


# PIXELATED



A TECHNOLOGY AND VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Thanks for picking up our first issue of Pixelated this year! We and our writers have put a lot of work into this issue, and we couldn't be more excited to finally showcase our work with all of you guys. We're very proud of what we've done and are really happy that we can share it with all of you, and hope that you enjoy every minute reading this edition. If any reader is inspired by what they see here feel free to contact either of us if you want to write for us in the next issue! We can use what we learned this season to make things even better for next time, and we would love others to join the ride. Special thanks goes to our Design Editors, who have the credit for the awesome layout you're looking at right now. We hope you have as much fun reading this as we did making it!

Your EICs,  
Andre Dang  
Libby Mather  
Editors-in-Chief, Volume VIII

*Andre Dang* *Libby Mather*

# THE MODEL 3

by Lorenzo Hess

Tesla Motors looks to accelerate the world's shift towards sustainable technologies. They aim to create fully electric cars that are "better, quicker and more fun to drive than gasoline cars." During the decades before Tesla was founded, electric cars did not offer any particular advantage over gasoline cars, other than, of course, being zero tailpipe emission vehicles. Other than their environmental appeal, there was little reason to opt for them: electric cars had much less range than gasoline vehicles and took much longer to charge than a gasoline car took to refuel. For electric cars to become appealing to consumers they would have to at least have a competent range and low charging time. Tesla made sure to check off both of these boxes, and then went even further. Their self-driving software, sleek aesthetic, and a host of other factors make them cheaper and more appealing than gasoline vehicles. Along with a longer-lasting battery, Tesla offers its drivers access to its own Supercharger network, a network of fast battery charging stations. The chargers, known as "Superchargers," can charge Teslas to approximately 80% battery capacity in 30 minutes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has given Teslas 5-star safety ratings in every category.

To achieve its ambitious goals, Tesla has followed CEO and Co-founder Elon Musk's Master Plan, which outlines necessary steps and milestones for the company. Musk's Master Plan began with producing the Tesla Roadster, a high-end car manufactured at a low volume and sold for a high price. The Roadster served (and still serves) as proof that an electric car with both competent range and great aesthetics could be produced. The Master Plan went on to include the production of an four-door electric sedan more affordable than the Roadster, the Model S. Tesla eventually added another step to the plan and produced the Model X, an electric SUV which is

similarly priced to the Model S. Both the Model S and Model X were produced at mid volume, and are more available compared to the low-volume Roadster. The next major step, which has already begun and is arguably more than halfway complete, is to produce the Model 3, an electric sedan. Produced at high volume for a low price, it will be even more affordable than the Model S and X. For reference, the Roadster was originally sold for around \$110,000, while current base prices for the Model S and Model X are \$78,000 and \$84,000, respectively. The cheapest version of the Model 3 is \$35,000, less than half of the price of the S and X, although this version is not yet in production.

The Master Plan started with a proof of concept, then progressed by increasing the production volume while decreasing the price of the vehicle with each model. As production volume is increased, the risk involved and resources needed to produce the vehicles increases. Tesla started with a low risk car that did not require many resources to produce. As more people bought Teslas, the company's resources increased, allowing it to produce the Model S and Model X. Consumers liked these cars, and with revenue from the S and X Tesla could begin producing the Model 3. Because the Model 3 is a mass market car and will dramatically increase revenue for Tesla, it is essential to Tesla's business model. A successful Model 3 will allow Tesla to further expand and start production of the Model Y, the Tesla Semi truck, and the Tesla pickup truck.

In addition to being important to Tesla as a business, the Model 3 is crucial to the survival of electric cars in general. If Tesla can demonstrate that it can profit from an appealing, affordable, mass-produced electric car, it will ensure that electric vehicles are recognized as viable products. Tesla's 3rd quarter of 2018 was its third most profitable quarter since 2013 and 2016,

largely due to the Model 3 of the 83,500 vehicles produced in that quarter, 53,239 were Model 3. While this profit has only been for one quarter, it serves as a sign that once production kinks are worked out, it is possible to profit by selling a mass-market electric car.

**"The Master Plan started with a proof of concept, then progressed by increasing the production volume while decreasing the price of the vehicle with each model."**

Tesla has shown that there is a huge market surrounding electric vehicle and their related technologies, from the production of lithium-ion batteries and to the seamless integration of a car's software and hardware. The Model 3 production has ramped up over the past year and Tesla's third quarter profits have put pressure on other car companies to begin electrifying their fleet or else risk losing a crucial spot in the electric vehicle market. In September 2017, Mercedes-Benz announced a \$1 billion investment to ramp up production of electric cars in the US. In January 2018, Ford announced it would increase its electric vehicle investment to \$11 billion by 2022 and would plan to have 40 hybrid and fully electric vehicles available by then. Volkswagen plans to invest a staggering €44 billion (\$50 billion) into the production of electric vehicles and self-driving technologies by 2023.







Video games date back to the 1950s, when the simplest video games were being developed on punch cards with the earliest computer systems. Fast forward thirty years, and dedicated video game consoles are made and used publically. From the 80s to the current day, video game consoles have constantly evolving and improving. Companies such as Apple, IBM, Atari, and later Nintendo and Sega, have been major players in the development of video game systems. Today, the major platforms on which video games are made and played are the personal computers, the dedicated consoles, and the mobile devices, though they are less common than the computer or console. Video game consoles fill a long list of various devices optimized specifically for gaming, while PCs and mobile devices have video games as one of their many functions.

Recently, as more and more platforms have been added, developers have been looking to incorporate a new feature

in their games- cross platform gaming. Major companies like Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft are looking to expand their scope in video games without coming up with brand new games. At this point, most non-exclusive games have been ported to other platforms, usually the consoles or PC, as they are the largest platforms. The issue for developers is the optimization of their games, as different devices have different control setups, different graphics capabilities, and different software systems than their native device. Right now, most games can[A6] successfully be ported onto separate devices; however, intercommunication between devices has been limited.

The main issue with intercommunication is that certain devices have an intrinsic disadvantage against others, which is a problem especially for competitive games. Generally, mobile devices have a lot less capability in graphics, processing power and control than the console or the PC,

and so if players matched against each other in a first person shooter, for example, it would be very unfair - using keyboard and mouse on a high-functioning device is simply faster and more accurate than having to swipe on a small screen, with its limited control capabilities. Games like Hearthstone avoid this problem, as their game is based solely on clicking/touching - because of this, Blizzard Entertainment allows players to match up cross-platform. However, on their other title Overwatch, which is available for both console and PC, they do not implement cross-platform capabilities. Some console companies do not allow cross-platform communication, which is part of the reason why many games do not have this capability. Also, as a first-person shooter, the mouse can simply turn faster than the controller's joysticks, giving it an advantage. Console players and PC players have also each developed a separate community, and senior designer Jeremy Craig has stated that Blizzard wishes to keep it this way.

# CROSS PLATFORM

by Arden Chen



This example is true of most other first-person shooter games.

Because of these advantages and communities, for most games, cross platform gaming becomes limited to having multiple versions of one game available on different devices. The hit single player game *Stardew Valley*, originally released for the PC through Steam, was ported to mobile devices in mid-October 2018, as a separate game. The developer is planning for players to be able to import and export saves between platforms, which is a nice feature available to single player games.

