

GAME REVIEW

New blood delivered by FromSoftware

Bloodborne presents a tried challenge with true, merciless gameplay; not to be missed

Geoff Rosenthal

Senior Reviewer

Patrick Hesselbach

Staff Reviewer

Geoff's View:

WORD OF WARNING: IF YOU'VE PLAYED A FromSoftware game before, I would suggest skipping to Patrick's view. Because of this, I have a terrible confession to make. I'm a filthy casual. I've never played any games created by FromSoftware, meaning no *Demon Souls* or either of the *Dark Souls* games. Truthfully, I wasn't even sure I'd want to play one of these games; every time the experience has been described to me, the mechanics seem needlessly complicated. And through playing, I've discovered I'm half right; while the game is complicated, it has become clear why the base mechanics between these games is so similar, because it is an incredibly rewarding and well constructed system.

At first, it's a little overwhelming getting into *Bloodborne*; with three weapons to choose from, and two guns, it can be a bit much to start, especially if you have no idea what anything does. However, I happily found that the weapon I chose, the cane-whip, while definitely the worst, served me just fine. In fact, I was able to buy the other starting weapons just a small time into my playthrough and found myself using one of them, the pole-axe. If the weapon names sound hyphenated, then it's because they actually serve as two weapons. Every weapon has two forms, the cane-whip can serve as a blunt weapon in cane form, or as a sharp range weapon in whip form. These transformations are quick and seamless, allowing you to transform even during combos. And while this game is harsh, it is far from unforgiving, being able to retrieve your currency of blood echoes lost upon death by simply returning to where you've died. The combat is brutal; most enemies can kill you in one or two hits, but it forces you to quickly memorize not only the layout of the area and enemy locations, but patterns where enemies might ambush you or traps might appear.

My favorite part of the game, however, is the incredible world. Set in this awesome gothic city, in one continuous map, you traverse a Lovecraftian wet dream. Minus the trips you spend in an upgrade area, you could traverse the entire map without seeing a loading screen, and you should be happy about that, because it is amazing. The world is in the 13th century gothic architectural style, with creepy weeping statues, and a wonderful blend of



Courtesy of Sony

THE HUNT BEGINS: the player protagonist of *Bloodborne* enters on the night of a hunt, a semi-regular purging of an affliction that causes people to turn into beasts, and it is the hunters' duty to cleanse the city of Yharnam of this Lovecraftian disease.

winding residence streets, muggy forest caverns, dark castles, and many other places. Not only is this place huge, but the world feels real, with an intense attention to detail in not only making the area look fantastic, but flow with the enemy placement and combat.

This game has shown me why people like other FromSoftware games; the mysterious Lovecraft-inspired story, the gorgeous scenery, and the fast paced combat makes the experience of getting back up after being repeatedly knocked down so much sweeter. If you have a PlayStation 4 and haven't tried this game yet, please do; it is one of the best games I have played in recent memory.

Patrick's View:

Having played the *Dark Souls I* and *II*, *Bloodborne* has been an absolute treat. The common theme of every *Souls* game so far has been the presentation of a seemingly insurmountable challenge, followed by victory after mastering the situation, and *Bloodborne* is no different. The biggest differences for veterans

coming to *Bloodborne* are the faster combat, weapon choices, and the almost complete removal of shields. All three of these play upon each other to create an experience reminiscent of *Dark Souls* while still defining itself as its own game. Attacks, dodges, and counterattacks come out much faster than in previous titles, which, when combined with a lack of shields and a mechanic for regenerating lost health by quickly retaliating, leads to a gameplay style focused on constant offense. Players who choose to retreat whenever hit will soon find themselves out of blood vials, the games "health potions," which the player is limited to 20 at any given time. All considered, *Bloodborne's* fights are fluid and active, an interesting and welcomed change from the slower and more reserved fights of previous titles.

Combat isn't the only thing that has changed in *Bloodborne*, though; returning players will most likely find the lack of variety in covenants and the absence of New Game Plus secrets very concerning. While the NG+ cycles and PVP and PVE covenants added countless

hours to the replayability of the *Souls* series, *Bloodborne* instead focuses on its Chalice Dungeons. New to the series, Chalice Dungeons are a combination of fixed "story" dungeons the player can advance through; these are randomly generated dungeons for each player, and can connect to ones shared by other players. The dungeons feature several bosses not part of the main story, some that are, and a few variations of the stronger enemies. Each dungeon consists of three to five layers, each containing its own boss. The endgame loot is found exclusively in the more difficult Chalice Dungeons, including variations of the normal weaponry with different blood gem layouts, the most powerful blood gems themselves, and even a unique weapon only found in these dungeons.

