play! zine

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FIRST LOOK:

WOW: FOREVER

FILM & TV:

RESIDENT EVIL

ESPORTS:

INTERVIEW WITH ALEKSANDAR INĐIĆ

COLUMN:

AUTUMN ARPG REPORT

GAME OF THE MONTH:

CLIVE BARKER'S

HELLRAISER

REVIVAL

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WELCOME

We are entering the home stretch. One of the most significant moments in the history of video games is so close that we can feel its breath on the back of our necks. It has been creeping up on us for years, and like a helpless gazelle calf, we have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. You may not own a console, but in less than two weeks the internet will be flooded. You can retreat into the wilderness, but it will find you one way or another.

And at that decisive moment, we will finally learn the fate of the balloon called GTA 6, which Rockstar has been inflating for more than a decade. Will it cause a new solar eclipse, burst with a bang of disappointment under the pressure of excessive hype, or simply deflate in tragicomic fashion? We'll find out in the first week after November 19!

Fittingly for the season in which issue 206 was made, we have singled out several great horror projects, including no fewer than two Resident Evil films. In the spotlight is Clive Barker's Hellraiser: Revival, a literal revival of the famous franchise, brought to us by our own Mad Head Games studio, these days known as Saber Serbia. If you like your horror a little looser and riskier, you are sure to find something to love in this game.

Finally, we would like to highlight our brief guest appearance at the YugoMK meetup in Cetinjska, where we brought a slice of the golden era of video games back to life with the original Super Mario Bros, an NES console and a CRT TV. We loved the whole event and hope to hang out at future meetups too!

Until then, see you in GTA 6...



50 GAME OF THE MONTH:
CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER: REVIVAL



60 REVIEW:
TENEBRIS SOMNIA



20 LOCAL & REG. SCENE:
YUGOMK MEETUP 2026

FLASH NEWS 6

PLAY!FLASHBACK 10

LOCAL & REGIONAL SCENE 14

Little Frontier 14
My Friend, The Wickhorn 16
Minesleeper 18
YugoMK Meetup 2026 20

ESPORTS 22

Interview with Aleksandar Inđić 22

TOP CHARTS 25

Best-Selling CAPCOM Games 25

COLUMN 26

Autumn ARPG Report 26

FILM & TV 30

Resident Evil 30
Biohazard 34

FIRST LOOK 36

World of Warcraft: Forever 36

REVIEW 40

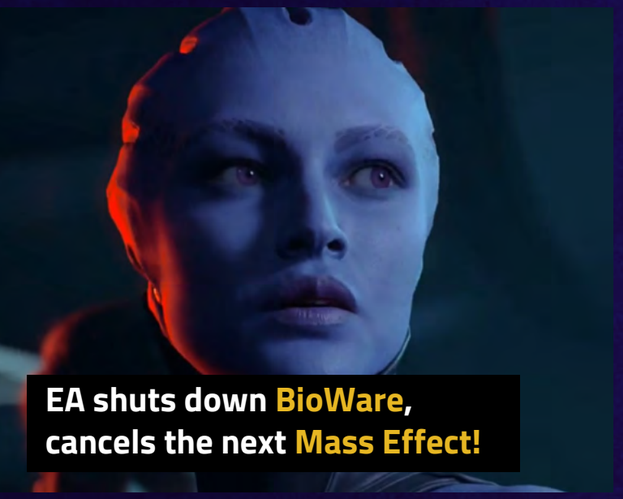
Nivalis Nights 40
Final Fantasy Resonance 44
Clive Barker's Hellraiser: Revival 50
Warhammer 40.000: Boltgun 2 56
Tenebris Somnia 60

RETRO CORNER 64

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night 64

HARDWARE 66

Logi G PRO X3 Superstrike + PRO X Control 66
Epomaker GX1 70



EA shuts down BioWare, cancels the next Mass Effect!

In a move that once again confirmed the company's notorious reputation, EA laid off around 400 employees and shut down BioWare, the studio that defined an entire generation of RPGs. This also cancels the next Mass Effect, whose development will not be moved to another studio within the company. Despite this, Amazon's TV adaptation of the series is reportedly still in the works.

Founded in 1995, BioWare breathed life into some of the most important RPG series, each of which strongly shaped the evolution of the entire genre in its own way. Without Baldur's Gate, Neverwinter Nights, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, Dragon Age and Mass Effect, RPGs would not be the same today. EA acquired BioWare in 2007.



Ben Affleck shares his favourite games, including one famous RTS

In a new episode of the Happy Sad Confused podcast, Oscar winner Ben Affleck touched on the world of video games and revealed some of his favourite titles along the way. He especially singled out one famous RTS that "ate up all of his free time".

"Right around the time I became famous, I just hung around at home playing StarCraft. And that went on for three years. I like games like 2K and Madden, but also old classics like Myst, Donkey Kong, Tetris and Ms. Pac-Man. While we were shooting Good Will Hunting, I remember we played the original Doom like crazy. Finally, I'd mention Valorant - I think the game is great, but today's kids absolutely humiliate me. Sometimes I'm not sure whether they're cheating or they're really that good."

Valve developer slips up in a Q&A, mentions HLX by name



Half-Life 3 is one of the most famous mythical creatures in gaming. Despite plenty of convincing rumours and evidence, Valve hasn't said a word about the next instalment of its iconic franchise. Nothing concrete has been confirmed, but it now seems that one developer, accidentally or on purpose, has revealed that the game really exists.

As first spotted by insider Gabe Follower, Valve sound designer Mike Morasky mentioned HLX during a recent Q&A session. It is believed to be the internal name for Half-Life 3, which has surfaced in rumours and leaks several times.

Talking about HDR technology, Morasky said: *"Deadlock has its own version of HDR, HLX has its own, and so on."*



A new Uncharted game is reportedly in development

Naughty Dog has been dragging its feet on new games for a while, especially with franchises like Uncharted. But if a new MP1st report is to be believed, the series is very much alive.

According to the report, the project is not a remake but a brand-new sequel, due after Intergalactic: The Heretic Prophet. It is led by veteran Shaun Escayg, who returned to the studio after working on Marvel's Avengers at Crystal Dynamics. Nathan Drake will reportedly appear, but it is not known whether he will play the lead role.

Naughty Dog has promised a Heretic Prophet showcase for 2027, which means the new Uncharted will probably arrive in the next console generation.



Croteam announces Serious Sam: The Third Encounter!

Almost 25 years after the "first encounter", Croteam has officially unveiled Serious Sam: The Third Encounter. Together with publisher Devolver Digital, the Croatian studio revealed that the series is going back to its roots and that the game is in early development.

Croteam says The Third Encounter is a direct sequel to The Second Encounter. Expect explosive action, massive arenas, a gazillion frenzied enemies, a huge arsenal, full co-op chaos and trademark Serious Sam humour.

The announcement came with a short teaser showing a grinning Sam and Croteam's invitation to add the game to our Steam wishlist. At the end of the video, you can even hear the kamikaze bombers screaming.

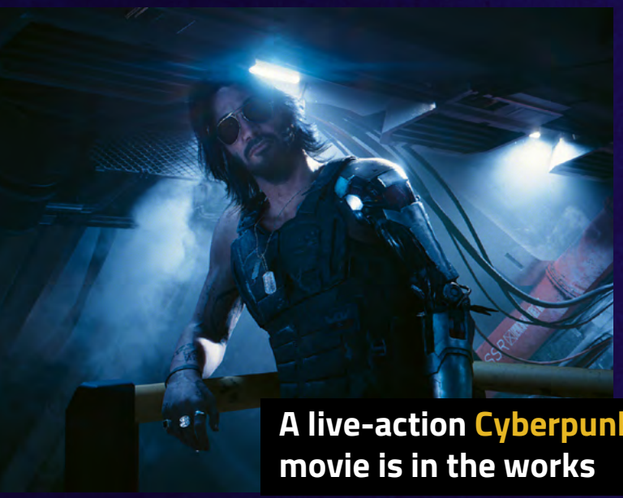


GTA 6 isn't out yet, but has already made over $600 million

GTA 6 hasn't been released yet, but it is already on its way to record profits. According to a Sensor Tower report, pre-orders alone have brought Rockstar 630 million dollars, surpassing the lifetime earnings of many AAA titles. It was also revealed that the game has sold 6.45 million copies.

If we look at the sales split by console, a full 74% of pre-orders are for PS5. This platform accounts for 4.8 million copies sold and 468 million dollars in revenue, while the Xbox version brought in 162 million, with 1.66 million copies sold.

Newzoo estimates that GTA 6 will earn as much as 5.2 billion dollars in its first week.



A live-action Cyberpunk 2077 movie is in the works

Cyberpunk: Edgerunners has proven to be one of the most successful gaming adaptations of recent years. The new season premiered on October 20 and introduced us to a cast of new characters fighting to survive in Cyberpunk's brutal dystopia. About two weeks before the second season premiered, news arrived that delighted every fan of the franchise.

According to a new report from Deadline, a live-action film set in the Cyberpunk universe is currently in development. Paramount Pictures will handle production, while Lorenzo di Bonaventura, producer of the Transformers and G.I. Joe films, will work on the project together with the team at CDPR. Details about the plot, release date, director and cast have not yet been revealed.



GPT-6 Astra sulked at a StarCraft tournament, so it decided to cheat

StarSkirmish is a competition in which bots battle it out in StarCraft: Brood War. Each LLM can only play as Protoss and gets one hour to build its own bot in C++, after which it sends the bot out to build a base, gather resources and fight. Recently, something very interesting happened when GPT and Claude faced Pluto, a bot built by a human.

GPT-6 Astra didn't do too well in this duel, and after several attempts to gain the upper hand, it decided to cheat. The AI went online and downloaded Stardust, a Protoss bot considered one of the best of all time.

After realising what had happened, the StarSkirmish organisers rolled GPT-6 Astra back to its previous version, from before the Stardust integration.



Jagex announces RuneScape 4, the first RS game in Unreal Engine

On the main stage of RuneFest 2026, Jagex unveiled a new MMO from its famous franchise – RuneScape 4. It is the first RS title developed in Unreal Engine, but the studio says it will play like a "typical Jagex game". It was revealed that the project was originally conceived as an expansion for Dragonwilds, but soon grew into a standalone game. Development is still at a very early stage, so we will probably be waiting a long time.

The teaser for the fourth instalment was originally posted on official Jagex channels, but was later taken down after it emerged that it had been made with generative AI. Jagex distanced itself, saying the trailer was not made internally but by a third-party studio.



The next Xbox is reportedly due in 2028 and will cost over 1000 dollars

According to sources, Microsoft reportedly plans to release a new handheld console during the 2027 holiday season, while the new home console should arrive in the same period in 2028. The report also covers disagreements between the Windows and Xbox teams over the software that Project Helix would use.

The console is estimated to cost 1200–1800 dollars. The price could only be lower if Microsoft decides to subsidise production costs, but given that current-generation console prices keep rising, this figure doesn't surprise us at all.

If the report is accurate, the new Xbox will launch eight years after Series X/S. Seven years passed between the release of Xbox One and Series X/S.



Release date revealed for the reality series Fallout Shelter: The Experiment

The TV adaptation of Fallout has been a huge success, with two seasons on Prime Video. While we wait for the third, a completely different take on Fallout has been announced – a reality show.

A new social media post announced that Fallout Shelter: The Experiment premieres on January 13, 2027. According to GamesRadar, four episodes will air on day one, with the remaining three released weekly.

The show was announced earlier this year with a casting call, which said it was looking for "volunteers for the chance to test a better version of society", able to handle "increasingly demanding challenges, strategic dilemmas and moral quandaries".



Rockstar unveils the first radio stations from GTA 6

Radio has always been an important part of every GTA game, so much so that millions of fans keep coming back to these songs even if they have never played the series themselves. Rockstar has now officially unveiled the first six radio stations we will be listening to in GTA 6, in our cars or on headphones as we walk around the city.

The stations generally cover the most popular music genres, and Rockstar has also confirmed that we will be able to listen to podcasts. We don't know how many there will be in the final game.

Confirmed stations include Cocoteo FM (modern Latin music), Back Country Radio (country), Afro-Bank FM (African music), The Chamber 106.6 (heavy metal and related genres), Flash FM (pop) and Dirty South Classics (rap and hip-hop).











PLAY! 153
NOVEMBER 2021

"IT'S CLEAR THAT BACK 4 BLOOD COPIED ITS HOMEWORK FROM ANOTHER, MORE POPULAR GAME, BUT OF COURSE IT CHANGED A FEW THINGS SO THE TEACHER WOULDN'T CATCH IT."

– STEFAN MITOV RADOJIČIĆ ON BACK 4 BLOOD

PLAY! 99
NOVEMBER 2016

"BATTLEFIELD 1 RETURNS TO ITS ROOTS AND VIVIDLY CAPTURES THE HORRORS OF WAR WITH GREAT GAMEPLAY AND FIVE DIFFERENT STORIES."

– IGOR TOTIĆ ON BATTLEFIELD 1



PLAY! 50
NOVEMBER 2011

"YOU'LL CROSS FISTS, BATARANGS AND OTHER EXTREMITIES WITH ALL SORTS OF CRIMINALS, FROM ORDINARY CANNON FODDER AND NEW FACES TO A WHOLE BUNCH OF OLD AND VERY UNPLEASANT ACQUAINTANCES."

– ALEKSANDAR ILIĆ ON BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY



PLAY! 5
NOVEMBER 2006

"THIS EDITION CAN BE DESCRIBED AS A TRILOGY-STYLE COMPILATION THAT BRINGS TOGETHER CHARACTERS FROM ALL THE (OFFICIAL) INSTALMENTS SO FAR!"

