



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #11 – July 19, 2025

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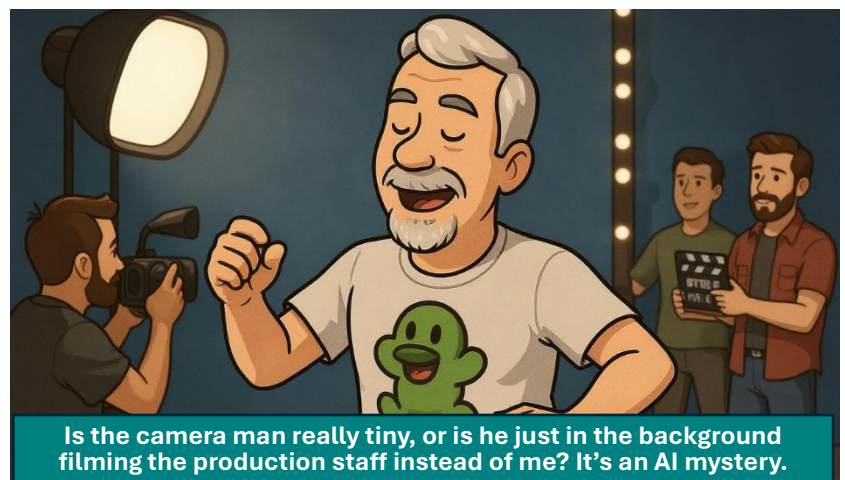
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Loading Screen

For this week's feature topic, I'm taking a look at video games featuring famous actors. Sure, it's an excuse just to talk about vastly different games that are linked together only by a single common theme or thread, but hey, I've done it before, I'll do it again, and it'll be a nice change of pace from last week's deep dive into the history of *Lunatic*.

For each subsection title in the main feature, I stitched together made-up movie (or game) names from some of the games referenced in that section, just for fun. I've also included mini-reviews later in this issue, for several of the games mentioned here.

With no further ado, let's start with recent events.



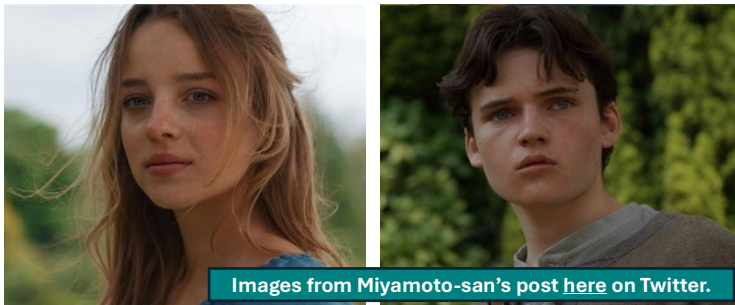
Recent Events

Since I'm writing about TV and movie actors in video games this week, let's start with a recent event that sort of does the opposite.

Actors have been cast as Link and Zelda in the upcoming film, *The Legend of Zelda*, based on the decades-spanning video game series.

Shigeru Miyamoto, creator of the series, announced it this week:

"This is Miyamoto. I am pleased to announce that for the live-action film of *The Legend of Zelda*, Zelda will be played by Bo Bragason-san, and Link by Benjamin Evan Ainsworth-san. I am very much looking forward to seeing both of them on the big screen."



Images from Miyamoto-san's post [here](#) on Twitter.

Deadline (among countless other sites) has a good write-up about the casting news here:

<https://deadline.com/2025/07/legend-of-zelda-movie-casts-bo-bragason-benjamin-evan-ainsworth-1236458682/>

I finally received Issue #369 of *Game Informer* magazine, the first issue since they were shut down by GameStop and then resurrected as an independent publication. It's a bit pricier than it used to be (I did get in at the intro rate, though) but the cover is glossy, and the pages are high quality. I think it's worth the cost.



A trailer for the upcoming *Mortal Kombat II* movie, starring Karl Urban as Johnny Cage, is out now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9pHkX7c3y8>

In more game-to-cinema news (well, game-to-television), Netflix announced a live-action show based on *Assassin's Creed*. They don't say much about it beyond some top-level "get hyped" marketing speak; not even a release window for the premier. They do say it's been in the works for five years, though, so maybe that means it's imminent. I hope it's less forgettable than the *Assassin's Creed* movie was.

<https://www.netflix.com/tudum/articles/assassins-creed-live-action-adaptation-series>

The unfortunate drama around *Subnautica 2* developer Unknown Worlds and their parent company Krafton continues. I mentioned it briefly last week. The ousted former founders have sued Krafton, claiming that the game's early access delay was *definitely* staged (and unnecessary) as a way to avoid the potential \$250 million payout in bonuses. For that kind of money, it seems that either side would have a reason to stretch the truth, so who knows.

<https://www.ign.com/articles/former-subnautica-2-leaders-accuse-krafton-of-hindering-games-release-firing-them-to-avoid-paying-250-million-bonus>

Switch 2 exclusive Donkey Kong Bananza is out now, to rave reviews. Even if I wanted to rethink my complete disinterest in the new console, it's a moot point since they're never in stock anywhere. It looks like this game isn't one of those dreaded "game key cards", and it's not \$80 like Mario Kart World (although \$70 is still a jump from their \$60 last-gen offerings), but maybe it'd be worth it for a few select physical titles, and to play what's likely to be a better version of *Metroid Prime 4*.

<https://www.metacritic.com/game/donkey-kong-bananza/>

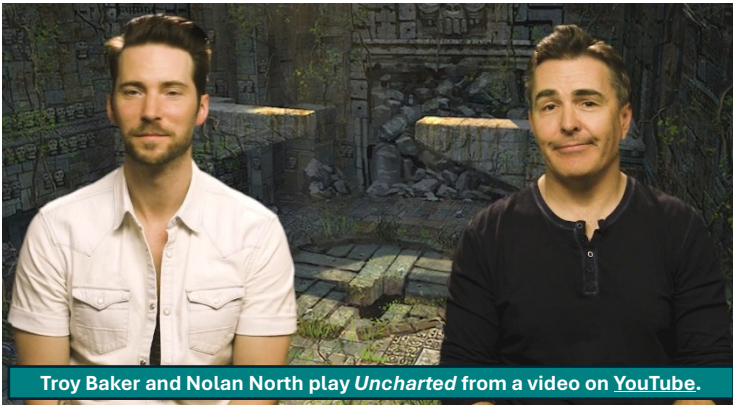


From the *Donkey Kong Bananza* product page at BestBuy.com.

Famous Faces in Digital Places

Video game characters need a face, and they need a voice. Okay, sure, not *all* characters and not *all* video games, because some are about colorful blocks (*Tetris*, *Thomas Was Alone*) and some have no spoken dialogue at all (*Virginia*, *Journey*, *Limbo*, *Unravel*, *Zork*).

Usually, a game's artists design the look of a character, and usually, they're voiced by professionals who specialize in voice acting, not necessarily live action films or television.



Sometimes, though, game directors decide to use recognizable actors and celebrities, not just to voice a character, but to provide facial capture and likeness as well; essentially turning them into digital puppets. In a way, it's as if those actors are actually starring in the game, as they would a TV show or movie.

It's debatable whether or not this makes a game better, but I'm not sure it's about making a game better. Developers – especially auteurs like Hideo Kojima (*Meal Gear Solid*, *Death Stranding*), Sam Lake (*Alan Wake*, *Control*, *Quantum Break*), and David Cage (*Detroit: Become Human*, *Beyond: Two Souls*) just have an affinity for Hollywood and like the thought of having “real” actors in their games.

Of course, it's also for marketing. Imagine being able to say “hey, our game stars Tom Cruise.” That example has never happened, to my knowledge, but it would get big publicity.

First, though, I've put together some ground rules on which actors and games might make the list, and an explanation of what this topic is all about.

1. **It's an unordered**, unnumbered list. I'm not ranking actors, games, or the importance of their appearance in these games. This is just meant to be a fun look at a few big games featuring big names.
2. **Listing every game** that qualifies would be silly and impossible. This isn't meant to be complete or exhaustive, just a fun and hopefully interesting diversion. I'm sure I'll have a big “DOH!” moment once this issue goes out, upon realizing important and obvious actors/games I overlooked, but it is what it is.
3. **Well-known actors** who voiced a character but didn't lend their likeness to the game aren't included in the list. Examples would include Samuel L. Jackson as Officer Tenpenny in *GTA: San Andreas*, Charlie Cox as Gustav in *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*, Sir Patrick Stewart in *TES IV: Oblivion* and *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*, and Mark Hamill as The Joker in the *Batman Arkham* games.
4. **Well-known faces** voiced by somebody else are also excluded. Examples would include Guillermo del Toro as Deadman in *Death Stranding* and Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones in *The Great Circle*.
5. **Games featuring** the voice and likeness of an actor who isn't normally associated with film and TV, or who is lesser-known in general (at least to me) are excluded too. An example would be the guy who starred in *Mafia 3* and the recent (and highly unfortunate misfire) *MindsEye*.

Night Stranding Until Dawn

Dana Plato in *Night Trap*

The first time a well-known actor appeared in a video game, according to every source out there, was the 1992 full-motion *Night Trap* video game. Playing the key role of special officer “Kelly”, sent in to pose as a teenager to investigate strange disappearances at the Martin family home, was Dana Plato. She was best known as Kimberly on a sitcom called *Diff’rent Strokes* (also starring Janet Jackson, Todd Bridges and Gary Coleman), which aired from 1978 to 1986. I remember enjoying that show back then; yeah, I’m that old.

CAST	
DANA PLATO	KELLY
TRACY MATHESON	CINDY
DEBRA PARKS	LISA
ALISON RHEA	ASHLEY
CHRISTY FORD	MEGAN
JOSH GODARD	DANNY
JON R. KAMAL	VICTOR MARTIN
MOLLY STARR	SHEILA MARTIN
SUZY COTE	SARAH MARTIN
ANDRAS JONES	TONY
GIOVANNI LEMM	JEFF MARTIN
WILLIAM BERTRAND	EDDIE

I’m including my mini-review for the game later in this issue, but it doesn’t go into any detail about the gameplay. I played a bit of the 25th Anniversary Edition, which includes remastered full-screen scenes and a camera system where you can actually see live feeds in each of the eight camera panels at the bottom, making it much easier to know when something is happening elsewhere in and around the house.

The original release had highly compressed video and still thumbnails for each camera, which was bound to have caused even more frustration than now. You can toggle on the classic camera mode and older visuals, but unless you’re a masochist, you shouldn’t.

Gameplay is deceptively simple. You play the part of “Control” – an unknown stand-in for you as the player – working with the S.C.A.T. task force who has gained control of the Martin home’s camera system and its many traps. You can switch between the eight different camera feeds to see what’s happening in different rooms. From what I saw in my brief time with the game, only two or three rooms at a time tend to have activity, with various characters moving throughout the house as time progresses.

Black-clad invaders called “Augers” constantly infiltrate the home. It’s your job to find them on camera, know the correct color for the security system (which changes from time to time, requiring you to hear the new color from one of the Martins and wait for somebody to go change it), and catch them in a trap at just the right time before they kill.

The traps are goofy in a [Home Alone](#) kind of way, although they’re a feature of the house. There are trap doors to drop Augers down into pits, side panels that open in walls where you can trigger an opposite panel to slide out and push them in, a spring trap to catapult Augers off the roof, a bookcase that can rotate when an Auger is near, and so on.

It’s simply frustrating to play, unfortunately. Some scenes can happen simultaneously in different rooms, so there’s a trial-and-error to figuring out what’s important, catching the mention of a code color change, and selecting the right camera to be ready to spring a trap on an Auger without missing something important elsewhere.

When too many Augers escape, it’s game over. The S.C.A.T. leader chastises you for your sloppy efforts and cuts the connection. You then start from scratch. I saw no way to save scum or rewind; sort of like an arcade game, which becomes way too tedious after a while.

The story and acting are very 1980's teenage campy horror comedy. It's also nothing close to the society-collapsing herald of doomsday it was presented to be by Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl in the [1993-94 US Senate hearings](#) that put the game front-and-center as a modern-day boogeyman that was going to destroy America's children with its sex (despite it having no sex or nudity) and violence (which is silly and campy; a far cry from what video games offer these days).

