

PlayStation 3 Forever



LittleBigPlanet

Buzz

Armored Core 4

Japan Studio

Top PS3 Exclusives

& More



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Team Update

Matt

Editor

I started off by finally playing Ghost of Tsushima on the PlayStation 5 which is very good despite the fact that these open world type games haven't really improved on the formula since the first Assassin's Creed. Then I played some Parasite Eve on the PlayStation 1, a game I had been meaning to get back to for quite some time. I then decided to check out Game Pass on my

gaming laptop as I wanted to play some Flight Simulator but then I noticed the new Sniper Elite: Rebellion was out, which I played. I absolutely love those games and there are a few for the PlayStation 3. Finally it was time for me to put down those new fangled games and get back to the PlayStation 3 where I have spent a lot of time on Ratchet & Clank 2.

Alessio

JRPG Specialist

Alessio is an award-winning filmmaker and writer, as well as the co-host and producer of the games club podcast Metal Gear Mondays. He currently also works as a Post Manager on several network television series for History, NatGeo, Netflix, and more. You can find him on Instagram @alessiomadethat and via his website at

alessiosummerfield.com Alessio is currently playing Xenogears (PlayStation, 1998), Judgement (PlayStation 4, 2019), and Shadow of the Tomb Raider (PlayStation 4, 2018).



Letter From The Editor

New year, new games



Welcome to the first issue of 2025 and although January seems but a distant memory, I still need to get a handle on my PlayStation 3 plans for the year. I definitely need to up my Platinum Trophy count. I'd like to finish Ratchet & Clank 2, which I have started in the Trophy Hunter section, and then move onto Ratchet & Clank 3, which is the last of those games I need in order to have the Platinum in all of them. The other franchise I am close to finishing off is God of War and there are a couple of those on PlayStation 3 I need to finish too.

In this issue we do a bit of a dive into the first LittleBigPlanet and the Buzz quiz games. It was fun to revisit these and play them as a family also to get some extra perspectives on them.

We also cover the fantastic racing game Blur and the mech shooter Armored Core 4 in some short reviews.

It's a double bill for Trophy Hunter this issue where I had an exhausting time trying to Platinum Ratchet & Clank 2. Whilst I love the game, it is quite hard and longer than I had thought. The second story is for Metal Gear Solid 2, a very challenging Platinum I achieved a few years ago.

To top it off we have another Top 10 list, this time my personal Top 10 games you can still only play on the PlayStation 3. It was surprising putting that list together just how many games are no longer exclusive to the PlayStation 3, but there are also a few key titles that just haven't been ported yet.

As usual I hope you enjoy this issue and if you want to reach out and get involved please send a message to contact@playstation3forever.com.



LittleBIGPlanet™

There are a handful of special video game characters who just belong to a particular console. Sonic and Sega, Mario and Nintendo, and during the PlayStation 3 era, Sack Boy and PlayStation. It was arguably the most recognisable PlayStation mascot during this era.

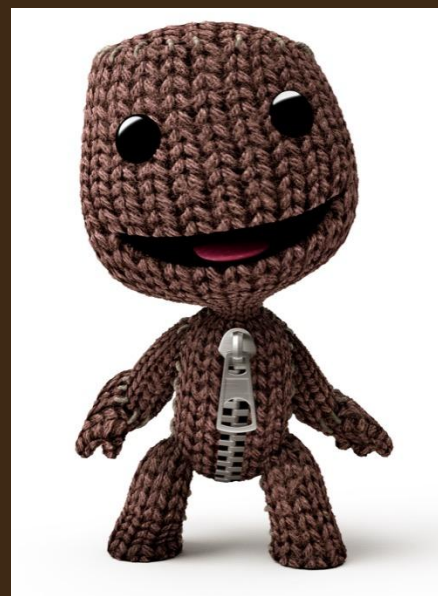
Sometime around 2006, a handful of developers working at the well known Lionhead Studios in Guildford worked on a side project called Rag Doll Kung-Fu which was one of the first third party titles to get published onto Steam. After Microsoft acquired Lionhead

studios the same developers found themselves out of a job and so they formed a new company called Media Molecule and pitched a new physics based, rag-doll game to Sony.

Unforgettable Tutorial

Booting up the game today you are thrown straight into the tutorial. It is a tutorial I have never forgotten since I first played it in 2008. The well known British personality Stephen Fry provides the voice of the narrator and guides you through the tutorial. Celebrities had been used in games in various ways with various

degrees of success over the years but somehow the use of Stephen Fry here was really significant, for me it was a real signal that this generation of gaming was going to be the one that really started to take gaming from the subculture it



was into the mainstream. The tutorial itself was also something quite different, it was deliberate, it did not assume you knew anything about video games, each button and action carefully explained and in a cute and fun way. Names of the developers and photos of them in the background whilst you progressed really brought home that this game was made by real people and not a faceless corporation. You see these elements quite a lot these days especially amongst indie titles but at the time this was definitely not usual, especially for such a big title.

The game itself is a very simple platformer with charming rag-doll animations and physics. You jump through the level with some basic puzzle physics based puzzle solving like moving objects around,



smashing into objects causing them to tumble down. The story mode is split into 8 worlds, these are thematic and have a running smaller story inside of them. Each world typically has 3 levels and 3 challenge levels which you have to unlock by finding secrets in the levels first.

Local Multiplayer

Something I do really love about LittleBigPlanet and a reason to still play it today is its use of local multiplayer. The whole story mode can be played with 1-4 players and there are some small sections of the game where collectables can only be achieved by using multiple players. There are so few games that manage to make good use of local multiplayer in this way but this is one of them.

