

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

2019

THE YEAR
OF PS4



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GAME OF THE YEAR

Did your favourite make the cut?

ISSUE 157

PRINTED IN THE UK £6.99

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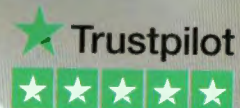
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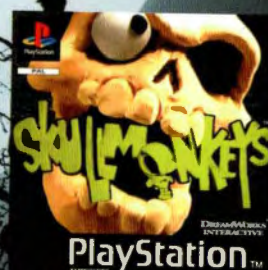
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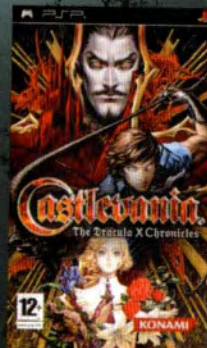
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PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

ISSUE 157 / JAN 2019

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

ISSN 1752210

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abc The ABC combined print, digital and digital publication circulation for Jan-Dec 2017 is 25,190
A member of the Audited Bureau of Circulations



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com
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Welcome



GAME OF THE MONTH
Tetris Effect
2019 PREDICTION
PS5 will be revealed (maybe)

"WE TALK EXCLUSIVELY TO THE LEGENDARY TIM SCHAFER ABOUT HIS NEW GAME, PUNS, AND MORE."

Our annual bumper preview issue is always a thrilling one, as we look ahead to the great games coming to PS4 in the next 12 months and beyond. Personally, I think one of the most exciting is Psychonauts 2. On page 6 we talk exclusively to the legendary Tim Schafer about the new game, the importance of puns, and more.

The Double Fine dev's not the only one we catch up with this issue, either. Ubisoft Montreal chats about its Far Cry 5 sequel (p14), BioWare discusses Anthem (p50), and Avalanche reveals the '80s fun to be had in co-op shooter Generation Zero (p58).

This is on top of new hands-on previews of Resident Evil 2, Control, Dead Or Alive 6, and Sekiro. And we take closer looks at two of Sony's games for 2019: Days Gone and Ghost Of Tsushima. Turn to page 30 to start your journey into 2019's hottest games.

If old is your new, then take a closer look inside your wallet to find our exclusive PlayStation Classic poster-mag.

Ian

Ian Dean
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Secure
OPM #158
+ Anthem drinks
coasters

Subscribe
on page 70

THIS MONTH'S WINTER WONDERLANDERS



Oscar Taylor-Kent
GAMES EDITOR
Final Fantasy. Las Vegas. A free breakfast buffet... Oscar was living the dream this issue as he got the scoop on Shadowbringers.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Spyro Reignited Trilogy
2019 PREDICTION
PS Vita 2 (in his dreams)



Jess Kinghorn
STAFF WRITER
Having spent hours playing Beat Saber Jess has already hit her New Year's gym quota. More guilt-free egg baps for our writer.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Déraciné
2019 PREDICTION
Catherine is Katherine



Miriam McDonald
OPERATIONS EDITOR
Mim's still not finished The Witcher 3. We suspect our super-prod is not playing it correctly - you don't need to kill everyone, Mim.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Fallout 76 (the soundtrack)
2019 PREDICTION
Not getting on that unicorn



Milford Coppock
MANAGING ART EDITOR
When not designing hundreds of pages Milf's been trying to decipher Death Stranding. We're not sure which is worse.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Battlefield V
2019 PREDICTION
Death Stranding will release

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We poke inside the game-creating brains of Double Fine's Tim Schafer and Zak McClendon.

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All the news from the Fan Fest, including details of new expansion Shadowbringers.

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Find out about the new playable character and previously unseen area in the remake.

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Producer Thomas Singleton reveals the game's beating BioWare heart.

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It's been a great year on PlayStation - so discover OPM readers' top ten games.

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Will it be a medal or a court martial for the controversial latest Battlefield?

REVIEW

090 SPYRO REIGNITED TRILOGY

The little purple dragon relights our platforming fire.

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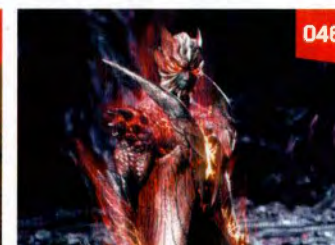
Subscribe to OPM and not only will you get a special subs cover, and for less money, this issue we're offering a free controller! Details on page 70.



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Many of the original team are working on the new Psychonauts – that's fantastic news.



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Shadowbringers is coming to FFXIV.

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Psychonauts is back with a little Raz-mataz

We're on the couch with Double Fine's Tim Schafer and Zak McClendon

01

It's been three long, quiet years since Tim Schafer and Double Fine announced work had

begun on Psychonauts 2, but earlier this month the studio broke its silence and debuted the first gameplay trailer. This was a wispy reintroduction to Raz and the playful world of the Psychonauts – psychic spies who save the day by hopping into people's brains and solving their deepest (high) anxieties.

"We're not joking around," laughs Schafer as we sit down to discuss the new game, "we're *making* Psychonauts 2."

The veteran designer, who has The Secret Of Monkey Island, Grim Fandango, and Broken Age on his impressive CV, is in good spirits.

"I'm getting the band back together," he jokes, explaining how many of the original team from Psychonauts are working on this sequel, 15 years later.

These returning team members include artists Peter Chan and Scott Campbell, who designed characters and environments for the original game, as well as environment artist Geoff Soulis, programmer Kee Chi, modeller Dave Russell, and composer Peter McConnell. With the family back it's easy to see why Psychonauts 2 looks like it'll be a faultless follow-up.

NEXT DAY TRIPPER

The trailer is crammed with teases of what we can expect from the new game, including new psychic powers, returning characters, and a new evil.

The sequel's plot follows straight on from Rhombus Of Ruin on PS VR, which in turn began directly after the original game had ended. "It's later that day," says Schafer, explaining how it's been 15 years for us, the players, but only hours for the game's characters. There's a pretence that nothing has moved on in the game's world, and we're still cha-cha sliding like it's 2005.

"Ever since that first game ended, before it even ended, I kept a doc of

PSYCHIC SPIES SAVE THE DAY BY HOPPING INTO PEOPLE'S BRAINS AND SOLVING THEIR DEEPEST (HIGH) ANXIETIES.



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



BACK OFF THE BINKS

"The nature of collaborations is there's always someone to stop you driving off a cliff [...] basically have people around you to maybe say, 'Think twice about Jar Jar.'" Tim Schafer reckons listening to new team members is a good idea.

ideas for more brains [...] so we've talked about what we'd do if we'd make a sequel for years. Also we have story elements lightly seeded in the first game that we wanted to do, stories we wanted to tell the full adventure of," says Schafer.

It's clear this sequel will be a larger escapade, one which will explore the broader world of psychic spies. But like the first game this will be a "keyhole view of the world," says project leader Zak McClendon, explaining the appeal of Raz, for him, is exploring an adult world from a child's perspective. The sequel goes further, he explains: "It just implies a larger world, even those characters like Sasha and Milla, and spies that you meet, you're meeting them in a different context."

CIRQUE DU PSYCHO

The universe is being fleshed out for this sequel. The 'real world' areas are more open, with side quests, challenges, and goals to complete. In the trailer we see Raz's circus, the family he ran away from to join the Psychonauts. Will this form a story arc? Schafer teases: "Raz definitely goes on a rollercoaster of emotions."

By contrast the mental worlds, the brains Raz dives into, are more focused excuses for classic platform puzzling. "You go in and experience the arc, the story, and there's less exploration," says McClendon.

That's not to say these have been easy to design. McClendon explains how each mental world is a bespoke, "open-ended problem that [needs] new visuals, a problem, a story, new characters, gameplay - it's been the biggest challenge, [it's] so different to how you make a standard game."

We see snippets of these worlds. There's a morgue scene in which Raz has to run around a floating cube. When you're inside a brain it doesn't follow normal physical rules.

McClendon explains: "Gravity may go up and around, you can walk on the surface of something and things may not connect in a normal way; you may shrink or grow while in a brain. There are lots of things inside the mental world that break the rules of physics and reality but plays in a way that you can understand."

Schafer says inspiration for the game's mental worlds springs from anywhere, even people he meets on the street. Often they come from puns; "The life preservers in the ocean of joke writing," he laughs.

That's not to say the sequel won't touch on serious issues. In the



trailer we see The Judge, a metaphorical embodiment of your self-criticism. He's one of the many new Censors, mental constructs that keep you from thinking thoughts you shouldn't - by whacking Raz with a giant gavel.

BRAIN FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"It's important because we're dealing with serious issues," says Schafer. "This game goes into some really dark places of the human mind, and so I think it's important to have a lot of levity in there to balance that out, in some ways to make those safe places to go to."

That balance is what makes Psychonauts and this sequel so engaging. It's a quirky, colourful 3D platform adventure of the kind we used to love in 2005. But it's not afraid to carry a message and touch on complex issues.

"Psychonauts 2 is a game about learning about people from the inside out and humanising everyone. Taking that into the core of the design, like optimism, even if we do explore those dark places there's still always this optimism behind it, which I think is really important in games," says McClendon earnestly.

"It's not afraid of really dumb jokes [either]," adds a grinning Schafer.

What do you think of Psychonauts 2? Let us know on Twitter: @OPM_UK.

WE'RE DEALING WITH SERIOUS ISSUES. THIS GAME GOES INTO SOME REALLY DARK PLACES.



"It looks like we'll be visiting Raz's family at the circus. This'll get emotional."



Inside Ford Cruller's mind, a rather untidy place. Are we headed in here?



The aging agent has multiple personalities. Have we met them all?



That's one heck of a gavel - and The Judge is happy to wallop you with it if you think the wrong thing.



Raz gets to ride a giant roulette ball over his enemies, and we're promised "more powers, new powers" by project leader Zak McClendon.



"There are lots of things inside the mental worlds that break the rules of physics," says McClendon.

While unannounced for the West, Sato is keen to keep Western fans in mind for future Yakuza remasters.



2018: the year of the dragon

Daisuke Sato tells us why Yakuza is still only getting started

02

With both Yakuza 6: The Song Of Life, and Yakuza Kiwami 2 releasing in the West in 2018, it's been a busy – and successful – time for Yakuza. And that's without taking into account spin-off game Fist Of The North Star: Lost Paradise capping off the dev team's efforts.

The series' Westward momentum shows no signs of stopping in 2019.

"We do get many requests to bring the Yakuza 3, 4, 5 remasters to the West, which are already underway in Japan," producer Daisuke Sato acknowledges. "The Western releases have typically been over a year after the Japanese launch, but

we're hoping to reduce the delay as much as possible," he explains.

While the remasters still haven't been officially announced for the UK, Sato doesn't want Western fans of the series to feel left out. "Gaming technology is constantly evolving, and products seem to age faster as more time passes. That's partially

why I hope to bring more of these titles that are currently in the backlog to the fans as quickly as possible," he says. It's not all

remasters, though. Sato tells us he'd like Western fans to know that "with the 'New Yakuza Project' in the works, the Yakuza series will be entering a new phase with a new protagonist." As Yakuza 6 closed leading man Kiryu's story, the new



dev talk

"Fist Of The North Star has a very distinct world setting [...]. While there are hints of Yakuza, I think that the game turned out to be something very unique. [...] While I don't have a specific franchise in mind, I would like to explore other IPs that would be a fun collaboration with Yakuza."

Daisuke Sato
Producer, Yakuza series

title will be a bit of a shift. Again, it has yet to be announced, but Sato is keen to capitalise on revitalised Western interest in the enjoyable Japanese gangster stories.

CRIME WAVE

After Yakuza 4 came out in the West no further entries in the series were released here for almost five years. How did the series' overseas revival come about? "Yakuza 0 played a huge part in this," says Sato. "It created an entry point for new players, and it also happened to be one of the best titles within the series in terms of quality. I believe that both Western media and the audience recognised that."

"If you'd ask me if the series was successful because it's very Japanese, then I probably wouldn't agree," he tells us when we ask. To him, it's more about the honesty of

the series. "The games are also set in specific points of a Japanese present-day timeline, so you experience all the trends and culture of a moment in time when you play. Perhaps this authenticity was well-received by Western audiences."

"In Japan, people who don't even play games have at least heard of it," he says. "In 2005, there were barely any other games that were about the underworld in Japan. I feel that this unique identity attracted people's attention. [...] I'd be delighted if the franchise can grow in the Asian and Western regions as it did in Japan, but the subject matter of the franchise is very Japanese, so it could be difficult to reach people who simply don't have an interest in that."

★ What do you want to see next for Yakuza? Let us know opm@futurenet.com.

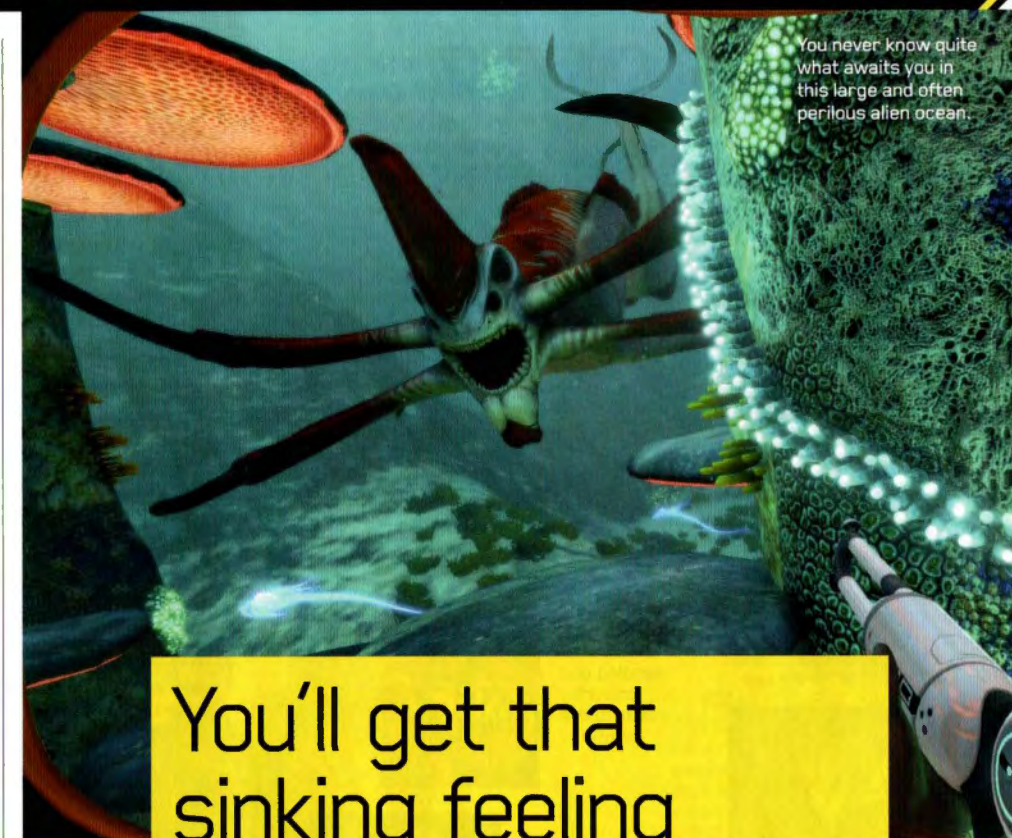


WHALE OF A TIME

Whether you have thalassophobia (the fear of being in large bodies of water) or megalohydrothallaphobia (the fear of large things in water), there's plenty to tickle your amygdala.

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



You never know quite what awaits you in this large and often perilous alien ocean.

You'll get that sinking feeling

Subnautica brings deep-sea diving to PS4

03

Fear of the ocean is pretty common. And for good reason. The sea is a huge expanse – it's the unknown.

Fear of the sea is basically the terror of space, but right here on Planet Earth. And Unknown Worlds' new game makes the most of it.

"We didn't set out to make a scary game when we started developing Subnautica five years ago," Charlie Cleveland, Unknown Worlds' founder and director explains. "We wanted to make an open-world underwater game where you didn't kill creatures." And they achieved that; this underwater exploration game can, at times, perfectly encapsulate the joys of deep-sea diving. But the devs felt they had to capitalise on the primal fear they'd accidentally touched upon. "Some of it happens unintentionally due to innate fears

that many of us have. Once we saw these psychological factors at work, we focused on them to create thrills," says Cleveland.

Subnautica is sure to create many more fans of the lands beneath the waves. There might be plenty we still don't know about our oceans on Earth, but the epic journey you undertake in the game is even more

mysterious. You play the sole survivor of a crash landing in the ocean of 4546B, an alien planet. Plenty of dangerous creatures lurk in the waters, but so

too do wondrous things await. Everything you discover is strange and exotic (if occasionally very frightening). You'll also need to collect resources to survive if you want to tell tales of your findings to others in the future, pushing you to keep exploring.

▶ Subnautica crash-lands on PS4 around the time this issue hits shelves. Dive in!

“DANGEROUS CREATURES LURK IN THE WATERS. SO DO WONDROUS THINGS.”



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

So long 2018 – you were great

Let's take one last look at another year of fantastic releases

04

Before we get excited about the year ahead with our chock-a-block 2019 feature (starting on p30), it's worth looking back. 2018 was a year of huge releases, and that was particularly true for PS VR. A number of new titles

entered our Hall Of Fame, and the headset saw a price drop in March that made it even more of a must-have. But of course, that isn't the only highlight of the last 12 months. Take a trip down memory lane with us...

January

PRESS Q FOR EMOTION

Quantum Dreams' latest QTE-laden game debuts. Detroit: Become Human certainly looks the part but we aren't entirely convinced, giving it 7/10 after conducting our in-depth Turing test.



RAGE 2 WAS REAL

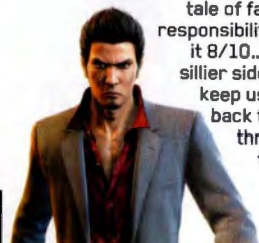
While the Internet questions a listing at retailer Walmart for Rage 2, we know it's the real deal because we're sending our colourful cover to the printers.



May

SWAN SONG

The final refrain in Kiryu Kazuma's tale has us all weepy right from the opening 45 minutes of recap cutscenes. That aside, we enjoy Yakuza 6's tale of family and responsibility, giving it 8/10... and the sillier side stories keep us coming back for more throughout the year.



KRATOS RETURNS

God Of War releases to wide acclaim (we score it 9/10) and it dominates much of the year. Did it make Game Of The Year? Turn to p72 to find out.

January

DAYS GONE IS EMOTIONAL

We play Days Gone and love it, so much so we give away a free art poster. Sony Bend love that so much the team sign it, frame it, and hang it on their wall.



April

WHAT A GOOD BOY

It graced our cover in 2017, and in March 2018 we finally get to play fetch with Boomer when Far Cry 5 releases. After tackling the Seeds' nasty cult across Hope County, we give it 8/10.



March

POWER OF POLYGONS

A full remake brings Secret Of Mana to PlayStation for the first time. However, its Saturday-morning-cartoon-style voiceover and stiff 3D character models fail to charm us, earning it a middling 6/10.



WANDER-FUL NEWS

The Shadow Of The Colossus remake rises to the challenge of making us misty-eyed all over again. After wandering around the Forbidden Land and getting ALL THE FEELS, we give it 9/10.



February

NOTHING BUT HITS

The new budget range of PlayStation Hits titles is announced, comprising a selection of PS4 classics at just £14.99 each. The selection includes Uncharted 4, The Last of Us, Bloodborne, and Yakuza 0.



June



KISS KISS, BANG BANG

E3 stands out for more than The Last of Us II's gameplay glimpse and that kiss. We also see more of Ghost Of Tsushima and Death Stranding, plus Bethesda teased its next Skyrim. What?!

IT'S A FILLION THING

Director Allan Ungar casts fan favourite Nathan Fillion as Nathan Drake for nearly 15 minutes of high-budget fan film goodness. While not part of a planned larger work, we're happy to chat Uncharted with the short's director for an OPM exclusive.



July

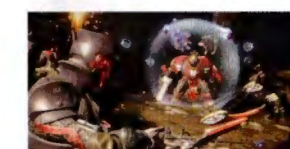
FACING THE MUSIC

We catch up with FMV maestros D'avekki Studios and leading lady Aislinn De'Ath about their next project. Shot in a haunted house, there are plenty of spooky tales from the set of The Shapeshifting Detective.

August

DESTINY 2 MAKES A COMEBACK

The biggest and most important DLC yet for Destiny 2 releases 4 September, and with Forsaken Bungie puts its online shooter back on the map. Is all forgiven? Go on then.



ONE IN 50,000

A limited run of 50,000 special edition consoles is announced to celebrate 500 million PlayStation units being sold around the world. They sell out fast!

ICH HAB' MEIN HERZ IN KÖLN VERLOREN

Jess heads to Germany for Gamescom, interviewing the devs behind Life Is Strange 2, Twin Mirror, and Control, and getting her grubby mitts on Overkill's The Walking Dead, Sekiro, and Resident Evil 2.



PICTURE THIS

Marvel's Spider-Man swings onto PlayStation, graciously collecting a gold 9/10 from us on his way through. Long after tying up Peter Parker's loose ends in New York City, we're still web-slinging our way through the streets thanks to the excellent DLC.



September

SMALL BUT MIGHTY!

What a way to end 2018! PlayStation Classic launches, preloaded with 20 games of yesteryear. Post-release, it is a forgone conclusion that we won't see Ian or Milf until the New Year...



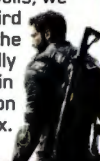
LOSE THE BATTLE, WIN THE WAR?

Fortnite rival PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (or Plunkbat, if you're so inclined), the battle royale game that launched a thousand imitators, makes its way to PlayStation. We'll have to wait and see if it claims the crown from its royale rivals.



'CAUSE WE CAN, CAN, CAN!

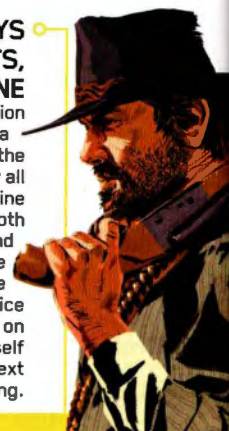
After gracing the cover of OPM #155, action adventure Just Cause 4 re-acquaints us with daredevil Rico Rodriguez. Tearing across Solis, we contend with weird weather and the Black Hand's deadly mercenaries in this destruction derby sandbox.



December

COWBOYS WHERE BOOTS, ONLINE

Red Dead Redemption 2's online beta launches and the world goes crazy all over again. Online missions, both single-player and co-op, dominate what will be the multiplayer of choice for 2019. Mosey on over and pull yourself a seat at PS4's next big thing.



POTSHOT

Hitman 2 debuts a smart follow-up season of new maps plus plenty of improvements to 2016's levels. Under threats of having the fish thrown at us, we have to take Agent 47 very seriously (even if he is wearing a flamingo mascot costume) and award it an Editor's Choice 9/10.



KEEPING YOUR CARDS CLOSE

Sony announces it will not be participating in 2019's E3. The company explains in a statement that it is looking to explore new ways to engage with its community, and that more news about this will follow. Watch this space!

November

MOST WANTED

After countless delays and leaks, Red Dead Redemption 2 finally releases, to the tune of a perfect 10/10 score from us. The impressive open world adventure sets itself up for a tussle with God Of War for our Game Of The Year. Who wins?



October

RETRO HORRORS

After announcing the game at PSX in 2017, Sony finally delivers MediEvil's first gameplay trailer – timely enough, on Halloween. Are you ready for another remade retro masterpiece? We certainly are.



CYBERPUNK SHOCKER

The biggest surprise of the year? That has to be CD Projekt Red dropping an hour-long Cyberpunk 2077 demo at E3 in June. We were there to see the game in action, and it blew our minds. So much so, it made the cover of our E3 issue with a special his and hers twin-set.



The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

RUNNING RINGS

Legendary Sonic The Hedgehog developer Yuji Naka leaves his own studio to work for Square Enix. An excellent match, given the pair's shared fondness for spiky-haired protagonists.



FAR FROM OVER IT

The Overwatch eSports League enjoys its very first season. Beginning as it means to go on, what follows is a huge year for Blizzard's unstoppable hero shooter.

WHAT'S THAT COMING OVER THE HILL?

Monster Hunter: World brings the cult series to a wider, global audience. We don't hear a peep out of our editor until he returns from his expedition, bestowing 9/10 on the ARPG.



NORDIC TAKEOVER

THQ Nordic finalises a deal to buy Koch Media, snaffling up Deep Silver and reacquiring a number of titles that were previously THQ properties, such as Saints Row.



Thanks for that,
Joe. Nice one. That's
really made the
world a better place



Dawn of a new era for Far Cry

Far Cry 5's standalone sequel goes beyond the end of the world

05

Don't you just hate it when the bad guy was right all along? We'll throw up a spoiler warning now in case you've

yet to finish Far Cry 5, but cult leader Joseph Seed has been teased as making a return in its standalone sequel Far Cry New Dawn. **No, really, if you still haven't seen that ending, stop reading now.**

We know now that rather than the ending being one last Bliss-fuelled

manipulation by the Father of Eden's Gate, Hope County really did become scorched earth. In fact, all across America, bombs fell.

While Ubisoft keeps its cards close to its chest when it comes to the extent of Joseph Seed's role in this followup, nearly two decades on from the ending of the previous game more than a few familiar faces re-emerge in a very different world.

NEARLY TWO DECADES ON, FAMILIAR FACES RE-EMERGE.

Between colourful plumes of superbloom, two diametrically opposed factions take shape. Your Survivors, residents of the former Hope County and migrants from other parts of the US, have built a home base called Prosperity. Farming veggies for food and fuel in the form of ethanol, their respect for the land is not matched by the opposing Highwaymen.

Led by twins Mickey and Lou, the Highwaymen squeeze all they can from the land before upping sticks and doing it all over again somewhere else. They have chapters across all of what remains of America, and you'll find plenty of their outposts scattered throughout Hope County. You have to liberate these, as you expect, but what you might not expect is that they don't stay liberated if you leave them unattended. If the Highwaymen do muscle their way back into an



dev talk

"It's a brand new setting - yes, there are ties to Far Cry 5 but [...] you're going to discover the world with [a new player character]. [...] Far Cry is an opportunity to get into an open world shooter that's very easy to pick up [...] It's all about these lawless frontiers, these places that are pretty remote."

Jean-Sébastien Decant
Creative director,
Ubisoft Montréal

outpost, it'll be that much more difficult to retake.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

The new expedition missions feature similar levels of escalating difficulty. Taking you to locales outside Hope County, they let you glimpse the state of the wider world. While they're designed with co-op in mind, you can play them solo with help from a selection of Guns and Fangs For Hire. On our visit to Ubisoft we see a stealthy trip to an abandoned theme park on the lowest difficulty setting quickly go awry, but are assured that it is a far more intense story at the third and highest level.

And while we'd love to tell you all about Nick and Kim Rye's grown-up daughter, or Nana the sharpshooting granny, you'll have to wait. Truthfully, we wish we could tell you more about Timber the akita. Luckily for you, Far Cry New Dawn isn't far off - it launches on the 15 February.

★ Read our full preview of Far Cry New Dawn next issue, on sale 15 Jan.

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Square Enix gets shady

Big announcements at Final Fantasy XIV Fan Fest Las Vegas

06

We were mixed in with a huge crowd – the lucky ones who managed to grab a ticket to the Las Vegas leg of the Final Fantasy XIV Fan Festival 2018, which sold out in three hours – and the buzz as they lost their minds over the epic trailer for Final Fantasy XIV: Shadowbringers was incredible.

The third proper expansion to the MMO, it ushers in Version 5.0 in summer 2019, with updates and tweaks that will apply to all players, whether they buy Shadowbringers right away or not. But fans will want to, as Square Enix treats each full expansion as its own release. “Like

OUR MISSION IS TO BRING A FULL GAME’S WORTH OF NEW CONTENT.

always,” Naoki Yoshida, the director and producer, told fans, “our mission is to bring with each expansion a full game’s worth of new content.” Shadowbringers carries on the story in a meaningful way, adding huge new areas (we glimpse a woodland with treetop dwellings, a desert with tilting, twisty ruins, and

a coast strewn with violet flowers); and, of course, things like new job classes. As was the case with the last expansion, Stormblood, it’s easier to think of

this as the next game in the FFXIV series than a small addition.

FEELING BLUE

Between big releases like Shadowbringers Square Enix offers



dev talk

“[After taking on FFXIV] if I’d mentioned something like a Fan Festival I’m sure people would have laughed [...] My first goal was always to rebuild FFXIV, and to show appreciation to the fans who have supported us throughout all this. But to be able to do a world tour [...] was a goal I had since taking over the project.”

Naoki Yoshida
Producer/director,
Final Fantasy XIV

a lot of ongoing support with new content, including story quests and dungeons, which still continues with Patch 4.5 – A Requiem For Heroes. A surprise announcement that this will include a new job class, Blue Mage, elicited more yelling from the crowd, this time chanting “Yoshi-P”, their nickname for Yoshida. Modestly he told them the whole dev team did the work, and the crowd began to chant “dev team” instead.

Yoshida’s ever-humble as the leader of the team working on the game, and throughout the Fan Fest’s presentations and key notes remained so, though he was always ready to tease and have fun with the fans. As were the other members of the dev team – they’re extremely in touch with the players. After the original Final Fantasy XIV had a negative critical reception, Yoshida had the gargantuan task of

Shadowbringers’ thrilling trailer provides plenty of detail – if you can hear it over the fans screaming with excitement.

rebooting the game from the ground up while maintaining the old version. Continuing the relationship with the fanbase was key to its success.

If anyone could be a rock star game developer it’s Yoshida, but despite revitalising the game and turning it into one that sells out convention tickets within hours, his interactions with the fans are always earnest. Except he *literally* became a rock star game developer when he took to the stage to close out the show and sing a song with The Primals – a band consisting of some of the game devs, which plays covers of in-game music. Just as mad a moment as it sounds.

FAN-TASY

The Fan Festival was a true celebration for players of the game, and we found plenty to see and do. Las Vegas was just the first location,

IN A BLUE MOON
The Blue Mage job update is a new type of “limited job” that operates by learning the actions of enemy monsters, just like in previous Final Fantasies.



What’s a convention without a cosplay contest? All entrants were fantastic.

as the event’s rolling on to Paris and Tokyo early next year. The main stage had something for everyone going on almost all day every day, from in-depth lore discussions to fan Q&As, and even a live piano concert.

In addition, there was a ton of fun activities to get involved in. There were traditional-style arcade games like chocobo racing, basketball challenges, and a cactuar high-striker, plus in-game events that included a special boss battle against Yojimbo, a survival challenge, and a tower climbing competition. PvP mode The Feast even got a look in, with the event playing host to the regional North American Finals where Yoshida congratulated the members of Synergy SixX of Aether on their win – players are often referred to as hailing from their home servers. The Fan Festival is, after all, a real-life extension of the online community, where those who have played together for a long time may meet for the first time – a fanbase grateful to developers who took care of their ailing game, and developers who are thankful for the players who supported them through thick and thin.

Watch the FFXIV: Shadowbringers trailer for yourself: bit.ly/ffxiv5trailer.



Square Enix CEO Yosuke Matsuda joined the devs in meeting fans.

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE’S TALKING ABOUT

info patches
update your brain



RACE TO WIN

The next big motorsport has an “e” in front of it. The Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA) certified its first eSports competition – the Gran Turismo Championship. Brazil’s Igor Fraga took home the Nations Cup trophy, with Team Lexus winning the Manufacturers’ Series.



DO NOT STEAL

Taking a leaf out of Oscar’s fashion wardrobe, Jump Force allows players to mix and match things like Dragon Ball and Naruto outfits. You can create your own custom character, tweaking their looks and giving them moves from your favourite anime in this crossover Shonen Jump fighting game.



GOD OF COMICS

The story of 2018’s God Of War was so good we just can’t wait for more. A sequel is still probably a way off, but that’s where Dark Horse’s prequel comic series comes in, expanding on Kratos’ adventures just before the events in the game as he builds a new life for himself in the Norse wilds.

Symphony of the dark

Lara Croft becomes the Tune Raider in this OST remake

07

Videogame fans have a special relationship with soundtracks. As we interact with these virtual worlds, the adventures we have become our own, and listening to the music can remind us of those special times. So we've got good news if you're nostalgic for classic Tomb Raider, as The Dark Angel Symphony - a remake of the scores to Tomb Raiders 4 through 6 - smashed its £60,000 Kickstarter goal and will be made.

"It was overwhelming, exciting, and daunting but I was a big fan of the game long before I ever worked for Core Design so had a great understanding of what made it tick," Peter Connelly, the games' original composer, tells us about joining the series back on Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation (the fourth game). "It didn't make it [the symphony] any easier to make, sure I didn't kill the audio so wanted it to remain authentic with a little bit of me to spice it up a little."

AUDIO ANGEL

The project, set to release towards the end of 2019, will mark the joint anniversary of Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation and Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness at 20 and 15 years respectively.

While the project will include a remastering of the original game soundtracks, the thrust of it is a remake - a go-over of the old soundtracks. "It's a typical trait of any composer, especially when they're up against time and limitations so, 15 to 20 years on, I've had plenty of time to work out what works and what doesn't," Connelly explains. "To me and Martin Iveson [co-composer on Angel Of Darkness], we can hear a lot of issues with our music and we want to bring them to the level we expect to hear them at." If it can rekindle how we felt in the temple of Horus, we're all ears.

★ Find out more about The Dark Angel Symphony here: bit.ly/trdarkangel.

15 TO 20 YEARS ON, I'VE HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO WORK OUT WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T.



Two backers pledged at the '£2,000 or more' level - their rewards include original Angel Of Darkness concept art.

Sixth in the series, PS2's The Angel Of Darkness was the last Tomb Raider from creator Core Design.



LISTEN TO LISSIE

Lissie is your guide to the fjords, but your relationship with this friendly and independent woman will change depending on the choices you make. Friend or foe? That could be down to you.



The 1920s Norwegian setting feels fresh on PS4.

Calling on a new kind of Cthulhu

The mythos gets a Norwegian reworking on PS4

08

If Cyanide Studios' Call Of Cthulhu left you wanting to uncover more of The Old Ones, but with a less devoted take on HP Lovecraft's mythos, then Red Thread Games' Draugen is the game for you. Billed as a 'first-person psychological mystery set in 1920s Norway' our interest is already piqued. Now add in an AI companion,

called Lissie, who will react to your decisions through dialogue choices, and we're already booking a ticket to the fjords.

Playing as American traveller Edward Charles Harden, who's venturing to Norway's isolated lakes and coastal villages in search of his sister, the Lovecraft lore lingers heavily over Draugen's setting.

That name, Draugen, references the Draugr, undead creatures from Norse mythology (they also popped up in this year's God Of War). So we expect some monstrous surprises alongside the psychological puzzling.

But it is the emotional shocks that will deliver Draugen's biggest surprises. We're promised the picturesque landscape will change with the weather and as Harden's mental state deteriorates. Draugen promises a distinctive take on the Cthulhu mythos. More soon.



■ The epic landscapes change with your mental state; reality becomes unreliable.

★ Visit the developer's website for new updates: redthreadgames.com/draugen.

PlayStation voices

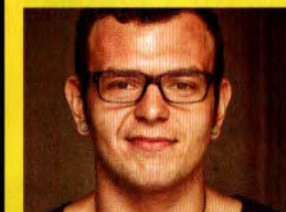
the month in mouthing off

Neil Druckmann

pays his respects: "RIP, Stan Lee. You were an inspiring creator and a genuinely good guy."



"RDR2 reminds me why I love making games." CD Projekt Red's Sebastian Kalembe takes a break from Cyberpunk 2077 to play our latest obsession.



"Those who [...] are whisked away to worlds made purely of imagination and passion are the future."



Cory Barlog gets feely.



instant opinion

strong vs
wrong

SOUL OF SUCCESS

Hidetaka Miyazaki was awarded the Golden Joystick for Lifetime Achievement. The trophy was presented by two of his childhood heroes, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone.

DEVIL MAY THRIVE

Castlevania producer Adi Shankar is developing another series for Netflix. The new show will be based on Devil May Cry.

TIME OUT

One61 Studio has announced a Fallout SmartWatch, packed with all the biometric tools you'd expect. At \$149.99, you'll have to save up your Caps.

FROM THE ASHES

Overwatch's latest patch will require many players to reinstall the entire game. This is due to a number of improvements, as well as new hero Ashe.

MATERIA MEMORIES

Talking to Famitsu, Tetsuya Nomura said development for the Final Fantasy VII remake was 'progressing favourably.' He offered no indication of when we'll be able to play it.

MEET THE TEAM

Footballer Krzysztof Piatek revealed that when he moved to play for Genoa he used his PlayStation to get to know his teammates. Bet the generic ones were a surprise.



God Of War had to fight off fierce competition this year but still walked away with a slew of awards.

PlayStation wins at the Joysticks

As 2018 ends, Kratos becomes the God Of Four

09

PlayStation cleaned up at the 36th Golden Joystick awards in November. There were big wins all round, but the biggest success story hails from Santa Monica. Not only did SIE Santa Monica Studio win the Studio Of The Year award, its latest release did it proud. God Of War claimed the prizes for Best Storytelling, Best Visual Design, and Best Audio before scooping up PlayStation Game Of The Year (presented by our staff writer, Jess).

