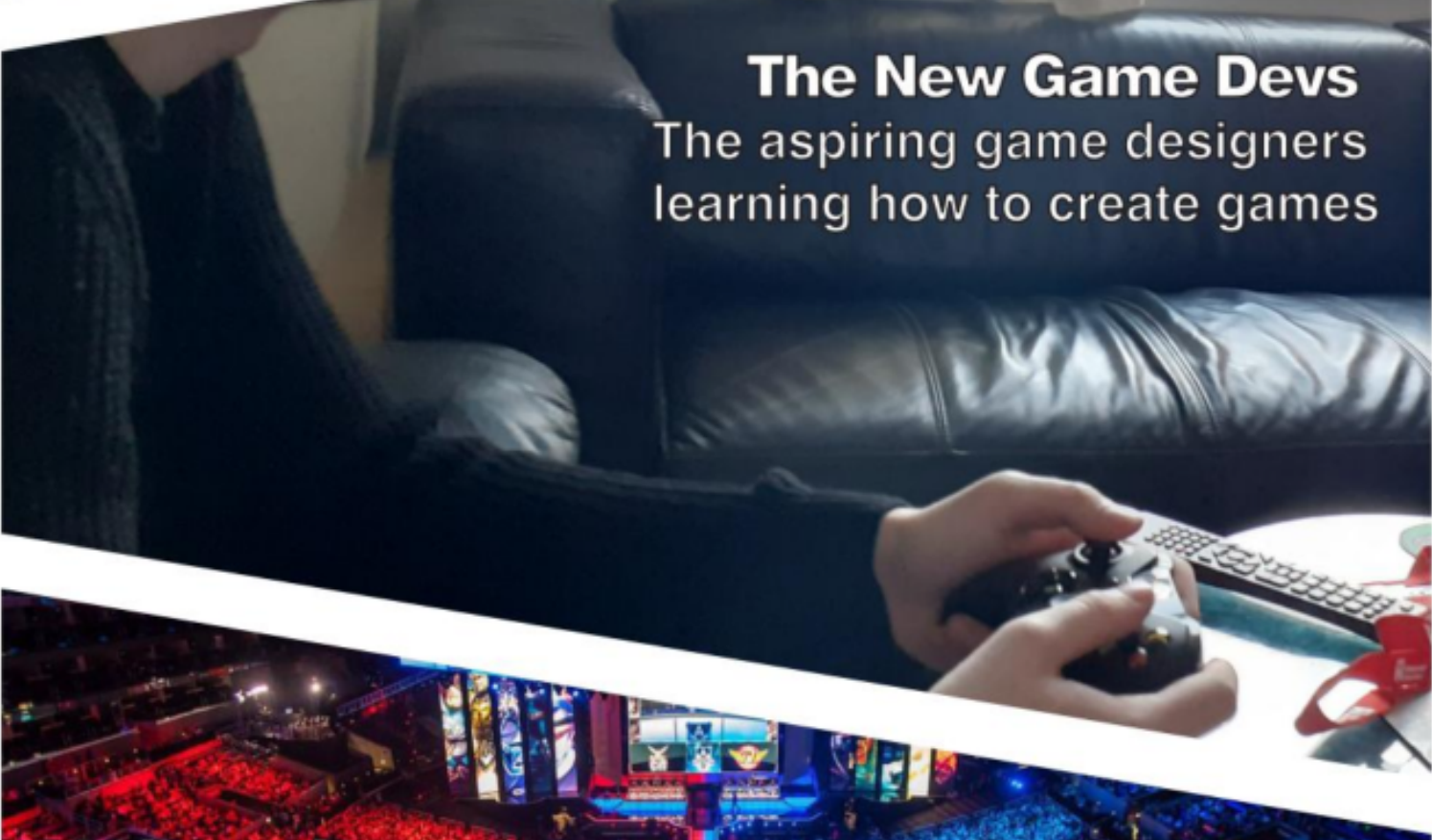




Game Blast Magazine

Develop
Play
Perfect

ISSUE 1 | FEBRUARY 2020 | £2.00



The New Game Devs

The aspiring game designers
learning how to create games



University e-sports into the future

Talking to a former e-sports
leader about its future



CQ32G1
2560X1440



BEND YOUR REALITY

Available at:



ebuyer.com

amazon

aocgaming.com



[@aoc_gaming](https://twitter.com/aoc_gaming)



[@aocgaming](https://www.instagram.com/aocgaming)



[@aocgaming](https://www.facebook.com/aocgaming)

「Contents」

Development 6

- 9. The Detrimental Culture of Crunch
- 10. The Industry Newcomers
- 12. A good racing environment

Play 14

- 16. Digital and Physical Game Sales
- 18. The End of a Console Generation
- 20. Previews

e-Sports 22

- 24. The History of E-sports
- 26. The University Professionals



Editor's Note

Hey! Welcome to the first edition of Game Blast Magazine. This magazine looks at the three main stages of games, from making the games, to playing them, and finally perfecting them in an e-sports scene. With

the new generation of consoles around the corner, this edition will take a look at the past and future of games, as we remember the solid generation that is now coming to a close and eagerly look forward to

what's in store with the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X. Here's hoping that it's an entertaining generation full of surprises and fantastic games.

Tom Daniels



ELITE AUDIO— UNCONTESTED

Raise your play with the headset
engineered for high-resolution gaming.



GAME AUDIO DIAL

3.5MM CONNECTOR + VOLUME CONTROL

LIGHTWEIGHT EXOSKELETON

TUNED ACOUSTIC CHAMBERS

50 MM DRIVERS



plantronics.com

Available at:



XBOX ONE®

PS4®

PC

COMPATIBLE

Dolby Atmos® requires an Xbox One or Windows 10 compatible device, and a Microsoft account and login. Activation for one device only.
©2018 Plantronics, Inc. Dolby Atmos and the double-D symbol are trademarks of Dolby Laboratories. All trade names and trademarks
are the property of their respective owners. 8.18 240347

「 In the next console generation, we need to move past ports 」

The PlayStation 4 and Xbox One era of gaming was full of many great strides in game development as, just like the previous generations, developers found ways to push the tech to its absolute limits, creating stunning experiences and, in the past year or two, setting a precedent for the next generation of console gaming.

However, for as impressive as the eighth generation has been, it has also been marred by many companies' rabid chasing of nostalgia through porting, bringing old games to the digital storefronts of current generation consoles with very little in the way of upgrades. This process can be good for games that are hard to acquire, with PS2 releases like *Katamari Damacy* being impossible to play in regions they were never released in, due to the rigid region-lockout rules of the time.

However, most companies of recent years opted to re-release easily accessible games for the sake of squeezing out whatever few pennies are left in them. The fact that *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* has become a widely told joke among gaming fans because of



The first three games in the Devil May Cry series have been ported to at least 6 different platforms aside from the ones they released on in the past decade, most recently on the Nintendo Switch. Many other game series have gotten this treatment, even when nothing is changed about them and they're simple re-releases. Here's hoping backwards compatibility becomes a universal thing so more new games can be worked on. (Image courtesy of Capcom)

the amount of times it has been ported to other consoles just shows how much the industry loves the practice.

