



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS

NEWSLETTER

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Loading Screen

It's hard to believe that I've reached the 20th issue of this little passion project that I only started because I had a dream (or nightmare) that I was publishing a gaming magazine and I somehow forgot to release the latest issue.

My topic this week is space stations and ships in video games. Most gamers will recognize some of my picks. Some of them, though, are a little more niche or obscure. All my picks, which aren't ranked or scored, are from games I've played, so please excuse any big or notable omissions.

I couldn't come up with much for Recent Events this week, aside from the big (and disappointing) Xbox news, but I do call out a few recent releases.



Here's "cartoon me" as an astronaut driving a spaceship like a car.

Recent Events

The Xbox Paradox

As anybody in business knows, if you're trailing your competitors and your product is less popular in the market, the only way to turn things around is to raise prices. You need to make your product less appealing and less affordable for potential buyers.

Oh wait, I forgot the <sarcasm /> tag.

Presumably, Microsoft has no other choice. They announced price increases (again) on Xbox consoles. At the high end (and I'm rounding up a dollar for even amounts; you'll pay way more than that in sales tax), a 2TB Xbox Series X will cost \$800. A Series X digital-only (no disc drive) goes up to \$600 with the standard Series X at \$650. The Series S, which launched for \$300, will now cost \$400.

How soon before Sony and Nintendo get in on this second round of price hikes? Who knows.

Source: Polygon

<https://www.polygon.com/xbox-consoles-new-price-hike-october-2025/>

Hell Is Us is Really Good

I'll include my mini-review in a future issue, but for the curious, it's posted to all three of my social media profiles. Here's [a link](#) to it on BlueSky, and [a link](#) to it on Threads.



Honestly, I haven't been disappointed by many (if any) of this year's new games; at least not the ones I've played. Some of them may be more of a "Mike likes everything" situation (for example, *MindsEye*), but even legitimately great games like *Lost Soul Aside* seem to be on too many gamers' *let's-all-dump-on-it* list.

Borderlands 4 is Out Now

Borderlands 4 came out on September 12th, and apparently people are once again upset with GearBox's Randy Pitchford for tone-deaf comments about how the game runs on PC (and maybe on consoles). I'm only an hour in on PS5, but I haven't seen any issues yet.

Not to be a Randy Pitchford defender, but I can kind of see where the guy is coming from. You work for years on something great, only to get flippant mockery from some of the player base. I get that some issues are real, and some are more severe than others, but we're in a gaming climate now where some people think it's an affront to their personal wellbeing if there's a slight stutter or a solitary and momentary dip in the framerate. I'm not saying that's the case here, but I *am* saying that negativity in general is out of control.

Cronos: The New Dawn is Out Now Too

Technically, it was released the day after *Hollow Knight: Silksong* (September 5th), but not for me, because the physical version was delayed by two weeks.

I've heard great things about it, but also some grumblings that it's very difficult and limits your resources more than what might seem fair. We'll see. I still plan to play it, but I'm already getting backlogged on Fall 2025 games, with *Silent Hill f* just five days away.

Both of those will probably be good "spooky month" games, assuming I don't prioritize something else instead.

An image from the official *Cronos* website, found [here](#).



Spaceships in the Spotlight

Science Fiction (sci-fi) has been my favorite genre since I was a little kid and learned it existed. One of the earliest things that drew me to it was a series of books that started with [The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet](#). It's about two friends (David and Chuck) who see a weird ad in their local newspaper asking for a spaceship.

They make one out of old wrecked boat parts and haul it to the home of Mr. Bass, who adds an engine and coats it with sealant (yeah, I forget the specifics). Anyway, it works, and they go on an adventure to a nearby hidden planet. Four more books follow in the series. I never read the last one, but I paid a whopping \$200 to buy an old hardback library copy on eBay many years ago.

I probably checked them out from my local library dozens of times. It shaped a lot about my taste in stories, and as an adult I enjoyed novels like the Dan Simmons *Hyperion* and *Endymion* books, several by Vernor Vinge, *anything* by Jack Vance (my favorite author ever – *The Dying Earth*, *Cugel's Saga*, *Demon Princes* and many others), series novels for *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Doctor Who*, and many, many more.

Sadly, I rarely read novels these days. That used to be *all* I did, but at some point, my gaming side hobby became my *main* hobby. I still lean towards sci-fi (and tend to pick sci-fi TV shows when I'm looking for new stuff), but in many ways it no longer feels new and special like it did when I was younger. Now, sci-fi is everywhere, and it's mainstream. That's not bad, of course. It just makes it easier to forget what drew me to it to begin with.

What drew me to it, I think, was the idea of space travel; exploration, space opera, even just the concept of it, as in the *Mushroom Planet* books. That's why I enjoyed *FarScape*, *Red Dwarf*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Expanse*, *Lexx*, *The Orville*, *Dark Matter*, *Firefly*, etc. It's also why I liked *Starfield* more than most people, and why I loved *No Man's Sky* at its original launch. It was like a vintage sci-fi novel.

I'm also a big fan of sci-fi involving time travel, but that might be a topic for a later issue.

On an episode of the *Get Played* podcast sometime in mid-August, somebody asked the hosts about their favorite spaceships from video games. I forgot what they answered, because I was too distracted due to immediately adding notes to my “future topics” list.

As usual, I've set a few ground rules for myself:

1. **No ships** carried over from a licensed property are included. That means no USS Enterprise or Voyager in *Star Trek* games, no Millennium Falcon from *Star Wars*, and no TARDIS from *Doctor Who*. Ships in a licensed game are OK if they were invented specifically for that game.
2. **Space stations** count. At first, I thought about limiting it to just ships (in the sense that they can travel from place to place) but there are several good callouts involving space stations, so I figured, why not?
3. **For spaceships**, they need to be owned or used by the game's protagonist *or* they need to be the location where some, most, or preferably all of the game takes place.
4. **They need to be** in space, at least part of the time. Wrecked ships on a planet that the protagonist finds and explores don't count.
5. **The ships/stations** must be from a game I've played. There are so many great choices when it comes to games/series like *EVE Online*, *Wing Commander*, *FTL*, and *Homeworld*, but I haven't played any of those. You may see some notable and unfortunate omissions as a result.
6. **I wanted to rank** these, but on what? How cool they look? What they're named? My enjoyment of the game they're in? Barring that, I thought about doing a “used spaceship salesman” persona (sort of like my recruiter persona in [issue #15](#) about schools in games), but thought that wouldn't fit given how big my list is and the nature of many of my choices. So, this is just a meandering list with a short mention about each game's ship/station.
7. **I've put** them into six categories. Some could probably fit more than one, and some might be miscategorized anyway, but I did the best I could.

Classic Arcade Ships

For the first category, let's go back to the early days by looking at a few ships that *were* the playable characters.

Gradius

Vic Viper

Although none of these are ranked or in any meaningful order, I had to start with this, because the "Vic Viper" has to be one of the coolest names for a spaceship. It also has an interesting upgrade system that lets you build a meter and decide when to cash it in for speed, missiles, a laser, and so on.

I only ever played a little of *Gradius*, but I did beat *Life Force* (also from Konami) on the NES. It was a similarly styled side-scrolling schmup (shoot-em-up) and a spin-off of *Gradius* that featured the same ship.



R-Type DX

R-9 Arrowhead

Variations of this chubby little blue-nosed ship appear in different versions and sequels, but it was *R-Type DX* (on the GameBoy Color) that I played and enjoyed.

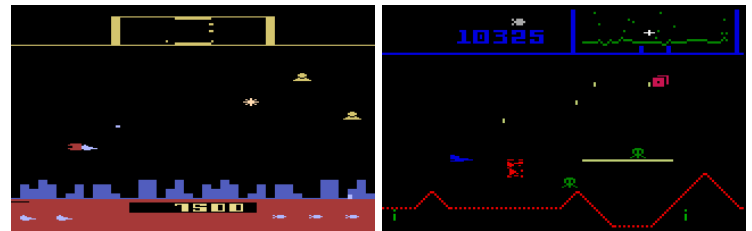


Defender

Unnamed Ship / Defender Starfighter

We might as well continue with side-scrolling space shooters, and *Defender* pioneered the genre. Later games, like the aforementioned *Gradius* and *R-Type*, featured ever-forward gameplay where you could move around the screen but not face backwards and start scrolling left instead, but that was core to the gameplay in *Defender*. It was also deeper (at least a little) in that it wasn't just about surviving yourself. You also had to protect and rescue people from the alien invaders.

I don't remember how much of this game I played back then, but it probably wasn't much. The arcade game came out at the beginning of the 80's, and I wasn't even a teenager yet. I also don't remember what I played it on – Atari 2600, maybe, or at an arcade. It was ported to plenty of platforms.

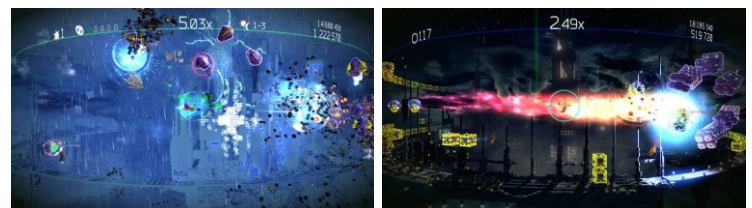


Resogun

Nemesis / Ferox / Phobos

There was a time when Housemarque was known for their arcade-style games, rather than third-person action games like *Returnal* or the upcoming *Saros* (starring Rahul Kohli). *Resogun* was a showcase launch title for the PS4, and I played the heck out of this game. It's sort of a spiritual successor to *Defender*, and I even earned the platinum trophy for my efforts in "saving the last humans".

This one is a bit of a cheat (it wasn't a classic arcade game) but there isn't another category where it fits; maybe the "Ships You Can Directly Fly" category.

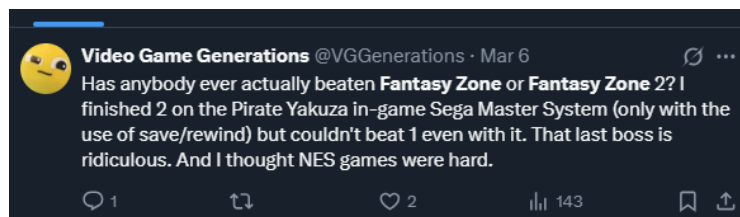


Fantasy Zone

Opa-Opa

As it happens, I only *really* played *Fantasy Zone* and *Fantasy Zone II* earlier this year, on the in-game Sega Master System in *Like a Dragon: Pirate Yakuza in Hawaii* of all places.

