



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS

NEWSLETTER

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Issue #9 – July 5, 2025

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Loading Screen

As I've gotten into the writing routine with each issue, I'm finding that this introductory section is the one I always finish last. It's easier to introduce something if you already know what it is, not just what it might be.

In a prior issue, I said that this wasn't meant to be an autobiography, yet it keeps being exactly that.

As they say, write what you know.

This week, it's about my co-op gaming experiences; even ones that stretch the definition to include single-player games and competitive games. More than that, it's about the people who made those experiences memorable. Even my mini-reviews this week are all about co-op games.



Who among us *doesn't* remember those co-op arcade classics, "Suniboma" and "SoRRFL2"? Good grief, AI. Otherwise, not bad.

Recent Events

When I made predictions about Summer Game Fest in [issue #4](#), this one would have been worth 5 points:

“Capcom will announce a new 3D Mega Man game, in the vein of Mega Man Legends (an action adventure or RPG or something along those lines).”

There’s a fan theory going around now that *Pragmata* is secretly a Mega Man game. I first heard of the idea on the 6/27 episode of Kinda Funny Games Daily, although I don’t think they buy it any more than I do. The theory is interesting, if nothing else, and if by some freak chance it turns out to be true, I could retroactively update my prediction score. 😂

This is the Polygon article they referenced:

<https://www.polygon.com/news/609384/pragmata-mega-man-game>



An official Capcom *Pragmata* shot, found at [Polygon](#).

Xbox studio “The Initiative” has been shut down, and their *Perfect Dark* reboot has been cancelled as part of the continued mass layoffs at Microsoft. Source: [IGN](#).

I’m several chapters into *Death Stranding 2*. I like it a lot so far. As a so-called “strand” game, the async co-op lets players help each other in a variety of ways: sharing resources, leaving signs, “liking” stuff for boosts, contributing to the construction of shared world facilities (bridges, roads, devices) and more.

If I had any interest in online multiplayer games (aside from the co-op experiences this issue is dedicated to), I would be all over this Call of Duty Warzone DLC. *Beavis and Butt-Head* originally premiered when I was in my early 20’s, with MTV making up a big part of my college and post-college memories. I had even perfected a spot-on impersonation of Beavis and his sugar-fueled shirt-headed alter ego, Cornholio. It’s surprising how often I had the chance to use it back then, but I digress.

There’s a bit more about the COD Beavis and Butt-Head DLC in [this article at GameSpot](#).



From the COD x Beavis & Butt-Head Trailer on [YouTube](#).

I mentioned last week that Nightdive’s remaster of *System Shock 2* was delayed on consoles. We [now know](#) that it’s set to release in a matter of days, on July 10th. The remake of *System Shock 1* was great, but I never played more than a few minutes of the sequel. All I need to know now is when the physical release is happening, so I can order it. It certainly doesn’t seem to be day-and-date, despite Google trying to tell me it is.



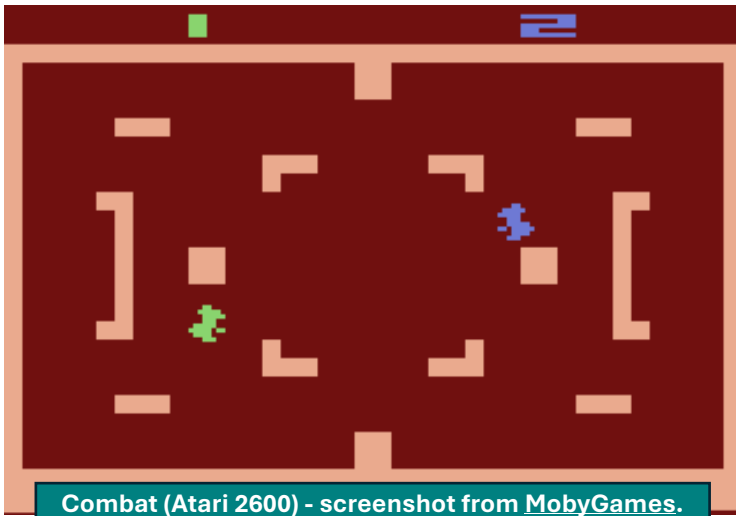
From the *System Shock 2* Remaster trailer on [YouTube](#).

Shared Lives and Split Screens

The summer before my fifth-grade year of school, when I would have been ten years old, my brothers and I ended up in foster care for a few months. The details aren't important for this, and I honestly don't remember too much about it now as a fifty-three-year-old adult. My brother Jimmy was about a year and a half younger and starting fourth grade. My other brother Charlie was still a toddler at the time.

The older lady whom we stayed with first (we were moved to another family who already had a couple of kids partway through the school year, for reasons I don't know) had an Atari 2600. I don't remember if this was before or after I had the chance to play Intellivision at an aunt's house, but it *feels* like this may have been my first experience with a home video game console.

Nobody would call *Combat* a co-op game. Even so, it's the first time I can remember playing a video game *with* another person. For that matter, it *might* be the first game I can remember playing *at all*. Despite being competitive, and despite not being all that fun in hindsight, Jimmy and I spent hours that summer shooting square bullets at each other from blocky planes and big-pixel tanks as if it was the greatest thing we'd ever seen.



Combat (Atari 2600) - screenshot from MobyGames.

No other gaming memory with my brother stands out like that one. We were inseparable through middle school, but eventually our interests diverged, with me doing a lot of writing and later programming, which meant I kept to myself more often.

In early 2009, at 35, Jimmy passed away from heart and lung issues. If he was still around, it would be interesting to know if he remembers playing *Combat* the same way I do.

Single-Player Co-Op

Many couples watch TV shows together. Over the decade or so that we were married, my ex-wife Ragan and I played video games together.

More accurately, I played, and she watched. It wasn't something I had to trick her into, either. She was a bit of a lapsed gamer, with one of her all-time favorites being *Final Fantasy VIII* (which she never finished because she got stuck at the final boss). By this point, though, she preferred to spectate; helping solve puzzles, offering suggestions on what to do next, and enjoying gaming without ever taking the controller. It might not be the definition of co-op, but it made for fun times.