This isn't to say that remastering is necessarily out of the question either, as games like *Resident Evil 2 REmake* and the *Crash Team Racing Nitro Fueled* show how games can be entirely changed and improved from their originals in a full remake. These games can even stand amongst other brand new releases in terms of graphical quality and technology, unlike the ports that either get small upscaling and framerate improvements or, in many cases, no improvements at all.

Nostalgia is a nice thing to wallow in from time-to-time, and there are always the classics that people will happily buy a million times over because they're good games. However, the next console generation should aspire to be entirely independent from what came before, and with both consoles currently promising backwards compatibility for all previous generations, hopefully less emphasis will be put on the games that came before and more can be done with the technology we have instead of the games we've already played.



Development



The games we play all have to start somewhere, be that in a basement with a single dedicated developer, or in an office complex with a team of talented individuals, the development stage is, obviously, the most important part of any game.

Through concept, design, writing, coding, and programming, a single idea can become an entire world for many to explore, a simple sketch can

become a fleshed out character for people to latch on to, a small bit of inspiration can become a core game mechanic that sets one game apart from the rest.

The process of game development is long and arduous, but the results are always worth it, and this section is here to highlight the hard work and dedication these developers put into their work.



Forge Your Career in Games

Our Games Testing (QA), Unreal, Python, Concept Art and Mixed Reality courses start in Doncaster and London from January 2020

hello@lightforgeacademy.com
lightforgeacademy.com

-  /LightForgeAcademy
-  @LightForgeAcademy
-  /LightForgeAcademy
-  @LightForgeAcad
-  Lightforge Academy



The Detrimental Culture of Crunch

Sometimes the most efficient way is not necessarily the best way, and the practice of crunch is one of those things in which developers are expected to work overtime for no extra pay in the final months of development. This, unfortunately, has become industry standard and most if not all AAA companies take part in it at the slightest chance they might not hit a release window.

The consequences of crunch have become well documented in the industry, with developers reporting weight loss, mental breakdowns, exhaustion, and other ailments because of the insane hours they're made to work under crunch conditions. The forty hours a week that developers are paid to work can easily ramp up to anywhere between sixty and a hundred hours a week that higher ups expect these people to work.

The negative effects are surely obvious to any casual observer, as overworking employees and causing exhaustion and fatigue would lead to more mistakes or the game receiving less care than it should, but crunch has become so ingrained into the industry that it is factored in as part of the development process, treated like a necessary evil rather than the abhorrent practice that it is.

The first case of crunch being publically known was in 2004, when Erin Hoffman under the username "ea_spouse" wrote an online article titled *EA: The Human Story* in which she documented her husband's experience of working at Electronic Arts. She wrote about the workdays becoming 9am to 10pm shifts, initially six days a week but then bumping up to seven with no clear end to the crunch process. She described how many developers fell ill, and that the employees were given no compensation for their extra time whatsoever. She

Critically panned and mostly forgotten, *Anthem* is a cautionary tale on the overreliance of crunch. (Image courtesy of BioWare)



showed the reactions of the higher ups, the common sentiment being simply "if they don't like it, they can work someplace else."

Since this article was published, laws surrounding crunch have improved somewhat, as EA was hit with three class action lawsuits and paid out \$14.9 million in overtime pay to programmers who worked at EA between February 14th, 2001 and February 14th, 2006. The scene is not quite as bad now as it was in 2004, with surveys in 2014 suggesting that almost 20% of developers didn't see any crunch, and the average work hours for 35% of surveyees had dropped from 65-80 hours a week to 50-65.

However, while not as much of a problem it is still a problem, with stories cropping up about hellish conditions in the workplace and certain games, like 2019's *Anthem*, releasing with an accompanying article describing the dreadful crunch the developers had to endure to get the game to release on time. Even 2017's *Fortnite* was subject to crunch as developers regularly worked between 70 and 100 hours after the game's explosion in popularity in order to keep it updated with content. While such hours aren't technically mandatory in the industry, fear is propagated by producers and executives, as refusing to work overtime would reflect badly on the developer and lessen their chances to work elsewhere.

Recent years has seen the discussion around crunch ramp up drastically, as calls for unionisation have increased and more attention is being brought to any company that employs crunch. However, with the recent news that alongside a delay, CD Projekt Red will have a crunch period until *Cyberpunk 2077*'s September release suggests that the road to stopping crunch is a long one, but hopefully that road will be travelled soon.



Cyberpunk 2077 promises a rich RPG experience, but at what cost? (Image courtesy of CD Projekt Red)



The Industry

Looking at the up and coming game developers learning to create the worlds we explore

Games development takes immense skill, dedication, and practice, and is a tough environment to get into. Over in the University of Central Lancashire, however, these game design students are intending to do exactly that.

In the final year of their degrees, these students have already had some experience in game development. Having participated in multiple game jams over the past few years, these aspiring devs have already had a taste of what the process of creating a game is like.

Of course, such an interest doesn't just come out of nowhere,

as these are all people that have had a passion for gaming their whole lives and have let that passion lead them to this position.

HOW DID I GET HERE?

The inspirations for getting into games development and design is varied, going from a relatively simple "I enjoy making games" to a more complex desire to "create unique moments and experiences for players". An enjoyment of creation and creativity is an obvious incentive to create games, but

can we go more in depth?

"I have lots of good memories and experiences thanks to games. They also helped me meet lots of the most important people in my life right now" said one student, who goes on to say "I wanted to be able to entertain others and make them enjoy games as much as I do." This desire to pass on their own personal enjoyment of games to other people is a common one

"I wanted to be able to entertain others and make them enjoy games as much as I do"

among game devs, part of which is shown through the students citing their favourite games like *Dragon's Dogma*, *World of Warcraft*,



One of the games made for the Global Games Jam 2020, *Handy Jobs* has you going around repairing things around the house.

Newcomers

and *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.

LEARNING THE CRAFT

But how is the experience of learning how to make games? The process is a mixed bag, with some saying “it has been as I expected it to be”, and others claiming it was “much easier than anticipated” or “vastly different in a positive way” to what they thought it was going to be.

The shared opinion on the workload of learning is that while it isn’t easy to begin with, it is a fun experience if you apply yourself and dedicate time to learning.

WHERE TO NOW?

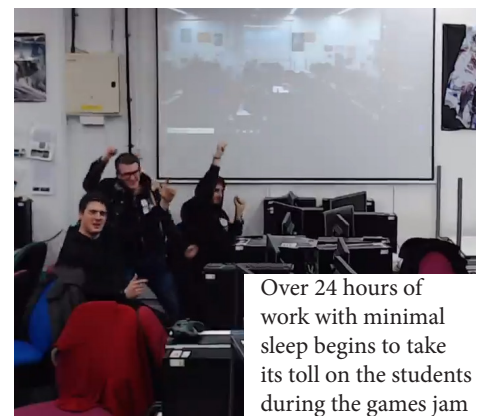
In their final year, the young developers are turning their attention towards the market ahead of them, considering where they’d like to work.

Some cited companies like Bethesda or Obsidian, saying that a dream job would be “developing games like *The Elder Scrolls*, *Fallout*, or *The Outer Worlds*.”

Others weren’t fussed, saying “As long as I make

games that make me and others happy, and I have a good work environment... I will be good anywhere.” With such dedication to creating games, it’ll be exciting to see where these developers go in the industry.

