

Intro

Cora's horse quote "All of society was built upon horses. Imagine what they must've looked like for real".

It's time to beat this dying horse even more!

We've given *Bethesda Game Studios* nearly as much time as *CD Projekt Red* took to fix *Cyberpunk*, so it's time to ask the question: Is *Starfield* any better now? Oh, and we can also finish Analyzing the game.

Seriously though, following Episode 1, the announcements of updates and then the god-awful crowd control PR disaster that was the *Steam* review replies, myself and Evan felt it was best to give the game some time, to see what they do.

New Updates

BGS haven't shown themselves to be the company that is interested in full overhauls, the one time they did do it, for *Fallout 76*, was likely a large reason for *Starfield's* own development being maligned - so the chances of them doing it again... were low.

What we have had do go some ways towards improving what *Starfield* has to offer - improving being the key word. If you bounced off *Starfield* originally, nothing we have seen will be enough to change that. If it was a game you think you might enjoy with some major improvement, then let's evaluate and establish if these make that difference.

The big ones you've probably already heard of are the new difficulty options, 3D surface maps and ground vehicles.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Difficulty Options

First we should analyse the difficulty options the game shipped with, so that we can establish the benefits that the new highly customizable system allows.

Difficulty in *BGS* titles has had a contentious reputation since *Morrowind*. A sliding scale that increases enemy HP and Damage Output exponentially is, with good reason, seen as a lazy approach to adding variation in how players interact with the game.

Starfield launched with the updated version of said slider, the one we've seen since *Fallout* 3, broken into 5 choices from Very Easy to Very Hard. The general idea remained unchanged, on the low end, your adversaries fire water guns against your supersonic rounds, and on the high end, the result is reversed, bringing forth the infamous bullet sponges.

These difficulty options have been criticized ad-nauseum. For 20 years the audience has been left perplexed by the laissez-faire approach *BGS* have used when balancing their games for weaker and stronger players.

Todd: "We're just really humbled by everyone's excitement for it, and it's fuel for us to make it as good as it can be for everybody."^[1]

By aiming at every type of player, it is impossible to please them all, and impossible to balance a game to do so. Often, playing a game on a harder difficulty can feel like a whole new experience, even more so when additions like a survival mode add mechanics that were originally missing. *Fallout* 4 being an example that benefits from this additional difficulty.

However, it's a challenging tightrope to balance upon. *Skyrim*'s Legendary difficulty goes too far into the realm of tedium, where hacking at enemies becomes a chore, even when utilising all of the extraneous features, from smithing, enchanting and poisons to try and level the playing field.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Todd's goal of mass appeal isn't without reason, consideration of the average player is required. A higher level of difficulty may improve player feedback in the long run, where they feel accomplished for mastering a difficult combat scenario after throwing every bit of knowledge they had into the fray. Yet if the opening few hours, where said knowledge is at a minimum, are too difficult, the player's likely to change the difficulty to something more manageable and miss out on that future triumph. Not forgetting of course those who cannot, for one reason or another, engage fully with a difficult game.

Even then, the harder difficulties with those late game advantages, may not be as challenging as the setting implies. The Very Hard mode that *Starfield* shipped with followed exactly what many dislike about *BGS*'s past iterations, and felt like they had learnt nothing from the overall praise they received from the addition of *Fallout 4*'s survival mode. Made even stranger by *Starfield*'s inclusion of multiple hardcore survival mechanics inspired directly from Todd's favourite space faring tabletop RPG.^[2]

Bullet sponges that hit like a truck technically makes the game harder, but it's wholly unsatisfying. In *Start-edgy*'s review of the *Oblivion Remaster*^[3], he highlights why this approach is outdated. By proving that it isn't outdated at all, and that *BGS* annoyingly does not put in the proper effort to alter difficulty even when there are avenues to do so. And for that we need to look at the game that predated *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* by only a few months, our first-person lord and saviour: *DOOM*.

Each successive difficulty option increases the aggression and strength of enemies, while also increasing their numbers. On easy, a room may contain 2 baddies that keep their distance taking pot shots, and on the other end of the scale there could be 8 of them all rushing in to get the best aim they can. A system like this wouldn't have worked in

Morrowind, with its extensive use of hand-crafted named NPCs, but since *Oblivion*, we have grown accustomed to the generic bandits and raiders that could support such a system.

A problem with this is that it couldn't be hot-swapped and would only come into effect after loading into a new area, but it would otherwise be superior.

There is of course the additional development time and budget associated as well, with level designers having to consider enemy placement across five difficulty levels. As well as technical time given to altering AI aggression.

This then is likely a core reason behind why, until this update, we have seen little change in *Bethesda's* approach to difficulty. Todd loves automated systems, that's the belief behind his "it just works" meme. That they can add a new system atop the scrap heap of others, and they'll all work together to improve minute-to-minute emergent gameplay:

"You want to build systems" "You can't go through and touch everything by hand per se"

"So you have to rely on some systemic level of creation and a lot of systems that are robust enough so that when they touch another one, things aren't breaking apart."^[4]

Let's then look at a way of adjusting difficulty at a systematic level, where additional credence could be applied to enemy level spread. *BGS* dungeons, even when historically level-scaled, supply a gamut of opponents. The majority placed at the player's level, around 10% of a weaker fodder, and then 10% of a higher level, with one or two "boss" fights, usually placed 5 or more levels above.

Starfield too offers this spread of enemy levels in a combat focussed point of interest, combining level-scaled enemies alongside the Star System levelled ones.

By which I mean, each Star System we can travel to is assigned its own level, from as low as 1 up to the maximum of 75. This usually informs the strength of the AI found within, unless the player outlevels the system. In which case a number of antagonists will be scaled.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

A level 30 Star System, for example, will spawn a dungeon with enemies ranging as low as lvl 15, with the boss NPCs around 35 to 40 and the majority of others sitting at 30. If instead we were to enter that same system at character level 60. That majority will have scaled up to anywhere between 30 and 60, the fodder will remain as low as 15, but the bosses will still outlevel us by 5 to 10 levels.