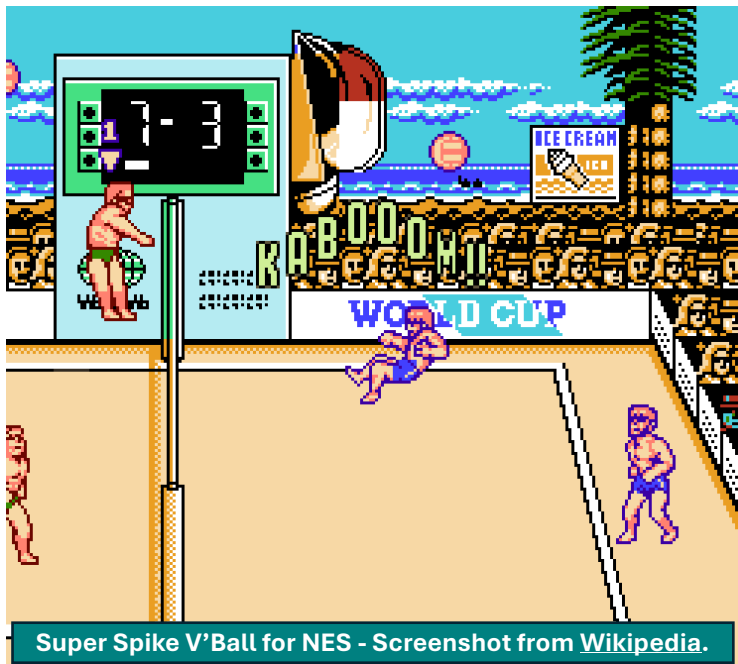
Together this way, we played:

StarFox Adventures, *Eternal Darkness*, *Zelda: The WindWaker*, *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon*, *Still Life*, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee*, *Silent Hill*, *Silent Hill 2*, *Silent Hill 3*, *Beyond Good & Evil*, *Escape from Monkey Island*, *The Longest Journey*, *Dreamfall*, *Indigo Prophecy*, *Syberia*, *Grim Fandango*, *Shadow of Destiny*, *Sam & Max Season 1*, *Heavy Rain*, and some of *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (which I ended up needing to finish by myself).

Gaming With Friends

Until October 2009, I'm not sure I ever actually played co-op with anybody. I'd either played single-player games *with* somebody, or I had played competitive games. The two-player mode in *Super Mario Bros.*, for instance, just meant that two players swap back and forth between Mario and Luigi when one dies; one of the most frustrating waiting experiences a person could have back in the 1980's.

In college, it was more of the same; *Street Fighter 2* on an arcade machine at the movie theater, for instance. My college roommates, friends and I had great times with competitive sports games on the NES, too. We put what must have been dozens or hundreds of hours into *Tecmo Bowl*, *Blades of Steel*, and *Super Spike V'Ball*. I really enjoyed *Super Spike*, because I'd figured out how to do a power spike before anybody else, making me a master of the game (for a time). It might also be what got me into playing volleyball for fun; something I've not really done since the '90s.

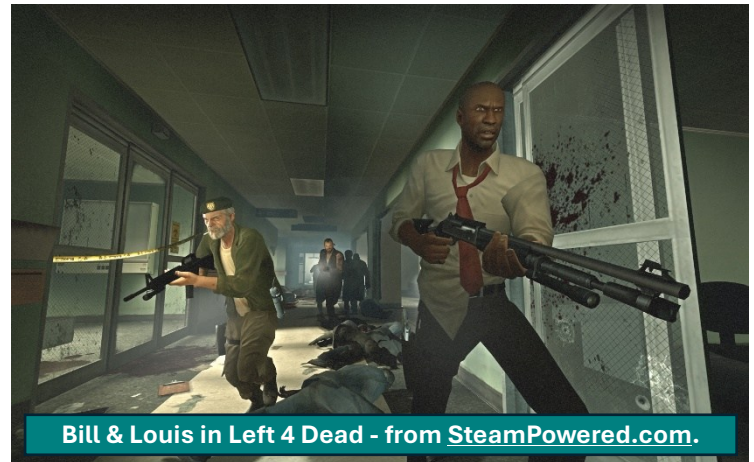


Super Spike V'Ball for NES - Screenshot from Wikipedia.

Much later, in October 2009, my friend Bill and I played through all four campaign missions of the first *Left 4 Dead* on Xbox 360.

If I recall, he'd set up his gaming room in his basement, using a projector instead of a TV. We fought zombies late into the night, and it must have been well after midnight by the time we extracted from the final mission.

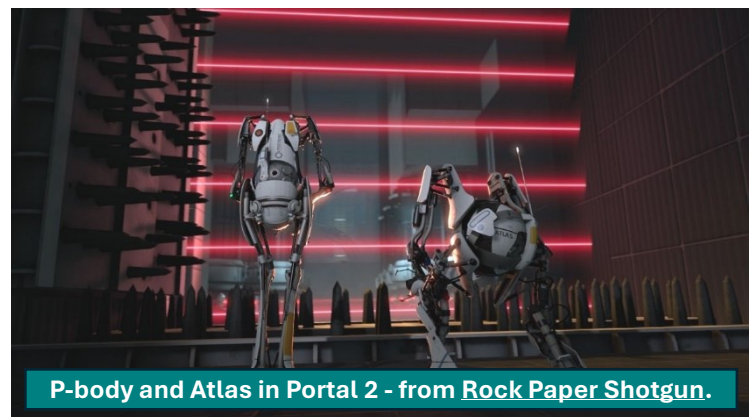
I don't remember who I played as; Louis, maybe, or Zoey? Bill for sure played as Bill, because of course he did.



Bill & Louis in Left 4 Dead - from SteamPowered.com.

Left 4 Dead 2 was right around the corner, and the two of us played through most of it in late November that same year. My "game log" file (yes, it's a thing I do) says I played the last mission (The Parish) by myself. As best I can remember, it was super late and we were both exhausted, so I must have continued at home a few weeks later with three AI companions.

The two of us played through the co-op campaign of *Portal 2* in September 2011, and the *Peer Review* DLC in November that year. If you haven't played the *Portal 2* co-op story and you ever have the chance to, by all means do it. It's fantastic. I highly recommend it.



P-body and Atlas in Portal 2 - from Rock Paper Shotgun.

Gaming With Munchkins

Yes, I refer to my kids affectionately as munchkins; even D (that's Addie's nickname, even though Addie was already short for her full name), who's nearly 20 now.

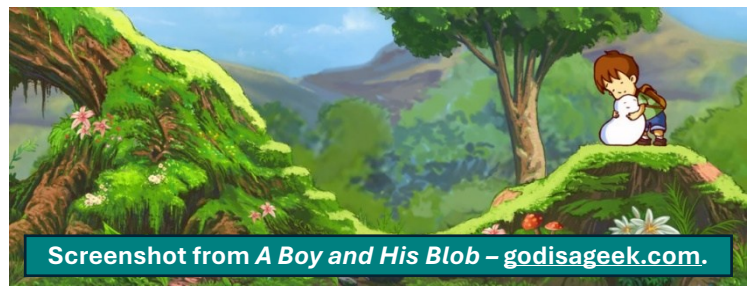
To gamer parents, having kids means a chance to share a hobby with them. If we're lucky, it means having couch co-op partners when they're old enough to play.