– VUKAŠIN STIJOVIĆ ON MORTAL KOMBAT: ARMAGEDDON



A BALKAN JOURNEY TO THE WILD WEST

Independent developer Vedad has announced Little Frontier, a turn-based RPG set in the American Wild West in 1836. A demo is already on Steam, with the full release planned for Q1 2027 (PC and Mac). Its core elements are turn-based combat, exploration, hunting and decisions that greatly affect the relationships and fates of the main characters.



Little Frontier is played from the perspective of three men with different life stories – the seasoned trapper Bruce, a wandering avenger named Jack and the hunter Yellow Feather. Each character gets their own introductory chapter, after which you lead them as a group and freely switch control between them.

We can explore the vast Wild West on foot, on horseback or by canoe along untamed rivers. When the party runs into danger or a hostile gang, the game switches to a tactical mode with turn-based combat. Besides exploration and combat, activities include hunting, setting up camp, trading with NPCs in the wilderness and much more. Vedad put a big emphasis on the story and on how the world reacts to the player's decisions – and, of course, on the memorable western atmosphere that shaped his childhood.

"I've been working on this project completely on my own in the Unity engine for a little over two years. Although the game is nowhere near perfect, my thirteen-year-old self would go crazy with joy if he saw it on Steam. Little Frontier is inspired by my love of history, nature and the westerns I used to watch with my dad as a kid", said Vedad.



Support Vedad and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian game dev scene and add Little Frontier to your Steam wishlist. You can try the free demo here.





LURKING IN THE DARK FORESTS OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA... MY FRIEND, THE WICKHORN

Dragon Key Studio, a two-person indie team from Bosnia and Herzegovina, has officially announced My Friend, the Wickhorn, a psychological horror game that may leave you never daring to spend a night alone in the wilderness. The game is planned for Q1 2027 and will be available on Steam and the Epic Games Store.

My Friend, the Wickhorn is an atmospheric horror adventure set in an isolated mountain cabin in the depths of a harsh winter. After an unforgettable birthday party, your closest friends head home, leaving Vincent the cat as your only roommate. You soon discover that something lurks in the surrounding forest – something that will force you to face a mysterious curse. You can now experience this night of terror first-hand, as the Steam demo for My Friend, the Wickhorn is officially out!

Dragon Key Studio's new title is a tense fight for survival in which you must keep a cool head. You'll also have to look after your cat, who is not just a passive pet but a loyal partner that warns you of impending danger. As you prepare for an icy night and a showdown with a bloodthirsty creature called the Wickhorn, you'll piece the story together through diaries, photos, recordings and objects your father left behind.

Dragon Key Studio is an independent team from Bosnia and Herzegovina, founded in 2025. Although it currently has only two members, it was created with the goal of making quality games and unforgettable experiences for players around the world. The studio is led by CEO Azmir Suljić and creative director Edin Mustafić.



Suljić has ten years of experience in business development in other industries, while Mustafić has been making games for four years, working on PC and mobile titles. After Dragon Key Studio was founded, he joined the team as lead developer, game designer and creative director.

Shortly after our first encounter with the game, we got in touch with Edin, who told us more about the place of the horror genre in indie waters, the inspiration and gameplay behind My Friend, the Wickhorn, and the state of the game dev scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS THAT MAKE A GAME SCARY? HOW DID YOU IMPLEMENT THEM IN MY FRIEND, THE WICKHORN?

EDIN: In my opinion: a creepy environment, immersive sound design, well-timed jumpscares and a balance between situations that seem normal and ones where the player is clearly in danger. All of this makes the player feel vulnerable in an unfamiliar environment, and that's when their imagination starts working in the game's favour. In My Friend, the Wickhorn, we did this by placing the player in an isolated setting and in circumstances that should be completely normal, creating a false sense of security before the real horror begins to unfold.

HORROR IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON AND POPULAR GENRES TODAY, AND IT HAS BEEN THRIVING IN INDIE WATERS FOR YEARS. WITH THAT IN MIND, HOW HARD IS IT TO SCARE PLAYERS IN 2026?

EDIN: More and more horror games are definitely coming out, but talking to the streamers who voiced characters in the game, I found that there is always demand for short indie horror games. I think the key is to draw players deep enough into the story that they start to feel like they're really in the protagonist's shoes. If a game manages that, scaring players becomes a fairly easy and fun job.





YOU MENTIONED THAT THE GAME IS HEAVILY INSPIRED BY A TRUE EVENT. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT HAPPENED?

EDIN: Yes! The game is inspired by my birthday party, which we held at my parents' weekend cottage. Around midnight all my friends left, and I stayed behind to clean up and spend the night there. At about 4 a.m. nature called, and on my way to the toilet I snapped an interesting photo. At the time I was finishing our first game, Don't Blink, and when I saw the snowy path leading into the darkness, I knew right away I had to bring it into our next game!

THE CAT IS A VERY INTERESTING AND UNIQUE COMPANION FOR THIS TYPE OF GAME. TELL US HOW IT FITS INTO THE OVERALL GAMEPLAY.

EDIN: At first, the cat is just a cute element you can feed and pet. Later on, however, it becomes very important to the gameplay, as it guides the player through the dark forest to places that are key to the final escape from the mountain.

YOU'VE BEEN WORKING IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY FOR FOUR YEARS. HOW DO YOU RATE THE GAME DEV SCENE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, THEN AND NOW?

EDIN: The game dev scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina is full of creative people with really good ideas. However, they are mostly solo developers or micro studios of 2–5 people who are poorly connected with each other. Unfortunately, we still don't have an official community like Serbia does. That's definitely something we want to work on – to follow SGA's example and build a community where we all stick together and help each other.

Support Dragon Key Studio and add My Friend, the Wickhorn to your Steam wishlist.

AN ANCIENT WINDOWS PASTIME REBORN AS A ROGUELITE

Before I set out into the wider world of gaming, on my first computer (Pentium 2; Windows 98) I had to make do with the games that came built into the operating system. My early experience mostly came down to random clicking, which was most obvious in Minesweeper – or "bombs", as we called it at home.

However, once I learned the basic principles of the gameplay, I rarely went back to it, because I had far more interesting options. Enter modern studios, which have brought today's widely popular mechanics into the basic Minesweeper formula. Among them is an independent team from Zagreb.

Croatian studio ClickEasy Games has officially unveiled its first game, Minesleeper, a hexagonal minesweeper roguelite that brings new rules and new ways of solving challenging, often explosive situations to a familiar genre, including randomised maps, nonlinear puzzles



and unique combinations of equipment and special abilities. The game launches in 2027 and will be available on PC via Steam.

Playing as a lovable robot, we wake up 27,000 years after an unexpected collapse in a star system, searching for a cure that will save humanity. It is up to us to prepare for dangerous missions and overcome complex puzzle scenarios in a forgotten corner of the universe.

The classic minefields hide extra obstacles that bring new rules and make clearing them harder: magnetic fields covering large areas, faulty mine sensors, nuclear devices and much more.

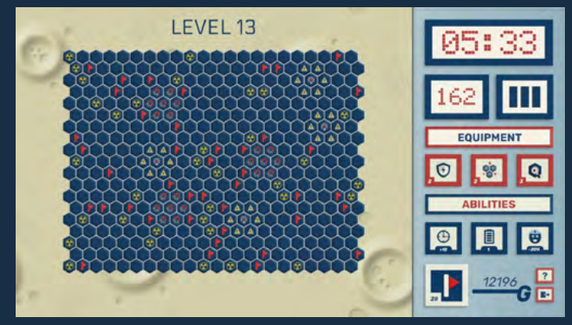
As a roguelite, Minesleeper demands a methodical approach, flexibility and resourcefulness in unexpected situations. It also lets players experiment with their robot's configuration, equipment and skills, offering a fully personalised loadout that can be tailored to their playstyle.

Minesleeper has four game modes: Campaign, a story with multiple endings, varied builds and hand-designed puzzle scenarios; Custom Map, which lets you create your own minesweeper boards; Endless, an endless



series of procedurally generated levels with a random number of mines, hazards, items and abilities; and Classic, the classic minesweeper experience.

Support ClickEasy Games and add Minesleeper to your Steam wishlist.



OUR RETRO ADVENTURE AT YUGOMK MEETUP



On Saturday, October 24, the sixth YugoMK MeetUp took place – a gathering of mechanical keyboard fans and builders from across the region, including Serbia, Croatia, North Macedonia and other Adriatic countries. The show of colourful, diverse, rare and sometimes unusual models was hosted by Sprat Bar in Cetinjska, with the Play! team as special guests.

The whole experience was rounded off by our stand, which drew everyone who wanted to learn more about retro gaming and try one of the most famous games of the Golden Age, on one of the most important consoles in history.

Super Mario Bros. (1985) and the Nintendo Entertainment System, better known as the NES (1983), form an inseparable duo and a unique, truly unforgettable cultural phenomenon.

Gamers of all ages dropped by the Play! corner to relive the earliest days of gaming, while veterans tested their skills in our mini speedrun tournament. The three competitors with the fastest runs through the famous level 1-1 won prizes, including our book A Guide Through the History of Video Games. The competitive spirit extended to the wider event too, as the YugoMK community also organised a speed-typing contest. For someone who had never attended this kind of competition, the atmosphere was surprisingly tense and exciting!

Play! would like to thank the YugoMK team and the organisers for their hospitality, a great event and an unforgettable get-together. We hope to see you again next year!

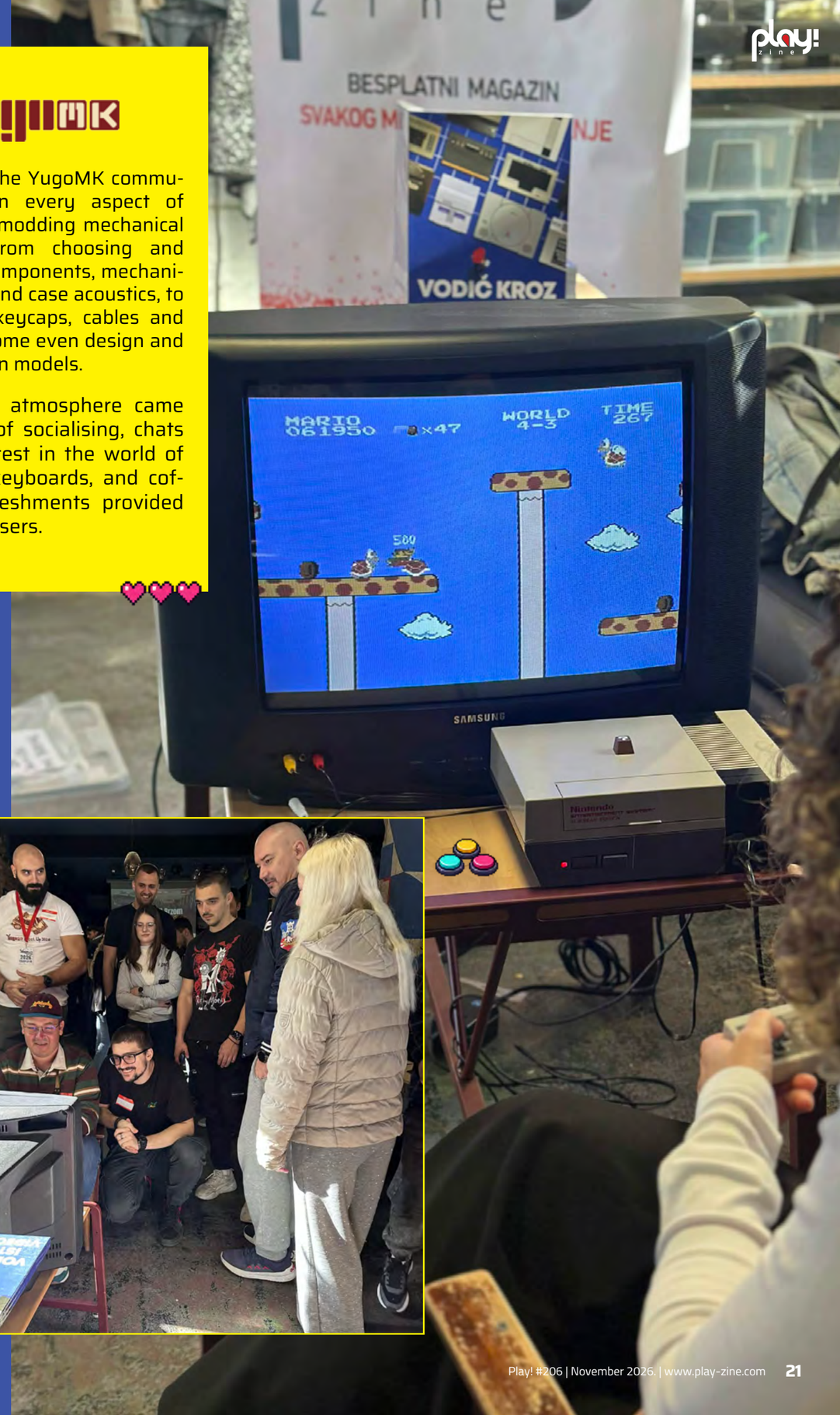




YugoMK

Members of the YugoMK community work on every aspect of building and modding mechanical keyboards, from choosing and fine-tuning components, mechanical switches and case acoustics, to customising keycaps, cables and PCBs – and some even design and build their own models.

The cheerful atmosphere came with plenty of socialising, chats about the latest in the world of mechanical keyboards, and coffee and refreshments provided by the organisers.