The other big success story of the evening,

**THANK YOU TO
ALL THE PLAYERS
- AND... THE BUS
DRIVER.**

surprising no-one, was Fortnite Battle Royale. Picking up Best Competitive Game and Ultimate Game Of The Year, in their second acceptance speech a representative from the studio said, "Thank you to all the players - and especially, thank you to the bus driver."

In a result that shocked many, Red Dead Redemption 2 placed second in Ultimate Game Of The Year, but did still take home the Critics' Choice Award. Among the less surprising wins of the evening, Overwatch won eSports Game Of The Year, Skyrim was dubbed Best VR Game and Cyberpunk 2077 was crowned the Most Wanted Game.

God Of War pipped Detroit: Become Human at the post for PlayStation Game Of The Year, and in the end the android-centred drama failed to pick up any big awards itself. However, Bryan Dechart was awarded Best Performer for his turn as fan favourite Connor and, alongside his co-star and now wife Amelia Rose Blaire, also won Best New Streamer.



GOW director Cory Barlog sent a heartfelt video on behalf of the studio.

* See all the winners and catch up on the nominations at bit.ly/opm_gj_winners.

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The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



GT SPORT REPLAYED
We're giddy with excitement for 2019, especially since a reveal at the Inter BEE 2018 exhibition in Japan teased the real future of PlayStation - Gran Turismo Sport was being played in 8K at 120fps.

10

just one more question...
the team debate this month's burning issue

What are your videogame resolutions for 2019?



IAN DEAN
EDITOR

WITH PS VITA ON ITS LAST LEGS, I'M MAKING A PROMISE TO PLAY MORE ON-THE-GO CLASSICS.

Oscar loves PS Vita. His portable PlayStation goes everywhere with him like an adult security blanket. So when I announced next year I'll be playing more on-the-go classics I was shocked to see him turn to me with a smile and say, "It's not for you". He probably has a point; my tolerance for anime otome games and visual novels is very low. But the suggestion PS Vita is some kind of secret society only a select few with a love of yelping anime girls and boys are allowed into has me even more intrigued. Besides, there's a wealth of PS1 games on the system - it's a retro haven. ■



JESS KINGHORN
STAFF WRITER

REMINDER: DO NOT MAKE PROMISES YOU CANNOT KEEP. AND THEN I GO AND MAKE THIS ONE...

Like an absolute egg, I dubbed 2018 the year of shooters and proceeded to play almost none. After Shadow Of The Tomb Raider reaffirmed it simply wasn't going to work between me and anything without auto-aim, I'm making my goal this year something a touch more attainable. The thought of finishing every huge title dropping next year is enough to make me want to go and take a lie down in a dark room until 2020. So I'm making the commitment now to simply start each one. 2019 will be the year my backlog becomes something a little livelier than a forgotten graveyard o' games. ■



OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
GAMES EDITOR

2019 IS THE YEAR I FINALLY GET OVER MY COMMITMENT ISSUES... WITH JRPGS (AND DO SOMETHING BETTER INSTEAD).

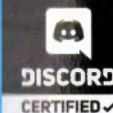
I'm torn between two extremes. On one hand, next year, I definitely have a list of games I want to finally polish off - almost all of them JRPGs (Persona 3 and Shadow Hearts, to name a couple). It's hard to commit the time, but making time to envelop myself in their warmth is always satisfying. But I also want to teach myself to shake off the guilt of not finishing some games too, and be okay with knowing when I've got all I can out of certain ones. In short, my resolution is to value my time more, and in turn value those special games more - because they deserve it. ■



MILFORD COPPOCK
ART EDITOR

I'M GOING TO TURN BACK TIME AND MAKE THE MOST OF PLAYSTATION NOW.

With PlayStation Classic reminding me there's more to PlayStation than new Triple-A hits on the horizon, I'm going to make more of PS4's streaming service. PlayStation Now is a hotbed of classic games that I once adored but have since overlooked, so 2019 is the year I'll sign up and indulge my retro instincts. When there's as varied a lineup as Bloodborne and Ape Escape 2 begging to be played how can I resist? It's also home to my guilty pleasure, 'lucky sevens' - those average-scoring games that are pure, undemanding fun. Wet, for example, is a must for its grunge look and standout psychobilly soundtrack alone. ■



ADVERTORIAL

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The headset you need if you want to supercharge your setup

There's a reason that CORSAIR has become synonymous with comfort and quality to PC gamers the world over. It's because the company has, for little over two decades, been steadfast in dedication to creating the very best peripherals on the market; when you're rolling with CORSAIR, you just know that you're going to have an edge over the competition.

Now, and for the very first time, CORSAIR is bringing its premium headsets to console, giving you PS4 owners out there the opportunity to experience their legendary comfort, build quality and audio performance for yourself. Why should PC gamers have all of the fun? We are so right on this one.

We know this to be true because the CORSAIR HS60 Surround Gaming Headset comes equipped with adjustable memory foam ear cups, designed to provide exceptional comfort even as you are playing long into the night. It's because the HS60 is packing 50mm neodymium speaker drivers, fine-tuned to deliver depth and clarity to your audio experience; upgrading the quality of your sound will improve your awareness and

accuracy in single-player and multiplayer games alike, the difference is truly startling, especially if you've been stuck using your standard TV speakers for all these years. If that wasn't enough, CORSAIR has also ensured that the HS60 comes equipped with an optimised unidirectional microphone that'll let you talk trash and talk tactics with your buddies without any fear of your words getting lost in the mix - it's so good, in fact, that is been Discord certified, so you just know this headset will facilitate crystal clear communication.

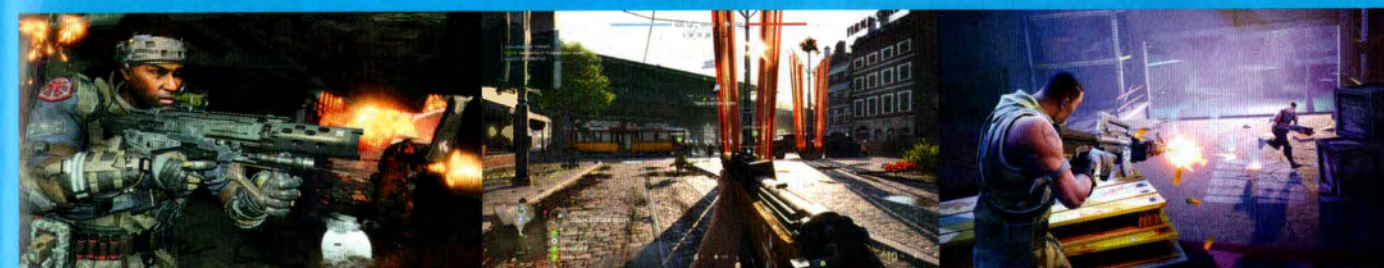
Better yet, the CORSAIR HS60 is designed to last. When the company says this headset is 'crafted for comfort, built for battle' it isn't messing around. Regardless of whether you are connecting this headset to your console to enjoy incredible stereo sound, or whether you are linking it up to your PC to enjoy virtual 7.1 surround sound, the HS60 is a durable and reliable headset that will deliver exceptional and uncompromising quality across every PlayStation 4 game in your library.



Plush memory foam and adjustable earcups provide exceptional comfort for hours of gameplay.

Optimized unidirectional microphone reduces ambient noise for enhanced voice quality and is fully detachable for use on the go.

Legendary CORSAIR build quality and metal construction ensures long-term durability.



Hear every detail in games like Black Ops III, Fortnite, and Battlefield V, giving you a clear competitive edge over other players.

REPLIES

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156 Two covers and crammed with Resident Evil 2 gifts - excellent.

Control yourself

For the love of all that is good and paranormal, can we PLEASE get a poster of that beautiful Control image of Jessie from Issue 155 on page 61?

Yann Green via email

If you're reading this, Yann, we've already answered your query - the Control poster is in the wallet with this very issue! We hope it takes pride of place on your wall.

Red Dead bored

I purchased RDR2 this week. I was gutted not to get your review before purchase but I presume you guys will

give it a 9 or 10 like everyone else. (Good guess, it was a 10 - ed)

I'm finding this game so slow at the moment. I spend most my time riding my horse to locations which now is just getting tedious! I'm really disappointed in this game basically - I loved Spider-Man and Tomb Raider, but the pace of this game is too slow for me. I will reluctantly carry on playing it but hopefully it will grow on me. At the

minute I can't say it's grabbed me at all.
Damien Kenchington via email

For most of the game's fans, the slowness is one of Red Dead Redemption 2's selling points - they love moseying around in Rockstar's Wild West. Hopefully it will grow on you over time, but if it doesn't, the coming year's bringing loads of great games that could hit your sweet spot. Turn to p30 where we look at what's coming our way.

Half a job

Why can't developers finish games properly before they come out? Okay it's nice getting DLC to prolong the life of something you really love, but you need to have a complete game to love in the first place. (Looking at you, Battlefield V!) If something's janky from the start, I'm not going to

I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME RIDING MY HORSE TO LOCATIONS, WHICH IS NOW JUST GETTING TEDIOUS.

pick it up again when the patches and DLC arrive weeks down the line.

Jes Ackerley via email

Some of the team are old enough to remember the days before DLC and patches, and while that didn't guarantee games free of bugs, we did see far fewer outright glitchy or unfinished ones. As regards Battlefield V, though, what's there is good and we reckon it has the potential to be brilliant, so do stick with it.

Star letter The show must go on

What do you guys make of Sony not going to E3? They only announced a few things in advance of this year's show then pulled out some surprises; do you think they'll do it again? Or is 2019 going to be a bad year for PlayStation fans?

Ed Kimble via email

2019's guaranteed to be a great year, Ed - our coverage of what you've got to look forward to begins on p30. As for Sony not being at E3, we don't know what it's got planned but we do know Sony never lets us down. We're going to enjoy seeing what all the third-party developers reveal at E3 (hopefully news of The Avengers and Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order), and keep an eye on the likes of Death Stranding, Dreams, and Ghost Of Tsushima.

CAN I GET A RT?

The most pleasing tweetings from the @OPM_UK timeline...



@THETATTOOEDBEAR Christmas issue was an awesome read! A massive portion was anything n' everything @RE_Games.. so it was a given, really



@SAMBRIDGETT @OPM_UK does do a rather nice line in free gifts. A t-shirt transfer to be proud of, there.



@THE1LIKESAF Picked up this month's issue of the @OPM_UK mag. Full of Resident Evil 2 goodness! I really can't wait for this game to drop!!!



@THERBALDWIN99 I low-key buy @OPM_UK mag for the awesome posters



@PURPLE_DRAGON25 @PetRemy17 according to @OPM_UK - in issue 155, you would dye your hair purple if Spyro went Number One... well he's number one so you gotta dye your hair lol



@IAMPHENOMENAL01 This is the UK PlayStation Magazine why are you didn't articles with items in dollars? [EH? - ed]



@BLOOMMYBOY I've just started using the PS4 spikey thumb grips I got months ago with the mag, didn't like them at 1st but now I'm loving them, thank you



@WAYNELITTLEWOOD Still don't understand how a multiplayer battle-royale can be called Black Ops. Surely the whole point of Black Ops is off the books missions and not a free for all between 100 individuals? Makes no sense to call it that.

TROLL OF THE MONTH

BEST COMMENTS FROM FACEBOOK.COM/OFFICIALPLAYSTATIONMAGAZINE

"How about you figure out how to make my horse stop drinking when I'm offline. Drunk horse loves trees and boulders."

VICTOR ENRIQUEZ JR. HAS AN UNUSUAL PROBLEM IN RDR2...



"Got a whole year's subscription for €20 on Black Friday!"

IT'LL BE A GREAT YEAR, ELANORE GILLINGHAM!

READERS' MOST WANTED

Which games are bleeping loudest on your radar?

1

Kingdom Hearts III

A Disney JRPG? Surely the very definition of niche. But the fans who love it, *really* love it, and so it's topping the Most Wanted list this month.
FORMAT PS4
ETA 29 JAN

2

Resident Evil 2

Not long to wait till you get to relive Leon and Claire's scary night in the city... but there's more in this remake, as we reveal over on p32.
FORMAT PS4
ETA 25 JAN

3

Cyberpunk 2077

Sometimes a game is so anticipated it can't possibly live up to expectations, but CD Projekt Red has always delivered the goods to date, and you're still keen on this.
FORMAT PS4
ETA TBC

5

Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice

Sneaking into the edge of your Most Wanted list like the One-Armed Wolf who stars in it, it's Activision's new samurai-stealth epic.
FORMAT PS4
ETA 22 MAR

4

Devil May Cry 5

With every new revelation (mechanical arms! V! Dante's motorbike/actual fiery wheels of death!) Devil May Cry 5 has more to tempt you. Capcom is really spoiling us.
FORMAT PS4
ETA 8 MAR

VOTE NOW!

Tell us the five games you can't wait to play at opm@futurenet.com

EXIT POLL

Our Facebook fans answer a final question

Which classic PlayStation platform game deserves a sequel?

23% Reckon Ratchet & Clank have more life in them yet.

11% Wish to unfold a new Tearaway.

8% Want more Astro Bot, even though it's still pretty new.

45%

Would snap at the chance to play a new Croc.

7% Ask for Little Big Planet - we'll say, 'in your Dreams'.

6% Prefer another lizard, and want another go at Gex.

NEXT MONTH

What's your favourite couch co-op game on PlayStation?

Ben Wilson

■ ■ NICHE SPORTS GAMES AREN'T EXTINCT, BUT WE NEED TO BE MORE PROACTIVE IN SUPPORTING THEIR DEVELOPMENT. ■ ■

Why 2019 can be the year of cricket, rugby, and, er, kabaddi

This has been an above-par year for sports gaming. For all its critics, FIFA 19's Ultimate Team remains a brilliantly moreish time sink. A focused MyCareer mode returned WWE 2K19 to relevance. And NBA 2K18, NHL 18, and MLB 18: The Show put in stellar showings. Yet the most fun two hours I had within the genre involved none of these. Instead, it was a 73-ball century from Jonny Bairstow in little-heralded PS4 effort Ashes Cricket.

Released last November, Australian developer Big Ant kept its bat 'n' ball sim strong with patches and fan-created team updates. Yet the immediate reaction from both friends and social media when I espouse its joyfulness is "it's no Brian Lara" — usually followed by some remark about the ten-year wait for a decent cricket sim. The problem is those two responses are interlinked. Devotees recall the Lara series as faultless, so any imperfection in modern alternatives makes it a no-buy.

That issue extends across most niche sports. Digitising rugby? Be prepared for people to make negative comparisons to Jonah Lomu. Tennis? People have written you off against Top Spin from the outset. I don't only mean the paying customer. After reviewing the reasonable AO Tennis for this publication I dared to compare my thoughts to fellow journalists'.



WRITER BIO

Ben Wilson's commitment to lesser-known sports titles such as Ashes Cricket and Fire Pro Wrestling World has led him to postpone starting RDR2 until Christmas. Of 2019. He hopes to one day own console simulations of kabaddi, octopush, and Jet-era Gladiators.

Many marked it down for not feeling like Virtua Tennis — a take that's both lazy and irresponsible. VT is an arcadey, almost cartoony, take on the sport. AO aims to be a slower, more realistic sim. "This banana? Doesn't taste like a grapefruit at all. 3/10."

Since having kids, I've managed to keep one area of our house out-of-bounds to inquisitive toddler paws: the study, in which my favourite consoles from yesteryear sit side-by-side. Every six months I reintroduce Lara to Mega Drive or Lomu to PS1 and enjoy half an hour of throwback amusement. But that's it: two

decades after release, these games trumpeted as best-in-class actually warrant 60 minutes' play per calendar year. Fond memories cloud current expectations. Ashes Cricket is superior to any Lara game.

FACE VALUES

A related issue is weighing games with smaller budgets against those made by EA or 2K. It's easy to mock Ashes or AO because their graphics and animations fall short of FIFA standards. Yet if we — fans and journalists alike — want such titles to improve it's necessary to look beyond the cosmetic. Niche sports games aren't extinct, but we need to be more proactive in supporting their development. Can small studios invest millions on adventuring into uncanny valley territory? No. Can our feedback help them tweak mechanics to make these games better in terms of feel, which is what matters? Absolutely.

The beauty of spaces such as Twitter is every gamer has a voice, and word of mouth is paramount. Ten years ago PS3 sports-driver hybrid Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars emerged to minimal fanfare and was quickly forgotten. Reskinned and expanded for PS4, you now know it better as Rocket League — an exceptional genre entry which couldn't have endured and evolved without social media love and feedback. That's the power you and I hold. The power that can turn Ashes Cricket's successor, or Rugby League Live 5, or Extreme Kabaddi 2019 (sadly not real yet, but I live in hope) into a household name, if only we're more considered in harnessing it.



Emma Withington

■ ■ YOU CAN REMAKE MY FAVOURITE GAME, BUT YOU CAN'T REMAKE [YOUR FAVE '80S MOVIE]. ■ ■

Remakes allow us to share and re-experience past glories in the current generation

Crash Bandicoot N.Sane Trilogy was the best-selling PS4 exclusive in 2017. Considering that was the year Horizon Zero Dawn released, it was a staggering achievement for the two-decades-old game. While a remake or remaster is by definition not an innovation, Crash paved the way for more remakes — which will continue into 2019 with MediEvil.

Film has a notoriously bad track record regarding remakes. Disney is currently remaking a number of its animated classics in live action, which hasn't been well received. Arguably this is down to a lack of originality and for not exploring anything new with the source material.

If you want to watch your favourite film, you can access it with relative ease and enjoy 120 minutes of run-time that you're able to recite backwards in your sleep. Unless a remake has access to groundbreaking technology, or significantly improves on or is truer to the source material, it's generally considered a waste of time.

As players, we spend hours in game worlds — they are interactive experiences we

build memories around, some of which we relive over and over again. This creates a bond with a depth films simply can't match.

BACK FOR MORE

Unless you're a hoarder like me (I'm clinging onto classic consoles and games for dear life), the chance to access these experiences again can be incredibly slim. Backwards compatibility has not been available for more than a decade on PlayStation, and subscribing to PS Now to get a classic title may not be your bag — that's if the game you want is even available. This leaves a wider gap in the market for remakes, not only to sate older players' nostalgia, but to bring an experience to a new generation of players, and allow them the chance to be taunted by those godforsaken Egg-Thieves.

Remakes and remasters are currently having their day in the sun, but the 'lack of originality' argument may catch up with the industry if it becomes overly saturated with nostalgia. However, for now, it's wonderful to see a new generation of players experience the classics for the first time.

WRITER BIO

Mother of 'Pools, Breaker Of Games, Queen Of Caihurst, and Khaleesi Of The Third Street Saints. Emma Withington is a renowned merch goblin and professional press botherer, who submitted to Sony at the tender age of four.



Alex Spencer

■ ■ IT'S NOT A TRIPLE-A SMASH, BUT TETRIS EFFECT IS THE QUINTESSENTIAL PLAYSTATION GAME. ■ ■

Among the game's many pleasures is its ability to take you back through time

When you think 'PlayStation', what game comes to mind? Maybe it's Uncharted or God Of War or, depending on your age, Metal Gear Solid. But firing up Tetris Effect transported me right back to the original PlayStation.

It's an intensely personal connection. For me, the shimmering visuals of Enhance's psychotropic puzzler are like a portal to the first time I saw a PlayStation, round a friend's house on his birthday. What I remember isn't the games — maybe he didn't have any yet — but just watching him pop in a CD, and marvelling at the music visualiser's pulsating stabs of light, keeping perfect time with Wildchild's 'Renegade Master'. It was a simpler time.

SPECIAL EFFECT

Beyond that, Tetris Effect feels like an evolution of the original PlayStation's promise, perhaps best epitomised by WipeOut, that games could be cool and weird, and sit on the cutting edge of culture. Because it was the '90s, that meant bold graphic design from Designers Republic — all geometry, kanji, and fonts that

looked like they should printed onto a puffer jacket — and dance tracks from the likes of The Chemical Brothers and Orbital.

These were games that could fit alongside a clubbing lifestyle, games with abstract 3D visuals like Kula World and Kurushi (aka Intelligent Qube, one of PlayStation Classic's preloaded titles), or delivering audiovisual feedback like Vib-Ribbon, Bust A Groove, and PaRappa The Rapper. Sony actually installed rooms full of PlayStations in nightclubs.

If you squint just right, all of this is visible in any given round of Tetris Effect. It's a game where every spin of a tetromino gives off a sound effect as satisfying as PS1's startup twinkle, filled with gorgeous imagery made up of scattered pixels of light, the whole thing pulsing in time to a stage's soundtrack.

If PlayStation was targeting 20-something clubbers with its flashing lights and banging techno, Tetris Effect feels like the grown-up version, still messing with the old brain chemistry but ultimately just trying to have a nice Sunday. As I approach 30 myself, that's exactly what I need.

WRITER BIO

Is Alex Spencer getting nostalgic in his old age? Perhaps. But mostly he is thinking about the now — specifically, where to put that damned L-block that's rapidly tumbling down the screen right now. Argh, too late.

IN
THE
MOOD
FOR...

X-ray vision

Peeking beneath the surface with PlayStation's all-seeing heroes

1 RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

Lara uses her Survival Instincts to get out all of sorts of Siberian scrapes. In need of a life-saving snack? Click the stick to illuminate a herd of deer. Want to clear out an enemy camp without raising an alarm? Crofty's X-ray sense can help you plan a stealthy ambush. Lara's eyes are exquisite.

2 HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

The smouldering slaphead can use Instinct to spot enemies through walls, and also employ the ability to throw guards off his sociopathic scent. Instinct is equally useful for identifying homicidal opportunities, like a disco ball that's just begging to fall on a sleazy nightclub owner.

3 HORIZON: ZERO DAWN

Aloy can thank her Focus for her robot-peeping powers of perception. The little sci-fi doodad is an AR device that allows the tribal warrior to spot her mechanical dino foes through solid objects. The snazzy accessory can even track predicted patrol routes, which saves Aloy's hide when she's clearing out enemy encampments.

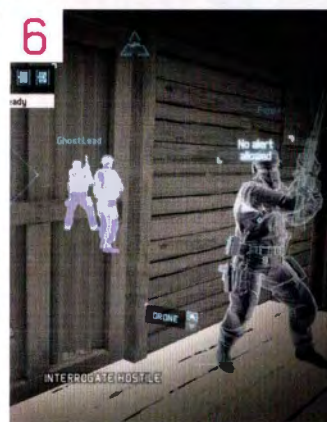
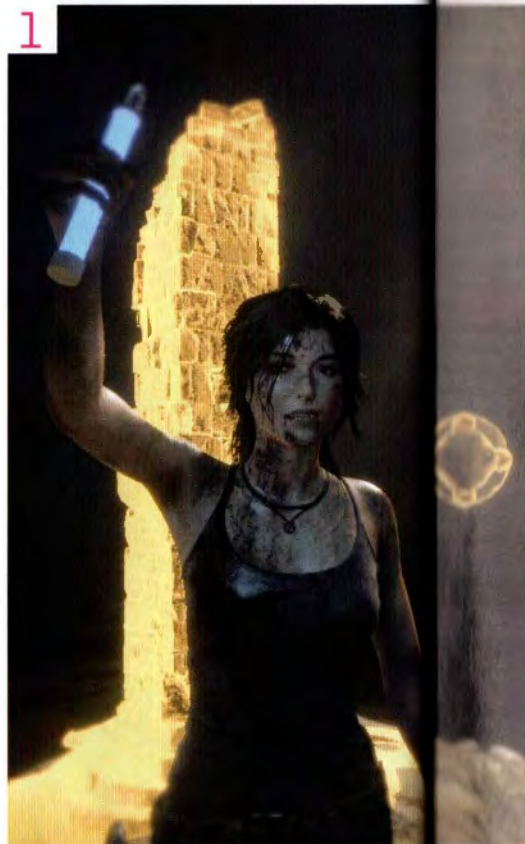
HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare
Sadly, the X-Ray Personalization Pack DLC doesn't let you see through walls. Boo!

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Adam is obsessed with augs, so it's not surprising he had his eyes tweaked so he could see through objects.

Metal Gear Solid V
If Snake punches the ground with his metallic mitt, he can scan nearby enemies. Hooray for X-ray fists!

Did we miss your fave X-ray power? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Show and tell at twitter.com/opm_uk.



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4 BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

The Dark Knight's Detective Vision gets a workout in Rocksteady's trilogy caper. During the Perfect Crime side-quest, the Bat scans a series of mutilated corpses, and his X-ray sight is so effective, it can swap between examining flesh wounds and zeroing in on bone damage. This eventually leads Bruce to Prof Pyg.

5 THE LAST OF US

Technically, Joel uses a kind of echolocation in Naughty Dog's dystopian classic. Is classing the gunrunner's Listen mode as X-ray vision a bit cheeky on our part? Kinda. But c'mon, the dude can still see Clickers through walls, so give us a break. Be it Infected-spotting ears or eyes, Joel's power is handy.

6 GHOST RECON: FUTURE SOLDIER

Tom Clancy's super-soldiers are so advanced, their X-ray visors are among their more vanilla pieces of kit. After all, this is a game where you can command a huge robot pooch, rock Predator-aping camo, and pull off obscenely badass sync shots. Still, seeing through walls is ace when breaching terrorist strongholds.

7 SNIPER ELITE 4

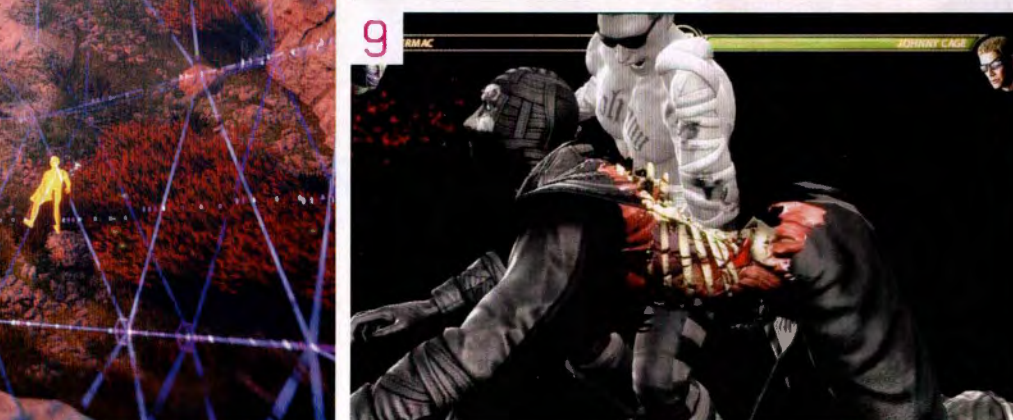
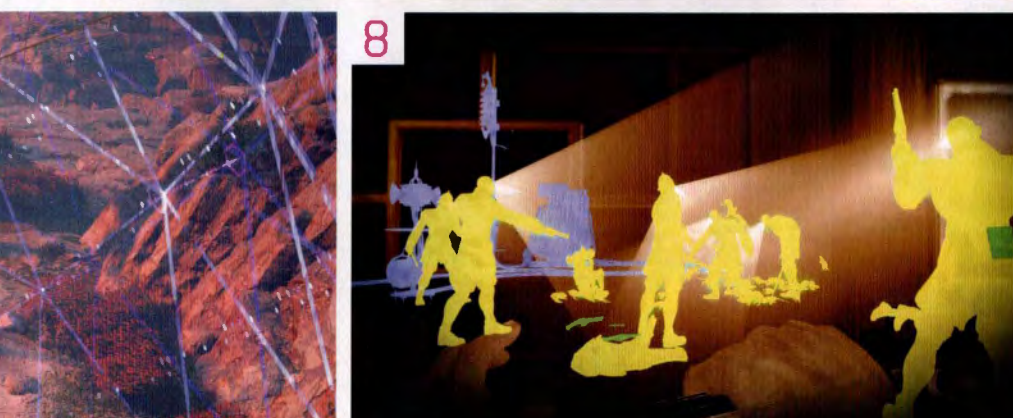
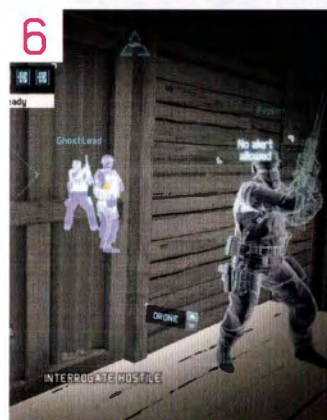
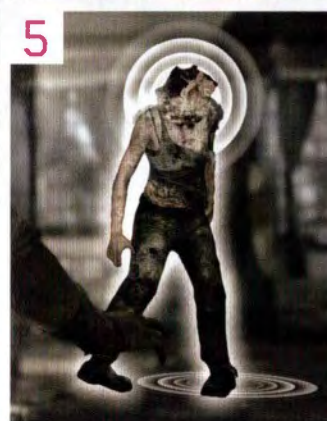
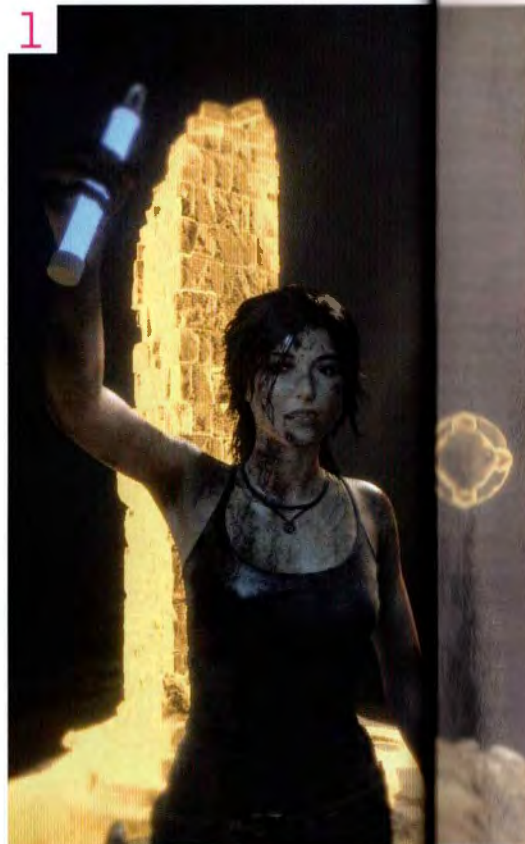
Shooting virtual Nazis is just grand, but you know what makes sniping Hitler's goose-stepping henchmen even sweeter? Seeing your bullet smash their cartilage into bigoted shards courtesy of Sniper Elite 4's delicious X-ray kills. Watching as Nazis' organs go splat in slow motion is such a simple, life-affirming pleasure.

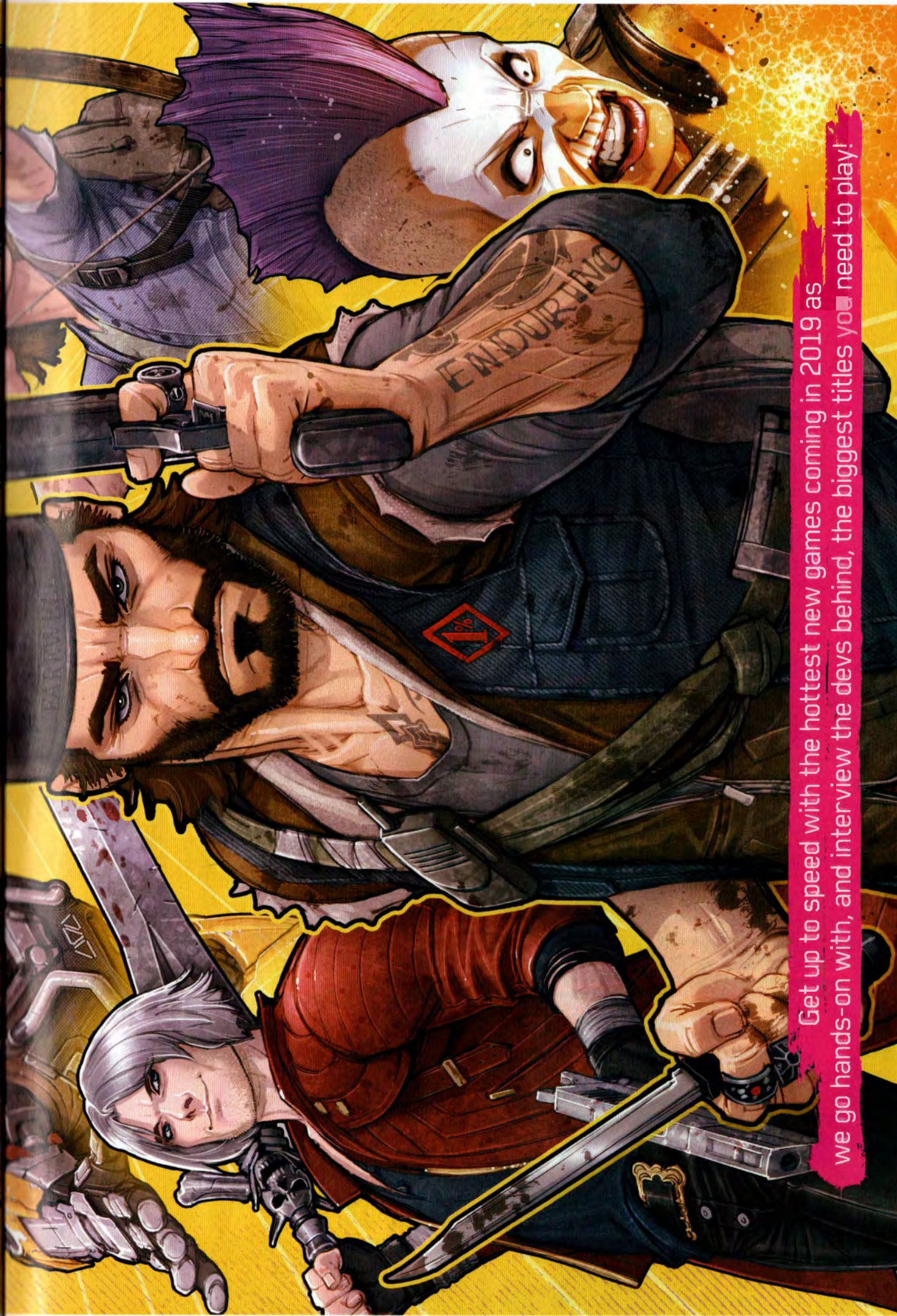
8 DISHONORED

Arkane's assassin/pro Skeletor cosplayer has many tricks up his murderous sleeve, but Dark Vision is probably Corvo's most useful power. Not only can Attano's take on X-ray vision spot enemies through walls, once fully upgraded it even shows your foes' sightlines. It's the ultimate eagle-eyed party trick for sneaky network.

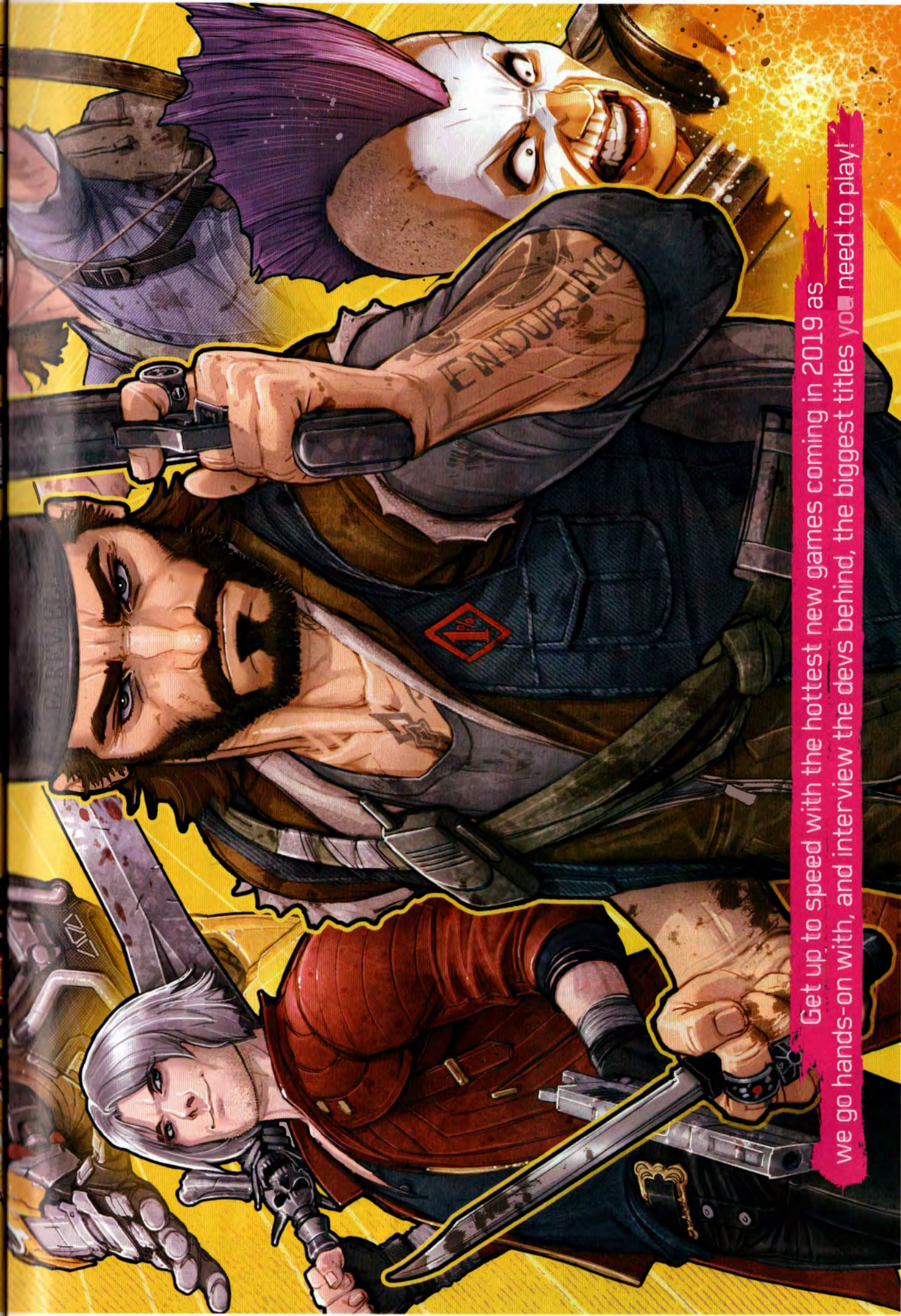
9 MORTAL KOMBAT

Egads! Spines just aren't meant to bend that way. Not only does 2011's gory beat-'em-up reboot have zero respect for chiropractic work, it reveals in showing shattering bones and rupturing spleens with its headline X-ray moves. If you've ever fantasised about seeing Ermac's ribcage erupt out of his back, boy is this the game for you.