Before they're old enough to play, single-player co-op is a fun way to introduce them to video games. D was only two and a half when "we" played *Dora the Explorer – Barnyard Buddies* on PlayStation 1; her first game.



Cover art found at launchbox-app.com.

Following that, we played *The Lion King – Simba's Mighty Adventure* (PS1), *Disney Princess – Enchanted Journey* (Wii – she really enjoyed it), *Boom Blox* (Wii – in retrospect, pure physics-based puzzle games may not be the best for single-player co-op), *Super Paper Mario* (Wii), *Scoobie-Doo and the Cyber Chase* (PS1), *Monsters Inc. – Scream Team* (PS1), and *A Boy and His Blob* (Wii). None of those are *actually* co-op games, but she enjoyed the stories and the adventure of it all.



Screenshot from *A Boy and His Blob* – godisageek.com.

The pinnacle of this phase of our gaming time together was *Kingdom Hearts* and *Kingdom Hearts 2*, on PlayStation 2. The first time we tried KH1, though, it gave her nightmares. There's a pretty unsettling scene with a huge shadow monster near the beginning, and she was too young to deal with that. I hadn't played it before, and even though the cartoony nature didn't seem troubling to me, it sure did to her. We set it aside for a long time, before trying again when she was older.



Kingdom Hearts screenshot from [this blog](#).

The second time, she loved it. We were both obsessed, to be honest. We went from KH1 right into *Kingdom Hearts 2*. I think these remain a couple of her favorite games of all time. She played through the first one again on her own, many years later.

We tried *Kingdom Hearts - Chain of Memories* and put a few hours into it, but it was just so different with its card-based system and the weird map layout thing going on, that we lost interest at some point and never finished it.

Munchkins - Continued

The first time D took up a controller for real co-op gameplay was as the “helper star” in *Super Mario Galaxy 2*. This required pointing the Wiimote at the screen to collect and shoot star bits to temporarily stun enemies. This was just before she turned 5, but she was great at it. It helped quite a bit, if I recall.



Super Mario Galaxy 2 screenshot from [this wiki page](#).

We played through our first full co-op game together only a few months later. The game was *Castle Crashers* on the Xbox 360, and she loved it as much as I did. I *think* she was the blue knight, and I *know* I was the orange one.

The game is no joke, either. Well, it’s a bit comedic (especially when we finally got to see the purple princess at the end of the game), but it’s a journey across several lands, with enemies, bosses, RPG level-up progression, and some really cool music. It’s hard to think of a better game we could have played together back then.



Castle Crashers screenshot from [LaunchBox Games DB](#).

We also played though *Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light*, *Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris*, *TMNT: Turtles in Time Reshelled*, and *Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars* in co-op.

We also played through the co-op in *Portal 2* together; the second time for me, but it’s a game I tend to forget the puzzle specifics after a while, so it never hurts to revisit.

D’s interests have shifted over time. She still does some gaming on Switch, but as a Junior in college this fall with friends, school, work, and seemingly non-stop trumpet practice, it doesn’t seem like her top hobby anymore.

My daughter Hadleigh does co-op with friends in *MineCraft* and *Roblox*. I think it’s more a social thing, though. She’ll play *Mario Kart* or *Splatoon* sometimes too, but gaming isn’t really her thing. All four of us played that top-down 4-player *Ghostbusters: Sanctum of Slime* at some point, but that’s about it.

My son, on the other hand, is a gamer through and through. He started out with single-player games like *Puppeteer* (PS3), but at some point became more interested in multiplayer online games with friends (*MineCraft*, *Fortnite*, then *Apex Legends* for a while, *COD Warzone* for a while, *Helldivers 2*, and now *Marvel Rivals* is their latest obsession).

Over the last couple of years (he’s 17 now), he’s starting to become my mini-me. He spends a lot more time on single-player games (just like me), with a growing list of platinum trophies on PlayStation. Off the top of my head, he played through *The Last of Us 1 and 2*, *Horizon Zero Dawn* and *Forbidden West*, and recently *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*. He played *The Legend of Zelda Breath of the Wild* and *Tears of the Kingdom*, *Lost in Random*, *Outer Wilds*, *Viewfinder* (which I haven’t even played yet), the entire *Hitman: World of Assassination* trilogy, and more.

Like me, gaming is about *all* he does in his spare time. That might not be good for a kid his age, but I’m keeping an eye on things. Even with all the single-player and online gaming he does, we’ve still managed a bit of co-op.

Munchkins - Concluded

Heath was almost 8 years old the first time we played co-op together. The game was on PS4, and it was a more modern version of *Gauntlet* called *Gauntlet - Slayer Edition*. It was fun.



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I think Heath and I need to play [#UnravelTwo](#), and with these two controllers. Just cuz.



6:05 PM · Jun 9, 2018

When he was 10, we played *Unravel Two*, the co-op follow-up to the first game about two little Yarnies (one red, one blue) in a 2.5D side scrolling puzzle adventure. We had a lot of fun with that. Back then, my mini-reviews on Twitter were just one post instead of three, but this is what I had to say:

“The “two” in the title is for its emphasis on two-player co-op, which is how I played. My son and I had fun in the main story chapters, and most of the challenge levels. Not a long game. Visually impressive. Fun platforming and puzzle-solving.”

It was four more years until our next co-op game, which we played online. I think it has split-screen co-op too, so I’m not sure why we didn’t just do that. The game was a stand-alone expansion for *Borderlands 2*, and it was called *Tiny Tina’s Assault on Dragon Keep - A Wonderlands One-Shot Adventure*, which was a precursor to *Tiny Tina’s Wonderlands*.

Right at one year ago, during a week off work (just like this week was; I tend to plan my time off around holidays), we played through the entire *We Were Here* series.

I remember Janet Garcia talking about how good these games are for co-op back when she was co-hosting *Kinda Funny* podcasts, and when I mentioned it to Heath, he insisted we give them a try.

The interesting thing about the *We Were Here* games is that they’re built in a way where players *have* to communicate. You can probably say that about most co-op games, but the gimmick here is that they have to be played online because split-screen would ruin them, or at least trivialize the puzzles.

It’s all about separating the players so that neither have a full picture of what’s going on. For example, one game has a puzzle where one player is operating a machine to make different sounds, but only a selection of symbols to work from. The other player is in a room where those symbols have explanations, but they don’t actually know what sounds each one will make.