Perhaps the most important part of LittleBigPlanet, and part of the reason for its huge success was its level builder.

The story levels were good but where the game really shined was in letting players build their own levels using exactly the same mechanics as the main story missions and then publishing and sharing those levels with the world. The online community for this game thrived. The building and sharing of player made levels is really the central part of the game, as you play through the single player missions your primary collectable is stickers and objects that you use in your level creation and there are tons and tons to collect.

Sadly, as the servers are all closed, none of that functionality still remains. You can still create your own levels but the millions of player-made levels that used to exist can no longer be played. There is so much of the game centered around online capability that the game does feel weird to

boot up and play. So many options are greyed out and the leaderboard at the end of the level is just a constant reminder of the way things have gone.

Community Efforts

However, there is a dedicated fan base of LittleBigPlanet gamers who have been working to keep the community alive. I have been unable to determine quite how, but a group of gamers managed to get hold of and release an archive of one of the original servers which preserves most of the player-made levels that had been created. Following that another project called LittleBigRefresh provides a custom server reverse engineered from the original. The community has found a way to keep LittleBigPlanet going along with all the custom levels, though the setup does look quite complicated.



Again as the servers have closed down and many of the trophies required the online play the Platinum trophy is no longer available which is a real shame as I think it is a game that would be quite exciting to try and Platinum.

The game was released to immediate fan fare. With 9/10 and 10/10's across the board from many different review platforms. It regularly appeared in the top 5 on Official PlayStation Magazine UK's Essential PlayStation 3 games.

The game is still enjoyable to play today. Graphically it has a few rough edges but it almost adds to its charm in a way, the furry edges of the rendering working with sack boys cloth material design. Some of the mechanics are a bit less forgiving, the game is 2D but there are 3 different levels of depth within that plane and swapping between them can be a bit confusing and the game doesn't always do you what you expect. Added to that, the platforming and its mechanics are somewhat limited, with the intention that creativity will emerge from a small set of robust physics mechanics.

LittleBigPlanet remains as one of the most iconic PlayStation 3 titles and is a must-have for any collection not least because it has still not been re-released on any other systems and remains trapped on the PlayStation 3.



Armored Core 4

Blazing Fast Mech Action - I'm not so sure

MECH SHOOTER

RELEASED 2006



Armored Core 4 was the first in the Armored Core series to be released on the PlayStation 3 in December 2006, mere months after the console's official launch. It is not a series I am familiar with at all, I have played a handful of hours in other mech type shooters but this entire genre is not one that I usually play. I can tell there is a niche for these games and I can see the depth in them that the community must enjoy and that specialisation is quite

noticeable in the review scores. The average review score is quite mixed, hovering in the 60s but if you dig into the individual scores it's more polarised, some people love it and some people don't like it at all.

When you first start the game you are dropped into a fairly boring set of tutorials set in virtual reality space where you learn to move your mech around, fire weapons and learn

about the couple of different speed boost mechanics, it was not clearly explained to me why there were 3 different boot mechanics and how to best make use of them - that you must figure out on your own later. I would discover that mastery of these controls is absolutely key to getting through this game. Being able to confidently control your mech, move with speed, target and shoot is one half of the central challenge of the game. I



really enjoyed having 3 different shoot buttons, you have your left arm weapon, right arm weapon and shoulder weapon, plus buttons to cycle between weapons on the arms too. Instead of a GUI which tells you which weapon you have engaged, you have to rely on looking at the physical mech in-game, where the animation changes when you cycle your weapons.

The First Levels

The first few levels were very short and proved no difficulty for me. You are dropped into a city or a facility in your mech and then you shoot and destroy a bunch of other mechs and leave with a rank score and a bunch of gold coins in my pocket.

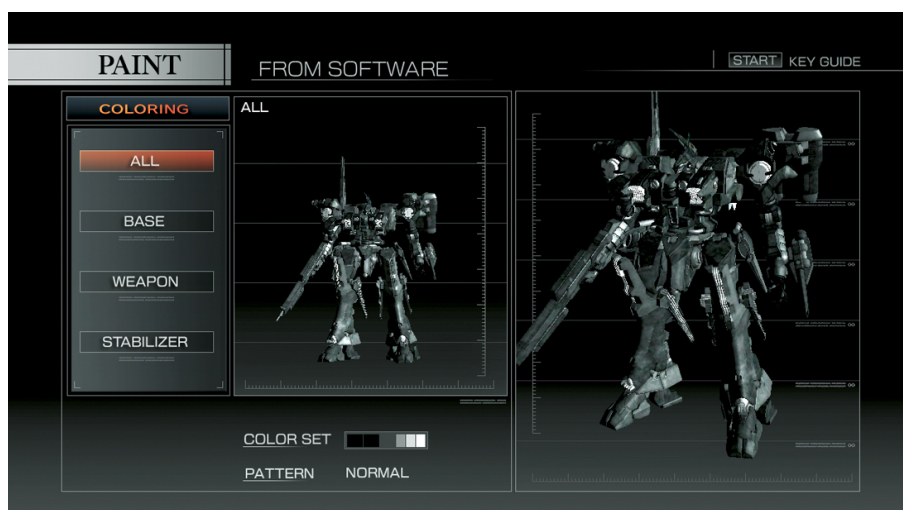
In one early mission my task was to protect a warehouse from a group of mechs, in protecting the warehouse I also shot and blasted it to bits,

destroying crates, walls and other presumably important machinery. Nevertheless I completed the mission with an A rank but I did notice that you are deducted money based on the amount of damage you do. This becomes important fairly quickly as in a subsequent mission I did so much damage that when I got the reward for completing the mission the balance was negative and the game offers you the option of redoing the mission or accepting the loss so you can at least continue.