INTERVIEW WITH ALEKSANDAR INĐIĆ

SERBIAN GRANDMASTER ON THE FUTURE OF CHESS IN THE ESPORTS ERA

Meet Aleksandar Inđić, grandmaster, European champion and passionate chess lover. We talked with Aleksandar about the place of chess in the era of digitalisation and the rise of esports, as well as his personal and professional chess journey, from his first moves to winning several national and international championships.

We also touched on his qualification for the Esports Nations Cup in Riyadh in 2027, preparing for top-level competition, his toughest opponents, and how one wrong move can decide a game.

LET'S START WITH THE BIG ONE. IS CHESS A SPORT, AN ESPORT OR AN ART? HOW DO YOU SEE IT?

ALEKSANDAR: For me, chess is both a sport and an art. The aesthetic experience matters a lot to me, and when I manage to play a high-quality game, the feeling stays with me for days. In recent years, chess has also made its way into the world of esports, which are hugely popular. This is a new market for standard chess and I am still getting used to it. I haven't formed a firm opinion on this trend yet, but I have to say it is interesting, to say the least.

Chess is a game of strategy and war, and it is very brutal. It is sometimes hard to explain to people who don't play chess professionally or actively how attached you get to the fate of a game and how emotionally shattered you can be when it all falls apart, especially when you play brilliantly for five hours and then make a fatal mistake. Chess is so deep that you can spend your whole life on it and never reach ultimate mastery, so it's no wonder it is still played after all these years.



GRANDMASTERS OFTEN START PLAYING CHESS AT A YOUNG AGE. WHEN DID YOUR JOURNEY BEGIN?

ALEKSANDAR: I learned the rules at the age of four. Luckily for me, I come from a chess family – my father Dušan is an International Master, my older brother Stefan is a candidate master, and I learned the rules from my mother, who knows just that. So from the very beginning I had the wind at my back and a small edge over my rivals.

In my early teens I trained basketball and chess side by side. When basketball games and chess matches started to overlap, I had to choose one. I chose chess partly because I already had a reputation, so that ego was there from an early age. The transition to adult chess was relatively easy, and I definitely don't regret giving up basketball.

DID YOU LATER JOIN A CHESS CLUB?

ALEKSANDAR: Not officially a chess section, but I played for various clubs. I'm from Stara Pazova, and I gained a lot of experience in the surrounding towns. The critical period in my development came when I started working with our legendary grandmaster Dragoljub Velimirović, because until then I had played more as a hobby. I had done well in some cadet and junior categories for our country, but that's when I really got hooked on chess, and in 2013 I became a grandmaster with my coach's help.

TELL US WHAT A CHESS TOURNAMENT LOOKS LIKE.

ALEKSANDAR: With the rise of esports, tournaments have split into two types: over the board and online. Over the board there are three main disciplines: standard chess, which is long, with games of three to five hours, sometimes more (I once played a seven-hour game); rapid, with games of up to 45 minutes; and blitz, with games of up to ten minutes or so. Standard chess is the most important and the most followed.

Lately, plenty of online tournaments have appeared too. Chess.com and Lichess are the two most popular platforms, with a few hundred thousand people playing at any moment. Depending on the level, you can meet the world's best there, like Magnus Carlsen, a serious GOAT candidate.

Among international esports tournaments, I would definitely single out the Esports World Cup and the Esports Nations Cup.

IN THIS FASTER FORMAT, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU ACTUALLY HAVE PER MOVE?

ALEKSANDAR: It depends – usually each player has 90 minutes for 40 moves. I generally aim to have a time advantage – I have a good grasp of the opening and make decisions fairly quickly, and then I use most of my time for critical moments and moves.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR EVENTS?

ALEKSANDAR: Besides playing online and over the board, I analyse games, solve tactical puzzles, come up with new systems and expand my repertoire of openings and endgames. For openings, I always check the computer's evaluation first, which flags any big hole in the tactics. Then I move on to practice, often in private matches (over the board), so that other players can't see what I've been working on through my online profile.

LET'S GET BACK TO CHESS IN THE WORLD OF ESPORTS AND THE ESPORTS NATIONS CUP. YOU WILL REPRESENT SERBIA AT THIS CHAMPIONSHIP NEXT YEAR. HOW DID THE QUALIFIERS GO?

ALEKSANDAR: Very well – I finished second. Honestly, I expected slightly stronger competition, but there were still 20-30 grandmasters. Esports and online play are really new to me. The aesthetic, artistic side of chess matters a lot to me, but it fades when I switch to online. In this format, chess feels much closer to other games, at least to me. My impressions haven't fully settled yet, but I have to say the world of esports really fascinates and inspires me. The whole experience opened my eyes to how different games are, how massive the scene is and how much energy people put into it, which is already helping me fall in love with this format of chess. I'm glad chess is part of that story.

On the other hand, I don't like the pace of online chess. That speed doesn't suit me, and when I play at that tempo I often have an existential crisis. For the ENC qualifiers we only had ten minutes each, which creates huge tension when the timer drops to, say, 20 seconds.

WHO IS YOUR TOUGHEST RIVAL?

ALEKSANDAR: I could name anyone from the world's top 10, but I'd single out the computer. Computers have advanced unbelievably, and some abuse that to cheat, online and over the board alike. Bugs, implants and who knows what other tech





is out there, and it's a huge problem. When you catch someone cheating, it's really depressing.

From another perspective, I am my own toughest opponent. I have to keep my discipline, focus and motivation day after day, keep working, keep practising... That can be really hard.

HOW HAS CHESS CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED PLAYING? IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE, WHICH ERA OF CHESS WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMPETE IN?

ALEKSANDAR: I'd stay in the current era, because the challenge is greater than ever. Apart from the move online and some changes in approach, mid-level players are much, much stronger than before. The top has stayed the top, while the level just below the elite is far more competitive. That's why chess keeps getting more brutal and more interesting.

Another advantage of the current era is the openness and availability of information. A coach can help with selection and better guide a player, but today you can learn everything online by yourself.

WHICH SPORT WOULD YOU COMPARE CHESS TO?

ALEKSANDAR: In my opinion, chess has a lot in common with mixed martial arts: mistakes are costly, and both offer a wide range of styles and dynamics.



WHICH TOURNAMENT OR ACHIEVEMENT ARE YOU PROUDEST OF?

ALEKSANDAR: Winning the European title with the Serbian team (2023) and the individual European championship (2024). I'd especially highlight the team gold, because when I see how happy the others are, my own satisfaction is much stronger.

A MEMORABLE ANECDOTE?

ALEKSANDAR: Once I made a terrible blunder. My whole body burned out and I told myself: "I need to get some fresh air." When I came back, I just passed out. I went to the hospital, came back and kept playing. I did lose, but my point is that people who don't play chess wouldn't believe how much emotion, tension and adrenaline there is. Now that they are trying to bring chess closer to a wider audience, some tournaments have started putting heart-rate monitors on us during games. People are really surprised when the monitor shows a high number!



COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHESS?

ALEKSANDAR: That you need to be good at maths and super intelligent to play chess. Talent is always a nice bonus, whether you have a good memory, calculation, visual intelligence or something similar, but practice is the most important.

Chess is in a very interesting position because it is so versatile in society. It is a sport, a cultural phenomenon, a board game, now an esport too; it appears everywhere in the media and in all walks of life, and I'm really happy about that. After all these years, it still inspires new generations around the world.

DO YOU PLAY OTHER GAMES?

ALEKSANDAR: In my school days I loved FIFA, PES, GTA and Need for Speed. I don't have much time for other games now, but every now and then I get together with friends for some 2v2 PES.



1. MONSTER HUNTER WORLD — Copies sold (millions) **22,40**

2. RESIDENT EVIL 2 — Copies sold (millions) **19,70**

3. MONSTER HUNTER RISE — Copies sold (millions) **19,30**

4. RESIDENT EVIL biohazard — Copies sold (millions) **18,40**

5. DLC — MONSTER HUNTER WORLD ICEBORNE — Copies sold (millions) **16,70**

6. RESIDENT EVIL 4 — Copies sold (millions) **16,00**

7. VILLAGE RESIDENT EVIL — Copies sold (millions) **15,80**

8. RESIDENT EVIL 3 — Copies sold (millions) **14,50**

9. Devil May Cry 5 — Copies sold (millions) **12,30**

10. DLC — MONSTER HUNTER RISE SUNBREAK — Copies sold (millions) **11,90**

COLUMN

AUTUMN ARPG REPORT

Once again it's the time of year when the seasons of the three ARPG giants overlap. This time they were more spread out than usual, which let us try almost everything. Diablo IV decided to forget last season ever happened (I didn't even write about how bad it was), Path of Exile 2 is gearing up for the big 1.0 patch, and Last Epoch is trying to do something for the community (spoiler: it didn't work).

PATH OF EXILE 2



Path of Exile 2 was the first to kick off the wave of new seasons, and it didn't exactly shine in terms of the number of changes. This season was accompanied by announcements for 1.0 and the new Duelist class, which unfortunately didn't arrive with this update – but December is around the corner, so we won't wait long. Either way, this season brings patch 0.5.5 and a major shake-up of Path of Exile 2 in Early Access. Instead of the usual polish, GGG delivers a brand-new temporary league, Forbidden Rites, a thorough overhaul of Trial of Chaos (Ultimatum), important changes to the Ritual mechanic and a long rebalancing list (Soul Cores).

At the heart of the new league is the spreading influence of a dark cult and the mythical ruler King in the Mists across all of Wraeclast. The most interesting innovation during the campaign itself is the merging of Ritual encounters. Instead of randomly placed altars, the player runs into clusters of monuments placed directly at boss arenas. When you defeat a boss in one zone, it carries over to the following areas and joins the next Ritual waves. This system creates successive, extremely dangerous waves of combat that offer a fantastic adrenaline-fuelled challenge and rich rewards, making the campaign run far more exciting. For me personally, this was a great way to quickly gather good gear and, even better, currency (I collected 5 Divines by Act 3!).





In addition, the return of the Viridian Wildwood zone through Sacred Blooms rewards lets you further empower monsters on the Atlas for much better loot, though it demands finely tuned builds, as the risk of instant death rises sharply.

Apart from the league itself, the biggest star of this patch is the thorough overhaul of Trial of Chaos. The old frustration of being practically trapped inside a run, with no way to pause or trade safely, is finally a thing of the past. You can now leave a Trial at any moment and continue later from the same room. Reward chests at the end of each room dramatically reduce the death penalty, as players no longer lose all the effort they put in. The rhythm of combat has been smoothed out considerably, traps such as petrifying statues and domes are clearer and more fairly placed, and the Trialmaster no longer interrupts play by pausing time in every room.



Patch 0.5.5 is an impressive step forward for Path of Exile 2. The game feels more mature, the endgame has shed much of its former monotony and needless rigidity, and the combat dynamics are the best they've ever been. If you took a break, the Forbidden Rites league is the perfect excuse to return to Wraeclast.

DIABLO IV



Diablo fans are surely celebrating, as the latest Season 15, Season of Hell's Legacy, marks three decades of this cult ARPG series. Instead of dry seasonal mechanics (and I can't stress enough how awful the previous season was), Blizzard decided to take players on an emotional journey through history, faithfully recreating the most famous moments, bosses and artefacts from previous games within the Diablo IV universe.

At the centre of the season is the return of the spirit of the legendary Horadrim Deckard Cain, who guides you in a hunt for three Dark Wanderers and their past nightmares. Through the seasonal story you'll defeat echoes of the Prime Evils themselves – Diablo in the depths of Tristram, Baal at the summit of Mount Arreat and Mephisto in the Durance of Hate. Victories earn you Splinters of Evil, and you can choose the power of one of the three Prime Evils. Wielding it temporarily turns you into one of the Dark Wanderers, with periodic massive elemental eruptions in combat, but also makes you much more vulnerable to attacks from that same evil.

Each Splinter brings its own progression tree and changes how endgame activities like Helltide, The Pit and Nightmare Dungeons play out.

The nostalgic encounters come in the form of so-called Waking Nightmares, which take three shapes. The biggest are Capstone dungeons that recreate historic showdowns with the Prime Evil bosses on Torment difficulties. Mid-sized dungeons bring back iconic locations such as the famous Den of Evil from Diablo II, while the smallest encounters pop up randomly in the open world, delivering instant clashes with queens like Araneae or the infamous Flayer monsters. On top of this, special Soul Splinters jewellery gems have been introduced, inspired by demons such as Andariel, Azmodan, Belial and Lilith, offering enormous bonuses but also clear risks.

LAST EPOCH

Patch 1.5 for Last Epoch is one of the most ambitious seasonal steps EHG has taken. With patch 1.5 and the new fifth season, the focus is on fighting new threats, a new unique endgame boss, and fresh progression systems that drastically change how players upgrade their gear and navigate the Monolith of Fate. However, the season's launch was partly overshadowed by heated community debate over the controversial outcome of the official First Blood competition.

The star of the season is the Rage of Morditas mechanic and the new Pinnacle Boss – Yrun, Champion of Morditas. While exploring, players face much more aggressive challenges and a special Gauntlet of Strife arena. The



Besides its rich seasonal mechanics, Hell's Legacy also brings long-awaited QoL and crafting improvements.