Get up to speed with the hottest new games coming in 2019 as we go hands-on with, and interview the devs behind, the biggest titles you need to play!



Get up to speed with the hottest new games coming in 2019 as we go hands-on with, and interview the devs behind, the biggest titles you need to play!

Waist-deep in a fatberg, we've just survived a fight with — blown the chops off, in fact — a

giant alligator in the sewers beneath the Raccoon City Police Department. It's an infamous sequence from the original *Resident Evil 2* that sticks in the mind of anyone who played it. Now given Capcom's beautiful remake treatment, it feels as fresh as any Kratos death blow. And the way Leon S. Kennedy delivers his pulpy lines — "Chew on this!" — with shameless gusto makes our return to Raccoon City even more enjoyable.

Out latest hands-on with the *Resident Evil 2* remake has us pounding the sewers and killing oversized reptiles as Leon, but we also get to test how corporate spy Ada Wong plays on PS4. At first she's guiding Leon around, handily filling him, and us, in on what's happening in Raccoon City.

The exposition could feel clumsy if it weren't for the stunning visuals: street lights reflecting off the shiny, rain-slicked streets, and new-Ada's Corey Hart fashion sense hiding a secret or two (sunglasses at night are retro cool). Just when you think it's starting to feel a little staid, a truly emotional scene behind the Kendo gun store tugs on the feels — but we'll leave you to experience that for yourself. What we will reveal is that overall, storytelling in this *Resident Evil 2*



THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME YOSHIKHI HIRABAYASHI
PRODUCER, *RESIDENT EVIL 2*, CAPCOM

"It's not one specific thing that excited me, so much as being able to use all the graphical technology and gameplay knowhow we've built up over the years and put it to use to create a modern horror experience. Horror is a really direct way to people's hearts and minds, and so I think it makes a great match for satisfying interactive entertainment."

matches anything we've seen from Sony's studios.

LADY IN RED

Some puzzling and zombie bashing later, the pair split, Leon heading to his sewer scrap and Ada to explore the NEST facility. She's on the hunt for Annette Birkin and the G-virus. Why and for whom? We're not so sure, but we're having a ton of fun fending off the undead in her best red frock — yes, Ada's classic *Resident Evil 2* outfit is in the game, in addition to her sunnies-and-trenchcoat getup. In fact, it's just one of many costume changes for Ada. We'll leave the exact



RESIDENT EVIL 2

The triple threat on test! We play as Leon, Claire, and Ada

Format PS4 ETA 25 Jan Pub Capcom Dev Capcom

Playing as Claire tests our nerves, especially once the Tyrant starts pursuing us.



"STORYTELLING MATCHES ANYTHING WE'VE SEEN FROM SONY'S STUDIOS."

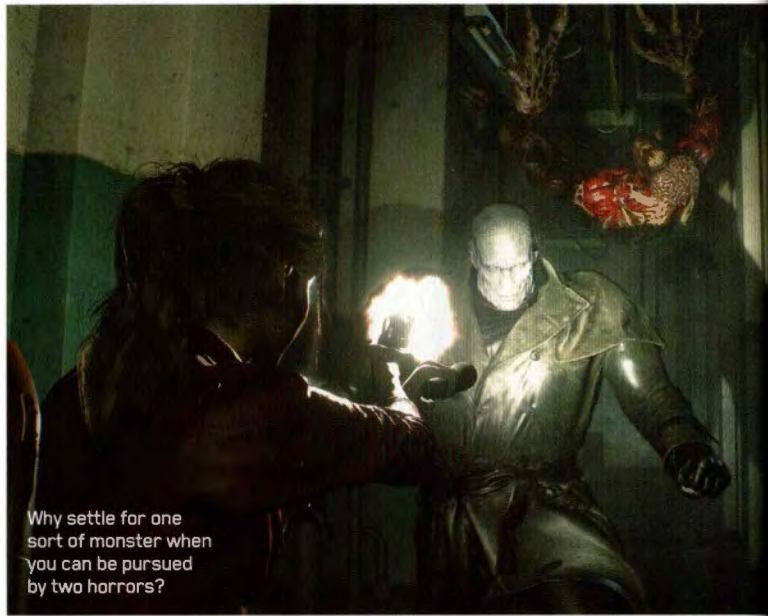


The horrifying orphanage is completely new, so we won't spoil it for you.

"CAPCOM HAS DOUBLED DOWN ON ADA'S SUPER-SPY SHENANIGANS."

» reason for the fashion parade for you to discover.

Playing as the infamous femme fatale proves one of the highlights of our hands-on, as Capcom has doubled down on her super-spy shenanigans for this remake. Armed with an EMP gun and seemingly stuck behind an electrically locked door, we scour the walls and floor of a NEST corridor, following the highlighted cables to power points and trip switches that we can activate by holding **RT**. It's a mechanic straight out of the Arkham text book, and we're glad we're all on the same page. The initial puzzle is a simple affair, and we think Ada's mission will be a breeze, but later problems are complex with multiple wire paths... and everything needs to be



Why settle for one sort of monster when you can be pursued by two horrors?



done under threat of an encroaching zombie horde.

JUMP CLAIRE

The pressure continues as we switch to Claire Redfield. The student-turned-zombie survivalist has her work cut out trying to get through the overrun police department in pursuit of Sherry Birkin, who's been kidnapped by the creepy Chief Irons.

Armed with a grenade launcher and some newly crafted acid rounds we're feeling pretty comfortable. Then we solve the classic burning helicopter puzzle and free the Tyrant, and discover

the remade-on-PS4 creature stalks us everywhere. We're trying to solve an Art Room puzzle — thud! We're shooting the legs off zombies with our unlocked JMB Hp3 handgun — thump! We're recovering from falling through the floor of the library — thwack! The constant clump of the Tyrant's boots on floorboards as it gets closer tests both our nerves and our puzzling skills. It puts us on edge, forcing us to rush even the simplest puzzles.

As though that's not awful enough, even standard zombies hunt you from room to room in this remake, and soon the RPD



At times like this, we're not sure if the flashlight is a curse or a blessing.

becomes cluttered with animated corpses looking to chew on a Claire kebab. Even the old frights feel new now they're built in the RE Engine. We jump as we open morgue doors looking for puzzle items; like a game of undead Deal Or No Deal eventually a body spits to life and claws us.

Our demo ends with a final twist, and one new playable character that we hadn't anticipated: we're in the pumps of Sherry Birkin in an all-new area called The Orphanage. But that's an unspoiled story for a different issue of OPM...



It really puts the 'horde' into 'horde shooter'.

WORLD WAR Z

Dining out on the army of the undead

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub MadDog Games Dev Saber Interactive

Based on the events of the novel, not the Brad Pitt movie, this zombie co-op shooter looks to take the pulpy fun from Rebellion's Strange Brigade and turn up the terror.

Boasting over 500 zombies on screen at any one time, all acting and reacting to your tactics with a unique swarm-like mentality, there's a level of ambition here that overshadows the relatively low-key development, and it makes for exciting action.

In the heat of a fight there's something mesmerizing about the scale of the task at hand, as hundreds of the undead fall over office furniture and crash through panes of glass in their desire to eat our brains. But it's the spectacle of seeing writhing bodies pile up against ten-foot-tall glass doors, which crack under the pressure and eventually spill the undead out into our path, that really, really impresses. You haven't played a zombie game like this before.

"HUNDREDS OF THE UNDEAD CRASH THROUGH GLASS IN THEIR DESIRE TO EAT OUR BRAINS."



FADE TO SILENCE

Going down a storm

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub THQ Nordic Dev Black Forest Games

This survival RPG places you in the fur-lined boots of Ash, leader of a band of humans eking out a living in the frozen wastes of a near-future dystopia. The grind of scavenging for resources is shattered by the eldritch creatures lurking in the wilderness. The Ripper's your basic clawed critter, but others include an explosive, bulb-spitting beast, and more nature-based nasties. Worse than these is the weather, which will sap the life from your party if you don't prepare. Currently sneaking under the radar, it could cause a storm in 2019.



OVERKILL'S THE WALKING DEAD

You've got red on you...

Format PS4 ETA 6 Feb Pub 505 Games Dev Overkill Software

This online co-op survival zombie shooter has already released to mixed reviews on PC, but everyone agrees it has the potential to be great. Survival mixes shooting, scavenging, and role-playing elements, and you're pitted against other survivors as much as the undead. It's the fact the living are as threatening as the dead that gives Overkill's The Walking Dead its appeal. Will that extra time spent in development on PS4 see us get an improved edition? We hope so.

RAGE 2

PS4's perfect developer pairing?
We'll be angry if it's not

Format PS4 ETA May Pub Bethesda Dev Id Software, Avalanche Studios

This is a marriage made in hell, or at least in Stockholm: the joining together of Id Software's love of first-person grotesque mutant shooting with Avalanche's broad-stroke open world fun promises to be one of 2019's most joyous events.

It's a partnership that has led both teams to re-evaluate how they make games. For Id Software it's been a learning curve. With its trademark solid shooting set free from steel corridors, the dev has had to learn how to anticipate everything we will do. The game is better for it.

The original Rage on PS3 had fantastic set-pieces and some perfectly enjoyable vehicle combat, but for the sequel Id Software needed Avalanche to join the dots and bring the elements together.

In-game this translates to fluid and chaotic battles where pretty much anything goes. While shooting feels robust and sharp, just as you'd expect from Id Software, the Nanotrite abilities have given Avalanche room to indulge its love of chaos in the combat. Tapping into these 'super' powers you can send bandits screaming through the air using Shatter, or you can leap above the throng, hover, then crash down onto groups of enemies with Slam.

Throw in offbeat weapons and gadgets — your Wingstick can be thrown to curve around corners and over obstacles — and Rage 2's fighting has the kind of playfulness that Avalanche is known for. You can experiment with mixing gear and Nanotrite powers to create inventive ways to take on the bandits standing between you and a mission's goal. And it all feels good — physical, perky, and powerful.

PORANGI PANTONES

It helps that Rage 2 looks the part. Every speck of dust in this post-apocalyptic world is caked in colour. The world is a raw mix

of jungle, desert, and crumbling old-world structures. The grey and brown tones of the original game have been replaced by a vibrant, exciting colour palette. It's a world that tempts you to explore it, to see what's over the horizon... which in all likelihood will be something nasty.

Neon pinks and greens are spewn across the buggies and war wagons of the various bandit clans. We love the fabulously furious punks of the Goon Squad, but that's not to say the game doesn't deliver on the Id Software mutant count too. The Authority, the Big Bad of the wasteland, are your typical Doom-like monstrosities — all angry pumped-up muscle and weapon implants.

Every moment in Rage 2 is a reminder of that partnership between Id Software and Avalanche, of robust combat and a lively open-world chaos. It's a perfect marriage, but the honeymoon is going to be wild.

"FLUID AND CHAOTIC
BATTLES WHERE
PRETTY MUCH
ANYTHING GOES."

In our hands-ons, we've loved how creative you can be when it comes to tackling the gangs.



ALSO HITTING PS4



DIRT RALLY 2.0

Format PS4 ETA 26 Feb
Pub Codemasters Dev Codemasters

There's a certain thrill to a good rally game that's hard to put across — it's the feeling of maintaining control against the odds, and of dirt splashing against your windscreen as you eke out just the right amount of control. Codies is back doing what it does best, with a game that's bigger, better, and downright filthier than the first (which we gave a deserved 9/10 back in #122). More official licences mean it'll deliver on realistic interpretations of both rally and rallycross.

TOM CLANCY'S
THE DIVISION 2

Format PS4 ETA 15 Mar
Pub Ubisoft Dev Massive Entertainment

Where the first game's Manhattan was suffering from a post-pandemic winter, The Division 2's Washington DC is in the grips of a horrible heatwave (it's set a few months later). Despite the name, the squads you play with in this team-based shooter RPG will have to work together to take back districts for the populace. This time the world feels more alive with fellow survivors, who can help your squad recapture areas, and more in-depth character specialisations add extra tactical possibilities to the combat.



TRIALS RISING

Format PS4 ETA 21 Feb
Pub Ubisoft Dev RedLynx, Ubisoft Kiev

A global challenge has been issued to those who can rise to it. The latest in the tilt 'n' tumble motorbike balance game has you undertaking courses in a range of countries, trying to stay upright as you shift weight and ease the throttle. Twitchy and tough, Rising is as satisfying to master as Trials has ever been. Tandem mode gives two players each an end of the bike to control, testing friendships.

PLAYSTATION 4 2019

CONTROL

Remedy's intriguing new supernatural shooter sees you taking (on) The Hiss

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub 505 Games Dev Remedy

Walking the constantly shifting floors of The Oldest House, Jesse Faden attempts to uncover the secrets of both the building and the Federal Bureau Of Control that occupies it... which, owing to an invasion of monsters called The Hiss, she's the newly appointed director of. This is just the start of a very long first day.

With the shapeshifting Director's Service Weapon to hand there's plenty of running-and-gunning to do in Jesse's shoes, but you also have a repertoire of telekinetic tricks, giving you the ability to shield yourself with office detritus or lob furniture at enemies. However, we've now seen that even smaller bosses can hurl projectiles right back at Jesse.

PILLAR FIGHT

The pillars we use for cover during just such a telekinetic encounter are only barely able to withstand the onslaught. We can't help but appreciate the attention to detail in the way the brickwork collapses, though we don't watch it for long as we need to scurry to the next bit of cover.

As you explore the Oldest House you discover artefacts that allow you to do more than just hurl stationery at Hiss. New powers, such as levitation, open up the secrets

"YOU DISCOVER ARTEFACTS THAT ALLOW YOU TO DO MORE THAN JUST HURL STATIONERY AT HISS."

of the building, and along the way you uncover rituals and follow bizarre side-quests such as one to help a man who can't stop gazing at a fridge.

Control borrows heavily from the New Weird fiction genre, with certain chains of events necessary for progression following something of a dream-like logic. One thing's for sure: you won't want to sleep on it next year.

THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME MIKAEL KASURINEN
GAME DIRECTOR, CONTROL
"You may have a picture of what it is now, but once you start scratching at its surface you'll find that there are many layers to it."

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DAYS GONE

Wanted dead or alive... (just hurry up and release it already!)

Format PS4 ETA 26 Apr Pub Sony Dev Sony Bend Studio

We're Deacon St John, riding his steel horse down a dirt track in an Oregon forest. Trees arch overhead and pine needles claw at us, caught under the motorbike's tyres. There's a poetic quality to Days Gone.

That is, is until a Freaker spots us. Rearing up from a deer's bloodied carcass, half-masticated flesh falling from its mouth, this infected feral human stares at us, points, screams, and charges. We raise our rifle, zoom in, and put the non-zombie out of its misery. Well done us.

Then more Freakers emerge from behind trees, running out of the forest mist. It's a startling sight, but an impressive one. Days Gone has been much maligned over the past three years. This is partly due to delays but also because Bend Studio has failed to sell the enormous scale and emotional impact of being alone in a recently fallen society, surrounded by hordes of feral, zombie-like humans.

LIVIN' ON A PRAYER

Our hands-on, while short, showcases the broad appeal of Days Gone. The motorbike's handling, in particular, is pure joy; revving the rear wheel digs it into the dirt and pushes the bike on, while tapping the throttle gives you thrilling bursts of dirty power.

When the bike kicks off the ground, it feels great.

Gunplay is very familiar and not unlike Uncharted's. It's clear that Sony devs share tech and creative thinking. The same weapon and item wheel appears on screen, enabling us to quickly select from a menu of rifles, pistols, and traps.

You'll need the lot, as Days Gone features a spread of playstyles — we stealthily invade a camp of human survivors before

triggering the alarm, which results in some very Uncharted-like cover shooting and scurrying.

Between shootouts and fleeing Freakers are the kind of polished, atmospheric cinematics Sony has become known for, with even incidental characters delivering

"INVADING A CAMP RESULTS IN SOME VERY UNCHARTED-LIKE COVER SHOOTING."

We're intrigued to see how Freakers' reaction to weather and time affects how we play.

the feels — a survivor protests she "has nowhere to go" as we let her walk free rather than kill her. Should we have simply put her out of her misery?

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

This isn't to say we don't still have questions about Days Gone. While we've grown to like hero Deacon, he's certainly not as instantly loveable as Nate or as iconic as Kratos. Likewise, with Red Dead Redemption 2 in the rear-view mirror Bend's heavy metal cowboy could run up against some tough comparisons, particularly as we wait to see how this game's open world missions and structure play out.

With a further but final delay, Days Gone is now set for release on 26 April, when we're confident Bend's Oregon-set epic can deliver enough ambition, emotion, and Freaker scenes to win even the sternest doubters over. Now, please Sony, no more delays.

ALSO HITTING PS4



DREAMS

Format PS4 ETA 2019
Pub Sony Dev Media Molecule

It almost feels unfair to call Media Molecule's new revolutionary project a "game". But "software" doesn't capture its magic either. Perhaps "Dreams" really is as close as you can get to an accurate description. In Dreams you can create, play with, and share creations you mould and shape with startling ease and beautiful efficiency. If you can think of it, Dreams gives you the ability to make it — whether that's detailed 3D models, or whole game worlds to play around in.



INDIVISIBLE

Format PS4 ETA 2019
Pub 505 Games Dev Lab Zero Games

There's a lot to love about this smooching together of 2D platforming with a JRPG-esque battle system. From Lab Zero's hand-drawn animation to the score by Hiroki 'Secret Of Mana' Kikuta, this Metroidvania with Valkyrie Profile-style combat looks set to be greater than the sum of its influences. It follows young Ajna as she seeks to understand her own powers and unite people against a warlord who destroyed her home. We'll tag along for the ride next year.



SEA OF SOLITUDE

Format PS4 ETA 2019
Pub EA Dev Jo-Mei Games

"When humans get too lonely, they turn into monsters." So Kay finds herself alone in a submerged city, turned into a strange dark creature, and surrounded by others the same — from those who look a bit like her to larger, more intimidating, beasts who want to hunt her down. She must search for a way to turn back, which means exploring the European-style city on her boat, solving puzzles as she goes. Expect this one to get emotional.

Like Mirror's Edge with zombies and blunt weapons, Dying Light 2 mixes melee combat and parkour.



THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME TYMON SMEKTAŁA
LEAD GAME DESIGNER,
TECHLAND

"We knew that we created a game that's fun to play, but I'd be lying if I said we expected it to become a staple of this generation and a bestselling title of the year it was released in. Did it put pressure on us? Of course we want to exceed our past success, but I think the biggest thing it gave us is confidence into following our intuition and ideas. Dying Light was a game unlike any other and I do hope we'll be able to say the same thing about Dying Light 2 when it's released."

DYING LIGHT 2

Lead game designer Tymon Smektała talks zombies and parkour

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Techland Publishing Dev Techland

Techland's Dying Light introduced us to the rather surprising combination of zombies and parkour. Acrobatic motion made sense when avoiding hordes of the undead at street level, and led to some nail-biting, desperate chases. The sequel could be the most thrilling zombie game yet. But how?

OPM: What's moved on with the parkour system for the sequel?

Tymon Smektała: The goal for Dying Light 2 is to create the ultimate parkour game — with the emphasis on "game". We're very proud of what we achieved within the first one. [...] To repeat the age-old mantra of "easy to learn, hard to master", that's something we want to achieve with Dying Light 2. If you want, you can traverse easily using just one basic move, one basic button, as in the first game. But as you earn new skills that increase your moveset you'll start noticing various pieces of the environment which you can use to travel faster, more effectively, and with greater finesse.

The environment, the cityscape, also evolves as you progress through the game, so this opens up new opportunities for you. This way you are encouraged to constantly change your parkour flow, and if you nail it right it really adds a lot to the excitement. And when you start connecting these parkour skills with various combat moves you get flooded with adrenaline. The rush is addictive, I'm warning you!

OPM: Are you developing RPG gameplay for the sequel?

TS: Yes, there's an RPG engine running under the hood of the game. Each of your actions — be it parkour, combat, things related to exploration — feed into your

XP points, which in turn allow you to get new skills that give you new ways to solve problems you encounter in the game.

OPM: In what ways are you improving the storytelling?

TS: It's a new beast altogether. We call the structure of our game a narrative sandbox, and there's a lot that stands behind the name. So as you play the game you'll face many difficult decisions, and the choices you'll make will shape the narrative and the world around you.

The consequences of your actions work on three levels: narrative, systemic, and gameplay. So the first one is easy to explain: you make those choices and they change the narrative; perhaps an important character dies, or a whole settlement gets destroyed, or a new group of survivors appears. These things are their own stories, but they also feed into an overall narrative, sometimes dramatically. Then we have the systemic consequences, and that's a layer where the game reacts to your doings according to the rules of the world. So for example there's a faction, The Scavengers, who want to rebuild the city. If you help them take over one neighbourhood of the city, you can expect that in time they'll rebuild all of the installations that are in it, like a bridge, for example.

And the last one is perhaps the most unexpected for the player, but also the juiciest. Some decisions (and there are actually a lot of them) bring new gameplay elements and features to the game, which change how you play the game. [...] This gives another meaning to the narrative sandbox concept — by your choices you actually shape the world around you, the sandbox space the game takes place in.

OPM: What do you mean by Modern Dark Ages?

TS: It's a theme that connects all level of the game: narrative, visuals, music, and design. So it's quite easy to grasp — the civilisation as we know it is gone and the humanity has gone back to brutal, primal Dark Ages. This means betrayal, intrigue, desperate struggle to survive, but the remains of what was before is still there, and serves as a backdrop for all of this. The juxtaposition of Dark Age themes with modern scenery and materials is something

"HUMANITY HAS GONE BACK TO THE BRUTAL, PRIMAL DARK AGES."

that makes the feeling of loss strike harder. So, for example, we looked at medieval illnesses like the black death and leprosy when we designed our Infected. The weapons you use are medieval-like axes and maces, but made from plastic and metal. The malls look like fortresses.

OPM: Can you explain a little more about the combat, and how it mixes with parkour?

TS: Combat is one of the areas where we took everything people liked about that feature in the first game — the brutality of it, the creativity of combat — and added completely new layers of depth to it. This time around combat is way more tactical, with a greater significance of various player tools: parkour attacks, interactive environment, throwables, and combat skills. Each encounter is a challenge, a puzzle for you to solve, but you have plenty of ways to find your own solution.

SAN FRANSOKYO

The gorgeous mix of Western and Eastern design from 3D animated superhero movie *Big Hero 6* feels right at home as part of KH3. As does Baymax, who uses his power to help Sora.

OLYMPUS

The most fully-realised Olympus *Kingdom Hearts* has taken on yet sees the whole Hercules cast take full form, including the Titans – Sora'll be dashing and fighting all over the myths.

KINGDOM HEARTS III

It's a big world after all

Format PS4 ETA 25 Jan Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

We're always happy to spread the good word about our favourite Disney/Square Enix crossover JRPG series. Behind those familiar characters and settings that really twang on our nostalgia nerve there's stacks of seriously complex and engaging lore. We've been looking forward to the third main entry for years, wondering which corners of the Disney universe Sora would explore and open up to us. With the game due for release next year, what better time than now to shine a light on the Disney realms you'll be exploring alongside Sora, Donald, and Goofy?

TOY BOX

Woody, Buzz, and the Toy Story gang fight beside Sora in this tiny take on the real world. Your party members look like action figures, and can pilot other toys as mechs in fights.

MONSTROPOLIS

While in the world of *Monsters Inc*, Sora, Donald, and Goofy take on terrific monster forms, and team up with Sully and Mike (who can, of course, be used as a bowling ball in fights).

THE CARIBBEAN

The high seas become uncanny valley as Sora mixes it up with the realistic-looking *Pirates Of The Caribbean* cast in whip battles, underwater scraps, and giant monster fights.

100 ACRE WOOD

At the end of the day nothing screams JRPG like Winnie The Pooh and his pals. This fantastical storybook world is filled with minigames Sora will have a solve to restore the world.

"SORA WILL HAVE TO HELP ELSA OVERCOME HER PROBLEMS."

ARENDELLE

Frozen fans won't be left in the cold. The smash hit *had* to play a role in KHIII. Elsa seems to play a key (blade) role, and Sora will have to help her overcome her problems and let it go.

CORONA

Tangled's Rapunzel is more than willing to help by fighting using her incredible hair, as Sora joins her and Flynn to adventure through the lush forest to the kingdom of Corona itself.

OTHER FANTASY GAMES HITTING PS4**SHENMUE 3**

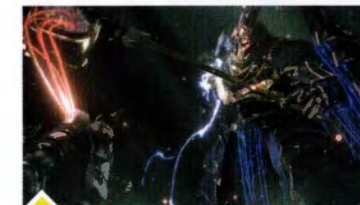
Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Deep Silver Dev Ys Net

Thanks to the PS4 *Shenmue I & II* collection that landed earlier this year we've never been more prepared to experience the next chapter in Ryo's quest to avenge his father, and uncover the spiritual mystery behind the dragon and phoenix mirrors. With the second game ending on a cliffhanger in 2001 it's no wonder fans enthusiastically backed this one's Kickstarter in 2015. But it's not a game that should be rushed.

**LEFT ALIVE**

Format PS4 ETA 5 Mar Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

You won't need to know much about *Front Mission* to appreciate *Left Alive*, which is set in the same mech-infested universe. Playing as three different characters, you need to survive and escape the 2127 invasion of the war-torn city of Novo Slava. As a regular person just trying to make it through the incident and help out other survivors, you're acutely aware of the gap between man and machine, and every confrontation is fraught.

**BABYLON'S FALL**

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Square Enix Dev PlatinumGames

Studio head Atsushi Inaba calls this one "a new challenge for PlatinumGames." It's a mysterious game about humans in big knight suits fighting to reclaim souls from Gaia in a super-stylised setting. It's testament to the consistently high quality of PlatinumGames' combat mechanics that we're super-excited about anything coming from the studio. The half-sci-fi, half-high fantasy aesthetic has us hooked already. If the gameplay can match the teased lore, then we're all in.

**JUMP FORCE**

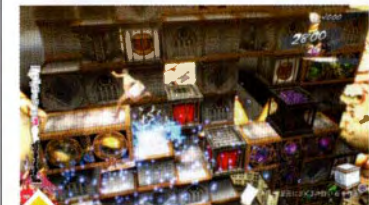
Format PS4 ETA 15 Feb Pub Bandai Namco Dev Spike Chunsoft

This tag team fighter looks set to settle every 'Who would win?' disagreement within anime fandom this side of the millennium. Boasting a roster of 24 characters from ten different popular series, as well as a few original additions, it should fulfil all of your fanfic fantasies in February. You can tear it up across a number of 3D environments, both fictitious and based on real-world locations, in 3v3 fights.

**CODE VEIN**

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bandai Namco Dev Bandai Namco

This fang-tastic action RPG is far more than 'anime Dark Souls'... in fact, it's probably fairer to say it's more 'anime Bloodborne by way of God Eater', seeing as the director of a number of entries in that latter series is also directing this post-apocalyptic blood drive. As you might expect from that slew of comparisons, your wardrobe is cool but improbable, fights must be thoroughly considered affairs, and death is closer than you think.

**CATHERINE: FULL BODY**

Format PS4 ETA 15 Feb Pub Sega Dev Atlus

The nightmare returns in this expanded remaster. While there are new storyline elements for both Catherine and Catherine, philandering Vincent can now acquaint himself with a new love interest, Rin. As the reveal trailer puts it, the love triangle has become a sexy square! You'll still be pushing blocks in a bid to survive the night, though this too has new content for the re-release. From the maker of *Persona*, you can expect this puzzler to have a suitably supernatural spin.

DEVIL MAY CRY 5

A shot in the arm for the long-slumbering series

Format PS4 ETA 8 Mar Pub Capcom Dev Capcom

Dante returns to full playable form for Devil May Cry's fifth outing. He and his nephew Nero must clean up the demonically overrun streets of Red Grave City, having taken on a job from a mysterious new client, V. This dark and mysterious sandal-wearer spouts William Blake and sports a rather fancy cane, and is also playable, though we've not yet seen him in action.

The younger son of Sparda can still swap between his trusty twin pistols, Ebony and Ivory, as well as his ruddy great big sword, Rebellion. He can now also get into punch-ups with demons thanks to the Devil Arm Balrog. These demonic greaves, shoulder pads, and gauntlets allow Dante to batter the underworld's hordes with powerful boxing-style blows and acrobatic kicks. His arsenal boasts more than that, though: he's got a nifty new pair of wheels that splits apart to become two giant, spinning blades, plus the multi-mode Cerberus nunchucks, and a snazzy hat.

CRAFTY DEVIL

The younger demon hunter, Nero, sports his Red Queen blade and Blue Rose revolver, but what makes his arsenal unique is his new mechanical arm. His demon arm from the last game, the Devil Bringer, has been lopped off and taken from him by a shadowy figure. Mechanic Nico Goldstein (yes, gunsmith Nell Goldstein's granddaughter) has teamed up with Sparda's grandson, supplying him with replacement Devil Breaker arms. There are eight differently powered arms in

the base game, and another four announced for DLC. Offering abilities from lasers and explosions to a time dilation effect, Nico's creations are definitely something you want up your sleeve.

Both Dante and Nero have their powerful Devil Trigger forms too, which boost their stats and damage output while regenerating their health – while their gauge lasts, at least.

Fan favourites Trish and Lady return to assist on the job in Red Grave City and, while both were playable in the Special Edition of the fourth game, there's no word yet as to whether the pair will appear in a similar capacity later down the line for this entry. We're living in hope but are fully prepared to make deals with the devil for that to happen again!

"DANTE CAN NOW GET INTO PUNCH-UPS WITH DEMONS."

We've loved Dante since the start, and DMC's other characters are growing on us too.



A unique Middle Ages setting and Ico-like gameplay? Love it.

A PLAGUE TALE: INNOCENCE

Medieval Europe is a thrilling – chilling! – place...

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Focus Home Interactive Dev Asobo Studio

The 14th century is at the crossroad of many important historical beats. We could call it the 'darkest times of history' and Amicia and Hugo are right in the middle of it," outlines Kevin Choteau, game director at Asobo Studio.

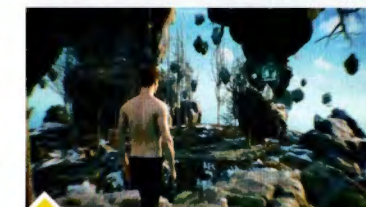
You may think he's laying it on a bit thick, but when you consider A Plague Tale's mix of stealth and puzzling is set against the backdrop of The Black Death, the Inquisition, the Hundred Years'

War, alchemy, banditry, and medieval superstition, you must admit he has a point.

Controlling Amicia, you must guide her younger brother Hugo across France Ico-style, avoiding the Inquisition and fleeing (and making use of) thousands of hungry rats.

"It's a dream-like, but authentic, vision of the Middle Ages," adds Choteau, and the period one that's certainly "intriguing and relatively new to videogames."

"IT'S THE DARKEST OF TIMES AND AMICIA AND HUGO ARE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT."



TWIN MIRROR

Not just smoke and mirrors

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bandai Namco Dev Dontnod Entertainment

A broken phone, a bloody shirt, and no memory of the night before. This is the situation investigative journalist Sam finds himself in one morning. After a painful break up, he's in his hometown, Basswood, to bury an old friend. Stumbling for the bathroom the day after the funeral, he's confronted by The Double, his inner voice, and things only get weirder from there in this choice-driven narrative game. After a surreal jaunt to Sam's mind palace, it's down to you to piece together what happened and just what you've got yourself into.



THE DARK PICTURES ANTHOLOGY

Gather your fears

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bandai Namco Dev Supermassive Games

Supermassive returns to horror with a succession of standalone scares. The first of these episodes, Man Of Medan, throws together a put-upon sea captain and a group of American tourists, then crams them all together in the titular ghost ship. Swapping between the perspectives of the five characters in this unlucky tour group, their fate is in your hands. However, you're not going it alone as a strange figure, The Curator, can offer snippets of cryptic guidance.

PLAYSTATION 4 2019

DEAD OR ALIVE 6

Far from make or break, this looks set to smash it

Format PS4 ETA 15 Feb Pub Koel Tecmo Dev Team Ninja

Telling a tale of escaped ninjas, business execs who like to scrap, and a super-secret fighter chick who really wants that extra-curricular credit, this ridiculous fighter returns. Swapping out sexier classic costumes for more tactically minded default get-ups for its protagonists, the sixth entry is switching things up just bit.

That's not to say the new game hasn't kept the series' playful side, as you can see in new fighter NiCO (pictured). This teen is a genius scientist who also happens to be a keen martial arts fighter. Mixing her two favourite things she fights with plasma attacks and makes use of her tech — EMF Rings enable NiCO to move at lightning-fast speeds. Entrusted with the secret MIST project, she plays a role in the story.

DEAD SET

However, while there's plenty for fighting game aficionados to get stuck into, beginners are being given more of a jumping-in point than they had in previous games. The Break Gauge fills as you take and land blows as well as when you block successfully. With the series' first-ever super meter fully charged, you can unleash a number of special moves. By repeatedly tapping **□**, you can hurl up to four strikes against your opponent with the Fatal Rush. If you tap **□** as you're trying to get a bit of distance, you trigger a Break Hold counter. If you tap the shoulder button when you're trying to get up close, you set off the cinematic Break Blow that certainly leaves its mark on your foe. We're already warming up, ready to jump back into the fray.

"NICO IS A GENIUS WHO HAPPENS TO BE A MARTIAL ARTS FIGHTER."

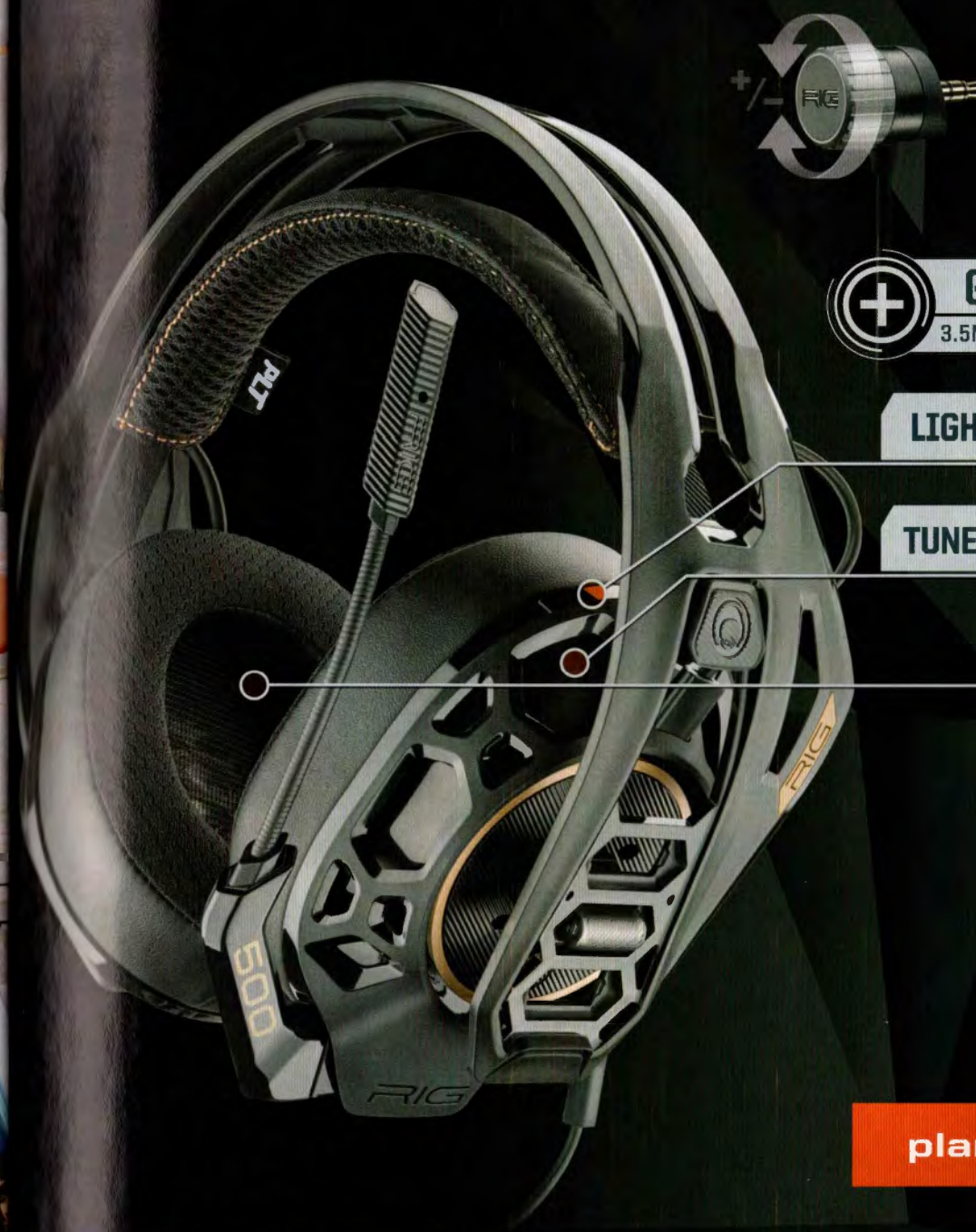


While you can now deliver some explosive super moves, you still need to bring the skills — the game demands substance to match its style.