“it’s a steep learning curve but easy to begin to understand if you’re willing”



Over 24 hours of work with minimal sleep begins to take its toll on the students during the games jam



One final year project has students making a VR game



A good racing environment

Environment is a metric by which most games are judged, with the constant race to make games more graphically stunning and ever closer to realism at the fore of AAA games development.

Racing games have been prized for their graphical quality over many other genres, with games series like *Forza* and *F1* going overboard with details, from faithfully recreating cars down to the engine, to cracks in the tarmac you race on.

But what goes into the creation of these games?

AN ARTIST'S CAREER

Andrew Fletcher is a lead artist at UK based studio Codemasters who has worked as an artist in the industry since the early 2000s,

and has worked on games in the Motorstorm, F1, and Driveclub series, among many others.

"At the time I joined the industry there was actually a small racing hub in the Northwest. I joined Evolution Studios who at the time were working on the WRC games," Fletcher said about his start in games development. "After finishing my masters, to stay local it was always likely I'd end up working on a game from the racing genre, and so it turned out."

Talking about the experience he gained along the way, Fletcher said "the more experience you get in a particular genre, you certainly do develop a knack [for it]. It's important to use that experience wisely in order to

continue to push the boundaries and improve the quality, rather than sitting back and resting on your laurels."

CREATIVE PROCESS

The process of creating tracks for a racing game is a varied one that is largely dependent on the type of track being made, as Fletcher explains "The process of designing the environment for a racing game can depend greatly on the specific

"[Racing games] continually provide new challenges as technology develops and processes change." requirements of the game. Tracks for licensed games such as F1 or Rally for example, may have to accurately recreate a certain

location which could potentially result in a greater use of scanned data in order to recreate the track

layout.”

However, a majority of the games Fletcher worked on were more arcade racers, and of those he says “the

tracks are influenced by reality but not 100% accurate to a specific

location”, as these games aim to have more of a blend of visual quality and interesting gameplay than games steeped in realism.

GRAPHICS VS SPEED

Performance is a crucial element in any game, and arguably more so for racing game as moment-to-moment races require the game to be able to keep up.

“It’s important for any artist to understand and appreciate the fine balancing act between visual quality and performance,” Fletcher says, as he goes on to describe his experience with the balance when he first started out. “Back on the PS2, creating assets and textures felt more of a challenge artistically due to the very tight restrictions on tri counts and texture memory budgets. A track-side building would have been a few hundred

tris with a couple of 128x128 texture sheets if you were lucky!”

Despite these restrictions, Fletcher appreciates the

experience of working with them, “while it certainly was a challenge, I feel grateful to have started developing under such tight restrictions, as it gave me a fantastic grounding in one of the most valuable skills for any game artist: to make the most with the resource you are given.”

Thanks to improved technology, artists nowadays have more freedom in how much they can do without sacrificing performance. However, Fletcher says the balance is still “vitally important in current gen games”, and that one should bear in mind “not just texture budgets and performance implications in game, but also the process for texture creation, considering visual quality and time management of the artist.”

“The process of designing the environment for a racing game can depend greatly on the specific requirements of the game”

experience of working with them, “while it certainly was a challenge, I feel grateful to have

“Racing games have lent themselves to promoting new features, and it’s not unusual for them to be at the forefront as new technology is developed”

racing games have naturally lent themselves to promoting innovative new features.” He goes on to give some previous

examples, saying “over the years I have worked on 2 separate launch titles with the sole purpose of promoting new technology during its release to the public, 3D and VR. Both technologies aimed to push player immersion, and this is likely to continue to be a key focus over the coming years.”

The importance of racing games in the continuing story of gaming cannot be understated, and as gaming systems improve and new technology is unveiled, it’ll be a treat to see how the genre is utilised to show off the tech, and look absolutely stunning while doing it.

ADVANCING TECH

As technology is always moving, a common question for gaming is where new tech could take games in the future. Fletcher believes that the path for racing games will continue to be “graphical quality and the push for realism” as gaming systems get more powerful.

However, Fletcher also suggests that racing games will move beyond just improving on graphical capability, “historically,



Forza Horizon 4 lets you stop and appreciate the view without risking losing a race. (Image courtesy of Playground Games)

「Play」



People play games for a multitude of different reasons. For some, it's a form of escapism, a welcome distraction from their lives; others play games to appreciate the medium, whether that is through the technical achievements, stories, or gameplay.

Regardless of why people play games, the medium is one that's

immensely popular and only stands to draw in more people in the future, given its rapid growth since its creation and how it has gone on to become a multi-billion dollar industry.

Considering its popularity and success, there are always stories to be told about the industry and the experiences that it gives to the players worldwide.

One of many GAME stores already closed down, with more set to join it.

GAI

Digital and physical game sales: are discs

Gaming's history has been chartered with technological enhancements, as the power and accessibility of gaming systems is largely dictated by the strength of the technology used. For example, storage for games has gone from RAM on the game cartridges themselves, to memory cards that plugged into ports on the front of the consoles, to Hard Disk Drives built into consoles nowadays; and with each iteration has been able to store more data, as where the sixth generation of consoles would only need eight megabytes or so to store data for many games, current consoles

come packaged with five hundred gigabytes to one terabyte of free data to download games.

However, there lies the most significant change, the ability to download games. Whereas games used to be played through the console reading directly from the disc or cartridge, games now are downloaded onto the console to allow for faster load times, as reading data from a hard drive is quicker than reading it from a disc. This started in the seventh generation of consoles and has since become more and more common, becoming the standard across every platform.

The seventh generation of

consoles also introduced digital storefronts to buy games from, cutting out the middleman of the disc and allowing players to buy and download games directly to their consoles. This, in turn, caused a shift in the market, and has led to consequences for physical sales.

DIGITAL IMPACT

Convenience is a significant factor in buying and selling a product, and when choosing between going out to a store and buying a disc or buying the game on a digital storefront and downloading it immediately, digital is far quicker and more efficient.

In 2019, Statista provided a bar chart showing the annual

"In 2018, a record 83 percent of all computer and video games were sold in digital form"



still relevant or are they a dead medium?

percentage of physical and digital sales from 2009 to 2018, and the percentages practically reversed, going from 20% digital sales and 80% physical sales in 2009, to 83% digital and 17% physical in 2018.

This shift has not gone unnoticed, considering Microsoft released a cheaper, all-digital Xbox One in May of 2019, and services like Xbox's Game Pass and Sony's PlayStation Plus taking advantage of the medium of digital downloads to provide players with free games for a price, something that would be significantly more difficult with physical games.

CHANGING MARKET

The UK high street has been on the decline for years now, and UK games stores

are another victim of the shift in how products are distributed. UK based video game retailer GAME announced in January of this year that it would be closing down forty UK stores, and other companies like Gamestation or Grainger Games were either absorbed into other retailers or shut down altogether years ago; to say that this focus towards digital gaming has influenced these cutbacks is an understatement.

ANOTHER METHOD?

On the other hand, game trading store CeX has seen massive success in the past few years, with almost four hundred stores in the UK and a hundred abroad. Similar stores that emphasise buying games as

well as selling them or stores that have a retro focus seem to do marginally better than stores that primarily sell current gen games.

