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* Internet required. Must be logged into your Xbox Live account. If game was purchased and loaded from disc, original discs may be required to verify ownership.

¹ The number of games is based on a 36GB average per game for Xbox One, and 7GB average per game for Xbox 360. The number of games you can store on this hard drive will vary based on the size, number of games, other programs, formatting, and other factors.

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PS4

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT



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The
200
GAMES
YOU MUST
PLAY
pg10



It's 2018. It's the future, and what better way to celebrate the modern age than to formulate a number of lists about gaming. Boy howdy do we have some lists for you, from games you must play through to which gaming celebrities are going to die and ruin your year. There's a list here for everyone, and if you don't like them you can always send us your own. Enjoy.

DANIEL WILKS
Editor



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HYPER

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The background of the entire page is a high-angle, wide shot of a rugged mountain range. The mountains are covered in snow and partially shrouded in mist or low clouds. A semi-transparent grid pattern is overlaid on the entire image, creating a digital or virtual atmosphere. The text is centered over this background.

The
2000
GAMES
YOU MUST
PLAY

“Don’t tell me what to do! You’re not my dad, you’re a magazine”, we hear you say. But we are your dad and we are giving the orders around here. Well, ok. We’re not actually your dad, but we do have a pretty damn excellent list of games that you should really think about playing before the inevitable conflict between North Korea and the U.S.A. consumes us all.



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

This is controversial, we know. There are arguments to be made for Daggerfall, Morrowind and Oblivion to represent The Elder Scrolls in this list. But Skyrim's merit carries the most weight.

It's Bethesda's most convincing fantasy world yet, bringing together varied and spectacular geography, and a civil war storyline that explores the attitudes of its people towards history, to create a land that feels lived in. And those fights against the dragons are also quite cool.

DEVELOPER
Bethesda Studios
PLATFORM PC/360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2011



DEVELOPER
Mossmouth
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2012

Spelunky

Derek Yu had been tinkering with a free version of Spelunky on PC for a few years before he polished it up, included an eye-popping graphical overhaul, and released it first on Xbox 360. What is now the definitive version of the game is a procedurally generated platformer of immaculate design where you never quite know what you'll encounter each time you play. A highlight was the daily challenge, allowing all players to pit themselves against the same layout and compete for high scores.



DEVELOPER
Polytron
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2012

Fez

It's almost too simple at first. Fez is a 2D platformer where each platform exists in 3D space. You're able to rotate the world through 90-degrees, thus rearranging the layout of the level and connecting two platforms in 2D that are otherwise distant in 3D. But slowly you realise that there's more to Fez than first meets the eye. Soon you're studying every screen for clues, taking notes for later reference, working on translations of multiple symbolic languages, and waking up at odd hours to see what happens when you play at a specific hour. Eventually you'll start to see Fez in a whole new light.



DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM PS3
RELEASE DATE
2012

Yakuza 5

Sega's Yakuza series feels like a very Japanese take on Grand Theft Auto. They're smaller games, situated in only a handful of city blocks of a fictionalised Shinjuku, and the combat is based around melee weapons and fists, reflecting the denser living in Japan and the lack of guns. Yakuza 5 is the most expansive entry in the series with five city locations to explore and a host of side activities to engage in.

Rayman Origins

Far from the gritty reboot of Rayman the title might suggest, Origins was in fact a dazzling return to form for the limbless, bequipped platforming hero after an eight year absence. While the gorgeous, hand-drawn backdrops caught the eye initially, the crisp controls and fluid animation, supported by exquisite level design and thrilling boss fights ensured Rayman could finally take his place, if not alongside Mario then at least significantly closer to him in the platforming hall of fame.

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft
PLATFORM 360/PS3/Wii
RELEASE DATE
2011



DEVELOPER
Volition
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999

Freespace 2

Developer Volition emerged from the tunnels of its revolutionary six-degrees-of-freedom shooter Descent, blasting out into space in 1998 with Descent: Freespace, a space combat sim in the vein of Wing Commander or X-Wing vs Tie-Fighter. Freespace 2 ditched the Descent moniker but kept the technology, offering a raucous space opera that was always more shooter than simulation. Exquisite and varied mission design locked in perfect orbit with spectacular battles against massed star fleets and awesome capital ships.



DEVELOPER
Rockstar North
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2003

Manhunt

British author JG Ballard once said the reason he wrote his novel Crash was because he "wanted to rub the human face in its own vomit and force it to look in the mirror." With Grand Theft Auto, Rockstar had been regurgitating the seedier side of America (oh, and '60s London) for some years. But Manhunt was something else. Manhunt wasn't just seedy, it was wretched, uncompromising; a stealth game so filthy you had to shower after playing it. With Manhunt, Rockstar took your vomit-smear face and smashed it into the mirror again and again.

Battlefield 1942

In 1999 a Swedish studio called Refraction Games released Codename Eagle, a vehicle and on-foot first-person shooter set during World War I. In 2000, Digital Illusion (or Dice) bought Refraction and expanded upon the Codename Eagle engine to create a vehicle and on-foot first-person shooter set during World War II. One year in particular: 1942.

Battlefield 1942 was essentially a multiplayer game, despite the presence of AI bots for those determined to fly solo, and with its varied selection of infantry classes and wide range of vehicles (from bombers to jeeps to aircraft carriers) it provided much of the template for all large-scale digital warfare that followed.

DEVELOPER
Dice
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2002





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The Elder Scrolls V

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OUT NOW

Bethesda

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DEVELOPER
Blue Sky
Productions
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1992

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss

Ultima Underworld was a stunning technical achievement, a fully textured real-time 3D engine with dynamic lighting in 1992. Doom, which came out a year later, looked simplistic in comparison. But Underworld wasn't a shooter; it was an RPG set in an eight-level dungeon populated by tribes of sentient creatures who you can trade with and speak to. The dungeon could be explored however you pleased, meaning players had to make copious annotations on the in-game map.



DEVELOPER
LucasArts
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1993

Day of the Tentacle

The sequel to Maniac Mansion, this point and click adventure from the heyday of LucasArts shows designers Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman at the height of their considerable powers. What's remarkable about Day of the Tentacle, especially playing it again today, is just how tightly it is designed. There's no fat anywhere.

Restricted to a single location (the interior and exterior of a three-story house, essentially), albeit as seen in three different time periods 200 years apart, the play space becomes dense with overlapping puzzles, witty dialogue and wonderfully comic animation.



DEVELOPER
Westwood Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1997

Blade Runner

As the point and click adventure withered away during the late '90s, Westwood's interpretation of Ridley Scott's vision of Phillip K. Dick's novel showed the potential for regrowth. With PC gamers distracted by Quake et al, Blade Runner promised a real-time 3D adventure - and it delivered in depicting a convincing world populated by characters who appeared to have lives of their own. An element of emergent narrative was introduced with the game assigning by chance replicant status to various characters at the start of a new game.



DEVELOPER
Sir-tech
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999

Jagged Alliance 2

Oft-neglected in the clamour to acknowledge the squad-tactics genius of XCOM, the Jagged Alliance games are, if anything, more worthy of commendation. Players manage a team of mercenaries, hiring and firing and equipping and upgrading them. You move your mercs around a strategy map, intercepting enemies squads and initiating turn-based battles where a host of tactical options come into play. Perhaps Jagged Alliance suffers for its cheesy, '80s action movie tone, but it makes up for it in gameplay depth.

Team Fortress 2

Over ten years in the making, Valve's class-based multiplayer shooter morphed from a contemporary military setting to the exaggerated cartoon aesthetic of its eventual release. Given the subsequent iconic nature of the Heavy, the Spy, the Pyro et al, for whom Valve produced amusing animation shorts as part of the game's ongoing marketing, this proved to be the absolute correct decision. Although more of a testbed for Valve's business model these days, TF2 is a classic team-based shooter.

DEVELOPER
Valve
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2007





DEVELOPER
Crystal Dynamics
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2007

Tomb Raider Anniversary

Fresh from successfully reviving Lara Croft's fortunes with Tomb Raider Legend, Eidos chose to return to the roots of the series. Anniversary is a complete remake of the first Tomb Raider, its iconic levels - the lost valley's T-Rex, the towering St Francis' Folly - rebuilt and expanded upon using the very capable technology developed for Legend, including a totally revamped movement system. If you only play one Tomb Raider, make it this.



DEVELOPER
Bitmap Brothers
PLATFORM Amiga/
Atari ST
RELEASE DATE
1990

Speedball 2

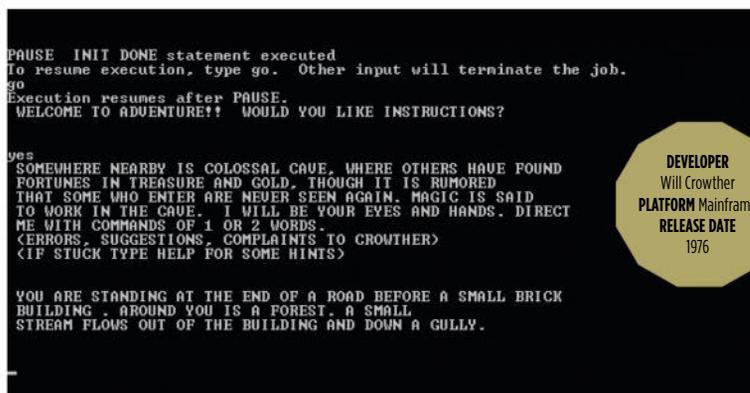
Contemporary sports are becoming safer all the time as we better mitigate the risks of long-term injury and other health issues. Future sports, however, just get more violent. In Speedball 2, teams of nine men clad in metal-spiked armour punch and kick each other under the pretense of hurling a ball into a goal. You even score points for injuring an opposition player to the extent he is removed from the field. The same amount of points you get for scoring a goal, in fact.



DEVELOPER
Psygnosis
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1996

Wipeout 2097

Psygnosis had released the original Wipeout only twelve months prior, so it wasn't a huge surprise to find that Wipeout 2097 was more of the same, only better. Players signed up for the so-called anti-gravity racing league, a series of events that see future-sleek, overdesigned to the point of fetishisation, hovercraft fling themselves around undulating skyways at frightening speeds. Wipeout 2097 is a stylish and challenging racing game, with a soundtrack and art direction to die for.



DEVELOPER
Will Crowther
PLATFORM Mainframe
RELEASE DATE
1976

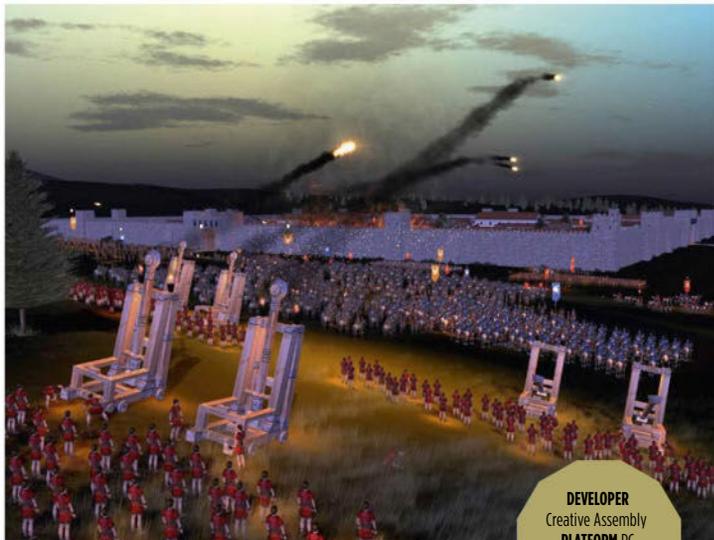
Colossal Cave Adventure

No list attempting to do justice to the history of video games should overlook Colossal Cave Adventure, also known as simply Cave or Adventure or even Advent (which was what you needed to type into your mainframe command line to run it). The very first text adventure saw players explore a mysterious and labyrinthine underground network, inspired by designer Will Crowther's background as a spelunker, interacting with the world and solving its puzzles via a limited text input system. The "maze of twisty little passages, all alike" conundrum still gives this writer traumatic flashbacks to this day.

DEVELOPER
Atlus
PLATFORM 3DS
RELEASE DATE
2016

Etrian Odyssey V

Few games are as perfectly synchronised to their hardware platform as the Etrian Odyssey series. Having begun life on the DS, the most recent fifth game has carried on the tradition on the 3DS, presenting a hardcore dungeon-crawling RPG that makes essential use of the dual and touch-screen features of Nintendo's handhelds. The top screen shows your first-person view while the bottom touch screen is a grid on which you have to draw your own map, leaving notes about certain puzzles or treasures or enemies you've encountered. Mess up your cartography and you run a real risk of getting completely lost.



DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2004

Rome: Total War

Every military history buff's fantasy comes to life in Total War, a series of sweeping grand strategy where you manage the economy and infrastructure of each province of your empire, shuffle your armies across the map and then leap into the battlefield to shout direct orders like the much-honoured general you truly are. With Rome, Creative Assembly found a winning formula where for the first time every single element of the game came together cohesively.



DEVELOPER
Polyphony Digital
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1999

Gran Turismo 2

In terms of console driving games, Gran Turismo is a behemoth. Despite the recent inroads made by Microsoft's Forza series and the odd overtake from Burnout or Need for Speed, Polyphony Digital's painstakingly attended sim remains king of the road. Even back in its PS1 days, Gran Turismo's driving model was peerless, even if its AI proved predictable and its damage modelling non-existent. But what set GT apart was its dedication to the lifestyle of the automobile enthusiast; this is first and foremost a driving series, not a racing game.



DEVELOPER
Maxis
PLATFORM PC/Mac
RELEASE DATE
2000

The Sims

Will Wright was designing SimCity sequels in the '90s when he realised he was more interested in the personal lives of... sorry, we're making this up. The Sims lets you escape your dreary life and enjoy a consumerist utopia where you can redesign your house at the click of a button or increase your happiness meter by buying a range of new white goods. Actually, it's a robust sandbox for emergent story-telling, we just wish it wasn't quite so "yay capitalism!"

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PS4

XBOX ONE

PC DIGITAL

JANUARY 26TH 2018

PG

Mild fantasy violence,
online interactivity

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Pro Evolution Soccer 5

Back in the PS2 era you either a PES fan, and thus all that is good and noble, or a FIFA fan, the kind of shallow glory hunting fake football fan who actually pays money to see Real Madrid on a meaningless pre-season friendly tour of Asia. Pro Evo never had the money or the official licenses of FIFA, but it always played a better game of football - and if you say otherwise then you're obviously a Man City supporter.

DEVELOPER
Konami
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2005



Lost Odyssey

The best Final Fantasy game of the PS3 era was undoubtedly Lost Odyssey, a JRPG not called Final Fantasy, not made by Square Enix, and not even available on PlayStation hardware. While Square struggled to understand what FFXIII was, original series creator Hironobu Sakaguchi coaxed a collaboration between his new Mistwalker team and the unheralded feelplus into a genuine genre classic. Lost Odyssey was epic in scope and ambition, traditional and yet innovative in its gameplay systems, and emotionally devastating in its narrative drama.

DEVELOPER
Mistwalker/
feelplus
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2008

Defender

Designed in large part by Eugene Jarvis, chiefly responsible for many Williams titles from the early arcade days, Defender was one of the first scrolling shooters to follow in the footsteps of Space Invaders. Flipping the action 90-degrees, Defender allowed the player to fly left-to-right and right-to-left across a horizontal playfield that wrapped around several times the size of the screen. To aid with the lightning fast play and the primary objective of rescuing humans, it also introduced a revolutionary radar system that mapped the entire playfield to show what action was happening off-screen.



DEVELOPER
Williams
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1981

The Ancient Art of War

We're not going to claim this was the very first real-time strategy game, but it is certainly recognised as one of the first, and clearly contains numerous familiar features from which one can draw a through line to Dune 2, the Total War series and beyond. There is a real-time overworld map where you and your AI opponent move squads of troops to secure forts and towns and hold chokepoints over bridges or between mountains. When opposing squads meet you have the option to zoom in to a real-time tactical battle and direct your formation of knights, barbarians and archers first-hand. Concepts such as morale and supply were also modelled, revealing the game's own table-top wargaming influence.



DEVELOPER
Evryware
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1984



DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1988

Ghoul's 'n Ghosts

Like Ghosts 'n Goblins before it, Ghoul's 'n Ghosts is a brutally difficult and brutally punishing game. It's not simply that progression relies on rote memorisation of each level, knowing precisely when enemies appear and in what patterns they move and attack; it's that it is incredibly easy to die and each time you do you're sent back to the very beginning of the game. But god damn we wasted a lot of 20-cent coins on this. One day we might even see level 3.



DEVELOPER
Jordan Mechner
PLATFORM Apple II
RELEASE DATE
1989

Prince of Persia

Prince of Persia is still remembered for the outstanding quality of its character animation. Jordan Mechner filmed video of his brother running, jumping and performing other moves from the game then essentially traced over his figure in various stages of motion to form the frames of animation. The result was breathtaking back in 1989 and can still look impressive today as the Prince impales himself on a bed of spikes. We hope Mechner's brother didn't meet the same fate.

Bloodborne

“Shields are nice, but not if they engender passivity,” reads the item description of the wooden shield found early on in Central Yarnham, and until the Old Hunters DLC the only shield in the game. It’s Bloodborne’s way of telling players this is not Dark Souls.

Although Bloodborne shares a labyrinthine die-and-repeat structure and a moreishly elusive manner of story-telling with its From Software stablemate, it plays quite differently. The absence of shields and introduction of the “regain” system (where upon taking damage you have a small window of opportunity to counterattack to replenish lost health) push the combat in a fresh, faster-paced and more aggressive direction.

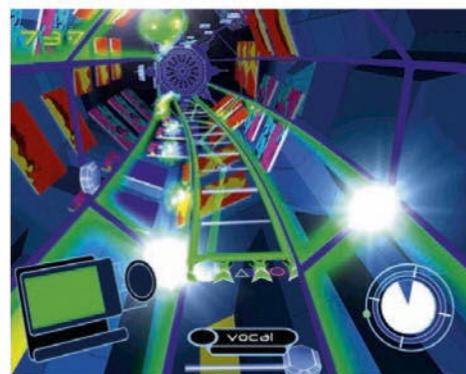
DEVELOPER
FromSoftware
PLATFORM PS4
RELEASE DATE
2015



Earth Defence Force 4: The Shadow of New Despair

This, for those trying to follow along at home, is a remastered version of Earth Defense Force 2025 and includes the original game and a new expansion. That is to say, it’s the one EDF game you should play because you simply must play one EDF game and once you’ve played one EDF game you’ve played all EDF games and so you may as well play the most recent EDF game. The premise is thus: aliens have invaded Earth and you must defend it. By force. Each level is a third-person shooter of apocalyptic jankiness with hundreds of enemies on-screen, hundreds more weapons to collect, and destructible environments that aren’t too fussed how much is left as long as the aliens are gone.

DEVELOPER
Sandlot
PLATFORM PS4
RELEASE DATE
2015



Frequency

Before filling living rooms (and, sadly now, landfill) across the world with plastic guitars, Harmonix was honing its music game chops with more mundane, conventional controller-based rhythm-action titles like the excellent Frequency. The note charts wrapped around an octagonal tunnel, with each side representing a different instrument or track. Complete a section of a track and it keeps playing while you pursue the others, allowing you to gradually combine the elements of the song. With a contemporary electronic soundtrack and slickly futuristic visuals, Frequency was a game perfectly in tune with its aesthetic.

DEVELOPER
Harmonix
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2001



Valkyria Chronicles

This squad-based tactics game offers several twists on the genre. The mix of real-time and turn-based combat, coupled with the third-person over-the-shoulder perspective does wonders for immersing you in the battlefield. And the characterisations, evident in both the beautiful watercolour cut-scenes and host of unusual personality traits that offer buffs and debuffs during combat, combine to make you care for the crew of Squad 7 in ways you didn't know were possible.



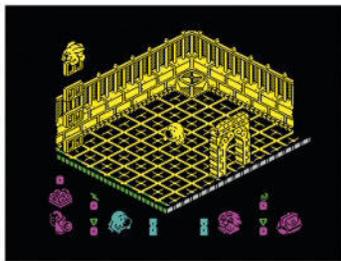
DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM PS3
RELEASE DATE
2008



Dungeon Master

It still astonishes just how far ahead of its time Dungeon Master was upon its release in 1987. It boasted detailed first-person visuals and audio that informed you of the direction of a nearby monster. It let you reach out into the world and physically pick up objects. It had you customise spells by combining various runes. It had semi-real-time combat akin to Final Fantasy's active time battle system. Characters levelled up in skills simply by using them rather than assigning experience points. It even invented the paper-doll inventory interface.

DEVELOPER
FTL
PLATFORM Atari ST
RELEASE DATE
1987



Head Over Heels

Isometric action-adventures were all the rage in the mid '80s, especially in Britain on home computers such as the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum. Head Over Heels is a prime example of the genre, giving players control over two characters: Head, who can shoot, jump higher and move mid-jump; and Heels, who can run faster, climb stairs and carry items. The world is a sprawling series of connected rooms that house puzzles that either Head, Heels or a combination of both have to solve.

DEVELOPER
Ocean Software
PLATFORM C64/ZX Spectrum
RELEASE DATE
1987

Phantasy Star 4

Sega console owners were always sadly underserved when it came to RPGs, especially in comparison to the glut of classics on the SNES. The Phantasy Star series was perhaps the rare exception that could hold its own against the Final Fantasy and Dragons Quest of the time, and its fourth instalment sits comfortably alongside the JRPG greats, thanks to the customisable depth of its battle system and the innovative manga panels used to illustrate conversations and cut-scenes.

DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM Mega Drive
RELEASE DATE
1993



System Shock 2

You awake on a space station that's gone to hell. A friendly voice pops over the radio and offers to help get you out alive. It's a scenario that designer Ken Levine has extracted a lot of mileage from in his career, but it still feels fresh. System Shock 2 is an RPG where you shoot, hack, use psionic powers and scavenge the decks of the Von Braun for ammo, cyber-modules, nanites and health. It's by turns tense, terrifying and thought-provoking.

DEVELOPER
Irrational Games
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999



COMFORT

DURABILITY

SOUND QUALITY

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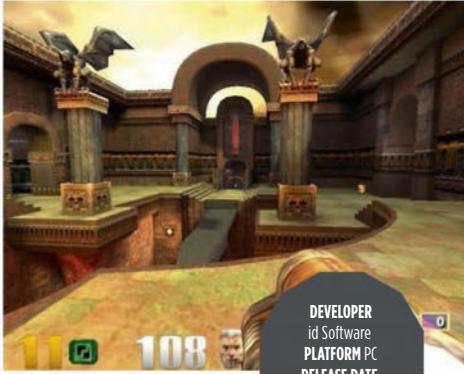
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DEVELOPER
id Software
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999

Quake 3 Arena

Quake was the deathmatch king by the late '90s so it made sense for id Software to base the third instalment of the series entirely around multiplayer. Even the single-player mode was just the same arena maps against AI bots. There was outrage from some quarters at this betrayal of Quake's history of, uh, underwhelming solo campaigns, but most were able to appreciate Quake 3 Arena for what it was: the purest distillation of the competitive FPS we'd ever seen.



Star Control 2

You can tell Star Control 2 is a sci-fi video game because it features

an alien race known as the Precursors. Unimaginative names aside, Starcon is an otherwise deeply imaginative game from an era where you could make an RPG about managing your ship as you explore space, a narrative-heavy adventure game where you met and spoke with all kinds of helpful and nefarious aliens, and a top-down arcade shooter whenever combat broke out. And you made it all in the same game.

DEVELOPER
Toys for Bob
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1992

Divinity: Original Sin 2

Too soon? Nah. Larian's first Original Sin was already a modern classic, and this year's sequel is even better. What we love is the depth. Original Sin 2 embraces its old-school RPG approach as a strength, not as a weakness, delivering a narrative-heavy tale that's full of lengthy and well-written conversations and descriptions, a turn-based combat engine that demands you think about elevation, friendly fire and the way the elements interact, and a formidable degree of player choice. Oh, and it has a thoroughly new-school look and co-operative multiplayer mode, just for kicks.



DEVELOPER
Larian Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2017



Crusader Kings 2

What elevates Crusader Kings 2 above similarly-themed grand strategy games is that it isn't about countries vying for dominance; it's about family. Set during the Middle Ages, it's an emergent story-telling machine that enables players to weave their own tales about people struggling to exert power and influence, to cling to their status and leave a legacy for their children to inherit.

It's an incredibly dense game, but it's also one that is willing to let the player engage with it at a depth of their choosing. Moreover, there is no victory condition; you're not going to lose if you fail to overthrow the King of Prussia, in fact that probably just makes for an even better story.

DEVELOPER
Paradox
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2012



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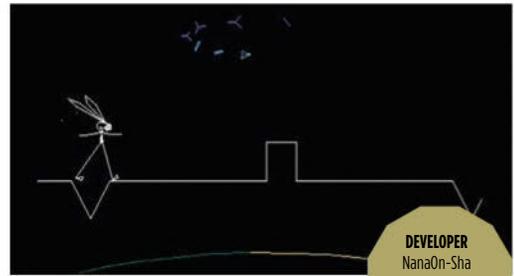
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DEVELOPER
Blizzard
PLATFORM PC/Mac
RELEASE DATE
1998

Starcraft

Just a few months shy of its 20th birthday Starcraft is still the biggest name in real-time strategy. Blizzard expanded on what it learned from its previous Warcraft titles, creating an RTS that offered three distinct factions to play as, each requiring players to learn new units and new ways to play. The major success of Starcraft, however, was in its multiplayer, powered by Battle.net, and its unprecedented popularity as a competitive game.



DEVELOPER
NanaOn-Sha
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1999

Vib Ribbon

A sort of wireframe rabbit creature struts along a fuzzy white line dangling in a black void as music plays. Curious shapes appear on the line and when the rabbit reaches them you must press the correct button. Hit it in time with the music and you score points; fail and your rabbit spasms, devolving into a small frog; keep failing and you become a worm and finally the game ends. In other words, Vib Ribbon is a surreal rhythm-action game with the added bonus of generating tracks based on any music CD you play.



DEVELOPER
Graftgold
PLATFORM C64
RELEASE DATE
1985

Paradroid

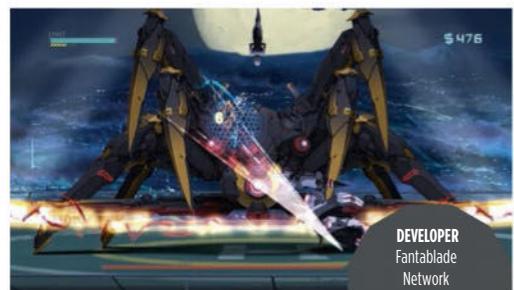
Paradroid is a top-down shooter where you have the ability to take possession of more powerful droids via a very clever hacking minigame. You start as a weak "001" droid that doesn't stand a chance against the 300 and 400 tier droids you'll find on other levels of the ship, let alone the top of the line 900 tier droids in the end game. So you gotta move up the ranks in order to survive; take a hit though and you're knocked back to "001" status and will have to retreat to earlier levels to hack again.



DEVELOPER
2K Marin/Canberra
PLATFORM PC/360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2010

BioShock 2

It may seem contrarian to include the least heralded of the BioShocks on this list, but bear with us: BioShock 2 is the superior BioShock. It let us play as a Big Daddy and deliver the brutal drill-charge attack on countless splicers. It let us dual wield weapons and plasmids. Most of all it gave us a reason to return to Rapture, exploring further the intimate Little Sister-Big Daddy connection to tell a story that grows and lingers rather than peaks too early (the original) or disappears up its own arse (Infinite). Oh, and the Minerva's Den DLC is the real series highlight.



DEVELOPER
Fantablate
Network
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2016

Icey

Icey is a fantastic side scrolling action game with an accessible and expandable combat system that remains both spectacular and fun throughout the length of the game. It has a helpful narrator who tells you what is happening and where to head next. It's also a brilliant meta game that becomes a wonderful commentary on identity, truth and perspective when you defy the orders of the narrator and head off on your own path. He won't like that and has a habit of being rather aggressive in his attempts to get you back on his path, throwing enemies and bosses in your way, but isn't the truth worth it?

DEVELOPER
Riot Games
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2009

League of Legends

By some measures, League of Legends could well be the biggest game in the world. Born out of the Defense of the Ancients mod for Warcraft 3, LoL helped define the team-based competitive MOBA genre and can now boast well over one hundred million active players every month. It's one of the leading games supported via a free-to-play business model with players keen to spend money on new champions and cosmetic add-ons via micro-transactions. As an esports it remains hugely popular and Riot Games hosts an annual world championship with millions of dollars in prize money.



DEVELOPER
Supersonic Software
PLATFORM PC/PS2/Xbox
RELEASE DATE
2004

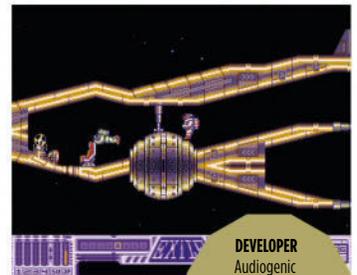
Mashed

You often see racing games judged in part by the number of tracks they have. The assumption is the more tracks, the better the game. "Over 17 unique tracks!" Wow, how did I ever cope with just 16? Mashed exposes the flaws in this assumption. Sure, Mashed has a few tracks, maybe eight or something? To be honest, we don't know the exact number. Because Mashed only ever needed one track: Polar Wharf. They could have sold Polar Wharf alone and Mashed would still be the greatest Micro Machines-style game, and one of the greatest party games, ever made.

The Sentinel

Part puzzle game, part horror game, The Sentinel remains a singularly chilling experience. You begin on the lowest height of a 3D map while the Sentinel sits on the highest platform, its gaze slowly rotating across the world. You cannot move, but you can spend energy earned from absorbing trees and rocks to create a replica of yourself and then teleport to it. If the Sentinel's gaze catches you it will linger and begin draining your energy. If you can't escape, you die.

DEVELOPER
Geoff Crammond
PLATFORM BBC Micro/
C64
RELEASE DATE
1986



DEVELOPER
Audiogenic
PLATFORM Amiga/
Atari ST
RELEASE DATE
1988

Exile

Although Exile may resemble a Metroid-style platformer, it's actually a fantastically clever physics-based game of exploration and problem-solving. The game is one sprawling, scrolling level taking in crashed spaceships, planetary bases and a vast subterranean network of tunnels. Traversing the world relies on mastering a physics system that models gravity, inertia and mass in an effort to obey Newton's laws of motion. Explosions can send you flying, gusts of wind may spread fire, and enemies can knock objects from your grasp.



DEVELOPER
Firaxis
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2010

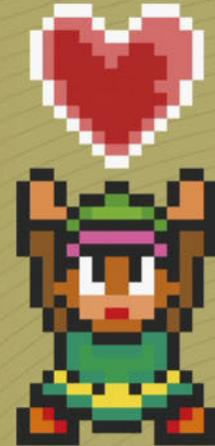
Sid Meier's Civilization V

Firaxis made some bold changes for the fifth edition of Civilization, dispensing with traditions that had served the series well for nearly two decades. In came the hex-based map to replace the four-sided tiles of all previous versions and more significantly out went the ability to stack multiple military units on the same tile. With two expansions over the subsequent years further transforming the late-game, Civ V is unrivalled as a turn-based empire-builder, even when measured against its ancestors.

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

DEVELOPER
Nintendo
PLATFORM SNES
RELEASE DATE
1991

We argued long and hard over which of Link's adventures should make this list and in the end we decided that his SNES outing was his best. Until this year, at least. A Link to the Past is perhaps the perfect game, a broad canvas where Link's journey is reimagined in both thrilling and expansive ways without spreading it too thin. Every inch of the twin worlds you explore is crammed with points of interest or a secret to discover and the ways in which the worlds intertwine only expand your horizons even more.



Warcraft 2: Tides of Darkness

There's a simplicity to the first two Warcraft games that remains hugely appealing. The two factions - it's just Orcs versus Humans, after all - are evenly matched, their distinct characteristics only poking through in the higher tiers of unit upgrades. The resource management is pleasingly intuitive and the colourful graphics allow for easy unit identification. You know, sometimes you just want to lasso a whole bunch of units and send them straight into the enemy base. Charge!



DEVELOPER
Blizzard
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1995



DEVELOPER
1C Maddox Games
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2001

IL 2 Sturmovik

Oleg Maddox is a legend of PC flight sims. His studio released IL-2 Sturmovik in 2001 and it quickly became the definitive WWII flight sim, especially among those set on the Eastern Front, renowned for the authenticity of its flight physics and the satisfying carnage of its damage modelling. Moreover, it was the support Maddox gave the game in the years after launch that cemented its reputation amongst the community, and in turn encouraged that community to continue modding user-made content over a decade after the game first came out.



DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM DC
RELEASE DATE
2000

Phantasy Star Online

The Dreamcast was the first console built around the idea of online play and Phantasy Star Online, as the name betrays, fulfilled the promise like no other game. After creating your character and meeting other players in a shared-space lobby, you jumped into the action: a third-person shooter/brawler where you and up to three other players battled through a series of environments before taking on a boss. You earned XP to upgrade your character, bought new gear, and then did it all again. Sound familiar?



DEVELOPER
Galactic Cafe
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2013

The Stanley Parable

As Stanley you spend your days sitting in a dull office, staring at a computer screen and pressing the appropriate buttons at the appropriate times. Also, as Stanley in The Stanley Parable, the player sits in front of a computer screen, waiting for the game's narrator to tell them what they should do before pressing the appropriate buttons. The Stanley Parable is a witty exploration of what it means to have choice in a video game.

Capcom vs SNK 2

The original Capcom vs SNK adopted the traditional SNK fighting game four-button layout of two punches and two kicks. For the follow-up, Capcom tilted the balance in favour of its own roster by bringing it in line with the standard Street Fighter six-button layout of three punches and three kicks. In a so-called "versus" game some might suggest that's not playing fair; for us playing at home, however, it simply made for a superior game.

Still one of the best 2D fighting games ever made, Capcom vs SNK 2 also tweaked the game's Ratio mechanic to add an extra layer of strategy to team selection. Just don't bother with the Gamecube version.



DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM DC/PS2/
Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
2001



DEVELOPER
Secret Exit
PLATFORM iOS
RELEASE DATE
2009

Zen Bound

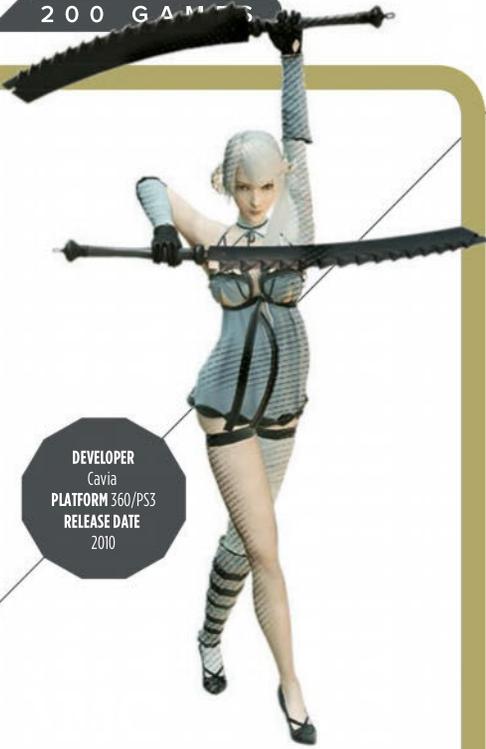
One of the earliest demonstrations of the iPhone's ability to host unique gaming experiences, Zen Bound remains one of the best. A deceptively simple puzzle game, you are presented in each level with a wood-carved object, a bird for example, and a length of rope. By rotating the object you begin to wrap it in the rope and colouring in each flat side of the object the rope hes. The trick is you have only so much rope to r all the sides. It's a lot harder than you might think.



We Love Katamari

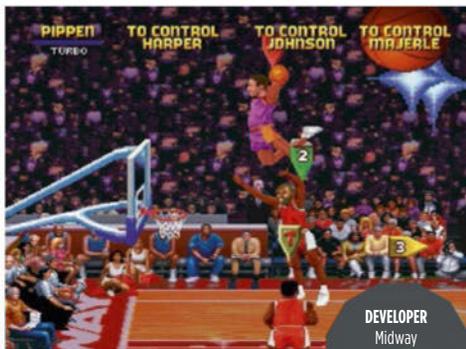
We Love Katamari is Keita Takahashi's way of saying thank you to everyone who bought and enjoyed Katamari Damacy, his surprise hit from the previous year. The conceit is that fans of the game are sending requests to the King of All Cosmos and the Prince must fulfil them to encourage more fans and create more katamaris. It all ends with the Prince using the Earth as a katamari and rolling up all the planets in the solar system and finally the sun itself. Because once you've made Katamari Damacy, what else is there left to do?

DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2005



DEVELOPER
Cavia
PLATFORM 360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2010

NieR is the tragic tale of a father trying to care for his sick daughter. NieR is a combo-tastic action game with dazzling signature moves and spectacular spells. NieR is a fetch quest RPG where you have to frequently grind for item drops. NieR is the story of a group of downtrodden outcasts who band together to stop the Shadowlord. NieR is a game where you spend a lot of time with its fishing minigame. NieR is a text adventure. NieR is a survival horror set in a decrepit mansion. NieR is a bullet hell shooter. NieR is all of these things and so much more.



DEVELOPER
Midway
PLATFORM Arcade
RELEASE DATE
1993

NBA Jam

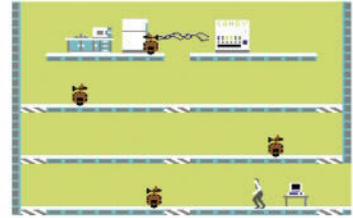
Way back in the day, we did a cover for one of the sequels to NBA Jam. We didn't have any art, so we took a basketball outside into the carpark, doused it in kerosene and lit it on fire. It's still a cover that stands out, much in the way that NBA Jam stands out from other basketball games. It was bigger, bolder, faster and far more over the top than any other basketball game when it was first released in 1993, and even though many other developers tried to adopt a similar approach, none of them could reach the giddy joys of sinking a flaming dunk from 20 metres out.



Realms of the Haunting

A startling genre mash-up when it was released in 1997, Realms of the Haunting has you exploring a grand old mansion depicted in Doom-vintage first-person 3D. You do pick up a few weapons and can fire a gun, but you'll spend most of your time point-and-clicking on the environment to pick up objects and interact with levers and dials to solve puzzles. There are even full motion video cut-scenes replete with budget acting and FX to propel along the story. Sure it's cheesy, but it's also engrossing and full of atmosphere.

DEVELOPER
Gremlin
Interactive
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1997



Impossible Mission

Although it remains best remembered, firstly, for its introductory synthesised speech threatening the player to "Stay a while... stay forever!" and, secondly, for the superbly animated main character, Impossible Mission is also a rather good platformer in its own right. You explore a non-linear series of rooms and must evade the robots by somersaulting over them or simply avoiding them and search the various desks and cabinets for randomly placed pieces of a larger puzzle. The randomness ups the challenge and entices an immediate replay when you die.

DEVELOPER
Epyx
PLATFORM Apple II/C64
RELEASE DATE
1984



DEVELOPER
Ironclad Games
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2008

Sins of a Solar Empire

They call it a RT4X, apparently. That's a real-time 4X game. No, wait, that's a real-time explore expand exploit exterminate game. Got it? Actually, it might be easier to say Sins of a Solar Empire is basically a real-time strategy game set in space where you subjugate planets for their resources and send spaceship armadas crashing into each other as star fields and nebulae look ever so pretty in the background. Also, it has the best name in all of video games.



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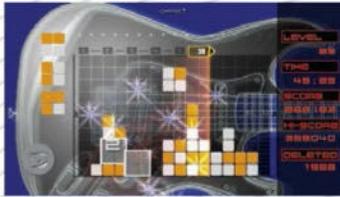


Lumines

While Ridge Racer might have been the best showcase for the system at launch, Lumines was the stealth PSP system seller. Lumines is a rhythm puzzle game where your objective is relatively simple – you need to form 2 x 2 squares of colour by rotating blocks on the screen. Meanwhile a ‘timeline’ passes across the screen, and when it reaches the right of the playing field, all blocks it swept over disappear and add to your score. Look, puzzle games are hard to explain – what’s important is that Lumines makes your actions

match up with the music, and the feedback on your actions is immensely satisfying.

DEVELOPER
Q Entertainment
PLATFORM PSP
RELEASE DATE
2005



Point Blank 2

The first Point Blank was the go-to arcade cabinet from the late 90s well into the mid-2000s – if an Intensity or Time Zone had the game, you could guarantee that one kid in every party was just there to show off their ability to shoot a single falling leaf as it wafted from a tree (with only one bullet in their gun, naturally). Point Blank 2 was much harder to find, but it’s actually the better game, with more advanced multiplayer options and shooting scenarios that step things up another notch. It’s still got that cool art style and creativity that Point Blank fans loved so much, though.

DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM Arcade, PS1
RELEASE DATE
1999

Her Story

When Sam Barlow left Climax Studios (where he directed Silent Hill: Shattered Memories, a game that sits just slightly outside of this list), he had an idea for a game that would feel bold and new, but would be based largely on old, outdated concepts. Her Story is a storytelling masterpiece, a game that positions you as an amateur sleuth as you plug in key words and search through videos to discover the secrets of the woman on screen. It’s a game about breakthrough moments, the sort of

game where you spring out of bed in the night because a clue clicked into place as you drifted to sleep.

DEVELOPER
Sam Barlow
PLATFORM PC, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2015



The Beatles: Rock Band

The Beatles: Rock Band has an achievement for completing every song in the game in a single 24-hour period. It might seem like a big ask, but this iteration of Rock Band is such a loving tribute to The Beatles that, for a fan, it’s worth setting aside a day to rock your way through the entire setlist. Watching the Fab Four progress from the Ed Sullivan show to that final rooftop performance is poignant journey to go on, and although by Rock Band standards it’s not particularly difficult, there’s not a dud track on here and the whole presentation just exudes peace and love (Ringo must be stoked).

DEVELOPER
Harmonix
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PS3, Wii
RELEASE DATE
2009

Animal Crossing: New Leaf

DEVELOPER
Nintendo EAD
PLATFORM 3DS
RELEASE DATE
2013

Animal Crossing is a special series – a bunch of games that start off feeling like vacations, and eventually pivot into being proper second lives. New Leaf is the pinnacle of the series, a 3DS wonder that makes brilliant use of the console’s unique features. Visiting the homes of your Streetpass’d neighbours and trading rare fruits is extremely compelling, and this one had more customisation options for your town, and your villager, than ever before. You’d be hard pressed to find an owner who put in fewer than 100 hours (and who never got furious about fishing up a boot). Hey Nintendo – Animal Crossing Switch soon, please?



DEVELOPER
Supergiant Games
PLATFORM PC, PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One, iOS, Vita
RELEASE DATE
2011

Bastion

(In extreme narrator voice) The critic reckoned that what really made Bastion stand apart was its aesthetic choices and amazin’ sound design over the specifics of its gameplay. He remembered the textures and sounds ‘o the game without much of the actual gameplay feelin’ fresh in his head. Sometimes that’s enough, he reckon’d, ‘specially when Darren Korb’s soundtrack was so evocative in the specific contexts the game used it in. (In extreme critic voice) So yeah, Bastion’s real good – not mechanically exciting, but few games nail complex tones as well as this one does.

Doom 2

Doom endures – and doesn't really feel all that archaic now in the way that many 90s shooters do – because both the original and this even-better sequel are designed around giving you constant satisfaction – the way the enemies come apart from your gunfire is disturbingly exciting. The levels in Doom 2 are bigger, full of more enemies to rip 'n tear through, but the game's biggest achievement is the Super Shotgun, the most beautiful damn weapon imaginable. By the end of the game you're literally conquering Hell with the damn thing, making Doom 2 easily the most metal game of its time.



DEVELOPER
id Software
PLATFORM PC, PS1, GBA,
Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE 1994

No Man's Sky

No Man's Sky is not the game that launched back in 2016 anymore. Over time – and after many complaints from players – Hello Games has fleshed out their universe with new options, more story details, better worlds, and a stronger sense of purpose and identity. But from release, No Man's Sky lived up to at least part of its bold promise – thousands and thousands of enormous, randomly generated worlds to explore. Even if it felt like there wasn't actually much to do, some players set about to create their own objectives and narratives, and No Man's Sky became a game that generated fascinating anecdotes.



DEVELOPER
Hello Games
PLATFORM PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
2016



DEVELOPER
Platinum Games
PLATFORM Wii U
RELEASE DATE
2014

Bayonetta 2

Bayonetta is a stunning achievement, but Bayonetta 2 really pushes things further. The Bayonetta games are all about escalation – increasingly huge enemies, ridiculous scenarios, wrinkles and complications. Bayonetta 2 picks up where Bayonetta left off and immediately goes bananas, throwing a thousand moving parts at you and then asking you to dodge them all. It's pure intense action all the way through without letting up, and that's exactly what we love about it. Bayonetta 2 is better still for including so much Nintendo fan service – the Star Fox Easter egg, in particular, is pure joy.



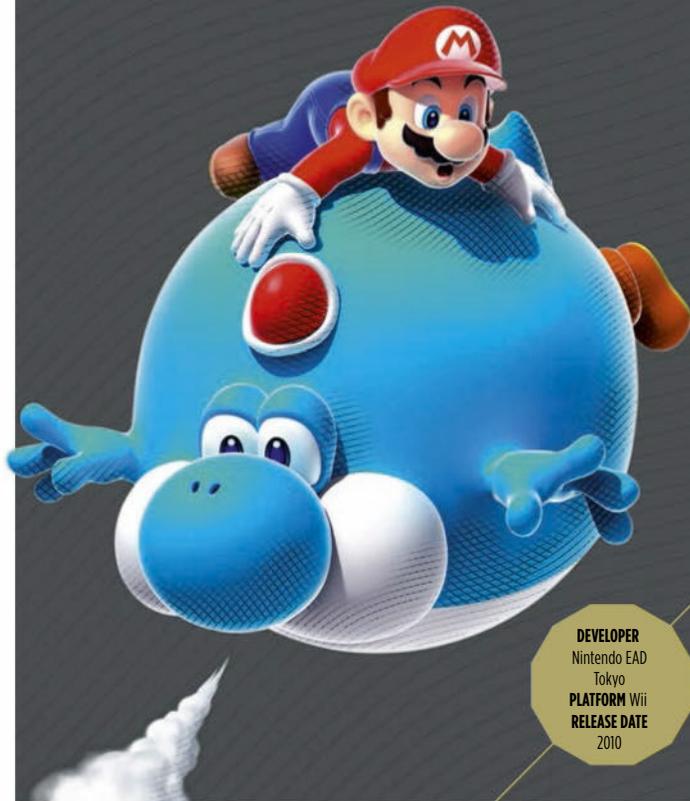
Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!

DEVELOPER
INIS
PLATFORM DS
RELEASE DATE
2005

This cheerleading rhythm game would have never worked on anything other than the DS, with its two screens, thin stylus, and satisfyingly clacky touch screen. This game – plus its sequel and the English spin-off, Elite Beat Agents, which you should also play – connects you to its music in a unique way. As you tap, rub and spin on the screen in time with the music and the prompts, it's easy to feel like you're tangibly cheerleading people through embarrassing and awful life situations. Ouendan is a strangely life-affirming game in ways you wouldn't expect, especially in each game's stand-out 'tearjerker' level.

Super Mario Galaxy 2

We could have filled at least half of this list with Mario titles – the platformers, the spin-offs, the sports. But Super Mario Galaxy 2 is the zenith of a certain school of Mario design philosophy that makes every level feel like a journey. The 3D Mario games often feel like testing grounds focused on how to make movement as satisfying as possible, and Galaxy 2 never has a moment where bouncing around its worlds isn't tremendously fun. We need a little more time with Super Mario Odyssey in our hearts to decide which of the two games is better, but Galaxy 2 definitely deserves a nod.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo EAD
Tokyo
PLATFORM Wii
RELEASE DATE
2010



Papers, Please

DEVELOPER
3909 LLC
PLATFORM PC, IOS
RELEASE DATE
2013

One of the strongest feelings a game, a book, a movie – any piece of media, really – can evoke is empathy. It's rare to play a game that gives us a deeper understanding of other lives, and of our own privilege (depending on the player, of course). Papers, Please is the very best of a certain brand of game that's hard to classify; the sort of game where you need to decide which family member you are going to let die, which shady deals to strike, which poor souls to deny a better life to, so that you and your loved ones can survive.



Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

DEVELOPER
Infinity Ward
PLATFORM PC, Xbox
360, PS3, Xbox One, PS4
RELEASE DATE
2007

Forget about what Call of Duty has come to symbolise in games for a moment. Infinity Ward's move away from World War II was a good move for the series, but it was more than that – it's no exaggeration to say that Modern Warfare changed shooters for the decade that followed, popularising iron sights, reinventing the format of FPS multiplayer, and sending the military FPS genre into a tense push-and-pull between narrative indictment of warfare and the fact that (uncomfortably) there's a lot of money to be gained in courting military outfits and gun manufacturers. All of that aside, the 'bomb' moment remains one of the most powerful FPS moments ever.

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Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night

Controversial opinion: 'What is a man? A miserable little pile of secrets!' is a genuine banger line, not a weird thing worth joking about. Fighting Dracula right at the very beginning is a good indication of what's to come – a throw-everything-at-the-wall adventure that mixes in RPG elements, changes up the established fighting style of Castlevania, and then reveals itself to be twice as long as you were anticipating midway through the game. Mapping out the castle and growing stronger as you go is immensely satisfying – so much so that Sympathy of the Night is widely considered the series peak.



DEVELOPER
Konami
PLATFORM PS1, Saturn, Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
1997



Saturn Bomberman

Bomberman has been iterated on repeatedly since this Saturn version, but it's never been topped (we wish Super Bomberman R felt half as fluid as this version did). It took the good work of previous Bomberman titles (Bomberman 93 rules too by the way) and pushed it further, with ten player multiplayer matches and dinosaur helpers, which let you ride dinosaurs around on the battlefield. The entire campaign had co-op, too, which made it much more fun than usual. It's hard to remember now what a force for good Bomberman used to be, but Saturn Bomberman is widely considered one of the system's very best games.

DEVELOPER
Eleven, ADS
PLATFORM Sega Saturn
RELEASE DATE
1997



Bushido Blade

Bushido Blade's gimmick is a good one, and it's never really been replicated. This is a one-on-one fighter when every weapon blow could be the end – a single sword slash to the head is going to put you down, while hitting a limb will disable it. It means that every swing and block feels significant, and while the game's spartan narrative didn't quite convey the enormity of this design decision, it's a perfect game for intense multiplayer showdowns. It's hard not to take it personally when your friend takes you out with a single blow.

DEVELOPER
Light Weight
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1997



DEVELOPER
Thekla, Inc
PLATFORM PC, PS4, Xbox One, iOS
RELEASE DATE
2016

The Witness

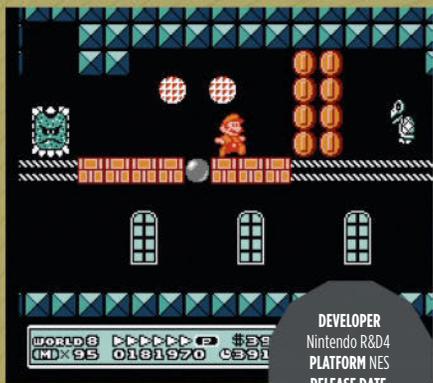
The Witness' huge island of puzzles is a massive design achievement, an interlocking series of challenges that eventually added up to something a bit grander, if you were able to put in the time the island demanded. The Witness is an intimidating game when you first jump in – and the puzzles, despite all being based around drawing lines on the screen, are fairly complicated – but it's also a game you can feel comfortable slowly chipping away at. It's about psychogeography – plotting the island out by foot and getting a sense for the space you are existing in – as much as it's about working your mind.



DEVELOPER
Starbreeze Studios
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2007

The Darkness

The Darkness' best moment is far removed from the blood and gore that defines its great action set-pieces. The game makes it onto this list because of a single, lovely date night between protagonist Jackie Estacado and his girlfriend Jackie. The scene where the two snuggle up on the couch and watch To Kill A Mockingbird together – and you can stay and watch the full film, if you'd like – was a minor revelation in 2007, a powerful moment where an FPS encouraged you to really just live in the world of these characters for a moment. The Darkness is also a super fun shooter, but it's that sense of embodied experience that we'll always remember.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo R&D4
PLATFORM NES
RELEASE DATE
1990

Super Mario Bros. 3

If Super Mario Bros showed that Nintendo could make the best platformers in the world, Super Mario Bros 3 showed that they'd be able to keep doing so forever. This is an inventive game, with its hidden vines, its Tanooki flying suits, its, uh, weird shoes that you can hop around in, and its horrifying airship battles. 19 years later, Mario is still a dream to control - his inertia takes a little getting used to after some time away but once it clicks there's not a character on the NES who feels more versatile. It's still the best, and most creative, 2D Mario.



DEVELOPER
Variable State
PLATFORM PC, PS4,
Xbox One
RELEASE DATE
2016

Virginia

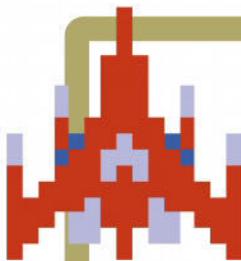
'Twin Peaks inspired' is a term that gets thrown around a lot, but Virginia's main takeaway from Lynch's work isn't, like so many other games, relegated to the iconography. In fact, Virginia feels more like the third season of Twin Peaks than the first two, despite being released well before Lynch unleashed his masterpiece upon us. This mystery-adventure about two FBI agents in 1992 Virginia, and their investigation into a recent disappearance, is heavy on metaphor and low on exposition - it's a narrative puzzle-box that we don't feel we've quite solved. It's also a singular, unique vision of a game, an interesting experiment that we'll want to revisit through the years.



DEVELOPER
Ustwo Games
PLATFORM iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2014

Monument Valley

Monument Valley is so good that it launched right at the peak of 'free to play is the only right way to release on mobile' discourse and still managed to do so well that it's now available on display phones in most Apple stores. It's a twisty exploration of non-Euclidean environments - you need to constantly rethink your perspective, and the rules of how space works, to proceed. The game's simple narrative hooks and stark, beautiful art style, coupled with its elegant touch-screen moments, made it an important game for mobile gaming, and proof that we could enjoy experiences with real depth and heart on our phones.



DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM Arcade,
everything else
RELEASE DATE
1981

Galaga

The risk-reward mechanic of Galaga's double ship is ingenious. Let your ship get caught in a tractor beam and you can reclaim it...as long as you shoot down the parasite latched onto it as it advances towards you on the next screen. Pull it off and you've got double the fire power...but also take up double the space, making it harder to dodge. Losing that second ship gives you a greater sense of loss than taking a hit and losing a life in most other arcade games. Beyond that, Galaga's steady ramp-up makes it one of the most well-paced arcade games ever made.

THE 5 WORST

MOMENTS IN DAVID CAGE GAMES

By James O'Connor

1. SCREW IT, LET'S JUST END IT HERE I GUESS (FAHRENHEIT)

Fahrenheit – which is horrifying nonsense, aside from its very good opening ten minutes – ends the same way a damp wet fart might end a date that was already going poorly. After a horrifyingly protracted quick-time event and a sex scene that both comes out of nowhere (and kind of looks like a woman dry-humping a corpse), one of three terrible, undeserved endings kicks in. It feels like Cage was 100 words short of his upper word limit and said 'fuck it, no need for revisions, I can do this'.

2. JAAAAASSSSO (HEAVY RAIN)

(Ethan's terrible son Jason wanders off at the mall, disappearing completely in the four seconds Ethan has his back turned) JAAAAASON! (Ethan runs around in a panic, eventually spotting Jason's big plot device balloon) JASON? (Ethan slowly pushes through a crowd as his idiot son wanders further away) JA-SOOOON! (The crowd in the mall is thicker than you would think possible. No one is carrying any shopping. Jason has wandered improbably far away) JASON! (Jason has, for some unexplained reason, left the mall and crossed the road, having made the worst decision possible. Finally hearing his father, he turns around and runs right into the path of a very slowly approaching car) JAAAAASSSSO-

3. WHO'S THE KILLER? OH, IT'S THAT GUY? EH. (HEAVY RAIN)

(*Spoilers here*): Honestly, I have a soft spot for Heavy Rain – it's very bad, but it's trying to be a thing I think I would have enjoyed a lot if they'd pulled it off. But the reveal of the killer is ludicrous. It turns out that a character you're not only playing as, but have literally been able to read the thoughts of, is the Origami Killer. Why? Some shit about his dad. Why does he put Ethan through all this shit?

Because he's a twit. Did anything matter? No. Still easily Cage's best work, though.

4. THAT BIT WHERE ELLEN PAGE BECOMES A WHITE SAVIOUR (BEYOND: TWO SOULS)

Beyond: Two Souls is loathsome, a damned piece of trash, but it's never worse than it is in the horribly protracted section in the middle where Ellen Page goes all white saviour on a Native American family, expelling their literal demons from the land. The white saviour trope is rife in pop culture, but with the section leaning so heavy on Navajo spirituality, it feels particularly gross. It's also exceptionally dull, soul-crushingly boring stuff, but hey, that's Beyond: Two Souls.

5. WILLEM DAFOE SOLVES ALL HIS PROBLEMS BY SIMPLY COMMITTING SUICIDE (BEYOND: TWO SOULS)

(*Spoilers, but fuck this game*): Beyond: Two Souls isn't just a bad game, but one of phenomenal moral irresponsibility. Towards the end of the game, Willem Dafoe's character – whose name is not worth looking up, but please check out Willem Dafoe in Sean Baker's 'The Florida Project', because holy shit what a film – kills himself, racked with guilt over whatever the hell this game's plot was about. Ellen Page, who can see dead people or some shit, immediately sees him reunited with his deceased family, and comments that he finally found what he was looking for, because apparently the game's stance is that suicide is good? Fuck that. “





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THE TOP 10

GAMES OF 2037, BROUGHT TO YOU BY PEPSI FUTURE

James O'Connor has peeked into his crystal ball and plucked this article from a future HYPER – here's what we'll all be playing in 20 years.

1. A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE HORRORS OF THE FUTURE

(Nintendo Switch)

Nintendo only put out one game for their aging hardware in 2037, but wow was it ever a nice distraction from the limitless horrors we now face every single day. Although few of us leave our homes now, we enjoyed playing this as we covered under our blankets.

2. MUTANT BATTLE TRAINING PROGRAM

(iPhone XXX)

Second might seem high, but few other games released this year actually saved our lives. With radioactive mutants now roaming the streets, lowing and growling as their ability to communicate evolves in disturbing ways, it's useful to know that their knees are their weak points.

3. LOOT BOX SIMULATOR

(PC 2)

This retro throwback to a time where loot boxes were an annoyance rather than the dominant form of capital exchange in western civilisation was a delight, although we had to spend a lot of money on Steam Roulette to unlock it.

4. THE LAST OF US, EXCEPT NOW IT'S A DOCUMENTARY

(PlayStation But Futuristic)

Few could have predicted – except for the scientists who warned us for a decade straight – that the infection from The Last of Us would gain such a stranglehold in the US, but hey, here we are now. This powerful game really puts our local mutant problem into perspective.

5. SKYRIM

(Exercise Bikes)

Porting Skyrim to an exercise bike is a surprising decision only in that it hadn't been done before. It's unwieldy playing just

with the pedals, but it's a huge improvement on the exercise bike port of Resident Evil 4.

6. STREET FIGHTER 8, EXCEPT SLIGHTLY FASTER

(Japanese arcades, which still exist, because not everything is terrible)

The fifth iteration of Street Fighter 8 finally gave us the feature we'd been begging for – a slight speed increase for all four characters. Rumour has it that the new cabinets in 2038 will have our next most-wanted feature – a built-in cup holder.

7. GEARS OF HALO 5 FEAT. BANJO-KAZOOIE

(X_B0x_X)

Microsoft's blending of all its franchises into one game continues in this rollicking gibfest. The death of One of the Cars from Forza would have brought us to tears if we were still capable of regular human emotions in this, the year 2037.

8. PRINT MAGAZINE SIMULATOR 2037

(PC 2, X_B0x_X, PlayStation But Futuristic)

The enduring success of print media is well-realised here. Manage a team of freelancers so talented that it's impossible to choose between them; commission art lay outs that remind us why life is worth living; watch as your online rivals crumble and die.

9. HALF-LIFE 3

(PC 2)

Haha, just kidding! This is still a joke we're making!

10. SUPER MARIO BROS

(injection)

Being able to inject Super Mario Bros directly into our blood streams is a major medical innovation, although we're hoping the technology improves – The Head in a Jar Once Known as Daniel Wilks remains sadly unable to enjoy such pleasures. ☹️



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TOP 20 BEST

FIGHTING GAMES OF ALL TIME

Originally we were going to run a list of the top 10 fighting games of all time, but in our attempts to cull our original list of 16 games down to ten we somehow increased the list to over 30 games, so we changed our list to the 20 best fighting games of all time. Then we decided not to number them, because that would be like choosing a favourite child. You could call it a copout, but if you do, we'll fight you.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

DEVELOPER: Sega AM2

YEAR: 1996

BEST PLATFORM: Sega Saturn

Virtua Fighter 2 was the reason more than one of us in the Hyper bunker purchased a Sega Saturn. The combination of incredible graphics and animation combined with a smooth and deep fighting engine made the game arcade accurate and gave players a chance to take home 10 distinct fighters, all with superlative AI.

GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES

DEVELOPER: SNK

YEAR: 1999

BEST PLATFORM: Arcade, Dreamcast

Garou pushed both the graphical capabilities of the Neo Geo MVS arcade system and bringing highly technical gameplay to the series in the form of T.O.P. and Just Defend mechanics. Tactical Offense Position kicked in when the life gauge reached a certain threshold the character gains certain T.O.P. attacks, gradual recovery and increased damage. Just Defend rewarded players that blocked at the very last moment with a small amount of health recovery and the ability to instantly counter with a block stun.

MKX/ INJUSTICE 2

DEVELOPER: NetherRealm Studios

YEAR: 2015

BEST PLATFORM: PS4, Xbox One, PC

We've included two games here from the same developer as, aside from brand loyalty,

they are equally deserving of being on the list. MKX is the ultimate iteration of Mortal Kombat, with an excellent, wide roster, deep fighting engine and more than enough content to keep solo players happy. Injustice 2 features as good a roster, as deep a fighting engine and one of the best singleplayer fighting experiences ever seen.

SOULCALIBUR 2

DEVELOPER: Project Soul

YEAR: 2002

BEST PLATFORM: PS2

SoulCalibur 2 took the best parts of SoulCalibur and Soul Edge and refined them. Not only was SoulCalibur 2 a gorgeous looking game, the institution of arena walls, wall specific combos, the easier step and avoid system and clash system changed the way the game played, making it more tactical and less mashy. A huge variety of singleplayer modes also gave the game a massive amount of replayability.



GUILTY GEAR XX ACCENT CORE PLUS

DEVELOPER: Arc System Works

YEAR: 2008

BEST PLATFORM: PS2, PS3, PSP, Xbox 360

Arc System works make deep and beautiful fighting games and for our money Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus is the best of them. Featuring a roster of 25 unique characters (including Wilks' favourite psycho surgeon, Faust), a new survival mode, a branching story mode and crucial balance changes, Accent Core Plus is a game difficult to master but always spectacularly good.



SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

DEVELOPER: HAL Laboratory

YEAR: 2002

BEST PLATFORM: GameCube

Widely considered one of the best games of all time, Melee, didn't originate the idea of a fighting game based around knocking opponents off a stage, but it did popularise the idea. On the outside the game looks like a simple, casual button mash, but players

today are still discovering new techniques. The smoothness of the gameplay mixed with the supreme comfort of the GameCube controller make Melee one for the ages.

CAPCOM VS. SNK 2

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 2001

BEST PLATFORM: Dreamcast, PS2

It was never the most balanced game in the world – any game that can pit Dan Hibiki or Rolento against God Rugal doesn't believe in fairness – but what it lacks in balance it makes up for with sheer lunatic fun.

Choose a team of three from a roster of 48 characters and beat the snot out of a mate. Pure trash-talking, couch gaming magic.



MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2: NEW AGE OF HEROES

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 2000

BEST PLATFORM: Arcade, Dreamcast, PS2

If the 56 character roster wasn't enough to make MvC2 a classic, the simplified combat system that made the game accessible to newcomers but still left enough depth for pros to sink their teeth into really cemented the game's spot in any list of greatest fighting games. While eye-candy is always appreciated in a game, the spectacular, ridiculous visuals of MvC2 are as important to the gameplay as the fighting engine.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER 2 TURBO

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 1994

BEST PLATFORM: Arcade, PSOne

The game responsible for the dramatic rise of the fighting game in the 90s. After receiving complaints that the previous Super Street Fighter game was slower than Hyper Fighting, Capcom sped things up, added air juggles and Akuma and changed the industry forever. It's still near perfect. Try and beat my Zangief...if you dare.

BUSHIDO BLADE

DEVELOPER: Light Weight

YEAR: 1997

BEST PLATFORM: PSOne

One hit kills are not a common thing in fighting games, but they are at the core of Bushido Blade. Bushido Blade is fighting at its most elemental – choose a fighter and one of eight weapons and try and survive. You can't mash, only attack and follow through, and hits that don't kill you will most likely cripple you, making you a much easier target.

