



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #24 – October 18, 2025

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Loading Screen

Stop me if you've heard this one. A vampire, a witch, and a werewolf walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and frowns. "Hey kids, you can't be in here without an adult," he says. As they get up to leave, the werewolf says to the bartender "That's fine, but we'll be back later with our mummy."

Every week, I tell myself that I need to make shorter issues. Nobody has time to read 35 pages, even if pictures make up half of it. It isn't just that, though. I miss playing games. At least, I miss playing games as much as I used to before starting the newsletter.

Anyway, enough lamenting that. This week, it's the lighter side of spooky month in a main feature that's all about the horror game "monsters" that appear in non-horror games. It's also a quiz. Have fun!



The Not-So-Scary Top 10 Monsters Quiz

I struggled to find an interesting angle for this week's feature. As third in my four-part series of "spooky month" games, I knew I wanted to write about non-horror games featuring the archetypal monsters that you'd also see in horror games. I knew there might be some cross-over with what I've already written (particularly, zombies in [issue #22](#)). It didn't seem interesting to just list out a few random games that fit the topic either (although I've done that plenty of times before).

Then, as it often does, it came to me. I can turn this into a monster double-feature; two different features rolled into one.



First, I've identified ten "monster" types (and maybe some of these use the term loosely) that you might expect to see in a horror game. I've ranked them on how prevalent they are in non-horror games, from least to most. Put another way, my pick for #10 doesn't show up in video games nearly as often as my pick for #1 does. It's basically a popularity thing.

Second, rather than write much about the games themselves (there will be plenty of that later, in mini-reviews for several of them), why not make a quiz out of it? I'm experimenting here, but I think I'm on to something. It's a game within a newsletter about games.

For this, you might want to grab a pen and paper to jot down your answers, open your notepad app, or just have a good memory.

Here's how it works. For each of the ten monster archetypes, I'll include screenshots or clipped images of a few NPCs or playable characters. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to identify each character and/or the game or series they're in (your choice).

Some of these will be easy, but others will be quite a bit more difficult and obscure.

Rather than assign higher point values to the games I feel may be less recognizable, each one is worth a single point. I figured it would be silly to make the harder ones worth more points, because it would be disheartening to end up with a low score despite guessing correctly on most of them. This isn't school.

In total, there are 60 games or characters, so the quiz is worth 60 points. How many of them can you get right?

To help, I've added hints and clues where it seems appropriate. If you want to play in hard mode, try making your guesses from just the pictures, and then read the text afterwards.

The answers appear much later in this issue, after Collection Inspection, after all the Mini-Reviews, and just before The Final Stage.

Here's a chart to help you keep track. How are you going to use this in a digital document? Heck if I know. Print it out and circle them?

10.1	10.2	10.3	9.1	9.2	9.3
9.4	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.4	7.1
7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	6.1	6.2
6.3	6.4	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	5.10
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	3.1	3.2
3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	2.1
2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7
2.8	2.9	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4
1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.10

#10: Mummies

Most (but not all) of my character choices come from games I've played myself, and I used that as a benchmark for gauging how common they are in non-horror games.

As representation for the undead goes, mummies don't seem very common.

#10.1

Do you know what games these guys are from? I'm making this one easy by including four different versions, but it all counts as 1 point. At least, I *think* this is an easy one.



#10.2

I enjoyed this game on the original Xbox. It's also on PS2, and it has a PC port on Steam.



#10.3

I feel like this game uses the term "mummy" loosely, although maybe the franchise it's based on does too. She looks a little too, uh, healthy to be a mummy, if I'm being honest.



#9: Werewolves

I can't think of too many werewolf games, horror or not, making these furry lycanthropes rank near the bottom of my list. I'm going to bend the rules a little and include an example of a guy turning into a *different* animal, just because it deserves a mention too.

#9.1

Originally, I cropped the top of the screenshot out, but I think having that little bit of the HUD showing makes it a little easier. Even with it, this one might be kind of difficult. Any guess?



#9.2

No, that's not a werewolf. Your other hints are that it came out three console generations ago, and it's a game based on a movie. These are two different characters from that same game, although they relate to each other. Pat yourself on the back if you know their names and earn one point if you recognize the game.



#9.3

This game is a bit more intense than some of my choices, even bordering on actual horror at times, but I think it counts. It's also a game I enjoyed, that I consider to be very underrated.



#9.4

You're probably not going to get this one, because I'm the only person on Earth who played this (or at least, the only person on Earth who played *and* enjoyed it).

Here are two hints. One, the protagonist can become a werewolf *and* a full wolf, and two, it came out just a few years ago, at the start of this console generation. Continue to the next column for two screenshots.



#8: Witches

Witches may be more common in games than I give them credit for, possibly deserving of a spot higher than #8 on my list. Most of these choices are from games I've played, although one in particular deserves a spot even though I've never gotten around to playing the game.

I very nearly included the *Left 4 Dead* witch, but a case could be made that (1) she's not that kind of witch, and (2) they could maybe be categorized as horror games, making them off-topic for my list.

#8.1

An Umbra Witch is still a witch, right? She also does this cool thing with her hair.



#8.2

This game would probably be recognizable even if I selected a different screenshot, but I'm feeling generous. Does this give it away?



#8.3

This witch comes from a game and a series that's among my biggest gaming blind spots. It's on my backlog (along with 400 others).



#8.4

You might recognize the character based on her look and costume, but do you know the game?



#7: Demons

I think "demon" is sometimes a catch-all for any sort of hellish monster in a video game. They do tend to appear in more mature-rated games (although not always).

How many of these demons or games featuring demons do you recognize?

#7.1

This series is all about the demons... so many demons... just lots and lots of demons. Here are two of them. Can you name them, or at least the series of games they're from?



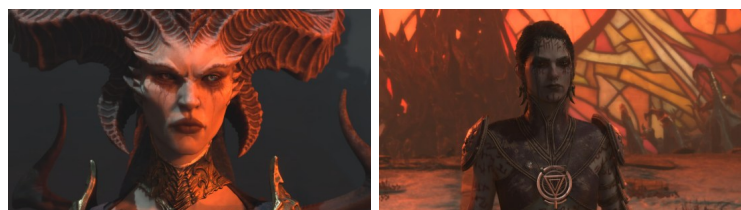
#7.2

Here's a couple versions of one of the most recognizable demons in this next series. I wouldn't consider this a horror series, except for maybe one entry in particular.



#7.3

Only one of these two is a demon. The other is the playable character I made in this game. I suppose it's not difficult to tell which is which, but can you name the game?



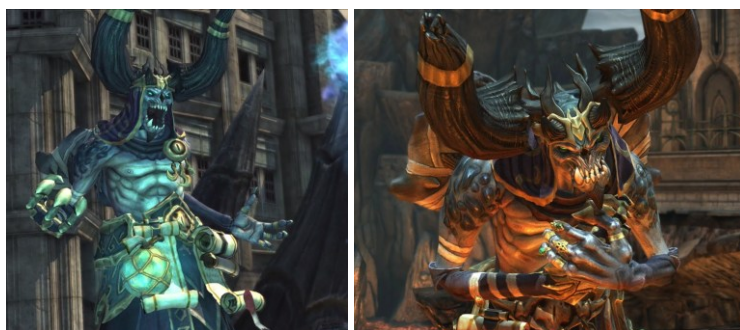
#7.4

Here's a demon and a half-demon. This would have been hard mode if I only included the first guy. The second guy gives it away, right?



#7.5

Believe it or not, this guy isn't your enemy. He looks like a tough customer, but he just wants *you* to be his customer. He appears in a series of games involving the end of the world, each featuring a different main character.



#6: Skeletons

Few horror-styled monsters play to comedy the way skeletons do. The problem with skeletons, though, is that they're not very distinctive. I could drop in images of fifty skeletons from fifty games, but unless there is some other clue to go along with it (the HUD, other non-skeletal characters present, or even an actual clue), they'd be too hard to guess.

So, I've narrowed this down to just a few choices that I hope are distinctive enough to make this part of the quiz fair.

#6.1

Let's start with an easy one. Do you recognize these two skeletons, and the game they're in?



#6.2

Here's another game I've always wanted to play. It remains on my endless backlog. The original got a remake several years ago, but the sequel remains locked away on the original platform. Do you recognize this guy?



#6.3

These guys look a bit different from game to game, but they're all from the same series. Do you know the series, and what they're called?



#6.4

Here's a classic. I don't think this one needs any additional hints, and to make it a *little* more challenging, I opted for a screenshot that doesn't have him (the one on the left) in his signature work attire.



How many of these games and characters have you recognized so far? We're now half-way through the top 10 list, but there's still plenty more left in the quiz.

#5: Vampires

These sun-averse bloodsuckers *might* be the most popular monsters on my list, if we're just talking about pop culture and media in general. When it comes to video games, I can think of plenty of vampire representation in non-horror games, but not enough to rank them higher than #5.

#5.1

Even if you haven't played this cult classic FMV game or its remaster from a few years back, you might just recognize these live action vampires. Technically this is *supposed* to be a horror game but come on.



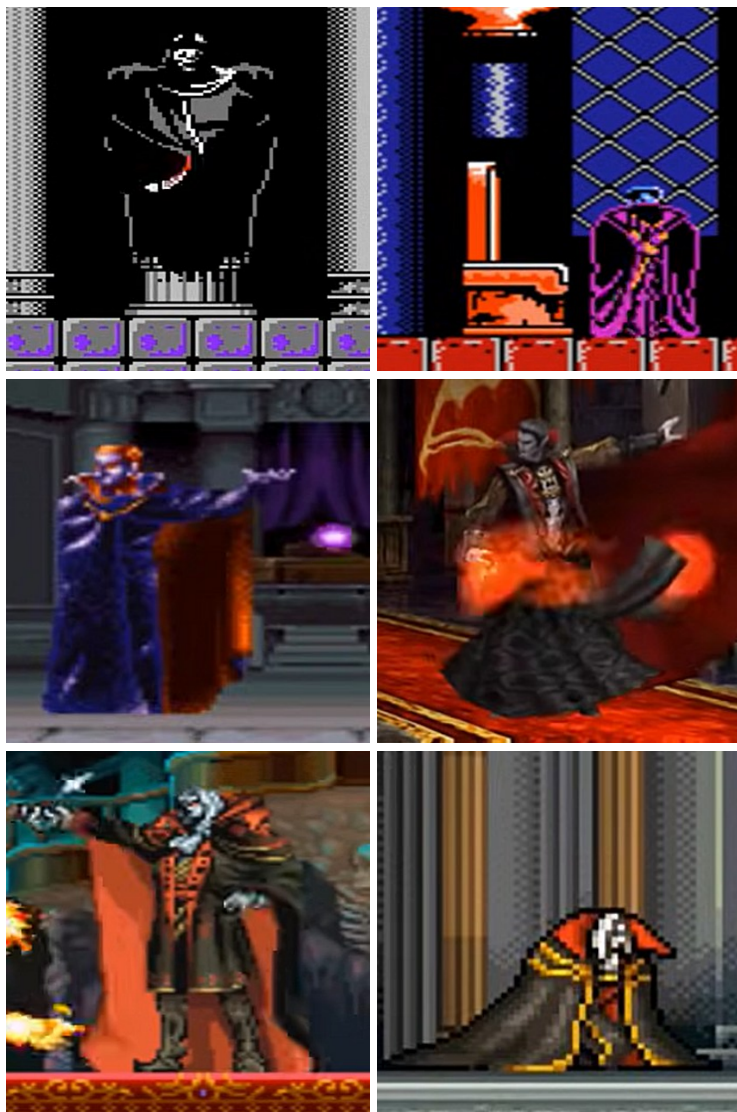
#5.2

Until later DLC finally introduced a vampire playable character, this game was entirely devoid of them aside from this one blurry guy on the title screen.



