CLOUD BASED GAMING: is it really the future?

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Cloud based gaming allows you to stream video games directly from the internet. Sounds great on paper but it begs the question: "Can it replace old school physical and digital copies?"

Cloud based gaming streams video games in two ways: streaming a video of the game which you can control normally or streaming the game files directly. You need extremely fast internet connections to stream games at 1080p and 60 fps which pretty much cuts us, Bangladeshi gamers, off from availing the service given the dismal state of our internet speeds. On top of that, you have to take in to account the delay in inputs or ping.

OnLive, a video game streaming service, launched on June 2010 with the promise of revolutionizing the way games are distributed to the consumers. Fast forward 5 years later, OnLive has ceased to exist; its assets bought up by Sony and its former customers disgruntled by the fact that their games library is, effectively, gone.

Such is the longevity of internet based services. There is no guarantee that they will stand the test of time. Imagine one day waking up to find your favourite gaming company has gone bankrupt and thus you cannot play your video games despite having physical copies. All that money spent on purchasing the copies will be for naught. The problem is aggravated further in cloud gaming as you would've had to pay a hefty monthly subscription fee, alongside the full price, to access your games.

Obviously, video game publishers absolutely love the idea. For one, it removes the supposed "problem" of used games; gamers won't be able to share their libraries which in turn will force them to buy subscriptions for themselves. Then there is the obvious increase in revenue from the monthly subscription fees.

But is cloud gaming really all that bad? Not exactly. For one, games can be played on almost any OS and any device that is chained to a computer or a console. This makes the service free of the constraints of platforms. You would not need to purchase high end hardware to enjoy the latest AAA titles as the games are streamed from servers linked to powerful PCs. TV manufacturers might even start including cloud based gaming apps so that you can play your games without buying a dedicated machine.

Unfortunately for us gamers, the industry is becoming heavily profit driven with publishers nowadays cutting games into portions which you would have to buy besides the main game. While the idea of cloud based gaming is intriguing, it is hard not to worry about how publishers will taint it with excessive DRM and hefty costs. The power of ownership is severely limited when you buy a subscription to a cloud based gaming service. Not only does the streaming company have full control over your right to play a game but they also control your right to sharing it with your friends. Thus I, for one, am extremely sceptical of this phenomenon and sincerely hope that physical and digital copies endure.

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GAMES YOU SHOULD AVOID IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED
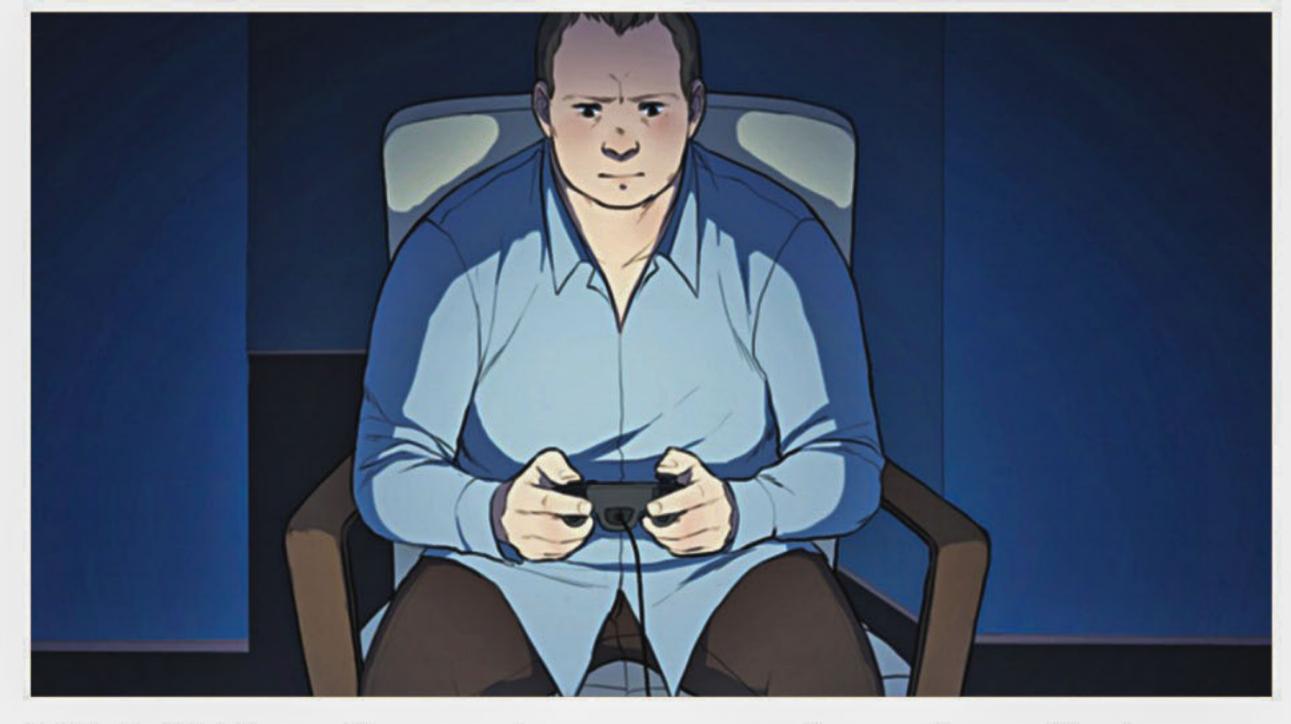
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Games often have an effect on your mental health. Fast paced games will keep you on your toes and make you impatient, maybe even have anger issues. On contrary, slow paced games will make you a more calculating individual, albeit boring. Some games can remedy depression, something light-hearted like Kirby. Other games however, can make your day a whole lot worse.