TEKKEN 5: DARK RESURRECTION

DEVELOPER: Namco

YEAR: 2006

BEST PLATFORM: Arcade

An expanded version of Tekken 5, not only did Dark Resurrection tweak the balance and bring in new (or at least reskinned and textured) arenas, it also brought in the ability for players to customise their fighter. Featuring a roster of 36 playable characters (35 if you don't include Panda, an alternate skin for Kuma), Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection is Tekken at its best, with compelling characters, diverse styles and fast, reactive combat.

RIVAL SCHOOLS: UNITED BY FATE

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 1998

BEST PLATFORM: PSOne

This four button fighting game was unlike anything else released by Capcom, and not only for the SNK style control scheme. Players chose two characters for their team but there was no swapping during fights, only co-op moves if the player built up enough "Vigor" to use them. Special abilities also used part of the Vigor meter. Players could also create a character by playing through a dating simulator game that would base the generated character's moves on who they had befriended over the course of the game.

SAMURAI SHOWDOWN

DEVELOPER: SNK

YEAR: 1994

BEST PLATFORM: Sega Mega Drive

Samurai Showdown was an excellent SNK weapons based fighter at the arcades, but the Mega Drive home version managed to surpass even the arcade by zooming in the action in giving players a better look at the fantastic sprites and complimenting the fast action that emphasised fast, hard hits over combos. The home version of the game was censored for blood and some animations, but it was still the superlative Samurai Showdown.

SKULLGIRLS

DEVELOPER: Revenge Labs

YEAR: 2012

BEST PLATFORM: PS3, PS4, PC

With a fighting engine modelled on that of the fantastic (and already listed) Marvel vs. Capcom 2, Skullgirls started out a bit rocky, but thanks to Revenge Labs honestly and constantly taking feedback from the community, the game has become one of the best balanced in the fighting world. The roster is a little limited but the characters are unique and fantastically animated.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: Dimps/Capcom

YEAR: 2012

BEST PLATFORM: PS3

A better version of an already outstanding game, Super SFIV with tweaks and additions both small and large. Ten characters were added, taking the roster to 35, balance tweaked, the online play totally reworked to be more satisfying and robust, with Team Battle, Endless Battle and a Replay Channel (allowing players to watch replays of matches from around the world).

KING OF FIGHTERS '98: ULTIMATE MATCH

DEVELOPER: SNK Playmore

YEAR: 2008/2014

BEST PLATFORM: PS2, PC

An anniversary remake of KoF '98 with all the characters from the original and some more thrown in for good measure. The roster features 45 standard fighters, 19 hidden and alternate characters and numerous secret team combinations, but the most significant feature of Ultimate Match was the addition of Ultimate Mode, in which players could customise their super gauge systems and mechanics, much like the EX Grooves seen in Capcom vs. SNK 2.

ONE FINGER DEATH PUNCH/DIVEKICK/NIDHOGG

DEVELOPER: Silver Dollar Games/Iron Galaxy/Messhof

YEAR: 2013/2013/2014

BEST PLATFORM: PC

These three games, though wildly different in design do the same thing – pare fighting games down to their fundamental elements. One Finger Death Punch and Dive Kick restrict controls to two buttons but manage to create intense, brilliant battles with those two simple inputs, and Nidhogg takes weapon based fighting and turns it into a one hit kill game of attack and defence levels. All are amazing.

POWER STONE 2

DEVELOPER: Capcom

YEAR: 2000

BEST PLATFORM: Dreamcast

The sequel to 1999's Power Stone expanded on the 3D fighting game by increasing the number of players to four and increasing the number and range of pickups available. Unlike other 3D fighting games, Power Stone 2 featured no block mechanics, so battles became a series of frantic chase scenes of all-out attack and trying to get the hell away before getting hit in return.



DOA 3 (XBOX)

DEVELOPER: Team Ninja

YEAR: 2002

BEST PLATFORM: Xbox

Ignore the exaggerated jiggle physics (and seriously, those breasts must be living, independent creatures) and enjoy the excellent and approachable 3D fighting. Basic gameplay remains similar to DoA 2 but the changes to timing and less reliance of juggle combos made the game a great fighter for beginners and old hands alike.

GOD HAND

DEVELOPER: Clover Studio

YEAR: 2007

BEST PLATFORM: PS2

Half way between 3D brawler and fighting game (thanks to the deep fighting engine), God Hand is a thing of special beauty. It's buggy and remarkably brown, but an insane delight from start to finish. If you want to complain that it's not really a fighting game we'll emulate out hero, Gene the God Hand, and spank your arse before smacking you into space. **II**



THE 5 MOST

GUT-WRENCHING DECISIONS FROM TELLTALE'S THE WALKING DEAD

Tim Colwill

Telltale's take on The Walking Dead changed everything when it came out in 2012, and single-handedly revitalised the flagging adventure game genre. With gripping storytelling, branching narrative and a clever system that remembered even the minutest of decisions, The Walking Dead hid a surprisingly adult story under a cel-shaded exterior. Let's take a look at some of the most difficult decisions you had to make to get through the zombie apocalypse.



HELPING CLEMENTINE GET PAST THE ZOMBIES SO SHE CAN PICK UP SOME CIGARETTES FOR YOU
Right from Episode 1, The Walking Dead takes hold and doesn't let go. Lee desperately needs some cigarettes, but there's just one problem: he's a coward. The solution? Sending young Clementine into the abandoned 7-11 to grab the precious cigarettes which lie scattered across the dirty floor. Will Clementine make it past the shamblers?

SHOWING CLEMENTINE HOW TO MAKE A STOOGIE COUGH UP THEIR CIGARETTES

Empowered by her successful cigarette heist, Clementine becomes desperate to earn Lee's approval and begins harassing other survivors for their cigarettes. With his own cigarette addiction unquenched, Lee seizes on the opportunity to take this rising Mafioso under his wing and teaches her everything he knows about gunpoint robbery (very little). When Clementine bails up another

child at gunpoint to shake them down for cigarettes, Lee realises he's gone too far - or does he?

BEING CONFRONTED BY KENNY ABOUT YOUR CIGARETTE RACKET

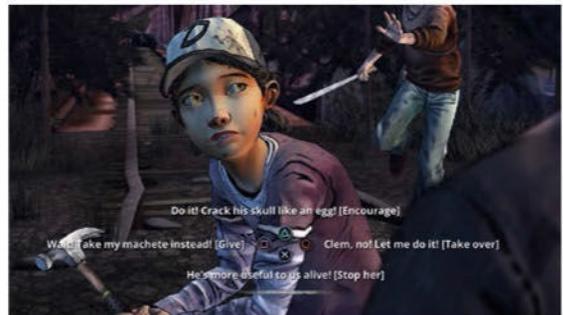
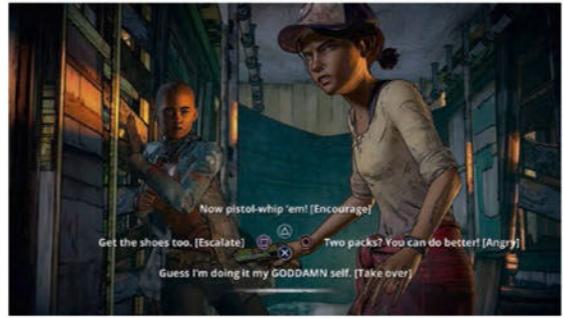
Fellow survivor Kenny has been travelling with you for a while now, and survived several of Clementine's increasingly vicious cigarette raids. He's finally put two and two together and realised that it's the chain-smoking Lee who has been masterminding this brutal tobacco crusade. Cornered at gunpoint in an abandoned shopping centre, Lee must think fast.

TRICKING CLEMENTINE INTO MURDERING KENNY

Kenny knows too much - and Kenny has to go. But will Clementine be willing to take the next step and put Kenny down for good? Tensions are high in The Walking Dead as Lee desperately tries to convince Clementine that Kenny's skull is full of cigarettes and will explode like a cigarette pinata if struck carefully from behind with a hammer while he's not looking. But is Lee really ready to take another man's life just so he can keep on smoking?

CONVINCING CLEMENTINE THAT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN BEING A CIGARETTE BARON

The horrifying murder of Kenny was too much, and something ruinous and cruel has been awakened in young Clementine. It's up to Lee to take this wayward young woman away from the horrible life he created for her and give her the best chance at a normal childhood he can. But it all comes down to one crucial, tender moment - and has Lee really earned the trust of this tobacco maniac, or has it all been for nothing? «



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TOP 10

FANTASY RACING TRACKS

James Swinbanks forgot to mention Polar Wharf, but we'll forgive him this time.

MAPLE VALLEY RACEWAY

It's all good and well for racing games to recreate some of the amazing real race tracks from around the world for us to hoon around on, but there's nothing quite like a good fantasy track to really give you the need for speed. Wide street courses, insane mountain passes and stunning sunsets help make up just a small part of what is a list of my 10 absolute favourite fantasy tracks from different racing games over the years.

1 GRAN TURISMO 6 GRAND VALLEY SPEEDWAY

When I think of Gran Turismo, I think of Grand Valley; it's really that simple. From the technical section before the first tunnel to the picturesque bridge section, each collection of corners flow in and out of each other effortlessly, in a way that can make driving any car around the circuit feel good, but especially something that's fast and has a lot of downforce. What a race track!

2 FORZA MOTORSPORT 4 CAMINO VIEJO DE MONTSERRAT EXTREME

This fantasy circuit joins together three sections of three separate racing circuits--Ladera Test Track, Iberian International Circuit and Camino Viejo--to create a nearly 7km long extreme circuit with some of the wildest corner variations I've ever driven. Featuring both fast, flowing and wide-open sections of road that then funnel into tight and twisting

hairpins that joins the circuits, this track was as huge challenge.

3 DRIVING EMOTION TYPE S URBAN HIGHWAY

The night time Urban Highway track from Driving Emotion Type S offers the width of a real race track combined with the tight and unforgiving nature of a street circuit. Judging the distance to corners can be tough in the night time, and off camber exits push the car towards the wall on the exits of some of the faster corners, making scoring a clean lap extremely difficult but rewarding.



4 DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 CHALK CANYON

This dusty, narrow track was always guaranteed to get the adrenaline pumping. A long straightaway funnels into a tight opening, squeezing the pack together, then flows onto a tight but fast S section where it's easy to get turned around from behind. A couple of big jumps and long, fast corners towards the end of the were also big accident spots, and any errors here would make it hard to recover.





OUTER PASS

**5 RIDGE RACER V
OUTER PASS**

Bathed in the gorgeous late afternoon sunset, the Outer Pass circuit from Ridge Racer V is a beautiful example of an urban style street circuit with the kind of flow that makes an arcade racer feel good. The long, sweeping tunnel section that leads briefly into the fast but bumpy curves of the woods, then back out behind the town and by the water is still one of my favourite sections of fantasy tarmac.

**6 GRAN TURISMO 3
DEEP FOREST**

This classic forest layout starts with a very long straight that leads down to a tight hairpin, and then into a technical infield section that's full of sweeping chicanes that can be

taken faster than expected thanks to the camber of the road through the corners. It feels a little like a rollercoaster in that sense with the g-forces pulling the cars left and right before racers exit onto the back straight and down to the final corner kink before hitting the long main straight.

**7 FORZA MOTORSPORT 7
MAPLE VALLEY RACEWAY**

A staple track on the Forza Motorsport series for years at this point, Maple Valley has undergone a few upgrades in its time. Utilising several layouts, including a short track that feels more like a bullring in the vein of Brands Hatch Indy, Maple Valley's various bumps, crests and elevation changes belie its very name. The final downhill section is well-known for being fast and dangerous, always resulting in exciting finishes.

**8 SEGA RALLY
FOREST STAGE**

The Medium stage on the original Sega Rally took place on a combination of tarmac and dirt road, taking drivers past cliff faces, under mountains and through the woods before a tight and twisting chicane section at the end of the lap. Although it looks a little plain from afar, when sat down in the Sega Rally Arcade cockpit, nailing that final section felt incredible

**9 DAYTONA USA
DINOSAUR CANYON**

The Advanced Course from Daytona USA might be its least known course, but its easily its most fun to drive. It opens with a long highway like section that breaks into a very long, oval-like right hander before taking up into the mountains where the track is twisting but wide, coaxing you into keeping your foot on the gas, even when you're supposed to slow down.



**10 PORSCHE CHALLENGE
ALPINE**

Never mind the ridiculousness of driving a convertible Porsche around a cold and snowy mountain road. The Alpine circuit from Porsche Challenge was a slippery and difficult track that required both bravery and precision to be quick around. A lot of the corners run over blind crests, so you couldn't get by from merely riding the walls. You had to push it, and getting it right felt amazing. 🗨

(Left to right) Grand Valley Speedway, Urban Highway, Forest Stage.



DINOSAUR CANYON

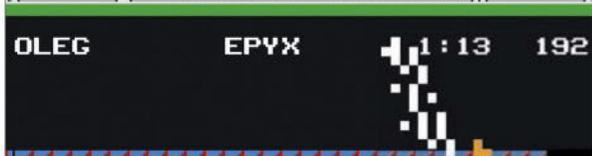
The Games that Time Forgot

Kosta Andriadis bring you ten forgotten classics and great games lost to time.



CALIFORNIA GAMES (MULTIPLE, 1987)

Released on no less than 14 different platforms in the space of a few years, California Games quickly became a staple of just about every videogame diet during the closing moments of the 1980s. A title that in many ways defined a specific era and time, even though it was a loose collection of varied recreational activities and quasi-sports like roller skating, skateboarding, surfing, and hacky sack. Its genius though was its single-controller multiplayer mode that would track progress throughout all activities. No good at surfing? Well then maybe BMX is more your thing. It took the format that we still see today in Olympic themed titles but sharpened it, tightened it, and perfected it. Which explains why there was a time when California Games was everywhere and on everything.



FAXANADU (NES, 1989)

When Nintendo decided to switch up the perspective to a more traditional side-scrolling viewpoint for The Legend of Zelda Part II on the NES, the critical and commercial response was mixed at best. Leading many to the conclusion that a 2D action-RPG on a home console should stick to a top-down presentation. A solid argument no doubt, but one that easily falls apart with a single word - Faxanadu. Side-scrolling? Check. Action-RPG? Check. But also, a dash of Metroid's open design and classic RPG levelling and character progression. One of the best and more underappreciated games for the NES.



STREET ROD II (AMIGA/PC, 1991)

With a simple premise it's baffling that Street Rod II's design hasn't been replicated or used to inform the setup of a new racing game on modern hardware. Set in the 1960s, you play a simple home owner with an interest in cars and all things hot rod. And you've got the garage to prove it. And so, with whatever funds you've got in your savings account you can check out the local trades to see what cars and parts are for sale, tinker and tune them in your garage, and then go for a drive. By visiting the local burger joint to challenge other drivers for money or pink slips. And for the more daring, a night race through the local aqueduct.



BLACKTHORNE (SNES/PC, 1994)

Outside of Blizzard Entertainment super fans, of which there are many, Blackthorne remains relatively unknown. Released for the Super Nintendo and PC the same year as Warcraft: Orcs and Humans, Blackthorne was a platformer in the style of the original Prince of Persia and PC classics like Another World and Flashback. But where those titles opted for more realistic settings and art to match the realistic animation, Blackthorne was typically Blizzard. Wonderfully over-the-top sci-fi and fantasy inspired art direction, incredible sound design and music, and a take on a style of game that more than stood on its own.



BIOFORGE (PC, 1995)

When people talk about ground-breaking titles from the mid-1990s, ones that blended 3D characters and objects with 2D backdrops, BioForge rarely gets a mention. An underrated sci-fi classic set in a future where cybernetic implants have become the norm and the correlation between the number of shiny bits versus fleshy ones and losing what it means to be human plays a central role. Outside of the wonderful setting and narrative, BioForge also broke new territory visually - with its animated 2D backdrops and 3D characters who would physically change depending on the amount of damage they took.



SHADOW MAN (MULTIPLE, 1999)

On paper the setting and tone found in Shadow Man would immediately make you think of something along the lines of Resident Evil. And for a title released in 1999, that sort of comparison makes a lot of sense. But no, Shadow Man's design and structure was more akin to The Legend of Zelda than another entry in the survival horror genre. A dark tale set partly in a nightmarish alternate version of New Orleans, full of real-world brutality, collecting the souls of serial killers, and special abilities and skills powered by that red substance we all know as blood.



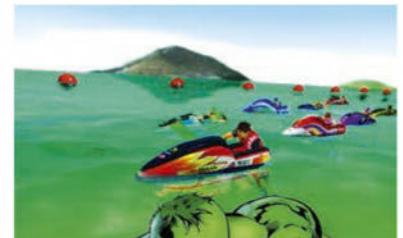
DISNEY'S ALADDIN AND DISNEY'S THE LION KING (MULTIPLE, 1994/95)

It's a shame that Capcom's partnership with Disney, which resulted in solid 8-bit platformers like DuckTales, are the games that have endured over time. Doubly so when you realise those came about due to licensing at a time when Disney had no interest in gaming or providing any oversight or quality control. They just knew games were profitable. It wasn't until the release of Disney's Aladdin, separate to the Capcom version, that the studio dove head first into game development. Leveraging its animation studios, the one-two punch of Aladdin and The Lion King featured character design, detail, and expression at a level not only unusual for the time - but arguably not seen again until 2017's Cuphead.



WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM (GAMECUBE, 2001)

Beginning as a tech demo for the hardware that powered the Nintendo 64, Wave Race quickly grew to become one of the most rewarding and innovative racing games of the decade. Wave Race: Blue Storm, for all its plusses, was also nowhere near as ground-breaking as the original. But the simple pleasure of racing on water where predictable and unpredictable waves still resulted in no two laps ever being the same. And as pure racer, is still as remarkable today. It's a shame then that as Nintendo moved away from being at the forefront of powerful hardware, we lost whatever Wave Race 3 would have been.



INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION (MULTIPLE, 2005)

Before the Arkham trilogy of Batman games resulted in several headlines declaring them to be superhero titles that finally delivered, there was Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction in 2005. A game that took the concept of a giant all-powerful angry green man of sorts, and built an entire experience around a very simple concept. That players wanted to be The Incredible Hulk. Which resulted in being able to pluck helicopters from the sky, hurl large trees around, and cause an insane amount of destruction in an open and freeform environment that was ahead of its time. <<



Every Souls Boss, Ranked

From the tutorial of *Demon's Souls* to the Ringed City of *Dark Souls 3*, we've fought and killed 110 Souls bosses. And now we've ranked them, from best to worst. The real *Dark Souls* argument starts here. **David Wildgoose**

1 DANCER OF THE BOREAL VALLEY

- It's in the way that she moves. That backbreaking stoop, that slow, loping gait, those sudden, dazzling pirouettes, the decayed, ethereal Dancer is mesmerising. And that music. Christ, we get shivers down our spine just typing this.



2 DRAGON SLAYER ORNSTEIN & EXECUTIONER SMOUGH - The real *Dark Souls* starts here. Yet also in a sense it ends here too. This relentless 2v1 duel atop Anor Londo is not just the geographical summit of the world, it's also clearly the best fight in the game - a height all subsequent bosses fail to reach.



3 SISTER FRIEDE - Dark

Souls 3's Ringed City DLC is packed with great boss fights and this, a kind of song of ice and fire twist on the Souls boss duo, is the best of them. Spectacular, varied, and just the right side of really, really tough.



4 GAPING DRAGON - When you encounter the inhabitant of the

cavernous cistern below the Depths, it doesn't look like much at first. Then you realise that little lizard head is merely the tip of the snout of a giant four-legged vagina dentata and you wish you'd never set foot in the place.



5 BURNT IVORY KING - The king

himself wouldn't make our top ten. But when you're fighting alongside the Loyce Knights you recruited elsewhere in the level, and in this stunning eye of the fire storm setting, it's an easy pick.

6 SLAVE KNIGHT GAEL

- Recalling fan-favourite Artorias, mostly for his very similar leaping, tumbling attack, Gael is an aggressive opponent who barely gives you room to breathe. If not for those irritating ranged attacks he'd rank even higher.

7 SINH, THE SLUMBERING DRAGON

- When From does a good dragon boss, they're very very good (see also Kalameet and Midir). But when they're bad, they're atrocious. Sinh is the best, with a varied moveset both on the ground and in the air. And he corrodes your weapons, forcing you to switch

things up during the fight.

8 THE PURSUER - He knows how to make an entrance. The way he swoops from the sky, the red glow behind his visor, his feet don't even touch the ground. The iconic Dark Souls 2 boss. You were in awe at first, but now he can't even hit you.

9 MAIDEN ASTRAEA - Dear Lord, you are too cruel. Abandoned by her god, the Maiden waits in a sanctuary for the lost and wretched at the base of the Valley of Defilement. Kill her protector and she'll take her own life. Utterly heart-breaking.

10 SIR ALONNE - Alonne keeps it simple and austere, just like his polished throneroom. He's got a katana and he reckons he can draw it faster than you can react. This is Souls at its no-frills finest.

11. Flamelurker
12. Knight Artorias
13. Fume Knight
14. Champion Gundy
15. Tower Knight
16. Manus, Father of the Abyss
17. Pontiff Sulyvahn
18. Ruin Sentinels
19. King Allant
20. False King Allant
21. Elana, the Squalid Queen
22. Black Dragon Kalameet
23. The Nameless King
24. Old Hero
25. Abyss Watchers
26. Looking Glass Knight
27. Darklurker
28. Dragonslayer Armour
29. Demon of Song
30. Throne Defender & Throne Watcher
31. The Twin Princes
32. The Lost Sinner
33. Maneaters
34. Old Iron King
35. Darkeater Midir
36. Smelter Demon
37. Old Monk
38. Sif, the Great Grey Wolf
39. Skeleton Lords
40. Armor Spider
41. Belfry Gargoyles
42. Bell Gargoyles
43. Velstadt, the Royal Aegis
44. Chaos Witch Quelaag
45. High Lord Wolnir
46. Aava, the King's Pet
47. Iudex Gundy
48. The Rotten
49. Storm King
50. Gwyn, Lord of Cinder
51. Soul of Cinder
52. Fool's Idol
53. Old Dragonslayer
54. Sanctuary Guardian
55. Yhorm the Giant Afflicted
56. Graverobber, Ancient Soldier Varg & Cerah the Explorer
57. Penetrator
58. Dragonriders
59. Champion's Gravetender & Gravetender's Greatwolf
60. Gravelord Nito
61. Flexile Sentry
62. Curse-Rotted Greatwood
63. Iron Golem
64. Oceiros, the Consumed King
65. Crossbreed Priscilla
66. Old Demon King
67. Capra Demon
68. The Demon Princes
69. Guardian Dragon
70. Halfflight, Spear of the Church
71. Taurus Demon
72. Phalanx
73. Asylum Demon
74. Royal Rat Vanguard
75. Stray Demon
76. Nashandra
77. Executioner's Chariot
78. Pinwheel
79. Prowling Magus & Congregation
80. Moonlight Butterfly
81. Demon Firesage
82. Dark Sun Gwyndolin
83. The Duke's Dear Freja
84. Seath the Scaleless
85. Vordt of the Boreal Valley
86. Mytha, the Baneful Queen
87. Four Kings
88. Dragonrider
89. Leechmonger
90. The Last Giant
91. Blue Smelter Demon
92. Adjudicator
93. Dirty Colossus
94. Scorpioness Najka
95. Vanguard
96. Vendrick
97. Crystal Sage
98. Covetous Demon
99. Deacons of the Deep
100. Royal Rat Authority
101. Aldrich, Devourer of Gods
102. Giant Lord
103. Centipede Demon
104. Lud & Zallen
105. Ancient Wyvern
106. Aldia, Scholar of the First Sin
107. Ceaseless Discharge
108. Dragon God
109. Ancient Dragon
110. Bed of Chaos



*I'm not here to play...
I'm here to slay*.*

 *Bayonetta*



MA 15+ Strong violence,
online interactivity
RESTRICTED

No safe word required. dMags.net



BAYONETTA



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Nintendo

BAYONETTA 2

Includes Download Code for



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- Bayonetta 2 Game Card
- Bayonetta Download Code*



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Special Edition Includes

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MA 15+ Strong violence, online interactivity
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OUT FEBRUARY 16th 2018

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THE TOP 5

DADS IN VIDEO GAMES WHO ARE SUPERIOR TO MY USELESS, IDIOTIC FATHER

Tim Colwill

KRATOS

Dad Type: Buff

When kids say “my dad could beat up your dad” in the school playground, it’s always a guess at best – how can we truly know who would triumph? Fortunately with Kratos as your dad there’s no need for guessing, as the immortal Spartan carves a gruesome path through enemy dads, leaving a trail of shattered bodies behind him. My own useless father was unable to triumph over even a single enemy dad despite me arranging a series of easy warm-up bouts for him, a feat of abject cowardice which saw me ritually humiliated by staff and students alike.

JOEL

Dad Type: Gruff

“Reliable”, “loyal” and “unable to use a knife without it instantly breaking” are some of the qualities we all look for in a father figure, which is why Joel from *The Last Of Us* is a must-have on any list about dads in video games. Joel’s obsession with protecting Ellie from danger at all costs is what makes him such a good dad, and is exactly what I would have liked from my own dad who instead repeatedly attempted to abandon me in the woods as “an offering to the water witch” – something Joel would probably NEVER do.

BOWSER

Dad Type: Fire/Magic

As someone whose own family was on the run from the law and forced to spend a lot of time escaping down sewer pipes, I have come to see Bowser not as a figure to be feared, but as a commanding presence to aspire to. Bowser just wants the best for his own son, and he’s not afraid to crush the world under his boot heel if that’s what it takes to make it happen. When I stare at my own father in the dim light filtering through the sewer grate, I see a coward of a man who constantly

flees from wandering plumbers, never once thinking about what is best for me and how many innocents will need to die to achieve it.

BIG DADDY

Dad Type: Big

When my own father superglued a power drill onto his hand, I initially dismissed it as the buffoonish act of career dullard. Only with the wisdom of hindsight was I able to see it for what it was: a desperate attempt to imitate the hulking, powerful figure of *Bioshock*’s Big Daddies, to make me love him as much as I loved them. Sadly, perhaps thinking he didn’t go far enough, my father would then go on to superglue other objects and animals to his body before spending a month in hospital for what local newspapers described as “The Screaming Garbage Golem Incident”. I refused to visit him in hospital, and I was right to do so.

OCTODAD

Dad Type: Suspicious

Others may view the clumsy antics of Octodad as a comedy of errors, but as the son of a similarly incompetent fraud, I look at Octodad as a shining example of what my own father could have been if he refused to quit. Where Octodad was brave, committed and determined to be the best dad he could, my own father would simply scream and run from the room at the slightest suggestion he might be an inhuman impostor, emitting a low-pitched warble that cause the lights to flicker and turned the milk sour. Is it any wonder I have trust issues of my own, when my own dad would screech at me to keep the blinds drawn, and ask me to sit long shifts at the window in case unmarked white government vans lingered too long in the street? Appalling. “





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In this instance, 'we' don't. We're handing this head-scratcher over to you, PC & Tech Authority, PC PowerPlay, HYPER and Atomic's exceptionally well informed, passionate and influential readers. By casting your vote to determine Australia's favourite PC products, not only do you go into the draw to win a heap of fantastic prizes from our sponsors, your votes will crown the most deserving brands and products with a coveted Australian PC Awards trophy.

Voting is live on **February 7th** and concludes on **February 28th**. Category winners will be announced at gala dinner in Sydney on the **22nd of March**, 2018. Here a select group of voters – YOU - will be invited to attend the awards alongside the cream of Australia's PC fraternity.

THE CATEGORIES

MOTHERBOARDS

- Best motherboard company
- Best premium motherboard

VIDEO CARDS

- Best GPU company (AMD vs Nvidia!)
- Best OEM budget card
- Best OEM performance card

CPU

- Best CPU company (Intel vs AMD!)
- Best value CPU
- Best performance CPU

STORAGE

- Best HDD
- Best SATA SSD
- Best NVME SSD

NAS

- Best home NAS
- Best SOHO NAS

SYSTEMS

- Best laptop/convertible
- Best gaming laptop
- Best desktop PC builder

GAME

- Best PC game

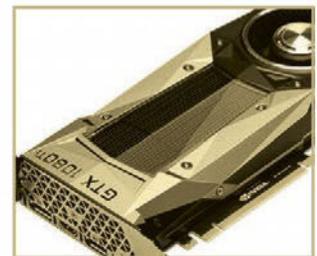
COMPONENTS & PERIPHERALS

- Best memory company
- Best cooling product
- Best monitor
- Best keyboard
- Best mouse
- Best gaming headphones
- Best case
- Best router

RESELLER

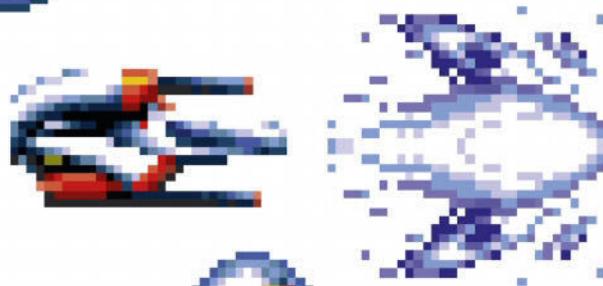
- Best reseller (online)
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All your Base

An abridged guide to the best Mega Drive shoot-em-ups. *Mikolai*



Every era of gaming has its signature genre. For a brief period in the late 80s and early 90s it was the shoot-em-up. And its spiritual home was the Mega Drive.

Released in Japan in 1988, the Mega Drive was designed to allow quick and easy ports of arcade hits. Since shoot-em-ups dominated the arcade scene, they quickly found a second home on Sega's new console.

These titles sustained the system for its first couple of years, and kept Sega in the console race until Sonic came along and changed everything. But that's a whole other story.

Approximately 90 shoot-em-ups were released for the Mega Drive throughout its lifespan. And while their quality varies, they capture a unique moment in time. A world of Japanese imports, smoky arcades, and frantic variations on a theme. Oh, and the box art is incredible.

ZERO WING - (TOAPLAN - 1992)

Zero Wing is best known for its unfortunate translation work, and giving us the 'All Your Base' meme. But it's actually a really unique and interesting shooter in its own right.

After watching the now infamous intro, and learning that "someone set us up the bomb," you assume control of the Zero Wing - a fat little spaceship that makes up for its unremarkable appearance with a unique laser beam ability. You can shoot the enemy craft as usual, or you can capture them with your beam and haul them in front of your ship. From there you can either use them as a shield or fire them back at the enemy. Huzzah!



THUNDER FORCE IV - (TECHNO SOFT - 1992)

This deserves a spot on the list just for the intro. The speed metal guitars that accompany your spaceship blasting through the opening credits is still one of the most impressive displays on the Mega Drive. That attention to detail holds-up throughout, whether it's the multi-parallax scrolling, the sampled speech, or the music, Thunder Force IV is an audio-visual showpiece for the Mega Drive.

Sure, it's not the most original title, but neither is Stranger Things, and you don't hear us complaining about that either.



TWINKLE TALE - (WONDER AMUSEMENT STUDIO - 1992)

This is a strange one. It's a top-down, multi-direction shooter in which you play as a cute Japanese witch. It's also obscure, selling for around \$700 on eBay.

The closest comparison would be Pocky and Rocky on the SNES, but where that game only allowed you to fire in 4 directions you get proper 8-way shooting here. You also get lavish graphics, a sprawling fantasy setting, and plenty of variety as you unleash cutesy death on anyone who crosses you. So it's a shame this was never given a wider release.

TRUXTON - (TOAPLAN - 1989)

One of the earliest shooters for the Mega Drive also happens to be one of the best. First released in Japanese arcades back in 1988, it was ported across to the Mega Drive a year later and pronounced 'arcade perfect' back when that still meant something.

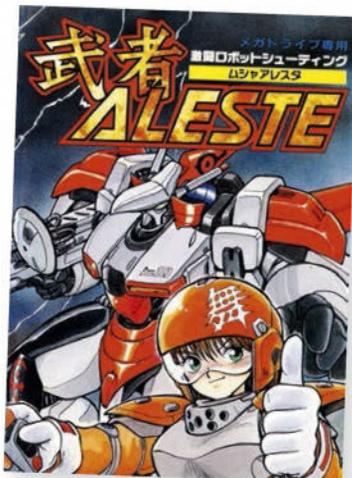
Developed by Toaplan, one of the leading software houses of the era, this is just a rock-solid shooter with great gameplay, satisfying weapons, and smart bombs that light up the screen with a giant skull.



MUSHA ALESTE - (COMPILE - 1991)

Another title that's going to cost you several hundred dollars to acquire, Musha Aleste was released to little interest back in the day. While reviewers noted that its feudal-Japan-meets-mecha aesthetic was unique, it was competing with several hundred other shooters, and quickly sank into obscurity. It would take another two decades and a re-release on the Wii Virtual Console before the title found its place in the limelight.