A Tough Game

The spike in difficulty was sudden and early on, I checked the front cover of the box and discovered it was developed by FromSoftware and not only that but its director was Hidetaka Miyazaki, the man who would later go on to direct the many, many Dark Souls games and spin-offs. Fans of those games probably already knew that he had done Armored Core but this was news to me and suddenly the games made a lot of sense. I felt like a game historian, going back to a famous video game designer's earlier work to discover the tropes that existed way back when.

Armored Core 4's short missions are intentional. They are short challenges designed to get you to master a particular skill. You can die very quickly, but you can also destroy very quickly. I died 4 times on one



mission before on the fifth attempt I beat it in about 30 seconds. You need to master the controls, as I have mentioned, but you also need to master setting up your mech.

In between missions you can customize your mech and the options here are extremely overwhelming, not too dissimilar to upgrading the stats in your characters in Dark Souls. Changing parts of your mech affects the weight, the cost, the balance and it is very much not treated as an upgrade but more like a load-out. You need to pick the right set up for the right mission type and the game presents these rather fittingly as Schematics.

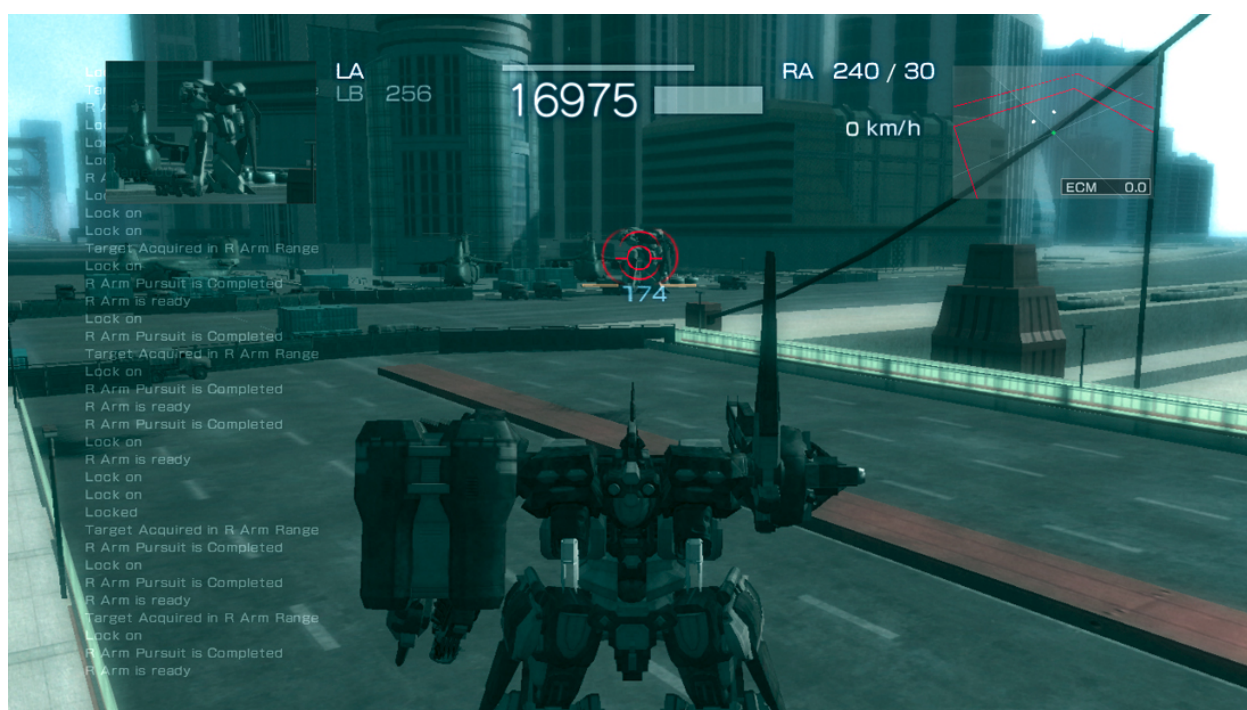
Unfortunately though the age of the PlayStation 3 does not really suit this style of gameplay any more. Every time you fail a short mission, which is often, you have to load back into the menu and every time you retry you have to load again. The load times on PlayStation 3 feel slow by modern standards and you can just about get away with it on some games but ones that require frequent loading are more painful. The graphics are also pretty lackluster, the

environments are bland and not very detailed and everything has a hazy fog to it all, it was an early PlayStation 3 title of course.

Multiplayer may have been a much bigger part of this game's personality but unfortunately I cannot play that any more. I can imagine investing in mech set up and working with friends would have been a lot of fun.

Two more Armored Core titles were released on the PlayStation 3, Armored Core For Answer (An unusual title) is a direct sequel to Armored Core 4 and then much later on we saw Armored Core V.

This is not my sort of game and not my sort of genre. But I absolutely love that this niche exists and I can see the appeal of learning something so intricately and mastering the build of the mech. But even at that, I think the poor graphics and slow load times mean there are probably better Armored Core games out there but if nothing else, if you are a fan of Miyazaki's games it is fascinating to look back and explore the parallels.





