PS4 PlayStation4 | PS4 Pro PlayStation4 | PlayStation VR | PS VITA PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

ISSUE 139 SEPTEMBER 2017
gamesradar.com/opm

HANDS-ON

FAR CRY 5

Montana mayhem! We blow the doors off Eden's Gate

BOOTYLICIOUS

SKULL & BONES

We set sail for the ultimate hijinks on the high seas

DAVID CAGE ON CUTTING CONTENT FROM PS4'S DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN

ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS

Exclusive access to the epic prequel that will reshape the series

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST!

WOLFENSTEIN II

Reich here, Reich now! We shoot our way through Nazi-controlled Roswell

Future
ISSUE 139

CHILLOUT GAMES

we value your games

www.chilloutgames.co.uk/Sell

review centre since 1st 2005

We Pay £££ For Your Games:



£12.03



£71.12



£10.76





£21.93



£18.58



£14.57



£18.67



£15.42



£32.53



£12.84



£19.16

-GET GREAT PRICES
-WITH FREE COURIER AND FAST PAYMENT



Prices valid as at 30th July 2017. Prices subject to change on a daily basis. Chillout Games and retro-games.co.uk are trading names of Chillout Games Ltd. Prices are for shop credit - 12% more than PayPal. T&Cs at www.chilloutgames.co.uk.

PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

ISSUE 139 / SEP 2017
Future Publishing Ltd, Quay House, The Ambury,
Bath BA1 1UA, United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0) 1225 442244
Email opm@futurenet.com **Twitter** @OPM_UK
Web www.gamesradar.com/opm

EDITORIAL
Editor Ian Dean **@IanDean4**
Managing art editor Milford Coppock **@milfcoppock**
Operations editor Miriam McDonald **@crinolinerobot**
Games editor Ben Tyrer **@bentyrer**
Shaming editor The Goat Of Shame **@TheGoatOfShame**

CONTRIBUTORS
Adam Cook, Anne-Marie Coyle, Alex Spencer, Ben Griffin, Ben Wilson, David Meikleham, Dominic Peppiatt, Cliff Newman, Ian Evenden, Jenny Baker, Joe Parlock, Jordan Farley, Justin Towell, Leon Hurley, Louis Pattison, Louise Blain, Luke Kemp, Monika Daniels, Phil Iwaniuk, Rodney Dive, Simon Bramble, Zoe Delahunty-Light

ADVERTISING
Media packs are available on request
Commercial director Clare Dove
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising director – Games Andrew Church
For Ad enquiries contact andrew.church@futurenet.com
01225 442244

INTERNATIONAL
Official PlayStation Magazine is available for licensing. Contact the international department to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of international licensing Matt Ellis
matt.ellis@futurenet.com +44 (0)1225 442244

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Campaign manager Helen Harding
UK reader order line & enquiries +44 (0)344 848 2852
Online enquiries www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Email contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
International +44 (0) 344 848 2852

CIRCULATION
Circulation account manager Tom Cooper
tom.cooper@futurenet.com

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION
Head of production UK & US Mark Constance
Production Project Manager Clare Scott
Advertising Production Manager Joanne Crosby
Digital Editions Controller Jason Hudson
Production Controller Vivienne Calvert

MANAGEMENT
Finance & Operations Director Marco Peroni
Creative director, magazines Aaron Asadi
Art & design director Ross Andrews
Group editor in chief Tony Mott
Senior art editor Warren Brown

PRINTED IN THE UK BY
William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future
DISTRIBUTED BY
Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU

abc The ABC combined print, digital and digital publication circulation for Jan-Dec 2016 is **28,120** (**Print** 24,769 **Digital** 3,351)
A member of the Audited Bureau of Circulations

Want to work for Future
Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs

All contents © 2017 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

ISSN: 1752210

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Future is an award-winning international media group and leading digital business. We reach more than 49 million international consumers a month and create world-class content and advertising solutions for passionate consumers online, on tablet & smartphone and in print.

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

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial officer Penny Ladkin-Brand

Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244 (Bath)

Welcome



GAME OF THE MONTH
Pro Evolution Soccer 2018
FAVE EGYPTIAN GOD
Hapi – God of the Nile

This issue we welcome back an old friend. Assassin's Creed, we've missed you. And what a return! Assassin's Creed Origins (p56) looks to be the game Ubisoft has always threatened to make: an open-world, RPG-lite, tomb-raiding, stat-levelling, loot-hoarding masterpiece. To learn more we exclusively sat down with director Ashraf Ismail and to uncover details on the game's factions, tombs, and combat.

We also scooped an exclusive hands-on with Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus (p68), playing all-new levels of the game to learn why BJ Blazkowicz's return to PS4 could be 2017's sleeper hit.

On top of this, Ben played Knack 2 with Mr PlayStation, Mark Cerny (you can read what happened on page 6), I got to spend a day at Anfield playing PES 2018 (p43), and we all sat around contorting our faces for That's You!, PlayLink's fun debut. Have you played it yet? Send us your selfies!

"I GOT TO SPEND A DAY AT ANFIELD PLAYING PES 2018."

Ian Dean
EDITOR
opm@futurenet.com
@IanDean4



Secure OPM #140 + photo mode supplement
Subscribe on p74 by 11 August

THIS MONTH'S GODS OF EGYPT



Ben Tyrer
GAMES EDITOR
Ben jumped at the chance to step up and become OPM's new Games Ed. In fact, he got all wrapped up.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Crash Bandicoot: N. Sane Trilogy
FAVE EGYPTIAN GOD
Set – God of chaos



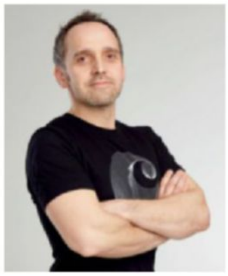
Louise Blain
GUEST WRITER
With a Jen-shaped hole in OPM Towers, Louise was on hand to play AC Origins. She turned heads, or was it the Pharaohmones?

GAME OF THE MONTH
Assassin's Creed Origins
FAVE EGYPTIAN GOD
Seshat – Writing goddess



Miriam McDonald
OPERATIONS EDITOR
After spending the month trading space junk in Elite, Mim launched her own get-rich-quick idea. It's a pyramid scheme.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Elite: Dangerous
FAVE EGYPTIAN GOD
Bast – Cat goddess



Milford Coppock
MANAGING ART EDITOR
Milf has been invited to star in the World Powerlifting Championships (he's the UK champ). We hope he won't need of a Cairo-practor.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Uncharted: The Lost Legacy
FAVE EGYPTIAN GOD
Ptah – God of creation

Contents

Sept mber 2017



HIGHLIGHTS

THE BIG 10

006 KNACK 2

Sony never lost faith in its puzzle-platformer. We go hands-on to see if we'll become true believers.

PREVIEW

044 FAR CRY 5

Taking a deeper look at what's going on in the creepier corners of rural Montana.

VIEWPOINT

054 SONIC MANIA

Sonic couldn't move fast enough to meet our print deadline – here's our pre-release opinion.

FEATURE

056 ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS

We've had a special hands-on with Assassin's latest, and Bayek it's gorgeous!

FEATURE

064 DESTINY 2

Art director Michael Zak reveals how his team created a whole new universe to play in.

FEATURE

068 WOLFENSTEIN II: THE NEW COLOSSUS

For BJ the '60s aren't so much swinging as blasting, as he pummels some all-American Nazis.

REVIEW

078 CRASH BANDICOOT N. SANE TRILOGY

Don't be fooled by that loveable face: Crash is back, and he's as tough as they come.

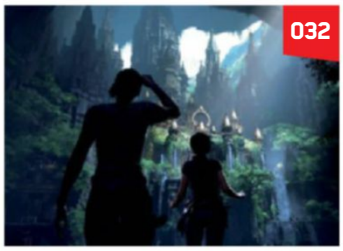
REVIEW

086 FINAL FANTASY XII: THE ZODIAC AGE

Sailing onto PS4 with an improved battle system and soundtrack, it's a beautiful remaster.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!
Do you want special covers like these? Then you need to subscribe, and we'll give you a free Guardians Of The Galaxy season pass. Turn to p74...







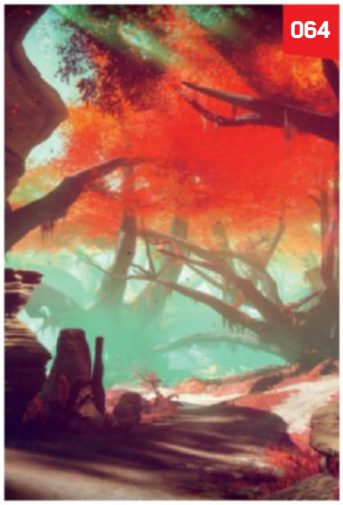




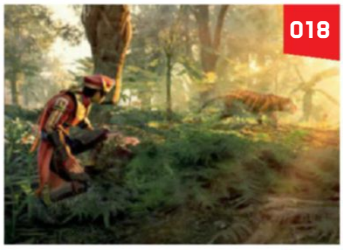














THE GAMES INDEX

014 ACE COMBAT 7
012 A PLAGUE TALE: INNOCENCE
091 ARIZONA SUNSHINE
056 ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS
091 AVEN COLONY
085 BLACK THE FALL
019 CITY OF BRASS
078 CRASH BANDICOOT N. SANE TRILOGY
042 DANGANRONPA V3: KILLING HARMONY
091 DEAD BY DAYLIGHT
010 DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN
052 DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ
018 DYNASTY WARRIORS 9
088 ELITE: DANGEROUS
044 FAR CRY 5
086 FINAL FANTASY XII: THE ZODIAC AGE
096 FINAL FANTASY XIV: STORMBLOOD
098 FINAL FANTASY XV: EPISODE PROMPTO
011 GRAN TURISMO SPORT
048 KINGDOM COME: DELIVERANCE
006 KNACK 2
053 LASER LEAGUE
016 LIFE IS STRANGE: BEFORE THE STORM
038 METAL GEAR SURVIVE
090 MICRO MACHINES: WORLD SERIES
092 MINECRAFT: STORY MODE – SEASON 2, EPISODE 1
050 MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD
043 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2018
053 SHAKEDOWN: HAWAII
040 SKULL & BONES
036 SONIC FORCES
054 SONIC MANIA
037 SOUTH PARK: THE FRACTURED BUT WHOLE
053 SPARC
085 SUNDERED
093 THAT'S YOU!
053 THE INPATIENT
085 THESEUS
032 UNCHARTED: THE LOST LEGACY
053 UNDERTALE
082 VALKYRIA REVOLUTION
097 WIPEOUT OMEGA COLLECTION
068 WOLFENSTEIN II: THE NEW COLOSSUS
084 YONDER: THE CLOUD CATCHER CHRONICLES

SECTIONS AT A GLANCE

THE BIG 10 — All the hottest news — 006
PREVIEWS — Latest info, screens and playtests — 031
FEATURES — To-the-point, detailed analysis — 056
REVIEWS — In-depth verdicts on every big new game — 077
NETWORK — Max out your PS4, online and off — 095
RETRO STATION — Classics revisited — 102



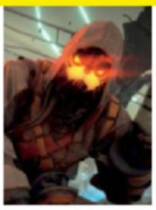
Knack can now grow exponentially larger this time around, leading us to dub this bigger version of him Knackzilla.

"THE INTRODUCTION OF A SECOND GAMER PLAYS A HUGE PART IN CREATING A DEEPER COMBAT SYSTEM."









12 RAT'S ALL FOLKS
A Plague Tale brings the rodents.

16 COOKING UP A STORM
Final look at episodic prequel.

20 PS NOW YOU'RE TALKING!
The streaming service gets PS4 games.

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

OPM takes on Knack 2 with Mark Cerny

We go hands-on, playing three new levels with the game's director

01

OPM are sitting in Sony's London HQ next to the man who is both the lead system architect of the console we're playing on and director of the surprise sequel we're here to play. It's no understatement to say that Mark Cerny is one of the biggest names in the world of PlayStation and, fortunately for us, he's also our co-op partner as we play through the game none of us expected.

Our first level together is an early one called Running The Gauntlet. Knack, Dr. Vargas (Knack's creator), Ryder, and Lucas are on the hunt for allies, and their quest has led them to a monastery where Knack has to prove himself by clobbering through waves of fighters.

Cerny says that he wanted Knack 2 to have a deeper combat system than the first game, and it's immediately apparent that the introduction of a second gamer plays a huge part in this, because you can use your partner for special moves. For instance, if you get behind a buddy's Knack and start hitting – as Cerny does to me – you can shoot tiny pieces of them at enemies. All of a sudden, we're a pretty handy machine gun as enemies can't get in touching distance of us.

It's not just co-op that improves the combat; there's an expanded move set for the adaptable guy. With a push of L1, Knack throws up a shield that can block attacks and, with good timing, also parry enemy shots back at them.

One of the other additions we see during Running The Gauntlet is co-op QTEs. Here both players have to time their reflexes, as Knack transforms into a mixed Red and Blue relic form.

It's a novel concept, and Cerny tells us it's being fine-tuned to compensate for differing skill levels, such as a parent and child playing together: "It will get easier if a player is failing because we want to take care of that kind of case." Even »



SHARE THE LOVE
While Knack 2 supports couch co-op, thanks to Share Play, the couches won't have to be in the same house. Perfect if you can't convince a mate to pop over for a few hours.

at this base level, it's a much more involving and fun experience.

GOBLIN IT UP
Of course, we can't ignore the fact that the reaction to the original Knack was mixed, and we ask Cerny what lessons his team took from it. He's open about listening to feedback the team got, from playtests to tweets, telling us: "I think the biggest is variety. Making sure that it is not *just* combat, that this time around it's combat, it's platforming, it's puzzles, and there are a couple of exotic modes like driving a tank, which you can do."

We'll come back to the tank. For now, we're going to hop into a new level – The Hidden City – to see just how varied this is. We start with a tiny Knack and look at how the city dwarfs him. Fortunately, Knack can now unlock and upgrade new moves on a skill tree using Relic Energy found in blue treasure chests scattered across the levels. Split into four quadrants, as well as buying new moves, such as the Hook Shot which is a punch that can grab and yank enemies towards Knack, you can use the skill tree to increase the power or speed of attacks and chain moves together.

Intriguingly, Cerny tells us that you won't be able to unlock absolutely everything on your first playthrough, when you'll need to plan strategically and pick out the upgrades that complement your style the most. However, he also confirms that there will be a New Game Plus mode, so you'll definitely be able to get a super-powered Knack eventually.

BIGGER THEY COME
The Hidden City is also a good place to show off another big difference between the original and the sequel, which is the sheer size of Knack 2.0. The literal relic even gets a height gauge that measures how tall he is. Cerny explains how the level shows that off: "After a while you get kicked out and have to go back in again, but the second time you're huge. It's about feeling the difference between Knack being small and him being large."

He's not wrong. We start at around four feet tall, but when we clamber back into the city, we're at an enormous 17 feet. Not only does this mean we can smash through goblins with joyous ease, but the bigger Knack is, the more damage he can take. Which is handy when he has a city's worth of goblins lobbing everything they have at him.



dev talk
"With Knack 2, we re-did the engine to get the framerate up and the detail of the graphics up, so we had pretty much the same challenges as a launch title would have."

Mark Cerny
Director, Japan Studio

> THE BIGGER KNACK IS, THE MORE DAMAGE HE CAN TAKE. WE CAN SMASH THROUGH GOBLINS.

KNACK ATTACK
Our final level – That New Tank Smell – puts OPM and Cerny in control of a tank, with your favourite games mag on the steering wheel and the director on the gun. While he blasts away at red barrels lying around the quarry we're ploughing through, we're making the most of the tank's dash ability by running over goblins blocking our path. It's another example of the co-op ensuring both players have something to do and, like the old-school platformers he worked on, such as the recently revived Crash Bandicoot, it's a memorable change of pace.

With a month to go before Knack 2 hits shelves, it's already looking like a huge step up from the original. Before OPM's time is up, we ask Cerny if there is anything specific about Knack that draws him back. He tells us: "After we spent a couple of years learning how to make a game based on the character with parts, it was just great to have an opportunity to use that know-how, and hopefully we're managing to take the game in some surprising directions."

* Knack 2 is out on 5 September, and will be reviewed in a future issue.



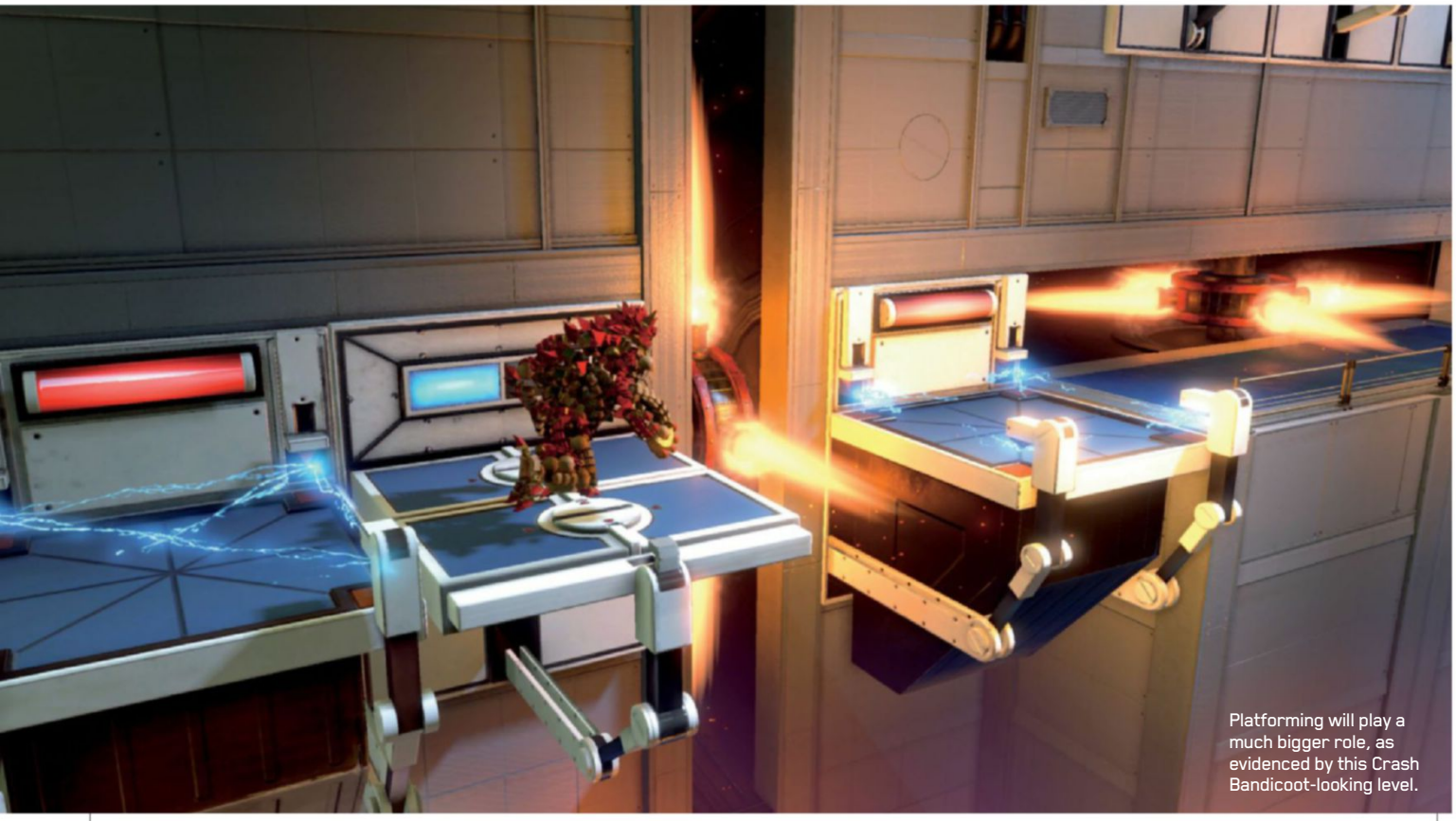
Players with a PS4 Pro will be able to choose from a higher framerate or improved graphics.



It's only fair with a bigger Knack that his enemies have a size increase as well.



There are some seriously impressive visuals. No-one stain the carpet!



Platforming will play a much bigger role, as evidenced by this Crash Bandicoot-looking level.





Whether it's driving the tank or blasting from the turret, your co-op partner isn't going to be left (metaphorically) twiddling their thumbs.



You know things are getting serious when these two have to go Knack-to-Knack.



Unlocking the cage door

The hard choices behind Detroit: Become Human's development

02

When terrorists attacked Paris on 13 November, 2015, the world stopped as it watched the horror unfold. For David Cage, writer and director of Detroit: Become Human, it was terrifyingly close to home.

"I was in the middle of writing when there were the terrible events in Paris, and it happened pretty [close to] the studio. We're not far from the Bataclan [theatre], not far from the supermarket where these things [the terror attacks] happened, and actually my kids were at school when it happened. They were very close to the events and they were locked in the school, they couldn't go anywhere. When you're a parent and you're at home, you know what's going on, and you watch TV, and you know your kids are at school, you wonder if they're safe. That's something that is..." Cage takes a breath, considers his wording and continues: "Important."

> "WE ARE DEALING WITH MEANINGFUL THINGS."

Staff from Quantic Dream were in the Bataclan when the terrorists struck, and it naturally affected the developers and what they wanted to say with the game. "Dealing with this kind of subject matter, where we deal with violence... I just wanted to make sure that whatever we do in the game, there is no ambiguity and our meaning is absolutely clear."

Cage also reveals that certain scenes were dropped from Detroit over their lack of clarity. "Honestly, I cancelled a couple of scenes where I felt the meaning could be interpreted wrongly. It was a very interesting thing for me because it's made me realise with Detroit, that we are dealing with very meaningful things and that you need to be careful and be respectful and pay attention to what you have to say."

Cage continues: "And that was scary, but at the same time, once the fear has gone, you say, 'wait a second, I'm working on a videogame, it's meaningful, it's important, it has something to say, I need to be respectful, I need to pay attention to everything, but at the same time I'm talking about something.'"



dev talk

"PlayLink is very interesting, and we tried connecting a phone to a PlayStation on Beyond. We replaced the DS4 with a phone, so you could play with the phone. It'll help people who are not familiar with the console to play. The more people who can enjoy what we create, the happier we are."

David Cage
Director and writer, Detroit: Become Human

METHOD MAN

Cage also opens up about how he collaborates with his actors and the impact they can have on the story,



In the near future, AIs fight for their freedom, Detroit: Become Human has serious issues.

including Jesse Williams, who plays Markus, an android activist.

"Jesse is quite famous for his activities defending African-American people," explains Cage. "It was interesting to confront our views about the story, his character and how we could make sure that we're very respectful of the very serious matters we deal with in this game." However, Cage wants to ensure that players still enjoy the final game. "For me, there was no way I wanted to use existing issues in a game that is still entertainment, no matter how much passion and honesty we put into it, it's still just a game. There are some very serious things happening and we didn't want to 'use' them, so we had many conversations about that."

Discover more about Detroit: Become Human at quanticdream.com.



CAR COLLECTOR
While we'd normally shy away from expensive day-ones, the lure of an art book crammed with behind the scenes info and images from the GT series has us intrigued.



Mechanical damage is now in GT Sport, and affects handling as well as fuel consumption.

GT Sport is given the green light

Polyphony finally sets a firm release date

03

Are you ready? Are you set? Okay, Gran Turismo Sport creator Kazunori Yamauchi has revealed the highly anticipated racing 'simcade' game will release on 18 October.

The news was also met with a tease of some big announcements through August and September. "Between now and launch you can expect to hear a lot more from the GT team, as we unveil more information on the many features included in Gran Turismo Sport," wrote Yamauchi-san on the PlayStation blog.

> THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED RACING SIM WILL RELEASE ON 18 OCTOBER.

Expect to hear more on the campaign mode, as well as GT Sport's creative tools, in the coming months. Yamauchi-san also promised to reveal all the cars and tracks wending their way into the game.

Speaking of release day, if you want to pre-order GT Sport there are five special editions planned. The high-end version, Gran Turismo Sport Collector's Edition (£104.99) offers $2.5m of credits to spend in the game, along with three 'head start' packs (Japan, Pace Car, and America), a gold steelbook, a guide to Gran Turismo called the APEX booklet, avatars and in-game liveries, plus a 1:43 scale model of the classic Mercedes-AMG GTS. Sweet.

The Gran Turismo Sport Steel Book Edition (£57.99) features the 'head start' packs, $2.5m of credits, and avatars, while the Gran Turismo Sport Day 1 Edition (£44) features $250,000 of credits, avatars, and a chrome racing helmet to use in the game.

Other versions for the cash-strapped include the Gran Turismo Sport Digital Deluxe Edition, and the Gran Turismo Sport Digital Edition.

For more details visit the Gran Turismo Sport website at gran-turismo.com.



“WE HAVE DESIGNED AREAS WITH SOMETHING LIKE 6,000 RODENTS. WE’D LIKE TO GO FURTHER.”

BUILD A BETTER RAT TRAP
There will be a crafting aspect to A Plague Tale too, with Amicia able to create bespoke tools to help her overcome the "growing threats and turn situations to her advantage," says Choteau.



Complex horde VFX have been confined to the movies... until now.



"What happens when a child's innocence is challenged with desperate situations?"

Will you outrun the rodents?

A Plague Tale: Innocence has a rat problem...

04

Rats. We're going to see a lot of the furry little terrors in A Plague Tale: Innocence. While we'll be playing as the Inquisition-dodging children Amicia and Hugo, it's the rodent army that could run away with this Middle Ages-set adventure.

The recent teaser trailer featured 3,000 rats, but lead game designer, Kevin Choteau wants to go bigger. "We have also designed areas with something like 6,000 rodents. We'd like to go further, up to 10,000 as the story critically evolves," he says.

RAT-A-TWOEY

Inspired by Hansel and Gretel, the game will use the 'rat swarm' as both a danger and an aid to the children. For instance, rats have an aversion to fire and light: "Amicia and Hugo will learn how to use the lights and the entire range of fire sources to repel the rats and stay alive." It's risky, however, as using lights makes it easier for the children to be seen by members of the Inquisition, who want them dead.

Choteau says: "You will be able to use the rats to your advantage against the Inquisition forces. For example, when in darkness, other humans are just as much prey to the horde as you are. On top of that, we are adding a weather effect layer – rain, wind, night, day – which really spices up the challenge."

The real test for the dev has been getting the rats to move realistically without breaking the game's tech. The solution? Detailed rats close to the camera and lower-textured rodents in the distance. "We also had to figure out how to deal with how the entity of the swarm behaves, and every individual rat at the same time," explains Choteau. "Each rat has its own AI with pathfinding and behaviour, acting independently. You can isolate rats from the horde, and they will have their own 'story' – it's not just a visual effect."

Got your musophobia in check? Then see more at aplaguetale.com.



Namco serves up a flying ace

Ace Combat 7 puts us on cloud nine

05

The thrill here is in the detail, the way ice crystals form on the cockpit as we pass through dense clouds (too much ice affects the handling), or how water vapour rasps across our plane's wings on a steep turn.

Yet for all the careful attention paid to simulating the illusion of flying a state-of-the-art jet, when it comes to the guts of the game, to locking on and lighting up, Ace Combat 7 handles like a dream – rarely do we feel like we're fighting the physics.

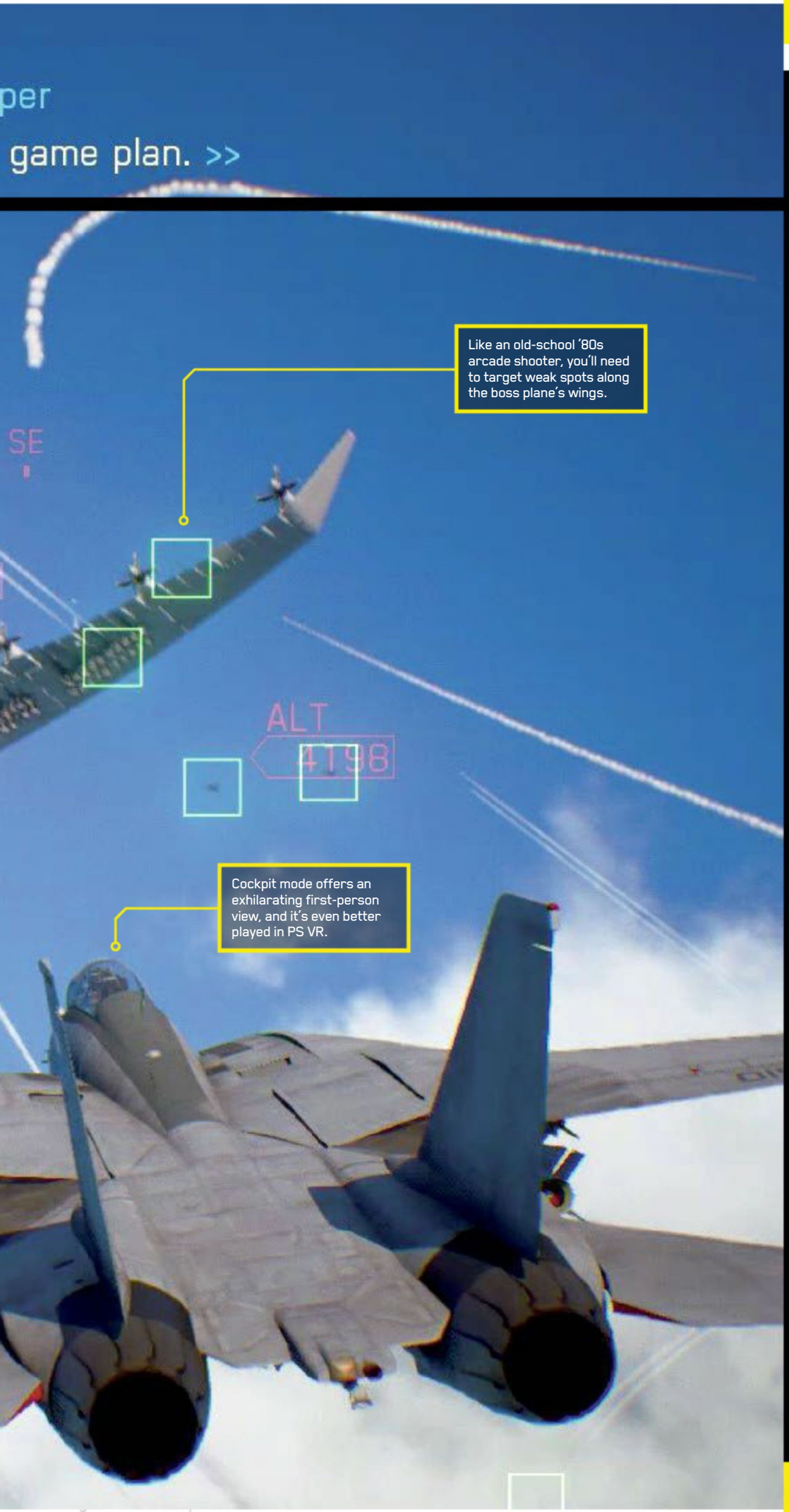
The boss battle (pictured) highlights Ace Combat 7's subtle mix of realism and fun, arcade sensibilities. Our F-14 will stall if mishandled, but to destroy the enemy bomber we have to target 'weak spots' along its wings, while avoiding attack patterns.

Coupled with a blistering PS VR mode, Ace Combat 7 is shaping into a maverick release.

* What do you think of Ace Combat 7? Let us know on Twitter at @OPM_UK.

per

game plan. >>



number game
we do the maths

1888

PS4 games released between December 2013 and June 2017.

33,000,000

Rocket League players worldwide (across all platforms).

16.5

Activision Blizzard's percentage of all the physical games sold in June.

24

Crash's position in the UK franchise list (boxed sales from 1995 to 9/7/17).

1,000

Frontier Points you get with the Elite Dangerous: Legendary Edition (p88).

31,680

How many minutes to wait before Uncharted: The Lost Legacy releases.

01

The chart position of Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy on release.

1,000,000

People attended the Sony-sponsored London Pride march in July.



Original developer Dontnod is currently working on a full-blown second season.

Life is going to get stranger

A new perspective on Life Is Strange in Before The Storm

06

It's almost time to re-enroll in Blackwell Academy for another term of teen drama. However, a lot has changed since our last stay, including the developer, with Deck Nine taking over from Dontnod for this three-part prequel. Life Is Strange: Before The Storm also offers a different protagonist and time period, but retains the familiar setting of sunny Arcadia Bay.

This time around players take control of Max's bestie – Chloe, who's yet to discover blue hair dye or beanie hats – three years before the events of Life Is Strange.

> "CHLOE IS TRYING TO COPE WITH THE TRAGIC LOSS OF HER FATHER."

Crucially, not playing as original protagonist Max means the previous game's core mechanic – the ability to manipulate time – has been removed. The fact that Chloe is unable to rewind time and pursue different dialogue options means that you are stuck with the choices you initially make. It's essentially confiscating your 'get out of jail free card' should you make a decision that leads to the brown stuff well and truly hitting the fan.

Of course, this being a prequel we know the fate of the characters beyond the events depicted here, but Deck Nine is working hard to carve its own separate story that doesn't simply feed into the events of the first game. It's promising to be a smaller, more personal tale, which allows you to explore Chloe's world. Zak Garriss, lead writer at Deck Nine, explains: "It's given us a lot of freedom to tell a rich narrative that will have a lot of mystery, that will have a lot of uncertainty leading up to the very final decision you make, without spoiling anything from the first game."

The Chloe we see in Before The Storm will be vastly different from the fierce, determined character we're used to. Here, she's just 16. With Max absent, Chloe is trying to cope with the tragic loss of her father in a car accident two years earlier. "Chloe is alienated, she's alone, there's a vulnerability there. Right alongside her strength, there's a frailty that's real, it's authentic, so we're going to see a more vulnerable Chloe."

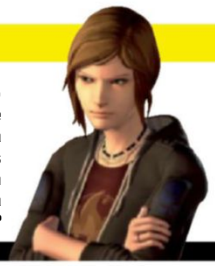


dev talk

"To share an experience that normalises alienation and the kind of hurt that can come from losing someone you love, and at the same time celebrates how incredible it can be when you meet that person who changes your world, that seems like the right story for the Life Is Strange franchise."

Zak Garriss
Lead writer,
Deck Nine Games





FAMILIAR FACES
Before The Storm will see younger versions of Arcadia Bay's inhabitants. Perhaps we'll see Blackwell queen bee, Victoria Chase, as a shy, sweet sophomore?

Although Max isn't in Arcadia Bay at this particular time, she still has a presence in Chloe's world. Similar to Max's diary in the first game, Chloe puts down her thoughts about what's going on in letters to Max. They will grant us a unique insight into Chloe's life and how she views people and events and, according to Garriss, are just one of multiple ways we'll explore her world. Chloe doesn't send these letters, however, as she's given up hope that Max will ever return to Arcadia Bay or play any part in her life.

GIRL POWER
One of the biggest mysteries in the original was the disappearance of Rachel Amber. Although she was central to the plot, Rachel never appeared in the game. Before The Storm will give the team the chance to flesh out the character of Rachel, as well as fully explore the intense relationship Chloe had with her, which we know completely changed Chloe's world.



Chloe loves to hang with a bad crowd, so we're anticipating tense choices.

VOICE COACH
Another notable difference is in Chloe's vocal tones. The ongoing voice actors' union strike meant that Chloe's original voice actress, Ashly Burch, couldn't reprise her role. Thankfully, she's still very much involved in the formation of Chloe's character in Before The Storm, coming on board as a story consultant. "We've had her out in the studio in Colorado, she's worked with all the writers to share her personal perspective on who Chloe is and what Chloe's voice is like. It's been wonderful to work with her," says Garriss.

