

FREE ISSUE

PREVIEW CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE III

REVIEW STARFIELD



ISSUE 97 NOVEMBER 2023

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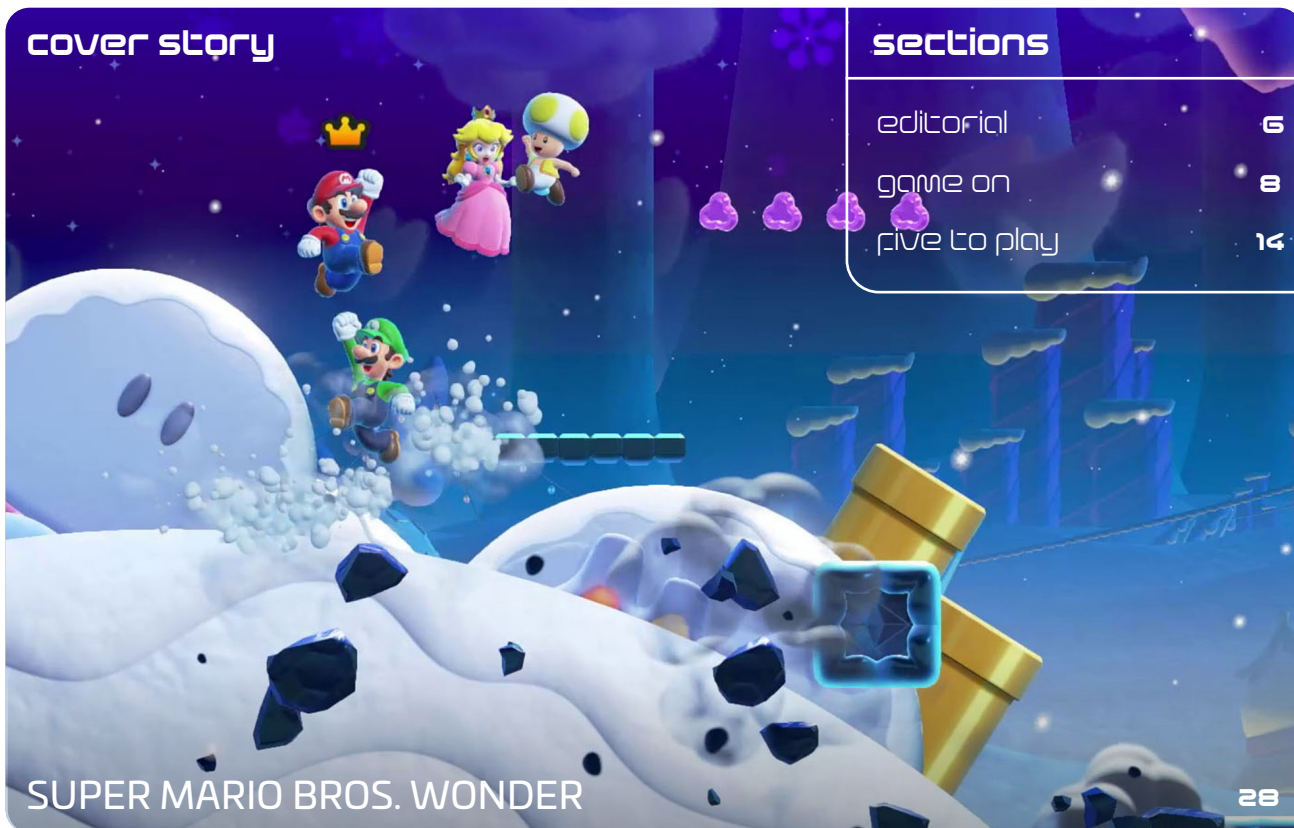
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welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



VOICE CHAT

This month's cover story features *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, a new 2D platformer starring Nintendo's legendary plumber. As you'll read all about in the cover story, the game introduces plenty of imaginative twists on classic *Mario Bros.* gameplay, but one of the biggest changes it brings to the series is one you may not even notice: Mario's voice actor.

Yes, Charles Martinet, who's provided Mario's *Wahoo!*s and *It's-a me!*s since the early 1990s, recently announced he's retiring from the role and transitioning to a new gig as Nintendo's "Mario Ambassador." Truly, it's the end of an era.

It's also a chance to reflect on the contribution voice actors make to so many of our favorite video games. Artists, animators, programmers, and writers are the ones who *create* characters—but voice actors play a huge role in bringing those characters to life and making them memorable for players. Would we care as much about Master Chief without Steve Downes' heroically gruff performance? Would *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s Arthur Morgan be as memorable without Roger Clark's hard-charging take on the outlaw?

What's more, acting has become even more crucial as performance capture has

grown more common in big-budget games. With performance capture, actors aren't just saying lines, but providing a character's entire performance—including body movement and facial expressions—that the animators will then refine and map onto a 3D model. Modern classics like *BioShock Infinite*, *The Last of Us*, and 2018's *God of War* are as beloved as they are in large part because of strong performances.

So when you boot up the next big game, take a moment to appreciate the work voice actors put into making virtual worlds and stories more immersive for us all.

As for the rest of this month's issue, we've got deeper looks at *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III*, *Persona 5 Tactics*, and *Fashion Dreamer*. You can also read our reviewers' verdicts on two of the fall's most exciting games—*Starfield* and *Armored Core VI: Fires of Rubicon*—alongside regular features like news, Five to Play, and Parting Shots.

And, as always, be sure to keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson

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Nintendo Switch Lite plays all games that support handheld mode.
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Nintendo



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TEARS OF THE KINGDOM WON'T GET DLC—BUT COULD GET A SEQUEL

When is enough of a good thing enough?

While some might be tempted to instantly answer “never,” it’s an argument that has only grown over the years when it comes to story-focused video games. In older eras, the game that you bought was the game that you’d get, and if you wanted more, you’d hope that the developer might have plans for a sequel, be it direct or spiritual.

Nowadays, however, games can continue on for years after release, enhanced and expanded through free or paid updates. Sometimes, those additions are minimal, but often they can bring entirely new storylines, characters, or even continents.

One of the games fans have been wondering about in this regard is *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*. As a direct sequel, the game was already in some sense an expansion on the events of *Breath of the Wild*. But its predecessor received two different DLC expansions in the year after it launched, leading many fans to wonder if we could see similar updates for Link’s latest adventures.

In a recent interview with Japanese publication *Famitsu*, producer Eiji Aonuma and director Hidemaro Fujibayashi were discussing a variety of topics about the game, when the pair were directly asked

about what might be next for the series—for *Tears of the Kingdom* itself.

“There are no plans to release additional content for the game at this time,” Aonuma’s translated answer reads. “That’s because I feel like we’ve done everything that we can to create fun in that world.”

Now, on the surface, that seems to be pretty clear in stating that there will be no DLC released for *Tears of the Kingdom*. However, the rest of his answer leaves open a possibility that one might not expect.

Aonuma went on to say that Nintendo decided to make a sequel to *Breath of the*

Wild, rather than developing a completely original *Zelda* game, because the team believed there would be value in offering players new kinds of gameplay experiences in that same version of Hyrule. He *then* said that if the team once again had an equally exciting new idea that would make sense as another sequel, we could actually see a third chapter in the *Breath of the Wild* saga. Aonuma also noted that such an idea could instead lead to a completely new game, but the fact that Nintendo might even consider making a fully connected *Zelda* trilogy—something that has never happened in the franchise’s history—is pretty remarkable.