This resulted in the creation of the ESA (Entertainment Software Association, who used to run E3 until it shut down a few years ago) and the ESRB rating system.

Special features in the 25th anniversary edition include short documentaries about the making of the game and the controversy around it, and a 48-minute movie made up of scenes from the game culminating in what appears to be a "bad" ending, but without any gameplay elements included. I wasn't able to see every special feature, as some of them are locked behind completing the game and some require that you reach the good ending.



It's mostly just important for its historical significance, which includes the controversy and being the first game featuring a well-known actor. I wouldn't recommend *playing* the game, but for those who can get the hang of it, it might be a fun time.

Sadly, Dana Plato [died](#) by apparent suicide on May 8th of 1999, according to her entry on [Wikipedia](#).

The same team's *Double Switch* released a year later. It seems to have exactly the same camera and trap gameplay, and it starred Corey Haim (*The Lost Boys*, *License to Drive*), who [died in 2010](#). It too got a 25th Anniversary Remaster a few years ago.

Norman Reedus in *Death Stranding* + *DS2*

He's in the recently released sequel and the original *Death Stranding* from 2019. The thing about his character Sam Porter Bridges in both these games is that it's difficult to see the character as anything other than just Norman Reedus behaving exactly like he would in *The Walking Dead*. It's just him.

The game's creative lead is, of course, Hideo Kojima of *Metal Gear Solid* fame. He's known to have a fascination and love for Hollywood movies and actors. Norman Reedus is only one of several famous faces in these games, which also include Mads Mikkelsen (in the first game), Léa Seydoux (in both games), a de-aged Lindsay Wagner (in the first game), and Elle Fanning (in the second game only).



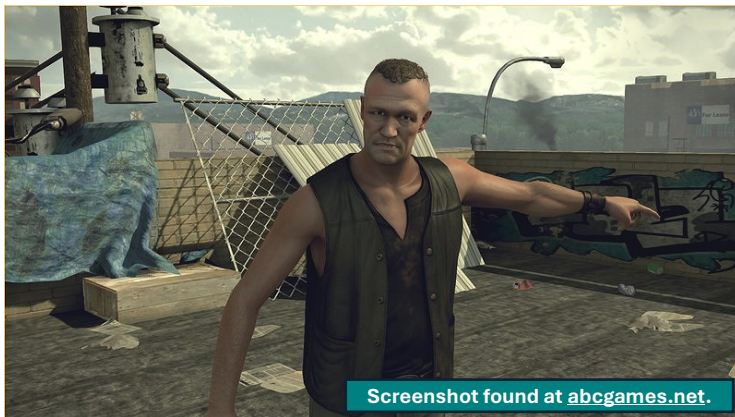
The games even feature celebrities in bit parts, such as Geoff Keighley (of *The Game Awards*) and Conan O'Brien (of *The Tonight Show*) in the first game, and all three members of the Scottish synth-pop band *Chvrches* in the second game (pictured above). Their music is pretty catchy, if I'm being honest. I must have listened to their track [Nightmares](#) on Spotify dozens of times by now (also featured in the game), and their [Death Stranding](#) track is a banger too.

As for the game *Death Stranding 2* itself, it's fantastic, and if not for *Expedition 33*, it might be my Game of the Year. I've included my social media mini-review later in this issue.

Norman Reedus and Michael Rooker in *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct*

No, it's not that I'm a Norman Reedus superfan or something. I just really liked *TWD Survival Instinct*. I feel like it's an underrated Xbox 360-era gem that more people should have played (and those who did should have enjoyed it more than its horrible 32 out of 100 rating on [Metacritic](#) would suggest).

The game also stars Michael Rooker. If you don't recognize him as *TWD*'s Merle Dixon, you might know him as Yondu from Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The voices and likenesses of both actors appear in the game.



Screenshot found at [abcgames.net](#).

Giancarlo Esposito in *Far Cry 6*

I can't think of anything I'd seen Mr. Esposito in prior to *Far Cry 6*, except maybe his role as Moff Gideon toward the end of *Mandalorian* season 1. I'd eventually get around to watching *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*, which may be where he's best known.

He plays the bad guy, Antón Castillo (aka "El Presidente") in *Far Cry 6*. I feel like we're way overdue for the next one in the franchise.



Part of a blurry screenshot from my 2021 mini-review.

Hayden Panettiere and Rami Malek in *Until Dawn*

I'm not sure how I forgot about this game when writing about my co-op experiences in [issue #9](#). I must have just lumped it into the unlisted bucket of games Tracy watched me play (but she was very invested in the story and in helping me make decisions).

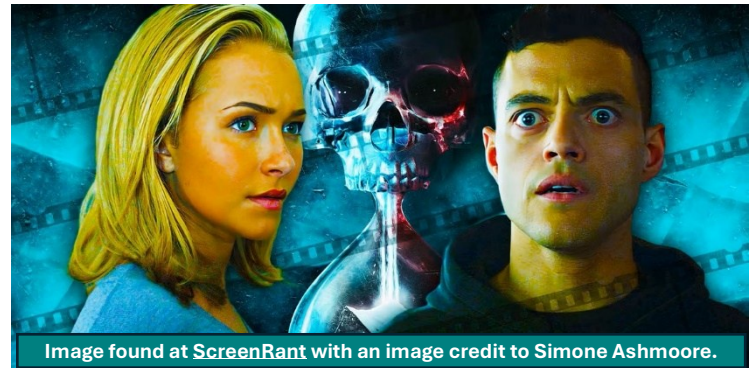


Image found at [ScreenRant](#) with an image credit to Simone Ashmoore.

Supermassive Games has gone on to replicate (or try to replicate) their *Until Dawn* ensemble cast movie-like horror game with their *Dark Pictures Anthology*. I've only played the first two (*Man of Medan*, which was one of the mini-reviews in [issue #9](#), and *Little Hope*).

Their game *The Quarry* is also supposed to be good, and more of a spiritual successor to *Until Dawn*. I really need to play all those.

For me, the star of the game was Hayden Panettiere, who I knew as "the cheerleader" from *Heroes*. Others might know her from the show *Nashville*. I also recognized a guy who was in the first season or two of Marvel's *Agents of Shield* (Brett Dalton).

I don't think I had seen Rami Malek in anything at that point. He was the lead (a hacker named Elliot Alderson) in *Mr. Robot* (a series I greatly enjoyed), but that premiered mere weeks before the game did, and I hadn't even heard of it yet. Since then, he's been a James Bond 007 villain (Lyutsifer Safin in *No Time to Die*) and Freddie Mercury in the *Bohemian Rhapsody* biopic, among others.

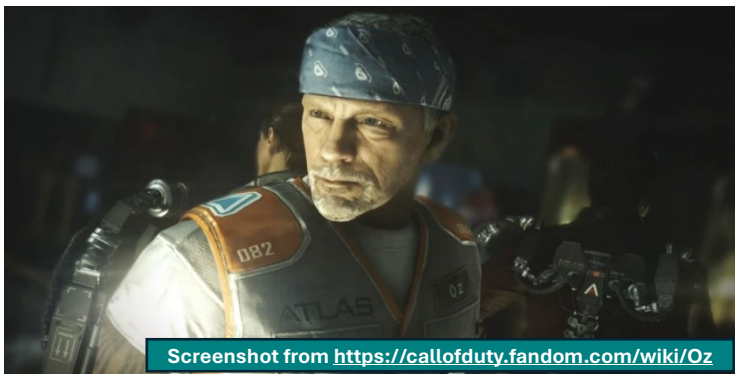
Duty Days in the Dark

John Malkovich in *Call of Duty - Exo Zombies - COD: Advanced Warfare*

With *Call of Duty* being such a blockbuster hit year after year, Activision has the budget to hire Hollywood actors. Games in the series (and often the DLC or zombies modes) have starred actors like Kevin Spacey (known for his roles in movies like *Seven*, *American Beauty*, and *Pay it Forward*, as well as allegations of sexual misconduct that led to his later removal from 2014's *Advanced Warfare*), Danny Trejo (in a *Black Ops* zombies DLC), Robert Englund (but not his *A Nightmare on Elm Street* character Freddy Krueger, in the same DLC), Michael Rooker (mentioned earlier, and in the same DLC), Sarah Michelle Gellar (same DLC), David Tennant (aka the Tenth Doctor on *Doctor Who*) and Karen David (great in last year's *Black Ops 6*, which I played; see my mini-review of it in [issue #6](#)).

The actor that surprises me most, however, is John Malkovich. I've always seen him as more of a prestige actor, but with roles in 1997's *Con Air*, the weird but cool *Being John Malkovich* (as himself, from 1999), and Pascal Sauvage in the goofy but incredibly hilarious Rowan "Mr. Bean" Atkinson spy comedy from 2003, *Johnny English*, I guess he has a wide range. Here's a short YouTube video where he talks about his role in *ExoZombies*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOEtutgwGZU>



Screenshot from <https://callofduty.fandom.com/wiki/Oz>

David Harbour in *Alone in the Dark*

The 2024 reimaging of *Alone in the Dark* stars Jodie Comer as Emily Hartwood (I didn't recognize her from anything I've seen), and David Harbour as Edward Carnby (best known as Jim Hopper in *Stranger Things* and Red Guardian in various Marvel movies). Hiring these two seems like a big swing for a game that ultimately didn't move the needle for the series or for horror games in general.



Keanu Reeves in *Cyberpunk 2077*

Yeah, I'm going to be "that guy" – the one who snobbishly insists he loved this game at launch, way before it had its redemption arc and became the masterpiece many gamers consider it today. I'm not lying, though. My mini-review (included later in this issue) backs me up on that. My son just finished playing through it recently, and he earned the platinum trophy just like I did. He enjoyed it.

Keanu Reeves plays an important role in the story (Johnny Silverhand, a sort of ghost-in-the-machine) and has plenty of in-game presence.



Another blurry image, due to the foolish way I was taking screenshots.

Apparently, Idris Elba is also great as Solomon Reed in the *CP2077 Phantom Liberty* DLC.

Sam Witwer in *Days Gone*, *The Callisto Protocol*, and *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 1 and 2*

Has Sam Witwer ever been the lead in anything big, other than video games and maybe Syfy's *Being Human* (which I haven't seen)? He seems to show up a lot in support roles and bit parts (ex: I remember him from an early season of *Dexter*), but I associate him just as much with video games (Starkiller in *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* and Captain Leon Ferris in *The Callisto Protocol*, which both feature his voice and likeness).

I'll fight anybody who says *Days Gone* was a bad game. Well, not really, but I'll at least strongly disagree with them.



Days Gone cover art found at IMDB.

My social media mini-review from July 6th, 2019, predates my 3-post format with screenshots, but I had [this to say](#) back then about the game:

"An excellent, beautifully-realized open world post-apocalyptic action adventure epic with zombies (more or less). Good story and gameplay. Loved it. A frontrunner for personal GOTY. Not perfect, but easily one of the year's best so far. Fun and memorable."

Josh Duhamel in *The Callisto Protocol*

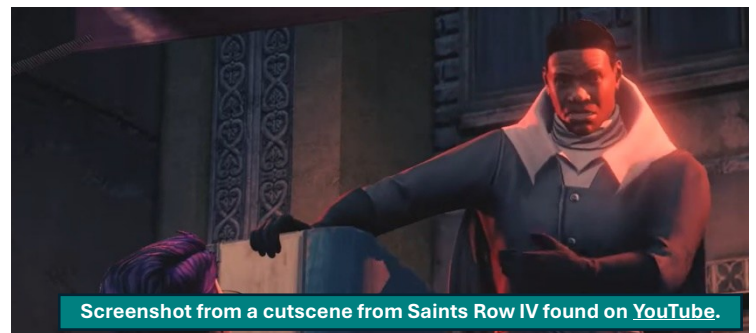
Glen Scholfield was a co-creator of *Dead Space*, and this was his spiritual successor to that series. I liked it way more than most reviewers did, with people often citing their frustrations with the melee punch-and-dodge combat. It probably didn't help that a remake of the original *Dead Space* was coming out less than two months later, to much higher praise among fans.

