Potluck

Citadel a New TCG
First Look at E-Stew
new Trading Card

Identity &
Cyberpunk 2077
What makes Us

The Philosophy behind Nostalgia
Moving Forward while Looking Back
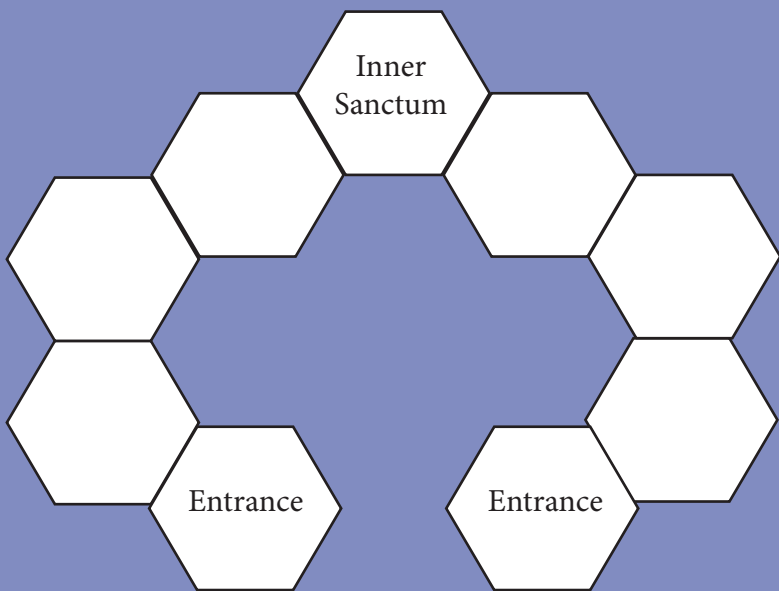
Citadel: A New TCG by E-Stew

Citadel is a high-strategy game of fortification and infiltration. It requires a very large, open field with two forts (called "Citadels") assembled on each side. Some Citadel fields are far more elaborate and expansive than others. Nearly any configuration is allowed. The only strict rules are that every Citadel has an inner sanctum and at least two entrances on any outer walls.

Citadel is a strategy-based game of fortification and infiltration. Build your citadel. Select your team based on their roles and abilities. Further customize your Citadel using tools, weapons, and summons. Once you learn the rules, you can play it your way! Want it fast-paced? Play with limited teams and building resources. Want to settle in for a battle of minds? Construct a sprawling fortress with larger teams. Find a team that resonates with your style and stick with it, or change it up each time to give yourself a challenge. Then, do whatever it takes to protect your citadel and destroy the other team.
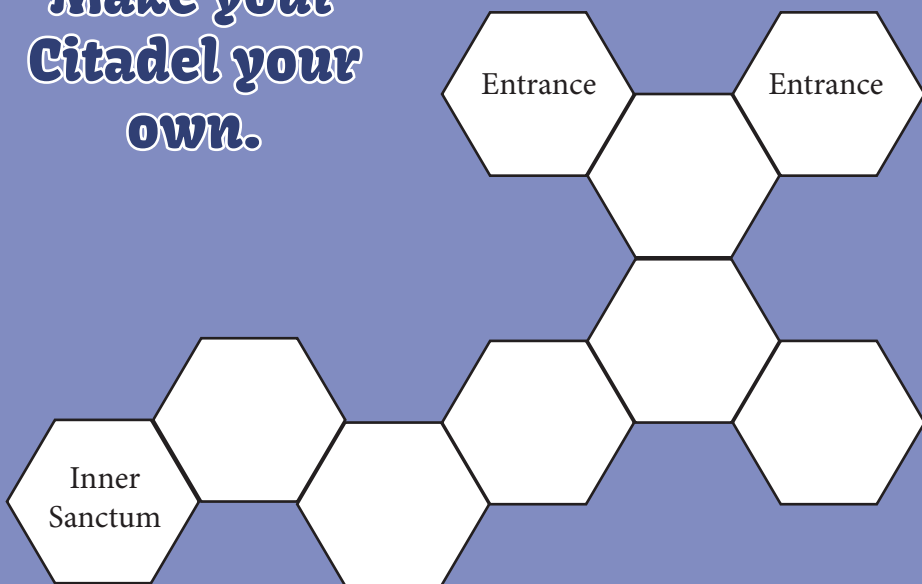
Citadel is a strategy-based game of fortification and infiltration. Build your citadel. Select your te. Further customize your team using tools, weapons, and summons. Play it fast-paced with limited teams and building resources, or settle in for a battle of minds with larger teams. Find a team that resonates with your style, or change it up each time to give yourself a challenge. Once you've got the rules, there are many ways to play.

DIABOLICAL TRIO

Commander
Academic
AC: 12
HP: 10
SPD: 2

DiaboliX Runic Manifest. *Living void consumes you swallowing whatever harm comes to you. When you're hit by an attack you can reduce the damage in half (rounding up).*

TOOL: HEALING RUNE

Heals every one of your champions for 10 HP. This tool can only be used once.

Inner
Sanctum

Entrance

Entrance

Warp
Point

**Shore
up your
Defenses**

**Make your
Citadel your
own.**

Entrance

Entrance

Inner
Sanctum

Build your 12 card deck and Conquer.

