

EXPAND HORIZONS - VOL #3.

A RECOMMENDATION LIST BY VERTEGRAS

NOTMUDKIP

This series is dedicated to finding games that fit the genres that I know these people like, prefer, or have shown interest for. While also, showing where to get them, a brief overview, and how much I think they'd mesh with the games.

NOTMUDKIP

A gamer of strategy, turn-based, and long stories spanning large worlds. Given the lineup of known games that he's played and have preferred to gravitate towards, this is pretty easy.

Known Games:

RPGs:

- Persona
- Xenoblade
- Fire Emblem
- Paper Mario
- Mario & Luigi
- Octopath Traveler
- Genshin Impact
- Honkai Star Rail

Metroidvanias & Platformers:

- Hollow Knight
- Metroid
- Celeste

Miscellaneous:

- Zenless Zone Zero
- Valorant
- Pikmin

With that assessment of games, we can dissect some stuff that I think would fit in his realm.

What's a RPG?

There are four entries that come to mind that hit various levels of the RPG experience.

1. The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - This is the embodiment of fantasy action RPG. Snappy combat, straightforward leveling system, feeling like a badass throughout and tons of content? (Xbox One, Series S|X, PS4/5, Switch, PC)
 - a. The Game of the Year 2015.
 - b. A massive open-world that feels fitting and doesn't feel like bloat.
 - c. Geralt is an incredibly well written character with a pretty dedicated story.
 - d. Almost always on sale.

Mesh With: Very Well.

2. Fable - This series is an almost entirely linear story with small choices that the player can influence. This trilogy of them makes for a great amount of content. The second one, arguably being the best, is one of the best experiences but the third one having magic blending is incredibly fun. (Xbox One, Series S|X, PC)
 - a. On Game Pass.
 - b. The new one is coming next year! LET'S GO!
 - c. Fable 2 and 3 have co-op multiplayer.
 - d. *And Eli would always choose the brothel in Fable 3...*

Mesh With: Very Well.

3. Baldur's Gate 3 - This one is probably the biggest "head scratcher" on this entire list because it is so open-ended but it is also pretty linear if the player chooses to do so. It has non-Tav character stories, like Astarion or Karlach, that one can choose and do without having to be contemplating on every potential decision. (Xbox Series S|X, PS5, PC)
 - a. The Game of the Year 2023.
 - b. This game is just marvelous, beautiful, has so much love put into it and it is the best D&D experience that isn't D&D (*or, uh, Pathfinder.*)
 - c. Plus, it would be very interesting to see a potential 'The Goons' multiplayer run of Baldur's Gate 3.

Mesh With: Pretty Well.

4. Dungeons of Hinterberg - A new little game that just released on Game Pass last month, this game blends the day to day activities of something akin to *cough Persona cough* with puzzles and combat situations of an action RPG like Final Fantasy 7 Remake or Genshin Impact. It's a great little time. (Xbox Series S|X, PC)
 - a. Yeah, I said two of those games in describing this one.
 - b. It's a pretty great pick-up and play game that I've been enjoying.
 - c. On Game Pass, obviously.

Mesh With: Very Well.

The Stratagem of Gaming.

There are few series that hit the strategy aspects that would feel natural to him.

1. Halo Wars - These two games take the Halo franchise to real-time strategy. In the same way as Command & Conquer. They are something that tend to get ignored from the Halo series but deserve high praises. (Xbox One, Series S|X, PC)
 - a. On Game Pass.
 - b. Tons of content, with multiplayer.
 - c. Much more streamlined experience than other RTS series.
 - d. Halo Wars 2 is lowkey goated.

Mesh With: Very Well.

2. StarCraft - The legendary Blizzard IP that has been pushed to the wayside, this sci-fi universe holds the RTS genre in its bosom. With both the original StarCraft & StarCraft II being free, there's no reason to not jump in with friends. (PC via Battle.net)

Mesh With: Pretty Well.