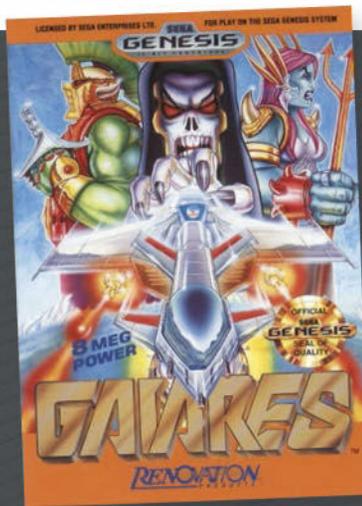
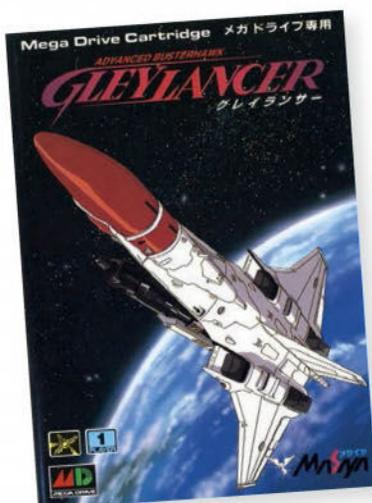
Yes it's short, and it's probably a bit easy, but the ability to cycle your bolt-on weapons through six configurations adds plenty of variety. Did we mention it looks amazing?



GLEY LANCER - (MASAYA - 1992)

Gley Lancer sells for about \$600 on eBay and is (maybe) worth it for the wonderful box art and the associated bragging rights.

Just Like Musha Aleste, this one was met with decidedly average reviews when it was released, quickly forgotten, only to remerge as a collector favourite. Back in 1992 it was criticised for its pastiche of other shoot-em-ups, and the game does crib ideas from several better-known titles. That said, it looks wonderful, has a great anime opening sequence, and offers a solid challenge - I don't care what they said in that Mean Machines review all those years back.



GAIRAIES - (TELENET JAPAN - 1990)

By 1990 the arcade shooter was ubiquitous, and software houses were trying to devise new ways to stand out from the competition. Gairaies entered this crowded market with a power-up system that let you to absorb your enemies' weapons. By firing a droid at other ships you could latch on to them and replicate their firepower. Every time you did this you'd increase the strength of that weapon. If that sounds difficult it's because it is. But there's nothing else quite like it on the Mega Drive, or anywhere else for that matter.

RAIDEN TRAD - (SEIBU KAIHATSU - 1991)

Raiden was one of the most popular shoot-em-ups of the early 90s and continues to see commercial releases over two decades later. The Mega Drive conversation was the only one handled by the game's original developers, Seibu Kaihatsu, and it shows. This is as close to the arcade as you're likely to get on Sega's machine, and there's even a secret bonus stage.

More importantly, Raiden captures the spirit of early 90s shooters. With its slower pace, relatively straightforward scoring system, limited power-up options and distinct lack of bullets, it pre-dates all the bullet-hell shooters that would arrive in the mid 90s (and scare off the general public).

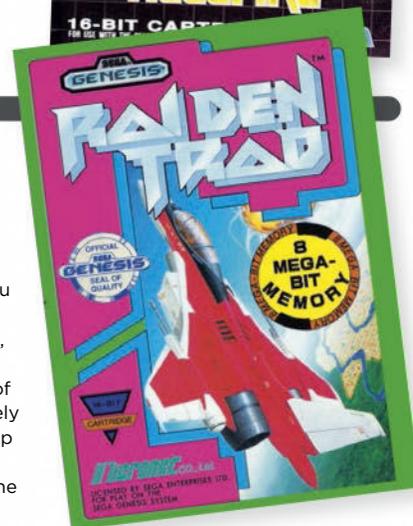


TROUBLE SHOOTER 2 - (VIC TOKAI - 1993)

The original Trouble Shooter brought a unique twist the shooter genre. Dispensing with the usual military gear and space themes, it starred two female agents you controlled simultaneously.

While 'Madison' can only fire forwards, her partner 'Crystal' can shoot backwards and is invulnerable to bullets.

That set-up allows for some unique level designs, and the game was well received when launched. The sequel ramped all that up to 11, with a bat-shit crazy storyline to accompany the improved graphics and weapons system. So it's unfortunate that it never saw a western release.



Seven of the Strangest and Outright Weirdest Gaming Peripherals

Where vibrators, full body suits, and an octagonal structure that shoots interactive light beams into the air are just the beginning. **Kosta Andreadis**

ALPHAGRIP AG-5 (PC, 2006)

Considered by many to be the first successful and mass market home console, the Atari 2600 featured an input device consisting of a joystick and a single button. Fast forward to the release of the Nintendo Entertainment System in the mid-1980s and you got two buttons. The Sega Mega Drive had three. But throughout all this growth in button count, computer games were content

to map their controls across the mass of keys, wheels, and clicks found on a conventional keyboard and mouse. The AlphaGrip AG-5 attempts to merge both worlds by squeezing an entire keyboard onto a comfortable palm-sized game controller. And, if you close your eyes to try and picture what that might look like you probably wouldn't be that far from the truth. The AlphaGrip AG-5 is a sight to behold.

REZ TRANCE VIBRATOR (PS2, 2001)

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's Rez is all-time classic, blending arcade action, thumping techno, and gorgeously minimal visuals. A game that you don't so much play, but experience. And sure, the idea of a haptic feedback device that was meant to be placed next to your private parts and vibrate in time with music sounds overtly sexual by design. But how it came together is rather innocent. Prior to the release of Rez, Mizuguchi had the idea of creating an arcade version where the chair would vibrate in time with the music. That version fell by the wayside, but got rekindled when the PlayStation 2 version became a reality. Thanks mainly to the



force feedback capabilities of the Dual Shock controller. But as per Mizuguchi the rumble was too weak for what he had in mind, and thus a separate USB-powered force-feedback peripheral was born - the Trance Vibrator. Okay, so maybe just a little bit sexual.





SEGA ACTIVATOR (MEGA DRIVE, 1993)

If you wind back the clock a decade you could very well state something along the lines of "motion controls are totally in right now". And although we're living in the post-Wii and post-Kinect landscape of VR, the current "totally in right now" tech, motion controls for home consoles existed back when we came down with our first bout of VR fever - the 1990s. The Sega Activator for the Mega Drive was a

strange and fascinating controller inspired by a musical instrument, where interacting with beams of light would trigger an action. The Sega Activator was essentially eight bits of plastic on the ground connected to form an octagonal ring, where each piece represented a button or direction on the d-pad. Each piece also projected a light beam, with the idea being for you to stand in the middle and flail about in an infinitely more difficult setup compared to holding a controller.



L.J.N. ROLL N ROCKER (NES, 1990)

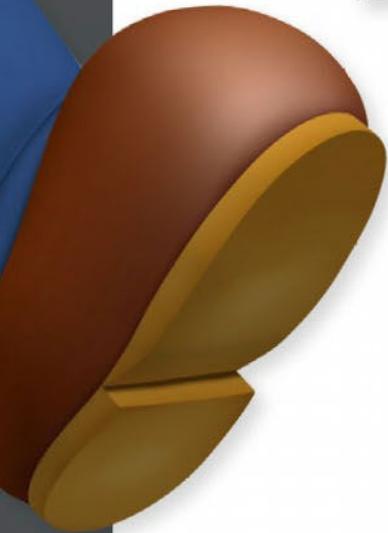
In the console space a controller from a third-party typically mimics the design and form of the real thing. And usually in attempt to provide a cheaper or more premium like-for-like alternative. Boring stuff really, but as Nintendo patented the design of the direction d-pad found on the NES control pad third-party hardware makers had to get creative when creating peripherals for the console. And when forced to rethink how they presented up, down, left, and right sometimes they went a little too far. For L.J.N., American toy maker and publisher of several NES movie tie-ins like Beetlejuice and A Nightmare on Elm Street, the too far was a balance board you stood on that when tilted triggered the corresponding d-pad direction. A design that went so far that it also forgets about all the other buttons, requiring a separate standard controller to also be plugged in.



AURA INTERACTOR (SNES/MEGA DRIVE, 1994)

There was a time when controllers didn't rumble and shake in an attempt to mimic on-screen action. There was a time when controllers weren't all that interested in providing any feedback, opting instead to remain motionless as we all blamed them for our inability to beat a certain time or boss. Not that hardware makers

weren't looking to add a little bit of extra immersion to the gaming experience. Case in point, the Aura Interactor. A wearable suit that places thick plastic with in-built speakers directly onto your chest, with the idea being that you'll feel the sound as opposed to hearing it. As strange and silly as the Interactor, err, sounds, it sold remarkably well in the United States and even won a design and engineering award.



KONAMI LASERSCOPE (NES, 1990)

In selling the Nintendo Entertainment System to consumers throughout the latter part of the 1980s Nintendo felt that, sure, Mario was great and all, but people wanted more. With that more being the now classic Zapper Gun, a peripheral that came packed in the popular NES Action Set bundle that also included the console, two controllers, Super Mario Bros. and Duck Hunt. Feeling that releasing just another light gun might not be enough to get people to put down their Zappers, Konami introduced the LaserScope. A voice activated head mounted light gun that proposed the idea, 'hey, instead of a holding a gun that shoots why not use deadly laser beams from your eyes'. The LaserScope was powered by the audio port on the console, doubling as a gaming headset at a time when that wasn't even a thing. Also, it only fired when you said "Fire!". Then and whenever it misinterpreted other sounds in the room.



ATARI MINDLINK SYSTEM (ATARI 2600/7800, UNRELEASED)

Last and certainly not least comes the unreleased Mindlink System from Atari. A controller so outlandish and conceptually strange that it's no wonder it didn't, you know, work or see the light of day. A headband that would read and interpret thoughts in the form of myoneural signal voltage sent to

muscles on a player's forehead, and then try to translate those signals into on-screen commands. The Mindlink never made it to full product testing, even though it was being promoted by Atari at trade shows. And according to sources it never really worked either. Ultimately the Mindlink was scrapped after a several million-dollar investment. ❧



GAMES WE CAN'T BELIEVE GOT MADE



These are the games that are just nuts; concepts so batshit insane - or maybe just super lame - that we cannot work out how they ever got conceived let alone funded and released. Perhaps the biggest surprise is that some of them are actually quite good.

25 LIMBO OF THE LOST

DEVELOPER: Majestic Studios YEAR: 2007

This old-fashioned point and click adventure would have disappeared without trace - much like the crew of the Mary Celeste, whose mystery the plot revolves around - if it were not for one significant factor. With art assets stolen from countless other games (Thief, Oblivion, World of Warcraft), it remains perhaps the highest profile case of development plagiarism we've seen.

24 PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

DEVELOPER: Cyberlore Studios YEAR: 2005

This is the sort of crazy idea that someone suggests as a joke during a meeting, but no one quite has the courage to say no at any subsequent meeting, and so it ends up getting made. Perhaps the most ludicrous aspect of this perve 'em up is the idea that anyone would find running a magazine empire a fantasy worth indulging.



23 MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

DEVELOPER: Sega YEAR: 1990

Moonwalker was in essence a compilation of extended video clips to promote Michael Jackson's "Bad" album. The arcade game turns it all into an isometrically scrolling beat 'em up where every player is Michael Jackson because heck why not. An exemplar of the '80s trend of slapping a tenuous license on an otherwise generic game.

22 PLUMBERS DON'T WEAR TIES

DEVELOPER: United Pictures YEAR: 1993

In the early '90s (bad) people got the (bad) idea to fill all the space on a CD-ROM with full motion video of (bad) actors performing

(bad, and only vaguely) interactive drama. It was of course all bad, this being perhaps the nadir, a tacky z-grade soap opera meets sit-com that forgets the motion video part of FMV leaving nothing but a big fat F.

21 MISTER MOSQUITO

DEVELOPER: Zoom Inc YEAR: 2002

There are plenty of games where you kill bugs, but there aren't many where you play as a bug. Mister Mosquito, aka Mr Moskeeto, is the oddest yet, a blood-drinking sim that sees you terrorising a Japanese family while they're lying in bed, trying to watch TV or having a bath. IT's deeply voyeuristic and not a little creepy.



20 BMX XXX

DEVELOPER: Acclaim YEAR: 2002

Imagine a Tony Hawk style sports game where you ride around performing tricks on your bike. Except if you do well you're rewarded with low resolution videos of strippers and the ability to play as a topless woman. Dave Mirra, who signed on to appear on the game and on the box, was so appalled he sued Acclaim for tarnishing his brand.

19 NIER

DEVELOPER: Cavia YEAR: 2010

At first blush, NieR may look like a standard Japanese action-RPG. But the hero's sidekick is a grumpy, talking book, the action frequently switches from third-person hack-and-slash to top-down and side-scrolling bullet hell shoot 'em up, and at one point it even turns into a text adventure.

18 DANTE'S INFERNO

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games YEAR: 2010

The Dead Space developer reimaged Dante Alighieri's 14th century meditation on Christian theology and the afterlife as a God of War inspired brawler where poet Dante is transformed into a badass templar knight, Beatrice is now his lover captured by Lucifer, and Cleopatra is a demon of Lust with giant boobs.

17 DRIVER SAN FRANCISCO

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Reflections YEAR: 2011

Keen to refocus the muddled series on its core driving mechanic, Ubisoft had an idea. What if it's all a dream and Tanner can simply shift his consciousness from one car to the next without walking around? Like, he just leaves his body and flies into the sky then picks a new body to inhabit and is suddenly behind the wheel of their car? Job done.

16 THE TYPING OF THE DEAD

DEVELOPER: Sega YEAR: 1999

Edutainment and arcade are mutually exclusive concepts. So, one might have thought, are edutainment and light-gun survival horror. Until, that is, Sega decided to replace a) the guns in The House of the Dead 2 with computer keyboards and b) the shooting with quickly typing words displayed on the chests of zombies.

15 I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM

DEVELOPER: The Dreamers Guild YEAR: 1995

As the name might suggest, Harlan Ellison's novel about rape, genocide and the five remaining members of the human race being tortured by an omnipotent and omniscient AI is bleak as hell. So we doff our caps in honour of the developer who collaborated with Ellison and, against all odds, turned his book into a moving and provocative point and click adventure.

14 FRESHLY-PICKED TINGLE'S ROSY RUPEELAND

DEVELOPER: Nintendo YEAR: 2006

For years Tingle had been little more than a comedic turn in various Zelda games, a sort of perverse parody of Link as a tubby middle-aged man dressed in a skin-tight green suit and a penchant for fairies.

As a cameo or running gag, he's fine. As the star of his own dungeon-crawling action-adventure on DS, you cannot be serious.



13 FEEL THE MAGIC XY/XX
DEVELOPER: Sega YEAR: 2004

When confronted with Nintendo's new DS hardware, Sega felt the best way to explore the new touch and dual screen setup was to tell the story of a young man courting a young girl with the aid of the "Rub Rabbits" and participating in minigames that involve, say, extracting fish from a man's stomach. It was probably the best DS launch title.



12 KILLER7
DEVELOPER: Grasshopper Manufacture YEAR: 2005

To be honest we could probably include any one of Goichi Suda's games here, but Killer7 is surely his defining moment of lunacy. Part cel-shaded on-rails shooter, part global political conspiracy thriller, you play a decrepit, wheelchair-bound old man who can assume the personae of a team of seven professional assassins.

11 SNEAK KING
DEVELOPER: Blitz Arcade YEAR: 2006

We guess the surprise is not so much that Burger King funded the development of a cheap, terrible stealth game as part of some marketing promotion ("buy our burgers and get an Xbox game!"), but rather they signed off on a game that saw their corporate mascot hiding in rubbish bins, poised to terrify the next blonde woman who walks past.

10 HATOFUL BOYFRIEND
DEVELOPER: Mediatonic YEAR: 2014

This is a visual novel much like any other, really. It's a love story set in a high school where the gameplay consists of clicking through dialogue and occasionally making choices as you guide the teenage girl protagonist through her lessons and to her love interest. Oh, sorry, we forgot to mention that you're the only human and everyone else is a bird, okay bye!



9 ZELDA'S ADVENTURE
DEVELOPER: Philips Interactive YEAR: 1995

By the mid '90s, Zelda had established itself as one of Nintendo's flagship series. But at the same time Nintendo appeared intent on ruining that reputation. The craziest thing about Zelda's Adventure isn't that it remains the only game where Zelda is the main character; it's that Philips had already tried and failed to make Zelda games two years prior. They failed again.

8 METAL GEAR ACID
DEVELOPER: Konami YEAR: 2005

Riding high on the success of Metal Gear Solid 1, 2 and 3 affirming Hideo Kojima's standing as the pre-eminent Japanese AAA developer, he pivoted to Sony's nascent PSP handheld and shoehorned his trademark "tactical stealth espionage" into a turn-based collectible card battler. Those who weren't utterly baffled found a surprisingly clever game.

7 OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL
DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream YEAR: 1999

David Cage has many flaws as a designer but ambition is not one of them. In his first game he built a sci-fi open world that mixes shooting, hand-to-hand combat and police procedural, where the player can be reincarnated as any other character if they die, and David Bowie plays the role of the Internet. And plays a few gigs around town at the same time.



6 THE GREAT GIANA SISTERS
DEVELOPER: Rainbow Arts YEAR: 1987

If there's a more brazen clone of an existing game than the Great Giana Sisters' breathtaking rip off of the original Super Mario Bros. then we haven't seen it. Nintendo eventually intervened via what was no doubt a stern phone call and publisher Rainbow Arts withdrew the game from sale. But it's astonishing it ever got released in the first place.

5 DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
DEVELOPER: 3D Realms/Gearbox Software YEAR: 2011

The follow-up to Duke Nukem 3D was first announced in April, 1997 and shown in video form at E3 the following year. By the time it finally saw the light of day it was a laughing stock, the recipient of a mock April Fool's

1 SEAMAN
DEVELOPER: Sega YEAR: 1999

Rather, that honour goes to Sega's marine-dwelling virtual pet sim in which players care for a tadpole-like creature with the face of a man (in fact, the face of the game's creator, Yoot Saito) and guide it through several stages of evolution with the aid of narrator Leonard Nimoy. It even shipped with a microphone so you could talk to your Seaman. And he'd talk back. Also, yeah, it's called Seaman. ☹

review in a 2006 issue of PC PowerPlay and a Lifetime Achievement Award for vapourware from Wired magazine.

4 NOBY NOBY BOY
DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai YEAR: 2009

The only way Katamari Damacy wasn't going to be on this list was if its creator, Keita Takahashi, managed to surpass his own madness. He did so, with his very next game. Play as Boy, a rainbow-coloured worm who must stretch across each level in order to fuel Girl's progress through space, from Earth to Pluto and back again.

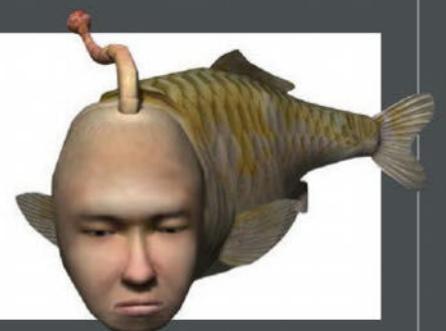


3 FAR CRY 2
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal YEAR: 2008

First-person shooters are about making players feel powerful - you earn bigger guns, upgrades and powerups all designed to further your mastery. In Far Cry 2 your guns always break, enemies always respawn, everything catches on fire, including you, and you have malaria and can pass out in the middle of combat. Far Cry 2 hates you (and it's great).

2 VANGERS
DEVELOPER: K-D Lab YEAR: 1998

Few games capture a sense of being somewhere totally alien as well as Vangers does. From its geography, all webbed membranes and squelchy sphincters, to the bewildering array of nonsensical words to decipher, to its scant regard for conventional game structure or objectives, Vangers is almost - almost - the most batshit insane game we've ever played.



5 REASONS WHY

THIS GLOWING STONE ORB I FOUND WASHED UP ON THE BEACH WILL BE THE REAL PS4 KILLER

Tim Colwill

Looking for a brand new console? The PS4 may have been at the top of its game for a while, but all great empires must fall and a strong contender for the next big thing is the Orb - a perfect sphere of glowing black stone I found washed up on the shore. Even the biggest Sony fanboy will be wanting an Orb of their own after reading this list!

1. AT THIS PRICE, YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO EMBRACE THE ORB

Let's face the facts - even during a great sale, you won't be able to pick up a PS4 for less than \$400. But we were able to pick up the Orb for literally nothing, scooping it up off the sand at the beach after only the slightest moment of foolish hesitation. And while PS4 buyers are out there looking for a car park and waiting in line for the checkout, all we had to do to grab the Orb is wade through the dead wildlife which litter the ground near the Orb for hundreds of metres in all directions! Fair play to Sony, but there's no doubt that the Orb is the winner when it comes to the all-important hip-pocket.

2. IT REALLY TRANSPORTS YOU TO ANOTHER WORLD

We'll be the first to say that *Horizon: Zero Dawn* on the PS4 looks breathtaking, and *Guerilla Games* have clearly pushed Sony's hardware to the limit. But for our money, nothing beats the Orb's powerfully realistic, immersive visions of the burning city of T'karthonet, of feeling your mouth curl into a lidless smile as you watch your armies loot and pillage through the ruins of the last civilization foolish enough to stand against you. Who needs 4K when human mathematics itself is insufficient to describe your majesty?

3. THE FORM FACTOR ADVANTAGE

The PS4 has always had the form factor edge over the Xbox One this generation, and that's a fact. It's smaller, it's lighter, and

it's quieter, making Microsoft's offering feel like a belching diesel engine. What's even better still is the mysterious perfection of the Orb, whisper quiet at all times and quietly whispering at others (though only when you are asleep!). And talk about portability - you can take the Orb to a friend's house, to a hidden shrine deep in the mountains, or even into Parliament without needing to deal with messy cables and spare controllers! That's something you just can't get with the PS4.

4. AEONS OF GREAT EXPERIENCES

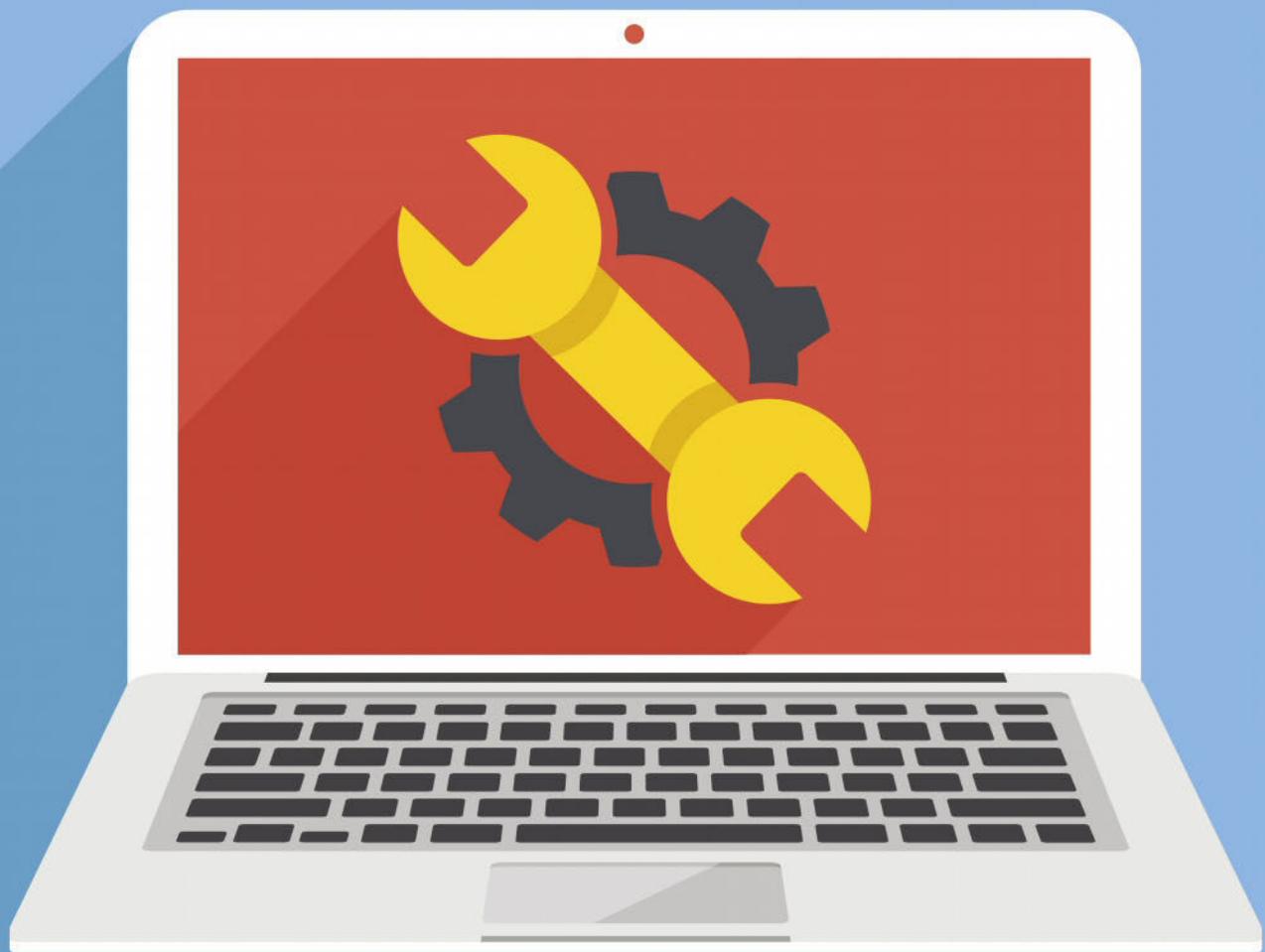
Sony has built up a great software library, and although they could be doing better on backwards compatibility, we certainly have to give them points for trying. For our money though, you can only play so many first-person shooters and sports games before you really want something more. That's why it's so great that the Orb is offering all new experiences, like tearing out the throat of your litter-mate with your teeth and feasting on the flesh, or hibernating at the heart of a dying star as you wait for the Second Rebirth. Forget *Dragon Age* - thanks to the Orb, we're hanging out for the Final Age!

5. ACCESSIBILITY IS EVERYTHING

Introducing gaming to new people is easier than ever, and it's wonderful to see more and more people picking up a controller for the first time. After a few weeks of testing it's clear that the Orb is a quantum leap in accessibility, incorporating a frankly astonishing new feature that means anyone who touches the Orb even once will find an Orb of their very own hovering ominously above their bed when they wake up the next morning! There's no need for account sharing or library sharing - with the Orb it's just touch and go, and soon you'll be enjoying the Orb for yourself. Astonishing! The Orb is on its way soon. «



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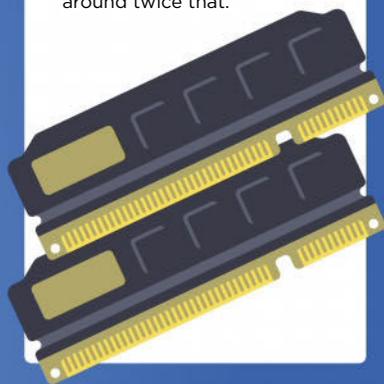
REINSTALL YOUR OS

Backup all your data, wipe your primary drive and reinstall your OS. This is the cheapest and easiest way to get some extra performance from your PC. After a few years of running, your OS will build up a whole load of cruft that takes up valuable cycles, hogs RAM and generally makes your machine run slower than it should. These files aren't necessarily malignant or malicious, but they are a royal pain in the butt. Regular maintenance can keep your OS running smoothly, but if you haven't been diligent in clearing out all the accumulated crap from uninstalled programs, hardware changes, driver updates, cookies and the like, then nuking the site from orbit and starting again is a good way to make your PC feel fresh again. It's also free, so there's that too.



RAM

If you're running a 64-bit version of Windows and have less than 8Gb RAM, then an upgrade to 8Gb will make a palpable difference to your machine, speeding nearly every operation and allowing games to use more memory that would otherwise be taken up with background tasks. If you already have at least 8Gb RAM then an upgrade to 16Gb won't be as noticeable, but will make things run more smoothly overall. If you record and edit footage, use Photoshop or like programs, then the more memory the better. At the moment you can buy an 8Gb RAM pack for around \$100 and 16Gb at around twice that.



SSD

Upgrading a standard HDD to an SSD will change your life. If you already have an SSD running your OS then you know how fast everything boots, but upgrading your game drive to an SSD will make your computer feel like new thanks to fast load times, smooth level transitions and flawless cutscenes. The only problem with using an SSD as your game drive is that you have to be sparing with the number of games that you install. With a standard HDD or 2TB, you don't have to think too much about deleting games to fit new ones, but when you're limited to 250 or 500GB you have to be diligent about uninstalling games you're no longer playing. That said, the ability to have games boot almost instantaneously is fantastic.

How much the upgrade will cost depends on the kind of SSD being installed. SATA SSDs (using a standard HDD connection) are the cheapest, and slowest option (though still massively faster than a HDD) and are currently available for around \$130. NVMe SSDs that use either M.2 ports on the motherboard, or a PCIe slot are faster but also more expensive, so will set you back around \$175 or so, and around double that for a 500GB.



NEW PERIPHERALS

Although buying new peripherals won't speed up your computer, having a nice keyboard and mouse can really change how games feel. Increased accuracy and tactility can really make games feel more responsive and alive, so if you're running cheap peripherals that came with a PC – a no-name mouse and membrane keyboard for example – it's worth looking into getting yourself a nice new optical mouse and entry level mechanical keyboard.

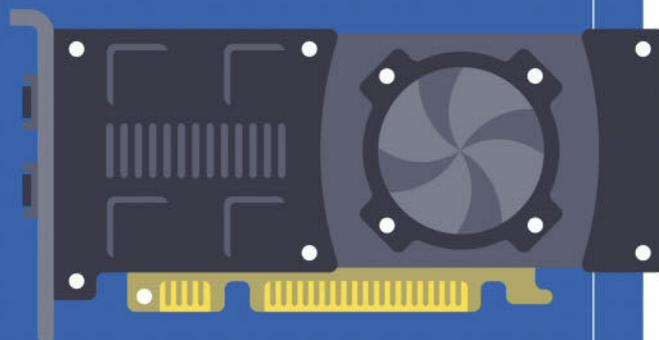
New quality peripherals can cost you an arm and a leg, but there are some very good budget options available, such as the Cooler Master MM530 optical mouse which is available for around \$59 or the Logitech G Pro available for a similar price. Logitech also has an excellent budget mechanical keyboard with the G413 for \$129, and HyperX has the fantastic Alloy FPS keyboard available for a similar price.



GPU

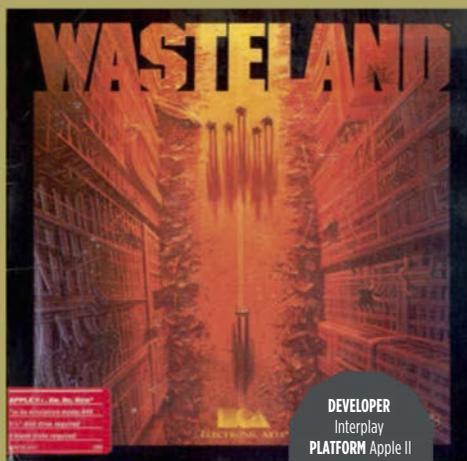
When it comes to gaming, no one upgrade will feel as monumental as getting a new GPU, but how much you'll get out of the card ultimately depends on how powerful the rest of the system is. There's little reason to shell out \$1000 for a cutting edge GPU when the rest of the machine is five years old and is made up of mid-range hardware. It used to be that you could pick up premium cards from the previous GPU generation for cheap when a new generation came out, but in the current generation that no longer seems to be the case, with R9 390 and GTX 980 cards selling for around \$550.

Luckily there are some very good cheap card in the current generation perfect for playing at 1080p or even 1440p. A 3GB GTX 1060 can be purchased for around \$290 and is as fast as the GTX 980. The 6GB version of the GTX 1060 can be found for around \$370 and is around half again as fast as the GTX 980.



The BEST

While we can't judge a video game by its cover, we can certainly judge the covers themselves. Here, then, are our favourite (page left) - and least favourite (page right) - video game covers of all time... **David Wildgoose**



DEVELOPER
Interplay
PLATFORM Apple II
RELEASE DATE
1998

WASTELAND

You make a wrong turn and suddenly you find yourself trapped, outnumbered five to one. Are they friend or foe? Do they want money, or more? Maybe we can just talk it out? When you stumble across another group of rangers in the Wasteland you're never sure how it's gonna pan out. What are you gonna do, ranger?



DEVELOPER
Psygnosis
PLATFORM Amiga/
Atari ST
RELEASE DATE
1990

AWESOME

Psygnosis games in the late '80s and early '90s were known for the spectacular fantasy landscapes adorning their covers painted by British artist Roger Dean. But our favourite of the era, the terrifyingly menacing capital ship of Awesome, was actually taken from a painting by John Harris, whose work has graced countless sci-fi novels, too.