The PC and console host the largest communities of gaming, as they have stronger capabilities than other smaller devices, and some are even built specifically for this purpose. Therefore, many games are simply ported between these two systems, without hitting mobile devices. The main reasons for this are the control setup, the graphics potential,

and the communications capability. In all of these fields small devices are severely weaker than computers, simply due to their size and the necessary sizes of their components. Many times, storage also becomes an issue, as games can use up a lot of disk space, which smaller devices cannot have.

The competitive game *Rocket League*

“The main issue with intercommunication is that certain devices have an intrinsic disadvantage against others”

is another example of a game which has gained success with strong cross-platform capabilities. Originally released for both PC and console platforms, players regularly play against opponents on other devices. The main reason this works is that most players use the controller on

both platforms anyways, with a small minority of players playing with keyboard and mouse on the PC, playing with a slight disadvantage. As the controller better emulates the sensation of driving and flying, that is the system most popular for the game, allowing the game to one of a few that successfully implement cross platform gaming competitively.

Cross platform gaming is a relatively new technology that has its advantages and its disadvantages. Many developers use it to expand their user base without having to create an entirely new game, and spread their game out to reach more customers. However, its limitations mean that it is unusable competitively, and connection between platforms relies on the style of the game itself. Cross platform gaming is a feature that will be experimented more by developers in order to find better uses for it, and has a lot of potential in the future of gaming.







# NEW IPHONES

by Siddiq Nanabawa

The iPhone XS, XS Max and XR were the latest iPhones to be released in October of this year. Many people claim that they are a major improvement from the iPhone X and that they are worth every penny. One of the newest features is the screen display, which can range from 5.8 inches up to 6.5 inches. In addition to the increased screen display, the new iPhones also contain many new features that make them stand out from the iPhone X which was released in November, 2017. Now join me, and let's see if the iPhone XS, XS Max and XR really are an improvement and if they are worth every penny.

One of the most important features of the iPhone XS and XS Max is their amazing displays. The iPhone XS has the same display as the original iPhone X, which was 5.8 inches, and the iPhone XS Max has a display of 6.5 inches. These iPhones have the most color-accurate and brightest displays out of all of Apple's smartphones, due to the fact that they both have a pixel density of 480 ppi. In addition to the displays, the iPhone XS and XS Max both contain dual 12-megapixel cameras which provide the phones with 2 times optical zoom as well as 10 times digital zoom. The phones also contain Smart HDR which will increase the detail and color in your pictures. The Smart HDR works by taking several photos that vary in

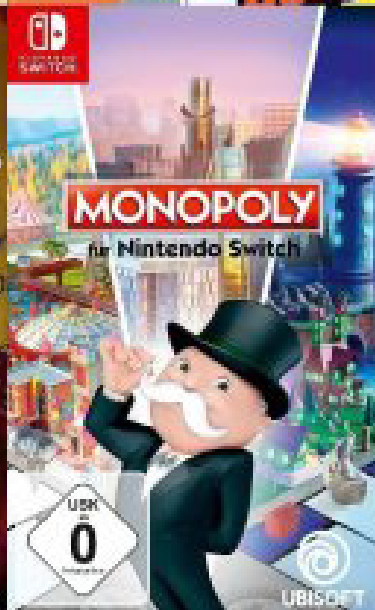
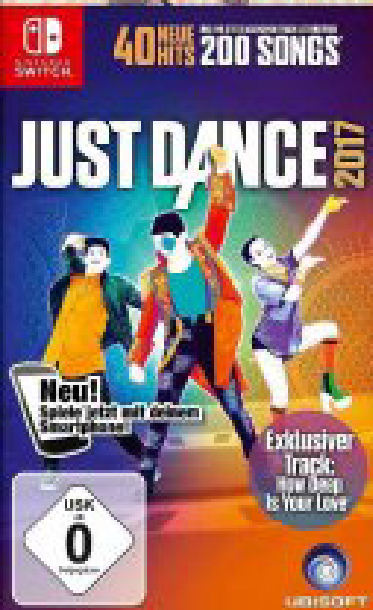
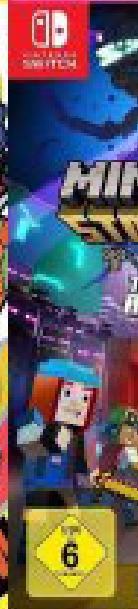
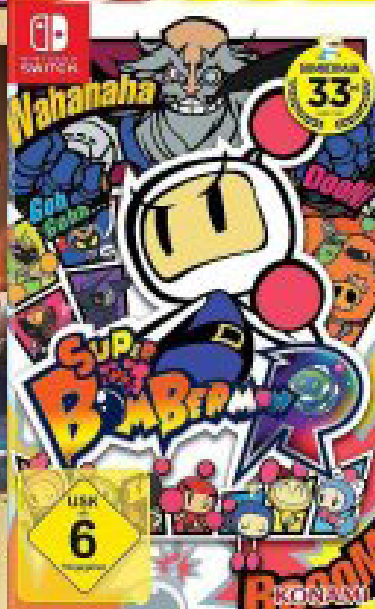
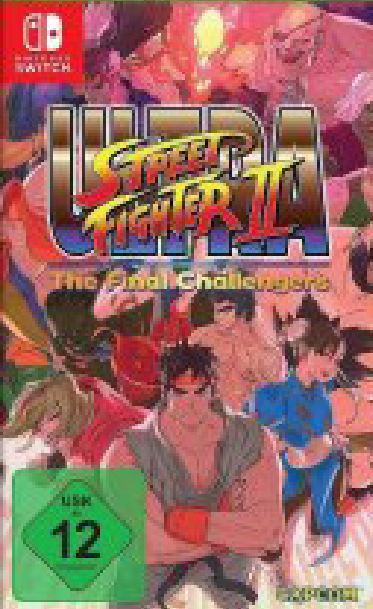
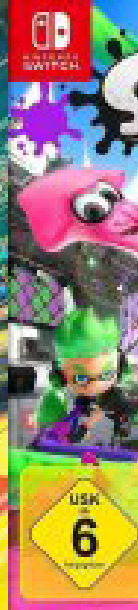
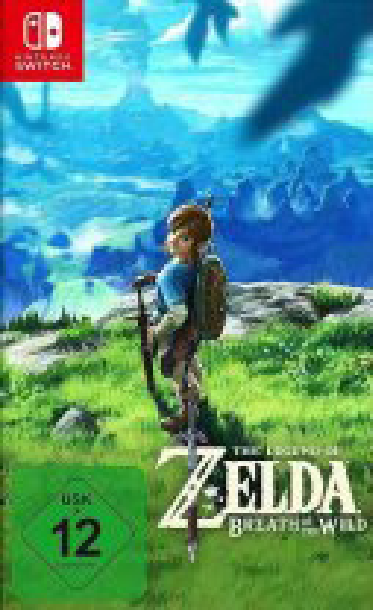
their exposure and puts them all together in order to make the image as detailed as possible. Another new feature that the iPhone XS and XS Max have is that they contain the new A12 Bionic chip. The chip allows the phones to be up to 15% faster than the iPhone X, while using less battery power. Lastly, the iPhone XS and XS Max is rated IP68 water resistant, which means that we can leave these phones in up to 7 feet of water for approximately 30 minutes. Although the new features of the XS and XS max may justify buying a \$1000 phone, the iPhone XR isn't much different

One of the differences is that the iPhone XR has a pixel density of 326 ppi and its display is only 6.1 inches, which is larger than the XS but smaller than the XS Max. The display makes up for some of the XR's shortcomings, however it is not as sharp or color-accurate as its peers. On top of the difference in pixel density, the iPhone XR has a ram of 3GB compared to the 4GB ram of the XS and XS Max. Compared to the dual 12 mega-pixel cameras of the XS and XS Max, the XR's is not quite as impressive, but it is still able to use the same photography tricks as the XS and XS Max, such as Smart HDR. The XR is also more vulnerable to water damage, being rated IP67 rather than IP68 water resistant. However, this isn't such a major difference as it's very unlikely that someone is going to leave their phone in water for

more than 10 minutes. Although, there are some minor differences between the XS/XS Max and the XR, the XR makes up for it as it costs almost \$200 less.

