



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #2 – May 17, 2025

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Editor's Note

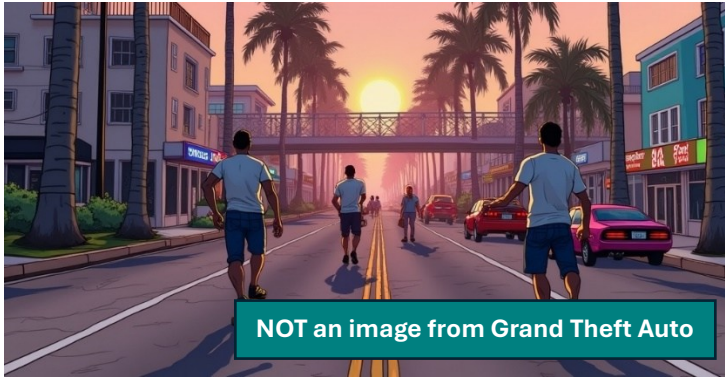
The hardest part of starting a thing is *starting* the thing. It will take some time to shape this newsletter into what it'll eventually be (establishing recurring features and focusing on the content that makes sense), but I'm just happy that last week I *got started*.

What are the goals here? Above all, I have thoughts and opinions on games and gaming that I want to put into words. Not all those thoughts and opinions may be well-received, and my way of expressing them may not be as tactful as they'd be if I wasn't my own editor. Case in point: in one of the mini-reviews this week, I refer to anti-woke activists as chuds.

I also want this to be entertaining. Even if you don't agree with everything, I hope you stick around for the good parts. For that matter, I hope there *are* good parts. I hope you get a chuckle or even just a smirk from some of it.

Recent Events

GTA VI was scheduled to release later this year, but did anybody *really* believe it? It now has a solid 2026 release date of May 26th. It wouldn't surprise me to see another delay, but putting a firm date on it is encouraging.



The question remains, though, how much will it cost? I was skeptical when analysts were throwing around \$100 as a possibility, and went so far as to openly balk at the idea. Now, with Nintendo raising prices to \$80 and Xbox reportedly doing the same by year's end, my skepticism may have been unfounded.

I (mostly) resisted the \$70 hike for the first two years of this console generation. I'm definitely not on board for \$80 games. I think \$100 for any game sounds absurd, unless we're talking about collector's editions. But... it's GTA. If any game can get away with it, so to speak, it's Grand Theft Auto. Will I buckle and buy it for \$80 (which is almost a foregone conclusion now)? For \$90? For \$100?

My original thinking was that Rockstar would see more merit in keeping the game "affordable" (relatively speaking) and selling more copies, but really, why would they? GTA V sold big numbers month after month. Once the premium price buyers thin out, they could drop it to, say, the discounted price of \$70 and end up picking up the sales they lost (if any) by launching at a higher price to begin with.

Season 2 of the Fallout TV show on Amazon Prime is reportedly coming out in December. I loved the first season, but of course Fallout 3 is my favorite game of all time, so the chances were good that I'd like the show unless they just completely messed it up.

Did you know that Masi Oka, the guy who played Hiro on Heroes, founded the studio that made Outer Wilds? It was news to me.

Source: <https://www.videogameschronicle.com/>

Here are some upcoming game releases (in some cases already out digitally, but now on disc) that interest me and might interest you.



5/22/2025	Blades of Fire
6/10/2025	MindsEye
6/19/2025	Chronicles of the Wolf
6/24/2025	Choo-Choo Charles
6/25/2025	The Thing – Remastered
6/26/2025	Death Stranding 2
7/11/2025	LoK – Soul Reaper 1 & 2
7/18/2025	The Devil Within – Satgat
7/18/2025	Shadow Labyrinth
8/29/2025	Lost Soul Aside

Yes, Choo-Choo Charles is totally a real game that I didn't just make up, already out digitally. Based on Metacritic reviews, it's abysmal. Based on Steam reviews, it's fantastic. Maybe I'll find out for myself in a little over a month.