Creating the follow-up to a game with characters as well-loved as Chloe and Max is no mean feat, but Deck Nine appears to be up to the task. From what we've seen so far, Before The Storm looks set to deliver the same raw emotion that fans loved about the first game, with the studio injecting some new ideas to really make the series its own.

* The first episode of Life Is Strange: Before The Storm launches on 31 August.



Chloe's new voice actress, Rihanna DeVries, originally provided her mo-cap.

info patches
update your brain



THIMBLEWEED PARK NAILS RELEASE DATE
Twin Peaks-parodying point-and-click adventure Thimbleweed Park will finally be hitting PlayStation 4 on 22 August. That's some damn fine news considering our preview was full of praise for the old-school adventure from genre legend Ron Gilbert.



NI (OH) NO KUNI II
From good news about a release date to bad. The sequel to Level-5's delightful JRPG is now being pushed back to 19 Jan 2018. Fortunately, we won't have to wait *too* long after the new year. According to Level-5 CEO Akihiro Hino, the move is due to more development time being needed for the title.



ICE, ICE (PS4) BABY
Sony and Activision are offering fans a limited-edition Glacier White PS4 Pro Destiny 2 bundle. It's more than just a mouthful, mind. You'll get a physical copy of the Deluxe Edition of Destiny 2 along with a voucher for a Legendary sword, a Legendary player emote, and a Cabal-Empire-themed emblem.

China in your hands

Size matters for Dynasty Warriors 9, as the series goes open world

07

There are major changes coming to the Dynasty Warriors series. For a franchise that has refused to change dramatically over the course of 20 years, this is *huge* news. Indeed, 'scale' is the word buzzing around Dynasty Warriors 9 like Turban infantry circling a general, as Omega Force promises an open world game in which *all* of ancient China is explorable. That's big.

> "'SCALE' IS THE WORD – ALL OF ANCIENT CHINA IS EXPLORABLE. THAT'S BIG."

Between the colossal battles, the 1v1,000 fights the series is renowned for, you'll be able to go off-piste and travel China on foot, horseback, or by boat. We've seen screens of tigers and pandas out in the wilderness, which suggests hunting side quests – though what heartless monster would want to stalk and skin a panda?

The free-roam gameplay, which includes dynamic weather and day/night cycles, will now affect the battles. For instance, enemy vision is affected by darkness and pouring rain, which means there will be a new tactical edge to certain missions. Completing side quests discovered in the open world can also help you in battle, making some encounters easier, which signals, to a degree, the entire world is now a living place where actions have consequences.

CHINA CRISIS

There are more changes planned once you get into a conflict, with a new 'Three State Combo' system being introduced. This features multiple layers of move sets: Trigger Attacks, Flow Attacks, and Finish Attacks. After starting a combo you can cascade into new, complex moves and weapon flurries, and hitting these unlocks a devastating finishing move that can also affect any nearby soldiers. The days of hammering light and heavy attacks for an hour look to be coming to an end.

The introduction of a grappling hook will also shift focus away from repetitively beating the DualShock 4's buttons. Influenced by the new open world nature of the game, you will be able to use the grapple to scale castle walls, and naturally China's Great Wall, and take the fight to the rooftops for a strategic jump on the enemy. Out in the wilds the grapple can be used to discover hidden areas and quests. After years of average releases, DW9 could hook us back.

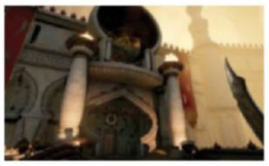
Will an open world get you back into Dynasty Warriors? Write in and tell us.



The new open world Dynasty Warriors 9 will be a PlayStation 4 exclusive.



Sun Shanxiang is one of the characters carried across from The Romance Of The Three Kingdoms.



BRASS BALLS
Inside the City Of Brass you'll find demons, traps, and treasure. The game's levels are procedurally generated, and there are plans for leaderboards to showcase the world's best loot hunters.



Dual-wielding a whip and a scimitar? Now that's a new perk we can get behind.

Whipping up a sand storm on PS4

Will City Of Brass be the new Prince Of Persia?

08

With former Irrational Games devs on the case, and a theme based around the Arabian Nights, it's easy to label the rogue-lite City Of Brass 'BioShock meets Prince Of Persia'. Ed Orman, lead designer, explains: "Mechanically, we are drawing some inspiration from BioShock in terms of the combinative approach to the game systems, where players are encouraged to see how the systems interact with each other."

These 'systems' include a flexible approach to combat. By pressing L2 you can crack a whip to trip, stun, or disarm enemies – just target a specific body part to get a different outcome. The whip can also be used to grapple the environment, to swing away from traps, or to scale buildings to uncover secrets. Mix this with sword melee strikes on R2 and there's plenty to experiment with in City Of Brass. "The combat is centred around the idea of combinative gameplay. It's basically about using one system in combination with another to secure a different outcome," says Orman.

You'll need to harness these skills to survive the city – one filled with demons and deadly traps – and steal as much loot as possible in the process. Expect more news soon.



By pushing or pulling enemies with the whip, you can use traps against your foes.

City Of Brass is set for release in 2018; see more here: uppercut-games.com.

PlayStation voices

the month in mouthing off

"You know, they say "never say never," right? So I'll just leave it at that." **Hironobu Sakaguchi,** the creator of Final Fantasy, hints at a return.



"It's going to look really good in 4K at 30fps." Fortnite's fired up producer, **Zak Phelps**, on harnessing the power of PS4 Pro for the fort-builder.



"Three years ago, we thought [Metro Exodus] was almost impossible." **Andriy Prokhorov,** creative developer.



instant opinion
strong vs wrong

ZERO PLUS
Horizon Zero Dawn's 1.30 patch is a biggie. Adding a New Game Plus mode, it'll keep us hunting until The Frozen Wilds DLC launches.

BOWLED OVER
Tekken 7's first DLC releases this month, and it's a doozy. Ultimate Tekken Bowl sees the return of Tekken Tag Tournament's lunch-hour-busting take on 10-pin bowling.

STOLEN HEARTS
Square Enix confirmed a new Toy Story world is heading to Kingdom Hearts III, and it sent us to infinity and beyond! We can't wait to explore Andy's room and meet Woody and the gang.

FORGE AHEAD
The new Nemesis Forge update for Shadow Of Mordor allows you to export your highest ranking orc rival and ally into the forthcoming Shadow Of War.

SPIDEY NONSENSE
US film website Variety mistakenly used screen grabs of PS4's Spider-Man in place of stills for its review of Spider-Man: Homecoming. We knew Spidey PS4 looked good – here's proof.

TIMELY TAT
Ubisoft is going to town on Assassin's Creed Origins, with a comic series, novel, and anime-style TV series series set to release in time for the game.


Did you miss Killzone Shadow Fall at PS4's launch? You can stream it on PS Now.

Now that's what we call gaming

PS Now adds PS4 classics to its bulging roster

09

With over 400 PS3 games sat waiting on PS Now, Sony's online streaming service, you'd think there would be enough choice. But Sony likes to keep us all happy, so news that PlayStation 4 games are now ready to stream and play is welcome news.

July saw 50 PlayStation 4 classics added to PS Now, and our choice of those on offer includes Killzone Shadow Fall, Saints Row IV Re-Elected, and Evolve – all games that have piqued our interest over the years. Whether you're double-dipping and playing to relive fun memories, or want to try a game that's never quite made it into your collection, PS Now is the ideal service.

> "JULY SAW 50 PLAYSTATION 4 CLASSICS ADDED TO PS NOW."

The addition of PS4 games to the existing PS3 lineup means PS Now is fast becoming the 'Netflix for games' it was always meant to be. Want to get set for God Of War's Nordic PS4 comeback? Then stream God Of War 3: Remastered at the click of a button. Did you miss out on Darksiders and feel the urge to get up to speed ahead of next year's threequel? Then PS Now is there for you with Darksiders II: Deathinitive Edition, like a kindly friend eager to help.

Sony is promising to add more PS4 games to the PS Now service in the coming months, and with 79 publishers signed up – including the likes of Rockstar, Warner Bros, and Capcom – it shouldn't be long before a game you want is available.

PS Now offers a seven-day free trial. The monthly subscription is available for £12.99. At that cost, it could prove binge-worthy.


PS4 games you missed or favourites worth replaying, PS Now has them all.

What PS4 classic do you want to see on PS Now? Write in and let us know.

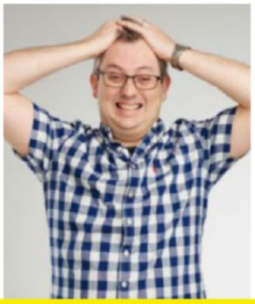


ARE YOU GIFTED?
Did you miss out on the print edition's free postcards? Well you can subscribe to both print and digital issues for a special price and save money. Skip over to page 74 to see our offers!

10 just one more question...

the team debate this month's burning issue

What PlayStation location do you want to take a trip to?



IAN DEAN
EDITOR

GIVE ME AN ISLAND IN THE SUN, AND THROW IN SOME PUZZLES.

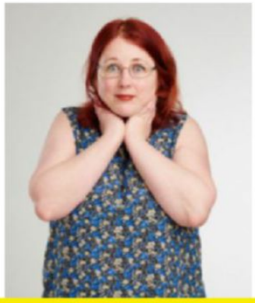
Hey team, are you sitting comfortably? Let me recall my holiday... Golden sandy beaches, cool lakes, bronzed-leafed trees, and ancient castles for a spot of culture, all within walking distance. The Witness' idyllic isle is the perfect getaway spot. Okay, so there's the odd frozen man to spoil some snaps, and I had to eat my weight in superfoods – blueberries *are* brainberries – to solve those puzzles, but I've got lots to show for it. Snaps of me solving a maze in the woods, a maze in the ruins, a maze by the sea... Mim, Milf? Where are you going? Ben, I've got pics of me solving mazes over here. Readers, maze photos? Anyone? ■



BEN TYRER
GAMES EDITOR

THE TIBETAN VILLAGE IN UNCHARTED 2 LOOKS LIKE THE PERFECT GETAWAY FROM THE RUSH OF MODERN LIFE.

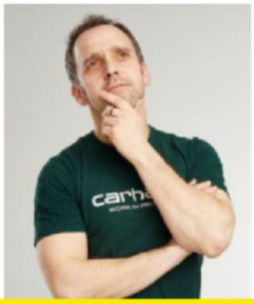
A holiday should be about pushing the reset button. So why not visit a place where the demands of modern life melt away? When Drake wakes up in Tibet in Among Thieves, he wanders around a charming community, where people are eager to meet and chat to the treasure hunter/death defier. I'd love to visit a place where the locals *don't* view me with suspicion. Plus, being nestled in the mountains also means the views around the village are particularly Instagram-worthy. Wait, there's no Wi-Fi up there? Or electricity? I've made a *huge* mistake. ■



MIRIAM MCDONALD
OPERATIONS EDITOR

LEGO CITY IS THE DESTINATION THAT HAS IT ALL.

Why wouldn't you want to go to Lego City? For starters, it's got a beach resort, Paradise Sands, packed with luxury hotels (don't stay at the one Frank Honey's parents own, though, as the pool smells of horse) and home to an amusement park. If you don't fancy the beach, you can go camping in Bluebell National Park. Visit the Fresco district for ice cream at Pappalardo's, Pagoda for Chinese architecture, or hit Downtown to spend an afternoon shopping. Go sightseeing on Liberty Island. Even the prison's a laugh. In fact, I've spent so much time hanging out in Lego City, I probably qualify as a resident rather than a tourist. ■



MILFORD COPPOCK
MANAGING ART EDITOR

WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO GO ON A SCUBA SAFARI IN THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD OF ABZÛ?

What better way to switch off and get away from the day job (sorry, boss) than to spend it in the pleasantly warm, sun dappled azure waters of a vast tropical ocean? Swimming through shoals of brightly coloured tropical fish, hitching a lift on a massive manta ray, and OH MY GOD, WAS THAT A SHARK?!! Nope, must have been seeing things. So, where was I? Oh yes, I was exploring submerged ancient ruins, swimmi... NO, THAT WAS DEFINITELY A SHARK! *Finds phone* "Er, Ian, I might be back from my holiday sooner than planned!" Now, where's my flipplin' boa... AAAAAAAARRRGGHH!!! ■


PS4
ONLY ON PL
UNCHARTED
THE LOST LEGACY
AUGUST 23
16
www.pegi.info



"PlayStation" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. Also, "PS4" is a trademark of the same company. Uncharted™: The Lost Legacy ©2017 Sony Interactive Entertainment America LLC.
Developed by Naughty Dog LLC. "Uncharted" is a trademark or a registered trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe. All rights reserved.

REPLIES



#138 Spider-Man leads the lineup, alongside God Of War and AC Origins.

Pile of old stat

Back on 23rd March I received a happy little email from PlayStation celebrating 10 years of the PlayStation Store. Within this email there were loads of stats from my gaming adventures since I joined PSN on 26th June 2007.

I didn't realise that PlayStation kept such stats. I've played hundreds of different games and I would love to be able to look through stats on them all – I'm nerdy like that!

My longest-played game was Skyrim, at 555 hours, because I insisted on Platinuming it. But what about Witcher 3, Fallout 4, all the Tomb Raiders, all the Uncharteds (on PS3 *and* PS4!), nine COD games... I could go on!

So any chance you could plant the idea of adding these stats, accessed through trophies maybe? Worth a shot, right?

PS. I'm planning on beating that 555 hours with Skyrim VR, can't wait!

K Ferris via email

It would certainly be cool for gamers to know which titles they've spent longest on – though Ian might end up weeping when he realises how much of his life has been taken up with PES.

Going pro

I am just about to start year 11 in September, which is the GCSE year and I am really interested in either becoming a games tester or a games reviewer. Can you give me any tips as to how best to get started please?

Stuart Markwick via email

Becoming a games reviewer is, in some ways, not difficult. While most magazine staff have degrees, it's not essential – you certainly don't need a journalism degree. But what you do need are two skills: you need to be able to write well, and to play games brilliantly. Practice your writing, even if no-one sees your work but you. The more you do, the better you'll become. And it's the same with games; keep playing them because you can't review what you can't play, and the more you play, the more of a games expert you'll be.

When you send samples of your work to magazines or websites, make sure it's in their style. Some have more jokes, some are very serious, some have lots of boxes on the page, some have one big block of text. Above all, keep on practicing!

> MY LONGEST-PLAYED GAME WAS SKYRIM, AT 555 HOURS, BECAUSE I INSISTED ON PLATINUMING IT.

Star letter Becoming Human

I think the concerns that the Uncharted: The Lost Legacy [Replies, OPM #137] will be lacking heart because there are no male protagonists (ie. Nate and co) are unfounded. The laddish banter of the previous Uncharted games was a device which I felt was much overused to the point of monotony. Lara Croft drew me into her world in a way Nathan Drake never could and if Lara can carry a game with passion, determination, empathy and, yes, plenty of heart, then I am sure Chloe and Nadine can do the same.

Alan Strafford via email

We think it's possibly not so much the genders as the characters that worry some people – Chloe and Nadine are pretty hardboiled. We're hoping to see their more human side on their adventures.

CAN I GET A RT?

The most pleasing tweetings from the @OPM_UK timeline



@VICTORVRAN
Who is Geralt and what is a Witcher and why are there 3 of them!? There is only one Demon Hunter!



@BIGKING123
The version of God Of War shown at E3 was on base PS4 so can't imagine how it will look on Pro.



@JASONH123456
I bought a Pro on the 26th of last month. I love it, the graphics are awesome.



@ROBABOWMAN
One of life's great unanswered questions: did Hank Scorpio actually have milk in his pockets?



@1BRADLEYRUSSELL
My mission to plaster the world in cr*p puns continues.



@HIGGIE_BABY
Awesome cover this month guys!

TROLL OF THE MONTH



@SOLM67
Is editor Ian Dean related to Louis Walsh?

[*Harsh, man, harsh – Ed*]



@SCOTT180WARREN
Do us fans a favour, see if Activision can do a remake of Tenchu Stealth Assassins ;)



@TORSRYK
Not a single video game has an even tolerable movie adap.



@THENOSTROMO
Assassins Creed was shockingly bad. I could have done better. Not even joking.

"The next Uncharted game should focus on Sully and Sam. Would be an awesome new chapter for the series!"

DANNYO MENTOS IS ONE STEP BEYOND THE LOST LEGACY ALREADY



"COD World War 2 is the greatest game in the world."

IS THAT A PROPHECY, CHO WIN TUN?

READERS' MOST WANTED

Which games are bleeping loudest on your radar?



1 God Of War

Kratos has been occupying your Most Wanted list for a while, and his reappearance at E3 has only whetted your appetite. You've got to wait a while to play the game, but we'll have a special feature next issue to keep you keen.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 1ST HALF 2018

2 Spider-Man

He slips! Spidey may have been the star of Sony's E3 presentation, but he can't withstand the mighty Kratos. Can he web-sling his way back to no. 1?

FORMAT PS4
ETA 2018

3 The Last Of Us Part II

No news clearly isn't bad news – despite things going quiet on this front, you're still enthusiastic.

FORMAT PS4
ETA TBC

4 Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus

A new face on the Most Wanted list, BJ's blend of laughs and firepower blasts him into view.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 27 OCT 2017

5 Days Gone

Now you've seen the way weather and time of day affect the action, this Freaker-busting adventure looks more appealing that ever. As far as anything featuring shuffling monsters *can* be appealing.

FORMAT PS4
ETA TBC

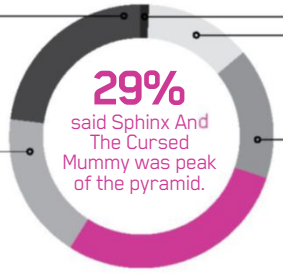
VOTE NOW!

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

EXIT POLL

Our Facebook fans answer a final question

What's your favourite PlayStation game featuring mummies?



23% raided PS3's tomb to come up with Spelunky.

18% fell for the charms of Kiya, the mummy princess in Medieval 2.

1% Went for a Sega Genesis game, Decap Attack. SHAME!

13% thought Crash Bandicoot 2 or 3's mummy made it.

16% liked the unravelling action of Metal Slug 2.

NEXT MONTH

He's swapped his blades for an axe. Which weapon should Kratos switch to next?

Dave Meikleham

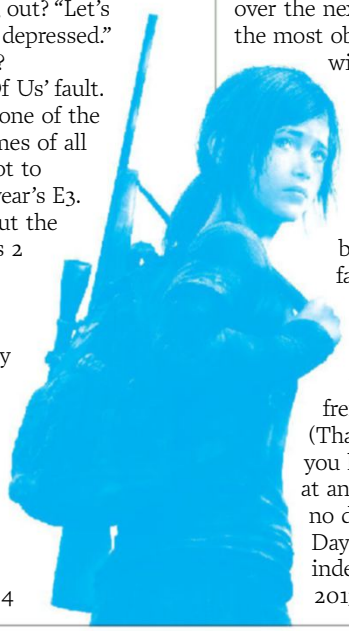
SONY'S FIRST-PARTY TITLES ARE SENDING OUT A MESSAGE: THEY WANT YOU TO FEEL A TEENSY BIT SAD. AND IT'S THE LAST OF US' FAULT.

The release schedule is filled with games that want to be TLOU

Videogames are a serious business for serious, grown-up people. That's the message that rang out from this year's E3 PlayStation press conference. (Sorry, 'Media Showcase'). The time of snuggling up in the easygoing embrace of happy-go-lucky fare like Uncharted, Ratchet & Clank, and LittleBigPlanet is over. We're now entering the age of sombre PS4 sadness. Best keep the hankies on standby.

I'm jesting, of course... well, kind of. Sony's LA presser was brimming to bursting point with spectacular upcoming titles, so this glumness filling the air has nothing to do with quality. Instead, it's all about themes. The message Sony's first-party titles seem to be sending out? "Let's all feel a teensy bit depressed." Sadness sells, right?

It's all the Last Of Us' fault. Oh sure, it may be one of the most acclaimed games of all time, but it had a lot to answer for at this year's E3. I'm not talking about the fact The Last Of Us 2 no-showed either, though that was a bummer. No, I'm referring to Naughty Dog's original awesome apocalypse, and the fact its influence seems to be permeating every triple-A first-party effort that's coming to PS4 over the next 18 months. Days Gone is the most obvious of its disciples. Man with beard as lead character? Check. Careful sneaking through rainy woods? Check. Murdering a load of zombies, then feeling kind of bad about it after the fact? You'd better believe that's a check. In fairness, Studio Bend's downbeat undead adventure will most likely distinguish itself from the TLOU with ferociously frenzied action sequences. (That's what happens when you have 1,700 zoms on screen at any given time.) Yet there's no denying the overall tone of Days Gone seems to be hugely indebted to Naughty Dog's 2013 masterpiece.





WRITER BIO

Dave Meikleham reviewed The Last Of Us for OPM back in 2013. He gave it 10/10. Then he reviewed The Last Of Us Remastered in 2014, also awarding it 10/10. Noticing a trend here? Despite his love for Clickers, he'd like to see more PS4 titles be a smidgeon cheerier.

Comparing two zombie games is like shooting fish in a barrel... and drunk fish at that. TLOU's influence reaches farther than Days Gone, though. Just look at the new God Of War. Father figure struggles to bond with child in an uneasy alliance set against a backdrop of gruesome violence. Remind you of Joel and Ellie's cross-country jaunt at all? Even the decision to remake Shadow Of The Colossus on PS4 feels like it's been born out of a post-TLOU landscape where glum, artful games are now totally Sony's jam.

BREAKING SAD

Then there's Detroit: Become Human. Obviously, this is very much David Cage's oh-so-emotive baby. Regardless of what trends grip videogames at large, Quantic Dream will continue to do its own thing: make slightly sexy, vaguely pretentious, ultimately interesting thrillers. Looking at Detroit, though, it seems less hopeful than Cage's last title, Beyond: Two Souls. I worry it could be yet another PS4 exclusive that's rocking up to Sony's pity party with a bottle of scotch and some pissed-up poetry it just wrote on the back of a napkin.

The Last Of Us is an undisputed classic, one that should rightly inspire other studios' work. The trouble is, if most of Sony's upcoming big hitters try to channel its mournful vibe — even Uncharted: The Lost Legacy looks less cheery than Nate's breezy treasure-hunting quests — diminishing returns will soon kick in with so many 'me too!' titles. Thank the Stan Lee above, though, as Spider-Man, at least, looks like a massive, happy hoot.



Anne-Marie Coyle

THE CURRENT GENERATION NEEDS MORE TRIPLE AAA GAMES THAT BREAK BOUNDARIES.

Supporting creative and innovative games is essential to combating stagnation

There's no denying the awesomeness of AAA titles. With their high production values, they're unparalleled in scope. However, the rising cost involved in creating them dissuades publishers from taking risks on more unique projects. This has resulted in an over-reliance on secure, established franchises, surefire formulas, and nostalgia-inducing remasters.

That's not to say that AAAs have entirely lost the ability to delight. Recently we've been gifted with magical journeys like The Last Guardian and Horizon Zero Dawn, but games like these are increasingly becoming the exception rather than the rule.

The problem's not insoluble, though. With Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice, Ninja Theory is fusing the creative freedom of indies with the feel of a full-blown AAA title. Chances are, if the team had gone to a publisher with an idea for an action game that focuses on a character with a mental illness, it would have been turned down out of fear it wouldn't appeal to every gamer and their dog. By adopting what it's dubbed 'independent AAA', the Cambridge-based developer has been able to stay true to its vision and offer players something truly divergent. It's a path more developers should be exploring.

INDIE GO

Increasingly, the most memorable adventures are made by indies. Try to find someone who wasn't blown away by Journey, or enthralled/horrified by Inside. These offer experiences that stay with you long after the credits have rolled. But indie developers often lack the financial means to get their visions off the ground, making support from big publishers crucial. Without Electronic Arts' EA Originals programme, for example, games like the intuitive platformer Unravel and upcoming co-op-only adventure A Way Out would still be twinkles in passionate developers' eyes.

As gaming grows, the potential for exploring innovative concepts should be blossoming with it. Right now more needs to be done to allow unique experiences to thrive, even if it means scaling back the spectacle to make more room for innovation.

WRITER BIO

Anne-Marie Coyle loves the huge open worlds current AAAs provide. However, they can be problematic. Her need to hear every insignificant NPC's thoughts, and investigate every drawer means they can take her years to explore.



Luke Kemp

DIFFICULTY SHOULD NEVER BE INSURMOUNTABLE TO THE POINT WHERE YOU STOP PLAYING.

It's possible – and desirable – to make all games work with rather than against the player

With mildly depressing certainty, I can say I've been playing videogames for longer than some OPM readers have been alive. In my distant youth, games really were as difficult as you've heard. Back then, though, I had a ludicrous amount of free time – in addition to the game-playing skills that, as we all know, are genetic.

Today, however, I have a lot of things I didn't have back then: three young children who have probably inherited the mad skillz gene; a full-time job that drains my soul/gives me a sense of purpose in society; a mountain of bills that must be paid. I have a long list of things that take priority over repeatedly trying to defeat that end-of-level boss. When I was younger, I got halfway through Resident Evil: Code Veronica before starting the game again from scratch because I didn't have enough ammo to knock the Tyrant out of a plane. Contrast that with Dark Souls II, which I tried for a few hours before deciding that I'd wasted enough of my remaining life getting killed by the same dozen enemies.

TIME LIMIT

That's why Prey likes me, and I like Prey. Here's a game that allows me to change the difficulty setting at any time, and even makes a point of saying in the loading screens that I won't be punished for doing so.

I'm not the only one in this leaky boat, as other spare-time-challenged gamers can surely attest. I have no desire to stop playing games, even though the time I now devote to them is merely ridiculous rather than ludicrous. If developers can help everybody by allowing players to adjust the difficulty at any time during play, and not just at the title screen, players would broaden their horizons. They would be willing to try more games, which would in turn drive sales up for publishers and developers. As a bonus, unwelcome difficulty spikes could be merrily skipped over, which would help us balance time for a good game with the demands of adult life. In turn, this ensures more people would make it to the finish line than ever before. I'm sure we've all got time for that.

WRITER BIO

Gaming since (*embarrassed mumbling*), Luke Kemp likes nothing more than a videogame that manages to make him laugh, cry, or both. He dislikes nothing more than a videogame which makes him cry for all the wrong reasons.

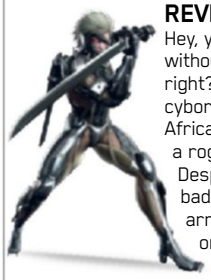
IN THE MOOD FOR...

Revenge

Holding a grudge and seeking retribution with PlayStation's most vengeful stars

1 GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
Niko isn't fussed about the American Dream when he arrives in Liberty City. No, he just wants revenge on the man who betrayed his unit back in the Balkan badass' army days. Bellic catches up to his target in the mission, 'That Special Someone', where you can either cap or spare the pathetic Darko Brevic – your choice.

2 UNTIL DAWN
Following the deaths of his sisters, unhinged teen Josh orchestrates an elaborate weekend of haunted house revenge on his chums. Said vengeance mainly revolves around him dressing up like a cross between Pennywise and Jason Voorhees... that, and faking his own grisly bisection.

3 METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

Hey, you can't spell 'revenge' without 'Revengeance', right? While working as a cyborg security guard in Africa, Raiden is attacked by a rogue military force called Desperado. Said dastards badly damage Jackie Boy's armour, sending the ninja on an extra-stabby revenge quest.

4 GOD OF WAR
The Ghost Of Sparta is one miffed customer. And who could blame him? After all, the God Of War, Ares, forces Kratos into servitude, then tricks him into killing his family in a moment of deranged bloodlust. The salty slaphead then spends the rest of the game seeking revenge against the deity.

5 CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3
Vladimir Makarov is a big meanie. Not only do the terrorist's actions kick off World War III, he also kills Captain Price's protegé, Soap MacTavish. The owner of gaming's greatest soup strainer won't let that shizzle stand, and ends MW3 killing Vlad in brutal style... with a little help from some Juggernaut armour.

6 THE DARKNESS
Choosing the life of a goodfella ain't exactly a wise(guy) decision. Though Jackie Estacado survives an assassination attempt by Paulie Franchetti, the mobster soon whacks his girlfriend. Good thing Jackie's possessed by the Darkness. Seeking revenge is way easier with two demonic tentacle beasties on your side.

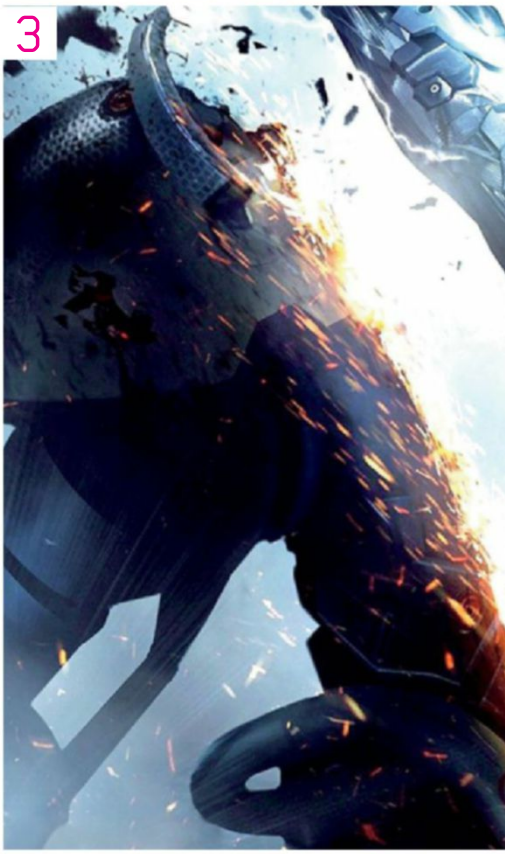
7 DISHONORED
Pro tip: don't double-cross a dude who can summon rat swarms. After Corvo is betrayed by corrupt Dunwall politicians – who murder the Empress, then frame Attano for the killing – the poised teleporting assassin seeks vengeance against the Lord Regent. Anyone who gets in his way is sliced and diced.

8 MAFIA III
Revenge is a dish served homicidally hot. Upon returning from the Vietnam War, Lincoln Clay teams with his surrogate pappy... pity his dad is in debt to the mafia. Despite trying to settle these money woes by fleecing a bank, the mob rub out Lincoln's old man regardless. What follows is a lot of bloody, mobster-whacking vengeance.

9 RED DEAD REDEMPTION
Red Dead has one of the most evocative finales ever. It also has a cathartic, extra vengeful final scene. Years after John Marston's murder by government cronies, you're placed into the spurs of his offspring, Jack. The son then travels to Mexico, swiftly finding and shooting crooked agent Edgar Ross. That was for you, Pop.







HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Final Fantasy XV
All-round evil-doer Ardyn Lzunia is obsessed with taking revenge on the entire Lucian line. Maybe they said his hat was stupid.

Tekken 3
Jin Kazama is desperate to avenge the death of his mother, when he mistakenly thinks Orge offed his momma. Classic Jin.

Canis Canem Edit
Bully's 'Revenge on Mr Burton' mission sees Jimmy playing a portaloo prank on the teacher to avenge a fellow student.

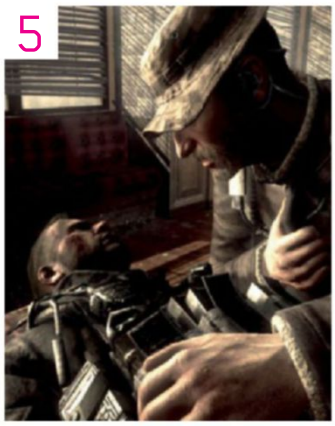
Did we miss your act of revenge? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Show and tell at **twitter.com/opm_uk**.

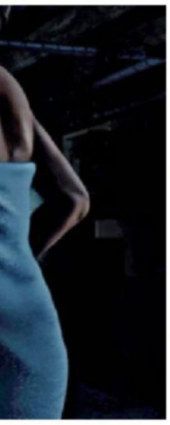


4



5

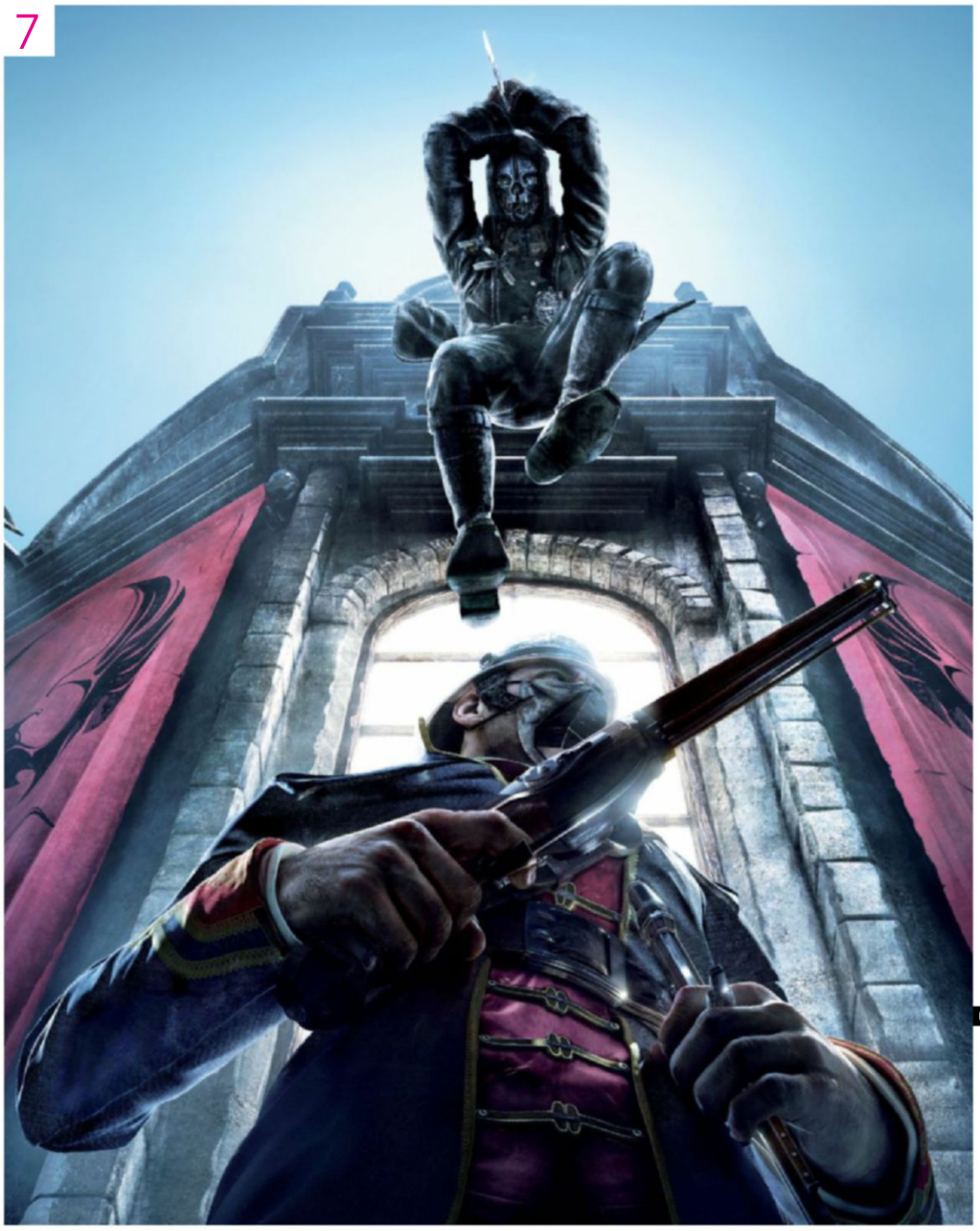




6



7





8



9




INSOMNIA 61
EXPLORE THE UK'S BIGGEST GAMING FESTIVAL
THROUGH OUR ZONES:
EXPO ZONE
RETRO
MINECRAFT
CREATOR
Main Stage
BYOC
ESPORTS
VR ZONE
INDIE ZONE
COSPLAY
FIGHTING GAMES
Head 2 Head
TICKETS START FROM £25
25TH-28TH AUGUST - NEC, BIRMINGHAM
INSOMNIAGAMINGFESTIVAL.COM



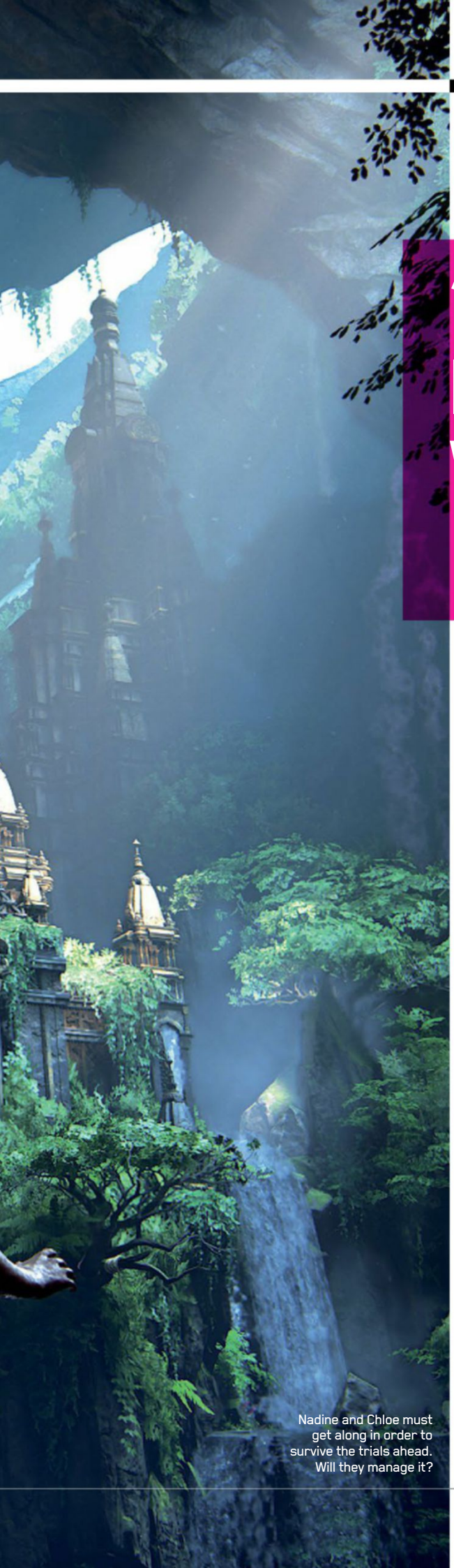
PREVIEWS

44 FAR CRY 5
We have seen the light! And we've seen Far Cry 5 too – check it out.

CONTENTS

UNCHARTED: THE LOST LEGACY 32 | SONIC FORCES 36 | SOUTH PARK: THE FRACTURED BUT WHOLE 37 | METAL GEAR SURVIVE 38 | SKULL & BONES 40 | DANGANRONPA V3: KILLING HARMONY 42 | PES 2018 43 | KINGDOM COME 48 | MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD 50





Nadine and Chloe must get along in order to survive the trials ahead. Will they manage it?