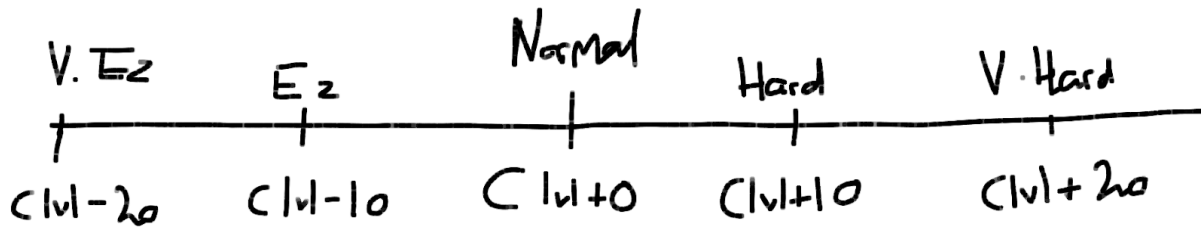
Up to a point at least. There is a clamp around 5 times above the Star System level. For example in this Level 5 Abandoned mine, the fodder is ranging from 5 up to 12, and the boss is level 24, despite my character level at over 100. Testing this has been difficult as some POIs fit the description I gave, and others ignore it. As well as faction and story quests often having enemies unaffected by the Star System Level, where they will scale akin to all titles post-Oblivion. Even researching this hasn't helped. The Starfield Wiki, run by the UESP folks hasn't covered it to any depth, although they have all but abandoned the site, and I can't blame them for that.

To adjust this current method as I understand it, to the various difficulty settings, they'd need to tinker with the values that dictate which enemies spawn. With higher difficulties raising the upper threshold and tightening the bottom. The simplest way to achieve a similar result would be for each successive difficulty level to internally alter the player's level. Hard could raise how the level scaling system perceives the character level by 10, and Very hard by 20, with the two easier difficulties doing the opposite.

So if we were to enter a level 30 Star System at character level 30, on very hard, the scaling system would spawn AI as if we were level 50, and as if we were level 10 on very easy.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>



Ostensibly, this is similar to increasing enemy health and damage output across the board based solely on percentages, but with the added bonus not only of increased experience gain, but in loot variety, level and value as well.

Still, this is only an adjustment to combat difficulty, and there are many more systems at play in *Starfield* than that. Indeed, my critiques still apply after the update, as combat options haven't been touched outside of an additional parameter to increase the percentages even more against our favour with Extreme difficulty.

Which in reality exists as a band-aid for poor late game balancing. Combat perks boil down to increasing one's effectiveness with any given type of weaponry, and apart from slightly faster reloading or aiming down sights, this means higher damage outputs. If the player accidentally levels their character to the point where they are one-shotting everyone and thing they find, and would prefer for them to at least be able to survive one or two more bullets, then that's what these options are really for.

Instead, it's the vast degree of other mechanics that these gameplay settings allow us to control that improve the game through personalization. These additional settings leave no stone unturned, and should've been there at launch.

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Having said that, it's easy to criticise *BGS* for taking their time in adding these features.

When many comparisons are made regarding the post-launch development of *Cyberpunk 2077* or *No Man's Sky*, even by myself, it's only fair that, from this point on, we ignore these.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

A complete critique of a game that is, for lack of better term, still being developed, is quite the task. How can it be complete, when the game still isn't.

To add to this, on the 6th of August 2025 as I write this, the week that this video is meant to go out for the public, an update just released. It mostly concerns UI changes for the *Creations* page. Gotta keep that money train rolling, of course. But the more interesting discovery has been curious mentions towards 'cruising' in the code. Possibly alluding to interplanetary travel in the future.^[80] Such a change has been seen in mods for a while now, and it won't completely fix space travel, but it will certainly alleviate some of the criticism I have towards the compartmentalisation of space gameplay in Part 2. Although how they intend to implement cruising in a hard-sci-fi lore friendly way beyond staring at your ship for another 10 minutes in between planets is yet to be seen. Perhaps they will speed up gameplay like in some *Daggerfall Unity* mods.

So yes, *Starfield* released without crucial components. But from here on out, I will focus on analysing the *Starfield* that currently exists as of the creation of this video. And when an eventual Part 3 releases, that too will evaluate the game as it exists at that future time.

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Let's draw our eyes to the XP modifier. Modifying the XP earned per difficulty level is a hold-over again from *Fallout 3*, but due to the level of control the player is given over how much of the game plays, I can't help but draw comparisons to *Daggerfall*'s sliding scale in character creation. And how the more disadvantages the player enforces upon themselves, the faster they will level and gain power.

I've already said before how I didn't want *Starfield* to go in the direction of *Daggerfall*, feeling that the latter is not a direction modern day *Bethesda* is best suited for. Still, the *Starfield* we got, for better or for worse, has taken steps to emulate that 1996 classic.

"It was time to do something new" "You mentioned *Daggerfall*, we go back to some of that"^[5]

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UIxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

It would be hypocritical for me to adore many aspects of *Daggerfall*'s flawed design, such as this sliding scale, and then for some reason state how this is bad just because it's in *Starfield*. Frankly I think this XP variable is brilliant for how it pushes players to reach outside of their comfort zone.

We are directly rewarded for increasing the difficulty, and for the first time since that second *Elder Scrolls* - ignoring *Fallout 4*'s Survival Mode - it is without the need for overpowered combatants with a health pool near infinity.

This includes, for all practical purposes, removing or reworking entire gameplay systems that you may personally not enjoy - including carry capacity, ship cargo capacity, cargo access distance, the in-game economy, combat afflictions and environmental hazards and ailments. It's the equivalent of *Bethesda* holding up their hands and admitting that they tried for years to make a game that was both hardcore in its survival elements, yet not too punishing for the broad appeal of the mass market, and that they failed at that task.

"These are the elements you have to play with, how do we make this all work together and you come out of it at the end of the day like 'now that feels great" *gulps and and blinks multiple times*^[6]

I must say though, I respect it. Rather than remain stubborn and headstrong, they identified sticking points for the player base and offered means of massaging them away.

Carry capacity being a key one for many. Often highlighted as proof of *BGS*' outdated approach to game design, perhaps I too am showing my age, as I generally like having a limited inventory space. It adds an extra level of role-playing where we have to be considerate over what loot we can or cannot carry. This works well in the fantasy medieval world of *The Elder Scrolls*.