Sam Witwer appears as a supporting character here too, but you play as Jacob Lee (portrayed by Josh Duhamel) escaping from a nightmarish sci-fi prison. I recognized him right away, but without being able to put a finger on just *what* I'd seen him in.



Keith David in *Saints Row IV*

I'm a fan of *all* the *Saints Row* games, including the reboot from 2022, but I didn't realize upon playing *Saints Row IV* back in 2013 that Keith David (as himself, as the Vice President) was actually a veteran of the series, portraying Julius Little in the first two games. I only played them for the first time in the past year. Self-referential humor in *SRIV* even has characters commenting on how much Keith David resembles Julius Little.

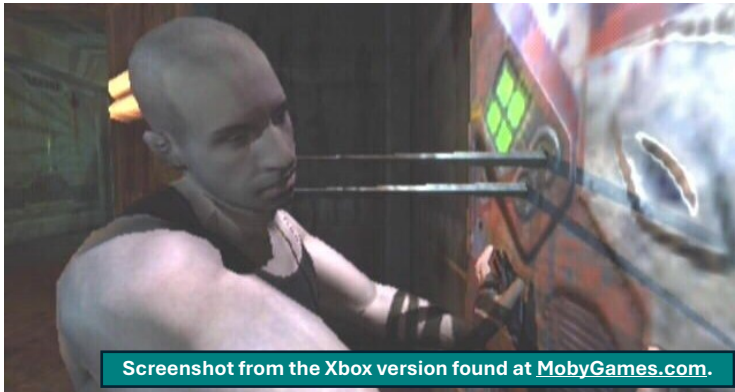


Screenshot from a cutscene from Saints Row IV found on YouTube.

Infinite Quantum Observer

Vin Diesel in *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay*

The original first-ever Xbox has several titles that could be in the running for “best game on the platform” but *Escape from Butcher Bay* must be near the top of the list. The game was made by Starbreeze and Tigon Studios, with Tigon being Vin’s own game development company (he’s known to be a gamer too).



Screenshot from the Xbox version found at MobyGames.com.

Back then, licensed games were more miss than hit, often serving as movie tie-in cash grabs with very little merit beyond that. *Escape from Butcher Bay* (and later, *Assault on Dark Athena*, which IMO wasn’t as good) told original stories in the movie universe.

The game *Escape from Butcher Bay* (also on PC) was a prequel to the sci-fi horror movie *Pitch Black* (it’s great; watch it if you never have; incidentally, Keith David stars in it as well) which became part of a *Chronicles of Riddick* universe. I’d say the film franchise seems to be abandoned at this point, with Vin Diesel too busy with the cash cow that is *The Fast and the Furious* film franchise, but apparently *Riddick: Furya* is still in the works.

In *Escape from Butcher Bay*, you play as Richard B. Riddick (reprised by Vin Diesel) as he gets his iconic eye shine and makes his escape from a triple-max prison (Butcher Bay) on an inhospitable desert planet.

Shawn Ashmore in *Quantum Break*, *Alan Wake II*, and *Man of Medan*

Sure, one of those things is not like the others (*Man of Medan* is from Supermassive games, part of the *Dark Pictures Anthology*, whereas the other two are from Sam Lake and Remedy Entertainment), but I wanted to credit Mr. Ashmore for all three of these at once. Sadly, he was the only one to die – and early on, at that – in my playthrough of *Man of Medan*.

His roles in *Quantum Break* and *Alan Wake II* are especially notable, for different reasons. In *Quantum Break*, it was necessary to model the game’s characters to look like the actors portraying them because the game included four TV show-like live action episodes between each chapter. Incidentally, the guy who played Littlefinger on *Game of Thrones* (Aidan Gillen) was also in the game.

In *Alan Wake II*, Mr. Ashmore plays Sheriff Tim Breaker, seemingly a nod to his character in *Quantum Break*. In the *Night Springs* DLC, he stars as himself in a sort of multiversal twisting narrative that has him entering the world of the *Alan Wake II* video game.



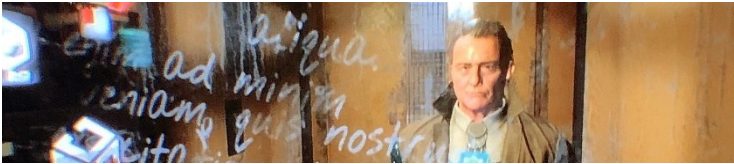
Also notable in the game and its *Night Springs* DLC is the character Warlin Door, played by David Harewood in a series of live-action scenes where he’s a talk-show host (in the main game) and a Rod Serling-like presenter of the *Night Springs* TV show in the DLC. I recognized him as J’onn J’onzz (or Martian Manhunter) from *Supergirl* and other Arrowverse shows that aired on “The CW” a few years ago.



Rutger Hauer in *Observer*

Before Bloober Team had a big hit with the *Silent Hill 2* remake, they made quite a few other weird horror games, including one called *Observer* (or **>OBSERVER_** if the title screen is to be believed). It features Rutger Hauer, star of many films but perhaps best known in the iconic role of replicant Roy Batty in the cyberpunk classic, *Blade Runner*.

In my mini-review (included later in this issue), I comment that he sounded tired in his line delivery. I didn't realize then that he was almost 75 when the game was made, and that he passed away around two years later.



The "screenshots" in my mini-review are blurry due to simply taking photos of the PS4 version from my TV with my phone. Oddly enough, that's pretty much how the game looks with the Nintendo Switch version, which I tried playing at first but just couldn't get past that Vasoline filter image quality.

Lance Reddick in *Horizon: Zero Dawn* and *Horizon: Forbidden West*

Known for his role as the concierge at the Continental Hotel in the *John Wick* movies and as Phillip Broyles in the TV show *Fringe* (among many others), Mr. Reddick died in March of 2023, in part from coronary artery disease (a condition I myself have). He portrayed Sylens in the Horizon games.



One of the only images of Sylens I could find, from a [Horizon fan site](#).

Danny Trejo in *Like a Dragon: Infinite Wealth*

He's easily recognizable as the voice of Dwight Méndez in this, the second *Like a Dragon* outing for Ichiban Kasuga, but I never thought the character *looked* that much like him. The internet says Dwight was also modeled after Mr. Trejo, but to my eyes, there's only a loose resemblance.

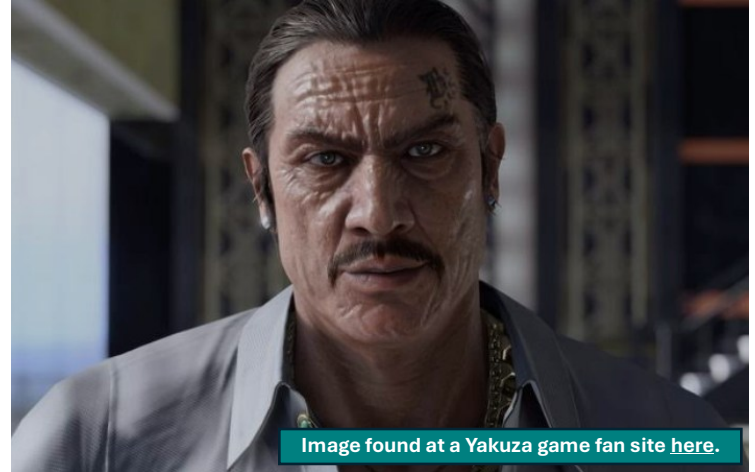


Image found at a [Yakuza game fan site](#) [here](#).

Anya Chalotra in *Unknown 9 - Awakening*

My mini-review for this underrated and highly overlooked gem of 2024 can be found on page 8 of [issue #2](#) of the VGGN. The makers of *Unknown 9* reportedly had big plans to make it a cross-media franchise (podcasts, comics, novels, and games), which probably explains the casting of Ms. Chalotra (best known, at least to me, as Yennifer of Vengerberg in Netflix's take on *The Witcher*).



Screenshot from my mini-review of *Unknown 9 - Awakening*.

Unfortunately, the game *wasn't* a hit (I wish it had been) and so those plans were scrapped. I would have at least liked to see a sequel.

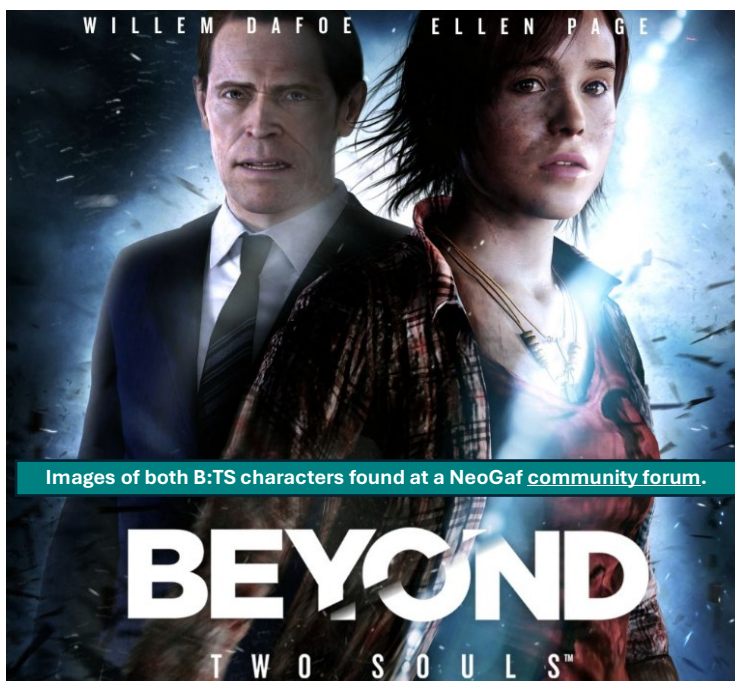
Human: Dead by Ragnarok

Elliot Page and Willem Dafoe in *Beyond: Two Souls*

While Quantic Dream's prior game, *Heavy Rain*, featured the likenesses of real actors too, it wasn't until *Beyond: Two Souls* that even a pleb like me was able to recognize the key cast members.

First up is Elliot Page, credited in the game at the time as Ellen Page. He plays Jodie Holmes, a young woman shown throughout various stages of her life in a non-sequential narrative that I really enjoyed but many others didn't. Best known at the time for roles in the movies *Inception* and *Juno*, and as Kitty Pryde in various *X-Men* films, a more recent notable role is Vanya/Viktor Hargreeves in the Netflix series *The Umbrella Academy*.

Willem Dafoe plays government scientist Nathan Dawkins in the game. Mr. Dafoe is a prolific actor you've almost certainly seen somewhere: Green Goblin (aka Norman Osborn) in the Sam Raimi *Spider-Man* movies, Sergeant Elias in *Platoon*, or many others of which, admittedly, I haven't watched myself.



Images of both B:T:S characters found at a NeoGaf community forum.

Valorie Curry, Bryan Dechart, Jesse Williams, Lance Henriksen, and Clancy Brown in *Detroit: Become Human*

Okay, the biggest names here are probably Lance Henriksen (best known to me as the android "Bishop" in *Aliens*) and Clancy Brown ("Harbinger" in *John Wick: Chapter 4* and Sergeant Charles Zim in *Starship Troopers*), but the three playable lead characters all do a fantastic job voicing the *Detroit: Become Human* androids modeled after them. My son also gives the game a big thumbs up, having played through to one ending recently.



This is another game where my social media mini-review pre-dates my 3-posts with screenshots format, but I had [this to say](#) back on May 27th of 2018:

"Did one marathon play-through this weekend and loved it. Got what I'd consider an ideal ending. Great game despite a few minor issues in story and control. Some really emotional moments. My favorite game of the year so far. Highly recommended."

Valorie Curry (Emma Hill on *The Following* and more recently the southern-accented anti-hero Firecracker on Amazon Prime's *The Boys*) plays Kara in the game.

I didn't recognize Bryan Dechart from anything (he's been in a few movies, I guess), but his character Connor is a fan favorite.

Markus was portrayed by Jesse Williams, probably best known as Dr. Jackson Avery on *Grey's Anatomy*, but he has starred in quite a few movies too (none of which I've seen).

Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and Brie Larson in *Fortnite*

Having never played a single minute of *Fortnite* (online competitive multiplayer just isn’t my thing), I would have thought dozens of celebrities would make this list from *Fortnite* alone. As I look now, though, they typically appear as unvoiced “skins” in the game, or with somebody else providing a voice-over.

Brie Larson (who also plays Captain Marvel in the MCU) is (or was) “The Paradigm” in *Fortnite*. To me, the resemblance is lacking, but maybe that’s just due to the game’s cartoony art style. You decide:



Image of “Paradigm” (Brie Larson) in *Fortnite* found in a Reddit post.

More recognizable in his role as “The Foundation” is Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson (former WWE wrestler turned actor who has appeared in countless movies, including *The Fast and the Furious* film franchise and the new *Jumanji* movies); but you know who he is.



Image of Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson in *Fortnite* found at [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com).

Another notable in-game appearance was Travis Scott, who held a [concert](#) inside *Fortnite* called “Astronomical” back in April of 2020. I don’t know his music, but I remember it being a big deal when it happened.

Nicolas Cage in *Dead by Daylight*

Here’s another popular multiplayer live service game I know next to nothing about, but everybody knows Nicolas Cage.



In the game, he’s simply a version of himself, taking on the role of a playable survivor. If somehow you don’t recognize the name or the face, look up movies like *Con Air*, *The Rock*, *Face/Off*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, and *National Treasure*. He’s in everything. A comedy short from College Humor about exactly that, on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), is a classic. It gets a bit NSFW (Not Safe for Work), but it’s pretty funny.

Richard Schiff in *God of War: Ragnarok*

Mr. Schiff is one of those actors who I sometimes see in things and think “oh, I recognize that guy” without being able to remember where or put a name to the face.

He portrays Odin (the “All-Father” in Norse mythology, and Kratos’s nemesis in *God of War – Ragnarök*). He starred in TV shows like *The West Wing* and *Criminal Minds*, the latter of which Tracy instantly recognized him from.



This image of Odin in *GOW: Ragnarök* can be found all over the internet.

City Survivor Crackdown

Terry Crews in *Crackdown 3*

Like Vin Diesel in *Escape From Butcher Bay* (mentioned earlier) and Henry Cavill (who's reportedly starring in an upcoming game called *Squadron 42*, which is tied into *Star Citizen* somehow, although who knows if that game will ever see the light of day), Terry Crews is an actor who is also well-known as a gamer and who appears in a video game.

Mr. Crews (best known to me as Terry Jeffords on the show *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, a fantastic Andy Samberg comedy) plays Commander Isaiah Jaxon (the game's main character) in *Crackdown 3*, which was a fun but easily forgettable Xbox exclusive action game.



Image of Jaxon (Terry Crews) in *Crackdown 3* from [TrueAchievements](#).

In a social media mini-review from March 18th, 2019, way before settling into my 3-post format that includes screenshots, I had this to say:

“A shallow relic of last-gen in looks, design, and story? Yeah. Fun, though? YES! The internet convinced me it was bad, but it's not. It's no *Agents of Mayhem*, but fun open-world super-powered action hits the spot. Crazy guns, jumping, orbs. I enjoyed it.”

“You might like *Crackdown 3* if you like:”

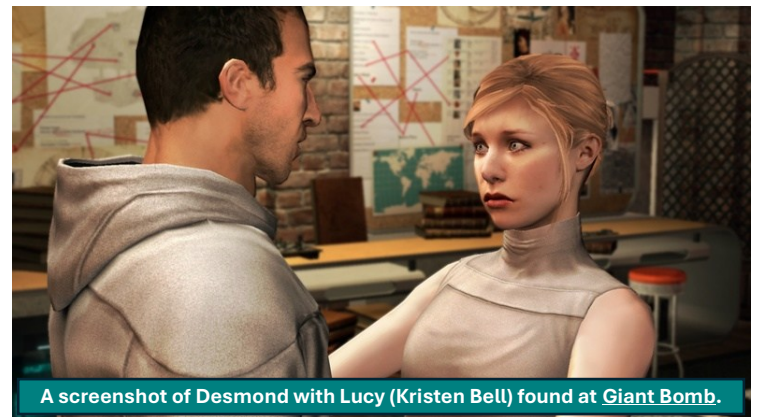
- Saints Row 4
- Sunset Overdrive
- Crackdown 1 & 2
- Agents of Mayhem
- Games that look dated.
- Feeling overpowered by the end.
- Some tricky optional platforming areas.
- Lots of cars and driving in a world where it's most fun to just run and jump.

Kristen Bell in *Assassin's Creed*

One thing has bothered me since I decided to write about “real” actors in video games for this issue. It's that all of this is common knowledge, or at least, I would think so.

While doing research to figure out if there were any important examples I forgot about from my own gaming experiences, I stumbled on articles about the first three *Assassin's Creed* games, and how Lucy Stillman is portrayed by Kristen Bell. I played (and loved) those games, yet I somehow had no idea. Maybe that means readers will find a few games and names from the list surprising too.

It could also be that the graphical fidelity on the Xbox 360 just didn't do justice to Kristen Bell's likeness in the game, although in this particular screenshot (found at [Giant Bomb](#)), I can see it now.



A screenshot of Desmond with Lucy (Kristen Bell) found at [Giant Bomb](#).

She was *Veronica Mars* in the TV show and is the voice of Anna in *Frozen*, among others.

Her story arc is interesting in that she's introduced in the first game as an Abstergo employee (aka the Templars, the bad guys), but she befriends protagonist Desmond Miles and is revealed to be an undercover agent of the Assassins, but surprise (and spoiler for a very old game) it turns out later that she really was a Templar, working as a double-agent within the Assassins.

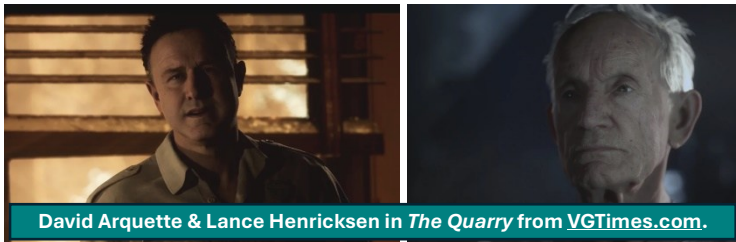
I wonder how much of that wasn't planned initially, until Ubisoft decided to write her out of the game after a [failed contract dispute](#).

David Arquette in *The Quarry*

I've mentioned other Supermassive horror games in this write-up (*Until Dawn*, *Man of Medan*, and *The Dark Pictures Anthology* in general), but among a cast of often lesser-known actors in these, David Arquette stands out as the big name in *The Quarry*. It's a game I haven't yet played, but I hear good things.

You may know Mr. Arquette from the *Scream* movie franchise, *Eight Legged Freaks*, *Muppets in Space*, and a long list of others.

Lance Henriksen (mentioned earlier for his role in *Detroit: Become Human*) also stars.



David Arquette & Lance Henriksen in *The Quarry* from VGTimes.com.

Cameron Monaghan in *Star Wars Jedi: Survivor* and *Fallen Order*

Could Respawn have opted to cast an actor in the role of Cal Kestis for their *Star Wars Jedi* games just in case Disney ever wanted to feature the character in a live action format? I don't know, but with Cameron Monaghan providing his voice and likeness for the main character, it's something they *could* do.

He's been in a lot of stuff, apparently, but I recognize him most as Jerome and Jeremiah Valeska on the *Batman* prequel show *Gotham*. One of them either becomes the Joker or later inspires somebody who does; it's not clear.



A capture from my *Star Wars Jedi: Survivor* mini-review.

Lots of people in *Crime Boss: Rockay City*

I so very much want to play this game, and I'm completely undeterred by its dismal rating of 52 (out of 100) on [Metacritic](#). It doesn't need to be good, and I already bought a copy back when it released in September of 2023. It just needs to be as ridiculous as it looks, and fun.



Promotional pic from *Crime Boss: Rockay City* found at Geek Network.

Ingame Studios somehow landed a cast of B and C-tier actors for the game, possibly with the financial backing of publisher 505 Games.

Let's take a look at the talent involved here.

To start, we have Michael Madsen, who voiced Toni Cipriani in *Grand Theft Auto III* (plus other games, plus roles in several Quentin Tarantino flicks like *Reservoir Dogs* and *Kill Bill*). He plays the lead protagonist, Travis Baker.

You may notice Danny Trejo, mentioned twice already for appearing in a *Call of Duty* zombies map and as a supporting character in last year's *Like a Dragon: Infinite Wealth*.

Michael Rooker (also mentioned twice already) stars as a character called "Touchdown".

Chuck Norris, a man who needs no introduction (but if he's unfamiliar to you, check out all [these facts](#) about this famous actor and martial artist), plays Sheriff Norris, presumably Baker's enemy.

Vanilla "Ice, Ice, Baby" Ice plays "Hielo".

Kim Basinger is Casey, a woman who's described as also being a part of Travis Baker's gang.

Danny Glover, star of the movies *Lethal Weapon* and *Predator 2* (among others) plays "Gloves", another member of the gang. So yeah, I *have* to play this game someday. I just don't know when.

Rainbow Apocalypse

Yvonne Strahovski in *Mass Effect 2 + 3*

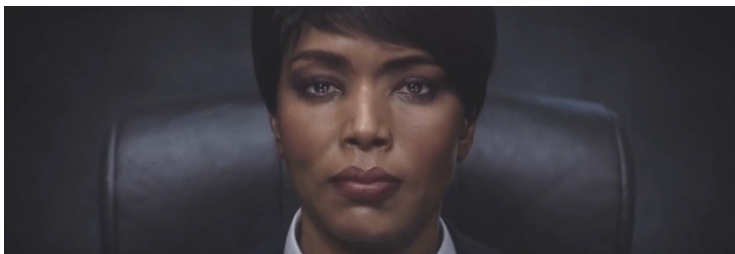
I've seen Ms. Strahovski in things (she was Hannah McKay in *Dexter*, Serena Waterford in *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Sarah in *Chuck*, which I haven't watched), but I somehow didn't know her by name and never knew that she was Miranda in *Mass Effect 2* and *3*. I think giving the character dark hair is what threw me, but it could just be that I hadn't seen her in those things until years after I played those games. Compared side by side, I can see it.



This image of Miranda next to Yvonne Strahovski found on [Imgur.com](#).

Angela Bassett in *Rainbow Six: Siege*

Angela Bassett appears as the leader “Six” in Tom Clancy’s *Rainbow Six: Siege*. Her film credits include Marvel’s *Black Panther* and its sequel; also, *Malcolm X*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Boyz n the Hood*, *What’s Love Got To Do With It* (as Tina Turner), and many others. For TV, she was in *American Horror Story* (which I’ve never watched) and *9-1-1* (also never watched).

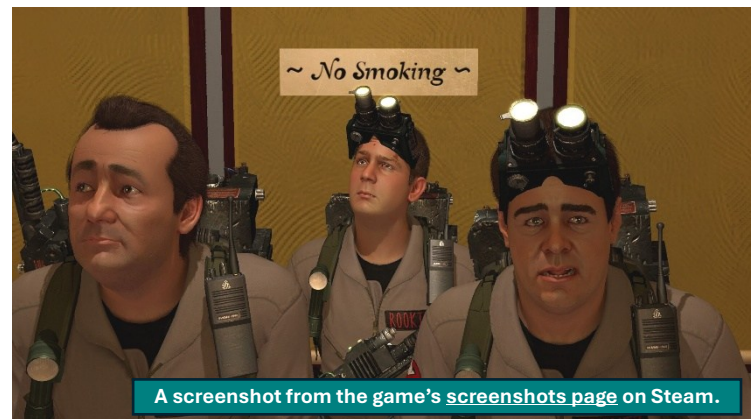


Angela Bassett as “Six” in *Rainbow Six Siege*, from this [YouTube video](#).

Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Ernie Hudson, and Harold Ramis in *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*

Somehow, despite being a big fan of this game when it first released, I tend to forget that it stars the voices and likenesses of the original movie cast (including Annie Potts returning as Janine Melnitz and William Atherton as the EPA inspector Walter Peck, who was responsible for shutting down the ghost containment unit in the first movie). In the game, you play as a “rookie” rather than any of the famous *Ghostbusters* themselves.

Licensed games, when they actually include the likenesses of their movie counterparts, tend to have other actors doing the voice work. It’s bound to be cheaper that way. Not *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*, though. It was first released in 2009 for PS3, Xbox 360 and PC, but it got a remaster for PS4, Switch, and Xbox One back in 2019. At the time, it was being marketed as a “Ghostbusters 3” we were never expected to get in movie form.



A screenshot from the game’s [screenshots page](#) on Steam.

Dan Aykroyd and Ernie Hudson reprised their roles as Ray Stantz and Winston Zeddemore in the more recent *Ghostbusters: Spirits Unleashed* asymmetrical multiplayer game. Harold Ramis (as Egon Spangler) passed away in 2014, and Bill Murray (as Peter Venkman) is still around doing Bill Murray things. They’ve all been in a lot of other good movies over the years, which I won’t list.

Nathan Fillion in *Halo 5: Guardians*

His character Sergeant Edward Buck also appears in *Halo 3: ODST* and he's the voice (or one of the voices) of Cayde-6 in *Destiny 2*, neither of which I've played. I recognized him immediately when I played *Halo 5*, though.



You might recognize Nathan Fillion as Malcolm Reynolds (the lead in the cult classic sci-fi series *Firefly*), or as Rick Castle in the show *Castle*, or as Nathan Drake in a short and unofficial *Uncharted* [demo movie](#). He's been in plenty of other stuff, too.

The game (*Halo 5*) also stars Mike Colter (he was *Luke Cage* on the Netflix Marvel show of the same name), although Agent Locke in the game is voiced by somebody else entirely (Ike Amadi).

Aaron Staton in *L.A. Noire*

I very nearly left this game out, on purpose, because I didn't recognize most of the actors when I played it (and still don't). Apparently, much of the cast comes from the TV show *Mad Men*, which I've never watched. This includes Aaron Staton, who plays the lead detective in the game, Cole Phelps.



The game is notable for its lifelike facial capture and animation, which at the time was very much in the [uncanny valley](#) territory.

Bruce Willis in *Apocalypse*

I know nothing about [this game](#) other than (1) it looks interesting, (2) it's a PlayStation One exclusive from Activision, (3) it's in my ever-growing game collection and maybe I'll get around to playing it someday, and (4) it stars Bruce Willis (who was a star in many great movies, such as *12 Monkeys*, *The Fifth Element*, the whole *Die Hard* series, *The Sixth Sense*, *Unbreakable*, and *Armageddon*). He was also a lead in the show *Moonlighting* from the 1980s, which is where I first saw him.



Mark Hamill, Malcolm McDowell, and John Rhys-Davies in *Wing Commander III and IV*

As was the case in *Night Trap*, these actors appear in full-motion video (FMV) scenes. They're not simply modeled and rendered.



The marquee star here is Mark Hamill (on the right – Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* and later the voice of The Joker in various DC properties), but John Rhys-Davies (left – *Lord of the Rings*) and Malcom McDowell (center – star of *A Clockwork Orange* and *Star Trek: Generations*) have been in numerous things as well.

Kingdom of the Sand

Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson in *Bulletproof* and *Blood on the Sand*

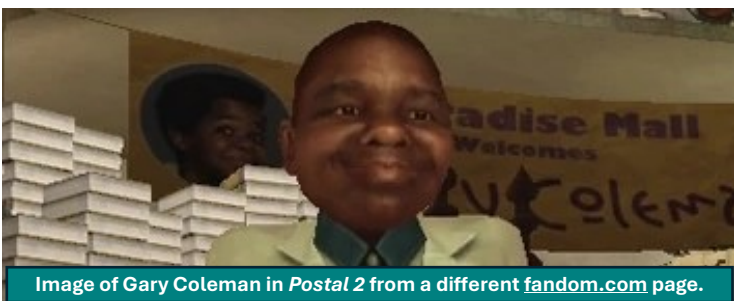
I very nearly omitted these games from the list on the technicality that rapper “50 Cent” isn’t a “famous actor”. Ultimately, I decided I can bend the rules if I need to, and since the latter game is quite good, I decided to go for it. The main thing is that he’s recognizable as a real-world person, and he voices this version of himself in the games.

I never played *Bulletproof* (despite owning it for both the OG Xbox and PlayStation 2), but I did play *Blood on the Sand*, and it’s great. My mini-review can be found later in this issue.



Gary Coleman in *Postal 2*

This is another entry that was originally relegated to the “honorable mentions” at the end of this issue, based on having never played *Postal 2* and being of the impression that Mr. Coleman (of the 80s sitcom *Diff’rent Strokes*, mentioned earlier; he passed away in May of 2010) only had a brief cameo in the game. However, [this fan site](#) paints an altogether different picture of his role in the game and its expansions.

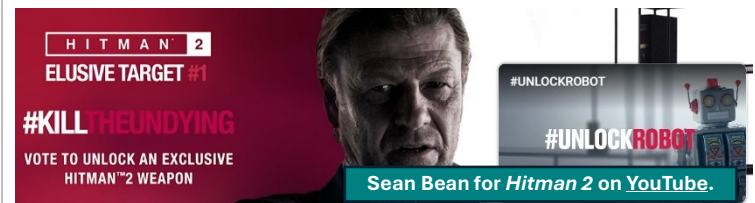


Sean Bean, Gary Busey, and Gary Cole in *Hitman: World of Assassination*

Similar to most of the celebrity appearances in *Call of Duty*, these three recognizable actors weren’t in the main game, but rather the live-service DLC that featured various elusive targets. These limited-time missions tasked players with tracking down and assassinating specific characters for the duration of the event.

As much as I loved the whole modern *Hitman* trilogy (now called *World of Assassination*), I never did any of those elusive targets. Since they were limited time (although some were brought back on a temporary basis), I believe it's far too late now anyway.

Sean Bean, known for playing characters who regularly get murdered in films like *GoldenEye* (the first James Bond movie to star Pierce Brosnan as 007) and shows like *Game of Thrones*, played Mark “The Undying” Faba in the *Hitman* contract. Get it? “The Undying?” That’s funny.



Gary Busey plays himself in the role of a target called “The Wildcard”. I remember seeing a trailer or commercial for this particular event, with Gary Busey being his typical unhinged self. After some sort of real-life controversy over misconduct allegations, though, IO Interactive opted not to bring it back later.

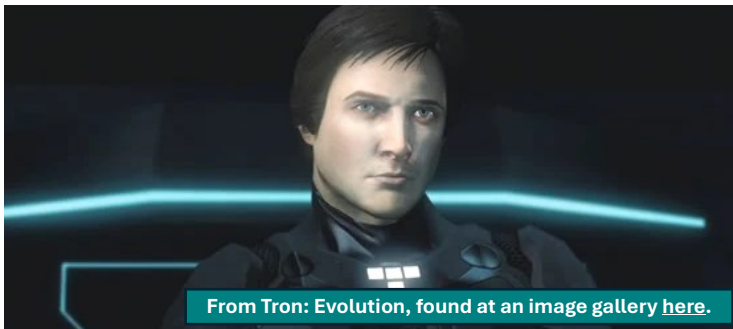


The contract also featured Gary Cole (not a target), who was perfect as clueless boss Bill Lumbergh in 1999’s *Office Space*. They’re seen together in [this trailer](#) on the *Hitman* YouTube.

Bruce Boxleitner in multiple *Tron* games and *Kingdom Hearts II*

The “antagonist” Colonel John Konrad in the cult classic game *Spec Ops: The Line* was voiced by Bruce Boxleitner, but that doesn’t count for this list. What does count is his recurring portrayal of the character Alan Bradley and his digital counterpart *Tron* in various games, reprising his role from the original movie.

Of the three *Tron* games he’s [credited for](#) (*Tron 2.0* in 2003, *Tron: Evolution* in 2010, and the Wii/DS mini-game spin-off *Battle Grids* also in 2010), I only ever played *Tron: Evolution*. I barely remember it (even though it was only four years ago when I played), except what’s written in my mini-review (included later in this issue), which is about the bad camera and difficult controls.



From *Tron: Evolution*, found at an [image gallery here](#).

Also of note, Olivia Wilde (known for her role as “Thirteen” on the Hugh Laurie-led medical drama *House*) was introduced in the movie *Tron: Legacy* as Quorra, and she voices her character in *Tron: Evolution* as well.

Mr. Boxleitner also plays *Tron* in the *Tron*-themed area of *Kingdom Hearts II*. If you’re unfamiliar with him, he also appears in quite a few movies and TV shows, including lead roles in *Scarecrow* and *Mrs. King* and the fan-favorite space opera *Babylon 5*.

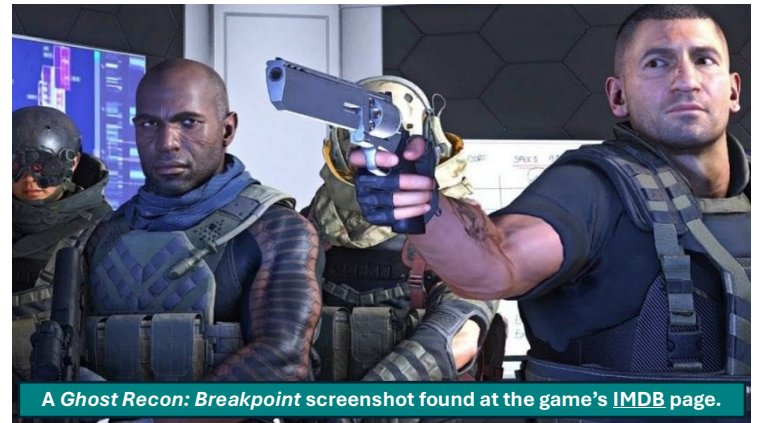


Image found at a [Kingdom Hearts II Reddit post here](#).

John Bernthal in *Ghost Recon - Breakpoint*

John Bernthal (the Punisher in the Netflix Marvel shows and Shane on the first two seasons of AMC’s *The Walking Dead*) is apparently in *Ghost Recon: Breakpoint*. I don’t think I’ve ever played a game in the series, but as the primary antagonist in the game, it seems like a pretty big deal.

I kind of want to play this now; yet another game to add to my nearly endless backlog.

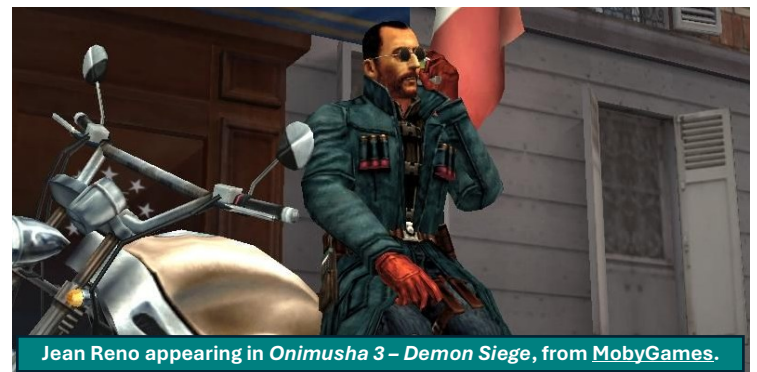


A *Ghost Recon: Breakpoint* screenshot found at the game’s [IMDB page](#).