#5.3

This iconic vampire appears as the final boss in pretty much every entry of this long running and well-loved (but seemingly dormant for the past decade) action game series.



#5.4

He's far less iconic, but this vampire protagonist is one you may recognize if you played this game.



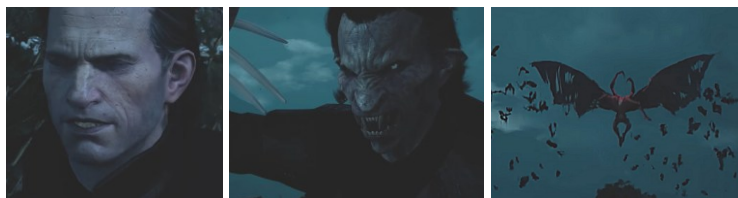
#5.5

No, that's not a pale Robert Picardo. This one is likely to stump everybody, so here's a *huge* hint. If you can get it from this, that's great, but if you simply look up the answer based on this clue, then – as some self-righteous Redditor once said, "You've cheated not only the game, but yourself. You didn't grow. You didn't improve. You took a shortcut and gained nothing." Oh, the clue? This game was made by the same development studio that made the *Shadow Warrior* and *Hard Reset* games.



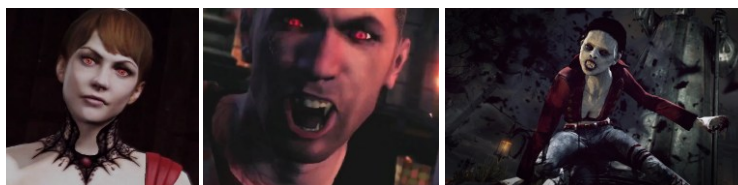
#5.6

Here's another really tough one. I present to you three versions of the same vampire. It's tough to give a hint on this one without giving it away, but I'll say this. A sequel to this game is in development. To get this one right, you'll need to know the name of the expansion this vampire appears in.



#5.7

Everything I said about the prior game (5.6) also applies to this one, other than the part about there being another game in development, and the part about this being three versions of the same vampire. The studio behind it has moved on to bigger (and by some accounts, better) things. In fact, they just launched their most recent hit.



#5.8

This fierce redhead is the half-vampire main character from a pair of games that were given the remaster treatment a few years ago, and from a 2D side-scrolling spin-off a few years before that. These are games I always wanted to play (for various reasons) but never did.



#5.9

This last game in the “vampires” section is one I played many years ago and really enjoyed, but if I was taking this quiz instead of creating it, I’m positive I’d get this one wrong. I’m not sure any number of clues will help either, but here goes. You play as an outlaw gunslinger and newly turned vampire named Jericho Cross. You partner up with a lady named Cassidy Sharp. You accidentally release the vampire lord, Lazarus. One of your cohorts, Tala (“Stalking Wolf”), betrays you.



#5.10

Okay, this is the real final vampire in this section. I almost forgot about this guy. No hints on this one, but do you recognize him?



#4: Zombies

These members of the walking dead are more popular than their cousins, the skeletons and the mummies. At #4 on my list, it seems like I should have plenty of zombie quiz fodder for this section, but I don’t. As with skeletons, zombies tend to show up in hordes or in ways that don’t make any one of them stand out.

#4.1

This guy stands out, though. It might be obvious from the art style (from three different games in this series), but this is the polar opposite of a horror game. Do you recognize the series? Do you know this zombie’s name?



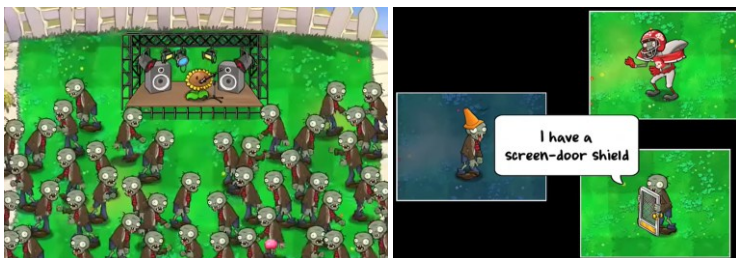
#4.2

Here's my guy, zombie numero uno, out to reshape the city in his own image.



#4.3

It took a long time for me to get the catchy song from this game's music video (pictured here, rather than the game itself) out of my head, but now it's back. I never played this or its sequels and spin-offs, but I've linked to the music video in the "answers" section. Click it, only if you want it to be stuck in your head too.



#4.4

The main character isn't a zombie, but I've included her in one of the screenshots anyway because I don't think this game is guessable from context and art style alone. Have you ever played this game? It's fun!



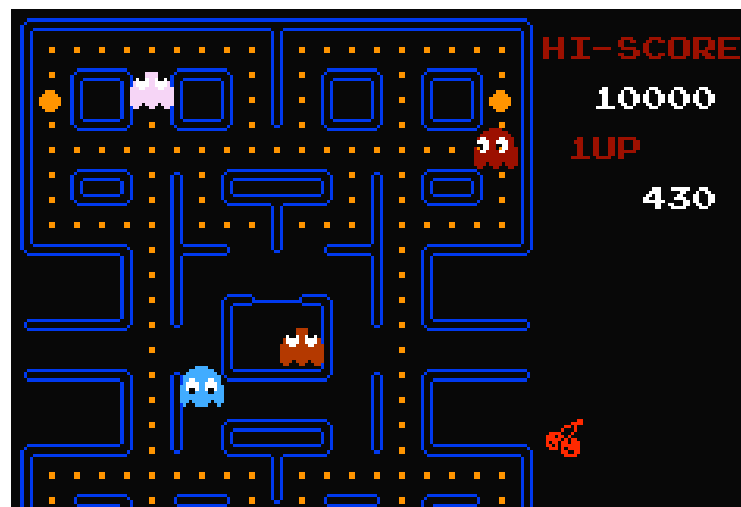
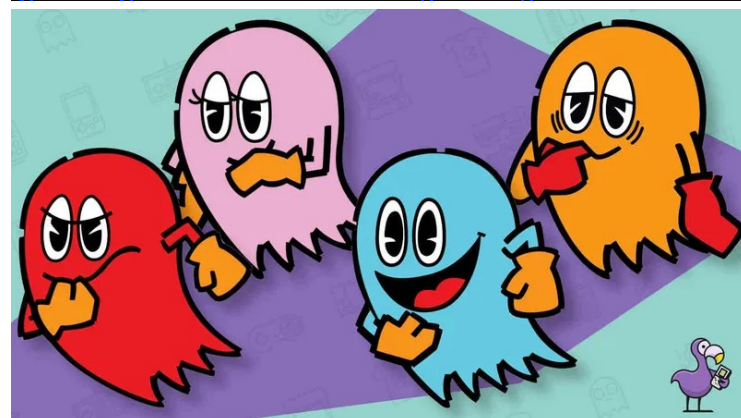
#3: Ghosts

They're everywhere! Ghosts are the third most popular monsters to appear in non-horror games, and they'd be #1 if I had been more selective with what counts as a monster when putting together this top 10 list.

They're so prevalent in video games, in fact, that I could probably fill an entire quiz with just ghosts. Rather than going overboard, I'll try to limit this section to just a few ghosts.

#3.1

Let's start with the easiest of the easy ones and go back to (near) the beginning with these four iconic video game ghosts (five, if you count their "sister" ghost). I bet you can name the game, but can you name each ghost?



#3.2

Of all the ghosts in this game (and this series), this hungry little ectoplasmic blob may be the most recognizable. He didn't have a name until the 1980s cartoon, though.



#3.3

One of these guys is a ghost detective (or rather, a detective that is now a ghost), in yet another game I enjoyed, but that I feel may be underrated and lesser known.



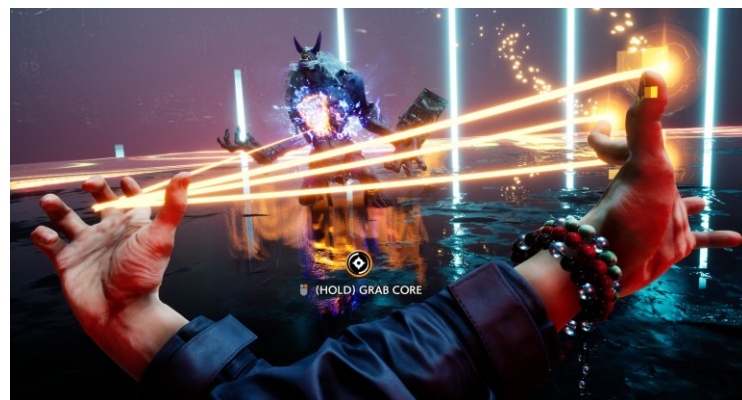
#3.4

Here's another easy one. These little guys are too shy to move if you're looking at them.



#3.5

Are these ghosts? I'm not sure. It's been a few years since I played this. They look more like demons. This game *does* have ghosts, though.



#3.6

Yet another series of ghost-filled games I haven't played is this one. Have you? I've heard good things. They're on my backlog along with so many others I'll never get to.



#3.7

My kids played both games in this series, many years ago. They looked like a ton of fun. It's hard to get more Halloween-themed than this. Also: Candy Corn does nothing, Candy Corn doesn't have arms, Candy Corn knows his limitations, and Candy Corn is good.



#2: Aliens

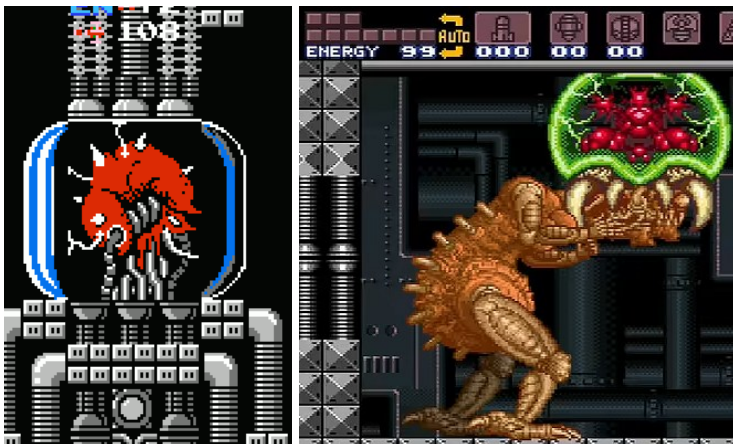
Okay, hear me out. I wanted to do a top 10 list, not a top 8 list, and so I had to come up with two more monster archetypes. As it happens, the two I picked are the two most common in video games, and so they lead the list.

Aliens are certainly a staple of horror games – and movies, for that matter. *Alien: Isolation* is all about a deadly Xenomorph, and there are plenty of monstrous Necromorphs in the *Dead Space* series. Alien horror makes them relevant to the topic.

There are just so many non-horror games with aliens, it's difficult to choose only a few for the quiz. How many of these aliens, or at least the games you can find them in, do you know?

#2.1

You have to know this one. It's iconic.



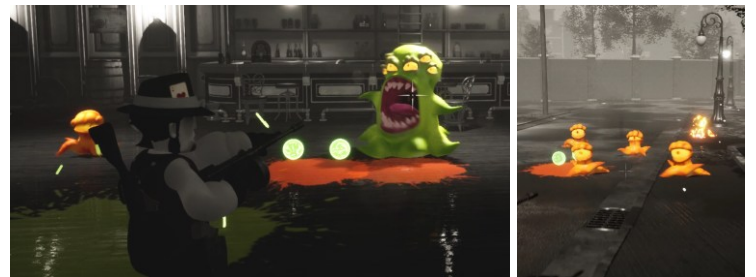
#2.2

The little ones always say the funniest things.