But in *Starfield*, with so much emphasis on resource gathering of raw materials for crafting and outpost building, the heavy weight of said resources makes that a chore. Ship cargo

was added as an additional storage solution to mitigate this, essentially bringing back the Cart from *Daggerfall*, but the added space fills up quickly as well.

Time and credits can be spent to upgrade this, but the resulting space lorry becomes an immovable tank in combat, unless we upgrade everything else in tandem.

3 skills were designed just for the increase of these shared spaces, needing 12 levels in total to mitigate the issue, and still it was common for players to find themselves over encumbered. In a galaxy spanning over 100 star systems and 1000 planets, it's no surprise that players did not want to spend unnecessary time navigating to the 9 human civilisations where this loot could be sold.

Nevermind the fact that companions could not be accessed from store menus, forcing us to break our back offloading loot from our companion before finally stripping the shopkeeper clean of the relatively tiny amount of credits they hold on a 24 hour cycle.

Shared storage between outposts would've been a lifesaver for this. And while that is possible, the resource investment needed has the player facing these annoyances until they finally get it set up. By which time they may find themselves fed up with the game as a whole, all to prevent them from lugging around a backpack full of iron, uranium and 50 pieces of loot.

The new gameplay settings, which vastly increases the players weight limit, remove the need to be close to the ship to access its cargo, as well as equally enlarging said cargo to be over 5 times in size, and give vendors enough credits to stop us destroying New Atlantis' economy on a weekly basis are all a helpful band-aid. Although they do completely nullify those carry-capacity-adding skills in the process, by admitting that a carry capacity system may not be best suited for the game.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Of course, the opposite is also true. The staunch masochists may adore that level of role-playing I mentioned, and wish to make their playthrough even more ball breaking by reducing carry capacity to a painfully realistic amount. Alongside shrinking the ship's capacity to that of a handbag, while turning the shop keepers of the Settled Systems into the tightest businessmen around.

Not all of the new options are perfect, the new sustenance mechanic is barebones and missing features included in the same mechanic from *Fallout 4*, but as with the removal of NPC routines we'll dive into later, that is likely attributed to complications that arise from the variable passage of time across planets and moons. When an hour on one planet can be 8 on another, the addition of a player character's internal clock to manage personal needs likely outstripped the budget for the update.

What we're given is a flat 30 minute time requirement for hunger and thirst. Without the consumption of a food or drink item, the player is debuffed with Hunger and Dehydration, and when they have consumed them, they are buffed. Realism has taken a backfoot to gameplay here, which is something Todd is always emphasising, such as when discussing the removal of the fuel system:

"We used to run out of fuel, you'd jump and get stranded." "Turn out that just stops your game, ok, I guess I'll just wander these planets trying to mine for fuel so I can get back to what I was doing. Y'know, it's a fun killer."^[7]

That too explains why sustenance may have been removed even when other survival mechanics stayed in. Opening the menu every 30 minutes to click on a burger and a juice box does put a hard stop in gameplay.

The importance of difficulty options cannot be understated. If the wrong one is chosen, it can alter our experience with a game from one we could've adored into one that struggles to excite.

It's hard enough trying to guess how good you may be at a given genre based on some faraway developer's notion, not to mention how every game is balanced to different standards. Very Hard in *Starfield* was not the same as a 'Souls-like', which is why the ability to tweak the game to this degree is a huge bonus.

The problem with these settings, which is a problem with such settings as a whole, and not just *Starfield*'s implementation, is that they require the player to have knowledge of the gameplay they are altering.

When playing a game for the first time, we have no idea what any of these settings are adjusting, or what that adjustment may entail.

Any spike or dip in the difficulty of each setting can misinform the choice long-term, resulting in even more time spent in a menu tweaking it to a personal ideal. If you get it wrong and the next hour of gameplay is far too challenging, you have to move the scales back down, which is disheartening.

Fine-tuning this throughout a playthrough may not bother some, but for others, it's probably something they aren't interested in. They aren't the designers and until they've invested a large number of hours into the game, they likely do not have a strong enough grasp to understand what may be best for their specific taste. It's easier to instead trust that the developers have balanced the experience to best fit the wider audience, and in *Starfield*'s case, I don't think that's true. They tried, but a quick glance at reviews across any platform highlights concerns.

Furthermore, there's the risk of undermining intended moments if this mentality of altering the difficulty becomes second nature. Where certain battles or environmental obstacles designed to greatly increase the toughness for a gameplay or story effect may be weakened by the player customising the difficulty on the fly. Or how the settings may be abused to benefit in some way, either curtailing boss fights, or speed-running the levelling process.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UIxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Yet, while this is true, *BGS* games are in large single-player experiences, and that the player is giving this responsibility under the belief that they have the freedom to harm what the developers may have intended if that is their wish is a boon. It's our game, we should be allowed to do with it what we want.

There is no perfect solution. For a new player, *Starfield's* additional gameplay options won't improve their initial impressions, but will help them perfect the game to how they would like to play it if they do find themselves enjoying it. Which is to say, that for the fans of *Starfield*, this was a great update, but on its own, it's not enough to change the overall opinion.

For me though, someone who, as stated before, believes the game to sit around a 5 out of 10, which is abysmal for *Bethesda*, but OK on a whole. Refining the gameplay for myself did smooth out points of impasse, and improve the challenge where I wanted.

Increasing the ailment system from a mild annoyance into a true survival mode. Adding in a, admittedly simple, sustenance mechanic, speeding up my time offloading loot with greatly increased vendor credits, and creating my own "realism" combat mod without the need of any external downloads. By setting player combat damage at Very Easy, and enemy combat damage at extreme, pirates and such drop in a bullet or two, and so do I. All the while I am earning more XP as a reward for this extra adversity, and the game is more fun to myself as well.

Local Maps

Additional difficulty options were a sign of opening up the game to offer more freedom. They heard the complaints about the ailment system or carry capacity and offered vanilla methods of mitigating the player's woes. On one hand this is cowardice, a sign of non-belief in the strength of these systems, but on the other it is a means of appeasing the mob and making

the game more accessible. Local maps then follow the same mantra of answering people's complaints.

The Local maps of past *BGS* titles aren't some lost technology going into *Starfield*. The abstract, mostly useless maps of the release version were implemented that way with distinct intention. An intention of obscurification. Discussing the development of *Starfield* in an interview with Lex Fridman in 2022, Todd explained how himself and members of the various teams involved would come together to deliberate over a problem they had identified, with the goal of coming out the other side of the meeting with a solution they can then implement.