Each game has puzzles that work the same way, where one player must guide another player through a maze, or the two players send tiles back and forth through tubes based on what the other player says they need. It’s really cool and really fun, but it *can* be really frustrating if one of the players gets a little impatient with his dad. There’s also an interesting storyline about a mad king and his kingdom that runs through the series.

Contrast this to the Hazelight games (*A Way Out*, *It Takes Two*, and *Split Fiction*) which are puzzley *and* actiony *and* meant for split-screen play. I re-played the first two for a second time with Heath (and the most recent, *Split Fiction*, only with Heath) earlier this year.

Gaming With Partners

I'm about to overshare; a bad habit of mine, but it sets the stage for this final section. To avoid this (it's not a happy story), skip the rest of this side and divert your eyes over to the right, where the co-op gaming talk continues.

After divorcing, I started seeing Tracy. I'd known her since 1996, but we'd lost touch for a long time until then. To make a long story short, she moved in with me (and the kids, since I have joint custody) and lived here for several years, until we broke up and she moved out around four years ago. We'd still hang out in an on-again off-again kind of way, until a couple years ago.

I wasn't too sure why it stopped, but she said she'd been sick a lot. She was a smoker and a binge drinker, and it was mostly the latter that was a deal-breaker relationship-wise. She could smoke outside, but she couldn't just immediately sober up if she happened to do it at a time when my kids would be here. She could go for weeks and be fine, then fall off the proverbial wagon with little warning. I'm sure it's a familiar story to anybody who's ever had an addict in their lives. A series of tragedies in her own family, including losing her mother and her only daughter, just made it all worse.

In late March this year, I got a text from her phone, from her disabled sister she'd been looking after, letting me know that Tracy had passed away during the night. I don't know the cause, but it was apparently health related. Whatever had caused her to stay sick for so long (maybe drinking-related, maybe something else; her mom died of cancer, I think) had caused her to lose weight excessively, and it ultimately took her life.

The lesson here, if there is one, is to always make the most of the time you have with the people in your life. Cherish good memories.

Tracy was a gamer, but not as obsessively as I am. She enjoyed point-and-click adventures, puzzle games, and was a big fan of hidden object games (from Artifex Mundi, Ocean Media, and others).

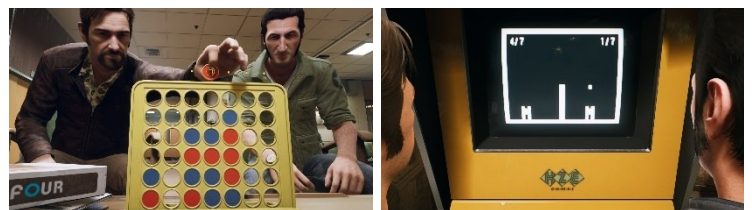
From time to time, we did what I've been calling single-player co-op (we played Double Fine's *Stacking* together, for example) but she was usually content just watching while doing something on her phone or whatever else.



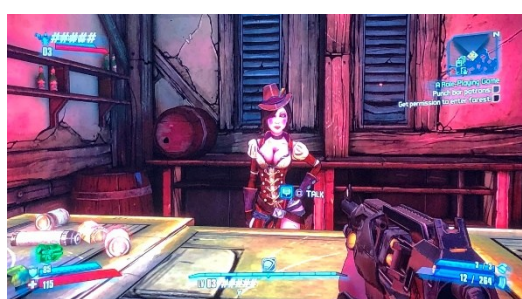
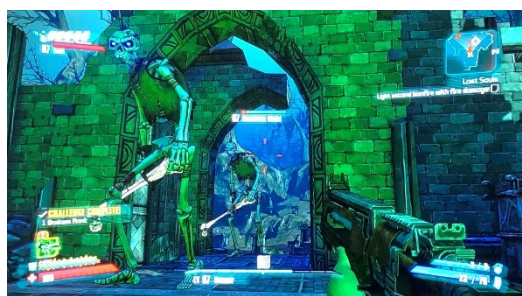
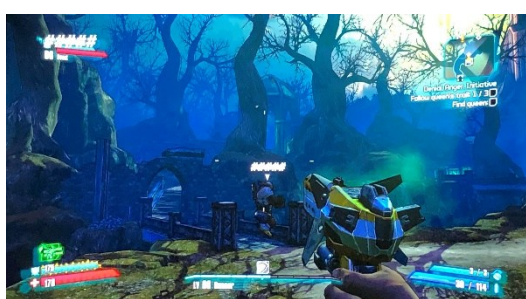
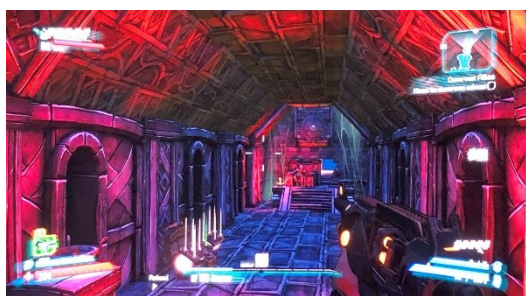
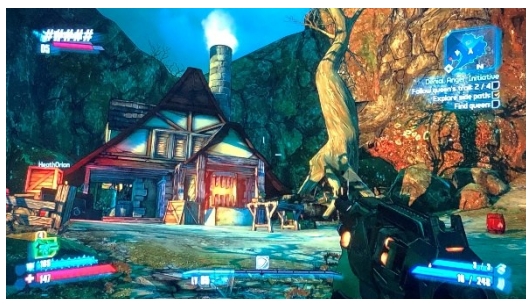
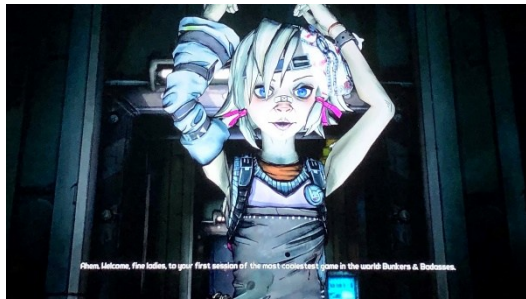
She said she enjoyed watching me play, anyway. I even got into a bit of hot water when I finished *Danganronpa V3* while she was at work one day. I think we'd been arguing and I decided to just wrap up the game without her. Bad move; big mistake. I should have waited.

Over the course of those years, we only ever played four games in true co-op. We played *Man of Medan* in "Party Night" mode, the isometric *Darksiders: Genesis*, *A Way Out*, and finally *It Takes Two* (the latter two of which I played again this year with my son).

The two from Hazelight also feature a variety of mini-games, and although we didn't spend too long with any of them, each one offered a bit of competition as a break from the general cooperative gameplay.