I was surprised at just how fun, cool, and unique these games are. Having save and rewind abilities in their emulated versions helped. I can't imagine anybody ever beating these games the legit way, but at least the one person who replied to me did.



Despite controlling a sentient little spaceship, you fly through colorful zones that for the most part aren't in outer space. There's an upgrade shop, the ability to fly in both directions (as in *Defender*), areas connected by portals (in the sequel), and other features that make both games fun and unique.



Asteroids

Triangle Ship

It's not called the "triangle ship" but that's what it is. Rotation-based movement in *Asteroids* was tricky. I was never good at this game, and I didn't even enjoy it much when I tried it, but it deserves a mention for its role in gaming history, if nothing else.



Galaga

Gyaraga / Fighter

An honorable mention goes to *Galaxian* (the precursor to *Galaga*), but it was *Galaga* I played a few times (I forget where; maybe an arcade game in a pizza place or bowling alley or something). Maybe I played the NES version at some point, but again, I forget.

To me, *Galaga* is synonymous with arcade games, much the way I see *Centipede*, *Frogger*, and *Ms. Pac-Man*. I don't think I ever made it far, but I did get pretty good at the first few minutes of the game.

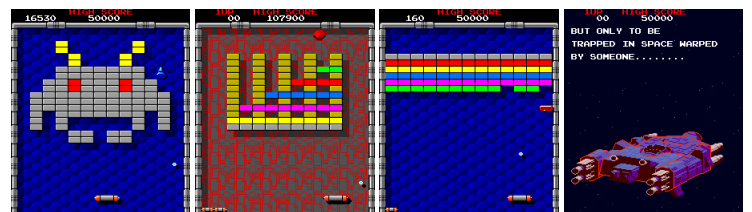


Arkanoid

Vaus

Yes, the paddle is actually a spaceship.

This was always my favorite of the brick-breaker games, although *Alpha Bounce* on the DSi was pretty inventive and really fun too.



I wrote three of my own *Arkanoid*-inspired games: two for the TRS-80 CoCo 3 (which I talk about on page 37 of [issue #13](#)) and one that was a full conversion D-Mod for *Dink Smallwood* (see it at [The Dink Network](#)).

On a tangent: one of these days, I want to see if Seth Robinson (creator of *Dink Smallwood*) is up for an interview, for a future VGGN feature. That would also give me an excuse to write about the add-on "Dink Modules" I wrote for the game. Not so fun fact: I ruined a relationship making them.

Lunar Lander

Lunar Module

I guess this isn't so much a spaceship, but a part of a spaceship. Was any version of this game fun? I remember it being difficult and frustrating, but I haven't played it in decades.



Ships You Can Directly Fly

I don't have many in this category, although technically all the classic arcade ships I already mentioned are ships you can directly fly. That's also true of a few ships in some later categories.

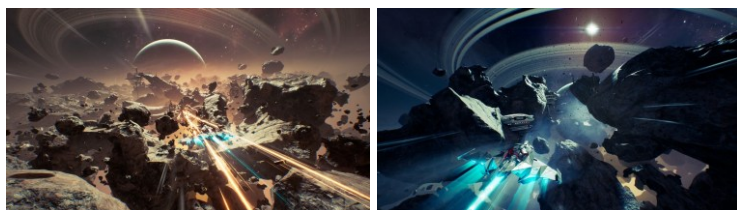
What makes these fit here, though, is they wouldn't fit in any of the other categories. They're not from arcade games, they're not hubs or bases, they don't exist just for the narrative, you aren't exploring and walking around in these ships, and you don't build them yourself.

Chorus

Forsaken / Forsa

I'm already going on a tangent, but the name of this ship makes me think of the game *Forsaken* and by extension *Descent*, which I was tempted to include on this list despite only playing a tiny bit of each one. I didn't, though, because I'm unclear about whether you control spaceships or just ship-like hovercrafts. They seem to take place in mostly interior spaces.

Back on topic, *Chorus* is the newest game in this set, with a release date in late 2021. I loved what I played of it, but I fell off (I don't remember why) after just a few hours. It's entirely ship-based, with missions/quests and a seemingly good story.

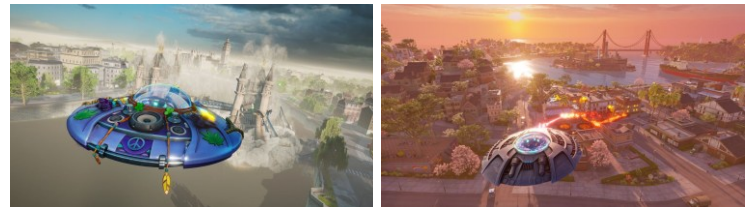


Destroy All Humans!

Saucer

After playing the 2020 remake of the first game in 2021, I binged the rest of the 4-game series: the original PS2 sequel as a digital "classic" on PS4/PS5, the third game (*Big Willy Unleashed*) for the Wii, and the final game (*Path of the Furon*) for Xbox 360. While some parts of the series were a little questionable all these years later (especially racial stereotypes in the second game, which apparently remain intact in the remake, although that wasn't out yet), I had a blast with the entire series.

Much of each game takes place on foot, but a big part of it involves flying the saucer around to abduct people and destroy buildings. It's a blast, literally and figurately. My mini-reviews of all four games appear later in this issue.



Star Fox

Arwing

Somehow, I tend to like the dark horse entries in a series: *Super Mario Bros. 2*, *Super Mario Sunshine*, *Zelda 2*, and *Star Fox Adventures* (for the GameCube), to name a few. In fact, *Adventures* is the only *Star Fox* I ever played, and the Arwing sections were pretty limited (and not very fun). The rest of the game, though – highly underrated, if you ask me.



Outer Wilds

Unnamed Spaceship

I realize it's not for everybody, with its unique brand of exploration and puzzle-solving that leaves players to figure things out and piece together what the end goal even is, but I *loved Outer Wilds*. Part of that's the atmospheric soundtrack featuring a banjo and an acoustic guitar. Part of that's the exploration itself, as a lone alien astronaut discovering the nature of the time loop and the precursor alien Nomai.

Controlling the ship takes a little getting used to, but it's your means of transportation between the tiny planets you'll explore.



Build Your Own Ship

This short category is an ode to games where you can build and customize your own ship. Many of the best examples may be from games I never played (such as *Kerbal Space Program*), but here are three that stand out from among games I *have* played.

Kingdom Hearts

Gummi Ship

In each game it works a little differently, but in the mainline *Kingdom Hearts* series, you're able to build the spaceship you'll fly between worlds. The parts you use and how you place them determine your weapons, armor, speed, maneuverability, and of course appearance.



Starfield

Custom-Named Spaceship

I spent a good amount of time building and customizing my ship (or ships) in *Starfield*. How you fit various cabins and modules together determines the interior layout, which becomes a fully playable environment you can walk around in.

It isn't just the shipbuilding that's cool and fun. This was one of my favorite games of 2023; one that remains highly underrated.



No Man's Sky

Custom-Named Spaceship

As much as I enjoyed this game at launch, it has improved over the years (in some ways like a live service game) to where, as I understand it, it's almost unrecognizable from the game I originally played. I haven't had an urge to revisit it, but maybe I should.

I don't remember how spaceship building worked before, but a more recent update (dubbed *Voyagers*) seems to have expanded it into a much more robust system, described by one source as being similar to *Starfield*.



Hubs and Home Base Ships

In games, especially open world games and RPGs, it's not uncommon for the main character to have a home base, hideout, hub, safehouse, camp, fortress, headquarters, or anything else you want to call it. In games where you travel through space, that hub will probably be your spaceship.

Mass Effect

SSV Normandy SR-1 and SR-2

The *Mass Effect* trilogy is one of the most fully realized space operas to ever make it into video game form. This is where Commander Shepard interacts with his or her crew, and it serves as a mobile base of operations for planning missions and for various story beats.

It's even bigger when *Mass Effect 2* introduces the Cerberus-created Normandy SR-2. It's a location in the games that most players will become intimately familiar with, and quickly.



Deliver Us Mars

Zephyr-3

I don't have a category where this neatly fits. Some of the early game takes place aboard this Mars-bound spaceship, but you don't fly it directly and it's not the setting for *most* of the game, so this seems like the closest fit.

It's the sequel to *Deliver Us the Moon*, which has a rocket ship mostly as a narrative device before the reset of the game has players exploring an abandoned base on the moon.

My mini-reviews for both games are included later in this issue.

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

Ebon Hawk

The SSV Normandy in *Mass Effect* wasn't Bioware's first go at creating a memorable hub ship. In *KOTOR 2*, Obsidian built onto that to make the ship even more central to the game.

My mini-review of *KOTOR 2* can be found in VGGN [issue #18](#) on page 15.



The Outer Worlds

The Unreliable

Speaking of Obsidian, their take on the Ebon Hawk wasn't their *last* go at creating a memorable hub ship. It's perhaps a bit *less* memorable than the Ebon Hawk or the SSV Normandy, but we're soon to find out its role and importance in the upcoming sequel.



Journey to the Savage Planet

The Javelin (JAV-4523 Lander Module)

I'm sort of breaking rule #4 (the ship must be in space, at least part of the time) although I think technically it *might* be, at the end. You've crashed onto "the savage planet" and must repair the ship to leave. It does serve as a home base or hub, at least.

There's a sequel, *Revenge of the Savage Planet*, which completely flew under my radar somehow when it released earlier this year. I really enjoyed that first game. I've included my mini-review later in this issue.

Genesis: Alpha One

Genesis Starship

It was a toss-up on whether to include this here (as a home base hub ship) or in the next category, for games set almost entirely aboard a space station or ship. The next category has the most entries, and you do make excursions to planets to gather resources, so I decided to put it here. It could also go in “build your own”.