"NAUGHTY DOG ISN'T MESSING WITH THE SERIES' 10/10 FORMULA."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 22 AUG
PUB SONY / **DEV** NAUGHTY DOG

UNCHARTED: THE LOST LEGACY

Ross is boss as Chloe teams up with a sadistic sidekick

Nadine Ross is a brutal badass. Nate and Sam learned not to make the merc cranky the hard way in Uncharted 4... pity they never gave a heads-up to the schmucks at the start of The Lost Legacy's latest in-game demo. No sooner does Chloe suggest she "take left" if her uneasy ally "takes right" than the South African soldier clinically dispatches two guards, breaking one's neck and kicking the other off a cliff. Ms Ross sure ain't Sully.

This ambitious Uncharted expansion may do a more sociopathic line in AI sidekicks than Nathan Drake's adventures, but elsewhere it looks very much like business as usual. Of course, when said trade garners your series three consecutive 10/10 reviews in OPM, it's probably wise Naughty Dog isn't overly messing with the tried-and-tested (and brilliant) formula.

Beautifully animated rope-swinging; plummy mid-combat banter; tagging enemies before popping a round in their skulls; yanking dudes off ledges; fleeing a homicidally committed ATV. The series may have swapped sarky Madagascan murder sprees for shootouts in verdant Indian sinkholes, but this is still very much Uncharted 4's twin. Albeit a slightly malicious one you lock up in the attic and never speak of at family gatherings.

If Naughty Dog looks to be playing things safe when it comes to the bullet-riddled bread-and-



Left Leaps of faith are back. What are the chances those bricks will crumble away?

Right The Uncharted series was originally inspired by Tomb Raider – and those roots are showing.

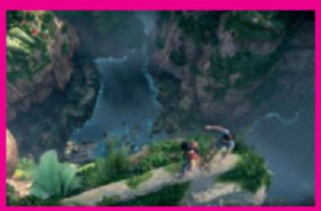


Crazy setpeice shootouts, and matey banter between headshots... Yep, this is Uncharted all right.



Charted territory

How Chloe's quest is sticking closely to Drake's beloved tropes



1 The Lost Legacy still has Uncharted's head for heights, as this vertigo-inducing ridgetop stroll shows. Best watch your step, ladies.



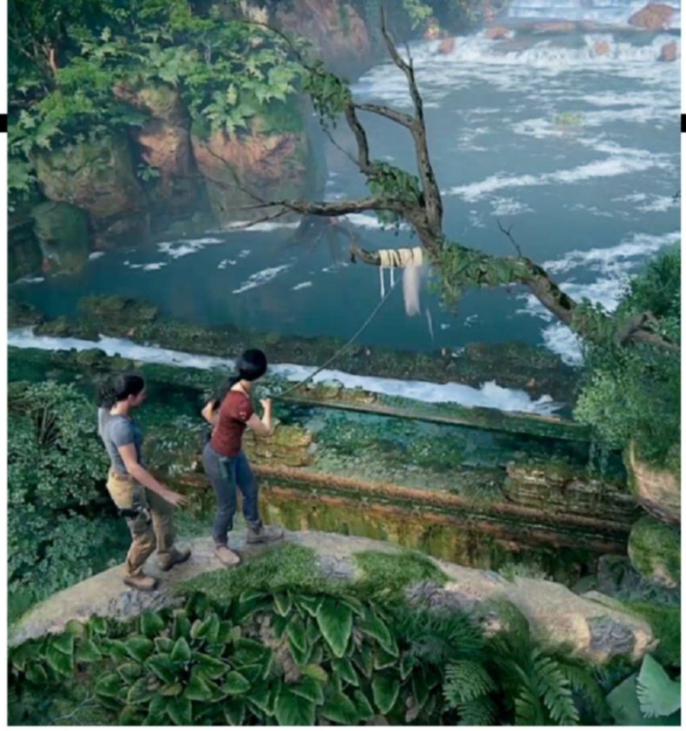
2 Nor has the expansion lost any of the series' appetite for spectacular views. No other game does virtual waterfalls quite as well as Uncharted.



3 Even though Nadine is more than capable of taking out multiple goons at once by herself, expect team-based takedowns to feature in fights.



4 The Lost Legacy retains Nate's love for showy setpieces. The battle with the ATV is a dead ringer for the chase scene in U4's No Escape level.



Above Reaching the Tusk is going to take all of Chloe's physical skills, and that means a fair bit of thought on your part to work out her route.

"NAUGHTY DOG HAS HINTED UNCHARTED COULD CONTINUE TO LIVE ON THROUGH SIDE CHARACTERS."



Above As always, the characters are beautifully animated – no wonky eyes or wooden faces to be seen here.



Above The Western Ghats – one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots are beautifully recreated. Will Chloe meet a tiger?

butter action, the same can't be said for the change in location. The demo showcases a densely layered, dizzyingly vertical slice of jungle located in a lofty pocket of India's Western Ghats mountains. The walkthrough's main shootout hints at a pleasingly open playground to whack enemies in, and Naughty Dog has already suggested parts of The Lost Legacy match Uncharted 4's sweeping Twelve Towers chapter for chunky real estate.

Such scope probably explains the game's £24.99 price tag. At an estimated six to seven hours, this is no mere single-night DLC job. Creative director Shaun Escayg says The Lost Legacy is a 'full game', chock-full of the same fantastic set-piece shootouts and puzzles we expect from a typical Uncharted release. That means same sense of grandeur, a similar focus on exploring archeological sites, and that familiar push for adventure, where every corner of the game offers a surprise.

Nadine seems to be taking that uncertainty part to heart. In the demo she's a cyclone of asskicking chaos that Chloe can barely keep up with. Knocking saps out with a single uppercut; springing up sheer surfaces while Chloe lags behind; dropping out of the air to squash bad guys like a homicidal Spider-Man. At every turn the camera is poised to frame both you, playing as Chloe, and Nadine's hijinks. It's Naughty Dog at its cinematic best.

Chloe and Nadine could have Spidey pegged in the villains department, too. Wilson Fisk may be a 400lb slab of criminality, yet we'd rather face Kingpin in a dark alley than Asav. The Lost Legacy's Big Bad appears to be cut from the same sinister, softly-spoken cloth as Uncharted 3's Katherine Marlowe. The demo's final scene, where he coldly and calmly threatens Chloe at gunpoint in an underground aqueduct, points to a calculating evil-doer who'll stop at nothing to get his dastardly mitts on the Tusk Of Ganesha.

The Lost Legacy is prime cut Uncharted, then. It has quirky quips, breakneck action, and set-piece spectacle to spare (we witness Chloe almost being crushed by a toppling tree during a shootout with an armoured vehicle). What it won't have is Drake. Naughty Dog doesn't want its leading man diverting attention away from Chloe's story, and it's confirmed Nate won't even make a cameo appearance. Looks like A Thief's End really was, well... the end, for the dreamboat treasure hunter.

FACTRICK

1. EYE FOR AN EYE

Chloe isn't just after the Tusk Of Ganesha; there's mention of the Eye Of Shiva at the end of the demo.

2. RAW WHEEL

Chloe and Nadine will get behind the wheel in driving sequences, a la Drake's jeep bits in Uncharted 4.

3. AT A ROSS

Due to the losses her Shoreline unit took in U4, Nadine is purely in it for the money as TLL begins.

LEAVE A LEGACY

On a much cheerier note, The Lost Legacy may not actually spell the end for Uncharted. In tantalising style, Escayg has hinted the franchise could continue to live on through side characters (a Victor Sullivan/Charlie Cutter team-up was tested before Naughty Dog set its sights on the Chloe/Nadine team). In a time of extended universes why shouldn't Uncharted join the party and explore its beautifully realised world of sinister smugglers, double-crossing thieves, and exotic ancient world mysticism?

While Uncharted: Sully's Mighty Moustache Quest would be one hell of a good time, The Lost Legacy looks more than worthy of carrying on the series' legendary name in the meantime. Before the next issue's out, we'll discover whether Naughty Dog can deliver what has a chance to be one of the most exciting expansions in PlayStation history. ■



Hurtling through this besieged city as Modern Sonic shows off PS4's power.

"SPEEDRUN/SCORE ATTACK FUN WILL KEEP YOU COMING BACK FOR MORE."



Above This throwback to the very first Sonic boss fight makes us feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

Create-a-hero

Yep, the DeviantArt community can't believe its luck...



1 You can make your own custom Sonic hero, and flesh it out with cool moves. Here's one rocket-jumping over Green Hill to collect rings.



2 This one has an energy beam attack. You might be having flashbacks to PS2's titular hero Shadow The Hedgehog, but there's more to this than grit.



3 The flamethrower in action. You're not able to aim it above your head, which is a shame, but clearing your path as you run feels terrific.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** WINTER 2017
PUB SEGA / **DEV** SONIC TEAM

SONIC FORCES

Yes. *sigh* It is strong with this one

Sonic games are apparently like buses – you wait ages for a good one, then two come along at once. Aside from overseeing Sonic Mania, Sonic Team has been hard at work making its new 3D Sonic title, Sonic Forces. This issue's hands-on has us believing it could be the Sonic Generations follow-up we've been craving.

The game is split into three game types, with Modern Sonic blazing through densely-detailed environments, Classic Sonic offering familiar side-on speedy action (and back in Green Hill as he is contractually bound to revisit forever), and a new character creation mode where you make your own rookie resistance fighter. It feels strange to be told there's a flamethrower attack on PS2, but such new abilities make for a clever way of recycling environments – far more natural than Generations' obvious filler content.

While the Modern Sonic level we play doesn't offer much in terms of alternate routes, it's clear the potential for speedrun/score attack fun will keep you coming back. Scores are ranked and stored, and there's a wonderful flow when you get everything right. Running at 60fps on PS4, it feels solid, even at this stage of development. It's not a revolutionary update to the last game's formula, but it doesn't need to be. 'More but polished' will do nicely.

"IT'S ALL CUT WITH THE UNFLINCHING HUMOUR THE SERIES IS KNOWN FOR."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 17 OCTOBER 2017
PUB UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT

SOUTH PARK: THE FRACTURED BUT WHOLE

New Kid's (back) on the block

Nothing is safe from South Park. Trey and Matt's sardonic vessel has returned to videogames to lampoon the superhero movies that have cluttered up the cinema for the last decade. The Fractured But Whole picks up where The Stick Of Truth left off, but in a much more accessible way.

Ubisoft has tightened up the UI and shaken up the gameplay – overworld movement handles better, and everything in the game is actioned via an in-game mobile phone system, which makes both battle menus and overworld menus easier to interact with.

The Fractured But Whole keeps the core RPG elements of its predecessor, but adds more puzzles and peripheral tasks. And it's all still cut with the trademark unflinching humour the series is known for: infiltrating a strip club, collecting the ingredients for a disgusting drink, and battling a rabid horde of strippers were all part of our most recent hands-on, and that all happened within 30 minutes. This game is not going to give you a chance to get bored.

It's had a troubled development, but none of that's visible – it's a refreshingly light, foul-mouthed RPG, and we wouldn't want it to be anything else. ■



Above It's made in such a loyal way, you may sometimes mistake the gameplay for an actual episode of the show.

This time South Park has Marvel in its acerbic sights as the children play as being superheroes.



Our highlight is pumping lead and stamping heads inside a Walker Gear, but ammo is at a premium.

"NOW YOU CAN BREAK INDIVIDUAL BONES, AND THERE ARE HUNGER AND THIRST METERS."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2018 / **PUB** KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

METAL GEAR SURVIVE

There's no reason to be Quiet about this one

As the first Metal Gear developed without Hideo Kojima, this was always going to be a tricky sell. But, to this oddity's credit, it doesn't trade on past glories. Instead, it focuses on an alternate universe that has zombies with crystals for heads roaming around, while you try to defend yourself from them. Snake, we're not in Kansas any more.

It's been a while since we saw this, so a quick recap. You're playing as a soldier from Mother Base who has been sucked through a wormhole and has to survive by scavenging for resources. While there will be a single-player campaign, our hands-on puts the focus on a multiplayer horde mode, setting our team of four a simple task: to find and defend a wormhole generator against three waves of "Wanderers".

The first part is easy, as we sneak past the crystal creatures into the generator's open-air base. We quickly fortify by barricading entrances and laying down barbed-wire traps. We're looking secure, so on goes the generator and we start the defence phase.

NAME AND NATURE

Wanderers come from every angle, but they're easy enough to take down with a head shot. While this plays similarly to MGS V, the survival game influences are stronger than the stealth ones. Now, you can break individual bones, and there are depleting hunger and thirst meters. If you don't look after your soldier, they get hungry and thirsty and end up being much harder to use effectively. The pivot towards these mechanics also means you will need to craft ammo, traps, and barricades when you run out of your initial loadout.

Importantly, though, that doesn't detract from the fun. Whether it's discovering mini-mech Walker Gears to use or seeing a perfectly laid trap take out a gaggle of enemies, the different systems offer something Survive's older cousin didn't. Plus, just like The Phantom Pain, it's a joy to experiment with, and push the limits of, the arsenal at your disposal.

Metal Gear Survive is ready to prove that it deserves to be taken seriously... Well, as seriously as you can take the series anyway.





Above Fulton balloons are back, and if hoisting (sort of) zombies up into the air doesn't make you smile, nothing will.

CRAFT
RIDE
DESTROY

CROSSOUT

CRAFT • RIDE • DESTROY

AVAILABLE FOR FREE
IN THE PLAYSTATION STORE





WWW.CROSSOUT.NET

PC PS4 XBOX

© 2009–2017 by Gaijin Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Gaijin Entertainment

TARGEM GAMES

7

www.pegi.info







To win your team can risk their weakened vessels in a defensive strategy, in order to amass a match-winning pile of plunder. Who'll be sacrificed?

"WE MANAGE TO T-BONE THEIR SHIP WITH OUR BATTERING RAM."



Above There'll be a single-player campaign but so far, Ubisoft is only saying that it'll be "completely integrated" into the multiplayer.













FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2018 / **PUB** UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT

SKULL & BONES

Naval warfare promises to make pirates out of any landlubber

Considering how much fun it was to sail the seas in the Jackdaw in Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, it's no surprise that Ubisoft is heading back to the ocean. But this isn't a follow up to our past cover star's series. Instead, Skull & Bones is an intriguing seafaring fighter that casts you as the captain of your very own warship, hunting for the one thing salty dogs crave the most: treasure.

We're sampling multiplayer mode Loot Hunt, a 5v5 skirmish where teams battle to capture and escape with as much booty as possible. You can plunder it from AI merchant ships who are daft enough to be using your battleground as a trading route, or steal it from other online players.

Before we can rumble in the azure blue waters around Madagascar, we need to choose a ship. Unsurprisingly, there are various classes, each offering different ways to play. The beefy Frigate, for instance, is a hulking tank-like ship that can absorb more than its fair share of cannon shot, but is a sluggish beast, while the Sloop-Of-War is a sprightly long-range ship that's unable to sustain *too* much damage, but whose powerful long-range attacks can chip away at enemy ships from afar. We plump for the short-range Brigantine, which can ram into anyone foolish enough to let it get close to them.

FACTRICK

1. ANCIENT HISTORY

The original idea came from Ubisoft experimenting and putting a second player captain in Black Flag.

2. BETA BELIEVE

Fancy giving this a try before you buy? Ubisoft is already planning a beta for PlayStation 4.

3. KRAK DEN

Expect mythical monsters to lurk beneath the depths of the Indian Ocean, as the trailer teases the Kraken.

BREAK WIND

Split into two teams, the Cutthroats (Team OPM's clan for a round) and Raiders, we start out by getting used to how our ship handles. Because of its similarity to the sailing in Assassin's Creed IV, it's easy enough to manoeuvre, but wind plays a much bigger role in the speed of your vessel. You'll need to pay attention to which way it's blowing, as the breeze affects the pace your ship can travel at. Get the wind in your sails and it'll fly across the sea, but if it's blowing against the bow of the ship? Expect an agonising crawl that leaves you open to attacks. An easily readable guide on the mini-map means you won't get stuck trying to figure out how to make use of a stiff breeze.

We're able to catch the wind just right and our billowing sails send us straight towards the tropical islands dotted around the centre of the map. Very soon we come across an AI ship that's ready to be looted. With cannons at the front and sides of our Brigantine, we send a volley of shots crashing into our prey, blowing it up. We collect our reward and hum shanties to ourselves.

WHAT AN ANCHOR

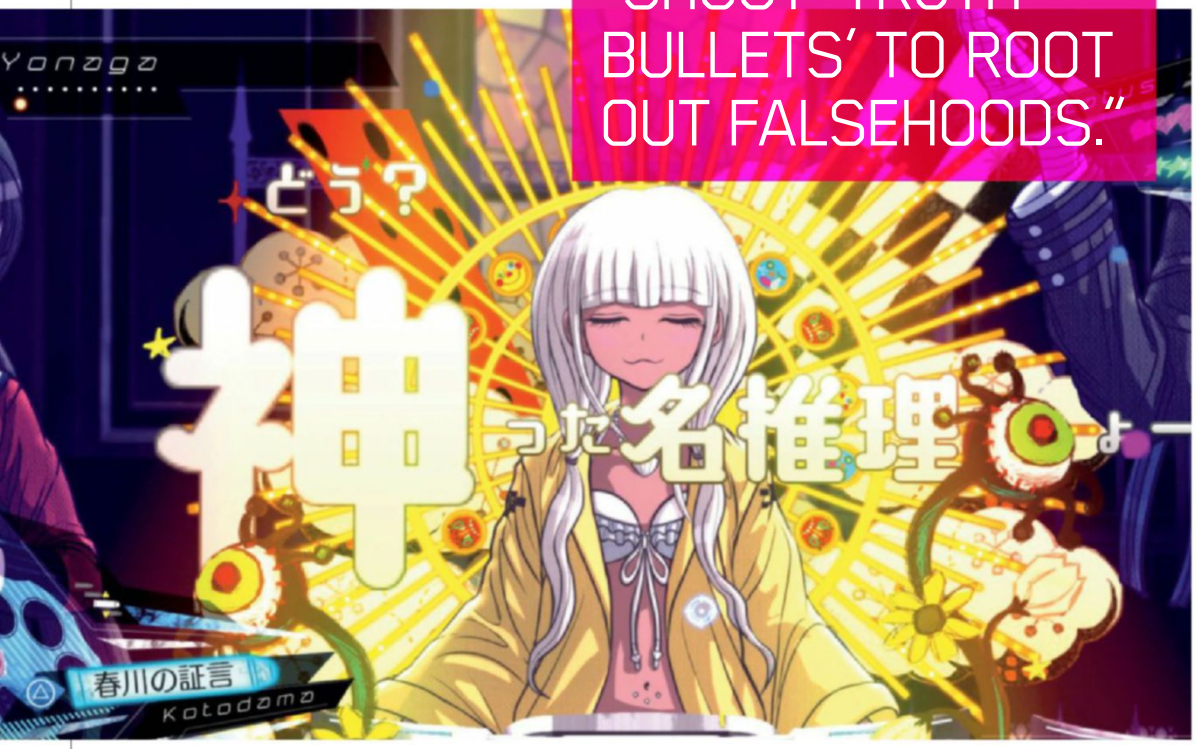
With one enemy down, we go on the hunt for a proper pirate, a real test. We use the Crow's Nest to get a better look and see certain stats of other ships on the sea. We spot a Raider Frigate, which is just the challenge we are looking for, and to make things even better it's full of treasure.

However, we also spot Pirate Hunters, super-powerful AI ships that signal the end of the round. They chase the pirates carrying the most gold, although every player needs to make their escape from the map or risk losing their bullion, no matter how pitiful your haul. The loot you plunder only counts if you get away, and with that opposing Frigate boasting a game-winning bounty, we set full sails towards our target.

They might clock onto our efforts, but with the wind in our favour, we manage to T-bone their ship with our battering ram. A cloud of splinters flies impressively from the point of impact, but it doesn't take our target down. Instead, we just make a dent in their hull and have a tidal wave of cannonballs crash into and destroy our own beautiful ship. Fortunately, we've done enough to slow them down and stop our loot from sailing away, giving our Cutthroat team the win.

In these moments, we experience the multiplayer magic in Skull & Bones, where tactics and laughs come together to create an exhilarating experience. Keep your parrot's beady eyes on this one. ■

"SHOOT 'TRUTH BULLETS' TO ROOT OUT FALSEHOODS."



FORMAT PS4, PS VITA / **ETA** 29 SEP / **PUB** NIS AMERICA / **DEV** SPIKE CHUNSOFT

DANGANRONPA V3: KILLING HARMONY

The visual novel graduates to PS4

This twisted visual novel series might now be on its third instalment, but Killing Harmony is the first developed for PS4 as well as Vita. Moving from handheld to the home console has given Spike Chunsoft extra power to play with, and the presentation has been seriously stepped up. Killing Harmony is just about recognisable as a Danganronpa game, but it's a lot busier, a lot deeper, and a lot more active.

As is usual in Danganronpa, you're trying to discover the identity of the mastermind behind a killing game you've been trapped in. It's the first title in the series to feature a female protagonist, and as a result you're a far less stoic player in the sadistic, school-set schemes, and actively interact a lot more with your classmates.

CRUEL SCHOOL

In the Class Trials – the core gameplay areas of Danganronpa games, where you try to figure out who the murderer is – you can now be confronted by multiple students talking at once. Shooting them with surreal 'truth bullets' to root out falsehoods has been made simpler thanks to wonderful floating dynamic text that has been localised and reanimated at a better reading speed to help you in your psychedelic quest to find the truth.

A lot of the improvements in Killing Harmony come from the interface: whereas previous games in the series went with a 'psycho-pop' feel, this goes for more 'psycho-cool'. The result is a spiky, busy UI that's always giving you something to look at, and often presents like Persona 5's system. Every health bar, every map, every informative element is animated and stylised so clearly that we were surprised how easily we managed to understand the wealth of information that's thrown at you throughout the game.

Danganronpa has always worked well on Vita because its focus on story has been deemed more important than any significant design depth – it is a visual novel, after all. Killing Harmony is a departure from that mindset: it's twice as long as the previous two games, it's got myriad exciting mini-games breaking up the courtroom-like core, and (unbelievably!) even a full RPG for you to experience once you've finished the main game. With so much on offer, we're looking forward to our next school year. ■



Above Who's the bad guy? The obvious choice is on the right, but you never know.

on the box

judged only by their covers



DESTINY 2

Strong of shoulder pad and fiercely booted, the Fashion Police are here to put an end to crimes against style. This shooter sees you take down perps wearing socks with sandals, a fedora, or anything from the '90s.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 6 SEP



DISHONORED: DEATH OF THE OUTSIDER

Doctor! A nasty accident has left your patient with a chunk of glass embedded in her face. Can you remove it before she expires? A challenging puzzler.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 15 SEP



THE EVIL WITHIN 2

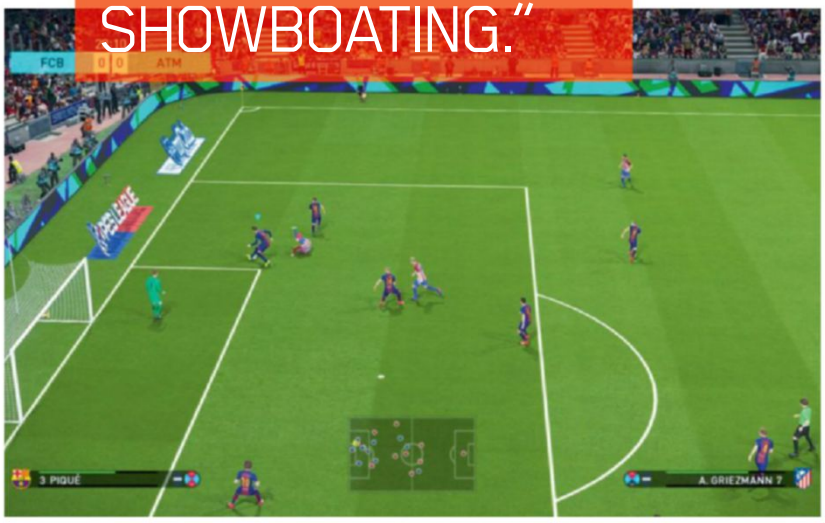
An open-world adventure in which you play a graveyard statue that's brought to life and has to return to the quarry its marble came from so it can free other sculptures from the rock. Note: not The Rock.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 13 OCT



The free kick system has ditched the visible guidelines of PES 2017 for a more natural feel.

"IF LAST YEAR'S GAME WAS ABOUT PACE, PES 2018 IS SHOWBOATING."



Above More physical than last year, you'll need a myClub squad of giants to compete.

Hat trick of changes

Discover the three ways PES 2018 is changing the game



1 The ability to shield the ball means there's time to plan your killer pass, but you need to get into position to 'activate' the new shield move to make it work.



2 The goal kick camera is now above the keeper, and with no guides you need to pass the ball with line-of-sight. This will take some getting used to.



3 As with the goal kicks, corners also use the line-of-sight approach. It feels less accurate and harder to judge power, but practice makes perfect.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 14 SEP
PUB KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2018

Elbowing its way to the top?

One game that's guaranteed to make you cry is Pro Evolution Soccer. If you judge a game on its ability to leverage passion from players, the PES series is in a league of its own. If a key myClub player gets injured it can ruin carefully planned tactics. Our play of PES 2018 tells us to expect more tears...

This year's game is far slower than PES 2017, and passing more precise. The days of spamming balls forward to speedy wingers could be over, replaced by methodical midfield build-up. Helping this is the new Real Touch+ dribble control. In our hands-on, the improved animation and control sensitivity saw Liverpool's Adam Lallana produce a defence-splitting heel flick to Sadio Mané before he shimmied into the box. If last year's game was about pace, PES 2018 is the class showboat.

Enabling such crowd-pleasing moves is a newly felt physicality, exemplified by a 'ball shield' move - some players can hold off defenders. It means you'll need to rethink your preferred myClub stars, as nippy wingers could be ditched in favour of powerful players who can win headers. With over 4,000 myClub stars to choose from, who'd have thought we might all need Marouane Fellaini in our PES 2018 teams? It's enough to make you cry.



We're sure 'love they neighbour' doesn't cover what Seed's got planned for the bloke tied to the top of the truck.



"PUSHES THE DEFINITION OF THE SANDBOX OUTWARDS."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 27 FEB 2018
PUB UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT

FAR CRY 5

Welcome to Hope County, paved with good intentions...

Far Cry has become known as an explosive, globe-trekking sandbox of a series, intent on giving players the freedom to cut loose in exotic climes. From surviving in the African plains to warring against a dictator dug in like a tick in the Himalayas, uncovering a mystery on a Pacific island to mastering animal husbandry in neolithic Europe, it has pushed the definition of sandbox outwards, merging the idea of immersive exploration with chaotic trigger-happy gunplay.

You wouldn't really associate either of those things with Montana. Yet that's where Far Cry 5 calls home. In the gentle (fictional) foothills of Hope County, a religious cult calling itself Project Eden's Gate has seized control, its far-right politics and twisted interpretation of Christianity making live hell for the 'non-conformist' locals.

So far, so Far Cry, right? It's just all set in a very Western locale, instead of out in the middle of the mountains or the ocean, giving Far Cry's penchant for social commentary more weight to a Western audience. To that end, we've got a new villain: the charismatic, devastating Father Joseph Seed, similar to Far Cry 4's Pagan Min in his happy brutality, similar to Far Cry 3's Vaas Montenegro in his insanity, but very much his own, unsettling character.

Your job, as one of the few remaining law enforcement officers in the county, is to restore peace (or, at least, normality). Our hands-on unfortunately



Left Now that's a game of fetch we can enjoy. Good dog, Boomer!

Right There's plenty of personality in Far Cry 5 – even the vehicles have it.



Another good thing about the American setting: you're guaranteed some very good rides.

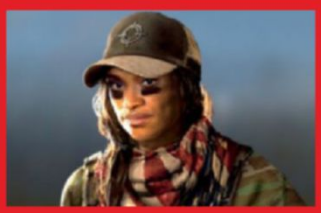


Guns For Hire

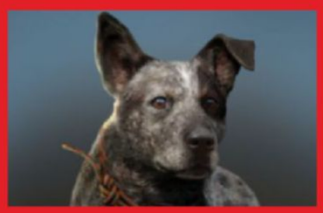
Meet the mercenaries helping you liberate Hope County



Nick Rye
Your eye in the sky – a cropduster pilot who's seen his fair share of violence and has no objections to dropping bombs from on high.



Grace Armstrong
A sniper who prefers to keep her distance, clock enemies from afar, and help suppress threats without getting directly engaged.



Boomer
This well-trained dog will retrieve guns for you, silently take out targets, and be an all-round good boy when you're in stealth mode.



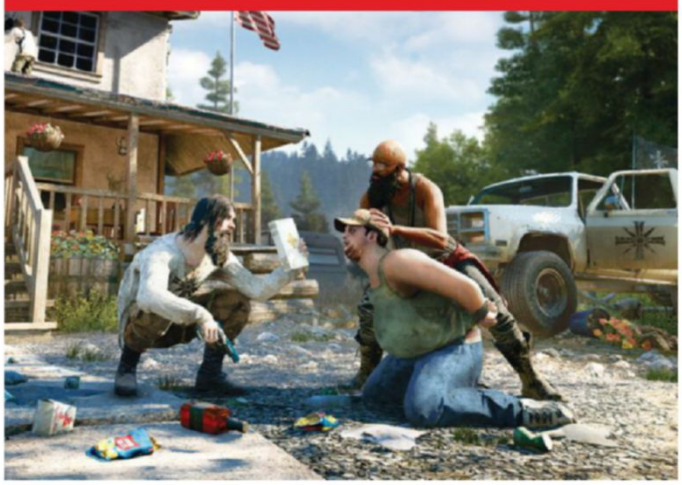
Your friend
Far Cry 5 can be played entirely in co-op, so if you've got a friend you want to liberate Hope County with, you'll be able to do it between you.



Above Any Stephen King fan knows rural America is a place of utter horror. Don't be fooled by all that lush greenery and rustic charm.



"WHEN STEALTH GOES TO POT, YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT YOUR MORE RELIABLE ARMS TO LEAN ON."



Above No matter how many guns he's got, we're still not going to read The Da Vinci Code...



Above Not everyone's on the side of the cultists. Nick here is definitely on our side. We'll buy him a drink.

skips past the character customisation part of the game – this is the first Far Cry to offer such an option – and throws us right in at the deep end. We're emancipating a village where innocent people are being executed by the Project outside a church.

From the off, we adopt a stealthy approach. Far Cry has always excelled at slotting stealth into the open world, and it's no different here thanks to Montana's dense tree lines and rocky hills. We aim down the sights of our silenced pistol to clock three cultists tormenting prisoners outside the church. Moving closer to them, using the long grass as makeshift cover, we take them down one-by-one.

Unfortunately, we were careless and have been spotted by a nearby guard, who immediately sends a flare screaming into the sky. Nuts.

WHOLE NEW WORLD

Time to run, then. We jump in the nearest vehicle – a lorry cab with an American eagle painted on it – and plough into the flare gunner and his ally. We're too late, though; that flare's gone off and more cultists pull up in two pickup trucks and start suppressing us with machine gun fire. We leap from the lorry and chuck a grenade towards the flatbeds, triggering an explosion that catches some of the propane tanks nearby. Everything goes up in flames, even us (though, thanks to some wonderful first-person animations, the flames are soon patted out by our on-screen hands).

Needless to say, this is Far Cry. When stealth goes to pot, you've always got your more reliable arms to lean on (our machine gun has just a bit too much recoil for us to want to use it in a pinch, though) and failing that, there's always something, somewhere, that can explode. A more thoughtful approach may have saved us some hassle, but Far Cry has a habit of putting the tools you need to make things *fun* within your reach at all times, and that really is masterful game design.