Room Enough for Everything

One of the most heartbreaking aspects of today's gaming landscape, at least as it relates to social media, is the loud and flippant negativity around games. Some of this stems from a focused effort by a few prominent grifters to sabotage the success of certain games and developers for the perceived injustice of (checks notes) having a female protagonist, including "ugly" characters, embracing diversity, and telling stories that simply never intended to cater to their self-centered and prejudiced view of the world. This is why every price deal announcement for *Dragon Age: The Veilguard*, *Dustborn*, and certain other games from *Wario64*, *IGN Deals* and others are flooded with unoriginal cookie-cutter replies like "not even if they paid me" or "still [price of the deal] too expensive" or "throw that woke garbage away." I'm paraphrasing a bit.

These "opinions" (using the term loosely) are easily disregarded, and the idiots who post them are easily blocked. Still, it contributes to a chilling effect, and that's the point. Their mantra of "go woke, go broke" isn't just a catchy rhyme. It's a mission statement, a credible threat, and an end goal for all the madness. If you release a game that even hints at a so-called "woke agenda", your company and your game are a target.

They want those games and developers to fail. Grifting content creators lead the charge, and their army of minions carry out the campaign, thinking they're part of some grand and important movement to save video games from those dastardly villains who are trying to pervert them into (gasp) a medium where not every character needs to be hypersexualized or a brawny meat-head on a power trip.

It's comical when you think about it, but the results are dire. In a competitive market where word of mouth carries more weight than ever, this kind of negativity can not only be overwhelming, but it can also paint a picture for other gamers who aren't even part of that movement, of a game that must truly be trash. Why else would so many people be so vehemently against these games? They *must* be bad, or at the very least, not worth the effort and expense of checking out.

It doesn't always work for them, and it's a moving target. I don't remember much anti-woke backlash against *Metaphor: ReFantazio*, yet that game is all about diversity, empathizing with other races, and working for a better, more inclusive future. You don't get much more woke than that.

Of course, it's all a scam and a grift. They're fueled by the thought of being the guy who broke the story on the wokeness of such and such game; the guy who sounded the alarm; the one responsible for the poor sales of said game and the possible downsizing or closure of said studio. Whether the ridiculous backlash had anything to do with the poor sales may be debatable, but it's a data point they can use. If a game *succeeds* and sells well, it's either crickets or the invention of some other metric to frame it as a failure.



Room Enough... Continued

How many people played Concord? Trick question. Nobody played Concord. Okay, I jest, but I didn't play it because I don't really get into multiplayer games. The concept, the setting, and what little I saw of the story looked like it would have been right up my alley if it had been a single-player game.

Follow up question: do you think Concord was a failure because it was a bad game? If you do, you're in the vast majority. That's the narrative around it, yet by every account I've heard from people who *did* play it before it was unceremoniously banished to oblivion, it was fun. It was a good game. It just wasn't a *revolutionary* game, it was released as a premium title in a market dominated by free-to-play, and it seemed a bit too similar in vibe and style to Guardians of the Galaxy.

Even before it was released, a subset of the market was already rooting for it to fail. Now, it serves as the poster child for *What Happens When You Make a Woke Game*™ and it's pointed to when predicting that basically any new multiplayer game is destined to be DOA.

This has been a long, round-about way of getting to my real point. Too much of the gaming market has become intolerant of any game that isn't a genre- or generation-defining masterpiece. A particular recent comment on "X" really put the sentiment into perspective. I'm paraphrasing (because I blocked the user and can't find the original post now), but it was something to the effect of "I'm disappointed to see that Doom: The Dark Ages is getting an 82 on Metacritic. I expect more from AAA games."

Really? You expect more than an 82, which indicates it's a great, worthwhile game?

On some level, I get it. Staying up to date with the latest releases is difficult and expensive. If you only buy two or three big games a year, you can't be faulted for wanting those games to be the absolute best games available.

What I don't get, though, is what satisfaction comes from poo-pooing any game that isn't a 90+ scoring Game of the Year contender. Even taking "woke" out of the equation, I've seen a growing toxicity to online gaming discourse, at least in certain places.

My attention was first drawn to this several years ago when PS5 exclusive Forspoken was released. No, even before that, with Mass Effect: Andromeda, or before that, with Assassin's Creed: Unity. In each case, the game had some stand-out, easily meme-able flaw that made it the butt of many jokes and the proverbial whipping boy of the day. Maybe it was groan-inducing dialogue. Maybe it was awkward facial animations or an unfortunate camera angle that gave a nightmarish, deformed look inside a character's head.