Whether or not we get that third game, there’s already a lot to see and do in the current world of Hyrule. So, if you haven’t already, pick up your copies of *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* and *Tears of the Kingdom* from Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.



\$108 Billion

Projected spending on mobile games in 2023, according to tracking firm Data.ai

320,000

Attendees at the Gamescom 2023 expo in Cologne, Germany

1 Million

Concurrent *Starfield* players on launch day

18

Years Treyarch design director David Vonderhaar spent with the studio before departing in August

25

Years it’s taken for Sega’s arcade racer *Daytona USA 2* to get a home port

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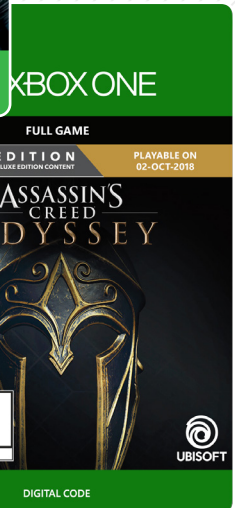
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Walmart* release calendar

OCT

- 24 CITIES: SKYLINE II**
PARADOX INTERACTIVE / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC
- 24 JUST DANCE 2024 EDITION**
UBISOFT / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH
- 24 METAL GEAR SOLID MASTER COLLECTION VOL. 1**
KONAMI / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, PC
- 26 GHOSTRUNNER 2**
505 GAMES / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC
- 27 EA SPORTS UFC 5**
EA SPORTS / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5

NOV

- 2 MY TIME AT SANDROCK**
FOCUS ENTERTAINMENT / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PC
- 2 ROBOCOP: ROGUE CITY**
NACON / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC



- 2 STAR OCEAN: THE SECOND STORY R**
SQUARE ENIX / PS5, SWITCH, PS4, PC
- 3 EA SPORTS WRC**
EA SPORTS / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC
- 3 FASHION DREAMER**
XSEED / SWITCH
- 3 WARIOWARE: MOVE IT!**
NINTENDO / SWITCH

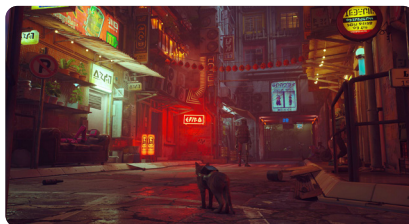


- 6 THE INVINCIBLE**
11 BIT STUDIOS / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC

'CYBERPUNK CAT GAME' STRAY TO GET MOVIE ADAPTATION

Last summer, French indie BlueTwelve Studio found a breakout hit with *Stray*—you may also know it as “the cyberpunk cat game” or “that cat game.” Now, a movie adaptation is in the works at Annapurna Animation, the sister division of the game’s publisher, Annapurna Interactive.

Stray follows a cat—not a talking cat, just a normal cat—in a futuristic cyberpunk world where humanity has gone extinct, and the ruins of our civilization are populated by friendly robots we built before our downfall. After the cat is separated



from its family in an accident, it encounters a flying robot named B-12, who ultimately guides the duo on an adventure through the city, uncovering mysteries of the past along the way.

Annapurna Animation studio co-head Robert Baird told *Entertainment Weekly* that the movie will follow the game’s lead by making audiences see the world “through the point of view of an adorable cat.” No director or writer are attached to the project yet, but the film is in active development.

In a press release, Annapurna also said that it plans to adapt more of the games it’s published into films.

You can pick up a copy of that cat game at Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.

FUTURE OF GAMING'S BIGGEST EVENT UNCERTAIN

For those of us who love video games, E3—the Electronic Entertainment Expo—long felt like Christmas in June, a time when our hopes for the gaming industry might come true, or our dreams may end up shattered.

Unfortunately, the dreams of many who wished to attend E3 one day have certainly been shattered in the years since E3 2019. A planned in-person

event the following year was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and attempts to get the show going again since then have not materialized.

However, there still may be some hope for E3.

“While the reach of E3 remains unmatched in our industry, we are continuing to explore how we can evolve it to best serve the video game industry, and are evaluating every aspect of the event, from format to location,” said the Entertainment Software Association, the organization that runs E3. “[We] look forward to sharing news about E3 in the coming months.”

Whatever does happen, it will happen without the help of ReedPop, the company that organizes the popular fan-focused Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) events. As part of the same press release, the ESA announced that it would no longer be working together with ReedPop on E3’s future, a partnership originally born from intent to change the expo from an industry-focused event to a more fan-forward one.





PAYDAY 3 REVEALS BIG POST-LAUNCH PLANS

Payday 3 may have launched last month, but the four-player co-op heist game is just getting started. Developer Starbreeze has revealed its plans for post-launch support during the game's first year, with four major content updates adding all-new heists to the game, and smaller additions on the way through next fall.



The first year of *Payday 3* DLC will be collectively titled “The Bad Apple,” hinting that the New York City setting of the main game will carry over into this new content. Fans can expect the first DLC heist, called “Syntax Error,” to arrive this winter. Judging by the name and artwork, it looks like Dallas, Hoxton, Wolf, and Chains will be knocking over a high-tech computer facility. Next up, in spring 2024, will be “Boys in Blue,” which sure looks to involve pulling a job on a police station. Then, next summer, comes “The Land of the Free,” which is a bit more

ambiguous, but the scales of justice in the artwork may point to a mission set in a courthouse or prison. Finally, in fall 2024, the first year will wrap up with the launch of “Fear and Greed.” That *has* to be a big Wall Street heist, no?

Alongside these four major releases, Starbreeze promises additional updates in the form of new weapons, cosmetics, playable characters, quality of life improvements, and seasonal events.

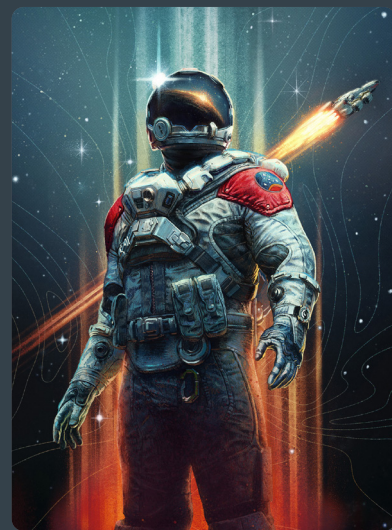
But one of the most surprising and exciting updates Starbreeze has planned for the game, however, isn't new content at all. Instead, it's a brand new game engine. While the version of *Payday 3* you can play right now runs on Unreal Engine 4 technology, the studio is working on an update that will port the entire game into the newer and much more technologically advanced Unreal Engine 5. While it remains to be seen exactly what specific upgrades the engine swap will bring, UE5 boasts superior lighting and performance, so improved graphics *and* a better framerate certainly aren't out of the question. Who said crime doesn't pay?

Payday 3 is out now on Xbox Series X/S, PlayStation 5, and Windows PC. You can pick up a copy on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

MAN CREDITS STARFIELD WITH SAVING HIS LIFE

Starfield has garnered strong sales and positive reviews, but the Bethesda RPG may also be able to tout an even more exceptional accomplishment: saving a Northern California man's life.

In a post to reddit's *Starfield* community, user “tidyckilla” shared the harrowing story of his close call with an apartment fire, accompanied by a photograph of the blaze.