Directly competing with the digital storefronts of the main first party developers is a dangerous idea, especially when also against online retailers like Amazon. However, physical games aren't necessarily dead yet, as old systems that do not have digital counterparts are still profitable to sell, and games that are sold to such stores can be sold on to customers for cheaper than they are on digital stores; it is less so that physical games are "dying" in a sense, more so that the focus must be pivoted away from only selling modern releases, as digital gaming has that market cornered.

Xbox's backwards compatibility allows for games from previous generations to be played on the Xbox One



The end of a generation

The next generation of consoles is looming, with the PlayStation 5 and the Xbox Series X both set to release at the end of the year. Considering this, let's take a look back on the current console generation while it is still "current".

The PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and Nintendo Switch have had many quality games, with the

Switch still going strong (having only released in 2017), but how did each console fare at their release?

VARIED SUCCESS

Sony and Microsoft launched their consoles in 2013, given that they are direct competitors to each other and have been since the original Xbox.

Microsoft had a rocky start to the launch of the Xbox One, with problems around how the console was initially presented, the "always on" feature that had the console watch the player constantly through the Kinect peripheral, and the console being marketed as more of a multimedia device than a games console. Because of this, the PlayStation 4 far outsold the Xbox One at launch, and to this day sales figures place the lifetime sales of the PlayStation 4 as double that of the Xbox One.

The Switch, on the other hand, released following the failure of Nintendo's previous console, the Wii U, which suffered from a lack

Some of the **Best**
Looking at a few of the
most memorable releases
of the generation



Image courtesy of Sony

Bloodborne

Following on from the massive success of *Dark Souls*, From Software took to a more gothic setting with a much faster-paced style of gameplay, creating one of the most richly detailed and challenging games of the generation. Here's hoping for a follow-up on the PlayStation 5.

of third-party support, as well as poor, unclear marketing. When the Switch released, it did so with a large lineup of games, as well as continuing the tradition of Nintendo doing their own thing, rather than directly competing with Sony and Microsoft. The Switch has so far sold over fifty million units worldwide.

INDIVIDUAL GOALS

Since the start of the generation, each console has fell into their own tactics that have worked well for them. PlayStation is focused on exclusives, with titles like *The Last of Us*, *God of War* and *Spider-Man*, selling excessively well for the company.

Xbox has since shifted its focus primarily onto games, with services like backwards compatibility (allowing previous gen games to be played on the Xbox One) and the Xbox Game

Pass (which gives players a bevy of games for free as part of a monthly subscription) prioritising giving people games for a very reasonable price.

The Nintendo Switch is dedicated to its portability and the ability to play games wherever you want, leading to many ports of other games being on the switch primarily for the convenience and freedom of being able to play them anywhere.

THE NEXT GEN

Each console has managed to find a niche and develop that into successful business strategies, but how are things shaping up for the next generation?

Well, given what we've seen so far, these companies seem dedicated to continuing in the niches they've found. Sony has lined up titles like *Godfall* and *Ghost of Tsushima* to launch with

the PlayStation 5, whereas Xbox's continued dedication to the Game Pass service as well as their focus on the power of the new console, suggests that their focus will be primarily on games this time round.

While Nintendo doesn't have a new console coming out or a new version of the Switch, more and more titles are being rumoured or added to the Switch's library showing ample third party support for the console alongside Nintendo's dedication to developing games for it, with a sequel to 2017's *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* currently in development, potentially for a 2021 release.

While each company have had their ups and downs in the last generation, the future is looking bright for all three companies, as the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One wind down to make way for the Playstation 5 and Xbox Series X.



The Nintendo Switch has sold very well since its release.



GodFall, the first PlayStation 5 exclusive that Sony has showed off so far (image courtesy of Counterplay Games)



Image courtesy of Nintendo

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

One of the Nintendo Switch's early titles, *Breath of the Wild* showed how to make a game that could be played either at length at home or in small chunks out and about. On top of that, it provided a fresh take on the *Legend of Zelda* series and open world games in general.

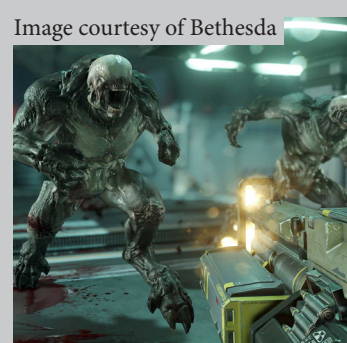
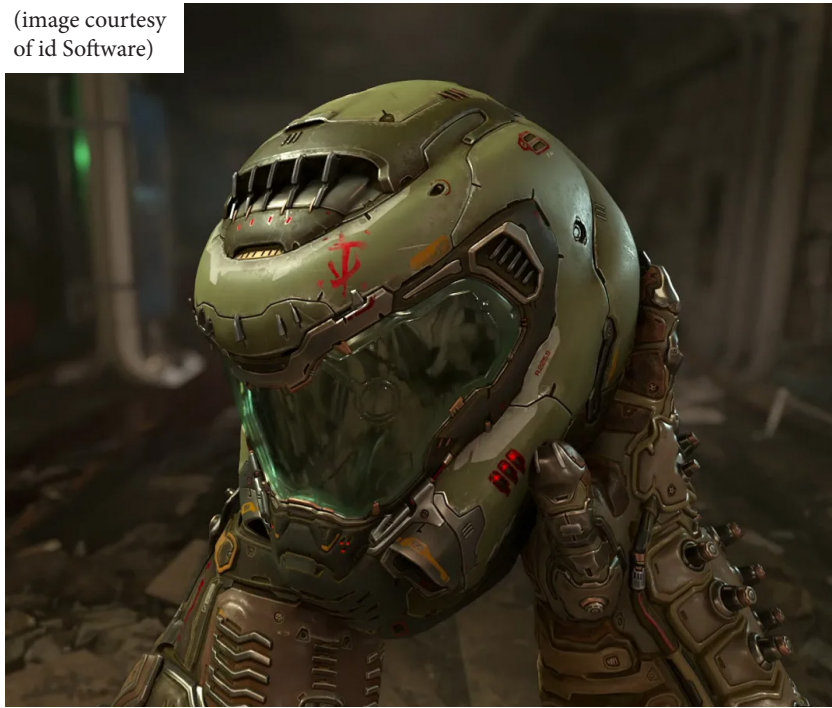


Image courtesy of Bethesda

DOOM (2016)

The original *DOOM* created the first person shooter genre, so it was only fitting that the 2016 reboot should revitalise the genre and return it to the non-stop, action filled thrillride that it was in the 90s.

(image courtesy
of id Software)



Doom Eternal

Releasing: **March 20th**

The follow up to 2016's *DOOM*, this long anticipated sequel looks to crank up the action and the demons. Equipped with a familiar full arsenal of weapons and a few new additions, the Doom Slayer is now headed to earth to rip and tear it up once more with aplomb.

Doom Eternal promises to deliver more locales and more tools to add to your demon slaying belt, like a grapple hook attached to a shotgun, a flamethrower on your shoulder, and a retractable blade on your wrist. This game is aiming to diversify the already extensive list of ways you can tear through demonic hordes; no wonder it's so hotly anticipated.

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Releasing: **March 20th**

Nintendo's widely adored series of games focused around owning a house, making friends, and paying off debt is finally getting its long-desired Switch game. *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* takes players to a deserted island for them to explore and build at your own leisure.

Animal Crossing has always been a relaxing, charming experience and this one looks to be no different, promising a calming time on your very own island, letting you decorate, garden, fish and more to create your own personal paradise.



