The Panther Press

High School Newspaper

Volume 11
Issue #2

KROB

Winter 2024

My Favorite Video Game Studio (and their ongoing decline)

VALVE

Josie Attisano

VALVE is a well known video game development company, responsible for timeless titles like Team Fortress 2, CS:GO, Half-Life, and creating and maintaining the popular PC gaming service Steam. In this article, different accomplishments of the studio will be reviewed and dissected as the company has shifted interests over the years.

HALF-LIFE [1998]

The game that all other FPS games were inspired from, Half-Life was an incredibly innovative sci-fi first person shooter with a dramatic and exciting overarching story and 3D graphics. It was one of the first games released that had such incredible and thought-out worldbuilding, a path that Valve continued down as they released more games with incredible world and character development. Half-Life raised the standards of the genre immensely from the popular Doom that was released in 1993 (just 5 years prior). Half-Life's 27th anniversary recently passed, having occurred on November 19th.





THE ORANGE BOX [2007]

The Orange Box was the quintessential package that Valve sold, containing the incredibly popular Half-Life in addition to two new games, Team Fortress 2, and Portal. These games have iconic storylines and gameplay, building to the exceptional reputation of the company, and drawing in millions of new players. The dark and mysterious atmosphere of Portal was in excellent contrast with the bright and fast-paced humor and action of Team Fortress 2, which was based off of a mod of Quake, which released in 1996.

PORTAL 2 [2011]

The successor of Portal, Portal 2 vastly improved upon the graphics of the game and developed a breathtaking story that will leave you in awe and in shock at every twist and turn. And you'll be crying by the end of it, if you're anything like me.



COUNTER STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE [2012]

Counter Strike Global Offensive was insanely well received and quickly became a very competitive game. CS:GO is a first-person shooter with roots in skill based gameplay and complex strategy, and was insanely influential in the gaming community. CS:GO was originally built as a mod of Half-Life before becoming a fully fledged game, similar to the humble beginnings of TF2.





DOTA 2 [2013]

Dota 2 is a sequel to Defense of the Ancients, mod created by the community surrounding Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos. Dota 2 is classified as a multiplayer online battle arena, or MOBA, in which two teams try to destroy each other's "Ancient", a large magical structure, while simultaneously defending their own. This game was very popular, but not as popular as some of the other titles in this selection.

HALF: LIFE ALYX (VR) [2020]

Half-Life: Alyx was the long awaited third release of the Half-Life series. This game was released in a Virtual Reality format, which limited the player base, but allowed for incredible immersion and interaction with the environments and the story of the game. The Virtual Reality aspect of this game shows the strides that VLAVE was continuing to make to stay modern and innovative.



Gradually, and unfortunately, Valve began transitioning from a company that makes incredible games to a company that neglects incredible games At this time, most of the games that Valve had created were created and voice acted by a select group of people, who worked on every game they were releasing. This became an issue because when moving onto creating new products, they didn't maintain a large enough team to tend to their past creations. Bots overran CS:GO and TF2 servers, making them almost completely unplayable. Fans of these games had consistently voiced their disappointment and anger on Valve's neglect to little avail. Additionally, Valve was neglecting people who played on consoles, like PlayStation or Xbox. Console players experienced little to no updates, which was particularly troublesome for fans of TF2, as it is an online game that constantly was receiving small tweaks to fix servers and add new items and features to the game.

After a few years of releasing sub-par titles and card games that nobody really asked for, Valve released a console of its very own, the Steam Deck (2023). This portable gaming system was created to rival the Nintendo Switch (2017), and was received with much excitement by Valve fans. However, Valve's release of the Steam Deck seemingly marked the end of an era. Now, it has been many years since Valve has released a well-received game. Now, they simply maintain Steam as millions of people's favorite games rot away in minimally maintained servers.

loveactually

Anna Benhardt

The holiday season is an amazing time of the year when people gather with their family and friends, where they sometimes love to sit and watch Christmas movies. Number 14 on the list of most watched Christmas movies is the amazing romcom, Love Actually. Love Actually is a 2003 Christmas romantic comedy film that was written and directed by Richard Curtis and produced by Duncan Kenworthy. The film takes place in London, England, and depicts many different stories about people's lives and the love surrounded by them. Some stories include that of a little boy and his widowed father, a woman and her newlywed husband whose best friend is secretly in love with her, a Mayor who is secretly in love with his secretary, and a man who is in love with his maid who can't speak english. The storyline switches back and forth between all the different characters and their own life stories all going through their own struggles during the holiday season. Love Actually is an absolute Christmas classic, and is a wonderful and warm way to bring holiday cheer to the winter months.