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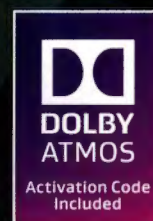


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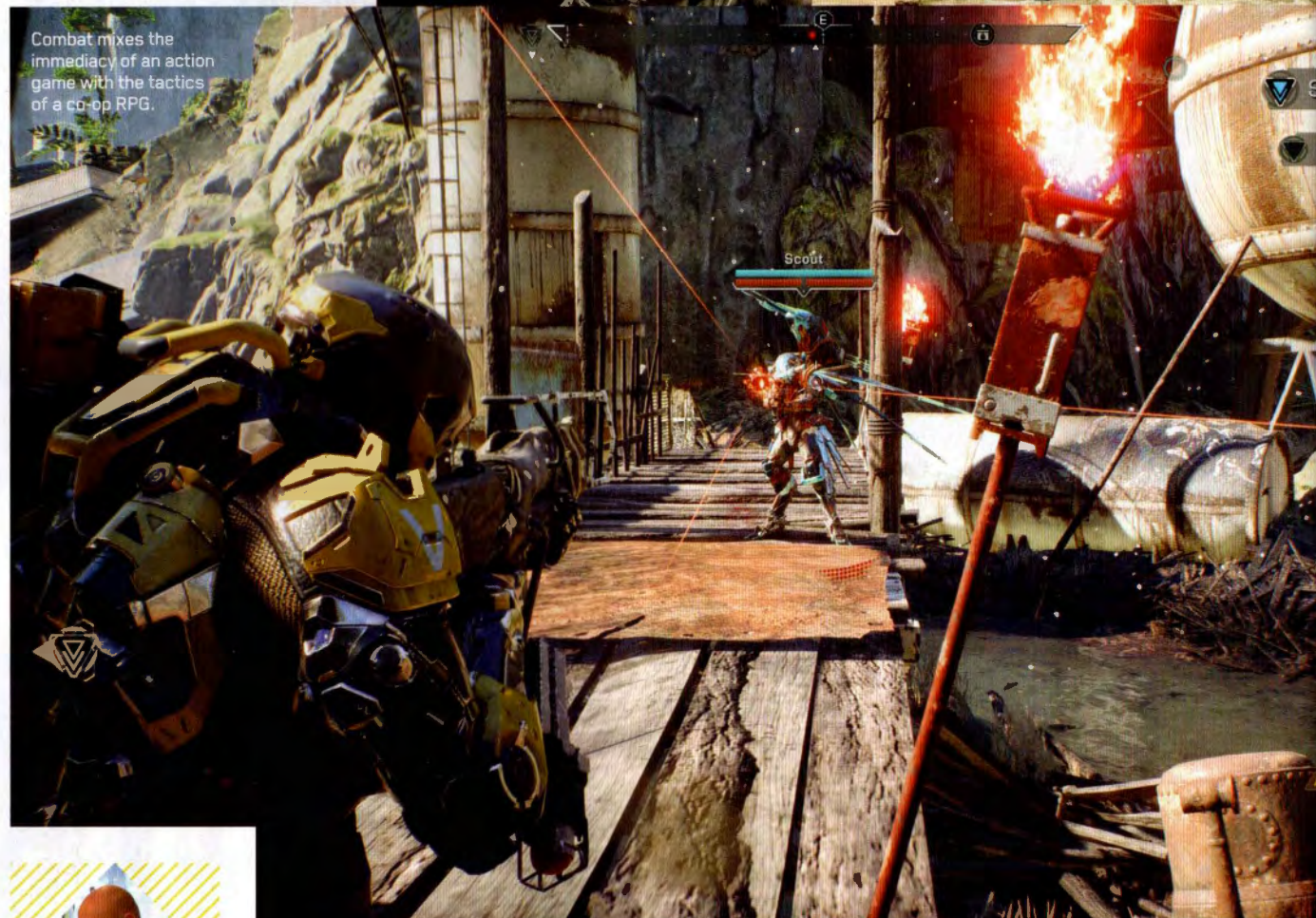


Javelins have customisable weapons, like the devastating burst mortar this Colossus is preparing to launch.



The verticality of Anthem's combat gives this ARPG a completely new dimension.

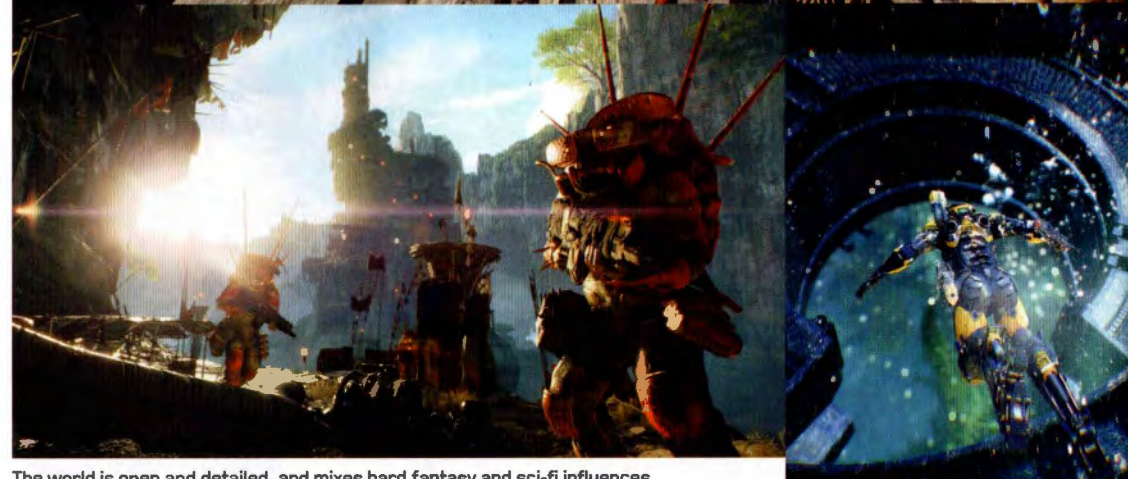
Combat mixes the immediacy of an action game with the tactics of a co-op RPG.



THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME THOMAS SINGLETON
PRODUCER, BIOWARE

"This is launching a new IP for EA, for BioWare, and we're super-proud of it. We're excited because we're bringing connectivity and co-op environmental gameplay to the game along with great storytelling, and that's rarely done [...] we're pushing team dynamics, that's where the game really begins to sell."



The world is open and detailed, and mixes hard fantasy and sci-fi influences.

ANTHEM

Producer Thomas Singleton reveals the game's BioWare heart

Format PS4 ETA 22 Feb Pub EA Dev BioWare



BioWare's return to PS4 following the poorly received *Mass Effect: Andromeda* gives the dev a chance to remind us why we love its games, including a focus on rich lore, clever storytelling, and team-based tactical combat. We sit down with Anthem's producer, Thomas Singleton, and pick his brains.

OPM: Is Anthem still a BioWare game as we know them?

Thomas Singleton: There's definitely a lot of 'let's bring in the depth, the richness, the immersive storytelling that BioWare's known for', and let's bring that and merge that with the co-op environment and the multiplayer experience that we're building in Anthem. You're seeing a lot of that cross-pollination taking place at this studio.

OPM: So good writing and narrative is still key?

TS: Are we super-light in story? Absolutely not. We're going as deep as we can and we want it to be ongoing after the launch of the game. That's what BioWare stands for.

OPM: So you'll support Anthem post-release in a similar way to titles like *Monster Hunter: World*?

TS: That's the world that we live in, it's a world that's always online and you're always engaged. So from an update perspective and the future of the franchise, for sure.

OPM: It's been two years since *Andromeda* was released. What have you learned in that time from mistakes made by other devs?

TS: The team has definitely looked out into the market and seen what's done well and what hasn't done well, right, and that's why we're doing some of the things in

this product that *Destiny* and some others haven't. We are trying to go into story further, we are trying to bring in the level of customisation from a Javelin perspective, and making it a meaningful difference for players.

OPM: So customisation will play a big part in Anthem?

TS: A lot of the gear that we've revealed are the weapons, those are the items that actually make a difference in gameplay, versus everything just being aesthetic: paint jobs, decals, etc. So there's definitely a combination in there.

OPM: And that affects how teams work and the tactics they use?

TS: Where the product shines is playing as that squad, you're working together as a unit to go and conquer various missions. If you want to play the experience solo that's your option, it probably won't be as rewarding, you won't have that team dynamic. The game will scale based on whether you're by yourself or playing with three other people.

OPM: The teamwork recalls RPG tactics from games like *Dragon Age: Origins*. Was that planned?

TS: You look at the studio that we're in up in Edmonton, and down in Austin as a partner, a lot of the products that both of those teams have worked on in the past definitely sprinkle into the creativity behind Anthem.

OPM: Speaking of which, the weapons and visual effects shown look impressive, but are you in danger of doing too much?

TS: We're in the middle of that process. The demo you saw [in which four Javelins hunt for a lost Arconist and battle a horde of Scars] is in alpha build, so from an art team's perspective a lot of

those things may be taken too far, so we may dial them up to 1,000 and then bring them back down.

It's the philosophy we run with, when you look at the visual effects, absolutely. Four players all using Ultimates at the same time, you have to factor that in.

OPM: About the Javelin designs - why do they look as they do?

TS: It's like when you're buying a car, the immediate kerbside appeal, you kind of know what you're going to get just by looking at it. You look at the Colossus and you know it's going to be a bit of a tank, it's going to be slow-moving, but man it's going to be really good in an accident, hence the Colossus is going to take a lot of damage, with its shield or just its stature. Versus the Interceptor

"YOU'RE WORKING TOGETHER AS A UNIT TO CONQUER VARIOUS MISSIONS."

which is very lean and quick, you can imagine what that's like to pilot. My favourite is the Ranger; I love the balance of offence and defence. It's got the perfect level of speed, for me, though I do love the majestic disappearance abilities that come with the Storm.

OPM: And the AI uses the same tactics as the player?

TS: Yes, there's the heavy Scar - he comes in, started using his flamethrower and his shield for protection, and then the smaller Scars move around and behind this heavy.

DEATH STRANDING

Kojima's big, weird adventure is getting closer to release

Format PS4 ETA TBC Pub Sony Dev Kojima Productions

At the Argentina Games Show actor Troy Baker was on hand to explain just how "big and weird" Hideo Kojima's *Death Stranding* is going to be. It's the first game the enigmatic developer's made since leaving Konami and signing to Sony.

According to Baker, Hideo Kojima had the entire game in his head for two years before development began. He didn't make any notes or detailed documents about the story, characters, or action, but chose to just jump into making the game.

"He has assembled an incredible cast to pull off a fantastical game," says Baker, who plays The Man In The Golden Mask, a mysterious character who was revealed at the Tokyo Game Show. "It's trippy, it's weird; I have no idea when it's coming out. I believe I've finished filming, so my role and everything — and I think Norman's finished as well but I could be wrong."

Those final words suggest the game is closer to completion than anyone may have expected, and hints at a 2019 release. Of course, there's a great deal of difference between actors finishing on a game's production and the artists and coders finalising the project.

CLASS ACTS

Baker joins a hefty cast of Hollywood stars, which now includes Norman Reedus (*The Walking Dead*), Mads Mikkelsen (*Casino Royale*), Guillermo del Toro (*The Shape Of Water*), Léa Seydoux (*Spectre*), Lindsay Wagner (*The Bionic Woman*), and Emily O'Brien (*Batman: The Enemy Within*).

What is *Death Stranding*, other than Kojima's pet project designed to corral his friends and get the internet twitching? The honest answer is: no-one really knows. Even some of the talent involved seem to have only a vague idea of what the final game will play like.

We do know there's a hefty multiplayer component, likely tied to co-op ideas. There's also a meta-game in which you need to carry precariously balanced parcels across a desolate landscape of waterfalls and shingle; each parcel

"HE'S ASSEMBLED AN INCREDIBLE CAST TO PULL OFF A FANTASTICAL GAME."

is its own physical object so one wrong move and they all tumble. And we also know there's an alternate world of sorts, alien beings, dangerous unseen forces, and spooky babies that power mechanisms that can see into this hidden world. Stealth, minigames, incredible visuals... it is, as Baker says, going to be "weird". But very, very impressive.



Cuddle that jar-baby. It could be the secret to survival in this crazy sci-fi adventure.



As well as guns and your new Meat Hook, we've seen an energy sword. YES!

DOOM ETERNAL

The visceral follow-up has us Meat Hooked already

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bethesda Softworks Dev Id Software

The thing about the 2016 *Doom* is its entire approach to being an FPS was revolutionary... by not being all that different to the very original 1993 classic, just injected with all the power of modern tech.

It is a fast-paced shooter that keeps you constantly on the move, and always on the tear with power-ups and supercharged weapons. Glory

Kills let you finish off weakened enemies with a melee attack, forcing you to close those gaps.

With *Doom Eternal* following closely in its footsteps, you could be forgiven for thinking the

continuation isn't going to be as interesting as the revival. Well, you'd be wrong.

While all the standard sequel elements are here (bigger weapons, meaner bad guys, and even larger bombastic



settings), some serious tweaks are being made to the "push-forward" gameplay that the *Doom* of a couple of years ago was best known for.

The Meat Hook is the largest change; this grappling hook strapped to the bottom of the redesigned shotgun completely changes how you move around the combat arenas. It introduces a new sense of freedom, making you feel more powerful than ever. And it only attaches to demons, so is guaranteed to bring you into the heart of the action. Playing online, this includes facing off against other players, as they control demons to invade your game.



BIOMUTANT

An evolution of open world

Format PS4 ETA TBC Pub THQ Nordic Dev Experiment 101

Be a furry friend: take on the World Eaters gnawing on the roots of the World Tree, and give your home a fighting chance of survival. Armed with customisable blades, guns, and the mechs you can find throughout the open world, you're well-equipped for the task. You're also able to use your foes' own munitions, or even their allies', against them. That said, Wushu-inspired moves form the backbone of combat. Each punch fills up your Wushu meter, which you can then empty for a special bullet time attack. This one definitely has claws, and we're looking forward to seeing just how sharp they are.



ONE PIECE: WORLD SEEKER

Set sail for one big adventure

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bandai Namco Dev Ganbarion

Considering the anime/manga series is all about exploring the bizarre seas of Eiichiro Oda's extremely creative world, it might seem a little out of character that this game's set on a single island. But captain of the Straw Hat Pirates Monkey D Luffy's adventure across Jail Island is the first proper open world *One Piece* game. With his stretchy rubber powers, Luffy is great for exploring a large area. *World Seeker* could successfully build on the promise of Ganbarion's previous *One Piece: Unlimited World Red*, though so far it has less colour and vibrancy than UWR's pirate brawling adventure.



DIGIMON SURVIVE

Survival of the fittest

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bandai Namco Dev Witchcraft

Despite the anime being popular around the same time as the other 'mon TV show, *Digimon* was always the darker of the two. Transported into the digital world while on a camp picnic, Takuma Momotsuka meets his partner *Digimon*, Agumon. The two have to survive in this perilous world in an adventure that hits some mature notes, in which you really feel the struggle to survive. The story's conveyed in a visual novel style with exploration elements, and combat takes the form of an isometric strategy RPG system with 2D characters in a 3D world. Your choices change endings and digivolutions, and affect who lives or dies.



THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME MARTY STRATTON
GAME DIRECTOR
ID SOFTWARE

"Each [gun] is a unique and powerful tool for killing the biggest and baddest demons you've ever seen. The coolest enemies deserve the coolest deaths. We're spending more time and energy than ever before making sure it feels absolutely amazing every time you shoot, punch, kick, slash, or otherwise rip and tear one of the demons."

PLAYSTATION 4 2019

GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

A haunting samurai tale

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Sony Dev Sucker Punch Productions

Mud, blood, and steel" is Sucker Punch's vision for Ghost Of Tsushima, the studio's love letter to Japanese samurai movies. It's set in 1274, and the shots of leading man Jin making his way through the forests and tall grass of feudal Japan immediately call to mind the films of Akira Kurosawa.

The story takes place on the island of Tsushima. The lives of its inhabitants have been forever altered by the Mongol invasion. The sudden attack is devastating, carried out by a horde of trained, well-commanded soldiers. The chaos they wreak is worked into the game, the beautiful landscape contrasting with scenes of destruction and desolation.

As Jin crests a hill in our demo, he passes a weeping widow near a pile of corpses. In the distance, over grasslands speckled with animals, is a thick pall of smoke – a sign of the enemies that vastly outnumber Jin, as skilled a samurai as he may be. As the story goes on, time will pass, and the Mongols will continue to sweep across the island. But Jin's honour will keep him fighting them off until the last.

GHOST WITH THE MOST

Despite being a samurai, Jin will have to learn a new way of

fighting in order to go toe-to-toe with so many enemies: the way of the ghost. He'll sneak along rafters, and kill enemies before they spot him. But when they do notice him you really feel Jin's connection to the sword, and there's a real sense of tension before it's even drawn. Combat is quick and decisive, settled in just a few blows.

The island is an open world that you can explore freely, and your path feels genuinely reactive. With a horse and a grappling hook, approaches to situations are your own. Things like stopping enemies calling for help affect how some events play out. Jin will need to make allies, such as the fierce warrior, Makoto, who he ends up duelling in the demo. Whether it's stealth or elegant exchanges, it's a measured game.

"JIN WILL HAVE TO LEARN A NEW WAY OF FIGHTING: THE WAY OF THE GHOST."

We've never explored feudal Japan in such detail. Sucker Punch knows its open worlds.



THE INSIDE VIEW

NAME: BRIAN FLEMING
PRODUCER, SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

"The red leaves are a visual metaphor for this story in Ghost Of Tsushima, but also for the path it takes to create a game. Ideas swirling around can almost be overwhelming for me – and at the same time incredibly beautiful and exciting. The first task is identifying a clear vision, picking out the one red leaf among thousands. Once you find that idea, you set out to pursue it relentlessly as the wind carries it in exciting new directions."

ALSO HITTING PS4



MEDIEVIL

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Sony Dev Other Ocean Interactive

Two decades ago the PlayStation original captivated us with its distinctly British dark sense of humour. It saw Sir Dan, a fallen, then resurrected, knight, setting out to save the kingdom of Gallowmere from the evil necromancer Zarok. At the time it was a great step forward for 3D hack-and-slash platformers. (It also had some light puzzle elements.) Now Dan steps forward again, into environments rich in character and detail, on PS4. As he'd say – get on with it!



CONCRETE GENIE

Format PS4 ETA Early 2019 Pub Sony Dev PixelOpus

Polluted as it may be, there's still a strange beauty to the city of Denska, which you explore as young doodler Ash. Fittingly for a game about making art, even the run-down streets Ash explores while avoiding his bullies ooze charm. Using a magic paintbrush, Ash can paint on any surface and bring his creations to life to restore the city. Lights flicker on, and the genies he creates can use their powers to help. It's enchanting.



PROJECT JUDGE

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Sega Dev Ryu Ga Gotoku Studio

The Yakuza developer is delivering something on the other side of the law. Takayuki Yagami (played by famous Japanese actor/musician Takuya Kinura) is a defence attorney turned private eye who must get to the bottom of a string of murders, searching for clues and donning disguises in the process. Still treading the line between goofy and serious, the game is strongly reminiscent of Japanese legal dramas, and re-uses Yakuza's Kamurocho setting and features similar combat.



MEGALITH

A virtual reality Overwatch? It's as good as it sounds...

Format PS VR ETA 15 Jan Pub Friend Or Foe Games Dev Friend Or Foe Games

What started as an RTS in PS VR has evolved into one of the more exciting shooters to arrive on Sony's headset. It's little wonder too, as the game's creators are ex-Insmniac devs seasoned on Resistance and Ratchet & Clank. "We went back to our roots and gravitated towards a hero shooter," says Jake Biegel, co-founder and CCO of Disruptive Games.

Currently in open beta, Megalith is a shooter that's been compared to Overwatch, and adds

a MOBA twist into the mix. As a Titan you can take on other giant characters while your minions battle beneath your feet for control of the map's towers.

TITANIC TASK

The game's built for PS VR. "The Titan's abilities are specifically tuned for VR," says Biegel. "We have an IK solution that lets you embody the character" – which means you can physically bludgeon opposing Titans.

"We spent a lot of time trying to get melee to feel right. So

[Titan] Tor really shows off how we've been able to wrangle melee, and he's really fun to play," Biegel explains. "As you see this giant monster charging at you swinging his claws it's

"IN PS VR YOU CAN PHYSICALLY BLUDGEON OPPOSING TITANS."

It's going to be fun seeing how different the Titans actually feel when we play as them in VR.



really intimidating, it's an adrenaline rush."

The blend of class-based shooting and MOBA tactics should ensure Megalith is one of the rare PS VR games to be replayable. Biegel says: "Our core pillar for this game is that it's sticky, it's something you'll want to return to, a game that kept you thinking about it and was competing for your time." Combine that with dedicated servers, and drop-in, drop-out bots to ensure quick match launches, and Megalith could be PS VR's next big deal.



Hero shooters call for fast movement – we're keen to see that work in PS VR.

Q&A



GHOST GIANT

Olov Redmalm reveals Zoink's first foray into PS VR

Format PS VR ETA TBC Pub Zoink Games Dev Zoink Games

Swedish developer Zoink charmed us with Fe, an action adventure commenting on our relationship with nature, and next year will venture into uncharted waters with PS VR title Ghost Giant. However, in many ways this is a return to form as you take on the role of the titular spectre assisting itty-bitty forest creatures.

Donning the PS VR headset, you'll be able to interact with tiny dolls' house dioramas in order to influence the denizens' daily lives. We catch up with the project's creative director, Olov Redmalm, for an inside look.

OPM: What made you decide to explore PS VR with Ghost Giant?

Olov Redmalm: We're always looking to try something new with each project and VR was completely new to us! Klaus, our CEO and creative lead, had an idea about simulating the feeling of exploring a homemade-looking doll house world and playing as a giant guardian angel to the main protagonist. From there we bounced the idea further and started developing a prototype. VR proved to be perfect for the concept – moving freely with your hands to fiddle with stuff in the environment, opening walls of buildings to peek inside and really feeling like you are there, connecting with the characters.

OPM: Were there any immediate challenges to developing for VR versus how you'd usually approach a project?

OR: One of the most challenging parts of developing a story-driven VR game was to direct the player's focus. Since the player is free to look around and interact with anything or anyone at any time and since we obviously can't grab the camera to show things, we had to find more subtle ways of grabbing the player's attention when something important was happening. We ended up using a sort of theatre lighting aimed at important events as well as making the player hear the characters within their view more sharply than the rest.

It also took some getting used to how different the game felt when looking at it on a regular screen compared to looking at it through a VR headset. It became even more apparent when making a trailer for the game – how do

you show what it feels like to experience this world in VR?

OPM: A few PS VR games take the approach of having you interact with a much smaller world. What do you think is particularly charming about that approach in Ghost Giant?

OR: Certainly the way Louis, the protagonist of the game, recognises you as the giant creature you are; rummaging through his world, ripping huge rocks out of the ground, lifting rooftops off their houses or reaching out to pet him. The way the player has to lean in closer to listen in on some of the conversations going on between the citizens of Sancourt to notice details otherwise gone unnoticed.

In the beginning you'll have to carefully build trust with Louis and prove to him that you're not dangerous, helping him with the smaller things as much as the big. You have to keep in mind that you're a pretty big, imposing creature and you'll have to find creative ways of showing Louis your peaceful intentions. And while you are a big, godlike creature with super-strength, sometimes Louis gets to be the one to hold your hand. You do lack the ability to speak and none other than Louis can see you. By helping Louis be brave, he will talk openly and freely, becoming your only link to the people of the town.

OPM: It looks like Ghost Giant will have quite a lot of puzzles as part of its adventure. Do you think this genre is particularly suited to VR?

OR: Absolutely! What with the actual grabbing the pieces for puzzles, throwing stuff around, cranking, pushing, and pulling levers, and other handiwork becomes so much more fun and immersive in VR as opposed to just pointing, clicking, and dragging. It feels like you're the one haphazardly kitbashing a giant flashlight together with your own hands.

OPM: What do you think the future holds for VR gaming?

OR: Longer, meatier, and more storied experiences with a lot of heart and emotion, a way to get rid of the motion sickness, and fun things to throw around!

GENERATION ZERO

Machines on the rampage were big in the '80s... and they're making a comeback in 2019

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub THQ Nordic Dev Avalanche

Johnny 5 has turned evil; he's out for blood and even Ally Sheedy can't cute-talk him down from turning humankind into a gooey mess. At least, that's what we see when *Generation Zero*, Avalanche's '80s-set open world shooter, loads up.

The reality is somewhat different – we guess the rights to *Short Circuit* are expensive – but the similarity between that film's cute mechanical star and the things trying to turn us into kibbles is stark. These machines ("not robots," stresses Avalanche's Paul Keslin) have the same DIY aesthetic that made the '80s movie so memorable.

"They look and feel like somebody could have cobbled them together from very '80s parts. So you see circuitry and wires, and metal plating that you'd expect from that time frame. They feel very much grounded in the

"ARE YOU REALLY READY FOR THIS FIGHT YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET INTO?"

'80s [...] even if we didn't have killer robots running around, it looks like it belongs rather than being a futuristic thing," says Keslin with a smile.

While the setting and machines catch the eye, there's more to *Generation Zero* than nostalgia for the decade of calculator watches and *Knight Rider*. Though self-published – "it's really an opportunity to try things that we want to do, and tell our own unique stories," – this is definitely an Avalanche game. The world is large and open, and running on the

same Apex Engine as *Just Cause 4*, the dev's recent chart hit.

Though the Swedish studio is known for its chaotic sandbox games, with *Generation Zero* the small team of 30 wants to marry its open world go-anywhere-do-anything style with subtler ideas. "We want players to be able to do unique things, to try and lure enemies into traps or trick them, and turn the tables to your advantage, because you don't just want to go in and run and gun, as you'll probably make it really tough on yourself," says Keslin.

This is because the shooter is built around something the team has termed "guerrilla action". It's slower than previous Avalanche games, it's not stealth but somewhere in between *Far Cry 5* and *Metal Gear Solid V*.

Keslin explains: "You need to be smart when you enter a battle [...] You're looking to collect some ammo, maybe you only have so many items that you picked up along the way. Are you really ready for this fight you're about to get into? If you're not, part-way through the fight you can leave and retreat. You can still call that a victory [because you've learned from it] and you can go and find some place to heal, and when you come back the enemies that you just fought will still have their health depleted."

ROBO-PALS

Playing solo or with three friends in co-op (Keslin explains this isn't a shared world or an MMO, but a strict, closed co-op experience) you need to manage your items and weapons. The dev reveals guns will be tiered by rarity. Looting abandoned buildings helps (typical gear includes flares, fireworks, and health packs), as does scavenging from destroyed machines.

It all comes to a head in combat when you need to juggle going in

for the kill with the real danger you could burn through your ammunition and items and be left vulnerable. Sometimes retreating to safety, foraging for gear, and making a triumphant return to the fray can be a better choice. Often you may choose to skirt around the machines altogether, deciding to push on and uncover more of the story than risk losing everything in a fight.

When it comes to the game's narrative structure Keslin says, "We want it to feel like you're uncovering the mystery yourself [...] You're trying to understand, how did they get there? Where are they from? What's going on?"

RUNAWAY SUCCESS

There will be standard side-quest opportunities and explorable hub areas to launch new missions and alternate quests from. But this is a world that really unfolds the more you investigate. "There's not an overabundance of hand-holding," says Keslin.

The game requires you to explore its world and uncover the story of why these machines are terrorising Sweden. You'll be doing a lot of leg work for yourself, having to think things through, to piece the story together, in what Keslin promises will be a "very narrative-driven" shooter.

This is done against the backdrop of '80s Sweden, the time of the Cold War and technological revolution. "So you get the weird wackiness of the '80s, but on top of that you have robotics and computers really starting to take off, so that's where a lot of the narrative comes into play," laughs the game's dev.

A tech-obsessed retro setting, machines on the march, and Avalanche's knack for crafting a beautiful open world – how can you not be excited? All it needs now is Ally Sheedy.



Working together you can take down even the biggest robo-terrors – though there's no shame in running.



The machines are cobbled together from bits of tech, so they look believable.



Blazing ammo could leave you vulnerable. Is there a more tactical way to beat the machines?



The "guerrilla action" enables you to set traps, as well as run and gun.



Team tactics are key; snipers should stay back and support the faster players.

THE LAST OF US PART II

We're hungrier than an Infected for Joel and Ellie

Format PS4 ETA TBC Pub Sony Dev Naughty Dog

We know this is still Ellie and Joel's story, but beyond that Naughty Dog is keeping its cards pressed closely to its chest. While Ellie is clearly a few years older, we've yet to get a good look at Joel, and even a recently released official poster obscures his face. This caginess implies Joel may not be as we remember him. Does this have something to do with the lie he told Ellie at the end of the first game?

He's definitely in the game, though. Writer Neil Druckmann

"NO PUNCHES ARE PULLED IN FIGHTS – NOR ARE FACE STABBINGS."



has confirmed that he's the 'old man' mentioned when Ellie shares that kiss with Dina. We're certainly intrigued.

GIVE 'EM ELL

Things are a lot less vague when it comes to gameplay. You'll be sneaking, diving in and out of cover, and engaging in guerrilla combat, just like in the first game. However, Ellie is far more sprightly than Joel was, and what we've seen so far has looked especially slick. We've seen Ellie using enemies as human shields and, following an especially tense moment spent hiding under a car as enemies searched the area for her, learned that no point of cover is truly safe. No punches are



pulled in fights – nor are neck stabbings or face hammerings.

Speaking of the series' more brutal moments, there's another side to the story we've yet to get into. Ellie comes up against members of a violent cult called the Seraphites (who we saw at Paris Games Week 2017, hunting down former members Yara and her brother Lev). With the help of a muscular, mysterious woman who remains unnamed, the pair deal with the cult only to draw the attention of Clickers.

The cult unites the two halves of the narrative, though Ellie's storyline is divided further, as Druckmann has explained that you'll be jumping between two time periods with her. Can we leap to 2019 now?

You'll be playing two parts of Ellie's life – here's hoping the ending is the happy bit we've seen.

TEAM PICKS

IAN DEAN
EDITOR



DAYS GONE

The jury seems to be out on this one, but having played it I can't wait to go hands-on with the final game. I love the idea of a world that's just collapsed, so we still get remnants of the society we've lost and see it crumble in front of us. It plays well, too. The bike handling is physical, the combat evokes Uncharted, and the Decima-powered world looks stunning.

MILFORD COPPOCK
MANAGING ART EDITOR



DEATH STRANDING

No, we still don't know what the game actually is yet, but whatever Hideo Kojima is involved with usually turns out to be both innovative and totally bonkers crazy. I'm really keen to see how he pulls together such disparate strands as the baby in a bottle, the oily enemies, and otherworldly delivery man Norman Reedus. This could be PS4's amazing swansong.

MIRIAM McDONALD
OPERATIONS EDITOR



DRAGON QUEST BUILDERS 2

As it's been confirmed as coming to the West on a certain handheld console in 2019, I'm expecting DQB2 to land on PS4 at the same time – Square Enix has already confirmed limited cross play. And as the dev has announced we'll be able to make blueprints of other people's buildings, it looks like the creative side will be stronger than ever. Brilliant!

OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
GAMES EDITOR



SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

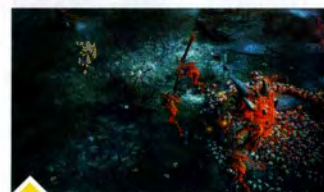
I'm always a bit anxious about things I'm looking forward to. Am I expecting too much? But FromSoftware's fresh project looks like everything Soulsborne fans could want. The same meticulous care in combat and world design, with a dedication to improved feeling of movement. It's a Seki-yes from me.

JESS KINGHORN
STAFF WRITER



DEVIL MAY CRY 5

When the working day is done, girls just wanna have fun and for this girl you betcha that entails kicking demon arse. I can't wait to get elbow deep into this ridiculous hack-and-slash. And no, my level of hype has got nothing to do with the fact I've listened to the Devil Trigger theme song five times every day since its reveal.



WARHAMMER CHAOSBANE

Format PS4 ETA 2019
Pub Bigben Interactive Dev Eko Software

Billed as the first action RPG to be set in Games Workshop's Warhammer fantasy universe, this Diablo clone should do the tabletop series justice. As you'd expect, there are spells and melee boosters to unlock and upgrade, plus side-quests to follow. But much of your time will be spent fending off the followers of Nurgle (who explode into satisfying floating hit points). What can we say? Sometimes you just want to hit a Nurgle cultist.



STREETS OF RAGE 4

Format PS4 ETA Early 2019 Pub DotEmu
Dev Lizardcube, DotEmu, Guard Crush

It'll be 25 years between games when this direct sequel to the 1994 Sega brawler arrives on PS4, and it's taking three studios to make it happen. Together Lizardcube, DotEmu, and Guard Crush are creating a game worthy of the name. Lizardcube's expertise in designing beautiful hand-drawn characters particularly jumps out. We're practising our one-button combos in anticipation of Axel and Blaze's return.



WOLFENSTEIN: YOUNGBLOOD

Format PS4 ETA 2019
Pub Bethesda Dev MachineGames

Introducing BJ Blazkowicz's twin daughters, this shooter set in '80s Paris is a sequel to Wolfenstein 2. Developed by the team that made the previous two modern games, the inclusion of two playable characters means it's a tempting co-op prospect. However, MachineGames has said the game will be playable alone. In either case, the thrust is the same: find and rescue your father. Expect more Da'at Yichud Power Suit silliness in 2019.



WOLFENSTEIN: CYBERPILOT

Format PS VR ETA 2019
Pub Bethesda Dev MachineGames

A companion game to Wolfenstein: Youngblood, this PS VR shooter is set in the same '80s Paris, but now you're a hacker who's taken control of the Panzerhund and turned it on its masters. Your goal is to aid the French Resistance, and we expect crossover with Youngblood. Bethesda is teasing more machines to control, too. Having brought The Elder Scrolls Skyrim VR to PS VR, Bethesda's track record is excellent, so hopes are high.



EVERYBODY'S GOLF VR

Format PS VR ETA 2019 Pub Sony
Publishing Dev Clap Hanz

Why has it taken this long to get a virtual reality golf game? PS VR is made for it. Sony's own Everybody's Golf VR will be the first to arrive for the headset, using either DualShock 4 or a PS Move controller – holding the latter like a golf club, you'll be able to line up and swing for glory. Inside PS VR you'll be able to see the undulating course, read the bumps, and also experience the layout in 360 degrees. This is shaping into a PS VR classic.



BLOOD & TRUTH

Format PS VR ETA 2019
Pub Sony Dev Sony London Studio

On the list last year, Sony London's gangster shooter is still making our wishlist. A spin-off of The London Heist from the PlayStation VR Worlds demo pack, peppering Blood & Truth's virtual world with bullets is a brutal joy. You grab magazines from your chest belt and stuff them into the gun, giving reloading a visceral and tactical edge. You move from cover to cover, shooting enemies who stand between you and the exit. It looks great, and plays even better, and that's the blood and truth of it.



SPACE CHANNEL 5 VR – KINDA FUNKY NEWSFLASH!

Format PS VR ETA 2019
Pub Sega Dev Grounding Inc

Rhythm action works beautifully in PS VR, so the idea of Sega's classic reworked for the headset has us tapping our feet. Space Channel 5 VR will feature two new rookie reporters – Lou and Kee – alongside returning news idol Ulala. Inside VR, you can use your body to dance rather than the DualShock 4. This could be the most entertaining PS VR release of 2019, for onlookers as well as players.