Tidyckilla said he had decided to stay up late to play *Starfield* on launch night, and shortly before 2:30 a.m. he heard a loud noise that sounded like an explosion. “I paused my game to see what was happen[ing]; when I opened the door I saw flames rising up our stairwell to our apartment,” he wrote. “I immediately got my wife and cat, rushing us to safety with only minor burns.”

According to tidyckilla's account, the apartment's fire alarm didn't go off until his family had already begun evacuating. “If I hadn't been up bingeing *Starfield* I would have been asleep and we would have all died to smoke inhalation,” he wrote.

You can pick up a copy of *Starfield* on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.



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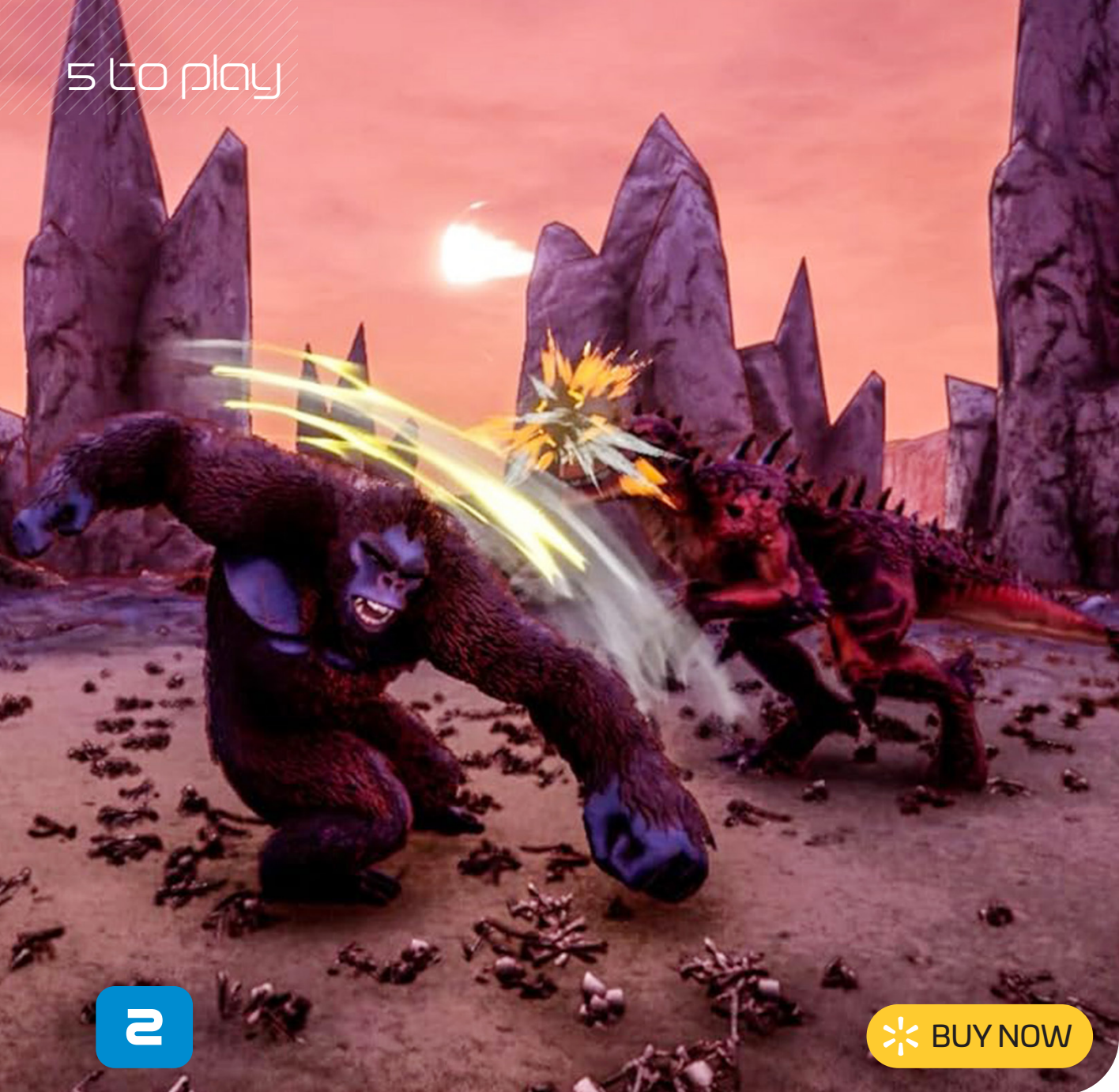
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PUBLISHER XBOX GAME STUDIOS / **DEVELOPER** TURN 10 STUDIOS, PLAYGROUND GAMES, SUMO DIGITAL / **PLATFORMS** XBOX SERIES X/S, PC / **RELEASE DATE** 10.10.2023

Though it's hailed as a reboot, *Forza Motorsport* still delivers the kind of deep racing action we've come to expect from this series since it debuted nearly 20 years ago. Not only does the game have over 500 cars (including the 2024 Chevrolet Corvette E-Ray and the 2023 No.01 Cadillac Racing V-Series.R), but they can now be damaged in more detail, or mechanically customized with over 800 performance upgrades (including ballast adjustment). Even the tracks have more detail, as surface temperatures are now dynamic, and thus can impact how well (or badly) your tires grip the track. As for modes, the game boasts a full slate of online races, as well as a revamped career mode called Builders Cup, which combines elements of the career modes from *Forza Motorsport 3* and *4* with the progression of a role-playing game for a compelling single player challenge.

[T]he game boasts a full slate of online races, as well as a revamped career mode called Builders Cup.



SKULL ISLAND: RISE OF KONG

PUBLISHER GEMMILL ENTERTAINMENT / **DEVELOPER** IGUANABEE STUDIOS / **PLATFORMS** XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / **RELEASE DATE** 10.17.2023

An action-adventure origin story for Hollywood's favorite towering ape, *Skull Island: Rise of Kong* places you in the role of a young, orphaned Kong on a quest to avenge his parents. Long-term, that means facing off against the dinosaur who killed them, Gaw, and taking your rightful place as King of Skull Island. Short-term, that means tearing your way through a whole mess of dangerous wildlife using your simian fists, ferocious roar, and brutal finishing moves, with new abilities unlocked as you progress. And, no, despite what you might have assumed, the game isn't connected to the recent Warner Bros. *King Kong* movies. Instead, it's based on an expanded Skull Island mythos created by artist and author Joe DeVito, who worked in partnership with the estate of Kong's original creator, Merian C. Cooper. (Look, if we tried to explain the complicated *King Kong* rights situation, we wouldn't have space for anything else in this issue.)

[I]t's based on an expanded Skull Island mythos created by artist and actor Joe DeVito, who worked in partnership with the estate of Kong's original creator, Merian C. Cooper.



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MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN 2

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / **DEVELOPER** INSOMNIAC GAMES / **PLATFORMS** PS5 / **RELEASE DATE** 10.20.2023

Set after the events of both 2018's *Marvel's Spider-Man* and 2020's *Miles Morales*, this third-person action game has Peter Parker teaming up with his former protégé to again try and clean up New York City. Except this time, they're not just fighting crime in Manhattan, but the sparser Queens and Brooklyn as well—thankfully, they now have Web Wings to help them glide long distances. More importantly, they're facing off against some new enemies (well, new to this series, that is), including the Lizard, Kraven the Hunter, and Venom. Good thing they've learned some more advanced fighting skills, including how to parry incoming attacks, grab multiple bad guys at the same time, and cast web lines they can then walk across or drop down from onto unsuspecting enemies. Peter will also get some cool moves when he bonds with the Venom symbiote—including tendrils and unique web moves—though we all know how that collaboration turns out, right?