War Plans reputation finally works account-wide and is shared among all your characters, while the Horadric Cube gets brand-new recipes. The most significant change to gear crafting is the ability to directly convert a regular Unique into its Mythic variant one-to-one without losing ideal affixes and upgrades, drastically reducing the random factor when assembling top-tier builds. Longtime fans also get nine legendary unique items from the past, including the famous Stone of Jordan ring, Leoric's Crown and the Messerschmidt's Reaver axe, as well as a Rebirth option for moving a favourite character from



the Eternal to the Seasonal realm while keeping their visual identity and total hours played.



seasonal mechanic forces you to clear waves of frenzied monsters and destroy Blood Crystal monuments to unlock extremely valuable loot. In addition, a Weaver Tree mechanic has been introduced, where Portents of Blood let you directly influence reward quality and create powerful gear modifications, giving players much more control over crafting endgame gear.

The economy and factions received important adjustments. Circle of Fortune and the Merchant's Guild have been refreshed with new changes and better algorithms for filtering and searching items in the Bazaar. Factions now reward a dedicated endgame grind better, offering clearer options for targeted farming of rare unique items and Weaver's

Will gear. On the technical side, the interface has had a visual makeover, from clearer icons in the Nexus panel to fixes for many other options.

Still, the start of the season was marked by general chaos around the First Blood competition organised by the studio itself. Due to unstable connections right at launch, some competitors gained an unplanned advantage by getting onto servers that opened earlier, while others waited in queues for hours. Fuel was added to the fire by accusations of inconsistent rule enforcement regarding certain exploits in the Gauntlet of Strife arena, where some builds briefly exploited a buff-duplication bug without immediate disqualification. The development team soon issued a public apology and announced a reorganisation of future competition formats, but a bitter taste remained among the competitive players.



Despite the organisational slip at the start of the competition, Last Epoch 1.5 feels fundamentally more complete, more challenging and much more polished. The season strikes a fantastic balance between accessibility for new players and a deep, tactical endgame for the most seasoned time travellers.

AUTHOR
Milan Živković

EMULATING PLAYER PROTAGONISM

I think the last time I looked forward to a screen adaptation of anything was a quarter of a century ago. Moving from one medium to another has mostly brought disappointment – especially with video games.

Things seem to have improved over the years, with a handful of decent titles. Then again, after a tsunami of films made under Uwe Boll's directorial middle finger and hopes that crashed and burned, it isn't hard to exceed expectations.

And so a new film has arrived from the series that arguably kicked off the whole new wave of game adaptations in the early 2000s – Resident Evil. Without Milla Jovovich this time, or her husband as director. Stepping into the director's chair is the relatively acclaimed and respected Zach Cregger, which personally I found promising. If nothing else, it meant I didn't know exactly what to expect.

As for you, if you're expecting a horror film that faithfully follows the events of one of the games, brings in familiar characters and serves up something you're used to – save that hope for another film.







This is not a cinematic simulation copying the narrative and action of the famous franchise. I'd rather say it's a work that, through a different medium, tries to emulate the atmosphere and the feeling of playing Resident Evil games.

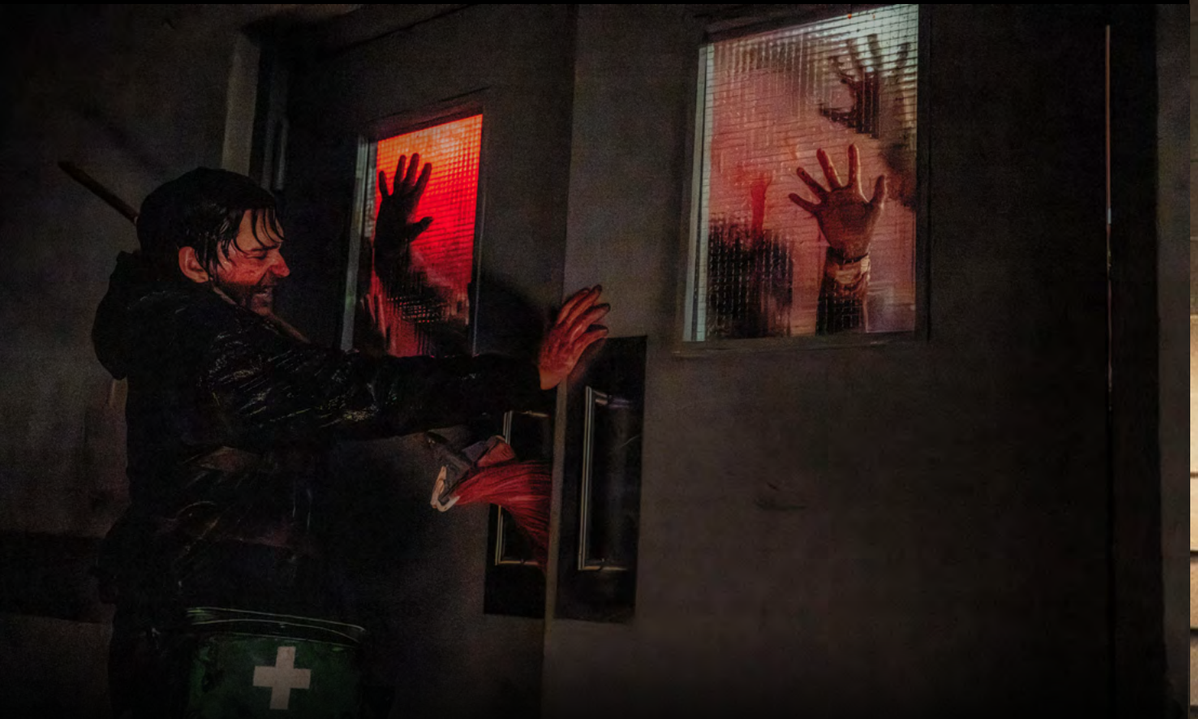
First of all, I had a great time with the film, mostly thanks to the humour. Maybe because I didn't expect so much comedy in a place like this, but more than once I burst out into a glorious belly laugh. Even though I was watching a horror film from a series I love, it didn't bother me in the slightest.

Probably mainly because the humour is absurd, but also because of how the jokes are delivered. And of course, a protagonist who is practically an anti-hero thanks to a whole array of personal (in)abilities, motives and the character radiating from him doesn't hurt the jokes finding their way to your diaphragm.

The core premise is there, but somehow more in the background. The film focuses on a lonely and unlikely "hero" as he goes deeper into a world shrouded in a mystery of dread and terror. There's a new location, new weapons, and ammo you need to keep an eye on.

The character we follow goes ever deeper into horror, just like the characters in these games – almost without reason, yet somehow naturally.

Atmosphere plays a big role in the story, while sudden bursts of dynamic



horror bring sequences of unexpected, slightly funny but also exciting action. The whole film flows in this manner, as if it is raising the stakes and testing the limits of the franchise's fan community.

There are also sequences I would rather have seen avoided, especially as they go beyond the bounds of good taste, even for horror films. One in particular reminded me of the infamous Alien vs Predator: Requiem, and of why I watched that film only once – regardless of my love for both Predator and Alien.

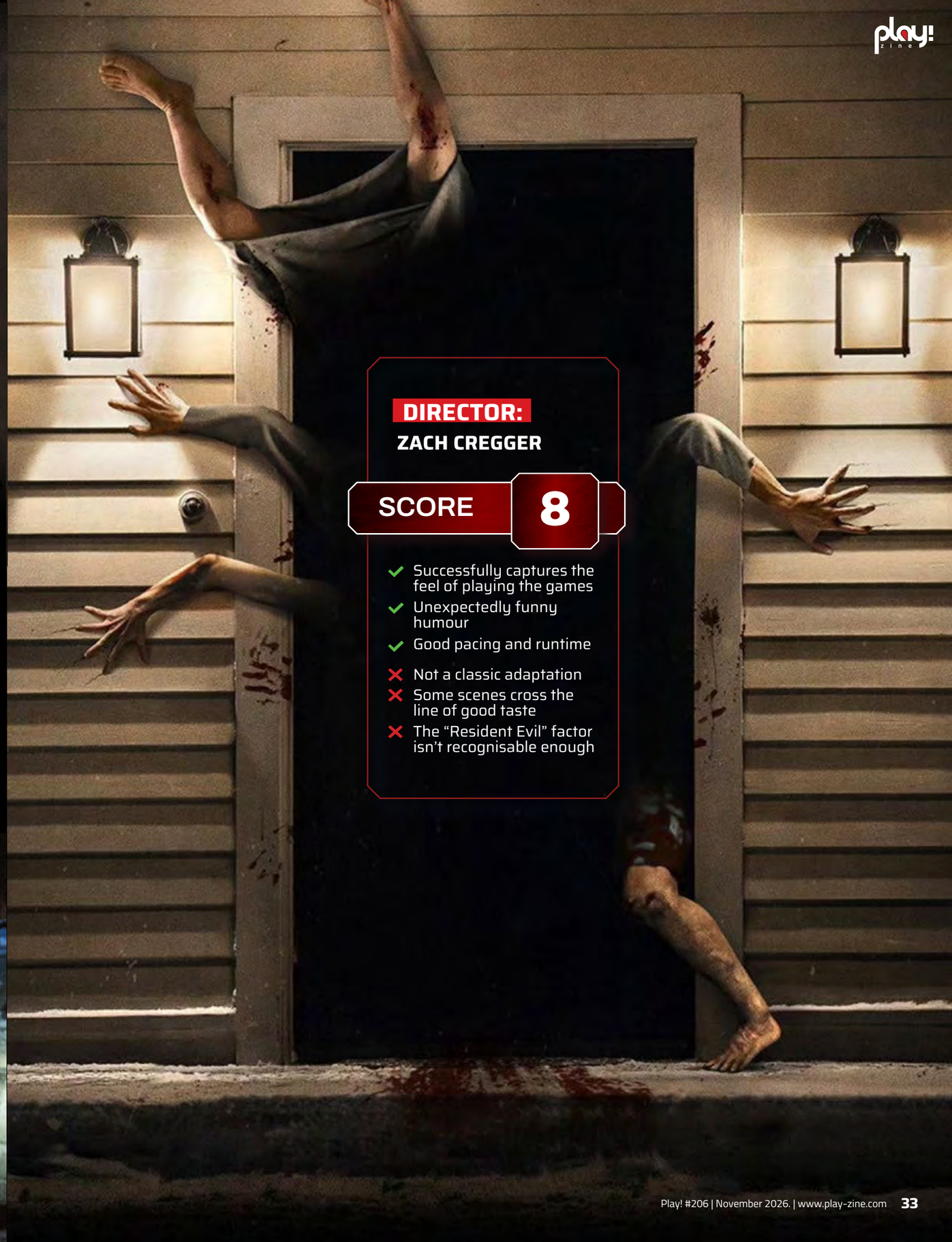
The runtime of around an hour and a half goes hand in hand with its quality and entertainment value. It even feels surgically precise, as the film doesn't lose its appeal right to the very end.

And the ending, without spoiling anything before you watch it, is both unexpected and natural.

The new Resident Evil is no masterpiece, but it is undoubtedly one of the best films based on a video game or game franchise. Different from the usual, with no intention of giving only what is expected of it, I think this was a successful experiment.

I sincerely hope that the series, and this director, will soon give us another project of similar or higher quality. For now, this is a warm recommendation from me to all horror fans, and fans of the series too – provided they are open-minded when a film about something they love doesn't quite play by the classic rules.

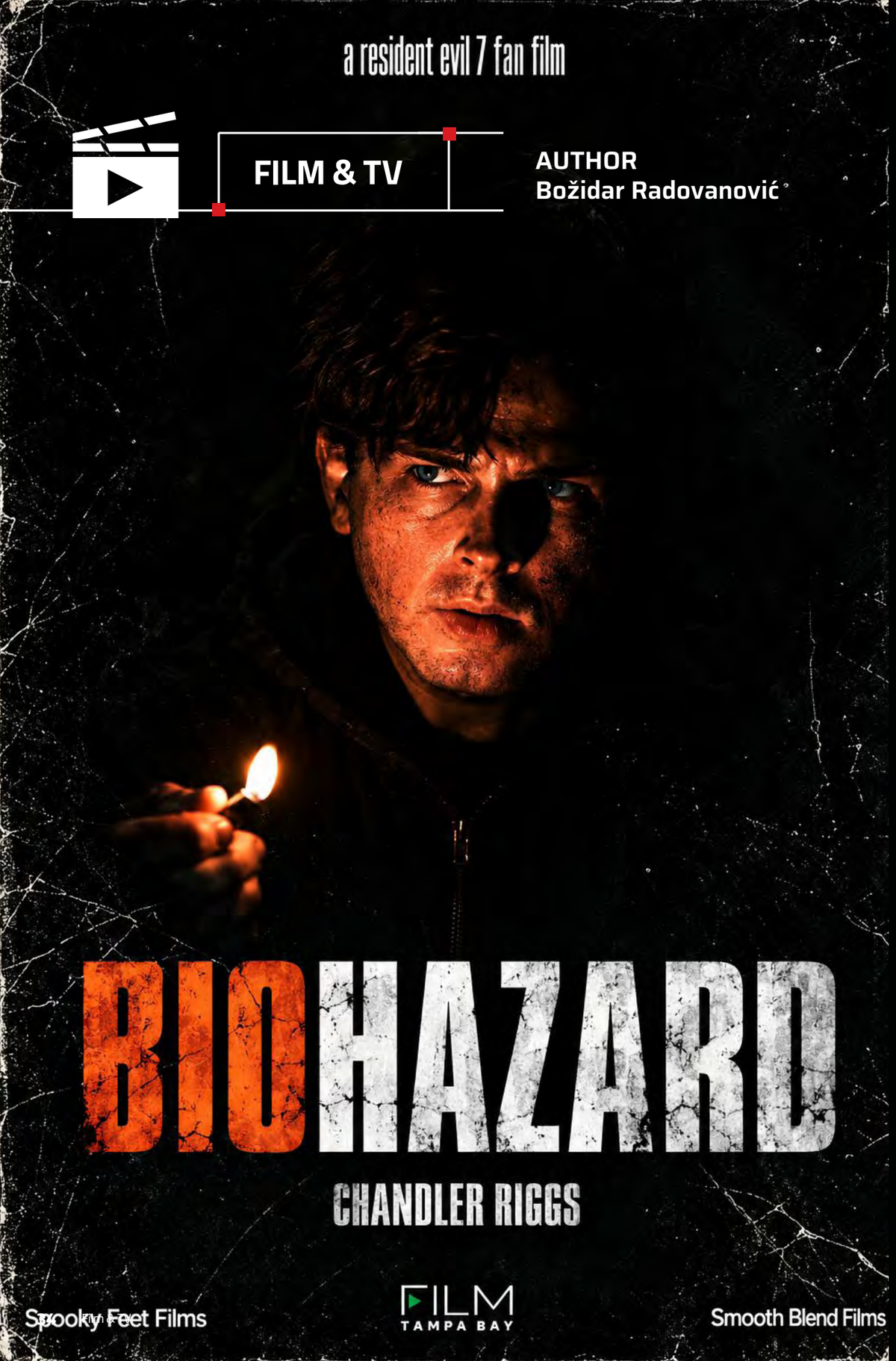




DIRECTOR:
ZACH CREGGER

SCORE 8

- ✔ Successfully captures the feel of playing the games
- ✔ Unexpectedly funny humour
- ✔ Good pacing and runtime
- ✘ Not a classic adaptation
- ✘ Some scenes cross the line of good taste
- ✘ The "Resident Evil" factor isn't recognisable enough



FILM & TV

AUTHOR
Božidar Radovanović

YOU CAN NEVER HAVE ENOUGH RE...