Because Far Cry 5 isn't going to involve you in a swelling cinematic narrative like its forebears did, you're going to have the freedom to do as you please in Hope County – liberating parts of the county one at a time, with no strict path to follow. Towards the end of our demo, we are told 'A Chosen' has been sent to kill us. These elite units of the Project can come at you whenever you've aggravated the cultists enough... as it happens, ours spawns as we are on a bombing run of ammo silos throughout the county in the newly playable biplane (which handles impeccably). This means we spend the closing minutes of our hands-on engaged in a dogfight above the foothills, gunshots from the ground ricocheting off our wing as we dodge fire from the other plane, trying to outmanoeuvre it and come out on top. It feels like the perfect example of what Far Cry 5 is trying to do: mixing these emergent gameplay moments with a dense open world, some of the best sandbox elements in the genre, and a setting as unsettling as it is intriguing.

Far Cry: Primal was a little disappointing in comparison to the rest of the series, but that's because the stone-age setting removed it from what makes Far Cry special: modern exotic worlds, exemplary gunplay and fascinating, character-driven stories. This is all coming back in Far Cry 5, and it's coming back with a vengeance. ■

FACTRICK

1. GOOD LOOKING

Far Cry 5 is the first game in the series with a customisable protagonist.

2. WILD THINGS

Montana will have just as much flora and fauna as any previous game in the series.

3. DEMOLITION MAN

Far Cry 5 will not feature either towers or a mini-map, both omissions a departure for the franchise.

"WE WERE SURPRISED BY HOW COMPLEX A LOT OF OUR DIALOGUE OPTIONS WERE."



We're intrigued by the lack of classes. Could this mean greater character flexibility?

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 13 FEB 2018 / **PUB** DEEP SILVER / **DEV** WARHORSE STUDIOS

KINGDOM COME: DELIVERANCE

Keeping Bohemia in Czech

You're special, most RPGs tell you. You matter. Well, not this one. It's trying to be a far more realistic affair. You aren't the Dragonborn, you aren't a Witcher, you're the son of a blacksmith, and you're not going to be able to take on armies of enemies at once. Because you'll die. Just like in real life.

Intriguingly, Kingdom Come falls somewhere between simulation and a classic RPG: if you don't eat enough, drink enough, or get enough sleep, things are going to end badly for you. This is an extension of RPG mechanics we've seen in other games, but taken that bit further: every conversation is going to influence how Henry (your character) grows in some way, whether it makes him more confident or affects his relationship with whoever he's speaking to.

BOHEMIAN HACKSODY

There are no classes in the game, no true levels to speak of. Every skill moves independently – the dynamic dialogue system helps to shape both the threatened world of Bohemia and Henry himself, as does every action you take. We were deeply surprised by how complex and comprehensive a lot of our dialogue options were. The Hollywood script doctor on-team at Warhorse is clearly earning his keep.

As it happens, in our most recent hands-on with the game, we didn't develop the eloquence to receive some debt repayments from a drunkard soon enough, so decided to settle things the old-fashioned way. This is where the game really shines: combat is *hard* and based on real-world fighting techniques, requiring you to read and anticipate enemy attacks while taking a gamble on where to strike back. The difficulty curve in learning this is going to make Souls-likes look trivial... but that's what you get with truly immersive RPGs.

We're impressed with just how comprehensive the RPG systems in Kingdom Come are – granted, we've only played around in an isolated village so far, but if the same level of detail and script quality, and the allure of a devilish battle system, hold throughout the game, we could have found our dark horse hit of 2018. ■





Above Forget giant swords spitting fire or ice – your weapons are as realistic as the beautifully created Bohemian setting.

ONE GIFT CARD.

Endless possibilities...



Visit Sainsbury's, ASDA, Game, Wilkos and WHSmith for Steam Gift Cards in a variety of denominations. With Steam Gift Cards, you can add money to your Steam Wallet and enjoy all of your favourite PC, Mac, and SteamOS games.

- Instant Access to Thousands of PC Games.
- Create and Share Content. Gift your friends, trade items, and even create new content for games in the Steam Workshop. Help shape the future of your favourite games.
- Join the Community. Meet new people, join game groups, form clans, chat in-game and more! With over 100 million potential friends (or enemies), the fun never stops.

REQUIRES INTERNET CONNECTION AND FREE STEAM ACCOUNT TO ACTIVATE. Notice: Product offered subject to your acceptance of the Steam Subscriber Agreement ("SSA"). You must activate this product via the Internet by registering for a Steam account and accepting the SSA. Please see http://www.steampowered.com/agreement to view the SSA prior to purchase. If you do not agree with the provisions of the SSA, you should return this game unopened to your retailer in accordance with their return policy.

©2017 Valve Corporation. Steam and the Steam logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Valve Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries.

Available at:

Sainsbury's

ASDA
Save money. Live better.

GAME

wilko

WHSmith

Powered by: Incomm



FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** SPRING 2018 / **PUB** CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Capcom's dino-decking sim is hungry for Western success

As Sir David Attenborough is 91, he probably doesn't have much use for videogames. Still, we're sure the beloved naturalist would adore Monster Hunter: World. Giant lizard things eating slightly smaller lizard things! Beasts regurgitating food to feed their babies! The goriest circle of life since poor Mufasa got crushed by that wildebeest stampede! This is videogame nature done right.

Even though we've only been demoed a 25-minute walkthrough, we're confident Monster Hunter: World is going to offer a good time. This is a series that has clearly looked at its historically poor Western sales, examined what needs updating, then overhauled its core mechanics to match the polish of the top-tier open-world contenders slugging it out at PS4's peak.

Gone are the loading zones of the hugely deep (if cluttered and clunky) Nintendo games. You'll find no black screens between areas here, only a sumptuous, seamless environment where you can explore to your hunter's heart's content. Past games gave players a cheaty reprieve if they jumped between zones — you could briefly down a potion or two as your prey waited to travel to the new area — but such cheap tricks have been lost in this truly open world.

It's not just the gorgeous chunks of jungle on World's new continent that are far more seamless than what's come before. Animation is freshly buttery, losing much of the awkward juddery motions that gave recent entries on Nintendo's Wii and 3DS such lo-fi 'charm'. Now your hunter confidently strides about in bruising style, exaggerated knee gestures and velvety dodge rolls recalling a little of Dark Souls' supreme combat.

More than any other feature, the monster AI seems to have benefitted most from the jump to PS4. In the old games, you could occasionally aggravate a creature, then lure it to fight another scaly foe, but it was a bare-bones system at best. Now, though, there's a fully fledged food chain, where monsters actively hunt each other, fight over territory, and even go out of their way to feed their young.

The opening of the demo gives a great example of this exciting ecosystem in action. As the hunter enters a swampy clearing, a grazing aptanoth (think a dino elk) leisurely takes a drink from some shallow water... DEAR LORD WHAT'S THAT LIZARD THING DOING TO IT?! No sooner does the aptanoth take a glug than along comes Mr Great Jagras: a colossal, iguana-esque critter that knocks down its prey, then swallows the poor bugger whole like a ravenous, otherworldly snake. Jagras isn't done yet, either. This isn't just a single-minded killer. No, the big-boned beast is also a parent, and as the hunter gingerly follows the monster through thick undergrowth, he's eventually treated to the sight of the leviathan bringing the remains of the aptanoth back up to feed its babies. Awwwww. Ain't nature beautiful?

WHOLE NEW WORLD

World also benefits from a raft of features that could help the series finally become a hit in the West: fast travel via a flying monster; four-player drop-in/drop-out co-op that lets you join fellow hunters to battle beasts at any time; flares you can fire to ask other players for help; hordes of Scout flies you can deploy to track down prey; and a weird sentient cat-beast (called a palico) that will assist you in single-player fights. Phew! All that, and an awesome tool called a Slinger — World's take on a grappling hook, which lets you propel onto a monster's back then clamber around it, Shadow Of The Colossus-style.

Almost every element of Monster Hunter: World seems to have been designed to make it palatable to newcomers, without sacrificing the charm that helped its predecessors amass such a cult following. If Capcom can get the final game to play as slickly as in our presentation, without jettisoning any of the series' depth, this really could be a monstrous hit. ■

FACTRICK

1. SMASH 'N' GRAB

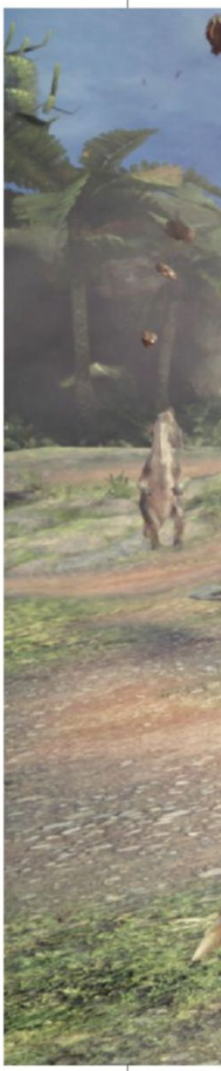
Monsters can smash through breakable scenery, creating new routes to zones or even causing floods

2. HUB CRAWL

Like past games, there's a centralised, monster-free hub area where you can trade and upgrade weapons.

3. CO-OP A FEEL

Cross-region play is supported for co-op, so you can join other PS4 hunters from all over the world.











They've got the size and weight advantage, but you have your evolved human brain and opposable thumbs. Use them!



"THERE'S A FULLY FLEDGED FOOD CHAIN, WHERE MONSTERS HUNT AND FIGHT."

This is why we love the Slinger so much: we can climb on dinos.







Above Need to get somewhere in a hurry? Flying's faster than battling through the jungle, and this winged reptile is your fast travel solution.






Above Dragon Ball FighterZ looks stunning and each character is beautifully animated. Anime fan or not, you'll love the way it looks.

As Goku wisely said, "Power comes in response to a need, not a desire."

"THE DESTRUCTIVE PAYOFF YOU GET WHEN YOU CHAIN A REGULAR COMBO INTO A SUPER IS WELL WORTH THE EFFORT."

There's one thing a Saiyan always keeps... his hands on his DualShock!

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** EARLY 2018
PUB BANDAI NAMCO / **DEV** ARC SYSTEM WORKS

DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ

We're Saiyan it here: legendary anime finally gets the treatment it deserves

Goku's story is *massive*. Almost 150 games related to Dragon Ball have been released, but none has got us as excited as Dragon Ball FighterZ. Developed by Arc System Works (the minds behind the BlazBlue and Guilty Gear series), FighterZ has the potential to be the best Dragon Ball game to ever come to PlayStation. We're serious.

The visuals alone are impressive enough to make you stop in your tracks – Arc System Works is using the same modified Unreal 3 engine it used in Guilty Gear Xrd to bring this game to life, and the result is a 2.5D anime masterpiece. Even if you're not enough of a fan to appreciate poses taken from the anime, it looks cool as all hell regardless. This is definitely the most authentic Dragon Ball game ever made.

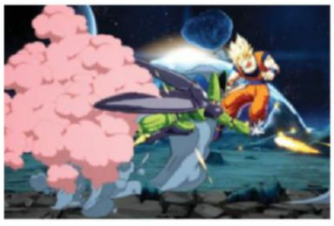
The game uses a 3v3 format in its fights – it's basically a rival to Marvel Vs. Capcom: Infinite. It's a faster game, though, and with that stylish Dragon Ball skin every move feels incredible to pull off, and delaying Hyper Attacks or sneaking in delayed assists shows there's as much complexity here as any other 2D fighter. It might be a trickier beast to learn than Infinite (which features 2v2 battles), but the destructive payoff you get when you chain a regular combo into a Super is well worth the effort.

The announced character roster is currently small, but with a varied pool of brawlers balanced against each other, this has the potential to be one of the best fighting games in a punch-packed 2018. ■





Above The 3v3 format feels familiar to older Marvel Vs. Capcom games.




Above Even simple combos can end in astonishing anime joy.

PREVIEW ROUND-UP

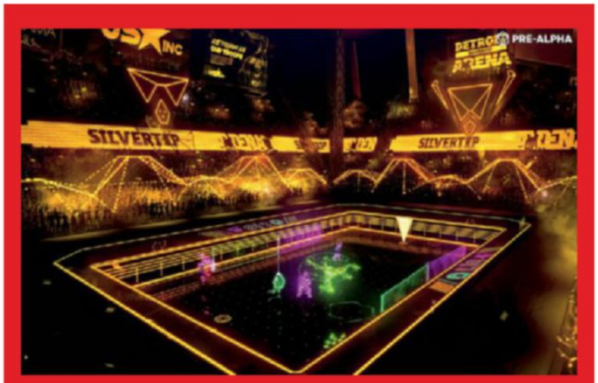
A collection of VR and retro treats for you this month. Sparc and The Inpatient show off what the headset o' magic can do, while Shakedown: Hawaii and Undertale take us back to the glory days.



THE INPATIENT

FORMAT PS VR
ETA TBC / **PUB** SONY
DEV SUPERMASSIVE GAMES

This psychological VR horror expands the Until Dawn universe by heading back to Blackwood Pines Sanatorium. The twist is that it's set 60 years before its predecessor, with your (unsurprisingly) amnesiac protagonist having to piece together how he ended up there. What's really spooky is the tech behind it, as you interact with the characters using voice controls. The branching narrative of Until Dawn returns, which means there'll be multiple endings to clumsily guide yourself towards. This looks like it'll recapture what makes PS4's premier teen murder simulator so special.



LASER LEAGUE

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2018
PUB 505 GAMES / **DEV** ROLL7

This arcade sport takes the look of Tron, whisks in Rocket League's frantic teamplay and ditches the vehicles from both to create your next multiplayer obsession. Two teams of four take control of moving nodes. When activated, they emit a coloured laser that matches the team that got there first. Hit one that doesn't match your team's colours and you're out. In practice, it's surprisingly simple to pick up and play, as responsive controls make weaving through a field of pulsating neon an addictive joy. Roll on 2018.



SHAKEDOWN: HAWAII

FORMAT PS4, PS VITA
ETA TBC / **PUB** VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT / **DEV** VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT

This follow-up to the 2D GTA-esque Retro City Rampage promises to be just as joyously manic, as you play the role of a failing CEO determined to take control of his destiny/island. While it's not a direct sequel there are plenty of similarities, from the open-world structure to the carnage you can unleash. Instead of targeting rival gangs, however, you're taking on competing CEOs and smaller businesses in your pursuit of a 'legitimate' corporate empire. With striking pixel art and a filthy synth score, we're ready for the rampage.



SPARC

FORMAT PS VR
ETA AUTUMN / **PUB** CCP GAMES / **DEV** CCP GAMES

The lofty goal this VR title sets out to achieve is to create an entirely new online virtual sport. Two players, equipped with PS Move controllers, each have a neon ball to hurl at one another, with points scored for directly hitting your opponent. Using full body motion tracking, you can dodge, block, and deflect the incoming projectile, with the match feeling like a futuristic version of Pong in the best way possible. While our 20-minute hands-on session leaves us building up a fair sweat, we can't wait for our next round with this promising experience.



UNDERTALE

FORMAT PS4, VITA
ETA SUMMER / **PUB** 8-4 + FANGAMER / **DEV** TOBY FOX

A cult indie RPG smash when it first came out on PC, Undertale is an unusual role-player in which your protagonist tumbles into a world of monsters. But, this isn't about bashing, slashing and mashing your way through dungeons to escape. Instead, you're offered the chance to show peace and mercy to the many fascinating characters you encounter on the trip. Plus, the choices you make will have long-lasting consequences that we won't spoil here, but if you think about what type of game Undertale is, there's a huge wealth of secrets and surprises waiting for you.





FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 15 AUG **PUB** SEGA
DEV HEADCANNON/PAGODAWEST GAMES

Sonic Mania

Justin Towell's seriously impressed by this retro revival

We only review finished games, so in Viewpoint, we go hands-on with near-final code of a game that has just missed our review deadline. Long-term hedgehog fan Justin's been hands-on twice with Sonic Mania, and this is his definitive pre-release verdict.



I've been playing Sonic games since 1991, and firmly believe Sonic Mania is close to being the best of all of them. Seriously, it would take an error of monumental proportions to screw it up now. And Sega seems to believe that, too, since the game has enjoyed a few extra months of development time to make absolutely sure it delivers on its potential. If what I've played again is a true indication of the quality of the whole game, I am certain it will be a success. The Sonic gamers loved in the early '90s really is back. After literally two decades of waiting, I am satisfied.

But hold on a minute. Let's not skip over the gravity of that statement. Sonic fans are *never* satisfied – it's one of the unwritten laws of videogames. If you like the new games too much, you have to hand in your Sonic badge. And we're not talking about the normal margins of critical opinion. Sonic fans' complaints get severely nitpicky: he's the wrong shade of blue; his legs are too long; his jumps are too shallow; or he doesn't have the right 'inertia' when he curls up into a ball. Well, Sonic Mania nails all those things. Sonic looks like he did on Mega Drive – a short, fat, little critter – only better. He moves exactly like he did in his original trilogy, with just a few tweaks having been made in certain specific circumstances that genuinely improve the experience of playing this new Sonic game.

Sonic Mania should attract plenty of newcomers in addition to satisfying long-term fans. The game is bright, cheerful, cheeky, gorgeous, fast, measured... basically everything I've seen so far has been designed with the player experience in mind.

GOTTA GO FAST

I can imagine the conversations during the creative process: "How will it feel to smash shop windows as you blaze past?" "Awesome? Oh, sorry – damn awesome." "Okay, it's in." "All right, how will people attempt to get up to this high platform?" "Let's leave a small undulation here to allow a higher technical jump for advanced players..." From a design point of view, Sonic Mania is a masterclass. The action flows beautifully if you want to go fast (this is Sonic, why would you want to do anything else?), but has plenty of tight, challenging platforming too for players who prefer to take a more methodical approach.

Every single element appears to have been carefully considered for inclusion, with nothing put in as filler. The result is a list of things I love, and it's getting ridiculously long: the new animation frames; the new badniks (enemies); the fan-pleasing moments and incidental details (there are visual nods to Daytona USA and Streets Of Rage in the Studiopolis Zone, and the Green Hill Boss is an adapted version of Robotnik's Sonic 2 behemoth from the Death Egg Zone, for example). Then there's the physics, the speed, the new takes on old classics, like Chemical Plant pipes where you get to choose a direction at junctions (just like we all imagined we were doing in Sonic 2). I love the cuter Tails sprite, the returning drop-in/drop-out co-op, the bold reworking of the later half of Green Hill, the new drop-dash move, the enhanced old music, and the incredible Act 2 remixes. The way it's been designed as though it was targeted to run on a Sega freakin' Saturn. How the graphical resolution is that of mid-'90s console gaming. The low-detail polygon elements. It really is the next-gen 2D Sonic game we never had. The real Sonic 4. But most of all, I love how it makes me smile whenever I play it. Sonic Mania is a joy to play.

PUMP THE BRAKES?

Of course, no game is perfect, so what don't I love? At this stage, worryingly little. There is a very slight hint of 'fan game' in the environment design, in that there are lots of suspended elements rather than purely ground-running action. But I've had two extensive hands-on sessions with Sonic Mania across several levels and 'suspended elements' is genuinely the worst criticism that can be levelled at it right now. I would like to see more original stages, but the complete level list is so far undisclosed, and they could be in production. So who knows? Maybe it really will be as big as Sonic 3 and Knuckles, as rumours are suggesting. But either way, at this stage I just want it on my PS4. Everything seems to be just right. It surely can't go wrong now.

VIEWPOINT

"IT'S STILL 1995 AS FAR AS SONIC MANIA IS CONCERNED, AND THE RESULTS ARE BEAUTIFUL. BARRING A CATACLYSMIC WEREHOG INJECTION, EXPECT THE BEST SONIC GAME EVER."

We'll have our full review of Sonic Mania next issue, on sale 29 August.





1





2



3

4

1 The ziplines never used to be in Green Hill Zone, but all the new additions have been designed sympathetically, and fit right in. 2 Knuckles is running off a stream of bubbles. You spray them from a dispenser by jumping on the pump. Why? Because it's fun! 3 Now Knuckles is bouncing on the new, more gelatinous 'Mega Mack' that floods the Chemical Plant Zone. Some *huge* bounces on offer here. 4 Dr Robotnik may be called Eggman these days, but he sure looks like Robotnik. Just look at his face.







NILE BLACK

After a year off, Ubisoft's stealthy historical franchise is back with a trip to Ancient Egypt. Louise Blain plugs into the Animus of **Assassin's Creed Origins**

ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS

Unlike the infamous dusty mummies who no doubt spring to mind when you imagine it, Ancient Egypt is truly alive. With no outstretched arms and undead shuffling required, 49BC is positively buzzing with life. Crocodiles lurk dangerously in the leafy shade of the riverbanks, hippopotami wallow in the deeper water, and boats of every shape and size criss-cross the Nile with their cargoes. Men and women work in the long grass of the surprisingly lush Faiyum region, and gazelle scatter as new hero Bayek's horse clatters into a small town.

Man with a hood? Beautifully realised historical time period? So far, so Assassin's Creed, but that's the only hidden-blade-shaped security blanket you're going to get. The stealthy franchise is finally getting the origins story it deserves and that means that everything has changed. No, seriously. Everything.

Going hands-on with the earliest Creed to date, the first thing that hits us like a da-Vinci-designed gauntlet to the throat is the lack of a mini-map. Gone is the frankly intimidating chart of things. No more climbing to the top of a tower and unfogging areas of the map until you can't see the streets for the mass of missions, races, fights, chests, and token collectibles clogging up the area like a murderer's to-do list. Instead, the team behind Black Flag has given you back the 10% of your screen you didn't know you were missing and replaced it with a Bethesda-style compass line.

NILE BE THERE

Landing in the sprawling expanse of Ancient Egypt, the slew of question marks above us is a tantalising change. Whichever direction Bayek faces, new quests lurk in the distance just waiting to be discovered – ooh, is that a pyramid we can see? Gazing across the lush world from horseback, accompanied by a gently mystical soundtrack from AC Unity composer Sarah Schachner, the sense of adventure is palpable.

Yep, Assassin's Creed Origins has gone full action-RPG, complete with quests, abilities, loot, and levelling, and it isn't a moment too soon. But why now? Why this time period to change everything we know about the franchise? "We've done a lot of research, we've had historians and Egyptologists embedded in the team, and we found a lot of really amazing stories of little events, people that did great things, and we asked ourselves 'how can we put these stories in here?'" explains creative director Ashraf Ismail. "It's one reason that we wanted a quest structure – we felt like quests are a wonderful way of telling little stories that are encapsulated, and a way to meet our characters."

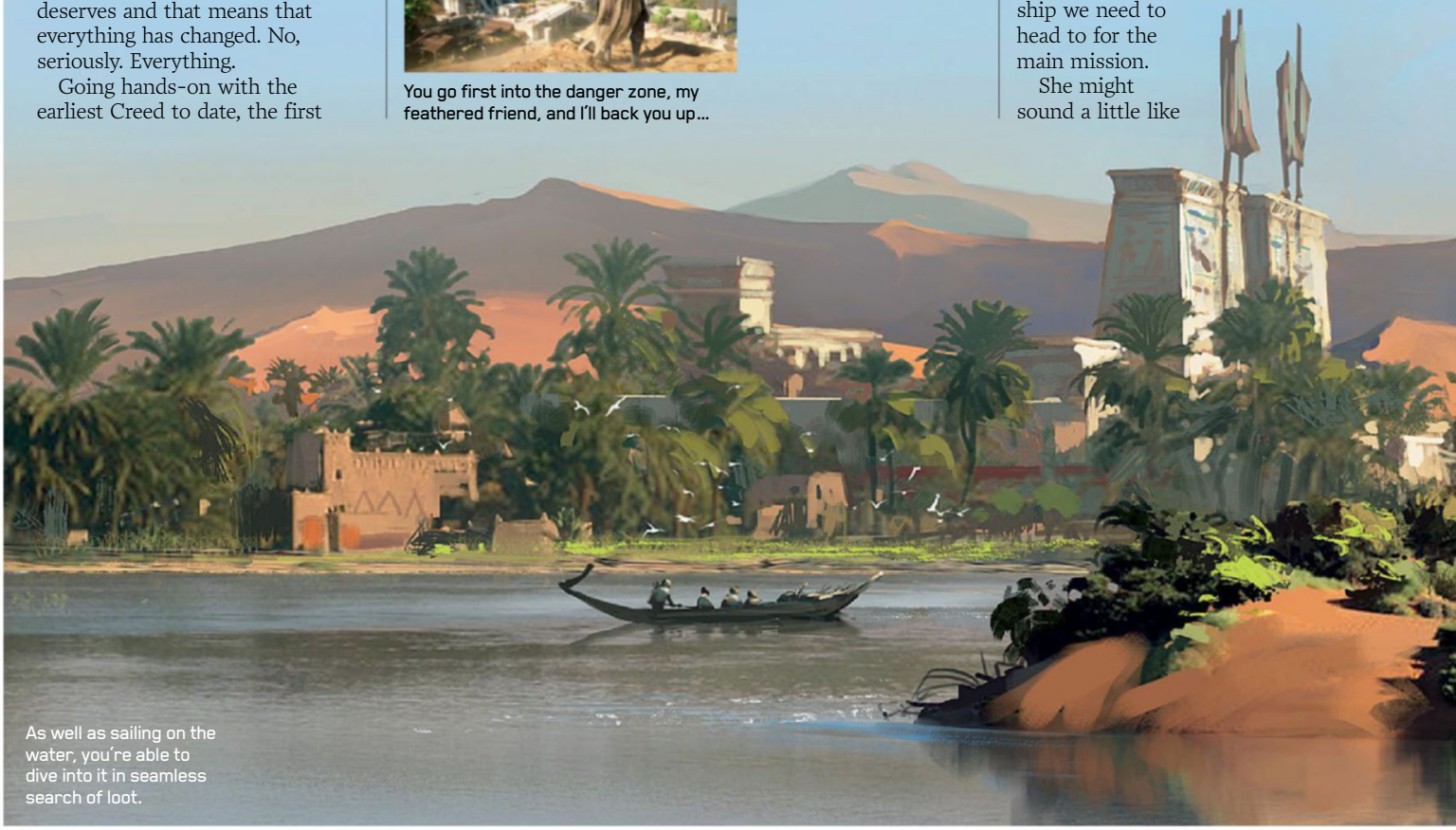


You go first into the danger zone, my feathered friend, and I'll back you up...

"IT'S GONE FULL ACTION-RPG, WITH QUESTS, ABILITIES, LOOT, AND LEVELLING."

This new way to experience the Creed's world is aided by Bayek's feathered friend, Senu. A Bonelli's eagle, she takes in the world from a bird's-eye view and maps out the land below. And she's not just a way to enjoy the (frankly) stunning scenery. Hover and she can use her very own eagle vision – or, y'know, in her case, just *vision* – to identify objectives. We take to the skies with a press of a directional button and she soars above the shore, spotting the potential hard leather for crafting inside hippos innocently swimming below and, on a more pressing note, the ship we need to head to for the main mission.

She might sound a little like



As well as sailing on the water, you're able to dive into it in seamless search of loot.



Random sand storms can be use to escape pursuing enemies.

Watch Dogs 2's drone but as well as having feathers, Senu can fly as far away from Bayek as you like. There are no restrictions or pesky Bluetooth signal here, just know that you'll eventually need to go back and get Bayek there on foot or on the back of the nearest horse or camel. A little later in our playthrough, Senu comes in ultra-useful as we reject the main quest and go hunting for bandits in the desert. Staying at a safe distance, we send her overhead to label every foe so Bayek doesn't head in blind.

HERO-GLYPHICS

If the idea of no longer unfogging the map has you worried, fret not: there are still viewpoints scattered across Egypt that you'll have to risk life and limb to reach. Of course, the Assassin's traditional camera spin is still there, but you're climbing for a new reason. Viewpoints now train Senu, improving her skills and letting her see further. Ever wondered why there was an eagle at the top of every viewpoint across the series, one which flaps away just as you reach the top? Well, you might have always just been training them and not noticed... Origins, you say? Expect plenty of nods to the future.

Reaching the lush banks of the Nile, we meet the local wildlife, and it quickly becomes essential to keep the local crocodiles at bay with Bayek's shotgun bow that fires five arrows at once. Quipping 'this is a knife' as we swing Bayek's intimidating curved khopesh blade, we flick between an impressive array of weapons to keep the gnashing teeth at arm's length. Gone is the Assassin's staple of picking the weapon with the best attack stats and sticking to it; Origins wants you to be

"WE KEEP CROCODILES AT BAY WITH BAYEK'S BOW THAT FIRES FIVE ARROWS AT ONCE."

LARA FUN

Fancy raiding tombs for the first time since AC2? Origins has you covered (probably in dust).

We have quite a few tombs in the game, and they range from being classical puzzles to navigation puzzles and navigation challenges," explains creative director Ashraf Ismail, who tells us there are a plethora of styles of tombs to encounter and solve, and all of them are historically accurate. "A lot of them are actually built off of the actual true tombs that we've researched," he adds.

The development team used historians to help craft each tomb, to ensure authenticity even when designing around the needs of gameplay. Ismail explains the design team would consult the historians when wanting to push a gameplay puzzle, or a navigation challenge, in order to construct it in a way that would feel true to how the Ancient Egyptians built their tombs.

"So we put a lot of effort into recreating these tombs. Everything that is actually known we've mapped it out, we have images, we have research that's been done on tombs, we actually try to replicate it as close as possible. So for example, the Greek pyramid, all the chambers, all the corridors are an authentic representation. Now, of course, we have a bit of fun and go a bit further, like, what are the secret chambers that have not been discovered yet?"





Horseback gives us a height advantage – and with a spear for extra reach, it's all good.

» able to choose your tools to fit your playstyle, and what better way to do that than with good, old-fashioned loot? Chests matter in a way that they haven't in ten games, giving Bayek the chance to pick up legendary gear and exciting new tools and steeds.

"We have a ton of weapons and three rarity levels," confirms Ismail. "There are ones that you can just find looting in the world, and there are ones that are in specific locations and that's the only place that you can get that weapon. We took a lot of conventions that exist around looting equipment and we wanted to play with it. We wanted people to be rewarded for exploring the world, and for finding all the hidden, unmapped locations in the world. There are actually quite a few, and there are a bunch of things that we haven't even started talking about yet that are really super cool treasure hunts."

PHARAOH, BOY

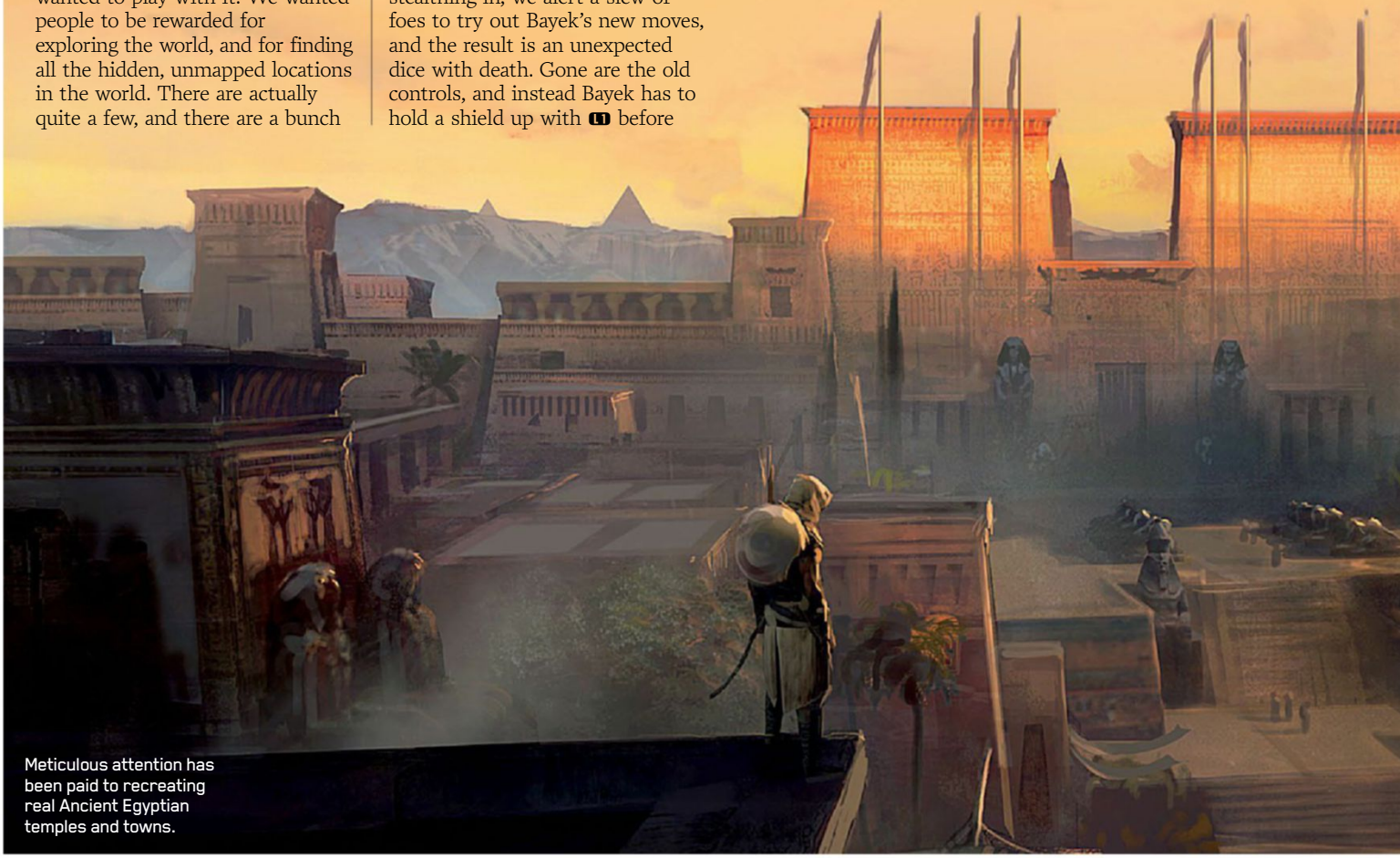
And worry not: for the first time in an Assassin's Creed game, you're going to actually enjoy fighting. Rather than just a variation on a theme of enemies standing in a circle and stabbing Bayek, the combat system has been stripped back and rebuilt. It's time to ditch that muscle memory.

Case in point: we find ourselves attempting to rescue a man from a house of Bandits. Instead of stealthing in, we alert a slew of foes to try out Bayek's new moves, and the result is an unexpected dice with death. Gone are the old controls, and instead Bayek has to hold a shield up with L1 before dishing out attacks with R1 and R2. Throwing in one heavy attack before peppering enemies with a barrage of light blows works for a few minutes – but then we realise there are archers hanging back and turning Bayek into a hooded pin cushion. Suddenly the dodge button becomes essential as we roll and dodge into a position to take out the AI that's grown more than a few brain cells in the series' year out. It's gloriously refreshing to have to think tactically, and every encounter changes depending on whether you're armed with an axe, poisoned spear, or nasty curved sword.

"LEAP ONTO YOUR TRUSTY STEED TO MOW DOWN YOUR ATTACKERS FROM ABOVE."

Weapons get even more exciting when you realise you can use them on foot or on horseback. Controls are mirrored no matter what you're doing, making it especially intuitive to leap onto your trusty steed to mow down your attackers from above. This is exactly what happens as we head out to the desert to take out the remainder of the Bandits.

We happen upon a horseback battle where two rival factions are fighting to the death and we can't help but get involved. Chaos duly ensues. Dust flies in an instantly exhilarating fight to the death.



Meticulous attention has been paid to recreating real Ancient Egyptian temples and towns.

This is just one of the many types of events that'll helpfully distract you from heading wherever Bayek needs to go.

"There are quite a few different factions in the world, and keep in mind that these factions are really living in the world," warns Ismail. "We don't have anything that is a spawned event, you know, 'because you're 50 metres away we're going to spawn this fight here for you.' These are NPCs that have a schedule, that have an agenda, that criss-cross paths, and if they happen to be enemies they'll fight, if they happen to be allies they'll hug each other. So this is really the world living."