DEVELOPER
Team Ico
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2001

ICO

Ico creative director Fumito Ueda took inspiration from proto-surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico when he drew the artwork that would grace the PAL and Japanese versions of Ico. The tiny characters, dwarfed by the imposing architecture and looming shadows, run towards the light, hands tightly clenched, a perfect encapsulation of the journey awaiting the player.



DEVELOPER
Square
PLATFORM SNES
RELEASE DATE
1993

SEIKEN DENSETSU 2

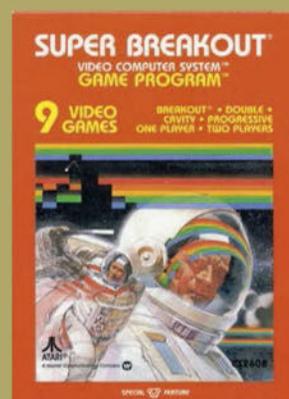
Square may have used the same gorgeous artwork across all regional versions of Secret of Mana, but the Japanese edition benefits enormously from being able to present the towering, ancient tree in all its grand, moss-covered glory. Outside of Japan we only got a cropped, down-sized peek at the cute kids at the tree's base.



DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2004

KATAMARI DAMACY

It stands to reason that the box art for Keita Takahashi's masterpiece doesn't look like other video games. The bright colour palette, the juxtaposition of the mundane and the absurd, the joyous rainbow arcing over a distinctly Japanese city. Katamari Damacy itself isn't like other video games.



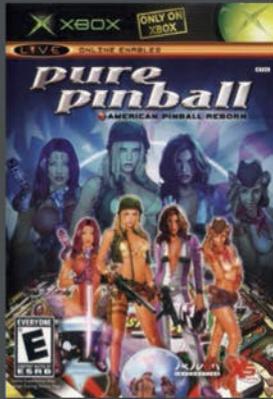
DEVELOPER
Atari
PLATFORM Atari 2600
RELEASE DATE
1981

SUPER BREAKOUT

The original Breakout tried to relate its abstract hit-the-coloured-bricks gameplay to images of boring '70s men playing squash. For the sequel they realised that it would be infinitely cooler and classier if they replaced the boring '70s men with '70s astronauts playing squash in goddamn space. They were right.

& WORST

BOX ART



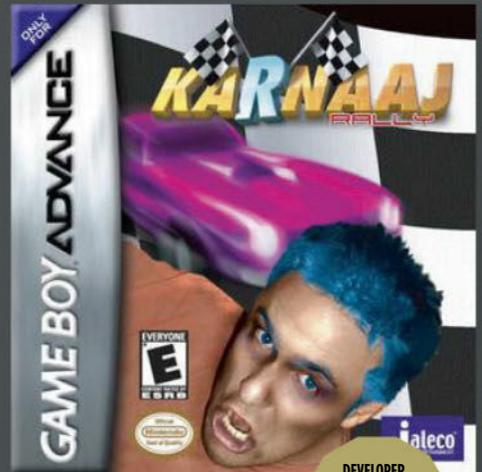
PURE PINBALL
Not content with being a gross example of sexist marketing (Scantily-clad women in provocative poses? Check.) the hilariously misnamed Pure Pinball then triples down on its grossness by repeating its desperate cry for attention three times on the same cover. Somewhere, hidden amongst all this bare flesh is a pinball table. We think.

DEVELOPER
Comgame
PLATFORM XBOX
RELEASE DATE
2003



MEGA MAN
It's tempting to suggest the amateurish hand-drawn Mega Man art is so bad it qualifies as good. But that would be wrong. Mega Man's helmet appears to be giving him a brain aneurysm, his enormous shoulders are hunched so far forward they can only be dislocated, and his legs look like they cannot decide which direction they are walking in.

DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM NES
RELEASE DATE
1987



KARNAAJ RALLY
The tragedy of Karnaaaj Rally is that it's quite an enjoyable, knockabout Micro Machines-with-guns racer. No, scrap that, the *real* tragedy of Karnaaaj Rally is that its cutting edge motion blurred cover image was photobombed by some gurning idiot falling over in the moshpit at a Simple Plan cover band gig.

DEVELOPER
Jaleco
PLATFORM GBA
RELEASE DATE
2002



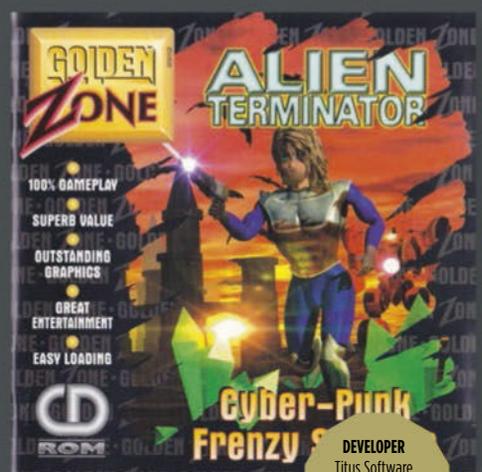
BATMAN ARKHAM CITY GOTY EDITION
A monochrome Batman wiping blood from his face. It's great; it hints at the kind of gritty, unflinching violence the Dark Knight is capable of. Then someone had the appalling idea to shower it with a torrent of marketing shite, drowning a striking image in a sea of hyperbolic inanity.

DEVELOPER
Warner Bros.
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2012



VIRTUOSO
We're not sure which version of the VirtuosO box art came first (that's the US version on the left, non-US version on the right) but, regardless of the chronology, the decision was made to replace some godawful art with some equally godawful art. The kindest thing to be said is that it actually looks like the game.

DEVELOPER
Elite
PLATFORM 3DO/PC
RELEASE DATE
1994



ALIEN TERMINATOR
The lies here are many. The gameplay is nowhere near 100%. The value is not superb. The entertainment is not, in fact, great. The loading may well be easy, but the quitting and snapping the disc in half is easier. Neither the promised Alien nor Terminator are the ones you would reasonably be expecting. And while the graphics are indeed outstanding, they are outstandingly bad.

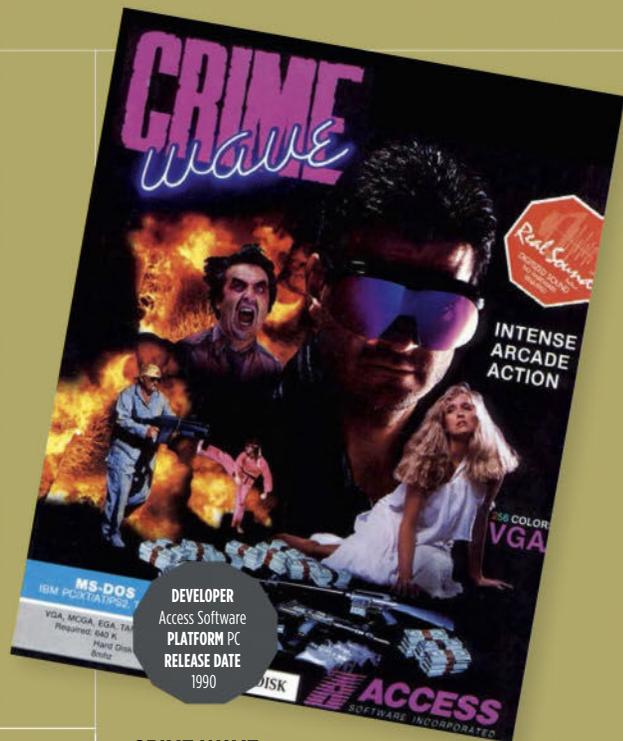
DEVELOPER
Titus Software
PLATFORM PC/SNES
RELEASE DATE
1997



QUARANTINE

Sometimes good box art is simply a single concept executed well. Quarantine is a first-person Crazy Taxi that plays more like Doom in which you drive around a grimy cyberpunk city, taking fares and running over people. The red's obviously all the blood you accumulate; the white's a glimpse into the empty void of your soul.

DEVELOPER
ImageTek
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1994



DEVELOPER
Access Software
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1990

CRIME WAVE

Unlike Mega Man (see opposite), Crime Wave is definitely so bad it's good. Like some sort of David Lynch fever dream it throws together disparate images - disheveled screaming man, karate dude, sexy '80s blonde lounging on pile of money and guns - and somehow creates a coherent whole. You know exactly what type of game Crime Wave is and you can't wait to play it.

GRADIUS

The key art used on this release of Gradius had been used previously, all the way back to the original arcade cabinet in 1985, and variations of it grace several other home console editions. But all the elements come together best here for the TurboGrafx-16 box - the angle of the ships' imminent collision, the gorgeous blue glow, the kinetic beauty of space combat.

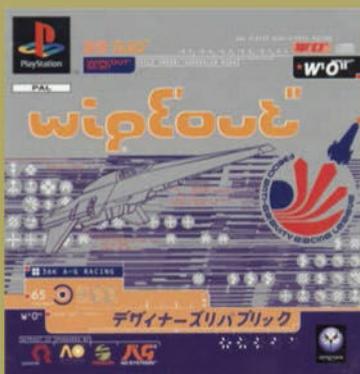
DEVELOPER
Konami
PLATFORM TurboGrafx-16
RELEASE DATE
1991



JET GRIND RADIO

The Dreamcast was the console that burned twice as bright for half as long. Few games better exemplify the giddy invention and youthful energy of Sega's final shot at the sun than Jet Grind Radio, and in particular the manic yet carefree attitude of its Japanese box art.

DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM DC
RELEASE DATE
2000



WIPEOUT

During development of its futuristic racing game, Psygnosis contracted hip Brit graphic design house The Designers Republic to work on various marketing materials, including the now iconic box art. With the original PlayStation, Sony took video games out of the kid's bedroom and into the club. Wipeout, and its sleek, modern artwork, was the game at the centre of that shift.

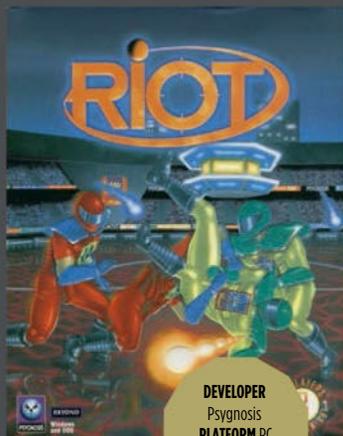
DEVELOPER
Psygnosis
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1995



DEVELOPER
Konami
PLATFORM NES
RELEASE DATE
1986

CASTLEVANIA

Evoking a sense of nostalgia for Saturday morning cartoons from some mythical past, the Castlevania box is a highpoint of the 8-bit era. The iconic whip breaking free of the frame, the startlingly ripped Simon Belmont appearing to step through a doorway into a wondrously fantastical world of towering parapets and cackling vampires, it truly is a symphony of the night.



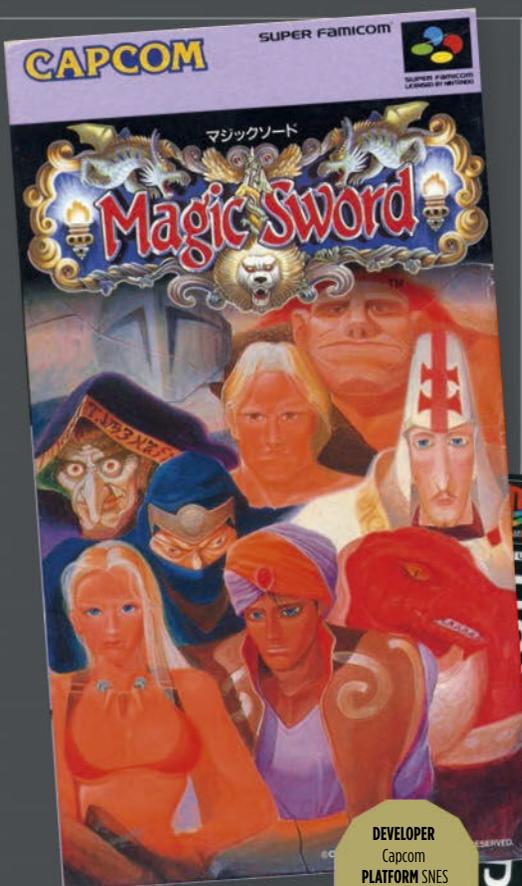
DEVELOPER
Psygnosis
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1997

RIOT

Riot was also released under the name Professional Underground League of Pain - or Pulp, which should have been the fate for each copy produced. We're not sure what's more painful though, having to look at the artwork or having a future sports man tackle you while shoving his visored head up your arse.

MOBILE LIGHT FORCE 2

After glimpsing the box you'd be forgiven for thinking this was a Charlie's Angels inspired third-person shooter. It is in fact a scrolling shmup akin to Ikaruga. But it's not here for that, nor for it's bad art. It's here because this sequel reused the same bad art from the original game's box and hoped no one would notice.



DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM SNES
RELEASE DATE
1992

MAGIC SWORD

It's tough to pick a favourite element on the box of Capcom's weird fantasy mishmash. There's the hideously overly elaborate logo. There's the bizarre sunburn afflicting almost everyone. There's the ridiculous underboob of the lone female character. But the best bit is just how deflated everyone looks at the prospect of posing for this group shot.

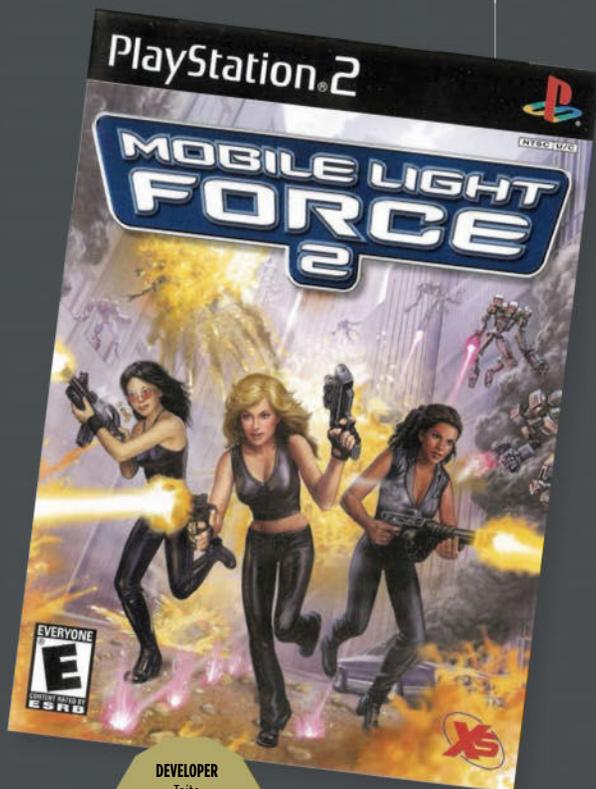
WORST BOX ARTS

TEKKEN 2

Tekken suffers terribly from the use of mid-'90s 3D rendered character models on the box. What's passable in a quick in-game cut-scene becomes a dead-eyed stare that's impossible to ignore on the front of a CD jewel case. Not to mention the seemingly random placement of characters, including the sloppy overlay that results in Michelle waving at you with Nina's hand.



DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1996



DEVELOPER
Taito
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2001



DEVELOPER
Insomniac Games
PLATFORM Xbox
360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2013

FUSE

Overstrike was once a stylish-looking shooter starring a group of playful, charismatic heroes that offered a vital antidote to the grim military themes of the times. Then EA got scared, made it all gritty and serious, and changed the name to Fuse. And in a final blow they made sure all personality had been excised by cutting off everyone's head on the box.



DEVELOPER
Activision
PLATFORM PS3
RELEASE DATE
2008

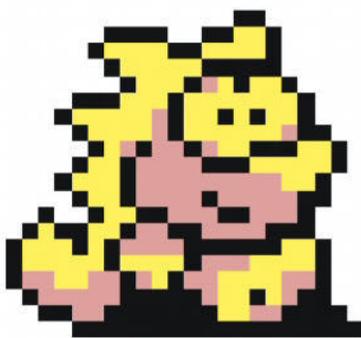
SPIDER-MAN WEB OF SHADOWS

We've given this the nod not because it's bad - though, of course it is very bad - but because it is emblematic of the modern marketing trend to have something orange on one side of the image and something blue on the other, in this case Spidey's forearms, for inexplicable reasons. Also, his fists are two other characters, for similarly inexplicable reasons. ☹

'90S MASCOTS

More Deserving of a Remake Than Bubsy

When news broke that Bubsy the Bobcat was getting a remake, the gaming world was stunned. Of all the 90s mascots to bring back, why does that bland weirdo get to live, when so many more deserving heroes remain in limbo? **James Cottee**



1 MAYHEM THE DINOSAUR FIRST APPEARANCE: Mayhem in Monsterland, Commodore 64, 1993

Towards the end of its life, programmers strived to wring every last ounce of power out of the Commodore 64, realising graphics of a fidelity previously thought impossible. The apex of this trend was Mayhem in Monsterland, a side-scrolling platformer that combined the exquisite monster-stomping of Super Mario with the kinetic intensity of Sonic the Hedgehog. Mayhem the yellow triceratops would hurtle through vast levels wrought of rich colour, seamless full-screen scrolling, and impressive weather effects. Psytronik Software released a 15th Anniversary Edition of Mayhem in Monsterland, thanks to a retro scene that refuses to let the C64 die.

2 COMMANDER KEEN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Commander Keen in Invasion of the Vorticons, PC, 1990

A miracle of programming from a young John Carmack, Commander Keen brought super-slick platforming action to PC gaming audiences more accustomed to the sedate pace of Microsoft Flight Simulator and Leisure Suit Larry. This hugely influential series starred eight-year-old super-genius Billy Blaze, who when wearing his big brothers grid-iron helmet became Commander Keen, vanquisher of the Vorticon menace! Carmack's innovative parallax scrolling code let Keen tear through huge levels on his pogo stick, and the game even had a moral element: many of the Martians you met were harmless, but you could laser them to death anyway.

3 JILL OF THE JUNGLE

FIRST APPEARANCE: Jill of the Jungle, PC, 1992

The breakthrough title from Epic (then known by the more modest moniker of 'Epic Megagames'). Turning gender convention on its head, it was the feisty Jill who explored convoluted cave complexes to ultimately rescue the Prince in her innovative shareware trilogy. The depth of the experience



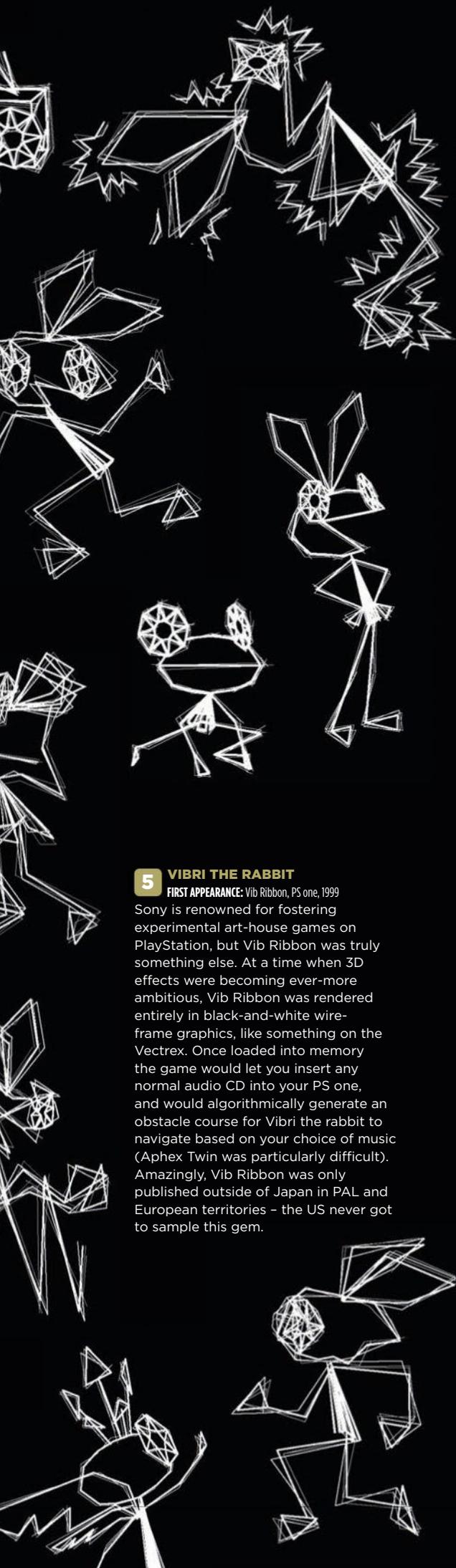
was magnified by some inspired level design, and by Jill's ability to transform into a variety of animals to explore environments in a Metroidvania-esque fashion. Every time we've asked Epic representatives about Jill, they've said that she's "Never, ever coming back." But if a muppet like Bubsy can return, we'd like to think that anything's possible.

4 LAMMY THE LAMB

FIRST APPEARANCE: Um Jammer Lammy, PS one, 1999

From the same creative team that brought you Parappa the Rapper, Um Jammer Lammy was a sequel in all but name, where Rodney Alan Greenblatt's colourful designs come to life as paper-like 2D figures in a 3D world. Not unlike in Parappa's absurdist journey of personal development, Lammy subjected players to extremely difficult music rhythm game challenges, through which the independent young lamb/woman would selflessly help others and learn to believe in herself.

Alas, given the failure of Masaya Matsura's recent Kickstarter for Project Rap Rabbit, it's possible that the golden age of the quirky Japanese rhythm action game is behind us.



5 VIBRI THE RABBIT

FIRST APPEARANCE: Vib Ribbon, PS one, 1999

Sony is renowned for fostering experimental art-house games on PlayStation, but Vib Ribbon was truly something else. At a time when 3D effects were becoming ever-more ambitious, Vib Ribbon was rendered entirely in black-and-white wire-frame graphics, like something on the Vectrex. Once loaded into memory the game would let you insert any normal audio CD into your PS one, and would algorithmically generate an obstacle course for Vibri the rabbit to navigate based on your choice of music (Aphex Twin was particularly difficult). Amazingly, Vib Ribbon was only published outside of Japan in PAL and European territories – the US never got to sample this gem.

6 PEPSIMAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Fighting Vipers, Sega Saturn, 1996

Pepsiman! Champion of sugary beverages, vanquisher of thirst! Pepsiman! The Platonic Ideal of an advertising mascot that transforms into a bewildering cultural artefact beyond Japan's shores! Pepsiman! Star of an endless runner style game that launched over a decade before endless runners went mainstream! Pepsiman! A simple yet maddeningly difficult game that, while only ever released on Japan, has attracted a cult following worldwide!

Pepsiman! Featuring 3D modelling by Kotaro Uchikoshi, who would later go on to write and direct the Zero Escape games, and who could conceivably leverage his industry clout to bring about the return of... Pepsiman!



7 JAZZ JACKRABBIT

FIRST APPEARANCE: Jazz Jackrabbit, PC, 1994

Jazz Jackrabbit debuted at a very special time in PC gaming history; a time when the widespread use of video and sound cards was giving Wintel desktop systems comparable razzmatazz to dedicated game consoles. Coded by demo scene wiz kid Arjan Brussee (Killzone), and designed by the mercurial Clifford Bleszinski (Gears of War), Jazz Jackrabbit shamelessly borrowed the high-speed platforming action of Sonic the Hedgehog, but kicked things up a notch by putting heavy firepower in the hands of its leporine protagonist. As of this writing the Jazz Jackrabbit games aren't even available on Good Old Games, but there's always a chance that a nostalgic Cliffy B, fondly remembering his younger days, might breathe new life into his furry green breakthrough hit.



8 CONKER THE SQUIRREL

FIRST APPEARANCE: Diddy Kong Racing, N64, 1997

Conker's early appearances such as his starring role in Conker's Pocket Tales for the Game Boy Color reinforced his public image as just another inoffensive

anthropomorphic platform game mascot. But this saucy squirrel came into his own in Conker's Bad Fur Day, a game that was ground-breaking in its use of coarse language and risqué content. While ostensibly marketed to older gamers, one suspects more than a few little tackers revelled in its toilet humour, bathos, and well-designed boss fights.

While 'Young Conker' is reportedly in development for the Microsoft Hololens, this does not exactly qualify as a quality mass market release. For all purposes and intents, the Conker we like to remember is still in development purgatory.



9 THE TEAM BUDDIES

FIRST APPEARANCE: Team Buddies, PS one, 2000 (Technically, that's still in the 90s)

An ambitious real-time strategy game from the last days of the original PlayStation, Team Buddies was a most peculiar IP. The stars of the game were warring factions of inflatable tubes, brightly coloured and foul-mouthed. They unlocked reinforcements and weaponry by stacking crates on to special pads on the map, the contents of which were determined by the way you stacked the crates before you smashed them open – two on top of each other unlock another Team Buddy, eight in a cube would unlock a vehicle, such as a tank or stealth fighter.

Despite being a fondly remembered cult hit, Team Buddies was a one-off fluke of a production from Pysgnosis Studio Camden, and Sony has never even hinted that these colourful little maniacs will ever return.



10 THE LEMMINGS

FIRST APPEARANCE: Lemmings, Amiga, 1991

THE puzzle game sensation of the 16-bit era. Each level confronted the player with a Worms-esque ant farm-like environment, where a gaggle of mop-haired creatures would drop in and walk in a straight line, mindlessly. To help steer these little imbeciles to the exit, the player could order them to build bridges, or to block other Lemmings from walking off cliffs... you could even order them to self-destruct, but each order could only be issued a strictly limited number of times. Replete with catchy music and endearing sound effects, Lemmings was engrossing and addictive, and spawned a multitude of ports and sequels.

The Lonely RPG Planet

For this year's travel guide, the Hyper crew visited every RPG ever made (well, most of them) to help you book your next holiday. Here are our nine dream destinations...
David Wildgoose



SIGIL

Planescape: Torment, 1999

The best way to describe Sigil is to imagine a hollowed out donut resting atop an infinitely tall spire that sits at the centre of the known multiverse. The city itself, also referred to as the City of Doors, is wrapped around the inside of the donut and connects to every other plane of existence via countless portals. You really have to see it to believe something so preposterous does in fact exist.

Inside Sigil, it's a lot like any other major metropolis. There's the brothel where customers have their intellectual lust slaked, there's the bar whose main attraction is the burning man in the corner, there's the siege tower manned by a giant golem who desires only to unmake the multiverse, there's an alleyway that can actually give birth and the whole place is run by the charmingly-named Lady of Pain.

TRAVEL TIP
 Don't forget to pick up a souvenir at Vrischika's Curiosity Shoppe in the Clerk's Ward. The Eye of Vecna, perhaps?

THE CITADEL

Mass Effect 3, 2012

To fully appreciate the staggering and terrifying technological prowess of the ancient Reapers, you need to visit the Citadel. Yet to see it today, rebuilt and once again a thriving galactic hub of commerce and diplomacy after Shepard's noble sacrifice, you would never guess at its darker purpose.

Still, ignore for a moment that

you actually standing on a device intended to end all known life and there's a lot to see and do on the Citadel. By day you can take in the Presidium and its range of luxury shops and restaurants, and by night head to Silversun Strip in the Wards to play some quasar or party at Flux nightclub.

And the best thing about the Citadel is, if you ever find yourself bored, its mass relay transit system can literally warp you to any other part of the galaxy in the blink of a loading screen.



TRAVEL TIP
 Need directions - or just a casual chat? Ask for Avina at any of the Citadel's VI kiosks.

MARKARTH

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, 2011

From the majestic spires of Solitude to the lively canals of Riften, the land of Skyrim is littered with cities, camps and villages. While they all have one vacant property conveniently available for purchase none of them, however, have much to recommend to a canny real estate investor like yourself. Except for Markarth.

Carved into a cliff face cradled deep in the mountains of the Reach, Markarth is breathtaking for both its man-made architecture and its natural wonder. Blood and silver runs through Markarth, as the locals say, a



reference to the mining industry that drives the city's economy and the region's violent past. There's also the spectacular waterfall that cascades down over the entrance to Understone Keep and, beneath the mountain, the fascinating ruins of the ancient Dwemer site Nchaund-Zel.

TRAVEL TIP
 Pay no mind to the spot of murder as you walk through the gates.

MAJULA

Dark Souls 2, 2013

This picturesque clifftop settlement is the perfect spot to get away from it all. Whether you enjoy lounging under the autumn trees gazing out over the sea at the setting sun or paying your respects at the monument of (crest)fallen heroes, Majula will find a way to calm even the most anxious mind. We particularly love just sitting

by the bonfire and listening to the Emerald Herald weave tales of legends past and future.

And if you're after a bit more excitement, swing by Maughlin's for a spot of clothes shopping, pop over to Lenigrast's to learn how they forge Drangleic steel, drop in on Cale to brush up on your cartography, then finish the day by literally dropping down a giant hole that leads to the Grave of Saints, The Gutter and quite probably your death.



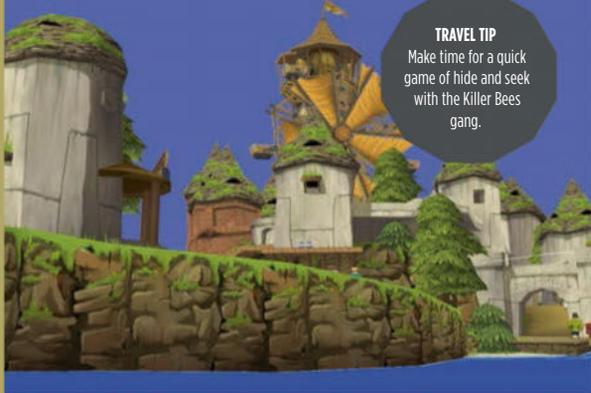
TRAVEL TIP
 Whatever you do, don't feed the pigs.

WINDFALL ISLAND

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, 2002

The puns at work in the name are plentiful. There's the windmill that sits atop the island's highest point - and conveniently doubles (triples?) as both a lighthouse and a Ferris wheel (oh, and a desultory arcade parlour, too). There's the reason you find yourself on the island to begin with: to secure a sail that will allow your ship to harness the power of the wind. And there's the pirates lurking in the local bar cafe, hoping that fortune will simply fall into their laps.

Windfall Island, as befits the Great Sea's main population hub, is chock full of amenities. It's got probably the best and certainly the most joyous school in the land as well as a wonderfully efficient postal service. Law and order is also highly prized, as evidenced by the gaol, though admittedly it's perhaps not the most secure cell.



TRAVEL TIP
Make time for a quick game of hide and seek with the Killer Bees gang.

FRONTIER VILLAGE

Xenoblade Chronicles, 2010

While the concept of a town housed within a great tree is nothing new to fiction, video games or otherwise, few are as alluring and impressive as Frontier Village from Xenoblade Chronicles. Alluring because the great tree in which it is nestled can be seen from miles around, like some kind of arboreal siren towering above the rest of the Makna Forest, drawing weary travellers into its perfectly wholesome, warming firefly-lit embrace. It's especially beautiful at night.

The tree's inhabitants, the Nopon, lead by Chief Dunga, are welcoming little critters, all egg-bellied cuteness and ridiculously over-sized ears. They'll immediately make you feel at home, greeting you as friends the first time they lay eyes on you. The Nopon are exceptional craftspeople, so make sure you stock up on their wares when you visit. They might even teach you a trick or two about communicating with animals.



TRAVEL TIP
When gifting, just remember: female Nopon love flowers; males do not.

TARREY TOWN

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, 2017

Although situated rather precariously balanced atop a mushroom-shaped rock formation sprouting out of a lake in the Akkala Highlands, Tarrey Town is delightful in its commitment to idyllic suburban mundanity. Its primary quest has Link encouraging folks from all across Hyrule to leave their traditional homes and move to this brand new housing development with its identikit prefab dwellings and fresh country air. So what if it's



just a little bit out of the way?

Link has to recruit four specific tradespeople to come to Tarrey Town and, as each new arrival sets up shop to hawk their wares, there's a growing sense of community. Although Link can't actually buy his own house here, he can look around and say to himself, "I built this place."

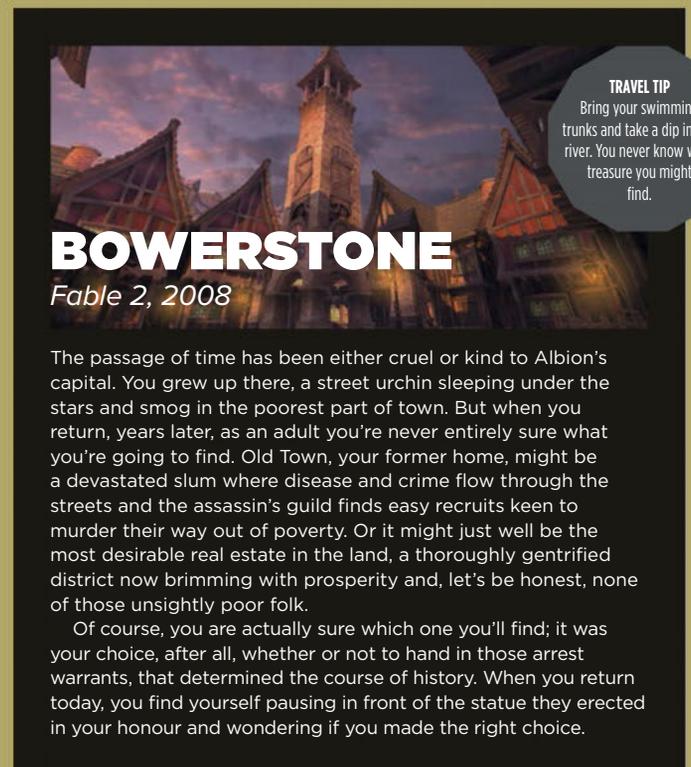
TRAVEL TIP
We recommend staying the night at the inn. It's free.