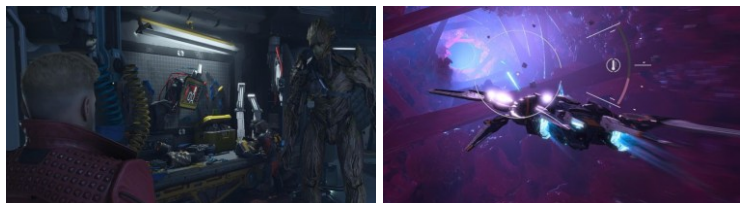
Ordinarily, this isn't my type of game. It blends base (ship) building, survival, resource management, crew management, and first-person shooting into a roguelike mixture that somehow appealed me to. In a way, this could have fit the “build your own ship” category too, since you're creating and placing modules that then become your playable area. It's a tough game to describe, and it gets pretty intense when you go on the defensive against invaders, but I really enjoyed it.



Guardians of the Galaxy

The Milano

In Eidos-Montréal's version of Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy* (a great game that probably caught unfair flack after Marvel's *Avengers*), Star-Lord's ship serves as the hub between missions. It's also a chance to chat with your fellow Guardians. My mini-review appears in [issue #18](#), on page 23.

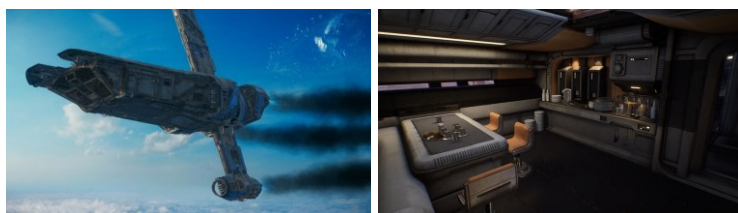


Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order

Stinger Mantis

In Respawn's excellent *Jedi* adventures, you play as Cal Kestis and use the Stinger Mantis as a base and for transportation between planets. It's piloted by a grumpy alien known as Greez. Spaceflight is limited to scene transitions rather than direct control.

My mini-reviews for the first two games in the trilogy (presuming Respawn is still working on the third game) appear in [issue #11](#) of the VGGN, on pages 33 and 34.

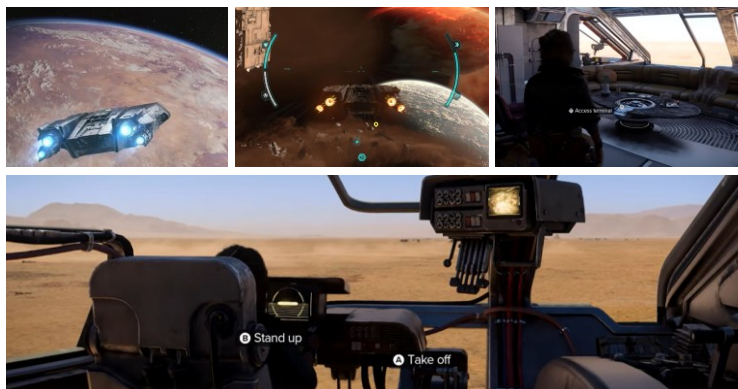


Star Wars: Outlaws

The Trailblazer

The twice-stolen hub ship in *Outlaws* isn't just a base of operations. It also factors into the gameplay, with space exploration and combat missions in regions near the various planets Kay Vess must visit on her journeys.

Believe it or not, a vocal minority of militant chuds didn't play this game because they felt Ubisoft intentionally made her unattractive. The venn diagram of guys bold enough to say something that stupid publicly and guys who've never seen a real woman up close is a perfect circle. My mini-review can be found in [issue #18](#) on page 31.



The Ship Is the Game

One of my favorite types of games are the ones that take place in a large, interconnected facility or complex. I'm not sure what games first drew me to that kind of structure, but two that come to mind are the original *Half-Life* and the original *Bioshock*.

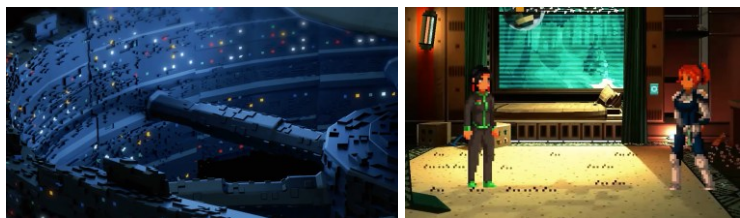
Large spaceships and space stations make a perfect backdrop for these. They're often used in horror games (you're alone, systems are on the fritz, and some horrific threat is there with you), but sometimes you get a game set aboard a ship or station that *isn't* crawling with monsters that are out to get you.

Between Horizons

The Zephyr

Let's start with one that isn't out to scare you, since there are plenty on this list that are. I played *Between Horizons* recently, and my mini-review appears later in this issue. It's presented from a side-scrolling perspective with a faux-retro aesthetic.

You don't fly the ship, and you only see it externally in loading screens and the title screen, but the entire game is set aboard the circular section of a colony ship on a 100-year journey to settle on a new planet.



Her Majesty's SPIFFING

HMSS Imperialise

It's converted from a Mini-Cooper and serves as the backdrop for most of this point-and-click adventure. This is definitely the *smallest* of the ships in this category. See more about it in my mini-review in last week's [issue #19](#) on page 25.

Tacoma

Lunar Transfer Station Tacoma

It's an exploration game (or "walking sim" in some ways) from Fullbright, who also made *Gone Home*. It's set aboard an abandoned space station (a definite trope at this point) and features items to find and read (or watch or holographically replay) that piece together the story of what happened and why.



Elea

Recovery

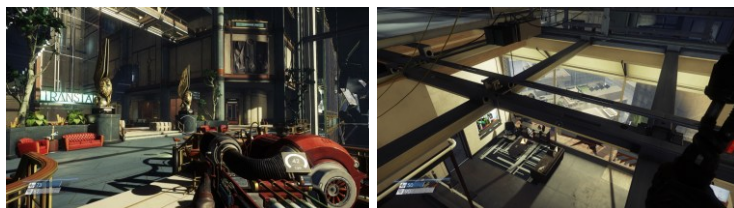
My shorter-than-usual mini-review for this game appears later in this issue. Much of the game takes place aboard the *Recovery*, a ship sent to discover the fate of a prior expedition. I remember this feeling a bit unfinished, and my mini-review seems to support that.

Prey

Talos I

I think my two hang-ups when playing this game kept me from fully appreciating it at the time. First, I had played the original *Prey* (a completely different game) a few years earlier and had been looking forward to the troubled sequel that eventually got cancelled. Two, I loved Arkane's *Dishonored* games, and I kept trying to compare them to *Prey*.

The game takes place inside (and sometimes outside) an enormous research station in space, which has been overrun by the Typhon, a deadly shapeshifting alien race.



System Shock

Citadel Station

There's a night-and-day difference between the original game and Nightdive Studios' remake. It's the latter that I finally played. The station is comprised of 10 separate floors (think of them as "levels") which connect via elevators. I haven't yet played more than a few minutes of *System Shock 2*, but Nightdive has a remaster of it too (seemingly less "remake" than the first game) which is not yet available on a physical disc.



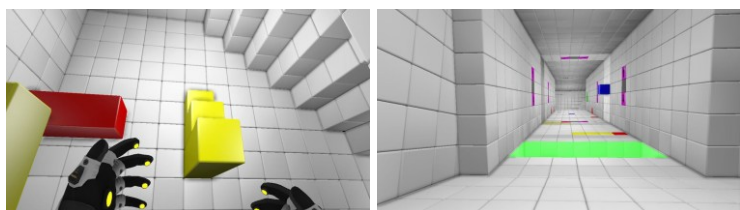
Q.U.B.E.

An alien "Cube Ship"

Of the four *Rama* novels by Arthur C. Clarke (and Gentry Lee), I somehow managed to read just the second one, *Rama II*. That's a bit beside the point, but I mention it because the basic premise in *Q.U.B.E.* – being sent to explore an alien space ship on its way to Earth – reminds me a lot of the premise of *Rama*. The similarities probably end there.

It's a first-person puzzle game set entirely aboard the aforementioned cube ship. My mini-review from social media is included on page 12 of [issue #12](#) of the VGGN.

The sequel, *QUBE 2*, surpasses it in almost every way, but it's not set aboard a cube ship (at least, not that I remember). Still, the first game is definitely worth playing too.

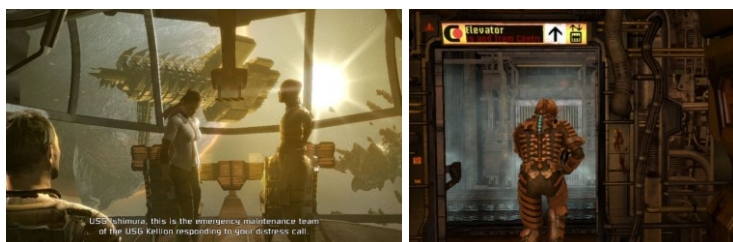


Dead Space

USG Ishimura

You play as Isaac Clarke, an engineer who finds himself on this huge "planet cracker" mining ship overrun with terrifying monsters called Necromorphs. I've yet to play the remake (I plan to) but I played the original and it left a lasting impression on me.

From the truly tense and scary environments, to the laser-based mining equipment repurposed as weapons that let you strategically target and dismember enemy body parts, to the interconnected structure of the Ishimura, I have a fondness for the original that exceeds either of the sequels.



An honorable mention goes to *The Callisto Protocol*, which was headed up by the same creative lead that made *Dead Space* (Glen Schofield). It's set on a prison colony moon, though, not a space station.

Dead Space 2

The Sprawl

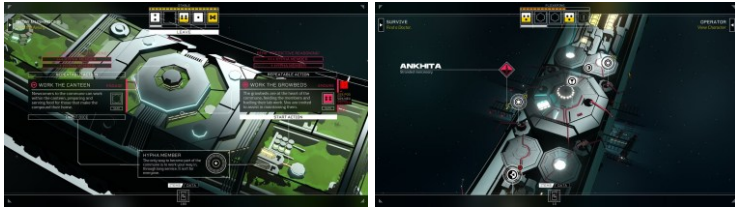
The sequel to *Dead Space* is also quite good, even though I remember fewer specifics about it than the original game. The third game in the trilogy is mostly set on an ice planet and so it doesn't fit the list, but this second game is set aboard a huge space station (appropriately called The Sprawl). It too becomes infested with Necromorphs, and Isaac Clarke must once again fight and survive to make it out.



Citizen Sleeper

The Eye

Citizen Sleeper is a hard game to describe. It's part visual novel, part RPG, and part time management, with a pulled-back view of the space station and a menu-driven interface. It took a while to click for me, but I loved it once it finally did. My mini-review is later in this issue. There's a sequel, but for whatever reason, I haven't been in the mood to try it.