The King of Quiz Games

The Buzz quiz games started life on the PlayStation 2 in 2005. Buzz brought the quiz game to consoles as a virtual game show like the kind you would see on TV. Its unique selling point was the special controllers that are required to play the game. These really bring home the game show idea and are much more satisfying than just pressing the buttons on a regular controller. They were also a really good way to get non-gamer members of the family to join in too, as the buzz controllers were far easier to get your head around than a DualShock 2.

Buzz continued its line of games onto the PlayStation 3

with Buzz: Quiz TV, now with wireless controllers which streamlined the concept even more and made it more accessible for comfortably playing in the living room in a big group. If you have two sets of controllers you can have up to eight players which is fantastic, though I have not personally had the chance to test more than four players.

Unique Controllers

The controllers work really well and are still reliable to this day. They have a big, red, satisfying Buzz button on top, which is quite underutilised, and then four color buttons which usually correspond to the four answers as each question is multiple choice. On the downside the wireless controllers require 2 AA batteries per controller so that adds up fast. As a side note don't accidentally leave your batteries in the controllers for extended periods as they like to leak and these controllers aren't the cheapest.

A set of four wireless controllers seems to be about £40 on eBay and fingers crossed they still work. The USB ones are a bit cheaper but the wires aren't as long as you would like so make sure it fits your room first. The Buzz games themselves also aren't cheap with prices between £20-40 for those too.



The Titles

The PlayStation 3 got four stand alone Buzz titles: Buzz: Quiz TV (2008), Buzz: Brain of the... (2009), Buzz: Quiz World (2009) and Buzz: The Ultimate Music Quiz (2010) which was also the last full Buzz title released, it was only followed by a smaller downloadable game.

The Buzz: Brain of the... title is unusual because they released about 20 different variants for different countries. For example the UK got Buzz: Brain of the UK and the questions contained within were more relevant to the UK.

The games are still really fun to play today. The style of game however, is not to everyone's taste. The main character Buzz, voiced by Jason Donovan in the English versions, is kind of annoying. He is meant to be, but over time his wisecracking jokes and bouncy personality can rub you up the wrong way.

The controllers are still a big part of why the game works. There are many different quiz games available today but most

of them use your phone as a controller and involve downloading apps which keeps the cost down and makes it fairly easy for other members to join in, but it's definitely not as immersive as a special controller with a big red button.

Trouble in the Family

A game of Buzz has a variety of different rounds, it's all answering questions as you would expect in a quiz game,



but the way points are spread out is different in each round. One complaint I hear a lot is that too many of the rounds are based around the speed at which you can read the question and press the button, which is unfair if you are trying to bring in older members of the family.

As is usually the story with PlayStation 3 games today, the online modes do not work. Online play used to let you compete with other people but more interestingly you could create your own quizzes and share them online. Although in reality, the player-made quizzes were quite limited and very hit and miss on quality and I don't think the game suffers from the lack of them today. There is also a "Share to Facebook" button

which does not work and is just kind of funny.

Buzz: Quiz TV itself contains over 6000 questions with other games having similar numbers, which is a lot but these are split into different categories, so if you favor the same categories over and over, it usually isn't that long until you

see a few repeat questions, it very much depends how much and how often you play the games.

Some of the questions really do date the game. It can be like playing a game of Trivial Pursuit from the 1960's you found in your Grandma's attic. I played a whole round of questions

where the category was “The Future” and it talked about the London Olympic Games, questions about electric cars and even one bizarre question asking me what day of the week Christmas Day would be in the far, far future of 2010. Other questions surrounding celebrities and music also feel very “of it’s time”, and that isn’t too bad for those of us who lived through that time, mentally you can re-contextualize the category of “Modern Music” to “History”. But if you are trying to involve younger players, they won’t enjoy those as much.

Annoying over Time

There are other things that I don’t love about the games either. I think certain aspects of the TV show idea just get very frustrating and repetitive when you see them again and again. The music, the jokes, the animations, the intros, all very



powerful on that first few playthrough but they grind on you after time, it’s like you start to see behind the curtain and the illusion is broken. I also would have liked more variety in the number of different rounds and better options for configuring that. Characters and unlockables would also have helped give the game better structure and purpose. But quiz games aren’t to everyone’s tastes and this does a pretty good job of being that family-facing good bit of fun.

In an interview in 2010 the developers, Relentless Software, suggested that the sales figures for the PlayStation 3 titles were not as strong as they were on the PlayStation 2, but sadly the PlayStation 3 didn’t take off in the same way and really struggled to move units early on. It wouldn’t be until after the Buzz games were stopped that the PlayStation 3 found it’s second wind and started to get better sales figures. I don’t think any modern quiz games have quite captured the completeness that Buzz offered. The controllers, the variety in rounds, the family-friendly approach and the overall polish is just missing from a lot of the newer quiz games.



Top 10 Games You Can Still Only Play on the PlayStation 3

The PlayStation 3 used to be home to many impressive, exclusive titles. But as the years have gone on, more and more of those titles have been ported, remastered or even remade on other consoles. But there are still a number of

games which to this day, can still only be played on the greatest console of all time, the PlayStation 3. So these are my Top 10 Games You Can Still Only Play on the PlayStation 3. As normal I have limited it to one per franchise.

10 Motorstorm

We will look closer into this fun off-road racing game in a later issue but this was an early PlayStation 3 exclusive releasing late in 2006. It has lots of different vehicles to drive like trucks, bikes, rally cars. It's more of an arcade racer than a hardcore sim, but it has great physics and decent graphics for such an early title. The other good news is it is probably the cheapest entry on this too as it can be picked up for less than £5.