(image courtesy
of Nintendo)

(image courtesy
of Valve)



Half Life: Alyx

Releasing: **March 2020**

After over a decade of silence on the *Half Life* series, *Half Life: Alyx* is the first entry onto the franchise since 2007's *Half Life 2: Episode 2*. As a VR game, Valve are regarding this as their "flagship" VR title, which is optimistic for the technology that so far has only seen tentative steps from a few developers.

Half Life has been a series that has been synonymous with advancements in the FPS genre, so here's hoping that *Alyx* can give the same treatment to VR and revitalise it so it can become more of a viable medium for video games, rather than a gimmick for minigames or tacked on to already existing games.

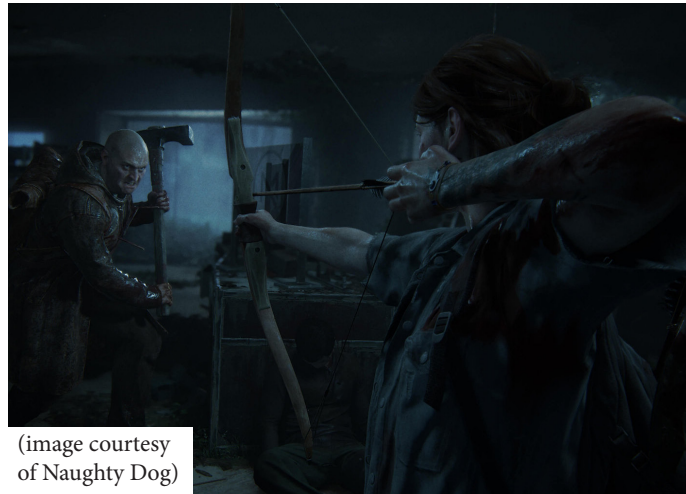
Releasing: April 3rd Resident Evil 3

Capcom's been on a roll these past few years, with smash hit successes like *Monster Hunter World*, *Devil May Cry 5*, and *Resident Evil 2 REmake* under their belt. Now they're continuing this good streak by giving *Resident Evil 3* the same treatment they gave *Resident Evil 2* last year.

At the start of the series' infamous "Raccoon City Outbreak", the game follows returning heroine Jill Valentine as she escapes Raccoon City, chased by zombies and the experimental superweapon designed to hunt her down: Nemesis (pictured right).



(image courtesy of Capcom)



(image courtesy of Naughty Dog)

The Last of Us: Part II

Releasing: May 29th

The Last of Us capped off last console generation and still stands as a gleaming example of storytelling and technical marvel. Now, *Part II* picks up a few years after the first, with players now controlling Ellie from the first game.

Naughty Dog has been known for their consistent quality since the first *Crash Bandicoot* on the PlayStation 1, which has the hype surrounding this game high, as well as the expectations. Hopefully, Naughty Dog can pull off another masterpiece for the *Last of Us* franchise.



(image courtesy of Sucker Punch)

Releasing: Summer 2020 Ghost of Tsushima

Very little has been properly revealed so far for Sucker Punch's new IP, with only a couple short trailers showed off for the game at E3 and the Game Awards in June 2018 and December 2019 respectively. What we DO know is that it is a stealth-action game set in feudal Japan, and is Sucker Punch's first new IP since 2009's *Infamous*.

Going off what we have seen, the game looks to have steady, parry-based combat with an emphasis on patience, alongside stealth segments which have you crawling around the environment looking for the best place to attack from.



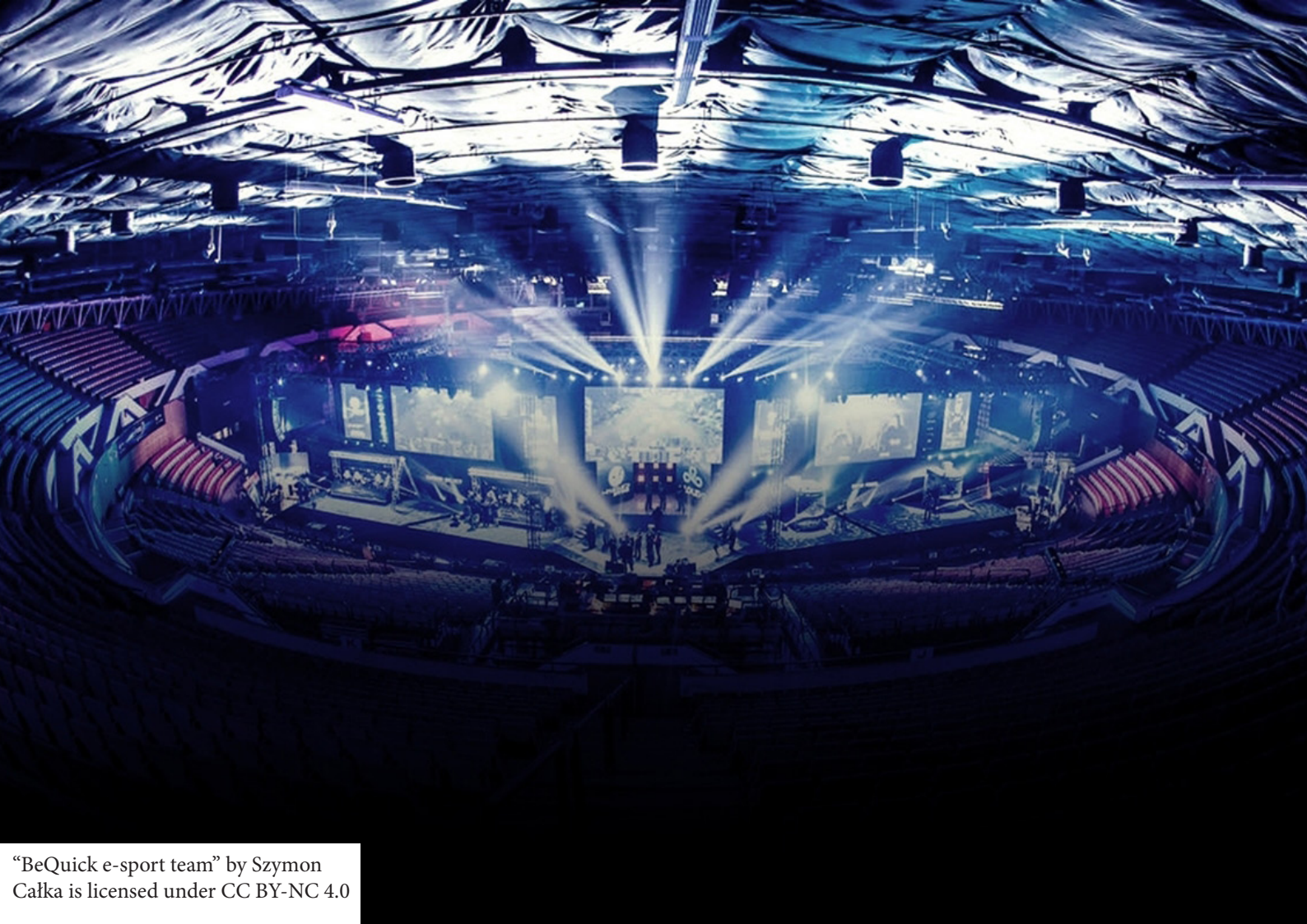
(image courtesy of CD Projekt Red)

