

THE EVOLUTION OF A GAMER

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Few of us adults have the luxury of being able to play video games. It is a hobby that most abandon when they transition to their job lives. I'm still one of the lucky few but it's still not the same as before.

On March 2005, I remember getting Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory after tirelessly sifting through multiple stacks of video games at Eastern Plaza. I was euphoric. I was a huge fan of Sam Fisher and the thought of being able to play the next game in the series made me ecstatic.

As the game started installing on my old Pentium 4 PC, I stared in anticipation at the slow progress bar. Once it reached 100%, I instantly clicked "Finish" and double clicked on the shortcut icon.

It felt like the pillars that held up my world crumbled all around me when I was greeted with a message saying "Your graphics card doesn't support this game."

I almost cried that day, realising that I had the game right in front of me but I couldn't play it. I asked my parents for a PC upgrade time and time again but they refused as my school results weren't quite fantastic. I sunk into depression. I revisited old titles from back in the day to cure the itch of gaming. It was never enough. While my friends were playing the latest titles on their shiny PS2s or Pentium D PCs, I was stuck waiting for the next episode of GAME on TenSports where they would show trailers of all the amazing new games coming out in the future. It was not a good time for me. Regardless, I still held out hope as I watched every trailer. I imagined myself playing those games in the near future when I'll have all the best hardware. That hope pretty much allowed me to survive till 2011, when my dad finally got me an upgraded PC after I



did well in my O levels.

I quickly jumped into experiencing all the titles I had missed out on. Starting with Mass Effect 2. I didn't get to play ME:1 but I heard it wasn't as good as ME:2. For the first time in my life, I experienced gaming at 60 frames per second. It was like finding a long-lost heirloom that was kept from me for so long. I spent hours and hours finishing up my backlog. Eventually I got an Xbox 360 and I started ploughing through all the console exclusives as well. I obviously had to wait a while between finishing games as I couldn't afford to buy new titles as quickly as I finished them. Regardless, this was probably the best time I ever had with video games.

Eventually I got into esports, starting with Call of Duty 4. I played one LAN tournament but that was it. I had

played countless matches online but I couldn't really get to the level I wanted to. I shifted to League of Legends and thus began the 12-hour play sessions that I remember so vividly. Every day, when I came back from school or coaching, I would hop on League and just play till I dropped. My social life took a big hit because of how much I was spending time on League. I was, however, forced to tone it down when I got into university. IBA isn't a place for the awkward and timid gamer that I was and so I focused on changing myself. I socialised, hung out with friends instead of rushing back home, started picking up new skills that would aid my future professional life, and focused on my studies.

The hours I invested in gaming slowly changed from 12 hours a day to barely 5 hours a week during my fourth year. Even though I had a beast of a gaming PC and a PS4, my hours were dwindling. I had a job too so that took an even bigger toll on my beloved hobby.

Today, I have a 9 to 5 job and can only play on the weekends. I still finish the latest titles somehow but gone are my days of playing competitive multiplayer at the highest level. I still haven't finished Sekiro even though a lot of people I know are already done with it. I can afford the best hardware and all the games I want, yet, I can't play them to my heart's content.

At least I still have the privilege of pressing the START button sometimes. I would not be who I am today if it weren't for gaming, and I will not abandon it for the world.

Shahrukh Ikhtear roams the mystical plains of adulthood in search of the fabled work-life balance. Help him out with good music or just say wholesome things at fb.com/sr.ikhtear



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