9 LittleBigPlanet 2



LittleBigPlanet 2 improves on its predecessor in nearly every way. The levels are much more detailed with new mechanics and there are even more items and accessories to decorate your own levels. It is an absolute blast to play and you can play with friends or family in local co-op and it is still cheap and easy to pick up.

8 Resistance 3

All of the Resistance titles are still stuck on the PlayStation 3. This one is my favorite of the trilogy but if we are being real, you should probably just get all of them. It is the culmination of the mechanics and the story and it comes together in a pretty satisfying conclusion. For the few of you who have not played or heard of these titles, they are a FPS set in an alternate WW2 timeline where Aliens attack. Obviously.



7 Folklore



Folklore is a really quirky, early PlayStation 3 title. It is an action RPG set in Ireland centred around Irish myths and legends. It is a really unique game and holds up very well. However, its exclusivity comes at a cost. Prices on ebay can be upwards of £50 so you need a keen eye and lots of patience to pick this one up at a good price.

6 God of War Ascension

It has to be said, this is probably the weakest of all the God of War titles. However, if you are a hardcore God of War fan then this is still your only place to play this game. Let me be clear, a bad God of War game is still a great game overall. Graphically the game is beautiful and the gameplay and environments are fantastic. I still need to come back and Platinum this one someday.



5 Killzone 2

I think this might be the best Killzone game. Its opening video with the actor Brain Box delivering a monologue over a fantastic score is so memorable. The level design is really fun and varied too which is important now that multiplayer is over. Original copies of the game aren't too expensive but if you are after a real bargain the platinum editions are cheaper (If you can tolerate the art style of the platinum editions).



4 inFamous



Infamous was a great title that released midway through the PlayStation 3's life and is a solid, well known exclusive. It probably wasn't strong enough alone to get people to buy a PlayStation 3 but it certainly gave existing owners a reason to be happy with their choice. You play as Cole, who obtains lightning based superpowers and you explore the open world city. A unique highlight was choosing between light or dark actions and seeing how it affected the game.

3 Puppeteer

Puppeteer is a fascinating smaller title which was initially available as a digital download on the PS Store and then available as a physical title. It is an extremely endearing platformer title set as a theatre production. Princess Peach Showtime released in 2024 is a modern take on the same concept. It is full of charm and often overlooked as far as PlayStation 3 titles go but it's definitely worth your time. The physical copy is harder to find and commands over £50 on eBay but I believe you can still buy the digital edition.



2 Ratchet & Clank A Crack in Time

This is my favorite of all the Ratchet & Clank games. For me it was the first one where they discovered they could tell a really good story. The cutscenes are excellent and the humor is really on point in this one. They manage to give Clank a lot to do also. I really enjoy the puzzles based around the manipulation of time and the exploration of the planets and moons is really good too.



1 Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

It might come as no surprise to some that my top rated game on this list is Metal Gear Solid 4 but I think I am completely justified. It is quite unbelievable that this game has never been on any other console yet, although there are

rumours that this will change very soon if the next Metal Gear Solid Collection contains it. There are many people who bought or still want a PlayStation 3 just for this game. It really pushed the PlayStation 3 to its limits.



Blur

It's Mario Kart with real cars

RACING

RELEASED 2010



Blur released in 2010 and was created by developer Bizarre Creations and was one of the last games developed by the British team before the studio closed, the other being 007 Blood Stone that we looked at last in the issue. The best way of describing Blur is a kind of “Mario Kart with real cars” but that is in no way to put the game, in fact it is unique and incredibly fun.

In single player your main focus

is the Career Mode. This is split into a number of different rivals, each rival has a set of different events. - races or destruction. You have to complete a number of challenges through those events, and you can replay them as often as you need to as your score accumulates, in order to meet the conditions to unlock the 1 on 1 event against that rival.

Each event earns you lights. For example, in the race type of

event you have to place either 3rd, 2nd or 1st in order to earn lights which is harder than you think as races have 20 racers in it and you always start at the back. This is actually quite a clever feature as there is always a car near you that you can target with weapons and it prevents you from getting to the front by the pack by end of the first lap and then cruising until the end. The whole race is a struggle to work your way up lap by lap.



Aside from earning lights you also earn fans. You get fans by doing tricks like jumps, drifting and using weapons. Fans unlock new items but most importantly new cars.

The Cars

The cars themselves have different specs and ratings including health. Some cars might be slow and handle badly but they might have lots of health and can therefore take tons of damage. They aren't all that useful but they come up in certain situations.



I find the game runs really smoothly and holds up quite well. The graphics are aiming for mostly realistic, the damage the cars sustain is also realistic with bumpers falling off and glass getting smashed. The scenery is fine too but does suffer some of that murky green/brownish color that seems to affect a lot of PlayStation 3 games. I don't particularly enjoy the UI graphics. They chose to go with a sort of bubble design with everything in lowercase and it definitely dates it for me, but



these are only minor points.

I also really like the career mode. I think it is hard in racing games to focus your single player mode around a satisfactory progression system. It's something that games did get better with before they ditched and went completely all in on online racing. The rival system is fun, there are plenty of challenges and items to unlock that keep it engaging.

The Weapons

We cannot talk about Blur and not talk about the weapons. You have a good range of power up options available and you can collect and store up to 3 at any time. You can also switch between them. This creates lots of different strategies where if you are leading the race you might want to hoard shields and bolts so you can fend off incoming attacks, and if you are behind you need some more



offensive weapons. This keeps the gameplay really fun.

if you are leading the race you might want to hoard shields and bolts so you can fend off incoming attacks, and if you are behind you need some more offensive weapons. This keeps the gameplay really fun.