Cyberpunk 2077

Releasing: September 17th

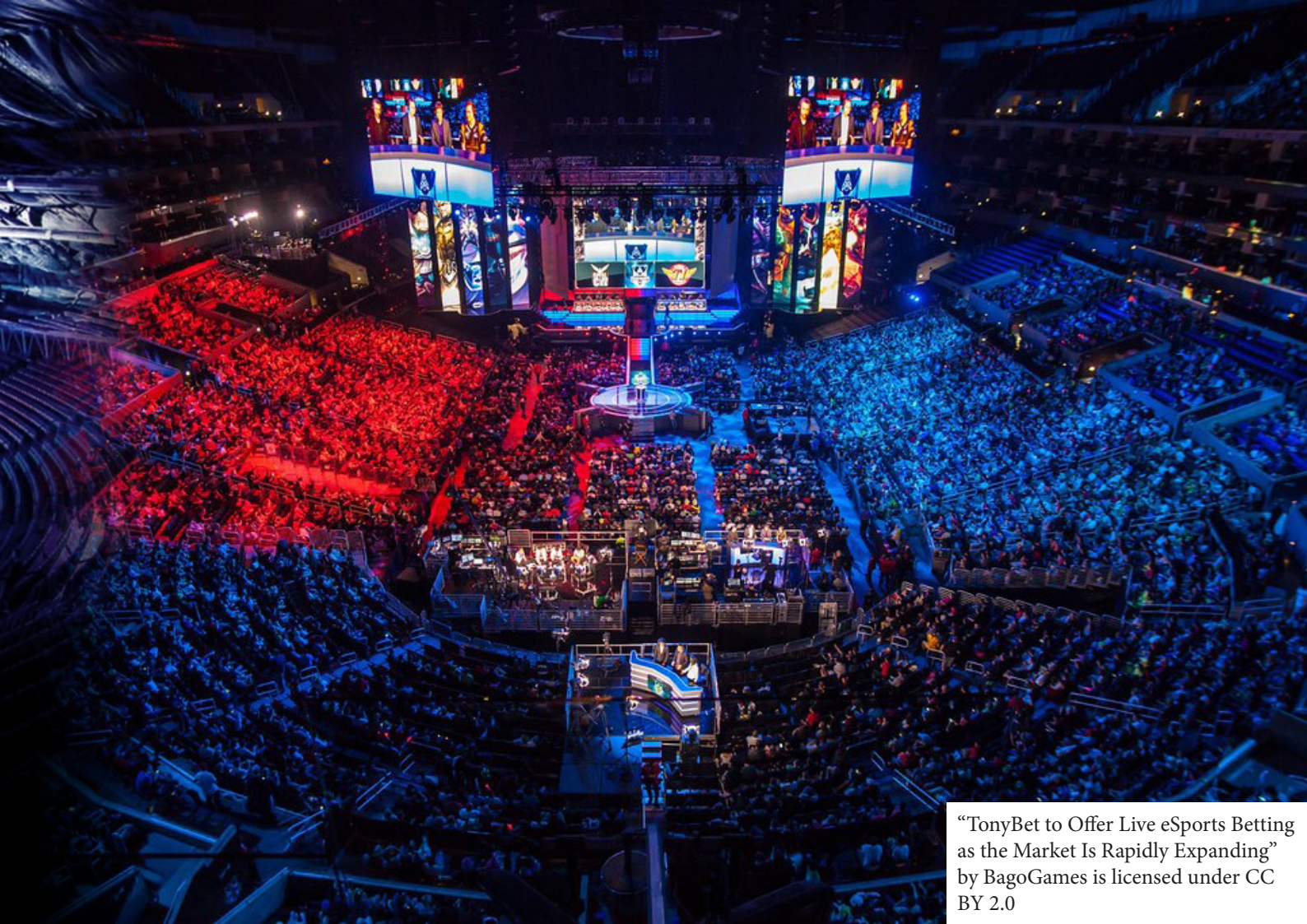
Internet darlings CD Projekt Red made a name for themselves with their *Witcher* series of games. Put this with a surprise appearance at the E3 2019 showing of the game from Keanu Reeves, and now the hype is astronomical for *Cyberpunk 2077*.

An FPS-RPG hybrid, this game is looking to combine a dystopian cyberpunk world with CDPR's storytelling experience, emphasising freedom and player choice in the futuristic "Night City". Here's hoping that CDPR can deliver and live up to the massive expectations set for them.



"BeQuick e-sport team" by Szymon
Całka is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

「e-Sports」



“TonyBet to Offer Live eSports Betting as the Market Is Rapidly Expanding”
by BagoGames is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Playing games for enjoyment purposes is one thing, and a perfectly acceptable thing at that, but perfecting them down to a tee is a completely different ballpark altogether.

That is where the e-sports players come in, showcasing a highly impressive level of skill and experience, these players know the ins and outs, the minute details of the games they play to an extent that most people wouldn't even

consider when playing the same games.

E-sports comes in different forms, from team-based games like League of Legends and Dota, to one-on-one competitions in fighting games, and even in completely removed forms like speedrunning, where people compete to finish games the fastest; in short, the abilities of every e-Sports player easily deserves the spotlight whenever possible.

A history of e-sports: from arcades to arenas



The Dota 2 e-sports competition, “The International”, runs yearly. This picture was taken in 2019, where the prize pool for the winners was over \$30 million. (Image credit, The International Twitter account: @dota2ti)

E-sports is a relatively new medium of competitive sports, only really becoming properly popularised in the 2000s and just now catching up to traditional broadcasted sports in terms of popularity.

Even though it isn’t yet seen on the same level as other sports, e-sports has grown exponentially in the past thirty years, going from small tournaments in the early 90s to multi-million dollar championships nowadays.

SMALL SCALE

The earliest gaming competitions can be traced back to the 1970s with games like *Spacewar*, *Pac-Man*, *Donkey Kong* and *Space Invaders* being played in various tournaments around the world, in which players competed for high scores.

At this stage it was still largely separate and independent tournaments, and it wasn’t

until the first Nintendo World Championships (NWC) took place, in 1990, that e-sports events started to become big tournaments, as the NWC toured thirty cities in America and had a final, the reward for the winner being \$10,000, a car, and a TV.

But it was with *Street Fighter II* in 1991 that head-to-head direct competition was introduced. Rather than competing for a high score, players now faced each other in one-on-one combat, and as fighting games became more popular, the Evolution Champion Series (EVO) was founded in 1996 where competitors played *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* and *Street Fighter Alpha 2*.

SHIFT TO ONLINE

The late nineties saw an increase in internet access which was reflected in the e-sports scene, primarily in PC games like *Counter-Strike*, *Quake*, and *Warcraft* which paved the way

for other games in the FPS and RTS genres that would become e-sports staples later.

However, it was in South Korea that the modern e-sports structure really took off, as the Korean broadband infrastructure proliferated exponentially in the mid nineties and *StarCraft* released in 1998 which has been immensely popular in South Korea since its release. The game’s popularity, alongside its competitive nature made it an obvious choice for e-sports, and as interactive media theorist Michael Wagner pointed out, “the vast broadband infrastructure in Korea favoured the creation of television stations that were able to focus on broadcasting computer gaming events,” meaning televised e-sports became popular at that time.