That's not to say paying customers should just live with and ignore legitimate issues. It's also not to say that there *aren't* legitimate issues. It *is* to say that some of this originates from influencers and reviewers who *weren't* paying customers, some of it would never happen to most gamers anyway, and there's such a thing as making a mountain out of a molehill.

Negativity has moved beyond the memes and comes from more than just the anti-woke crowd. Yes, there's merit in critical analysis. Yes, it can be useful to distinguish between a game that scored 92 and one that scored 62. Call me an idealist, but I don't see the merit in clowning on games just for clicks and giggles.

Room Enough... Wrap-Up

It's that flippant negativity I take exception to. It's one thing to review a game and point out its strengths and weaknesses. It's another thing entirely to crack jokes at the mere mention of a game you never played, because JoeJoe the Stinker Thinker on YouTube made a twenty-minute explainer video nit-picking the volumetric lighting and fog in a double-A game that by all other accounts punches above its modest budget.



I'm not defending corporations. I'm not defending bad business practices and greedy investors that see development teams as numbers on a spreadsheet, easily cut loose if profits amount to a measly 10% over investment rather than the 200% they expected. I will defend, for what little it's worth, the developers who are almost certainly pouring their passions and best efforts into the games they hope we all enjoy. To then see that work kicked around by fools online, who care nothing about the human factor and actively want those developers to give it up, just pushes all my buttons.

I've been gaming for most of my life, and it's tough to see the hobby I love go through such a dramatic shift. It may be that AAA games are just hosed. They've become so expensive to make in a way that meets players' ballooning expectations, that even just selling enough to recoup the development budget is often a Sisyphean effort in futility. Even when they do, it's often not "enough" for their investors.

The alternative is indie and AA games, which *can* succeed, but often don't. We can look at three of this year's most critically acclaimed titles, *Blue Prince*, *Split Fiction*, and *Expedition 33* (which all launched for \$50 or less and met with success in the market) and see that as a possible solution.

By and large, though, the mainstream wants AAA, and that's proving to be less sustainable. Indies typically have the benefit of lower budgets and lower expectations, but the real magic, for me, is in the AA space. Too often, these get the most criticism because they *look like* or *aspire to be* on the level of AAA, making them easy targets for all the negativity I've been railing against in this rambling rant.

In honor of some of my favorite AA games from last year, and to counter either the undeserved negativity or the complete lack of interest the market showed these games, I'm including my social media mini-reviews for *Banishers: Ghosts of New Eden*, *Flintlock: The Siege of Dawn*, and *Unknown 9: Awakening* in this issue. They each deserve more attention.

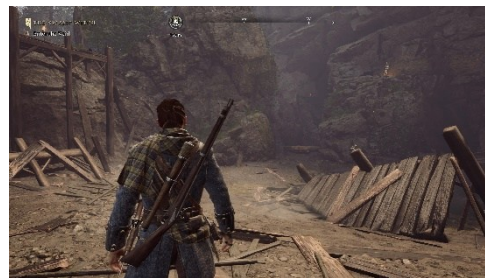
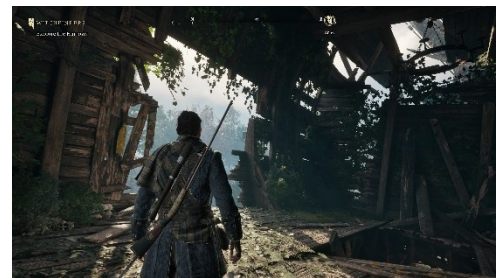
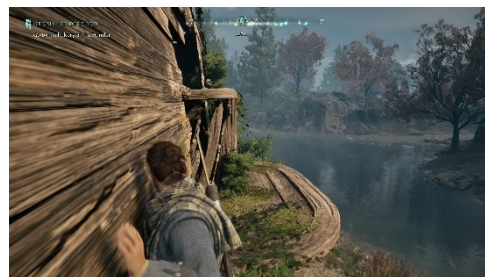
Despite what the anti-woke crowd believes, games with beautiful women and musclehead jocks and no hint of LGBTQ characters aren't going anywhere; nor should they. Some of my favorite games fit those categories. There's room enough for everything, with no reason to limit or second-guess developers' creativity.

