

Oni's Games I played this year 2021

Trails to Azure

I feel kinda bad for how this game constantly got the short end of the stick. I swear something big I wanted to play came out once I'd made some solid progress. With that I've played the entire Trails series up through Cold Steel finally. You can really start to feel the evolution of the gameplay into what it'd become in Cold Steel and it was cool to see just how far some overarching plot points that define the series later were planned in advance. There's a pretty noticeable lull in the middle of the game though that made it tough to push through, but that final section (including one of the best final boss themes I have ever heard oh my god i legit bumped the score up half a point due to it) was insane. 7.5/10

Scarlet Nexus

I went into this game as blind as possible, I only knew from the first trailer I really liked the concept and after Code Vein I'm very willing to try out a Bamco original IP. It does a really, really good job at avoiding the pitfalls of a lot of ARPGs in being able to mindlessly brute force your way through the game, not even bothering to learn any of the advanced mechanics. Which is good because a lot of the unique abilities from your party members are super slick and fun to use. Towards the end there is definitely a bit of HP bloat and a lack of enemy variety however. I was also kinda caught off guard by how mature (and a bit of a bait and switch in terms of the direction I thought the narrative would take) the story/characters was? And the lounge themes in this game had zero business being so catchy. 8/10

Bravely Default II

Goddamn I seriously forgot to write about this one too LMAO. As a Xenoblade fan I did not mind the shift to EU voice actors as much as some people in the fanbase did. It's weird since even though I like the cast as individuals (especially Elvis) I just can't bring myself to say they were better than the original Bravely Default crew. The gameplay is as fun as ever and was genuinely one of the most challenging turn based RPGs I have played until very very late in the game where you break the game in half in typical Bravely fashion. I'm so damn glad that Revo came back to do the soundtrack, even if I thought it wasn't their best work with the exception of a couple absolute bangers 8/10

Tales of Arise

After five fucking years we finally got a new next gen Tales and goddamn was it completely worth the wait. I'm not sure they could've done a better job at broadening the appeal of the series while not sacrificing what makes Tales Tales. I said it before but this was the single most fun combat system in the series yet IMO, which is doubly impressive because it is definitely simplified and the enemies are obnoxious at times at how difficult they can be to stagger, yet I had a blast regardless. EVERYONE felt great to play and the Boost Strike system was well thought out, although later enemy variety was a bit of an issue. Story is pretty standard Tales fare, although I certainly will not get tired of a wide variety of slave revolts. Cast grew on me a lot quicker than I expected even with the loss of animated post battle skits, Alphen and Kisara being my personal favorites. Even the OST which has felt phoned in at times by Sakuraba has been stepped the fuck up. Just an all around awesome experience and I hope it means the turnaround time for the next Tales is quicker. Also, Hootle good and is best mascot 9/10

SMTV

The freshest game in my memory as it's the last one I beat. The core SMT series gameplay is just so good, with it demanding a solid understanding of weaknesses and buffs/debuffs/status effects actually

being useful, although here it might be streamlined a bit *too* much with the lack of Pierce. This game clearly suffered from the Switch's lack of graphical power with the constant frame rate drops while exploring in the overworld. Not to mention the platforming being pretty jank overall with some fucky physics at times. As usual though while the central themes of morality/alignment and world creation is interesting, the storytelling just doesn't quite have the same emotional pop the Persona series has at times. The OST is pretty solid and I love the MC's super androgynous fuccboi design. I have an itch to go back and beat the super bosses I'll probably scratch when I get some significant time off 8/10

Ys IX:Monstrum Nox

In this edition of Adol Christin's wacky adventures he gets tossed in the slammer and becomes a disgusting black creature of the night. The gameplay is as solid as ever for a Ys title but even though I generally like dark and gothic designs for some reason I just didn't like it as much as I liked YS VIII's tropical setting. I liked the cast as a whole but also think the OST wasn't as consistently good as previous entries and the ending sequence/final boss is straight assssssss. 6.5/10

NEO:TWEWY

Another game that fell victim to being juggled due to some bangers that came out around the same time. Similar to Persona I really like TWEWY's general sense of style and while it's extremely frantic gameplay is a bitch on my aging millennial hands it was still a blast. The series handled the transition from 2D to 3D pretty well, and similar to the first game the narrative can get surprisingly dark for such a colorful game at first glance. Characters are pretty endearing too, Fret is one of my favorite lancer/sidekicks of all time (GALAXY BRAIN ACTIVAAAAAAAATE). It's a pretty big spoiler so I won't go into detail but I kinda disliked how the introduction of certain characters really ate up the screen time of others, and again the ending sequence was somewhat repetitive and asspullly in a way I didn't totally like. 7/10