- 6 Different Champions
- 2 Weapon Cards
- 2 Tool Cards
- 2 Summon Cards

Commander
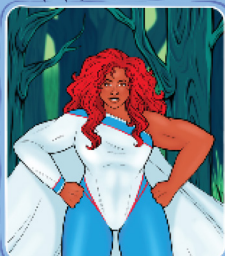
DIABOLICAL TRIO

Commander
Academic
AC: 12
HP: 10
SPD: 2

DiaboliX Runic Manifest. *Living void consumes you swallowing whatever harm comes to you. When you're hit by an attack you can reduce the damage in half (rounding up).*

Divine Slayer

SENTINEL, THE DRUDIC HERO

Divine Slayer
Warrior
AC: 11
HP: 20
SPD: 1

Drudic Pressure. *Sentinel's attacks create pressure waves that increase the range. Sentinel's attack can hit an enemy champion in an adjacent room.*

Marshall

DEAN SAMOON-ATLAS

Marshall
Rogue
AC: 10
HP: 15
SPD: 3

Eclipse: Fires of Creation. *Using their Eclipse, Dean can remove all damages and effects that were inflicted upon them in the previous 3 rounds. This effect can only be used once per game.*
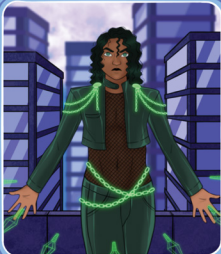
Dozens of Cards to Discover. Find the right deck combination for you.

Full Release February 2024

Spymaster

Orion Rodrigo

Spymaster
Rogue
AC: 10
HP: 15
SPD: 3

Warp. *Orion can warp to any room within his movement range. If Orion attacks an enemy after warping to a room, add 3 points of damage to their attack.*
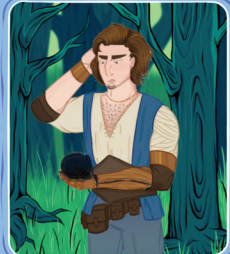
Sage

Eve Heart

Sage
Academic
AC: 12
HP: 10
SPD: 2

Sweet Song. *Eve sings a song that calms down any champion in the area. Enemy champions in the same room as Eve will treat Eve like a companion and will not attack for 2 turns.*
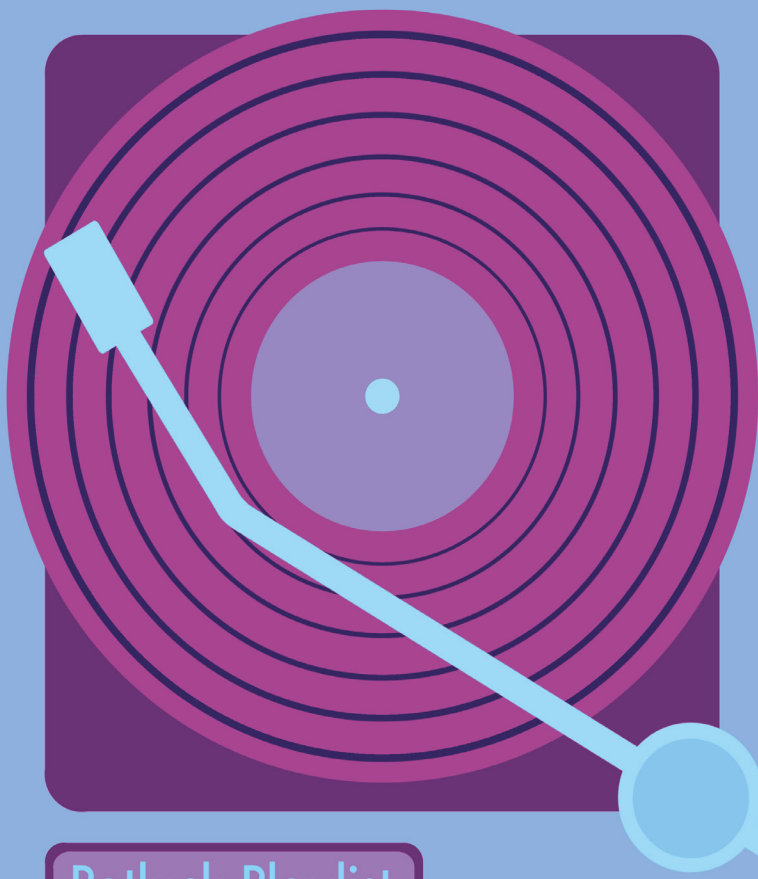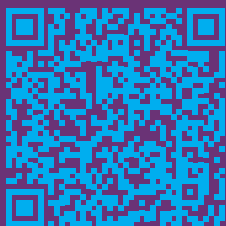
Successor

Ruko Rovka

Successor
Warrior
AC: 11
HP: 20
SPD: 1

Pocket Sand. *In your own Citadel, Ruko can throw debris at an enemy champion. The target becomes blind and cannot move until their next turn.*

Overcharge. *In an enemy's citadel, Ruko overcharges his blade arm. The blade deals 6 points of damage.*

Potluck Playlist

Meddling Kids Playlist
A soundtrack perfect for exploring a haunted mansion or running away from ghouls! We tried to encapsulate the feelings of watching retro cartoons, while you tune!

The Philosophy of Nostalgia

Medium Mushroom is an artist that utilizes Nostalgia in many of there works.

Derrick Jean-Baptiste
Staff Writer

'Nostalgia' is the name we commonly give to a bittersweet longing for former times and spaces. This private or public return to the past, and sometimes to an interlinking imagination of the future, is not new. There has always been a fascination for the, as we often call them, 'good old times.' But who would have thought, given the 1990s' imagining of a future filled with technology, that the beginning of the new century would, in fact, be marked by an increase in expressions of nostalgia and in nostalgic objects, media content, and styles?

On social media sites like Facebook, groups and forums with titles like 'nostalgia,' 'vintage,' or 'retronaut' have emerged, videos and pictures with nostalgic statements are posted, and vintage styles in fashion and art are celebrated. Not to mention editing digital photographs on mobile phones to resemble Polaroids; retro design has become digitized. Indeed, part of the web could be seen as a vast attic or

night market where individual and collective nostalgias converge and spread. Companies invade our mobile phones using old-fashioned objects to represent new ones, even when the old objects are no longer necessary or relevant.