The factions include the Ptolemies, who are your main enemies across the world. Like anti-Robin Hoods, these guys collect the taxes across Egypt, maintain camps, and transfer prisoners. Another group you'll encounter are the Bandits, highwaymen-style foes who steal across the world. As a Medjay, one of a group of elite soldiers who protect the values of the people of Egypt, Bayek understandably doesn't get along with the Ptolemies or the Bandits but often sides with a group known only as the Rebels. We'll apparently find ourselves battling alongside them throughout the narrative.



Enemies no longer wait their turn to attack you – fighting is all-in.

It all throws another layer of Ancient Egyptian life into a world that already feels like it's overflowing with intrigue. We hear whispers of discovering ancient rituals, learning abilities that'll let Bayek booby-trap bodies with lethal poison, and even the fact that we'll get to uncover exactly why the Assassins are so keen on cutting that pesky ring finger off. We haven't even seen a single city yet, but Memphis and Alexandria are just waiting across the desert. With all of this at Bayek's feet, suddenly the potential for this Assassin's Creed feels limitless.

PYRAMID SCHEME

We finish our playthrough with a 15-minute bout in the Gladiator Arena as Bayek pushes his way through enormous doors into a bloodied ring of sand with the crowd roaring in his ears. Unlocked in the narrative, the arena can be ignored once you've beaten a certain enemy, but why would you want to cold-shoulder a giant room of spinning spikes where you can learn the intricacies of Origins' combat and earn new weapons?

"YOU'LL FIND ESPECIALLY VICIOUS FOES IN THE GLADIATOR ARENA."

There are bosses scattered across the world — yes, seriously, look what good combat can do — but you'll find especially vicious foes in the Gladiator arena. After a few practice runs with hordes of different kinds of enemies, we take on The Stalker, a man who makes Game Of Thrones' Mountain look small, armed with a trident that initially makes short work of Bayek, skewering him and tossing him away. Running around the ring to regain some much-needed health, we take a different approach, dodging to the side before unleashing a barrage of heavy attacks. We're constantly on the edge of death but that seems to be how the baying crowd likes it. Finally we see our chance. One well-placed swing of Bayek's khopesh sends The Stalker hurtling into a gory Saw-like spike trap. We're given the offer of mercy but The Stalker won't be fighting here again. After all, everything is permitted.

After only a year off, Assassin's Creed has come back fighting and we already need to see more of Ancient Egypt. Prep the papyrus, this one might just be going into the history books.



FREE EBOOK

If you've yet to discover this brilliant series of games, never fear – we'll tell you what you need to know.

Get set for the release of Assassin's Creed Origins with our 148-page Assassin's Creed Origins: Ultimate Series Guidebook. We explore every previous game in the series leading up to the release of Origins. And we're giving it away!

Simply use the URL below, enter your name, email address, and country, and we'll email you a link to download your ebook. Completely free – what are you waiting for?

bit.ly/assassins-creed-book



Q&A

THE PYRAMIDDLE MAN

Creative director **Ashraf Ismail** talks taming animals and *that* giant snake

OPM: Origins finally gives us a skill tree that really matters. How important was it to deliver a genuine amount of choice for players?
Ashraf Ismail: Where the ability graph came from initially, it was really an intention early on when we decided to go much more RPG. One of the main reasons was really the way we looked at the way people consumed Assassin's Creed. What we saw was there were two very distinct play styles; one was a warrior style, and one was a stealth style. We wanted to cherish both — one is not better than the other — so we decided: 'Okay, why not allow players to play the game as they prefer, as they wish?' At the same time, we were adding the bow so we felt that the ranger playstyle was also becoming valuable. We had all these ideas for abilities that were linked to Senu, linked to manipulating the environment. So, in the end, we have these four playstyles that came out of it and through the gear, through the crafting, we decided: 'Okay, we allow players to craft that playstyle that they prefer.'

OPM: Can you tell us about Bayek's abilities that you especially like to play with?
AI: Taming animals is awesome, I've had some really amazing moments with it. I'll give you a little story: at some point when we were testing the feature out, I had tamed the crocodile, and I ran off somewhere, and the crocs are pretty slow, they are not able to stay at your pace. Lions can, leopards can, hyenas can, and so on, but the crocodiles are a bit slower. So I left and I actually thought it bugged out and that the crocodile had lost its connection to me. So anyway, I continued playing and I was doing a quest. I was in the middle of a camp and I was actually getting in trouble, I was dying, effectively, my health was super low, and out of nowhere this giant croc just leaps out of the grass and takes out some of the guys I was fighting with. It was a really amazing moment, it felt so cool. So he was literally travelling the whole time just trying to catch up to me and it literally took him like 15 minutes to get to where I was. The feeling was super-cool and it stayed with me the whole time. So the animal taming is a lot of fun, and you can pretty much tame every predator type of animal, it's a cool ability.



Tame a lion and you won't have to waste arrows shooting those hungry hippos.

OPM: So, on the subject of predatory creatures, about that giant snake in the trailer...?
AI: The giant snake, the amount of questions we get on that... I'll tell you this about the snake: Assassin's Creed is a credible experience. I mean we have our lore, of course, we have our First Civilisation, and that aspect, I mean we don't shy away from that, it is part of the brand and we assume that. But we also don't go randomly high fantasy. There is a justification for that snake, of course, you don't want me to spoil that for you and I won't. Yes it's a giant snake, if you ask yourself, how could a giant snake exist for a guy like Bayek? I'm sure there are a few answers that can work, but I'll stay saying that Assassin's Creed is an authentic, credible experience. We have our lore, but we don't ever really break that immersiveness by all of a sudden going fantasy out of nowhere — outside the realm of the First Civilisation stuff.



Senu's your best animal pal, and the most useful, but you can tame others that'll help you out.

ASSASSIN'S CREED MOVIE OUT ON DVD AND BLU-RAY NOW!

FROM ONE OF THE BEST-SELLING GAME FRANCHISES OF ALL TIME COMES TWO STUNNING COMIC COLLECTIONS!

ASSASSIN'S CREED: UPRISING - VOLUME 1

ON SALE AUGUST / £13.99

THE EPIC CULMINATION OF THE VIDEOGAMES' PHOENIX PROJECT ONGOING STORYLINE!

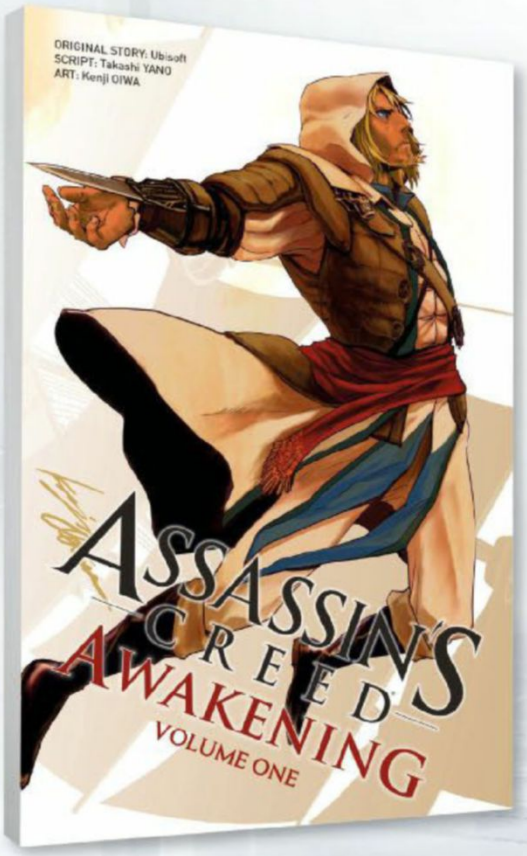
"It's right on the money, and worth yours!"
– Bleeding Cool

"A compelling story that gives a dose of suspense at every turn!"
– Multiversity Comics

"If you're an Assassin's Creed fan, you should really pick this book up!"
– Comics: The Gathering



ISBN: 9781782763079



ISBN: 9781785858581

ASSASSIN'S CREED: AWAKENING - VOLUME 1

ON SALE AUGUST / £9.99

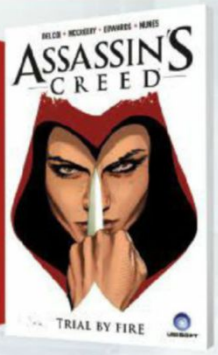
A BEAUTIFUL, COMPELLING ADAPTATION OF THE BESTSELLING VIDEOGAME *ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG*!

"Anyone who loves a good adventure story: pick this one up, you won't be disappointed. 9 out of 10."
– Comics: The Gathering

"Fast-paced, violent, and visceral."
– Multiversity Comics

ALSO AVAILABLE!

ASSASSIN'S CREED: ASSASSINS VOLUME ONE



AVAILABLE IN ALL GOOD BOOKSTORES OR ORDER ONLINE AT:

TITAN-COMICS.COM

© 2017 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Assassin's Creed, Ubisoft, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries.

TITAN COMICS

UBISOFT

A brave new world

Discover how Bungie's going big when it comes to Destiny 2's new planets, moons and cities

As the old saying goes, 'the devil is in the details'. For a game built around epic space opera, grand vistas, and exotic new worlds to explore, what made Destiny memorable was the minutiae. It was the crest on a Guardian's armour, the remnants of ancient machinery, and the tease of a new town just over the horizon.

The sequel will be no different. Great care is being taken to build worlds that feel more alive than ever before, despite having been partially destroyed by the Red Legion, splinter faction of the Cabal.

After playing the game we met up with Michael Zak, art director on Destiny 2, to discover the tiny, yet world-building, details he's had a hand in designing. From the clothes the Guardians wear, which offer a deeper insight into their play-style, to the exotic but contradictory blend of claustrophobic environments set inside epic landscapes, Zak's art team is aiming for higher, broader, and deeper worlds than we've seen so far.

OPM: Can you give us an idea of what exactly you are working on as art lead? What sort of things in the game have you worked on?
Michael Zak: Ultimately I'm responsible for the way everything looks: the visual appearances of our worlds, our characters, our enemies, our gear. I have the privilege of enjoying looking at the amazing work that the team creates – I don't actually do a lot of that myself, to be





Nessus reminds us of Venus from Destiny, and is home to the Inverted Spire Strike.

> **“FOR US IT TOTALLY MADE SENSE TO GO EXPLORE THE FORGOTTEN CORNERS OF OUR SYSTEM, SOME OF THE LESSER-KNOWN PLACES.”**



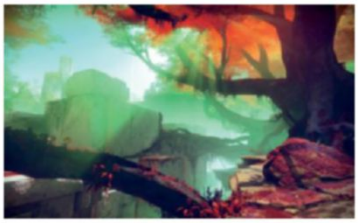
Art director Michael Zak worked on both Destiny titles, and has been at Bungie since 2004.

honest. In my case, it’s just about making sure that our art team’s full of amazing and talented people working on things that are going to align best with the goals of the game, the theme of the game, the design intention, that it all comes together, co-ordinating all that, setting some direction, and once in a while I get to have an opinion and maybe say, “You know, I’d really like more pink in that please”.

OPM: You’re clearly underselling your role, but how do you design a look that conveys Destiny 2’s themes of loss and recovery?
MZ: Guardians have been spending a bunch of time in very familiar places, the Moon, and Mars, and Venus, and when we do get kicked out of our home at the start of Destiny 2, for us it totally made sense to go explore the forgotten corners of our system, some of the lesser-known places. With that, for me, comes along this opportunity to do things that are a little more unique. Nessus, for example, is actually a real celestial object, it’s a centaur [a minor planet that is like a cross between an asteroid and a comet] and it’s like, “Oh yeah we could do something there. It’d be cool if the Vex completely converted this world and turned it into a machine world, we’ve always wanted to do that, let’s do that here”. Ideas like that present themselves, and sometimes we indulge ourselves.

OPM: What other cool things did you do?
MZ: [This one] came straight out of the brain of Jesse van Dijk, our world art director. He just basically showed up in a meeting, we were talking about the story of the Vanguard and how’d they been scattered, how they were reacting to their loss and what their character arcs demanded and yeah, he just showed up with a pitch and just said, “We’re going to Titan, there’s 40-foot methane ocean waves,” and we were like, “Yeah, that sounds good. Let’s do it!” It was pretty awesome.







Top You’ll fight the Cabal in some lesser-known parts of the solar system. Left Nessus is one of Michael’s favourite locations. Right Settings aren’t all rural.

OPM: It sounds like developing the Titan class, seen in the first trailer, became a passion for the team?
MZ: For me, that Titan right there came from a concept that Joseph Cross did. He’s our concept lead; he’s amazing. It wasn’t for anything other than general class exploration that we were doing at the start of the project.

We really wanted to see where we could take the silhouettes, really push the archetypes of each of these classes that really leaned into their bespoke personalities and emphasise them in ways that maybe we’d been more timid in Destiny 1. I mean, there’s nothing timid about those shoulder pads, for example. I think they’re awesome, I think it’s fun, that

NEED TO KNOW



2014
DESTINY
■ Freed from the shackles of Microsoft, Bungie launched Destiny, a new IP designed to change the way we play games. We say it's "The most ambitious game on PS4," and score it 9/10 in our review.

2015
DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING
■ The studio's first expansion took everything that was great about Destiny and built upon it in a fantastic new adventure that set a new standard for DLC. (It also earns a 9/10 from us.)

2016
DESTINY: RISE OF IRON
■ Less a jaw-dropping expansion and more a consolidation of what we love about Destiny, Rise Of Iron had less meat on its bones than The Taken King. This was pure fan service wrapped in a tasty, downloadable format.

image really resonated for me. It's really evocative, that original concept, so we translated that into this gear set, which was sort of a seed for the other two sets that we basically designed to feel like this prototypical, idealised Guardian. That's where we started because there's new players coming into the fold, and what better way to introduce them that with a canonical, pinnacle look?

But also for returning players, give them a new suit, some new threads, but then have Ghaul show up and just take it from you. It gave us an opportunity then to really lean into what happens when that power's been taken from you and how can we then represent that? So, the gear you get in the early game is really driven by that state that you are in, where you are an underdog, you've been kicked in the dirt. My hope is that the journey you're going on as a Guardian is really reflected in the journey your wardrobe goes on through the campaign.

OPM: What was the thought process behind the new allocation of the Lion, Snake, and Eagle symbols?
MZ: We love graphic design, we love design at Bungie, those came from the mind of, again, Joseph Cross, the concept artist. He just felt like that would be a really cool way to express something more symbolic around the classes that maybe people didn't immediately relate to, and the spirit animal for Destiny 2 for each of the classes, and that was his idea and I thought it was fantastic and we've incorporated it into a lot of the art.

OPM: Can you explain them a little more?
MZ: Sure, I mean every animal you choose will have different connotations and no one will be exactly right on. So part of it was pushing the envelope, I mean, we had a lot of the imagery, in the Hunters' case, around wolves and pack wolves, and we kind of leaned into that. That was an obvious one to do, but it was like, "It's a sequel, let's push things a little bit, let's generate conversation". There are aspects of a snake that I think are absolutely Huntery and I think if you were to do a sorting game and say, "Snake, which class?" Probably Hunter, right? Like, quick strikes, you know?

OPM: Is there any content being carried over from Destiny?
MZ: We're sort of leaving the original Destiny, there's a lot of content there and there's a lot of universe building that was done, and Destiny 2 is definitely going to converge for a moment. I think it's really going to focus on what its core-to-the-universe premise is. That was the starting point for us, we wanted new players to come into this world and to understand it, and a kind of narrowing for our existing players, so that you can create that contrast and they can go back and rediscover those old things and find out more about them.

OPM: You designed the Inverted Spire that we played earlier. What is your favourite moment from that Strike?
MZ: That view; where you land is typical Nessus landscape, it's this incredible red foliage and these beautiful alabaster Vex structures, giant Vex milk waterfall into an abyss... it's incredible.

That's a beautiful place to land and I was struck by the poignant beauty of the space, but I knew there had to be some interaction between the Red Legion, as this dominant occupying force, and the beautiful Vex





Top There's a real sense of destruction in places.
Above The Red Legion is wrecking environments.

world. And there was this concept we'd had, that was really sort of done as a thematic piece for the Cabal, which was this giant tower of a strip mining drill that carves corkscrews down into the earth, so I said, "Let's combine these two elements and let's use this opportunity to take the beauty of Nessus and this Vex world, and combine that with the tyranny of the Red Legion, who are just absolutely ravaging the landscape".

So there's this moment where you walk through some tight Vex corridors and you come out expecting to just pass through a barrier between two beautiful places, and all of a sudden it's just this wasteland where these guys have destroyed it. It's kind of apocalyptic, but it's an amazing view, and you're really high and you have to jump down really far. Arguably a little bit punitively far, maybe some falling damage will happen, but it's worth the view! Every time I peek out there I'm like, "Okay, it's annoying that I have to jump down there, but the view's amazing".

OPM: You're now using physically-based rendering (PBR). How has that improved Destiny 2's graphics?
MZ: It's an enhancement we made to our engine this time around which basically gives us two big benefits. One is the environments, they just look more grounded, the lighting's richer. On the player's side, that allows you convey material responses that are more realistic and more subtle and more varied, so we can represent materials that we couldn't in the past, very plausibly. So leathers are going to look more like leather, with metals you can have a real matt powder-coated paint, you can have super gloss, you can go all the way to chrome, you can do iridescence. These are really beautiful effects, a lot more sophisticated. ■

WOLFENSTEIN II: THE NEW COLOSSUS



THE REICH STUFF

The Nazis return in **Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus**, and Ben Tyrer goes hands-on with a ferocious shooter that has a bite to match its bark

America. Land of the enslaved and home of super-soldier BJ Blazkowicz. Last time we saw him he was ready to embrace the sweet release of death after finally defeating General Deathshead. Now he's back on home soil, but it's not *quite* how he remembers it...

FÜHR YOUR EYES ONLY

Pay close attention to this grave new world, as there are plenty of minor stories hidden away...



1 This unlucky bystander is singled out by a patrolling drone, who demands to see and scan his ID card. We can imagine what happens if he doesn't have his correct papers to hand.

If you briefly glance at the bustling streets of Roswell – where OPM's demo of this thrilling sequel is taking place – you might mistake it for a typical slice of '60s Americana. There are blue skies, a family friendly diner and a ticker tape parade. Except the parade is commemorating V-Day, when the Nazis finally won the war and captured America.

As Blazkowicz wanders through the streets in a firefighter's disguise, we witness just how thoroughly America has been perverted. Nazi flags are draped over every building, the Ku Klux Klan practise their Deutsch in the street, and we overhear an auntie casually tell her niece she's selling slaves in a week's time. That last one even elicits a sharp gasp from OPM, proving Machine Games' ability to shock in exactly the right way is back in full force.

We ask creative director Jens Matthies why the developer decided to go for America and he explains: "For our protagonist, it's a very big deal because it's where he is from. So on a personal level, I think that's a profound thing for him. I think it's also interesting to see this country that is really founded on the ideas of freedom be completely subverted by the Nazis."



Just in case you weren't aware from the copious flags, yes, this is a Nazi hangar.

UP AND ATOM

So what is BJ here to do? His gang of freedom fighters have come across intel that says the Oberkommando, a collection of high-ranking military officials in the German army, are hiding out in Area 52, which is under Roswell. It's part of a hidden and elaborate military network beneath the States which the Nazis are using

2 The Lady Helene on the billboard is almost certainly a reference to Leni Riefenstahl, the infamous director of Nazi propaganda such as "Triumph Of The Will". Will Terror Billy be turning up at a screening of her latest?

3 The guards aren't just imposing lackeys. They're also committed linguists, as we see one test a Klan member on the pronunciation of "Danke Schön". Well, thank you very much too.

4 Looks a pretty sweet ride, right? Later on in the Roswell level, BJ gets to commandeer one of these fantastic-looking motorcycles. Sadly, it's only in a cutscene.



"THE OBERKOMMANDO ARE HIDING IN AREA 52. BJ'S THERE TO TAKE IT OUT WITH AN ATOM BOMB."

to bolster their already impressive army. BJ's there to take it out with an, erm, atom bomb. Never let it be said he does things by half measures.

Still, we need to find a way to sneak into Area 52, and that's why we're heading down Roswell's main street towards Papa Joe's Diner disguised as a firefighter. One of our resistance contacts, Super Spesh, has got a tunnel ready for us to sneak into the underground military complex. After we make contact, what follows is a scene that mixes the same unnerving tension and ballsy humour that characterised The New Order. Simply put, we daren't spoil what happens in Papa Joe's Diner because it has to be seen to be believed. We're not going to ruin that for you. Instead, we'll fast-forward to the thing you're really after: the action.

GOING UNDERGROUND

Of course, a shooter is nothing without a good arsenal and Matthies enthuses "We like our weapons to feel very heavy, and brutal, and intense. I think you'll see a step up from the first game, which already was pretty over-the-top, but we pushed it a little bit further."

Mission accomplished in that case. We emerge from the craggy tunnel that Super Spesh prepared and head into a large industrial hangar that houses a train we need to board to get to the Oberkommando. Here's where »



New Orleans is another iconic American city we'll be visiting, but the Nazis don't seem to have been too kind to it.



Say hello to the robotic division of the Nazi army. You will grow to the despise that cold metal face running at you.

» we finally get a chance to test out our arsenal, which includes the explosive Dieselkraftwerk, a powerful grenade launcher whose missiles can either detonate on impact or stick to a target for a remote explosion. There's a Nazi commander overlooking the area and if he becomes aware of our presence, he'll send out reinforcements and alert soldiers that we're sneaking around. So, stealth is a wise choice... to begin with.

NO PAIN, NO TRAIN

We're up in the rafters and scope out one soldier patrolling on his own. Rather than lob one of BJ's new hatchets at him for a stealth kill, we decide to sneak up on him. We whip out our Pistole, which we've upgraded with one of the new weapon kits so it has a silencer attached. Three quick shots and he's down. But far more importantly, none of the roving guards are aware of our actions.

We sneak towards the control room, where we need to release the locks on the train. In a stroke of luck, the Nazi commander is patrolling inside (if we take him out it'll make life easier - no more reinforcements). But his mutt spots us. Gnashing at our ankles, the dog alerts everyone in the vicinity.

There's no use being subtle now, so we quickly add the Maschinenpistole to our other hand, thanks to free dual-wielding, and let off a barrage of bullets. Player freedom is key to the combat, and Matthies says the aim is to give what "the individual player feels is the best approach for a particular scenario."

While we shed a silent tear for the poor doggo (for he surely doesn't know he is defending a Nazi), it's an empowering joy to let off a multitude of rounds into the officer, before swinging around and blasting away at the guards who are rushing to investigate the ruckus.



Don't fancy being a Pedigree chump? Take the Nazi hounds out as quickly as possible.

Thinking we're safe now, we saunter over to the controls and unlock the train. Alas, that's when all hell breaks loose.

REICH PLACE, WRONG TIME

We get a first glimpse of a new type of enemy we'll be battling, with what can only be described as robot Nazi ninja pelting towards us. They're not decked out in black robes, but these bots *are* scarily agile, as we learn after they crash through the window of the control room. They weave from left to right, escaping our shots, before firing a devastating laser at us. We need to buy time, so switch the pistol out for the Dieselkraftwerk, launch a few

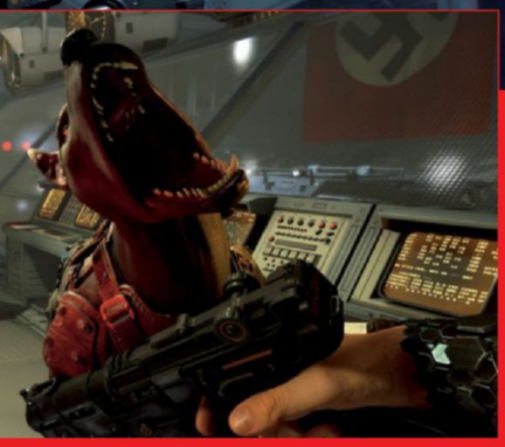






Creative director Jens Matthies tells us that because Wolfenstein was envisioned as a trilogy, seeds for this game were planted in The New Order – which is a surprise to us, considering that game's ending...





just created. With the remaining guards further away, we find a ledge to run up to and switch to the Sturmgewehr. The long-range rifle is customised to come with armour piercing ammo and a scope, which gives us a chance to wreak headshot havoc on the final dregs of the Nazi forces in this area.

With that, we hop on the train, set course for the Oberkommando, and take a long, deep breath. This is a

"A BRUTAL, FAST, AND FREEFORM ASSAULT THAT BUILDS ON THE SOLID CORE OF THE NEW ORDER."

stick grenades at them, and sprint out of the control room.

We don't even turn around when we trigger the explosions, but the thunderous boom tells us that serious dose of firepower got the job done.

There's still the matter of getting our ride further into the complex, however, and this is where the Power Suit BJ obtained in the first game and now wears comes into play. Giving BJ a little extra oomph in his movement, we peg it around to the opposite side of the hangar, away from the scene we

brutal, deliriously fast, and freeform assault that builds on the solid core of The New Order.

DARKEST TIMELINE

Matthies also provides more details of what we can expect from the final game. He confirms that the two timelines established at the start of The New Order will continue in this sequel, although rather than reading a save file, there's an in-game mechanism. He also tells us what impact it'll have on proceedings: "One thing we did this time around is we tied a signature weapon to each of the timelines." While we wait to see what ordnance we'll be packing in either one, it's a nice continuation of the story established in the first entry.

For now, though, what we play is a full-on adrenaline rush. With the Roswell Main Street sequence's tension fantastically followed by the heart-rate-troublingly intense shoot-out through Area 52, it's no surprise that Matthies explains what Machine Games want you to feel when playing The New Colossus: "The overarching theme for this game is catharsis, and that concept runs through the story as a whole and all of the character arcs." With a campaign set to deliver it in spades, whether it's through the fantastic cast or hefty shooting, this is quite the contender for shooter of the year. ■



Machine Games isn't skimping on the gore. Getting up close and personal 'rewards' you with fountains of the red stuff.

SPECIAL OFFER

Subscribe to PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Choose Your Package

PRINT

Every issue delivered to your door with **exclusive subscriber-only covers** each month.



ONLY £17
every three months

DIGITAL

Instant digital access on iOS or Android devices. Plus all the latest PS4 trailers on iPad.



ONLY £6.75
every three months

PRINT & DIGITAL

Every issue delivered in print and to your iOS or Android devices.



ONLY £20
every three months

Special Offer

WORTH £24.99

Join Star-Lord, Groot, Gamora, Rocket, and Drax with this **Marvel's Guardians Of The Galaxy: The Telltale Series** season pass.

Note: the season is five episodes long; the disc contains episode one and you will need your PS4 to be connected to the internet to download subsequent episodes.



Subscribe to OPM today

ONLINE ▸ myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/OPM/GUARDIAN

TERMS AND CONDITIONS Gift is available to new UK print subscribers and print + digital subscribers paying by six-monthly Direct Debit only. Please allow up to 30 days for delivery of your gift. Gift is subject to availability. In the event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to replace with items of a similar value. Prices and savings quoted are compared to buying full priced UK print and digital issues. You will receive 13 issues in a year. You can write to us or call us on 0344 848 2852 to cancel your subscription within 14 days of purchase. Your subscription is for the minimum term specified and will expire at the end of the current term. Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. Your statutory rights are not affected. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions please visit: myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/terms. Offer ends 31/08/2017.


EMP
MOVIE, TV, GAMING & MUSIC MERCHANDISE | ALTERNATIVE FASHION
15% off
your next order
Voucher code*: PSMSUMMER17
*minimum order £ 30
visit us at
emp.co.uk
© Blizzard Entertainment
@empukofficial



REVIEWS

86 FINAL FANTASY XII: THE ZODIAC AGE
Remastered and with a new combat system, it's a magical experience.

OPM SCORES

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
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.

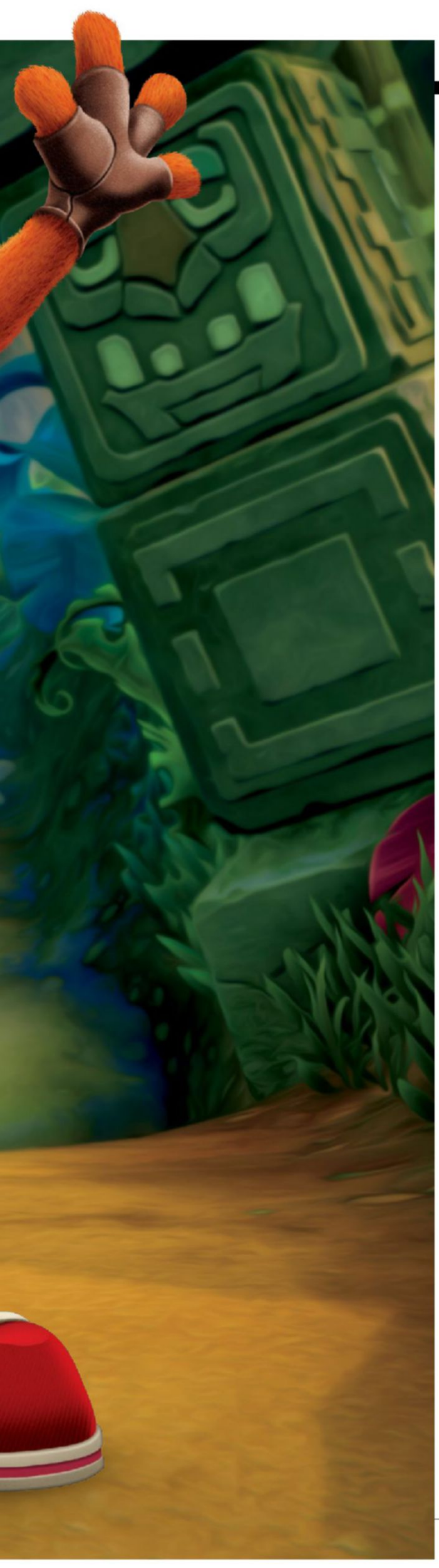
CONTENTS

CRASH BANDICOOT N. SANE TRILOGY 78 | VALKYRIA REVOLUTION 82 | YONDER 84
SUNDERED 85 | ELITE: DANGEROUS 88 | MICRO MACHINES: WORLD SERIES 90 | ARIZONA
SUNSHINE 91 | AVEN COLONY 91 | MINECRAFT: STORY MODE – S2, EP1 92 | THAT'S YOU! 93



Why Crash wears fingerless gloves, yet no shirt, has never been explained.

"THIS IS THE WAY YOUR MIND'S EYE REMEMBERS PS1 CRASH: A SMOOTH AND GORGEOUS GAME."



TIME WARPED

@bentyrer



7

PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

CRASH BANDICOOT N.SANE TRILOGY

Marsupial's return sticks the landing



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV VICARIOUS VISIONS

Think of the great PlayStation reunion of 2017 as a summer festival. While the likes of Parappa The Rapper and WipEout are great to see on the bill, there is only one headliner everyone is here for. Naughty Dog's famous furry creation launches himself onto the stage and, let's be honest, how can the years have been *this* kind?

Well, Crash has the sorcerers at Vicarious Visions to thank for that. Considering they built this almost entirely from the ground up, they've done an utterly astonishing job of giving the trilogy a makeover that drags it up to 2017 standards yet still feels authentic. From levels that are instantly familiar yet look like they were designed only yesterday, to the somehow adorable Crash 2.0 whose mohawk sways as he gambols through levels, this is a Wumpa banquet for the eyes.

Just as impressive is the remastered and rerecorded audio. Classic tunes sound crisper and punchier – admit it, you're already humming the intro themes – and while not all the actors reprise their roles (our fave Dr Neo Cortex actor Clancy Brown is MIA), you never really notice.

Essentially, there's very little fault to find in the scrubbing up Crash has received, and that plays a huge part in the appeal. This is the way your mind's eye remembers PS1 Crash: a smooth and gorgeous game. A trip to YouTube will remind you that was very much *not* the case. So, why does this only get a 7?

Well, just because Crash looks the part, it doesn't mean he plays it. The slavish attention



Right The original's result screen returns. See what happens when you don't smash any boxes.





Left Boss fights are back, and Nitrus Brio's Hulk form still makes the blood boil.

to detail extends to how these games played back when they first came out. Despite full analogue stick and D-pad support across all three adventures, Crash is not the most graceful of leapers. This was a lot more forgivable in '96-'98, but now you'll howl with primal rage as he slips off a ledge he definitely landed on for a second, and twitch every time you slip into a Nitro crate. It's not unmanageable, but the slightly jerky movements require a bit of getting used to. Compare it to Rayman Legends and it's hard not to feel that there's a little lead in Crash's high tops. Maybe it's the jorts weighing him down?

JUMPING JACK CRASH

It's most prevalent in his debut. With no double jump or slide there are times when it can feel more like a history lesson than an enjoyable game, especially as you have to wrestle the furball through some of the most thumb-ruiningly precise jumps on PS4. Couple that with some demanding challenges – completing levels without dying is the go-to test here – and it flirts dangerously close to 'slog' territory.

However, that heady mix of knowing the game inside out and managing to pull off near-impossible acrobatic feats is, in spite of the flaws, addictive. Take the infamous Road To Nowhere. This fiendish high-wire act involves leaping across the rotting boards of a rickety bridge, with any slight miscalculation punished by tumbling insta-death. It will break you – sometimes fairly, at other times thanks to the twitchy movement – but it's impossible to walk away. The wave of relief I felt at getting to the end of this level is still reverberating around my body.

SEQUEL APPEAL

Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back doesn't add too much to the formula, but the introduction of the slide 'n' jump combo instantly improves the most important system of the game. With just a little more control over the sentient Wotsit, it's easier to find a rhythm to levels. On the downside, though, the egregious amount of backtracking rankles most here, as it's another reminder of the old-fashioned game design that may have been necessary once, but is just annoying now.

Still, not only is Crash 2 an improvement, but Vicarious Visions' decision to unify these games with time trials across all three adds a new, compulsive dimension to levels like Hang Eight. Best of luck with that.

Finally (well, you can play the games in any order) there is Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped. Unarguably the series' finest hour, this tones down the difficulty just enough to be challenging without running the risk of popping a vein in your forehead, as well as introducing a tonne of variety to both Crash and the level design. Special moves you obtain from beating bosses,

"TIME TRIALS ACROSS ALL THREE GAMES ADD A NEW, COMPULSIVE DIMENSION."





Above Neo Cortex in happier times, revelling in his Frankenstein-esque madness.

Right Coco isn't just a bit player any more, she's playable in all three games.





Above Dying is a sad constant in Crash's life. We say sad, it's often quite funny.

such as the double jump or extended spin, make backtracking less of a chore by offering you (slightly) different ways to approach levels. Plus they offer the most control over Crash in the series.

And those levels are a joy. The Arabian-themed High Time, which tasks you with monkeying across rooftops, or Double Header, with its collection of two-headed giants, are as brilliant as ever.

CORE TECHS

You're never doing the same thing for too long, and what you do is usually a blast. I say usually, because the vehicles you use in a fair few stages are as stubborn to turn as the younger sibling you had to kick off the console to play Crash 3 back in the day. Still, Warped is the most refined and enjoyable of the three titles.

There's a lot to love about this remake (sorry, "remaster plus"). The insane attention to detail, the important preserving of one of the most fondly remembered series on PlayStation, and the thrill of a perfect run. Oh, and Warped, obviously. But as a 3D platformer in 2017, flaws niggle throughout. Whether it's the imprecise jumping that leaves you fuming at the TV, or the outdated lives system that does little more than remind you why it was slowly phased out of games, the buzz from childhood memories will only sustain for so long.