Running in winter Vs. Running in summer: Which is better for your health?



Kevin Kuriacose

Studies have shown that running in the chilly winter weather can have major benefits towards health that are similar to running in the summer. One must run in several layers to keep warm while running in the cold. There are many pros and cons to running in the winter.

PROS

- **Increased Blood Flow**

In warmer temperatures, many animals, including humans, sweat as a cooling mechanism to cool down safely in the hot sun. However, in the already cold winter, you wouldn't need to sweat, which can lead to more effective blood flow to other parts of the body instead of the sweat glands.

- **Lower Heart Rate**

Along with more blood pumping through the body, winter running benefits the runner by allowing more blood to be utilized in the body as the heart rate of the person is lower, in part because sweating is reduced as well as other homeostasis mechanisms.

CONS

- **Freezing Temperatures**

This was pretty obvious, but running in pretty low temperatures can lead to uncomfortableness and sickness despite the body heating up while running. This can also be detrimental to progress as incidents like frostbite or slipping on ice can injure the runner. It's important to keep on the lookout for dangerous icy patches or wintery debris while running in this weather.

- **Heavy clothing**

Unlike summer running where you don't wear extra layers, in the winter to be safe, you have to wear layers that could weigh you down. Running in winter footwear like boots isn't the smartest move either, as they can interrupt running form and cause injury. One should do proper research on proper footwear, such as running boots, to prevent possible injury in icy climates.

EUROPA

Ellis Worcester

THE UNASSUMING MOON

Out of the nearly one-hundred moons orbiting Jupiter, perhaps the most interesting one is Europa. It is so interesting, in fact, that NASA launched a space probe called the 'Europa Clipper' in order to learn more about the moon. It is not the largest moon, nor is it particularly interesting to look at, but this unassuming moon could perhaps be the most interesting in our solar system. Europa is our best chance at finding alien life in the milky way.

EUROPA UNVEILED

Europa is a fairly large moon at about 90% the size of our moon. (Note: Earth's moon is abnormally huge). Astronomers believe it formed from leftover material from Jupiter's formation, making it about as old as the Solar System proper. Interestingly, Europa shares this property with three other large moons of Jupiter which astronomers call a "mini-solar system" around Jupiter. Europa somewhat resembles Earth in form: an iron core surrounded by rock and saltwater. However, a thick layer of ice surrounds the water. Visually, Europa appears like an ice-blue ball cut with red cracks composed of salt and sulfur.

LIFE (POSSIBLY)

We have no proof of life on Europa. That being said, Europa has qualities which make it one of the most likely celestial bodies in our solar system to be habitable to life; apart from Earth, of course. Europa shares many substances with Earth that make life possible here, like liquid water, carbon, hydrogen, etc. Additionally, astronomers believe there could be an energy source on Europa which could sustain life, which could potentially be radiation from Jupiter or volcanic activity. Either way, life is still incredibly rare – and if we do find life, it will not be like aliens we imagine in our fiction. Life would probably look something like how the first life on Earth did: tiny microbes at the bottom of the ocean feeding off of an underwater volcano.

The 'Europa Clipper' will be arriving at its destination in April 2030. It may be some time whether we know for sure if life calls the moon home. Either way, it is a fascinating moon, and scientists can look forward to gathering more information about it and its possibility of life in approximately five and a half years.

Snow Bunnies

Jayden Deangelis



Snow bunnies, often referred to as "snow hares," are a unique species of rabbit that have adapted to cold, snowy environments. These creatures, primarily found in regions with long, harsh winters, are a marvel of nature's ability to adapt. Their ability to thrive in extreme cold and their special characteristics set them apart from other rabbits, making them an intriguing subject for study. Understanding the physical traits, habitat, diet, behavior, and the challenges they face in the wild can help us appreciate the remarkable nature of snow bunnies.