With this idea in mind, let's investigate the philosophy behind Nostalgia. To do that, we first need to examine and deep dive into Nostalgia. Once we devise a working understanding of the topic, we can dive deep into its philosophy.

So, let's ask ourselves, what is nostalgia? In its simplest terms, nostalgia is an emotional state that is triggered by memories of the past. It's a complex mixture of longing for the past, happiness from recalling fond memories, and sadness from realizing that those

moments are gone forever. When we experience nostalgia, we often feel deeply connected to our past selves and the people and events that shaped our lives.

The term 'nostalgia' was first used to describe a medical condition. It was coined in 1688 by a Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer, who studied the phenomenon of homesickness among soldiers who had been fighting overseas. If left untreated, Hofer argued, nostalgia could prove debilitating and even fatal, but it was readily cured by returning home. In the modern sense, nostalgia is not so much about homesickness as about a longing for the past, a 'regretful or wistful memory of an earlier time,' as the Oxford Dictionary puts it. As such, the focus of nostalgia is often (though

not always) on childhood and youth. Contemporary nostalgia is (perhaps surprisingly) less likely to be given a medical diagnosis, but it is also harder to escape – and indeed, some have seen it as an unavoidable consequence of modernity.

Nostalgia entails a sense of loss and regret. It is not caused by past experiences but by comparing things in the present and by a sense of the discontinuity between them. Typically, nostalgia focuses on the positive elements of the past, and it derives its emotional force from the assumption that the present is, by and large, worse than the past. However false or illusory such evaluations may be, nostalgia must depend upon personal experience – although some suggest that people can be 'nostalgic' for times that they have never known themselves.

In popular commentary, nostalgia often has the status of a guilty pleasure. Its widespread appeal cannot be denied, but it is also frequently dismissed as somehow inauthentic or escapist. This ambivalence is also apparent in academic debates. On the one hand, nostalgia is often seen as politically conservative or reactionary. Longing for an idealized version of the past – an imaginary 'Golden Age' – may be pleasurable (or at least 'bitter-sweet'), but it can make it harder to face the realities of the present and the challenges of the future. On the other hand, some argue that nostalgia can represent a critique of the limitations

of the present, which has a more subversive or critical edge: far from being merely escapist, it can help people adapt to change, or even challenge official narratives of progress.

Nostalgia is a universal experience that transcends culture, age, and geography. It can be triggered by various stimuli, such as smells, complex emotion is essential. Research suggests that nostalgia serves several important psychological functions. One of these functions is self-continuity – the idea that our past, present, and future selves are interconnected. Nostalgia allows us to maintain a sense of continuity and coherence in our lives by reminding us of our

tastes, songs, or photographs. Regardless of its origin, the nostalgic feeling is a powerful reminder of the experiences that have shaped us and the people who have touched our lives.

To understand why we feel nostalgia, exploring the psychology behind this

history and the experiences that have shaped us.

Another function of nostalgia is social connectedness. When we reminisce about happy memories, we often think about those who shared those experiences. This can promote feelings of social connectedness and foster a sense of

belonging. Studies have shown that nostalgia can even help alleviate feelings of loneliness and promote social support.

Finally, nostalgia is also linked to our sense of identity. Our past memories and experiences play a crucial role in shaping who we are today, and nostalgia allows us to revisit those moments and reinforce our sense of self. By connecting with our past, we can better understand ourselves and feel more grounded and secure in our identity.

Nostalgia can be an intensely emotional experience that often brings tears to our eyes. But why does nostalgia make us cry? The answer lies in the complex interplay of emotions that nostalgia evokes.

When we experience nostalgia, we are transported back to a specific moment in our past, often filled with happy memories and feelings of warmth, comfort, and security. This can lead to a longing for the past and a desire to return to those more straightforward, happier times. At the same time, we are acutely aware that we can never honestly go back, which can evoke feelings of sadness, loss, and even grief.

This bittersweet combination of happiness and sadness makes nostalgia powerful and tear-inducing. While the tears can be a poignant reminder of the fleeting nature of time and the inevitability of change, they can also serve as a cathartic release, allowing us to process and come to terms with our past experiences.

With these ideas of nostalgia, what philosophy can be pulled from it? What if we utilized our nostalgia as a catalyst for personal growth? By reflecting on our past experiences, we can gain valuable insights into our strengths, weaknesses, and core values. This can help us make more informed decisions, set meaningful goals, and live more purposefully.

One way to harness nostalgia for personal growth is by engaging in nostalgic reflection. This involves intentionally reflecting on past events, experiences, and relationships to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our lives. This can be done through journaling, meditation, therapy, or other introspective practices.

Another way to use nostalgia for personal growth is by identifying and revisiting pivotal moments. These moments can be positive or negative, but they should have significantly impacted our personal growth and development. By revisiting these moments, we can gain new insights, learn from our mistakes, and gain a deeper appreciation for the challenges we have overcome.

Ultimately, the key to harnessing nostalgia for personal growth is to approach it with curiosity, openness, and a willingness

to learn. By embracing our past experiences and using them to inform our present and future, we can cultivate greater self-awareness, resilience, and purpose.

Nostalgia is a powerful emotion that has the potential to enhance our well-being, strengthen our social connections, and promote personal growth and development. By understanding the psychology of nostalgia and the triggers that evoke it, we can learn to harness its power for greater happiness and fulfillment.