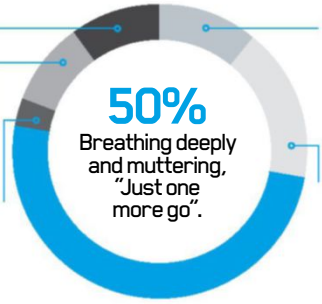
It doesn't stop this from being a success, but now that Crash has reclaimed his audience, we hope he moves forward rather than replays his old hits.

VERDICT

There's no doubting Crash's place in history, but this restoration shows its age a little too much at times. One for reliving, rather than creating, memories. **Ben Tyrer**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... CRASH BANDICOOT N. SANE TRILOGY



10% Missing a ledge by a millimetre and seething.

9% Mistiming a spin into an enemy and huffing, "I've. Got. This".

3% Falling down a pit and exclaiming, "How did young me do this?!".

11% Missing one crate throughout your run and sobbing while restarting the level.

17% Finally nailing the level and mimicking Crash's dance IRL. The nosey neighbours can't see.

LOVING/HATING



LOCO FOR COCO

Playing as Crash's sister might not offer a different experience, but it's nice to have the option of giving her a bigger role in the story.



LIGHTS ON!

If you think a timed level in which your only light source is a mask sounds like fun, then congratulations on discovering you're a masochist!

SECOND OPINION CRASH MACHINE



Crash has always been hard. I broke more than one DualShock playing the original. So I accept N. Sane Trilogy is going to frustrate. That doesn't mean all should be forgiven, but the care given to bringing these games back is hard not to admire, and have fun with, which is why I've been enjoying Crash's return a little more than Ben. **Ian Dean**

IS IT BETTER THAN?



NO

Insomniac's semi-reboot updates the past without feeling so indebted to it.



YES

A knowing throwback from former Rare developers, but Crash tickles our nostalgia gland a bit more.



NO

The limbless French icon is super smooth to handle and is endlessly inventive, so just edges it.

MULTIPLAYER



In a very 2017 type of improvement, Crash now has online leaderboards to test how your dexterity measures up against the rest of the world. While it only tracks Relic run times, it adds a welcome extra sliver of competitiveness.



VALKYRIA REVOLUTION

You say you want a revolution? Well, you don't



You don't need to be a fan of the Valkyria Chronicles series to understand and play this. Actually, it's probably best if you're not; the popular turn-based combat system and distinctive graphical styles (sumptuous watercolour-esque visuals for the first game, more cartoony presentation for the handheld sequels) have been ruthlessly tossed aside to further distance this spinoff from the main games.

The results aren't pretty, and I'm not just talking about the fact that the PS4 version is clearly a Vita game wearing an unconvincing moustache and slightly more expensive trousers. It's far from an aesthetic disaster – there's some very nice art design at play in the environments (in cutscenes, at least) – but the character models are very disappointing, and overall the original art style would've improved things immensely. Bizarrely, the nine-year-old Valkyria Chronicles looks much better.

The story, still set within the same universe, concerns five friends known as "The Traitors". When they were children, the orphanage they lived in was attacked and destroyed, and the woman they looked upon as a mother taken from them. As adults they are alarmingly obsessed with revenge, and end up triggering nothing less than a full-scale war. The story is presented as a recounting of the tale from one historian to another, discussing the truth behind the officially-recorded version of the conflict. A great idea – but almost the only one the game has.



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ALSO ON PS VITA
ETA OUT NOW
PUB DEEP SILVER
DEV MEDIA.VISION

SPEECH IMPERILMENT

It's a tale told through an enormous amount of lengthy cutscenes... and they're all so, so bad. The highlights are merely mediocre and comically clichéd, while the worst moments are examples of dialogue so terrible it's physically painful to endure. Here's an example: "She was a real nympho, that one. She was one hell of a sl*t". It left a bad taste just typing those lines – imagine how it was to play. It's unfair to criticise the actors considering the stilted, unnatural script they were forced to work with. But acting matches dialogue... It's bad.

The new combat system is an awkward combination of real-time and turn-based attacks. Provided you're not suffering under a negative status effect there's no limitation on your movement, including blocking and evasive moves. Everything else, however – basic attacks, special attacks, issuing direct orders, even using items – is dependent on a brief but irritating cooldown. It's designed to encourage tactical play, but the rest of the game goes out of its way to discourage this.

Each mission takes place in a large and linear area crammed

"SOME DIALOGUE IS SO TERRIBLE IT'S PHYSICALLY PAINFUL TO ENDURE."



Right You'll know when your cooldown is over thanks to the giant READY on your jacket.

Below Only four of your squad go into battle at a time, because... er...







Above left There are explosions and mechs, so the game's not a total loss.

full of enemies, and the overall experience is about as balanced as a drunk on rollerblades. On a tightrope. With his eyes closed. Okay, you get the idea.

BARMY ARMY

The second hour of play is almost indistinguishable from the 20th, because only a tiny number of enemy types (and, to be honest, map assets) have been shared across the entire campaign, with little more than visual tweaks and laughable AI. The soldiers, which make up the bulk of your foes, go down fairly easily, and the walking tanks require more time than anything else. Boss fights, on the other hand, are excruciatingly long battles against enemies who don't flinch against anything you throw at them except under specific conditions (plus some of the later ones can deal out one-hit kills).

Pass the story's halfway mark, and you'll notice enemies begin to rapidly level up with each new mission. If you want to keep up, you'll need to go through the utterly joyless process of slogging through dull (and regularly recycled) optional missions. You can probably largely avoid the need for this (especially if you play on Easy), but it's very unlikely you'll see the ending without subjecting yourself to this at least a little.

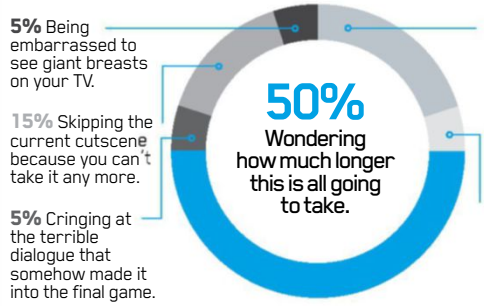
I really, really wish I could recommend this game. For all its many faults, the script does at least make a valiant effort of recognising and explaining the politics of war and propaganda. That doesn't change the fact that there's an army of games more worthy of your money.

VERDICT

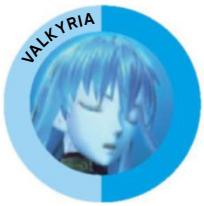
Most of what Valkyria fans loved has been abandoned, without anything to attract newbies being introduced, least of all a decent game. This revolution deserves to be mercilessly crushed. **Luke Kemp**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... VALKYRIA REVOLUTION



FRIENDS & ENEMIES



A mysterious bluish reaper who you'll have to repeatedly scrap with.



Leader of "The Five Traitors" and hider of secrets.



Princess of Jutland, who joins the military's Vanargand unit.

ALSO ON PLAYSTATION VITA



Review code wasn't available for the PS Vita version, which you can only pick up digitally via the PlayStation Store. It's also not Cross-Buy, so you'll need to fork out an extra £32.99 if you want to take this on the morning commute. But the question is: why would you?

HOW TO... SET YOUR BATTLE PALETTE



Each character's Battle Palette (set of RP-draining special moves) needs to be managed manually. You need to do this at the workshop or in pre-battle preparations. 1 Select the slot you want to edit and hit ⊗. 2 Choose the 'Ragnite' you want, ensuring the character is of sufficient affinity and of the right class where relevant. It's a good idea to have a mix of Ragnites across your party, for maximum versatility. Hit ⊗ again. 3 Job done! You'll now see the move you chose in the Palette.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE
This is your first, literally unmissable, 'congratulations for putting the disc in the right way up' trophy.



SILVER
Defeat 3,000 enemies to get this beauty. As grimly time-consuming as it sounds. All that for a silver trophy.



GOLD
Attain all S ranks in all missions to bag yourself a gold. Really not worth all the extra effort involved.



Yonder's world is cute, but there's a lot of empty space between quest hubs.

CLOUD STRIFE

@zoe_dels



YONDER: THE CLOUD CATCHER CHRONICLES

Not every cloud has a silver lining



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB PRIDEFUL SLOTH
DEV PRIDEFUL SLOTH

Being shipwrecked in real life isn't a pleasant experience. You're far away from home, in an unfamiliar environment, and have no clue what to do next. Games, however, should be more enjoyable. Yonder kicks off with this seafaring disaster, so every bone in my body expects a tutorial level introducing the island. It doesn't. Uh-oh. That doesn't bode well.

So. I'm in a cave. It's as decent a place as any to start an open-world adventure game, I think as I totter through its tunnels, enjoying the clink of my rucksack and the pleasingly smooth, Pixar-ish cave walls. A blue light draws me close, and I'm expecting to discover a guide figure, or a book explaining the world. A cross between an ornate French pastry and a plushie pops out. Laughing, it introduces itself as a sprite before whizzing into my backpack, leaving me bewildered. What do I do with it? I don't know it yet, but this thought will define my time playing Yonder.

FETCH QUEST SIMULATOR

It turns out sprites are scattered around the Island. These adorable beings dispel patches of Murk, a purple mist that's infected the world. For an entity which has apparently caused the inhabitants a lot of grief since its sudden arrival, they sure stay quiet about it. Instead I'm given quests to find wood, fetch flowers, or collect cut grass. Are you seeing a pattern here? It would be an exaggeration to say that every single quest is of the fetch variety (one delightful mission gives you a mystery to solve), but Yonder could at least disguise them. The sheer number makes the world feel shallow and – to put it bluntly – lazily created, as deeper storylines are few and far between.

While some may love the fact that there are about as many tutorials as there is bloodshed (ie. none), I do not. I don't enjoy running from one side of the map to the other – you're not initially told how to fast travel, either. Revelations come hand-in-hand with frustration, as with every single realisation comes the irritated question of why Yonder would conceal such basic information from its players. There's no sense of natural progress or levelling up as the crafting tutorial is agonisingly brief and mainly based around fetching (there's that word again) the right ingredients rather than developing any skills.

However, my time running around the world is broken up by genuine moments of thrilling discovery. Finding new animals, like the flower-covered sprite pig, and hidden villages is an "a-ha!" moment, with the lack of combat meaning that the entire world is instantly open to you without having to worry about enemies waiting in the shadows. Unfortunately this doesn't outweigh Yonder's frustrations. Those with the patience of a saint might enjoy it, but we mere mortals are a different story.

VERDICT

Simple quests, a lack of tutorials, and little-to-no backstory makes Yonder feel unpolished, in direct contrast to its whimsically charming setting.
Zoe Delahunty-Light

INFO **FORMAT** PS VR **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB FORGE REPLY **DEV** FORGE REPLY



THESEUS

An amazing idea, short-lived

While everyone else and their dogs are creating PS VR games in first-person, Italian dev Forge Reply has struck out on its own path with this third-person Ancient Greek adventure that wears its Ico influences proudly.

It's a choice that pays off. From the moment Theseus staggers onto the screen, from behind your left shoulder, a sense of unease permeates the game. As the Greek legend stumbles and staggers through Minos' famous labyrinth, it's apparent he's vulnerable, a victim. The floating third-person camera makes you feel protective towards the titular character. You're an observer as Theseus struggles to outfox the 30-foot Minotaur that stalks him, even though you have direct control over his actions. It's a unique quirk of playing in virtual reality.

There are simple combat moves to master – hammer ◻[1] – and contextual platforming (hold ⊗ or ◎ to climb, drop, and scurry under obstacles), but it's in the quieter moments when the emotive context of the game, and PS VR, really works. A section in which I need to walk into a pitch-black tomb lit only by a flaming torch, the light reflecting off the multiple eyes of creatures stalking Theseus in the darkness, has me scared for my on-screen surrogate.[2]

These sequences are too short, however, and like many PS VR releases you'll reach the labyrinth's end in under two hours. It means Theseus never gets to develop what works, and with nowhere to grow, what could have been a complex maze of tense confrontations is instead a conveyor belt to the exit. It's one thing to set out on your own path, but make sure it's a long and winding one. **Ian Dean**

6 PlayStation.



FOOTNOTES 1 Don't expect Kratos-like combo strings, this combat is very simplistic. 2 It's like being a ghoulish, floating voyeur. It'll make you feel all wrong, and not in a good way.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB SQUARE ENIX **DEV** SAND SQUARE STUDIO



BLACK THE FALL

Prepare to die... again. And again

Are we all just cogs in a machine? Not in this platform-puzzler we're not, in here you're a human-robot hybrid in a machine, and an unpleasant one at that. Running, jumping, and furiously pedalling exercise bikes, in Black The Fall your task is to escape the distinctly 1984 world that has turned you into a compliant industrial slave. Every new scene is a monochrome delight, with an oppressive tone and environmental storytelling that'll suck you into the world by creating an uneasy dread, the fear that you'll return to mindless slavery[1] if you're caught.

The problem is, if someone spots you, you're dead. Very dead. Luckily death is a part of the learning process, though at times it feels unfair that a single brief glimpse by an overseer[2] is all it takes to get me acquainted with some heavy artillery. Pondering your way through most of the puzzles is challenging fun, requiring a mix of speed and precision – but when you get stuck, oh boy do you get stuck.

Because there's no tutorial level with on-screen instructions, and few hints, key mechanics can remain a mystery until you stumble upon them, meaning that a couple of puzzles are cursed with a lengthy process of trial and error. Thanks to the insta-death mechanic, there's a lot more error than trial. The 'a-ha!' moment in these circumstances is more of an 'are you kidding me?' moment, which overshadows the other intriguing and atmospheric conundrums on offer. Black The Fall doesn't make you feel as clever as Portal will, but if you can see past the frustration it'll walk you through a story of industrial oppression, the fall of a nation, and hope. **Zoe Delahunty-Light**

7 PlayStation.



FOOTNOTES 1 Brief snapshots show the nation brainwashing its workers, an unnerving sight to say the least. 2 Burly workers are not your friends. Neither is the gun that'll shoot you.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB THUNDER LOTUS **DEV** THUNDER LOTUS



SUNDERED

Cave of blunders

Play as Eshe, a tiny sword-wielding wanderer navigating gorgeous hand-drawn caverns filled with plunging waterfalls, secret shrines, and long-abandoned research facilities. She's got upgradeable combat moves, acrobatic traversal abilities, and a cool cape that swirls and swishes – what's to be scared of? Well, infinity for one thing, because parts of these caves rearrange upon your death. Yep, we're in rogue-lite territory.

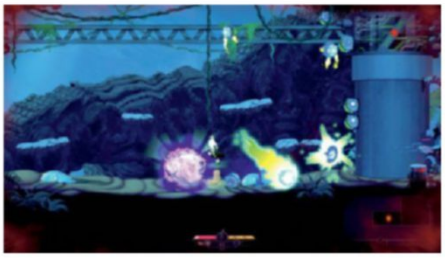
Instead of inviting exploration, though, it inhibits it. Rooms reorganise around an unchanging critical path,[1] so any plucky spelunking is tinged with the dread of backtracking. On many occasions we travel dozens of screens down looking for viable routes, hit a dead end, and have to begin an arduous wall-jump ascent back up.

Randomly spawning enemies turn the annoyance into a nightmare. They're on you *constantly*: little blue slugs charge recklessly, shelled beetles burst from under foot, walking mechs target you with lasers, drones home in and explode. Making sense of the maelstrom is impossible, so you just have to intersperse your hammerings of the attack button with the occasional dodge.

Unlockable moves, although visually striking and gracefully animated, don't address the messy combat problem.[2] For example, through your skill tree, The Leaping Device can either become Z'toggua's Wings, which enables gliding, or Salvation's Bane for a handy triple jump.

Despite compelling ability divergence and luscious art, needless level complexity and an overabundance of enemies turn Sundered into an opportunity squandered. **Ben Griffin**

6 PlayStation.



FOOTNOTES 1 Light areas on the map randomly generate each time you die. Dark regions remain fixed. 2 There's a double jump, wall-clinging anti-gravity boots, a grappling hook, and more.



Boss fights are no joke, and even the early ones pack a punch. Is that a fiery unicorn?

@bravelyjen



FINAL FANTASY XII: THE ZODIAC AGE

Airships galore, ye olde magicks, and more

Every game deserves a second chance, this more than most. Originally released in PS2's twilight years, when PS3 was glimmering on the horizon, FFXII's time to shine was sadly limited when it embarked on its maiden voyage over a decade ago. Now sailing onto PS4 in the form of an imaginative remaster with a revamped combat system, this old-school JRPG proves age is just a number.

Opening with a royal wedding procession through the city of Rabanastre, FFXII showers you with drama from the outset. Featuring extravagant costumes, epic boss battles, and a mature plot, it has an air of grandeur many modern entries in the series do not. Miles away from the cup noodles and gas stations of FFXV, it has more in common with Star Wars. A princess leading a rebellion against an evil empire teams up with a sky pirate being pursued by bounty hunters... And now the eye candy is sweeter, the controls are smoother and the OST has been re-recorded with a full orchestra. Ardent FFXII fans say 'yay'.

VAGRANT STORY

Slaying rats in the sewers – that's your first task as Vaan, FFXII's very own Luke Skywalker. A street urchin who on paper is the hero. In reality? He's a little cinnamon roll nobody ordered just tagging along for the ride. Princess Ashe and sky pirate Balthier are the *real* heroes.



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX

Thankfully, the world of Ivalice is fun to traverse even in the shoes of a spectator, its network of orange teleport crystals giving it a faux MMO feel. Pressing L3 brings up a map overlay for easy navigation, and tapping L1 increases your movement speed. Truth be told, the latter is a real immersion killer, but when travelling via chocobo or airship is out of the question it provides a simple, if joyless, solution.

Main story aside, monster hunting is FFXII's best feature. Testing your party's mettle against foes triple your size, then watching your Bestiary bloom as a result is pretty neat, especially when you factor in FFXII's crowning glory...

TACTICS ADVANCE

The Zodiac Job System. More than just a remaster, Zodiac Age updates FFXII's battle system to a version in which you must assign jobs to your party members. Is it better than the old system? Absolutely. Is it for everyone? Absolutely not. Neither as effortless as the turn-based models of the past,

"FEATURING EPIC BOSS BATTLES AND A MATURE PLOT, FFXII OOZES GRANDEUR."



Right FFXII's HD upgrade really lets the little details shine. Check out those gemstones!

Below Jobs are connected to star signs. Yes, it's all very Mystic Mog.







Above left Unlocking FFXII's fishing mini game involves some prickly customers.

nor as cutting-edge as those of the present, FFXII's battle system falls into an anomalous void, charming to those with a taste for strategy, alarming to those who prefer their fantasy battle fare a little more vanilla.

With an array of jobs (classes) covering all the usual bases — tank, healer, DPS — there is plenty of fun to be had tailoring your team. Each character can master two jobs and any combination goes. Katana-wielding white magicks user? Why not? But wait! There's a catch. The Zodiac Job System does not have an Undo button. A job is for life. This makes battling FFXII's biggest bosses — like the beasts known as Espers — a tough trial even outside of the update's tougher Trial Mode. From the fiery King Bomb to the gorgeous Elder Wyrm (a moss-covered dragon with pink flowers all over its bod) every enemy requires a new strategy. The chess-like 'licence boards' used to upgrade your characters certainly feel fitting, as buying licences for equipment and abilities requires you to think several steps ahead at all times.

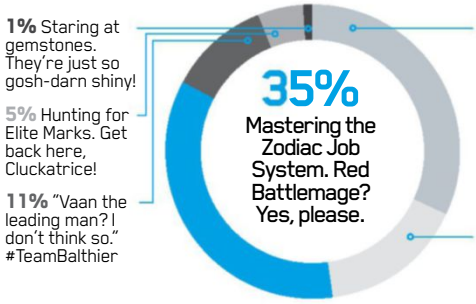
For fans of the original, this remaster is the stuff of wish lists, going beyond cosmetic sugar-coating to deliver an experience that is fun despite its foibles. For new players, this isn't the best the series has to offer but it holds its own. If FFXV's modern magical setting didn't appeal, this might be the antidote. Its fishing mini-game doesn't boast 40-plus lures, but who needs fishing when you have an intricate storyline and a bestiary to make Newt Scamander green with envy?

VERDICT

Looking for a JRPG with a heart of silver? Look no further! It might fall just shy of gold, but with its theatrical Star Wars aesthetic and rich plot, this remastered runner-up is utterly charming. **Jenny Baker**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN… FFXII: THE ZODIAC AGE



LOVING/HATING



SIDE SALAD

FFXII's fun monster hunting side-quests cater for vegetarians! Marks include a Rogue Tomato, a Carrot, and the Onion Queen.



SHREDDED TWEET

On the flip side, FFXII's monster hunting side-quests also contain *hysterical sobbing* chocobos. So long, Bestiary completion trophy.

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



Sky pirate, outcast, Playboy Bunny… your airship is in safe hands.



In FF lore, Cids always side with the hero. Well, almost always… bad Cid.



Newly-wed. Newly-dead. Once Ashe's sweetheart, now Ashe's spirit guide.

STAT PACK

100 Stages to clear in Trial Mode. Clearing stages unlocks rewards such as gil and healing items.

0 Permanently playable brunettes. In Ivalice, blondes really do have more fun…

12 Jobs to mix and match to your heart's desire, which include White Mage and Foebreaker.

11 Years since the original FFXII debuted in Japan. The platform? PS2. The year? 2006.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE

Spend 1,000,000 gil! That's right, it's time to make it rain. Who doesn't need 80 Diamond Swords?



SILVER

Fully explore every corner of Ivalice, from the sky-city of Bhujerba to the hidden jungle village of Eruyt.



GOLD

Obtain every Esper. That means defeating them in battle. There are 13 in total… which is unlucky for some.



You have to wait 10 seconds before quitting – no logging off in the middle of a fight.



ELITE: DANGEROUS

Immersive space exploration goes to infinity and beyond

The Milky Way's 400 billion star systems are open for business. Set a course to Sol and gaze upon Saturn's rings, touch down on a planet and spin your rover's wheels, or fly directly into the sun. Before doing any of that, though, you'll need to do a flight check. Is your landing gear up? Is your cargo scoop retracted? Have you diverted power to the engines? Do you have a system permit? Oh, you've exploded. Authentic space flight is ridiculously complex.

This reboot of 1984 classic Elite is about trading goods at spaceports, mining raw elements from asteroids, upgrading into bigger and better vessels, and dogfighting with both AI and human ships en route. The problem is, it's a constant battle to actually do any of this when there are a dozen ways to die at any given moment.

On one occasion our oxygen suddenly starts depleting and we suffocate. Another time our landing gear gets stuck and we can't use our thrusters. Relegated to a Sidewinder, the puny free ship you receive every time you're killed, it's not long before we overheat by incorrectly distributing the ship's power. Compared to No Man's Sky's 'Space Exploration For Dummies', Elite: Dangerous is 'A Brief History Of Time'.

In fairness, Frontier has done an effective job in transitioning myriad keyboard controls to the PS4 pad. It's just that, well, there are lots of controls. Pressing ◎, for instance, boosts. Holding it, meanwhile, brings up several more nested options on the D-pad: left is lights, down is landing gear, up is cargo scoop, and right is external camera. L1 triggers silent running and R1 toggles flight assist, unless you're holding ◎, then it's R1 and L1 to cycle through fire groups. It's this in-depth command of your spaceship that makes Elite so special. It also makes it an acquired taste.



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS
DEV FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS

ART AND SPACECRAFT

Impressive craft customisation is Gran Turismo-esque. You can kit ships out with chaff launchers, surface scanners, lightweight alloys, room for passengers, and even bays to launch other ships, then get weird with neon lights and bobbleheads. Your ship figuratively, and literally, drives the experience. It's a massive time sink, though, and the vanity stuff costs actual human money. Boo.

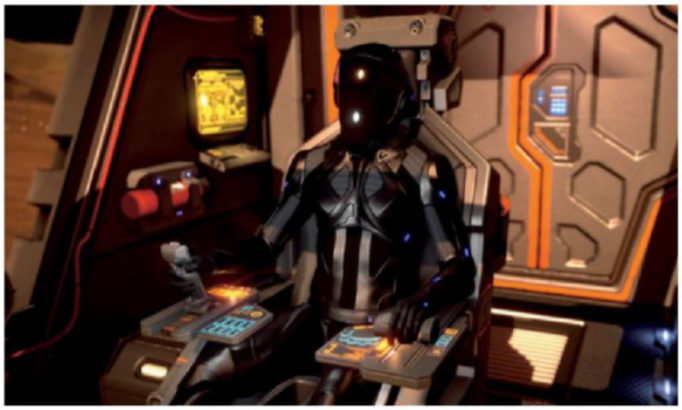
You'll also have to invest time in training. A smattering of tutorials detail fighting, warping, docking, and planetary landings, then leave you to figure out the rest. Here's where space station mission boards come in. They generate legal, illegal, combat, transport, and aid-based assignments. At Baker's Prospect, for example, Angelique Melendez wants us to deliver data, but

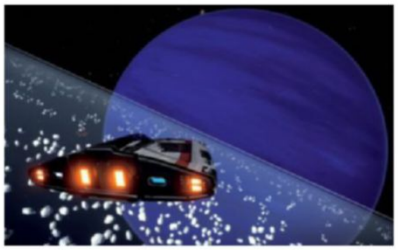
"THERE ARE AT LEAST A DOZEN WAYS TO DIE AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT."

Right Elite contains 400 billion star systems, and planets rotate in real time.



Below Character face paint and outfit options cost real money.







Above left Land on planets to gather materials, which can help with repairs.

unfortunately we lack the necessary rank. Okay, we'll assist Xavier Alford, who's looking for a smuggler to deliver stabilisers – but it turns out this job requires nine cargo spaces. Great. Theoretically, you can make your name transporting VIPs or delivering medicine to plague-ridden worlds; realistically, you'll spend 15 minutes trying to time your drop out of hyperspace before crashing into a station antenna.

TEAM GAMES

It's not like Elite: Dangerous lacks content. Take the Powerplay feature, whereby you pledge allegiance to a galactic faction and vote each week on, say, who to negotiate with or which side to take in an impending war. This governs what missions you get. The down side being, space is so hideously large that it hardly seems to matter. Persistent multiplayer is also hampered by caveats: you're able to select nearby players from a drop-down menu and request a seat in their ship, but it's rare they'll ever actually let you. If you're more into shooting people? They'll likely have a much, much bigger laser than you.

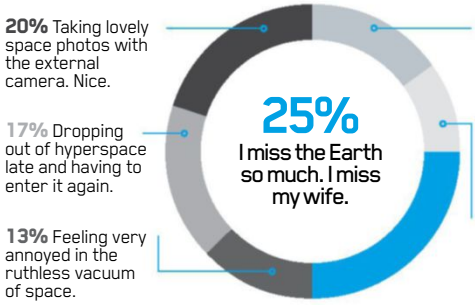
Elite: Dangerous captures the magnificent desolation of space like no other game. We've turned off our engines and floated in the presence of purple gas giants. We've looked across seas of a million asteroids. We've also yawned a lot. For every moment awed in the presence of a monumental celestial body, there are ten in which you're lonely, humbled, and really quite bored.

VERDICT

Elite's a lot like space itself: there's plenty of it to keep you busy, but it's incredibly difficult to wrap your head around. This is evocative and immersive but will leave you cold - also like space. **Ben Griffin**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN… ELITE: DANGEROUS

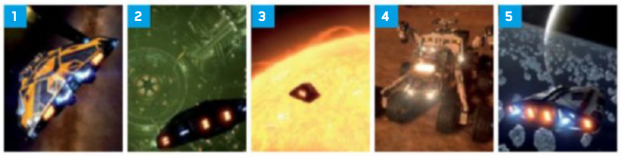


SECOND OPINION LEARNING THE HARD WAY



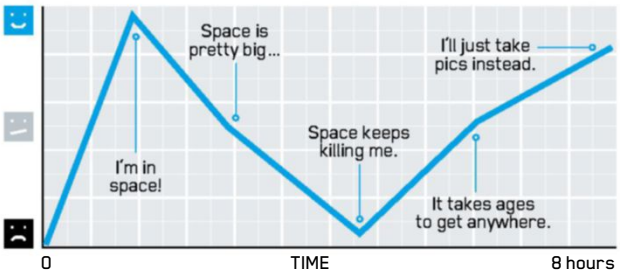
Elite was the first game that ever captivated me – I'd watch a friend playing it back in the '80s. But this is rock-hard. All my fantasies of cruising the galaxy and beyond selling tea here, iron there, vanished as soon as I took part in my first firefight. It is a compelling challenge, but the path to becoming Elite is long and difficult. **Miriam McDonald**

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS…



1 We wonder what this ship can do. Let's press *all* the buttons. 2 Hello there, requesting permission to dock. Oh, docking denied you say? Cool. 3 See ya, suckers. We're off to the nearest star. Time to arrival: eight years. 4 We've figured out how to mine asteroids. This should keep us busy. There are lots of asteroids. 5 Just give us a technologically advanced spaceship and extensive camera options and we're happy.

COMPEL-O-GRAPH



IS IT BETTER THAN?



NO

Elite is more in-depth and ultimately rewarding, but there are a few too many frustrations.



YES

EVE focuses almost exclusively on combat, whereas Elite gives you room to breathe and explore.



NO

Who needs space when you've got an infinite patch of land and your own imagination?



Tracks scattered with domestic gubbins look great, but can be painful to race on.

MAYBE DRIVER

@jebusf



MICRO MACHINES: WORLD SERIES

More of a has-been than a Hasbro racer



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB CODEMASTERS
DEV CODEMASTERS, JUST ADD WATER

Taking your tiny police car for a spin around a kitchen table race track littered with obstacles from Cheerios to spilled ketchup was once the height of multiplayer gaming. Dragged screaming into the modern day at a budget price, Codemasters' attempt to tickle the nostalgia bone while bringing controller-smashing defeats is a mixed bag, and not of the penny sweets we all loved as kids.

As you'd expect, Micro Machines' main draw is the multiplayer, and *of course* all players should be in the same room. Whether you're enjoying a standard race, an elimination, or just taking on the battle royal-esque, er, Battle mode, the entertainment value is massively improved by the hilarity of shafting your friends.

However, the 2017 model splutters far too often. For starters, the handling rarely feels right — it's a strange mix of too heavy and too floaty. While you can happily switch between triggers and face buttons to speed up or slow down, neither proves to be satisfactory. Hours of competition give way to frustration as you repeatedly misjudge a turn and smash into the corner, going from first to last place.

Similarly, the vehicles are cute, ranging from tanks to fire engines, and diggers to hovercrafts, but they're also not quite right. Slower machines feel better because they let you approach corners with more precision, and quicker cars squirrel out of control at the slightest touch. It's strange, but you won't care as much when you're all laughing at how Ben just smashed Ian so hard he flew sideways off the course.

HOSPITAL CORNERS

There's little in the way of single-player content. You can race against bots in offline modes, but this isn't fun. Even if you get ahead in a race, often your opponents will zoom back into view, reminiscent of an era where rubberbanding was acceptable instead of rage-inducing. That said, it's great to see the old gang of characters again. I don't care what anyone says, Spider's Fonz-inspired aesthetic is as cool as ever and that five o'clock shadow has never looked as glorious as it does in high-definition.

This playfulness sees puns like Dr. Mel Practice and Hank N. Stein returning, but the Nerf (over)branding is an issue that detracts from the whimsical nature. It's not entirely ugly, but the Hasbro licensing takes the shine off an otherwise beautifully nostalgic visual trip. It's especially disappointing given how much attention to detail is on show elsewhere, such as Spectrum tapes from the developer's past visible in the background.

Still, whether it's bumping Ben off with a newly Nerf-branded Hammer shot, or watching him hold his breath as he teeters on the edge of a table only to eventually tumble off, Micro Machines can still bring the laughs. Sorry (not sorry), Ben.

VERDICT

It's at its very best when you play it with friends, and the tracks are as fun as ever, but the racing is hit or miss, and ultimately that's what you come for. Shame. **Adam Cook**

INFO **FORMAT** PS VR **ETA** OUT NOW **PUB** VERTIGO GAMES **DEV** VERTIGO GAMES/JAYWALKERS INTERACTIVE



ARIZONA SUNSHINE

Make every shot count

There's no part of 'shooting zombies in VR' that doesn't sound like fun, and this game nails the dream (nightmare?) beautifully. The execution is simple, but at the same time fun, scary, and exhilarating, as you crisis-manage encroaching undead hordes through the medium of ohgodjustkeepshooting.

Zombies approach from any direction, so expect plenty of six-checking as you try to survive – you might think you've got it all under control but there's nothing more terrifying than noticing, amid all the chaos, that one of the moans is a bit too close and... behind you. Sound design is excellent in that respect, and this is one of the few games where listening is an invaluable skill.

The single-player campaign sees you trying to reach rescue through a range of Arizona locations[1] and, while brief at four to five hours, packs in plenty of variation, guns, and a likeable character narrating it all. If that sounds short then there's co-op and a surprisingly stressful and testing horde mode for up to four players. If you're one of those people who think you'd boss any potential zombie apocalypse, give this a spin and re-evaluate your chances.

While it launched with some ropy gun tracking for the PS Aim controller,[2] a patch has since fixed that, and there are immense amounts of satisfaction in going full John Wick on a crowd of corpses. The abundant weapons are a mixed bag (some lack punch, others have sights that are tricky to read) but there are plenty worth choosing, and once you find your faves you'll never want to part with them. It's as close as you'll ever want to get to an actual walking dead scenario. **Leon Hurley**



FOOTNOTES 1 A dark, cavernous, torch-lit mine is an *exceptionally* horrible and scary highlight. 2 On release the game had difficulty tracking the PS Aim controller and the headset close together.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW **PUB** STARBREEZE STUDIOS **DEV** BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE



DEAD BY DAYLIGHT

I'd kill for a few patches

You wait years for one asymmetrical multiplayer serial-killer-versus-terrified-teenagers game, and then two turn up at once. First we lived through Friday The 13th, which was pretty good (7/10, OPM #138), and now we have Behaviour Interactive's attempt to slash its way to success. Regrettably, while it may have a creative cast on its side, it ultimately fails to stand up to Jason.

Dead By Daylight pits four survivors against one of a creative array of very naughty killers.[1] The survivors' goal is to repair enough generators to escape while avoiding the killer's attempts to sacrifice them to a supernatural entity. Hiding, running, working together, and even screwing over your teammates are totally valid strategies, as long as you survive.

Although fun for a few hours, there isn't much depth to keep you playing beyond that time. Customisable perks and items don't introduce enough variety between matches, and maps feel identical. Flat and constrained, the scenery features the same scraps, forests, and church walls, so levels end up looking similar. I couldn't name a map even if I had a rusty machete put to my head.

The biggest problem is the lack of polish. It's rife with bugs, typos, connection problems, and balance issues. Killers have a major advantage, and some of them are so overpowered that anything else is silly. These are problems that are going to force players away in the long run,[2] and make the long matchmaking times even longer a few months down the line. Sadly, unless it manages to pick itself up pretty sharpish, Dead By Daylight may well be dead on arrival. **Joe Parlock**



FOOTNOTES 1 Everything from unqualified doctor-torturers and rich sadists to traumatised accidental killers. Spooky stuff. 2 It's been out on PC for over a year, so these should've been ironed out.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW **PUB** TEAM 17 **DEV** MOTHERSHIP ENTERTAINMENT



AVEN COLONY

SimCity in space

The future sure seems exciting. After tiring of inventions like hoverboards and self-lacing shoes, humanity sets its sights on forming civilisations light years from the comfort of Earth. As Governor, you're charged with overseeing Aven Prime, humanity's first colony outside the Solar System. No pressure, right?

