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From Software

Dark Souls

Un-dated microblog format.

1: Okay, I get that this game is supposed to be hard, but this is absurd. I cleared the Asylum with little problem, but now I'm getting absolutely butchered by those skeletons in the graveyard. This is completely imbalanced.

2: It seems I was trying to go the wrong way. The path through Undead Burg is easier.

3: Okay this game is awesome.

4: Okay this Capra Demon is bullshit.

5: I put a shield on and killed the dogs, now the Capra demon is dead. Like my spirit.

6: Okay fuck these sludge tunnels and every curse-vomiting lizard in them.

7: Wait there's a back door?

8: Okay the back door is much easier.

9: Heh, spiderbewbs.

10: Okay fuck this spiderlady and her lava.

11: Heh, mute spiderbewbs.

12: This game is making me angry, why am I still playing?

13: Seriously, I've died 800 times and have been playing for 11 hours straight.

14: I should be writing a Bachelor's Thesis.

15: Sen's Fortress axes are assholes.

16: ... damn Anor Londo is pretty

17: Anor Londo is fucking awful. Who put this rafters section in the game and why weren't they fired?

18: or killed?

19: Okay I cleared the rafters, activated the lift and got SNIPED BY AN ARCHER FIRING MISSILES.

20: Bonfire. Friend?

21: Ornstein as Smough are the most unbalanced thing in this game so far.

22: Seriously this is bullshit. What were the developers smoking?

23: Oh good, when I kill one of them, the other gets all their health back and goes Super Saiyan.

24: Fucking fuck.

25: Introduce that giant hammer into your own rectum.

26: Okay I killed them. Fuck both of these enemies. I hope their faces melt.

27: Amazing Chest Ahead.

28: Did that painting just attack me?! I can't even look at a painting in this fucking game.

29: Oh this is a pretty zone. It reminds me of Finland.

30: Just got stabbed. Still reminds me of Finland.

31: The boss didn't attack me and asked me to leave her in peace. Still very much reminds me of Finland.

32: Well, Ceaseless Discharge died quickly.

33: What is this Bed of Chaos bullshittery.

34: I spent more time running to that boss than I spent fighting it.

35: Pinwheel died immediately. Why am I suspicious?

36: Ah, Gravelord Nito, that's why.

37: You wouldn't even be difficult without your constantly reviving adds, you dead fuck.

38: ... okay maybe you would.

39: Hah, now you died. Dead fuck.

40: PUPPY!

41: Don't make me kill the puppy.

42: =(

43: If they're called 4 kings, why did I kill 5 of them?

44: Seath the assless.

45: Seriously where are his legs?

46: Where did all my health go?

47: Time for the final boss!

48: Oh, he can be parried.

49: But if I don't parry, I die.

50: High risk parry win.

51: Well, that was fun. I'll try the DLC now. It can't be any harder than this.

Dark Souls 2

don't care what the reviews said. I enjoyed Dark Souls 2. That being said, I understand what the reviews complained about. The difficulty peaked relatively early, and remained fairly static right through to the end. An abudance of summons for every single boss fight gave the option to trivialize difficult encounters, which I'm sure some players opted for. It's not a perfect follow up to Dark Souls. But standing alone, it's a good game.

I did have an advantage in one thing: I played the Scholar of the First Sin only. I imagine a lot of the problems with the original game were rectified by that point. Not to mention, Frozen Eleceum Loyce was one of the stronger sections of the game.

I did mow through bosses like they were not in a Dark Souls game, though. I think I killed 12 in a row without having any significant problems, several of them killed in the first attempt on my first run. That should be an oddity in a Souls game, not the standard.

Still, I enjoyed it. And this gives me a chance to outline my playstyle.

I like to make 4 characters, based off the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse. They seem suitable for this game.