The iPhone XS is available in three different colors which are silver, gold and space gray and it is also available with 64GB, 256GB or 512GB, each costing \$999, \$1,149 or \$1,349 respectively. The iPhone XS Max is also available in the same colors as well as the same amount of GB, however the it costs \$100 more due to its larger display. The iPhone XR on the other hand is available in a multitude of different colors which consist of white, black, blue, yellow, coral and red. The XR is also available with 64GB for \$748, 128GB for \$799 and 256GB for \$899.

Overall, the iPhone XS, XS Max and XR all have significant changes from the iPhone X. These changes range from an improvement in the cameras all the way to a change in the phones processor. The new processor is responsible for making the phone significantly faster while using less battery power and there is also a vast improvement in the camera. In the end, the new iPhones are much better than the iPhone X, however if you don't want to spend \$1,000 on a phone, the iPhone XR is the way to go as it isn't much different than the XS and Xs Max and is significantly cheaper.





# WII U VS. SWITCH

Jayer Yang

Ever since the Nintendo Switch was introduced on March 3, 2017, under the codename Nintendo NX, an eternal question has remained: Is it truly better than its predecessor, the Wii U? Now, after over a year since the Switch's debut, the time has come to resolve it once and for all.

A key point of comparison is between the games library and the amount of content released for each console. One of the factors most attributed to the poor initial sales of the Wii U was the weak lineup of games that were offered at launch, the most notable ones being New Super Mario Bros. U, Skylanders, and FIFA. A total of 30 titles shipping with the system in the US didn't make the splash it was intended to, especially with the lack of original games as opposed to simple ports or minor updates. Even after launch, content releases for the Wii U were slow. Original games were released sparsely throughout the Wii U's lifespan. On the other hand, the Switch has had a steady flow of content, quickly building up an array of iconic games like Breath of The Wild, Splatoon, Fortnite, and Super Mario Odyssey. Nintendo has been much quicker to release content for the Switch, having new releases almost every month with still even more content on the way, including the heavily anticipated Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. This results in the Switch arguably already having a still-expanding games library that could rival or even surpass that of the Wii U in its one-year tenure compared to the games released

for the Wii U over its five-year lifespan.

In fact, the Switch, as of October 2018, has sold close to 23 million total units, compared to the 13.5 million total units of the Wii U. The two console's respective retail prices were also the same, so the price wasn't a deciding factor in the sales. What really helped make the difference between the two were the specs. The Wii U's gamepad introduced us to the possibility of a true handheld console but was limited by the fact that it couldn't go more than a couple of feet away from the main console. The Switch built on that possibility by creating a console that could double as a handheld device and a traditional home console. Functionality was not impeded by having a dual-purpose system, either. The Switch features a 6.2-inch, 1280 × 720p LCD screen, same as the Wii U's gamepad, but offers the ability to operate entirely independent of its dock. The resolution can also be increased up to 1080p when the system is hooked up to an HDMI cable, the same as any HD video and matching the resolution of the Wii U. The Switch's battery life is impressive, its 3.7 volt lithium ion battery offering up to 6 hours of gameplay before recharge. In addition, many glitches in the Switch's software present at launch have since been patched in its regular updates, and problems with the hardware have been offered to be fixed by Nintendo themselves. For example, an issue with the functionality of the left joy-con that was very present at the launch was compensated by

Nintendo, who offered a free repair service, provided the Switch was in its warranty period, of course. The Switch is enjoying constant updates to its software compared to the Wii U, where major software patches came only once or twice a year at best, leaving glaring problems in its UI, and eventually, technical support slowed dramatically towards the end of the Wii U's run. The Switch's ongoing live service is faring much better than that of the Wii U, which means a much more enjoyable gaming experience on the Switch overall.

In conclusion, is the Switch better than the Wii U? Yes. Obviously. But to compare two consoles released so far apart as equals wouldn't be fair. The Wii U wasn't a complete dunce of a console. Without the tech and concepts introduced by the Wii U, the Switch as a console wouldn't exist as we know it today. And for perspective, the Wii U had 20 times the amount of memory the original Wii did, and at the time, was a huge step up for Nintendo's consoles. To say one's "better than the other" doesn't make sense when considering when they were made, so it makes more sense to say each of Nintendo's successive consoles show a logical progression and make steps in the right direction to create the best gaming experience possible. With much content planned for the future, the future of the Switch looks bright with no end in sight.



Marvel's Spider-Man is a game that easily go down as the best Spider-Man game of all time. As a comic book fan and an avid video game player, Marvel's Spider-Man pleased me on every level. For the first time in any Spider-Man game, I finally felt that I could relate to Peter Parker and the everyday struggles that he deals with being Spider-Man. Whether it's failing to pay rent or weaving through his relationship with Mary Jane through risky texts, you related to Peter Parker as you realize he is just a good guy trying to get by.

Story-wise, we pick up with Peter after he has been Spider-Man for seven years showing us an experienced Spider-Man. Most of his rogue's gallery has been created and his relationship with people like Captain Yuri Watanabe has been established. Besides the story aspect, the more experienced Spider-Man let game developers dabble in more sophisticated gameplay. We see web swinging and fighting like never before in this game. The web swinging is the smoothest it has ever been as spinning each web is effortless and the combinations of spins, backflips, and hops from building to building is perfect, making travel feel not like a chore and more like another amazing part of the game.

While swinging around the city is exhilarating, I was mainly focused on the story throughout the game as each mission lead to another clue and step towards defeating Mr. Negative. Mr. Negative was a strange choice to make the cover villain for the game as he has never been portrayed on the big screen or in any other video game before. Mr. Negative's alter ego Martin Li also appears in the story as he is Aunt May's boss at F.E.A.S.T (a homeless shelter). This fits perfectly into the story as it directly tied Peter's life to Spider-Man's which makes for great storytelling.

The game itself contains a main story that lasts around 20 hours. It starts off at a very familiar spot with Peter attempting to take down Wilson Fisk. This is pivotal for the story as Fisk being taken down leave a vacuum in the criminal underground for other villains to try and grasp. Through his battle with Fisk, Peter ruins his suit and is forced to fix it at his job. He is then caught by his boss the one and only Otto Octavius, who is Peter's mentor. He believes that Parker is designing Spider-Man's gear and actually helps Peter in creating the main suit of the game, The Advanced Suit. The boss of Peter Parker was a hidden surprise coming into the release and fans were theorizing it could be Tony Stark. To go to Dr. Octopus himself as Peter's boss again helps the story as every player knows that at some point they would see the transformation into the villain we all know and love.