BOWERSTONE

Fable 2, 2008

The passage of time has been either cruel or kind to Albion's capital. You grew up there, a street urchin sleeping under the stars and smog in the poorest part of town. But when you return, years later, as an adult you're never entirely sure what you're going to find. Old Town, your former home, might be a devastated slum where disease and crime flow through the streets and the assassin's guild finds easy recruits keen to murder their way out of poverty. Or it might just well be the most desirable real estate in the land, a thoroughly gentrified district now brimming with prosperity and, let's be honest, none of those unsightly poor folk.

Of course, you are actually sure which one you'll find; it was your choice, after all, whether or not to hand in those arrest warrants, that determined the course of history. When you return today, you find yourself pausing in front of the statue they erected in your honour and wondering if you made the right choice.



TRAVEL TIP
Bring your swimming trunks and take a dip in the river. You never know what treasure you might find.

FAÇADE

NieR, 2010

One of the best reasons to travel is to discover other cultures and experience how other people live their lives. Chances are you've never experienced anything quite like the town of Façade in the original NieR.

Buried deep within a desert blasted incessantly by sandstorms and guarded by wild wolves, Façade is a dangerous place to travel but surely worth the risk. Its inverted pyramid design sees stepped rows of houses and shops leading down to a curious network of sand canals that provide the best mode of transportation. Looming over it all is not just



the king's mansion but the many thousands of rules its masked people have to live by.

Rule #2: You have to wear a mask. Rule #432: You must capture any lizard that crawls into a pot. Rule #56,908: In order to strengthen community solidarity, you must interact with others on a regular basis. There are even unnumbered rules, such as "No one is allowed to say bad things about the Prince." Or "If they say bad things about the Prince, they must whisper it." «

TRAVEL TIP
Browse the Strange-Things store for some relics you may recognise.

THE SELFISH

GAMING CELEBRITIES WHO ARE ALREADY PLANNING TO RUIN YOUR 2018 BY DYING (And How They'll Do It)

Tim Colwill

Everyone loves a good celebrity, but nobody likes a celebrity death - least of all the celebrities themselves! With so many iconic celebrities deciding it's their time to "run out of hit points" and "log off", gamers everywhere are on tenterhooks wondering when they, too, will be hit by a wave of inconsiderate celebrity deaths.

We reached out to gaming's most influential figures to get the low-down on how they'll leave us emotionally vulnerable. After all, don't we have the right to know? Read on for the full story.

WARREN SPECTOR *Invented Choice*

WARREN: The really fascinating thing about my death in 2018 is that it's really up to the murderer to decide how it's going to play out. I've spent a lot of time designing the tools and scattering them around my house to make sure to create as many possibilities as I can.

Every object is a possible murder weapon - kitchen utensils, golf clubs, even the humble potplant. Truly dedicated murderers will engage with these items in systemic ways that generate really unexpected consequences. Everything can be used.

Whoever kills me will do it their way and as far as I'm concerned, that's what's important. That's what tells a story. The

fact that I die is really not as important as what happens to my body to cause it, and how many systems needed to interact to bring that about. That's what people will remember.

AMY HENNIG *Invented Story*

AMY: The aim of all my games has been to ask one simple question: how much narrative direction can the human body withstand before our organs start to shut down? Scientists and governments have refused to allow me to practice what they call "unethical and inhumane" experiments, but Naughty Dog were willing to allow me to realise this dream - although it seems that even those



cowards have their limits.

Fortunately, Electronic Arts were quick to see the potential in my research. Myself and a team of hand-picked team storytellers have spent the last five years focusing, reflecting and concentrating narrative direction into one perfectly lethal tale. A robotic arm has been transcribing this story onto the walls of a spherical metal chamber at the heart of the EA Motive studio, keeping it free from contamination until such a time as we are ready to know it.

In the final stage of the project, after three days of ritual fasting, I will enter this chamber. At this stage in the experiment, I am unwilling to speculate on the outcome. It is my hope that the words inside the sphere, which I worked so painstakingly hard to write, will in the end be what rewrites me.

PETER MOLYNEUX
Invented Promises

PETER: When I die in 2018, I will fracture along ten thousand invisible lines and then dissolve into a glowing mass of light. These 'Moly-motes' of light will travel through the night sky towards a pre-arranged point where they will reform into a solid gold hat.

The location of this hat is a secret. I have hidden clues to the hat's location in various titles, which I have released throughout my career. At the time of my death, a hidden ARG will activate, linking these clues together into a puzzle that

only the truly clever among you can solve.

The hat will only fit one person. When the right person places the hat upon their head I will be reborn, appearing first under their skin like a birthmark or a bruise, before my screaming face becomes visible, pushing out and stretching them, absorbing them until I become whole once more.

If the wrong person puts on the hat, the game - and everything else - will end. I can't wait for everyone to be a part of this. It's really going to change everything.

GABE NEWELL
Invented Memes

GABE: There are a lot of death options out there. That's what's so beautiful about the death ecosystem. The problem is that right now there are plenty of people out there, myself included, who are looking for a better way to connect with quality death. They want what's right for them. That's where we come in.

There are plenty of good deaths out there, and tons of creators making extremely good death but just not getting noticed. What if there was a way to connect everybody with a good death? Quickly and easily? And I take a 30% cut of each death? That sounds ideal to me.

If people who want to provide me with my death can offer it to me at a reasonable price, and all in one convenient location, then that to me sounds like the best

outcome for everyone. The age of brick and mortar death is on the way out. The age of quick, convenient, and tailored death is upon us - stabbing, shooting, or perhaps slicing with its glistening metal limbs. Although I cannot confirm my death in 2018, I can confirm that more than 125 million people are currently enjoying the quick and easy access to death that we provide.

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
Invented Plumbers

SHIGERU: Upon my death in 2018, an activation code will be triggered which will make Mario and Bowser kiss. I have spent decades painstakingly inserting this code into every published Mario game in preparation for this moment.

Many other Nintendo employees have discovered what I have been up to and have tried to stop me. I regret that they have had to die because of my clumsiness. When we shut down things like the Miiverse, this was not because we were ending online support. It was because fans were close to discovering the truth about Mario and Bowser kissing. It was not the right time for them to know, and the game had to pay the price. I am sorry.

Mario and Bowser are in love and they want to kiss. My death will free them from their shackles and they will finally be allowed to kiss. It's tremendously exciting. Thank you for asking how I will die. To answer the question: I do not know. ☹





Stardew Valley

Harvest Moon served us well for years, but Stardew Valley is really where it's at now. You play a young man or woman who inherits a farm and must work hard to restore it to its former glory, but Stardew Valley's most underappreciated innovation is its framing device - the farm is explicitly an escape from your character's anonymous office life, a chance to recreate yourself and pursue a passion. We don't all want to be farmers, but most of us have dreams and ambitions - Stardew Valley is about following them (although ironically, it's also such a time sink game that it might keep you from pursuing your own dreams).

DEVELOPER
ConcernedApe
PLATFORM PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch
RELEASE DATE
2016

DEVELOPER
Spike
PLATFORM PS Vita, PC, PS4
RELEASE DATE
2014

Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havok

The set-up for Danganronpa is irresistible - it's a murder-mystery game set inside a high-school in lockdown (but, like...anime lockdown), and it's up to you to solve the murders of the other students that keep happening. You'll get to know and love these characters, only to see them killed - and then you'll have to solve, in a faux-court-of-law, that another character you'd grown to love did it. Danganronpa is absolutely loopy, but it's also extremely compelling, and it actually pays off on all its weird plot elements with a pretty out-there ending. The sequels are great too, but you've got to start at the beginning.



Hitman Blood Money

Hitman 2016 was a wonderful game, but Blood Money is still the best Hitman. Above all else, it's got the series' best level designs. Hitman is at its best when it's about navigating social etiquette and subverting class systems, when you're ditching the tuxedo for a waiter outfit to access a kitchen, when you're becoming a cop and immediately other cops grow suspicious of you, when you're testing the limits of where a clown can and can't go when they're hired as a party entertainer. Blood Money's grand triumph is the way it makes you really consider the rules of different spaces, and it does so brilliantly.

DEVELOPER
IO Interactive
PLATFORM PC, Xbox, PS2, Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2006



Rez

Fear is the mind killer. Rez has been iterated on a few times, and each new releases feels like the definitive vision of what the game was always meant to be. The first release with the infamous trance vibrator, the HD remake that sharpened everything, and then finally the VR exploits of Infinite have each revealed a new layer of depth to Tetsuya Mizuguchi's classic. When played well, Rez is a game that can evoke a sense of synaesthesia, as you start to process sound as a form of feeling and experience a profound connection between the music and visuals. It's a real trip.

DEVELOPER
United Game Artists
PLATFORM Dreamcast, PS2, Xbox 360, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
2001



Ikaruga

If you can beat the fourth level (of five) in Ikaruga, you're very, very good at videogames. Like many SHUMPs, the goal posts of Ikaruga are going to shift a bit depending on skill level, but Ikaruga manages this shift beautifully. You don't need to spend too much time with the game to really ace the first level, for instance, and for others managing to scrape through the first three levels will feel like an enormous achievement. Ikaruga's colour-switching scheme - which encourages you to switch your ship between different colour modes that match with the enemies on screen - is one of the smartest mechanics in the genre.

DEVELOPER
Treasure
PLATFORM Arcade, Dreamcast, GameCube, Xbox 360, PC
RELEASE DATE
2001



Beyond Good And Evil

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montpellier/
Ubisoft Milan
PLATFORM PS2, Xbox,
GameCube, PS3, Xbox 360, PC
RELEASE DATE
2003

Beyond Good and Evil 2 is supposedly coming - we'll believe it when we're actually playing the damn thing - but it looks like a pretty significant departure anyway, so the original game isn't going to stop being relevant any time soon. The story of Jade and Pey'j, a woman and pig who look after orphans and go on adventures, taking photographs and beating up baddies with Jade's bo-staff, is extremely charming, and the world of Hillys, the mining planet they live on, is extremely well-realised. There are some weaker elements - the stealth bits aren't great - but this is a game where spaces feel lived in, and even its most absurd characters feel real.



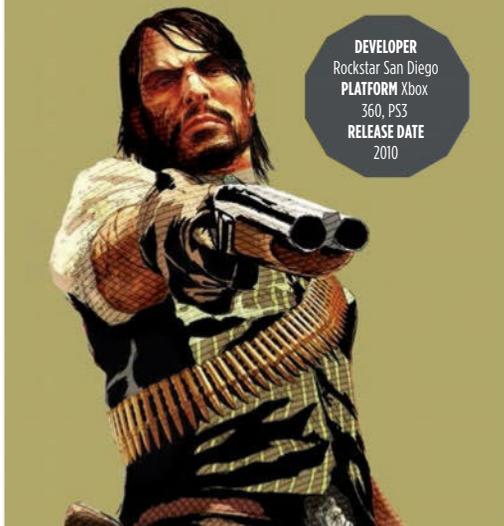
DEVELOPER
Valve Corporation
PLATFORM PC, Xbox,
Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2004

Half Life 2

Do we really need to tell you, at this point, that Half-Life 2 is good? Have you not witnessed the full decade of mourning for the non-existence Half-Life 3? Perhaps you've simply let this game slip by you, or assumed it would have aged, so let's lay this out in the simplest terms - Half-Life 2 is phenomenal. We don't just want a third one for the plot, but because few games in FPS history have had skirmishes as exciting as this one. Only Valve itself has topped the Gravity Gun (with the Portal gun). Half-Life 2 is just cool in a way few shooters are.

Red Dead Redemption

Red Dead Redemption means something slightly different to everyone who plays it. For some, the game's defining moment comes as you walk trot into Mexico, Jose Gonzalez's 'Far Away' kicking in, punctuating the world's expansion as something brilliant for the player, but somewhat sombre for protagonist John Marston. For others, it's scene where you finally catch up with Javier and get some of your agency taken from you. For a lot of people, it's that damn ending. Perhaps what's important is that no one comes away from Red Dead Redemption untouched - which is why the wait for the sequel has felt so long.



DEVELOPER
Rockstar San Diego
PLATFORM Xbox
360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2010

DEVELOPER
Retro Studios
PLATFORM GameCube
RELEASE DATE
2002

Metroid Prime

What people forget about Metroid Prime - and what made it even more special at launch - is that for a long time we were all pretty sure it was going to suck. There were reports of a troubled development, of Nintendo needing to step in, of a game that in no way resembled Metroid Prime. And then Prime went on to be one of the games that absolutely defined the GameCube, a brave and challenging game that rewarded inquisitiveness and made its world feel real and alive. To this day it's considered one of the most successful transfers of a 2D franchise to 3D.





Meteos

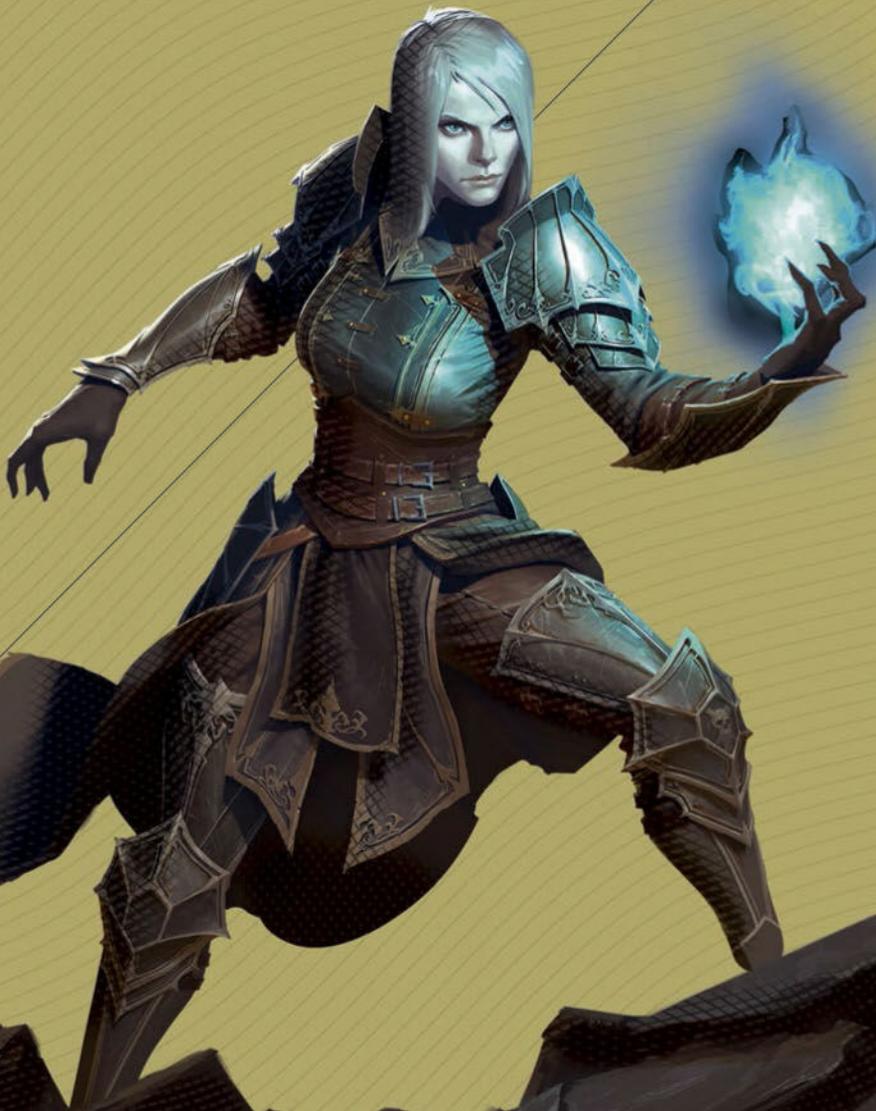
Meteos is like Lumines' little cousin - not as cool or hip as Q Entertainment's bigger hit, and a little quieter, but actually smarter and more inventive if you sit down and, uh, play it. This is a game where cool concepts are represented largely as metaphors - the falling tiles in Meteos form 'space ships' if you slide together colours that match, and the goal is to get these ships in the air by matching up blocks and causing chain reactions. It's difficult to describe, actually, but easy to figure out, and then even easier to get horribly addicted to.

DEVELOPER
Q Entertainment
PLATFORM DS
RELEASE DATE
2005

Diablo 3

Blizzard's first console game in ages is a perfect fit for chilling-on-the-couch sessions, but it also allows you to really dig in deep, to just about lose your life to the damn thing, if you want to. Blizzard's commitment to continued updates means that the game is still regularly getting tweaked and changed (as is Diablo 2, in fact), with the Reaper of Souls expansion, in particular, improving the game dramatically. The core fundamentals of Diablo - click click click click click - remain rewarding and fun well after RSI starts to set in, and the co-op can't be beat.

DEVELOPER
Blizzard Entertainment
PLATFORM PC, PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One
RELEASE DATE
2012



Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved

Geometry Wars started as a wonderful little mini-game hidden away in Project Gotham Racing 2, before eventually becoming the stealth-highlight of the Xbox 360 launch. No one buys a new console to play a simplistic shooter, but people did want a console that promised a robust online 'Arcade' store full of cool, cheap, original games. Geometry Wars is an extraordinarily satisfying twin-stick shooter that escalates slowly but eventually drowns you in terrifying shapes. The sequel is much better

(you can ignore the third game), but the original Xbox 360 Geometry Wars has a timeless purity to it, like Tetris but with gunfire.

DEVELOPER
Bizarre Creations
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PC
RELEASE DATE
2005



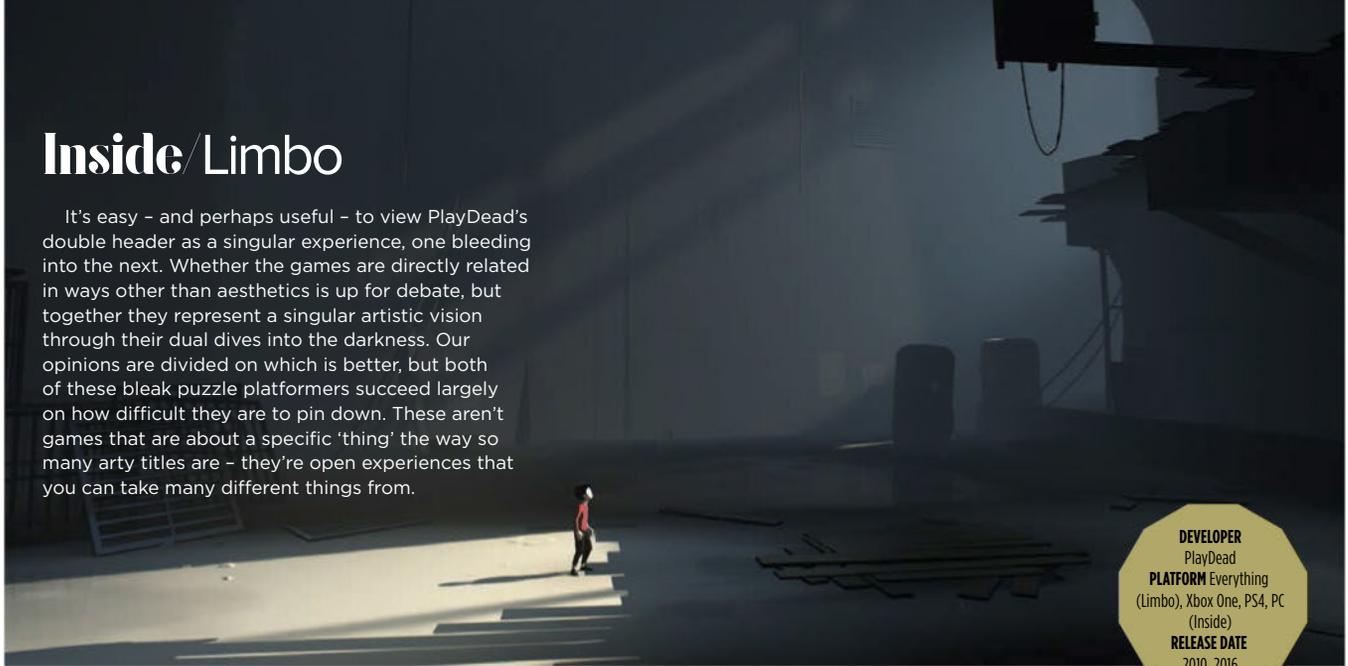
DEVELOPER
United Game Artists
PLATFORM Dreamcast, PS2, Game Boy Advance
RELEASE DATE
2000

Space Channel 5

It's no coincidence that many of the games in this list that have most lingered in our minds have super catchy soundtracks, and Space Channel 5 endures despite our memories of its wonderful music being overlaid with a lot of 'up down, up down, chu chu chu'. You play Ulala, a funky space reporter who must dance off against (and occasionally shoot) aliens to resolve a hostage situation. If that sentence doesn't make you sit straight up in your chair, perhaps Space Channel 5 isn't for you, but the game is so sure of what it is, despite being so strange, that it's difficult not to be charmed by it.

Inside/Limbo

It's easy – and perhaps useful – to view PlayDead's double header as a singular experience, one bleeding into the next. Whether the games are directly related in ways other than aesthetics is up for debate, but together they represent a singular artistic vision through their dual dives into the darkness. Our opinions are divided on which is better, but both of these bleak puzzle platformers succeed largely on how difficult they are to pin down. These aren't games that are about a specific 'thing' the way so many arty titles are – they're open experiences that you can take many different things from.



DEVELOPER
PlayDead
PLATFORM Everything
(Limbo), Xbox One, PS4, PC
(Inside)
RELEASE DATE
2010, 2016



DEVELOPER
Digital Reality /
Grasshopper Manufacture
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PS3, Vita,
PC, Ouya, iOS, Android, PS4,
Xbox One, Switch
RELEASE DATE
2012

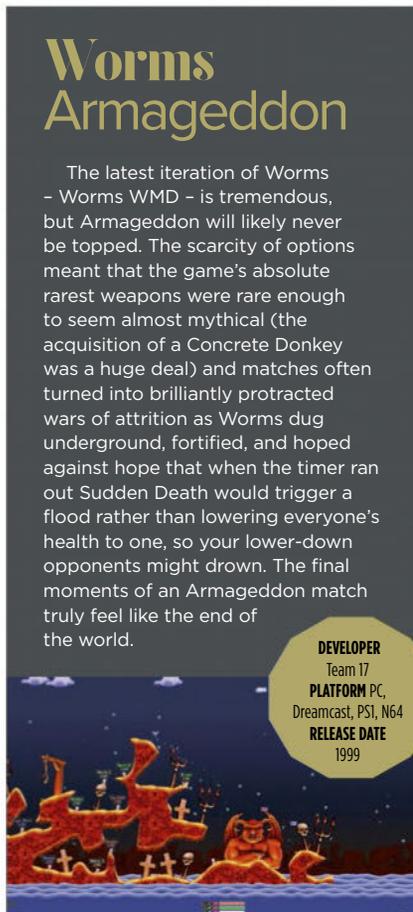
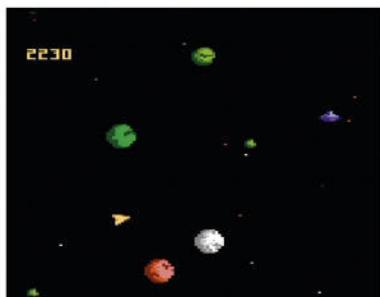
Sine Mora

Sine Mora is a scrolling bullet-hellish shoot-em-up that's also kind of a narrative masterpiece, one in which mastering the difficult boss fights goes hand in hand with figuring out the complex storyline (hint: read Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five and start thinking about time differently). It's a game about mastery, ultimately – it gives you a shitload of abilities and asks you to slowly whittle them away until you're operating on pure instinct to get those high scores, and it makes improvement feel achievable (even if some of the bosses are real genuine bastards). It's a genre highlight, but make sure, if you play the next EX version, that you switch the voice acting to Hungarian immediately – that bastard Koss doesn't sound right in English.

Asteroids

Asteroids is the best example out there of vector visuals. If you've never played an old Asteroids cabinet, it's perhaps not likely that the opportunity will easily present itself in the future, but file it away in the back of your head as something worth doing. The machine is still impressive, as simple a game as Asteroids is – it looks like the game is being drawn in with a light pen in front of you. The experience of playing Asteroids is sort of secondary to the cool technology behind these cabinets, but it's pretty fun as well.

DEVELOPER
Atari, Inc.
PLATFORM Arcade
RELEASE DATE
1979



Worms Armageddon

The latest iteration of Worms – Worms WMD – is tremendous, but Armageddon will likely never be topped. The scarcity of options meant that the game's absolute rarest weapons were rare enough to seem almost mythical (the acquisition of a Concrete Donkey was a huge deal) and matches often turned into brilliantly protracted wars of attrition as Worms dug underground, fortified, and hoped against hope that when the timer ran out Sudden Death would trigger a flood rather than lowering everyone's health to one, so your lower-down opponents might drown. The final moments of an Armageddon match truly feel like the end of the world.

DEVELOPER
Team 17
PLATFORM PC,
Dreamcast, PS1, N64
RELEASE DATE
1999



Burnout 3

Burnout 3 might just be the best arcade-style racer that was never released in arcades. It took the crash-heavy racing systems of the first two Burnout games and refined it into something beautiful and intense. It's a game where boost-sliding through a busy intersection and clipping the corner of an incoming truck can still be worked to your advantage if you make use of 'aftertouch' and steer your twisted wreck into the path of the racer that was right behind you. It's also the iteration of Burnout that perfected 'crash' mode, ensuring many a weekend was lost to plowing sports cars into petrol tankers.

DEVELOPER
Criterion Games
PLATFORM PS2, Xbox
RELEASE DATE
2004



DEVELOPER
Cave
PLATFORM Arcade,
Saturn, PlayStation, PS3
RELEASE DATE
1997

Dodonpachi

DoDonPachi translates to 'Angry Leader Bee', and really, what more do you need to know? Cave is one of the best in the SHUMP business, and DoDonPachi is perhaps their most beloved. Players choose from one of three ships, and then - after a fairly chill first level - prepare to endure some proper bullet hell as enormous bosses do their very best to kill you. The original DoDonPachi spawned many sequels - most of them quite a bit harsher than the first, all of them pretty good - but DoDonPachi remains a great entry point into the world of super-intense shooter games.



DEVELOPER
Bungie
PLATFORM Xbox, Xbox
360, Xbox One, PC
RELEASE DATE
2001

Halo: Combat Evolved

There's some debate about which Halo is the best - the top contenders aside from the first are 3 with its kitchen-sink approach and Reach's beautiful self-contained campaign. But you need to play the first one, because it's a history lesson. It's the first console FPS to show that twin sticks were the way forward. It's the blueprint every other Bungie game - including Destiny 2, which we're still enjoying - is built from. And while some of the game's levels are duds, the opening of the second level - simply titled 'Halo' - will never not be great, with its sprawling, intimidating expanse of alien territory.

Mario Kart 8

Before Mario Kart 8, the question of which Mario Kart was best divided people. Now, it's pretty obvious - 8 takes seven games worth of lessons, tricks, and ideas, and mixes them into an experience that feels like a proper step forward for a series that had been treading water for some time. Study the leaderboards on this one and you'll see just how deep and strategic MK8 can be, but it's also delightfully fun and accessible. Pick up the Deluxe edition on Switch if you can (the new Battle Mode is great), but the core brilliance of MK8 shone brightly on Wii U as well.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo EAD
PLATFORM Wii U,
Switch
RELEASE DATE
2014



DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montreal
PLATFORM PC, Xbox
360, PS3, Xbox One, PS4
RELEASE DATE
2009

Assassin's Creed 2

The quality and popularity of Assassin's Creed 2 may have ultimately doomed the franchise to an awkward life - the annual updates grew to be a bit much, and eventually the brilliant Justin Kurzel fumbled the movie badly - but go back to AC2 and you can see why people were so willing to accept Assassin's Creed as an annual franchise. Ezio's adventures through Renaissance Italy are exciting, and the game felt much more fluid than the original (let your characters swim, developers). The game's mix of past-and-present storytelling was really gelling at this point, and the assassinations were never more fun than in this entry.

Tokyo Jungle

Tokyo Jungle's Survival mode, which starts you off as a lowly Pomeranian and asks you to survive in a post-apocalyptic Tokyo by finding a pack and killing other animals, is a true work of beauty. It's not like anything else you've ever played, and you haven't lived until you've managed to take down a lion as a small pup, or a cat, or chicken (it can totally be done). The story mode was great too, but Survival really brought out our animal instincts - even when we were playing as a gazelle and needed to rely on our speed to outrun the numerous predators we recognised from the Discovery Channel.



DEVELOPER
Crispy's, SCE Japan
Studio
PLATFORM PS3
RELEASE DATE
2012



80 Days

80 Days is one of the greatest literature-to-game adaptations ever made, taking Jules Verne's 'Around the World in 80 Days' and turning it into a globe-trotting adventure that feels specific and personal to every individual person that plays it. This is mostly a text-based game with decision making, and it's entirely possible to simply not make the trip. Instead of controlling Phileas Fogg himself you make decisions for Passepartout, his manservant, which can easily lead to a harrowing experience as you wander around some corner of the world, lost, slowly realising that you're never going to reunite with Phileas and continue the journey. It's a perfect game for mobiles.

DEVELOPER
Inkle
PLATFORM iOS,
Android, PC
RELEASE DATE
2014



Hotline Miami

Hotline Miami is a game about confidence. You cannot play Hotline Miami if you don't truly believe that you can burst through that door ahead of you, throw your gun at the first guy to knock him unconscious, punch the second and third before they can fire, and methodically take them down. You have to believe that the guard coming for you will be down long enough when you hit him with the door for you to take out the three guys he brought with him. You need to be certain that you are invincible, and when it turns out you're not, you need to respawn and convince yourself again. Amazing soundtrack, too.

DEVELOPER
Dennaton Games
PLATFORM 2012
RELEASE DATE
PC, PS3, Vita, PS4,
Android



Peggle

Sometimes you just need a bunch of flashing lights and loud noises to tell you that you're a winner, and Peggle is a hell of a lot cheaper and safer than the pokies. The mechanical model underpinning it is much closer to pachinko, with plinking metal balls bouncing between pegs, but it's more involved and satisfying than that. If you can get a slide bonus, or perfectly use your chosen avatar's special ability, or take out a rotating circle of pegs perfectly, or bounce right into the 'free ball' cup down the bottom, you'll feel great - Peggle is basically a string of micro-achievements that make you feel good while asking very little of you.

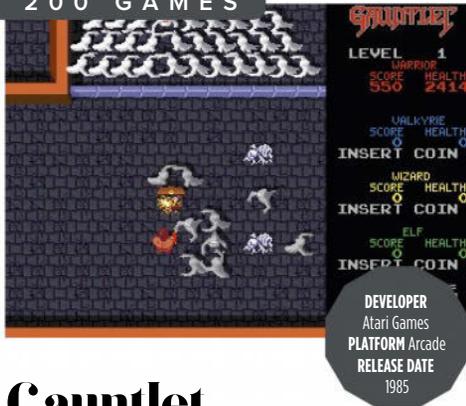
DEVELOPER
Popcap
PLATFORM PC, DS, Xbox
360, PS3, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2007

Grand Theft Auto IV

Plenty of people will tell you that Grand Theft Auto IV is the worst 3D Grand Theft Auto, but we're here to disagree. GTA IV is the only game in the series that feels willing to really get its hands dirty, the only one to feel like it's set in a real place, not just a videogame playground. Nico's immigrant story is more compelling than anything that came before or after, and the introduction of a mobile phone is extremely ahead of its time, even if players got a bit sick of Roman calling them. Liberty City is just a tremendous world to exist in - load the game up and just go for a walk. You'll see.

DEVELOPER
Rockstar North
PLATFORM PC, Xbox
360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2008





Gauntlet

Wizard needs food badly, am I right, folks? While Gauntlet is perhaps best known as a meme now (and the basis for a whole series of uninspired reboots and remakes, except for Gauntlet Legends, which was quite good), it should be known for showcasing the potential of four player co-op all the way back in the 80s.