> Her (Death): Magic user. Typically wields enchanted sword or scythe and big magic. High int.
>
> War: Big armor, big sword, big ouch. Sometimes goes Faith for lightning, sometimes Pyro for flames.
>
> Entropy (Famine/Pestilence): Some kind of more unique playstyle. In this, rapid fire bleed/poison claws.
>
> Conquest: Soul Level 1 character, designed to get as far as possible.

I have yet to complete an SL1 run, but I've given it a fair attempt. My DS1 SL1 run ended at Four Kings, with Bed of Chaos already down, Seathe and Nito to go.

I'm going to start Conquest now in DS2 and see what I can do.

Elden Ring DLC: Shadow of the Erdtree

I want to like this DLC. I genuinely do. There are good and bad parts to it, and while the good come close to outweighing the bad, in the end they just don't.

> Pros:
>
> The Shadow Realm is well made and visually pleasing.
>
> The new weapons are extremely fun.
>
> The story is interesting and compelling, if somewhat subtle.

The negatives, however, are somewhat serious.

The world feels empty

This one is somewhat subjective, but the open world felt empty and vacant. The original Elden Ring excelled in making the world feel alive and rewarding exploration. In this DLC, whole swathes of territory are empty or uninteresting, with nothing but the occasional scattered skull with glowing eyes to trample with your horse.

Bosses are artificially difficult.

There are two problems with bosses in the DLC. The first is that they've overtuned. They hit too hard, they have too much health. At times you have no time to learn the bosses because you'll be dead before you've seen more than 1-2 attacks.

But the second, more problematic issue is one of poor design. From Software have clearly learned nothing from the feedback regarding the last sections of the original game. Bosses attack relentlessly, with combos of up to 10 hits allowing for very few attack windows, and then only if you're perfectly timed. At the end of this combo, they'll start another almost immediately. They're not held back by things like stamina, FP or any sort of limiting.

The hit boxes on most of these attacks are comically poor. A boss with a flaming spear can hit you with a thrust attack aimed a full 150 degrees away from you. It is as if someone asked the lead dev where the hitbox should be and they responded with "yes".

Then there's the boss movement which is, for the most part, wild and erratic, leading to more deaths through camera angles than mechanics in a lot of places. Any attempts at ranged combat

miss altogether, forcing you into one specific meta: find a way to make the opponent bleed, summon mimic tear to do it twice as fast, cheese the enemy and then go onto forums to brag "I didn't find this hard at all, l2play" which seems to be code for "I used the meta to cheese it, fluff my ego."

And on the subject of metas...

The Miyazaki Meta is still a thing

While it's true that bosses are overtuned, so are some of the enemies. I actually enjoyed this at the start of the game. The enemies hit like trucks, but they also died quickly. It led to a fast, frenetic gameplay loop that was challenging and satisfying.

Then I progressed in the game and things rapidly fell off a cliff. Each enemy started to feel like a miniboss who required dedicated time and tactics to beat, could kill me in one combo, had infitinte stamina and FP to spam their abilities with no downtime for healing or recovery, had a healthpool that required a fight of at least a minute to beat them, and gave paltry rewards when you did.

This brought everything back to what I like to call the Miyazaki Meta; the idea that it's more sensible to run through the enemies instead of engage them, pushing for a speed-run style daisy chain of one Site of Grace to the next, purely because of how frustrating it was to dump 3+ healing potions on a standard enemy, only to have another waiting around the corner.

The level-up mechanic is terrible

The level-up mechanic, which I saw one Redditor refer to as "doohicky levelling", a completely fair term, involves wandering and exploring the world to find one of two items that makes you more powerful. That's all. With one item, you take less damage and deal more. With the second, your summons take less damage and heal more.

There's no satisfaction to this levelling scheme. The levels you built up in the main game seem to mean nothing in comparison, and your power level in the Shadow Realm has no connection to your combat skills or any time dedicated to increasing your power. Unlikely all previous From Software titles, there are set and defined limits you can reach before facing any particular boss. As such, if you're struggling against on particular boss and you've collected all the Doohickies you can, you're pretty much screwed.