#2.3

If you recognize this stylized mobster-noir third person shooter, I tip my non-existent hat to you. I'm not *trying* to make the quiz hard. I just thought this was a fun game to include. My mini-review for it is later in this issue.



#2.4

The art style probably gives this one away, but do you know *which* game this scene is from?



#2.5

This over-the-top action series has four games (plus remakes of the first two). All of my mini-reviews appear in [issue #20](#) of the VGGN. Do you know this little wise-cracking murderous alien clone that sounds like Jack Nicholson? How about his scheming, sarcastic superior?



#2.6

This is a promotional image where I've blurred out the game's title (not a screenshot), but I chose it because it's a perfect who's who of alien races in this series. You don't need to name them all.



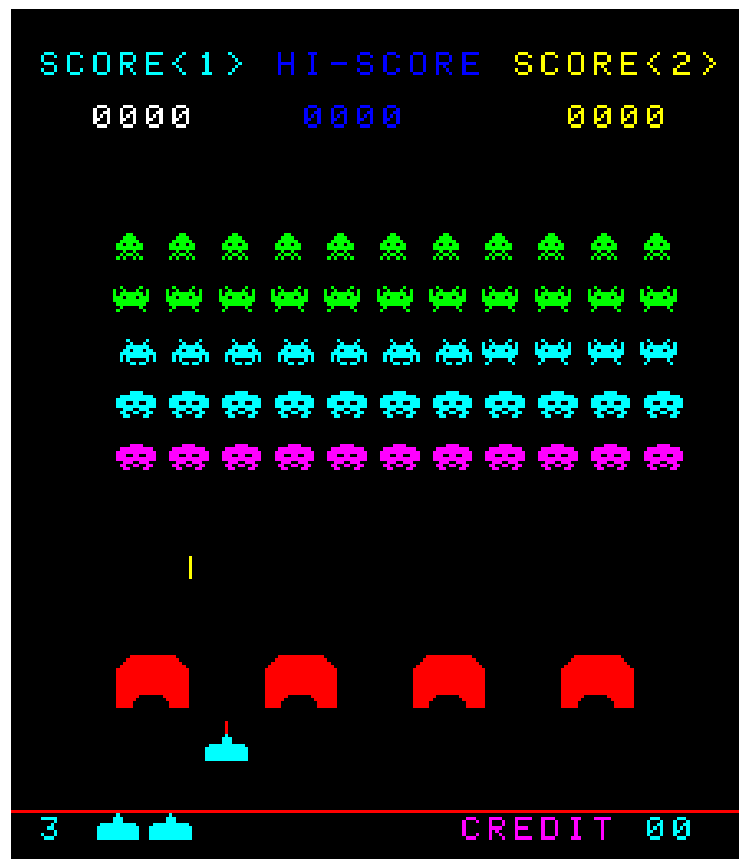
#2.7

I thought the sequel to this game was coming out this year, but either I was mistaken, or it got delayed sometime after it was announced during Summer Game Fest.



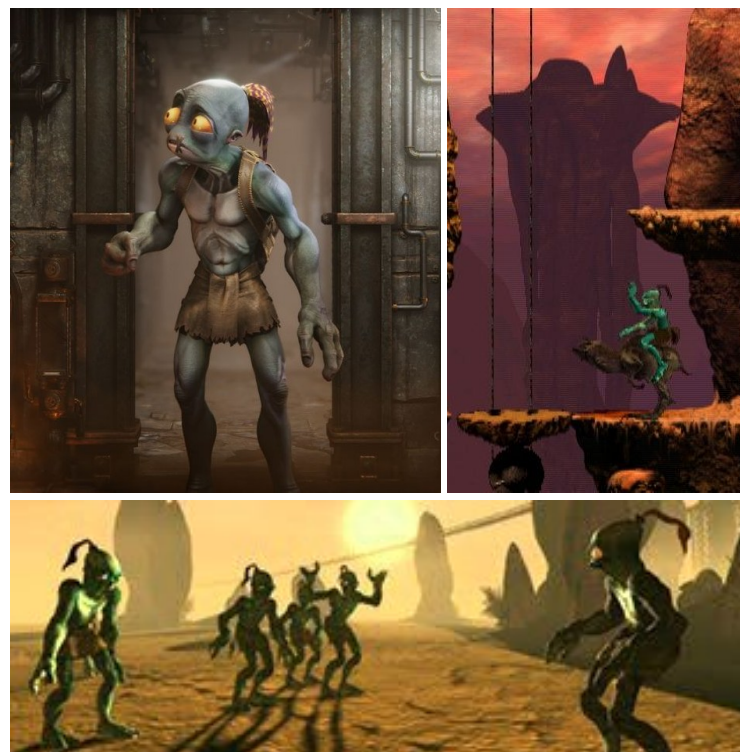
#2.8

In [issue #20](#), I posited that those little guys might be space ships, but no, I think they're giant alien bugs, crabs, squids, and so forth.



#2.9

This reluctant hero isn't in every game in the series, but he's its closest thing to a mascot.



#1: Robots

In the interest of actually finishing this issue on time, I opted to stop adding more aliens to the list. There are just so many. *Superman* is an alien. *Star Wars* is full of aliens. Elvis in *Perfect Dark* is an alien. I could keep going.

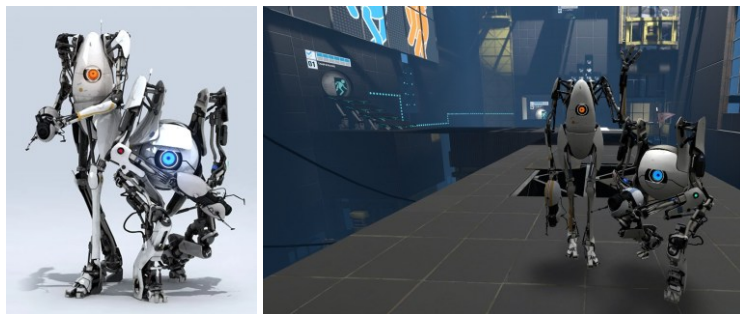
What's even more common in video games than aliens? The answer is robots. This isn't scientific, though. Maybe robots should have been #2, but here we are.

You may be thinking this is really a stretch for a list about horror game monsters making their way into non-horror games. If so, maybe you're right. There's *Five Nights at Freddy's*, of course, and Working Joes in *Alien: Isolation*.

Typically, robots aren't the subject of horror games, so yes, maybe this one is a stretch. There are, however, countless video games featuring robots, and the quiz must continue!

#1.1

These two are the greatest of co-op partners.



#1.2

The only images with all three protagonists together are from promotional materials.



#1.3

For the number of games in this series and its various spin-offs, I'm saddened to say that I only ever played the first six to completion. These games involve a good robot battling bad robots in their own themed stages, to take their unique power and use it in later battles. The games are tough, and the 8-bit music is some of the best ever heard on the NES. You can try naming every single boss shown here or simply score a point by knowing the series.



#1.4

The third mainline numbered game in this long-running series is my favorite game of all time. Can you identify these robots, or at least the game series where you can find them?



#1.5

The main character in this excellent action game series usually wears his little robotic buddy like a backpack, but the sidekick becomes the hero once in a while.



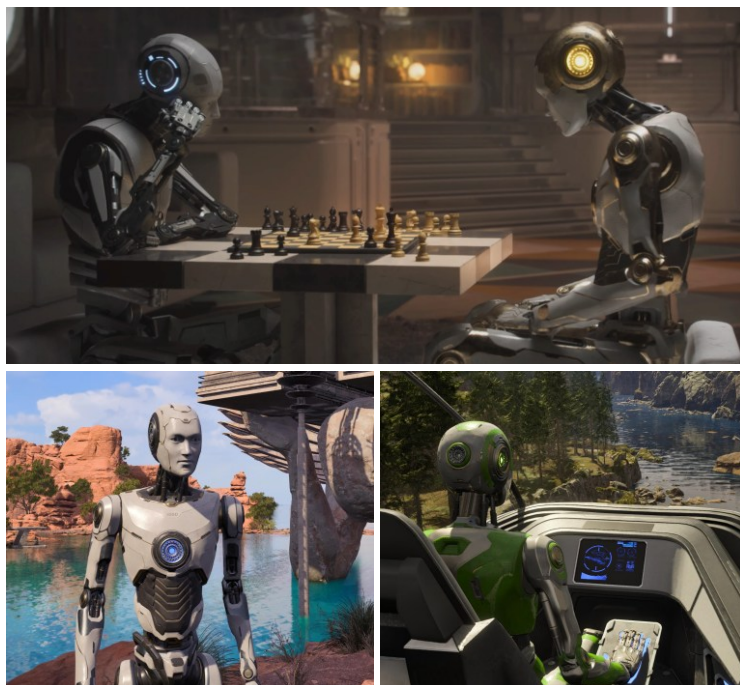
#1.6

Here's another little guy; an up-and-comer making a name for himself in recent years.



#1.7

These images are from screenshots included in my own mini-review for this game, back in [issue #12](#). This puzzle game is a must-play.



#1.8

I wasn't personally a fan of this visual novel disguised as a retro point-and-click adventure when I played it a few years ago, but some people really enjoyed it. Do you recognize this little robot, or the game they're from?



#1.9

A new game in this series came out recently, and I've been playing it... but slowly, because I spend all my time working on this newsletter. Can you identify the series just from its one annoying (but endearing?) robot mascot?



#1.10

The one on the left is a robot. This is a classic.



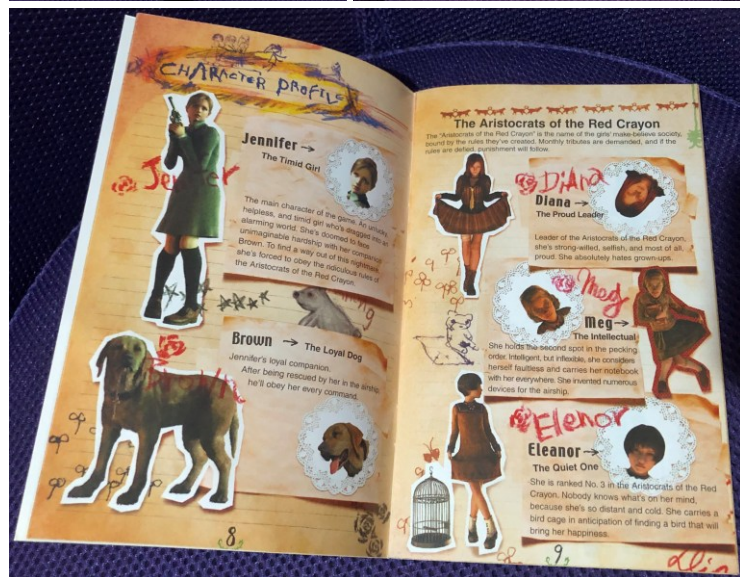
Collection Inspection – Horror Classics

This is the new recurring and pointless feature where I take photos of a few games from my collection, often blurry or with bad reflections due to my poor photography skills. This week, I'm featuring a few games I wrote about in last week's horror game travel agency issue.

Rule of Rose

Platform: PS2 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: This copy is in perfect condition. People on eBay have theirs (in less perfect condition) listed for upwards of \$600. Some people are cray-cray.