Mini-Review: Banishers – Ghosts of New Eden

Banishers is Don't Nod's biggest, most ambitious game yet. I've clocked almost 80 hours already. Granted, I played it on Hard mode (the 4th of 5 settings) because I hit a wall with Very Hard and found Normal too easy. Also, I'm trying to do all the side quests and get all trophies (with a partial replay for the other ending trophy up next), so a single beeline through the story on an easier setting would go way faster.

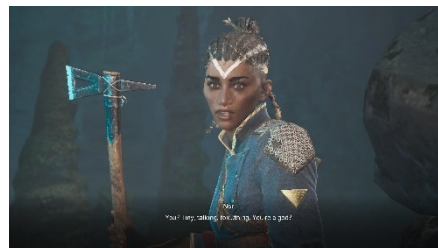
Still, the scope and content here rivals games in the AAA space, with an open-ish world set in the American colonies at the end of the 17th century, where ghosts are real and everybody knows it.

Aside from sometimes-finicky combat (I try to heal or dodge, but Red is busy stumbling around like an idiot from the last hit he took) I really vibe with this game.



Played on console: PS5. Originally posted to social media on 3/11/2024.

Mini-Review: Flintlock – The Siege of Dawn



“The developer's prior game, Ashen, was clearly indie, but I remember a lot of buzz and positivity around it.”

First 15 minutes: “This is great. I'm gonna love this.”

Next few hours: “Hmm, maybe not. I don't know. It's not really grabbing me.”

By the end: “Yeah, this was really good. I'm glad I picked this one up.”

I have a theory that the more triple-A and mainstream a game looks, the more criticism it gets; or it at least gets overlooked. Maybe it's just easier for an indie to exceed expectations, whereas double-A draws more comparisons to triple-A alternatives?

The developer's prior game, Ashen, was clearly indie, but I remember a lot of buzz and positivity around it. This, I've heard almost nothing at all, even though it looks/plays better, has more story, voice acting, everything. It's aptly billed as a “souls-lite” and budget-priced at \$50.

And to the “DEI” complainers leaving stupid one-star reviews on Amazon (and probably elsewhere)? Just grow up.

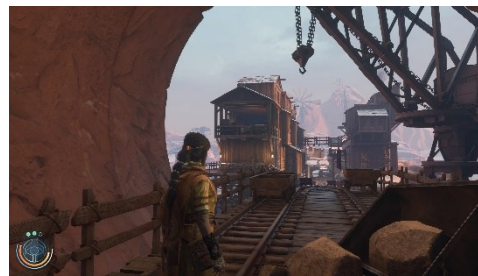
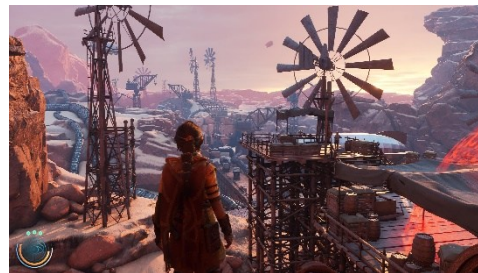
Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted on 7/24/2024.

Mini-Review: Unknown 9 – Awakening

I've been trying to figure out what I can write about this game to say it's really good, without triggering the chuds who've already bought into the grift without ever even playing it. I could highlight the negatives: companions nag you to hurry up while scouting for collectibles, no 60 FPS mode (but its 30 FPS is smooth and consistent), and Haroona's character model does a disservice to actress Anya Chalotra (Netflix's *The Witcher*); but these are nit-picks.

So forget the chuds. It's a really good, really fun third-person action/stealth adventure in the vein of *A Plague Tale*, *Assassin's Creed*, and *Uncharted*. Linear levels are well-balanced and varied, although it gets combat encounter-heavy in the last few. It's one of the most underrated, under-the-radar gems of 2024.



Played on console: PS5. Originally posted on social media 11/26/2024.

What's Next?

I'm still working out the formatting and style for the newsletter. At one point, I tried using justified spacing for text, which looks great in most cases, but awkward just enough of the time to make it a questionable choice. This paragraph uses justified spacing.