GREEDFALL

You'll discover a land of RPG opportunities, reveals Spiders' CEO Jehanne Rousseau

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Focus Home Interactive Dev Spiders

Anyone who's had a Mass-Effect-shaped hole in their life for the last few years will welcome Spiders' new RPG. While it may not be a space opera, GreedFall's 17th-century-set roleplayer promises the sort of choice-led depth and narrative scale we've come to love from BioWare.

"We tried to include in the universe and story a lot of different ideas in GreedFall," explains Spiders CEO Jehanne Rousseau. "[...] Exploration and discovery, but also disease, loss, politics, diplomacy, environment, and even colonialism."

Set on a mythical island, you're one of many new settlers to arrive

"THERE ARE PARALLELS TO THE COLONISATION OF AMERICA"

and reap the spoils that come from being part of an invading society. That's not to say the indigenous people are compliant. While you can tap into magical as well as period weapons to loot the land, its natives will call on the protection of the Earth itself. Naturally, there are parallels to the European discovery and colonisation of America.

"We've tried to avoid lecturing the players, and we have no real

historical ambition. It's a videogame, and it's a fantasy universe," qualifies Rousseau.

RUBENS IT IN

Grounding the narrative themes and period styling is a unique art direction that calls on the traditions of Flemish painters, drawing on the late gothic and early baroque periods. Rousseau says the team didn't want to create an historical game, but the costumes, architecture, and politics of the time were a perfect fit for the themes of exploration and colonisation.

Rousseau says: "We wanted the rendering to be different from

photorealism and we looked at the paintings of the same era – the Flemish paintings, but also the chiaroscuro from the Caravaggio school are so magnificent and sounded like a logical choice based on our universe that we decided to use them as much as we could as a reference for the colours, shapes, lighting, and contrasts."

CREATURE FEATURE

It's a design choice that affects the kinds of creatures you'll face. Some are based on the types of animals explorers of the period would have discovered, or perceived. So you'll battle beasts like the Ulg, a giant wolverine, or

the Lewola, a large reptile that resembles a komodo dragon.

"Some others are huge creatures that the natives of the island call Nádaig, which means guardians in their language," says Rousseau. "These creatures are not only impressive, they have their own history that players will be able to discover during the game."

This sense of immersion recalls the best of BioWare. Rousseau explains the team has created a consistent world of interconnected factions, geography, histories, magic, politics, and religions.

"Even if the players can't see everything in this one game, it helps a lot for writing the characters and different scenarios of the main and side-quests," reveals the CEO. "So yes, the world of GreedFall is a broader world than what the player will experience. And who knows, maybe it won't be only useful for this game but also to develop another in the same setting?"



GreedFall reminds us of BioWare's games – so, can we smooch monsters?

THE INSIDE VIEW
NAME JEHANNE ROUSSEAU
CEO, SPIDERS

"Players can make a lot of choices. They can really decide if their character will be heroic or not, a diplomat or violent, caring or selfish. The game will react to these decisions, but there are not necessarily 'bad choices' – the story and experience will be different, of course, but it won't lead to a game over."

While the game draws on real history, there's a good dose of magic to liven up the world and its story.

Q&A



THE SURGE 2

Director Jan Klose reveals why second time's the charm

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Focus Home Interactive Dev Deck13

Soulsborne sci-fi The Surge showed promise but stumbled at the final augmented hurdle. Now the dev team are showing us how they're making the sequel a whole lot better. A more open world, more customisation, and fluid combat are some of the changes...

OPM: How much work have you put into making combat smoother and faster?

Jan Klose: Actually, a lot! As we're doing a game that's so much about tactical combat, we were keen to improve on that subject as much as possible. We tried to find a balance between keeping what's fun in part one and offering more, better, cooler stuff for the sequel. We always wanted to emphasise the smooth, fluent parts of combat. In The Surge 2, we're giving the player more options for quickly changing attack patterns, defensive moves, and the combat flow in general. We want the player to be able to react faster and to feel even more in control.

OPM: How deep is the customisation?

JK: We've added more layers to our system, starting with a character creator where you can change the looks of your hero. There's also a lot of gameplay content that's new, for example how much you can customise your drone and how exactly you distribute your powers. All in all, we want to give you even more options to build your very own rig.

OPM: Is it more freeing from a design perspective to have a larger world?

JK: It's great to have more options for the world design and it also feels awesome to offer more choice for the player. On the other hand it makes balancing all these elements a bit more difficult: when the player can decide more freely where to go and what to do, we need to take care



Smarter enemies and a larger world? Bring on the Surge, we say.

that they can't ruin their levelling and crafting experience. Therefore we had to put a lot of extra work in to offer special content for those who traverse the world in a different way than the standard one, but in the end we hope that the game benefits greatly from this.

OPM: What kind of bosses can we expect, and do you have a favourite?

JK: We have many more boss fights in The Surge 2. Some are the size of humans, others are really huge – we have much more variety in the game this time around. My personal favourite has a lot of flexible legs, a crazy amount of hit zones, and, most importantly, a rather disgusting finishing animation!

OPM: How does the drone work?

JK: The drone functions mainly as your ranged combat device. You can take ranged weapons from your enemies and attach them to your drone to have it become a sort of flying gun. It adds a lot more customisation options than in The Surge and also some passive or non-combat skills that you can use your drone for. We hope that it feels even more like a companion and also makes ranged combat more versatile.

OPM: How does it feel to still be the only sci-fi Soulsborne game?

JK: Our grounded sci-fi take on this growing genre has definitely gotten some attention, and from our perspective it's a natural fit. We enjoy playing around with ideas in the "industrial sci-fi" theme, and it definitely gives us a ton of fuel to come up with brutal and unique weapon and armour designs, dangerous enemies, and interesting places to explore.

OPM: Are you improving the enemy AI?

JK: Well, playing in a city where everything is brain-dead, we needed a new approach for enemy AI. So we asked ourselves how small groups would react when they would approach the player, and we focused on communication between enemies so that encounters get especially interesting if the player encounters more than one opponent. But also, single enemies are more clever now and they can traverse the level in a much smarter way than before.

VANE

A flight of fantasy

Format PS4 ETA 15 Jan Pub Friend Or Foe Games Dev Friend Or Foe Games

An explorative adventure in which a child finds his place in a sprawling, enigmatic world, it's no wonder early takes on Vane likened it to Ico. Comparisons to some of Sony Japan's best games would be easy and fair to make, as members of the team worked on The Last Guardian.

"It's a game about transformation, and it's about, to an extent, it's about being presented with a large open space and figuring out what to make of it," explains producer Matt Smith.

"That freedom of choice has key trade-offs to do with the story, but we don't want to spoil that," says director Ivar Dahlberg.

"It's about understanding your place in the world," adds the game's art director, Rasmus Deguchi. "It's a game that starts out open-ended and breezy, and bit by bit the underlying narrative unfolds, but we want

to leave the interpretation of that to the player."

After four years being worked on by a core team of four, Vane is close to release. It will surprise you, too. To date the developer has shown gameplay that mixes Journey-like flight, in which you soar across a desert world, with exploration as the boy.

This is something of a sleight-of-hand on the dev's part. "We try and challenge expectation; we change things up and surprise the player," says Dahlberg. "We often get compared to games like Journey because we often show the serene desert and the bird flight, so we're really looking forward to surprising a lot of people as the story evolves."

Embracing those Fumito Ueda comparisons, Vane is a wordless

adventure — "there is a menu," jokes Smith — with a focus on atmosphere. It's an allegorical story that you're free to piece together however you like. There're no minimaps or quest goals, so creating a world that you long to explore has been vital.

"One touchstone for our art team has been Another World [the 16-bit adventure]," says Deguchi, but the team has also drawn on European abstract illustrators and brutalist architecture to create its exploratory adventure.

"The game goes to some places that you might not expect," says Dahlberg, about a world that looks like it's been brushed onto the screen, like an old oil painting.

It's a world that begs to be investigated. And given the 15 January release date, we don't have too much longer to wait.

The influences on the design team are clear, and the result is a crisp, yet brooding art style.

"WE TRY AND CHALLENGE EXPECTATIONS; WE CHANGE THINGS UP."



SOUNDFALL

Format PS4 ETA Early 2019 Pub Drastic Games Dev Drastic Games

Created by former Epic games devs, this dungeon crawler mixes twin-stick shooting and rhythm action. Playing as Melody, a music-loving, vinyl-obsessed teen, in Drastic Games' take on Diablo you're transported to the world of Symphonia where sound comes to life and musical puns chime with the regularity of a Kanye West tantrum — the Big Bad is called Discord. It's a promising idea that could offer a fresh take on the dungeon-crawling template, and played in co-op we're predicting a harmonious time.



TOEJAM & EARL: BACK IN THE GROOVE

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub HumanNature Studios Dev HumanNature Studios

Created by the original's Greg Johnson, this PS4 outing plays similarly to the 1991 Sega MegaDrive game. With up to three friends you must explore nine worlds of floating islands. If you love 'old-skool' hip-hop you're in luck, as the soundtrack includes 15 remixed and 15 new tracks.



SAMURAI SPIRITS

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub TBC Dev SNK

First teased at the Tokyo Game Show, Samurai Spirits (the series is known as Samurai Showdown in the UK) is a weapon-based beat-'em-up from fight-master SNK. It has a bold new look that mixes large character models with a sweeping camera that showcases the special attacks up close. In terms of stages and fighter roster it looks like an Unreal Engine reworking of the sprite-based Samurai Showdown that released in 1993. Classic SNK on PS4? That's worth fighting for.



THE SINKING CITY

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Bigben Publishing Dev Frogwares

With no guides or map markers, this detective horror adventure could send you loopy. Maybe that's the point. Like all games loosely based on HP Lovecraft's work The Sinking City's unreliable narrator is on the verge of madness. Set in Oakmont, a town ravaged by floods, mysterious deaths, and supernatural terrors, the open world has a Silent Hill feel. You make progress by investigating crime scenes, which can lead to some weird discoveries. How much of it can be believed? Now that's the real puzzle.



THE LEGO MOVIE 2 VIDEOGAME

Format PS4 ETA Feb Pub Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment Dev TT Games

Based on the events and characters of the original The Lego Movie, and its sequel, The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part, out in time for this game, you can expect the usual blocky platforms and puzzles in February. We're told this one will feature multiple open worlds and will leave the confines of Bricksburg for the wider, new Systar System. Expect plenty of weird life forms as well as a lot of blocks and builds to collect.



SONIC TEAM RACING

Format PS4 ETA 21 May Pub Sega Dev Sumo Digital

Developed by the team behind PS3's Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed, this new kart racer has one neat idea: teamwork. Winning is no longer a guarantee of coming first; instead you need to work as a pack to earn points, and the team with the most points as you cross the finish line wins. The only down side is the characters are limited to Sonic mascots.



SKULL & BONES

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub Ubisoft Dev Ubisoft Singapore

What seemed, at first, to be a weird multiplayer spin-off from Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag is fast evolving into an engaging piratey MMO, like Overwatch with sea legs. PvE is now planned in addition to PvP, and having played it, we can reveal it's a heck of a lot of lootery fun. With ships to buy and upgrade, solo missions, and team-based tactics to master, Skull & Bones promises to be much more than a game looking for a Pirates Of The Caribbean licence.

Q&A



SPELUNKY 2

Derek Yu on why survival is better with friends

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub TBA Dev Mossmouth, LLC

OPM: What were your first thoughts on making a sequel?

Derek Yu: My first thought was that I wanted to figure out what made Spelunky feel uniquely Spelunky and push those aspects as far as I can. There are a lot of great roguelike-inspired games now, but I think that Spelunky still occupies its own unique space.

OPM: Online multiplayer is one of the biggest new additions to the sequel. How did you find the response to co-op in the first game?

DY: The best thing about co-op for me was that it brought people together, regardless of age or skill level. I heard from parents who enjoyed playing the game with their kids in co-op and platformer fans who enjoyed playing it with non-fans that way. A lot of people have probably beaten Spelunky co-op but not in single-player. So the main focus on multiplayer moving forward is going to be having fun moreso than being 'balanced'.

OPM: The first game was very, very hard. Is Spelunky 2 similar?

DY: In Spelunky we had the shortcut system, which seemed to work pretty well as 'training wheels' for new players. I don't plan on adding anything more to Spelunky 2 to make the game easier in a direct way like that. However, I do want to make the game feel more nurturing and less lonely, even in single-player. A lot of people have told me that they bounced off Spelunky and didn't get into it until a friend convinced them to try it again — I'd like Spelunky 2 to have that friend inside the game!

OPM: What new tricks have you had the most fun seeing people come up against, and which favourites were you keen to see return?

DY: I think the Volcano area is a good example of how we're mixing old and new together. It has a lot of the trappings of Hell, which was the secret final area in the first game, like lava and flying imps, but there's also so much new stuff going on: the new liquid physics, exploding robots, conveyor belts, wild rock dogs (that you can tame and mount), the second layer, etc. So for old players there's a sense of familiarity in an otherwise very new place. It also appears as one of the second areas (there are occasional branching paths in Spelunky 2), so there's this feeling of, "Whoa, this feels like Hell, but it's very early in the game... what's going on?"

METRO EXODUS

Apocalypse now?
Only two months to go...

Format PS4 ETA 22 Feb Pub Deep Silver Dev 4A Games

Previous games have been set in the Moscow underground, but this time we're surfacing.

Underwhelmed by Fallout 76? Need a dose of solo post-apocalyptic survival? Metro Exodus is your sci-fi saviour in tattered leathers.

Like past games in the series, Exodus looks like an FPS but plays like an RPG. If you go into it with the mindset of a Call Of Duty veteran you'll burn through resources, attract the attention of a mutant bear, and upset the locals. Basically, you'll be rat food.

Freed from Moscow's tunnels, Artyom and his group are taking a train across Russia looking for a safe place to settle. The game takes place across one year, shifting mood with each season.

Survival is the key, and much of your time spent in Exodus' small open world maps will revolve around scavenging for gear to craft into ammo, items, and traps, and to upgrade your weapons.

How you approach a choke point – be it an enemy camp or a pack of wild animals – is down to you. In our hands-on we need to bypass a bandit camp. On our first play we run in, guns blazing.



Face off against mutated creatures like this batty character in Exodus.

Second time around we stealthily stalk through the camp picking off enemies, and free a captive we'd missed on our first run. On our third attempt we discover a waterlogged cave, and while it's littered with traps, it takes us past the camp and we skirt danger. This is just one camp in a map layered with such moments; each can be tackled in different ways and rewards you with new loot and hidden objectives if you have the time, and desire, to try.

PACK IT IN

The fact you can now open your backpack and modify weapons and gear on the go influences your decision making. Needing to take

out a band of enemies holed up in an abandoned school building we open our pack, deconstruct one weapon, and rebuild it as a silenced, air-powered pistol.

Freedom comes in other ways, whether that's choosing which NPCs to align with or missions to tackle, or just scouring the world for story clues and narrative hooks to dig into. Perhaps you'll meet someone in need of help; what you do next won't affect the

"IT TAKES PLACE ACROSS ONE YEAR, SHIFTING MOOD WITH EACH SEASON."

narrative but it will open up new avenues of the world to explore.

There's a reassuring honesty to playing Exodus. Perhaps it's the blend of Fallout and BioShock, or its stubborn focus on single-player narrative. Either way, you need to get on track with this one.

It was anything is going to work well in PS VR, it's a flight simulator. We're living our Top Gun dreams.

"THE FULL VIEW OF THE SKIES IS SOMETHING SPECIAL."

ACE COMBAT 7: SKIES UNKNOWN

Dip your wingtips into this ace VR flight simulator

Format PS4, PS VR ETA 18 Jan Pub Bandai Namco Dev Bandai Namco, Project Aces

Long-running hybrid action-flight simulation series Ace Combat is being brought bang up to date in PS VR. This exclusive content comprises five totally original missions for a substantial three hours of content, alongside more than 20 non-VR missions in the main game.



PS VR owners are getting five original, exclusive missions. Ace indeed!

Placing you into the cockpit of fighter jet callsign 'Trigger,' the full view of the skies is something special. The level we play taxis us through a base under siege, planes screaming overhead. Cross chatter is panicked and far from reassuring as the runway before us becomes cluttered with detritus raining from above. After a frantic and far from ideal take off, conservatively tapping **RT** to accelerate and narrowly avoiding a craft explosively running aground, we're up in the clouds.

WITH FLYING COLOURS

Soaring above the airfield, water droplets streak cockpit window. In the air, you can hide behind

clouds during dogfights. Pirouetting through the sky using **LT** and **RT** to dip your wingtips left and right feels unreal, though helpfully (if you're concerned about motion sickness) the barrel rolling is grounded by seeing your virtual body sitting in the cockpit.

Chasing hostiles through the air, incoming missile alerts ringing in your ears, sky battles are intense and balletic. Twirling out of the path of projectiles, we finally get a lock on that elusive target. We double-tap our own missile deployment trigger and hold our breath. Both fall in a plume of black smoke, drawing our mission to a successful close, and 2019 will start with a bang.

We're expecting mastering the fighting to be as satisfying as beating the enemies.

SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

A call to nifty prosthetic arms

Format PS4 ETA 22 Mar Pub Activision Dev FromSoftware

FromSoftware's latest gives you the right to bear arms as the One-Armed Wolf. Using your prosthetic, you can batter assailants with an arm-mounted axe, lob shuriken at them, or burn them away using the flamethrower. You can't use these add-ons willy-nilly as they are resource-based (and besides, you'll be preoccupied with staying alive).

The crossing of swords is a complex dance. You can't just

swing wildly until your opponent keels over. It's all about the posture bar, which both you and opponents have. Posture can be whittled away by perfectly timing your blocks to meet incoming attacks, attacking, and pulling off a special kind of dodge known as a 'mekiri'. Some attacks will cause the kanji character for danger to appear, signalling that you cannot block them and you'll need to try something else. One way to deal with this sort of attack is to

perform a mekiri, and dodge into it. Few opponents will expect that, hence this move destabilising even the most stoic enemy's poise.

If you sneak up on the unwitting or sufficiently whittle away at another foe's posture, a red orb will appear, showing you can go in for a Shinobi execution with **△**. Weaker enemies will go down after one of these killing blows, and many bosses can only be finished off this way. For both, the end comes in a red plume.



GRANBLUE FANTASY PROJECT RE: LINK

2019's best kept secret

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub TBC
Dev Cygames, PlatinumGames

Neither Cygames nor Granblue are household names in the West, but this could all change in 2019. Confirmed for the West but with no UK date yet, Granblue Fantasy Project Re: Link is the PS4 edition of the dev's insanely popular JRPG for mobiles. Co-developed with PlatinumGames and featuring some of the most beautiful visuals we've seen this side of Final Fantasy, as well as an OST by Nobuo Uematsu, Granblue Fantasy Project Re: Link could well be that rare JRPG that arrives with little fanfare but takes us all by storm.

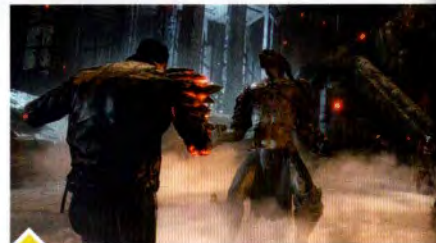


GOD EATER 3

Co-op fun to chew on

Format PS4 ETA 8 Feb
Pub Bandai Namco Dev Bandai Namco

The more we play God Eater 3, the more the anime/Monster Hunter: World comparisons keep coming. The mix of creature hunting and manga storytelling is compelling, and while this game doesn't have the same level of crafting depth as Capcom's classic, nor does it feature such lovable monsters, the core battling feels great. The Burst Arts special attack system adds an explosive twist – these massive damage attacks change depending on how you're moving. Having played the game, it's fast and entertaining, and should deliver those co-op thrills if you've weaned yourself off Monster Hunter.



DEVIL'S HUNT

Striking a fantastic balance

Format PS4 ETA 2019 Pub 1C Company Dev Layopi Games

Polish author Paweł Lesniak founded his own studio to turn his fantasy novel Równowaga (Equilibrium) into a game. The series in question follows its protagonist Desmond as he becomes caught in the war between Heaven and Hell. Intended as the first game in a series, Devil's Hunt features a familiar mix of puzzle solving and melee combat, with skill points being put towards steering your Desmond towards a physical or magical fighting style. Either way, the lead hero mixes both demonic and angelic powers into his combos as you explore Hell, an American environment, and an 'ancient city'. It sounds promising, like a mature Devil May Cry.

2019 AND BEYOND

There's more... here's the best of the rest

The optimist in us wants **CYBERPUNK 2077** to release in 2019, and given Bandai Namco has recently signed to publish the game in the UK, we're crossing our fingers for it. However, the reality is CD Projekt Red's epic sci-fi action-RPG will likely creep into 2020.

The game's environment city co-ordinator Hiroshi Sakakibara told Japanese magazine Famitsu that Night City will be "The face of the game". Mixing modern and ancient Asian influences this vast city will feel alive and dirty, but also fresh and open. Sakakibara-san offered the mix of wet streets with blue skies and swaying palm trees as an example.

With Kingdom Hearts III now finished, Tetsuya Nomura has stated **FINAL FANTASY VII: REMAKE** is now his priority. But Square's remade classic isn't the only Japanese game that has us excited. We fully expect **NIOH 2** to release following the crowded 2019 schedule. This Team Ninja-developed sequel, published by Sony, is already on our must-play list. Cygames' **PROJECT AWAKENING** is another Soulsborne that looks stunning.

There's a lot of excitement around **WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE**. Now releasing 2020 this open-world lycan-themed action-RPG has plenty of promise. As does adventure **PARADISE LOST**, a game being compared to Quantic Dream's output mixed with BioShock and Fallout. It's certainly eclectic.

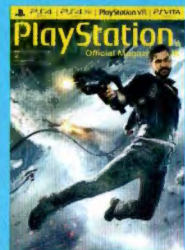
Less so will be **STAR WARS JEDI: FALLEN ORDER** from Respawn and EA, and due out Christmas 2019. What a way to end the year.



Leading 2020 will be Soulsborne and narrative adventures Project Awakening, Paradise Lost, and the Sony-published Nioh 2.

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HAVE YOUR SAY...

"Not only is God Of War a stunningly beautiful game, its gameplay mechanics are the stuff of legend. Each encounter becomes more rewarding than the last. It's been a long time since a game has made me feel so... well... complete." Ruari Elwood

01

THE LEVIATHAN AXE

Kratos was almost inseparable from the Blades Of Chaos, his whirling twin swords joined by a chain, in the original games. It made sense to reconsider this when moving Kratos to a new environment and a new mythology.

The Leviathan Axe, given to Kratos by Faye, provides a new physical language for this updated take on God Of War. Part slashy combo-driven weapon, as you'd expect, you can also throw it — whereupon it'll stick into enemies and objects. What's key is the ability to recall it whenever you want with a tap of **A**. The physicality of this, affected by distance, is wonderful, as is the manual feeling of the recall — sometimes it makes more tactical sense to leave it elsewhere, and let Kratos continue to brawl with his fists.



The ability to throw and recall your axe adds even more dynamism to fights.

02

KRATOS VS WORLD

There have always been large-scale fights in God Of War. (Who can forget that very first Hydra fight, or ascending Gaia in God Of War 3?) But accompanying the over-the-shoulder one-shot-mimicking camera style of this new take on God Of War comes a more constant feeling of closeness. Without a doubt, you feel as if you are right there alongside Kratos, experiencing his journey with him.

You still get some spectacular encounters this time around, but seen from this new perspective — next to Kratos looking at this huge thing instead of viewing his small character model from a distance — it's utterly dramatic. Moments like meeting the World Serpent, fighting on a revived giant's corpse, and taking on a dragon feel bigger and more memorable for it.



"BOY!"

03 For the bulk of the game you're looking squarely over Kratos' shoulder as he hacks his way through his enemies. But Atreus is always with you on your quest, warning you of incoming attacks.

With a quick press of **C** you can call on your son for assistance and he'll use his bow or join the tussle — he's even got his own skill tree and equipment. This kid's no dead weight. Even

the most cynical player comes to appreciate his presence in Kratos' journey, and how their bond grows over time, with Kratos struggling to find the right words to explain the world to his growing son.

More than anything, though, everyone adores hearing "Boy!" shouted in Christopher Judge's dulcet tones over and over again. BOY!

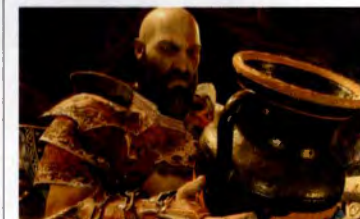


04

GREEK MYTH

Kratos is a man reborn in the Norse Wilds, but he's still haunted by his Greek life. While for the most part this new take focuses on all things Nordic, it makes those moments that harken back to the Hellenic settings, when Kratos reflects on his past and what it means for his future, and his son's, all the more powerful.

At one point they discover Kratos' influences on some Greek pottery in a vault, and the Norse underworld Helheim, of course, contains some blasts from the past. The old musical motifs also occasionally make a return, swelling during a particular moment when Kratos reflects in his basement, and the music makes his Greek history feel important and weighty, even to players unfamiliar with the God Of War's past adventures. Memory is more powerful than muscles.



We have Facebook to embarrass us. Atreus discovers Kratos' past via pots.

05

BALDUR'S GATES

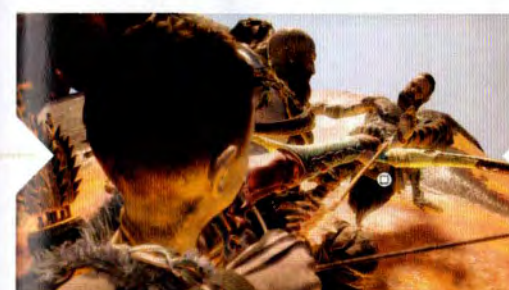
Unable to feel pain, the relentless Baldur can take just as much of a beating as Kratos, and the pair butt heads. **WARNING: SPOILERS**



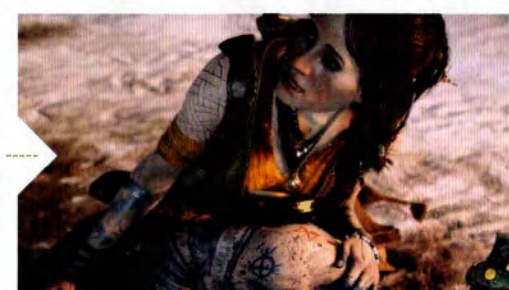
At their first meeting, Baldur is only "The Stranger". It's a sequence that teaches you the ins and outs of fighting and parrying, but feels like a truly brutal tussle in the snow.



Unable to die, the two really go at each other with shirts nowhere in sight. And the game doesn't explain who The Stranger is or what he wants with Kratos for some time.



By the game's climax Baldur's madness is clear. Stabbed with mistletoe, his feelings return, yet he still wants to mess with Kratos — while a re-animated giant intervenes.



And in the end, Kratos must make a difficult decision, and it will sit with you for a while. But we're not going to spoil everything.



GAME OF THE YEAR

HAVE YOUR SAY...

"I have played many games this year, been engulfed by them, but only one of these games did I transition from playing to outright living the experience – Red Dead Redemption 2. **Nogarda**

PlayStation

2

RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

Rockstar's big country moseys into second place



Man alive, this follow-up from Rockstar a long time coming. But hoo-boy does it live up to the hype.

That thar Red Dead Redemption 2 presents a new type of open world for outlaws to explore: one where

physicality matters, and the world feels... real. Or real enough, anyway. Some of the bunkum this Dutch Gang gets up to gives y'all more excitement than we thought we'd have in all our born days, but there we are. Time to head west yet again for your second-favourite game of 2018.



01 STRANGER DAYS

Whether you're hornswoggling civilians out of cash or just tipping your hat as you ride on by, the way you can interact with almost anybody is something else. Gun holstered, targeting civilians allows for context-based interaction that can lead to tip-offs, clues, or just more information. Shooting's not the only way you have to interact with this world.



03 THE DRUNK MISSION

We've all had relatable experiences to the mission A Quiet Time, where Lenny and Arthur enjoy a night at the saloon. Jump-cutting from moment to moment it captures the chaos of drunkenness: making strange friends; losing your mate; and a forced first-person peeing sequence. The button prompts are even misspelt and blurred as you get more drunk.



02 THE STORY, AND IGNORING IT

By the time you're done with the hefty chapters and chunky epilogue RDR2 has taken you on a journey you won't forget, with many stand-out moments. But just as unforgettable are the stories you make for yourself when you simply saddle up and ride out. There's always something new to find – adventures to call your own. No two journeys are the same.



04 BEAUTIFUL WORLD

RDR2's world isn't one you can leap across in a single bound. Your interactions with it are slow and considered. In turn, the world opens itself up to you in quiet, beautiful ways, whether that's noticing how, after a fire, bodies sink into swamp mud, or walking the gaslit, foggy streets of Saint Denis just before sunrise. There's so much to drink in.



STAN WAS THE MAN

We lost Stan Lee recently, and this makes his cameo in Marvel's Spider-Man currently his final one. The former Marvel president and publisher was the face of the comic's brand for decades, appearing in Marvel's films as a hidden guest character. On PS4 Stan Lee plays Mick, the owner of the Italian restaurant Peter and Mary Jane visit throughout the game.

HAVE YOUR SAY...

"So many great games this year, but Spider-Man had me hooked. It was magic and crucially stood apart from the constant stream of huge open world games. Spider-Man captured Marvel's polish." **James Brown**

PlayStation

3

MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

A super-human performance makes it your third best of 2018



Lara Croft's stabbing a man in the throat, Kratos is crushing skulls, and even Spyro's got in on the act, his fiery breath

more fearsome than ever. Being a PlayStation gamer in 2018 was a grim business, which is why Marvel's Spider-Man was such a breeze – a blue-and-red beacon in a sea of blood and thunder.

Within minutes of swinging across New York City Spidey's quipping. He zips up The Avengers building as birds scatter against a soft blue sky and I can't help but grin. The swing mechanics are perfect, the sense of freedom is life-affirming, and

the constant drip of Marvel fan service proves Insomniac gets it; the dev understands why Spider-Man matters.

It's no wonder then, that the game sold more copies than any other previously released title in 2018*. It also became the fastest-selling Marvel-branded videogame of all time. In raw numbers it made \$198 million in worldwide sales – that's more than the movie Spider-Man: Homecoming, which earned \$117 million.

It's a PS4 exclusive that's more than an amazing sales story, it's a Marvel story. It wouldn't be Marvel's Spider-Man without touching on the emotional notes that make us laugh and cry. The narrative takes in Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson's on-off

relationship, newcomer Miles Morales' flirtation with heroics, and a cast of super-villains from across the comic's history. It's mature without being graphic.

Outside the main arc you're encouraged to explore, collect, and save New Yorkers. The game does a marvellous job of making every foiled heist or kidnapping a thrill, and moving through this alive city rewards at every swooping web-swing. There are quick-travel markers you could use, but what monster would do that and miss out on these swing mechanics?

Every collectible and location name-drops a past Marvel adventure – a vial of Sandman's granules, Black Cat's next heist, The Wakandan Embassy, a Clone Saga reference, and much more.



4

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

So many great moments – is it possible to pick just one?



Choosing one defining moment from *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* is a thankless task. Having put in over 100 hours into this epic adventure I've seen everything.

There's Layla Hassan's revelation that Evie and Jacob Frye from *AC Syndicate* joined the Ghost Club with Charles Dickens to battle paranormal silliness. I found the sword in the stone, visited the cave of Kratos, and plunged down into Atlantis; I fought the Minotaur, and gawped at a time-twist I never saw coming. Yet, of all the moments that make *Odyssey* great, the one

I'd single out is riding slowly into the Petrified Valley, where crumbling buildings poke through the mist before old gives way to older and the gleaming, black obelisks of the Isu temple rise from the fog. Stone 'statues' linger in the haze. I'm getting chills.

Inside lurks Medusa, the famed Gorgon whose gaze can turn people to stone. It's here that *Odyssey* proves itself, walking a fine line between fantasy and reality, history and myth. The game manages to sell legends as lore, grounded in the rules of the *Assassin's Creed* universe. It's a deft stroke of genius that perfectly sums up why *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* is my game of the year, and your No. 4.



5

MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

We always had Paolumu faith Capcom would deliver



Come on in, smell the Sporepuffs. A masterclass in all manner of things, from world-building to co-op play, the real

reason *Monster Hunter: World* remains one of 2018's defining games is its creature design.

Like choosing your best Celebrations choc, picking one

monster above the rest is nigh-impossible, but I'll give it a go. There's beautiful Tobi-Kadachi, a silky mix of electric dog and flying squirrel; Kirin, a majestic unicorn that channels lightning; there's the poison-spewing Pukei-Pukei, kooky rock-loving Kulu-Ya-Ku, and the elegant stature of the lion-faced Teostra. So. Many. Monsters.

If I were to throw my Fatal Cutie hat onto one creature, it would be Paolumu. This ball of puffed-up

fur floats around grinning and grimacing, but its pink-cotton bud look belies a nasty bite. It's the archetypal *Monster Hunter: World* creature – it looks ridiculous but can chew you up and spit you out in a split-second as its fluffy self unfurls to reveal a ferocious bat-thing with a club-like tail.

Free DLC and events throughout the year helped keep this game on my must-play list, but it's those monsters that kept me hooked.



6

DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN

Roboys save the game



David Cage's exploration of the idea "what if robots were just like us?" is full of tropes and clichés, as you might expect. However, one convention I always have time for is a good buddy cop story. The bromance between Connor (an endearingly clueless android investigator) and Hank (a police detective

with a mysterious past who hates androids) is one that *Detroit* couldn't really get wrong. Standing apart from the moody everything-else in the game, Connor and Hank will forever be in my heart... and also in yours, it would seem, as *Detroit: Become Human* makes your Game Of The Year list.



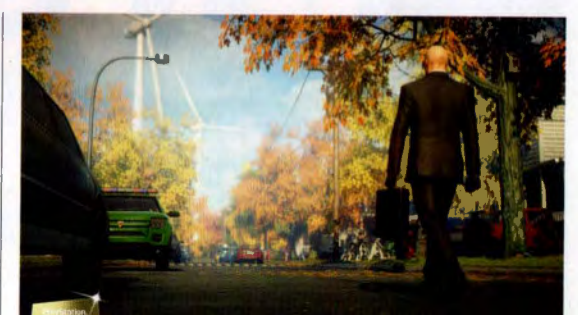
7

DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ

Motion comic



Who'd have predicted an anime fighter would be beloved enough to make a Game Of The Year Top 10? Yet such is this one's appeal. Arc System Works made almost every frame of animation look as if it were torn from Toriyama's original manga, and it's one of the most in-depth yet accessible fighters around to boot.



8

HITMAN 2

Bad neighbours



Every new map in *Hitman 2* is spectacular, but the Another Life mission, taking place in Whittleton Creek, is a highlight – a riff on my (and everyone's) favourite, A New Life from *Blood Money*. Cast aside your targets and rifle through everyone's houses in this suburban American neighbourhood. 47's one nosy neighbour.



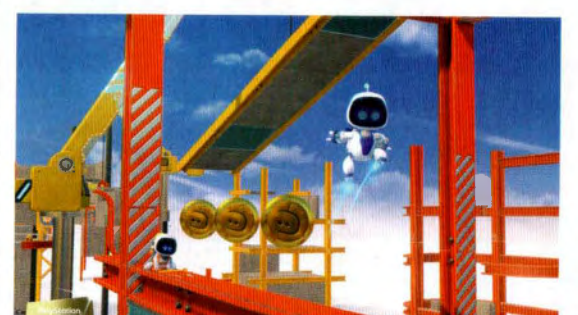
9

YAKUZA 6: THE SONG OF LIFE

Father Kiryu-mas



This game closes out the story of Kazuma Kiryu, the ultimate gaming daddy. It sees him on a quest to set his criminal past right by acting as the star pa to everyone he cares about, despite having no blood children. That's because, in a way, this gangster with a heart of gold is everyone's daddy – yours and mine.



10

ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

Worlds collide



The first PS VR game to hit our Game Of The Year list, ever! What's special about this VR platformer is the way it makes you feel like you're peering into a real world to help Astro Bot rescue his friends. As you peek around corners and look for secrets, for the first time a 3D platformer like this really comes to life.

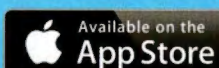
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TO PAGE 70

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REVIEWS



82 BATTLEFIELD V
Fighting the good WW2 fight, from chilly Norway to sunny Crete.

OPM SCORES

**GOLD
AWARD**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

GOLD AWARD

Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

**EDITOR'S
AWARD**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

EDITOR'S AWARD

Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

10 INCREDIBLE

The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

9 OUTSTANDING

Unreservedly brilliant - this should be in every collection.

8 VERY GOOD

A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

7 GOOD

A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

6 DECENT

Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

5 AVERAGE

What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

4 BELOW AVERAGE

Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

3 POOR

A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

2 AWFUL

Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

1 HORRIFIC

Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

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PlayStation. Official Magazine UK

War Stories deal with some of the less-well-known conflicts, and take place all over the world.

082

"BATTLEFIELD V'S SINGLE-PLAYER STAGES ARE WELL MADE, SMARTLY PACED, AND SERIOUSLY ENJOYABLE."