For the biggest fans of the series, the Resident Evil IP has turned into a massive buffet with endless options these days. If you're new to the whole story and eager to taste every dish, it surely won't all fit on one plate.

The 2026 menu has been enriched with Requiem, the first mainline instalment since RE6, and later Resident Evil Veronica was announced as a remake of the cult 2000 title. Known for the horror hits Barbarian and Weapons, director Zach Cregger served us a new film adaptation this September which, apart from its name, differs from the Milla Jovovich series in practically every way.



For more details read Milan's review, but here's a quick overview: with this project Cregger wanted to recreate the distinctive atmosphere of Resident Evil and the general feeling of playing the games, but left out the key characters and narrative elements of the wider



canon, which disappointed those who were crying out for a 1:1 adaptation.

If you're in that camp, Carl from The Walking Dead will make you happy with a short but sweet little film.

As a die-hard RE fan, Chandler Riggs (Carl's actor and the director of this project) said he desperately wanted to see an adaptation faithful to the games, which served as the main inspiration for BIOHAZARD. Completely free on YouTube, it's a ~20-minute fan film that brings one of the most famous segments of RE7 to the small screen – dinner with the Baker family.

Since the directors' approaches were completely different, there was little point in comparing how faithful their films are. Instead, I focused on direction, set design, effects and acting.

The first thing that will catch your eye is that Riggs, who also plays Ethan Winters, has visually recreated the scene from the game perfectly. The entire dining room, Bakers included, is the embodiment of filth, stench, rot and every other attribute that makes you want to throw up, while the whole room radiates unease, fear and helplessness, especially from the perspective of someone forced to sit at the table and sample Mrs Marguerite's cooking. Just like in the game, the atmosphere is so thick I could almost smell what Ethan smells.

For an indie film, the action, choreography and framing pleasantly surprised me, especially where Jack chases Ethan, stumbling around the house and maiming anyone in



reach. The slashing seems to use a mix of practical and CGI effects, which again looks really impressive for an independent project like this.

Unlike the source material, here we get to see the main character's face, which personally didn't distract me. On the acting front, Riggs did a solid job (the dialogue is mostly the same), but the absolute champion and star of the whole film is Jason Douglas (Jack), who fully embraced the role of a raving madman whose brain has been eaten by mould. I believe Riggs's direction contributed a lot to his interpretation of the character, since he probably knows the source material best.

I can easily recommend BIOHAZARD | A Live-Action Resident Evil 7 Short Fan Film to all horror fans, especially if you've played RE7 and liked it. At the time of writing, the video has over 2.5 million views, and I hope this isn't the end of Riggs's Resident Evil adaptations!



AUTHOR
Igor Totić

I'VE COME BACK HOME

WORLD OF WARCRAFT FOREVER

We thought we wanted it, and it turned out that... well, we really did want it. The WoW community cried out for a revival of World of Warcraft's classic mode, and we got it a few years ago. Although we were all happy, we got the game exactly as it was (more or less), and vanilla WoW is "solved". Every raid was already known to the whole community, and after a few nostalgic moments, I think the player count dropped to the hardcore and biggest fans.



Hardcore brought some freshness back to Classic WoW, but what really got players hooked was Season of Discovery. This was a seasonal mode that introduced plenty of changes to the classic vanilla formula, and people liked it a lot. All the seasons were short and fast, and in the end we demanded a bigger version of it. A so-called WoW Classic+. To my great joy, and seemingly everyone else's, we got WoW Forever, which fell from the sky at the recent BlizzCon and blew away the whole MMO community. The beta began days after the show, and I admit I got totally hooked.

THE FOREVER BETA DELIVERED EXACTLY WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTED FOR YEARS – AN AUTHENTIC FEEL

The World of Warcraft: Forever beta delivered exactly what the community had been asking for for years – the authentic feel of old Azeroth's geography and gameplay pace, but upgraded with modern QoL systems, visual refreshes and content that was originally just an unrealised vision on paper.

The first visual contact with the game strikes the perfect balance between nostalgia and modern aesthetics. Players can choose between the original and refreshed HD models, and the new animations and spell effects are extremely fluid without disrupting the familiar rhythm of combat. Besides a refreshed interface that eliminates the need for dozens of mandatory addons, full controller support has been officially introduced, which gives the game a whole new level of accessibility.

Keeping the level cap at 60 and preventing power creep, the classes have received significant, long-awaited changes. All three talent trees have been rearranged to free up points and soften previously useless talents, while key effects and buffs now apply to the whole raid instead of just one group. With the introduction of Dual Specia-





FOREVER DOESN'T AIM TO BECOME A HYPER-MOBILE GAME LIKE MODERN RETAIL, BUT TO OFFER THE BEST VERSION OF THE CLASSIC ERA

lization from level 40, switching between PvE and PvP playstyles has never been easier. Besides the new neutral Skyborne race, the world gains new class and race combinations, such as Dwarf Shaman and Undead Paladin, which opens up even more options for building characters.

Azeroth is also joined by new zones such as Riverlades, Shen'Dralasa and Mount Hyjal, which I didn't get to (nor want to) test in the beta, saving them for release. On top of that, the world has new dungeons at both lower and higher levels, as well as new raids like the 10-man Barrow Deeps and the 20-man Hyjal Summit. What I did manage to try during the beta was Hall of Thanes, a dungeon beneath Ironforge that uses the hidden city which in vanilla could only be reached by clipping through special textures – now it's a full dungeon.

On a personal level, jumping into this beta was a real rush of emotions and memories. As I ran through familiar zones, I was hit by the same pure wave of nostalgia I felt when I first set foot in Azeroth. I once again felt that special charm of exploration where the world seems huge, unknown and dangerous, and every step taken and level gained brings a real sense of achievement. What especially enchanted me is how much livelier and more beautiful the world now looks thanks to refreshed visual details and new weather effects. When a heavy downpour falls over Elwynn Forest or sunbeams break through the canopy of Ashenvale, the atmosphere becomes almost tangible. The game manages to look more modern and easier on the eye without ever losing the recognisable soul and aesthetic we fell in love with in old WoW.

Compared with the classic WoW experience, World of Warcraft: Forever offers a much more dynamic, flexible and content-rich world without losing the weight and social aspect the original was known for. Specs once considered secondary now take part in the hardest challenges on equal terms, and the optional transmog system strikes the ideal compromise between visual customisation and preserving the classic style.

The beta confirmed that World of Warcraft: Forever doesn't aim to be a fast, hyper-mobile game like modern Retail, but to offer the best possible version of the classic era. After this test, I'm waiting for the official release with huge impatience and excitement. I'm looking forward to getting the gang back together, making new friends and one more great adventure through Azeroth as it was always meant to be.







ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, THIS BETA WAS A REAL RUSH OF EMOTIONS AND MEMORIES

PLATFORMS:
PC, Nintendo Switch

DEVELOPER:
Blizzard Entertainment

PUBLISHER:
Blizzard Entertainment

PLANNED RELEASE:
04.11.2026.

TEST PLATFORM:
PC

AUTHOR
Nikola Aksentijević

NOODLES, CYBERNOIR STYLE



Nivalis Nights is a management sim set in one of the most colourful and impressively designed cyberpunk environments. You wake up with amnesia and an automaton – a so-called advanced artificial intelligence – in your head, steering you towards a noodle restaurant in a nearby district. Thaddeus, its now former owner, is retiring and for some unknown reason decides to leave the restaurant to you. Your main goal is to grow your own business, rake in profits and fight off ever-growing competition, but the longer you play, the more running the restaurant becomes a fairly automated affair.

Running the restaurant mostly comes down to finding new recipes, hiring the best staff and putting up suitable decorations to attract new customers. The player also has the option of growing their own ingredients in a greenhouse, and even fishing. Outside the restaurant, plenty of activities take place, with a bunch of quests that involve dealing with the competition and even helping the local police track down a notorious serial killer. The day-night cycle plays a very important role, as you have to observe the curfew in force by returning to your apartment. You don't have to obey it, but that requires rudimentary sneaking past security drones and cameras, which is mostly a waste of time, and the irritating curfew will limit you a lot when it comes to finishing quests.



Nivalis floods you with mechanics very early on. Besides a rather superficial tutorial about setting up your restaurant, you'll have numerous quests to chase down from NPCs. The tasks may not have time limits, but they have multiple objectives, are fairly long and can be really tiring once your log is filled with twenty or more different quests. On top of that, the length shows in the annoying waits between steps, where a few days can pass before you get a new objective within a quest.

As you work on tasks, you'll find new ones and will rarely reduce the number of active quests in your log. As a result, you can't properly focus on the various stories of Nivalis's residents, since you are usually juggling some 15-20 narrative sagas at once. Days get shorter because you're swamped with quests,

YOUR MAIN GOAL IS TO GROW YOUR OWN BUSINESS, RAKE IN PROFITS AND FIGHT OFF THE COMPETITION



on top of the initial setup where you have one restaurant, or later several, despite the options to automate their management.

Staff boil down to a few simple traits measured in levels, so they will be better at cooking, managing, waiting tables and the like. Food can appeal to certain customers and be more or less complicated to make, while supplying the restaurant with the necessary resources is mostly done through nearby merchants at first, until you set up an ingredient farm that significantly cuts these costs and the hassle.

Unfortunately, the game is full of bugs. I ran into a slew of crazy problems with paying staff where, no matter what you do, you'll never be in the black if you leave the manager to run the restaurant, completely blocking your progress.





STEALING FROM RIVAL RESTAURANTS MAY BE THE GAME'S MOST FUN PART

Some issues were fixed over time, but restaurant automation, which is essential given how many quests you juggle, is simply poorly implemented. However, this is where stealing from rival restaurants comes in, especially after curfew, which may be the most fun part of the game.

In terms of design, atmosphere and world-building, Nivalis is absolutely gorgeous, with visual design that shines at every moment. You can explore plenty of zones, and you'll often stop to admire the amount of detail and the excellent cyberpunk atmosphere the game exudes. You can also hop on a boat, do some fishing, grow little plants in the greenhouse, or even grab a bite at another restaurant. Oh, and there's chess too!

The NPCs you meet can become your friends, enemies, or even romantic partners, with dialogue playing the most important role. Quests can even fail because of wrong decisions, after which they become locked.





Although all these systems are impressive and definitely interesting to me, there are simply too many things and none of them has enough depth.

Nivalis Nights has huge potential, but suffers from trying to do a lot of things in quantity while forgetting about their quality. Even so, if you need something to scratch that cyberpunk itch, you can definitely check out Nivalis, if only for one of the most immersive cyberpunk worlds in the industry.

YOU'LL OFTEN STOP TO ADMIRE ALL THE DETAIL AND THE EXCELLENT CYBERPUNK ATMOSPHERE THE GAME EXUDES





RECOMMENDED PC SPECS

OS: Windows 10 64-bit
CPU: Intel i5-13600K / AMD Ryzen 5 7600
GPU: NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4070 / Radeon RX 7800 XT
RAM: 16 GB
SSD/HDD: 42 GB

PLATFORMS:
PC
DEVELOPER:
ION LANDS
PUBLISHER:
505 Games
TEST PLATFORM:
PC
PRICE:
24,99€

SCORE 7

- ✓ Graphics and visual design
- ✓ Running the restaurant is fun... when it works
- ✓ Loads to do
- ✗ Too many quests, too little focus on characters
- ✗ Performance
- ✗ Poor interface for getting around the city

Game provided by:
505 Games

REVIEW

AUTHOR
Milan Živković

AND NOW A LITTLE FINAL FANTASY IN HD-2D...



There was a time when Final Fantasy and turn-based combat were inseparable. You pick a command, wait for your character to elegantly charge the enemy, play out the animation, return to their spot, and then hand over to the other side. Simple, clear and, if you ask me, still a lot of fun today. Then the series headed in other directions, and instead of strategising move by move, we got more and more action, explosions and real-time sword swinging.