So why not take a trip down memory lane today? Whether revisiting an old anime, reconnecting with an old game, or simply reflecting on the music you listened to in the past, embracing nostalgia can be a powerful tool for enhancing your happiness and overall well-being.

Starfield & The Cosmic Horror of Space

'Starfield' left many players wanting more. Hopefully mods could fix the experience.

Josander Ramos
Staff Writer

'Starfield is scary. Or at least what it represents is. Released September 6th, 2023, Starfield is the latest open-world role-playing game developed by game developer juggernaut Bethesda Games. The game takes place in a space-themed setting and is the first new intellectual property developed by Bethesda in 25 years.

While the game did not meet expectations, it still jumpstarted my thinking on the thing I fear the most: Outer Space. This constant inner thought allows for an excellent opportunity to examine the scariest horror subgenre: Cosmic Horror.

It's fair to say that all horror is scary to some degree; scaring is, after all, the point of the genre. And there are endless possibilities for the things that can be used to terrify people, from the obvious, like serial killers and ghosts, to the more abstract, like a walking STD. But not all sub-genres of horror are created equal. As obscure as it may be, cosmic horror, or Lovecraftian horror, is easily one of the scariest sub-genres horror has to offer. Here's why.

If you're unfamiliar with cosmic horror, it's a sub-genre of horror fiction that deals with the fear of the unknowable — the unfathomable. Classic horror staples like jump-scares or blood and guts don't particularly feature. Cosmic horror is less about the tingling of the spine or the shock to the heart and more about a

crushing sensation of dread that slowly creeps up on you until you're left questioning your very existence.

Another name for the sub-genre is Lovecraftian horror, named after the American writer, H. P. Lovecraft, who popularized it with his tales of Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones — terrifying, impossibly powerful beings who once ruled over the Earth as Gods. Stemming from this, much of Lovecraft's fiction features themes of madness, forbidden knowledge, and the sense that life as we perceive it is nothing but a thin gauze over the actual reality. This reality is so unrecognizable and bizarre that it could drive a person mad to be faced with it. One look into the Lovecraftian abyss, and the mind could crack for good.

What makes any of that scarier than anything else in horror? After all, Cthulhu is as real as Dracula, and pulling back reality's veil seems too abstract to be truly scary. But it does make sense when you begin to consider the implications of such possibilities and that the people in Lovecraft's stories are just like you and me — living their normal, everyday lives until they stumble upon the awful truth. Who are we to say that it could never happen?

What cosmic horror really works on is our fear of not understanding, of not knowing. It's part of our nature, as humans, to search relentlessly for the meaning in everything, whether it's why we chose toast over cereal for breakfast or why we're feeling low on any given day. After all, we tend to think we're pretty important as a species — placing ourselves firmly at the top of the food chain — and therefore, there has to be meaning. Otherwise, we're just another animal, eating, sleeping, and reproducing, with no greater idea of the world around them.

We think we're not like that. We're refined creatures, making art and music, driving around in cars, and not just going off of pure instinct when deciding who we will and won't sleep with. But I'm sure we've all had those moments where we stop and think and wonder if it really means anything or whether we have any of it figured   15

out. You know the moments — when you're staring up into the vast gulf of space, suddenly feeling so small and wondering what it'll all mean at the very end.

The thought that none of it means anything is horrifying and no doubt responsible for many existential crises. If it became real, something we had to face within our lifetimes, then I'm not sure how many of us could bear it. Something tells me that if it came down to being faced with either a serial killer or the very fabric of our perceived reality being ripped from us, then we'd gladly take the killer every time. I know I would.

Because, relatively speaking, serial killers are a safe zone. Sure, they're murderous and quite often insane, but in the end, the likes of Norman Bates and Leatherface are still only human. Even those who aren't altogether human, like Freddy Kreuger, have their weaknesses, and even most monsters have their weaknesses. In fact, the common thread for most horror story villains is that they can always be beaten.

As scary as popular horror antagonists can be, they're all tangible, and the heroes of their stories can often fight back in some way — silver bullets for werewolves crosses for vampires, exorcisms for demons, and so on. Even aliens, as powerful as they would likely be in real life, are often depicted arriving on Earth only to be thwarted by something as simple as water or bacteria. There's almost always a solution in horror movies — a way out for the protagonists, where the audience can breathe a sigh of relief.

Because horror is most enjoyable when there are safe limits. That's why most people would rather watch a movie about a family living in a haunted house than live in one themselves. It's also why many people have boundaries

when it comes to horror, things that they just can't deal with, even at a distance. Having the heroes of any given story, horror in particular, come out on top is a safety net for people — the promise that, no matter how scary things might get, there'll be some kind of saving grace at the end of it all.

But there is no solution or saving grace when it comes to cosmic horror. The problem is cosmic, a gargantuan threat that can't be outrun or overcome by strength or sheer force of will. When the very fabric of reality comes undone, there's no stopping it or sitting down and having a meeting about it. There are no plans to be made and no hope in fighting back. Even if there was some way of returning fire against such a thing, our minds would hardly be resilient enough to take the shock.

Most horror is shown to be like a game of cat and mouse between the antagonist and the victim. But the likes of Cthulhu, or any of the Great Old Ones, barely even recognize us as living things. They see human beings the way we see ants — tiny, insignificant creatures milling about with no real idea of the world. Just the idea that we're not the superior race we think we are, that there are levels of reality we can never understand — much like the ants themselves — and that, therefore, all the meaning we've ascribed to life doesn't particularly matter, is terrifying. It's unthinkable.

And it's a very human fear. No other creature in the world is so concerned with their own existence or can be. As if cosmic horror wasn't scary enough, we're the only species on Earth to know this fear. We are alone in our fear, and that, in itself, is horrifying.