REVIEW 

HIT AND MISS

@AndyHartup

BATTLEFIELD V

Not a fully trained trooper... but there's plenty of potential here



PS4
16
INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB EA
DEV DICE

Battlefield V isn't finished. The whole thing feels incomplete; work-in-progress; a few bullets short of a full clip. If this were a single-player experience, designed for players to fire up and forget eight hours later, it'd be a crushing disappointment.

As it stands, it gets a pass thanks to the wealth of potential woven throughout.

Its most complete aspect is its solo campaign although, hilariously, a quarter of the single-player is missing at the time of writing. What you get out of the box is the Prologue, plus three other War Stories. It lasts about ten hours, so it's a decent chunk of game, but we're still missing the 'Last Tiger' mission, which goes live this month. The Prologue is a neat mood-setter; its sombre voiceover narrates a series of battles that you fight in until your soldier is killed in any number of horrific ways. It's a comment on the brutality of war, which is tonally at odds with the gamification inherent in the rest of Battlefield V, but as its own slice of interactivity it's moving.

CHAPTER AND VERSUS

Battlefield V's War Stories are all entertaining in different ways. Nordlys follows Solveig, who is attempting to rescue her mother from a Norwegian 'heavy water' plant. The officer holding the prisoners is presented as a human being, rather than a faceless Nazi, and Solveig as a reluctant resistance fighter. There are some neat gameplay moments, and a satisfying conclusion to the story. The action is open-world, kind of. You get to play through large hub areas any way you choose — although stealth, all-out-action, or a mix of both are the only true options — and strategy plays as big a role as shooting.

The other stories are variations on the theme. Under No Flag is a buddy story focused on the British Special Boat Service (SBS) and featuring some terrible Cockney accents. Tirailleur follows Demi, a French-African conscript who's been sent to fight for a country he's never even visited. Of all the War Stories Tirailleur is the standout,



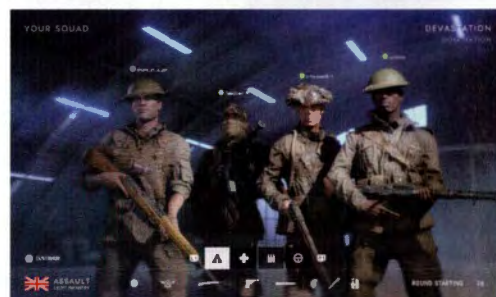
8
PlayStation
Official Magazine UK

083



Though content feels unfinished, the game looks spectacular.

Right You're rewarded for playing as part of a squad, so team players will end up with more points than lone wolves.



Left Prepare to die a hell of a lot online. Battlefield V's conflicts are extremely chaotic.

its set-pieces more explosive, its story beats more poignant, and its characters more likeable. Battlefield V's single-player stages are well made, smartly paced, and enjoyable. Hopefully, that can be said of the Last Tiger too.

MORE IS HELL

But Battlefield's reputation is built on its online multiplayer — and that's where the problems lie. Even getting in and out of multiplayer to the main menus is flawed; once I had to wait over a minute for the main menu to load, and another time it crashed completely. Load times when navigating the menus are unacceptably lengthy, even after the Day One patch. The XP/currency system is more confusing than it needs to be, and there are shades of Star Wars Battlefront II's overly complex progression system here.

This is the sort of stuff that will be patched in coming months, but for now it creates the illusion that you're playing a posh beta rather than a £50 finished game. This becomes more evident when you notice many of Battlefield V's

online features are currently absent. Tides Of War isn't ready at launch, there is no Combined Arms co-op mode, and most of the Live Service features feel very placeholder. What you do get is a raft of core Battlefield multiplayer modes, with a few new ones thrown in, and a slick online shooting experience.

Online the action is fast-paced, and more deadly than in Battlefield 1. Respawns are frequent, although the new revive mechanic — where anyone can heal a fallen ally — keeps the action moving.

Weapons are pleasingly varied, although certain classes feel slightly anonymous. There's little real difference between the Medic and Assault in terms of primary firepower, and because anyone can revive the Medic feels underpowered. Maps allow much more scope (pun intended) for the Recon class to shine, and Support gets the ability to build, which feels

redundant in a game that relies heavily on respawns and chaos.

In terms of modes, Breakthrough is the newest. It's basically Rush on a wider set of maps, plus the opportunity to take back objectives. Rush remains the better mode because of how permanent it is to lose an objective, despite the fact that Breakthrough feels less like you're battling down a narrow corridor of death. Retained from Battlefield 1, Frontlines is a neat mode that still feels unbalanced. Once momentum is with one of the teams, it's tough to stop, and the inevitable grind to defeat is rather deflating if you're on the wrong side.

Smaller modes like Team Deathmatch and Domination are back, and just as compelling as in previous games. However, it does feel like the Domination maps are a tad too big — probably to help the Recon players feel included — and as such the tight, close-up nature



Above Flicking through the customisation menus, most stuff looks the same.

Right You'll be surprised by just how tricky some of the single-player missions are.



Above Battlefield V tells emotional human tales through War Stories.

of the gameplay is less chaotic than in previous games. On a larger scale, Conquest remains king, and the large-scale action is as much of a treat as ever. Even the slightly anonymous maps can't spoil the fun.

THAT'S GRAND

The other new mode is Grand Operations (we're not counting the forthcoming Battle Royale mode because — surprise! — it isn't finished). It's an extension of Operations from Battlefield 1, and offers large-scale conflict with more of a story and fresh objectives. It's here where the game has the most potential to become great, but right now Grand Operations doesn't feel as coherent as Conquest or as compelling as Breakthrough. When Tides Of War starts to add new Grand Operations, and mix up the rules, it'll be brilliant. Again, though, that's a few months down the line.

Overall, Battlefield V is a great shooter with a lot

of problems to patch out. The War Stories deliver a sizeable single-player offering that satisfies far more than any previous solo efforts from Battlefield. And while multiplayer feels rough around the edges, the core gameplay is engaging, wonderfully violent, and nicely balanced. New maps and modes are unspectacular, but Conquest and Domination still shine.

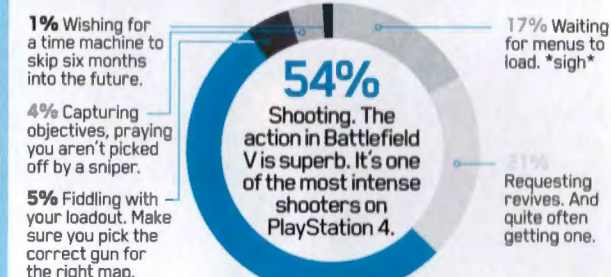
It all feels like a safe, yet stumbling, start for a shooter that's made promises it can't keep. However, DICE is known for the support it has given past Battlefields and it seems certain that six months from now this will be a different, rather brilliant war game.

VERDICT

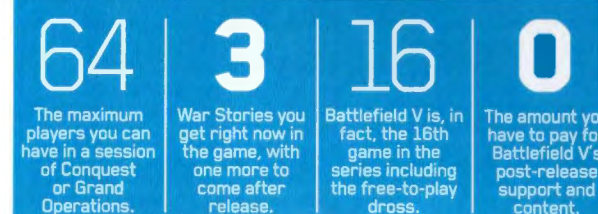
Ripe with potential but riddled with problems, the new Battlefield will be brilliant six months from now. Right now, however, it's merely a good shooter. **Andy Hartup**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... BATTLEFIELD V



STAT PACK

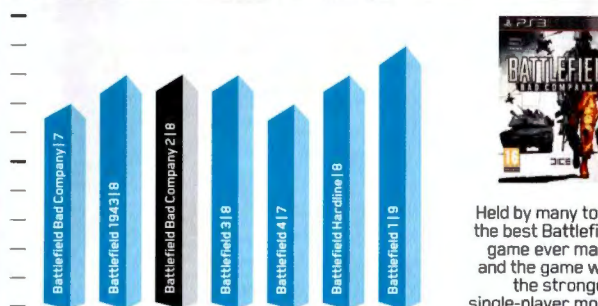


HOW TO... SPOT



In previous games, tapping **RT** would spot an enemy for other players to shoot. Now it indicates the general direction of an enemy, unless you're bang on with your targeting. So, you need to be accurate. Or simply shoot the enemies yourself.

SERIESOGRAPHY



Held by many to be the best Battlefield game ever made, and the game with the strongest single-player mode.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



Although it is a matter of taste. If you enjoy getting killed by teens before you've even seen them, pick COD.

Not now. Battlefield 1 is a more rounded, polished game. Six months from now, that may change.

Most things are better than Fortnite. Even cleaning your own oven. Battlefield V is already a better game.

"A STUMBLING START FOR A GAME THAT'S MADE PROMISES IT CAN'T KEEP."

Boss battles are epic – this is what Darksiders is all about.



Nephilim's Respite

086 FURY'S ROAD

DARKSIDERS III

Fury, it's vice to see you

When you meet a boss who brags about wiping his bum on angels' wings it's clear this is the same Darksiders you've come to love. The series' six-year hiatus hasn't put a dent in the brash and colourful take on angels and demons waging war on an apocalyptic Earth, with the Four Horsemen caught in the middle.

War kicked off the series, and Death undertook an epic journey across multiple open worlds to prove his brother innocent. Fury's story is simpler: sent to Earth by the Charred Council to hunt the escaped Seven Deadly Sins, her quest *should* bring balance to the universe. Given the long gap between games it's a thankfully straight-to-the-bone quest, but one with enough twists to excite fans as well as usher in newcomers.

GRAND DESIGN

With one massive map that links together, turning back around and in on itself through secret routes and hidden loot-laden chambers, Darksiders III distils what makes the series so compelling. Time and again your internal voice will mutter "Wonder where this leads?" as yet another hidden trail reveals itself.

You progress by tracking and killing each Deadly Sin, not simply because another one is ticked off Fury's blood-smudged to-do list but

because with every Sin slain comes a new weapon or gadget, called a Hollow, that affect how Fury interacts with her world. For example, the fiery Chains Of Scorn gives Fury a higher jump and enables her to burn through obstacles; she can float with the electrically charged Lance Of Scorn; and break rocks with the Mallet Of Scorn.

You're forced forwards but there's a satisfying feeling that comes with retreading past areas to rediscover once-concealed chambers. Doing so rewards you with Demoniac or Angelic artefacts, which are used to upgrade your weapons and their embedded enhancements, or Shards used to buff Fury's powers – giving her extra strength, health, and

Arcane power. It's a simple circle: the more you explore, the more powerful Fury can get, making life easier when facing off against the forces of both Heaven and Hell.

Combat is solid, if largely unoriginal. Fury's chain whip is bolstered by the Hollow sub-weapons, which all have their own combos to learn. However, you'll need to master perfectly-timed dodges using **△** – time slows, allowing Fury to deliver a powerful counter-attack. It works well, even against multiple enemies. It can come unstuck in the close confines of corridors, often meaning you need to usher enemies – a mix of giant insects and angelic zombies – into open spaces to avoid being pinned.

"IT'S A CIRCLE: THE MORE YOU EXPLORE, THE MORE POWERFUL FURY CAN GET."



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB THQ NORDIC
DEV GUNFIRE GAMES

@lanDean74

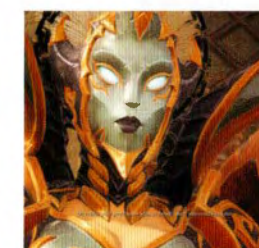
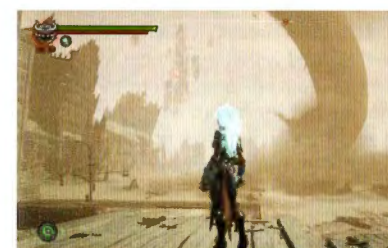


PlayStation
Official Magazine UK

Right It took ages to find this secret bridge, but the trek was worth it.



Below As well as bosses, minibattles crop up across the map.



Above left This tornado is evil... so how do you kill a city-sized gust of wind?

While Darksiders III plunges along at a smooth pace in the underground caverns and tombs, some of which are beautifully stylised, when the action goes overground into the shattered city streets the framerate can drop.

The epic vistas of the city and later, larger stages are a reminder there's a Triple-A game in here fighting to get out, battling bugs both polygonal and actual – the game crashed numerous times during this review. It's frustrating, particularly as when Darksiders III hits its stride it delivers a compelling story.

SIN-SATIONAL

You will keep playing, though. Puzzles, some multiple rooms in size, which often demand you combine Hollows in succession to solve, are well-crafted. And in its boss battles (not all the bosses are Sins), Darksiders III really finds its voice. Wacky, grotesque, and

extravagant in design, they often spin the narrative in new directions as you fight, or in some cases last the length of a map. (The size of the map can cause loading pauses, often irritatingly mid-combo.)

Well designed and featuring enough twists on the classic Metroidvania formula to find its own voice – stealth-kill a tornado, anyone? – Darksiders III is let down by buggy aspects that don't match the ambition of its design. If you can overlook the technical hiccups, however, there's an engaging and creative adventure hidden away in here that, while not as epic as Darksiders II was, is, still heaps of fun.

VERDICT

A formulaic adventure lifted by some fantastic design, then brought down to Earth by bugs and technical limitations. Still, there's great fun to be had in Darksiders III if you can overlook its shortfalls. **Ian Dean**

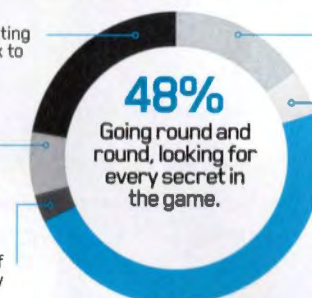
THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... DARKSIDERS III

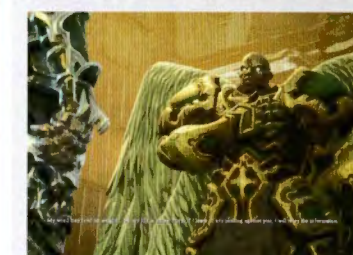
22% Experimenting with a Hollow mix to solve a puzzle.

7% Whipping, whacking... pausing, loading, stalling.

3% Wondering if Sloth can get any more disgusting.



HOW TO... GET A HEAVENLY FRIEND



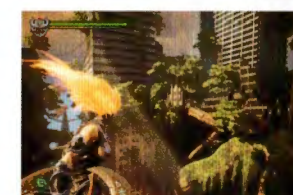
In the battle with Lust, the angel Usiel joins forces with the Sin, giving you two bosses to defeat at once. But can you defeat Lust without also killing Usiel? Achieve this and the angels on Earth will align to Fury's cause. Kill Usiel and life gets hard.

LOVING/HATING



BOSS BATTLES

Creative, puzzley, and often in bad taste, Darksiders III's epic enemies raise the game from formulaic to freakish fun.



BIG WORLD...

But not a big-budget. The game performs and looks at its best when confined to small stages; the larger areas can stutter and pause play.

STAT PACK

332

Weeks between the original release of Darksiders 2, and this follow-up.

6

Weapons imbued with elemental powers like lightning, fire, ice, and, erm, purple rocks.

5

The number of times you need to upgrade an artefact to reach balanced level.

20

Humans to find scattered and hidden around the game's maps. Rescuing people is good.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE

Kill a devilish 666 enemies to earn this bronze trophy. Achieving it is sinfully enjoyable.



SILVER

Upgrade five weapon enhancements to Balanced level using scavenged loot to claim this.



GOLD

To win the only gold in the game, complete it on Apocalyptic setting. (Though isn't Death someone else?..)

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB BANDAI NAMCO DEV BYKING



MY HERO: ONE'S JUSTICE

All for one, one for all

Yet another anime fighter graces PS4, this time based around the popular anime/manga My Hero Academia.

Taking place in a world where it's common for almost everyone to have superpowers (called "quirks"), it focuses on a high school class of heroes-in-training. The lead, Midoriya, has no powers of his own – until a special quirk is bestowed upon him by the world's greatest hero, All Might.

One's Justice is a 1v1 3D brawler where you punch each other with flashy superpowers until one of you is knocked out. The arenas feature some destructive elements, and a couple have ring outs, but for the most part it's fairly basic. It captures the look of the anime without being spectacular, though care's been taken to present the breadth of powers with variation that makes each character move uniquely, even if at their core they all play the same. With one primary attack and a few quirk power buttons it's an elementary fighter, the only real interesting aspect being a de-emphasis on guarding versus punching through opponents' attacks. While taking some getting used to, there's a satisfaction to the fast exchanges when you're on a roll, though it gets repetitive.¹

The story runs through the second season and first half of the third. Dryly presented, it's mostly fight after fight with comic-style cutscenes that provide a recap of the show's events rather than being engaging on their own.² There are enough touches for fans to feel the source is appreciated, but outside of seeing your favourites smash each other in the faces, it's bare bones. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



FOOTNOTES ¹ Even high bar Naruto Shippuden Ultimate Ninja Storm 4 suffered from this. ² The manga is quite far ahead, so readers will miss the newer characters in this anime-focused game.



INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB FOCUS HOME INTERACTIVE DEV CYANIDE



SPACE HULK: TACTICS

The not-so-incredible Hulk

Right down to its simulated dice rolls, Space Hulk: Tactics is a faithful digitisation of Games Workshop's legendary board game. In both, a squad of Space Marines explores the titular Hulk,¹ pursued by Tyrannid Genestealers – it's basically Aliens with heavier gothic stylings.

There have been many videogame adaptations of Space Hulk, but for the first time Tactics lets you play either side, in dedicated campaigns or multiplayer. Genestealers first appear on the map as motion-tracker blips, only revealing their true nature – each blip could contain as many as three sharp-clawed xenos, or none at all – when they wander into the Marines' vision cones. They're lethal up close, but have no long-range defences. The Marines, meanwhile, are walking tanks. They have fewer action points each turn, and those can get gobbled up just by turning around. Which direction they're facing matters, because of the game-defining overwatch ability, which fires on any aliens that skitter into view.

It's a great setup, but not one that's especially well served by digital. When you're moving pieces across a board in the company of a fellow human, the down sides of Space Hulk's core design aren't too apparent. But played with fiddly controls, every flaw is exaggerated. Without the drama of a bad dice roll, the game feels too reliant on luck. Without a set of shifty eyes to stare into, bluffing out with empty blips feels pointless. Tactics makes the most of its medium with neat battle animations and a variety of view modes,² but it's no substitute for shouting at a friend across the table. **Alex Spencer**



FOOTNOTES ¹ Not of the green 'don't make me angry' variety, but a gargantuan derelict starship. ² The first-person mode is impractical, but a nice nod to the old PS1 Space Hulk game.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB KOEI TECMO DEV OMEGA FORCE



WARRIORS OROCHI 4

Fight at the museum

Combining two flavours of Warriors (Dynasty and Samurai), this crossover series combines figures from Chinese and Japanese military history... and throws them into a world of monsters, gods, and magic. If you missed the first three games, don't worry – the returning characters have lost their memories. Hurrah!

Like 90% of Omega Force's output, this is a game that pits you against hilarious odds in each stage. Unless you're going for a speedrun, your kill count at the end of each battle will sit well within quadruple figures. Yes, there is (appropriately) an army of these games out there, but even though it doesn't have the anime hook of Berserk And The Band Of The Hawk this is a pretty good starting point.

It's incredibly easy to get started: just attack anyone and anything with a red health bar. There are two basic attack buttons, two different sorts of special attack, and three types of magic attack.¹ There are four gauges you'll need to keep an eye on, but the UI is pleasingly clear and simple. There's also a map in the corner of the screen, which you'll occasionally need to quickly navigate your way to an ally who needs your help. Failing a mission just because you didn't squint at the map hard and fast enough is annoying, but rare.

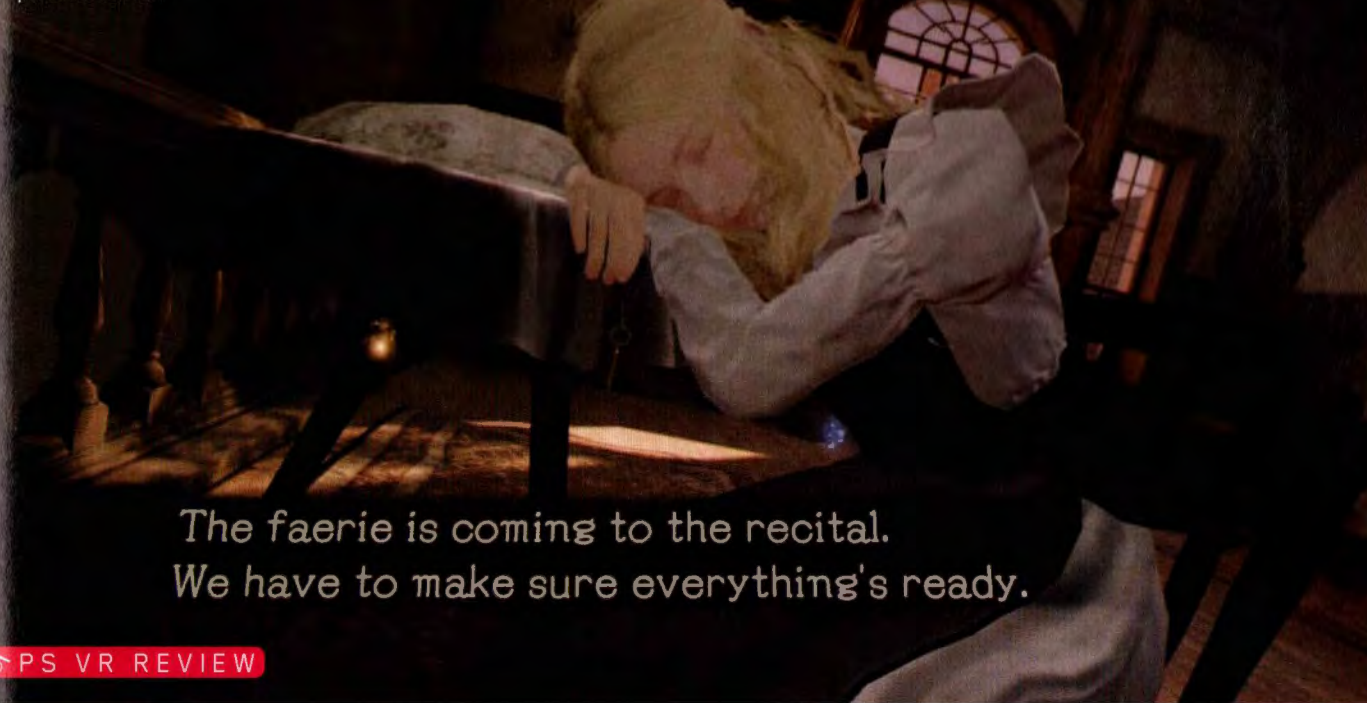
The fundamental gameplay couldn't be simpler, and the dialogue is terrible... but it's good. There's a staggering 170 characters to unlock,² and you'll soon find favourites. With an enormous amount of content, online and offline co-op (if you can find other players; I couldn't), and some cool-looking moves, it's a shallow but entrancing adventure. **Luke Kemp**



FOOTNOTES ¹ There's an upgrade system it's important (and easy) to get to grips with. ² There are only so many different weapon and ability types to go around, but they're well distributed.



The children can't see you – not even when you purloin their personal effects.

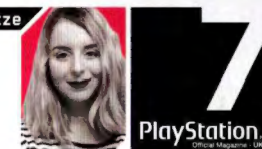


The faerie is coming to the recital. We have to make sure everything's ready.

PS VR REVIEW

FAERIE NUFF

@KoeniginKatze



DÉRACINÉ

I fought the lore, and the lore won



INFO FORMAT PS VR
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SONY
DEV FROMSOFTWARE

Once upon a time, there were six children who all lived with their headmaster – happy together but isolated from the rest of the world. The eldest, Yuiliya, believed in faeries with all of her heart. But one day a faerie really did come to her school. Oh, what a poor, unlucky girl...

Donning your own magical visor, you're soon bestowed with two rings. The band on your right hand allows you to take the time left in living things and restore it to something similar. With your left hand you can travel through time, uncovering and shaping the children's fate. But time flows differently for faeries. The children themselves are frozen in place throughout the school and only through grasping at nearby sparkling orbs can you witness snatches of their conversations, which may hint at a problem you can assist with.

The first few hours are a sedate jaunt as you teleport around, eavesdropping and moving the children's belongings around. This point-and-click VR adventure takes too long to get to the meat of its story which, in true FromSoftware

style, is largely squirrelled away in item descriptions.

DO YOU FEEL PUCKY?

The first half's leisurely stroll is intended to invest you in the children, though their characterisation is thinly traced, in keeping with the dark fairy tale stylings. That said, it's hard to say what could be excised as it all fills out a bigger picture later. Slowly, a story about childhood grief begins to bloom and, just when you think Déraciné is going to render its own emotional core inert with its ending, it surprises you. You need to lore-hunt to get the full scope, but this story is much easier to excavate than those of other From games and feels far more intuitive as you physically pick up objects.

What's less intuitive is that you are bound to using the PS Move wands. This is baffling as your two powers over time are under-utilised, and you seldom need to use both hands separately. That a compromise couldn't be reached to make

the game compatible with more widely used controllers is strange indeed.

That's not the only strange design decision. Apparently faeries are terrified of cats, and the school's resident feline, Tia, places herself in spots that close off parts of the building to you. The use of cats can unnecessarily pad some chapters as you trudge back up to the attic again just to check you haven't missed anything.

But even as the limited range of movement afforded to you by the game's teleportation system keeps you at arm's length in a world you'll want to reach out and touch, the story draws you along. When things finally do take a turn, you'll be in it until the end trying to make things right.

VERDICT

While mechanically stiff, like an automaton, this is still a compelling VR fairy tale. Lore hunters are rewarded, but even the less dedicated will want to go digging. **Jess Kinghorn**

"THIS VR ADVENTURE TAKES TOO LONG TO GET TO THE MEAT OF ITS STORY."



Each world brims with secrets to uncover and nooks and crannies to explore.

090

FLAME ON

@MrOscarTK



SPYRO REIGNITED TRILOGY

A fiery breath of life for the series

Wagon Wheels are smaller. The gap between Toblerone pyramids is bigger. The games that once wowed us simply make kids today shrug. As time goes on, some things just don't get better. This remaster of the original *Spyro* is the antithesis of that – not only have the games been freshened up so they excel in the modern age of gaming, but it underlines just how full of life those original designs were.

This is a remake of Insomniac's original *Spyro* trilogy, which released on PlayStation between 1998 and 2000: *Spyro The Dragon*; *Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage* (originally *Gateway To Glimmer* over here); and *Spyro: Year Of The Dragon*. They were three of the best 3D platformer-collectathon games around. In the *Reignited Trilogy* they're even better, able to stand up next to more recent games, and a must-play for anyone who fondly remembers the purple dragon's origins, or anyone who wants to feel the burn for the first time.

EGGS YOU LIKE IT

Even when gaming was oversaturated with the genre (these days platformer-collectathons are few and far between) the *Spyro* games stood out,



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV TOYS FOR BOB

thanks to being both accessible and moreish. A small dragon, *Spyro* can't wreak havoc like his older brethren, but he can glide, charge, and breathe flames to master platforming challenges and toast enemies. He's a nimble, nippy thing, a joy to control. It's a moveset that always makes you feel free. Some of the best secrets revolve around you spotting a hard-to-reach area and then working out how to glide over.

Extra animations for this version of the classic *Spyro* design make tearing through each world, rinsing it clean of gems and collectibles, a joy. There's a rush to figuring

out the design of each area, and clearing everything out. Sparx (your dragonfly friend who picks up treasure and acts as your HUD-free health indicator) can now point to uncollected gems in all three games from the very start, easing your frustration at finding one little green gem you missed along the way. Thanks to there being so much to collect, getting enough to beat the final boss never feels like a chore or too difficult, yet there's plenty of challenge in going above and beyond to collect everything possible.

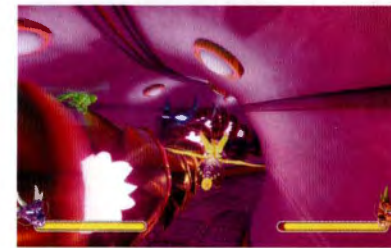
Thanks to the stunning recreation these games rarely

"EXTRA ANIMATIONS MAKE TEARING THROUGH EACH WORLD A JOY."

Right The characters, from enemies to dragons, are full of personality.



Below Burning enemies has never felt so satisfying. Look at the flames!



Above left Power-up areas and playable side-characters add more variety.



show their age. The designs pop and fizz with colour. *Spyro* was always quirky, fun, and not too serious, so it really benefits from leaning into that cartoon aesthetic even more. The unique dragon designs and more lush, distinct worlds add a lot, and the extra fidelity makes exploring to unearth the games' many secrets feel more rewarding than ever. Because these are games where you're constantly nosing around levels, they really benefit from this extra TLC more than the fixed-path platforming of, say, *Crash* in the recent *N.Sane Trilogy*. These are worlds you inhabit as *Spyro* on a much closer level, and seeing how gorgeous some of the environments in the *Reignited Trilogy* are, you won't want to look away.

DRAGON AGE

There are a handful of times when the old school level design does show a few wrinkles. Some of the side-

missions where you play as *Spyro*'s friends in the later games don't feel as tight and fluid as the revised *Spyro*'s movements; some minigames feel clunky now (a whack-a-mole mission in the third game is still rage inducing); and the handful of boss battles feel basic these days. Enhancements across the board level the playing field across the series, though the debate is sure to (Ripto's) rage on as to which of the three games is king. Surprisingly, each retains its individual personality. None of the games are to be missed, and feel completely fresh even for those who know the originals back to front.

VERDICT

This package contains a huge amount – and it's almost entirely some of the finest 3D platformer design plus enhancements that are simply gorgeous. Go on, puff the magic dragon. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... *SPYRO REIGNITED TRILOGY*



SECOND OPINION *SPYROMANIAC*

This was a huge part of my best friend's childhood, and it's not hard to see why she loved the titular purple scale-baby. Expanding the source material in all the right directions while revitalising the original, the persistence of your muscle memory may surprise you. A reasonably priced bundle of excellent collectathon platformers. **Jess Kinghorn**

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



Your pal collects gems for you – his colour indicates your health.



This cowardly cheetah joins *Spyro* from the second game.



This leaping lovely's an extra playable character in the third game.

HOW TO... UNCOVER A SECRET



1 The games are filled with secrets, starting with this fun little one in the very first home world in the games – it's near these stepping stones. 2 Hop on each stone in turn to light it up. When all are lit, a secret wall in the conspicuous spot nearby will move. 3 Sunny Flight, the game's first flight stage, is revealed. Here you steer *Spyro* in full flight to hit targets within an allotted time. Flight stages are fun but challenging to master, and a series mainstay.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



YES
A fab remaster, but the platforming challenges don't benefit as much from updating as *Spyro*'s exploration.



YES
There's lots to love in this modern 3D platformer, but it's not the original masterclass *Spyro* is.



YES
This reimagining of Insomniac's own next step was fun, but only covered the first game in the PS2 trilogy.



In this Chinese-influenced world you affect the string arrangement to create a megalomaniac experience.

PS VR REVIEW

092

BLOCK PARTY

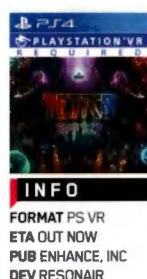
@IanDean74



TETRIS EFFECT

Want to come over and Tetris and chill?

Few games are genuinely flawless but Tetris is, frankly, perfect. No matter the format or platform, it's hard to ruin Russian game designer Alexey Pajitnov's elegant design, and in PS VR, with Lumines' maestro Tetsuya Mizuguchi at the helm, it's simply the best version we've ever had.



INFO
FORMAT PS VR
ETA OUT NOW
PUB ENHANCE, INC
DEV RESONAIR

Fundamentally Tetris Effect is the same block puzzler we've all played. Misshapen 'tetrominoes' fall from the top of the screen to the bottom; manipulating them into lines clears them from the screen, awarding you points and a snug feeling of accomplishment.

Tetris taps into a fundamental desire to organise and clear a space. Played in PS VR, with music, sound, and graphics affecting and reacting to your performance, it becomes a transcendental experience. Tetris Effect offers you a dark space to enter, then pounds you with puzzle blocks and massages you with musical beats that purr through the DualShock's rumble until you submit to its unique world. It's an emotional experience. A manipulative one, but affecting nonetheless.

SIGHT AND SOUND

Leaking Lumines and Rez influences into the Tetris template, Mizuguchi-san leads you down a rabbit hole of psychedelic puzzling marathons, challenges, and tests of skill and nerve. This game

is more than just Tetris backed up with a flashy Las Vegas light and sound show, though, it's an experience.

As main mode Journey's name infers, Mizuguchi-san's take on Tetris is a trip in the truest sense — you travel across the sense of a New York skyline to soft jazz, creating your own soundtrack as each tetromino lands to a different tetromino lands to a different piano chord. You enter a rainforest, water dripping from leaves audibly dappling as you match lines of blocks. There are trips through abstract shapes and a kaleidoscope of gleaming Christmas baubles. Light fizzles over, behind, and around you, enveloping you in its artistry.

In its master's hands the game alters pace and tempo.

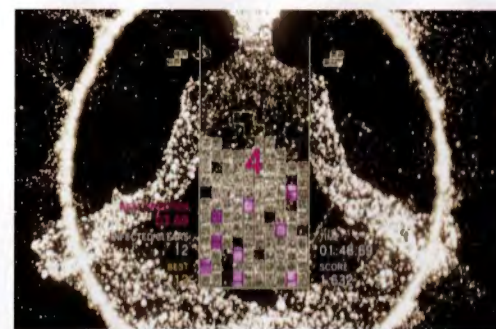
As the music rises and the beat increases the blocks come faster; as it subsides they slow, often within the same themed world. You're given space to breathe and think, adjust and plan. In PS VR it's perfection.

BEAT IT

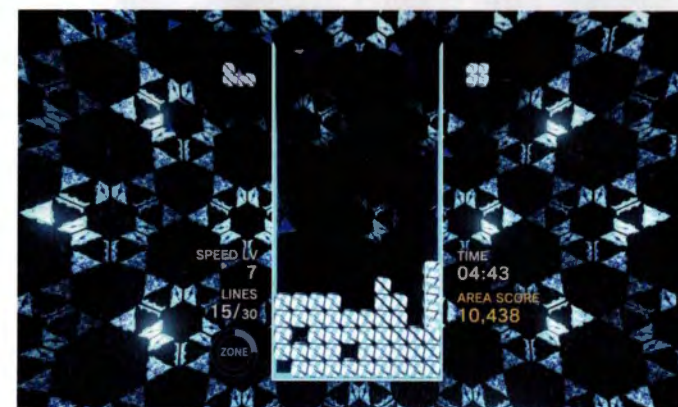
There're new ways to play Tetris too. Zone is a new addition — the Zone meter fills more quickly if you manage four-line Tetrises, and tapping **L2** or **L3** activates the mode, slowing time and enabling you to clear the screen. Ideally you'll plan ahead, setting yourself up to cascade line upon line to build up a high score multiplier. Or you can save Zone up and use it when the tempo increases, gaining

"POUNDS YOU WITH PUZZLE BLOCKS AND MESSAGES YOU WITH MUSICAL BEATS."

Right Clear the infected blocks before they spread in Purify mode. That's easy, right?



Below In PS VR these shapes fly into your face if you land a Tetris.



Above left Use Zone to pause time, get organised, and clear your looser lines.

respite from the faster flow of tetrominoes. It's a simple idea, but one that makes mastering Tetris just a little more fun.

Beyond the worlds found in Journey, Tetris Effect's best ways to play come from a set of Effects modes. Each offers a unique challenge. You can opt for classic Tetris, a relaxed marathon mode that challenges you to reach the highest score you can within 150 lines, or dive into some of the puzzler's more inventive ways to play... All Clear had me hooked for hours, and simply asks you to clear a screen of blocks using only a set number and type of tetrominoes. It's the closest thing to a classic timed puzzle, and it's Tetris catnip.

Other additions include Purify (where you have to destroy 'infected' blocks and stop them spreading across your screen) and Mystery (in which blocks come at random speeds, shapes, and sizes, including massive squares that

fill the screen). Effects mode shows dev's playful side. The many variants on offer break apart what makes elements of Tetris such a time-sink, and expands on them in unique and evocative ways.

VR ESSENTIAL

Tetris Effect works best in PlayStation VR. Its audio and lighting cues channel your concentration. It can also feel more responsive and smoother than playing in the 'real' world. Outside virtual reality the game is equally captivating and stands as PS4's best puzzler, but you're missing out on a virtual world of fun if you don't play inside a headset.

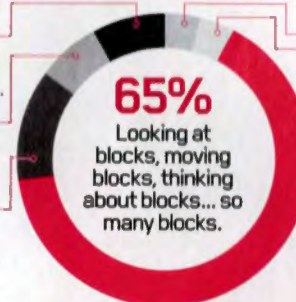
VERDICT

Tetris Effect and PS VR go together like ham and eggs. It's the perfect pairing of tech and game design. Don't have a headset? You can still join in but you're missing out on the definitive way to play. **Ian Dean**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... TETRIS EFFECT

8% Meeting the hidden targets, unlocking more music and themes.
7% Screaming ARGH! "Blorp" Why did I rotate it? "Blorp" WHY?
12% Having just one more go... I'll break into the online high scores this time for sure.