[T]his third-person action game has Peter Parker teaming up with his former protégé to again try and clean up New York City.





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LORDS OF THE FALLEN

PUBLISHER CI GAMES / **DEVELOPER** HEXWORKS / **PLATFORMS** XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / **RELEASE DATE** 10.13.2023

“The goal [in *Lords of the Fallen*] was to remain faithful to the established genre combat, but make it faster, snappier, and more aggressive. We added new mechanics such as the concept of withered HP, dashes and rolls, soul flaying enemies to displace them over ledges and environmental hazards, and so on. We also felt [effortless co-op] was sorely needed, especially in these lands of horror—it’s so satisfying to see your ally coming in clutch during a boss fight or a gnarly encounter. Now of course, a trope of the genre is the PVP invasions, and we would be remiss if we didn’t allow players to go head-to-head as well. We have expanded the RPG options tenfold, and I myself cannot wait to see what builds people come up with.”

CEZAR VIRTOSU, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, HEXWORKS

“...it’s so satisfying to see your ally coming in clutch during a boss fight or a gnarly encounter.”

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5



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CITIES: SKYLINES II

PUBLISHER PARADOX INTERACTIVE / DEVELOPER COLOSSAL ORDER / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 10.24.2023

Eight years after building your dream city in the original, you'll finally have the chance to become an even better city planner in *Cities: Skylines II*. Like similar series, *Cities* hands you a large plot of land on which to construct buildings, roads, and other structures, while also making sure the people who live and work there have the utilities and services they need to survive and thrive. As for this sequel, *Skylines II* makes it easier for people and goods to get around thanks to more flexible road tools, better traffic management mechanics, and deeper public and cargo transportation. The game also adds seasons, expanded public services—including trash management, public safety, and schools—as well as new types of construction zones, such as mixed-use residential. But the biggest addition, literally, is that your city's population can expand well beyond the previous game's limit of around 65,000.

The game also adds seasons, expanded public services—including trash management, public safety, and schools—as well as new types of construction zones...



FORZA MOTORSPORT



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3
MONTHS



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*Game catalog varies over time. See xbox.com/gamepass



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Nintendo Switch is the hybrid home video game system from Nintendo. In addition to providing single and multiplayer thrills at home, the Nintendo Switch system can be taken on the go so players can enjoy a full home console experience anytime, anywhere. The mobility of a handheld is now added to the power of a home gaming system, with unprecedented new play styles brought to life by the two new Joy-Con controllers.



NINTENDO SWITCH – OLED MODEL

Meet the newest member of the Nintendo Switch family. The new system features a vibrant 7-inch OLED screen with vivid colors and sharp contrast. The Nintendo Switch – OLED Model also includes a wide adjustable stand for more comfortable viewing angles, a dock with a wired LAN port for TV mode (LAN cable sold separately), 64GB of internal storage, and enhanced audio in Handheld and Tabletop modes using the system's speakers.

**There may be software where the game experience may differ due to the new capabilities of the system, such as the larger screen size.*

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2024

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SUPER MARIO BROS. WONDER

A NEW WORLD FILLED WITH WONDER

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
NINTENDO
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
10.20.2023
ESRB
E - EVERYONE



In 1996, Nintendo helped change the video game industry forever with *Super Mario 64*, a pivotal release in the transition from over two decades of 2D experiences to the amazing new world of 3D gaming. It was an incredibly exciting time—but, in a way, also a sad one. As players and developers alike rushed to embrace the switch from sprites to polygons, too many did so with the belief that anything with only two dimensions was no longer valuable.

Thankfully, we've come to fully understand the folly of such sentiments. Nintendo, the company who had helped transition the platforming

genre to 3D years before, proved it still had faith in side-scrolling adventures with the *New Super Mario Bros.* series of games. And yet, as great as they were for those who wanted a more traditional experience, there's been growing demand for a game that would combine the best parts of that series together with some of the gameplay and stage design elements

lost from *Mario's* 8- and 16-bit eras. Enter *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*.

"I think players will notice a distinct feel and experience from the *New Super Mario Bros.* games [in *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*]," Damiano Pinton of Nintendo Treehouse told us. And, at least if you're asking us, that difference is noticeable even just when watching trailers for the game.

■ The latest animal-based transformation to hit the *Mario* franchise leaves our heroes large and in charge.

"I think players will notice a distinct feel and experience from the *New Super Mario Bros.* games [in *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*]."

DAMIANO PINTON, NINTENDO TREEHOUSE



NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER

Super Mario Bros. Wonder offers four distinct power-ups to grab: Fire, Elephant, Bubble, and Drill. Given you've had 38 years to learn what a Fire Flower does, we're not going to explain that one to you, but here's what you need to know when transforming into one of the trio of new forms.

ELEPHANT

In Elephant form, Mario and his friends can swing their trunks to attack enemies, destroy blocks that stand in the way, or knock the shells Lakitu tries to drop on your head back at him. And those trunks are good for sucking up and spraying out water, which can come in handy in a variety of situations. As an Elephant, you can also destroy a whole group of blocks by running into them, or dash across larger gaps with ease.



BUBBLE

In a power-up reminiscent of classic games such as *Bubble Bobble*, you blow floating bubbles that can capture and defeat enemies from a distance. This form is especially useful, as those bubbles can knock out enemies you usually can't get rid of (such as Dry Bones), or those that are on the other side of a wall. Bubbles can also act as temporary platforms, making it easier to reach certain segments of courses.



DRILL

Drill form gives you a fashionable yet functional drill hat, which can take out enemies or objects falling on you from above. You can also use it to dive down and break destructible objects, or even burrow into the ground—or ceiling—to move under some walls or avoid enemies.



From the art style and stage design, to the types of power-ups and new gameplay twists, everything leaves us feeling like this maybe could have been titled *Super Mario Bros. 5* had we all taken a warp pipe straight from the SNES to the Switch.

"In *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, Mario and friends were invited to the Flower Kingdom, a not-so-distant land

just beyond the Mushroom Kingdom, by the benevolent Prince Florian," explained Pinton. "But Bowser was after the mysterious power contained in the Wonder Flowers, and with just a single touch, he merged with Prince Florian's castle. Thanks to his newfound power, chaos spread across the land."

Unsurprisingly, it's up to Mario and crew to save the Flower Kingdom

"In *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, Mario and friends were invited to the Flower Kingdom, a not-so-distant land just beyond the Mushroom Kingdom..."

DAMIANO PINTON, NINTENDO TREEHOUSE





while cleaning up the mess Bowser has caused. Our heroes have quite a journey ahead of them, as Prince Florian's domain covers not only his home turf of the Petal Isles, but also the six distinct lands encircling them.

From the more familiar-looking terrain of Pipe-Rock Plateau, to a gloomy forest (whose name remains a secret) filled with giant mushrooms, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* looks to feature a wide diversity of locales perfect for offering classic *Mario* platforming moments while introducing a whole host of new gameplay mechanics.