And here's the kicker: we don't need Cthulhu or any of the Great Old Ones to rear their ugly heads to understand why cosmic horror is scary. We don't need to face it to feel that dread creeping up on us. We just need to think, and think some more, and we'll find that that fear is right there within us, bubbling below the surface, waiting for the opportunity to sink its teeth in. The true horror is in the possibility of meaninglessness — that we are the ants — and I think we all know how real that possibility is. After all, the only meaning anything has is the meaning we, as humans, have ascribed to it. Beyond that...what's left?

Lack of Complexity burdens 'Starfield'

Mia Paul
Staff Writer

Complexity is one of the factors that make games fun. Every player has their own complexity preferences - one player might like simpler and straightforward games. In contrast, a different player might love intricate, complicated games. Suppose the game's complexity is too low for the player. In that case, they will usually find it boring because it's simply not engaging enough for them. Similarly, the player might feel overwhelmed and frustrated if a game is too complex.

Some games target specific player demographics. Such games may not achieve widespread commercial success, but they have a devoted player base and tend to be received well by critics. For example, Grand

Strategy games like Crusader Kings target players who enjoy complex games. Platformers like Mario tend to target players who enjoy simpler, relaxed gameplay.

Some games try to capture as wide an audience as possible. One such game is the well-known The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. It attracts players from all across the "complexity preference spectrum"; it's a great entry point for people completely new to gaming and gaming veterans. How does a game like this work around this "Complexity Problem?" That's what I'm going to attempt to explore.

Let's look at Skyrim. The game has many different systems, most of which are governed by skills. Individual skills are conceptually simple and can be easily explained in one or two sentences. For example, "One-handed is about

using small weapons to hurt enemies. Pressing a button makes your character swing at an enemy". There's very little depth in these individual skills, making it perfect for players looking for low-complexity gameplay, but what about the opposite group? Wouldn't they find it too basic or even boring?

Skyrim's most popular character build is "Stealth Archer," which is basically an archetypal thief or hunter. Why this specific playstyle? I believe it's because of how well it's integrated with the other skills. If you take a different playstyle, such as "Mage," you'll quickly realize that it's very self-contained; basically, you just need to use the Destruction skill with a splash of Enchanting or maybe Alchemy. Meanwhile, Stealth Archers can utilize a much wider variety of skills - Archery, Sneak, Light Armor, Smithing, Enchanting, Alchemy, and more.

At the same time, someone who is interested in basic gameplay can interact just with Archery itself.

The game layers several simple systems, forming a relatively complex structure that is simultaneously completely optional.

Another game that utilizes this is Runescape. Pretty much all skills in this game are, again, very simple. Woodcutting is literally just "click a tree and watch the character chop it until it's gone, receiving logs in process." The fun part is that Woodcutting leads to several other skills, such as Fletching, Firemaking, Farming, Prayer, Magic, or Summoning, which then, in turn, lead to more skills. This creates complex webs of relationships between skills, so in the end, you "want to do everything." But again, if you just want to chop wood, it's right there, and you don't have to do anything else. Similarly to Skyrim, the skills

with the least integration tend to be the least popular.

You might be asking yourself: Wasn't this article supposed to be about Starfield? I'm getting there! Starfield has a very similar structure as the aforementioned games - individual skills (or, in this case, let's call them activities) are conceptually very simple. The problem is that most of them are isolated from the rest, so the "layering" doesn't take place.

Shipbuilding leads to Ship combat, but nothing connects these two activities to anything else. Your ship doesn't interact with exploration, on-foot combat, economics, or quests. Exploration and Surveying lead into Outposts, and both lead into crafting and, therefore, combat, but the links are very weak and undermined by the fact that you can just buy everything you need for crafting with a fraction of the effort required on your part. Simply said, when you're interacting with a system or an activity in Starfield, you only interact with that one system.

What you're left with is a bunch of relatively shallow, disjointed systems, which might be a thing some people are looking for, but it's just not that engaging for players who want more complex gameplay.

Starfield could become a much better game if the systems were more integrated. Without these integrated systems, Starfield doesn't allow itself to hold a strong base.

Starfield: Final Review

Plot. Due to the Construction of Starfield, the plot suffers. The game asks you to explore to your heart's content. Because of this, the plot feels disjointed and needs to reach the heights of its contemporaries. Ultimately, the plot feels like it doesn't even matter. Bronze. (2)

Character. Starfield struggles with characters. Most important NPC's feel hollow. You would think they would become more fleshed out throughout your time in the story, but they feel more like set dressing than actual characters. Dirt. (1)

Construction. The development team did a fantastic job creating a large play area. Yet, as you play the game and explore the vast planets and solar systems, you continue to run into similar environments. Making the game world feel empty. The developers say that this was intended to emulate accurate space travel. Yet, this doesn't make it enjoyable to play. Bronze. (2)

Theme. The themes of freedom are strong within Starfield. But because your choices in the game ultimately don't matter, the themes ring hollow. Yes, at the beginning of the game, I can choose a profession, but regardless of what I do, that sense of freedom doesn't stick due to the game's construction. Silver. (3)

Final Score: Bronze (8)

The Speculative Biolgy of the Symbiote

'Marvel's Spider-Man' has a fun and brutal version of Venom.

Jusin Murray
Staff Writer

Marvel's Spider-Man 2 is a 2023 action-adventure game developed by Insomniac Games. In this game, Peter Parker and Miles Morales struggle to navigate the next steps in their personal lives while combating several new threats, including a private militia led by Kraven the Hunter, who transforms New York City into a hunting ground for super-powered individuals and the extraterrestrial Venom symbiote, which bonds itself to Parker and negatively influences him, threatening to destroy his personal relationships.