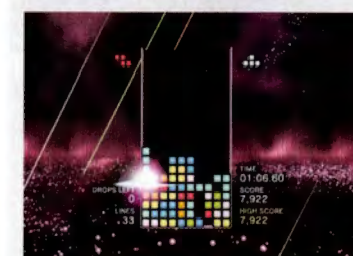


4% Learning to manage Zone; it'll get you out of a tricky situation.
4% Trying your best not to be overwhelmed by the light and sound show.

STAT PACK

27 Worlds to play through in Journey mode, including swimming with dolphins.	15 Effects mode ways to play. Will you get to see Countdown's epic meteorite storm?	4 Themed sets of modes, including Adventurous, Relax, Focus, and Classic (for Tetris purists).	150 The line limit in classic Marathon mode — will you break onto the high score chart?
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HOW TO... PLAN AHEAD



Learning to plan where to drop blocks is crucial. In Countdown mode the game drops I-shaped tetrominoes at timed intervals, in signposted positions. You just need to plan your blocks around where they land to score Tetrises. Simple? Yeah, hrm, no.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS...



1 The journey begins, under the sea. **2** Things are getting weird; we're in an abstract wood and our blocks sound like we're banging a glockenspiel. **3** We've travelled across deserts, squeezed inside a PC's circuitry and swam with dolphins. **4** Oh boy, it's going a little 2001 now. Our mind is going. We can feel it. **5** The last stage, Metamorphosis, and we're drifting through star signs and diving with solar dolphins.

TROPHY CABINET

TETRIS AND CHILL BRONZE Relax and enjoy the sights and sounds by clearing Ambient's Sea, Wind, and World modes. So tranquil...	BOOM TETRIS! SILVER Simple and fun: achieve 500 Tetris Line clears. The game's so addictive you won't need to aim for this.	SERIOUSLY? GOLD Oof, this one is block-hard. You need to earn SS Rank on everything, everywhere. Good luck.
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5 WHITESPRING BUTLER

Check the Terminal

An actual robot butler! You can't have one of your own, though, sadly.



Right It's not much, but it's home. How glamorous your camp is, is up to you.

Below If a Scorchbeast doesn't look like this (ie dead), run.



Above left There's a variety of clothing to find and craft. This is A Look...

FALLOUT 76

Say hello to the latest addition to the nuclear family

No, Bethesda didn't release another 71 entries while you weren't looking. 76 is the number of the vault you exit at the beginning of the game, as you start exploring a devastated West Virginia long before the events of the other titles. As an online-only experience, this is – both for better and for worse – a new type of Fallout.

It's a single-player series venturing into an MMO landscape, so there are shocks in store for series fans. Perhaps you're excited about launching a nuke, or battling a Scorchbeast, the new dragon-like enemy type. You can absolutely do these things... eventually. These are endgame activities that a solo, low-level player has little chance of success in. Expect to put dozens of hours in before trying either of those things.

FALLOUT BOYS

There are, infamously, no human NPCs now. Nonetheless, alongside the repeating MMO events and general exploration to be had, there's still a structured (and extremely lengthy) story, largely told through documents and recordings. How much attention you pay to it is up to you, though it's a good way to discover new locations, weapons, enemies, and items. It's hard to deny, though, that the world would feel more – to be honest – interesting with human NPCs to chat to.



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB BETHESDA
DEV BETHESDA

Saying that every human in the game will be another player is a great PR bullet point, but the fact is I've never seen more than 16 players spread across the enormous map at any one time (usually it's about ten). It's very easy to go several hours without seeing another player, unless you specifically seek them out (or they seek you).

This has interesting side effects, though. The overall sense of loneliness means this is arguably the most convincing depiction of a desolate, dangerous post-apocalyptic world to date. That makes for great atmosphere. Then, when you do come across another player, you'll sometimes find that they cautiously raise their gun, waiting to see whether

or not you're friendly. There's a Wanted system in place to punish those who kill players not interested in PvP combat, but it never hurts to be careful.

When you die, you retain important items such as armour and weapons, but you lose crafting items you were carrying (or someone will loot them) if you don't go back for them. You need to keep an eye on your hunger and thirst, though this is easy to keep on top of to the point of questioning whether this minor annoyance shouldn't have been left out altogether.

CRAFTY SO AND SO

Your weapons and armour degrade with use, meaning you have to repair or replace them.

"THE MOST CONVINCING DEPICTION OF A DESOLATE, POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLD."

As a consequence, constantly grabbing random junk is more important than ever, especially if you want to create items to build up a half-decent camp in the wasteland or, y'know feed yourself. Overall, rather than feeling like tedious busywork, the crafting element is actually easy to get to grips with and rather good fun.

Meanwhile, there's a lot of fighting to be done in this game, whether you're dealing with a Deathclaw or shooting up the new ghoulish Scorchbeasts (yes, this game's set before the others – there's a clever explanation for why they don't appear in entries set further in the future). Gunplay is as slightly awkward, as it's always been in Fallout, and the real-time implementation of the (optional) VATS system is only semi-successful. Because of rather than despite the faults, successful hits – especially headshots – are immensely satisfying, and combat always

remains engaging (if still distinctly imperfect).

Awkwardness abounds when it comes to introducing MMO elements. You can fast travel to previously visited locations, but this now costs Caps, also used for trading with robots and players. The map is huge, and running drains Action Points, so this feels slightly unfair. Also, it's great that we still have notes and terminal entries to read and holotapes to listen to, but this sort of thing isn't ideal when playing with others, who won't want to twiddle their thumbs while you soak up the lore. It's a good game, but one that seems unsure exactly what sort of game it wants to be.

VERDICT

It seems war does change things after all. If you're expecting this release to be Fallout 5, then yes, you'll be disappointed. Approach with an open mind, and you may be nicely surprised. **Luke Kemp**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... FALLOUT 76

10% Wishing it was easier to swap between weapons in fights.

14% Eating, drinking, or healing to keep those bars topped up.

3% Meeting other players, and remembering that this is supposed to be an MMO.

45% Travelling to a new location, killing anything in your way.

22% Collecting, then crafting/repairing with junk, like an irradiated MacGyver.

6% Hitting a brief but annoying plummet in the framerate. Sigh.

STAT PACK

51

Trophies. That's plenty, but getting them all involves a lot of hours and a lot of work.

2

Places you can fast travel to without spending any Caps: Vault 76; and your movable CAMP.

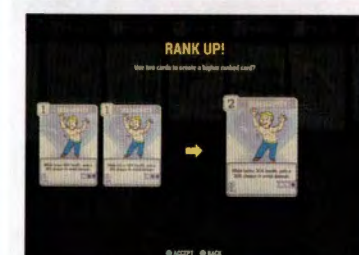
25

The level your player needs to be to wield the mini-nuke-launching Fatman.

24

The maximum number of players per server, though hitting that limit seems to be rare.

HOW TO... BE S.P.E.C.I.A.L.



The SPECIAL system is integral to your character build. When levelling up, assign a point to an attribute that matches your playstyle. In addition to a stat boost, this determines the total value of associated perk cards you can equip.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS...



1 Leaving Vault 76 to find that these balloons, and the helium inside them, have survived the nuclear apocalypse. Must be from M&S. 2 Joining other players for my first group Event. It's fun! 3 First death, and no sign of any other players to revive me. At least killed enemies stay dead. 4 Ooh, power armour! 5 Sad at my power armour running out of juice, I take a nap with a rotting corpse to cheer myself up.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE

People who've killed somebody who didn't fight back carry a bounty. Take them down for Caps, and a trophy.

SILVER

Nuke launches are rare. You'll have to be truly unlucky to get one dropped on you. At least you'll unlock this.

GOLD

Snagged by completing the nuke-launching quest, which only a handful of people have done at time of writing.



PS VR REVIEW

MAJOR LASER

BEAT SABER

This rhythm game cuts through the competition



Before you even pick up your PS Move controllers for this PS VR rhythm game, you must make peace with the fact that you're going to make an absolute egg of yourself. It takes the slicing and dicing of Fruit Ninja but requires you to match your swipes to the rhythm of its playlist. A tutorial acquaints you with everything going into this fruit salad, from blocks to bombs, and, while comprehensive, reveals little of just how you're going to make yourself the butt of the yolk.

The initial tracks in campaign mode ease you in gently with completion conditions that are almost forgiving. With the option to adjust the distance between your visor and the virtual floor beneath you, it is entirely possible to play these early stages while sitting down (as long as you don't mind bum-shuffling along your sofa in order to avoid laser walls). But as the tempo amps up, it quickly becomes clear that this is far from the ideal position to play in.

UNBEATABLE

You won't be pirouetting like the most graceful laser-sword initiate, but you'll need to shift

"IT'LL MAKE EVEN THE MOST UNCO-ORDINATED PLAYER FEEL LIKE A BADASS."

yourself if you want to go for the big points. Each cut from your titular sabre is individually scored, with wide, sweeping motions rated the highest. To meet certain score conditions for later stages, you'll absolutely need to go for it and accept the egg on your face. Once you get the hang of these movements across the entertainingly varied campaign mode, it certainly scratches the itch left by Taiko No Tatsujin, and you find yourself making the exaggerated strikes like the drum master you always knew you could be. Coupled with the vibration feedback from striking your sabres against one another or slicing through blocks, each cut feels good.

Unfortunately, playing while standing presents its own challenges. Even in a spacious meeting room sequestered deep within OPM Towers, I feel the restraints of PS VR itself. Whether it's getting tangled up in wires or battering colleagues, there are downsides to flinging your arms around like ever-so-slightly al dente

noodles. You'd better mean it when you select 'All Clear'.

At its core, Beat Saber will make even the most unco-ordinated player feel like a badass with two incandescent rapiers. The neon void in which play takes place doesn't evolve much even as your skills do, and the set list will prove to be just a smidge too select for most tastes. When you're deep in the zone, the sparse play area may well be an asset, though we couldn't help but wish for the spectacle of more visually hectic rhythm titles. While the music selection is narrow and both the party and the freeplay mode feel far lighter than the lengthy challenge of campaign mode, Beat Saber is more than the sum of these parts. Your aching limbs will be testament to that.

VERDICT

Feel the laser burn with this neon-lined rhythm game. Just make sure you have enough room to swing a cat strapped to a laser sabre when you play this one. **Jess Kinghorn**



INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB SQUARE ENIX DEV HUMAN HEAD STUDIOS



BIRD-BRAINED

THE QUIET MAN

No-one's listening

Producer Kensei Fujinaga fights back tears as he explains in a video from Square Enix why *The Quiet Man* exists – aged just 15 he was in hospital and PlayStation 'saved his life', enabling him to communicate with a child who couldn't talk. Nice story. This game, however, isn't going to change anyone's life.

The entire game is silent. Even the emotional musical interlude as club singer Lala takes to the stage, the moment when you, the player, are supposed to fall for this endless victim, is soundless. You see, hero Dane is deaf so you're placed in his designer leathers and asked to experience the world as he does, without a scrap of sound. It's an interesting take, and in our heads somewhere David Cage is clawing at his own hands in frustration that he didn't think of it first. But it also means nothing makes sense. What's worse, Dane can lip-read, so he actually knows what's happening, but you, the player, are left in the dark.

So you're left to fumble at the plot, hoping to work out the storyline as you play: there's a serial killer on the loose, a decades-old argument over a pair of pumps, a love triangle of sorts between Dane, his childhood friend Taye, and the aforementioned club singer who looks exactly like

our hero's dead mum (she's played by the same actress, so at least this one weird point is clearly signalled for you). It's an Oedipal complex made worse as Dane's actual mum revives you by making googly baby faces into the camera, at you, the infant Dane. (We imagine David Cage is throwing furniture by this point.)

JUST, NO

Combat is very simple, with kick, punch, and dodge buttons used to execute Dane's mixed martial arts. It's stiff and clumsy, and done contextually he'll weaponise the gritty urban environments, pouring petrol down racially stereotyped gangsters' throats – we're afraid if the game's not presenting women as devoid of agency, a problem to be fought over, it's typecasting Latino and African American men as violent drug dealers.

The Quiet Man is a once-in-a-generation terrible game mired by technical and racial issues, pretentious ideas, and poor execution. It's an ineffable game that fails to land any of its posy punches. That it merely exists... now that is something to cry over.

VERDICT

You won't believe what you're playing for all the wrong reasons. This should be shown in schools as a warning to future generations. **Ian Dean**



LAST MONTH ON PS PLUS



Maybe it's just us but we always feel a little bit introspective towards the end of the year. This December was no different as we strained our brains to pick our top games of 2018 (see p30). Thankfully, in order to recover from such exertion, we had a delectable selection of PS Plus titles to tuck into.



Existential horror **SOMA** got top billing and, thanks to the addition of Safe

mode earlier this year, there was never a better time to play Frictional's deep water descent. It had a lot on its mind, not least themes of transhumanism, and with Safe mode minimising the threat of enemies the story was able to breathe. If you were looking for something to sink your teeth into after stripping the turkey, this was a fine option.



ONRUSH offered a different kind of thrill with its take on racing. Wearing its

arcade sensibilities on its sleeve, it was all about tricks rather than placing first. Of course, there's nothing quite like bonding over a sick takedown either.

ICONOCLASTS bridged the gap between PS4 and PS Vita by being offered on both. This platformer followed the adventures of Robin, a mechanic with a heart of gold attempting to fix the world. Beautifully presented with a pixel art style, just watch the trailer and try to tell us you're not endeared to it.

Also on PS Vita was **PAPERS, PLEASE**. This politically-minded puzzle game interrogated the issue of immigration policy and, trust us, it was far more engaging than that description suggests.

Rounding out the month on PS3 was (first) **STEREDENN: CLASSIC**. This space shoot-'em-up was a roguelike with procedurally generated levels. Finally, **STEINS;GATE** is a visual novel that featured an unlikely time machine, texts to the past, and... jelly bananas? The basis for an anime, the original iteration was worth experiencing for yourself.

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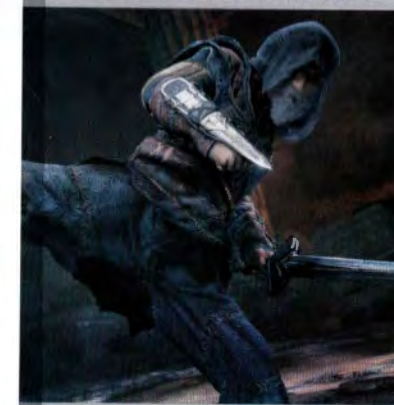
Hitman 2

100

If the chance to hunt down king of death scenes
Sean Bean doesn't tempt you, nothing will...



this month



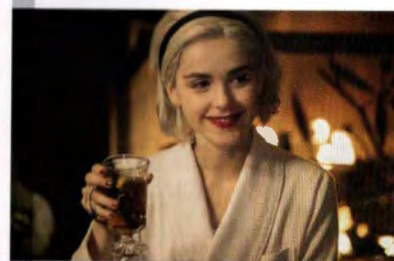
on the store

102 Assassin's Creed Odyssey -
Legacy Of The First Blade
Continue your Greek adventure by
discovering the story behind the
Assassins' hidden blade.



on your xmb

104 The Meg
It's big, it's daft... no, not the titular
prehistoric shark, we're talking
about the whole foolish film!



streaming now

105 This month's hottest shows

online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW



FINAL FANTASY XIV

Jess Kinghorn heads back to Eorzea

After Oscar's trip to the Fan Fest in Las Vegas (p161), I find myself longing for the warmer, simulated climes of Gridania. No, I'm not jealous... least of all of the jetlag he had to contend with. Making the most of server Lousoix's XP boost for new characters, I make an Au Ra lancer and set to work giving Gridanian denizens a helping hand. Unfortunately no good deed goes unpunished as my colleague and I soon realise we are separated by servers. Thankfully it just takes one world transfer and a magical cat girl to rectify things.



NEVERWINTER

Oscar Taylor-Kent rolls the dice on an MMORPG

I've been expanding my culture the only way I know how: dice in hand. Neverwinter has always intrigued as an MMO setting. It's based on the official Dungeons & Dragons licence, and I'm impressed with the D&D throwbacks in the character creation, from allocating stats to character backgrounds, but besides that the game is standard MMORPG fare. But, free to play as it is, on seeing other players zapping around, it's clear I won't get the most out of it without dropping some gold.

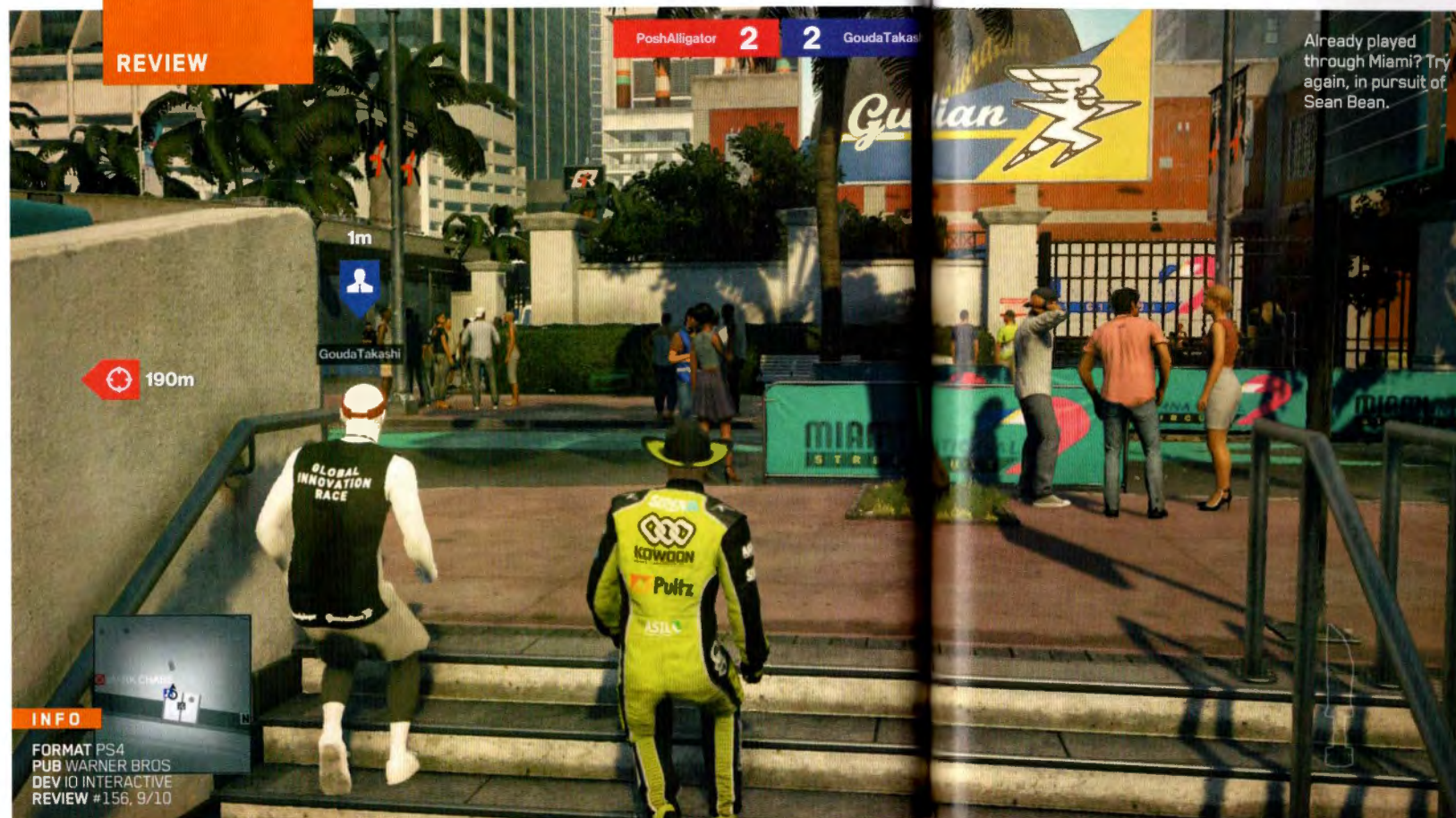


RED DEAD ONLINE - BETA

Ian Dean makes a terrible mistake...

I just couldn't resist the allure of Red Dead Online's beta, and it could be a big mistake. I'm going to be playing this forever! Every custom character looks odd; mine is the spitting image of Jeff Daniels from Dumb and Dumber Too - yes, old Daniels trying to look like young Daniels. This sold the game. Playing the story missions reminds me of classic GTA: there's a silent protagonist, weird characters, straight-to-the-point missions. To date I'm a dab hand at horse rustling, and have been branded a 'victim' in Most Wanted. Ian Daniels knows his place.

REVIEW



INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB WARNER BROS
DEV IO INTERACTIVE
REVIEW #156, 9/10

Hitman 2

Agent 47's playground expands online

While the core single-player stages in Hitman 2 are fantastic, there's a lot about Agent 47's package (the game, that is, not his secret silenced Silverballers), that gives off the feeling of simply being a platform for more to come. We'd love to see that involve more levels, but in the meantime the game's online offerings offer plenty of extra challenge and replayability in a variety of ways that put you to the test, and keep you coming back for more.

Returning from the first game is Contracts mode. Surprisingly fun and moreish, it's here that you can create and share your own hits - opening up all the game's levels to experimental kills. Every inhabitant of every map becomes a potential target, who you can attach certain kill conditions to. Some of the best player-made contracts either challenge you to take

out a seemingly easy target in the most efficient way possible, or to mentally reverse-engineer the thoughts of the player who made it. Just how did they get that particular item to that area unnoticed? With the Legacy Pack, you can make contracts in the enhanced versions of the original game's levels as well. Who knows what more maps could come to the service in the future? Both making

and completing contracts is great fun.

Elusive targets are making a comeback, with your first target, The Undying, being played by Sean Bean. Repurposing the Miami map, the mission breathes fresh life into the familiar setting, giving you just one shot to take out the Beanster before you fail forever. Some extra guidance in the briefing helps you plan out the kill without the fear of

THE HIGHLIGHT IS THE BRAND-NEW GHOST MODE - A 'FIRST TO FIVE KILLS' HEAD-TO-HEAD CHALLENGE.

MISTER BEAN

Sean Bean plays elusive target The Undying. An MI5 agent gone rogue, your briefing tells you he's been reported dead time and time again, like the actor does in his movie roles.



Already played through Miami? Try again, in pursuit of Sean Bean.

WWE 2K19

Ready to Rumble? Well, sadly, you can't

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB 2K
DEV YUKE'S, VISUAL CONCEPTS
REVIEW #155, 8/10

Given the myriad match types in 'real' WWE, online options within its digital equivalent are a touch vanilla. 3v3 brawls offer chaotic fun, but in 2018 net-based Royal Rumbles and Elimination Chamber contests should be more than a pipe dream. Still, there's much to commend in terms of using online options to expand your single-player experience. DLC characters such as Bobby Lashley, EC3, and War Raiders bring an already great roster up to date, while the Community Creations servers deliver thousands of fan-made grapplers from NXT, TNA, WCW, old school WWF, and so on, in addition to detailed arenas past and present, enabling you to relive Hulk Hogan's win over Yokozuna at WrestleMania 9 as often as you like.

VERDICT

A grapple sim whose online elements are essential outside of the ring, yet hit-and-miss - in the most literal sense - once the bell rings. Ben Wilson

failure becoming too overwhelming, though it's still a thriller. We can't wait to see how things like elusive targets continue to add to the game over time.

The highlight of the online game is the brand-new Ghost mode - a 'first to five kills' head-to-head challenge where two Agent 47s compete. Existing in different worlds, the chaos you cause affects you and you alone, and over time your outfits will become compromised as the bodies stack up. Your kills must go unnoticed over a cooling period for you to nab that point, and non-target kills take points off your score. Ghoulis ghost crates provide extra items and disguises to give you the edge. It takes a while to click, but when it does it feels truly fantastic, and matches are tense. Currently only supporting Miami, there's more to come.

VERDICT

Hitman 2's online action gives you the sense that things are only just getting started, but what's here is fantastic. We're keen to see it grow over time. Oscar Taylor-Kent



Soulcalibur VI

Keeping its head against stiff competition

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV BANDAI NAMCO
REVIEW #156, 8/10

Allowing the Soulcalibur VI community to settle down before we set about reviewing its online performance has paid off. While there are plenty of Casual rooms to drop into, and Ranked matches take under a minute to connect with, there are few obscure characters out here now. (Shortly after launch everyone seemed to have made a fighting phallus.) While customised characters are the norm, at least now you can fight without having to explain yourself to anyone who may peer over your shoulder.

Action is fast and there's very little glitching or slowdown. In terms of modes Soulcalibur IV is fairly barren, with only the Ranked and Casual matches being of note. At least that limits the chances of seeing an angry chopper.

VERDICT

Soulcalibur VI is a solid online fighter that performs well, but it could do with more modes to deepen the experience. One for purists. Ian Dean



EXPANSION

Assassin's Creed Odyssey – Legacy Of The First Blade

The Odyssey continues in the first DLC episode

Departing from the DLC content plans of past Assassin's Creed games, Odyssey's is... well... more of an odyssey, we suppose. The continuing adventures of Kassandra/Alexios are episodic and much more sweeping, as the debut instalment of the first bit of DLC, Legacy Of The First Blade, proves.

In Hunted, the first of the three episodes that make up First Blade, your character's Greek adventure continues as they meet the bearded Darius, who is destined to wield the first Assassin's Hidden Blade. He is already on a quest of his own to fight "those who lust for power", and reminds us of some of the traditional Assassins we've become familiar with throughout the series. Though, of course, Odyssey is set so

early in the timeline that the concept of Assassins isn't really properly established yet. That makes discovering more about the early history of the secret order all the more tantalising.

This initial episode sets everything up with plenty for you to do – as if Odyssey wasn't already long enough! With new

enemies to face, new characters to chat with, and new battles to conquer, there's plenty more on the plate. The next two episodes are due out early in 2019. There's a new story, The Fate Of Atlantis, to follow it. Assassin's Creed 3 and Assassin's Creed 3 Liberation remasters arrive in March 2019.

THE BEARDED DARIUS IS ALREADY ON A QUEST OF HIS OWN TO FIGHT 'THOSE WHO LUST FOR POWER'.

ALSO ON PSN



INASA YOARASHI
My Hero One's Justice gets a new playable hero in the form of this student from a rival school. We can't wait to mess around with his Whirlwind Quirk and blow 'em away.



SEASONS
'Tis the season in The Sims 4, with new annual celebrations, year-round activities and a Gardening career. Even if it doesn't snow in real life, you'll be able to make snow angels.



BANANA BUSTER
This spiky boy for World Of Tanks was created by Tank Girl artist Brett Parson. Comes with a month of premium time and other goodies to justify that price tag.



SPACE RACE
Surviving Mars gets its first major expansion. Choose your sponsor wisely as each has their own advantages and agenda when it comes to the red planet.



EVIL COSTUMES
Everyone's favourite Street Fighter V: Arcade Edition gets a bunch of costumes so that your bae can fight dressed like Albert Wesker, Ada Wong, or Jill Valentine.

DLC



FINAL FANTASY XV X FINAL FANTASY XIV CROSSOVER

The powerful Primal Garuda has somehow found its way to Eos. It's up to Noctis and the boys (alongside adorbs cat girl Y'hime!) to stop it. And yes, there is a kawaii cat boy skin for the crown prince if you're so inclined.



SPIDER-MAN - THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

With the final episode of this three-part DLC releasing around the same time as this issue, now's the time to get reacquainted with the rooftops of New York... Not to mention Felicia Hardy, AKA Black Cat, as she returns to spar against Peter Parker.



JURASSIC WORLD: EVOLUTION - THE SECRETS OF DR. WU

The good Doctor is committed to his research into hybrids. Earn his trust through covert work and he'll grant you access to previously unseen parts of the island as well as five new dinosaurs, three of which are the labours of his research.

LIVE GAMES

UPDATE

A series of Fortuna events

Warframe's latest is your Venus, your fire

Building on the excitingly fresh feeling open world format of the last update (Plains Of Eidolon), Fortuna takes you to the sweeping, '80s-pastel vistas of the terraformed planet Venus.

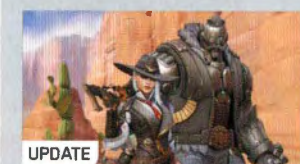
Like in Plains, you can still explore the larger landscape on foot or fly over it in your Archwing, but Fortuna also introduces the rather radical Bondi K-Drive, a type of hoverboard that's all the

rage with the Ventkids on the planet's surface. (Did we mention the '80s?) These boards are built using repurposed Corpus tech, from the mega-corporation that essentially owns the inhabitants of Venus. The body-augmented Solaris inhabitants are under an eternal financial debt to

Corpus, and live in constant fear of the Taxmen. You'd better help 'em out, yeah?

Fortuna adds a ton of content, and all in a neon cyberpunk style that scratches that itch we all feel so acutely. Another free update to Warframe, it's easily accessible to newbies and vet 'framers alike.

THE BODY-AUGMENTED SOLARIS ARE UNDER AN ETERNAL DEBT TO CORPUS.



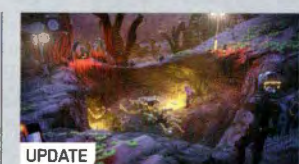
ASHE TO ASHES

This outlaw is the 29th playable hero to be released for Overwatch – it's been ratcheting up from the 21. It launched with back in 2016. Conceptualised simply as a Deadlock Gang rival for McCree in the Reunion animated short, the team realised Ashe had something special. Armed with a rifle she can quick-fire, tons of dynamite, and a robot partner named BOB, she packs quite a punch.



DISCOVER YOURSELF

Fans of the newest Star Trek TV series, Star Trek: Discovery, might want to consider hopping into Star Trek Online now if they haven't already. The game has updated on consoles as Star Trek: Age Of Discovery Part 1, introducing elements from the show into the already ongoing MMO. It adds a new starting experience, characters from the show, a Tier 6 character class, new missions, and more.



VISION QUEST

Hello Games recently updated No Man's Sky's seas as part of The Abyss, but it's already back at it with the Visions update, which adds extra life to the planets' surfaces. Literally, as the many procedurally generated planets you'll be exploring now have even more strange wildlife, and brand-new biomes that give planets a fresh feeling. Alien bones and artefacts wait for you to find them, too.

THE MONTH IN...
BATTLE ROYALE



Where once the lands of Battle Royale were a new frontier filled with promise, the soil here has perhaps proved too fertile. Sure, we love getting dirty, but could it all be a bit too much? There's only one winner.



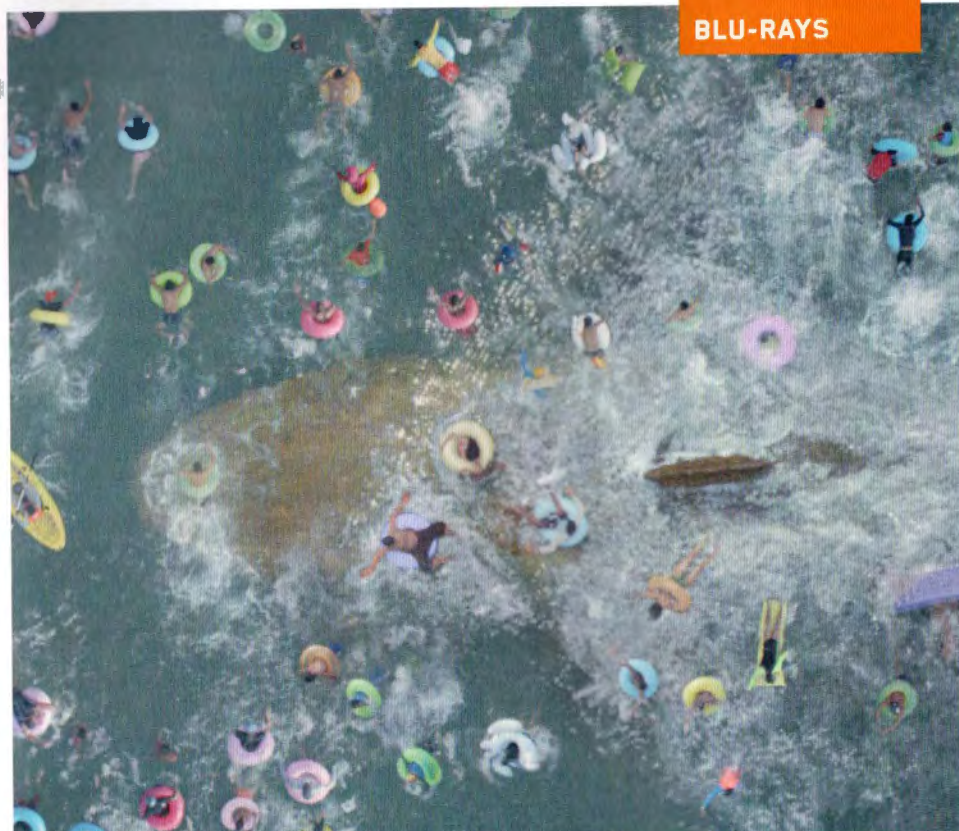
We say this, of course, because of the recent release of **PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds** on PS4. For many, PUBG (pub-jee) was the gateway Battle Royale game back on PC (though true pioneer honours belong to **H1Z1**, which also came to PS4 this year). While it might have popularised the genre, PUBG's fairly ugly design and relatively poor performance on console means it struggles to capture our interest all that much.



Never mind, eh? We've already got **Call Of Duty: Black Ops III's** Blackout mode, which also has a more military shooter design – enhanced with COD's slicker production values. Meanwhile, vibrant **Fortnite** is still huge, and rightly so, with plenty of updates to keep the game feeling fresh and alive for its devoted fanbase. Otherwise, **Battlefield V's** Firestorm mode is coming as a free update in March 2019. If anyone can make large scale conflict more exciting, it's DICE. So where does PUBG fit onto PS4? Time will tell.

on your **XMB**

BLU-RAYS



The Meg

All shark and no bite

How could anyone of sound mind resist a film where Jason Statham battles a shark so big it could eat Jaws for second breakfast? The sight of The Stath swimming solo into shark-infested waters to go mano-a-mano with a 75-foot megalodon is one of the year's purest joys. But there's little else here that transcends The Meg's B-movie trappings.

Statham stars as Jonas Taylor, a deep-sea rescue diver who's laughed out of the business after no-one believes his tales of a close encounter with an aquatic beast bigger than any in recorded history. Five years later a team of trendy science types at research facility Mana One uncover a hidden world beneath the ocean - a world home to Taylor's 'extinct' megalodon.

With a premise like that it will come as little surprise that The Meg resides firmly in the 'so bad it's good' pantheon of giant monster movies. With tongue firmly in cheek, the fearsome fish

makes a beeline for a densely populated beach resort, and chomps down on paddling pooches and a full platter of millennials. Director Jon Turteltaub wrings set-pieces like this for every morsel of tension and humour.

But, on most levels, The Meg is objectively not good. The dialogue is often abysmal, characterisation has the depth of the average bubble bath and the performances are direct-to-DVD standard (Rainn Wilson aside, who chews scenery like a champ). It's not a complete washout, but adjust your expectations before getting in the water. **Jordan Farley**



Megalodons had five rows of seven-inch teeth. Enough to chew the beefy Stath?

COMING SOON



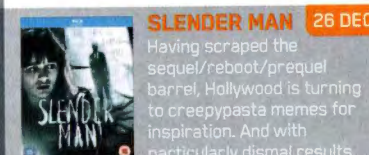
BLACKKKLANSMAN 24 DEC
Spike Lee directs this based-on-true story about an African American police officer who successfully infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan.



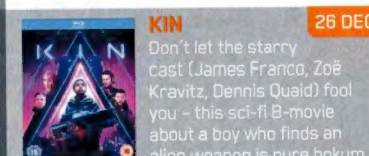
YARDIE 26 DEC
Idris Elba makes his directorial debut with this patchy '80s-set crime thriller about a man who follows his brother's killer from Jamaica to London.



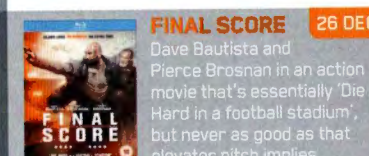
THE SPY WHO DUMPED ME 26 DEC
Milla Kunis and Kate McKinnon are a joy as pals who get caught up in a Bond movie when Kunis learns her old bae worked for the CIA.



SLENDER MAN 26 DEC
Having scraped the sequel/reboot/prequel barrel, Hollywood is turning to creepypasta memes for inspiration. And with particularly dismal results.



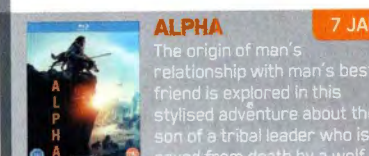
KIN 26 DEC
Don't let the starry cast (James Franco, Zoë Kravitz, Dennis Quaid) fool you - this sci-fi B-movie about a boy who finds an alien weapon is pure hokum.



FINAL SCORE 26 DEC
Dave Bautista and Pierce Brosnan in an action movie that's essentially 'Die Hard in a football stadium', but never as good as that elevator pitch implies.



BLACK 47 26 DEC
An Irish Ranger returns home during the Great Famine to find his family brutalised. Lots and lots (and lots) of satisfying murder ensues.