Both online play and televised events came to the west mainly in the 2000s, with one of the most notable events for e-sports during this time being the “Boost Mobile MLG Pro Circuit”, which was a

Fighting e-sports event EVO occurs yearly with competitors from all over the world (image courtesy of David Zhou)



televised recording of the 2006 and 2007 *Halo 2* Pro Circuits.

Other e-sports events were broadcast on television throughout the 2000s, with channels dedicated to e-sports being set up like XLEAGUE. TV in the UK and G4 in America, but many of these were shut down by the new decade as, seemingly, the buzz around e-sports was dying down.

NEW BROADCAST

E-sports was once again bolstered by new technology in 2011, as the rise of online streaming platforms like Twitch gave e-sports events a much more accessible way of broadcasting events. Twitch completely turned the tide for e-sports, as many e-sports events cropped up during the 2010s for a variety of games.

MOBAs like *Dota 2* and *League*

of *Legends* pulling in some of the most viewers for the site to this day, with *Dota 2*'s yearly broadcasted e-sports event, "the International" pulling in millions of viewers and having the prize pool go from \$1,600,000 for the winners in 2011 to \$34,330,068 for the winners in 2019.

This is alongside other games like *Overwatch* and *Rainbow Six Siege* that have yearly e-sports events, as well as more broad competitions like the aforementioned EVO which now features game series like *Tekken*, *Super Smash Bros*, *King of Fighters*, and many more.

OTHER FORMS?

Numerous genres of games obviously means that e-sports is a very big umbrella term. E-sports can include fighting games, first person shooters, real time strategy games, Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas, and battle royales, as well as a myriad of other genres.

“Over the past few years there have been many major milestones reached by the eSports industry as it continues to increase in popularity”

However, one of the forms of e-sports that could fit into another category entirely is that of

speedrunning.

Speedrunning, put simply, is the attempt to beat a game or a part of a game as quickly as possible, with players spending hundred of hours with games trying to find glitches, exploits, and techniques to try and get through a game in the shortest time.

Much like traditional e-sports, speedrunning has proliferated with online streaming, with events hosted by the prime speedrunning body, "Games Done Quick" (GDQ) that hosts events every few

months designed around raising money for charity.

While not quite e-sports in the way that previously mentioned events are, speedrunning is still a competition between players, albeit less direct - similarly to the fighting to get high scores that the early gaming competitions were based on. Regardless, speedrunning, like e-sports, is an impressive display of skill and could very much be counted as part of the genre.

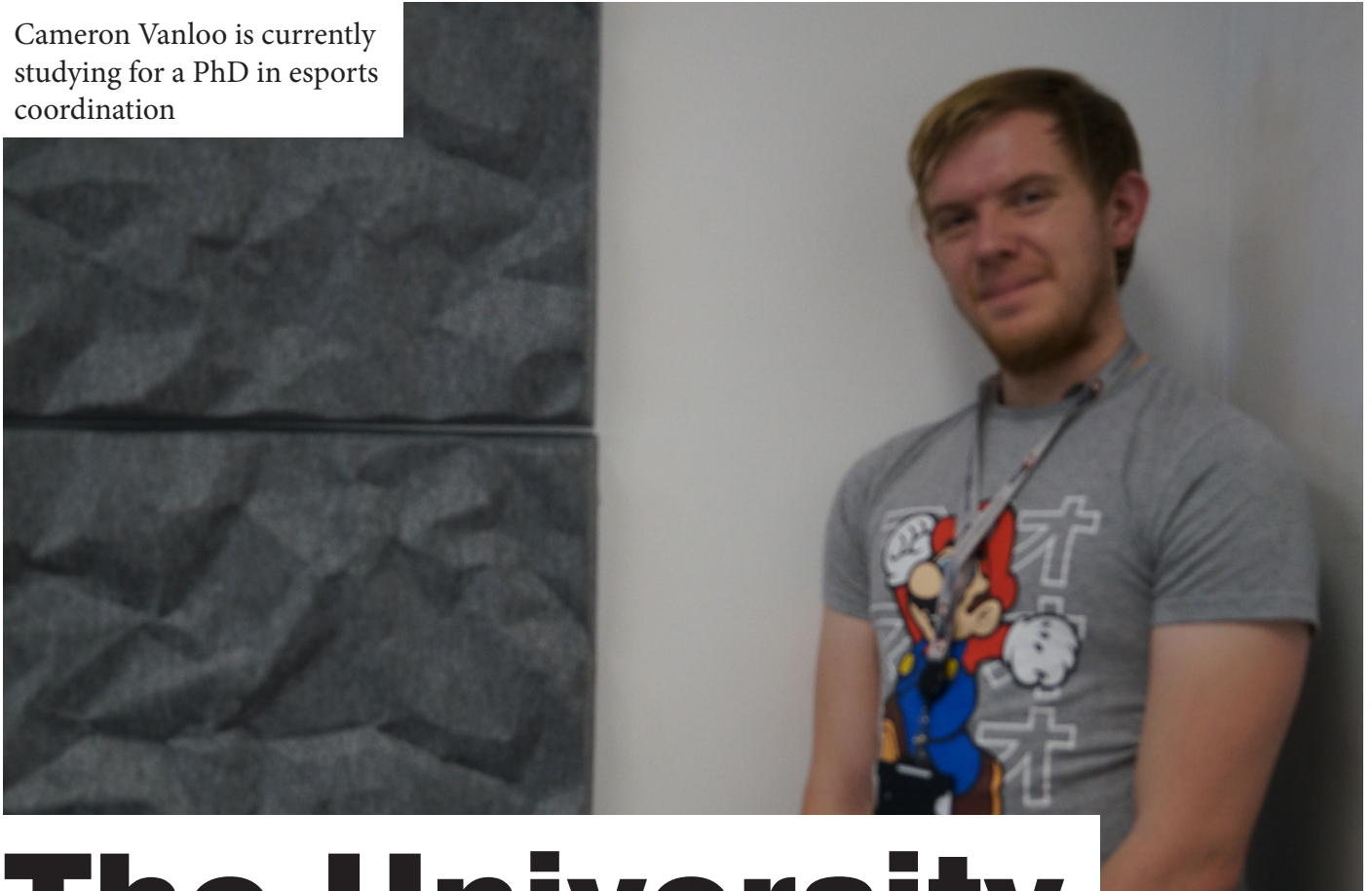
IS IT IMPORTANT?

The road of e-sports so far is an example of the passion and dedication to gaming as many e-sports competition draw in thousands of participants and many more viewers. Even if you don't have a vested interest in a particular game, you can still appreciate the skill and practice that the pro players exhibit, but on top of that many e-sports events are celebrations of some of our favourite games and genres, showcasing them at the absolute peak of how they should be played, and being met with thunderous cheers and applause.



(image courtesy of IBM)

Cameron Vanloo is currently studying for a PhD in esports coordination



The University Professionals

Running a university society or an esports team is no small feat. However, council member of the University of Northampton students' union, Cameron Vanloo, managed to do both at the same time.

In 2017, Vanloo ran the Northampton gaming and esports society, and from March 2018 to April 2019, he was vice president of the

society. Over these two years it went from near closure with only six members to having over a hundred and fifty. Now the society competes in championships around the world, a far cry from the state it was in just over two years ago.