Jean Reno in *Onimusha 3*

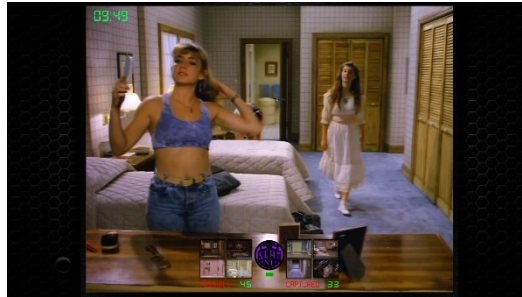
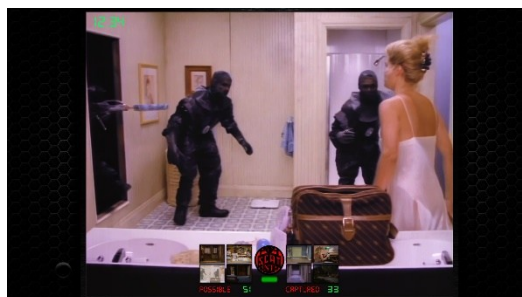
Jean Reno (of *The Professional* and *The Da Vinci Code*) was famously cast in the PlayStation 2 game *Onimusha 3*, but he only provided the French voice for his character.

This is another choice that nearly ended up in the “honorable mentions” later (because most English-speaking gamers will have experienced the character voiced by somebody else), but I remember it getting plenty of publicity at the time. Seeing famous actors in video games wasn’t a new thing then, but it was certainly far less common.



Jean Reno appearing in *Onimusha 3 – Demon Siege*, from [MobyGames](#).

Mini-Review: Night Trap 25th Anniversary



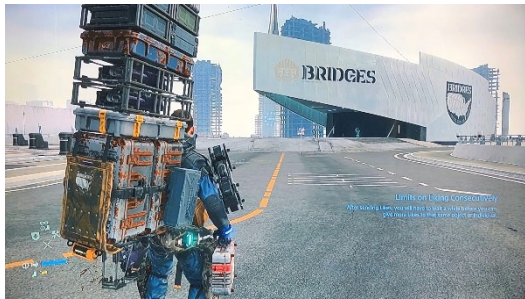
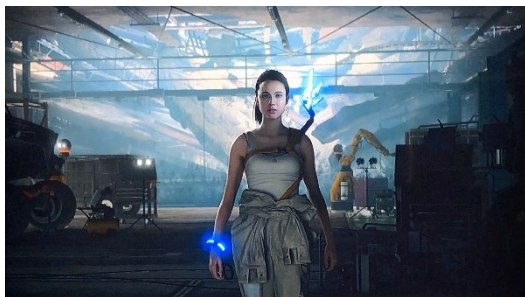
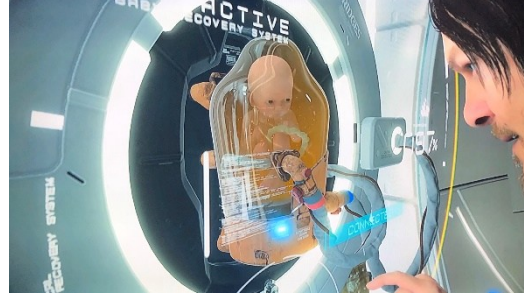
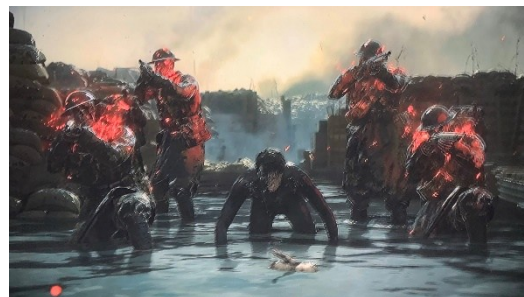
I don't usually "review" games I don't finish, so consider this just some info and thoughts on the game. I did make it past what seems to be the first Game Over point to the second one (about 11 or 12 minutes) but that's plenty of time to decide it's an interesting concept that just isn't fun to play.

It was revolutionary in its day (first released in 1992) and the focus of an incredibly silly investigation by the US government about violence and sex in games harming children, especially when considering it features no sex whatsoever and the "violence" is goofy and never explicit anyway.

This version defaults to a full-screen mode with live feeds for each camera, making it much more playable. It includes documentaries and even a 48-minute movie stitched together from the scenes.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 07/12/2025.*

Mini-Review: Death Stranding



A weird, wonderful, brilliant third-person action game with a really “out there” sci-fi story and memorable cast of characters. Not a new genre (sorry Kojima) but unique and fascinating use of online interactions.

I was hooked from the start but the initial few hours may feel like a slog for anybody wanting more immediate action and a more forgiving (or even “fun”) gameplay loop. It’s so much more than just a package delivery game, but it’s hard to fault anybody for bailing before the trek becomes more familiar.

So while I loved it, I can’t recommend it unreservedly.

If you’re in for a slower pace with time to invest (don’t rush through), and if you’re interested in a truly unique sci-fi adventure, you may like it. This seems destined to become a cult classic, even if divisive for now.

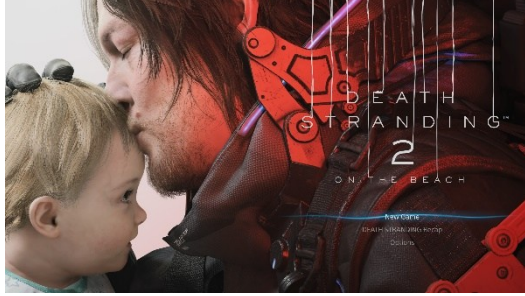
Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted: 11/23/2019.

Addendum

This is another game where my screenshots from the time were captured by my phone’s camera, so they’re all kind of blurry.

Mini-Review: Death Stranding 2



Full title: **Death Stranding 2 - On the Beach**

I loved the first game, and this is an improvement on that in every way. It's a game where you can spend hours upon hours not pursuing the main objectives, just exploring, making deliveries, and gathering the resources needed to build out infrastructures.



Upon reaching the game's huge main area, that means paving roads and restoring monorail tracks. The few structures you can build (generators to recharge vehicles, timefall shelters and so on) expand to include quite a few more.



As a "strand" game (as coined by Hideo Kojima himself), the efforts of other players bleed into your game (if playing online) in the form of signs, likes, contributions to shared constructions, and more.

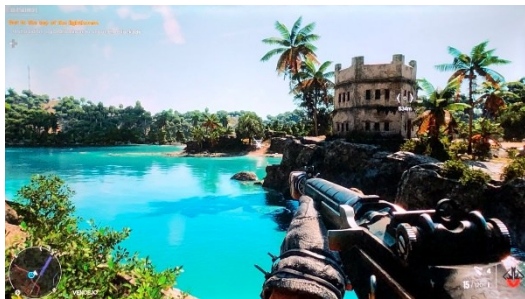
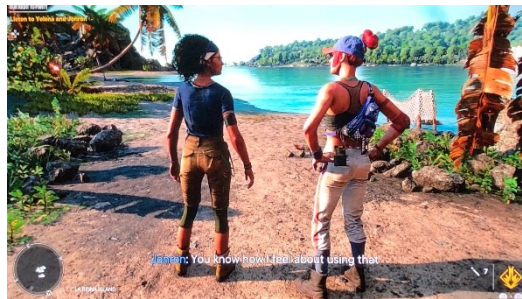
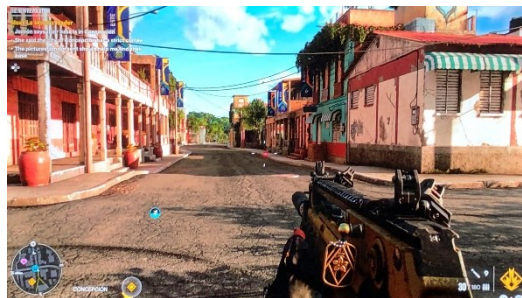


The story is bonkers, but it's great. It's a remarkable experience and a sure GOTY contender for me.



Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 07/09/2025.

Mini-Review: Far Cry 6



Maybe it's just recency bias, but I feel like *FC6* may be my favorite in the series. I've played all from *FC3* on (except *Blood Dragon*) and while *FC3* is generally a fan favorite, that was so many years ago I hardly remember it.

The island nation of Yara (a fictionalized Cuba, maybe) is enormous and brimming with loot, missions, surprises and excellent first-person gameplay. This time, your character (choose male or female) actually has military training. She (or he) appears frequently in cut-scenes and has a much more defined personality.

The world and characters feel alive. I mean, we see this in the best open-world games, sure, but it bears stressing how immersive it can be.

If you only wanted to play one *Far Cry*, this should be it. It's content-rich with a story and villain that kept me engaged.

Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 10/26/2021.

Mini-Review: Alone in the Dark (2024)



I'm having trouble deciding what to say about this reboot of the classic horror game franchise, as this is the first *Alone in the Dark* I've played.



It's a perfectly fine game, although the events of the last chapter seemed like a big escalation from what came before, despite some foreshadowing, with a final boss that felt way harder (on normal) than anything I'd faced in the game before.



It also never really felt scary; certainly not on a level with the *Silent Hill 2* remake that also released last year, or even other games in the genre. Have I become jaded toward the spookier elements in games? Or maybe it's just not that scary?



Slow weapon reloading is more frustrating than immersive. I didn't play again as Emily (just Edward, portrayed by David Harbour) but I've seen enough.



Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 06/27/2025.

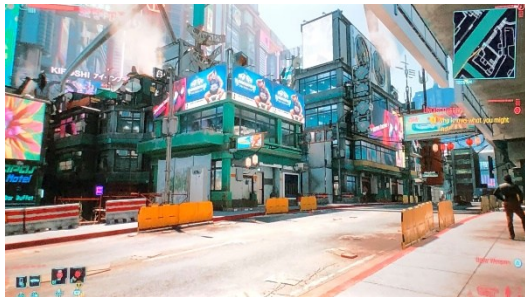
Mini-Review: Cyberpunk 2077



Preface: This is my review of the game played at launch, back in 2020, not a review of the game as it stands today.



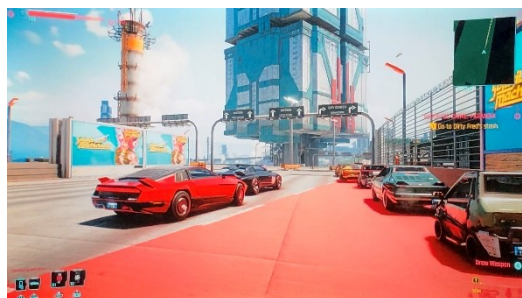
Loved it. A fantastic, stylish sci-fi RPG (like Fallout mixed with GTA) that unfortunately suffers from numerous glitches and too-frequent hard crashes. On PS5 (back-compat PS4 version), it performs great though. Fast, smooth 60 FPS.



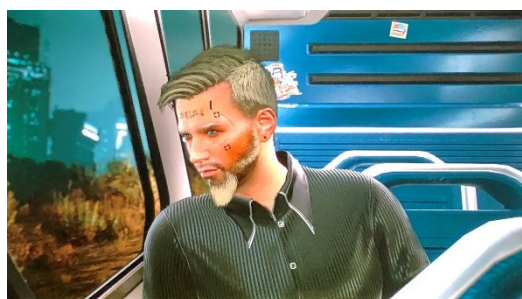
It feels like it needed another six months of work to make it the game it deserves to be — and likely will become by then. None of that ruined it for me. The story and style and gameplay make it one of my favorites this year.



On last-gen base model consoles, though, it's reportedly all but unplayable due to poor performance that I didn't see when running it on PS5. I'm less confident they can fix that, but we'll see.



For me, it wasn't broken in a way that ruined my experience, but it's a shame others may have to wait for later updates to see how great it really is.

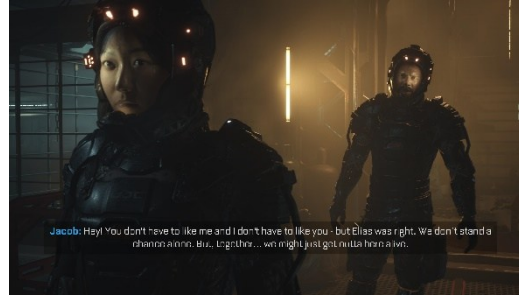
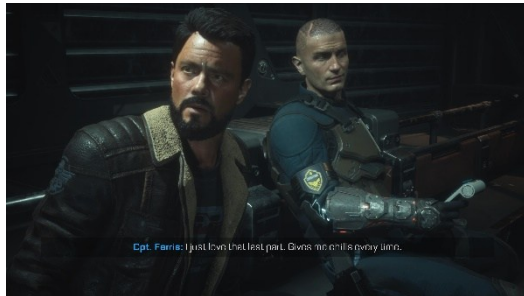
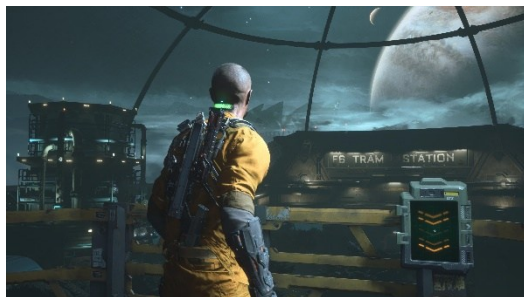


*PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 12/22/2020.*

Addendum

This is another game where my screenshots from the time were captured by my phone's camera, so they're all kind of blurry.

