STAGES OF PLAYING THE SIMS

NOOHA SABANTA MAULA

Admit it, every time a new Sims game was out, you've found yourself secretly excited to give the new features a go. You've probably spent a fair amount of money on the earlier versions and the numerous expansion packs sold in CD stores, only to discover they didn't work 98% of the time. You've definitely spent more time than you actually had, saying "just one more hour".

Regardless of what you've done and do with the lives of your Sims, here're the stages that follow in each game.

Stage One: Excitement
You're creating life, altering appearances and personalities. You're in control and you're ready to assert it. You buy a house, place your Sims in it and begin. That weird sofa? Not practical at all, but you'll get it. There are no rules and nothing can stop you from doing as you please.

Stage Two: Dose of Reality
It's only been a few hours but your Sims don't seem to be able to do anything on their own. The banality of everyday life is starting to kick in. You're scrolling all over commanding your Sims to eat and use the loo. It's a chore just making them survive. How are you supposed to make them have friends or love lives?

Stage Three: Settling In
You've spent about quarter of a day by this point and gotten the hang of disciplining your Sims. They're functioning better and you're cruising through. You're taking them out of the house, trying out the new features. You've also probably discovered that the boundaries for depravity are extended with each game and you're making your discoveries.

Stage Four: Creativity
You've spent about half a day playing at this point. Boredom is kicking in but you're hooked. The solution? You put your discoveries to use. You think up various ways in which everything you worked on in the past few hours can be undone. Your interest is back and you're ready to unleash creative ways of ruining/ending the lives of your Sims.

Stage Five: Moving On
Your Sims are miserable or dead, and you're starting to feel the effects of playing all day. You're ready to take on a new family and house but it has to wait a day.

These stages will be repeated several times until you'll eventually come to terms with that fact that everything is repetitive. You'll make an excuse for needing the space on your drive and hit uninstall with no regrets.

Nooha Sabanta Maula is an Anthropology major whose anthropologising has made her confused about life. Send her your thoughts to noohamaula@gmail.com

AN UNPOLISHED MASTERPIECE

NONY KHONDAKER

With the abundance of remasters and first person shooters, 2016 kept me yearning for something that was fresh and unique. The Last Guardian, despite its weak marketing and repeated postponements, felt like what I was looking for. Originally planned as a PS3 exclusive in 2007, the game's development was on a bumpy ride for almost 10 years until it finally released last December for the PS4.

The Last Guardian tells the beautiful story of an unnamed young boy and a giant creature named Trico. The game starts out with the boy being mysteriously kidnapped and waking up in a castle beside Trico, who initially has an aversion towards the boy. Gradually, through offering food and comfort, the boy manages to tame the beast. Together, they embark on a journey to escape the castle.

The beast Trico is a fictional creature which is, as the name translates from Japanese, a combination of a bird and a cat. Trico helps the protagonist by protecting him from enemies, helping him solve puzzles and navigating throughout the map. Trico acts pretty much like a real-life animal. So much so that you can feel it purring when you are petting it - an excellent use of the DS4's speaker and feedback feature. It does not follow orders instantaneously and frequently needs food and petting. This mechanic has received a lot of criticism but I personally think most of it is unwarranted. The challenge of convincing Trico to follow your orders is what makes the game feel alive, since it almost feels like owning a pet.

The Last Guardian is not even nearly as photo-realistic as most other current-gen titles. Instead, the game opts for its own distinct art style which is very aesthetically pleasing. The level design in the game is absolutely brilliant. The puzzles kept me scratching my head and when I could finally solve them, I would be amazed by how clever yet simple the solutions were. The soundtrack is bound to give you goosebumps, especially during the cinematics. Another positive about The Last Guardian, something I miss in most games, is how closely the checkpoints are placed.

Despite having so many positives to it, The Last Guardian can prove to be a painful experience at times, which can be attributed mostly to the lack of polish in the game. The problematic camera angles, accompanied by the complicated controls, make certain parkour sections of the game very difficult to complete and it often results in the player repeatedly dying. The game has its fair share of game-breaking bugs and glitches, forcing players to restart the game from the last checkpoint. The most serious issue with the game has to be its framerate. On the launch PS4, the game fails to go beyond 20 frames per second, which completely ruins the gameplay experience.

The Last Guardian is not a game for everyone. Unless, you have enough patience and time in your hands to sit through all the troublesome parts, you are not going to enjoy it. However, if you can endure the difficulties, the ending will more than pay off.

Nony Khondaker is an introvert with immense passion for tech and music. Feel free to send your constructive feedback at nonykhondaker@live.com or follow him on twitter.com/NonyKhondaker