3. WarCraft - This seemed expected given StarCraft. But rewind the times and go back to before World of WarCraft and you get the original trilogy of the medieval RTS. (PC via Battle.net)

Mesh With: Pretty Well.

4. Kunitsu-Gami: Path of the Goddess - This new Capcom IP has taken the Japanese mythological creatures and shoved it into a Pikmin-inspired Soulslike. Yeah, I said that. With a free demo, there's no point in missing out! (Xbox Series S|X, PS5, PC)
 - a. Now on Game Pass!

Mesh With: Very Well.

Platforming Mania.

There are quite a few games that immediately come to mind that hit the platforming direction.

1. Psychonauts - This series deserves so much more than it gets. It constantly gets ignored in discussions about platformers when it has not one but two of the best platforming games on the market. Raz deserves better. (Xbox One, Series S|X, PS4/5, Switch, PC)
 - a. On Game Pass.
 - b. Both games are phenomenal.
 - c. The gimmick of a person's psyche makes these games incredibly memorable in story as well.

Mesh With: Very Well.

2. Crash Bandicoot - The N-Sane Trilogy. This is such a great trilogy done by Vicarious Visions, bringing the former PlayStation mascot to modern consoles. It has high replay value with tons of content. (Xbox One, Series S|X, PS4/5, Switch, PC)
 - a. Now on Game Pass!
 - b. Hype for Crash Nitro Kart soon.

Mesh With: Very Well.

3. Hi-Fi Rush - This game is awesome. It has a colorful cast of characters, light palette with a musical twist. Worth any platforming fan's time. (Xbox Series S|X, PS5, PC)

- a. On Game Pass.
- b. Solid length of gameplay.
- c. Music is baller.

Mesh With: Pretty Well.

4. The Last Case of Benedict Fox - This was a sleeper hit for me and I recommend anyone who likes Metroidvanias to give it a look. This takes the darker tones of something out of H.P. Lovecraft's curios of chaos blending it with a stylish 2D-Metroidvania loop. (Xbox One, Series S|X, PS5, PC)
 - a. On Game Pass with the Definitive Edition.
 - b. A much different approach in art and story direction than other Metroidvanias.
 - c. Incredibly underrated.

Mesh With: Pretty Well.

The Mixed Bag / Honorable Mentions.

There are a few series that might not be the best, might not fit entirely, or are a little bit harder to access which I think fit here.

1. Thirsty Suitors (Xbox S|X, PS5, Switch, PC)
 - a. A gameplay loop akin to Paper Mario with some decisions akin to Life is Strange with lots of color and culture. Some of the standard fights do get repetitive though.
 - i. On Game Pass.
 - ii. Doesn't take itself seriously and that's fun.
2. World of WarCraft (PC)
 - a. I know he's already tried it before but that was a bit more of a rushed experience. And I think with a bit more time, WoW could be something he would appreciate given the content involved rather than the "create your own character" facade. With Raids, Mythic+ Dungeons, and tons of stories that exist in-game, it could be something special.
 - i. New expansion sets up a trilogy.
 - ii. Let the new player experience actually do its job for a bit.
3. The Ruined King: A League of Legends Story (Xbox One, Series S|X, PS4/5, Switch, PC)
 - a. Seeing some of it in my initial playthrough wayback, the gameplay loop and the story are things that should interest him. The weaving turn-based combat helps break the traditional repetition and gives a much deeper insight to some of the characters that he's seen in League for hours on end.
 - i. Solid story, fluid combat, worth it.
 - ii. ***Illaoi x Braum goes brr.***
4. Gears Tactics (Xbox One, Series S|X, PC)
 - a. In a similar vein of Halo Wars, taking a beloved Xbox IP and going strategy. Gears Tactics is so underrated. It takes the gritty Gears of War aesthetic and

injects a Fire Emblem-like turn-based battle structure into it. It was such a great surprise during lockdown that didn't get the recognition it deserved.

- i. On Game Pass.
- ii. Smooth combat loop.