"You feel like you've made tangible progress on the actual build of the game"^l

"Where something you played at the beginning of the day didn't feel great, you figured out a solution with a group of people - it's always with a group. And then the next day, then you're like 'yeah, that worked out'."^[8]

By looking at the updated local maps, we can dive straight into their headspace when approaching this system. Within seconds the player will notice the reliance on procedural generation to accomplish the game world. This is a world tile of similar size to that of Cyrodiil in *The Elder Scrolls 4*, and yet the 3D spaces could not appear any more different.

The weakness of the algorithm and the barrenness of planet surfaces are on full display. Miles of nothing but duplicated assets, a few metres away from each other. Repeated pieces of geometry scatter the ground on a perceptible grid, spun around on their axis to appear different during gameplay, yet the magic trick is out for all to see from this bird's eye view. How do you fix this then?

Upgrading the procedural generation this deep into development was out of the question, we don't know how much of the development was spent on implementing the technology, but we do know it was one of the first parts of the game's development cycle right back to 2016:

"We started the game right after *Fallout 4*, so 2016. And the first thing we did [was ask] how we could generate these planets and make them look, I'll say, reasonable, as opposed to fractal-y goop."^[9]

By the time they came to look at these local maps, that early dev time was long gone, the planets had already been rendered and the time to go back and improve the system had passed. What do you do then to avoid day 1 slander screenshots of local maps all over the web highlighting the simplicity of the world generation system? You hide it, behind a blue wave of fast travel icons.

And still, people complain, why have the maps of old disappeared, where's the real time rendered map of *Skyrim*, or the heavily filtered diegetic methods of *Fallout*?

Honestly, the lack of a local map for the planet landing zones is neither here-nor-there, the local maps, even after the update, don't help greatly with exploration, and much of the POI discovery loop is still contained to the scanner heads-up display. It's an "all-in-one" system to aid navigation, even though it is first introduced to the player as a means to locate resources.

What did annoy most is how those esoteric swathes of icons did not translate well to cities. Creating a blob of white diamonds that offered no directions and forced fast travel if one found themselves lost among the back streets. Now *Starfield*'s cities are barely large enough for this to be a regular problem, but with the additional height variables that aren't common in their previous games, and with the only other solution being to follow the scanner as the crow flies, I can emphasise with those that found frustration when trying to locate a store.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Not to mention the complete lack of any interior maps, an addition we have come to know since *Morrowind* - with the exact same application since 2002. A top-down shot of the interior cells exactly how they appear within the *Creation Kit*. It had a variety of filters over it across the years, and with interior level design growing more complex and cluttered over the 5 games that used them, by *Fallout 4* they were often next to useless, but that 'next to' is still poignant. If all else fails, additional navigation methods, even when they aren't the greatest, are better than none.

And so, to pacify the crowd, *Bethesda* launched their updated local maps, the same zoomed out solution used in *Skyrim*, with the rendered clouds removed.

Coming to the cities, and were the player's woes successfully answered? Well, yes, we can now identify exactly what streets or obstacles may be in our way, and additional information can only help when trying to trek across town. The problem is the lack of an even closer view, we only have the zoomed out world map, not the localised ones. Where are the interiors that were missing before? They still don't exist. If you get lost in an abandoned facility, the Cryo Lab being one of the most infamous among the community for its maze-like design, there still is no means of aiding our escape. The scanner does use the clairvoyance spell from *Skyrim* to try and fill this hole, but anyone who has used that magic knows that it can get just as lost as us.

It's that scanner mechanic that is probably part of the reason for the complete removal of interior maps, as well as how cluttered they had become by the time of *Fallout 4*.

But also for another reason, streamlining. The boogeyman word of *Bethesda* game video essays. Here is proof from the director himself:

"There is a logic to making a good level. Even if you walk by a little T intersection, that becomes like a decision point in the player's head. 'Like, oh, I didn't go down that way.'"

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

"But the more you do that, it looks easy on paper, but when you're playing a game, you actually wanna limit those because he's trying to keep track of all these decision points. Then they get lost."

"And yes, we have maps, but anytime the player's going to check a map in a place like that, I feel that it's more of like a backstop for certain players. If they need to check the map, I feel like we've kind of failed."

"You don't wanna ever be maze-y, as long as you know where you're going, as long as you know you made those choices, then it feels fine."^[10]

To be fair to Todd, obviously his plan was to have every level be simple and linear enough that the chances of getting lost are far and few between, and for the most part, a good 80% of the POIs are. They don't feel like a one way tunnel like in *Skyrim*, but the choices of navigation offered usually lead to the same location, so no matter what you will end up at the quest goal, usually an Artifact, or the main boss with all the loot held nearby.

The problem occurs when those 20% of locations are maze-like, or designed in a way where you get turned around and end up in the same central area, without a direct heading towards clearing out the dungeon.

Removing maps then, for the sake of removing that backstop that negatively affects some players, seems narrow minded. Too much focus again on placating everyone. If *Starfield* has proved anything, it's that trying to appeal to all, leads to a shallow product that appeals to little.

Even if they did add back those top-down creation kit screenshots, they wouldn't help that much due to the added level of verticality that we rarely had before, where boost packs are now a prime factor in regular combat encounters.

Which is what makes the next realization so heartbreaking for myself. They have 3D interior maps! This is Neon City's! One of the few local maps that isn't just an isometric view of the surface. Dungeon maps in this view would've been excellent. The modern reinterpretation of *Daggerfall's* interior map, combined with modern controls and quality of life. Where better to modernise their outdated top-down approach than in the game that pulls so many left behind quirky features of *Daggerfall's* design kicking and screaming into the modern day.

What's worse, is that it was basically ready-to-go, here's the map of The Well. A floorplan, shown in 3D, reminiscent of *Daggerfall's*, but much easier to control and identify where one needs to go.

I don't know how difficult this would be to add to every interior, nor is there at this time any fog of war to hide where you have not been, which would of course make dungeon exploration far too easy without its inclusion.