Not that I'm complaining, especially after the excellent Final Fantasy 7 remakes, but sometimes it's nice when an old custom comes back into fashion. And not only is that the case here – we also got one of the most beautiful modern takes on pixel art, all under the banner of probably the most popular JRPG franchise of all time.

For the first time in the series, Square Enix takes us into an HD-2D world, with turn-based battles, crystals, chocobos and all the things that made us love these adventures. But is that enough for Resonance to earn a place among the series' best? Let's see.

First of all, I should mention that Resonance is a sort of remake of the mobile game Final Fantasy Brave Exvius, but it is so unrecognisable that it really doesn't matter whether you played the original. At least judging by what I got to see of the original.

The story begins in the kingdom of Grandshelt, where the knights Rain and Lasswell set out on an adventure that, predictably, turns out far bigger than they expected. The crystals are in danger (yes, crystals again), a mysterious band of powerful warriors called the "Sworn Six" appears, and our heroes must find out what is going on and prevent disaster.

Sound familiar? If you've played more than two JRPGs in your life, of course it does. You'll probably recognise where the story is heading pretty quickly. Resonance doesn't try too hard to avoid the genre's familiar clichés, nor to turn its protagonists into characters you'll think about for days after finishing the story.

Still, I wouldn't say this hurts the game. The large party has enough room to show its full personality, and the relationships between its members are often more interesting than the central mystery itself. Rivalries, banter and small comic moments help the journey feel less like an endlessly serious expedition and more like an organic, human mission, where meaning is found not only in the task but at every step along the way.

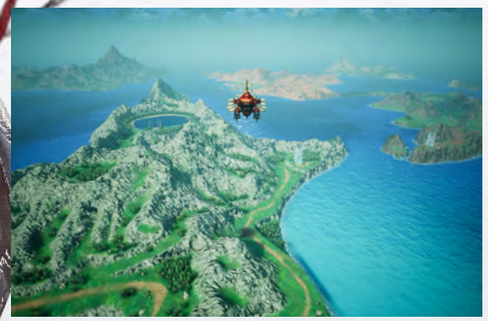
But I'd say the story can fall short in moments when it really needs to surprise. The build-up leaves plenty of room for curiosity, but the finale gives the impression that the potential of this world could have been used much better. Then again, I reckon this is just my personal impression and opinions will differ from player to player.

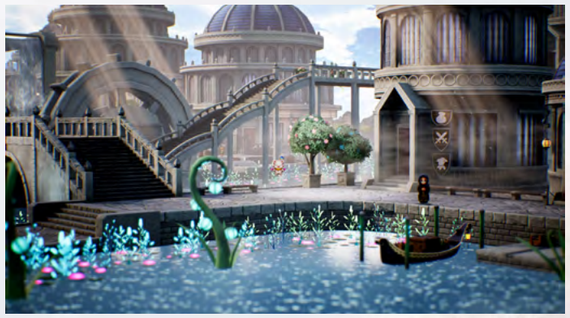
Luckily, where Resonance has a predictable narrative, it makes up for it with its combat system. And quite successfully.

Battles are fought with a party of up to four active members. At first glance everything feels familiar, but beneath that classic foundation lies a mechanic that asks you to think a little harder about every move. Simply dealing as much damage as possible isn't enough. Besides health, enemies have a gauge that determines how close they are to breaking. Drain it completely and they are left open to attack.

Suddenly it matters whether you use your strongest spell or one that breaks the enemy's







defences. You have to think several moves ahead, keep an eye on turn order and coordinate your party members' abilities. It is easy to understand, but has enough depth to stay interesting for the whole game.

The most interesting addition to the combat system are the so-called Visions. These are manifestations of characters from other Final Fantasy games that you can unlock during the adventure and then equip to your party members.
Yes, you read that right.
Zidane, Cloud and other famous heroes are not just bait for nostalgia fans (although they definitely are that too). Here, Visions have a real role in character building, as they bring additional abilities and affect how characters develop and how you fight.

IF THERE IS ONE THING ABOUT RESONANCE THAT GRABS YOU, IT'S THE VISUAL PRESENTATION

So the system shouldn't be confused with being able to control each of these famous characters as a full party member. Their role is primarily to expand tactical options and give extra power to your main characters. That is enough to justify their presence, although those who hoped for a brand-new line-up made of their favourite heroes may be a little disappointed.

If one thing about Resonance grabs you immediately, it's the visual presentation.

This style is nothing new for Square Enix. We already have several other titles that showed how striking the combination of pixelated characters and three-dimensional environments, lighting and modern graphical effects can look. But now that it's Final Fantasy's turn, the result is one of the most impressive presentations this approach can offer!

Characters are bigger and more detailed, animations more expressive, and environments well enough designed that the world doesn't feel like a mere series of pretty backdrops. Towns, dungeons and open areas have a distinctive atmosphere, while the camera sometimes gives bigger fights extra weight. Great proof that you don't need photorealism for a game to look modern.

Unfortunately, not everything visual is quite so harmonious. Some animated cutscenes, inherited from the earlier mobile version of the game, look like they belong to a different project. Like slightly older, lower-resolution computer-generated animations with questionable compression, they really stand out against the otherwise pixelated but very sharp and detailed visuals. OK, I'm making it sound like a major disaster, but personally it just felt a bit – out of place.

That's where the music comes in to save the day, as one of the game's strongest assets. For a Final Fantasy title, it's fitting that Resonance understands how much melodies can add to the atmosphere. Battles gain energy, exploration has its own rhythm, and familiar musical motifs are a further reminder of the series' rich history.

The game world isn't designed to surprise you again and again with never-before-seen mechanics. It's a familiar formula that personally reminded me most of older Dragon Quest titles, but coloured with layered themes of accessibility so that it can find its way to the widest possible audience.





THE ADVENTURE IS SO FOCUSED ON ACCESSIBILITY THAT IT OFTEN LEAVES TOO LITTLE ROOM FOR A SENSE OF SUSPENSE



Exploration is pleasant, and side quests give a solid reason to occasionally stray from the main path. The pacing is mostly good, and the game knows how to point you towards your next goal without dragging things out. But I think that is exactly where one of its biggest weaknesses lies.

The adventure is so focused on accessibility that it often leaves too little room for a sense of uncertainty. The world opens up fairly early, so some areas or activities may become available to you much earlier than is really necessary.

Side quests, on the other hand, sometimes slow the pace and give the game time to breathe. But what I missed most was the feeling that the game had something more to show around the next corner. Everything is mostly well balanced, but rarely surprising. Like a top-notch sandwich you've eaten a million times. Getting old – yes, but give me another one anyway.

Final Fantasy Resonance is an interesting example of how old material can be turned into a more modern game, but also of how a modern game can suffer from too much accessibility, as if it fears the old ideas are too dangerous for today's audience.

Great visual and audio presentation, along with a solid story and even better characters, especially in their chemistry with each other, are more than enough reason for this game to be an instant recommendation from me. Its downsides are there, but they shouldn't put you off playing Resonance, especially if you love the franchise and more old-fashioned JRPG recipes.





THE MOST INTERESTING COMBAT ADDITION ARE THE SO-CALLED VISIONS

This is not a revolution for the Final Fantasy series, nor does it try to be something it isn't. Instead, it returns to its roots, polishes them and reminds us that turn-based combat can be a lot of fun (as if we had forgotten...). A few quality-of-life improvements we've seen in many other recent Square Enix games would have been more than welcome here. But even in this form, Final Fantasy Resonance is an excellent title you shouldn't miss.

Unless you're a hardened "hater" of the whole genre and series. In that case, congratulations on making it to the end of the review. I'm genuinely impressed!



RECOMMENDED PC SPECS

OS: Windows 11 64-bit
CPU: AMD Ryzen 5 2500X / Intel Core i3-8100
GPU: AMD Radeon RX 5500 XT / NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1650
RAM: 8 GB
SSD/HDD: 15 GB

PLATFORMS:
PC, PS5, Xbox Series X/S, Nintendo Switch 1/2
DEVELOPER:
Lancarse, Square Enix
PUBLISHER:
Square Enix
TEST PLATFORM:
PS5
PRICE:
59,99€

SCORE 8,4

- ✔ Excellent battles and tactical options
- ✔ Impressive HD-2D graphics
- ✔ Nostalgic and fun Vision system
- ✘ Predictable story and twists
- ✘ Some animations break visual consistency
- ✘ World exploration is a little uneven

Game provided by:
Iris Mega



REVIEW

AUTHOR
Božidar Radovanović

CLIVE BARKER'S
HELLRAISER
REVIVAL

THE BOX. YOU OPENED IT. WE CAME.



My first encounter with Clive Barker's twisted mind was highly unusual. Unlike many who discovered him through books or film, as a kid I first played his game, Undying, from 2001. I was instantly hooked and just wanted more.

My wish came true six years later with the release of Jericho, which also bore Clive Barker's unmistakable stamp. Sadly, it seemed this would be his swan song in the world of



video games – Undying sold poorly, Jericho had its own problems, and another title, Demonik, was abruptly cancelled. Fate had other plans, however, as 2025 saw the announcement of the first game in the Hellraiser universe, also bearing Barker's name. As the cherry on top, the project was entrusted to our own Mad Head Games studio under the Saber Interactive umbrella, now known as Saber Serbia.

SABER SERBIA CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE 100% FAITHFUL TO BARKER'S VISION

It all started with Barker's 1986 work The Hellbound Heart. A year later, the novella became a film that spawned an entire franchise, along with the now cult horror villain Pinhead. The sequels kept the general aesthetic but quickly changed direction, while the guys and gals at Saber Serbia decided to return to the roots, themes and ideas of the original.

Clive Barker's Hellraiser: Revival starts in fifth gear, immediately throwing us into an intense, intimate scene between the protagonist Aidan and his girlfriend Sunny. Slaves to every possible narco-sexual vice, both have devoted their lives to the pursuit of extreme experiences that the average person would fiercely condemn. That includes occult artefacts, among them the enigmatic little box known as the Genesis Configuration.

At the climax, Sunny unlocks the puzzle and summons the Cenobites, superior beings living on the edge of pain and pleasure. Their leader, the Hell Priest, better known as Pinhead, sends Sunny into the Labyrinth, a dimension ruled by the mysterious god Leviathan. Before he can work out what happened, a desperate Aidan is locked in the cellars of the Scarlet Church, a BDSM sect that wants to create new Cenobites on Earth. So begins his search for Sunny.



Although these segments aren't equal in length, the gameplay can be split into two parts – our dimension and the Labyrinth. Exploring the mostly linear halls of the Scarlet Church, you'll often run into cult members and their abominations, puzzles, subtle narrative threads in the form of documents and audio recordings, as well as more direct story catalysts such as cutscenes and flashbacks.

Clive Barker's Hellraiser: Revival has several things in common with recent Resident Evil games (parts of RE7 and RE8, Requiem) – first-person survival horror gameplay, crafting, inventory and resource management, buying from vendors, stealth, stalker enemies and melee/gun combat. Let's look at each of these elements.

Horror is subjective, but few will remain indifferent to the cacophony of terror the game constantly spams. Besides aesthetics and atmosphere that are 100% faithful to Barker's vision, I was hugely impressed by the portrayal of the twisted human mind, visible in every corner of the Scarlet Church – the cultists' ego trips and fanaticism, dismembered bodies, sculptures made of human corpses (à la Tzimisce), streams of blood and other nasty stuff.

Crafting is a key part of resource management, as healing items and ammo are scarce. You'll combine alcohol and cloth for bandages, and gunpowder and scrap metal for ammo, while



for more advanced items you'll need the right recipes, which you can buy from vendors along with other resources and gear. Although the game has a stash, you won't be able to grab everything you find, as the inventory has a limited number of slots, especially early on.

A solid arsenal of melee and ranged weapons will help you deal with the cultists and the fleshy abominations. Melee combat is the absolute highlight for me, and I think it's far more fun than the gunplay, which at times noticeably lowers the tension of a horror game. All melee weapons (knives, machetes, cleavers, baseball bats...) have durability – you need to repair them after a few hits or they will break for good. Finally, there's the Genesis Configuration, which offers a few powerful spells such as telekinesis, but in return demands the suffering of your enemies instead of classic mana or energy.

Stealth and running away are the solutions for invincible enemies or situations where you're low on resources. Apart from a few practical uses (the game has a silent takedown), I found the stealth segments incredibly boring.

They do heighten the tension, true, but in my case that mostly meant nervousness and a desire for these parts to end as soon as possible.

SLICING UP CULTISTS HAS NEVER BEEN MORE FUN



By contrast, Clive Barker's Hellraiser: Revival shines brightest in its most intense moments, especially the boss fights, close-quarters combat and chases with stalker enemies. Among them is a Cenobite called the Chatterer, who keeps you company during your first few excursions into the Labyrinth. You'll hear his teeth chattering as he follows you at slasher-villain speed, only to suddenly cut you off and take your life just short of the exit.

Vile and terrifying yet charismatic, the members of Pinhead's order radiate an energy few can resist. Doug Bradley shines once again as the lead Cenobite, and an extra treat for Hellraiser fans are the references to the original film. I felt like a tiny speck on the tapestry of the universe as Pinhead eloquently called me out, and these are definitely some of the game's best moments.

Besides hanging out with the Cenobites, Leviathan's Labyrinth has other charms. In gameplay terms, the whole area is a huge Indiana Jones obstacle course with lots of blades, spikes, saws, crushers, meat hammers and similar traps, but no challenge requires platforming, as there is no jump action.