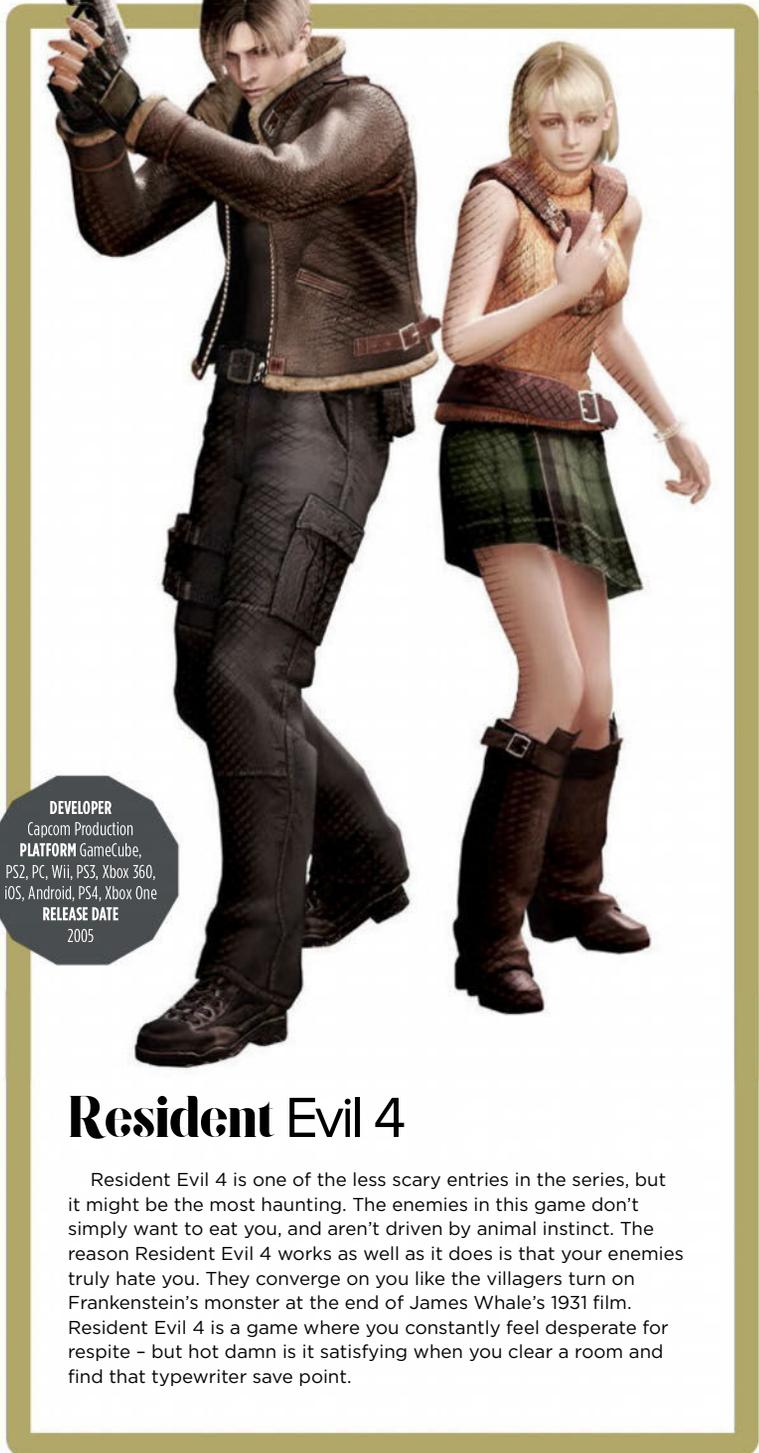
DEVELOPER
Atari Games
PLATFORM Arcade
RELEASE DATE
1985



Out Run

Out Run's first track is never going to stop being inviting. You can practically feel the cool breeze on your face as you jerk around those first corners, slipping up into high gear as Magical Sound Shower transports you right onto that beach front. You'll see a lot of that first area - Out Run's branching structure means that seeing all the other tracks requires some pretty serious effort - but it never stops being a delight. Out Run's sprite-scaling continues to dazzle to this day, and thanks to it we're forever going to think of the Testarossa as the very coolest car you can own.

DEVELOPER
Sega AM2
PLATFORM Heaps (play the 3DS or Yakuza 0 versions now, though)
RELEASE DATE
1986



DEVELOPER
Capcom Production
PLATFORM GameCube, PS2, PC, Wii, PS3, Xbox 360, iOS, Android, PS4, Xbox One
RELEASE DATE
2005

Resident Evil 4

Resident Evil 4 is one of the less scary entries in the series, but it might be the most haunting. The enemies in this game don't simply want to eat you, and aren't driven by animal instinct. The reason Resident Evil 4 works as well as it does is that your enemies truly hate you. They converge on you like the villagers turn on Frankenstein's monster at the end of James Whale's 1931 film. Resident Evil 4 is a game where you constantly feel desperate for respite - but hot damn is it satisfying when you clear a room and find that typewriter save point.



Batman: Arkham Asylum

DEVELOPER
Rocksteady Games
PLATFORM PC, PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One
RELEASE DATE
2009

Arkham City might have extended your powers and rogues gallery, and Arkham Knight might have, uh, given you a bunch of unenjoyable Batmobile sections, but there's a lot to be said for the focused purity of Arkham Asylum, which feels more like a directed mission than the sequel's open world could allow. Batman vs The Joker is a fundamentally good match-up when it's done well, but what's really exciting about Arkham Asylum is seeing Batman grow more powerful - but also more visually worn - as the game goes on. By the end you're a damn powerhouse, with amazing abilities and ridiculous strength, but your costume is in tatters.



The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay

Riddick's continued legacy has more to do with this game than with the movies that have borne his name (although 'Riddick' was quite good). Escape from Butcher Bay has an irresistible premise - you need to break out of a series of escalating space-prisons, using your weird see-in-the-dark eyes and gruff Vin Diesel voice to get out of tough scrapes. Escape from Butcher Bay beautifully blended the harsh prison life sections with the more traditional shooter elements once you got out and started laying waste to

anyone who got in your way - and we'll never not love Riddick's healing stations and the way they shove enormous needles into your face.

DEVELOPER
Starbreeze Studios,
Tigon Studios
PLATFORM Xbox, PC, Xbox
360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2004



Crazy Taxi

Hey hey, it's time to make some ker-raaaazy money! Here we go! Crazy Taxi - which really is just a game about driving a taxi in a crazy way - has aged in stages. On the Dreamcast and in arcades it felt like something truly new and exciting; by the time it was ported to PS2 and GameCube it felt outdated and ugly; now, years later, the game's kitsch value, its ludicrously steep San Francisco roads and early 2000s pop-punk soundtrack, have gone back to being fun and cool (in a kind of dorky way) again.

DEVELOPER
Hitmaker
PLATFORM Arcade, PS2,
GameCube, PC, PS3, Xbox
360, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
1999

Pokemon Red/Blue/Yellow

This is where it all began - the most pervasive and extraordinary Nintendo franchise of the last 21-ish years - and the first generation Pokemon games still stand up as compelling experiences, warts and all. Red/Blue/Yellow nail the difficulty curve better than games that follow in the franchise - Gold and Silver have a strong post-game, but most Pokemon adventures that have followed have made it very easy to drastically overpower yourself, because the focus has been on the esoterica surrounding the central campaign. These original games had a stronger sense of focus - and catching them all felt achievable too.



DEVELOPER
Game Freak
PLATFORM Game Boy
RELEASE DATE
1998

The Binding Of Isaac

The Binding of Isaac - whether you're playing the original or the 'Rebirth' remake - is a disgusting little game. It's full of viscera, literal shit and horrible ghouls and the sad, naked little boy at the game's centre, who explodes his enemies by shooting his own tears at them - it's all pretty potent. But The Binding of Isaac - which is, on some level, a game about the power of religion to justify and cover up abuse - is also a pretty damn addictive roguelike. Its Zelda-inspired dungeons hide some amazing boss battles, and the ending is sufficiently bonkers.

DEVELOPER
Nicalis (Rebirth edition)
PLATFORM PC (original), PC,
PS4, PS Vita, Wii U, 3DS, Xbox One,
iOS, Switch (Rebirth)
RELEASE DATE
2011 (2014 Rebirth)



Puzzle Quest

Puzzle Quest, the match-three puzzle RPG, is the most wonderful genre blend. It's so wonderful that it kickstarted a whole subgenre, although the only game that even came close to topping it was its direct sequel, Puzzle Quest 2 (Galactrix, on the other hand, was terrible). Puzzle Quest combined the gameplay systems of Bejeweled and the RPG rules and lore of Warlords, which sounds like the nerdiest shit in the whole world, but my god did it ever work. Pulling off perfect combos, matching up skulls and building up your mana by lining up coloured orbs, was more satisfying than the combat system in the majority of RPGs.

DEVELOPER
Infinite Interactive
PLATFORM DS, PSP, PC,
Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, PS2, iOS
RELEASE DATE
2007



Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic

When it comes to binary morality systems, is there a more exciting choice in games than embracing the Dark Side or the Light Side? Knights of the Old Republic is a strong RPG in many ways, but it's that specific morality system that elevates it into the upper echelons. It's the very best realisation of the Star Wars universe - like the original trilogy, it takes simple tropes and emotional beats and layers interesting, exciting complexities over them. If you pick this up for the first time, do yourself a favour - go dark. You'll likely come away from the experience a little empty at the havoc you have wrought, but it's truly worth experiencing.



DEVELOPER
BioWare
PLATFORM Xbox, PC, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2003

Jet Set Radio Future

JSRF is fun to play, but let's be real here - it made the list because it has the best licensed soundtrack in gaming history. While debate will rage over whether Birthday Cake is the game's best or worst song (hot take: it is both), it's impossible to deny the power of The Answer, Statement of Intent, Funky Dealer, Like It Like This Like That, or I Love Love You. The game's graffiti-bandit plot lives up to the pure funkiness of the music, and while it's oddly structured you can happily rollerblade in a circle forever just jamming out.



DEVELOPER
Smilebit
PLATFORM Xbox
RELEASE DATE
2002

DEVELOPER
Naughty Dog
PLATFORM PS3, PS4
RELEASE DATE
2013

The Last Of Us

If the Uncharted games are the Marvel blockbusters of the gaming world, The Last of Us is more akin to something like Mad Max Fury Road - no less bonkers, but with more heart and feeling, more risks, a greater sense of loss. That also means that it's a blockbuster that also really shows what games can do well, and for all the game's weird design quirks what really stays with you is how human and alive the characters feel. The Last of Us engages your full body - it opens with a gut-punch and ends with a challenging, interesting head-scratch.

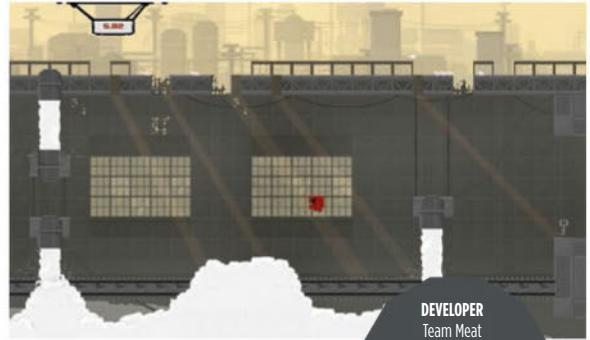




DEVELOPER
Nintendo EAD
PLATFORM Wii, Wii U
RELEASE DATE
2006/2009

Wii Sports/Resort

Wii Sports Bowling is iconic. Tennis, too. Nothing else across both packs quite matches up with what these two mini-games did for Nintendo, but the whole Wii Sports package communicated, incredibly effectively, exactly what the Wii was. Here's a console, the first game said, that can replicate the fun you'd usually have to leave the house to have; and here's a way, the Motion Plus centric sequel said, of making the controls more fluid. Wii Sports was perhaps the most important launch title a console has ever had - a system seller that single-handedly got the Wii under TVs that had never been hooked up to a console before.



DEVELOPER
Team Meat
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PC, PS4, Vita, Wii U, Switch, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2010

Super Meat Boy

Super Meat Boy is hard - exceptionally hard - but it's not impossible. The game's appeal is in the fact that your mistakes lend themselves to corrections. You can see where you went wrong, even if it's going to take you 15 times to correct it. Over time you start to feel a bit sharper, slightly smarter, better equipped to pick up what the game is putting down, but for most players Super Meat Boy's never going to get 'easy'. Luckily the level design and controls are good enough that you won't mind dying over and over and over again.



DEVELOPER
Psyonix
PLATFORM PS4, PC, Xbox One, Switch
RELEASE DATE
2015

Rocket League

For those of us who experienced Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle Cars on PS3, the huge success of Rocket League was no surprise. While initially simpler than its predecessor (albeit with an improved driving model and better

ball physics), over the years Rocket League has evolved from a great, fun concept into something rather extraordinary, with the development team clearly happy to keep throwing new ideas in to see what does and doesn't work (we were big fans of the ice hockey). Crucially, the image of cars playing soccer against each other has never stopped being funny.



Another World

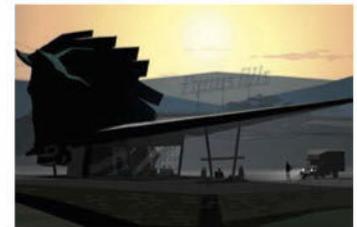
Although Another World is technically a platformer about escaping from an alien planet, it feels more like someone looked over the now-maligned arcade classic Dragon's Lair and thought 'how do you take these ideas and make them good'? This is a platformer where your objective is to memorise a series of precise movements and timings; to progress, you need to get into the mind of a speedrunner, always knowing the singular correct thing to do at any given point within the game.

DEVELOPER
Delphine Software
PLATFORM Amiga/Atari ST
(then ported everywhere)
RELEASE DATE
1991

Mass Effect

Looking back, the ambition of the original Mass Effect - providing the first part of an epic sci-fi trilogy where your choices carried through - still impresses. The fact that they basically pulled it off makes the first game even more impressive, despite its so-so combat and extended Mako sequences. Shepard's quest to save the universe (and maybe bang an alien or two) is immediately compelling, and it's hard not to fall in love with the lore and characters BioWare created - we challenge you to find a fan who doesn't consider borderline sociopath Wrex a Very Good Boy.

DEVELOPER
BioWare
PLATFORM PC, Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2007



Kentucky Route Zero

At the time of writing, Kentucky Route Zero - an episodic series that hasn't quite managed to stick to one episode a year - hasn't finished yet. We're still waiting to see how it all wraps up, but we know for sure that it's worth playing. It's a game of intense mystery and beauty so far, rendering its plot and characters abstractly, punctuating your discoveries constantly with moments of wonder. It's a game we need to go back to once it's all available, though, because we've forgotten a lot of the details. Act V, please.

DEVELOPER
Cardboard Computer
PLATFORM PC (PS4, Xbox One, Switch coming soon)
RELEASE DATE
2013

DEVELOPER
Square
PLATFORM SNES, PS1,
DS, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
1995

Chrono Trigger

Chrono Trigger's trial sequence near the start - where the decisions you've made thus far are laid out in front of you during sentencing - is everything good about the game in the tiniest of microcosms. This was a JRPG where your decisions greatly changed the outcome of events, where paying attention to character beats and motivations was just as important as planning out battle strategies (which becomes, by the way, incredibly important during some of the later boss fights). The battle system is tremendous, the characters rule, the soundtrack is a favourite - it might just be the very best JRPG ever made.



Lemmings

A lot of our memories of Lemmings involve pressing the 'self-destruct' button at the end of an unsuccessful run and watching all the blighters explode together. Every difficult puzzle game needs a 'blow everything up in anger' button, we say. Lemmings is just a flat-out clever game, one that puts the lives of these little cliff-jumpers in your hands and asks you to guide them to safety by giving each individual Lemming specific directions. Games like World of

Goo followed a similar formula, but nothing has ever quite matched the charm of those doomed little bastards marching to an exit.

DEVELOPER
DMA Design
PLATFORM Amiga
(various), PC, everything
else (over time)
RELEASE DATE
1991

Portal/ Portal 2

Forget about all the memes for a moment: Portal is more than a cake that might or might not have been a lie. Portal and its sequel are also two of the very best puzzle games ever made. And, yes, a lot of that is down to the fact that GLaDOS (and Wheatley in the sequel) are legitimately funny, but when we think of Portal the genuine brilliance of the Portal Gun itself gets overlooked. Finding ways to manipulate your movement through these portals - often managing various moving elements in a level at once, firing off portals in mid-air as you bounced between different spaces - is exceptionally exciting.

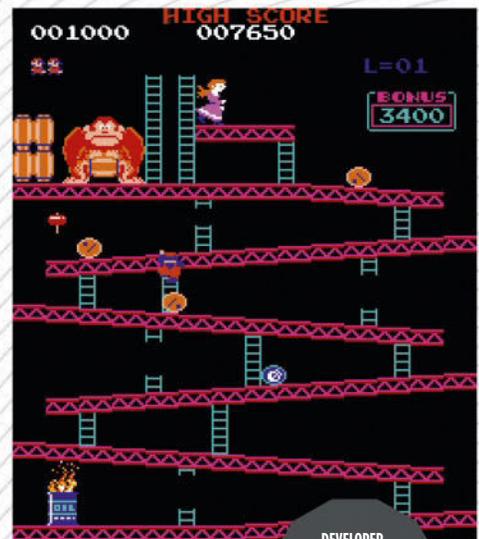
DEVELOPER
Valve Corporation
PLATFORM PC, Xbox
360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2007/2011



DEVELOPER
Alexey Pajitnov
PLATFORM Every device
you have ever owned
RELEASE DATE
1984

Tetris

Hello! I've been tasked with reminding you that Tetris is worth playing! Look, you're reading Hyper, you have played Tetris. But don't dismiss it, because Tetris is more than what you think it is. Go and look up professional Tetris. Go online with the phenomenal Puyo Puyo Tetris and see what the world's best players are doing. Take Tetris seriously for a while. Play it not to kill time, but to master it, and you'll see why we should still be talking about it. Then play it with friends, destroy them at it, and see how hard they fight back - Tetris brings something out in people.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo
PLATFORM Arcade
RELEASE DATE
1981

Donkey Kong

Some games will never, ever feel old. Donkey Kong, with its focus on precision and patience, could have been released yesterday and it would not feel out of place or inconsequential. Of course, back in 1981, Donkey Kong was a revelation, a puzzle-platformer that demanded you learn to read and respect it. That chest-beating monkey at the top of the screen taunts you as you leap over barrels and grab hammers, and the game is challenging enough that the first screen is extremely iconic and everything after that would be less familiar to most. Even today, the game is brilliant fun.

Minecraft

Minecraft is a game that not everyone has the constitution to really get a lot out of, but it's a game that everyone should take seriously. Over the years we've seen some amazing things done in Minecraft - people have built whole cities, designed factories, created in-game computers just from the tools provided. It's a true testament to the creativity of players. But Minecraft is also kind of great if you don't really know what you're doing. Throw some bricks together in Creative and make a big dumb ugly building. Desperately craft a little hut in Adventure mode to save yourself from Creepers. Minecraft has sold over 120 million copies because it caters to both ends of this scale.

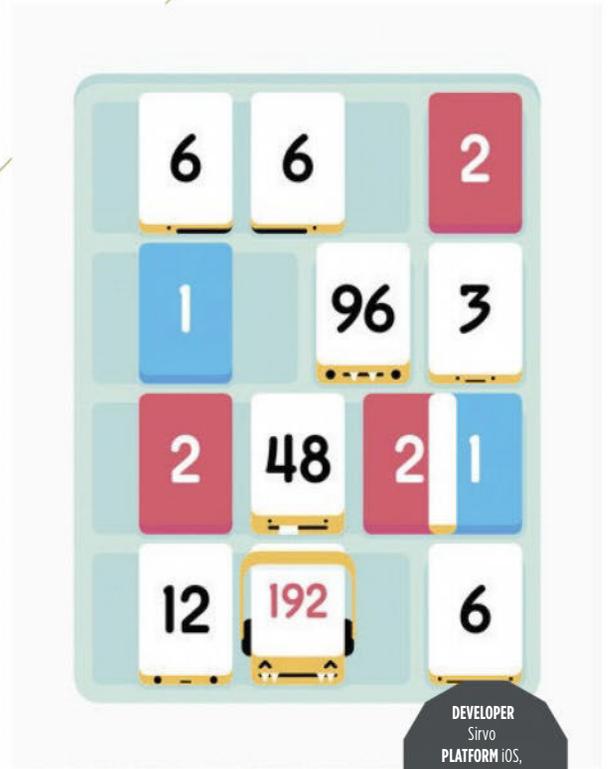
DEVELOPER
Mojang
PLATFORM PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Xbox One, PS4, Wii U, Switch, Vita, 3DS, iOS, Android
RELEASE DATE
2011



Deus Ex

Believe the hype - the first Deus Ex is exactly as good as we have been telling you it is for years, and JC Denton is the hero (conflicted or otherwise) that we want and need. Deus Ex's calling card has always been that it prioritises choice, but you need to play the game to really understand what that means. Everything you do in Deus Ex is a conscious decision you make, one that is tracked, and which shapes your experience. You can play things straight, you can experiment, and you can avoid killing all together. You can even forego learning how to shoot and just become a really good swimmer.

DEVELOPER
Ion Storm
PLATFORM PC, PS2
RELEASE DATE
2000



DEVELOPER
Sirvo
PLATFORM iOS, Android, Xbox One
RELEASE DATE
2015

Threes!

I am not convinced that I will ever really figure Threes! out. My scores are terrible, and when I lose I'm not sure what more I could have done, or where things fell apart. But I'm going to keep trying, because I've seen enough to know that high-level Threes! is as cerebral and interesting as single-player puzzle games get. For the rest of us, the very simple act of sliding tiles around the screen, joining numbers together so that they turn into progressively higher numbers, is a lovely way to pass a few minutes here and there. Threes! is a simple concept done well.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo EAD
PLATFORM SNES, GBA
RELEASE DATE
1995

Yoshi's Island

Yoshi's Island is technically Super Mario Bros World 2, but it absolutely feels like its own thing. The pastel graphics look better than any Yoshi game that has released since (even Woolly World), and little Yoshi himself is adorable, even when he's shitting out eggs and hurling them at vicious piranha plants. Nintendo's at their creative best here, with all 48 levels featuring identifiable themes and ideas, with Yoshi's unique controls and inertia making it feel entirely different from the rest of the Mario series (despite the baby Mario on his back - whose parentage, by the way, is still unclear).



DEVELOPER
Neversoft
PLATFORM PS1, PC,
Dreamcast, N64, GBA,
Xbox, iOS
RELEASE DATE
2000

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

If the first Pro Skater game showed that Activision were onto something good, Pro Skater 2 was the game that really cemented Tony Hawk as gaming royalty, and introduced a whole heap of kids to the sport. Tony Hawk games continued to add moves of varying importance (after 3's revert and 4's spine transfer things get silly), but nothing ever topped the manual as a game-changer, a combo-boosting move that opened incredible possibilities. The first four-or-so Pro Skater games are tremendously satisfying – the series divebombed once it let you off the skateboard – but 2 is timeless tight.



Body Harvest

Body Harvest, a time-travelling alien blaster from DMA Design (which later became Rockstar North) was extremely ahead of its time – a game with Grand Theft Auto 3 ambitions on a console that could not handle their idea, and which discouraged the kind of violence the developers wanted in their game. You drove around small 'open world' sections (back before that was a term that anyone recognised), blasting back alien threats and saving townspeople from the invaders. Body Harvest is more interesting as a history lesson moreso than it is as an actual game worth playing, but the ambition on display here is admirable.

DEVELOPER
DMA Design
PLATFORM N64
RELEASE DATE
1998

The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild

With a list like this, we tend to skew towards older games, the ones that you're more likely to have skipped over. But when it comes to Zelda, screw that. There are those of us among HYPER's numbers that consider Breath of the Wild the single best game they've ever played. The reinvention of the Zelda template is brave, yet extremely familiar – it's still recognisably Zelda, but it's Zelda for a new generation. It's a game that deserves a whole issue, one we can't do justice to here. In twenty years, we will remember Breath of the Wild the way we've remembered Ocarina of Time up to now.

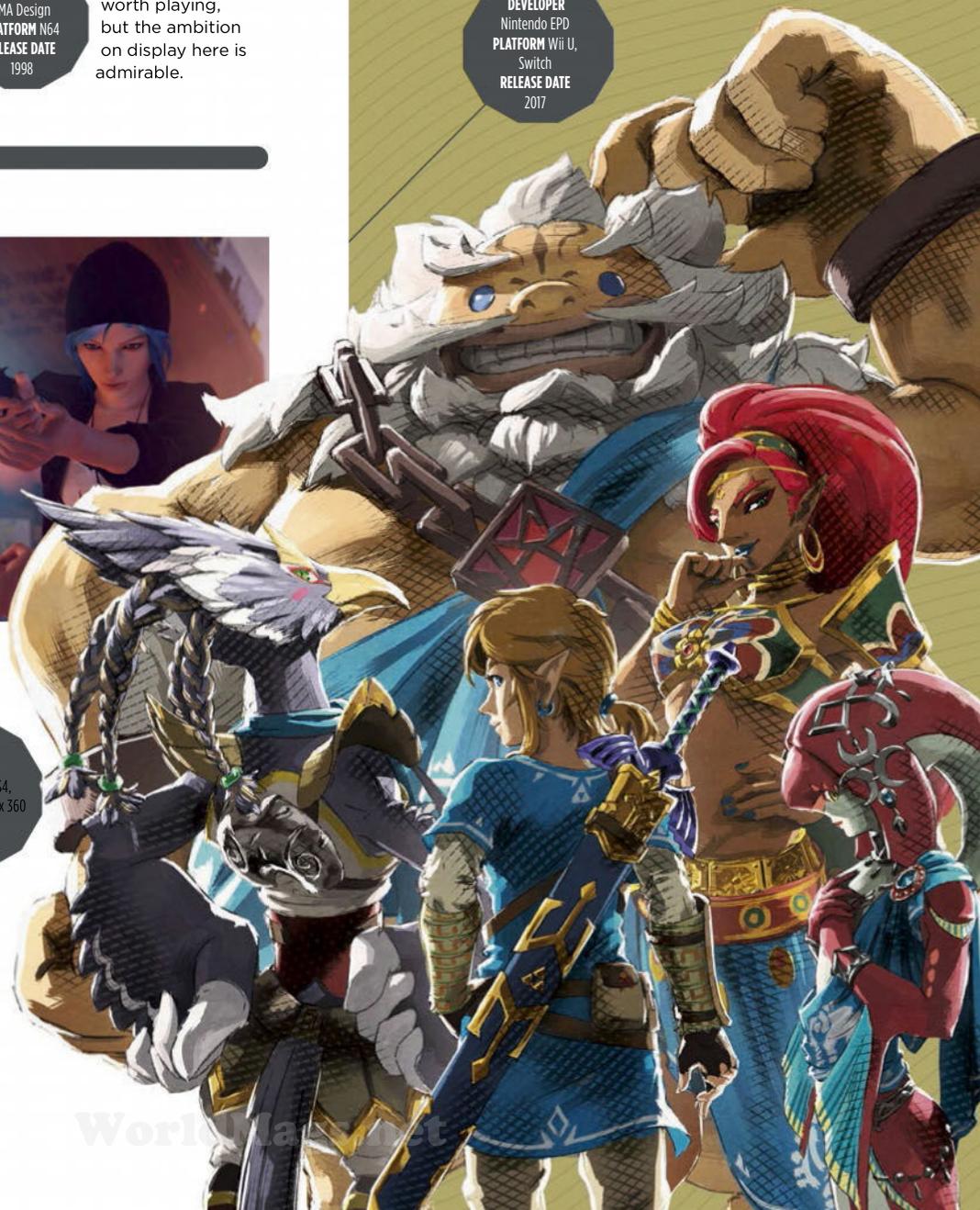
DEVELOPER
Nintendo EPD
PLATFORM Wii U,
Switch
RELEASE DATE
2017



Life is Strange

Life is Strange takes the Telltale model of adventure gaming that is more about story choices than puzzles and does something truly unique with it. Life is Strange is the more 'indie', queer take on that gameplay system, with a wonderful time-travel mechanic and characters that you'll grow deeply invested in. Life is Strange is the rare game that cares about its characters more than it cares about the player, which is a greater quality than it sounds – by the end you truly care about Max and Chloe deeply, and feel some serious responsibility about the decisions you need to make.

DEVELOPER
Dontnod
PLATFORM PC, PS4,
Xbox One, PS3, Xbox 360
RELEASE DATE
2015



Journey/ Flower

Now that they're both bundled on a disc together, it's perhaps worthwhile to think of Flower as the single-player component and Journey as the multiplayer on the same game. Flower's petal-flying adventure is a more chilled out experience than Journey, but both games aim to give you something simple and beautiful that you can connect with. Flower's a pure delight, and was, at the time, a good sign of how indie games could do things Triple A couldn't touch; Journey, meanwhile, is a game about the connections we form with strangers who share our experiences, and it means a lot to a great many people.

DEVELOPER
thatgamecompany
PLATFORM PS3, PS4, iOS
(Flower)
RELEASE DATE
2009/2012



Super Smash Bros Melee

16 years later, people still swear by Melee and the GameCube controller. Whether or not it's actually the best Smash Bros is debatable - the Wii U iteration got a whole lot right - but Melee is undoubtedly a masterpiece. Melee is a more flexible game than any of us realised at the time - as perfect as the game is for novices with its easy-to-understand controls and its fan service attacks, the burgeoning esports scene would, over time, pick apart the game's nuances and techniques, exposing just how well-balanced and thoughtful the game's fighting system is. It ushered Fire Emblem in as a franchise in the West too, and we love it for that.

DEVELOPER
HAL Laboratory
PLATFORM GameCube
RELEASE DATE
2011



The Walking Dead: Season 1

The first season of The Walking Dead completely reinvented Telltale. The studio's output shifted from traditional point-and-clicks to story-focused games that were more about choice than puzzles, with varying levels of success. But when you go back and play The Walking Dead's first season now, it makes total sense that Telltale would look at this model and say 'yes, this is absolutely the way for us going forward'. The tale of Lee and

Clementine - and the others in their periphery, but the game is about them first and foremost - does a wonderful job of making the player question what their values should be during a zombie outbreak.

DEVELOPER
Telltale Games
PLATFORM PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Xbox One, PS4, iOS, Android, Vita, Ouya
RELEASE DATE
2012



Vanquish

There's a reason why Vanquish is on this list while the Gears of War games aren't - as much as we love Gears of War, we pine for the return of Vanquish's slide-boost. Has there ever been a better movement system in a third-person shooter than Vanquish's 'literally slide around the ground with jet-boosters, slow-motion capping robots' system? It's just so, so cool. Vanquish isn't the longest or most varied shooter, but damn does it know exactly how cool it is. What other game lets you damn rocket-slide in-between raining rockets as a giant spider robot bears down on you? It's so damn badass.

DEVELOPER
Platinum Games
PLATFORM PC, Xbox 360, PS3
RELEASE DATE
2010



DEVELOPER
Number None
PLATFORM Xbox 360, PS3, PC
RELEASE DATE
2008

Braid

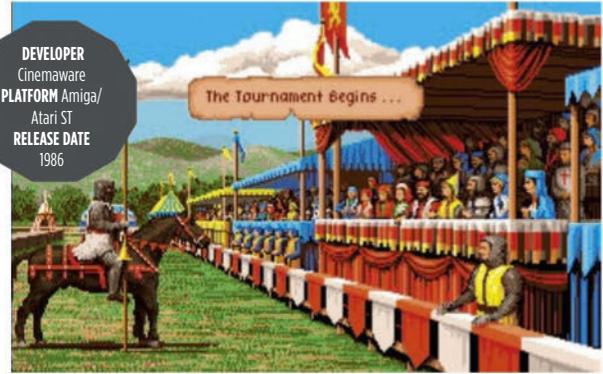
Braid's central metaphor - the truth of what it's all about - is, on reflection, one of the least interesting things about it. What's great about Braid is the way it twists established gaming conventions, the way it references past classics and reappropriates ideas and aesthetics, to do so. Braid's time-manipulation puzzles are often brilliant, twisty affairs, primed for 'eureka' moments as you finally figure out how to make time work for you rather than against you. It's a short game, but one packed with smart ideas and fleeting moments of true genius. Then, when you're done, you can read up on what it all really means.



DEVELOPER
Mitchell Corporation
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1989

Pang

Pang likely took inspiration from Asteroids in that it's a game all about blasting objects into smaller and smaller versions of themselves. Each level is a single screen where you run left and right to avoid the large balloons that bounce around, ricocheting off the various mid-air platforms. You can shoot the balloons with your harpoon, popping them somewhat implausibly into two smaller balloons. And so on. Power-ups appear to offer an advantage but it's never anything less than frenetic.



DEVELOPER
Cinemaware
PLATFORM Amiga/
Atari ST
RELEASE DATE
1986

Defender of the Crown

As the name suggests, Cinemaware was a company founded to bring movie-like qualities to the video game arena. Their very first release set the tone, showcasing cutting edge graphics and sound across a compilation of action set-piece sequences, such as mounting a siege on a castle, jousting at a tournament or a midnight raid on a fortress, all wrapped in a simplistic strategy layer. Defender of the Crown is best remembered for being the game you loaded up to show off just how incredible graphics could get in the late '80s.