Eternal Darkness – Sanity's Requiem

Platform: GameCube / **Edition:** Standard

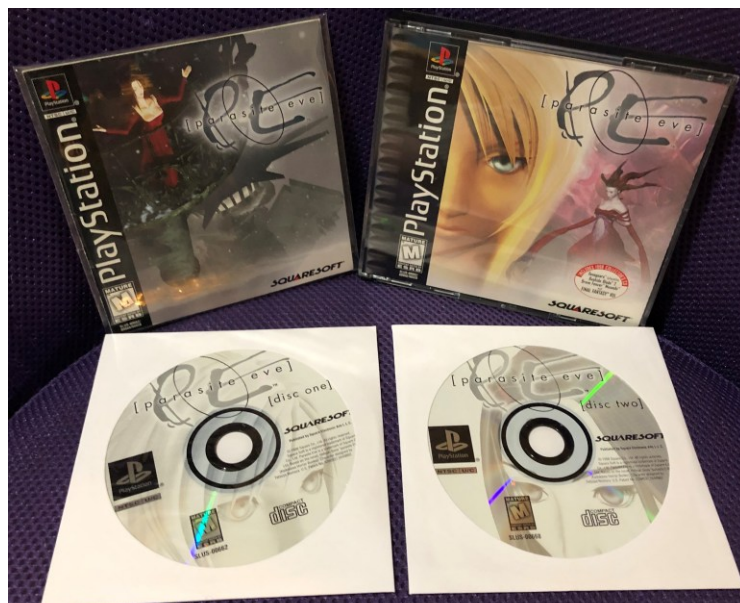
Comments: I didn't know it until opening it for these photos, but there's some rippling (maybe from water damage) on the front of the manual. I didn't have that noted on my inventory spreadsheet, but it must have been that way for as long as I've owned this game.



Parasite Eve

Platform: PS1 / **Edition:** Standard

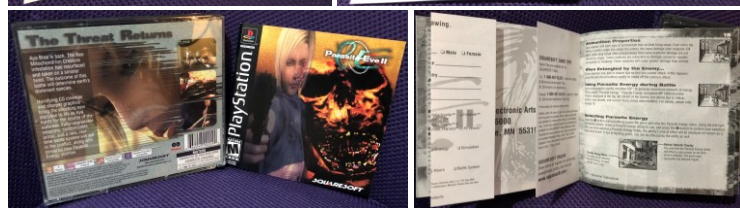
Comments: A two-disc cult classic PS1 game. It even comes with a bonus third disc of Squaresoft demos.



Parasite Eve II

Platform: PS1 / **Edition:** Standard

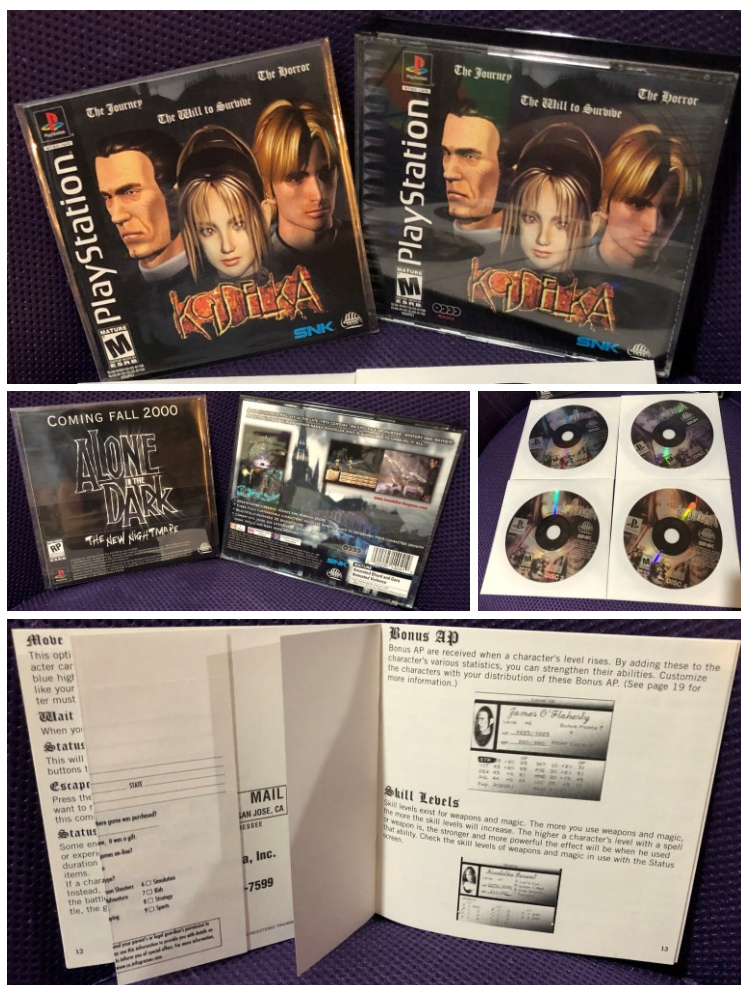
Comments: This sequel is also really good.



Koudelka

Platform: PS1 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: I played through this four-disc classic last year and included my mini-review here last week.



Dementia - The Ward

Platform: Nintendo DS / **Edition:** Standard

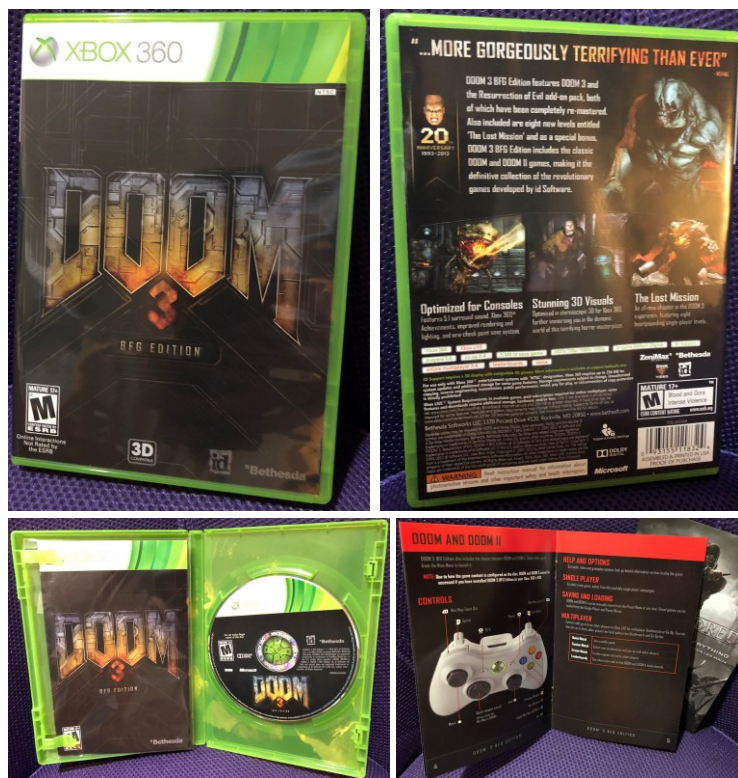
Comments: I also own (but never played) the sequel.



Doom 3

Platform: Xbox 360 / **Edition:** BFG Edition

Comments: Now with a gun and flashlight combo.



Echo Night

Platform: PS1 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: Despite owning this game on PS1, I bought it digitally to play on PlayStation TV (Vita).



Mini-Review: Bayonetta 3



You play as dancing witch Bayonetta in a fast-paced globetrotting multiverse-hopping action game where “over the top” and “signature style” are its guiding mantras.

Core gameplay is like *Devil May Cry* with combos, abilities, demon summons and lots of weapons to try. You also have a turn as two other witches in a few levels; new Viola and returning Jeanne – both great characters.

Variety in gameplay is non-stop; brawling, side-scrolling, shmup, kaiju battles and other one-off bits never cease to surprise as breaks between the core action.

You decide how much challenge you want with a post-battle grading system, extra challenge stages, collectibles and an option to replay levels.

I loved *Bayonetta* but felt *Bayonetta 2* wasn't very memorable. I'm back on board with *B3*. Great story. Great music. Great game.

Played on console: Switch.

Originally posted: 11/06/2022.

Mini-Review: SMT – Devil Summoner

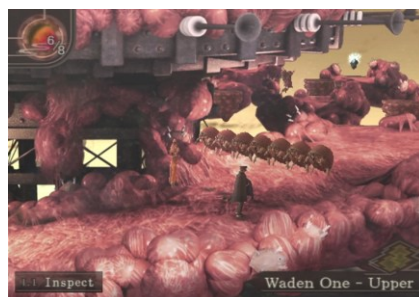
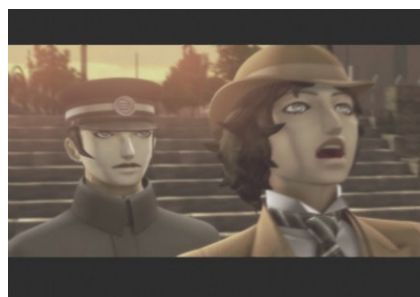


Full title:

Shin Megami Tensei – Devil Summoner – Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Soulless Army

Note:

I played this PS2 game for the first time earlier this year, and then a current-gen remaster was released a mere three months later. This review is for the original PS2 version.



Yeah, the title's a mouthful.

This is classic-era Atlus, before they made a splash with GOTY-nominated RPGs like *Persona 5* and *Metaphor ReFantazio*. This one takes the fun core gameplay and darker tones of demon collecting, training, and adventuring in a "real world" Japanese city setting (seemingly set in the 1920's) and experiments with the combat.



When battles start, you and a summoned demon can run around the combat area attacking in real-time, as you'd expect from an action game; well, sort of.

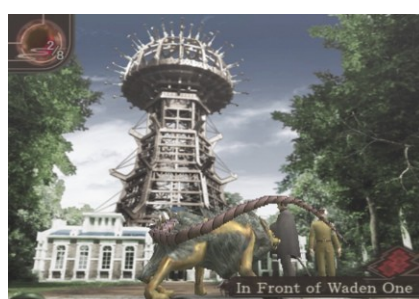


Limited moves, attack delays, slow movement and awkward mechanics make it feel a bit turn-based even though it isn't.



The story is weird and out there, which is typical for *SMT*.

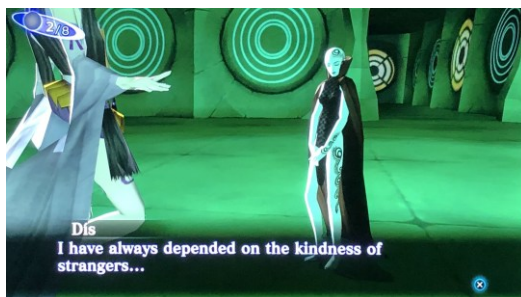
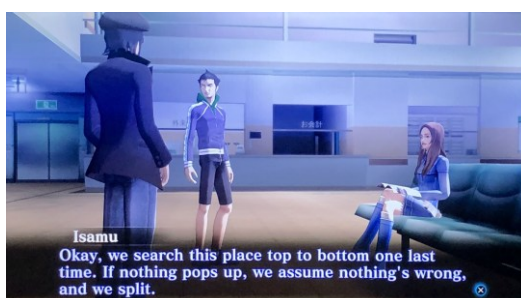
I liked it, but mainly because I'm already a *MegaTen* fan.



Played on console: PS2.

Originally posted: 02/22/2025.

Mini-Review: SMT III – Nocturne Remaster



Full title:

Shin Megami Tensei III – Nocturne – HD Remaster

It's a classic PS2 turn-based RPG from Atlus, remastered. It seems to be just an upscaled port; no other obvious enhancements.

It lacks the school socializing aspects of the *SMT Persona* spin-off series.

Rather than travel with friends, your other party members are the demons you find and recruit (many of the same ones that appear as “personas” in the more popular series).