The biggest mistake a veteran of this series can make is walking into *Bloodborne* looking for *Dark Souls III*. However, if you leave your notions of what a From game should be like behind, you will find a wonderful title that challenges you, tantalizes you, and more often than not, kills you.



Courtesy of Sony

GAMEPLAY IN BLOODBORNE INCLUDES farming for blood vials in order to continue the quest, as well as finding quicksilver bullets.

EVENT REVIEW

RPI shows off at annual charity talent competition

Maria Kozdroy

Staff Reviewer

THE NINTH ANNUAL RENSSELAER'S GOT TALENT BROUGHT SEVERAL UNIQUE PERFORMANCES TO THE floor in Darrin Communications Center 308 on Monday night. The Alpha Omega Epsilon sorority hosted this show to raise money for the desired charity of the winner's choice. Each contestant and/or group went up onto the stage for nearly five minutes to excite the crowd, as the crowd voted through text after all 13 performances. Advice was given after each act from three of the four judges: Kyle Keraga '15, Morgan Schweitzer '16, Kevin Guo '16, and another judge who was randomly selected.

The Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and The Brown Bag sponsored this event. Third prize winner was Richard Lin '18 who performed diablo, or Chinese yo-yo, and shocked the crowd when the lights went out halfway through the performance. He went into a box and pulled out a light up diablo, and managed to play in the dark. He received a freshly baked cake prepared by AOE members.

RPIgnite won second place and a \$30 gift card to The Brown Bag for their drumming performance, as the group members acted as they were riding a bus while keeping up a cool beat! The group to earn \$250 of all the proceeds raised to go to the charity of their choice was RPI Bhangra. The six person dance team brought high intensity and enthusiasm to the night, and even earned a \$75 The Brown Bag gift card for themselves! RPI Bhangra chose the 15-Love initiative, based out of Albany, N.Y., who has the goal of helping out inner city kids through tennis as their charity of choice.

There was a decent sized audience with a \$5 admission, yet to many, there was a lack of advertising of the event. This was a fun show and I wish more people could have shown up!

GAME REVIEW

Sequel game s-killfully steals reviewers' hearts

David Hodson
Ethan Spitz
Senior Reviewers

David's Take:

KILLING FLOOR 2 IS THE SEQUEL TO *KILLING FLOOR*, WHICH WAS released by Tripwire Interactive in 2005, and is a first person shooter that works exclusively as a "PvE" game where players band together to fight off increasing numbers of weird zombies called "zeds." Each round, the players are awarded money for their kills and can use that money to buy better weapons and body armor, fighting until they reach the boss after a set number of rounds. Pro-tip: never forget the body armor.

This is a decent premise for a game, and if you look at my Steam record, *Killing Floor* is twelfth on the list of games I've spent the most time in, so clearly there's something there. The real uniqueness to both games in the franchise, and therefore the source of replayability, comes in how each player selects a sort of perk set that alters how they play. It isn't a class system, because there are no weapon or ability restrictions, but a medic can use the healing ability a max of 200 percent faster and 50 percent more effectively. Another example: everyone can buy and use any of the shotguns, but when a fully leveled support character wields one, they do 25 percent more damage and their shots pierce 635 percent more. You level your place in each of these perk sets, earning unique rewards like free body armor, the ability to drop ammo, or even further bonus damage based on the set.

Overall, I think it's a decent game. In my opinion, it's a great thing to share with friends over a beer. It gets a little repetitive, but it's a real test of skill to defeat the boss and jump to the next difficulty level. The game is fairly polished, but the developers have explicitly stated that we can expect six new and different perk sets, alongside new maps both when the developers release them and the map making community gets rolling, so the game is only going to get better, and it's solid right now.

Here is the kicker though, the game is 30 bucks. It's a well developed and supported game with very good visuals and an active community, and it is going for half the cost of similar games. If you like shooters and if you're a fan of "horde-mode" style game, I say buy it. If a horror theme and a very bloody style bother you, then don't.