Shunt - Sends a targeted, high powered attack to a vehicle

Nitro - Gives you a big speed boost

Mine - Drops a mine behind you

Barge - A shockwave that moves the car in front of you out of the way

Bolt - 3 mini shots that can also be shot backwards as a defensive maneuver

Shield - Blocks attacks

Repair - Repairs some damage on your car

Shock - Creates bolts of lightning on the track for the leading cars

Sadly though the online multiplayer does not work as the servers are long gone. This also means the Platinum trophy is now unobtainable too. However, local multiplayer exists and supports up to 4 players which is pretty rare amongst the PlayStation 3 library and so definitely worth checking out if you have a

group of local friends.

Blur is a really fun arcade racing game and is quite unique in the PlayStation 3 library. Typically I would say racing games don't hold up well over time but as this is an arcade racer I think it does pretty well. It's definitely not a must buy, especially as I have noticed its price is starting to go upwards on ebay, so keep an eye out for a good deal if this sounds like your kind of racing game.



Japan Studio, and the Slow Death of Experimentation

How Sony learned to stop worrying and love the weirdest games

By Alessio



The original PlayStation is one of the greatest video game consoles of all time. That is a fact. Sony Computer Entertainment Japan (aka, Japan Studio) is one of the most important game developers of all time. That is also a fact. Japan Studio closed its doors indefinitely on April 1st, 2021. That is a tragedy. Let's get into it.

The Real PlayStation All-Stars

The Sony PlayStation would release in late '94 / mid '95 and would later blow my face off in 1998. The world, and my face, would never recover. And, Japan Studio was steering the... ICBM... directly at... my face? our living rooms? These guys were the coolest. Most notably, these guys had nothing to lose. Sony had very little faith that their Nintendo-less game console would make a splash, but those expectations would be exactly what would save the system.

Schrodinger's Pressure™ ("no pressure, because we know you're going to fail" vs "all the pressure, because you've got to make this a success") would be the kindling needed to kick-start some wild experimentation that would set the foundation for the next 15 years. Emboldened marketing teams across the world would push for Sony to pull stunts to attract more of a young adult audience—like hosting massive pre-release play sessions in



dance halls and techno venues. And it was this spirit that would bleed into many games in the console's library, though very few are as iconic and prolific as Sony's internal team. I promise this all gets to the PlayStation 3 soon enough.

In total, Japan Studio would be responsible for over 200 entries in the PlayStation and PlayStation 2 libraries, as well as nearly 100 PSP and Vita titles, but less than 40 PlayStation 3 games. How was it that the studio responsible for iconic generational classics such as PaRappa the Rapper, Everybody's Golf (Hotshots Golf), Gran Turismo, Ape Escape, and Beyond the Beyond (kidding) would start to lose its footing in the seventh generation?

Sorry about that Beyond the Beyond thing, Takahashi Shugo-san. It was my first JRPG, sure, but I can't even

pretend that it was a "good" video game, by any stretch. I guess it was "okay", but I don't think anyone should play it in 2025. It would be very irresponsible of me to wave people towards that particular car crash. Maybe... no, I can't. Forgive me Camelot Software Planning. Golden Sun was pretty good, though.

To be fair, about 7 of those 36 PS3 games were sequels and 5 or 6 were strictly PlayStation Move (remember that thing?), PlayStation Eye (remember THAT thing?), or Sixaxis

showcases, essentially bringing the more traditional game release count down to ~23, or 17 if you exclude Japan-only titles.

Notably, Genji: Days of the Blade (a PS3 launch title) would be the first use of the name "Japan Studio" officially on one of their titles, due to a 2005 rebrand after shacking up with SCE Worldwide Studios (aka PlayStation Studios these days).

So, What Happened?

Back to the question I built this hastily written article around: What happened to Japan Studio? Why this slow-down and drop off in terms of staying power? As much as it pains me, no one that I know talks about Folklore anymore. Depending on who you talk to, there are a few different factors at play back in the mid 00's. Yoshida Shuhei-san (yes, that very sweet man who was also in that Xbox diss track of a PlayStation 4 advert), who oversaw the team



from '96 to '00, seemed to think that Japan Studio's weakness during its PS3 days was a direct result of unclear vision, that he claims was the development practice of the day in Japan at the time. Less of a captain at the wheel and more of an everyone plays this Club Cranium type situation. Others, like Allen Becker, Studio Head of Japan Studio from 2011 - 2020, attributed the dark spot on the studio's legacy as being a by-product of complacency and an inability to keep up with the cutting edge of development tools at the time. Alessio Summerfield, an unqualified arm-chair developer and writer of this article, posited that all of the articles he read seemed to also paint a picture of a team focused on niche experiences tied to hardware gimmicks during this time. Though, that being said, Gravity Rush (aka Gravity Daze in Japan) probably wouldn't exist without the Vita's hardware eccentricities.

So, coming up for air after that thinly veiled Wikipedia fact regurgitation, weren't they still being experimental and "weird" with this new hardware? Isn't being experimental inherently tied to "failure" and harsh lessons about how webcam-based card games may not be

super lucrative in 2007? That's true, sure. But something wasn't quite hitting, sales were low, and Ueda Fumito-san was only two years into his eight-year The Last Guardian development bender. And what was the deal with that one game that Yoshida-san really disliked that Kajii Takeshi-san pitched to (checks notes) FromSoftware?