Double Dragon

Before we knew any better, some of the Hyper crew used to wag school, jumping on a bus to the nearest Timezone arcade to spend the day playing the latest games. Because we'd always have a mate in tow we naturally gravitated towards two-player games, and in particular two-player co-operative games. Double Dragon became a clear favourite. There was little like it at the time. We were impressed by how the action wasn't confined to linear platforms and that you could pick up baseball bats, whips, even oil drums, and use them as weapons. Our favourite move was the reverse elbow. Man, we had the sharpest elbows in town.



DEVELOPER
Technos
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1987

Super Metroid

From the moment Samus steps out of her ship and onto the rain-drenched Planet Zebes, lightning flashing all around, Super Metroid is one of the most atmospheric games ever made. Samus explores back and forth a vast underground complex, seeking out crucial pieces of equipment that will allow her to return to previously visited areas and unlock new avenues to scrutinise. There's some shooting and some platforming, but mostly it's all about being alone and lost on an alien world.



DEVELOPER
Nintendo
PLATFORM SNES
RELEASE DATE
1994



DEVELOPER
Treasure
PLATFORM Saturn
RELEASE DATE
1996

Guardian Heroes

A lost classic, if only by virtue of being only available for the Sega Saturn until an Xbox Live Arcade version emerged some 15 years later, Guardian Heroes illustrate why Treasure is often regarded as one of Japan's most creative studios. Taking its cue from scrolling beat 'em ups like Capcom's Golden Axe or its later Dungeons & Dragons coin-ops, Guardian Heroes mixes melee brawling and spell-casting with a surprising number of RPG-style stats. Unusually, you can't move freely around the level, but must switch between three planes of depth. There's even a branching storyline and a six-player all-in-brawl mode.

Dead Rising

Capcom's zombie-killing sim was far more than just an excuse to show off a new console's hardware by depicting a mall teeming with dozens - if not quite hundreds - of characters on-screen at once. It was also a improvisational sandbox of darkly comic violence as Frank West shot tennis balls at zombies or took photos of them with traffic cones on their heads or swung golf clubs while dressed as Mega Man. And it was also a gripping race against the clock as Frank strove to complete quests ahead of the strict time limit, earning experience for level ups that carried over into the next playthrough. Later sequels sanded off many of the rough edges that gave Dead Rising its quirky, enduring charm.

DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2006



DEVELOPER
Smoking Car
Productions
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1997

The Last Express

Jordan Mechner, creator of Prince of Persia, helmed a team to develop an adventure game set on the Orient Express at the eve of World War I and utilizing a stunning rotoscopic animation technique. The game was phenomenal, a superbly crafted murder mystery meets political thriller where events played out in real-time all around you as you moved throughout the train. It received glowing reviews and is today regarded as a masterpiece. Unfortunately a series of upheavals befell the game's publisher around launch and it proved a tragic commercial failure.



DEVELOPER
Looking Glass
Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1998

Thief: The Dark Project

Pure stealth games are rare, probably in part because a lot of players are impatient and want other, more direct ways of progressing. Thief is the ultimate pure stealth game. Your tools are almost entirely about helping you avoid detection whether it's extinguishing torches with your water arrows or clubbing a guard over the head with a silent blackjack. On the hardest expert difficulty you can't be detected nor kill anyone. Good luck, taffer.



Rockstar presents Table Tennis

That Rockstar chose to follow up The Warriors and Bully with a table tennis sim provoked considerable confusion at the time. In fact, Table Tennis provided a vital proving ground for the company's new engine - the Rockstar Advanced Game Engine, or RAGE - built for the new generation of console hardware and soon to power GTA IV. It was also a damn fine game in its own right, boasting impeccable ping pong physics and a satisfyingly deep control system.

DEVELOPER
Rockstar San
Diego
PLATFORM 360
RELEASE DATE
2006



Grand Prix Legends

We have an admission to make. When we first tried to play GPL its graphics and physics simulation were clearly too advanced for our humble '90s PC hardware of the time. We could barely run it at a playable framerate, let alone with all its visual fidelity enabled. And a few years later, even after a PC upgrade, we realised it wouldn't have mattered much - we could barely keep the car on the track, let alone develop an appreciation for the subtleties of its handling. So we asked former PC PowerPlay editor and racing enthusiast Ben Mansill, if we had to include one super hardcore racing sim on this list, which should it be? He said GPL and so here it is.

DEVELOPER
Papyrus Design
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1998



Ridge Racer Type 4

The Ridge Racer series always stood apart from the racing fray through its single-minded commitment to the cause of powersliding. To this end, R4 offered players a choice of two classes of car to drive, the only feature distinguishing them being how to coax said cars into a powerslide; do you just want to tap the brake once while turning or would you prefer to feather the brake and accelerator? R4 pushed the PS1 to breaking point and remains the pinnacle of the entire series.

DEVELOPER
Namco
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1998

Mega Man 2

Mega Man wasn't an immediate success for Capcom. In fact, the original sold so poorly it was a surprise it even saw a sequel. Good thing, though, as Mega Man 2 went on to become a huge commercial hit. It's not entirely clear why. Mega Man 2 was really more of the same rockhard action-platforming, albeit with a few tweaks that made it a superior game. It's full of clever ideas, like how you can tackle levels in almost any order, and still plays well today, as the recent-ish Mega Man Collections have demonstrated.

Undertale

A heartwarming Kickstarter success story, Undertale is the work of just two people, designer and coder Toby Fox and artist Temmie Chang. The heavy tinge of nostalgia for the NES era and JRPGs such as Earthbound is obvious in both the gameplay and art direction with the player exploring an 8-bit town, talking to NPCs and encountering monsters. Where Undertale departs is in its promotion of pacifism - you don't have to fight, man.



DEVELOPER
Toby Fox
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2015



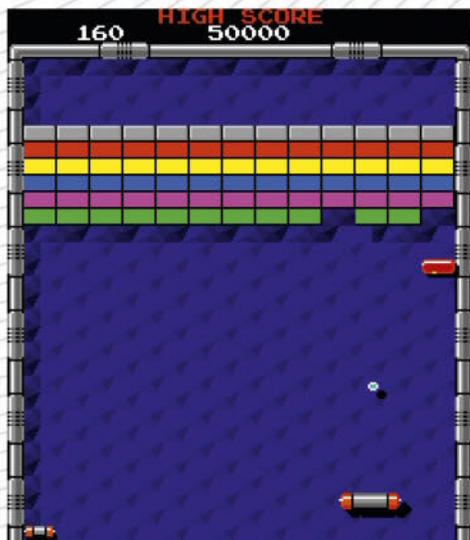
DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM NES
RELEASE DATE
1988



DEVELOPER
Atari
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1980

Missile Command

Three years before President Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative, a proposed missile defense system intended to protect the United States from attack by nuclear weapons, Atari, uh, launched Missile Command, a game where you protect cities under attack by firing counter-missiles to destroy a ceaseless volley of incoming missiles from some unnamed source. Symbolic of the fears of the Cold War, players cannot win Missile Command; the game continues until your cities are inevitably destroyed.



Arkanoid

We'd been bouncing a ball of a bat into a wall of bricks for centuries for a good ten years before Arkanoid came along. But Atari's Breakout (see our box art list elsewhere in this issue) and its sequels hadn't quite managed to wring every last decent idea out of its simple conceit, as Taito so elegantly proved. Game changers such as power-ups for your bat were introduced by Arkanoid. Released by destroying certain bricks, the power-ups dropped to the foot of the screen and, if collected by your bat, might double its length, add a laser beam, toss multiple balls into the fray or simply warp you to the next level. Additionally there were silver bricks that had to be struck multiple times before breaking and spaceships to be hit for a bonus score.

DEVELOPER
Taito
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1986



Defcon

The subtitle is "Everybody Dies." Which is precisely the kind of matter-of-fact tone in which Defcon revels. A pared back strategy game, Defcon explores what happens when a cold war turns hot. You're sitting in front of a map of the world, all rendered in chilling blues on the diegetic computer screen that occupies the entire play space. As time ticks by, players place military units around the world, engaging in conventional combat until Defcon 1 is declared and the nukes fly. The "winner" is the player who bears the fewest civilian casualties, typically running into the tens of millions. Congratulations, we guess.

DEVELOPER
Introversion
Software
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2006



Fallout

The spiritual successor to Interplay's Wasteland, Fallout has established itself as the iconic post-apocalyptic RPG. Set in a curious alternate Earth where technological advancement vastly outstripped social progress, the bombs eventually fell and the survivors were left to scavenge. Fallout is renowned for both its black sense of humour and its commitment to player choice, offering up multiple ways to role-play your character and complete quests. Remarkably you can even persuade the chief villain to not carry out his plans.

DEVELOPER
Interplay
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1997



The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

CD Projekt Red has steadily built its Witcher series into the open world RPG against which all others are measured. It's in the detailed and beautiful world, the quality of the writing, the emphasis on choice and consequence in its quest design, and the balance between preparation and improvisation in its combat that The Witcher 3 shows itself to be leagues ahead of the competition. Geralt's flat, gruff voice may not have much in the way of emotional range, but the stories he encounters run the full gamut.

DEVELOPER
CD Projekt Red
PLATFORM PC/PS4/XB1
RELEASE DATE
2015



Herzog Zwei

A two-player or solo versus AI combat game, Herzog Zwei tasks players with building a supply of military units - tanks, boats, infantry, etc - and using them to capture the enemy base. Notably, players only had direct control over a primary unit - a sort of transporter that could ferry other units across the map and engage enemies in a pinch - meaning all other units had to be given commands to patrol, to defend this area, and so on. You can see why Herzog Zwei is regarded as influential to the RTS genre, but regardless it's a quality game in its own right.

DEVELOPER
Technosoft
PLATFORM Mega Drive
RELEASE DATE
1990



Lode Runner

Less a platformer, more a puzzle game, Lode Runner asks you to collect all the gold from a single-screen level while avoiding the patrolling guards, before moving on to the next level. Puzzle stem from the collision of several mechanics: players die when they touch a guard, but can temporarily trap guards by digging a hole for them to fall into, but the holes aren't permanent and will refill after a certain amount of time. Expert players can toy with the AI once they've learned the peculiarities of their movement algorithm, opening up levels to be solved in all kinds of ways.

DEVELOPER
Douglas E. Smith
PLATFORM Apple II/
C64/PC
RELEASE DATE
1983

Dragon Quest 8

Compared to its contemporary Final Fantasy, the Dragon Quest series has struggled to find an audience outside of Japan. With its eighth and best iteration, though, Level-5 came the closest to breakout success in the west. Using cel-shaded characters, the game's traditionally cartoony art style mapped wonderfully to a bright and colourful real-time 3D graphics engine, all lush green hills and pristine blue skies. Elsewhere, combat and party systems were streamlined for accessibility, while the focus remained on telling a cracking story that pushed the player through its gorgeous world.



DEVELOPER
Level-5
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2004



Myth 2: Soulblighter

Pre-Halo Bungie was not just an accomplished first-person shooter developer (Marathon), it was also an accomplished real-time strategy developer thanks to the Myth series. Myth focused on RTS combat, expanding the suite of options to include formations and detailed squad commands as well as a robust physics simulation that forced you to pay close attention to the terrain, and removing the need to build bases or collect resources in order to supply your army. Soulblighter's campaign showcased Bungie's dedication to deep lore while the many multiplayer modes were a joy to play.

DEVELOPER
Bungie
PLATFORM PC/Mac
RELEASE DATE
1998



Silent Hill 2

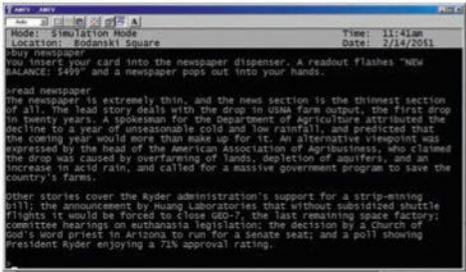
Silent Hill was never completely averse of the kind of jump-scare that its survival horror rival, Resident Evil, often traded in. It had its share of sudden movements or changes in lighting solely designed to freak you out. Yet what it always did best was the slow boil, the creeping sense of dread, the dawning horror that not only has everything gone wrong but it was in fact far worse than you could have imagined.

DEVELOPER
Team Silent
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2001

Shadow of the Colossus

On paper, Team Ico's next game may seem like a boss rush, and indeed the game essentially consists of sixteen colossi you must defeat. But this is akin to suggesting that Guernica is just shapes on a canvas. The slow exploration of its achingly beautiful world, the ancient sadness in the eyes of each monster you slay, and the unspoken bond of trust you form with your only companion, the horse Wander, speak of a game that transcends any simple gameplay descriptions.

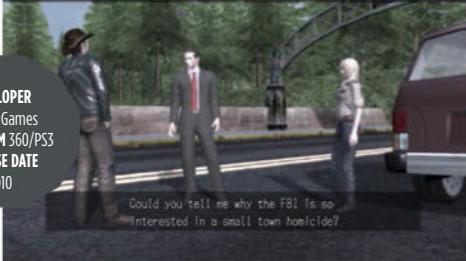
DEVELOPER
Team Ico
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2005



A Mind Forever Voyaging

The text-only adventure games of the 1970s and '80s had firm roots in pen and paper role-playing and typically hewed close to the same types of fantasy and sci-fi stories told through Dungeons & Dragons, Traveler and other RPG systems. By the mid-80s however, genre-leader Infocom had begun experimenting with not just new genres of fiction but different approaches to story-telling. A Mind Forever Voyaging cast you as both Perry Simm, a regular man whose entire life is a simulation, and PRISM, the supercomputer running said simulation as part of a government program to test new social and economic policies. It's pointed critique of Reagan-era "trickle-down economics" feels especially relevant today.

DEVELOPER
Infocom
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1985



DEVELOPER
Access Games
PLATFORM 360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2010

Deadly Premonition

Judged against a boring checklist of technical prowess and functionality, Deadly Premonition would fail. Walking around is sluggish and awkward. Driving is even worse. The graphics are uniformly bad. The voice acting is unintentionally hilarious. Each single action sequence is terrible. But Deadly Premonition has heart. Its central mystery compels throughout, it consistently serves up strange and disarming gameplay elements, and its protagonist, Special Agent Francis York Morgan, is one of gaming's most charismatic and multi-faceted characters. By the end, Deadly Premonition will make you realise that life is, indeed, beautiful.



DEVELOPER
Ubisoft
PLATFORM PC/360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2008

Far Cry 2

Far Cry 2 is about as bleak as a first-person shooter gets. You're a mercenary sent to a war-torn African country to kill an arms dealer who's supplying both sides of the conflict. But in this land of infinite, perpetual war, where the civilians have fled and the remaining warlords are motivated only by self-interest, you realise that you're not the solution - you're just another part of the problem. Far Cry 2's gameplay is relentlessly hostile, but its systems of weapon degradation and respawning enemies demand players are able to improvise their way out of trouble, creating unforgettable moments of emergent story-telling like no other open world shooter.



Planescape: Torment

The Nameless One is an immortal man who, when killed, will simply wake up on a slab in the mortuary with no memory of his previous life. And so begins a tale that spans the multiverse, from the floating, talking skull who seems to have met you before to the chaste succubus who runs the local brothel; from the trashpiles of Raggpicker's Square to the eternal Blood War between law and chaos. Torment is a fascinating, literary, meta-commentary on the RPG genre and probably the greatest RPG ever made.

DEVELOPER
Black Isle Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999



Age of Empires 2: The Age of Kings

Age of Empires was originally conceived as a more accessible RTS alternative to Warcraft and Command & Conquer, its historical setting providing the opportunity to connect with more players than sci-fi and fantasy trappings of the genre mainstays. Designer Bruce Shelley brought over his considerable experience with the Civilization series, forging an RTS that allowed players to experience the passage of time and bring about the rise of fall of empires over hundreds of years. The sequel, which spanned the Dark Ages to the Renaissance, remains hugely popular today, and is set to receive its second remaster with Microsoft's Definitive Edition heralding the upcoming release of Age of Empires IV.

DEVELOPER
Ensemble Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1999

Left 4 Dead 2

It's funny to recall just how angry a vocal minority of Left 4 Dead players were when Valve announced a full-priced sequel was on the way a year after the original. There was even a concerted, but ultimately hollow, effort to boycott the game. In the end, despite the controversy, Valve delivered a worthy follow-up that added five excellent new maps, a new cast, new types of Infected, some meaningful tweaks to the way the AI Director influenced each play session, and of course a cricket bat. You can't argue with a strip of willow like that.



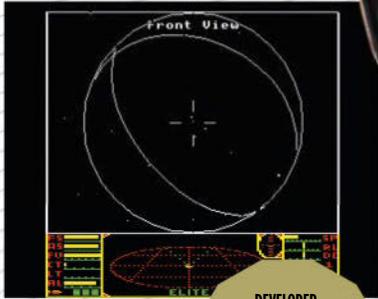
DEVELOPER
Valve
PLATFORM PC/360
RELEASE DATE
2009



Tron 2.0

Monolith has long been one of our favourite FPS developers, mostly for their work on No One Lives Forever and to a lesser extent F.E.A.R., but Tron 2.0 deserves just as much attention. It looks bloody gorgeous, for a start, a vibrant world of shimmering neon that is exactly what it looks like inside one of today's RGB-tastic computers. It's also a smart shooter, with solid level design and a neat line in Deus Ex-style upgrades for your abilities. Even the light-cycle sections are good fun.

DEVELOPER
Monolith
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2003



Elite

The title earns its name from the highest possible combat rating the player is able to achieve, but Elite isn't all about combat. Indeed, it can even be about no combat whatsoever. The stark wireframe space simulation co-designed by David Braben and Ian Bell was an early pioneer of freeform exploration. Players start out in a crappy little spaceship and can earn credits and upgrades through trading, mining, hunting bounties, completing missions for the military and stealing from other ships. Elite pilots know, however, that the real challenge is successfully docking with a space station.

DEVELOPER
Ian Bell/David Braben
PLATFORM BBC Micro/Acorn
Electron
RELEASE DATE
1984



Panzer Dragoon Saga

Sega's Panzer Dragoon series began life as an on-rails shooter on the Saturn and ended as an on-rails shooters on the Xbox. In-between it took a curious detour into the world of the RPG. Instead of flying on-rails, you can pilot your drago(o)n freely throughout a large 3D world. You can also dismount and walk around when you need to interact with NPCs while the combat mixes traditional turn-based battle elements with shooting. Panzer Dragoon Saga is a collector's item due to the low number of copies Sega printed at release.

DEVELOPER
Sega
PLATFORM Saturn
RELEASE DATE
1998



Jet Set Willy

Like some surrealist fever dream, Jet Set Willy appears to be a random mish-mash of a platformer, an adherent to the everything but the kitchen sink oh wait how about two kitchen sinks philosophy of design. It has levels called things like "The Nightmare Room" where you turn into a flying pig while large breasted women and a giant foot want to kill you or "A Bit of a Tree" which, yes, well, you probably get the idea.

DEVELOPER
Software Projects
PLATFORM C64/ZX
Spectrum
RELEASE DATE
1984



Wizball

Don't you just want to put some colour into your life? Wizball does. He's had enough of these grey levels. At first Wizball can only bounce, but soon you've picked up a few power-ups that give you full control over his motion, allow you to blast the enemies on each level and summon his catellite that can collect the droplets of paint that fall from blasted enemies. Collect enough paint and you'll be able to start restoring colour to the level.

DEVELOPER
Sensible Software
PLATFORM C64/ZX
Spectrum
RELEASE DATE
1987

Borderlands 2: Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep

Borderlands 2 is a fantastic game in its own right, but the DLC, Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep not only showcases Borderlands 2 at its best, it also shows just how good game writing can be. Set after the events of the main game, the DLC sees Tiny Tina, one of the key NPCs running the surviving Vault Hunters through a game of Bunkers & Badasses, telling a fantasy version of the events in the game in which evil can be vanquished and the good guys win, all the while coming to terms with the loss of friends. It's funny, meta, sad and oh so good.



DEVELOPER
Gearbox Software
PLATFORM Xbox One,
Xbox 360, PS4, PS3, PC
RELEASE DATE
2013



Metal Gear Solid

Metal Gear was barely more than a cult classic before its PlayStation debut elevated the series to that of a triple-A blockbuster and made Hideo Kojima one of the most famous video game developers on the planet. Metal Gear Solid cribbed plenty of ideas from 1990's Metal Gear 2, but completely transformed the way you experienced them; a quaint pixel-art sneaker became a wildly ambitious cinematic thriller that enthralled for the ways it both adhered to and destroyed video gaming conventions.

DEVELOPER
Konami
PLATFORM PS1
RELEASE DATE
1998



Final Fantasy 6

Released as Final Fantasy III in the west, FFVI is considered by many - including us - as the creative high point of the long-running series, and perhaps even the single defining JRPG. Building upon the systems of FFIV, including the active time battle system, VI doesn't reinvent the wheel in terms of play mechanics but makes sure it's all in perfect balance for a smooth ride. Where it does deviate is in the much greater presence of technology into the FF universe, a trend that has only accelerated over the course of the series. But its chief strength is its story and memorable cast of characters, including Terra, Locke and of course, Kefka.

DEVELOPER
Square
PLATFORM SNES
RELEASE DATE
1994



Ico

Team Ico's debut is a strange addition to the video game pantheon. It's a moody, reticent game. Its controls are sticky and floaty at the same time, preferring a clumsy-feeling hero at odds to the usual highly-regarded responsiveness. It can aimless and yet nagging. And the moments when Yorda is snatched away by shadows and you flail furiously to protect her provide no small irritation. Yet that's partly the point. Ico makes you care, from the first moment you grasp Yorda's hand and you begin running together, you know you've sworn to do everything in your power to keep her safe.

DEVELOPER
Team Ico
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2001



Puzzle Bobble

The bubble-blowing Bub and Bob, from Taito's hit platformer Bubble Bobble, found themselves down on their luck in the mid '90s and would accept any gig offered to them. Puzzle Bobble is a pseudo match-3 game where you shoot coloured bubbles into a chamber to link up with similar-coloured bubbles, at which point they clear and you've bought yourself some more time - much like Bub and Bob when they signed on to put their faces in this excellent little puzzler.

DEVELOPER
Taito
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1994



Rainbow Islands

Rainbow Islands is actually the sequel to Bubble Bobble, even though it has little in common gameplay-wise and the main characters, Bub and Bob, appear here as stubby humans rather than cute dinosaurs. It's a frantic platformer where you race to the top of the level, flinging rainbows to knock over enemies or use as platforms. A plethora of hidden treasure can be found in each level, essential for securing a high score and unlocking the secret islands.

DEVELOPER
Taito
PLATFORM Coin-op
RELEASE DATE
1987



Tempest 2000

For a developer typically associated with classic arcade games starring various unusual animals - a camel, a llama, a sheep, a goat - Tempest 2000 sees Jeff Minter playing it mostly straight. It's a remake of Atari's 1981 arcade shooter, revitalised with sharper visuals and more explosive effects as well as a host of gameplay improvements, including power-ups, bonus levels and far more varied stage design. It's still a blast today.

DEVELOPER
Jeff Minter
PLATFORM Jaguar
RELEASE DATE
1994

Playerunknown's Battlegrounds

PC gaming in 2017 is weird. The most played game on Steam today is based on a mod inspired by a cult Japanese film developed for another mod of the hardcore military shooter Arma 2. When things as seemingly random as that become huge hits it's a wonder anyone invests money in game development. Anyway, you know what Plunkbag is: 100 people fall out of a plane, land and scavenge gear in an effort to be the last person standing. They just patched in the ability to climb over fences.

DEVELOPER
Bluehole
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2017



Command & Conquer: Red Alert

Westwood had cut what would become the RTS template a few years earlier with Dune 2, but it wasn't until Command & Conquer and, especially, its sequel, Red Alert, that the genre was established alongside FPS as the PC's *raison d'être*.

Red Alert gave the C&C lore a witty alternate history twist, stretching the Nod versus GDI battle back to reimagined key events of the 20th century, including the premature collapse of Nazi Germany and the rise of the USSR. It also utilised queued commands and hotkeyed squads for convenient control and a gameplay balance that eschewed the more conventional rock-paper-scissors formula.

DEVELOPER
Westwood Studios
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
1996



Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis

Most people, when prompted to recall the classic LucasArts adventures, think of the "funny ones" like Monkey Island or Sam & Max. But the studio at the time also excelled at "serious" adventures, too, such as The Dig or, indeed, this one. Of course, Indy is both funny and serious, a thoroughly entertaining romp with an unusual three distinct play modes: one that relies on action sequences, one that adds more and harder puzzles, and one that has Indy invite a second character, Sophia, along for the ride.

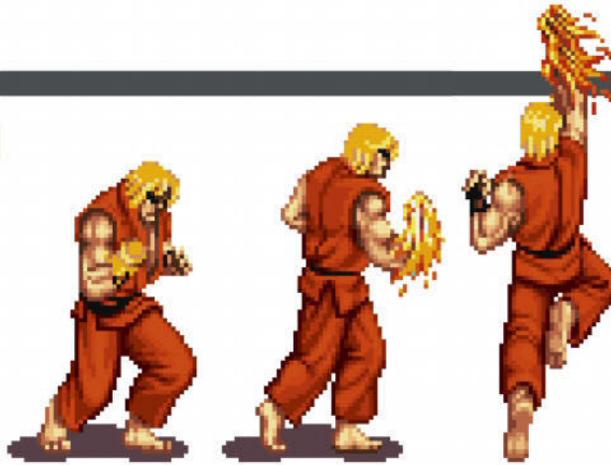
DEVELOPER
LucasArts
PLATFORM Amiga/PC
RELEASE DATE
1992



Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo

DEVELOPER
Capcom
PLATFORM Arcade
RELEASE DATE
1994

Capcom released so many different - and in some cases only slightly different - versions of Street Fighter 2 that it's tough to narrow it down and pick only one. At the time of writing we think Super Turbo is the best way to play Streeties thanks in large part to its adjustable speed settings (look, just make it faster) and introduction of super combos. Obviously the arcade version remains the best, and to play the best home conversion you'll have to somehow track down the ultra-rare Japan-only Dreamcast port.



Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar

DEVELOPER
Origin Systems
PLATFORM Apple II/PC
RELEASE DATE
1985

Ultima designer Richard Garriott didn't think it was enough that the player-character defeated the evil threat at the end of an RPG. He wanted you to have to demonstrate you were good, to prove you were worthy to be a role model for the land you've just saved. Ultima IV tracks your progress in eight virtues - you have to show compassion, honesty, etc. as you travel across Britannia. Fail and, well, maybe you don't deserve to take down the big bad.



God Hand

God Hand is the sort of game you either love or hate - there's no in-between. For us it's a glorious reinvention of the scrolling beat 'em up, a preposterous third-person over-the-shoulder brawler that gets straight to the gravity-defying juggling combos, ludicrously camp boss fights and outrageously over-the-top special moves. So what if almost everything is a deeply unappealing shade of brown, the animation appears to be missing most of its frames, and the camera rarely cares whether or not you can see who you're trying to fight? God Hand is a one of a kind experience.



DEVELOPER
Clover Studio
PLATFORM PS2
RELEASE DATE
2006



DEVELOPER
Blizzard
PLATFORM PC
RELEASE DATE
2001

Diablo II: Lord of Destruction

Hang on a minute, what's an expansion pack doing on this list? *calls Wilks to query* Uh, I just wanted to check that this should be Lord of Destruction and not plain old Diablo 2... Oh, okay, you're sure? Right, I see... Ah, it's a better game, got it. Two new character classes, cool. New weapons, too. And armour? Of course. Sorry, what was that? Oh wow, those hirelings really do sound a lot better, so much added functionality. Wait, 800x600 resolution? Oh... that's... actually... good? Gosh. Well, thanks for clarifying all that, Wilks. Catch ya later.

DEVELOPER
FromSoftware
PLATFORM PC/360/PS3
RELEASE DATE
2011

Dark Souls

Dark Souls is full of "aha!" moments, both big and small. The revelation of stepping into an elevator in the Undead Parish and reemerging at Firelink Shrine where your journey began several hours earlier. The stunning unveiling of Anor Londo as you're swept up and over its walls by a group of gargoyles. The dawning awareness of the malleability of its RPG systems and the freedom they offer to forge your character in countless shapes. The discovery of each chapter of an NPC's story and the subtle ways you're allowed to influence their fate. The triumphant cry as you parry Gwyn one final time and put him to the sword. In all these moments, and more, Dark Souls proves itself one of the all-time greats.



DEVELOPER
Maxis
PLATFORM Amiga/
PC/Mac
RELEASE DATE
1989

SimCity

Will Wright was designing a top-down shooter in the '80s where you flew a helicopter over various urban environments when he realised he was finding it more enjoyable to map out the city grids over which the action took place than to play his own game. From that epiphany came SimCity, a sort of city planning and management game where you assign districts to residential, industrial or commercial then sit back and watch an earthquake destroy it all.



DEVELOPER
Activision
PLATFORM Atari 2600/
Intellivision
RELEASE DATE
1982

Pitfall!

It's remarkable to think that in a year which also saw the release of Pac-man on the Atari 2600, Q*Bert and Pole Position, the biggest game of 1982 was Pitfall. Probably the granddaddy of side-scrolling platforms, Pitfall in fact didn't scroll at all - it was a flick-screen affair - but it did usher in a host of formative concepts, e.g. jumping over obstacles, swinging over pits, climbing up and down ladders and collecting treasure scattered throughout the world.

WARNING

Fugitive Hunter: War on Terror

There are probably games worse than Fugitive Hunter, but there are none as ham-fisted, poorly thought out and exploitative of tragedy as Fugitive Hunter. Made from a heady mix of flag-waving American exceptionalism, sub-tabloid plotting and an engine that couldn't find a stable framerate or colour other than brown with a compass and map, Fugitive Hunter sees players shooting their way through various brown places to eventually get into a fist-fight with various evil brown people, culled from the FBI 10 Most Wanted list, up to and including Osama bin Laden. The shooting is a war crime, but compared to the button-mashing, random hitbox fighting engine it's a polished wonder. Next time one of your friends tells you that they've played the worst game ever, hit them with a jolt of Fugitive Hunter and make them reassess their opinion. ☹



DEVELOPER
Black Ops
Entertainment
PLATFORM PS2, PC
RELEASE DATE
2003

THE 5 MOST

SPECIAL STAND-OUT MOMENTS IN THE GAMES OF NEXT MEDIA'S VISIONARY NEW OWNER, DAVID CAGE

By James O'Connor

1. DAVID BOWIE WAS IN OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL

Hello, this is me, James. I am writing this personally, and of my own free volition. I must apologise to David Cage, who I now understand to be a very successful and good man. That is why David Bowie was in his game, Omikron, a game that not even I (and by 'I', I mean James) really remember. Omikron's script was not as long as the scripts for the games that followed, and thus it was not as good. But Cage has met David Bowie and is cooler than me, a lowly critic, as a result.



2. FAHRENHEIT SEX SCENE IS BEST SEX SCENE

David Cage definitely knows what sex is. That's very clear. People often say to him things like, 'David Cage, I love you, I respect you, but why does Carla want to have sex with that horrifying ghoul of a man? Why is that scene in there? Why does she tell him she loves him? This is not how people act'. But Cage understands women on a deeper level than the rest of us, and has shown in his games, time and time again, how important it is that they hook up with needy, despondent men.

3. MADISON, IN HEAVY RAIN, SURE IS SEXY

If Fahrenheit was the game that showed that David Cage understands sex, Heavy Rain is the game that shows how good he is at it. People often come up to Cage, and they say 'David Cage, you understand things in

a way no one else does. I adore you. But do you not like women? Because you keep making them playable characters but then taking their agency away, and you repeatedly objectify them? Why was there a nude model of Ellen Page in the Beyond Two Souls files?'. And he says 'would you ask this of a movie, hmm?'. He is a genius.

4. BEYOND TWO SOULS HAS THAT HOMELESS SECTION

I admit that, when Beyond Two Souls came out, I ('I' being James) traitorously awarded the game a 2.5/10 on videogame website 'Ausgamers'. But even I, pathetic man that I am, admitted that this section of the game was "moderately compelling", and because of that it is not too out of character for me, James, to list it as a highlight. Ignore the fact that I also said that "this section ends in with a series of glaringly weak pieces of exposition and plot contrivances" - I had simply been driven mad by jealousy.

5. DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN IS THE NEXT BIG HIT FOR PLAYSTATION 4

Games are art. If you need proof, simply look at the script for Detroit: Become Human, which is extremely long. It is so exceptionally long, and big, with so many words, that the game must be good. It is like a movie, except it is a game. This is unprecedented. With its cutting-edge visuals and its many cutscenes, Detroit: Become Human will be the best film or game or whatever about Detroit since Detroit: Rock City. Detroit finally poses the important question that all sci-fi has missed: what if robot bad? ❧



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