They are most of the way there, and it's saddening to know that it is unlikely that they will go any further. And at this point, there isn't any reason for them to do so. The players who have stuck around know the confusing POIs like the back of their hands, or choose to forgo them completely. If people do still want these maps, a mod will probably fill that hole, with no dev time wasted at *BGS*, where it seems most have now been moved onto *The Elder Scrolls 6*. Even better, if that mod is paid, *Bethesda* will even get a sweet cut of the pie, with no sweat off their backs.

Ground Vehicles

Maps may not have improved exploration too much then, but vehicles, now they definitely do.

Although *Starfield* didn't launch with ground vehicles, it didn't take *Bethesda* long to implement them. Well not long by game development standards anyway since it did take

almost a full year. After playing with them a bit myself, the first thing I realized is that Starfield wasn't really designed to accommodate ground vehicles.

While yes, I do think that the implementation of them at all is impressive, and the fact that they function as well as they do even more so, but what I mean is that the world they built wasn't ready to handle the existence of ground vehicles.

When I first got one on New Atlantis, I immediately tried to hop in and drive around the city fully expecting it not to let me.

To my surprise, it did, and I drove around killing people for a while just to see what would happen and how the world would react to this.

On the one hand, letting players do this is awesome, and really Starfield needs all of the player freedom it can muster at this point, so I'm not trying to complain about it.

On the other, while driving around New Atlantis I realized that pretty much every single item in the environment is a static entity. The tables, the umbrellas, benches, anything. Everything. All of it was immovable, and unbreakable.

This isn't really a criticism by the way, I know this game desperately needed ground vehicles, and having them available in environments that weren't intended to accommodate them is totally worth having them in the giant, empty procedurally generated worlds while looking for temples and what-not.

I'm more so just pointing out that being able to drive around this section of New Atlantis, kill pretty much everyone and barely take any amounts of damage while the environment

literally doesn't react gives off the feeling that you've glitched a vehicle somewhere it shouldn't be.

Like the devs didn't account for this happening, which is kind of the point I'm making.

Again, this isn't really a criticism, I actually like this how it is, but I'd say it's more of an observation because I would have expected them not to spawn the buggy for you in New Atlantis to even try this.

As Evan said, the vehicles shine in the procedurally generated surfaces, mostly those barren of too many vegetation obstacles.

What makes not accounting for the vehicles in cities so amusing is that the solutions exist. *Havok* physics have existed in *Bethesda's* internal offshoot of the *Gamebryo* engine since *Oblivion*, they could apply those physics to those static objects in Evan's footage - except that it may break everything.

NPCs can choose to sit on those chairs, and by adding physics to them, I can already imagine the absurdity that would result as *Havok* has one of its regular hiccups and the chair shoots off into the atmosphere, or something else bug related. That then may not have been the perfect solution, although I'm sure with the right time allocated to it, a middle ground could be achieved, like having the physics turn off when the NPC is going to sit on a chair, and turn back on once they leave.

Time, and money, are the issue. They always planned on releasing more features after launch: "Despite the size of the game, there's still things we want to add as far as features in the future and stories and things like that"^[16]. Still, 100% of *BGS* is not assigned to fixing *Starfield*, they've moved on. The skeleton team left behind has to focus their limited resources on what was achievable, and the ground vehicle is certainly an achievement. The first working one of its kind in a *BGS* game, and 'it just works'.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

The controls may take a little getting used to, but there are two options available. It's a bit floaty, with varying levels of traction based on the surface you're driving on, but it certainly is 'an' car. This isn't an awkward port of horse riding, or the jank we've come accustomed to in other modded additions from yesteryear.

Better yet is the boost function, turning the ground based vehicle into a personal aircraft. On low-gravity planets, I've used the vehicle's boosts to fly for nearly 4 minutes, and it works without a hitch except for rocks popping in all over. Modder's leap at the opportunity to recreate the low atmosphere flight of *No Man's Sky* with this functionality, and it is now possible to fly around the surface in the way one would expect from a modern space game. Barring the issue of the crazy asset pop-in, this all the proof we need that console hardware has caught up enough to bring back levitation into the *Elder Scrolls*. The technical reasons of *Oblivion* and *Skyrim* are gone, and cities finally have the seamless transition into the countryside that we haven't seen since 2002.

Even without the ability to fly, the speed and utility of the buggy turns travelling a kilometer plus to the next POI from a 5-minute slog of mindless sprinting into a 30-second bit of fun. Which humourlessly is exactly why it wasn't there on launch:

"It's something we considered. Once you do vehicles it does change the gameplay, so by focusing on foot, it lets us make it an experience where we know how fast they're seeing things."^[17]

So the reason it didn't exist was to reduce repetition of the Points of Interest and to drag out the surface gameplay; turns out that minimising the time spent traversing procedural generated sand, snow or dirt is good actually. Those points of interest are called that for a reason, they are more interesting than literal nothing. This doesn't solve the negative changes proc-gen brought upon *Bethesda's* exploration formula, if anything it helps you get bored faster. Still, it does lessen time wasted - namely in how it both hastens and adds an extra layer of entertainment to the Surveying mechanic.

Surveying

Barret funny line that sounded sarcastic: “Exhilarating isn’t it, being the first to scan these things...” My thoughts exactly. Very... ‘exhilarating’.

Planet exploration is all about surveying. Surveying, like crafting and outpost management, is an optional mechanic tied to role-playing, namely as *Starfield*’s idea of an explorer. A sci-fi interpretation of a biologist’s job in identifying a previously undiscovered species of fauna or flora.

Unlike those other two systems, surveying is fully integrated into the average gameplay loop. We aren’t forced to scan resources, but we are forever reminded of it. If you want to see where to go? You open the scanner. Need to see how far? scanner. Need to find a temple in the main story? scanner. Identify what is an interactable object? You get the idea. The HUD has a lot of utility tied in, even changing the bottom left widget to highlight environmental hazards including local oxygen and radiation levels, as well as the gravity force at play.

Taking that extra leap and using the system for its true purpose of scanning rocks, plants and alien Jurassic Park rejects is all but implied. And it all comes from Todd’s obsession with technicality over game design. He is more interested in how he can push the *Creation Engine* to its technical limits. All starting with that obsession with procedural generation. This isn’t new at *Bethesda*, and I’m not just talking about the 90s *Elder Scrolls*. Since *Oblivion* they have used proc-gen to develop the landscapes of their games^[69], but the results were never up to par on their own, closer to that “fractal-ly goop” Todd mentioned earlier. This meant that the world designers still had to go in and hand place every object themselves, an extremely laborious process that *BGS* planned to streamline - and in the process remove any kind of human-touch those landscapes once had.