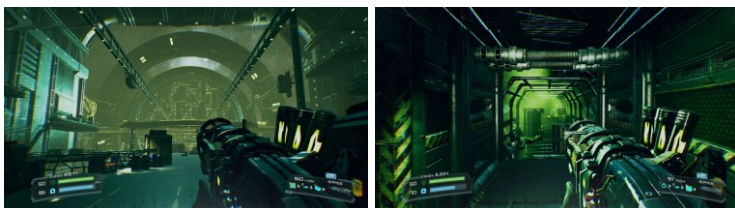


Hollow

Shakter-One

This game has an abysmal aggregate score of 36 on Metacritic (and a slightly higher 43 from users), yet it's one of those rough-around-the-edges underdogs that I ended up really liking, despite the bugs, and despite a game-breaking glitch that caused an event to not trigger, requiring a complete restart after I was already pretty far into the game. It felt like an overly ambitious first-person take on *Dead Space*, and there was a lot to appreciate and like beyond its ill-suited release on the Switch.

I was looking forward to the sequel for a long time. When I finally played it, I wasn't able to look past its numerous issues (blurry visuals, constant enemies rather than the first game's more paced survival horror). I ended up not enjoying it nearly as much. I've included a short social media capsule review of the first game, and my mini-review of the sequel.



Alien: Isolation

Sevastapol Station

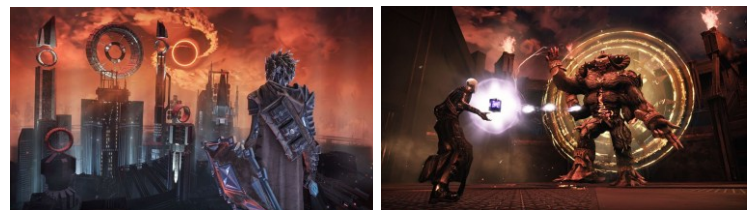
Although it lacks the enemy variety and abundance of a *Dead Space* or *System Shock*, Sevastapol Station is just as deadly and just as horrifically stress-inducing with its single (mostly, but no spoilers) Xenomorph that stalks protagonist Amanda Ripley, the daughter of Sigourney Weaver's character from the movies.



Hellpoint

Irid Novo

This sprawling space station is situated near a black hole, serving as the backdrop for a cool (if mostly by-the-book) Souls-like experience. My mini-review is included later in this issue.



The Starship Damrey

Damrey

This game by Level 5 *might* be impossible to buy now; one of the many reasons I'm against an all-digital future. It was exclusive to the Nintendo 3DS and featured first-person puzzles and exploration aboard a dark (and of course abandoned) spaceship.



Chronicles of Riddick: Dark Athena

Dark Athena

The full title is *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena*, and it's the sequel to the excellent *Escape from Butcher Bay*. While graphically a step up from the prior-gen game from the original Xbox, *Dark Athena* wasn't the follow-up I hoped it would be. I remember it leaning more into the action elements that involved more enemies and more shooting, and away from the stealth and immersive sim feel of *Butcher Bay*. That's not to say it wasn't a fun and worthwhile game; just different.

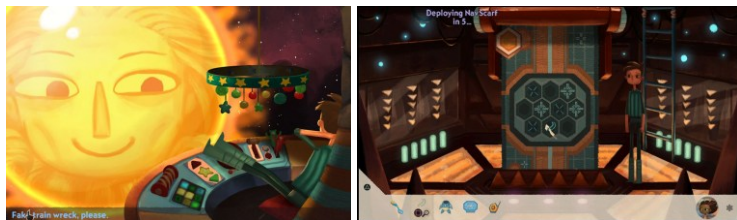


Broken Age

The Bassinostra

Last on the list for this category is Double Fine's point-and-click revival, *Broken Age*. It's hard to overstate just how cool and inventive this game is.

Without spoiling it (which would be a shame for anybody who might have never played it), roughly half the game takes place aboard the Bassinostra, where Shay is alone except for his AI parents and a few animatronic critters.



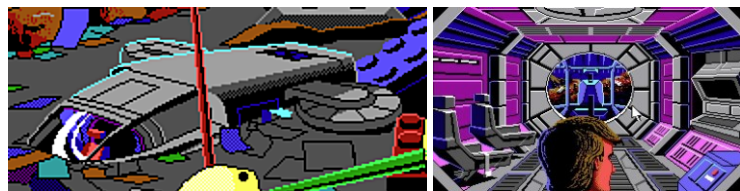
Ships in the Narrative

This last category is a bit of a catch-all for ships that didn't fit anywhere else. These are mostly ones that just appear in cutscenes or exist to support the narrative. Unless I've overlooked something, you don't directly fly them, they aren't used as a home base, and if you can move around in them freely in-game, it's only a small part of the experience or a single level or something of that sort.

Space Quest III

Aluminum Mallard

Actually, I don't know for sure that you *don't* explore and fly this ship as Roger Wilco in *Space Quest III*. It's been so long since I played it, I simply don't remember (and with misleading and often outright wrong search results online these days, it's hard to get clear and correct information).



Metroid (Series)

Samus's Gunship

This is hands down my favorite Nintendo franchise, beating out *Zelda* and *Mario* and the rest. The 2D games are great. The *Prime* games are great. I even enjoyed *Other M* (on Wii) and *Metroid Prime Hunters* (on DS).

With *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond* just around the corner (December 4th), I'm holding onto my mini-reviews for the three latest games in the series (*Dread*, *Prime Remastered*, and *Samus Returns*). I'll include them all in a future issue.



Advent Rising

Aurelian Ship

The main reason I included this on the list at all is that I just wanted to brag that I played and beat this original Xbox sci-fi game. It's most notable for a \$1,000,000 contest to find secret symbols in the game, which was cancelled over concerns of cheating or some inherent unfairness in the rules. I played it in April of 2014, though, way after it released.

An early part of the game takes place aboard an alien spaceship. I only remember bits and pieces of this game, but I remember liking it. Watch a video of it, such as [this one](#). It's very cinematic and pretty darned epic.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Rogue Shadow

I could write an entire article about just the ships from *Star Wars* (maybe *Star Trek* too, although I've somehow made it this far in life without ever fully playing a *Star Trek* game). Since I'm focusing just on *original* ships, the Rogue Shadow from this Xbox 360-era action game belongs in this miscellaneous category.

It's used by Darth Vader's secret apprentice Galen Marek (aka Starkiller, played by actor Sam Witwer) and serves the narrative by way of shuttling him and his crew from planet to planet in the first game. I never played the sequel, but I think it's used there as well.



Halo

Pillar of Autumn

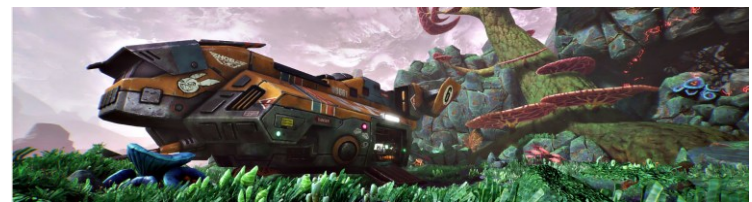
I've played every mainline *Halo* game (and *only* the mainline games, so far), but I don't think I fully follow the story. I remember the Pillar of Autumn from the first game, though. It's where we as players took our first steps as the Master Chief, although it crashes onto the *Halo* ring shortly after the game begins.



The Gunk

Dust Bunny

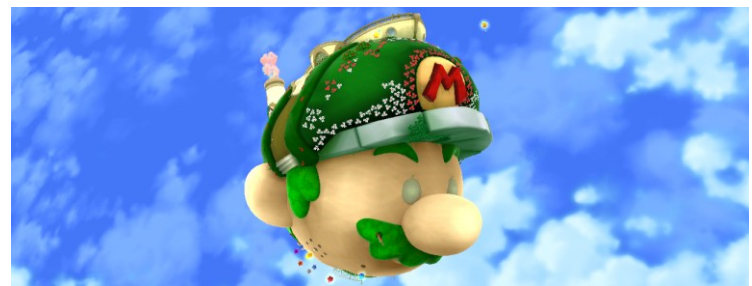
With a meager 70 average score on Metacritic, I feel like *The Gunk* is underrated. The story involves two friends (you play as Rani, with friend Becks staying back for support) who investigate an alien planet where they find the titular "gunk". I really enjoyed this back in late 2021 when I played it on Xbox with GamePass.



Super Mario Galaxy

Starship Mario

All that green makes Starship Mario look more like Starship Luigi. It's actually a small planet with its own gravity, just like other little planets in the *Galaxy* games. Mario can run around inside and on top of it.



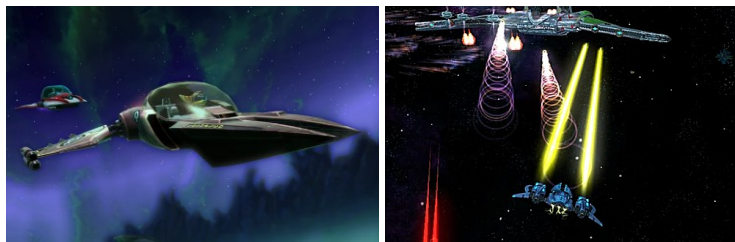
Ratchet & Clank

Aphelion

I was a latecomer to the *Ratchet & Clank* games when I jumped in for the first time with the 2016 reboot on PS4, despite owning all of them for PS2 and PS3 (and even a couple of them for PSP).

A wiki at [fandom.com](https://ratchetandclank.fandom.com) suggests that his ship in *Rift Apart* (the most recent game) was just some random Royal Starship and that the ship in the 2016 reboot was just “Mr. Micron’s Ship”, but Aphelion sounds like the most interesting and consequential of them all.

My mini-review for *Rift Apart* appears in VGGN [issue #16](#) on page 17.



Spaceship Wrap-Up

I’m probably forgetting a few good examples, even from the games I’ve played, but it is what it is. Also, for the record, *Space Invaders* has a laser cannon not a spaceship, but the enemies themselves might be.