Weekly content is also evolving. This week, I included a section for recent events, which serves two purposes: injecting a bit of news, but also giving more opportunity for opinions and commentary. I've been posting social media mini-reviews for many years, so that's a low-effort inclusion too (plus I can draw from all those years of prior reviews, as I did in this issue with prior reviews of three 2024 games).

I want to include at least one opinion piece, as with my complaints about Switch 2 in last week's issue, and this week's Room Enough for Everything three-page rant. If not a long-winded rant, then at least some sort of think piece or article.

I've been using AI-generated artwork for a bit of added flair. I'm of two minds on this. On one hand, it's an easy way (when it works) to create something specific I have in mind, and there's a certain luddite mindset when it comes to the role of generative AI in today's evolving creative landscape.



Buying multiple pieces of custom art for each issue seems beyond the scope of a hobby project like this, plus it would be tough to work that into a weekly release pipeline anyway.

On the other... WTF am I doing? It only works because it's aping the styles of existing artists, photographers, etc. Even if I'm not taking money directly away from them, I benefit from it in a way that seems scummy and selfish. What happens when AI replaces my job as a programmer? Or when artists are relegated to such an obscure niche that there are no real career opportunities in it anymore?

There are other avenues I could explore. My younger daughter is a fantastic artist. I do want to include some of her stuff (commissioned of course). There are also art repositories, clip art, and other ways to buy or license existing art that might not be customized to my specific needs but could at least benefit the original artists.

For the foreseeable future, I will probably continue including AI-generated artwork, but I'm aware of the controversy, agree with most of it, and realize I'm not helping matters. Half the time, the image it makes is dumb anyway.

I'd like to involve readers more, although at present, I'm guessing readership can be counted on one hand. When D and I had our podcast way back, we'd often ask a Question of the Week and then read responses on the next episode. I want to introduce that here, but it wouldn't make sense until this gets more of a following (if it ever does).

Still, feedback is appreciated, and if it's about the newsletter, I'll just kind of assume it's OK to include it here if it makes sense to do so.

“You are not a good person. You know that, right? Good people don’t end up here.”

- GLaDOS, *Portal 2*

“I used to be an adventurer like you, until I took an arrow to the knee.”

- Town guard, *Elder Scrolls 5: Skyrim*

“War. War never changes. But men do, through the roads they walk.”

- The narrator, *Fallout: New Vegas*

“What is a man? A miserable little pile of secrets”

- Dracula, *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*

“Death is inevitable. Our fear of it makes us play safe, blocks out emotion. It’s a losing game. Without passion, you are already dead.”

- Max Payment, *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne*

“Do a barrel roll!”

- Star Fox 64

“Get over here!”

- Scorpion, *Mortal Kombat*

“YOU DIED”

- Dark Souls

“The right man in the wrong place can make all the difference in the world.”

- G-Man, *Half-Life 2*

“..”

- Link, *The Legend of Zelda*

“Wanting something does not give you the right to have it.”

- Ezio Auditore, *Assassin’s Creed 2*

“A hero need not speak. When he is gone, the world will speak for him.”

- Halo

“Thank you Mario! But our Princess is in another castle!”

- Toad, *Super Mario Bros.*

“You have died of dysentery.”

- The Oregon Trail

“Stay awhile, and listen!” - Deckard Cain, *Diablo 2*

“Good men mean well. We just don’t always end up doing well.”

- Isaac Clarke, *Dead Space 3*

Credits

The title font (Closet Dwellers) and the section header font (Shake Your Plums) are used by license from Chequered Ink fonts. Source: <https://chequered.ink/>

The above video game quotes were found in a top 100 collection at Games Radar.

Source: <https://www.gamesradar.com/best-video-game-quotes-all-time>

Artwork of (1) The VGGN controller logo with three X buttons, (2) a creepy internet troll at his computer, (3) the angry YouTuber, (4) people walking and roller skating down a street lined with palm trees, (5) the old guy at a computer making a newsletter, and (6) the totally fake video games surrounded by hands were made using generative AI. Again, I apologize for resorting to that, but it’s likely to be an ongoing thing (see the [What’s Next?](#) section for a bit more about that). Source: <https://openart.ai>

Screenshots for video game mini-reviews were captured by me in-game and are used here (as well as when originally posted on social media sites) in what I believe qualifies as “fair use”.

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