

1. What are the top three things that make a single player game stand out to you?

A game's player controls, encounters, and pacing stand out to me within minutes of play. Mechanics are what distinguish games to me, and these three things are a huge part of that.

2. What single player games have exceptional player or AI systems and what makes them so great?

From the games I've played, Dark Souls I and III embody what makes both player and AI systems exceptional. Good player systems need to provide their players with a variety of tools and good AI systems need to confront players with a variety of obstacles requiring various tools' use. Exceptional player and AI systems occur when the obstacles presented allow each tool's use to varying levels of efficacy, thus incentivizing players to vary their approach to find the tool that results in a desirable difficulty tailored to each player.

3. What is your favorite part of designing systems such as player abilities, enemy AI, health systems or crafting systems?

Player controls and the context of encounters are my favorite part of system design. Player controls are how players exist and act within a game, and if not done well will make the experience more frustrating than engaging. I particularly enjoy iterating player controls until they are intuitive and near perfectly polished not just for my playing, but for as many other players as possible. However, controls need the context of encounters to truly shine. Encounters, made possible by level design and enemy AI, function as the guiding hand that push the player to learn and engage with player controls. Tightly refining and iterating between these two aspects is my life's work, and I could happily create endless content this way.

4. What do you love about games?

I love that games allow for a level of immersion and expression that no other media can compare. Video games are the most complex artistic medium known to man, comprising of visual, aural, narrative, spatial, and mechanical elements. While several mediums possess the first four elements, games and their unique element of mechanics allow players to exist within a world rather than simply witness it. Games grant players agency and affect, which enables and at times requires growth for players to advance. I believe a beautiful thing occurs when players manage to rise to the occasions that games present and improve as a person. Furthermore, games allow their audience to empathize in ways other mediums cannot. They can present different perspectives to not only see and feel, but also to experience in some way. Single-player or multiplayer, they create a space to be and play; exploring oneself as an individual or within the context of relationships with others. I love games as they have powerfully impacted my own life in all these ways as well as many others. Working on them provides me a flow or *Rausch*, a rapturous or transcendent feeling obtained from an engrossing activity. No matter where I am, who I am with, or what happens, I will always make and play video games; nothing will ever change that. It is vital to who I am and it gives me purpose and fulfillment unlike anything else.

5. List your 10 favorite games of all time, give reasons for your top 3.

1. Dark Souls III

So many different interconnecting systems form an action combat system that applies universally to every entity in this game. Each player, enemy, and NPC is governed by the same brilliantly balanced system; giving the player a single ruleset to learn and then apply to approach the world in any way they want. Not only that, but this universal system provides both engaging single player and multiplayer experiences. That's simply amazing systems design.

2. Super Smash Brothers Melee

Accessible enough to be any age's party game, and deep enough to be played competitively by the dedicated for decades, Melee is a masterpiece and mainstay in my life as long as I live. No matter what circumstance leads to in-game deaths, this game's mechanics always provided multiple opportunities for the player to have saved themselves. Players' actions determine the victor, not the limitations of the game's systems.

3. Shadow of the Colossus

Everything in this game is meticulously designed to be a work of art. Serene horseback rides in solitude and intense colossus battles create intricate and unique pacing for this action adventure trip -all with tight controls, breath taking visuals, a thought provoking story, and incredible sound.

4. Hyper Light Drifter

5. Super Metroid

6. Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

7. Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow

8. Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

9. Megaman X

10. Cave Story

Side Note: Games in the same franchise are included within entries. i.e. Dark Souls I included in Dark Souls III.

6. How important do you consider story? Discuss in detail the strengths and weaknesses of how narrative and/or exposition are handled in games you have played. Give a few examples.

Linear storytelling has been deeply engrained within our culture for millennia and as such is fundamentally important, and consequently utilized within games. Bioshock is a classic example of linear, explicit storytelling brilliantly executed. Deep characters in a vibrant world come to life as the player performs his role in the scripted events unfolding. However this linear, explicit storytelling can also detract greatly when misused. Video games are inherently an interactive media, and when storytelling unnecessarily interrupts gameplay or interrupts gameplay too often, an experience can be made worse for it. Thor: God of Thunder exemplifies this.

It is also important to note, linear storytelling does inherently undermine the agency of the player that is unique to games. With linear storytelling and direct exposition, there is a written fleshed out character that moves forward through a pre-destined narrative. It runs counter to what makes games unique: interactivity. Games such as Dark Souls and Hyper Light Drifter accomplish a non-linear implicit storytelling that allows players to participate and take in information more freely at the risk of them missing plot points completely. This provides an experience more close to real-life and can provide storytelling that is unique to games.

7. Give an example of a game mechanic that is accessible but deep?

The mechanic of smash attacks from the Smash Bros. franchise are a masterpiece of accessible but deep game design. They operate by allowing players to charge their attack by simply holding A after the initial input, which provides both easily accessible mechanical depth and a tactile, visceral feel. Smash attack's ability to charge a move's knockback strength over time and to vary the timing of hitboxes coming out creates tension between opponents; leading to countless fascinating interactions at both low and high levels of play.

8. What do you think is the purpose of enemy AI in a 3rd person action adventure game?

Enemy AI's purpose is to give players motivation for using and exploring the mechanic set. Being the opposing agents that populate the world, they greatly shape players' experiences. For example, many of Dark Souls' more difficult enemies aren't intended to be fought, but rather escaped from at first; affecting fear in players. Later in the game, players may return to defeat these foes, giving players an intense sense of growth.