Mini-Review: Assault on Dragon Keep



Full title: **Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep.**

My son was convinced that if we stuck to the critical path and skipped most side quests, we could start and finish this Borderlands 2 DLC-turned-stand-alone game in a single afternoon; and he was right!

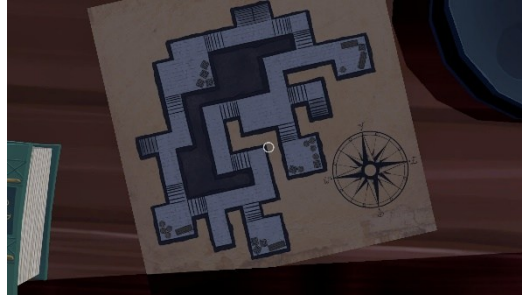
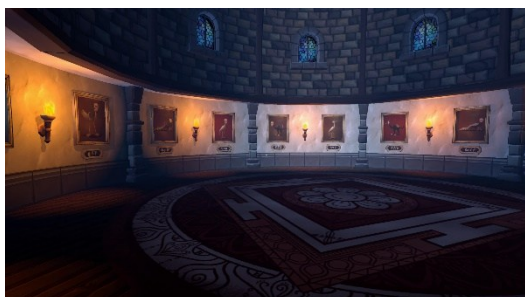
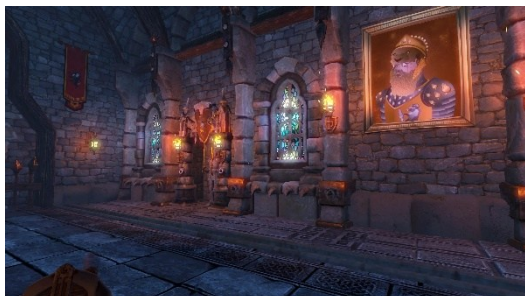
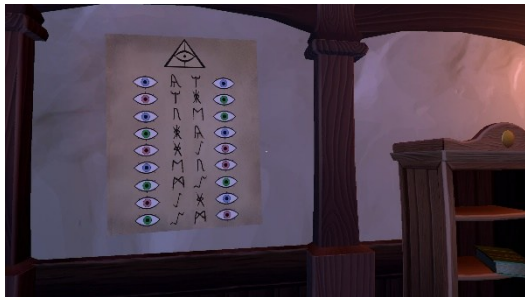
I've played and mostly loved every game in the series, but always as a solo adventure. Online co-op (up to 4 players, looks like) works really well, but does detract a bit from the pure immersion of going it alone.

This is exactly the systems and gameplay of Borderlands, but in a fantasy-world skin as envisioned by Tiny Tina's take on a D&D-style RPG.

Despite the shorter campaign, there's plenty more content left in Dragon Keep. This stand-alone release was almost certainly meant as an appetizer for the recently released Tiny Tina's Wonderlands, and as such, it worked on us.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 05/15/2022.*

Mini-Review: We Were Here + WWH Too



My son and I decided to play (and platinum) the first two games in this co-op puzzle series; both today, in a single afternoon.

I suspect that if we had played like you're supposed to, it would have taken more than the 3 or so hours we spent per game (each one twice to switch roles and get the alternate trophies). It's online only (no split-screen) because both players are in separate areas of the game, and actually seeing each other's screen would make describing clues and puzzles in one area that pertain to the other player's area way less challenging.

That is, however, exactly what we did, by sending screenshots, getting up and walking to the other room, and loudly talking rather than in-game chat. It must be possible, but it would be tough. We liked it a lot, our way.

*PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 07/04/2024.*

Mini-Review: We Were Here Together



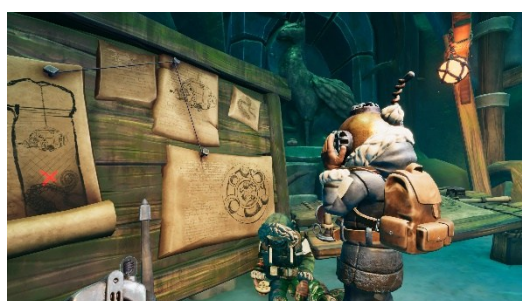
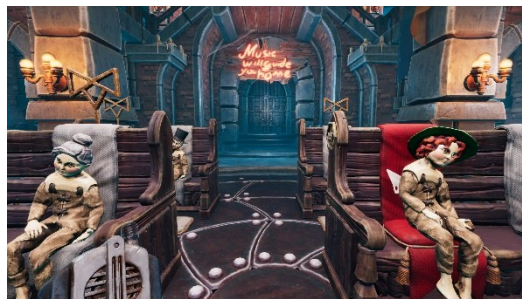
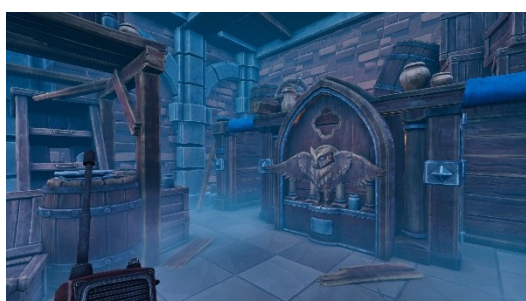
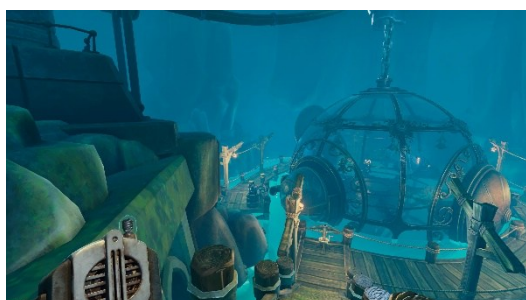
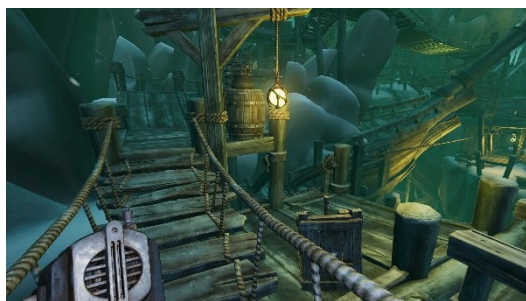
This one about broke us, but that may be less to do with the game's difficulty and more to do with my son's impatience to look around, describe things and experiment with the pieces/machines available to understand how each puzzle works before trying to just brute-force a solution.

For the most part, we did solve things with an understanding of what we were doing, but we were still in "go look at the other person's screen" cheat mode from time to time, and "just talk loudly down the hall" rather than using the built-in walkie-talkies mode.