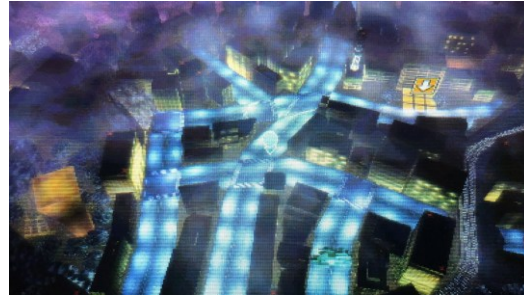
The combat system lacks the improvements seen in, say, *Persona 5* (this is way older, of course) but still rewards tactical thinking and a strong grasp of the elemental strength, weakness, buffs and debuffs combat that makes *SMT* so distinctive.

I'd have liked to see some quality-of-life improvements here, but still, I'm glad the version I finally played is the definitive one.

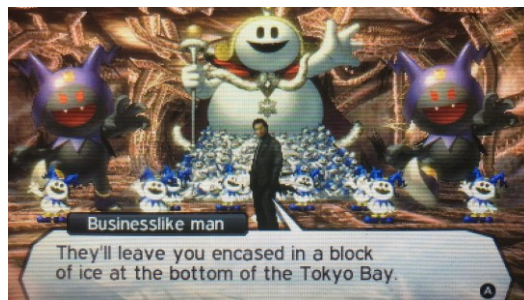
A worthwhile classic.

*PS4 game played on PS5.
Originally posted: 06/05/2021.*

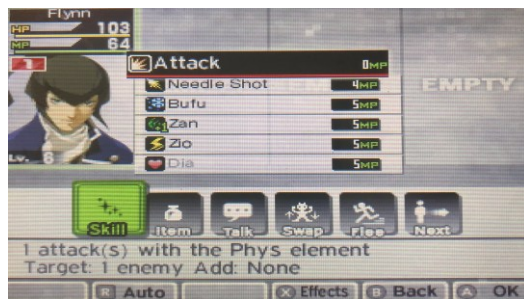
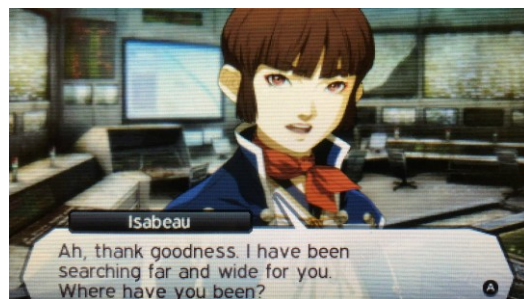
Mini-Review: Shin Megami Tensei IV



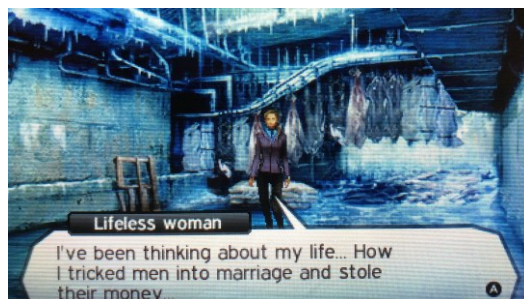
In some ways, it feels like a step back from *SMT3* (at least, from the recent remaster). Being confined to the 3DS, it feels less epic.



I wasn't initially a fan of the setting for this one (seemingly feudal Japan), but was much more into it once I escaped into the larger world. That brought new frustrations, though.



The overworld map is similar in style to *SMT3*, but even more labyrinthine and confusing. Too many times, I had no idea where to go next, or no clue how to get there even if the quest told me. It's not at all hand-holdy.



I ended up on a Neutral path (good, I think) but that made most optional side-quests required, which was a challenge and a chore.

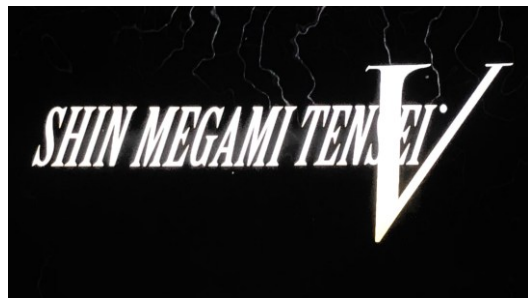
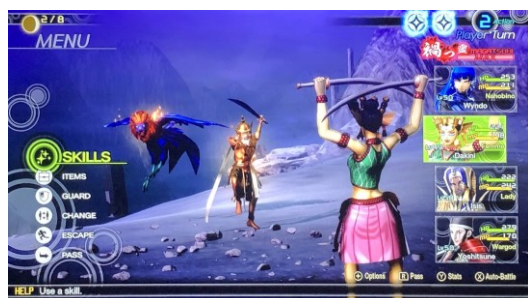
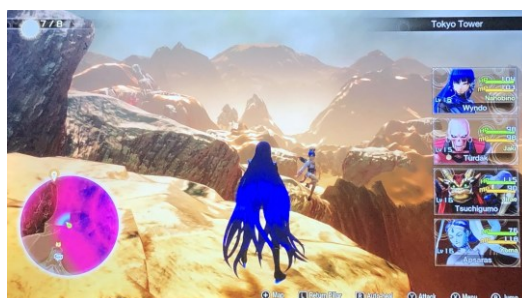
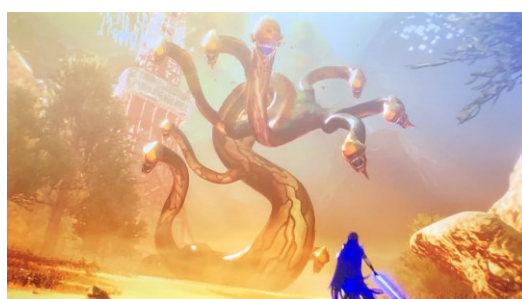


The familiar *SMT* turn-based combat, demon variety and fusion, and the dark story make it worthwhile, but maybe only for fans.



Played on console: 3DS.
Originally posted: 09/24/2021.

Mini-Review: Shin Megami Tensei V



The gameplay in Atlus's hardcore turn-based RPG gets a few positive tweaks (ex: light/dark magic is no longer a waste) and it looks better than ever with 3D demon models and several large-ish open world zones that make exploration and progress more meaningful.

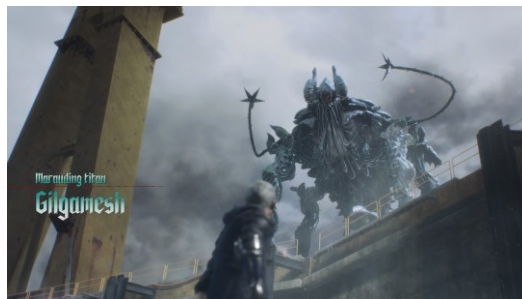
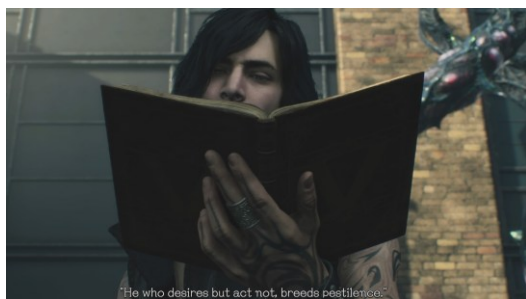
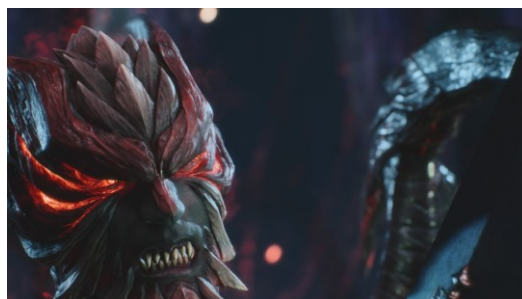
No innovation with the story though. In fact, it's a variation of the same story we've seen before; feels like a direct sequel to *Shin Megami Tensei III*.

Difficulty-wise, I started on Normal, which was challenging and great until the last big area and its bosses. Then I tried Casual (barely easier, if at all) before deciding that at 45 or so hours in already, I just wanted to finish and move on.

There's a "Safety" difficulty available as free DLC, letting you one-shot most enemies and easily beat bosses. It was either that, or tons of grinding.

Played on console: Switch.
Originally posted: 12/25/2021.

Mini-Review: Devil May Cry 5



I liked it but didn't love it.

Three characters with very different styles made mastering combat for any of them (or even just being good) impossible for me – a big difference from Ninja Theory's *DmC* reboot, or others like *Bayonetta*.

High replay value with new challenges, but I don't know if I'll put any more time into it.

I played through on Devil Hunter (normal) and without assist mode and still found it very easy, but I was rarely "Stylish" and it felt button-mashy.

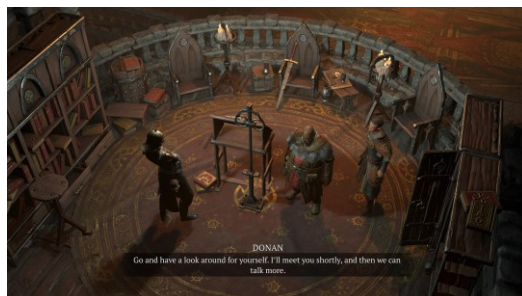
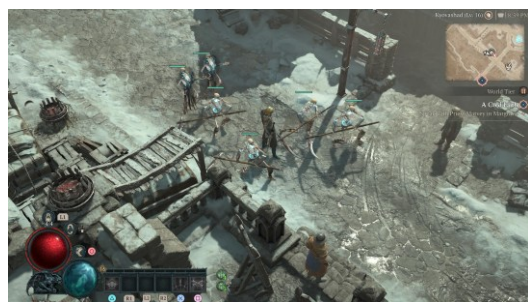
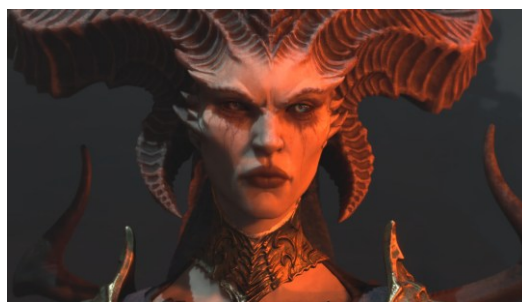
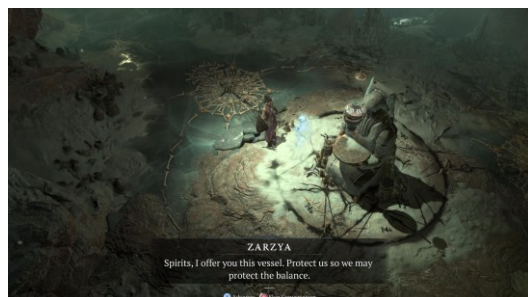
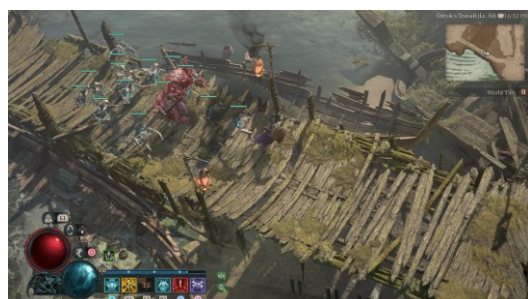
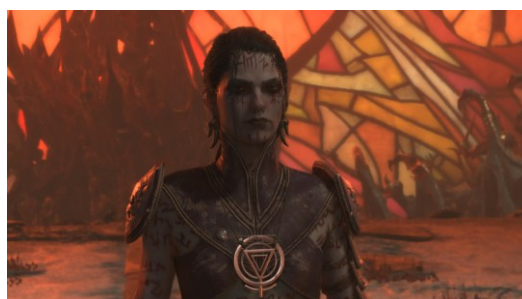
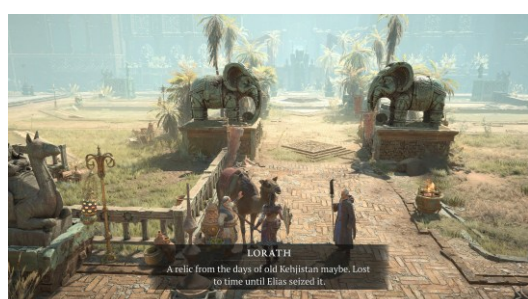
New modes unlock, but I didn't feel "in control" of combat like those other games. In *Bayonetta*, for instance, I was in the zone. Could see attacks coming and dodge into witch time (I forget the specifics). In the *DmC* reboot, I nearly mastered combat and played through on every difficulty, but *DMC5*... I just never seemed to "get it" and switching characters didn't help.