The Venom symbiote is such a popular character within the Spider-Man mythos that it was amazing to see it brought to life. But as I played the game, I continued to try to place myself into it. What would I do as Spider-Man? Would I react to my responsibilities like Peter or Miles?

I lived through those fantasies, but it was all I could think about as soon as Venom entered the game. What if I had the Venom symbiote? Or even what if the Venom Symbiote existed within the real world.

To explore this thought experiment, we must utilize something called Speculative Biology. "Speculative biology" (also referred to as "speculative zoology," though it is by no means limited to animals) is a sub-genre of science fiction that combines Speculative Fiction with creature design and deals with evolution in the future, on other worlds, or in alternate timelines, the same way that many other sci-fi works discuss technology. For the purpose of this article, we

will be utilizing a xenobiological lens. This subgenre leaves Earth and its history behind entirely to construct and explore entirely alien biospheres, whether on other worlds or in different dimensions entirely. Common concerns include considering what traits are intrinsic to life instead of simply being native to Earth's family of beings and exploring what shapes living creatures might take under truly alien or hostile conditions, such as evolving on a tidally locked planet or in the atmosphere of a gas giant or on the moon(s) of said gas giants.

So, let's examine the venom symbiote as if it were an organism in our world. Let's attempt to provide a biological profile of the Venom symbiote.

In its base form, the "Venom" symbiote is a mass of nutrient pathways, chemical stores, and no organs, with little more than a survival instinct and minor problem-solving skills similar to what is observed in terrestrial slime molds. For more advanced cognitive functions, it requires access to a host brain, which it can colonize for its own purposes. The Symbiotes sprout cilia as a form of rudimentary sensory organs. These "feelers" are delicate and highly vulnerable to sound waves, which cause significant pain and disorientation and allow the host immune system to reject the symbiote.

Separation from a viable host is incredibly dangerous for a
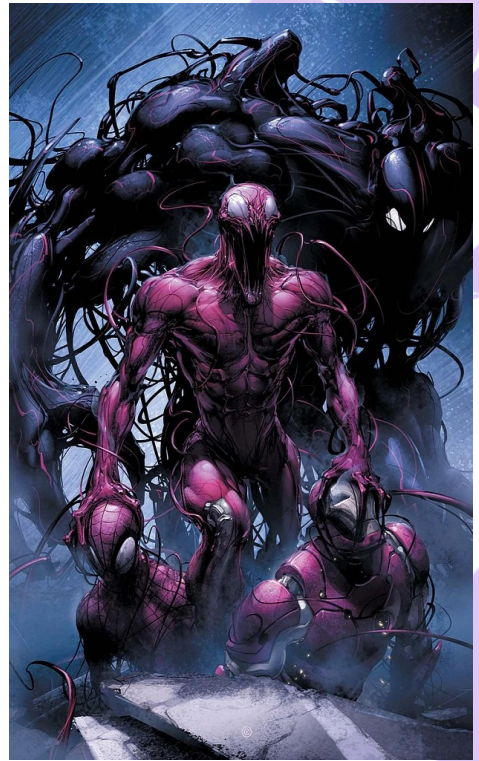
symbiote as it lacks independent survival systems of its own. It must also keep itself moist, away from fire, and protected from alien microbes for which it has no defenses. Without a host, the symbiote will exhaust itself and die.

The "bonding" process is an accelerated form of osmosis that can be conducted through any porous material. Glass, plastics, and tight seals are far too compact to squeeze through. Once bonded, the symbiote immediately begins implanting itself into various organs: brain, bone marrow, peripheral blood, blood vessels, skeletal muscle, skin, teeth, heart, gut, and liver. This implantation both revs up the production of stem cells, and allows

it to feed itself using the host's phenethylamine and adrenaline. The host will eventually be drained of these chemicals, but proper dietary supplements can nullify these effects.

When threatened, the symbiote will use the body's overproduction of stem cells to mass-produce a protective "shell" around the host. This shell is considered to be an amalgamation of the host and the symbiote — the host providing the necessary materials and the shell being an extension of the organism itself.

The new body is a flash-forged mass of muscle fibers, cartilage, and bone, growing to about 8 feet tall. The muscles are densely packed and are thick enough to stop bullets and pulverize concrete. It can form tentacles that can lash at multiple targets with incredible efficiency. The body also has needle-like teeth with a powerful bite force that cut clean through body armor and bone. The outer layer of "skin" secretes an oil that helps it stay moist so gas exchange can occur through passive diffusion, as the host lungs are too weak to support a creature that size.

When out of danger, the shell is recycled back into the host body as chemical energy for later use, with the additional mass being converted into steam and sweat.

A unique aspect of the Venom Symbiote biology is its unnatural predilection for symbiosis.

Typically, when another organism of its parasitic species infects a host, it sets up a colony in the host's brain that supplants the victim's will and takes control. However, the mutation - similar to that of human psychopathy - found in the Venom Symbiote shows its preference towards cooperation; the colony is instead used to stimulate certain parts of the brain to induce visual and auditory hallucinations as a form of communication.

The most fascinating component of its biology is the natural propaganda molecules it spreads. Because it hails from a species utilizing a swarm intelligence, the symbiote and its parasite brethren use nutrient and chemical exchanges to form the basis for a complex communication network. But deeper than that, anecdotal evidence supports quantum entanglement communication, thus forming a hive mind that can reach across galaxies. It's also theorized that this Quantum Entanglement is used to " track" previous hosts.

Symbiotes, in general, would be terrifying to have in real life. A living organism that can strip away your free will and change you from the inside out. (Just gently ignore the copious amounts of fungi and viruses that attack and change bugs from the inside out.)