The 3rd game in this 2-player 1st-person puzzle series looks better, plays better, feels more like going on an adventure, and features even more inventive, challenging puzzles that require both players working together. Just try to stay calm.

PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 07/06/2024.

Mini-Review: We Were Here Forever



We REALLY enjoyed this one. We liked them all, but this one is by far the best (so far; we hope the series continues past the much shorter *Expeditions* we also played today, which is a well-crafted first-person co-op puzzler too).

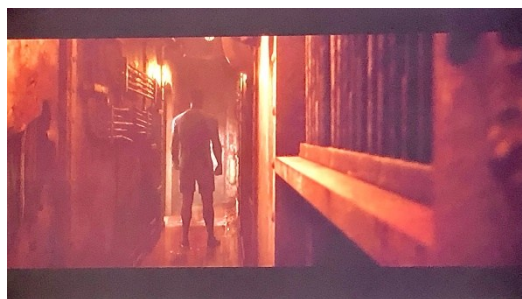
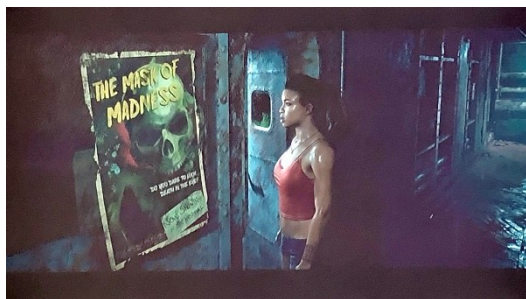
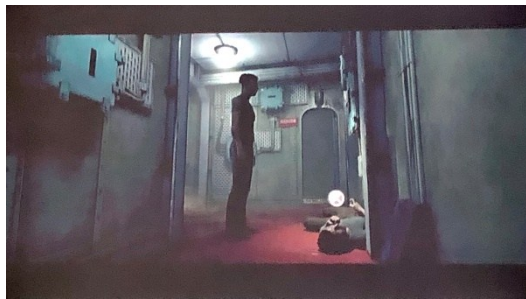
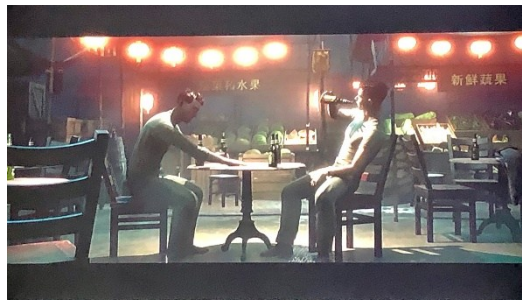
Each game has gotten better (and bigger) seemingly as the developers themselves have gotten better.

The puzzles in WWH Forever are varied and fun. All require cooperation either to operate them at a basic level or to provide clues back and forth that your partner needs but doesn't have; or passing pieces between your area and theirs. It's in a similar vein to Hazelight's games (*A Way Out*, *It Takes Two*) but without the split-screen.

Each game has added to the overarching story, although it's not strictly necessary to play them all, or in order. Very fun!

Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 07/07/2024.

Mini-Review: Man of Medan



We played through in “party night” mode (up to 5 players taking turns per character scene but we did 2-player guys/girls). It’s a good way to play. The game is 1/3 simple exploration, 1/3 QTE, and 1/3 cut-scenes.

We lost one character fairly early on, but kept the others alive via save scum. It’s from the makers of *Until Dawn*, so if you liked that, you’ll probably like this. It doesn’t surpass *Until Dawn*, but still has plenty of frights, branching paths, and replayability. Plus, it’s priced lower than usual too.

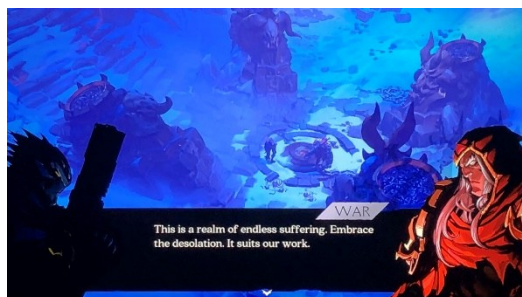
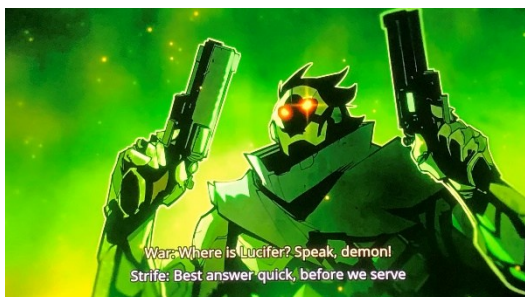
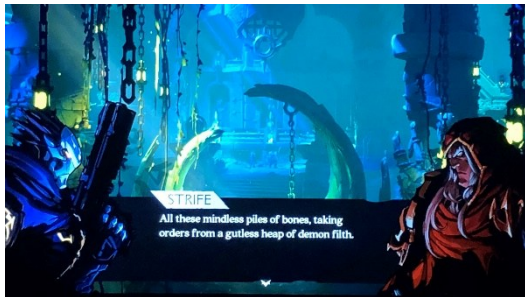
Some QTE in pivotal scenes is very fast, so it’s meant that some die (like a horror movie). Speaking of; scenes are cinematic, and as the first in a *Dark Pictures* anthology, the story is framed with a narrator or guide, The Curator.

The story is fine. Decisions change character relationships. Premonitions often help too. Any first play-through may differ a lot. It was a good time.

Back when a version of this review was originally posted to Twitter, I was lazy and wasn’t copying screenshots the right way. I’d just point my phone at the TV and take a photo. Between that, not figuring out yet how to crop and tilt images (I did later), and having an older TV, the screenshots I’ve brought over from the original review are blurry.

Played on console: PS4.
Originally posted: 09/15/2019.

Mini-Review: Darksiders - Genesis



Here's an enduring series that seems to reinvent itself with every entry, drawing heavily from elements of other games.

This time, it's an isometric co-op adventure ala *Diablo*, but with a focus on *Darksiders*' own brand of action and puzzles.