Ethan's Take:

In case you haven't played the original *Killing Floor*, THE game takes place in Europe where the company Horzine Biotech's experiments have gone awry, causing a massive outbreak of these cloned creatures called "zeds." You are part of a group of civilians and mercenaries who have banded



Courtesy of Tripwire Interactive

TRIPWIRE INTERACTIVE MAKES an entertaining sequel to its first *Killing Floor* game. The gameplay includes fighting off hordes of zombie-like creatures, named "zeds", using firearms in a bloody battle.

together to fight against the outbreak. To do this, you willingly enter "zed-laden hot zones" to exterminate all zeds. On April 21, Tripwire Interactive released *Killing Floor 2*, which is a major overhaul of the original *Killing Floor*.

The game starts with you dropped off in the middle of the "hot zone." From there, you fight wave after wave of zeds until you reach the final boss, who will most likely kill your entire team, assuming your team was good enough to get to the final boss in the first place.

One of the key features of *Killing Floor 2* that I think is pretty cool is that instead of making the zeds more bullet absorbent as you increase the level/progress through the waves, they make the zeds act more intelligently/aggressively. Basically, instead of having to empty an entire magazine into a zed to kill it, the zeds move so fast that it becomes difficult to shoot them before you have an entire horde clawing at you. This makes it ever so satisfying to headshot a zed and see its head explode.

Killing Floor 2 brings a major update to the graphics and animations of the game. When reviewing the game, I switched back and forth between the original and *KF2*. The difference is night and day. *KF* really looks like an older game with boxier graphics and repetitive animations. *KF2* upgrades its game engine from Unreal Engine 2 to a "heavily modified" Unreal Engine 3,

enabling life-like graphics. These new graphical changes include generally improved rendering quality and textures, persistent gore (which is awesome and disgusting at the same time), and adaptive lighting. In regards to adaptive lighting, it is not only a visual effect; it affects gameplay, because the longer you stay in one locations, the darker it becomes as your stray bullets and explosions start to knock out light bulbs. The game's animations are also pretty spectacular. In order to revamp the old animations, Tripwire Interactive went full out and did high-speed motion captures for all zeds, players, and weapons. This gives all the animations super smooth and realistic movement that was not seen in the original. Plus, it's more fun because, rather than each zed dying the same way each time, they crumple to ground in hundreds of different ways based on how you kill them!

The game also adds new types of zeds and three beautiful new maps to play on. I must note that the game is still in development and is only available for early access, which means maps, weapons, new bosses, and more are still to be added!

David's rating: 8.5/10
Ethan's rating: 9/10

Skylines: Roundabouts rule new city builder

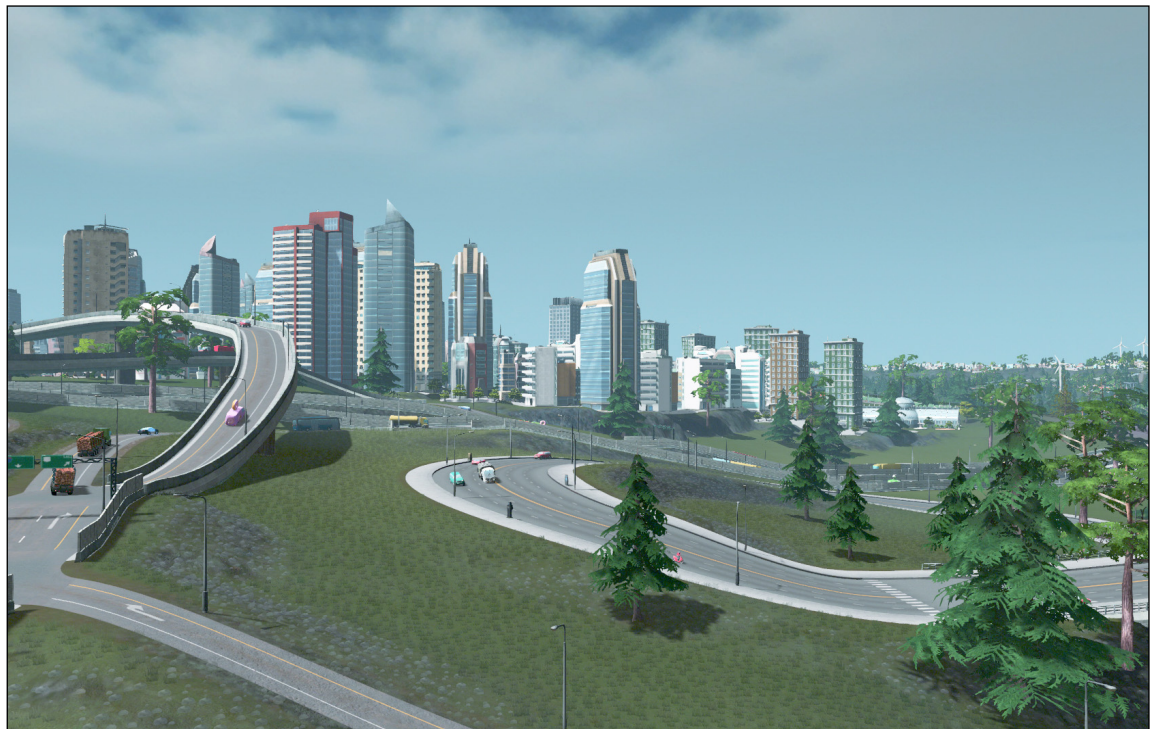
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One of the aspects I enjoy about this game is the casual feeling it has. While you do have to manage a budget, trash collection, pollution, and dead Cims, the game isn't going to have a big "You Lose" screen at any point. There aren't really any goals in the game except for having a larger population to unlock all the buildings. If you want to build a high-density, bustling, downtown metropolis, go for it! If you want to build a midwestern farm town with a single cargo rail connection, you can do that too! This game is great for some casual, stress-free fun.