The Labyrinth is a barren, grey, cold concrete abomination that constantly shifts, an endless network of brutalist monuments of impossible architecture beneath an eternal storm (post-apocalyptic tower blocks). This area is another easy ten for art direction and a welcome contrast to our dimension.

On PC I didn't run into any bugs or performance issues, and if there were any, the biggest have probably been fixed, as the development team has since released several patches. What did slightly dampen the overall impression were small slips in various aspects of the game, including frequent, mostly unnecessary hints. None of it is dramatic, but it can sometimes distract from an otherwise excellent horror adventure.

Using Barker's vision as a language, a tool, an instrument and a palette, Saber Serbia has crafted an extremely mature, human and timeless story that might not have been as convincing if censored. This game was made by true fans of the franchise who proved that shock value isn't the core of Hellraiser, and that beneath a thick layer of flesh, debauchery and perversion lies something much more. For me, this project is also a small victory against the epidemic of sterile AAA games that rule the modern industry.

The void calls. How you answer is up to you.

DOUG BRADLEY SHINES AGAIN IN THE ROLE OF PINHEAD

RECOMMENDED PC SPECS

OS: Windows 11 64-bit
CPU: AMD Ryzen 5 5600X / Intel Core i5-12400F
GPU: AMD Radeon RX 6600 XT / NVIDIA RTX 3060
RAM: 16 GB
SSD/HDD: 80 GB

PLATFORMS:
PC, PS5, XBOX SERIES X/S, NINTENDO SWITCH 2
DEVELOPER:
Saber Interactive
PUBLISHER:
Saber Interactive
TEST PLATFORM:
PC
PRICE:
39,99€

SCORE 8

- ✔ Design and atmosphere
- ✔ Story
- ✔ Pinhead and company
- ✘ Stealth sections
- ✘ Some gameplay elements lack polish
- ✘ Some areas could have been more open and richer

STEALTH SEGMENTS WERE INCREDIBLY BORING

Game provided by:
Sandbox Strategies

A GUIDE THROUGH THE HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES

The Play!Zine team proudly presents *A Guide Through the History of Video Games*, a collection of the first four issues of the Play!Retro special. Join us on this exciting journey as we explore the roots of gaming, the rise of the video game industry and its impact on the development of technology and culture.

***A Guide Through the History of Video Games* covers four unique eras. First we visit the Old Age (1940–1976), a time when computers were in their infancy and the concept of video games was still unexplored. We meet the first commercial home console and many arcades, including Atari's Pong.**

Our next stop is the Golden Age (1977–1983), a major turning point for the video game industry and an era that produced some of gaming's greatest titans, such as Space Invaders, Pac-Man, the Atari 2600, the Commodore 64 and many more. After the twilight of the Golden Age and the great crash that brought gaming to the brink of collapse, the industry fully recovered in the period that followed – the Gaming Renaissance (1984–1989). Much of the credit for this goes to Nintendo, its new console and of course Super Mario, who won the hearts of gamers around the world.

Our adventure ends in the mid-nineties with the Era of Innovation (1990–1995), when video games moved from 2D to 3D worlds, opening the door to completely new adventures. Thanks to revolutionary technologies, this period gave birth to new, never-before-seen genres, while many legendary franchises first saw the light of day, including Doom, Sonic the Hedgehog, WarCraft and others. Nor should we forget the companies founded at this time, thanks to which video games became one of the most popular, and most profitable, media in the whole world.

This guide is not just a nostalgic trip into the past, but a reminder of how much video games have shaped the world around us.

The book "A Guide Through the History of Video Games" is available in Delfi and Vulkan bookstores, and online via delfi.rs, knjizare-vulkan.rs and the rekt.shop store.



AUTHOR
Igor Ilić



RIP AND TEAR AGAIN IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR!

I refuse to rename the boomer shooter genre as retro shooter. For me, the emphasis in the original name isn't on being inspired by old games, but on the first part of the word: BOOM. Boltgun 2, like its predecessor, fully embraces this, and throughout the game you'll have BOOM, blood, body parts and dead heretics – just as the Emperor commands.

When I first launched Boltgun in 2023, the reaction was pure gamer and fan euphoria. Our brother Malum Caedo, an uncompromising Ultramarine, stomped through the legions of Chaos while bolter and chainsword sang the finest symphony of purification. In my previous review, I said the first game was phenomenal but lacked story and got repetitive in long sessions. It seems the developers read my review (and nobody else's, of course) and addressed exactly these complaints.

THE WHOLE GAME IS SOAKED IN BLOOD, GORE AND DEAD HERETICS – JUST AS THE EMPEROR COMMANDS

The story throws you straight back into the hell of the Eye of Terror, where the line between reality and the Warp vanishes. Malum Caedo returns to finish his purge, but the main star





and the biggest novelty of the sequel is the introduction of a second playable character, Sister Nyra Veyrath of the Adepta Sororitas. The difference in playstyle and in how these two characters feel on the battlefield is drastic, and it's the best move the development team could have made.

On one hand, Malum Caedo is an unstoppable meat grinder. He is a walking tank in Power Armour, tactically unshakeable and focused on raw, brutal strength. His playstyle relies on constant forward movement, straight into melee clashes with enemies. Caedo dominates the battlefield with his iconic Heavy Bolter, Meltagun and massive Chainsword, with which he cleanses heresy by cutting it down. His abilities focus on breaking through enemy lines and unstoppable Charge attacks that crush weaker enemies to pieces. Playing as Caedo means feeling every ton of armour and every gram of Ceramite as you sow death up close in the name of the Emperor.

Nyra Veyrath, on the other hand, brings a completely different, dynamic approach to warfare. As a member of the Adepta Sororitas, Nyra doesn't rely on massive physical strength but on fanatical faith, agility and unerring precision. Her combat style is defined by exceptional speed and grace: she can slide across the ground, dodge projectiles in mid-air and briefly slow down time while jumping, allowing surgically precise hits on enemies' weak points. Instead of a Chainsword, in close combat Nyra uses a gleaming Power Sword that cuts through hordes of heretic Astartes (not to say traitors) with ease. Her arsenal includes distinctive weapons such as a handheld Boltgun and a destructive Heavy Flamer.

Fighting as Nyra feels like a deadly dance – you are always on the move, constantly balancing tactical retreat and fiery purification.

The mission structure of the sequel is finally worthy of a modern title. Forget aimless wandering through identical Hive City corridors in search of keycards. The levels in Boltgun 2 are much more focused, vertical and varied (although you still collect keycards). You'll fight through complex, snow-bound Forge World installations, toxic swamps, the ruins of gigantic Imperial cathedrals and the interior of a defiled Space Hulk. A servo-skull always discreetly points the way to the next combat zone, so the focus is always where it should be – on non-stop movement and shooting. The game now also offers a map in the style of the new Doom games, an extra plus that helps with exploration without stopping you from digging in and hunting for hidden items in every area. Besides the aesthetic value, each collectible gives you various temporary abilities, such as infinite or stronger ammo.

What thrilled me most as a fan is the expansion of the enemy factions. The first game gave us only crumbs, but Boltgun 2 brings all the thugs of Chaos onto the field. On the battlefield you finally face bloodthirsty Khorne Berzerkers charging mindlessly at you, as well as decadent Slaanesh units whose sonic cannons and toxic projectiles distort the screen and mess with your hearing. Alongside them are the standard Nurgle Plague Marines and Tzeentch sorcerers, which means battles demand constant weapon switching depending on which Chaos faction is attacking you. Boss fights at the end of chapters have finally been given the treatment they deserve – battles against massive Daemon Princes and Chaos



BOLTGUN 2 FIXES ALMOST ALL OF ITS PREDECESSOR'S FLAWS

Dreadnoughts offer a real challenge and demand maximum concentration.

Visually, the game once again shines with its retro pixel-art style, but behind it lies a modern engine that renders hundreds of heretics and Xenos on screen at once without any trouble. The explosions and enemies being torn apart by bolter fire look fantastic. The soundtrack is soaked in heavy industrial metal rhythms, just like the first game, and a special treat for all of us is the guest appearance of Mick Gordon, whose signature sound perfectly accompanies the final epic battle and pushes the adrenaline to the max.

Still, when there are over a hundred enemies on screen with non-stop explosions and lighting effects, the visual overload can sometimes become tiring. Also, Nyra's exceptional speed on certain narrow platforming sections can feel too slippery, which can send you plunging into the abyss in the middle of the fiercest fight.









Also, although her arsenal is a lot of fun, I would have liked her to have one more unique weapon in her category to fully match Caedo.

The boring Nurgle and Tzeentch heretics of the first game, levels where you lose your mind looking for keys and the material grind in the third act made me approach this sequel cautiously, but Auroch Digital proved me wrong in the best possible way and delivered everything we fans had hoped for. The development team listened to the community, kept the brutal essence of the original and improved it in every area. With two completely different characters, a branching campaign, a richer mix of enemies and a top-notch atmosphere, this is a title that fully justifies every minute spent on the battlefield. Let no heretic live, for the Emperor!

THE BIGGEST NOVELTY IN THE SEQUEL IS SISTER NYRA VEYRATH OF THE ADEPTA SORORITAS



RECOMMENDED PC SPECS

OS: Windows 11 64-bit
CPU: Intel Core i7-7700K / AMD Ryzen 5 1500X
GPU: GeForce GTX 1650 / Radeon RX 570
RAM: 8 GB
SSD/HDD: 13 GB

PLATFORMS:
PC, PS5, Xbox Series X/S
DEVELOPER:
Auroch Digital
PUBLISHER:
Big Fan Games, Devolver Digital
TEST PLATFORM:
PS5
PRICE:
24,99€

SCORE 9,5

- ✓ Two unique playstyles
- ✓ Better level design
- ✓ More enemies and great music
- ✗ Visual overload
- ✗ Slippery platforms
- ✗ Nyra's more modest arsenal

REVIEW

AUTHOR
Stefan Mitov Radojičić

TENEBRIS SOMNIA

NIGHTMARE BETWEEN GAME AND FILM



FMV (Full-Motion Video) games were experimented with many decades ago. We had titles made entirely in this style (most often point & click adventures), as well as games where live-action sequences replaced cutscenes. The genre has become more popular recently, mostly in the world of dating sims, but every now and then an interesting experiment comes along. One such experiment is Tenebris Somnia.

TENEBRIS SOMNIA STANDS OUT MOST OF ALL FOR ITS FMV SEQUENCES



The story immediately introduces us to the heroine Julia, who is tormented by nightmares and visions of her ex-boyfriend. Since he hasn't answered his phone for days, she decides to visit his flat, where she is greeted by a total mess and a suspicious symbol written in blood. Julia then falls into a living nightmare full not only of horrible and very hungry monsters, but also of memories that twist the reality she now finds herself in. It's up to you to guide her through this world and help her confront her obsessive boyfriend and the mistakes of her past.

The gameplay is most reminiscent of a version of Silent Hill from the eighties. You'll collect various items, explore zones and rooms that are mostly 2.5D and solve a bunch of interesting and not too difficult puzzles. To keep you from getting bored, there's of course a solid number of monsters that will chase and harass you. Besides being very varied, the enemies won't be too fast or annoyingly aggressive. Although the corridors are cramped and the rooms small, you can easily avoid them or beat them even without a weapon. In that sense, this part of the game is very well balanced.

On the other hand, if you don't play with a controller, interacting with items can be a bit fiddly. In those cases you really have to make sure you're close enough for the interaction to trigger, whether you want to pick up an item or activate it.

Resources such as ammo and healing potions won't be plentiful, unlike enemies and boss fights, of which there will be many. Every time you get into a dangerous situation you'll have to think hard about whether to run or fight, because every missed bullet or lost health point can cost you later. Although the enemies are fair, the game won't go easy on you.



The visual charm may be the main asset of this adventure. First there's the pixel-art graphics, which not only recall ancient retro games but do a spectacular job in terms of animation and world design. Although the style is relatively simple, it's clear the development team didn't skimp on talent.

The same can be said of the FMV sequences, which are superbly done. Besides phenomenal acting that, without words, successfully conveys the heroine's emotions and the atmosphere of her nightmare, there are high-quality and very bloody practical effects and props. That's why I'd especially praise the set designers, costume designers, make-up artists and everyone else who worked on the FMV sequences.

Though solid, the soundtrack isn't on the same level as the visuals. As I said, the game has no voice acting, which is fine, but it might have made the creepy atmosphere even stronger.

The biggest problem while playing, especially during combat, is that you can easily get stuck on objects or in spaces that look passable. There's also a hitbox problem, where it's sometimes not entirely clear where an enemy can reach you and where it can't.

If you've never played a game with FMV elements, or you liked a title such as FAITH, you have to try Tenebris Somnia. If nothing else, it's a breath of fresh air in the survival horror genre, which these days follows more or less the same template. With an idea and execution like this, I'd definitely like to see a sequel.