Another soon to be turned villain that ap-

pears in the game is the Green Goblin himself, Norman Osborn. Osborn plays a pivotal role in the game as he is mayor and also because of his ties with everything happening in Peter's life. Osborn delivers a creepy essence that crawls down your back whenever he enters a scene as you can feel how evil he is in every line he speaks. As Norman is close to Peter, Mary Jane Watson is as well, but her relationship with Peter has been severed at the start of the game. While it was severed, they cross paths once more at the start of the storyline as they are both tracking down leads on Mr. Negative. Mary Jane and Peter's relationship is one of the most human arcs on any superhero game I have ever played as we follow Peter reading into every text that each other sends as well as the awkwardness of needing to sleep on her couch as he has been evicted from his house. It's scenes like these that made the game for me as I felt the writing and thought from the writers shine through.

“Web-slinging isn't the only part of the gameplay that had me coming back for more; the fighting resembles only the Batman Arkham series in its fluidity”

The only negative with Mary Jane throughout the game is the awkwardly placed stealth missions that place the player in her position. These missions while heart pounding at some moments were usually placed at awkward times in the game and stopped the flow of the story. Besides Mary Jane's missions, the story does space out boss battles and big events pretty well in the story throughout the first two acts of the game. When the third act hits, the game felt a sense of overdrive as Peter is pushed in so many directions in such a short time. While this feels rushed, it also correctly represents what would actually be happening for Peter in the situation.

Web-slinging isn't the only part of the gameplay that had me coming back for more; the fighting resembles only the Batman Arkham series in its fluidity. I found myself enjoying this fighting more than the Arkham series as Spider-Man has so many more options with the way he moves and how he in-

teracts with his surroundings. Instead of a regular dodge maneuver, Spider-Man will go under a bad guy's legs or flip over him which leads him to his next attack without a stop in his motion. Throughout the game, you also have the choice of upgrading the webs that Spider-Man can use in his fights. These webs vary from electrical webs, web bombs, web mine trippers, and more. These different webs can help in a fight by dealing extra damage to villains or as a crowd control device to space out the villains surrounding you.

When not fighting, you must travel through the vast playground that is New York City. The map is ginormous and outdoes Arkham Knight easily. This makes for the game to feel less repetitive as I found myself traveling to new parts of the map 10 hours into the game.

Whether you are playing the main story or roaming around NYC, there are a plethora of costumes that you can wear that range from the vast corners of the Spider-Man mythos. The suits are earned through doing side missions like finding old backpacks of Peter which are left around the city, stopping a car chase, or fixing the communication towers on the map for the police. These suits are in the best that a spider-man game has ever had, they range from well-known ones like the Ben Reilly Scarlet Spider Suit to a lesser known alternate dimension suit where Spider-Man is ghost rider. Personally, my favorite suits are the Big Time Spider-Man suit and the DLC Iron Spider suit. These suits set themselves apart for me as they were my favorite suits from the comics and they look exactly the same in the game. With each suit, a new power is unlocked as well. For example, when you unlock the Scarlet Spider Suit, you can then make image decoys of yourself which tricks villains. These powers also come in handy when you get into battles with enemies as they are a major power upgrade and can change the tide of the battle in your favor.

Once you finish the game, there are DLC's for you to continue the story. These DLCs build off of the main story and the ramifications of what happened. They also get to go deeper into the Spider-Man mythos by using other characters like Black Cat and Hammerhead. These DLCs provide 9 more hours of fun and interesting story.

Lastly, this game wouldn't have the same feel if it wasn't for the great voice acting that is done by the cast. Yuri Lowenthal delivers a great Peter Parker as his voice brings out an honest, pure, yet mature version that fits the game perfectly.

This game was easily one of the best games of 2018 and should be played by anyone looking for 20 hours of heartfelt, thrilling, and visually stunning gameplay.



# ***SPIDER-MAN PS4***

*by Mark Fernandez*





# 2019 LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

by Ryan Eastep & Chris Ha



## 1. Korea

### SK Telecom T1:

Coming off a historically awful year for the 3-time world champions in which they failed to make the world championships for just the second time ever, SK Telecom (SKT) decided that it was time for a change and to start a new era. They went into the offseason looking to rebuild around their star, the undisputed greatest player to ever play League of Legends, mid laner Lee “Faker” Sang-hyeok. SKT’s goal was to acquire the best mechanical players to compliment Faker for the 2019 season and assembled a roster beyond anything imaginable. They replaced their notoriously weak top side with former Kingzone DragonX top laner Kim “Khan” Dong-ha and Kim “Clid” Tae-min, two players with astronomical potential given their mechanical prowess. SKT also replaced their longtime botlane of Bang of Wolf with Park “Teddy” Jin-seong, an incredible talent stuck previously surrounded with a lack of support around him, and Cho “Mata” Se-hyeong, a seasoned veteran widely considered to be the greatest to ever play support. This new superteam has extraordinary expectations and looks to help Faker with his redemption arc as he looks to reclaim his rightful place at the top of competitive League of Legends.

## 2. North America

### Team Liquid:

Team Liquid (TL) had a breakout year in the LCS. Having never won an LCS split, they closed the year with back to back split titles. This run was headed by arguably the best ad carry in North American history, Yiliang “Doublelift” Peng. However, North American titles were not enough for Team Liquid as they look to make their case for a World Championship. To do so, they had to upgrade their weak points in the roster. Mid Laner Eugene “Pobelter” Park and Support Joo Sung “Olleh” Kim, while fantastic in the LCS, could not produce results on the international stage. To reach the next level, TL signed Mid Laner Nicolaj “Jensen” Jensen and Support Yong In “CoreJJ” Jo. Jensen is one of the most talented aggressive Mid Laners in the LCS and has repeatedly shown his dominance in consecutive strong splits for Cloud 9. Jo also boasts an impressive resumé as he was on the 2017 World Championship winning team Samsung Galaxy. Both of these players provide a huge upgrade in what were the weakest points of TL’s roster. The upcoming year looks very promising for TL who are already the front runners for the LCS and could even become a dark horse to become the first world champions from North America.

### Team Solomid:

Similar to SKT, Team SoloMid (TSM) also felt it was time for drastic changes after failing to make worlds for the first time ever. The team decided to cut ties with former MVP candidate, top laner Kevin “Hauntzer” Yarnell, and brought in an explosive mechanical beast in Turkish 18-year old Sergen “BrokenBlade” Çelik. Complimenting their star mid laner in Søren “Bjergsen” Bjerg, TSM hopes that BrokenBlade will provide a similar impact to Bjergsen when he first arrived at the age of 18 and dominated the scene. Longtime botlane duo of 4 years Jesper “Zven” Svenningsen and Alfonso “Mithy” Rodríguez split up after experiencing major struggles during the 2018 Summer Split, as TSM made the decision to replace Mithy with Andy “Smoothie” Ta. Given Smoothie’s history as an in-game shotcaller, TSM is looking to add more vocal presence to their roster and Smoothie seems to be the perfect fit. Overall, TSM added significant firepower to an already solid roster, proving that they only want to add to their legacy as North America’s most successful organization ever.

### Golden Gaurdians:

After back-to-back dead last finishes in their debut year, Golden Guardians, (GGS) a team owned by the NBA powerhouse Golden State Warriors, completely wiped their roster in hopes





**TSM 2019: Team SoloMid's brand new roster**

of making significant strides as an organization. Keeping a couple of their solid pieces intact, GGS shook up the NA LCS by adding veteran mid laner and Worlds semifinalist Henrik “Froggen” Hansen. They also added Hauntzer from TSM in addition to Olleh from TL, rounding out what appears to be a solid roster capable of making a deep run in playoffs. There is no shortage of veterans, as the new additions have a combined 6 LCS titles across Europe and North America.