Physically, snow bunnies are well-equipped to survive in their frigid habitats. Their fur is a key feature that allows them to endure the cold. In the winter, their coats are thick, fluffy, and often turn white, providing excellent camouflage against the snowy landscape. During the warmer months, their fur changes to brown or gray, blending into the earthy surroundings. This seasonal transformation helps them avoid predators, making it harder for hawks, foxes, and other predators to spot them. Additionally, snow bunnies have large, powerful hind legs that are built for swift movements, especially in deep snow, and their paws are wide, acting like natural snowshoes to prevent sinking into the snow.

The habitat of snow bunnies is generally characterized by cold, snowy regions, including parts of the Arctic, high mountain ranges, and temperate areas with harsh winters. These areas are often covered in thick snow for much of the year, and the snow bunny's ability to blend into this environment is crucial for survival. Snow bunnies build their nests in burrows or in snowdrifts, where they can hide and stay protected from the elements. These creatures tend to be solitary, though some species may come together during mating seasons. They are well adapted to living in environments where shelter is scarce, and the temperatures are consistently low.

Diet-wise, snow bunnies primarily feed on grasses, shrubs, and the bark of trees. In the winter months, when fresh vegetation is scarce, they rely on the bark and twigs of trees like willows and birches. Their strong, sharp teeth help them gnaw through the tough outer layers of plants. Snow bunnies are herbivores and have developed strategies to survive in environments where food can be hard to come by. In fact, they are known to cache food in their burrows to help sustain them during periods of food scarcity, especially during the harshest winters.

Despite their many adaptations, snow bunnies face significant challenges in the wild. Climate change poses a growing threat to their survival, as warmer winters may disrupt the timing of their coat changes, making them more visible to predators. Additionally, habitat loss due to human expansion and environmental changes further threatens their populations. As these animals are integral parts of their ecosystems, the decline in snow bunny populations could have cascading effects on other species that rely on them for food or other ecological benefits. Conservation efforts to protect their natural habitats and mitigate climate change are essential for ensuring the survival of these remarkable creatures.

Snow bunnies are extraordinary animals that have evolved specialized traits to survive in harsh, snowy environments. Their physical adaptations, such as their thick fur and wide paws, along with their ability to blend into their surroundings, are vital for their survival. While they face challenges from climate change and habitat destruction, their resilience and unique characteristics make them an important symbol of nature's ability to adapt. Protecting snow bunnies and their environments is crucial not only for the species itself but also for maintaining the balance of the ecosystems they inhabit.







Top 10 Sitcoms

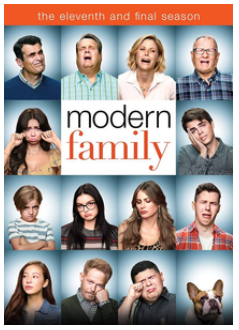
Aubrey Earle & Hazel Myers

New Girl



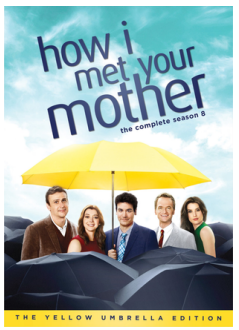
After a rough breakup, quirky and offbeat teacher Jess Day moves into a loft with three single guys: cynical bartender Nick, overconfident marketing associate Schmidt, and former athlete Winston. Together, they navigate relationships, careers, and adulthood, forming an unconventional but tight-knit family. The show blends humor, heartfelt moments, and awkward encounters as the group grows individually and collectively.

Modern Family



Modern Family – This mockumentary-style sitcom follows three interconnected Los Angeles families: patriarch Jay Pritchett and his vivacious wife Gloria, along with her son Manny; Jay's daughter Claire, her goofball husband Phil Dunphy, and their three kids; and Jay's son Mitchell, a high-strung lawyer, his theatrical husband Cameron, and their adopted daughter Lily. The show humorously explores parenting, marriage, and family dynamics, highlighting the love and chaos that bind them together.

How I Met Your Mother



Ted Mosby recounts to his children the long and winding story of how he met their mother. Set in New York City, the series follows Ted's journey through love, heartbreak, and friendship alongside his close-knit group: charming womanizer Barney, independent Robin, and the married couple Marshall and Lily. With humor, heartfelt moments, and clever storytelling, the show navigates relationships and adulthood, culminating in the long-awaited reveal of the mother.