I may just be getting too old for these games. In a way, though, that might be what it succeeds at – being playable in different ways, with difficulty that ramps up for skilled players willing to keep going and really invest in practicing on new modes.

Played on console: PS4.

Originally posted: 03/12/2019.

Mini-Review: Diablo IV



It took a while for me to warm up to *Diablo IV*. I enjoyed it a lot once I did; doing dungeons and side quests (so many more left undone though), constantly upgrading gear (although by the end I was rarely getting better stuff), exploring the world (which I've completely unfogged), and engaging in constant combat as my necromancer, Zarzya.

My main gripe was that it's not just "always online" – there's also no way to opt out of sharing the world with other players at all.

Luckily though, as a friend here explained, other players only show up in towns and world events; but this means no pausing the game and occasional disconnects.

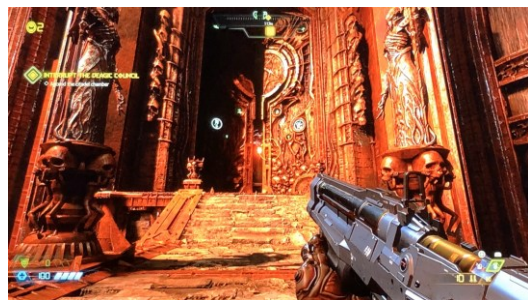
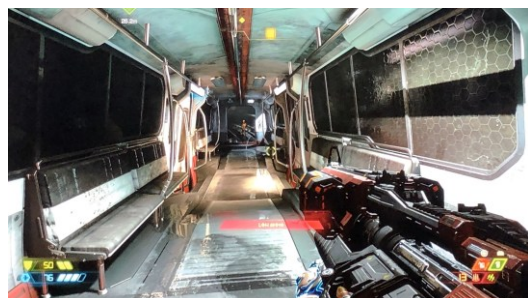
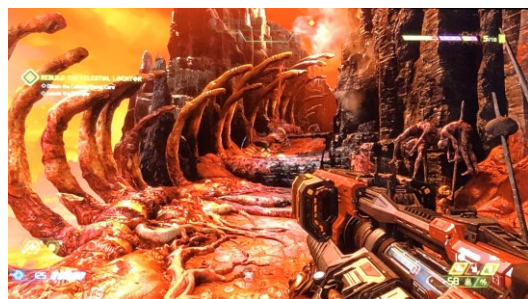
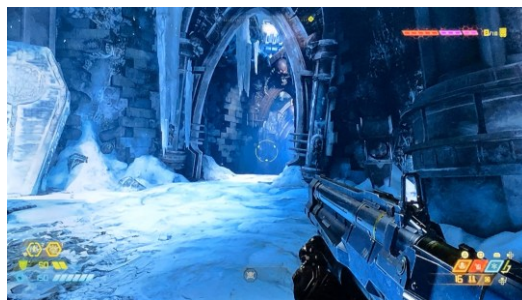
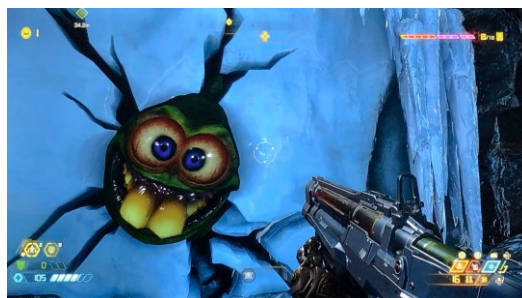
Lesser gripes include the isometric pulled-back view (yes, I know, that's *Diablo*) and enemy level-scaling.

The post-game looks to be a grind-fest, if you've got the time for it.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 06/23/2023.

Mini-Review: Doom Eternal



There are two ways to play *Doom Eternal*:

(A) Survive on a higher difficulty by mastering the combat – switch weapons and mods to exploit weaknesses, constantly replenish health, armor and ammo using abilities, have lightning reflexes, and never stop moving.

(B) Play on “I’m Too Young to Die” (lowest difficulty), treat it like any other fast-paced FPS, and employ just enough of those tactics to win.

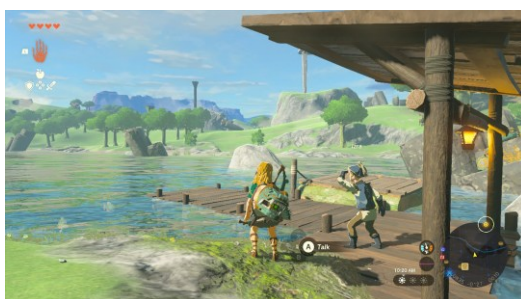
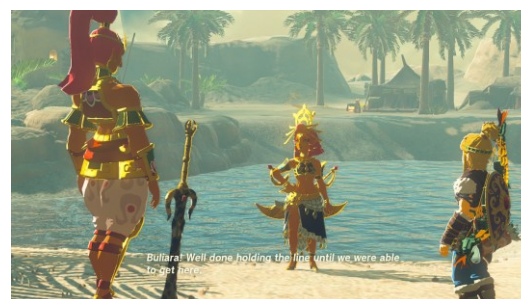
After trying plan A for a couple levels I settled on plan B. This was still challenging (still died quite often) but heaps more fun.

I ended up liking *Doom Eternal*. I’m not sure why I didn’t love it, though. It looks great, runs buttery smooth on PS4 Pro, but maybe it’s too frantic?

I liked the platforming, puzzles, collectibles, upgrades, plenty of lore, and level replay cheats. My takeaway: It sure is a video game.

Played on console: PS4 Pro.
Originally posted: 04/26/2020.

Mini-Rev: Zelda – Tears of the Kingdom



Full title:

The Legend of Zelda – Tears of the Kingdom

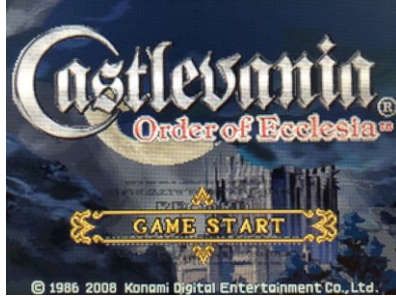
It's a masterpiece; but you either already know that first-hand, or you've heard it already, or you're one of the few people for whom it didn't click (the way *Breath of the Wild* didn't click for me).

Through some sort of wizardry, Nintendo has crafted a game that looks great on the Switch (due in no small part to its incredible art direction and animation), runs great and plays great (especially with a pro controller and in docked TV mode).

It's epic in every way a game can be, from its story, to its sprawling multi-tiered world, to its seemingly endless quests and side activities, the incredible orchestral soundtrack, a wildly inventive building mechanic that never ceases to amaze, puzzles that can be solved in many ways... the list goes on. It's truly superb.

*Played on console: Switch.
Originally posted: 09/02/2024.*

Mini-Rev: Castlevania – Order of Ecclesia



Remember when Konami made games? Those were good times.

Order of Ecclesia is the last in a series of six handheld entries that started with *Circle of the Moon* on GBA. These all follow from *Symphony of the Night*, with RPG elements and unique weapon, magic, and upgrade systems that vary game to game.

I hadn't played *Ecclesia* until now, mainly because I'd heard it was super difficult. It's definitely a challenge, and I looked up how to cheese the last boss, but most prior bosses were great.

Order of Ecclesia holds up well, and it looks great. It also controls great on 3DS, benefitting from the circle pad.

Konami did release a *Castlevania Collection* recently; if there's a *Collection 2* in the works, it really should include this and the other five handheld *Castlevania* games.

Played on console: Nintendo DS.
Originally posted: 07/19/2020.

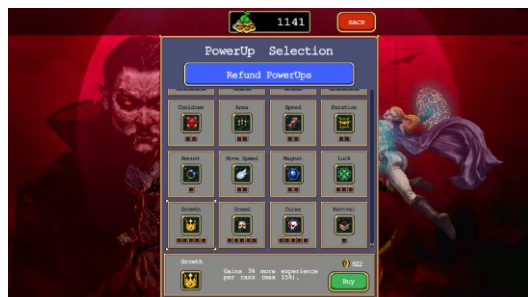
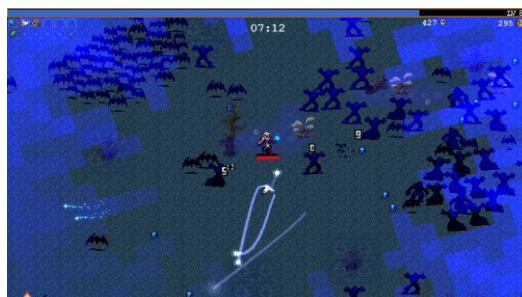
Mini-Review: Vampire Survivors



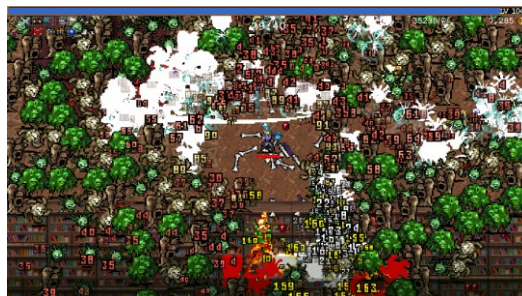
If you're anything like me, you've grown tired of hearing about this game over the past few months; a game that looks cheap and stupid and a complete waste of time.



If you've wished people would just shut up about it, you're not alone. Trying it out for a few minutes didn't change that, but there was something about it... something interesting... something addictive... and the next thing I knew, I had sunk several hours into it and totally understood the appeal.



To me, it's not the GOTY contender some say it is, but maybe there's even more to it I haven't seen yet. I've unlocked several characters, some of the maps, most of the available permanent upgrades, and I still can't stop playing.

