

The best games ... that I have ever played

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We pick up where we left off last week with a continuation of "The best games ...that I have ever played."

"Final Fantasy VI"

I didn't grow up with the NES or even the Super Nintendo, so when older gamers try to turn me on to the old guard of video game classics, I've never really been impressed. Their lot is typically short, blunt, and requires a considerable amount of nostalgia to remain relevant in the fifth console generation. This was not the case for "Final Fantasy VI," which has, hands down, one of the best stories a video game has ever told.

It's a straight up Japanese RPG. You got your player characters, you got your monsters, you got your experience levels, and you got your loot. But what you will appreciate the most is that this is one of the last times a game in the series has had an effecting sense of humor, the dwindling lack of this trait in later titles has since turned the series into a bit of a joke; a derivative, spiky-haired, angsty joke.

Its characters and their presence that make this game a unique ride and to just clack out their traits and personality would not do them justice. Mainly because that by themselves they really aren't anything special, but their various and brilliantly written musical themes give them a unique voice that's reinforced by a story that not only carries weight with it's cast of thousands, but with the game play itself.

FFVI is available on the Gameboy Advance... and certainly not on the Visual Boy emulator (www.emulator-zone.com/doc.php/gba)

"Resident Evil 4"

Many times, it takes a while to publish a game. Sometimes four years, sometimes six. RE4 falls under the latter and it was a red flag for a lot of reasons. For one, the franchise is one of the video game world's most profitable, making sure that whatever went wrong, Capcom would throw all the time and money necessary at it to make it work.

When games take this long, it usually means they went in the wrong direction—for a of couple years. And if those titles ever get released they

get an "E" for effort at best. See Alan Wake's lukewarm reception as an example.

Yet, "Resident Evil 4" is a glorious exception to the rule. Not only were they going in the right direction the whole time, but they managed to create one of the longest, scariest, most repayable shooters under the sun.

There's a corny story about rescuing the American president's daughter from a Spanish cult of zombies, but I don't really care about it and neither should you, instead focus on how jaw droopingly long it is. Survival horror games are a twelve hour romp in the best of times. RE4 takes at least 17 and it never runs out of places to take you, guns to buy, and zombies to kill... again, I guess.

So for staying as fresh at hour one as it does at hour 20. "Resident Evil 4" holds a very special place in my gamers' heart, as well as my nightmares.

RE4 is available on the Gamecube (who the hell has a GameCube?) PS2 and PC

"Bioshock (1&2)"

I'm putting both these games in one slot just like I did for my number one pick. Because it's sequel is not so much a sequel as it is a companion piece, correcting the former's short comings, while having a few of it's own.

But let me make my self clear. The world of the "Bioshock" series is an artistic triumph directly on par with either Narnia or Middle Earth. Not in the high fantasy sense, lord no, but as one of the most creative and intricate fictional worlds ever brought to life, And in my humble opinion, one of the best.

In 1944 during the aftermath and confusion of the second world war, an electrical engineering magnate disappears along with thousands of other artists, businessmen, and philosophers. The magnate, Andrew Ryan, had an impossible dream: a world without government. Or rather, a world where personal achievement was valued above all else, the ultimate meritocracy; welcome to Rapture.

"Bioshock" is the video game adaption of the philosophy of Ayn Rand. If you haven't read any of her work, I'm not going to waste your time explaining objectivism to you. Suffice to say, the world of rapture has some very bitter and critical things to say about it. It reduces Rand's philosophy

to a laughable ideal, without belittling the people that believe in it. It goes to great lengths to explain why the citizens loved and believed in Rapture, while simultaneously portraying them as drug addled mutants.

But what kind of game is "Bioshock"? That's a good question, and the simple answer is that it's a bunch of different kinds. It's a shooter first and foremost, but with collectable powers and abilities it becomes an impromptu role playing game. I say you shouldn't try to bottle why "Bioshock" is a blast. Let its moldy art deco mystery wash over you, and maybe by the end, you'll have some extra ammo against the special Rand nut in your life.

The Bioshock games created a world that grabbed me by the throat and never let me go. It's a place that's dripping with purpose and meaning as well as blood, mold, first aid kits, and anti-parasite propaganda. I recommend it to anyone over the age of eighteen. It's a cultural milestone and it's that powerful.

"Bioshock" 1&2 are available on PC, Xbox 360 and PS3

'Syria'

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lives, and in fact, many pro government demonstrations have occurred there. Damascus being overall stable has made me feel relieved about the safety for my family and I hope things will stay peaceful there. I still have plans to return home next week, and I hope the situation there will improve.

I must admit, it is surreal for me seeing Syria fall into chaos, because living there for 15 years has been relatively peaceful and stable. And it has been like that for the past 30 years. I find it hard to believe the images of Syrian people being killed in the streets and destruction occurring. Not this much unrest has happened since the early 1980s in Syria. Although back then, the uprisings there were not as widespread and were mostly conducted by Muslim Brotherhood that ended up getting crushed by the government with brute force.

Fortunately, the chaos in Syria has not reached

to the magnitude of what has been currently happening in Libya...yet, and I hope it will never get that bad in Syria. As I mentioned before, I hope tensions in Syria will calm down while I am there throughout the summer. If things really got out of hand there, my family and I will have to end up fleeing from the country and seek refuge in America, since me, my brothers, my father, and even my mother, even though she is Syrian, have U.S. citizenships. But I hope this situation will not occur because that would mean that my father will end up losing his job in Syria and we will end up losing our home.

But for now, I will stay optimistic and hope for the best in Syria. And many people I know from Brevard College have wished me and my family luck. Perhaps when I return to Brevard College in the fall for my semester I might end up telling people the wild adventures I had in Syria over the summer.