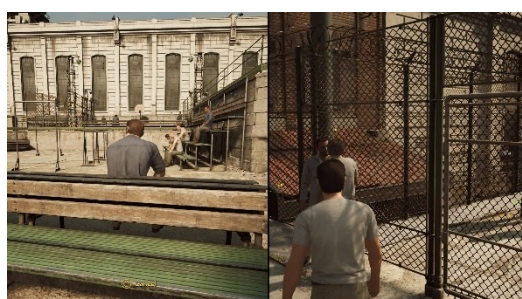
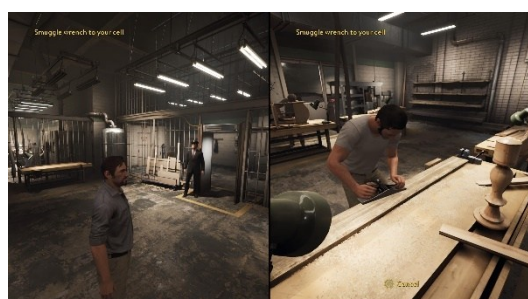
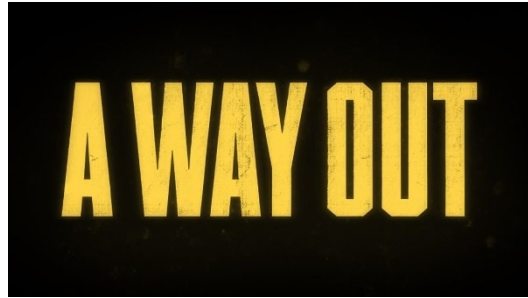
Although unusual for me, I played entirely in split-screen co-op. I think that helped elevate what might have otherwise been just an "ok" experience. The different areas, fun combat, ability-based puzzles: great. Often-obstructed view due to perspective and no player mark on the map: not.

It was a fun time on Normal, but trophy hunters will need to invest time and skill into mastering higher difficulties. We enjoyed scouring each level for hidden coins and upgrades, often returning with the needed abilities. Perfectly playable solo, but it definitely shines when playing in co-op.

Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted: 02/18/2020.

Mini-Review: A Way Out



A co-op only adventure set in 1972 about two guys, a prison escape, and the events that follow.

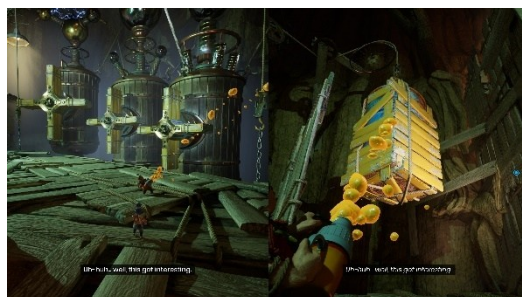
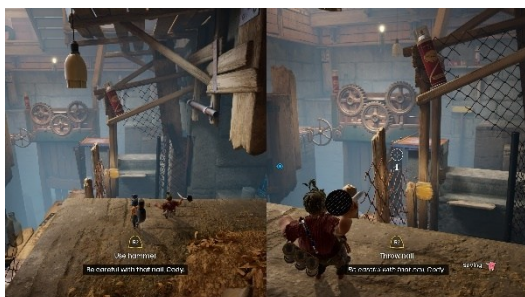
A single copy gets access for a friend online or play locally in couch co-op (which is what we did). We really enjoyed it. It has plenty of memorable moments. Some sections feature branching paths or alternate solutions. The game does a lot with the concept of working together.

It features a lot of optional stuff too; mini-games like horseshoes, darts, batting practice, a music rhythm game, etc.; brief chats with NPCs and more. But at its core, it's an action adventure with a worthwhile story that kept us engaged all the way.

Chapter select makes trophy-hunting fun and both endings easy to get. There's a bit of "game logic" to parts of the story and required actions. It's not perfect, but it's sure good.

Played on console: PS4 and PS5.
Originally posted: 08/29/2020.

Mini-Review: It Takes Two



Two-player co-op adventure from the makers of *A Way Out* (Hazelight). Played split-screen with GF and had a blast. There's a lot more game here than I expected, but it never gets old or repetitive because the journey takes you through a variety of fun, strange, cool locations, plus you both gain different abilities unique to each chapter.

It's a third-person platforming action game with puzzles to solve together and baddies to defeat together. The voice acting is great. It's probably my second favorite game that features a talking book.

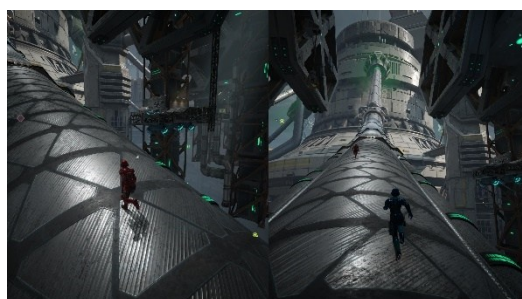
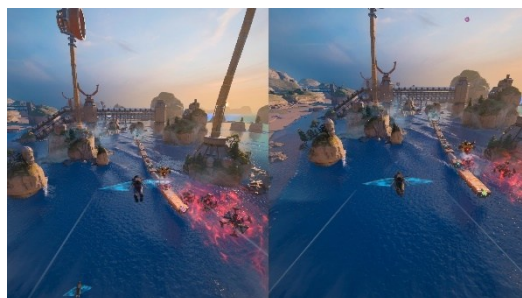
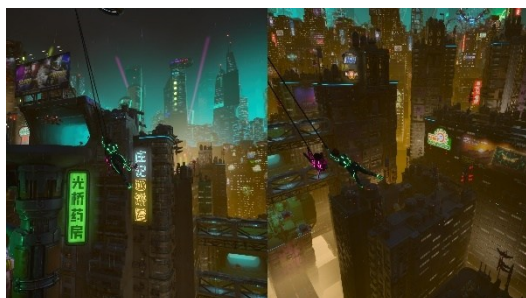
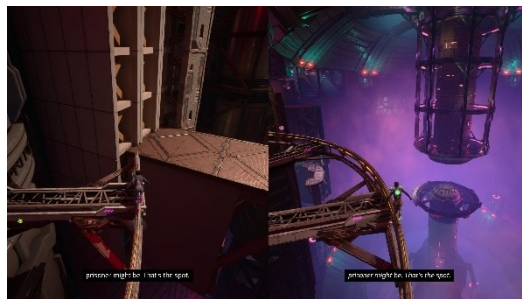
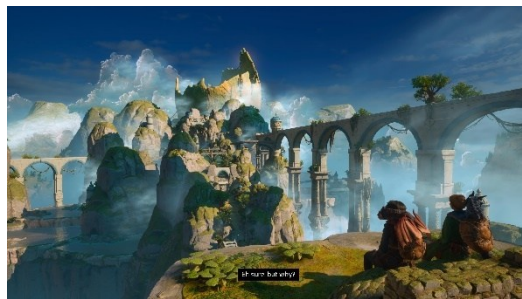
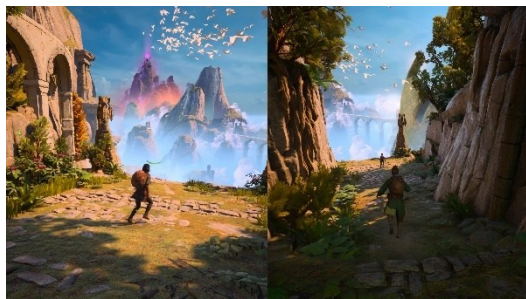
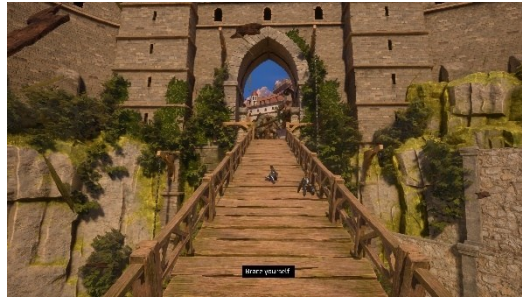
I got a kick out of how May says "Cody" and GF laughed every time at how Cody runs. Plenty of endearing details like that make it really memorable. Lots of mini-games and hey - this makes my 100th platinum! Highly recommended, but you'll need a friend.