Spider-Man 2: Final Review

Plot. The Plot of Spider-Man 2 is not as strong as the original game or even the side game, Miles Morales. Due to the expanse of the plot, it attempts to juggle several different storylines, and none of them come to a particularly satisfying conclusion. The game aims for more spectacle in its plot than the constant emotional beats in the previous entries, but that in itself is not a complete negative. Silver. (3)

Characters. Characters thrive in Spider-Man 2. It's the first game in the series that lets you play both Spider-Men, and they both feel different regarding how they interact with the plot. You constantly see aspects of the story from both Miles and Peter, and their interactions with the side characters that they both bring to the story is a quality I did not expect to have in this game. Gold. (4)

Construction. Characters are improved by the construction of the game. Both Spider-Men feel different as they use their abilities to take on crime in New York. The original soundtrack and the sound effects present in the game make for an auditory delight as you swing and glide through our biggest depiction of New York City. Gold. (4)

Themes. While the themes of this story piggyback off of the plot and characters, these themes are not entirely realized. What is enjoyable are the differing themes that Peter's and Miles's story have. It's fun to feel the differentiation of the characters extend to even the lessons you're supposed to take from their experience. Yet, some aspects of the plot seem unconnected to the themes. Silver. (3)
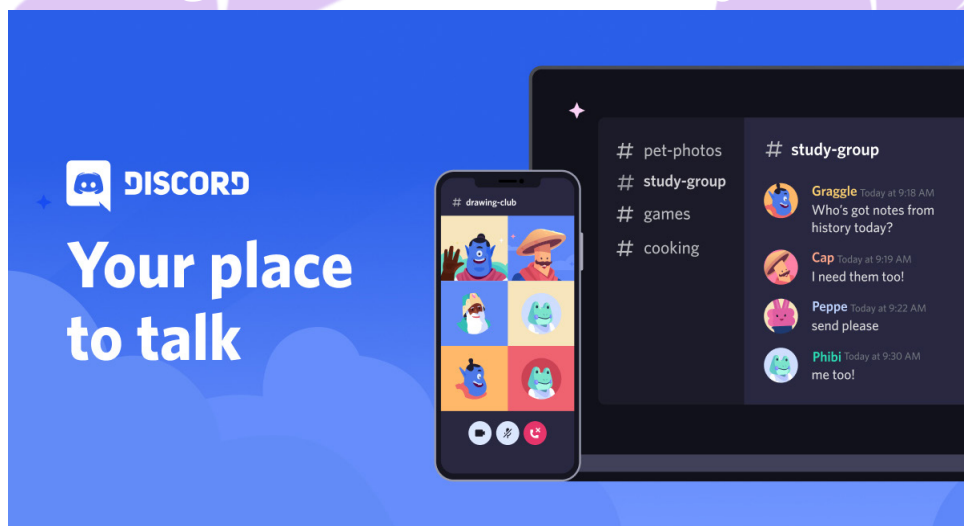
Final Score: Silver (14)

SCOOBY-DOO AND ALIENS TOO

In space no one can hear your *ZOINKS*

COMING SOON

Nostalgia Lost: A disdain of discord

You wouldn't know it but this app is the bane of my existence. (Kidding of course.)

UncleVT
Staff Writer

Back in the good old days, forums and instant messaging ran parallel with each other and had no reason to intersect. With the internet becoming more significant, more consolidated, and commercialized than ever, people are finding ways to spend time on as few different sites as possible. Forums have closed in favor of cheaper-to-run Discord servers. This has led to a significant exodus on over thirty years of early Internet history. I miss these forums for a number of different reasons.

Search indexing. This is the biggest downside to Discord and other instant messaging chats. There are no archival properties outside of the ecosystem. Unless you meet the requirements to join and are sometimes pre-vetted, accessing information is extremely hard with Discord servers. It is not very convenient having to join several channels and servers just to find one item guide on the character you like to use. Forums index all this information so it can be easily searched by the web. This is what they were built for.

Synchronous vs. asynchronous communication: Discord is very fast-paced and does not necessarily reward quality posts and comments, but instead to get known by posting as much as possible. You cannot communicate on your own time like on a forum; you have to lurk all day and hope you get into the discussion within time.

Server politics and cliques: Even more than forums, I found Discord servers to be pretty cliquey. There is always

an "it" person or group who controls the flow and nuance of the conversations. Diversion from these popular groups, like in real life, can lead to alienation, whereas forums had a more egalitarian vibe. Moderators seem way more involved on Discord chats than on forums. I have found most moderators on Discord servers to be insufferable, and by the growing memes, so does half the internet.

Online distribution/anonymity: On forums, your content is archived forever until deleted, and your presence on the whole internet, not just one server, is affected by your posts. It is also harder to change your name on forums. The more permanent presence of forums and the content encourages long-form and high-quality content. Trolls were generally shunned. I have found that people are a lot meaner and more willing to bully on Discord. An innocuous question posted on a forum will get a vastly different response on Discord; people seem more arrogant and crass because of the crazy level of anonymity Discord offers. After all, why not call that user a rude name or bully a noob? No one will see it 3 hours later, and even if they do, I can change my name and tag and repeat it. I have been laughed at, bullied, and trolled out of too many Discords to count, but forums are generally more accepting, and I have never been kicked or banned off of one.

28   **Game Chat Dead:** This is

more of a function of party chats killing game chat as a whole, but it is nearly impossible to make friends and build competent guilds nowadays through game chat. Everyone would rather sit on party chat or discord with their established clique, and playing solo queue is a painful experience. It's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. Few people use game chat for party chat, so the people who use game chat get bothered by the lack of mics and don't use game chat either.