ALPHA 7 JAN
The origin of man's relationship with man's best friend is explored in this stylised adventure about the son of a tribal leader who is saved from death by a wolf.



DOGMAN 14 JAN
A kind-hearted dog groomer is victimised by a hoodlum in this small-town crime thriller from Matteo Garrone. Contains lots of good dogs.



AMERICAN ANIMALS 14 JAN
Docu-drama about four friends who plan to steal priceless books from their uni library, but learn reality is nothing like the movies.

Streaming **now**



Kiernan Shipka is allergic to cats, hence Salem's reduced role.

FORMAT NETFLIX PRICE £7.99 A MONTH

Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina

The teenage witch conjures a Christmas

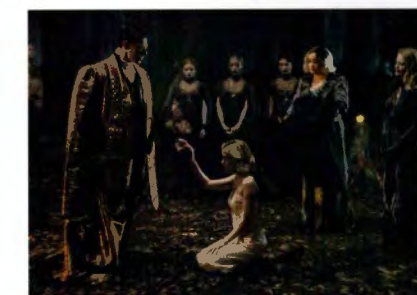
The recently released reboot of Sabrina The Teenage Witch is getting its own yuletide special. In classic Christmas anthology fashion, members of the Church Of Night celebrate the Winter Solstice by regaling each other with ghost stories. Expect some unwelcome guests to slide down the chimney...

Not up to speed on Sabrina's Chilling Adventures? There's much to like in this Netflix update, which abandons the sitcom stylings and (controversially) talking cat of the beloved '90s comedy. Instead, Chilling Adventures adapts the 2014 Archie Horror comic of the same name, which reimagines Sabrina as an occult coming-of-age story.

Half-witch, half-mortal, Sabrina Spellman (Kiernan Shipka) struggles to reconcile her dual nature, refusing to pledge allegiance to the Dark Lord on her 16th birthday, but keeping her occult side secret from her mortal

friends. A big ol' metaphor for the tug-of-war that goes on in every teenage brain, Chilling Adventures isn't a subtle show, nor is it particularly innovative. But it does have a deliciously sinister atmosphere, a likeable cast (including Miranda Otto and Lucy Davis as aunts Hilda and Zelda) and a moreish plot arc taking in all manner of underworld conspiracies.

Mileage will vary depending on your tolerance for teen dramas, but with a second season already confirmed Sabrina will be casting a spell for some time. **Jordan Farley**



MORE TO SEE



THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE SEASON 3

FORMAT AMAZON PRIME PRICE £7.99 A MONTH
The third season of Amazon's alt-history thriller about what would happen if the Nazis ruled the world goes full sci-fi this year by embracing the multiverse depicted in the Man In The High Castle's impossible films.

COBRA KAI SEASON 1

FORMAT YOUTUBE PREMIUM PRICE £11.99 A MONTH
This official Karate Kid sequel is set 34 years after the classic movie and sees a down-on-his-luck Johnny Lawrence and a directionless Daniel LaRusso reignite their rivalry when the Cobra Kai dojo is reopened. Packs a wallop like a Crane Kick to the chin.



KILLING EVE SEASON 1

FORMAT BBC IPLAYER PRICE FREE
Phoebe Waller Bridge, creator of top BBC comedy Fleabag (and Solo's sassy droid L3-37), is behind this twisted thriller about the perverse relationship between MI5 security officer Eve (Sandra Oh) and assassin Villanelle (Jodie Comer). It slays.



HOMECOMING

FORMAT AMAZON PRIME PRICE £7.99 A MONTH
Sam 'Mr Robot' Esmail directs Julia Roberts in her first television show. Based on the hit podcast, Roberts stars as a former caseworker at a centre helping soldiers transition to civilian life, now working as a waitress in a diner. But why did she leave the centre? And what could the strange gaps in her memory mean? Best thing about it: 30-minute episodes!



The big man may now be in his 50s, but back on PS2, the legendary pro was still in his prime.



INFO

PUB ACTIVISION
DEV NEVERSOFT PRODUCTIONS
RELEASED 2001, PS2
GET IT NOW AMAZON, £19.96

NEED TO KNOW

- 1 The game grossed almost \$80m in the US.
- 2 The PS2 version scored 97 on Metacritic.
- 3 Marvel character Wolverine features as a secret skater.



Skate expectations

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative, or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This issue, we scrape our shins performing Indy nosebones while rocking out to Motörhead in the great skater

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

Here's a question, oh lovely reader: what's the highest-scoring PS2 game ever? You're thinking GTA: San Andreas, right? Perhaps Okami and its wondrous wolf goddess?

Actually, surely it's got to be melancholy masterpiece Shadow Of The Colossus? Wrong, wrong, and wrongest. The actual answer is... well, obviously the virtual skater adorning these pages.

Yup, Tony's Hawk Pro Skater 3 has the joint-highest Metacritic score of any PS2 game. Considering it shares said accolade with the genre-defining Grand Theft Auto III, the Birdman's threequel is in ridiculously esteemed company. And you know what? Back in 2001, Tony and his cube-gleaming pals deserved all the acclaim that came their way.

While its legacy hasn't endured in quite the same way as that of Metal Gear Solid 3, Ico, or Resident Evil 4, THPS3 is still one of the most influential sports games ever made. Even before PS2's official network adapter launched in 2002, enterprising skate fans could play the game online via USB ethernet

adapters. Such forward thinking from Neversoft makes Tony's PS2 debut a PlayStation pioneer on par with SOCOM: US Navy SEALs when it comes to breakthrough online action.

Luckily, for the rest of us luddites, who barely had a clue what the internet was back in 2001, the offline component of THPS3 still serves up supreme skating thrills. With far more open, impressively layered tracks than its two PS1 predecessors, bustling NPCs to ollie over, and game-changing new tricks, Hawk absolutely soared on PS2. Just take the addition of the Revert. Arguably the most important move in the 15-game series, this trick lets you amass enormous scores by chaining together vert combos with a single-button manual manoeuvre. Couple this with the debuting balance

NEVERSOFT UTTERLY NAILED THE ZEITGEIST SURROUNDING SKATER CULTURE.



A balance bar lent new depth to rail grinds.



The game was stuffed with sporty sponsors.



Suburbia is an all-time classic track for THPS.

bar for lip tricks, and THPS3 remains the biggest innovator in the series.

Energetic, edgy, with a clear and completely sincere love for the sport, THPS3 was exactly the sort of vibrant, envelope-pushing title that helped define PlayStation as the most modern, relevant games brand of the '90s and noughties. Neversoft didn't just capture the cartilage-ruining spirit of the half-pipe-taming sport, the studio completely nailed the general zeitgeist surrounding skater culture.

WORTH THE SKATE

THPS3 had an electrifying atmosphere skate fans couldn't help but savour. This was a game that was at its best at both ends of the extreme spectrum. At the height of its gravity-defying powers it provided wonderfully absurd spectacle. Example? Pulling off all manner of Eggplants, Mute Inverts, and the odd cheeky BS Disaster while grinding around a cruise ship as Darth Maul. (Activision owned the Star Wars licence then.) Conversely, it also delighted in quiet moments. To this day we cherish memories of serenely skating the kerbs of the inch-perfect Suburbia with Bam Margera, all the while thrashing our overly eager heads to The Ramones' Blitzkrieg Bop. What. A. Soundtrack.

Sadly, in the 17 years since the Birdman flew so dizzily high, the skating genre has gradually been put on life support. Save for ace indie effort Olli Olli and its sequel, skate satisfaction is hard to come by on PS4. Tony, to borrow a phrase from your cereal-loving tiger namesake, you really were one of the PlayStation "grrreats!"

Name that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

- AS FIGHTING GAMES GO, IT'S ROBUST, IT'S DRIPPING WITH FAN-PLEASING REFERENCES.
- A SUPER-NATURAL CONSPIRACY SET IN UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY, IT'S PRETTY GOOD BY ACTION GAME STANDARDS.
- THE BOSTON WASTELAND IS ABSOLUTELY SATURATED WITH THINGS TO DO AND DISCOVER, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO COLONISE
- THE CHARACTER ROSTER IS A BLOATED WHO'S WHO OF THE DC UNIVERSE, AND EVEN MAKES ROOM FOR CULT CLASSICS SWAMP THING AND DOCTOR FATE.

- ANSWERS
1. Dragon Ball FighterZ, issue #145, 9/10
 2. The Order: 1886, issue #108, 5/10
 3. Fallout 4, issue #117, 8/10
 4. Injustice 2, issue #137, 9/10



OPM TIME MACHINE 5 YEARS AGO

Happy New Year? January 2014 began with Dark Souls II glowering out of the cover of **OPM #92**. There's cheerful



1 THE LAST OF US

Closing out the generation in style

When Game Of The Year voting opened last month, every OPM reader had to choose the best game of the year. The last of the PS3 generation was a tough choice, but The Last of Us emerged as the winner. It's a game that's not just a masterpiece of storytelling, but also a technical triumph. It's a game that's not just a masterpiece of storytelling, but also a technical triumph. It's a game that's not just a masterpiece of storytelling, but also a technical triumph.

DEV TALK **FAN TALK** **OPM TALK**

Above Everyone's votes for Game Of The Year were gathered in, and despite PS4 having launched, the winner was a PS3 game. But what a game! Since released on PS4, The Last Of Us is one of the greatest of all time - and we're getting another dose soon.

Below left If a second album is difficult, how hard do you reckon a second Dark Souls is? Punishing.

Below right "Haven't we killed monsters and completed quests many times before?" Not like this!



Far left We ditched our New Year's Resolution for a New Year's Resogun. It was so addictive we had no trouble keeping it.

Left Red Dead Redemption was the game you wanted to get a sequel. Good things come to those who wait...

DON'T MAKE ME PLAY! THE BINDING OF ISAAC: REBIRTH

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game

INFO
PUB NICALIS
DEV NICALIS
RELEASED 2014
GET IT NOW PS STORE, £11.99

WHAT?
A 2011 roguelike twin-stick shooter that was remade from its original Flash release for PS4 and PS Vita and sees you escaping the religious story of the Binding Of Isaac. We called it a "carousel of monstrosities" and awarded it 9/10.



WHO?
Justin Towell does have a soft spot for shooters, but grew up with 'blue sky gaming' which means anything dingier than Daytona's 777 Speedway makes him feel a bit weird.

Exactly what was it about the naked baby running from its fanatical, knife-wielding mother into a nightmare world of guts, blood, and excrement that put me off this game the first time round, eh? When it hit PS Plus a few years ago, the game's gleeful baring of the ugliest sides of humanity instantly made me want to play something else instead. So I did.

But since then, all I've heard is praise. Some people - notably former OPM staffer Louise Blain - absolutely adore this game. So here I am again, fleeing into the basement.

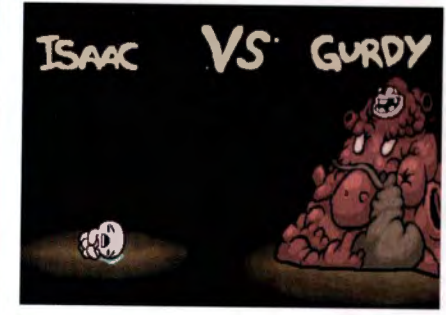
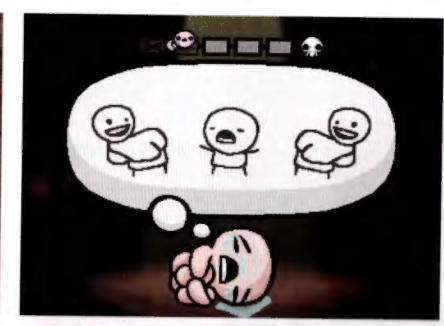
Ah yes, it all comes flooding back like that time someone flushed the already-blocked office toilet. [Thanks for that memory - ed] Within the first few minutes, I encounter a diseased heart thing for a boss, find a rotten

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE LOOKS LIKE PEPPA PIG BY COMPARISON.

baby which becomes my 'friend', and watch two bums taking turns to poo on Isaac in one of the interstitial nightmare animations. That's... harrowing. Our hero then develops gigantism, sells his soul in exchange for a few hearts, and props open his eyes with matchsticks. A Clockwork Orange looks like Peppa Pig by comparison.

And still the humdingers come. A room with piles of poo in every corner? How lovely! Malformed, whimpering babies that are full of flies when they die? The Ambassador is spilling us. And the blood-spewing wound in the chest of the 'Vis' enemy? I don't care what the official line is, that thing is the very definition of 'yonic', and it's really, really unsettling.

Now, I do stick with The Binding Of Isaac, and duly uncover the expertly-designed game within. The constant variety is superb and I admit it is 'good'. But I'd still rather play Enter The Gungeon. It gives me almost the same experience, only with zero poo. Bonus.



Angry-looking worms with big teeth? Check. Piles of faeces? Check. Pools of blood and free-flowing tears? Check. Booking a hotel is quite the minefield, eh? Fnar, and indeed, fnar.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

PS4 HALL OF FAME

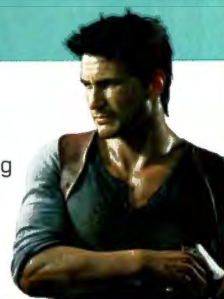


1



UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

Nathan Drake's swan song is a daring evolution. It combines series-defining set-pieces, quietly devastating storytelling beats, and sprawling levels that make you feel like a real-life explorer. This franchise finale retains its signature charm, with the wisecracks flowing as fast as the bullets, while the new characters each justify their inclusion. With an astonishing attention to detail, it's Naughty Dog's best yet.



2

NEW!



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

There are a lot of open world games, but none that make you feel like you're a part of a world in quite the same way as Arthur Morgan's wild west adventure. Tremendously physical, an epic story, and some of the most satisfying headshots you'll ever find.

3



GOD OF WAR

A departure in some ways but a resounding return in others, Kratos is back with a son and a ruddy big axe. Taking the legend from Greek to Norse mythology, this entry brings a lot to the table while improving on what was core to the earlier series' identity.

4



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

The White Wolf's epic journey is an RPG experience like no other on PS4. It's been made even more spectacular with this gigantic pack stuffed with DLC, making it a must-have part of any gaming library.

5



ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

A beautiful open world where every Greek island tells a unique story. AC Odyssey is an epic in the truest sense, with lively writing, mythical beasts to battle, and a poignant Assassin's Creed story that lays the bed for all the lore to come. A brilliant spectacle.

6



HORIZON ZERO DAWN

A staggeringly large world that condenses cracking combat, accessible systems, and uncut eye-candy into an action RPG that will please anyone. In Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

7



MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

Borrowing heavily from Rocksteady's Batman series, this delivers the heart and soul of Marvel's superhero. It ticks every box you could ask for: perfect web-swinging, a powerful story, a roster of classic villains, and all of New York to defend.

8



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than a mere HD remaster. Upgraded to a glorious 1080p, it weaves everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather, and a game-changing FPS mode.

9



BLOODBORNE

With the finest third-person melee combat in gaming, drool-worthy art design and the most twisted monsters imaginable, this is a gorgeously gothic must-have. The Old Hunters expansion adds enough nightmare fuel to make a return to Yharnam essential.

10

NEW!



HITMAN 2

Agent 47 sneaks his way into the ultimate PS4 stealth-'em-up. With a fantastic set of new maps, it also plays host to legacy content for all the missions in the first game, making it the new de facto Hitman hub. No stealth game is more satisfying.

11



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

While retaining that distinct storytelling and sense of wonder that defines an MGS title, MGS V offers a level of freedom unheard of in any sandbox. Grand, majestic, and bittersweet, it's an instant classic.

12



OVERWATCH

PS4's best multiplayer shooter bursts with colour, character, and charm. At its core, Overwatch is a pleasing mix of empowerment and teamwork, enhanced by a raucous roster. Expect to become obsessed with landing Play Of The Game. Boop.

13



RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Capcom's greatest series returns to terrifying form thanks to a trip to Louisiana to meet the Baker family, who stalk you around their mansion. While the second half of the game doesn't match the intensity of the first, this is still essential for any horror fan.

14



MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Presenting a vibrant open world, light on story but heavy on action, this is the most accessible entry in the series yet. Perfecting the feel-good grind through its complex systems and pitch-perfect multiplayer, it's a PS4 must-play.

15



TOWERFALL ASCENSION

You haven't lived until you've enjoyed a four-player free-for-all in this instant couchplay classic. The solo campaign is fine by itself, but almost nothing beats the arrow-grabbing, death-defying last-second kills of local multiplayer's mayhem.

16



DISHONORED 2

The follow-up to a PS3 great, mixing a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-ing immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to learning to link your powers, there's so much scope for experimenting.

17



THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

18



PERSONA 5

Atlus' anime wonder dazzles thanks to its mix of friendship building, stylish dungeons, and speedy turn-based combat. Add a story oozing with darkness and taboo-busting confidence and you have the gold standard for JRPGs on PS4.

19



ALIEN ISOLATION

Explore Ridley Scott's original vision of a horror-tinged future in startling fidelity with an attention to detail that borders on the obsessive. It's time to remember what made the xenomorph so scary in the first place... and then get killed by it.

20



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Bluepoint completely overhauls the visuals of Team Ico's masterpiece but still manages to match the original step-for-step in its remake. New controls and a beautiful photo mode add to the package. Wander's tragic quest has never looked or played better.

21



DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ

The most beautiful game on PS4? Possibly. This fighter from genre masters Arc System Works is a polished gem packed with content. Whether you're a hardcore fight fan or solo arcade basher, or just love the anime, Dragon Ball FighterZ sets a new standard.

22



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Rocksteady sends the Bat out with a bang. A compelling, cathartic story adds new layers to the Dark Knight, while PS4 allows Gotham to blossom with a truly amazing engine. The stealth still sings, the fisticuffs are fab, and the Batmobile is brilliant.

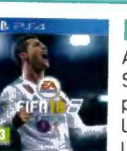
23



STREET FIGHTER V: ARCADE ED.

This fighter has finally come into its own. Arcade combines all previously released DLC, a slicker UI, and new modes, including fine-tuned online play. The titular mode, which explores over 30 years of series history, makes a welcome return to the ring too.

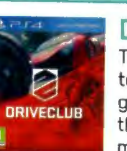
24



FIFA 19

Another year, another FIFA, but what an edition. Subtle changes on the pitch make tackles more physical and see shots finessed into the net, while Ultimate Team gets a makeover, and the Champions League arrives. The best FIFA yet? Absolutely.

25



DRIVECLUB

This phenomenal racer leaves its rivals for dust due to gorgeous graphics, strong social features and great handling. Major add-on Driveclub Bikes is also the greatest bike racing game on PS4, thanks to making driving on two wheels fun again.

BUBBLING UNDER Alternative picks

We mine the library for gold. This month: a whole world of RPGs

PICK #1



FINAL FANTASY IX

Jess Kinghorn returns to this classic tale. The original is as old as my kid sister but in all that time I've never strayed far from Gaea. The Digital Edition comes with an appropriate console theme, which inspired in me a wave of nostalgia. Even though Melodies Of Life is one of my least favourite themes from the series, there are plenty of reasons why I return to the game, from attempting to learn another language through it to using it to introduce my Mum to the medium.

PICK #2



TALES OF BERSERIA

For Oscar Taylor-Kent Velvet Crowe's Kill-Bill-like revenge quest shouldn't be missed. With a silky smooth combo-based combat system and a mature, yet somehow not too edgy, story, this is one of the strongest titles in the long-running Tales series. With hours of dialogue, hundreds of action RPG fights, and plenty of ground to cover, it's a sometimes grand adventure. But it's a snug-feeling one that fills the need for a cosy JRPG you get on rainy days.

A WARM, SNUG-FEELING ADVENTURE THAT FILLS THE NEED FOR A COSY JRPG.

PICK #3



PILLARS OF ETERNITY

Ian Dean embraces the '90s - Joe Bliggs jeans, high-energy techno, too much John Travolta - but the RPGs were great. Obsidian's Pillars Of Eternity turns back the clock to the heyday of isometric action RPGs set in hard fantasy worlds. With balanced team tactics and a script that brilliantly wraps its world around you yet still finds time for sharp bickering, it's a beautifully crafted ode to the decade.



Pillars Of Eternity looks like a classic '90s RPG but features all the balance and storytelling of a modern PS4 release.

THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

PS VR HALL OF FAME



1



THE PERSISTENCE

Designed specifically for PS VR, this first-person horror roguelike is, arguably, the headset's first true killer app. With the action structured around short bursts of intense survival, this shooter manages to pack in everything expected of a PS4 release, in VR. Clever ideas, unique weapons, genuine jump scares, and beautiful visuals delivered with zero motion sickness. All this plus inventive couchplay too.



2



REZ INFINITE

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality in PS VR. This psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X; it's powerful enough to bring players to tears. Worthy of its name, this is a timeless title.

3



THUMPER

Make no mistake: the brave chrome beetle gives Rez a run for its money. Hurling down a violently kaleidoscopic track, pounding notes and scraping round corners is exquisitely tough – and the manic magic is enhanced and perfected in PS VR.

4



ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

This pint-sized adventure packs charm in spades even if it isn't chock-full of challenge. Bringing the classic puzzle platformer formula bang up to date in PS VR, it won't take many levels before you're calling out, "Beam me up, Botty!"

5



KEEP TALKING AND NOBODY EXPLODES

Who knew bombs could bring people together? With one headsetted Defuser, and as many Experts as you can fit around a 23-page manual, no other VR game comes close for inclusive, endless multiplayer fun.

6



STATIK

Saw meets Portal in this fantastic puzzler. It makes ingenious use of the DualShock 4 by giving every button a specific function. You'll need to use them all to free your hands from the strange box in which they're trapped. An intriguing concept done well.

7



FIREWALL: ZERO HOUR

There's only one game mode, a cat-and-mouse assault to find and either destroy or protect a laptop, but when the shooting is this laser-focused, who could want more? A PS Aim controller is a must to get the most from PS VR's standout shooter.

8



RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Can you go eye-to-eye with the Bakers? Playing in VR raises the tension to almost unbearable levels and has gameplay benefits such as face-aiming, which makes shooting a lot easier. A brilliant example of how VR can improve already great games.

9



DOOM VFR

A new take on a classic game, this proves first-person shooters can shine in VR. A mix of control choices, including the PS Aim controller, ensures Doom is as fast and fluid in VR as it's ever been. Every PS VR owner needs this in their collection.

10



TO THE TOP

Leaping into our PS VR top 10, this creative platform-puzzler enables you to scamper, jump, and skate across its 35 sandbox worlds. It's as physically demanding as it is perplexing, and all the better for it. To The Top is a PS VR one-off.

11



RIGS: MECHANIZED COMBAT LEAGUE

Mech-suited shooter b-ball where you dunk yourself through the hoop? It might sound goofy, but it's PS VR's most elegant team sport. Potential nausea aside, this is the future of competitive gaming.

12



STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

Mixes the fanboy fantasy of nestling in the Captain's chair (or taking control of the helm, weapons, or engineering section) on a USS starship with the strongest co-op experience on PS VR. This is Star Trek's finest hour on PlayStation.

13



SPRINT VECTOR

A crazy mix of SSX racing and obstacle course high jinks, Sprint Vector makes use of the best control setup on PS VR to deliver a near perfect experience. A single-player Challenge mode and online races impress; only the poor single-player AI holds it back.

14



BATMAN: ARKHAM VR

Not only is the training mission an unparalleled exercise in wish fulfilment (Wayne Manor! The Batcave! Batarangs!) but the defiantly sharp, if short, campaign is the epilogue to Arkham Knight we needed and deserved. Bats off to you, Rocksteady.

15



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM VR

Though compromises have been made to texture detail and controls, you get all of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, including the expansions, inside PS VR. The scale and organic nature of the world at your feet overcomes any shortcomings.

16



MOSS

Guide adorable mouse heroine Quill through a fantasy storybook world full of virtual puzzles, fights with insects, and perfectly pitched Disney influences. There's no need to say cheese, because you'll be smiling as you play, all day long.

17



ACCOUNTING+

One of PlayStation's funniest games is a dark, twisted journey into the world of accounting. It's an Inception-like dive into increasingly bizarre and frequently hilarious scenarios that will scratch the itch of any Rick And Morty fan.

18



FARPOINT

This sci-fi shooter is a brilliant showcase for the PS Aim controller, a versatile bit of kit that makes the satisfying range of weapons feel weighty and real. The game matches it, delivering a strong story and challenging co-op for great VR action.

19



KNOCKOUT LEAGUE

Punching things is possibly the least creative use of the VR medium, but when it's used to create a classic arcade boxing sim that plays like a brutal puzzle puncher, it's irresistible. It's also good for you: it tracks your calorie count as you work up a sweat.

20



APEX CONSTRUCT

This story-driven FPS demonstrates five-to-eight hour adventures can work in PS VR. Building its narrative organically through physically exploring the game's world while fending off mechanical creatures with a trusted bow and arrow is a delight. Ambitious.

21



TRANSFERENCE

Come home to these ghosts in the machine. Traipsing through each family member's surreal vision of the apartment they share in first-person horror is a wonderfully dreadful experience. Trespassers will be thoroughly spooked.

22



GNOG

This puzzler doesn't require PS VR to play, but hugely benefits from it. Giant floating heads hide gentle conundrums, and only by probing them can you discover their secrets. A vivid art style makes this already lovely treat feel all the more vibrant.

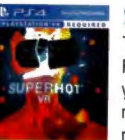
23



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT ROGUE ONE: X-WING VR MISSION

Climbing into the cockpit of an X-wing is one of the most potent bits of wish fulfilment on PS VR. It may only be 15 minutes long, but this free Star Wars Battlefront DLC is a magical portal into the movies.

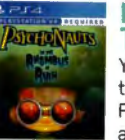
24



SUPERHOT VR

Time moves only when you move in this exceptional PS VR first-person shooter that manages to make you feel like you're playing through a slow-mo action movie. The free Superhot Forever update adds even more challenges. Make time for VR bullet time.

25



PSYCHONAUTS IN THE RHOMBUS OF RUIN

Your cynical inner voice says this is a marketing tool to remind you how amazing Psychonauts is ahead of Psychonauts 2. Your gamer voice will tell it to shut up and enjoy one of PS VR's best virtual adventures.

ON-THE-GO GOODNESS

PS VITA HALL OF FAME



1



TEARAWAY

One of the best platformers on the system, it makes terrific use of the entire PS Vita to create a unique experience: camera, touchscreen, touchpad; it's all here. The PS4 version has more content, but it remains more intimate and special on PS Vita.

2



PERSONA 4: GOLDEN

Where Persona 5 went bigger on PS4, this ultimate version of Persona 4 nails the warmth of a small-town high school setting. Filled with timeless characters, the Investigation Team dig into a murder mystery and befriend demons.

3



UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

Nathan Drake proves it's not the size of the package that counts, but what you do with it in this prequel expedition. Packed with Uncharted charm, this pulp action adventure is the biggest spectacle on the little handheld.

4



DANGANRONPA: TRIGGER HAPPY HAVOC

If being trapped in a school for the exceptionally gifted weren't scary enough, a murderous bear is goading everyone to kill their classmates. Investigations and trial scenes; thinking caps on.

5



TXK

Bright lights and flashing colours. That's the emergency services coming to move you on, as you remain still and engrossed in this pulse-pounding shooter that's always ready to turn your PS Vita into a trippy, zen-like getaway.



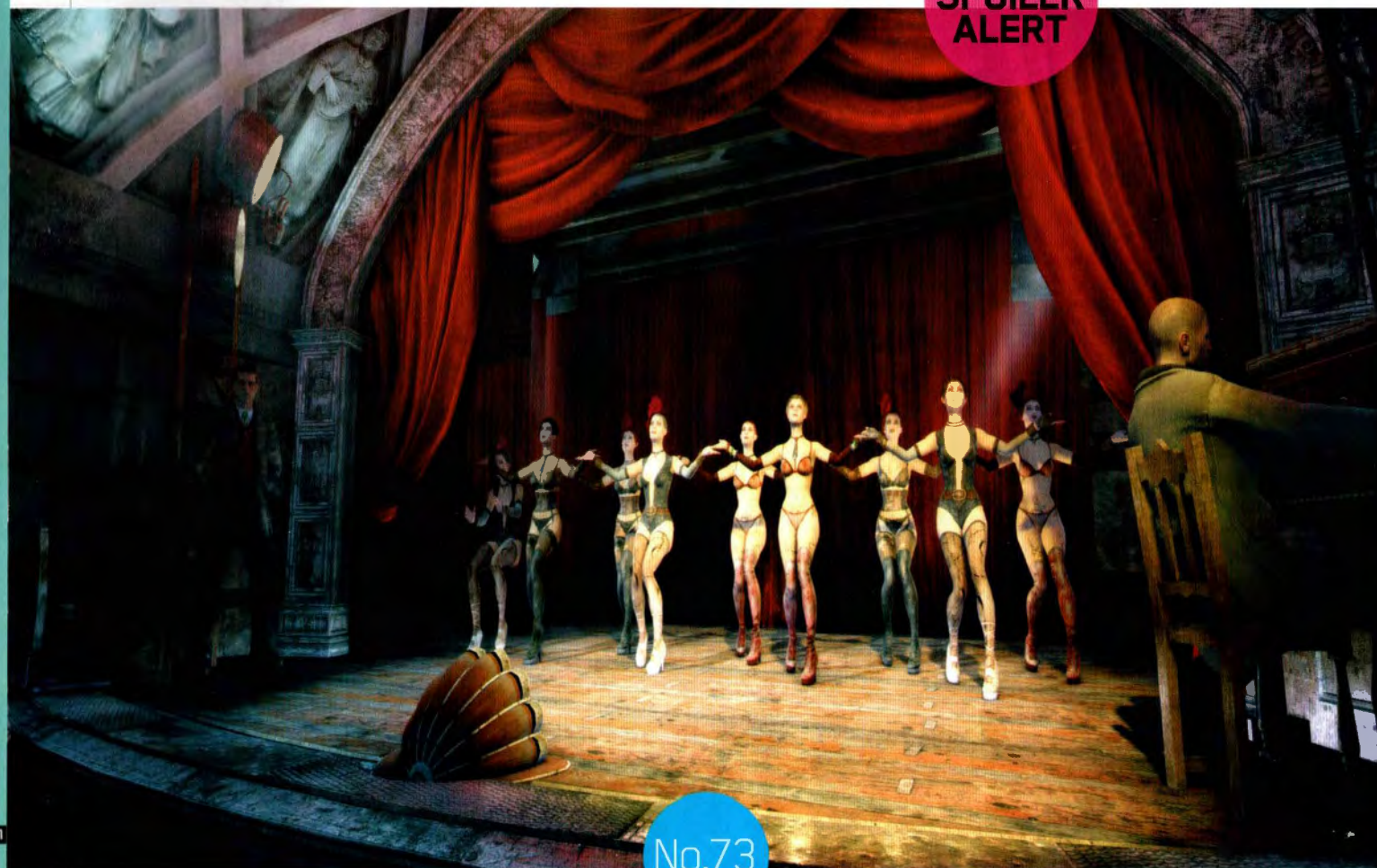
THE CLASSIC

DO IT YOURSELF

PlayStation Classic is a great bit of kit, but why stop there for your retro fix?

The original PlayStation was such a great console that distilling its library down to 20 games to represent it is a Sisyphean task. Strong as Classic's lineup may be, everyone's going to have games they feel are missing. But a reminder: many of the true PlayStation greats are already available to download on PS Vita. Turn your Vita into your own DIY PS Classic with the likes of Castlevania, Tomb Raider, Gex, Tomba, Suikoden, Crash Bandicoot, Vagrant Story, Spyro, and many, many more!

LOOK AWAY!
**SPOILER
ALERT**



No.73

Bolshoi meets world

Discovering Metro: Last Light's terrific theatre

■ **FORMAT** PS3 / **PUB** DEEP SILVER / **DEV** 4A GAMES / **RELEASED** 2013 / **SCORE** 9/10

**Last
Month**

**Metal Gear
Solid V**
The silence
is almost
unbearable
as you follow
Quiet into the
desert.

Talk about effective scene-setting. The tenth level of Metro: Last Light serves up one of the best pieces of interactive storytelling you'll find in any game, let alone a mutant-murdering FPS. This dystopian shooter is filled with moments of quiet character building, and no set-piece stands out more than Artyom's captivating trip to an underground theatre.

As Metro's futuristic Moscow has been levelled by nuclear war, a night on the town enjoying Hamilton while necking prosecco is never going to be on the cards

for its populace. Still, just because bloodthirsty mutants roam the remains of Red Square, it doesn't mean the slivers of humanity who exist in the city's underground system can't enjoy a little culture. Enter Last Light's wonderfully executed theatre stroll.

As Artyom pursues the last surviving Dark One, he's afforded a little downtime at the Bolshoi Theatre. Of course, seeing as people can no longer live on the surface, Joseph Bove's world-famous opera house can only exist as a dingy little auditorium that shares space with a sleazy

bar, slums, and filthy pig pens. Yet despite the setting, hope remains. Whether it's eavesdropping on old war tales, watching a man make shadow puppets in a dimly lit alcove to entertain a group of besotted children, or listening to a creaky accordion player gamely banging out ditties onstage, humanity endures.

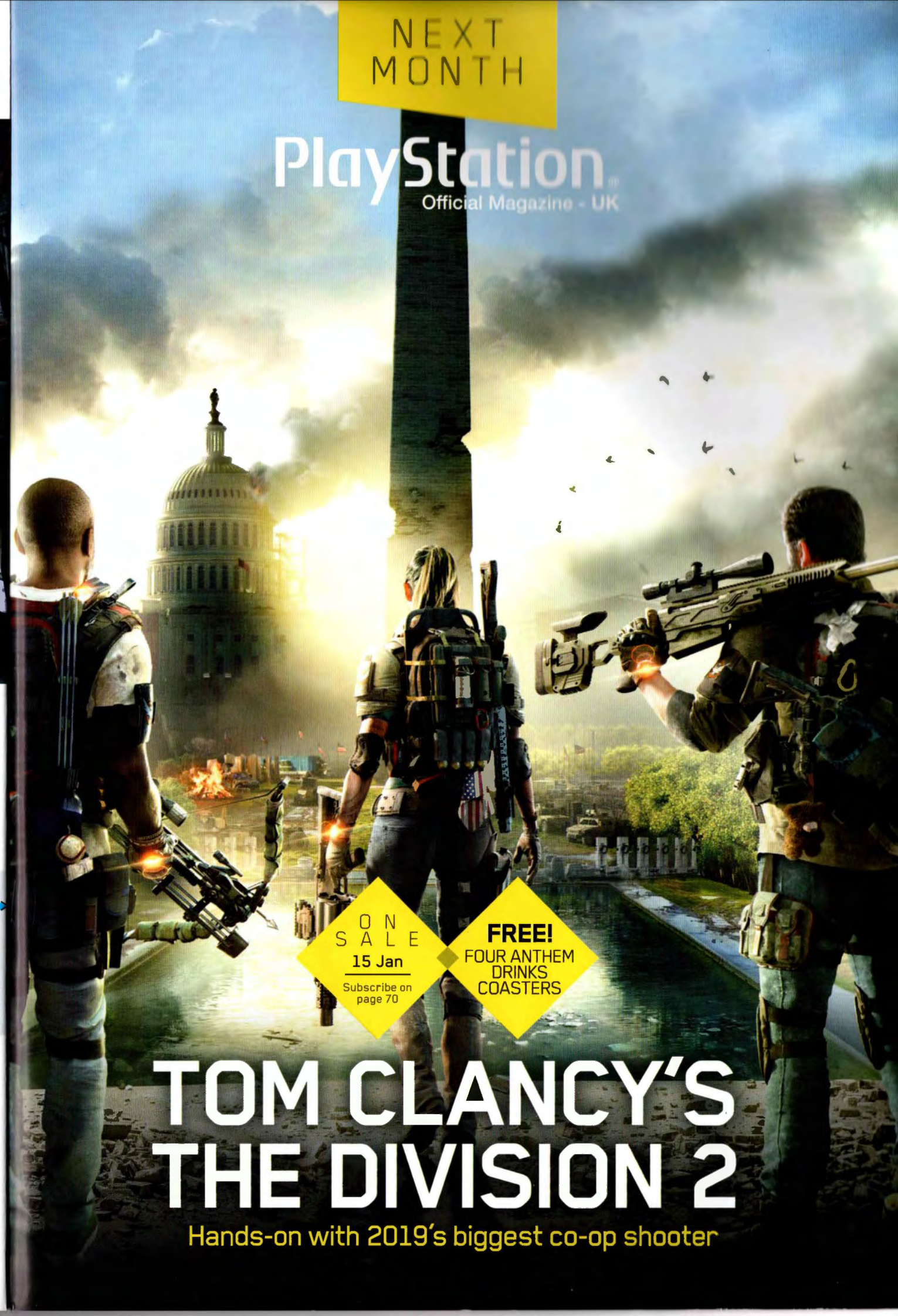
While it's easy to recall Metro: Last Light's crunching shootouts, five years after its original release, no memory burns brighter than shuffling through that ramshackle theatre. Nuclear war or not, the subterranean show must go on. ■

**Next
Month**

Persona 5
Remember
when Ann's
Persona finally
awakened and
we all went
crazy for
catsuits?

**NEXT
MONTH**

PlayStation
Official Magazine - UK



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