

STATE OF THE LOOT-SHOOTER GENRE



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Overshadowing traditional linear First-Person and Third-Person shooter games, Loot-Shooters have been all the rage amongst gamers in the past few years. But are the offerings of the genre worth the investment of more than a hundred hours of game time? We look into the heavy hitters in this category to find out.

First of all, let's look at what this genre is all about. Loot-Shooters are games where you have the traditional gameplay mechanics of FPS and/or TPS games but you have to level up, farm gear, and optimise your builds by clearing instances (or dungeons in MMO terms) or finishing story missions. Many Loot-Shooter games also have extensive PvP modes with gear and stat bonuses brought down to a certain level to even the odds between builds.

The most-talked about games in this genre are Destiny 2 and The Division. There's also Warframe which stays under the radar in terms of news coverage but the game has a huge loyal fan following.

Destiny 2 is the apex Loot-Shooter. Developed by Bungie and published by Activision, it has the highest playerbase amongst the aforementioned games. Players are put in the role of Guardians who have to protect the galaxy against The Darkness, an ominous presence which threatens the existence of humanity. The mechanics of the game are intricately designed to keep you hooked for hours in. For starters, you have the story campaign which lasts a good 10-20 hours depending on your skill. After that, you have to grind to level 20 and work on hitting the max Light Level cap. Your Light Level dictates how good your gear is and only by grinding the various end-game activities can you reach your desired Light Levels.

The game has a plethora of dungeon instances called Strikes and a Raid. Destiny's raids offer some of the best experiences ever in video games but Destiny 2's singular Leviathan Raid falls kind of flat in the face of Destiny 1's best offerings such as The Vault of Glass or The Taken King. Recently, Destiny 2 has faced huge community backlash over its lackadaisical approach to endgame activities. Players who were ardent about min-maxing their builds and collecting all the gear, quickly breezed through all the content that was on offer. This resulted in

disgruntlement as many saw that there was little to no incentive to keep playing once you hit max Light Level. The rehashed weapons and armour served up during special events such as Faction Rallies or Iron Banner, added insult to injury.

The most recent expansion to D2, Curse of Osiris didn't do enough to keep old players coming back. The campaign was short, repetitive and added little to no value to the story. Considering the DLC is about Osiris, one of the most talked-about characters in the game's extended lore, Bungie has missed out on a huge opportunity. Also, if you're a Destiny player who's really into PvP, don't venture into any of the modes till Bungie nerfs the Prometheus Lens. Trust me, you'll get melted by the beams of this OP weapon in two seconds. Plus Xur was selling the weapon on December 5 so literally everyone has it at this point.

Moving on to greener pastures and we have The Division which got off to a very rocky start during its launch on March 8 2016. I never thought I would be saying this about the game, but it's actually one of the best titles you can pick up right now. It had major content drops during the past few months, the more recent one being Update 1.8.

The Division is a unique twist to the Loot-Shooter genre. It doesn't explicitly embrace many of the MMO elements present in the game but it is blatantly apparent from a few hours in. The game takes place in Manhattan. A deadly engineered virus has swept across the city, forcing the authorities to quarantine the area. Trapped inside the chaos, many citizens turned to violence as a resort to survive. The Joint Task Forces of the area struggle to keep order in the streets. Thus, a new unit comprised of sleeper agents embedded in society is activated. This is the Strategic Homeland Division. Players play the role of an Agent tasked with bringing order to Manhattan through systematically completing missions and getting to the bottom of the Virus's origins.

The game plays like any standard Third Person Shooter but you do have to level up, and collect and optimise your gear. There are many interesting story missions, followed up by Incursions, a raid-like activity; The Dark Zone, a PvP realm where players have to seek out the best gear in the game; Underground a PvE instance filled with tough enemies called Hunters; and a plethora of other game modes. The game is just filled to the brim with content right now and I am having a blast playing it on the PC. The playerbase has returned too so it's high time to enrol yourself into SHD.

For many, Loot-Shooters might be too much of a grind requiring too much time and effort. But if you can find even an hour or two to spend every day, the experience is totally worth it.

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