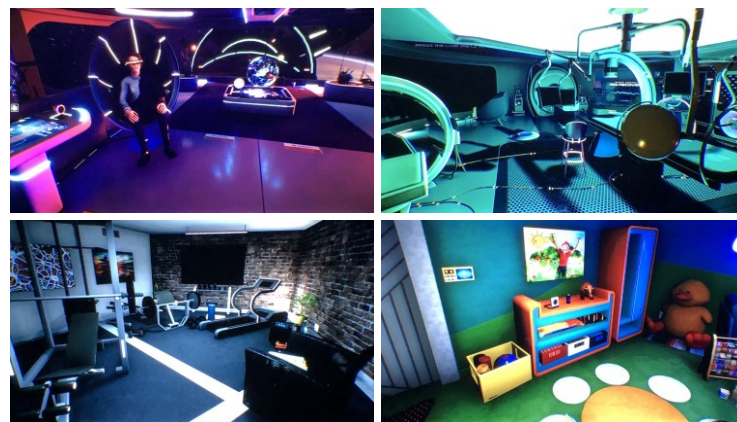


Mini-Review: Elea

I like short games, especially as a buffer between long ones, or when I just want a change of pace from whatever else I’m playing. Good games feel complete and worthwhile, even when short. This isn’t complete; or good; or even much of a game.



In theory, it’s part walking (or “looking at stuff”) sim and part adventure, but it ends at what feels like a first chapter. Aside from that, it’s kind of janky. Running is usually restricted. Objectives are hard to follow. The story starts off with promise but goes nowhere. Skip this one. I don’t really recommend it.



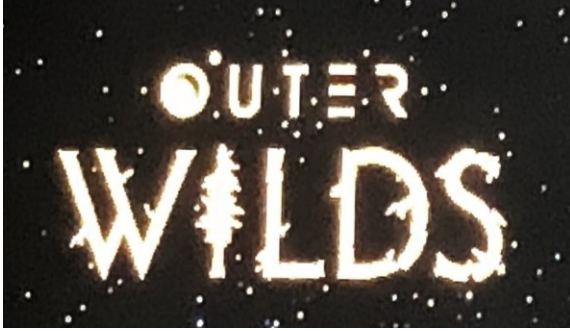
Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted to social media: 06/23/2021.

Five Little Capsule Reviews

Outer Wilds

Played on console: Xbox One. Originally posted to social media on: 06/17/2019.



Starts out an exploration game. Becomes a mystery with obtuse puzzles; got stuck two or three times. Despite that, janky controls and several hard crashes, I found it fascinating & ultimately rewarding. A unique experience that sticks with you.

It can't be overstated that there really isn't anything out there like *Outer Wilds* — at least nothing I've ever played. I didn't like it at first. It felt slow-paced, awkward. But as I explored and saw new places and began understanding the story, it hooked me in a major way.

Kingdom Hearts III

Played on console: PS4. Originally posted to social media on: 02/17/2019.



The magic of *Kingdom Hearts* 1 and 2 was playing them together with my daughter Addie, years ago. This is less magical alone, but it won me over by the end. Tons of variety in worlds and activities. It gets better as it goes. The nonsensical story somehow makes enough sense to follow. I enjoyed it.

Tacoma

Played on console: PS4. Originally posted to social media on: 01/05/2019.



A brilliantly told story from Fullbright, of *Gone Home* fame. It seems more interactive, too. It's still a game about observing, finding out about characters' lives, and piecing together the mystery, but very compelling. The AR replay aspect is a great hook.

Genesis: Alpha One

Played on console: PS4. Originally posted to social media on: 06/01/2019.



I died in the tutorial in this immersive colony ship survival resource management exploration base-building roguelike FPS (it's a lot of things). Then I tried again and got better. Tried a third time, and it totally grabbed me. I loved it. Saved the crew. Found a home.

I should also note that on my third play through, I'd exit from time to time and copy the save to the cloud, as a safety net. Losing all crew (which you can clone) isn't hard when the ship gets infested with aliens. After understanding the game better, it's really great and addicting.

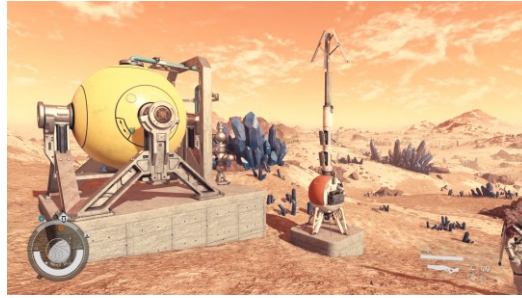
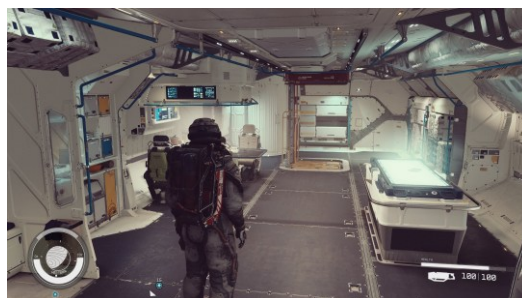
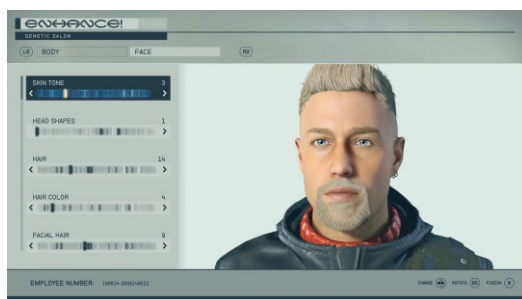
ChromaGum

Played on console: Switch. Originally posted to social media on: 03/28/2018.



It's like *Silent Hill* in a *Dead Space* setting. It had some bugs, and I had to start over 3/4 through due to a game-breaking glitch, but it hooked me enough to do that. It's a bit slow/awkward to control, but it succeeds in atmosphere and sense of place. If you're playing it, I recommend TV mode.

Mini-Review: Starfield



Starfield comes really close to capturing the magic I felt when I first played *Fallout 3*, which remains my favorite game of all time. I've heard the criticisms leveled at this game, and while none of it is "wrong" per se, none of it mattered to me.

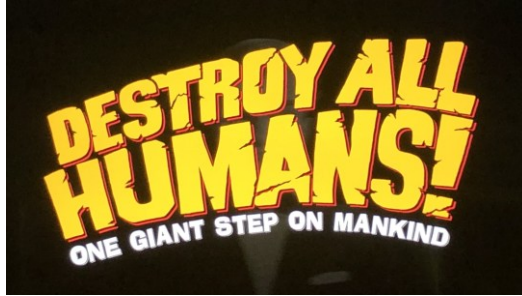
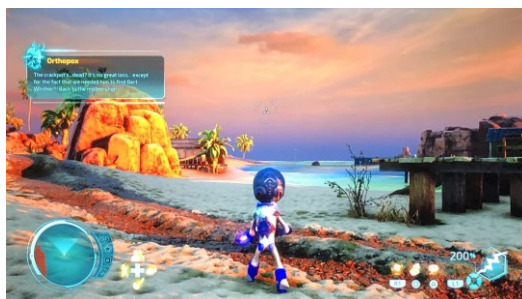
Well, almost none. It does feel a little less special when the open world is a series of hundreds of distinct planets (most of them mostly empty), but there is just so much else to love here.

The shipbuilding is fantastic. Characters and quests are great. It's so easy to get swept away by side quests and faction quests; many of which I never finished. Setting up resource-mining outposts was fun, if unnecessary.

I could play this game for hundreds of hours more, and probably would, if there weren't so many other games I want to play.

Played on Xbox Series X with GamePass. Originally posted to social media on: 09/20/2023.

Mini-Review: Destroy All Humans! Remake



What a blast to play. I only dipped a toe in the original so I could compare them, and I can say that this remake has much better controls, options, menu interface, and visuals.

I've read that it's true to the original story and chapters, but it plays much better. They did a good job remaking it; and yeah, it's really fun.

As evil alien Crypto (trying hard to sound like Jack Nicholson), you're the one-alien invasion force tasked with a variety of human-destroying missions, on foot, jetpack, and in your saucer. It has plenty of humor (hit and miss) centered around 1950's events and the political climate (a bit of an allegory for Communist fears) with some anachronistic comedy thrown in.

Also, alien Pox's dialogue delivery steals the show.

Anyway, I loved this game.

PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 07/11/2021.

Mini-Review: Destroy All Humans! 2



Since there isn't a remake of the second game (yet; rumor is, there will be) I played through the original. I miss the streamlined and improved controls of the first game's remake, but this is still very playable and fun.

Set 10 years later in 1969, alien Crypto seems more restrained and less evil, having spent a decade among humans. It's set up a bit like GTA with five different locations covering maybe a square mile each. He's often helping people (although with ample destruction in the process); another GTA-like aspect.

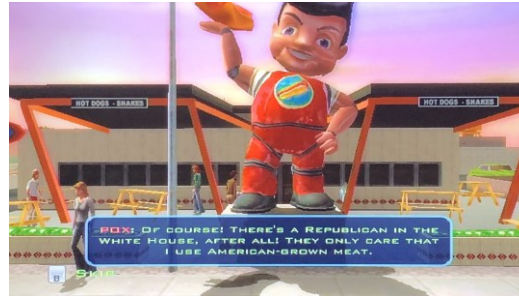
If it does get a remake*, I wonder how they'll handle the various NPC stereotypes? The first game had hillbillies, but *DAH 2* goes global in ways that are bound to offend.

It's goofy and comedic though. Also, a fun completion-based Platinum.

PS2 Classics played on PS5. Originally posted: 07/17/2021.

* A remake was released in 2022.

Mini-Rev: Destroy All Humans! – Big Willy



Full title: Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed

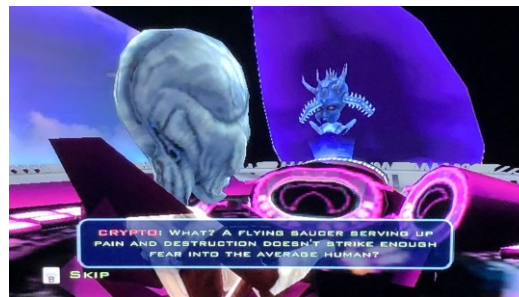
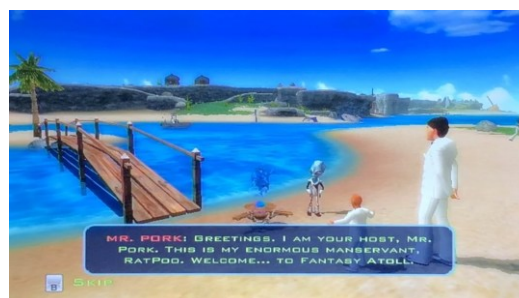
The third in the *DAH* series is exclusive to the Nintendo Wii. It offers only motion-controlled camera movement and various other motion gimmicks; no traditional option or pro-controller support, which makes it painful to play and awkward for somebody rusty at it like me. Otherwise, it's a third-person action game similar to the first two, if a bit shorter.