#### 100 Thieves:

100 Thieves (100T) made a significant statement in their first year in the NA LCS, making it all to finals in Spring and eventually qualifying for the 2018 World Championships, where, in a valiant effort, took third in their group but missed the knockout stage. That being said, 100T were plagued with inside issues and desperately needed a change of scenery within the team dynamic. They upgraded struggling mid laner Ryu with Choi “huhi” Jae-hyun and also added 2 time world champion Bang from SKT, strengthening what was already a formidable roster with perennial All-Pro top laner Kim “Ssumday” Chan-ho and 2018 Summer Split MVP Zaqueri “aphromoo” Black. 100T is looking to prove that their trip to worlds last year wasn’t a fluke, and that this year they can finally make an extra push towards an LCS title and make a

deep run at worlds.

#### 3. Europe Misfits Gaming:

Hailed as the Korean-slayers after almost dethroning SKT at Worlds quarterfinals in 2017, Misfits came into 2018 with high expectations, as many expected the European squad to go further at worlds in 2018 than the previous year. They failed to even qualify for the tournament, showing that their 2017-2018 roster had peaked, and it was time for a change. Keeping key players in AD Carry Steven “Hans Sama” Liv and jungler Nubar “Maxlore” Sarafian. They managed to acquire star Korean support Kang “Gorilla” Beom-hyeon from Kingzone DragonX, adding a much needed veteran with years of experience on the international stage. They got even more veterans in top laner Paul “sOAZ” Boyer and Fabian “Febiven” Diepstraten, two players who are past their primes, yet still have managed to stay relevant even in their declines. This Misfits roster on paper is one of the strongest Europe has even seen, and expectations will be high as they look to claim their first European title and perform internationally.

#### G2 Esports:

One of the underdogs of the 2018 World Championship, G2 eSports (G2) upset tournament favorites Royal Never Give Up in their semifinal run, cementing themselves as a legitimate threat both in

Europe and internationally. Even with that success, when a rare opportunity came their way, they pounced immediately. In what was undoubtedly the biggest shock of the offseason, G2 signed Europe’s Summer 2018 MVP, Fnatic’s Rasmus “Caps” Winther, moving their own star midlaner Luka “Perkz” Perkovic to the AD Carry role. The amount of raw talent on G2 considering that they kept their strong topside in Martin “Wunder” Hansen and Marcin “Jankos” Jankowski makes G2 the biggest hit or miss team for the upcoming 2019 season. The risk they’re taking by running two star mid laners on the same starting roster could prove to be either the best decision the made - or quite possibly the worst.



**World Champion CoreJJ returns to NA to bolster Team Liquid's chances at worlds**

# GAME WORLDS

by Spencer Kahn

The Game Awards for 2018 has officially announced their lineup of nominees for this year's celebration. Arguably the most popular of the various video game award ceremonies, being nominated for anything in this event is an achievement in and of itself. Looking at all the nominees, *God of War* and *Red Dead Redemption 2* seem to be the front-runners, with eight nominations each. Beyond just the prestigious Game of the Year award, the two games also share every other one of their nominations with each other, like Best Game Direction, Best Action/Adventure Game, and Best Score. While some may worry that "recency bias" will lean most votes towards *Red Dead Redemption 2*, it's important to note why people gravitate towards the game in general. What about *Red Dead* makes it so appealing to consumers? And how do other games even stand a chance in comparison?

I would say that what draws people into that game is the world it is set in. The entire game is modeled to be a painstakingly real adaption of the American West in 1899. It's almost absurd how detailed the game is, with thousands of unique animations that go unnoticed by many people, audio design that takes into effect distances between characters, and a world that can seem real to the human eye, with no prior knowledge that it's a game. Visual effects, like glare off of snow, and how slow every action feels only adds to this sense of realism. When the game launched, it was met with criticism due to it likely being a prime of example of the toxic "crunch-time culture" that the current game industry is made of. Each little detail can end up being hundreds of excessively long work days, with many developers feeling burnt out on the project. Even so, their work has received almost nothing but pure affection and praise, and the current review scores make this game seem nothing less than a masterpiece.

So why play something else? This game is almost as if you took a snapshot of the

real world and made it playable. A real, living and breathing game environment that you can roam around in freely. Who wouldn't want to at least mess around in that world for a while? With the game being so hyper-realistic, and becoming a critical and commercial success, why would any game come out with less meticulously crafted details?

Game criticism from any angle is purely subjective, everyone is allowed their own opinion. There are people out there, like me, who aren't personally bursting at the seams to play *Red Dead*. Every single gaming outlet is basically shoving a giant glowing sign in my face telling me to play it, and yet I don't feel compelled to. This is due to how a game uses its world in combination with its gameplay.

Games are made up of many parts, and how well some game is executed is clearly related to how well each component works in tandem. For example, let me compare the way the world is used in two other Game of the Year nominees that I played, *Spider-Man* and *Celeste* (Which are also currently my picks for favorite game I've played this year).

In *Spider-Man*, you play as, well, *Spider-Man*, and swing around Manhattan beating up the thugs that run amok on the streets. While the world may seem like a completely faithful recreation of the city, many elements are missing, like most streets and buildings. However, Every major Manhattan landmark is included, and each function as part of an ongoing photography side quest through the game. Because of this, it seems incredibly real to the common Twitch viewer or couch-sharer watching someone else play the game. The miniature Manhattan is used as a means of movement, *Spider-Man* needs to use the skyscrapers to swing around. The real Manhattan is much more linear in practice, and that would make the game more confusing to traverse, with many streets blending together and avenues looking similar at a glance. You're also limited to viewing the city from the sky,

upon further inspection it's revealed you can't quite enter any store you feel like. *Spider-Man's* Manhattan may take more creative liberties with the borough, but this results in a more appealing game from a design perspective. Similarly, almost all players of *Spider-Man* don't seem to care about the fact that the world isn't hyper realistic- the other aspects of the game draw them in.

The same can be said about *Celeste*, a pixelated platformer that hit PC and Switch in January, with releases on other consoles following soon. It's extremely difficult but never feels impossible, with each attempt at a level fueling the ever-growing desire to beat it. Combined with a lovely story about dealing with anxiety and hypnotically great music, and you get a delightfully complete package of a game. The game gets its name from the titular *Celeste* Mountain, which the main character, Madeline, is forcing herself to climb despite the horror stories she's heard about it. The locale of the game may seem to be the main attraction, being the title and all, but it actually plays second-fiddle to almost all other game elements in execution. What sets this game apart, according to reviews, is the combination of its tight controls, gripping story, and fantastic music. No mention of a realistic world to be found. And yet, it's being regarded as a masterpiece on the same level as both *Spider-Man* and *Red Dead 2*.

So, I'll repeat a question I posed earlier, "why play anything that isn't a meticulously detailed depiction of the real world?" The answer, I hope, now is obvious, because that isn't the only thing players want. We want places and worlds to get lost in, sure, but we also want unforgettable experiences. A game is only as good as its components, like I mentioned before. With enough time and effort put into every separate part of game, developers can create an experience just as interesting and appealing as the world we live in, without the need to mimic it.





# SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE

by Ryan Leung

The newest addition to the Smash Bros franchise, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, is finally here after a long four-year wait. Boasting a sizeable cast of 74, Ultimate includes every character that has ever been in any iteration of Smash, hailing from the classic Nintendo games as well as other fan favorites like Final Fantasy and Metal Gear Solid. In addition, Ultimate also has 103 unique stages, even more impressive when considering that each can be shaped to player preference with options to modify stage hazards and omega/battlefield mode. It is truly the full package, bringing back a robust single-player mode in World of Light that offers over 20 hours of gameplay as well as a spirits mode with over 1300 characters to collect. From a content standpoint, Smash Ultimate exceeds every expectation despite being one of the most highly anticipated games of the year.

There are many new and unique mechanics in Smash Ultimate, with the first being smash meter. While final smashes have been in the game before, the smash meter is a new way of integrating it into standard gameplay. It functions very similarly to super combo gauge in street fighter - as you give and receive damage, your smash meter will charge. Once it's charged you unlock a weaker version of your final smash. Another new feature is the stage morph, allowing players to choose two stages instead of one and throughout the battle. When enabled, the stage will morph back and forth between the two that were selected, making games both fun and somewhat unpredictable. Smash Ultimate are now players to select any stage in Battlefield or Omega modes, keeping the theme but making it legal for competitive play. Although, the most important new feature is the ability to turn

stage hazards off. In the past, lots of stages were deemed not legal in competitive play because of their respective stage hazards, leaving many smash games with untapped potential. In Ultimate, these stages are now legal in competitive play, with the stage hazard option being the reason why. A prime example of this is Pokemon Stadium 2, which in the past was not allowed in competitive play, but is now tournament legal and extremely popular. Possibly the most underappreciated change in Ultimate is how rulesets can be saved. This facilitates the ability to change the rules to how you feel like playing in that particular moment. So instead of having to go through all the rules changing them to how you want to play at that moment, you can now just select one of your premade sets. There are some other more minor changes like enhancing sudden death so that the screen can shrink and the game will drop bob-ombs too. The Smash Bros franchise has always been hard-pressed to please two types of people who play Smash - those who play Smash casually and enjoy the chaos of items, 8-player smash, stage hazards, and final smashes, and those who compete professionally and prefer to eliminate the randomness of the game. Smash Ultimate is so far the most accommodating for both groups of players. The new features can make an already chaotic and random game even crazier, while the ability to turn all these rules and stage hazards off gives the competitive scene even more stages to play on.

In addition to the new rules, there are many other single player game modes. Classic Mode makes a return but has been slightly tweaked. Every fighter now has their own customized gauntlet of six opponents. 100-man Smash, All-Star mode, and Cruel Smash are all

back, though there is a noticeable lack of the iconic target and challenge mode. Smashdown and Squad Strike are the two new modes that have been introduced. In Smashdown when a character is chosen and played in a game, in the next game characters that were chosen become unavailable to play again and players play until all the characters are gone. Squad Strike allows players to choose up to five different fighters to play in the same match. After your first fighter loses all of its lives you then start fighting with the second fighter you choose.

When you first get the game you only have 11 characters unlocked. The original 8 characters and the 3 Miis (if you choose to create them). To unlock the rest of the cast you can either play in versus mode or World of Light. In addition to the 74 characters that are currently in the cast, there are two confirmed DLC characters that will be released later this year - Piranha plant and Joker from Persona 5. The cast offers a wide variety of possible playstyles, from zoning with projectiles to a more aggressive rush down style. Some of the more notable new characters are Simon and Richter Belmont from the Castlevania series, King K Rool from Donkey Kong, Ridley from Metroid, and Isabelle from Animal Crossing.

Even though multiplayer is the most popular feature of Super Smash Bros Ultimate, there is also a big single-player draw called Spirits. There are over 1300 collectible spirits in Super Smash Bros Ultimate ranging from instantly recognizable characters like Mario to completely obscure characters like DeMille from Tomato Adventure, a Japan-only RPG for the Gameboy Advance. The most impressive component of Spirits is that Nintendo has created a fun challenge that you need to complete to get each





individual spirit. Each battle is also tailored to characteristics of the spirit you are collecting. Snorlax's spirit, for example, is a giant King K Rool which doesn't move. Spirits are equippable grant the player buffs when playing World of Light. You equip a primary spirit as well as three support spirits. You can also level up your spirits by feeding them various items so that they give yourself an even greater buff.

In the new adventure mode, titled World of Light, Galeem and his army of master hands have captured all of the spirits and characters, except for Kirby, who managed to escape. Galeem then engulfs the world in his light and creates puppet fighters that are clones of the fighters that he controls. These fighters are created with the sole purpose of stopping Kirby from freeing his friends. World of Light features a navigable world map which is somewhat similar to the Classic Mode on the Smash 3DS. Spirits and imprisoned fighters are stationed around the map as rendered figures, and when you approach one of them, you start a fight to unlock the spirit of fighter that again has a related theme. If you win the battle, you unlock the fighter or spirit to use in your quest to defeat Galeem. The main goal is to unlock all of the spirits and fighters, and eventually defeat the final boss Galeem and the later revealed Dharkon, to win back control of the world and keep light and dark in balance.

Another way to upgrade your character in World of Light is to upgrade your skill tree. Between the spirits that can be upgraded and the skill tree, I found that even though it took me around twenty hours to complete the story, and that by the tenth hour I was able to find the right spirits and upgrade my skill tree enough so that every battle I entered was relatively easy. With that, there was no need to try and unlock new spirits or upgrade my skill tree. I ended up using the same strategy in every game I played and the last ten or so hours, and eventually it became super repetitive.

The only mode that has some serious problems is the online multiplayer mode. First thing first, before you are even able to play online you have to pay for Nintendo's online services, priced at twenty dollars a year. Even once you start playing online, you immediately notice the often poor connection that you and your opponent have. Not only will your game lag and sometimes crash because it, but oftentimes you will not even play with your preferred rules. Even though you can indicate which set of rules and stages you would like to play with if you get paired up with someone who has a different set of rules and stages that they would prefer to play with, you could end up playing on Pac-Land on stamina mode with items and final smash meter on, when you really just wanted to play Battlefield with 3 stocks. If you plan on playing seriously

online I would highly recommend getting an ethernet adaptor for your Switch to make sure you have the best connection on your end at least. Winning online games will give you Global Smash Power, or GSP, for the character you win with. As you collect more and more GSP on a character eventually you will unlock a mode in online called Elite Smash. Elite Smash is a way for more skilled players in the game to play each other instead of having to play people who play the game more casually. Players in Elite Smash will mostly play a more consistent ruleset that most people who play the game seriously prefer and by playing people who are also very good at the game you can improve quicker.

Smash Ultimate is the most ambitious addition to the Super Smash Bros Franchise to date because of it's extremely long and content filled single player mode, huge amounts of characters and stages to play, new rules and game modes, and accessibility for all types of players. Although it may fall short in some aspects like online multiplayer and an unnecessarily long campaign mode, Smash Ultimate lives up to the expectations of a Smash Bros game and further refines the balance between a chaotic, random, party game and a competitive, high skillcap fighting game.

# RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

by Victor Dimitrov

By just looking at the game you can tell that Rockstar's game makers have poured a lot of effort into Red Dead Redemption 2 and the fruits of their labor truly show. A hundred hours wandering through this M-rated digital wild will still leave you wanting more. Red Dead is an action-adventure game that combines an open world with RPG to create an incredible experience.