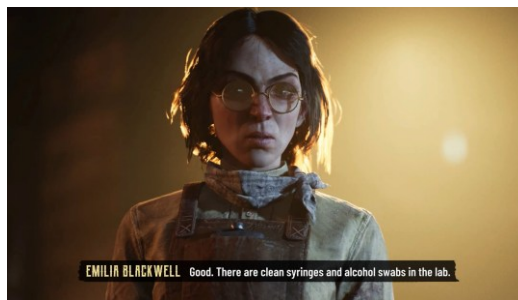
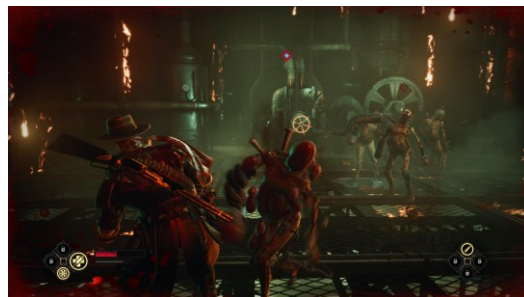
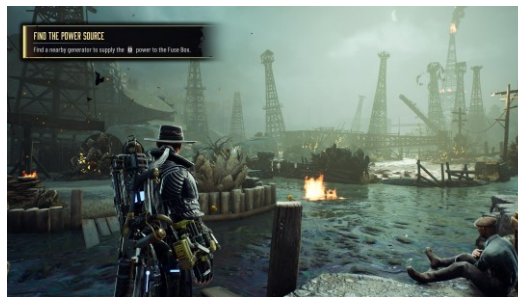
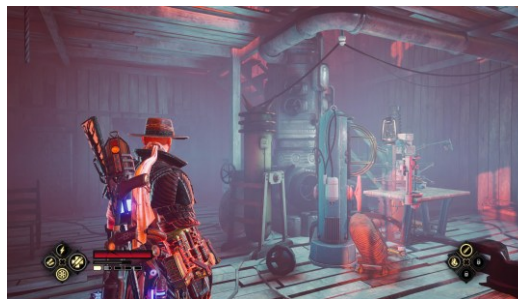
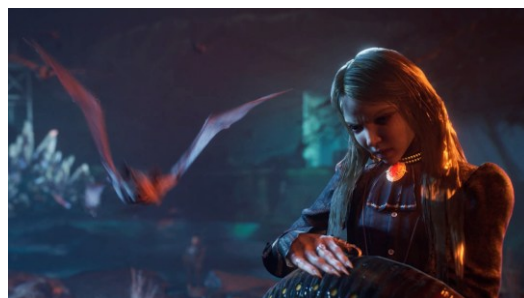
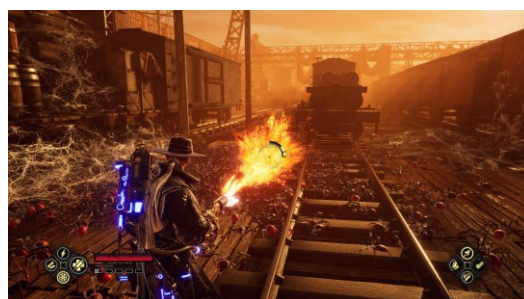


Just move, auto-attack, and choose upgrades in rouge-like runs. Simple, but wow is it fun.



*Played on: Xbox Series X.
Originally posted: 01/07/2023.*

Mini-Review: Evil West



Evil West is a bit like *God of War 2018* mixed with *The Order 1886*; gameplay of the former (you even smash loot chest lids to open them) and the setting/story of the latter.

Knowing little else about the game, I was expecting a *Shadow Warrior*-like first-person shooter; same game in a different skin. But no. This is a third-person action adventure with lots of upgrades and abilities.

I feel like developer Flying Wild Hog should get more attention than they do.

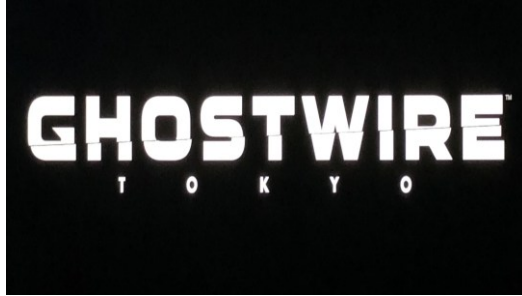
You could probably classify this as a AA-tier game, and one where certain aspects are a bit old fashioned (linear missions with light puzzle areas interspersed between battle arenas; routes blocked by obstacles that a real person could just step over), but I enjoyed it like a AAA game.

It's fun and well-crafted, with an interesting story.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 05/29/203.

Mini-Review: Ghostwire Tokyo



It's a strange thing to play a really good 7 or 8 out of 10 game right after two back-to-back 10's but after getting used to the weird vibe and ranged combat in *Ghostwire Tokyo*, I really enjoyed it.

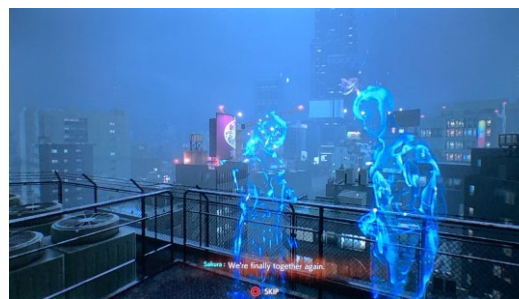
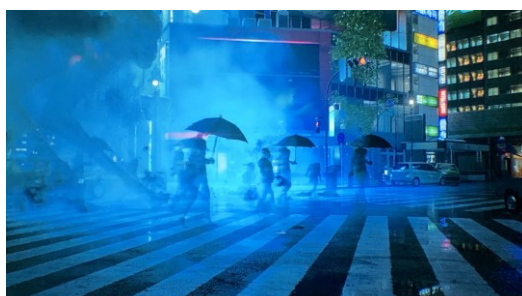
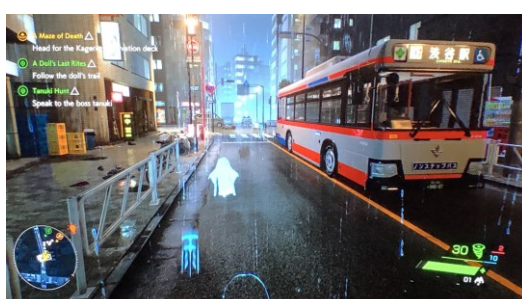
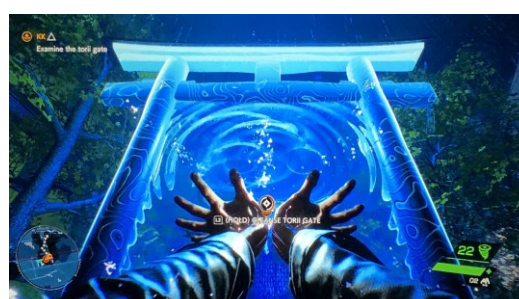
My only real complaint is that the graphics had a sort of blurry look, especially at the edges of things, which persisted no matter what mode I selected. I got used to it after a while.

There's a lot about this game that feels familiar (side missions, an icon-filled map, way too many collectibles) and a lot that's very unusual and strange (the enemies, a story involving the disappearance of everybody in Tokyo except their clothes, the combat itself).

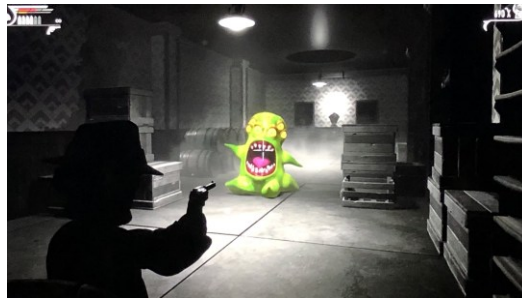
It's an open-world first-person action-adventure. I don't know if I'd consider it underrated, but hopefully it sells well. I sure enjoyed it.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 03/31/2022.



Mini-Review: Timothy vs The Aliens



It's a fun, fairly short open world mobster noir third person shooter with some platforming and a bit of mostly-optional driving.

The shooting is okay once you get used to it, but some control customization options would have helped.

It's in black and white, with the titular aliens injecting color into things.

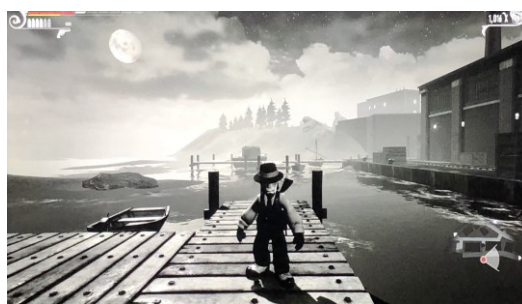
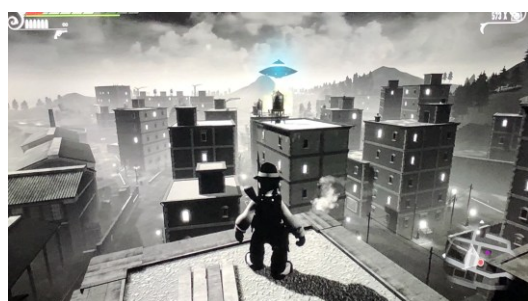
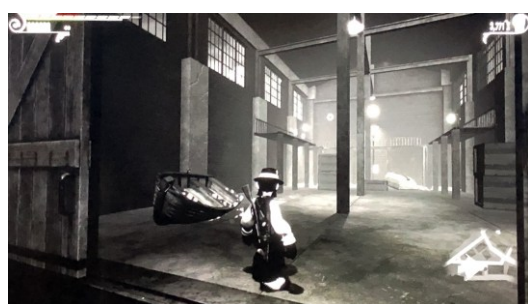
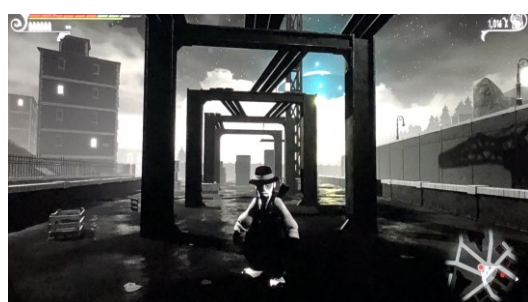
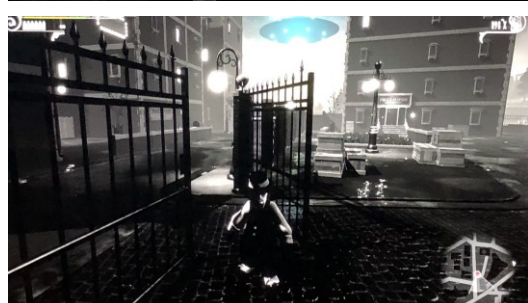
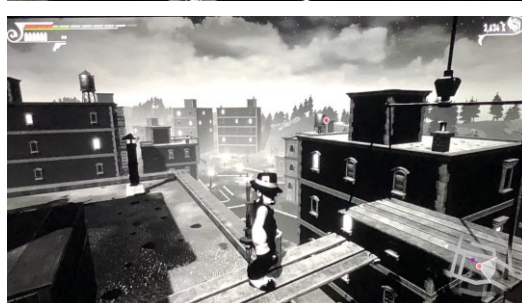
I'm not a big fan of jazz, but there probably wasn't a better choice for the style and period it's set in.

Timothy has the ability to slow down time briefly, but I didn't use it much. It's not really a difficult game unless you're surrounded, but that only happens in certain encounters.

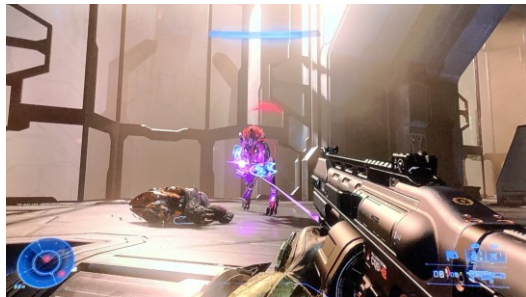
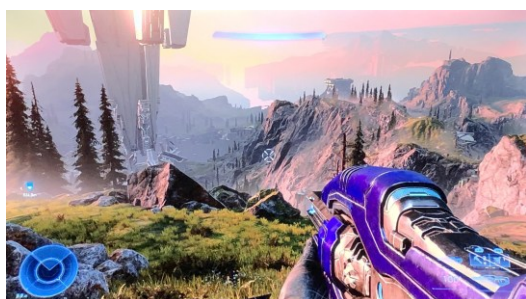
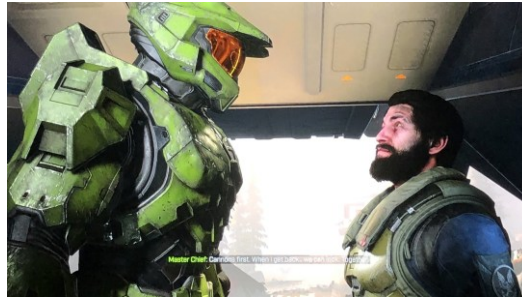
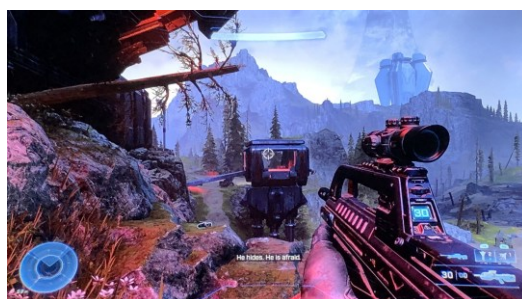
It's an easy platinum (if using a collectibles guide, at least). There's nothing necessarily remarkable here, but it's a fun way to spend a day if you want something more indie and offbeat.