This time, Pox enlists Crypto in a *Soylent Green*-inspired plan, with endless “big willy” jokes and puns that would make even *Austin Powers* jealous.

Now it's the 1970's, with disco and roller skating teenagers and (as in the prior games) references to politics and pop culture of that decade.

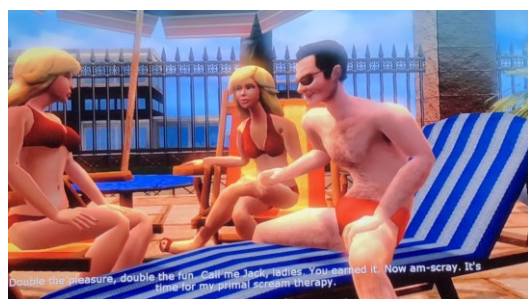
There are some clever bits and cool boss battles but overall maybe not as strong or memorable as the first two.

*Wii game played on WiiU.
Originally posted: 07/18/2021.*



This space intentionally left blank because the original mini-review accidentally used one of the same screenshots twice.

Mini-Review: Destroy All Humans! Furon



Full title: Destroy All Humans! Path of the Furon

The 4th game (and seemingly final unless Embracer Group revives it) in the *DAH* series is only on 360 and PS3, with no digital release and no backwards compatibility on newer consoles.

It's playable but kind of glitchy on the 360, with problems ranging from pedestrian crowds that sometimes float stiff-legged rather than walking, dialogue that cuts off before a scene ends, choppy frame rate that crawls during action-heavy gameplay, and more.

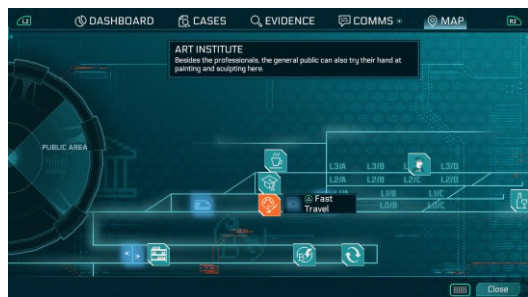
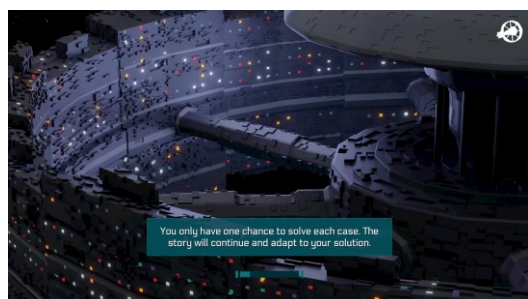
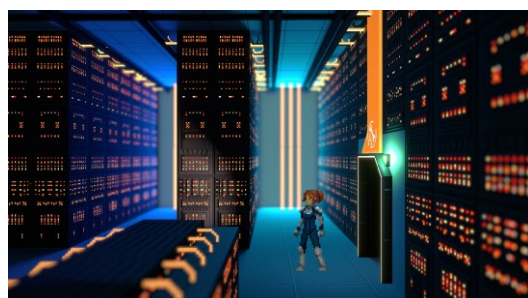
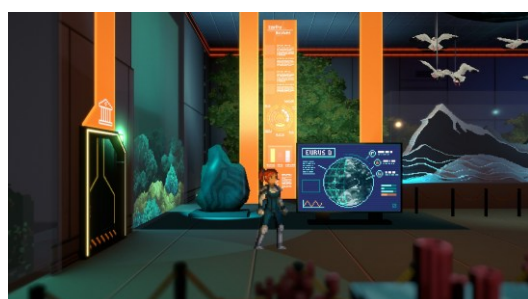
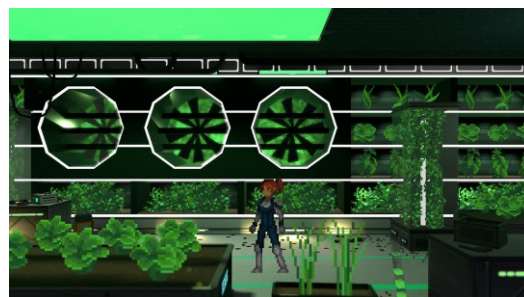
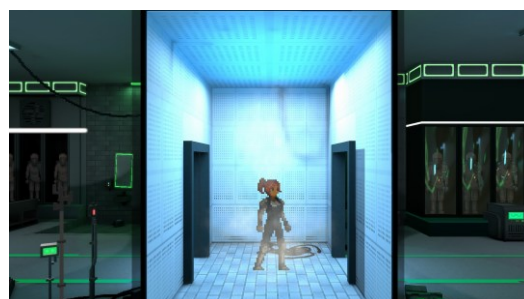
By now, the mission structure set across several small open world cities is familiar. In fact, it feels like a game that ran out of good ideas, where even the story and dialogue start to lose the spark that made the earlier games so good.

It's fun enough, and a good 1000 achievement score to get, but I grew tired of it all by the end.

Played on console: Xbox 360.

Originally posted: 07/26/2021.

Mini-Review: Between Horizons



It may not be obvious from stills, but this is a 2.5D side-scrolling adventure game. It looks retro with its pixel art, but that serves more as textures on the 3D-rendered environments. The character sprites and icons are pixelated, so it's a bit of both.

The story takes place on a colony ship that's around 30-some years into its 100-year journey. You play as Stella, an important member of the security team, as events unfold that will impact everybody aboard.

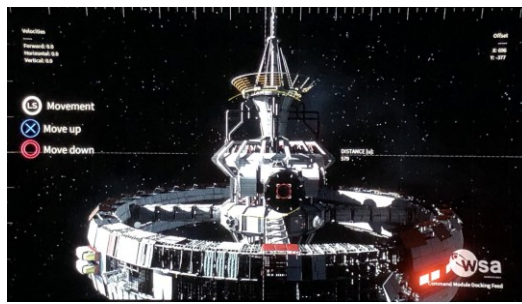
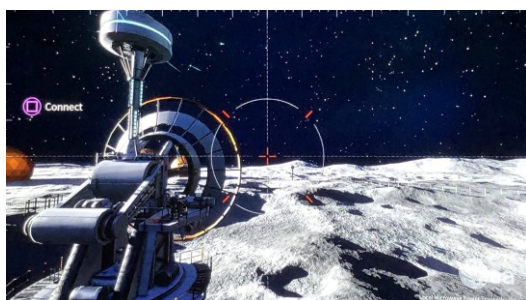
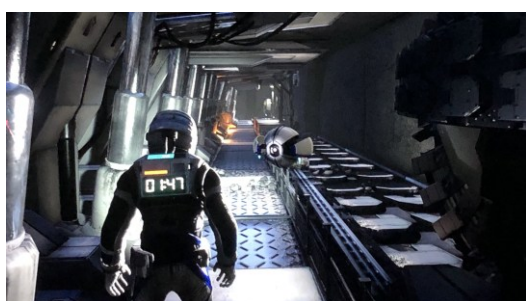
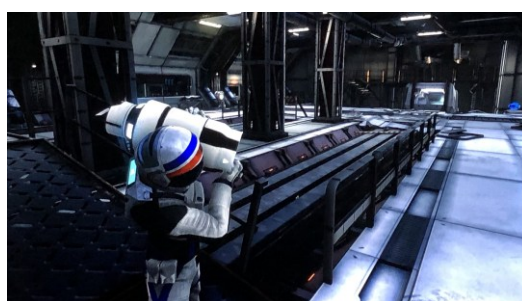
You might as well be a detective, though, because the gameplay involves finding clues, uncovering the facts, and ultimately making decisions to resolve a series of cases. You can't manually save. Decisions are final.

I really enjoyed this game for its modern-retro look, its sci-fi setting, and the clue-solving detective gameplay.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 08/09/2025.

Mini-Review: Deliver Us the Moon



After a slow start, it gets really good. It's an adventure game in third (and sometimes first) person where you explore, solve problems (ex: open an unpowered door by figuring out how to get a power cell out of another room), and try to solve a mystery of missing colonists in a near future where Earth's survival depends on power beamed wireless from a now-inactive facility on the moon.

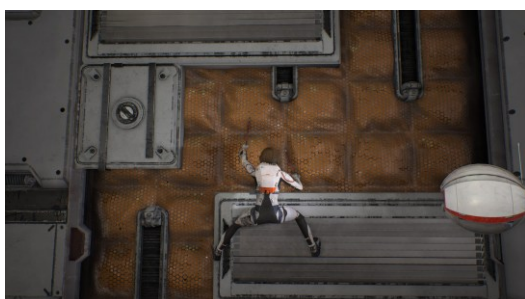
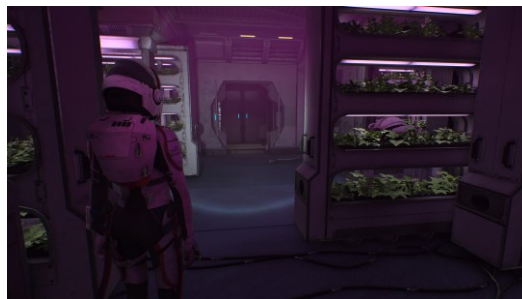
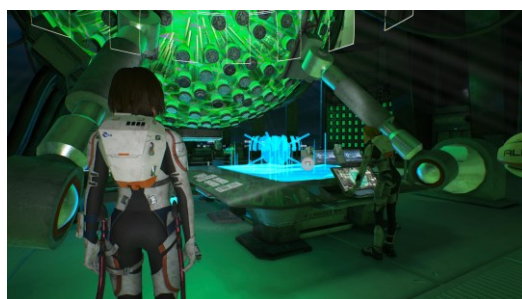
The closest comparison is maybe *Tacoma* (sci-fi, space, holograms, lone astronaut) but with more puzzles and gameplay variety.

Like many games of this style, it's a good 6 to 8 hours long, depending on your skill in solving puzzles and how much exploring for data and collectibles you do.