Gamers play as Arthur Morgan, the trusted right-hand man to Dutch Van der Linde, himself the leader of the infamous Van der Linde gang. As the story begins, the gang flees from a heist in Blackwater after the job goes wrong. They enter the mountains, on the run and on the verge of starvation. The gang is barely surviving due to the ravages of a swirling, deadly snowstorm around them. It's a struggle just to stay alive as they hunt, fight for food, battle surrounding gangs and look for ways to keep moving to the next town, or the next bank robbery.

Arthur Morgan has some good-guy attributes, however, he is a criminal, an antihero. Even if a gamer tries to choose the straight and narrow, Arthur will still find himself in scores of fist fights and gun battles. In-game slow-motion effects highlight well-placed headshots and critical wounds as blood spouts and sprays and spills.

In the game's initial mission tutorials, players learn about the general mechanics of gameplay, which range from gunfights to horseback riding, from hunting to fishing, and all of the other actions and duties that you might expect to fulfill if you were physically plopped down into that savagely Wild West world.

After a failed robbery in the western town of Blackwater, Arthur Morgan and the Van der Linde gang are condemned

to life on the run. With federal agents hunting the gang the members must rob, steal and fight their way across the rugged American terrain to survive. Deepening internal divisions threaten to destroy the gang and Arthur has to choose his loyalty to the gang who raised him and his own morality.

“After a failed robbery in the western town of Blackwater, Arthur Morgan and the Van der Linde gang are condemned to life on the run.”

The game is full of intense moral choices to consider. As you might expect in this often amoral Western setting, there are scores of choices to make that impact you. Do you stop and help that stranded guy with the broken wagon wheel or aid the fellow keeling over from a snakebite? Do you threaten someone who witnessed a crime? Do you ride out and kill just because it suits your fancy. The game is full of these choices, and it is up to the

player to decide what type of person they want to be.

Each choice results in a gain or loss of Honor that shifts the meter on your morality system—impacting how other people react to you, how much money you'll earn, and more. As in real life, the choices you make can come back to haunt you months or years later. For instance, running into the widow whose life you devastated when you murdered her husband long ago can be a difficult interaction and an perfect example of how your choices will impact future game play.

An additional feature of Red Dead Redemption 2 is online. Having just been released, there is a lot of work left to be done, but the online promises co-op and competitive play with others, allowing you to do missions and complete tasks and challenges by yourself or with a group. This lets players enjoy the game with their friends as well, and even though the online is not very good right now, because of how amazing this game was to play, I still have hope that through updates, the online will improve.

Red Dead Redemption 2 is all about the experiences of the game, featuring difficult and gritty experiences that crowd in on you. Of course, it's all those real-feeling, real-sounding and slowly seeping-in adventures that will inevitably produce a really good play-through of the game. These characteristics make this Red Dead more than just a good game but a true masterpiece. The wide range of experiences within the game adds significantly to the game's charm and appeal. With amazing features and an incredible amount of gameplay time, I would highly recommend this game to anyone.





# POKEMON GO REBOOT

by Ernesto Marks

Fans of the Pokemon franchise were incredibly excited during the months leading up to the launch of the waited mobile game Pokemon Go. The first trailer which was revealed in September of 2015 and sparked the hype that surrounded the game's launch. Pokémon Go launched on July 6, 2016. Its release was met with mass popularity, hitting 100 million downloads by the end of August. The app brought a dream to reality for the massive Pokémon fanbase. Everyone wants to capture and train Pokémon in the real world, and for many Pokémon Go was a way to live that dream. Entire neighborhoods of people traveled with friends and family looking to catch every Pokémon they could find. However, it didn't take long for this popularity to die out. Unfixed bugs in the game such as the three step glitch, the constant crashing of the game caused by incredibly high server traffic, and a lack of updates slowly turned away previously dedicated players. In particular, the three step glitch in particular was a major problem that prevented people from seeing how near or far Pokemon were and never got fixed. Instead the step system was removed completely leaving people with no way to track Pokemon leaving players even more frustrated. Despite the game's imperfections, Pokémon Go was able to maintain a player base. The event which many say truly "killed" Pokémon Go was the first Pokémon Go Fest in Lincoln Park, Chicago. This event sold out near instantly and managed to draw in

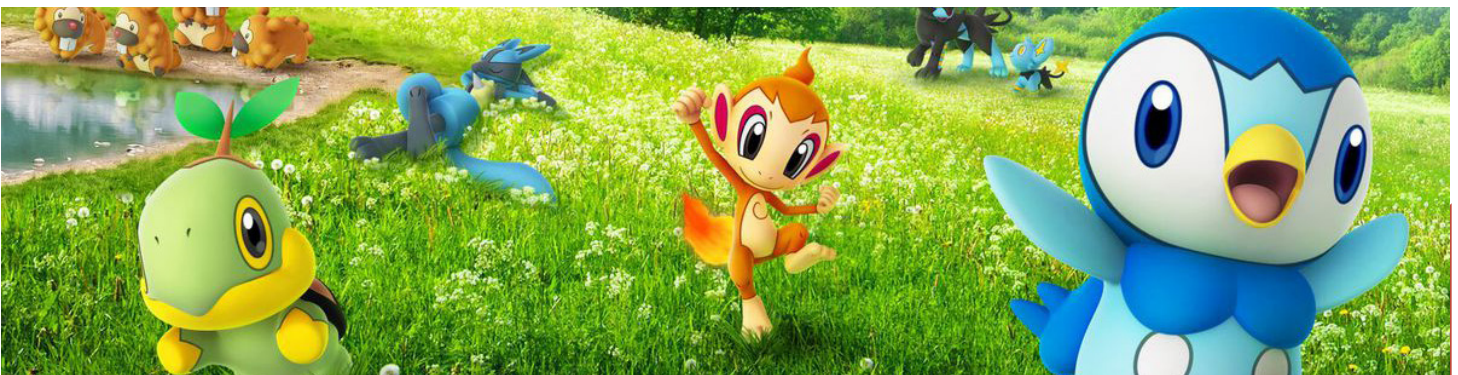
a crowd of almost 20,000 people. Despite the apparent success, Niantic was not prepared to handle so many active players in the same place. People who had spent hundreds of dollars for tickets, travel, and board were incredibly disappointed to see the game crashing left and right, with some unable to even launch the app at all. Crowds chanted "we can't play" and jeered at the Niantic CEO, John Hanke, as he stepped out to make a public statement on the quality of gameplay. Pokémon Go Fest 2017 was the lowest point in terms of publicity for Pokémon Go.

More than a year later, where is the community now? Does anyone still play? Is Pokémon Go dead? Despite a loss in faith, the game is back on the incline, with 60-65 million active players in the summer of 2018. This growth stems from the resolution of many of the problems that plagued the game during its 2016 peak as well as the announcement of the companion games Let's Go Pikachu and Let's Go Eevee on the Nintendo Switch. These companion games directly interact with Pokemon Go and incentivised players of either of the Let's Go titles to play Pokemon Go. Most glitches in the game have been patched, and a steady stream of updates to the game add fresh context and events to maintain player interest. Since the launch of Pokémon Go the number of Pokémon in the game has gone from 151 to 398, and long awaited features such as trading have been added. A new tracking system that gives you the exact location of a nearby Pokémon has been implemented,

finally providing a replacement to the old steps system. Raid battles have also been added to the game. In Raids, groups of up to 20 people fight one ultra powerful legendary Pokémon for a chance to catch it, reminiscent of the fight against Mewtwo in the original launch trailer. Each addition has brought players back to the community.