That 70's Show



Set in the fictional town of Point Place, Wisconsin, this sitcom follows a group of teenage friends growing up in the 1970s. Eric Forman, who lives with his strict father Red and loving mother Kitty, spends most of his time hanging out in his basement with his friends: rebellious Donna, dim-witted Kelso, vain Jackie, sarcastic Hyde, and eccentric exchange student Fez. Together, they navigate adolescence, relationships, and the challenges of growing up amid the cultural shifts of the '70s.

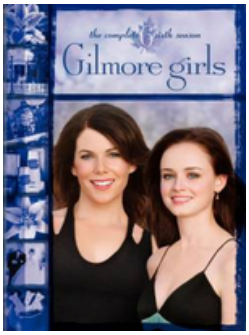
Jane the Virgin



Jane Villanueva, a devout young Latina woman, finds her life turned upside down when she is accidentally artificially inseminated during a routine medical check-up. Despite being a virgin, she becomes pregnant, leading to complications involving her longtime boyfriend Michael, the baby's biological father Rafael, and the telenovela-style twists of her life. The series blends romance, humor, and heartfelt moments while exploring themes of family, love, and destiny.

Gilmore Girls

This heartwarming dramedy follows witty single mother Lorelai Gilmore and her academically driven daughter Rory as they navigate life in the charming town of Stars Hollow. The show explores their close mother-daughter bond, Rory's academic ambitions, Lorelai's complicated relationship with her wealthy parents, and their romantic ups and downs. Filled with fast-paced dialogue, pop culture references, and quirky town residents, the series captures the warmth, humor, and challenges of family and friendship.



Shameless

This dark comedy revolves around the dysfunctional Gallagher family, led by their alcoholic and irresponsible father, Frank. His children, including the resilient and determined Fiona, struggle to keep the family afloat while dealing with their own personal challenges. Set in Chicago's South Side, the show explores themes of poverty, addiction, and survival, with humor and raw emotion as the Gallaghers rely on each other through their chaotic lives.



The Middle

The Heck family of Orson, Indiana, embodies the struggles of middle-class America. Quirky and overwhelmed mom Frankie and her laid-back husband Mike juggle raising their three unique children: lazy but lovable Axl, optimistic but awkward Sue, and eccentric bookworm Brick. The show humorously portrays the ups and downs of balancing work, family, and daily life while emphasizing love, laughter, and the occasional chaos of an average American family.



Never Have I Ever

This coming-of-age comedy follows Devi Vishwakumar, a smart but impulsive Indian-American teenager navigating high school, grief, and cultural expectations after the sudden loss of her father. Determined to reinvent herself, she juggles crushes, friendships, and academic pressures while clashing with her traditional mother. The series explores identity, family, and self-discovery with humor and heartfelt moments.



The Good Place

After her death, Eleanor Shellstrop finds herself in the afterlife's "Good Place" by mistake, despite her less-than-moral past. Determined to earn her spot, she teams up with philosophy professor Chidi, socialite Tahani, and dim-witted DJ Jason to become better people. As the series unfolds, it delves into ethics, personal growth, and the meaning of goodness, all wrapped in humor, plot twists, and existential questions.



MRS. LYNCH'S BOOK REVIEW:
Everything We Never Had by Randy Ribay

"Doesn't every son long for his father's approval, like a plant bending toward the light?" This is an example of the absolutely poetic writing in the book, Everything We Never Had, by Randy Ribay. This book tells the story of 4 generations of Filipino American men across a timespan of almost 100 years. 16-year-old Francisco Maghabol emigrates from the Philippines to America in 1929 because he is lured by the stories of promises of riches. He finds when he arrives in California, not riches, but another "r" word: racism. The work he is able to get is on a farm and only earns him a dollar a day.



Francisco's son, Emil, wants to break free from his father's anger at capitalism and just wants to assimilate himself into a normal life for a teenager in 1965. Emil is determined that his son, Chris, will be raised to be smart, college bound and feel like he belongs in America. Emil forces Chris to quit the high school football team in 1983 and Chris never forgives him for that betrayal. The fourth and final perspective we get to read is from Chris' son, Enzo. Enzo's story starts in 2020 when the world has shut down and his grandfather, Emil, who does not get along with anyone, comes to live with them. Each perspective tells of a young man's struggle to become a man and adjust to the changes in American society. The intergenerational relationships expose how we are forged by our upbringing and how that affects our own relationships as we get older. This book shows how healing can occur, but it isn't always easy nor is it on the timeline that we want it to be. I consider this a must read for anyone who is interested in how the past can influence the future.