PS4 game played on PS5.

Originally posted: 03/21/2021.



Mini-Review: Halo Infinite



What a game.

The change to an open world suits it well. It still has the glossy alien-tech interior sequences like the previous two, but those happen during story missions.

It's fun to clear out enemies from outposts, hunt collectibles, and explore, but the most fun is the traversal made possible by the new grapple beam mechanic (especially after unlocking the cooldown upgrade).

I rarely ever used a vehicle (aside from aerial ones later on) because zipping through the environment and up cliffs and walls was just so darned satisfying.

As for the story, I liked it a lot but I must have missed something because it doesn't seem to follow directly from *Halo 5*.

They've finally made another great *Halo*, redeeming what I've felt was a steady decline after the very first two games.

Played on: Xbox Series X
Originally posted: 12/18/2021.

Monster Quiz Answers

How well did you do in the monster quiz? Let's find out. These are all the answers, with links to the pages where I found the corresponding images or screenshots (where applicable).

- #10.1:**
Gibdos from the [Legend of Zelda](#) series. Specifically, from (1) the original *Legend of Zelda*, (2) *A Link to the Past*, (3) *Ocarina of Time*, and (4) *Minish Cap*.
- #10.2:**
Prince Tutankhamen from [Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy](#).
- #10.3:**
Princess Ahmanet from [The Mummy: Demastered](#) (and [here](#)).
- #9.1:**
Some random werewolf from [The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim](#).
- #9.2:**
Wallace (left, as the were-rabbit) and Hutch (right, as a rabbit given Wallace's personality in a mix-up) from [Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit](#), based on the movie.
- #9.3:**
An elder werewolf from PS4's underrated game [The Order: 1886](#).
- #9.4:**
The main character Cahal in werewolf and full wolf forms in [Werewolf: The Apocalypse – Earthblood](#) (and [here](#)).
- #8.1:**
Bayonetta, as seen in the first [Bayonetta](#). Her look and default hairstyle changes in each game.
- #8.2:**
Somebody's custom main character in [Hogwarts Legacy](#), taking part in the sorting hat ritual on the first day of school.
- #8.3:**
Gruntilda Winkybunion from [Banjo-Kazooie](#).
- #8.4:**
Wanda Maximoff (Scarlet Witch) in [Marvel's Midnight Suns](#).
- #7.1:**
Jack Frost and Pyro Jack in the [Shin Megami Tensei](#) series [here](#).
- #7.2:**
Cacodemons in the original [Doom](#) and in [Doom 2016](#).
- #7.3:**
Lilith, Daughter of Hatred in [Diablo IV](#).
- #7.4:**
Mundus (in boss form) and the main character Dante, from the [Devil May Cry](#) series (and [here](#)).
- #7.5:**
The merchant Vulgrim from the [Darksiders](#) series (and [here](#)).
- #6.1:**
Sans and Papyrus from [Undertale](#).
- #6.2:**
Sir Daniel Fortesque, the main character in [MediEvil](#) (and [here](#)).
- #6.3:**
Stalfos from the [Legend of Zelda](#) series; specifically, from boss encounters in (1) *Link's Awakening*, (2) *Ocarina of Time*, (3) *Wind Waker*, and (4) *Skyward Sword*.
- #6.4:**
Manny Calavera and Meche Colomar in [Grim Fandango](#).
- #5.1:**
Jeff Martin (left), Victor Martin (center) and Sheila Martin (right), three members of the Martin vampire family in [Night Trap](#).
- #5.2:**
The vampire on the title screen of [Vampire Survivors](#).
- #5.3:**
Dracula from the [Castlevania](#) series. Specific games shown are *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest*, *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse*, *Super Castlevania IV*, *Dracula X Chronicle*, *Order of Ecclesia*, and *Circle of the Moon*.
- #5.4:**
Dr. Jonathan Reid in Don't Nod's underrated action RPG [Vampyr](#).
- #5.5:**
Peter and Felicity D'Abano in [Evil West](#) from Flying Wild Hog.
- #5.6:**
Dettlaff van der Eretein (aka the Beast of Beauclair) in the big [Blood and Wine](#) expansion for *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt*.
- #5.7:**
Bloody Mary (the antagonist), Cole MacGrath (the main character turned into a vampire) and an unhappy-looking harpy from the *Infamous 2* stand-alone expansion [Festival of Blood](#).
- #5.8:**
Rayne (the main character) from [BloodRayne](#) and [BloodRayne 2](#).
- #5.9:**
Vampire lord Lazarus (in two scenes), Tala, and the main character Jericho Cross in the PS2/Xbox game [Darkwatch](#).
- #5.10:**
Astarion, a "vampire spawn" from [Baldur's Gate 3](#).
- #4.1:**
The Zombie Pirate LeChuck (formerly the Ghost Pirate LeChuck) in the Monkey Island series, particularly [Return to Monkey Island](#), [The Curse of Monkey Island](#), and [Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge](#) (Special Edition).
- #4.2:**
Edward "Stubbs" Stubblefield from [Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel Without a Pulse](#) (and [here](#)).

#4.3:

Various zombies from the music video for [Plants vs. Zombies](#).

#4.4:

Juliet Starling (not a zombie) and hordes of zombies in the Suda51 cult classic [Lollipop Chainsaw](#) (and [here](#) and [here](#)).

#3.1:

Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde from [Pac-Man](#) (and [here](#)). Not pictured is their “sister” Sue (often purple) from Ms. Pac-Man. I feel like it was a missed opportunity to not call her Bonnie.

CHARACTER	NICKNAME
	- SHADOW "BLINKY"
	- SPEEDY "PINKY"
	- BASHFUL "INKY"
	- POKEY "CLYDE"

#3.2:

Slimer (“the green ghost”) from [Ghostbusters: The Video Game](#).

#3.3:

Ronan O’Connor in [Murdered: Soul Suspect](#).

#3.4:

Boos from the [Super Mario Bros.](#) series, specifically *Super Mario World*, *Super Mario Bros. 3*, *Super Mario 64*, *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*, and *Super Mario 3D World*.

#3.5:

Sojutsuki, Hannya projected on a building, and a Rain Walker from [Ghostwire Tokyo](#) (and [here](#) and [here](#)).

#3.6:

Various ghosts from the [Luigi’s Mansion](#) series, with all but the first one being from *Luigi’s Mansion 3* ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

#3.7:

The ghost costume in [Costume Quest 2](#). I probably could have used this game for several of the other monster archetypes.

#2.1:

Mother Brain in [Metroid](#) and mechanized Mother Brain being attacked by the “baby” Metroid in [Super Metroid](#).

#2.2:

Grunts and Elites from the *Halo* series ([Halo 2](#) in that image).

#2.3:

Green and orange aliens in [Timothy vs The Aliens](#) (and [here](#)).

#2.4:

Somebody’s playable “new kid” at the mercy of aliens in the Ubisoft turn-based RPG [South Park: The Stick of Truth](#).

#2.5:

Pox and Crypto in the [Destroy All Humans!](#) series (and [here](#)).

#2.6:

If you were naming the alien races in the *Mass Effect* series (the image was promotional for [Mass Effect 3](#)) then you would notice (left to right) Krogan, Salarian, Turian, Asari, two Quarians, Drell, Geth, Vorchas, and Batarian.

#2.7:

The main character’s sister Lizzie (left, back row), Gene (right, back row), and four of the sentient Gatlian gun aliens (front row, Gus, Sweezy, Creature, and Kenny) from [High on Life](#).

#2.8:

Invaders from space in [Space Invaders](#).

#2.9:

Abe from the *Oddworld* series. Specifically, [Soulstorm](#) (the remake of Abe’s *Exoddus*), [Abe’s Oddysee](#) (the first game) and [Abe’s Exoddus](#) (the second game).

#1.1:

P-Body (tall, orange eye) and Atlas (short, blue eye) from the cooperative campaign of [Portal 2](#) (and [here](#)).

#1.2:

Androids Connor, Markus, and Kara in [Detroit: Become Human](#).

#1.3:

Every boss from the original [Mega Man](#) series on NES, with Mega Man himself in some of the center squares.



#1.4:

Two Protectrons from [Fallout 3](#), a Mr. Handy named Codsworth from [Fallout 4](#), and Nick Valentine also from [Fallout 4](#).

#1.5:

Clank from [Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart](#) and [Secret Agent Clank](#).

#1.6:

Astrobot and a whole bunch of other themed bots in [Astrobot](#).

#1.7:

Robots from the first-person puzzle game [The Talos Principle II](#).

#1.8:

Turing from the game [2064: Read Only Memories](#).

#1.9:

It’s CL4P-TP (aka Claptrap) from the [Borderlands](#) series.

#1.10:

It’s R-66Y (aka Robo) from [Chrono Trigger](#). What a great game.

The Final Stage

Hallowmoor

You're here, so you must not be too averse to reading. If you're feeling up to the challenge, I can suggest a Twine-based adventure game I wrote several years ago. This is old news if you follow me on social media, but if not, you can find my hypertext game *Hallowmoor* here:

<https://www.sidneymerk.com/hallowmoor/hallowmoor.html>

You play as a ghost who possesses a skeleton and a witch – very fitting for this week's issue.



Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. **When** I wrote this, the “Begin” button under that dark red title screen was easily visible. Somehow, on some displays, the image is too tall, so you won't see “Begin” without scrolling.
2. **A lot** of reading is involved. Click the reddish words to do things. After the intro, your “Inventory” is a link in the top title bar (don't forget to use it). The sidebar has a Load/Save.
3. **If** you're stuck at the beginning, check the “shadows” so you can go “down”. That will put you in range to... well, just check your inventory to use the “Specter Shift” ability. You'll be well on your way to infiltrating Castle Hallowmoor then.
4. **If** the lines of text are too wide to comfortably read on a computer monitor, use your browser settings to zoom in or make the window smaller.

Interactive Fiction / Horror

My game *Hallowmoor* is just one of many. It's also not scary; at least, it's not meant to be. I wrote a sci-fi horror game too. It's played by entering commands, not by clicking links. If you're familiar with text adventure [gameplay](#), give it a shot. [Distress](#) is playable online.

If you're interested in other text-based horror games, check out these two playlists on IFDB:

A timeline of Lovecraftian Horror:

<https://ifdb.org/viewlist?id=19wqe6h183ycwgr5>

Recommended Horror Games:

<https://ifdb.org/viewlist?id=sdlumtnqlssilj9m>



Next Week

Spooky month for the VGGN ends with next week's issue. If my plan doesn't change, I'll be writing about horror games I *haven't* played yet but still want to. Will it be a ranked list? Will I actually play any of them before next October, in time for spooky month redux?

Will there be some other fun twist?

Nobody knows! I'm still thinking about it.

End Credits

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Images sourced from elsewhere on the internet are sometimes credited and/or linked in captions that appear on or below them, but links to original images this week are in the Answers section.

Images of the physical games in the “Collection Inspection” feature are photos I took of games in my own collection and weren't sourced from the internet.

Screenshots used in my video game mini-reviews and some screenshots used in other articles or features that weren't already attributed to a different source were captured by me in-game and are used here in what I believe is “fair use”.

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