I really enjoyed this one. It's a new release (last month on consoles, last year on Steam). It's easy to recommend this one.

Played on console: PS4 Pro.
Originally posted: 09/14/2020.

Mini-Review: Deliver Us Mars



This follow-up to *Deliver Us the Moon* delivers us a well-crafted adventure with a fascinating story to tell, a few puzzles to solve involving energy beams and positional decryption (makes sense when you do it), some climbing and exploration, a plethora of collectibles, non-linear flashbacks, great voice acting (I forget if the first game had much voice acting at all), and a campaign that's longer, more involved, and less isolated than the first game (because you're accompanied by a small crew).

It hit on almost every note with some emotional moments and a feeling of investment in the story.

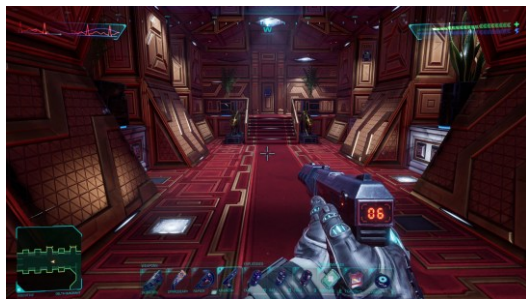
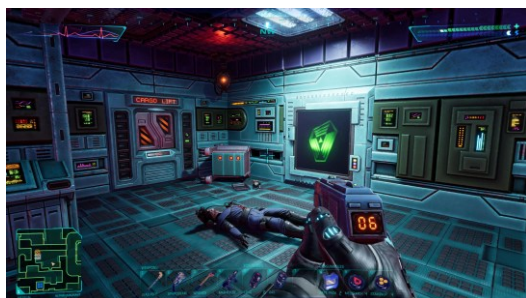
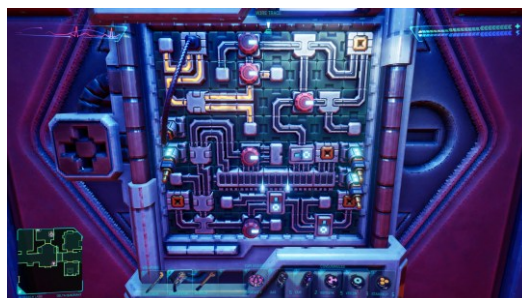
Playing the first game first is recommended, but this fully stands alone if you don't.

If I had to levy any criticism, it would be the sometimes-creepy character faces and the lack of a physical release.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 07/17/2024.

Mini-Review: System Shock (Remake)



Before *BioShock*, there was *System Shock*.

Nightdive Studio's remake of the 30 year old classic modernizes a game I've tried to play on PC multiple times over the years, but was never motivated to finish the first couple rooms, let alone explore higher floors and beat the game.

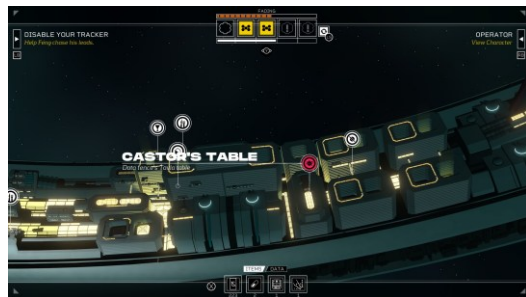
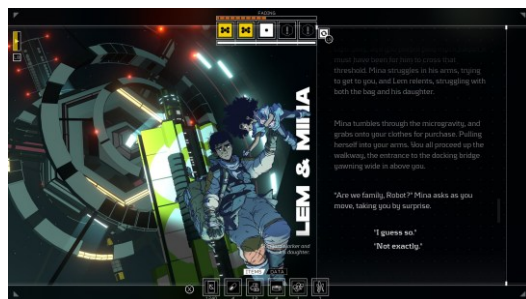
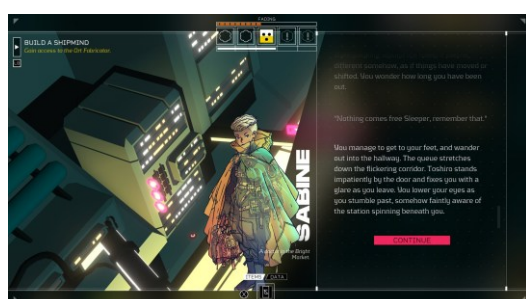
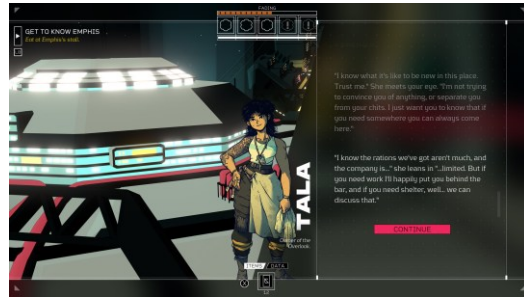
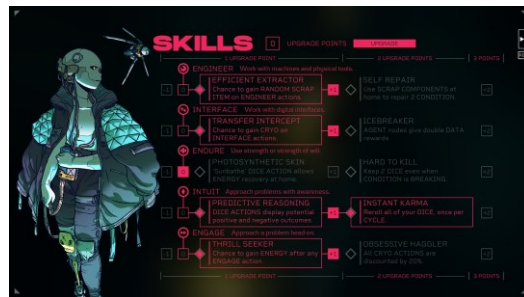
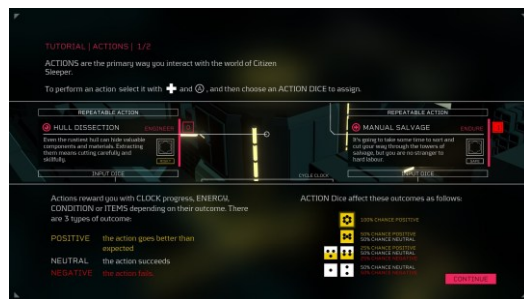
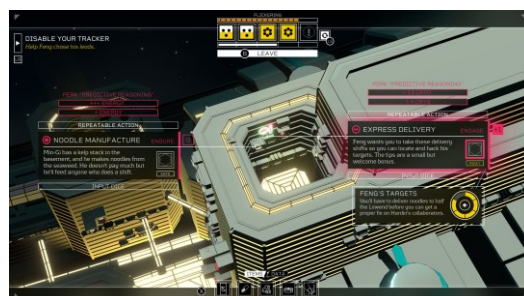
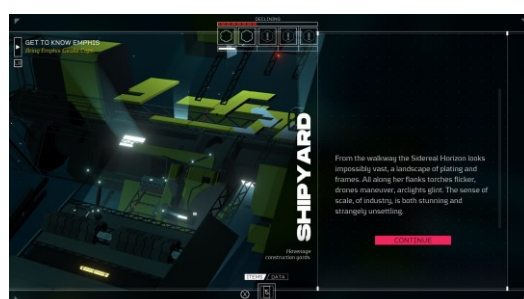
Although inventory management and some interactions remain cumbersome on a console, the updated visuals (now full screen, where the original just used a viewport with a lot of HUD outside it) work wonders for the immersion.

It may not have every innovation that later immersive sims have iterated on (the multiple solutions to problems and the progression options of *Deus Ex* or *Prey*) but the space station is full of secrets and surprises and is a fun (if sometimes scary and oppressive) environment to explore.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 06/29/2024.

Mini-Review: Citizen Sleeper



I don't think my opinion of a game has ever done such a 180-degree turn from extremely negative to extremely positive as it did with *Citizen Sleeper*.

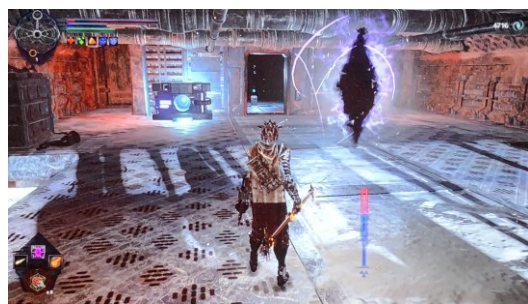
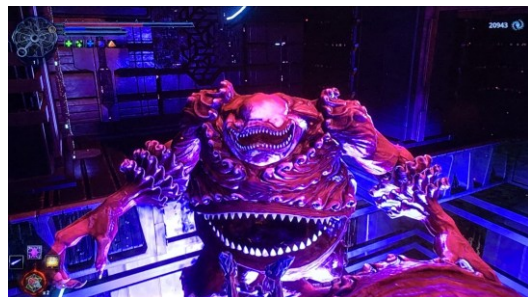
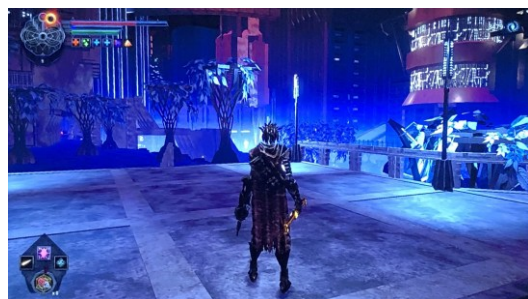
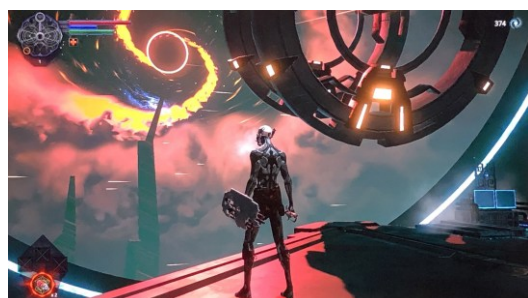
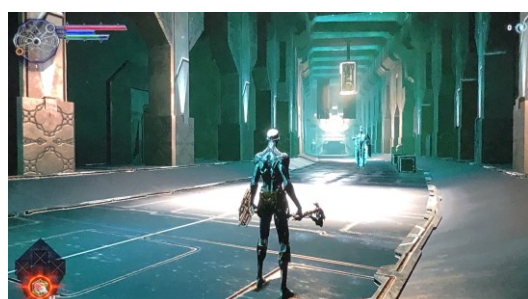
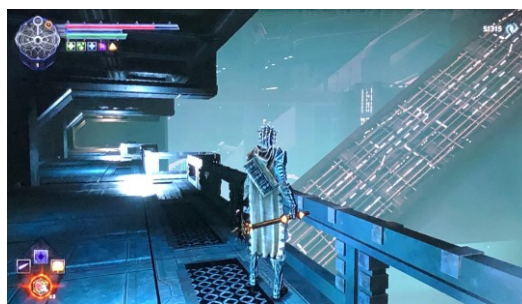
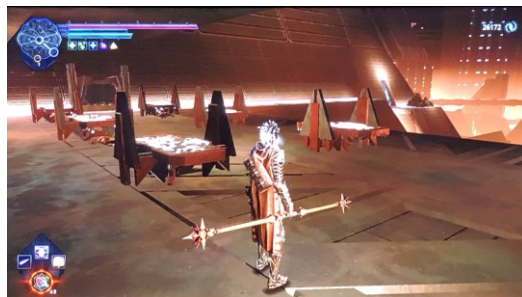
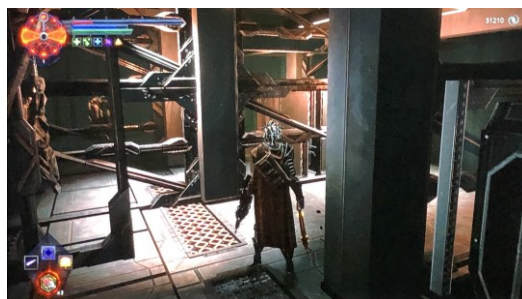
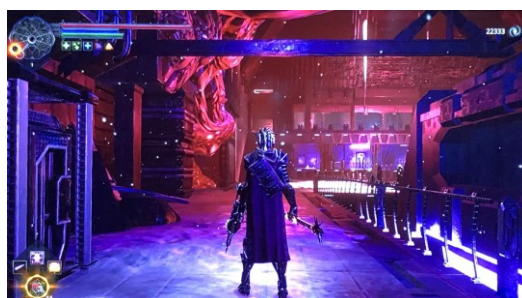
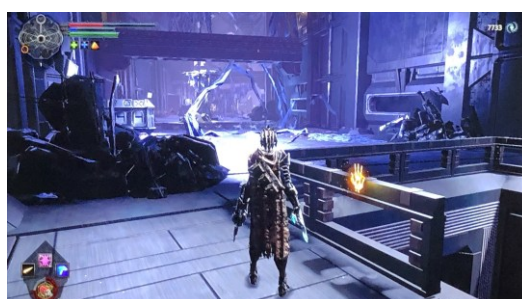
Over the first hour, I hated it. This is the game I've been hearing podcasters rave about? I do like interactive fiction and a good sci-fi story, but that's not what I was expecting here. The station menu interface drove me nuts until I realized I could fine-tune it and reach out-of-the-way options by using the D-pad.