Mini-Review: The Callisto Protocol



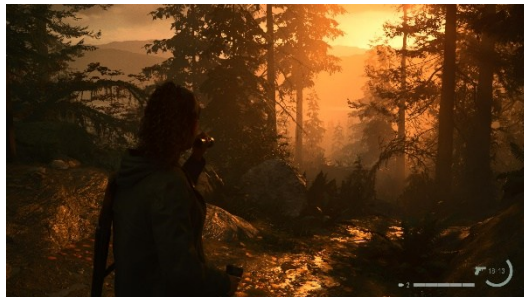
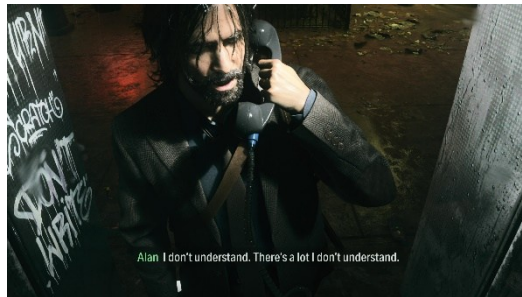
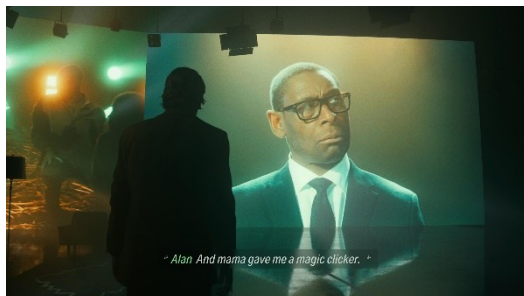
I took the internet's advice and played on Minimum Security (easy) mode. It definitely ratchets down the difficulty, but in a tense and claustrophobic sci-fi survival horror game like this, it does provide a better-paced, more enjoyable experience.

The game is mostly linear with frequent checkpoints, and it's way better than I expected from the mixed reception it got at launch last year. It was directed by Glen Schofield, who co-created *Dead Space*. It offers the same immersion; no HUD except in menus, with health and ammo meters projected from the main character's neck and weapons (Jacob Lee, portrayed by Josh Duhamel).

Combat may have been a sticking point for some, but I liked the back-and-forth dodge system and counter-attacks. It's a really good game, actually. I enjoyed it.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 05/23/2023.*

Mini-Review: Alan Wake II



Remedy and Sam Lake's survival horror opus is a must-play, provided you aren't somebody who actively avoids the genre. If Twin Peaks + Silent Hill + The Twilight Zone seems like your kind of mash-up (and apparently, it's mine) then you'll probably love Alan Wake II just like I did.

There's enough in the story to give players the gist of the first game that I think newcomers could jump in and get what's happening. And wow, that story. It's layers upon layers of mind-bending metanarrative that will either impress and amaze you (as it did me) or make you feel like it's unduly pretentious and up its own proverbial behind.

Much of it would be spoilers to discuss, but Remedy's penchant for mixing in live action is on full and well-used display here. I can't believe how good this is.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 11/17/2023.*

I then added this single-post follow-up on 11/26/2023:

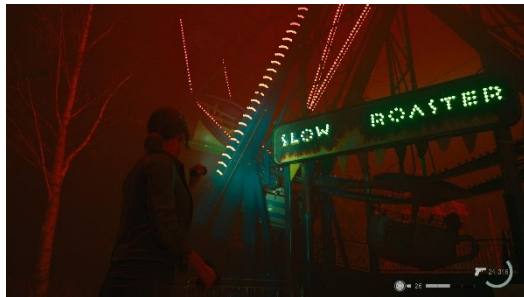
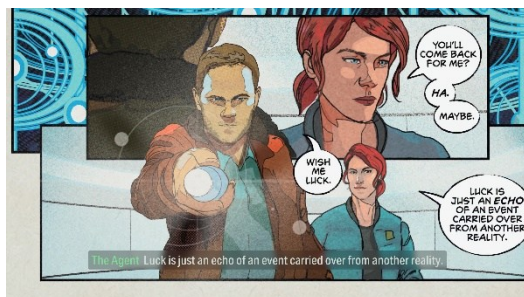
Alan Wake 2 really sticks with you. It's so good, and it has a great soundtrack. This one track *Wide Awake* has a permanent spot on my Spotify playlist now. What a great song. What a great game. What a freaking great year for incredible video games.

Mini-Review: AW2 – Night Springs DLC



Full title: **Alan Wake II – Night Springs DLC**

I don't often play the DLC for games, because I typically move on after finishing the base game. That is, unless it's already out when I play the base game, or, as with *Night Springs*, it's DLC for one of my favorites of the prior year AND it's supposedly short AND it's supposedly really good.



Okay, I guess this is less a "review" and more just an *Alan Wake II* appreciation post. All three short episodes feature a different playable character, a different theme, plenty of ammo, slight puzzles, humor, surprises, and more of the self-referential narrative hooks (especially in the last episode) that I liked about the main game.

I mean, you play as Shawn Ashmore, the actor (sorry if that's a small spoiler). Anyway, what a treat this *Twilight Zone*-inspired trilogy was.

Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 07/02/2024.

Mini-Review: 50 Cent – Blood on the Sand



Three things have resulted in ridiculously high prices for this game.

One, it was never made available to buy digitally.

Two, it recently became backwards-compatible.

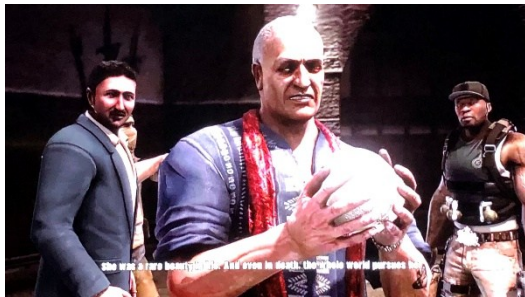
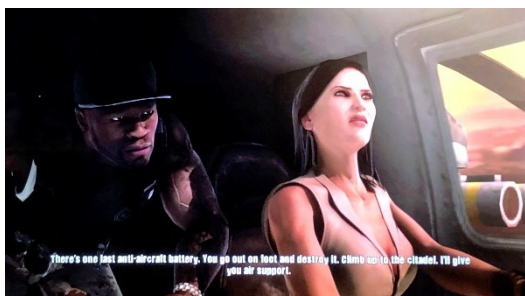
Three, it's actually a really good, very fun game.

Add to that, poor sales leading to what may be fewer copies out there and you've got people asking upwards of \$100, used. Luckily, I had my own copy already.

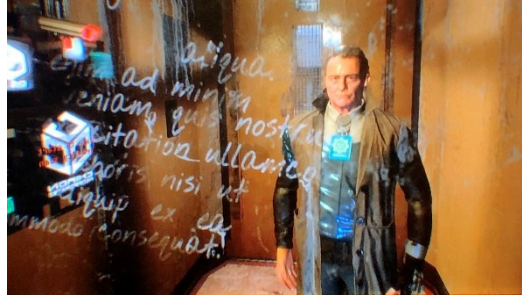
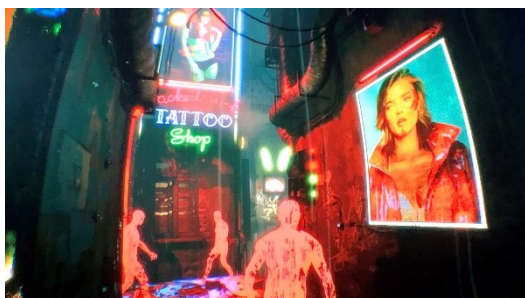
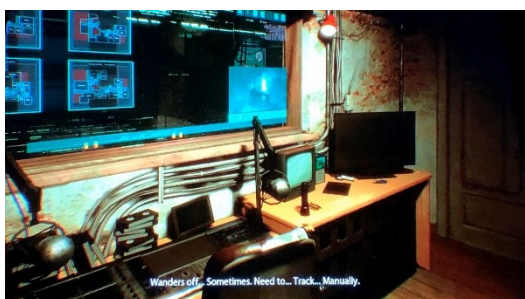
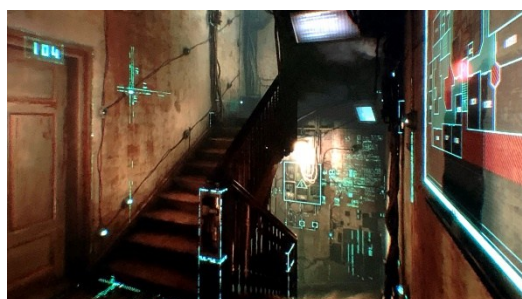
Anyway, despite being a bit out of my element when it comes to 50's music (which makes up the soundtrack), I had a blast. Rapper 50 Cent and one of 3 AI G-Unit buddies (or in co-op) take on enemies in a fictional middle eastern region in third-person cover-based combat ala *Gears of War*.

The mission: recover a diamond skull given as payment for a concert. It's very solid, very fun, and plays great with upscaling and FPS boost.

Xbox 360 game played on Xbox Series X. Posted on 01/29/2022.



Mini-Review: Observer



First-person adventure thriller. This one really drew me in. Many of its inspirations are obvious: Cyberpunk, Blade Runner, Silent Hill/P.T., 1984. Tech aesthetics are like 1980's thrust 100 years into the future. Bloober Team has crafted quite a trip.

Featuring the voice and likeness of Rutger Hauer as Daniel (he sounds really tired these days), you explore a run-down slum of an apartment complex looking for a killer. Things get trippy, and a couple of side objectives add to the weirdness.

Some light puzzle solving and stealth. It's not perfect on PS4, but it's nothing to detract from the experience like the visuals on the Switch.

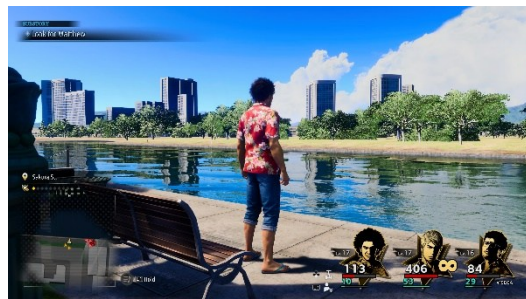
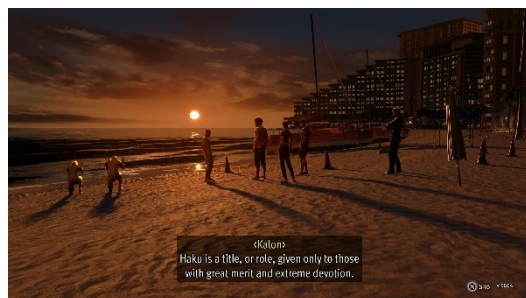
Scan the environment for clues, hack into a few people's minds, and find the truth about what's going on.

I really enjoyed it, and cliché to say, but I'd recommend it to fans of the genre.

Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted: 04/04/2020.

Mini-Review: LAD - Infinite Wealth



Full title: **Like a Dragon – Infinite Wealth**

I loved every minute of the 130 or so hours it took me to get the platinum in RGG's latest entry in the series that used to be known as Yakuza.