The biggest focus this game has is traffic management, which makes sense since the developers, Colossal Order, are best known for their mass transit simulator series *Cities in Motion*. For me, I think managing traffic flow is super fun. I could watch the traffic flow smoothly through a city for hours. At first I was designing my city in a grid style, with lots of four-way intersections. This worked fine up until the point where my industrial district had an economic boom. The

huge influx of trucks left my poor little highway connection looking like Los Angeles at 5 pm on a Friday. It turns out traffic lights and four way intersections can really create flow problems. Then I discovered the glory of the roundabout. A rare sight in the United States, roundabouts let vehicles travel through an intersection without ever stopping. This beautiful system is now installed at every major intersection in my city. Once they are unlocked, the bus lines, metro, and train stations are all also useful for reducing congestion. Cims are green thinkers, opting to take public transportation or even a footpath to their destination if possible.

My one major complaint with this game is the traffic artificial intelligence. Sometimes I really question what my Cims are thinking when driving around. Many times I have found roadways to be congested because Cims don't use lanes to the fullest extent, or they decide that it's necessary to switch lanes in the middle of the highway, or some variation of that. It's



Jack Wellhofer/The Polytechnic

CITIES: SKYLINES PROVIDES gamers with a next-gen city builder. The game's focus lies in traffic management with an emphasis on green options as the Cims in-game try and use public transportation.

annoying to find one lane full of vehicles and the other two open because they are all preparing to exit the highway in three kilometers. In the same vein, I would like to see some more traffic management in the game.

Some of my problems could be solved if I could change turn lanes, add timers to traffic lights, and fix priority signs.

Overall, I am very happy with *Cities: Skylines*. Colossal Order has made a fantastic city builder

that I see myself putting many more hours into. If a city building and traffic management games piques your interest, I highly recommend this game. No one who I've convinced to buy it thus far has been disappointed.

Features

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

EVENT REVIEW

Trains in Davison round the track again

Jack Wellhofer
Senior Reviewer

AFTER SPRING BREAK, MY FRIENDS AND I WERE discussing the new door that popped up on the side of Davison Hall. I told them that the new door allowed the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society to access the New England, Berkshire, & Western model railroad; a historically accurate model of the New England railways as they were in the 1950s. We heard that the club was running their trains on April 25 and that it was open to the public, so we decided to go take a look.

The new entrance felt more welcoming than the last time I had been to the display during Navigating Rensselaer & Beyond 2014. My friends and I wandered through the various towns and countrysides modeled by the club, observing the extreme level of detail and members of the club enthralled in their work. When we reached the very back where we met John Nehrich, an RPI graduate and member of the club since 1968, he immediately offered to give us a tour, since it was very clear we had no idea what was going on. Once per semester, the club members get together to run their trains and simulate what it would have been like to organize the rails. Passenger and cargo trains travel from station to station on a time table, filling out information at each stop to keep things running.



Jack Wellhofer/The Polytechnic
THE MODEL TRAINSET RUNS underneath Davison in one of the largest collection of historically accurate railroads in the world. The display is highly worth the visit.