"We came up with a way of building tiles. Like large tiles of landscape the way we would usually build them. We kind of generate them offline and hand do some things, and end up

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXxfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

with these very realistic looking tiles of landscapes, and then built a system that wraps those around a planet and blends them all together."^[11]

"And we had pretty successful results with that. So we thought, 'yeah, we could do this'."^[11]

This led to the game design behind exploration. The technical marvel of wrapping convincing proc-gen tiles around a planet, not a focus on fun or immersion. Gameplay was forced to fit the technology, rather than the other way around. Surveying wasn't added because it was a system they wanted; it was added to fill in the void:

"There was a big design problem to solve with what's fun about landing on a planet with potentially nothing. That can be a lonely experience. Here are the resources that are there, go find them".^[11]

Which makes their inspiration of a, at that time, largely hated and thought-to-be over-hyped and over promised space surveyor in *No Man's Sky* quite amusing. They didn't look at *NMS* and think, 'hey that's a cool mechanic let's make that a part of our game'. It was closer to 'wow, we have entire planets working in the *Creation Engine*, quick someone find a mechanic we can add so that players aren't left walking around barren rocks with nothing to do'.

Still, it's in the game now, and I'm not ashamed, although I probably should be, to say that this is one of the aspects of the game I... enjoy interacting with? Objectively it's half baked, and has a whole load of faults, yet it fulfills a purpose: Relaxing, cozy gameplay. Or as a pessimist may call it, Podcast gaming.

There were times, after a long play session recording gameplay of a questline, where I enjoyed sitting back, switching over to the controller and turning my brain off as I chased the pretty glowing objects. Ignoring the fact that the average player likely isn't playing *Starfield*

Sources:

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while note-taking to the point where such a choice had to be made; this is essentially a mini-game like 'Powerwash Simulator' plonked into an open-world RPG.

Seeing that it is entirely optional outside of specific, and admittedly, rare quests, its inclusion isn't entirely egregious. And while I've been dragging our favourite shortking Game Director through the mud, his passion is clear, and when speaking on this mechanic with *Kinda Funny Games*, his points ring true.

"I love the Buzz Aldrin quote "The Magnificent Desolation" I think there's a certain beauty to landing on those and feeling: I'm one of the only people, OR the only person, to ever visit this planet."^[12]

"It's a little more zen-like" "There's a whole part of the game where you're surveying a planet, like discovering all of the fauna and flora and resources. Plants also have traits, geological things inherent to that planet, and if you're uncovering those. If you fully survey a planet, that data is worth a lot of money - credits - in the game that you can sell. So it's a whole part of the game that's really just doing that."^[13]

The problems come in how Surveying is balanced and how the progression system aligns with it.

Out of the gate, with no points assigned to the related skills, scanning any piece of flora or fauna takes 8 scans each. So a planet like Akila that has multiple of each in both categories spread across three biomes will require hundreds of scans. And it's not as if xenobiology and plants are placed close together. We can find ourselves running around for nearly a half hour or more, which again, is why if the player wishes to role-play and utilize this mechanic, it is vital to enter that zen-like state and relax. My complaint though is that choice of 8 scans. Why is it necessary? Where did they even get this from? The obvious influence would be *No Man's Sky*, which requires a grand total of 1 scan per item. Why artificially inflate this requirement 8-fold?

For their arbitrary skill system of course. Maxing out Zoology and Biology, both tier 2 Science skills, will lower this number to a reasonable amount or 4 scans per item. We are required, however, to dedicate 12 level-up skill points to this endeavour. Points that could be better spent on a whole host of other perks.

Circling back to that role as a sci-fi Biologist. In reality, It may take a trained eye hours or even days to identify a new discovery accurately, but for the sake of your playerbase, consider shortening it to less than 8 scans.

Constellation is a self-proclaimed explorer group; By their leaders' mantra, we should be spending some time finding “what’s out there” (Sarah's quote), and documenting for the masses that follow.

But 8 scans per object? Mods that lower this down to 3 do not - in any way - harm the Role-Playing aspect of surveying. I’m not suddenly thinking “damn this isn’t exploring at all, I’m only surveying this brand new flower three times, how is that believable”.

We have an advanced watch with tech capable of highlighting these objects in the first place, I’m fully capable of extending my suspension of disbelief that tiny bit further.

I presume the decision was to reflect our inexperience with the Constellation job. We are an ex-rock miner, sensibly we may not be the best educated to distinguish an undocumented specimen accurately.

What about the specific backgrounds then? I designed *this* character [Jett] specifically to interact with surveying, role-playing a Constellation explorer as they have been written. Yet playing this way becomes a chore where I’d rather ignore the actual skills I chose. Only further highlighting how little importance the character creation has.

Not to mention how sealife grinds this already slow process to a standstill. Taking 25 minutes running up and down a coastline to scan a fish isn't exactly peak relaxing gameplay, especially when we cannot dive underwater. Why can't we go underwater?

Because a biome for it does not exist, as seen here with a broken element of the surface algorithm where a 'wetlands' biome has been truncated by a mountainous one.

The assets for an underwater biome do exist, seen here in an aquarium in New Atlantis, which makes me think that this is possible cut content seeing as *Starfield* is the first *BGS* title since *Arena* to disallow diving. And ironically enough, *Daggerfall* too had to cut its underwater biome...

I can't imagine anyone in Quality Assurance took 30 plus minutes to fully survey a planet and thought "that that was a reasonable use of time" compared with the faster paced questlines, combat, the damn striped back outpost building is more nimble than this.

If I were being generous, starting at 8 scans isn't necessarily terrible, but locking the means of universally lowering it behind 12 skill points is. In my opinion, the progression should've been reworked so that the 'Surveying' skill in the Novice tier of the Science branch would unlock less required scans, lowering it to 2 scans per object by Tier 4. Then have an Advanced tier skill that increases the surveying distance, which is what the novice 'Surveying' skill currently does.

And then there's the fact that a visual compendium to catalog all that you found is bizarrely absent. We're such a great biologist that we can store all that information in our head. The inspiration in *No Man's Sky* had it, so why not *Starfield*...