One of the first questions any good *Mario* fan will ask mechanics-wise is what kinds of power-ups are in any new release. *Super Mario*

Bros. Wonder introduces three new options to go along with the classic Fire Flower: Elephant, Bubble, and Drill. (To learn more about each form, see sidebar "Now You're Playing with Power.") Should you grab a different power-up when you've already got one active, you can keep it in reserve in case you get hit by an enemy and lose your current form. Or, in a welcome twist, you can also freely switch back-and-forth between the two to make use of both abilities.

■ When playing online, the Heart Points above each player's head tells you how helpful they've been to others.





THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

Indeed, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* has by far the largest roster of selectable characters ever seen in a mainline *Mario* platformer. In addition to Mario, Luigi, and Princess Peach, we get the long-requested debut of Princess Daisy, Yellow and Blue Toads, Toadette, four Yoshis—your standard green, Red, Yellow, and Light-Blue—as well as Nabbit, the kleptomaniac rabbit who first became playable in *New Super Luigi U*.

While we hinted that there wouldn't be any major differences between which character you pick, that isn't *quite* true. If you pick any of the main cast, one of the Toads, or Toadette, your experience will basically be the same. However, choose a Yoshi or Nabbit, and you won't take damage when getting hit by an enemy or most environmental hazards, making them great choices for younger or more casual players. (You can, however, still lose a life if you fall down a pit or into dangers like lava.) And, as an extra bit of assistance, Yoshis can also do their trademark flutter jump, as well as eat objects to spit back at enemies.

And, before you ask: Yes, you *can* ride around on another player if they're a Yoshi—even when in the much heftier Elephant form.



Speaking of abilities, one element that might surprise some is that, even though *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* sports the largest roster of playable characters ever seen in a traditional *Mario* game, who you pick won't be as dire a decision as you may expect.

"There have been Mario titles in the past where each character had

different traits, such as Luigi being able to jump higher or Peach being able to float," Pinton told us. "In *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, characters and traits are independent from each other, so that you can add your favorite trait to your favorite character [using] the Badge system." (To learn the reasons why you still might prefer

■ You can take Mario out of the Mushroom Kingdom, but you can't take the mushrooms out of *Mario*.



[C]haracters and traits are independent from each other, so that you can add your favorite trait to your favorite character...

DAMIANO PINTON, NINTENDO TREEHOUSE

one character over another, see sidebar “The Same, But Different.” And, while we’re at it, we also explain the new Badge system in sidebar “Badges...”

Of course, the addition that changes everything in *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* is right there in the game’s name: the Wonder Flowers, simple-looking plants that thrive on the mysterious energy of the Flower Kingdom. Touching a Wonder Flower causes it to release all of the energy it has stored up, resulting in a reality-



altering Wonder Effect. When that happens, pipes may suddenly start moving on their own, you might find yourself walking on the background (instead of in front of it), or Mario could even change into a Goomba or blow up like a balloon. Even with Nintendo not revealing everything there is to see and do in the game,

we’ve already witnessed a wide array of fantastical events that can happen when Wonder Flowers alter the world, meaning you’ll never know what to expect once you touch one—or what you’ll need to accomplish to grab the Wonder Seed waiting in that warped world so you can send things back to normal.

■ Mario wonders if everyone else sees the world being covered in giant, rolling purple hippos, or if it’s just him.

NINTENDO SWITCH – OLED MODEL: **MARIO RED EDITION**



In conjunction with the release of *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, Nintendo is also releasing a special Nintendo Switch – OLED Model: Mario Red Edition console. The system, Joy-Con controllers, and Nintendo Switch dock all feature Mario’s iconic shade of red, while the dock sports a Mario silhouette and a handful of hidden coins. Pick up your own Nintendo Switch – OLED Model: Mario Red Edition from [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) or your local Walmart store starting on October 6th.

Unlike previous mainline 2D *Mario* games, however, you can now also hop online for a whole new multiplayer experience...



BADGES, BADGES, BADGES, BADGES, BADGES, BADGES, MUSHROOM, MUSHROOM

Nintendo has certainly put a lot of new ideas and unique features into *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, but one of the most game-changing in our eyes could be the Badges. Earnable through special Badge Challenges or purchasable from Poplin Shops using flower coins, you can equip one Badge per course, completely changing what abilities you'll have at your disposal.

For example, just in terms of jump-related Badges alone, there are options such as Wall-Climb Jump, which gives you the ability to jump against a wall and then jump again straight up; Crouching High Jump, letting you charge up a more powerful high jump by crouching; and Timed High Jump, giving your jumps more lift if you time them just right consecutively.

Then, there are some Badges that bring some even bigger changes to the traditional gameplay of the *Mario* series. To name just a few, Parachute Cap lets you use your hat as a parachute to float down more slowly; Safety Bounce safely recovers you from dangerous drops one time per fall; and Grappling Vine gives you what is essentially a grappling hook you can shoot out midair to latch onto walls and objects.



"When a Wonder Effect occurs in the game, the mechanics of the course change greatly," said Pinton. "Wonder Effects vary course by course, but all of them put a heavy emphasis on surprise and fun. Something interesting is how all of the courses are designed to be fun regardless of if you get the Wonder Flower, which allows players to experience and enjoy each course in a different way."

Experiencing things in a different way is a concept deep at the heart of *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, a fact

that's also on display in the game's multiplayer options. Much like in *New Super Mario Bros. U Deluxe*, if you've got enough Joy-Con or other controllers, up to four players can team up in local co-op. Unlike previous mainline 2D *Mario* games, however, you can now also hop online for a whole new multiplayer experience, so long as you've got a Nintendo Account and Nintendo Switch Online membership.

Once connected, you'll run into Live Player Shadows, translucent

From bright and colorful to dark and gloomy, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* promises a wide variety of world visuals.



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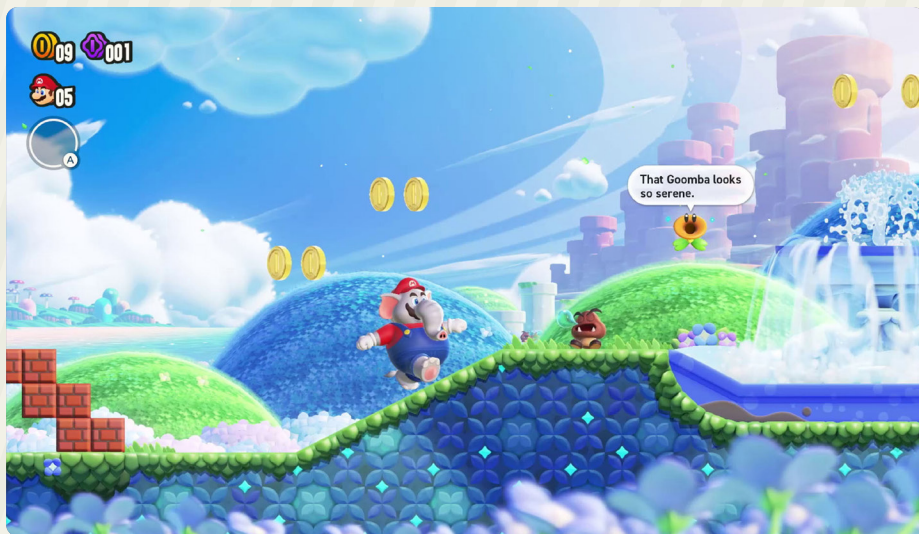
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“[Talking Flowers] are my in-game best friends—except when they talk about what I might taste like.”