What I really love about this model is their effort to bring historical accuracy to a truly remarkable time in Troy's history. Nehrich feels that the model railroad hobby has become inbred over the years. Clubs look at what other groups are doing and try to model that, instead of looking outside their basements and garages to the real thing. NEB&W prides itself in being the largest collection of historically accurate railroad models in the world.

Before adding or changing something, research is done using old photos, insurance maps, and sometimes a bit of guesswork. Nehrich says that doing all of the research and construction, rather than purchasing pre-built models, makes the rich history of the era more intimate. John gave me an unexpected but absolutely fascinating history of Troy. I think we as students see Troy as "just the town that RPI happens to be in," when Troy was once a hugely successful town. I never knew that at one point Troy was the fourth richest city per capita in the United States, or that as many as 135 passenger trains in 1915 passed through the station that used to be across the street from Blitman Commons.

I really think that every student should find an opportunity to see this amazing model and learn about Troy's prosperous past. Nehrich works in the Mueller Center and is available for Whistle Stop Tours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I highly recommend his brief tour.

SHOW REVIEW

RPI drum group sets stage on fire

Maria Kozdroy
Staff Reviewer

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I RECEIVED A Facebook invitation to the "Things You Miss" event. I opened up the event page, and saw the amazing panoramic of the RPIgnite group center ice at a hockey game. I missed that performance in February, but I knew for sure I was not going to miss it this time. I've only been to demonstrations from this amazing drumline group and wanted more.

A group of friends and I went off to the RPI Playhouse this past Saturday afternoon, April 25, to check out the performance and watch our friends up on stage. President of RPIgnite Trent DeVerter '16 introduced the crowd of students, family members, and all others excited for this concert. First on stage was the Avant Garde Alumni Drumline, a group that was formed several years ago based in Saratoga County, N.Y. Each player dressed with a black shirt and jeans, ready to play. The music that came out of this group was quick and on beat. The center drummer on the "four bongo drum" stared with a flat face into the audience while continuously beating. The group played several one to two minute songs; I cannot recall the beat of each song, but each one was very upbeat.

It was now time for the group with white T-shirts with the unique

black and red semicircular design to perform. DeVerter sat center stage while reading *The Polytechnic* while a beat evolved around him. Despite the entire show missing the dialogue due to technical difficulties, the music that came out of the 16 drummers was phenomenal. They played on their signature trash bins, as well as paint cans, ladders, and chairs. Most times, either one or two of the members would begin, while more people walked onto stage with an object and joined in, maintaining a constant beat.

Each beat was played in a different scenario, one of which I really enjoyed was when Jason Woods '17 played on a bunch of five gallon buckets and bins that were put together as a drum set. There was much creativity put into each scene. One member of the group was opening and closing a newspaper which provided a unique background beat. The entire show lasted around an hour and a half, and ended ironically with DeVerter opening *The Poly* for the viewers to see, as there was duct tape spelling out "The End."

This was my first official time going to an RPIgnite performance, and I'm very excited to go to the next one! There is a lot of talent and creativity in RPI students, and this was surely demonstrated in Saturday's show.

GAME REVIEW

Colossal Order's brand-new game does not disappoint

Jack Wellhofer
Senior Reviewer

ABOUT A MONTH AGO, I WAS PROCRASTINATING WHILE ON the Internet when I stumbled across a video review of *Cities: Skylines*. After just a few minutes of watching the reviewer build roads, place services, and watch a city spring up, I was sold. But like any college student, I'm not made of money, and most games run \$60 a pop. But for only \$30, the PC game *Cities: Skylines* feels like a steal.

When you start a new game, you are given a two by two kilometer plot of land and a highway connection. From there, you must build roads, zone

districts, and wait for people to move in. You have to build police stations, medical clinics, firehouses, and parks for your citizens, called Cims, to be happy. It's also important to make sure that you have enough power for your city and that your water intake isn't downstream of the sewer. I did that once and my Cims were not happy. They let me know through Chirper, a program similar to Twitter. Cims go on Chirper to let you know what's going well in the city and what could use some work. When I forgot to add a water line to a new neighborhood, a Cim complained with the Chirp "When is the @mayor going to provide water? It's getting expensive showering with bottled water!"

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Courtesy of Colossal Order
COLOSSAL ORDER'S NEW GAME OFFERS gamers an interactive experience for city building. Gamers can manage the traffic density, pollution, budget, and much more.