You're involved in virtually every aspect of the colony's functioning. This includes building generators for power, habitats for the population, farms for food, air purifiers and police drones for safety, and immigration centres to expand the population. Keeping your settlers happy and healthy is your primary goal, and necessary if you want to win referendums and stay in command.[1] Sometimes maintaining a functional colony requires tough actions, like enforcing food rations when times get tough. As well as basic concerns, disasters like shard storms, sandworms, and alien infestations threaten the balance.[2]

It's a clever, absorbing mix, and everything works perfectly on PlayStation 4 thanks to a sleek interface and menus that are skilfully optimised for controller input. However, the remarkable detail and smooth delivery are undermined by the lack of meaningful progression. Different colonies provide their own challenges, such as infertile land and hostile climates, but offer little in the way of advancement. You're constructing the same buildings, making the same trade deals and researching the same items. More variety could have made Aven Colony an out-of-this-orbit smash. Instead, it's initially very engrossing, but once you've established a colony or two, there's little left to keep you hooked. **Anne-Marie Coyle**



FOOTNOTES 1 Victory means an increase in power and influence, allowing you to introduce new social policies. 2 Along with the campaign missions, there's a sandbox mode.



This is a surprisingly emotional moment, as Kurt-Russell-a-like Jack mourns an ally.

CREATIVE BLOCK

AlexJaySpencer



MINECRAFT: STORY MODE – SEASON 2, EPISODE 1

Can Telltale craft a top-notch game from Mojang's classic?



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB TELLTALE GAMES, MOJANG
DEV TELLTALE GAMES, MOJANG

For a developer that made its name forging story-led games out of franchises such as Game Of Thrones and The Walking Dead, Telltale adapting Minecraft seems like a case of forcing a square peg – or cubic block – into the proverbial round hole. How does a game about building and exploration, with a huge following of younger players, fit into the death 'n' decisions subgenre Telltale has constructed for itself?

The answer, it turns out, is with a surprising amount of charm. The blocky visual style helps hide some of the cracks in Telltale's ageing engine, and the story lends internal consistency to the world of Minecraft. Characters congratulate each other on lucky loot drops, death scenes end in a dropped pile of inventory, and the admin? Well, the admin is basically God.

Season Two opens with Jesse (the male/female lead, your choice) and gang becoming bored. It's hard to blame them given the game's slow opening, which offers such thrilling choices as 'pumpkin pie or cake?' and the heart-racing quest to 'pet the dog'. Steady now.

DON'T BE A SQUARE

Rather than lingering on existentialism and ennui, though, you're quickly plunged into a new adventure. One with scarf-wearing llamas, mysterious gauntlets of power, and a 'heckmouth' that spits out hordes of explosive Creepers. It all makes for quite compelling viewing.

Note that I've said 'viewing' there. Story Mode uses the standard Telltale formula of cutscenes, dialogue-tree conversations, quick-time events, and the odd bit of walking around examining stuff. Even more than usual, though, your role as player is to stay firmly in the back seat. The episode has approximately one puzzle, and interactivity is often limited to nudging the thumbstick forward, or giving ⊗ a single tap to pull a lever between cutscenes. There are rudimentary combat sections, but it's not exactly Dark Souls.

Don't expect to be on the edge of your seat, then, as much as settled into the sofa with a cuppa. This makes it perfect fodder for playing with a friend, whether passing the controller between scenes or using the Crowd Play system, which lets everyone vote on each decision using their phones or tablets.

Crowd Play is actually pretty apt, given that the game's strongest suit lies in its depiction of friendship. You're paired up with adventure-hungry Petra, voiced by Ashley Johnson (who you probably know as Ellie from The Last Of Us), and she's good company. In fact, that's probably the best way to describe Story Mode: good company. It's like a pleasant couple of hours with an old friend, knowing you'll hang out again in a few weeks – or whenever Telltale gets around to releasing the next episode.

VERDICT

Once Season 2's opener gets going it's a solid adventure story that's best enjoyed with a friend. Just don't expect to be directing too much of the action yourself. **Alex Spencer**

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 (PLAYLINK) **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB SONY **DEV** WISH STUDIOS



NOT SO SMARTPHONE

@bentyrer

THAT'S YOU!

PlayLink premiere struggles to start the party



6

PlayStation.

Team OPM hasn't been the same since editor Ian and I played this PlayLink debut together. "Who would be the first to get lost in the woods?" the game asks. Everyone votes for who the person in the group they suspect can't handle the outdoors. Ian votes for me. I vote for Ian. Our other teammates plump for me. As party games go, this one also works as an ego-busting simulator.

Before you start demolishing your friends' self-worth, you'll need to make sure you have a smartphone or tablet to hand. That's You! is PlayLink's first game after all, and fortunately setting it up is a doddle. Download the That's You! app, connect to the same Wi-Fi network as your console, and start the game. There's little fuss here, which makes it easy to convince family members who wouldn't normally touch a DualShock 4 to give it a go.

So what are the rules of this casual quiz? Take a group of between three and six people and have them answer questions about who would be the most likely to do a specific thing. If you vote for the person who ends up getting the most nominations, you win points.

It's a simple setup, and Wish Studios does a good job of mixing it up with a few different tasks. These include getting players to mimic an expression on screen by taking a photo of themselves, or snapping a player pulling a pose and drawing over it on their phone.

A smart use of your phone or tablet's capabilities, it proves to be a real laugh the first few times you play. Not bad for a PS Plus freebie.

PARTY POOPER

The problem comes from the quick repetition of questions. On just our second playthrough, an identical scenario to the first crops up to collective groans. The structure of each game rarely deviates enough for extended play either. While each individual element is undeniably fun, they're repeated in such a way that boredom creeps in more quickly than you'd expect.

As a proof of concept for PlayLink, this will liven up a gathering or two, but it's not quite the party starter that Quiplash or SingStar can be. And with that, I'm off to the woods to wrestle a badger.

VERDICT

All the parts are there for a great party game, but they don't quite fit together thanks to oddly long rounds and an unfortunate amount of scenario repetition. **Ben Tyrer**

LAST MONTH ON PS PLUS



@bentyrer

Now that the horror of finding out your friends all think you couldn't handle a jaunt in the great outdoors is over, let's take a look at what else hit PS Plus in July. Whether it was luring a group of teens to their death in Until Dawn or hurling punches in Darkstalkers Resurrection, it was a good one for all things terrifying.



Half old-school horror, half Choose Your Own Adventure, **UNTIL DAWN** had us gripped once again as we planned the demise of the 'teenagers' central to the plot. With some fantastic performances and some enjoyably gruesome deaths the only thing we couldn't work out is why this wasn't saved for October.



We had a great time with Telltale's Tales From The Borderlands in May, so another offering from the story-focused dev in the form of its **GAME OF THRONES** series couldn't be refused.

A strong month for the Vita started with **ELEMENT4L**. A stylish platformer, we had to guide four elements (sharing one body) through distinctive levels. Building momentum by shifting through four states was key, helped immensely by a soothing soundtrack.

Then there was the retro **DON'T DIE, MR. ROBOT**. Nothing to do with the Amazon TV show, this arcade bullet-hell had us dodging threats and fighting back with explosive fruit. A bit rough in places, there was a lot of fun to be had from the central twitch stick system.

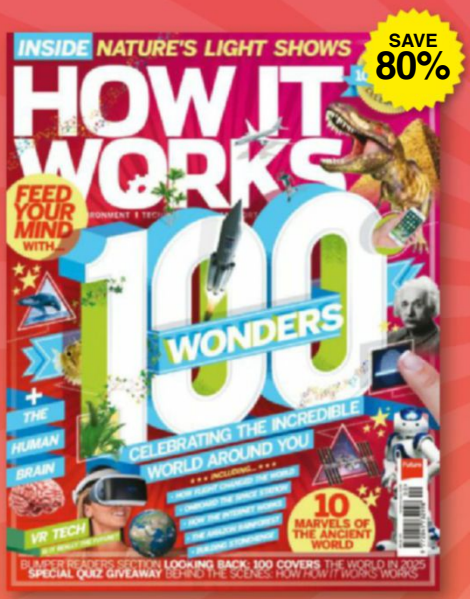
Meanwhile, PS3 boasted the bonkers **TOKYO JUNGLE**, where you play as a number of animals trying to survive on the streets of an apocalyptic Japanese capital. If that wasn't enough for you, then clearly you have lost all lust for life.

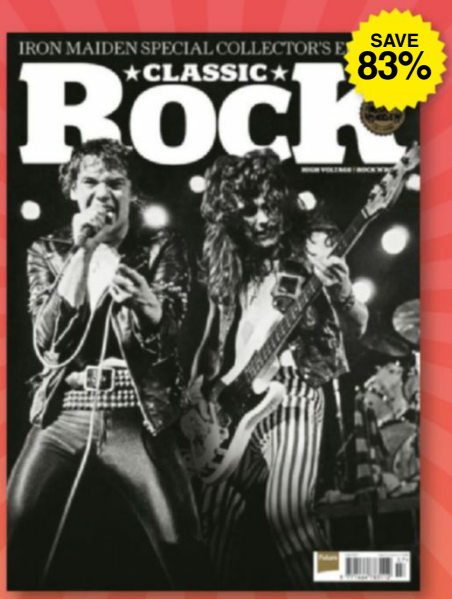
Finally, cult classic 2D beat-'em-up **DARKSTALKERS RESURRECTION** got us flexing our fighting fingers. An HD compilation of two entries in the series, there was plenty to sink our teeth into.

SUMMER SALE!

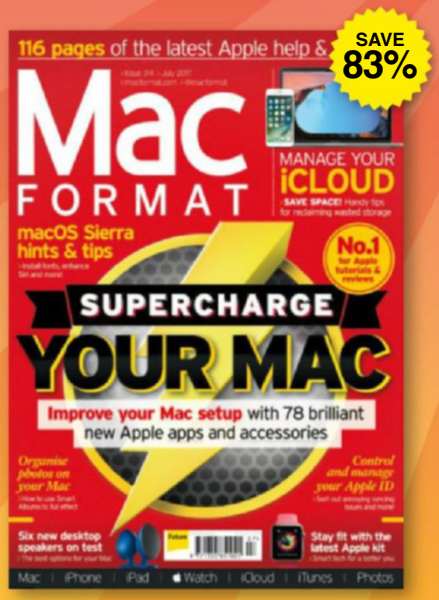
TRY 5 ISSUES FOR £5*

BIG SAVINGS ON OUR BEST-SELLING MAGAZINES













For great savings on all of our magazines, see the entire range online

myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/summer17

Hotline **0344 848 2852**

***TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** The trial offer is for new UK print subscribers paying by Direct Debit only. Savings are compared to buying full priced print issues. You can write to us or call us to cancel your subscription within 14 days of purchase. Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. Your statutory rights are not affected. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. Full details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available upon request. UK calls will cost the same as other standard fixed line numbers (starting 01 or 02) or are included as part of any inclusive or free minutes allowances (if offered by your phone tariff). For full terms and conditions please visit: bit.ly/magtandc . Offer ends 31 August 2017

network

online | dlc | how to | movies | music



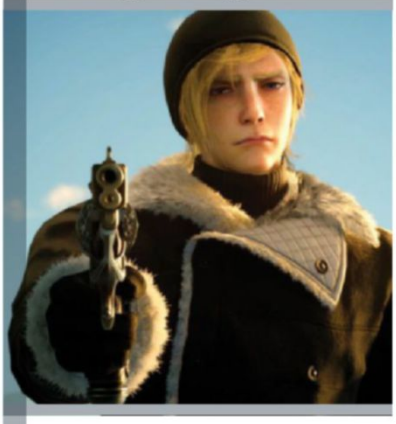
online tests

96

Final Fantasy XIV: Stormblood

This Asian-inspired expansion is big, it's beautiful, and it could tempt you to abandon reality altogether.

this month



on the store

98 Final Fantasy XV: Episode Prompto
Walking in a winter gunderland, as the lippy member of the team warms his frosty home up with a firefight.



PS VR Lootbox

99 What's new in the world of VR



on your xmb

100 Mindhorn
Both a great parody of '80s detective dramas, and a killer thriller in its own right.



music

101 This month's hottest tunes

online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

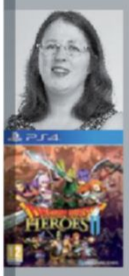
WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW



WAR THUNDER

Ian Dean shoots, scores, and quits

Ergh, what's that? A ruddy mouse cursor on my lovely PS4? Not a good start, War Thunder, not good at all. But I'm in need of some cheap thrills and this free-to-play shooter promises air, sea, and land conflict – the triple threat – so I'm in. Taking to the skies, the dogfighting leans heavily on the sim-side; I spend 10 minutes slowly tracking a dot on the horizon and occasionally pop a few rounds in its general direction. A puff of smoke, both planes crash into the sea thanks to poor controls, and it's over. Uninstalled. I head back to PES 2017 – at least I *tried* something new.



DRAGON QUEST HEROES II

Miriam McDonald lends a helping hand

I'm trying to get my character to at least level 20 in all vocations. Grriind! So I pop to the Inn and offer my level 38 Mage to players who need help, before heading out with my level 7 Thief. While I'm bashing my way through tedious mummies, in comes an offer: fancy a boss battle? Too right. I'm whisked into someone else's game where we hand the Kings of Klor and Kadava their twin asses, then back to my feeble Thief and the mummies, monotony briefly broken.



PUYO PUYO TETRIS

Ben Tyrer thinks he's a dab hand at Tetris...

A misspent youth trying desperately to top a Facebook Tetris Marathon leaderboard means that my block busting moves are *sharp*. In the office, I regularly find myself fending off all-comers on Sega's puzzle mash-up, but heading online is a mistake. I'm drawn against someone whose muscles must move at the speed of sound. I can barely line up a shadow, let alone drop blocks, before I watch garbage lines being sent my way. My thumb throbbing just from keeping up, I rage quit and ask Mim if she fancies a quick game with me instead. My wounded pride needs it.

REVIEW



INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX
REVIEW N/A

FFXIV: Stormblood

An expansion big enough to stand alone

You're missing out on something special if you haven't dipped your toes into the world of Eorzea in the Final Fantasy series' MMO yet. Go get the free trial downloading right now. Yes, while you're reading this.

After reinventing itself entirely after an undisputed failure on its initial launch, it's now one of the world's most popular MMOs thanks to its rich storytelling and fantastic combat.

Stormblood is the second expansion, set directly after Heavensward, and tasks you with liberating two countries on opposite sides of the world. You start in the arid mountains of Aka Mhigo, before heading east to a new continent inspired by a blend of Japanese, Chinese, and Mongolian cultures – think beautiful pagodas, tiered rice paddies and vast plains.

These new areas are also filled with monsters to fight, dungeons to take on, and villages full of people to talk to who make the world feel truly alive. The Azim Steppe – a large grassland, home to several different tribes – is a particular highlight. It's so impressively huge that you can't help but be taken aback by it as the music swells behind you. It also shows off FFXIV's writing at its absolute best, being full of NPC conversations that give you a real sense of what life is like for those that live there, and the tribes' distinct beliefs.

The expansion also introduces a new level cap of 70, two new jobs (Samurai and Red Mage), and an entirely revamped combat system that streamlines all your skills to make them easier to keep track of.

It's a welcome change that works particularly well for PS4 pads, as each skill fits more comfortably within the

> IT'S SO IMPRESSIVELY HUGE THAT YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE TAKEN ABACK AS THE MUSIC SWELLS.



THE SOUND OF MUSIC
The Final Fantasy series is well known for its incredible music, and FFXIV is no different. Be sure to turn it up while playing – it really adds to the sense of adventure.

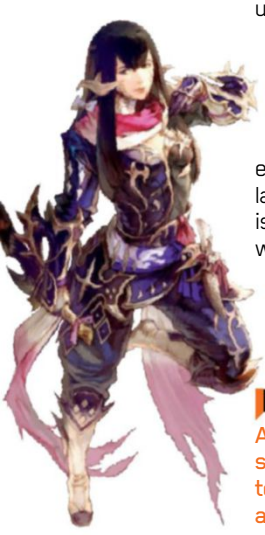


The main city hub of Kugane is an absolutely gorgeous place to hang out.

reach of your fingers. The two new jobs are also a delight to play – the Samurai hits incredibly hard with its katana-based moves and has a lovely sense of rhythm to its moveset. Playing as a Red Mage, on the other hand, is all about balance, casting both black and white magic from a distance which it then builds on to use more impressive skills up close with its rapier.

Being such a large MMO it's not entirely perfect, as while the story is excellent the current endgame is a little light – though this will be added to with large content patches every three to four months. The launch was also marred by connection issues and long queues on congested worlds, though this has settled now.

Even if you're not keen on the whole MMO thing, then the story alone is worth making the trip into the world of FFXIV for.



VERDICT

A preposterously huge amount of stuff to see and do that manages to improve the base game systems and top the excellent Heavensward expansion before it. **Monika Daniels**



WipEout Omega Collection

Futuristic racer languishes in the past

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB SONY
DEV SONY XDEV EUROPE/ CLEVER BEANS/EPOS GAME STUDIOS
REVIEW 138, 8/10

Let's start with the good news. Racing online against real people is as much fun as it should be. Tense matches that can turn on the right weapon deployed at the right time are a joy to share with competitors who aren't AI. There's a strong selection of modes, from standard single races to the destructive Eliminator. But while it's hard not to get a kick out of the racing, getting into a match proves frustrating. Eschewing streamlined matchmaking for a lobby system feels archaic on a console in 2017, with the lack of a quick match option a bizarre omission. And, unfortunately, the lobbies are already quiet. You won't be spoilt for choice if you want to hunt down a game. The strength of the racing means you should persevere, mind.

VERDICT

It may run beautifully online and look fantastic, but actually getting into races is a waiting game that's a necessary chore to play. **Ben Tyrer**



Marvel Heroes Omega

Our bargain sense is tingling

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB GAZILLION ENTERTAINMENT
DEV SECRET IDENTITY STUDIOS
REVIEW N/A

Free-to-play games can be daunting, particularly if you prefer playing solo to social. Which is why Marvel Heroes Omega feels fresh. Owing more than a cowled nod to Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, this is an action-RPG that can be played at your own pace, solo or with friends.

There's a healthy story mode to play through, which mixes dungeon crawling for loot with open-world environments where you'll mingle with other players. Crucially, you can play the way you like. Want to keep things simple (and free)? Then play solo with one hero. Want to indulge and own all 38 comic characters, mix powers, and develop new weapons? Then you'll need to start splashing the cash.

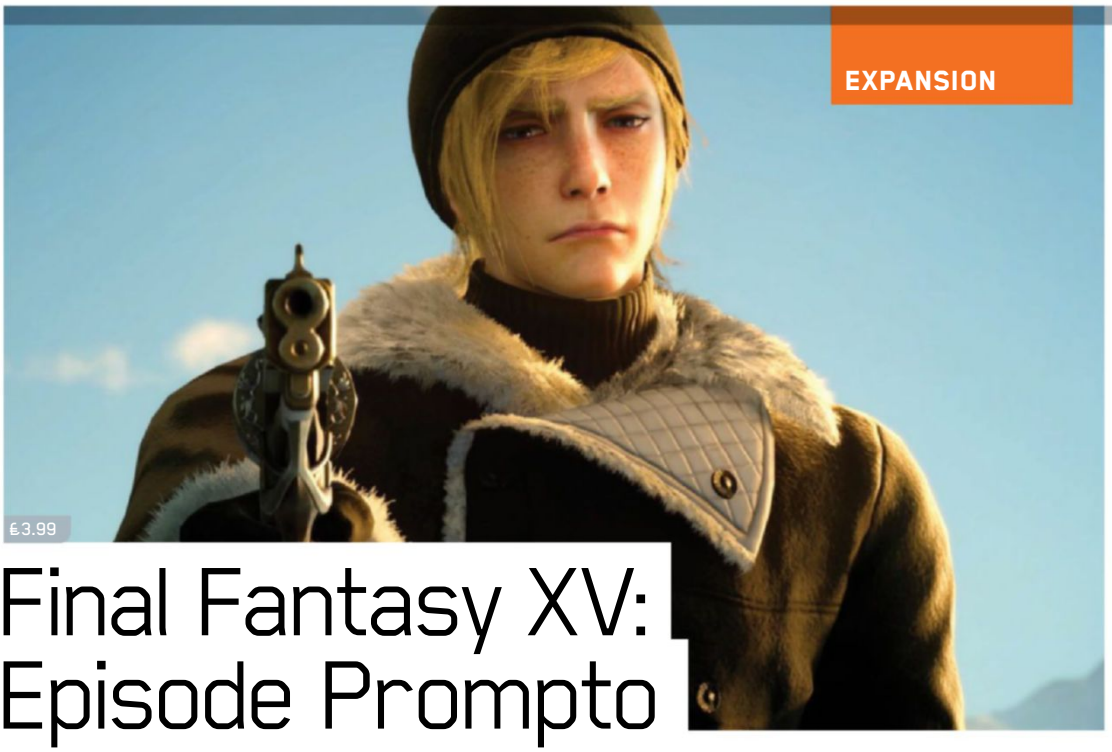
Paying is more fun, but even a solo jaunt will satisfy fans.

VERDICT

A pre-payday treat with enough depth to play on the cheap, but offers value for fans who want to pay for more. Never tried free-to-play? Start here. **Ian Dean**

on the store

EMPTY YOUR WALLETS NOW WITH THE LATEST DOWNLOADABLE DIVERSIONS



EXPANSION

£3.99

Final Fantasy XV: Episode Prompto

This story expansion is snow joke

Taking a character who verbally 'shoots from the hip' and turning him into a hero who literally shoots from the hip is a good move by Square Enix – asspats all round to the developers on this one. This easy-on-the-wallet DLC puts you in control of Final Fantasy XV's class clown, Prompto, as his fun-loving persona slips to one side and we get to discover more about his childhood hang-ups, angsty parental issues, and relationships with his road trip bros.

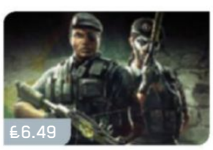
The episode begins just after Noctis shoves Prompto off a train in the main campaign. We play Prompto's side of the story as he finds himself in a wintry wilderness and back 'home' facing tough choices, ones that can only be solved down the barrel of a gun, and through the sights of a missile launcher.

This DLC is a change of pace from the main roleplaying game, and introduces an all-new third-person combat system, complete with sniping and melee attacks that enable you to kick enemies' guns from their hands and turn the tables on them.

Behind the gunplay lies a genuinely engaging story that lasts a good two hours (with side quests) and develops Prompto nicely, thawing his comedic defences to uncover some serious daddy issues. If you thought Magitek couldn't get any worse, then you need to play FFXV: Episode Prompto, pronto.

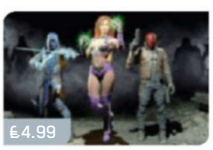
> AN ALL-NEW COMBAT SYSTEM ENABLES YOU TO KICK ENEMIES' GUNS FROM THEIR HANDS.

ALSO ON PSN



£6.49

CAPITÃO LORETO SET
Another DLC pack for Rainbow Six Siege that essentially offers new gear and little else. Want an Esperanza weapon skin for the M249 LMG? Sign up, soldier.



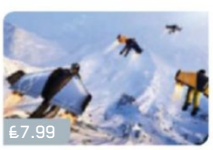
£4.99

FIGHTER PACK 2 - SUB-ZERO
Sub-Zero follows Red Hood in coming to Injustice 2, and is a fun DC interpretation of the Mortal Kombat legend. Roll on Starfire...



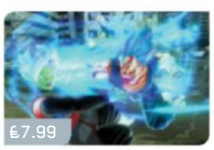
FREE

PACK 1: 10 TENANT HOUSES
With house prices soaring you may not be able to afford a *real* house*, but with Constructor's DLC you can get 10 for free. *Bit of politics



£7.99

STEEP EXTREME PACK
Three new sports – Rocket Wings, Base Jumping, and Speed Riding – are wrapped in a new story and challenges. The name may be Steep, but the price isn't.



£7.99

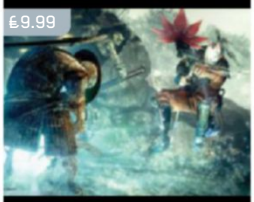
DRAGON BALL XENOVERSE 2 – DB SUPER PACK 4
Get two new characters – SSGSS Vegito and Fused Zamasu – and story quests taken from the Dragon Ball Super anime.

DLC



£12.99

DIABLO III: RISE OF THE NECROMANCER
The Necromancer class from Diablo 2 is ours to play with in the main campaign, with new Necromancer-themed events and loot for all of your party. While there's no new campaign, fans of the series will love the attention to detail.



£9.99

NIOH: DEFIANT HONOR
New weapon Tonfa, armour, magic items, and enemies are on offer in the second Nioh DLC – Defiant Honor. Fight alongside Sanada Yukimura – Japan's greatest warrior – in Osaka Castle and the stronghold of Sanada Maru as William goes in pursuit of Maria.



£11.59

CALL OF DUTY: INFINITE WARFARE – ABSOLUTION
Just when you thought it was safe to return to Infinite Warfare, we get a Zombies map, Attack Of The Radioactive Thing!, set in a '50s-creature-feature-inspired coastal town. There are also four new multiplayer maps, but Zombies is the big B-movie draw.

PS VR Lootbox

This month's VR highlights

A handcrafted pick of magic helmet-based experiences

THE VIRTUAL REALTOR
If we took his helmet off, we don't know what we'd find...



CREDENTIALS
I've spent so much time in Virtual Reality I can see past, present and future all at once - it's very tense. This means I know *exactly* what you should be piping into your headset.

1 FREE THE CHAINSMOKERS PARIS.VR



What we're looking at here is essentially a music video for New York duo The Chainsmokers. Personally, I'm more of a Wet Flannel fan (just wait until the unending summer of 2024), but I guess this pair will do in a pinch. This experience has you gliding through different environments, from a neon highway to an underground traffic tunnel, all in time to music. In an impressive touch, turning your head to glance at certain parts of the world triggers a note, giving this a kind of dude-bro Rez vibe. Despite having a brain capacity that's similar to a late-generation iPod, 'Paris' is a song that I just can't remember, even though I was playing this about ten minutes ago. Still, for the few moments you're caught up in its spell, there's something quite charming about this musical movie. Use a better band, next time, please.

2 FREE SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING – VR EXPERIENCE



While it's hard to keep track of which Spider-Man you're currently on (great news: there are at least 17 more to go before the end of human history), this web shooting gallery puts you directly into the suit. Why yes, it *is* a lot like the Batman VR game from last year, since you ask. Except where that had a story, levels, and actual puzzles, this is a glorified tutorial that lasts for about 10 minutes. What happens after you shoot a bit of webbing at balloons or yank a poster off a wall? A ropey scene in which you need to repair a crane, and one moment of swinging through New York (and that managed to send my stomach back to 1992). Oh, and don't forget the awkward credit sequence. It's hardly value for money, even though we didn't spend a single penny on it.

3 €9.99 CHESS ULTRA



Ah, the old black-and-white shuffle. There's nothing quite like an invigorating game of chess to get the ol' noggin whirring into life. But if you're growing bored of human opponents, how about a chance to take on someone who's actually a good personal friend of mine? The Grim Reaper is giving up harvesting souls (and our standing burrito lunch date on Wednesdays) to give you the chance to test out your strategic abilities on him. Why VR? There's nothing like staring into the eye sockets of Death himself before taking his queen with your pawn. There's plenty more to Chess Ultra, such as a comprehensive tutorial, online matches, and lots of locations that aren't across the Styx. But come on, Grimmy Reaps is giving you a once-in-an-afterlifetime chance here. Why would you want to waste time playing Harold in Chester online?

THE CHOICE
Only got time for one? Hmm, well my pick for you is The Chainsmokers Paris.VR. A mix of music and trippy visuals is always a strong choice in my book. Also, you should never turn down a freebie.

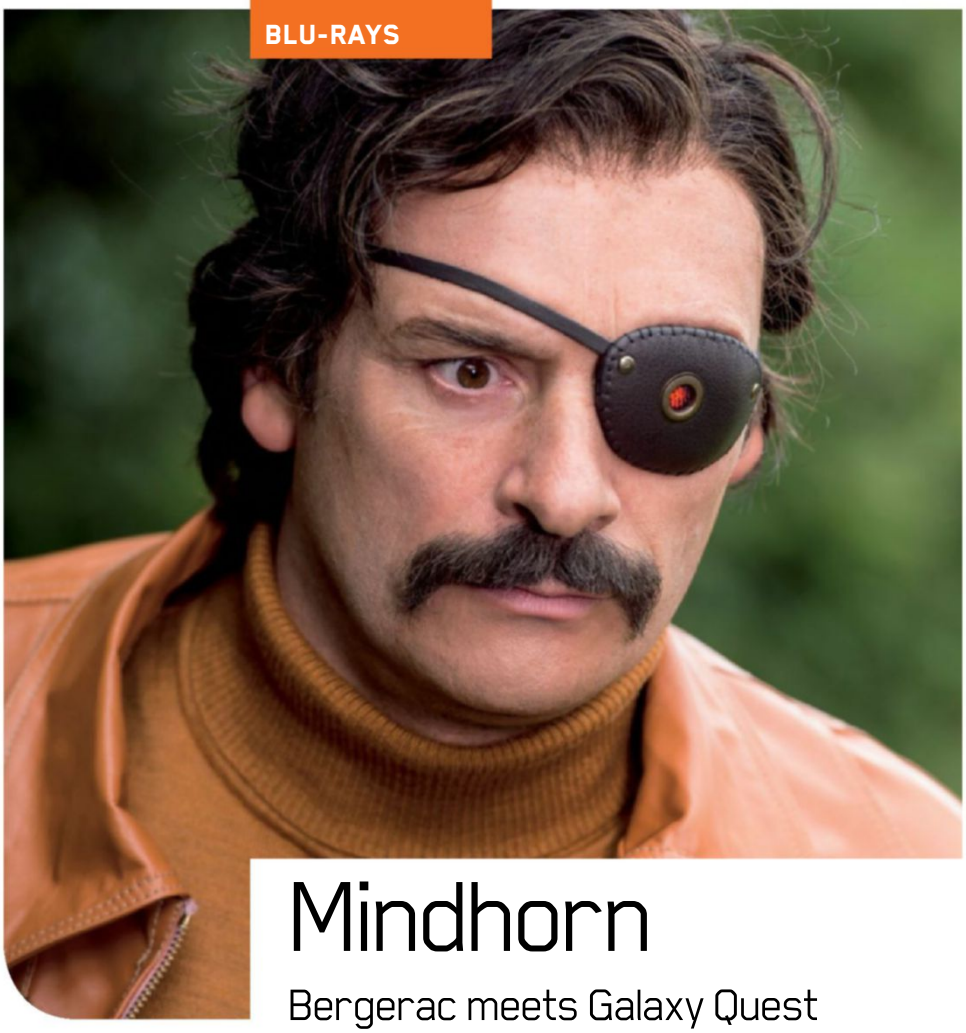


NEXT ISSUE
Months mean nothing to me any more, what with my ability to see everything at once. But I'll grab a few more VR treasures for next time.



on your XMB

BLU-RAYS



Mindhorn

Bergerac meets Galaxy Quest









A character called Bruno Mindhorn was in an episode of The Mighty Boosh.

Back in the 1980s, a British TV detective took the world by storm. Bruce Mindhorn was a former MI5 operative who could literally see the truth thanks to a robotic eye-patch. Naturally he used his unique ability to solve crimes on the Isle Of Man.

Mindhorn is, alas, the invention of Simon Barrett (The Mighty Boosh) and Simon Farnaby (Horrible Histories), but he could easily sit alongside Bergerac and fellow TV PIs. Picking up 30 years after Mindhorn's heyday, actor Richard Thorncroft (Barrett) has fallen on hard times, but catches a 'lucky' break when a killer on the loose demands to speak to Thorncroft's fictional alter-ego. Sensing the PR opportunity of a lifetime, Thorncroft straps on an eyepatch and travels to Man, where his ego clashes with police procedure, and the mistakes of his past are thrown into relief.

It's a genius concept, albeit one with a great deal in common with the sci-fi pastiche Galaxy Quest. Like that film, Mindhorn is a success because it works on two levels – both as a daft comedy, and a killer thriller that mirrors the twists, turns and preposterous double-crosses anyone who's diligently watched a TV detective show will immediately recognise.

Full of memorable cameos (Kenneth Branagh being the surprise highlight), it's consistently hilarious, with a sequence in a police station that's all but guaranteed to be the funniest scene of the year. It even has a hummable credits song with lyrics so ridiculous you'll be chuckling at them for weeks.

Jordan Farley

COMING SOON



THE HANDMAIDEN — 7 AUG

A devious Korean count employs a meek handmaiden to scam a Japanese heiress in this erotic thriller from Park Chan Wook.



SOCIETY — 7 AUG

A word of warning: Brian Yuzna's cult classic Beverly Hills satire features a flesh orgy that, once seen, can't be unseen. That said, it *has* to be seen.



FREE FIRE — 7 AUG

Brit writer/director Ben Wheatley assembled an all-star cast for this '70s-set action comedy that's, essentially, a 90-minute shootout.



THE TRANSFIGURATION — 14 AUG

Boy meets girl. Boy thinks he's a vampire? So far, so Twilight, but Michael O'Shea's horror has smarts to back up its scares.



THE SENSE OF AN ENDING — 14 AUG

Jim Broadbent excels as a businessman who delves into his past when the mother of an ex leaves him a mysterious letter.



CLASH — 14 AUG

Set within a police van where pro and anti-Muslim demonstrators are imprisoned, the greatest recommendation for this drama is Tom Hanks *loves* it.



THEIR FINEST — 21 AUG

A writer (Gemma Arterton) pens a female-led propaganda film while battling bureaucracy, sexism, and Bill Nighy in Lone Scherfig's WW2 romance.



THE BOY AND THE BEAST — 21 AUG

Mamoru Hosoda is behind this anime about an orphan raised by a warrior bear after crossing into a beastly alternate world.



UNLOCKED — 28 AUG

Orlando Bloom returns from cinematic purgatory to play a burglar who helps a CIA analyst (Noomi Rapace) prevent a chemical attack on London.



THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE — 28 AUG

Based on the true tale of a zookeeper who provided refuge from the Nazis for the local Jewish community.



Surface thrills and impressive VFX paper over an otherwise empty 'shell' of a film.

Ghost In The Shell

Scarlett rages against the machine

Akira aside, anime doesn't get any more iconic than Ghost In The Shell. Mamoru Oshii's masterful '95 adaptation from the manga is revered to this day for its stupefying visuals, sensational world-building, and cerebral storytelling. Updated for the superhero-era, GITS has had some dazzling technological upgrades, but its soul has been jettisoned in the process.

Scarlett Johansson stars as The Major – a senior killer for elite government counterterrorism unit Section 9. She's also a cyborg, her organic brain housed in a state-of-the-art robotic body after a terrorist attack left her for dead. While tracking super-hacker Kuze (Michael Pitt), The Major starts to experience a series of glitches, memories of a forgotten past life that may hold clues to a conspiracy in the present.

Cherry-picking characters, visuals, plot points and set-pieces from across the series, Rupert Sanders' slick remake is a more straightforwardly enjoyable experience than even the '95 classic. Coupled with the astonishing visuals – all augmented humans and Asian megacities filled with skyscraper-sized holograms – it's difficult to imagine anyone doing a better job of realising this world in live action.

But for all the controversy surrounding the film's 'whitewashed' cast, the film's biggest shortcoming is that it's been dumbed down to the point that it's lost its identity. While the original anime could be borderline impenetrable at certain points, at least it gave viewers something genuinely meaty to chew on. In comparison, this glitzy Hollywood remake is the intellectual equivalent of a stick of celery: elegant in form, but thoroughly unsatisfying.