Todd admitted in an interview with GQ that he wasn't sure whether everyone would like the change: "It's not the same as dropping you in a world like Skyrim," "You wander totally differently."^[18]

And he's right. Despite my criticisms, it's one of the few gameplay systems I enjoyed my time with, but only when it was fully upgraded, and only because I built a player character intently to role-play as a Biologist obsessed with uncovering the life forms of the Settled Systems. That's the juxtaposition of subjective taste versus objective reasoning. Surveying is heavily flawed, it probably should've been bolted on as a fast side activity in the way it is in *No Man's Sky*, and yet I can totally see where Todd was coming from.

"How does the wind sound? I enjoy strolling and watching the sunset. How does it land over the water? It doesn't have to be 'ok, let's go, let's finish the next quest, let's go level up'." "I like the quiet moments a lot. That's just part of being that character, being that person, in that space."^[14]

I appreciate the relaxing nature of surveying on foot, the serenity it brings, and how the atmosphere, combined with the sound effects and ambient soundtrack, enhances that experience.

[Car crashes down onto ground]

So where does the ground vehicle fit into this?

Speed.

Ripping and tearing with a rocket launcher mounted *Borderlands*-esque vehicle is a much-needed addition of adrenal chaos. 8 scans is no longer as much of an issue when you can cover multiple square kilometers in a fraction of the time, while engaging with the speed boost, jump and general joy that ragging around this slightly advanced dune buggy brings. It goes against everything I just said about atmosphere and immersion, and replaces it with dumb fun.

Vehicles open up Surveying to all. If that relaxing gameplay didn't appeal to you, now you have the alternative, and gameplay alternative is what *Bethesda's* RPG design is all about.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OIITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UIxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Oftentimes the content itself, whether a dungeon, quest, or open explorable area, remains static between players, but it is how you interact with it that changes your experience. Do you approach with stealth, using shadows and distant attacks to your advantage, combine powerful magic to cause confusion and chaos, or run in Axe swinging fighting mano a mano. Before this update, surveying ignored this factor of *BGS* role-playing. If you weren't playing a nerdy biologist, it made little sense to interact with the scanning of resources. Flora and fauna had no interest. And they still don't, but the agility in which a player can now experience the mechanic and reap its benefits in XP and Data Slates to sell for high credits will add some appeal.

Other Changes (Dialogue Camera, etc.)

Over 2024 a series of updates were drip fed containing bug fixes mostly to game-breaking issues and quality of life updates. The biggest for myself being the ability to open and loot containers while in Survey mode, a complaint I raised in the first part. As well as the ability to turn off the dialogue camera. In a single toggle, much of my criticism of the character animations are diminished. By obscuring the roughness of the animations, the facial deliveries appear more natural, for the most part. A few of them are just so exaggerated that zooming out isn't enough. [Heller's eyebrows go crazy when he is rescued].

It's now less jarring without the awkwardness of companion dialogue being aimed at an NPC, but delivered to the player with a dead stare straight through our skull. It's only in this natural viewpoint is it possible to see that the system is in place for NPCs to look at the appropriate character during their delivery, and it is often the fault of the companions positioning behind the player that caused the previous issue, rather than the eye tracking not being included. Although that was clear by how disconcertingly stare-y the crowd are. Admittedly, had a stranger just walked up to a group of my friends so nonchalantly, we'd probably look at them too.

Unfortunately, the dialogue camera isn't a perfect solution and is met with its own awkwardness as both NPCs and the player lock into position as soon as dialogue starts, leading to conversations where one participant may be across the room, and the other uncomfortably close. It's a step back from the dialogue system used in *Fallout 4*, instead mimicking how it worked within *Skyrim*. Fair enough, *Fallout 4*'s system had its own quirks, such as accidentally drawing your weapon will trying to skip dialogue on PC, or forcing the conversation to end prematurely by accidentally walking too far away. Still, I'd like to believe that there's a better resolution to those issues than forcing everyone to freeze. Hell, if they aren't involved in the convo, companions are still free to move around, which leads to them being a bit of a distraction, but it proves that movement between the characters is possible.

(Lin moving Heller clip)

Other than that, extra additions came alongside the *Shattered Space DLC*. Namely melee crafting, which was bizarrely missing from the base game despite being present in the crafting systems origin in *Fallout 4*. *PatricianTV* was right when he said that *Bethesda* fails to learn from their failures as well as their successes.

Too came the new ability to change traits after progressing into New Game plus. Originally only our appearance could be edited, which is no different than visiting one of the many Cosmetic surgery clinics. By allowing the change of traits, the New Game plus supports greater role-play options than before, opening up the ability to see new voice lines without the need of creating a whole new character and starting from level 1. Had those traits been more concrete, I may have had raised a complaint about how it doesn't seem very realistic from an RP perspective that these could be changed, but seeing as traits can be flagrantly ignored, and even straight up removed in game with a few lines of dialogue with the right character, it's doesn't make much difference.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Finally there is the extra content, a new faction and gameplay system with the Tracker's Alliance and a smattering of side quests, some of which are actually pretty good and I would argue have better writing than the base game. To prove that then, let's first cover that base game writing by diving deep into the Main Quest in Episode 2.

It'll be evident why the base game is an overall lacklustre affair as we uncover the woes at *BGS* during *Starfield's* 8 year development cycle. Since the game's release, *Bethesda's* reputation of low employee turnover has been shaken, with some of the biggest names, from Kurt Kuhlman to Will Shen and many others taking their leave. Interviews since my Part 1 back in early 2024 have helped paint a picture of a company that has grown too big, too fast, with a team of lead developers unable to effectively manage the goliath that has grown beneath them.

Authenticity is everything, and people can tell when something is inauthentic, checking boxes, or avoiding controversy to appease others. Being genuine is essential for making a connection. Not only is this true for *Starfield's* writing, and we'll come to see why a lack of authenticity deeply harms its themes and messaging, but it is also true for those writing PHD thesis length video essays, like myself.

If we were to refer to the Kübler-Ross model for the *Five Stages of Grief*^[59], I had gone through denial during my First Impressions live stream, and was somewhere around Anger and Bargaining come the creation of Part 1. It would be inauthentic for me to continue that tone and direction as I am far past depression and acceptance. *Starfield* was painfully mediocre, I'm not here to lambast more than is necessary, I'm here to discuss what it did wrong, what it does right, and identifying the cause and motives behind why and how it went wrong.