Demon's Souls

Yeah... so, credit where credit is due, we do owe Japan Studio a round of applause for Demon's Souls. It is true that Sony did not want to publish the game outside of Japan, thus kicking off the chain of events that led to Atlus publishing the title in the good ol' U.S. of A and Namco Bandai publishing in PAL territories. But, even with Sony's reticence, the entire pitch of a dark fantasy role-playing game more akin to From's King's Field titles, but with the power of the

PlayStation 3, did stem directly from Producers at Japan Studio. Unfortunately, Takeshi-san would pass away in 2013, but a loving special thanks was given to him in the 2020 Demon's Souls remake.

Anyway, this is where I just want to shout out that From had a great relationship with Sony, considering that the company went all-in on the PlayStation with their first big commercial title (King's Field) and stayed primarily on the platform for at least a half dozen games after. A big part of their being championed internally at Sony was Japan Studio's own staff. So, while the studio may have been on wobbly footing during the PS3, they certainly inadvertently changed gaming history for the better during those years, too.

Even with Japan Studio's support, Sony's overall



mismanagement of the handling of From's soon-to-be cult masterpiece would ultimately cost Sony millions in the loss of potential publishing rights for *Dark Souls* and *Elden Ring*.

While Japan Studio would eventually hit their stride just as the PlayStation 4 era was kicking off, resulting in titles like *Bloodborne* (which was also the result of Japan Studio's pitching the concept to FromSoft), *The Last Guardian*, *Gravity Rush 2*, and the critically acclaimed *Knack* duology, it would also be short lived.

Astro Bot and Beyond

The *Playroom*, *The Playroom VR*, and *Astro Bot Rescue Mission* would see Japan Studio back to spotlighting new Sony hardware in fun and creative ways, and with their distinctive playful style. And, with the launch of the PlayStation 5, the *Astro Bot* characters (for lack of a better identifier) would make a fourth appearance in *Astro's Playroom*, celebrating nearly all of Japan Studio's output in a very joyful way. But *Astro* would also ride into Japan Studio on a pale horse, wielding a scythe, and calling himself *Deathbot*.

When Japan Studio would close its doors in 2021, the staff would

be absorbed into Team Asobi, a team spun off of PlayStation Studios, to exclusively work on the *Astro Bot* series. Thus turning the original movers, shakers, dreamers, and let's-figure-it-out-as-we-go-ers into the museum curators of their own past works. Odd how that worked out.

Just three weeks after the studio's closure, PlayStation would insist that it had every intention to continue publishing "experimental" games alongside their slow growing (sometimes forcibly so) *Marvel*-esque (complete with silly opening logo reveal) blockbusters. And, while many remain hopeful, others started lamenting the perceived death of Sony's more fun-loving and creatively-curious group nearly immediately. I find myself somewhere in the middle, personally.

In short, I wanted to draft this piece to celebrate one of the best studios and their work on some of the best game systems ever made. While their output during the PS3's lifespan may not be the work most remember, and may even have kicked off a series of events that ultimately led to their closure, it still brought a smile to my face to see the little *LocoRoco* dudes rolling around my TV back in the late 2000s. Titles like *Echochrome* and *Siren: Blood Curse* made a huge impact on me back then, as well.

Put simply, even Japan Studio's B-Sides were stronger than most studios' flagship material. That's something to celebrate and it was that punk-adjacent spirit that really defined the PlayStation brand and library for me in my youth. Go Japan Studio, go Japanese games, go old PlayStations, and go get to playing some of these gems, already!



Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

Trophy Guide

This was one of the most difficult Platinum Trophies I've ever acquired, and it's definitely only for die-hard Metal Gear Solid enthusiasts. The game requires a minimum of five playthroughs—one on each difficulty level—as well as completing 500 challenge missions and the short but tricky Snake Tales levels.

Metal Gear Solid 2 was originally released for the PlayStation 2 but found its way onto the PlayStation 3 as part of the Metal Gear Solid HD Collection. Each game on the collection has their own set of trophy lists.

VR Missions

By the time I decided to seriously go for the Platinum, I had already collected most of the easy trophies and set my sights on the VR Missions. When tackling a trophy list, I like to identify the hardest trophy first and attempt that right away. If I can't manage it, there's no point wasting time on the rest.

VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE

Complete All VR and Alternative



Missions

I assumed the hardest part was probably completing the 500 VR Missions. The first couple of hundred were relatively easy and quite fun. You might hit a few stumbling blocks along the way, but strategy videos online provide solid tips and techniques—the grenade launcher missions can be particularly frustrating. That said, nothing compares to the nightmare of Snake Variety Mission 4, which stalled my progress for quite some time.

No video guide on the Internet could help—it's purely a test of patience and luck. The mission tasks you with preventing 26

guards from reaching Meryl by killing or tranquillising them. If even one gets through, the challenge ends in failure. Armed only with a sniper rifle, you'll contend with guards using the map's numerous hiding spots for cover as they dash around and pop in and out of view. To make matters worse, the analogue sticks make aiming over long distances an incredibly painful experience. I even searched to see if I could use a USB mouse for aiming instead... you can't. But after enough perseverance, late one night, after countless failed attempts, I finally beat it.

None of the other missions caused me as much trouble

and eventually this trophy was earned.

Story Mode

GREAT DANE

Collect All Dog Tags In The Planet Chapter To Obtain The Blue Wig

Next came the task of completing the game on every difficulty while collecting all the dog tags. Dog tags are collected by sneaking up on an enemy and getting them to "Freeze" by pointing your gun at them. They do a little dance and drop their dog tags. Thankfully, you can check which dog tags you've already collected, and their names appear when you pick them up. However, since the game is mostly linear, the tags are missable, so you'll need to follow a guide closely throughout. Collecting the dog tags on each difficulty isn't too hard by itself, beating the game on higher difficulties is the real challenge.