DAMIANO PINTON, NINTENDO TREEHOUSE

characters which represent other players roaming around the world map or attempting the same courses you are at the same time. While you can't directly affect their progress, nor can they yours, players *can* offer encouragement to anyone in the area, gift one another items, or help resurrect each other in times of need. If you'd rather play together with friends or family instead of strangers, you can create a private room for up to 12 people, where you and three others can enter the same course together to either provide one another some support, or compete with each other in a Friend Race to see who can get to the goal pole, find the Wonder Seed, or defeat the boss the fastest (depending on the course).



We've touched upon a number of elements to *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*—and yet, there's still so much we don't know about the game, and so many things that we didn't have the room to talk about. Like, say, those Talking Flowers that, to be honest, freak us out just a bit. (Pinton told us that he feels like “they are my in-game best friends—except when they talk about what I might taste like.”)

What we do know and can tell you is that *Super Mario Bros. Wonder* promises to offer even more proof that 2D platformers are alive and well—and all in a package that looks to take the best elements of the modern era of *Mario* while powering them up with beloved concepts from the past. And that, at least to us, sounds like a wonderful combination. 

 You see a “serene” Goomba, I see a fierce fungal foe just lying in wait.



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* PREORDER

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE

GOING LOUD



"No Russian." Even 14 years on, those two words still instantly evoke one of the most memorable and controversial moments in *Call of Duty* history, a mission in 2009's *Modern Warfare 2* that cast players as an American soldier working undercover with a group of Russian ultranationalists led by Vladimir Makarov. We'll spare you the unsavory details, but suffice it to say the events of that level established Makarov as a truly fearsome villain.

So when last year's *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare II*—part of a rebooted timeline inspired by the original *Mod-*

ern Warfare trilogy—closed with that same phrase, we knew something big was on the way. What we didn't know is that it would take just a year for Activision to deliver on that tease, with this year's *Modern Warfare III* serving as a direct sequel that pits the soldiers of Task Force 141 against Makarov in a new campaign.

In addition to the classic style of linear, cinematic missions *Call of Duty* is known for, *Modern Warfare III* also introduces "Open Combat Missions" emphasizing tactical freedom on open-ended maps. To accomplish that, lead developer Sledgehammer Games has incorporated elements

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER

SLEDGEHAMMER
GAMES

PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE

11.10.2023



■ The underwater sequences we've seen continue *Modern Warfare's* streak of impressive, cutting-edge visuals.

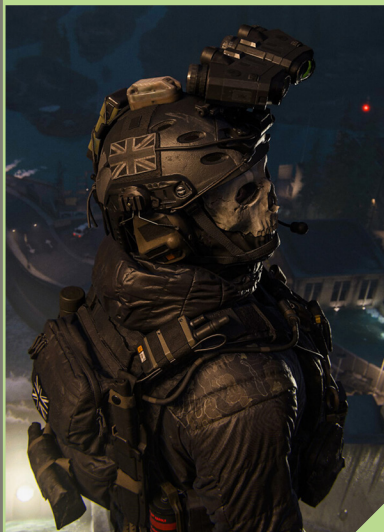
of the battle royale spin-off *Warzone* into campaign missions. For instance, one Open Combat Mission is set on an updated version of the original *Warzone* map's Gora Dam. You'll have a set objective, but it's up to you to determine the route you take and the loadout you want to use. Do you try to go in stealthily, or guns blazing? Do you steal an enemy vehicle and barrel through bad guys? Do you parachute down from above?

Of course, as with any *Call of Duty*, *Modern Warfare III's* campaign is just the beginning. In multiplayer, fans can expect to find a refreshed experi-

ence that ups the pace of play and brings back some beloved gameplay features. Remember the red-dot mini-map, which lit up with the locations of enemy players whenever they fired their weapons? Yep, that's coming back after being absent from the past few games. Also returning is map voting, meaning you'll have a say in what your lobby plays next. *Modern Warfare III* also revives advanced techniques like slide canceling and reload canceling, which, when combined with faster strafing and mantling and the ability to fire your gun while sliding, should speed up combat.

At launch, the suite of standard 6v6 multiplayer modes will support 16 maps, all of which will be remasters of the lineup from 2009's *Modern Warfare 2*. That means iconic battlefields like Rust, High Rise, Scrapyard, and Terminal are coming back

This year's *Modern Warfare III* serves as a direct sequel that pits the soldiers of Task Force 141 against Makarov in a new campaign.



TAC ATTACK

Since time immemorial (or, like the first game in the series), *Call of Duty* players have been faced with the same choice during a firefight. Do you shoot from the hip, allowing you to move around and aim faster at the expense of accuracy? Or do you aim down your weapon's sights, making you a slower target but keeping a tighter spread on your shots?

Well, with *Modern Warfare III*, players will finally have a third option: the Tac-Stance. In this new firing mode, you'll pull up your weapon into a canted firing position—aka you tilt it like 45 degrees so it looks super cool. It's a true middle ground option, more accurate than hip firing but not as accurate as aiming down sights. Your movement speed is also in between the two familiar options.

According to Activision, Tac-Stance is designed to complement aggressive tactics, allowing you to, say, quickly clear a room of enemies while keeping up your momentum. We're excited to see how this third option plays out in practice, especially in multiplayer.



with a fresh coat of paint and new gameplay features. If you'd prefer new maps, however, don't worry, as Activision will be adding 12 of those through post-launch support.

In addition to 6v6 modes, *Modern Warfare III* will support the larger Ground War and Invasion game types, playable on three original maps at launch. Activision is also reviving *Call of Duty: WWII*'s War mode, which spreads multiple objectives across a single large map and tasks one team with attacking while the other defends. Rounding out the experience is an entirely new game mode, Cutthroat, which mixes things up by pitting three teams of three against one another.

Oh, and in one final neat multiplayer twist, you'll actually be able to carry over your unlocked weapons and

equipment from last year's *Modern Warfare II* into the new game, meaning you won't have to start from zero.

Still not enough content for you? Well, how about Zombies? Yep, Activision is finally including *Call of Duty*'s popular survival co-op mode in a *Modern Warfare* title. Building off of *Black Ops Cold War*'s larger, more open-world approach, *Modern Warfare III*'s Zombies mode will up the ante even further by allowing your squad to work together with other groups to survive hordes of the undead, with up to six squads of four in a single match.

All told, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare III* looks to offer a thrilling mix of the old and the new, paying tribute to the history of the franchise while packing in more ways to play than ever before. 🎮

■ Well, that's one way to break the ice.



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PERSONA 5 TACTICA

TAKE THEIR HEART WHILE TAKING YOUR TURN

In recent years, Japanese RPG powerhouse Atlus has seemed to get quite a kick out of coming up with unique spin-offs of its *Persona* series. Based just on the last three mainline titles, we've seen 2D fighting games, 3D dungeon crawlers, hack-and-slash action adventures pitting players against hundreds of enemies at once, and even a dancing game or two.

Now, in *Persona 5 Tactica*, we get a game that both brings something new while also feeling fitting and familiar: a turn-based tactical RPG.