Before we turn the clock back to September 2023 and look at *Starfield's* main quest, I'd like to mention that based on some comments on the previous part, I have noticed that there is some confusion between the terms critique and criticism. A critique is not inherently negative. A critique should extol virtues around its criticism; otherwise, it does not fulfil its definition. Additionally, criticism is not meant as a personal attack on any developers, but instead aimed directly at the art in question. Unavoidably, the higher on the totem a developer is, the more control they have, so while I will inevitably be mentioning names like Todd Howard or Emil Pagliarulo as every aspect of the game went through them at some point, I am not attacking them.

Thanks for watching. I hope you enjoyed the video. If you enjoyed it and want to help me make more stuff like it, I have a Patreon and Youtube Members, which offer early access to videos and exclusive behind the scenes content for just £1. A huge thank you to all of the current members. If you would like to talk to me, you can hit me up on the Jwlary Discord channel. Links to all of these are in the description of the video alongside links to the full written Essay and Bibliography.

@grd046 asks:

"Do you think we will see an industrial/technological revolution in the world of Tamriel in *Elder Scrolls 6* or future *Elder Scrolls* games/media? [and] Can the world of Tamriel evolve to be like the world in *Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura* where magic and technology co-exist to an extent?"

Well to some degrees, we're already on the way to that. The Dwemer were the beginnings of that revolution before their disappearance, and we've seen characters like Sotha Sil unlock their secrets for his Clockwork city. Only *ESO* has really used that lore since *Morrowind*, but I think the Lost Expedition quest in *Skryim* is possibly pushing towards people like Calcelmo

Sources:

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trying themselves to replicate Sotha Sil's goal. And there's the anniversary edition Dwemer gun, but I think the community has collectively concluded that *Creation Club* slop isn't canon.

I can certainly see the *TES* universe pushing in the direction of *Arcanum* eventually, but not by *TES 6*. I believe they'll instead push the world closer to the late Medieval period, where slow firing gunpowder rifles and the like are going to be more common. But I won't be surprised if instead they may be one-off unique weapons associated with a Dwemer discovery quest akin to the Lost Expedition.

To be honest, with the disjointed development methods at *Bethesda*, even if they have planned for this, there's no promise it won't be cut. And there's an equal chance that they've decided they aren't going to do it, and then will change their minds at the last minute as Todd desperately tries to make the game fun.

@redgradientman9588 asks:

"Is it easier to write a script when the game is middling or when you are passionate about it? Like maybe how you wrote *TES 2* compared to these videos"

I may be different from some other creators in that regard. Other creators have commented that they find writing negatively is easier than positively. I find the opposite to be true.

Analysing a game I'm passionate about, while still pointing out its flaws, is far easier for me creatively. If we're talking about pure numbers of words on the page though, dissecting bad game design decisions does equate to more content than examining good ones.

The ideal games are ones that may not be the best, but aren't that far from being good. Especially if the reasons behind that are over ambition or technological problems, as it then becomes an exercise in imagining how the game could have been far better had it been made in another time.

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

That's why I love *Daggerfall* despite its flaws, and why I'm excited to get my teeth stuck into *Battlespire* and the *NGage* mobile *TES* games. *Diablo* is a perfect example, where we're actually lucky enough to see what the game could've been with more time and better technology, in *Diablo II*.

@Pukek97 asks:

Will they return to games like *Arena* and *Daggerfall* and give them remastering [or] even support the current unity builds?

I wouldn't be surprised to see *Bethesda* shout out the fan made remakes on their social media. Their socials tend to be pro-modders, with them even fully marketing a Creation Club mod as if it were an official DLC for *Starfield*. They may have already done it for *Daggerfall* Unity at some point in the past, I don't keep up to date with their socials that much.

But if the question is whether they will ever release them in an official manner, I highly doubt it. Seeing as both are freeware now-a-days, I feel like *Bethesda* has essentially washed their hands of any ownership over them, and are happy for them to belong to the community. At least, that was true when the choice to make them freeware was made. Whether that remains the case now that *Microsoft* is in the picture, is anyone's guess.

@bya_fox asks:

Once *Bethesda* releases *TES 6*, who would you like to see continue their games since the next game probably wouldn't be released till 2047?

If we're looking at the *Microsoft* owned game studios, honestly none of them stand out to me. If modern *TES* games are the result of devs who exclaim how much they love the franchise, maybe they should hand it over to 343 to see what a dev team that hates anything they have to work on will do ;)

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

Bethesda's Staff has more than tripled since *Skyrim*. Given how this has neither led to faster development nor an increase in quality, but actually seen a reduction of interest in the games, should they be made to work on other projects to learn the engine as well as gain better familiarity with the franchises instead of outsourcing the jobs Elsweyr?

Nice pun! Concerning the *Creation Engine*, it's main problem is the asset streaming, and with enough concerted programming effort, even that may be possible to circumvent. Similar to how *Warhorse* were able to wrangle the *CryEngine* into supporting a huge open-world. *Bethesda* won't do that though, as the game must be in a playable state for any of the designers to do any work with their "living design document" methodology. So technical downtime is forced to a minimum.

Instead I would prefer that *Bethesda* split their team into more manageable sizes. We'll see in part 2 how the 500+ people that worked on *Starfield* was too much, and they had far more productive output with teams of 100 to 150. I believe then that the team should be split between the three franchise IPs, with employees choosing which they would prefer to work on. Teams of around 100+ working on *TES*, *Fallout*, and god-forbid, *Starfield*, simultaneously. Of course, to make this efficient, there would need to be greater emphasis on concise planning before the teams set out on their development cycle, yet that seems nigh-on impossible at *Bethesda*.

Do you feel like the excessive monetization of the in-game store has cost *Bethesda* their charm with players being accepting of their jank from earlier games?

Let's just say that the mantra that modders will fix *Bethesda's* failings certainly stings even more when said fixes are being held behind a pay wall. I didn't pay \$70 for a *Roblox* style

Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Jlp6mb-OlITRph0MnIKPDXXfPd6eAa0UlxoX5tmqn8/edit?usp=sharing>

modding platform. I knew that was inevitable, but based on past results I at least expected a passable game below that....

Thanks again, and I'll see you in the next one.

[Credits]