From Software learned nothing from Elden Ring endgame

Elden Ring original endgame had such a difficulty spike that, unless you were cheesing it with a katana (and lets be fair, most players were) or using something like Comet Azur to melt enemies, you were in for a rough time. It would have been, in my opinion, the best game of all time without the arbitrary turning of all enemies into mini boss damage sponges who kill you in 3 hits.

In the DLC, From Software doubled down on this mentality, and it shows.

Addendum: Post balance patch, From misses the point.

From released a balance patch. This balance patch is... comical. It increases the power of the early "leveling doohickies" you pick up and... nothing else. They attempted to address the least problematic part of their whole design, cementing the idea that they've completely lost the plot.

Has anything been done to slow down bosses from two shotting you as soon as you enter the room? Technically, yes. Now they three-shot you as soon as you enter the room. They're still problematically aggressive, leave tiny windows (and frequently none at all) for attacking or recovery, hit you with any attacks they make regardless of where you are in relation to them, and explode in AoEs that remove half of your health pool on the rare occasions they happen to miss.

Players said "I want a fair fight, and I want to have fun. Please stop kicking me in the balls." and From Software's response was "We are providing you with a cup, and will continue to kick you in the balls."

Extremely disappointing to have waited a year and a half for this.

The Witcher

I finally finished the first Witcher game now. I'm still not sure why. Since the first Chapter the combat was ridiculously clumsy and repetitive and towards the end of Chapter 5 I was thinking 'Please god let this end already.' The epilogue kind of pulled it back for me though.

But really, who designed that combat system? I have the Enhanced Edition and it felt like it needed some major improvements. I can't imagine what it was like before the massive overhaul. I also couldn't stand the villains and their methods. "We'll taunt you, get beaten quickly and easily and then teleport away. Repeatedly, for the duration of the entire game." I don't get how a hero falls for that more than one time. You put a knife through their leg, watch them try to run away then.

The story was clumsy in places too, but overall it was the only thing that kept me coming back to finish it. God knows it wasn't the gameplay. I particularly liked the parts where you'd lose a big portion of your health before your screen had properly loaded or you'd drawn a weapon. The lack of customization didn't help. Sure, you had different styles but they were a requirement for different monsters rather than a choice.

I might pick up the Witcher 2 when I have some time to kill and it costs 10e like the first one did.

In all honesty, I played it for the sex. For all the fun of digital boobs. I am a god. A sad, sad god.

VR

Initial Experiences with VR

VR is... good?

So far it's a little disorienting at times. My body expects to be moving when my character does, and at first that gave a sort of motion sickness that I wasn't expecting. Teleportation movement types prevented that at times, but felt less immersive.

The strangest sensation is actually coming out of VR, where everything feels floaty and somewhat unreal for some time after. This feeling of wrongness, that I've decided to dub "reality sickness" has taken several days to get over, and I still find myself surprised to see my hands or to be stopped by a wall.

VR

Half-Life: Alyx

HLA is an amazing tech demo used to deliver a somewhat mediocre game.

Don't get me wrong, I'm having a lot of fun with the game, and it's an experience I feel anyone who plays video games should try.

A little disclaimer: HLA is pretty much my first VR game. It's the one I'm using to adjust to VR, and it feels like a good example.

The Opening

I was blown away by the starting of HLA. The view of the rooftops, the vehicles flying by. The random pidgeon sat on your railing. It was all extremely well done. I didn't even move for a few moments as I took in the scene, looked over the railing, tried to catch aforementioned pidgeon.

Some pros

Gunplay feels natural and solid. All the weapons being one handed may be a blessing. I'm not sure how well two handed firearms will translate to VR.

The level of interactiveness in the environment is also astounding. Being able to throw pool balls and raise antennas on radios.

The Negatives

Unfortunately, there are plenty.