As the story kicks off, *Persona 5*'s team of teenage heroic outlaws, the Phantom Thieves, find themselves whisked away to an alternate reality

where the population lives under tyrannical oppression. Before they can fully get a grasp on what's happened to them or where they are, our heroes run into the Legionnaires, a military group made up of strange beings that help keep the people in subjugation. Suddenly, a revolutionary fighter named Erina shows up, offering the Phantom Thieves rescue in exchange for their help.

Thus, the stage is set for a whole host of different scenarios where strategic battles play out between

the Phantom Thieves (with Erina in tow) and the Legionnaires. Before heading to the battlefield, you'll put together a squad of three fighters from familiar *Persona 5* faces and new recruits such as Erina, and then carefully plan how to win each scenario without having your entire team wiped.

On each turn, characters can both move to a different location and perform an action, which include familiar battle options from using weapons to summoning supernatural Personas

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

ATLUS

DEVELOPER

ATLUS

PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
SWITCH, XBOX ONE,
PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE

11.17.2023

[W]e get a game that both brings something new while also feeling fitting and familiar: a turn-based tactical RPG.



■ Combat will feel similar in many ways to the original *Persona 5*, just more tactical.

to unleash one of their powerful skills. Who you pick to put on your squad for each battle will of course be important, but what techniques they have available for those fights can also turn the tide, which will be up to you through unlocking paths on character-specific skill trees.

While there are plenty of elements in *Persona 5 Tactics* that'll feel familiar to anyone who has played games like *XCOM* or *Mario + Rabbids*, there are also plenty of elements that also feel true to its familial roots. Triple Threat Attacks are a nod to the All-out Attacks of *Persona 4* and *5*, where all three of your squad members can team together to unleash massive damage upon an enemy they've surrounded. Meanwhile, the Baton Pass also returns, but instead of giving one character's turn to a teammate, it



offers a chance to swap out KOed squad members for fresh fighters waiting in reserve.

While Atlus' *Shin Megami Tensei* franchise is no stranger to more tactical gaming experiences, this is

the first time that the *Persona* series is delving into strategy RPG territory. And yet, it wouldn't surprise us if the Phantom Thieves end up stealing the hearts of fans of that genre just like they have so many others. [G](#)



preview

* PREORDER



FASHION DREAMER

BACK IN FASHION

Through its nearly 135 years of existence, Nintendo has garnered worldwide fame thanks to blockbuster brands such as *Mario*, *The Legend of Zelda*, *Animal Crossing*, and many others. However, while the company has plenty of franchises that have sold tens of millions of copies, it also releases a wide variety of smaller, more niche titles that offer something a bit different from the norm.

One such series is *Style Savvy*, a line of games that delve into the wide world of fashion that started back on the Nintendo DS. While the original game would see three sequels on the 3DS, fans who have been waiting for the franchise to hit the Switch have found nothing but empty racks.

Enter *Fashion Dreamer*. Although XSEED Games' new release isn't

officially part of the *Style Savvy* series, it does look to give players a lot of the same experiences while also taking those ideas into some new territory—and it comes from the same development team, Syn Sophia.

Players start by using *Fashion Dreamer's* detailed

**As goes the modern world,
one of your main goals is to
become a top influencer...**



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
XSEED GAMES
DEVELOPER
SYN SOPHIA
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
11.03.2023



Fashion Dreamer's world is divided up into four areas called Cocoons.

character editor to create a Muse, the avatar they'll control throughout the rest of the game. From there, it'll take both smarts and style to make it to the top of the fashion industry.

A game centered around clothing would be nothing without those clothes, and building on its work from the *Style Savvy* games, the team has included over 1,000 patterns and over 1,400 customizable items you can use to bring together that perfect look.

Fashion Dreamer promises a lot of depth for those who simply enjoy virtually trying on a vast closet full of possibilities, but it's *how* you show off your talent for coordination that'll propel you through the rest of the game. As goes the modern world, one of your main goals is to become a top influencer, with your flair and knack for original outfits potentially leading you to becoming the ultimate trendsetter. However, should you find another fashionista in the game's story mode whose wardrobe wins your heart, you can give them a Like

while also stealing their ensemble for yourself. And, once you become confident enough, you can even hop online to see what kinds of fashion trends other players from around the globe are setting.

Although it might not share the same name as Nintendo's breakout fashion franchise, *Fashion Dreamer* looks to keep its spirit and atmosphere alive for those who have been longing for another trip down the catwalk. And if you ask us, games that attempt to appeal to a broader audience while bringing us experiences outside the norm are always in style. **C**


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STARFIELD

SPACE ODYSSEY

In a sense, *Starfield* is three different games in one.

The first and most central vein of the experience is exactly what you'd expect from a Bethesda sci-fi RPG—call it *Skyrim* in space, *Fallout* on the final frontier. As in those earlier games, you build a character and embark on a sprawling adventure in a fantastical world, with combat, loot, dialogue trees, memorable quests, dozens of skills to level up, and opportunities for creative problem solving.

In *Starfield*, your custom hero starts as a miner on a remote planet in the year 2330, a distant future in which humanity has left Earth behind to settle the stars. After encountering a mysterious artifact that gives you an otherworldly vision, you're recruited by Constellation, an organization of interstellar explorers, to join them in their quest to discover the artifact's

origins. Unraveling this enigma draws you into the orbit of the factions jockeying for power within the Settled Systems: rival governments, space-pirates, megacorporations, and even more powerful forces working in the shadows. Rather than a single open world, though, your quest unfolds across 120 star systems with more than 1,000 procedurally-generated planets and moons.

That brings us to the second major vein running through *Starfield*: a chill-out exploration game akin to *No Man's Sky*. You can spend hundreds of hours just traveling the stars, landing on planets, and surveying their geography and wildlife. This side of

the game is definitely more about breadth than depth—cataloging planets is ultimately a fairly simple, repetitive gameplay loop—but there's an appealingly low-stakes, zen vibe to wandering these beautiful, often desolate landscapes.

Starfield's third and final vein emphasizes creativity and construction, channeling some of the spirit of *Minecraft* or even *Animal Crossing*. Across those 1,000-plus planets, you can also mine for resources, construct outposts, and staff them with members of your crew. You can even get into the nitty gritty of interior decoration, crafting and placing furniture. Put enough time into this

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

XBOX GAME STUDIOS

DEVELOPER

BETHESDA GAMES STUDIOS

PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PC

RELEASE DATE

09.06.2023

Bethesda has essentially created an RPG that you can explore for literally thousands of hours on a single save file.



side of the game, and you can build a tiny galactic empire that will make sure you'll never have to worry about having enough credits again.

These additions to a familiar RPG formula give *Starfield* a sense of identity that goes much deeper than a change of setting. By combining these elements with other innovations, like a creative take on New Game Plus that we won't spoil, Bethesda has essentially created an RPG that you can explore for literally thousands of hours on a single save

file. If *Starfield* pulls you into its orbit, you could be playing for years.

For all its breathtaking ambition, however, a few elements of *Starfield* don't fully live up to the fantasy. Character progression is slow, taking many hours to fully flesh out your intended playstyle, and without any respec option, it's a pain to pivot your approach midway through. While compellingly fleshed out, the sci-fi setting can still feel like a hodgepodge of ideas from other popular movies and books without a strong hook. And *Starfield*'s

■ *Starfield*'s ship customization is robust, with your build affecting both performance and looks.

approach to space travel, which relies heavily on menus and loading screens rather than seamlessly flying between and landing on planets, diminishes some of the wonder you'd expect from a journey across the stars.