The Cat Lady

This game is lauded as one of the indie horror games out there with the best story. Now horror games are already a no go if you're depressed, but there is something about *The Cat Lady* that makes it truly emotionally devastating. *The Cat Lady* is a psychological horror game that revolves around a chronically depressed woman who only has cats for friends. This game is a physical manifestation of depression. It deals with suicide very casually and is very disturbing in general.

Undertale (Post-Pacifist Genocide Mode)

What makes this game so messed up is that they record every single one of your playthroughs, boiled down to all your decisions and battles. Post-Pacifist Genocide Mode is when you finish the game once without killing anyone after which you kill everyone on your next playthrough. Nothing is more soul-wrenching than watching old characters die off by your hand. While Pacifist Route is filled with jokes and happy music, Genocide Route is a nihilistic descent towards madness and no remorse, and the characters know how you've changed while they haven't. Genocide has a far more distorted soundtrack than Pacifist, and depressing dialogue that you would never find in Pacifist.

This War of Mine

This War of Mine is a one of a kind game. It's a survival strategy game, where you need to keep several survivors of war alive and well fed. This game focuses on the desperation and breakdown of mankind. Taking care of several people is nerve-wracking, and the health of these fictional characters is in your hand. The sheer frantic need for survival, the constant interventions and hard decisions you need to make, these are what make this game special. The graphics are in gloomy greyscale, which add in to the entire depressed feel.

To The Moon

This is an odd one on this list. It's an RPG Maker game, but it's so well made that it is sold on Steam; and for good reason too. It has a beautiful storyline, but it gets disheartening as it advances. The story involves a false memory creator that allows doctors to give people a happy memory before they die. You play as an elderly man who wants to be called Johnny, and his subsequent past selves. The more you go through Johnny's memories the more depressing it gets. If your family is going through financial troubles or you're facing a bumpy road in your relationship, this game is going to hurt you where it counts.

I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream

Pretty self explanatory title, *IHNMaIMS* is a 90s horror title which deals with a bunch of heavy topics like genocide, paranoia, insanity and much more. The story is about an artificial intelligence (AM) that leaves only 5 people left in humanity and cruelly makes them play a game after around 100 years of torture, to prove that machines are better than humans. What made the game truly frustrating was that you could never actually win, meaning machines always would. The characters all have their exploitable flaws that AM takes advantage of.

All of these are 7/10 or 9/10 games, highly recommended if you are not depressed. Of course, some might argue there is nothing more depressing than the finale of a huge series you just finished; or knowing that your favourite game won't get a sequel. But anybody can get over that.

Honourable Mentions: *Mother 3, Nier, Silent Hill franchise, Max Payne franchise, Limbo, Dark Souls, Legend of Zelda Majora's Mask, Heavy Rain, and Binding of Isaac.*

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