Guilty Gear Strive

Where do I even start with this masterpiece. It was honestly a bit of a leap of faith to even buy this since the last fighter I played extensively was BBTAG back in like 2018 and it's just such a tall order to learn them at a high level I didn't feel it'd be worth the time commitment. Post retirement though I really needed a game to scratch that competitive itch in the way that team games like LoL or others just couldn't so after all the great things I'd heard leading up to it and as someone that was a very familiar to ArcSys fighters due to my experience with BlazBlue I pulled the trigger. I've had long-standing issues with the fighting game genre as a whole regarding things like poor netcode and general accessibility, and Strive goes above and beyond in resolving those. Rollback Netcode is something that should've been commonplace YEARS ago, and I'm very glad ArcSys did such a good job they've essentially forced the industry to make it the de facto standard. The gameplay is tight and responsive largely due to the aforementioned factors and very, very rarely do I feel like I am cheated out of a match due to shit connections. The character design is fucking cracked including the single coolest motherfucker on the planet in Nagoriyuki. I didn't even know the game would have an English dub still they surprise announced it during the beta I have been hooked on the Daisuke Ishiwatari OST chronic for 12 years between Blazblue, Guilty Gear and other various titles and was skeptical at first but the decision to include vocals in all the character themes makes them sooooo memorable, especially if you're familiar with the character backgrounds thoroughly explained in the series encompassing glossary.. If you have even the faintest hint of a taste for rock music (honestly, even if you don't) you are doing yourself a disservice to not listen to this soundtrack This is my personal GOTY and really only Arise comes close. 10/10.

Metroid Dread

Another NEVER EVER game to come out this year. Even now I still occasionally hear the chirping of the goddamn E.M.M.Is. This game just about perfects the 2D Metroid formula and the horror elements are

even further enhanced from Fusion and land really well. The fluidity of motion is unmatched and the game is genuinely old school SNES era difficulty which clearly triggers some normies. Was really cool to get some true continuation of the narrative after Fusion and some of the reveals were absolutely insane. I really gotta try a replay to cut down on my ridiculous play time from my first run. 8.5/10

Monster Hunter:Rise

Ngl I only bought this game because I had a little lull earlier in the year where I was bored. I had a ton of fun with Monster Hunter World at first but my issue with Monster Hunter games is I always hit that wall where I lose motivation to play once I start having to refight the same monsters as just tempered. And it felt like I hit that wall sooner here than I did in World. The game looks amazing for a switch game as long as you don't Co-Op. Magnamalo is one of my favorite fights in the series. Really do think this is another series that could've used to graphical power that the Switch generally lacks, and maybe after a long enough hiatus enough new stuff has been added to consider picking up again 6.5/10

Genshin Impact

Seeing as I am *literally employed* to play/write about this game I may be slightly biased but I really am impressed how well the game has developed over the course of the year. The beginning of the year was kind of a slog, but once they hit Inazuma in 2.0 the game has really hit a fantastic stride that doesn't seem to be slowing down. Even as someone who is nearly min/maxed out I am still very much enjoying myself. Genuinely my only complaints are more endgame content aside from the Abyss and some balancing concerns between the elements but even that seems to be getting addressed in some respects indirectly by things like enemy design and new artifact sets. Looking forward to another year of the best gacha on the market 9/10

Spiderman:Miles Morales

I got this when I first bought my PS5 and only just got around to completing it. The Insomniac Spiderman games are just the pinnacle of superhero games (alongside the Batman Arkham series by Rocksteady). The fluidity of movement is just unparalleled and the game is stuffed to the brim with fanservice that does the series Justice. Miles' powers also serve to help mix up the combat loop which got a teensy bit repetitive in the base game. It was kinda short but that's to be expected for something that's essentially a DLC pack 8/10

League of Legends S11

Maybe it's just the natural weariness of having played since S4, the fact I finally started working full time outside of the family business (and now juggling two jobs), or the fact I just had a steady stream of quality games this year to play to distract me from it but this was easily the least amount of League I've played in years. That in itself isn't necessarily a bad thing but from the general w of the event passes (and the sentinels events was definitely a large offender of this, never even finished it), typical aversion to playing ranked because of the sheer level of toxicity (COVID brains making this even worse) and of course the typical doomer feelings of the scene in the west in general really put a damper on my enjoyment. I feel a little bit better after playing this preseason but I'm really hoping there are considerable improvements going forward in this year 5/10

Raging Loop

Look at me actually playing games/VNs. I'm gifted. This was super early in the year and it was fun to play through coming back after long nights at work. The amogus/werewolf comparisons are inevitable but it was genuinely a pretty fun ride with some genuinely spooky/off putting moments and twists. The ending did feel super exposition heavy and that kinda felt like a cop out that could've been executed better by more skilled writers. Chiemi best girl. 7.5/10

13 Sentinels Aegis Rim.

This game is a unicorn man, never will we likely see anything like it again as an RTS/VN hybrid. You'd think a game with 13 genuine main characters would have issues with pacing and allocating screen time but they actually do an incredible job at it and the A+ voice cast really sells their characters. I don't think other than maybe Steins:Gate, there is a single VN that handles the Pandora's Box that is time travel as a narrative device and it legitimately has one of the best, neatest endings to such an amazing clusterfuck (that is extraordinarily well detailed and outlined in the game's timeline in the glossary)) of a VN plot I've ever seen. Vanillaware truly outdid themselves with this one. 9/10

Halo:Infinite (Multiplayer)

As someone dogshit at shooters Halo was always one of the exceptions with it being slightly more friendly to people who aren't twitchy freaks with its slightly higher TTK than other shooters. The gunplay is very crisp and the movement options thanks to the grappling hook feel extremely nice and gives the gameplay a very nice sense of speed and degree of verticality the series typically hasn't had before. I've only played a little and it may be a bit before I splurge for the campaign but I'm really glad Halo is relevant again. 8.5/10

Valorant

Being bad at shooters is already rough enough but tactical shooters are a whole other level of frustration because of the incredibly high skill floor needed. I don't think I'll ever have it in me to play seriously but dickin around as Brimstone with old HS/college buddies is pretty fun. 6/10