Still, if you're looking for a satisfying, deep Bethesda RPG experience in a space setting, there's no question that *Starfield* delivers on that promise, all while adding on some surprisingly robust elements that ramp up the scope to almost ludicrous levels. Other games may be better at some of the individual things *Starfield* does, but there's nothing that offers all this variety, at this level of quality, in one package. [G](#)





90
100

ARMORED CORE VI: FIRES OF RUBICON

REKINDLING A MUCH OLDER FIRE

With the release of *Demon's Souls* back in 2009, developer FromSoftware would begin down a path of breakout stardom, gaining millions of fans around the world with its blend of well-crafted gameplay, challenging difficulty, and engrossing storytelling.

What you may not know is, years before, the studio had a smaller but just as dedicated fanbase for another of its long-running franchises: *Armored Core*. Now, after numerous titles focused on sword- and sorcery-based combat in medieval settings, FromSoftware has gone back to the future.

Although *Armored Core VI: Fires of Rubicon* resurrects a series that first began in 1997, you need no knowledge of what's come before to fully appreciate this latest chapter. Things have gone very badly on the planet of Rubicon 3, as various interests fight over an unstable energy source known as Coral. You play the part of a mercenary sent down to the planet's surface in your personal *Armored Core*, a 30-foot-tall military mech, to profit off of the chaos. And, with that, you know all that you need to know.

Unlike the interconnected areas of *Dark Souls* or the wide open world of *Elden Ring*, *Armored Core VI* builds around a mission system, where you're launched into specific sections of Rubicon 3's landscape to perform focused tasks. This setup makes the game feel decidedly old school, but

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

BANDAI NAMCO

DEVELOPER

FROMSOFTWARE

PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE

08.25.2023





While the controls can be a bit tricky at first, once we got the hang of them, we were caught off guard by just how incredible it felt to zip around the landscape...

tactics and offenses to overcome. Yes, there's a *lot* to choose from in building your Armored Core, but the opportunity for finding your favorite combinations is immense, and at times gives the experience even more gameplay depth than the *Souls* series.

Deeply customizable robots and traditional FromSoftware difficulty is a combination that could initially scare off a lot of people, but we can't encourage you enough to give *Armored Core VI: Fires of Rubicon* a try if it's in any way appealing to you. The team could have easily just created "Dark Souls with robots" and made a lot of players happy. Instead, it has both revived one of its classic franchises with the respect it deserved, and set a new standard for any mech-based action titles that follow. [G](#)

■ Rubicon 3 may be an awful place for humans, but it's a playground for mechs who love to fight one another.

in a way that's refreshing and even a bit comforting. Plus, the wildly varying length of those missions means you'll never fully know what to expect next.

One constant you *can* count on is the enjoyment that awaits when piloting your Armored Core. While the controls can be a bit tricky at first, once we got the hang of them, we were caught off guard by just how incredible it felt to zip around the landscape, targeting enemies and unleashing four different weapons simultaneously. No matter if you tend to prefer a light, fast mech or a heavy, well-armored one, this may be some

of the most fun you'll ever have controlling a giant robot in a video game.

Those personal preferences are of vital importance, and tie in to what is both *Armored Core VI*'s biggest strength and its largest potential roadblock: parts customization. Not only do you need to carefully choose weapons for each arm and shoulder of your robot, but also its various body parts, engine, weapons system, and more. You won't get very far if you just stick to one loadout, because *Armored Core VI*'s difficulty often comes from mission types, enemies, and bosses that require different





1 ON 1

EA SPORTS FC 24

SAM RIVERA

SENIOR PRODUCER ELECTRONIC ARTS

After 30 years, EA Sports' *FIFA* series is no more. Fans of soccer—or, depending on what part of the world you're from, football—shouldn't panic just yet, however, as the end of one series means the beginning of another. This year, the franchise has relaunched as *EA Sports FC*, a new name that may bring with it slightly less connection to the worldwide football association, but plenty of new opportunities for future expansion. To learn more about *EA Sports FC 24*, we hit the pitch and kicked a few questions around with senior producer Sam Rivera.

Walmart Gamecenter: What does the chance to continue EA's soccer/football series with a fresh start under the new *EA Sports FC* brand mean to you?

Sam Rivera: For the past three decades, EA Sports has created the defining interactive football video game experience, changing the way fans engage with the sport we all know and love. We're excited for this new *FC* chapter because it presents an opportunity to continue delivering innovation for fans on a global scale for years to come.

Personally, I'm incredibly excited to watch *EA Sports FC* evolve into a global football experience, creating the world's largest football club and inspiring the next generation of football fans to grow the game.

WGC: On the newest consoles and PC, *EA Sports FC 24* makes use of "HyperMotion V" capture technology. What can you tell us about this tech and what it contributes to gameplay?

SR: HyperMotionV technology translates the rhythm and fluidity of real-world football, meaning that movement in *EA Sports FC 24* comes directly from beloved teams like Real Madrid, PSG, and Manchester City, and that the animations of hundreds of players are defined by their own actions on the pitch.

We were able to do this through the use of volumetric data, which helps to power HyperMotionV—full teams playing full matches in the top competitions around the world, captured live by a bank of cameras around the stadiums, meaning data from players influence how they move in-game.

We've also brought machine learning to *EA Sports FC 24* to recreate true-to-football motion, even in real time, to make The World's Game feel even more immersive and unique.

WGC: Millions of soccer fans play EA's games specifically for the Ultimate Team mode. How is that experience refreshed and expanded in this year's game?

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

FIFA

SR: One of the updates I'm most excited about is that Ultimate Team now brings players from men's and women's football together to play on the same pitch for the first time, allowing fans to engage with more of their favorite players like never before.

We'll also be introducing Ultimate Team Evolutions—a new feature that creates a progression path for players already in your Club. You'll be able to develop your favorite players into Club legends by completing objectives that improve their stats, PlayStyles, overall rating and even Player Item look/type.


We're also thrilled to answer a long-standing request from fans—bringing the full Ultimate Team experience to Nintendo Switch in *EA Sports FC 24*.

WGC: Speaking of Switch, *EA Sports FC 24* is also the first time that version of the game runs on the Frostbite engine. Why was it important to bring the Switch release this year in line with the Xbox One and PS4 versions?

SR: We have a passionate community of football fans, and it's important for us to create an experience that feels immersive to all players, regardless of where they play. By leveraging the capabilities of Frostbite for Switch, we've been able to develop a version of *EA Sports FC 24* that brings a new level of pride to our team, and one that we're optimistic will be shared by Switch players.

We want all of our *FC* fans to feel like a part of the club with *EA Sports FC 24*, and with fan favorite modes like VOLTA Football and Clubs coming to Nintendo Switch for the first time this year, we're able to celebrate more of The World's Game with our community.

WGC: One of the major additions to the game is the PlayStyles feature, which gives players bonuses to particular skills to reflect what they're best at on the real-world pitch. What PlayStyle bonus would you want for your normal everyday life?

SR: I'd have to go with Speed Dribbler. Imagine being able to move at the speed of a professional sprinter and complete all your daily tasks in half of the time! 

"Personally, I'm incredibly excited to watch *EA Sports FC* evolve into a global football experience..."



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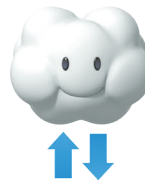
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