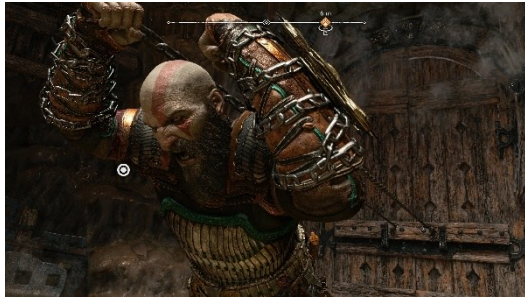
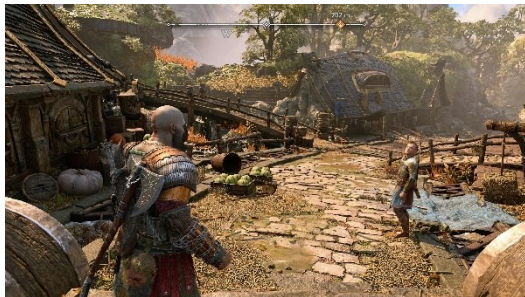
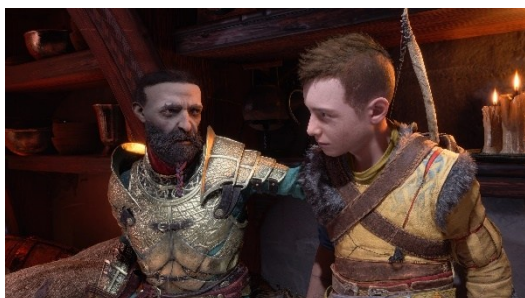
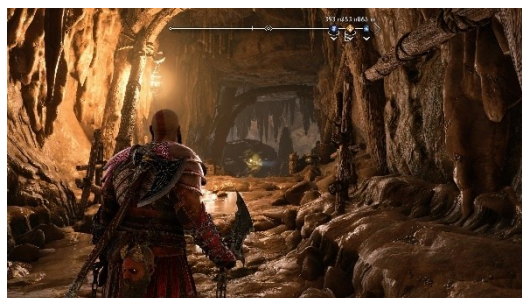
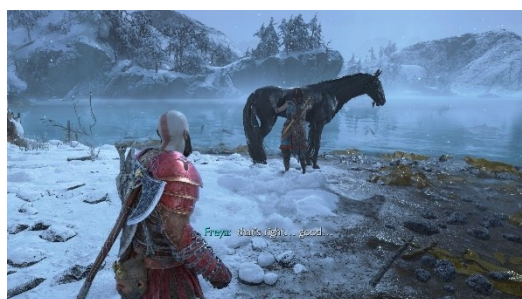
Ichiban Kasuga returns, along with Kazuma Kiryu, all his buds from the prior game, two cool new party members, and a great cast of supporting friends and enemies. Turn-based RPG combat returns as well, with "Pound Mates" summons, new job classes and special signature skills that are even more zany and bizarre than before.

Mini-games galore include the usual (poker, arcades, darts, etc.) along with new spins on Pokemon collecting/battling, Pokemon Snap, Crazy Taxi, and the excellent, addictive Dondoko Island (Animal Crossing).

I'm not sure what the game's title means, unless "infinite wealth" is the friends you make along the way.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 02/24/2024.*

Mini-Review: God of War – Ragnarök



The prior *God of War* was pretty good, but it didn't resonate with me the way it did for many; it was only #9 on my Top 10 of 2018. Ragnarök is bound to rank much higher for 2022, because I loved it. I'll have to mull over whether it beats *Horizon: Forbidden West* for #2 this year.

Everything I found lacking or unsatisfying in *God of War* 2018 is fixed here; from the enemy variety to the weapon and skill upgrade paths, to the collectibles, to exploration, to how it inspires me to do and see everything it offers.

Side missions and collectible hunting feels meaningful and additive, and even most of a day spent exploring a huge late-game seemingly-optional area instead of pursuing the main quest felt right and worthwhile.

I'm in the post-game, where story content and trophy-hunting continues. What a game!

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 11/25/2022.

Mini-Review: Halo 5 – Guardians



I liked it more than Halo 3 and 4, but I haven't really loved this series since the first two. I've only played the numbered entries, though. I hear people really like Reach. Maybe I'll try that someday. Or... maybe Halo Infinite will be the one?

I didn't know Nathan Fillion was in this, and Mike Colter (Luke Cage) as Locke (though not his voice). I felt like Locke's team had a lot more personality than Chief's team. For me, the story was easier to follow than I remember of Halo 4, which may have helped elevate it for me.

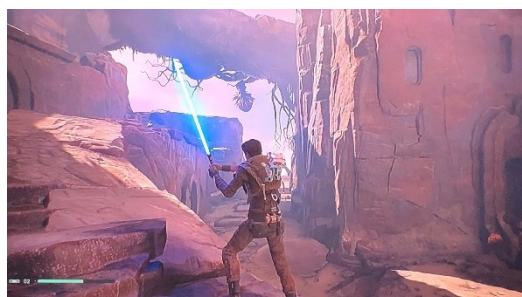
I only did the single-player, which was fun enough. It seemed easier on normal than the prior games (until the last couple of missions), in part because you're always joined by three squad mates. Also, you can run past many of the encounters. I do want to see how the story wraps up.

*Played on console: Xbox One.
Originally posted: 06/11/2020.*

Addendum

This is another game where my screenshots from the time were captured by my phone's camera, so they're all kind of blurry.

Mini-Review: Star Wars Jedi - Fallen Order



What a game!

Highly recommended.

3rd person action that takes the gameplay loop of Dark Souls, the traversal of Tomb Raider, and the area design of Metroid Prime (plus the other two) and sets it to a good Star Wars Story.

A few glitches here and there (as I often do, I managed to fall through the world a couple times), but overall very polished. Really captures the grandeur and magic of Star Wars.

Lightsaber combat is great. Force powers and other upgrades make exploration a blast. It's super fun! It's great on hard mode, but it has lower and even one higher difficulty for a range of skill levels. Also, a pretty do-able platinum trophy.

On a side note, I don't care what anybody says about the "down year" for gaming they feel 2019 to be. *Fallen Order* is another fantastic must-play.

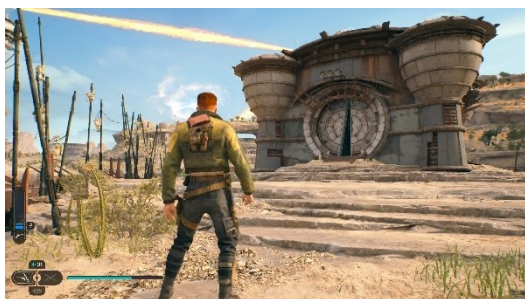
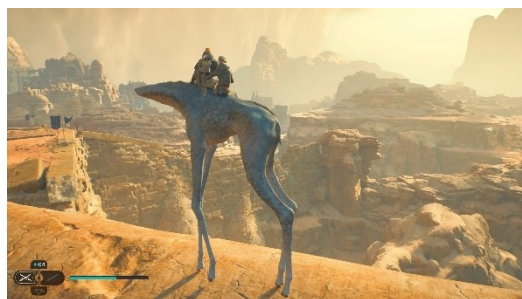
Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted: 11/28/2019.

Addendum

This is another game where my screenshots from the time were captured by my phone's camera, so they're all kind of blurry.

Mini-Review: Star Wars Jedi – Survivor



I don't know what's happening with current-gen games. When 60fps works well, it's amazing. When it's choppy and suffers from severe screen-tearing, as it is here, it's a pain. Several patches over my three weeks of play made it better (or maybe I just got used to it; I opted not to bump it down to 30fp) but it never felt totally fixed.

All that said, the game itself is great. Respawn expanded on what *Fallen Order* started, with some open world-ish levels, lots of side quests, cool force powers and traversal skills, and a much bigger game (especially if you want to see and do everything and go for the platinum trophy).

Great side characters and a good story (which thankfully wasn't spoiled for me) help make it one of the best Star Wars games I've played.

Likely to be a 2023 Top 5.

*Played on console: PS5.
Originally posted: 05/20/2023.*

Mini-Review: Tron - Evolution



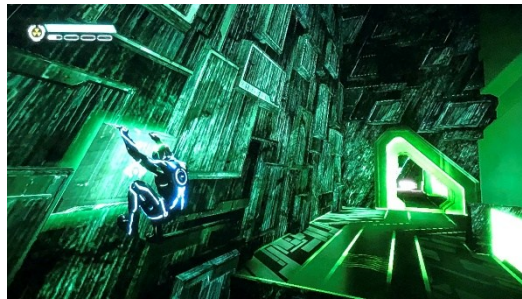
Despite its numerous flaws, I did like this game. It's a prequel of sorts to the *Tron Legacy* movie; a third-person action-adventure (not open-world) with some tank and light-cycle sections.



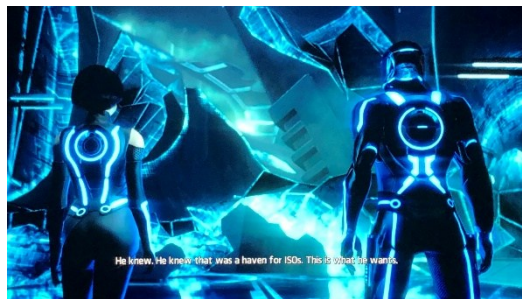
An emphasis on parkour and platforming makes for fun sections between combat encounters as you make your way through the world, but it also highlights serious problems with the gameplay. You'll be fighting the camera and the controls as much as you'll be fighting the enemies.



You get better over time, but there's just something wonky about the wall-running, the climbing, and the movement in general.



For me, it was worth suffering (maybe the wrong word) through all that to experience a new *Tron* story in the *Tron* world.



There's some sort of multiplayer, but I doubt it's still up or has players.



Xbox 360 game played on Xbox Series X. Posted on 05/22/2021.

Addendum

This is another game where my screenshots from the time were captured by my phone's camera, so they're all kind of blurry.

The Final Stage

Let's wrap up with a few honorable mentions.

I very nearly included Martin Sheen as *Mass Effect 2* and *3*'s "Illusive Man" in this week's feature, based on conflicting information about whether Mr. Sheen did facial and motion capture as well. I didn't, though, because of [this Reddit post](#) saying the look of the character was modeled after somebody else. I guess he does kind of look like Martin Sheen, at least a little.

Live action games by Sam Barlow (Half Mermaid Productions) feature some recognizable actors, particularly a couple that come to mind from *Telling Lies*. Angela Sarafyan was in *West World* and Reed Diamond has been in some stuff.

Manon Gage and her co-stars in *Immortality* give outstanding performances as well, but I'm not sure any of them are recognizable outside the game. They should be. Maybe someday they will be. My mini-review can be found on page 19 in [VGGN issue #7](#).



Wales Interactive FMV games feature a few recognizable but lesser-known actors too (*The Complex*, *The Bunker*, *Late Shift*, *Five/Ten Dates*, *Who Pressed Mute on Uncle Marcus* and others).

Other cult classic FMV games like *The 7th Guest*, *The 11th Hour*, and *Phantasmagoria* feature obscure and relatively unknown actors, so those didn't really fit the topic.

The problem with this topic has been that just when I think I've included every famous actor of note, I stumble upon even more. That's how this issue grew to be 36 pages. For instance, an FMV adventure game from 1996 (from Take Two Interactive, who you might know as the publisher of *Grand Theft Auto*) called *Ripper* features John Rhys-Davies (mentioned earlier), Christopher Walken, and others.

Burt Reynolds is in *Saints Row: The Third*, which I had completely forgotten about. If I keep looking, I'll probably find enough new examples to fill another section, so at this point, I'm just going to stop looking.

Can you think of any other examples I didn't feature here, and didn't at least mention? Let me know on [Twitter](#), [Threads](#), or [BlueSky](#).

End Credits

Some of the games and actors mentioned in this issue came from posts on this Reddit thread. I used as much of my own gaming knowledge as I could, but I did discover several good callouts I had either forgotten about or never knew about:

https://www.reddit.com/r/gaming/comments/pr9heu/movie_actors_in_video_games/

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NEXT WEEK: I'll be writing about my favorite first-person puzzle games, particularly ones in what I've been calling the "Portal-like" genre, which blends physics, puzzle-solving, and exploration/escape themes. See you then!