Difficulty is achieved through a combination of scarce ammunition and enemies being bullet sponges. Expect to use 3-6 bullets of a 10 round clip taking down even the most basic of enemies even when performing headshots. Later enemies will use your entire surplus of ammo.

This leaves a requirement to scour each and every environment to collect as much ammunition as possible, leading to a second layer of difficulty: this one through tedium. Did you not explore the previous level well enough? Too bad, here's 46 enemies and 4 shotgun shells.

The complete lack of melee compounds this problem. If you run out of ammo, you have no choices. You're either running through the enemies, or you're dead.

Weapon selection is also odd. This is my first VR game but... wouldn't being able to holster a pistol make sense? Having a button-press menu was an odd choice.

Outside of combat, the game is extremely linear. After being teased a city at the start of the game, I was treated to hours of corridors, tunnels, dingy rooms and alien environments. The time spent outside on streets was limited. I understand this is a gameplay choice, but it could have opened things up a little more.

Conclusion

It's still worth it. I'm looking forward to some of the community built parts of it.

It feels like valve made an incredibly powerful VR engine and a great tech demo of a game to show it off. If they handed this to someone else, they might be able to make a definitive VR experience.

Exercise through VR - Part 1

I've recently started a VR-based exercise regimen because, like many of us, I don't get enough exercise in my daily routine. I've found that combining fitness with gaming is a great motivator for me, especially after having success with the boxing rhythm game on the Switch. The immersive nature of VR seems like the perfect way to make working out both fun and effective, so I've been diving into a few different titles to see what works best for me.

So far, I have tried:

Groove Gunner

Groove Gunner has quickly become one of my favorite VR experiences. It combines the fast-paced action of a shooter with the rhythm-based mechanics that keep me engaged and coming back for more. In the game, you're tasked with shooting targets in time with the music while simultaneously using shields attached to your forearms to block incoming projectiles. The concept is simple, but the execution is superb, offering an intense workout that doesn't feel like a chore.

The one downside is the somewhat limited song selection, but the developers have mitigated this by offering a range of difficulty levels. This means that even if you're playing the same songs over and over, the varying levels of challenge provide enough variety to keep the game interesting. The higher difficulties really push you to improve your timing and accuracy, making it a great way to both hone your skills and get a good sweat going.

ShadowBoxr

ShadowBoxr is another VR title I've been exploring, and while it's still in early access, it shows a lot of promise as a boxing trainer. The game is designed to help you improve your boxing technique through rhythm-based exercises, but it's clear that it's still a work in progress. The graphics and mechanics aren't quite polished, and there are moments when the punches feel out of sync with the beat. This can be frustrating, especially when you're trying to maintain a rhythm, but I'm hopeful that these issues will be ironed out as development continues.

Despite these rough edges, ShadowBoxr isn't a bad option if you're looking for a boxing workout in VR. The core mechanics are there, and the potential for a solid training tool is evident. If the developers continue to refine the game, it could become a great way to incorporate boxing into your fitness routine, especially for those who prefer a more structured, trainer-like experience.

PowerBeats VR

PowerBeats VR is another strong contender in the VR fitness space. It's a solid game that focuses heavily on boxing training, offering a series of workouts designed to improve your agility, reflexes, and overall fitness. The gameplay involves dodging, punching, and moving to the beat, which keeps you engaged and physically active throughout your session. It's a game that really gets your heart pumping, making it an excellent choice for cardio-focused workouts.

However, there's a bit of a catch. While the boxing mode is fully accessible from the start, other game modes are locked behind a leveling system. This means you'll need to put in some time to unlock all the features, which could be seen as a downside if you're eager to try everything right away. On the flip side, this progression system might be motivating for some players, providing an incentive to keep coming back and working on their fitness goals. Overall, PowerBeats VR offers a comprehensive and engaging workout, but it does require a bit of patience to access all of its content.