

# E3 2019: The Games You Missed

NUHAN B. ABID

E3's always full of big announcements for each platform every year. It goes without saying that in a sea of hyped reveals and some welcome surprises, there's always some potentially great looking games that get overshadowed. E3 2019's no different, let's look at some of those games this year.

## SPIRITFARER

**Platforms:** XBOX One, PC, PS4

A cute 2D colorful indie from Thunder Lotus Games that already looks like it's shaping up to be an indie hit. Releasing 2020, it brands itself as a "cozy management game about dying". While it sounds like gameplay isn't anything extremely innovative – you're tasked to do things like craft or cook or mine – it's the premise that's very exciting. You play as Stella, a Spiritfarer who guides the souls of the deceased, and the game is about your interactions with these souls.

While it sounds somber, the beautiful hand-drawn art, comfortable atmosphere likened to Stardew Valley, the amount of promised content (ranging to ~100 hours according to developers for completionists) seems like this indie about loss and friendship will be one to watch for.

## 12 MINUTES

**Platforms:** XBOX One, PC

This point-and-click adventure comes from developer Luis Antonio (the art director for The Witness) and is about a man stuck in a time loop looking for a way to solve a mystery involving his wife and a murder. The kicker is, you only have 12 minutes (who'd have guessed?) to solve the mystery.

The short answer is you don't. You're meant to learn new things with each play through. Every 12 minutes is another chance to unravel the mystery you've been pre-



sented with. Oh, and you can also die before you do that. Good luck. The game's inspired a lot by Stanley Kubrick visually, so look forward to it in 2020.

## ASTRAL CHAIN

**Platforms:** Nintendo Switch

The first exclusive on this list comes from developers Platinum Games. This third-person action game releases on August 30th, 2019 for the Switch, and looks just as flashy and explosive as one might come to expect from Platinum.

As if their reputation with their biggest franchises (Bayonetta and NieR) weren't enough, the game is directed by NieR's designer and supervised by the Bayonetta creator. Now we only wish it wasn't exclusive, but promises to be a good draw for Switch owners.

## MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 3: THE BLACK ORDER

**Platforms:** Nintendo Switch

Team Ninja and Nintendo bring back a third installment in this series, coincidentally on the heels of Square Enix's reveal of their own Avengers game....and it's looking like this might be the better game.

While it's no AAA blockbuster, many derided the first reveal of Square's Avengers to be a knock-off of the MCU. Meanwhile, MUA3 spares no punches in terms of accuracy,



as well as something even more important: an equally diverse roster. With fan favorites and some surprise appearances from the deep list Marvel has at its disposal, it almost pains to look back at the other Avengers game and think 'that's it?' when MUA3 boasts a roster from almost every corner of the Marvel universe.

Such a shame MUA3 is also Switch exclusive, but look forward to it on July 19th 2019.

## PSYCHONAUTS 2

**Platforms:** XBOX One, PC, PS4

Almost no one thought this would happen, but lo and behold there is indeed a Psychonauts sequel coming after 14 years. Double Fine has returned with a game that not only picks off right where the first game left off, but also stays true to the original, even with that 14 year gap.

Given how good the first one was, this is a hopeful sign that when the game releases later in 2019 fans will get a long awaited treat.

*Nuhan's back after realizing the philosophical significance of that painting with the dogs playing cards, and decided to channel out his existential dread caused by it by writing. Send him mildly morally questionable food choices at nuhanbabid@hotmail.com*

# MAKING VR MORE ACCESSIBLE

WASIQUE HASAN

For the longest time, the only names in VR gaming were HTC and PlayStation (PS). The Vive and PS VR had the best collection of VR games along with the best hardware to run them. Now, with the release of two new headsets from Oculus – the Quest and the Rift S – it seems like there is finally some solid competition for the VR crown. I'll break down the specifications of each of these headsets to figure out what new features each bring to the table.

## OCULUS QUEST

The Quest is one of the first stand-alone VR devices made for high-quality gaming. Boasting a Qualcomm Snapdragon 835 processor, it is powerful enough to run a wide variety of games at 72 Hz with a 1440x1660 display. Currently its library features big names like Superhot VR, Beat Saber, Creed: Rise to Glory, with 50 more games in its library. Not a poor collection, by any means, although the graphics are going to be slightly inferior compared to how they are in the non-standalone headsets. Owing to the reduced power of the Android processor, many higher-end games like Skyrim VR, Fallout 4 VR, Subnautica and Elite: Dangerous are not available at launch, although we might



even see iterations of these on the Quest in the future.

Beyond the hardware and libraries, however, one of the biggest changes with the Quest is its revamped tracking and wires. Or rather, lack of wires. Because this is not plugged into a PC, there are no wires on the device. You simply pop the headset on, strap the controllers to both hands and start playing. This is huge, since one of the biggest complaints people continue to have about VR is how often you trip over the many wires trailing on the floor. Another big change is the absence of big

tracking stands all around the room, since all of the motion trackers are built into the headset. In addition, there are cameras on the device so if you ever wander to the edge of your playing area, the cameras switch on to show you a black and white view of your room to make sure you don't hit any furniture.

For all its features, the Quest doesn't break the bank. The 64 GB headset is priced at USD 399 and the 128 GB headset is priced at USD 499. With these prices, they are a very economical pick for someone who doesn't have a gaming set-up but

wants to dip their toes into the world of VR.

## OCULUS RIFT S

The Rift S targets the market of gamers excluded by the HTC Vive's hefty price tag of USD 499, mostly by slight reductions in performance to compensate for the reduced price of USD 399. The sacrifices aren't too steep, however, with a 1280x1440 display and a refresh rate of 80 Hz. The Rift S has the same improvements as the Quest minus the wireless-ness, featuring the same inbuilt motion sensors and cameras. Add to that the benefit of being able to run the beefiest Oculus exclusives alongside the VR games in Steam's library, and the Rift S shapes up to be a very competitive entry to the VR headset market.

If you already own a PS4, then the USD 300 PS VR headset is still the cheapest option for you, although it can't run most Steam-exclusive VR games. For PC gamers, however, the Rift S has the perfect set of features to make a solid VR set-up. For everyone else, the Quest is a no-brainer. Overall, you'd be hard-pressed to find better entry-level VR headsets.

*Wasique Hasan came to Bangladesh to eat mangoes and get heat-stroke, and he hasn't found any mangoes yet. Send him information that will lead to the acquisition of mangoes at fb.com/hasique.wasan*