"I took over the society when it had two members"

"Our first team we put forward played one game and decided they didn't want to play together" Vanloo said about the start of the society, "I took over the society when it had two members... and I was told I had to get five teams for three different games set up in two weeks, and I grabbed all my housemates and we set up a mini gaming lab in my housemate's bedroom".

Despite losing their first tournament, Vanloo and his peers had laid the groundwork for the teams going forward, having now upped the membership from two to twenty-six. With the foundation for the society set in place, Vanloo left the teams in the capable hands

of a committee.

"That was two years ago," Vanloo said about leaving, "last year we had a president, he decided that he couldn't do it and the new president wanted me to be vice president." After this, the society entered into their first proper season of esports with the NUEL (National University Esports League) into which they entered teams for *Overwatch*, *League of Legends*, and *Counter Strike: Global Offensive*.

Each team performed considerably well: "in the winter season, we had a team that finished 20th... and then the other two teams finished about mid-table, so about 60th, 70th. That was our first season, and from that we got a load of interest."



The logo for the UoN esports and gaming society (created by Sam K.)

THE WORK INVOLVED

The university esports team currently has twenty-four teams competing, five of them being groups and the rest individual players. Vanloo stepped down as vice president of the society in April of 2019, and said the experience of running it was both “fun and stressful”.

Vanloo described the weekly process of running an esports team, saying “normal sports teams play on the Wednesday. Esports play during the week, across the week.”

Overwatch teams would practice on the Monday, *Counter Strike: Global Offensive* and *Teamfight Tactics*

teams on the Tuesday, the *Hearthstone* team on Wednesday, the *Tom Clancy’s Rainbow Six Siege* team on Thursday, the *Call of Duty* team on Friday, and then the *League of Legends* team on Sunday.

While he was vice president Vanloo had to organise the majority of these teams, and described it as “an interesting experience”, putting down a lot of the organisation to “self-management” and relying on the motivation of the players to create a successful team. While he has since left the society to be run by committee, Vanloo hopes that the society can get into the country’s top ten esports teams and stay at that level.

INTO THE FUTURE

Although Vanloo is no longer a part of the University of Northampton esports and gaming society, he offered some insight onto

the future of the medium both at a university level and a major league level.

“I think we’ll see a lot more grassroots competition”, Vanloo said, referring to lower league esports competition which is an increasingly popular way to get into esports.

In terms of universities, Vanloo suggests that there will be more focus on esports in the future at this level, with more university scholarships as esports becomes more formally recognised. Esports could also become more prominent within BUCS (The British University Championship Series), something that could come sooner rather than later as they are already partnered with NSE (National Student Esports).

“I think we just need to keep ahead of the trend which is what we’re currently doing in terms of how we work,” Vanloo said after talking about where esports could be headed in the future. Before long, matches will most likely have dedicated stadiums with home and away teams, much like currently popular sports like football and rugby.

The continued success of the University of Northampton gaming and esports society has shown just how far passion and dedication can take a group, and with game companies investing heavily into esports, societies such as this one may well appear more and more as the sport is more officially recognised by universities and related organisations.

“It was fun, I met some of my best friends through doing this”



A University of Northampton e-sports team at practice (image courtesy of the the UoN eSports & Gaming Society)

DOOM ETERNAL

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

"THE GIFT OF ARGENT POWER"
11X17" LITHOGRAPH

DOOM ETERNAL
GAME AND EXCLUSIVE
STEELBOOK® DESIGNED BY

MONTRO

ARTWORK BY GABZ



DOOM (2016) AND
DOOM ETERNAL
LOSSLESS DIGITAL
SOUNDTRACKS



RATING PENDING

RP
ESRB

May contain
content inappropriate
for children.

Visit esrb.org for
rating information.



Bethesda

© 2019 BETHESDA SOFTWORKS LLC, A ZENIMAX MEDIA COMPANY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

* IMAGE FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY, ACTUAL PRODUCT MAY VARY.

DOOM ETERNAL

COLLECTOR'S EDITION



WEARABLE
DOOM SLAYER
HELMET

DOOM
LORE BOOK BY
ID SOFTWARE

DIGITAL CONTENT



YEAR ONE PASS
INCLUDES CAMPAIGN DLC 1 + 2



DEMONIC SLAYER SKIN



CLASSIC WEAPONS
SOUND PACK



1ms

144Hz

Free Sync



RED EAGLE™

GB260HSU | GB270HSU | GB2760QSU



1ms
75Hz



Free Sync



BLACK HAWK™

GE2288HS | G2530HSU | G2730HSU | GB2530HSU | GB2730HSU



4K



Free Sync



GOLD PHOENIX™

GB2888UHSU



2560
x
1440

1ms
75Hz

Free Sync

ENTER A NEW DIMENSION



SILVER CROW™

GB2783QSU



Eyes on the sky

How *Shadow of the Colossus*' thirteenth boss provided an eternally memorable fight.

Every colossus fight in Team Ico's 2005 masterpiece, *Shadow of the Colossus*, could be handed the title of "best fight in the game" because of the overwhelming spectacle that they all so expertly provide and the experience of fighting each enemy being a different ordeal to the last. However, the thirteenth colossus, given the name "Phalanx" by fans, is easily the most interesting in its scale, behaviour, and sheer marvel that has made this colossus a fan favourite.

Unlike the other fifteen fights in the game, Phalanx's arena is a wide open desert area with no obvious way to keep the beast contained. The player enters and goes to the only landmark, a small stone plateau in the middle of the desert, only to be greeted by this five hundred foot long creature bursting out of the ground and soaring miles into the sky. Here, the player regains control, left with the dilemma of figuring out how on earth they're going to climb onto and topple this beast.

Unlike most other battles in this game, Phalanx doesn't attack the player straightaway; in fact, Phalanx is the only colossus that doesn't attack the player at all, the only real threat being the sand when you either fall off the colossus or it retreats back into

the ground after it takes some damage.

The beauty of the fight can only be matched by its thrill, as once the player shoots the three sacs underneath its body, Phalanx will then lower itself and its wings, at which point the player must ride alongside it and jump on to the creature as it moves. From there, the colossus steadily climbs back up until it is once again high above the ground, and the player now has to climb on the back of the flying beast to find its weak spots and finish it off.

Out of all the colossi, Phalanx is by far the biggest, being twice as large as its two other worm-like counterparts (those being the seventh colossus, which resides in a lake, and the tenth, which is found underground) and putting every other behemoth to shame in terms of sheer scale.

This fight stands out among a range of spectacular fights with the other fifteen colossi with its incredible size, palpable tension, and unique behaviour. The colossus provides such a striking mix of serene majesty with heart-pounding excitement to an extent that no other encounter in the game - and perhaps no other fight in any other game - could emulate, which is what makes the battle so terrifically memorable.



ONE CARD

Endless possibilities...

Broaden the content you enjoy on your PlayStation®system with convenient PlayStation®Store Cash Cards in denominations of £20 or £50 and PlayStation®Plus subscriptions in 3 month and 12 month membership cards.

Use PlayStation®Store Cash Cards to purchase downloadable games, game add-ons, full length movies, TV shows and other content that you can play or view on your PlayStation®3, PS Vita or PSP®.

Available at:



Sainsbury's

wilko

cardfactory

WHSmith



Powered by: Incomm