*Played on console: PS4 and PS5.
Originally posted: 03/30/2021.*

Addendum 06/22/2025

I played through this again with my son this time (17) and enjoyed it just as much as the first time. He tends to rush, though. He really enjoyed winning against me in most of the 25 mini-games found throughout. It makes for a good co-op weekend game. Still highly recommended.

Mini-Review: Split Fiction



Hazelight has done it again. This co-op only action-adventure features gameplay variety that rivals the GOTY-winning *It Takes Two*. For a game about two writers and the importance of storytelling, though, its writing and storytelling take a bit of a backseat to the gameplay.

Multiple game genres are represented, and unless you're disinterested in a few cutscenes, there's never a dull moment.

I don't want to spoil any of what's in store here, but simple puzzles and plenty of platforming round out the many kinds of experiences *Split Fiction* offers. While most of it is inventive in the sense that familiar gameplay elements get a co-op twist, some late-game additions truly make the most of the split-screen format and its co-op nature.

If you have a friend, play this please. It's fantastic.

Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 03/08/2025.

Final Stage

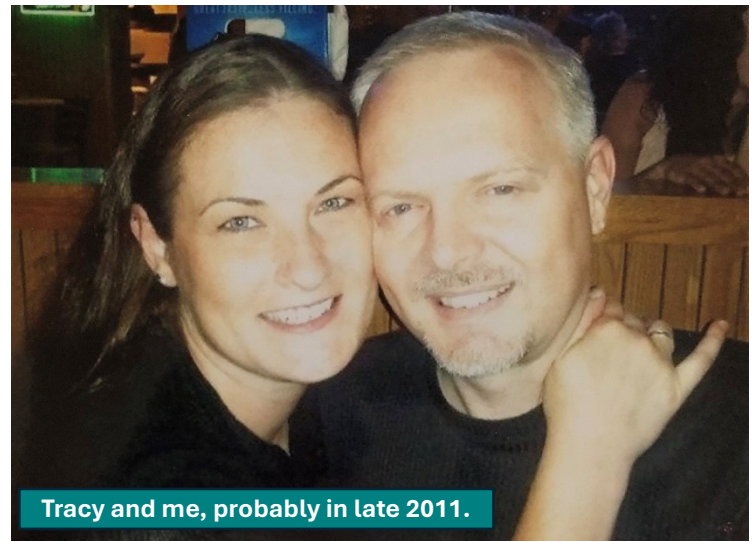
When I envisioned writing about my co-op gaming experiences last week, it didn't occur to me that there would be a theme of loss running through it. The memories are good, but some of them have that downside too.

Loss can mean different things. I miss my brother, and I miss Tracy (her passing is so recent that I still haven't fully come to terms with it), but most of my co-op experiences mark a point in my life I'll never get back.

I've not hung out with Bill in years, aside from him guest hosting a couple episodes of the podcast, but that was over seven years ago. We're still friends. We just never hang out.

I have very fond memories of gaming with Ragan, but it's tough to frame those after the reality of divorcing. Addie moved away for college two years ago, and Heath only has one more year of high school (although if he goes to college nearby, he'll live here still; but who knows if that will mean any co-op gaming).

Let's look ahead, though, to next week's issue.

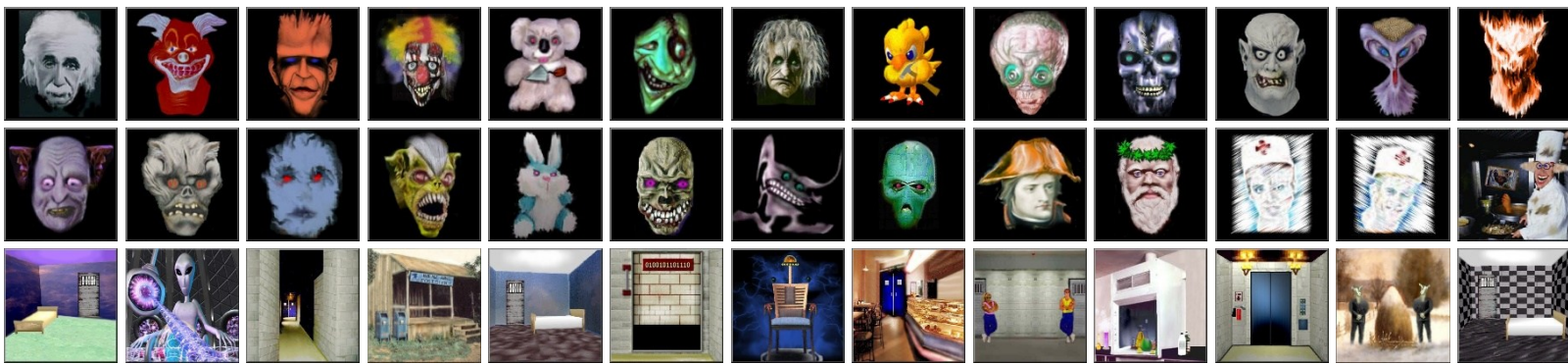


Tracy and me, probably in late 2011.

In prior issues, I've written about a few of my personal projects: the podcast I did with Addie ([issue #4](#)), my video game collection ([issue #3](#)), and the interactive fiction (text adventures) I wrote over the years ([issue #7](#)).

For next week, I'm planning a retrospective on *Lunatic* in all its incarnations; the BBS door game, the much pricier version for MajorBBS and WorldGroup, and the browser-based *Lunatic Online* version.

I want the feature to serve as the complete history of the game; from its inception and development, how each version was sold and marketed, and why *Lunatic Online* shut down.



End Credits

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