To collect all the dog tags you have to play the game on every difficult mode: Very Easy, Easy,

Normal, Hard and Extreme. Each difficulty level has a different set of dog tags and all the save files stack on top of each other. Even playing the game on Hard difficulty... is quite hard. But Extreme takes it to a new level.

Getting past guards is not the difficult part, by this point you will be a master of stealth and know the position of every guard but there is no escaping the Boss battles. Each one is very difficult. Another very important point to note is that when you enter a Boss battle you cannot leave it. So you had better make sure you have enough health and other items because you can really make things impossible for yourself. At one point I found I could not beat the Harrier fight no matter how hard I tried. Eventually I reloaded to a much earlier save

and went through more carefully to ensure I had enough health. The Harrier fight was bad, the Metal Gear Ray fight was even worse. You have to fight 20 Metal Gear Rays. On very easy you only have to fight 3! But even if you make it through that, only one person stands in your way... Solidus Snake, and he is really tough.

Miscellaneous

COMPLETE STEALTH

Clear The Game Without Entering Alert Mode

For this trophy you will need to complete a run of the game without entering alert mode. Definitely one to try and do on the very easy mode whilst collecting the dog tags. This one wasn't too much of a challenge.



JOHNNY ON THE SPOT

Hear Johnny's Bowel Noises In
Two Locations

This is a fun trophy, if you are a Metal Gear enthusiast you will know that the guard known as Johnny appears in nearly all the games and is found somewhere stuck on a toilet. This trophy requires you to use the directional microphone to find him. There are 2 locations you need to find. The first is when you have to use the directional microphone to listen to Ocelot and Solidus's conversation and the other is when you have to provide Sniper cover for EE later in the game.

STEAMED

Kill 5 Enemies With Pipe Steam

Almost every game has that

one trophy that is total and utter garbage. It adds nothing, it's glitchy, it's painful. In MGS2 it's Steamed. This trophy requires you to kill 5 enemies with hot steam. This is achieved by getting them to stand near a pipe and then shooting the pipe releasing the hot steam. There is basically only one section in the game where you can do this and there are a limited number of enemies to try it on in that area. So you need to replay the game or the section to keep coming back here and try again. It's not always obvious if it worked and there is no way to track progress. I feel like I must have killed about 30 before it popped.

Metal Gear Solid 2 is one of my all time favorite games so the

addition of trophies In this HD collection was extremely welcome. My favorite part of trophy hunting is giving me reasons to replay my favorite games and do things in it I wouldn't have ordinarily done. I can well and truly say I have done everything in MGS2 by this point. It was very difficult, and from start to finish it took 10 years but I look back on this as a great achievement in gaming.

**Absolutely would not
recommend.**



Ratchet & Clank 2

Trophy Guide



Ratchet and Clank 2 was originally released on the PlayStation 2 but came to the PlayStation 3 as a part of the Trilogy collection. This collection had the first 3 games and most importantly with trophy support.

Unlike some of the other games I covered here, this one I would be starting my Platinum trophy hunt from scratch and not picking up a 10 year old save file in order to finish off some trophies.

Fortunately, you don't need to worry about missable trophies as long as you stop before the

final boss and the game does warn you about that too to some extent. This is my favorite type of Platinum - One that lets you just play the game first and come back for the clean up.

The game itself is a lot of fun but the difficulty really spikes in places, you really need to save up the bolts for the later weapons and keep swapping between them to upgrade them.

Step 1 - Finish the Game

After finally making it through the game I was surprised at how few trophies I had

unlocked. This is because most of the trophies in the game are earned by completing "Skill Points" which are a bunch of small challenges and random activities for each level. Also you will need to collect the Platinum Bolts along the way. There are a handful of these hidden collectables in each world.

Step 2 - Platinum Bolts and Skill Points

So next up I decided to run back through the world and get the Platinum Bolts and the skill points. Some of the skill points are really tedious, such as collecting all of the crystals and

shooting birds but some are pretty fun.

YOU'RE MY HERO

Protect all tourists on Planet Todano from the squirrels

There is a planet where bus loads of robot tourists arrive for a tour of a factory (or something) but, they are attacked by killer squirrels (Yes I'm serious), you have to protect them all and make sure they all survive the tour. It's actually a bit of a buggy and annoying trophy as some of the robots just fall off the cliff and die but the idea is really funny.

SPEED DEMON

On Planet Barlow, get a time of 2:10 or less in the hoverbike race

This one is also really

challenging, the races are hard and extremely unforgiving. With enough patience and attempts you will eventually get it, but try not to break any controllers in the process.

Step 3 - Challenge Mode and Clean up

This is as far as I got in around 12 hours. So next up I need to finally beat the boss and start the game again in Challenge Mode. Challenge Mode has a feature, just like many other Ratchet & Clank games, where your bolts multiply allowing you to get lots and lots of bolts and buy the more expensive armor and weapons. There are trophies for getting 2 million bolts and for getting the end game armor and weapons too.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

Beat the "Impossible Challenge" in the Megacorp games

This trophy looks like it is going to be a real pain. It's 60 rounds of destroying enemies so you need to be fully prepared with ammo, item upgrades and armor and of course, if you fail, you got to do it all again. (Ugh why did I start this again?)

Ratchet & Clank 2 is a really fun but challenging game. It's exactly the kind of game I like to try and Platinum and I should manage to finish this one off soon.