I miss the forums, and basically, everyone I grew up on was shut down. Companies have to save money, but it is a shame going on a Discord board only to sift through trolls and bull to find one piece of content I need. The forum had it all right there.

Identity & Cyberpunk 2077

V's relationship with Johnny Silverhand constructs a problem with identity.

Rain Omega
Staff Writer

Released in December 2020, Cyberpunk 2077 is an Action-role-playing game developed by CD Projekt Red. It's been a long time since the game's release, so let's take a look at one of the most significant philosophical issues raised in the game.

The brief plot is simple: You are a thief living in a dystopic future where corporations essentially rule the world, and everyone is cybernetically enhanced - including the brain. After a tip, you steal an extremely valuable chip but damage the case in your escape and slot it into your head for safekeeping. This turns out to be a bad idea as the chip contains an "engram" of a person - basically a copy of this person's

memories and behavior - created by a program called SoulKiller AI.

This engram starts overwriting your brain (slowly assuming control), implanting Johnny Silverhand - a famed rocker boy and anarchist from 50 years earlier. You start seeing and interacting with him, and you join forces to get him out of your head - as he agrees that he is an intruder/parasite.

As you grow closer, literally, he occasionally gets to pilot your body, and Johnny tries to fix his earlier mistakes - but arguably never succeeds. He takes an old girlfriend to the movies as he promised, but she leaves because "who are we kidding? It's not 2015". He reunites his band for one last show, but due to a fight, he has to decide between two band members who now hate each

other. Even the ending is, in a way, a do-over - an assault with the ex-girlfriend at a corporation's headquarters. 50 years back, it's what killed Johnny; this time around, it's what killed his ex-girlfriend.

Finally, the protagonist and Johnny realize that it is too late for the protagonist's body, and you can either choose to let both die or let Johnny continue living. I chose the latter.

In the epilogue afterward, you quietly leave town, having grown wiser, and presumably live out your years somewhere else in solitude.

The game implied (though it did not adequately explore) questions about identity. The relationship between V and Johnny Silverhand is reminiscent of the Ship of Theseus.

One of the most famous examples of a fission case is provided by the ship of Theseus. Over a long period, all of the planks composing a certain ship are replaced one by one. Eventually, a ship indiscernible from the original but composed of entirely different planks results. Call that later ship Replacement. As each plank is removed from the original ship, it is used to construct a ship that is constituted from all and only the planks belonging to the original ship. Call the ship composed of the same planks as the ones initially composing the original ship Reassembly.

So the question is, how many "planks" must be replaced until V is no longer V, but Johnny? Perhaps there's a question of whether Johnny is entirely himself in the ending you got. Is his character growth a result of his experience with V, or are there parts of his personality now that are lifted from V? Would he still be Johnny in this case? Does it even matter?

You can consider Alt as a counterpoint. She uploaded herself to the net to survive Soulkiller, but the Alt you meet beyond the wall claims to no longer be her. How is this meaningfully different from character growth? Are you still (literally) the same person today as you were 10 years ago? Despite her claims, Alt still seems to have feelings or thoughts about Johnny, so perhaps she is not as distinct from her human self as she thinks.

The game also brings into consideration the mind-body problem. Most philosophers aren't dualists, but there are still severe arguments over unresolved issues. Cyberpunk passively endorses dualism. There seems to be no question that Johnny's engram has volition and that his choices have real moral implications, e.g., if he killed V, as he tried to at first, that would be wrong. We wouldn't say the Relic killed her, but that Johnny did. Similarly, Alt may exist solely as a construct now, but she is still treated like a person.

31

Circling back to the ending, is Johnny different, not because he learned from V or inherited part of her personality, but because he exists in her body? Perhaps the Relic changes the body chemistry accordingly. But I played a female presenting V personally, so I can't imagine Johnny is entirely at home in a body with breasts and a vagina, as is the case in that specific sending. Or, maybe he is at home because he cannot conceive of himself as body-less. Even when confined to the Relic, he's still manifested as bodied, even smoking cigarettes that don't even physically exist. Similarly, Alt is always shown with a body. And not just anybody, but her body.

This question can be combined with the ship of Theseus' example. Instead of replacing figurative planks of the mind, what about replacing parts of the body? How far can you go before you aren't yourself anymore? Lizzy Wizzy has fully replaced her body with cyberware and seems to have had a personality shift that's frightened her agent/boyfriend. His fears are validated later when Lizzy murders him and seems remorseless. She still has a physical body, so she perhaps is more "real" than Johnny. Yet Johnny's engram seems more like his original self than Lizzy's.

Lastly, V doesn't die in your ending, so much as she lives on the Net, beyond the wall -- I think with the implication that she would "merge" with Alt. So there are questions of whether this changes Alt, if it makes her a different person altogether, or one is slightly augmented (and note how this mirrors Johnny's circumstance). And does V still exist in some meaningful sense? Did she defy her mortality, and or is she just as dead as she would be if she stayed in her body? Is either choice more suicidal than the other? Is it wrong to abandon your body, even if it is a sinking ship? Can she still be V, without her body?

Unfortuntly, there are no definite answers, and it's not clear how much of V's choice was explicitly a moral decision or an ambiguous one. It's not clear she would be wrong to decide one way or the other, and that it all depends on her priorities and idiosyncratic values. It could be that she was merely dodging death the only way she had. It could also be that she was doing Johnny an act of charity, that he could be granted a second chance at life. Or maybe it's neither, and V has simply resigned herself to her fate.

At the end of the day, though, she didn't make the choice... you did. A lot of the meaning you derive from the game is a contribution you make yourself. You might not be examining V's actions so much as you are examining your own. So ask yourself: what does it mean to you?