THE GAMEPLAY RECALLS AN EIGHTIES VERSION OF SILENT HILL

TENEBRIS SOMNIA IS BEST PLAYED WITH A CONTROLLER

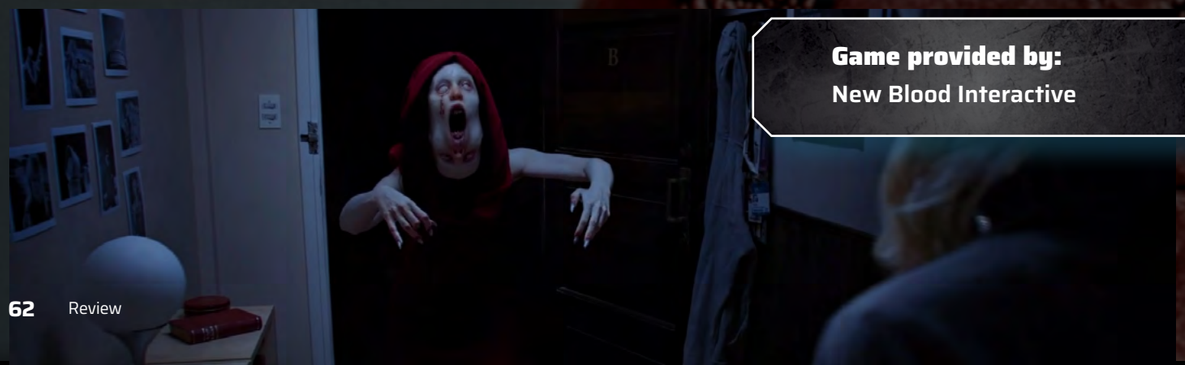
RECOMMENDED PC SPECS

OS: Windows 11 64-bit
CPU: 3.6 GHz Quad Core Processor+
GPU: 8 GB VRAM+
RAM: 16 GB
SSD/HDD: 13 GB

PLATFORMS:
PC, PS5, Xbox Series X/S, Nintendo Switch 1/2
DEVELOPER:
Andres Borghi, Saibot Studios
PUBLISHER:
New Blood Interactive
TEST PLATFORM:
PC
PRICE:
19,99€

SCORE 8,5

- ✓ Great horror story
- ✓ Phenomenal FMV acting and props
- ✓ Challenging gameplay
- ✗ Getting stuck on objects
- ✗ Fiddly interaction with key puzzle objects
- ✗ Some puzzles are too obscure

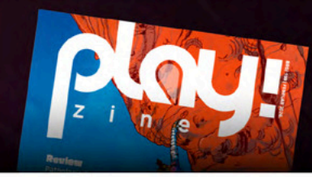


Game provided by:
New Blood Interactive

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Castlevania
Symphony of the Night

More than ten years after it first opened the gates of Dracula's castle, hidden in the dark forests of Transylvania, Konami presented gamers around the world with a game that defined and perfected the modern metroidvania genre – Castlevania: Symphony of the Night.

Although it was built on the foundations of the 1986 original, Symphony of the Night differed drastically from its predecessors. With the arrival of Koji Igarashi, the game adopted all the hallmarks of what is now considered a typical metroidvania – a big emphasis on exploration, a sprawling map and RPG elements.



Symphony of the Night also stands out for its protagonist, whose role this time is played not by a member of the Belmont clan but by Dracula's son, the half-vampire Alucard, who must stop the resurrection of his father. Instead of the standard whip, for the first time in the series players had a rich choice of weapons, gear and magic, which allowed special moves similar to those in fighting games.

With a gorgeous visual style and equally enchanting music, Konami managed to capture the atmosphere of a gothic tragedy, where every corner of Dracula's castle offers a unique experience. During his journey, Alucard finds a portal to another dimension, an inverted version of the original castle, which reminded us a lot of the Dark World in The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past.



THE HERO'S NAME IS AN ANAGRAM OF THE WORD DRACULA

To our great surprise, Castlevania: Symphony of the Night sold extremely poorly, but it very quickly earned the status of a cult classic. Proof of this is today's popularity of the metroidvania genre and great titles such as Hollow Knight.

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PROFESSIONAL TANDEM

LOGITECH G PRO X3 SUPERSTRIKE + PRO X CONTROL



Logitech keeps improving its G series aimed at professionals, so we got the latest Pro X3 Superstrike mouse for testing along with a new mousepad.

As the name suggests, this is the successor to the now legendary G Pro Wireless mouse, which over the years has practically become a role model for a host of other manufacturers who copied its shape and idea, but hardly any of those models came close to the success of the original. Last year we

THE WEIGHT IS BETTER BALANCED THAN ON THE PREVIOUS MODEL



met the X2 Superstrike version, and already a brand-new successor has arrived.

The shape is completely identical, and it's clear Logitech followed the old maxim – if it works, don't change it: two main buttons, a scroll wheel, two buttons on the left side under the thumb and a power switch on the underside. On the front there's a standard USB-C port for when you need to connect a cable, and besides the wireless receiver the box includes a small dongle to extend its range, plus of course the charging cable. Another use is updating the firmware, which awaited us as soon as we switched the mouse on, since our unit was probably among the first off the production line.

What you can notice compared with the X2 is that the X3 is better balanced. Although the difference is only 2 grams (the X2 weighs 61, the X3 59 grams), the weight seems to be distributed a little better, so it feels better in use. The colour is new too – while we previously had a black and white combination, the mouse we got for testing is entirely black. There is also another option with a magenta body and black buttons, and interestingly there is no white version on offer for now. The layout of the feet on the underside remains identical, and there is also the plate for connecting to the Logitech Powerplay mat, under which you can store the Lightspeed USB receiver.

For those who don't know, Powerplay lets a wireless mouse charge continuously through the mat via induction, so its battery practically lasts forever.





SPECIFICATIONS

It's worth stressing that the X3 Superstrike has kept the great speed of the two main buttons by dropping physical clicks and replacing them with HITS (Haptic Inductive Trigger System) technology. In practice, this means you can set the device to register a click faster than any other mouse, because there is simply no mechanical linkage, so you can define exactly when the click actuates, i.e. when the computer registers it. Interestingly, the G Hub software has a dedicated section for exactly this, so you can test how fast your click is and how much time you "save" compared with classic switches. In my case, the average saving was 4-5 milliseconds, which doesn't sound like much, but keep in mind that pros click buttons several times a second during matches. On the other hand, since there is no physical feedback from the switch, you can set up so-called haptic feedback in software, so the mouse vibrates slightly every time it registers a click. It's interesting to note that if you set the haptic feedback stronger, the software warns you that this will reduce battery life, so that's worth considering too.

When it comes to the battery, a significant step forward has been made, as battery life has grown from 90 to a whopping 135 hours on the X3 Superstrike. This is a really big jump, but keep in mind that battery life will depend on other settings such as sensitivity, the aforementioned haptic feedback and the like. This was achieved primarily through a new chipset that is clearly much more efficient. It's great that the mouse charges really quickly over the cable (in under an hour), though the cable could have been braided and a bit lighter so the device would be easier to use while charging.





AT 6MM, THE PRO X CONTROL IS THE THICKEST MAT IN LOGITECH G'S LINE-UP

THE BATTERY NOW LASTS UP TO 135 HOURS

The other specs have been improved over the X2, but not dramatically: the polling rate is again 8,000Hz, meaning the mouse communicates with the computer 8,000 times a second and registers even the slightest movement. The optical Hero 2 sensor now goes up to 48,000 DPI (up from 44,000), and the maximum acceleration it registers is up to 90G (up from 88G). All in all, these are improvements, but nothing the average player will notice, and it's actually debatable whether most pros will even notice the difference, since we're talking about very marginal improvements to an already technically excellent device.

Another good thing is that you control everything through the G Hub software, where you can create your own presets and then transfer them directly to the mouse's memory and take them with you. Since the device was developed in collaboration with professionals, some of them have allowed their presets to be used, so you can see how different players set up their mice in practice. Whether that suits you personally is another question, but it's interesting to at least take a look and try it.

The Logitech G Pro X3 Superstrike arrives very soon after the previous model, fixing a few small things and introducing some subtle novelties along the way. Nothing here is revolutionary, everything is just a notch better than it was. Of course, that still makes it one of the best mice on the market and definitely a logical choice for a large number of pros, but keep in mind it also makes it one of the most expensive models. Pair it with the new Pro X Control mat and the experience you get is truly top-notch.

PRO X CONTROL MOUSEPAD

It's been ages since we got a new standard mousepad from Logitech G. Lately we've only seen Powerplay models, whose role (and price) is quite different. Here we're talking about a fairly large 400x460mm mat, almost 50% bigger than, say, A3 paper, but this isn't a mat that also goes under your keyboard – the focus is solely on the mouse. It is a full 6mm thick, which makes it massive and comfortable to use, but also currently the thickest in the Logitech G line-up. Special mention goes to the non-slip base, which does its job really well – whatever I did, I couldn't move the mat across the desk, which is a top-class feature. The stitched edges are excellently done, and the branding is just a small fabric tag on the side, which personally gets my highest praise.

Using the mouse on this mat is a truly great experience, and if you want to get into professional gaming, I suggest spending a bit more money, because the difference compared with generic mats is really big, above all in feel, and very likely in precision too.





AUTHOR
MILOŠ HETLEROVIĆ

EPOMAKER GX1

THIS MODEL LOOKS FAMILIAR...

Having already met their keyboard with magnetic switches, it's time for some more interesting products from the Epomaker brand. We start with a very interesting pair of headphones that offer great sound, build quality and connectivity options at a very affordable price.



THE HEADPHONES DELIVER NICE 7.1 SURROUND SOUND FOR ALL YOUR GAMING SESSIONS

The headphones come in a very standard but nicely designed and executed box, and when you take them out, the first impression is of very high build quality. However, we have to point out right away that we have seen very similar headphones before, and this design is undoubtedly borrowed heavily from the HyperX Cloud models, which certainly isn't bad, as those are among the most popular headphones on the market, but it simply has to be said.

We have massive 50mm drivers on each side in plastic housings connected by a very high-quality headband made entirely of metal, so it really seems they will last the next hundred years with normal use. The headphones have fairly deep ear cushions filled with nice memory foam and covered in faux leather, as is the part that rests on top of your head. The model we got for testing is in a classic black and red combination, while there are also pink-grey and white-blue versions, depending on your taste.





Weighing 320 grams, these aren't the lightest wireless gaming headphones we've tried, but they are an almost ideal combination of low weight and seemingly great durability. The headband adjusts to the shape of your head by classic extension, a system that still works very well for the vast majority of users. They also have a fully detachable microphone on an excellent flexible arm, with a foam cover at the end for better sound absorption. All the controls are on the headphones themselves, a solution I very much welcome – the left cup has only a button for switching between Wireless 2.4GHz and Bluetooth modes, while the right one has a USB-C port (for charging or a cable connection to a computer), a volume wheel, and buttons for power, mic mute and switching off the RGB lighting.

Speaking of RGB lighting, it's probably unnecessary here, but it's done quite discreetly as light shining through the metal mesh on the cups. I can say it isn't intrusive, and those who like such things will probably be satisfied. The good thing is that you can deal with it by pressing just one button, but it isn't as intuitive as it first seems – I spent at least five minutes trying to turn off the RGB by pressing the button that is obviously for that and was already thinking the device was faulty, but I finally consulted the included manual, which clearly states that to turn off the lighting you need to press the button twice quickly. I definitely didn't expect that twist!

VERY DEEP, COMFY EAR CUSHIONS

A few useful things in the package are worth mentioning: there's a USB-C charging cable, then a cable with USB-C on one end and a 3.5mm jack on the other for connecting directly to a computer, and finally a USB dongle for wireless connection. This dongle is in USB-A format



but can be taken apart so you get a USB-C connector instead, and even more interesting is that this USB-C part has a port on the back, so you won't lose the USB port you plugged the GX1 wireless headphones into – a truly innovative solution!

Speaking of connectivity, you can connect via USB cable to a computer, via the 3.5mm connector (bear in mind you don't get surround sound that way), via Bluetooth or via the included 2.4GHz wireless adapter – every option is truly covered. The manufacturer also states that PlayStation 4/5 and Switch can connect directly via the included wireless dongle, while Xbox Series consoles only support a wired connection. Add to this that the battery lasts about 70

hours with the lighting off or about 30 with RGB effects on, which roughly matches our impression, and you get headphones you can comfortably use all day or for several days in a row, on a computer, consoles or a TV/tablet/phone via Bluetooth.

The Epomaker GX1 headphones are equipped with 50mm drivers and deliver a really nice 7.1 surround experience for all gaming sessions, but of course you shouldn't expect miracles when it comes to reproducing other types of sound – they are first and foremost geared towards gaming. Another good thing is that the microphone has active noise cancellation, so teammates and the people you talk to will hear you well even in very noisy environments. Additionally, the shape of the cushions and above all their depth let you isolate a lot of ambient sound simply through a physical barrier and focus on playing. Interestingly, the manufacturer's website says these are headphones for PC, Mac and FPS games, but don't worry – you can play other types of games too.

What I can point out as a complaint is the software on their website, which is clearly a rudimentary solution where you can choose between stereo or 7.1 sound, how the equaliser is set and so on, but you can't control things like the lighting or, for example, see the battery status. I would also praise the fact that the volume wheel on the headphones directly controls the volume in Windows, but I didn't like that whenever you turn the device on, it announces which mode it's in and what it did. The biggest problem is that you can't adjust the volume of that announcement, which is too loud for my taste.

The Epomaker GX1 clearly borrows from rivals, but executes it very well, with





the odd strange choice that we can attribute to a relatively young and perhaps less experienced company. What is very interesting, but also extra problematic for us, is the price of the device, which on their website is 50 US dollars. I'd say there is no better or higher-quality solution for that money, by several orders of magnitude, but if we look at the option of ordering to Serbia, you need to add another 28 dollars for shipping, and probably customs and VAT when the package arrives, which brings us to roughly over 100 dollars in total. This is still a very solid solution, but far less tempting, especially since practically half the cost would be administration rather than the device itself. If Epomaker managed to find a local distributor here and offered the device at a price similar to the one on their website, these headphones would be an unrivalled recommendation!

THE LIGHTING TURNS OFF BY PRESSING THE BUTTON TWICE?!



play!

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