I was even confused by the Active Scene notices that prevented me from completing cycles. But then I got it. The RPG elements and resource/turn management aspects clicked. The story went from "what" to "this is something truly special."

The Lem/Mina ending even had me a bit emotional. I ended up loving this game.

Played on Xbox Series X with GamePass. Originally posted to social media on: 06/05/2022.

Mini-Review: HellPoint



It's another sci-fi *Souls*-like. It sticks close to the formula, aboard a labyrinthine space station full of hidden areas and shortcuts. I was initially turned off by the lack of any PS5 performance enhancements. I wonder how it runs on a PS4 if it sometimes stutters on PS5, but after playing a ways into it, I really liked it and stopped noticing that it runs like a last-gen game.

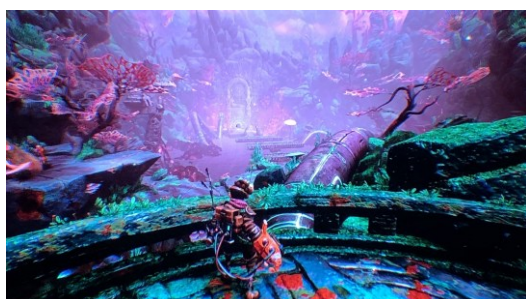
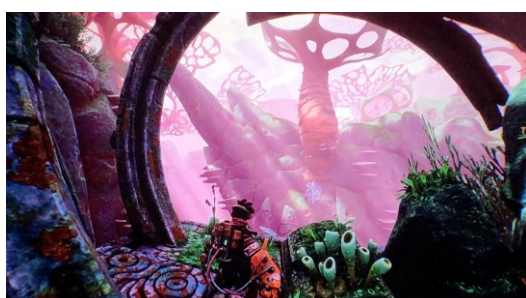
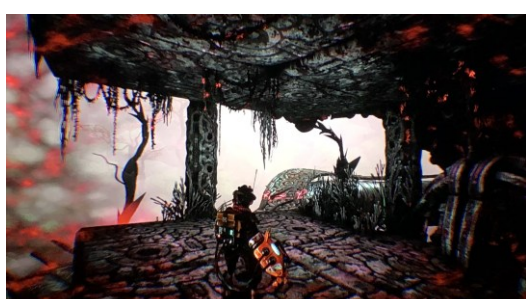
The boss fights are pretty cool, but that's one area where most *Souls*-likes falter - this one included. Rather than needing to Get Good in different ways to overcome each boss, it's basically just a matter of leveling up enough (and upgrading weapons) to bend every fight to your own play style.

My biggest complaint is that I did everything needed for the "true" ending (at least I think so), yet it didn't happen.

Otherwise, good game!

*PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 06/04/2022.*

Mini-Review: The Gunk



The makers of the *SteamWorld* games have moved beyond indie with a game that feels bigger and more double-A in nature. It's a third-person action adventure with some light platforming and puzzles; think *Kena*, *Psychonauts*, *Concrete Genie* etc.

As an explorer on an alien planet, your main mechanic is an arm-mounted vacuum that sucks up the titular “gunk” in a way that feels great and serves as the cornerstone of the adventure you go on.

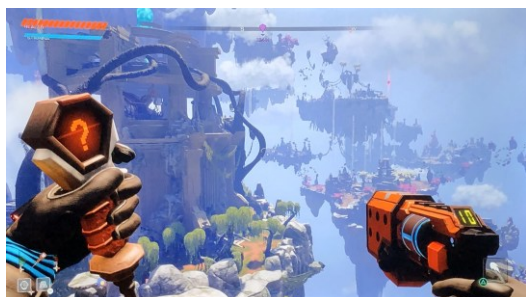
There's an occasional few enemies, exploration, collectible ingredients to craft upgrades, and a scanning system to unlock said upgrades.

The story is good, it's fun to play, and it's just an all-around great time. Not too short. Not too long (maybe 4 to 6 hours).

I absolutely loved it, but I feel like *The Gunk* is destined to be overlooked and underrated.

Played on Xbox Series X with GamePass. Originally posted to social media on: 12/26/2021.

Mini-Rev: Journey to the Savage Planet



Smallish first-person open world shooter that fits into the same niche as *Metroid Prime*. Scan things for data. Shoot, slap, or kick weird aliens. Lots of platforming.

New items help open new routes (a la *Metroid*). Some cool bosses. The game's wacky sense of humor is most evident in FMV fake ads aboard the ship (serving as a hub) and feature over-the-top products and services.

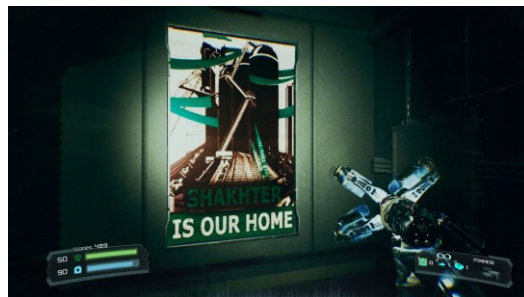
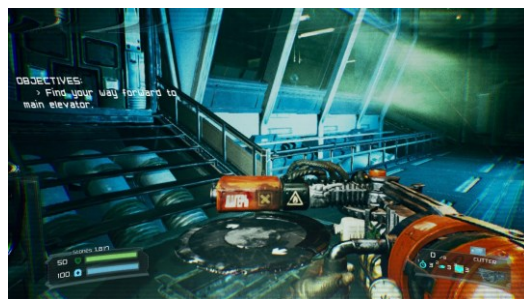
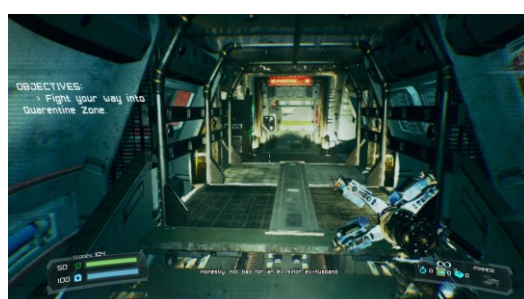
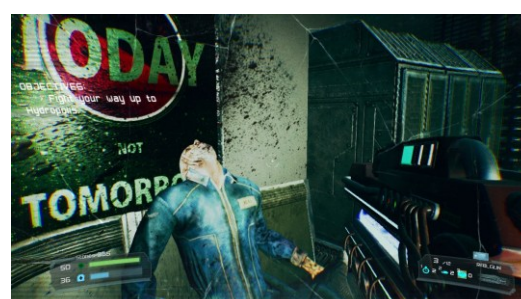
The ship's AI is an ever-present voice that reminded me of 2064 ROM's Turing character (the voice, not the personality); fits well.

Even after the credits, there's plenty more to find. I still need fuel to return home, so there's a bit more story, more collectibles and scans and quite a few trophies I can get.

I'm really into it, but it feels a bit like junk food. It's really fun, but it isn't trying to be GOTY.

Played on console: PS4.
Originally posted: 02/10/2020.

Mini-Review: Hollow 2



The first *Hollow* wasn't what anybody would consider a *good* game. It was janky and broken. I even had to completely restart after hitting a game-breaking bug near the end.

But, it had many memorable moments, a mystery, and a truly creepy survival horror vibe. It was a hidden gem. I was a fan.

Hollow 2 is something else entirely. The tension is replaced with near-constant monsters and is now just a competent *Doom*-style shooter. It's short and lacks whatever the first game had that drew me in.

It plays fast and fine but looks blurry (explained away, I guess, by the protagonist's view through a helmet). Maybe the first game shared similar problems, but if so, it bothers me now where it didn't then.

By the end, I did enjoy it. Not bad for a Switch indie FPS, I guess, and the end credits are legit cool.

Played on console: Switch.
Originally posted: 10/30/2022.