Jordan Farley





MUSIC



QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
THE WAY YOU USED TO DO

FORMAT TRACK **ETA** OUT NOW **PRICE** £0.79

Josh Homme's desert rock bruisers return with the first track from upcoming LP Villains, a wicked Bonnie-and-Clyde love song. qotsa.com

BLONDE FT ASTRID S
JUST FOR ONE NIGHT

FORMAT TRACK **ETA** OUT NOW **PRICE** £0.79

UK production duo Blonde have been smashing it with their collaborations. New single Just For One Night, featuring Norwegian vocalist Astrid S, is a tropical pop banger. soundcloud.com/blondesound





DAPHNI FABRICLIVE 93

FORMAT ALBUM **ETA** OUT NOW **PRICE** £7.99

As Caribou, Dan Snaith makes festival-friendly electronic pop songs. But as Daphni, we find him indulging his dancefloor side, and this 70-minute mix of disco, punk funk, and carnival rave is a winner from start to close. facebook.com/caribouband



MURA MASA
MURA MASA

FORMAT ALBUM **ETA** OUT NOW **PRICE** £9.99

Guernsey-born producer Alex Crossan made the jump from Soundcloud demos to collaborating with US rap icon A$AP Rocky and writing for grime king Stormzy. His long-awaited debut album is crammed with guest spots and a take on US trap production that's gorgeously melodic and utterly addictive. www.muramasa.me

Hotline Miami was one of PS3's first breakout indie hits.



INFO

PUB DEVOLVER DIGITAL
DEV DENNATON GAMES
RELEASED 2013
GET IT NOW £7.99, PLAYSTATION STORE

NEED TO KNOW

1. The game began as a shooter called Super Carnage.
2. The synth-heavy soundtrack was available to buy.
3. Ryan Gosling film Drive was a major inspiration.

Jacket and die event

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This month, take a trip through the baseball-bat-crazy delirium of one of the most memorable indie games of the last 10 years.

CLASSIC GAME

Hotline Miami

Gunning down, knifing, and battering mobsters you have no personal truck with is Hotline Miami's central, bloody hook. Yet despite scoring a full house in indignant headline bingo – casual slaughter, blood, the gamification of human suffering – Hotline Miami escaped the shouty tabloid wrath that enveloped the likes of Grand Theft Auto and Manhunt.

We'd like to think that's because this is a game that refuses to sugar-coat the killing, making you feel increasingly uncomfortable, and causing you to question why you're being told to snuff out Russian gangsters. An essay on the causes and effects of desensitisation to violence in videogames, if you like. But it's probably because it looks like it was made in 1989 and is really bloody hard to play.

PLAYING CHICKEN

As the anonymous anti-hero, nicknamed 'Jacket' by players, you take delivery of a mysterious package containing a frankly terrifying rooster mask and a note instructing you to retrieve a briefcase from a group of criminals. So off you go to wipe out said criminals. And so it goes every time you receive a creepy answerphone message delivering your next set of seemingly innocuous orders to deal with a "problem" or make sure guests "have a great time".

You're never told why, only that "failure is not an option". Except that it frequently is, on account of Hotline Miami being – did we say this already? – bloody hard. A single bullet is all it takes to eliminate an enemy, and the same is true of you, which shunts you back to the start of the level.

So you find yourself restarting levels a lot: at first by mistake, and then later by design. Because underneath the blood and the stylised top-down veneer is a deft AI weave. Every time you begin a mission the enemies you face will behave slightly differently. Some will come looking for you if they hear gunfire, others will ignore it and stick rigidly to their patrol patterns until you run into them.

This is Hotline Miami's cleverest surprise. It's not a shooter. It's a puzzle game. Every level is a series of rooms with a variety of routes through them, some leading to better end-of-level grades than others. Every time you play, your route will be slightly different. First enemy carrying a shotgun? Die, restart, repeat until he's armed only with a baseball bat.

> THIS IS WHAT STARDEW VALLEY WOULD LOOK LIKE AS A SNUFF MOVIE.

Designer Dennis Wedin, one half of Dennaton Games, confirmed as much in sister magazine Edge shortly after the game came out. "If enemies reacted to the gunshots and bodies, they would destroy the puzzles in the room," Wedin said. "All the rooms are designed so that there are a few ways to enter the room and solve the puzzle. But if you just started shooting outside the room and they all came running out, you'd just destroy that."

In other words, the AI is designed to be just as freaky as the storyline. Adding to the sense that this is what Stardew Valley would look like as a snuff movie, each level has a letter hidden within it. These form a password which can be used in a bonus level to discover more about who is making these phone calls.

Hotline Miami arrived on PlayStation 3 and PlayStation Vita just after E3 2013, where indie games were given centre stage at the unveiling of PlayStation 4. The best example of this new focus on creativity was arguably Hotline Miami on PS Vita, where touchscreen lock-ons and map scrolling added a new dimension to the game. Sadly Sony's handheld no longer sees so many revolutionary new releases, but Hotline Miami remains just as vital (and violent) four years on.



Despite its looks, it's more puzzler than shooter. Somehow the tabloids never got worked up over it. You won't mind dying – it's a chance to rethink.

Name that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

1

"THE PHYSICAL RANGE OF EXERCISES REQUIRED TO SHOOT ALL THESE MONKEYS IS EXHAUSTING, MIND."

2

"IF YOU PLAN ON OPENING IT ALONE, THEN IT'S WORTH THINKING TWICE… IF YOU'VE ANY BACKUP ON CALL, THEN TUCK IN. VEGAS IS MEANT TO BE SHARED."

3

"A GAME THAT HAS HAD ITS TIME: A MECHANIC THAT WAS GROUND-BREAKING ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN INTEREST TEN YEARS AGO NO LONGER POSSESSES THE SAME CLOUT."

4

"NOT SINCE GTA V HAS AN OPEN WORLD BEEN SO MOREISH, EACH ACTIVITY DELIVERING FUN IN ALMOST EQUAL MEASURE."

ANSWERS

1. Ace Banana, issue #130, 5/10.
2. Rainbow Six Vegas 2, issue #17, 8/10.
3. Max Payne 3, issue #72, 8/10.
4. Horizon Zero Dawn, issue #134, 9/10.



OPM TIME MACHINE
5 YEARS AGO

They say 13 is unlucky for some… Star Wars 1313 was on the cover of **OPM #74**. Unluckily for us and you, it got cancelled



Above We actually got to go out to LucasArts to see the game, and it looked fantastic. However, when The Walt Disney Company bought Lucasfilm, it laid off most of the staff at LucasArts and ceased all game development. The Rebellion, foiled by Darth Mickey.

Below left We were in the mood for six games of thrones, and had a royally good time.

Below right Being mere peasants ourselves, we also chose our 20 best games costing under €20.









Far left Sleeping Dogs was a fantastic sandbox adventure. Like poor old Star Wars 1313, the sequel never made it to our PlayStations.

Left There's something about Transformers that makes you want to play with them. (Yes, we *are* grown-ups…)

DON'T MAKE ME PLAY!
TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game

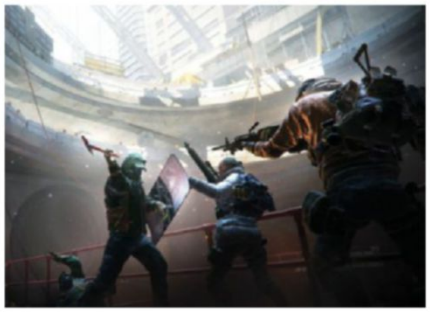


INFO

PUB UBISOFT
DEV MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT
RELEASED 2016
GET IT NOW AMAZON, £11.99

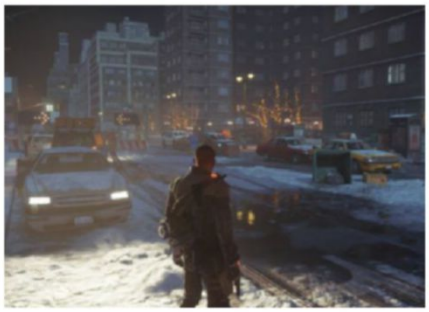
WHAT?

A slick sandbox third-person shooter set in near-future NYC after a smallpox outbreak, with smart RPG elements. Only FIFA 17, COD: Infinite Warfare, and Battlefield 1 outsold it in 2016.









Massive Entertainment's online-only shooter didn't quite match the hype on release, but free Year 2 DLC has retained long-time players' interest. OPM scored it 8/10 in issue #122.



WHO?

Former OPM editor Ben Wilson likes his PlayStation shooters loud, brash and dumb, and so has never been near Splinter Cell or Rainbow Six. For which he makes no apologies.

Confession: I've never played a Tom Clancy game – and that's a very deliberate decision. Tactics are for FIFA, strategies for Sim City. My dream blaster is Bulletstorm: in, out, shake some shells about, do the shooty-shooty and then turn around, celebrating testikills. Clancy always seemed too serious, too requiring of proper thought, for my tastes.

Yet four hours into The Division, I can't stop playing. While some criticised it on release for lacking the layered political intrigue of past Clancy games, that's the exact reason I've been propelled through. It's primarily about roaming New York in the snow and unleashing bullets into stuff. Its story, mission structure, and upgrade trees are all easily comprehensible to this shooter philistine. I'm hooked. The little

> THE LACK OF DEEPER POLITICAL INTRIGUE IS WHAT KEEPS ME PLAYING.

voice dishing out instructions from within the DualShock 4 controller? Properly neat.

That's not to say I've been brave enough to attempt linking up with friends. Co-op makes me nervous – I'm always afraid of being the klutz who lets the side down, and so hide in cover while comrades get busy. The Division's wonderfully slick, sticky cover system is a great help, but I'm still finding myself blitzed every time I try to do anything aggressive against human players. Perhaps that'll change with experience.

One element which won't change, but I really wish would, is the AI's ability to soak up headshots. Seriously: I nail a random goon twice between the eyes yet he can totter towards me, brushing off bullets like paper cuts? Nah. Amid many grand design decisions, that stands out as an especially poor one. Thankfully it's the exception rather than the rule, and I've kissed farewell to Grayson Hunt for the summer. Let's hear it for New York...

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

PS4 HALL OF FAME



1 UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END



Nathan Drake's swansong 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 THE LAST GUARDIAN



After a decade in development, Ueda's PS4 debut is both a technical marvel and emotionally devastating. Trico's mannerisms make it feel like a real creature – one we truly care about – while escaping The Nest is a captivating test. Some things are worth waiting for.

3 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 and creativity unheard of in any sandbox. Grand, majestic, and bittersweet, it's an instant classic.

4 GRAND THEFT AUTO V



Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than just a mere HD remaster. Upped 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.

5 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 new gold standard for JRPGs on PS4.

6 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 this a must-have part of any gaming library.

7 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. With Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

8 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 Yharnam return essential.

9 INJUSTICE 2



Finally, the Batman vs Superman fight you wanted. This brilliant brawler has a strong central story, some astonishing animations, and controls that make it approachable for fighting newbies. Plus, the loot system is a stroke of genius. An unexpected delight.

10 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 a must for any horror fan.

11 STREET FIGHTER V



Mechanically, this is as close to perfection as any fighter on console – everyone from hardcore fans to first-timers can grab a pad/fightstick and have serious fun. The launch game's lean, but with free add-ons coming all the time, it keeps getting better.

12 DESTINY: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION



Bundling the base game and all four expansions (September's Rise Of Iron included) into one bumper package, this is the most complete and moreishly satisfying shooter any PS4 owner could wish for.

13 DISHONORED 2



This strong follow-up to one of PS3's greatest mixes a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-ning immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to discovering how to link your powers, there's near-endless scope for experimenting.

14 TITANFALL 2



Respawn's mech masterclass crashes onto PlayStation, bringing an inventive single-player story (including some of the finest levels ever to grace PS4) and a fluid multiplayer that rewards creative thinking. This is now the gold standard for pure shooters on PS4.

15 THE LAST OF US REMASTERED



This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A starkly brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is quite simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

16 

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.

17 NEW! 

TEKKEN 7

One of PlayStation's superior scrappers goes back to basics. While geared more towards veterans, who will get a kick out of the silly story mode, the new Rage Art system helps newbies ease their way in with eye-poppingly pretty, and easy, special moves.

18 

NIOH

Using the story of William Adams as the basis for a mash-up of Japanese folklore and sadistically punishing combat, this bruising adventure will push your skills as far as possible, especially in the boss battles. A potential heir to the Dark Souls crown.

19 

TES V: SKYRIM SPECIAL EDITION

Last-gen's best RPG gets a remaster that will shave months off your life all over again. All manner of graphical upgrades breathe new life into Tamriel, while bugs are a much rarer occurrence. Mod support's sadly limited by Sony, but it's still ace.

20 

DARK SOULS III

Offering heady nostalgia for veterans, as well as one of PS4's most well-realised worlds for first-timers, From Software's masterpiece is one of PlayStation's most rewarding challenges. It's a fitting conclusion to a mesmerising and engrossing RPG treasure.

21 

THE WITNESS

The ultimate puzzle game? Thekla, Inc's behemoth boasts one of PS4's most stylishly inviting, and resolve-testing, worlds to explore. It then crams it so full of secrets that even the platinum isn't the end of the adventure. It's a true original.

22 NEW! 

DIRT 4

This demanding racer doesn't make any concessions to first timers – or old-school rally heads – but that only increases the thrill of victory. With the best moment-to-moment racing on PlayStation, don't let the difficulty put you off another muddy classic.

23 

YAKUZA 0

By going back to the start of Kazuma Kiryu's tale in the '80s, the action-RPG series turns out its best entry yet. A new fighting system allows you to change styles on the fly. The perfect starting point for newbies, a resounding success for veterans.

24 

INSIDE

Six years in the making, the follow-up to Limbo is a harrowing adventure that resonates long after it's finished. The 2D trek through an oppressive and dangerous world is crammed with cunning puzzles, horrifying deaths, and a stunning end sequence.

25 

WHAT REMAINS OF EDITH FINCH

An inventive and devastating story where you journey to the Finch family home and discover the fates of Edith's relatives. Simple and short, it's perfectly paced. Those demises might not be pleasant, but you'll have a hard time forgetting this beautiful walking simulator.

BUBBLING UNDER Alternative picks

We mine PS4's library for gold. This month: puzzlers

PICK #1



PUYO PUYO TETRIS

'Once you pop, you can't stop' doesn't just apply to snacks, learns Miriam McDonald

Online Puyo Puyo Tetris is alarmingly moreish. You get to choose which game you play, as does your opponent, and then it's a race to see who fills the other's screen first. Beware an opponent who doesn't seem to be clearing many lines; that's usually a prelude to them getting three Tetrises in a row, at which point all you can do is wince as your screen is flooded with bricks.

PICK #2



PEGGLE 2

Popcap's ode to joy manages to keep Ben Tyrer hooked years after release

While it's bending the rules to call this a puzzler, there's enough skill in lining up high-scoring shots to make this pachinko-esque delight my favourite brain-teasing PlayStation pastime. The aim – clear all orange pegs on any given stage – is made addictive by simple controls and adorable charm. Plus, it's worth playing just to see your DualShock 4's light bar glow when you beat a level.

> CLEARING ALL PEGS IS MADE ADDICTIVE BY SIMPLE CONTROLS AND ADORABLE CHARM.

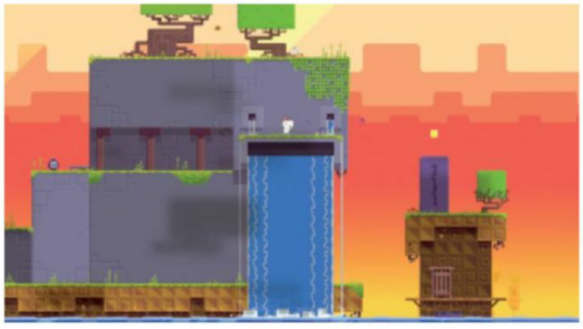
PICK #3



FEZ

A puzzler? Platformer? Puzzle-platfomer? A nod to the Fez's fashionable resurgence?

In truth, Fez is a little bit of all of this and more. The 2D gameplay set inside a 3D world will have you scratching your head as you rotate the levels to solve puzzles and unlock new areas. The itch to explore is Fez's big pull, making you feel like you can explore every 'Trixel' of the colourful world. A ladder to nowhere? Spin the screen and realign it to a unseen platform. Genius.



Fez is available for PS Vita as well as PS3 and PS4. Who needs rubbish smartphone games when you can play this on the move?

THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

PS VR HALL OF FAME



1 REZ INFINITE



Fifteen years after the original's release, the psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. In PS VR, creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality, the glittering polygonal trance-world and pounding techno inspiring total synaesthesia within you. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X, powerful enough to bring players to tears. Deserving of its name, this is a truly timeless title.



2 THUMPER



Make no mistake: the brave chrome beetle gave Rez a run for its money for our top spot. Hurtling 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD



Can you can 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.

6 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.

7 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.

8 STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

NEW!



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.

9 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.

10 FARPOINT



The 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, with a strong story and challenging co-op providing PS VR with its best FPS.

11 THE PLAYROOM VR



No-one can resist a freebie, least of all when it's this adorable. The Playroom robots return in a multiplayer mini-game collection designed for all, besting many premium titles with its quality. (Play ace platformer Robot Rescue; pray for a full-length sequel.)

12 WEREWOLVES WITHIN



An ingenious mix of party game and paranoia-fuelled investigation, your group needs to chat to identify which of you is the werewolf. Getting the right mix of chums is essential, but you won't even notice the full moon rising as you figure out who is the monster.

13 PLAYSTATION VR WORLDS



The demo disc that ate all the other demo discs and absorbed their power. This impeccably crafted (but occasionally puke-inducing) five-game variety show has you pull off heists and go face-to-face with sharks in some of VR's most immersive experiences.

14 TUMBLE VR



With its sassy robot, pinpoint-accurate motion-tracking and block-stacking brainteasers, the virtual reality version of the PS3 physics puzzler is utterly absorbing. Multiple modes including lasers, mines and ticking timers make it PS VR's smartest entry.

15 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.

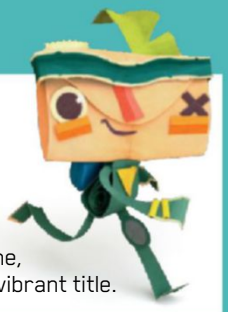
YOUR EVERY NEED FOR ON-THE-GO GOODNESS

PS VITA HALL OF FAME



1 TEARAWAY





Peerless crafty platforming from Media Molecule, this time using PS Vita's raft of touchscreen/ touchpad controls to surprise and delight you in new ways for hours on end. Full of whimsy, charm, and enough personality to put most games to shame, Tearaway's papercraft world remains Vita's most vibrant title.

2 PERSONA 4: GOLDEN



This thoughtful and unique JRPG epic gives you another stab at high school – only this time with intrigue and superpowers instead of nerves, acne, and an unpredictable vocal register.

3 RAYMAN LEGENDS



Rather than losing its lustre on the move to PS Vita, Ray's second slice of sumptuous side-scrolling is even better on handheld. Touchscreen gestures make this fine platformer all the sweeter.

4 VELOCITY 2X



A ludicrously enjoyable puzzle/platformer hybrid that should come with a health warning. So joyous is the side-scroller's twin-stick teleporting, there's a danger you'll smile your face clean off the bone.

5 LITTLEBIGPLANET



Sackboy's back, smaller but just as lovable as ever. His platforming antics work perfectly on Vita, and the new control inputs complement the level creator brilliantly. Also: d'awwww.

6 SUPER MEAT BOY!



The new music doesn't match up to the classic tunes, but Meat Boy's long-awaited PlayStation debut is the finest, fleshiest twitch platformer of all. An essential, thumb-destroying masterpiece.

7 FINAL FANTASY X/X-2 HD REMASTER



Two examples of JRPG royalty, lovingly restored to their former glory for your portable pleasure. Their new touch controls are – gasp! – a welcome addition.

8 GRAVITY RUSH



Use a gravity-defying cat to break the laws of physics and zoom across the skies of a floating steampunk city. With stylish comic-book looks and a sassy heroine, this is a rush to remember.

9 METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION



Two of PlayStation's finest adventures scale down beautifully, with enough cutscenes to fill a transatlantic flight. Even less excuse not to play, then.

10 SPELUNKY



With more than a subtle nod of its fedora to a certain whip-wielding Dr Jones, Spelunky's procedurally generated dungeons and platformer/roguelike mashup shines brightest on PS Vita.

11 STEINS;GATE



This mind-bending, tongue-in-cheek visual novel takes something as simple as a mobile phone and turns it into a time-travelling extravaganza that's fit to bursting with comedy and drama.

12 HOTLINE MIAMI



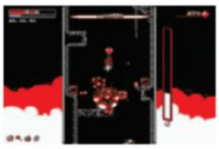
Part puzzler, part top-down murder-'em-up that's as brutal as almost anything else on PlayStation. It's hard but never frustrating, with instant restarts and lightning-fast gameplay.

13 CRYPT OF THE NECRODANCER



Take Guitar Hero and Spelunky, then whack them in a blender. You'll get this gem, with its addictive soundtrack and moreish rhythm-action monster-slaying.

14 DOWNWELL



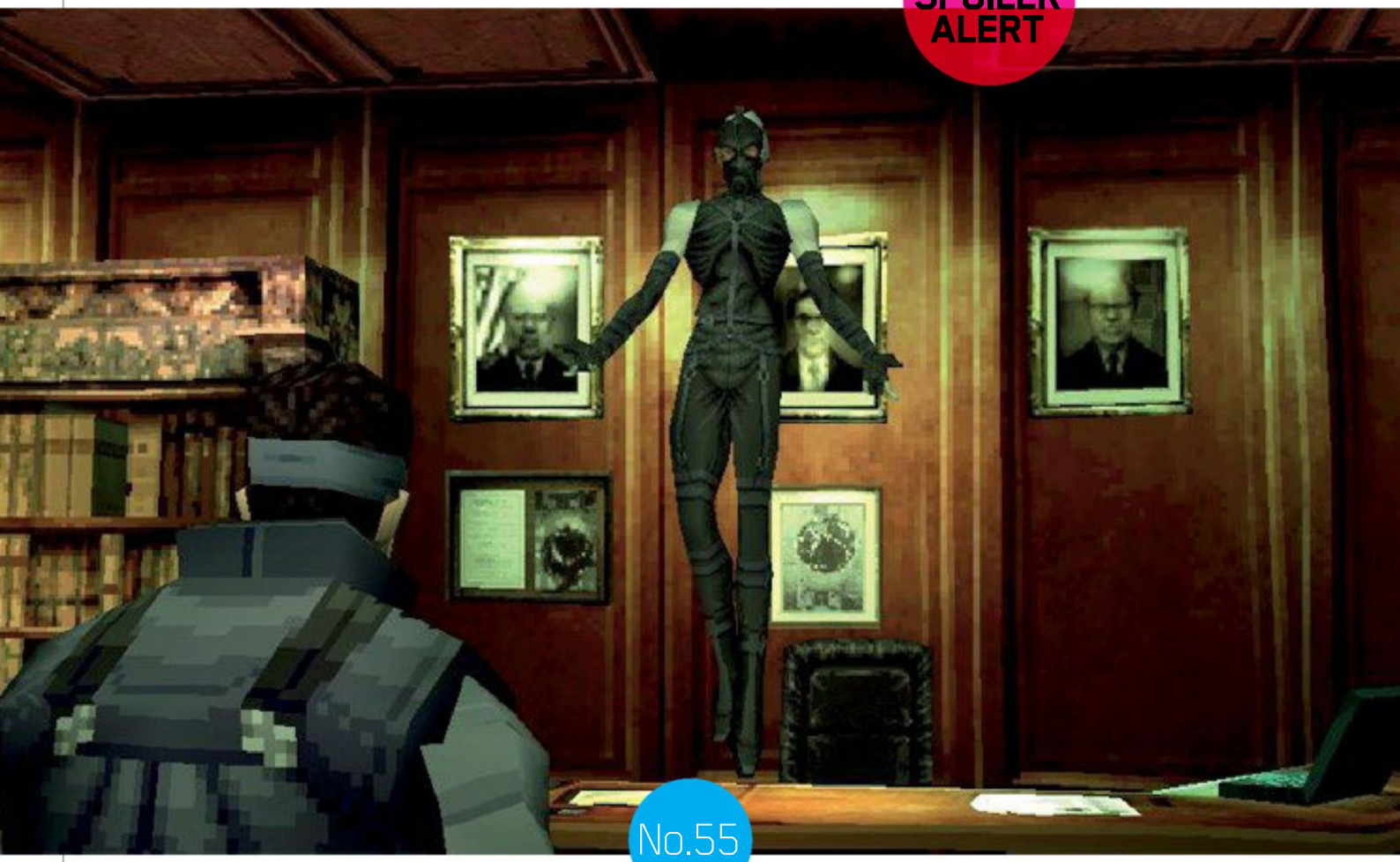
There's an engrossing simplicity that powers Moppin's surprise hit. All you can do is move left and right and fire your gunboots, yet hours later, we still can't turn it off. Fair to say it's gone down well.

15 UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS



Drake proves he's just as adept at adventuring on the go. A prequel story plump with classic jungle action, and crammed full of typical Uncharted charm.

LOOK AWAY!
SPOILER ALERT



No.55

Pyscho Thriller

Snake encounters card tricks in Metal Gear Solid

FORMAT PS1 / **PUB** KONAMI / **DEV** KONAMI / **RELEASED** 1999 / **SCORE** 10/10

Has there ever been a more disconcerting moment of technical tomfoolery? Managing to rendezvous with Meryl Silverburgh, a soldier who helps Solid Snake with his infiltration of Shadow Moses, should provide our sneaky hero with a bit of respite. Instead, she seems to lose control of herself and pulls a gun on our Snake. It's just the first of many of Psycho Mantis' tricks.

Hideo Kojima proves his reputation for playful game design is well deserved in this mind-shattering boss battle. After revealing himself as Meryl's puppet master, Mantis proves his psychic powers by revealing your play style so far. "You are a very methodical man, the type that always kicks his tyres before he leaves," he could hiss at you if you've been taking an exhaustive approach to the sneaking.

But that's only the beginning of his parlour tricks. He goes on to read your memory card, specifically calling out Konami games you might have dabbled with, such as Suikoden or Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night. Even when you take into account that Metal Gear Solid loves a good bit of fourth-wall breaking, this fantastically eerie moment still feels light years ahead of typical boss taunting.

So how do you take such a dastardly figure on? In a pleasingly tactile act, you have to pop your pad into port 2 so Mantis can't predict your movements. While it operates as a typical boss fight by the time you swap your controller over, with his powers reduced to just lobbing furniture at you, it doesn't diminish a weird and wonderful introduction that lives long in the memory. ■

Last Month
Red Dead Redemption
We head into Mexico to the soothing sound of one man and his guitar.

Next Month
Hitman: Blood Money
It's party time as we head to Mardi Gras – there's a big chicken that needs to be plucked.



NEXT MONTH

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

ON SALE
29 Aug
Subscribe on page 74

FREE!
PRO GUIDE TO PHOTO MODES

GOD OF WAR

Join us as we explore PlayStation's legendary series, then and now


WHITE DAY



TOO GHOUL FOR SCHOOL

White Day: A Labyrinth Named School's producer and director Lee Won Sool opens Yeondu High's gates

The kerchink, kerchink, kerchink of the janitor's keys echoing down the otherwise silent corridors of Yeondu High School are like the devil's earworm; predatory and permissive, it's the sound of a horror icon we've never experienced on PlayStation. While there are plenty of remakes heading our way in 2017, White Day: A Labyrinth Named School was PC's best-kept secret when it released in 2001.

Playing as Hee-Min, we've entered Yeondu High to drop off a present for the mysterious So-Young, the girl of our dreams. The school's tragic history is filled with unexplained suicides, mysterious deaths, and swirling with tall tales of hauntings. It's not the kind of place you want to be stuck inside... but here we are, trapped in the school for the night with dozens of oddball ghosts, a cast of girls to flirt with, and that pursuing janitor, the ringing of his jangling keys quite literally the sound of our imminent demise. White Day has us on edge from the very first creak of a classroom floorboard.

Sound is crucial, because as well as providing atmosphere it offers clues that will help us survive the night. Developer Roi Games is including all of the original sound effects in the remake (these were recorded at night and on location for authenticity). When we hear a classroom door closing, the shuffle of shoes on a wooden floor, or the echo of jangling keys, these are real sounds from inside an actual Korean school. "We even played a broken violin and crawled on our hands while wearing high heels! That's why all the sound effects used in White Day are very realistic," recalls the game's original director, and producer of the remake, Lee Won Sool.

> **"THE SCHOOL'S HISTORY IS FILLED WITH SUICIDES, MYSTERIOUS DEATHS, AND HAUNTINGS."**

DEAD LIGHT

It's this attention to detail that makes White Day so compelling, even now. The remake, naturally, has had a »

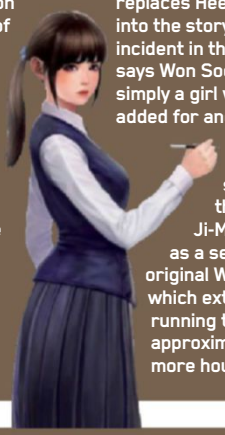
YOO WHO?

There's a new face on the register at Yeondu High

This PS4 debut is no simple remake, as Roi Games has chosen to add a new character to the roster. Called Ji-Min Yoo, she will be used to tell the hidden story of the original game. Producer and director Lee Won Sool explains: "She fills in the gaps between the remake and the original, replacing Hee-Min as the protagonist, and she investigates the story behind the incident in the school."

As with the main game's Hee-Min, Ji-Min Yoo has an interest in So-Young, "So-Young actually rescued Ji-Min from bullies during her school orientation by talking them out of it – Ji-Min has liked her ever since, and has been doodling things about So-Young and the other characters on the school walls."

As we explore the school in the main story mode, we can see and collect these doodles, adding yet another layer of interest.



"It's worth noting that Ji-Min is a character who replaces Hee-Min and digs into the story behind the incident in the school," says Won Sool. "She's not simply a girl who has been added for another ending or two, she's a fresh storyteller in the game. I see Ji-Min's campaign as a sequel to the original White Day, one which extends the running time by approximately two more hours."



Do you admit to being scared or bluff it out? These 'likability' choices will define your path.



The first-person camera is "what our old fans loved most about the original," says Won Sool. It also makes the jumps scarier.



Some of us keep old gym socks and Haribo in our lockers, others like to store up a supply of angry old ladies.

» visual overhaul, including improved textures and environmental details, but it's the illumination that gives us chills. Won Sool says, "The lighting, in particular, is a key feature in expressing the school at night, where the protagonist is trapped and alone: lights make you feel safe, but they can also be a threat when a killer is using it to track you and find you. On the contrary, complete darkness plays an important role in bringing each player's inner fears to the surface."

Switching on a classroom's lights, or flicking a Zippo lighter, will signal to the janitor where we are, and like a moth to a literal flame he'll shuffle unrelentingly towards us like a creepy mix of a Scooby-Doo villain and The Terminator. But we feel safer in the light despite the janitor's menacing presence, even though deep down it will be our undoing; White Day's sense of perversion is to be admired.

But this is no simple survival horror. While the noughties-era gameplay is reminiscent of Resident Evil – door puzzles, inventory juggling, and endless backtracking through the school's corridors are all essential – the inclusion of the female cast places a new emphasis on your decision making. This is 'romantic horror', if you will, where dialogue choices and how we treat our female classmates leads to one of the game's eight endings. While dialogue trees are simple binaries – we can be nice to the girls or treat them mean – they build upon one another to map a more complex path through the game. We agree to help the confident tomboy Kim Seong-ah early on – that's an A* for us – but we shun the bookish Seol Ji-hyun, deciding to play the loner rather than take her up on an offer of friendship. That won't end well.

While some of our dialogue choices have direct, immediate consequences, ultimately the relationship we build with our classmates will determine which ending we see. "The most important choice that affects the

"DARKNESS PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRINGING EACH PLAYER'S INNER FEARS TO THE SURFACE."

It may sound simple, and be commonplace now in horror games, but the use of light in White Day exemplifies the game's technique for making us constantly fearful. This is a darkly psychological game that turns otherwise comforting actions against us, a staple of all good Korean horror.





game's ending is the 'likability' you gain or lose from the dialogue you select during conversations with the female students. Each option has (hidden) likeability ratings, and the sum of these points will determine the ending you will get," explains Won Sool.

Dialogue choices have remained the same, "because we wanted our old fans to feel nostalgia for the original," but a professional writer has been recruited to freshen up the many storylines and game endings.

Each character has two endings, good and bad, and unlocking all of them opens a special end-game puzzle, with a further secret hidden in this conundrum that's related to Ji-Min's story — White Day likes to keep you thinking.

EXAM HORRORS

There are plenty of night terrors in White Day to make us hop off the edge of the OPM sofa, too. There's a genuine sense of paranoia that builds as we make our way through the game. Every action has us spooked. Using the crouch button enables us to move more quietly; running is noisier but often needed, each loud clip-clop of our shoes on the wooden floor putting us in peril. We switch on the lights and rush a padlock puzzle because we know any extra second of illumination could catch the janitor's attention, yet lights out means we're in danger of stumbling into one of the game's many horrific apparitions: a crumpled, angry woman stuffed into a school locker; a haunted, dissected anatomical mannequin; or Won Sool's favourite, the headless toilet ghost: "She was a student killed by her jealous friend at the school. Every night, her bloody head searches for her friend. This is the scariest story I heard when I was young. I felt like I could hear her head thumping around every night as she searched for her victim. I hope you enjoy meeting her in the toilets..."

There are 20 such creepy, ghostly encounters in the game, and we're encouraged to experience them all, but we'll only meet ghosts by solving puzzles, collecting certain unique items, and through specific actions.

Like everything in White Day, our keenness to meet all the ghosts encourages us to experiment and replay. It's a structure that helps paper over any shortcomings we find in our play of the preview build: the slow pace and old-fashioned item manipulation puzzles could wear thin were it not for the constant need to build friendships, stay paranoid, and spin the narrative into new and unexpected places.

While White Day may be a game that wears its 'cult classic' hall pass with pride, there's enough here to suggest horror fans will be happy. ■

VIRTUAL SHOCK

Virtual reality adds a new dimension of terror

One of the standout design choices of White Day is the first-person viewpoint. It's hardly a novelty today, but was innovative 16 years ago. "When I first designed White Day to have a first-person camera in 2001, it was a unique experience – one rarely tried in the genre!" exclaims producer and director Lee Won Sool. "Back then I believed that a first-person viewpoint was the best way to convey the extreme fear from being chased by an undefeatable enemy. Players agreed with me, and the original White Day became one of the most-loved horror games in Korea as a result." It's a design choice that sets up White Day perfectly for a virtual reality edition. Announced last year at the PS VR Asia Conference, White Day: Swan Song is a prequel set six years before the events of A Labyrinth Named School, and is exclusive to PS VR. The story will follow a new cast of classmates as they enter the school, closed because of suicides. While the setting and 3D environments remain the same, developer Roi Games is changing the control system, which will remove the ability to run, to suit VR – the only sick thing here will be the shocks.

PS4 PlayStation 4 | PS4 Pro PlayStation 4 | PlayStation VR | PS VITA PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

ISSUE 139 SEPTEMBER 2017 **£6.99**
gamesradar.com/opm

SCARED SHEETLESS

New girl has school spirit

Why Yoo Ji-min's arrival will be a game-changer

VIRTUAL THRILLER

PS VR game is a scream

We examine White Day's virtual reality spin-off



BACK TO SCHOOL!

WHITE DAY

a labyrinth named school

It's on PS4! The Korean horror remake looks like a class act

9012

9000