While the community is about half the size of the 130 million player peak it is still as strong as ever in terms of interaction. Active players have formed groups in order to meet up and play together, discord servers, such as the NYC channel with over 8,500 members, organize meetups in all Boroughs for trading, battles, rare sightings and in-game events. They keep players up to date with all Pokémon Go news and share the top strategies to in-game success. Their meetups are well organized and well attended. I personally attended a meet up in Manhattan for an Articuno event and was surprised to see a group of about 100 people ready to battle in raids together.

Through the game's lifespan it had many highs and lows. We saw errors on Niantic's end shrink the player base, and then corrections and improvement from Niantic raise the player base back up. With the steady rate of improvement to the game, Pokemon Go could easily reach new heights. Despite Pokemon Go's low points, I can confidently say that the game is nowhere near dead.





# POKEMON LET'S GO EEVEE/PICKACHU

by Ryan Eastep

With the release of the Nintendo Switch back in March 2017, one question was on everyone's minds: When was Pokemon going to release, and how would it function on the new console? That question is finally answered with Pokemon Let's Go Eevee and Pokemon Let's Go Pikachu, released in November 2018. But how does it stack up versus previous iterations of the game? Was it worth the wait?

Although Let's Go is essentially a remake of the beloved Pokemon Yellow for the Nintendo Gameboy, there are some notable deviations from the original. For starters, it's very clear right from the get-go that Let's Go is a beginner-friendly game. Usually a staple in the series, wild Pokemon encounters were drastically changed in Let's Go in favor of a more simplified system. Not only was the random aspect of tall grass removed, but you no longer battle wild Pokemon if you choose to start an encounter. To make up for this, the catching system functions similarly to that of Pokemon Go through the use of berries and motion control. Overall, it creates a simple yet satisfying replacement for the traditional system which although it doesn't appeal to

everyone, is a welcome change for many, especially those unfamiliar with previous Pokemon games.

Unlike the original, Let's Go lacks Hidden Machines, or HMs for short. HMs, up until Generation VII and the release of Sun & Moon, were a staple to any traditional Pokemon game. Similar to Sun & Moon, Let's Go fulfills the concept of moves that can interact with the overworld, just not in the form of HMs. Not having to support the use of HMs, the game feels much less restricted and feels like a change most players, both new and experienced, are happy with.

Visually, the game is stunning. Let's Go perfectly encapsulates how a Pokemon game should look on the Switch, and the user interface feels great on a single screen. Transitions, as the story progresses, are incredibly smooth, as it rarely feels awkward compared to the generations of dual-screen gameplay in the past. Frame lag is almost never an issue, as Let's Go runs quite solidly at 30 frames per second, which isn't all that bad when considering the outstanding visuals. Eevee + Pikachu are incredibly well executed, with their adorable facial expressions and actions making the story even more enjoyable to progress. Visuals as a whole represent a positive step forward for both Nintendo and Pokemon games in the future and prove to be one of the biggest pros of the game.

Battling is key to any Pokemon experience - it's the core element of gameplay alongside exploring the region, and Let's Go makes sure that it stayed true to this idea. That being said, the battling experience is the game is significantly less rewarding and interactive than that of its predecessors. First of all, there are way too many battles as you explore the region.

Whether its the dozens of monotone Team Rocket members or gruelingly trying to walk north of Cerulean City, the sheer amount of unnecessary battles can end up leaving players quite drained. Even worse, many battles usually end up with multiple one-hit KOs in the player's favor, given that the starter granted at the beginning of the story has extremely overloaded stats and a versatile moveset. Also, if it wasn't easy enough, players can "call" for an ally trainer (using an additional Joycon), effectively turning any battle into a one-sided 2 versus 1. The combination of both the length in addition to the non-interactive nature of the battles results in an experience very lackluster when considering the standard for a Pokemon game, and is one of the major flaws present in Let's Go.

Overall, while Let's Go lays a solid foundation for how a Switch Pokemon game should feel and look, and while it does provide a good start for new players, its flaws seem to overshadow its benefits, especially in the eyes of veteran players. The changes to both capture mechanics, difficulty, and battling tarnish an outstanding game visually and left many disappointed. That isn't to say that there isn't hope for when the Generation VIII Pokemon game releases next, however. Although Let's Go released rather recently, players are already hyped up for the next game, considering that we know it will stay truer to the philosophy of standard Pokemon games. But until then, Pokemon Let's Go Eevee and Let's Go Pikachu will remain as nothing more than a disappointing placeholder, lacking what many came to love about the series in the first place.

Rating: 8/10



# NBA 2K19

by Mark Fernandez

The NBA 2K series is back with NBA 2K19 which brings a load of adjustments to the already established game. Backing off the cover athlete LeBron James, NBA 2K19 tries to be the greatest game in the series to date. The game is the most realistic to date, but is that the best for the game?

Overall the gameplay is very similar with all the buttons still relating to their respective movements, but once again 2K throws away the prior year's shot meter to show a new and improved version. While this could be an improvement, it also becomes annoying for players to relearn it every year. The biggest improvement to the game is the adjustment of not letting players automatically drive past each other, especially with guards going against big men. This adjustment makes it so that to drive by players more skill is required. This adjustment frankly makes the game much harder when starting off as player's game styles can completely change because of this. Instead of isolating and right away getting to the basket, players have to use energy on their team by making moves to finally get to the basket.

Speaking of getting to the basket, 2K

has added a shot meter for layups to make it more realistic. Instead of having it be automatic, the game has given the players more power over how good they can finish at the rim. This addition was smart as it doesn't guarantee the layup and lets you make sense of why you either missed or made a layup, another example of the realism in this game.

A place where you notice all of these gameplay additions is in the "my career" mode, which has multiple changes to it as well. The big change is the story which takes a different course this year as it takes your player overseas. This is interesting, as the journey for your "my player" has always been one that stays in the states. The beginning of the story is also much longer than it has been in the past as you go from overseas to the G league and finally to the NBA. The whole thing takes about 45 minutes before you can go to the neighborhood. The neighborhood (the free roam part of my career) has changed as well with it being in a square formation and the playground courts are in the middle of the square. NBA 2K tried to make the my career more interesting by hiring Anthony Mackie and Michael Rapaport to play characters in the game, yet it does

not help it much. I found myself wanting to skip through the scenes as all I wanted to do was get to the NBA and Neighborhood. Once you get to the NBA, the cutscenes seem to diminish and all that is left is just playing the games. It is still a fun game mode, but different in some ways.

Another change to 2K is that to play Pro-Am with your friends you need 5 players instead of 3. This was a horrible change as it stops some players from playing as getting 5 players is very difficult for the average player. Pro-Am is personally my favorite mode as my friends and I have always played together, but by needing 5 players we only can play at certain times which ruins it for us. Hopefully, this can get patched through updates, but it will probably stay the same.

Overall, 2K is still a great game that brings basketball to life for players, but it tries to be too perfect which leads to some errors in adjustments. The game's charm is still there, allowing people to play as their favorite players and teams, which is a part of the experience that is still amazing. Hopefully as the year goes on, 2K will fix these problems and firmly grasp the title of the best in the series.





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Ken Masters, a character from the Street Fighter series, is shown in a dynamic fighting pose. He has blonde hair and is wearing his signature red gi with a black belt. His right arm is extended forward with a clenched fist, and his left hand is held palm-forward. The background features a bright blue energy blast or fire effect against a dark blue sky with stars. In the lower-left background, a portion of a white house with a window is visible. The ground is a mix of green grass and yellowish-brown dirt.

# COME WRITE FOR PIXELATED!

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