#8
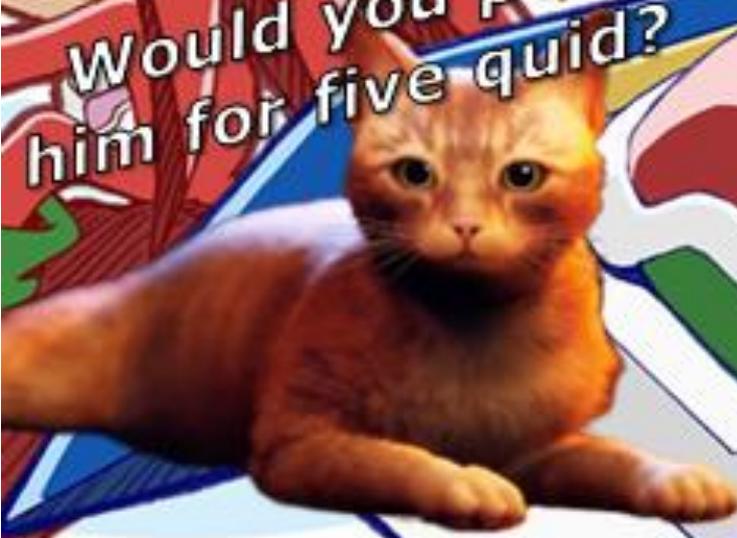
The Monthly Silly

Sonic Riders

I think this art is really cool

Would you pet him for five quid?

First ever guest segment! Featuring boober :)

Table of Contents

STARFOX 64

Star Fox 64 is an on-rails shooter released by Nintendo for the N64 in 1997, and a sequel to the earlier Star Fox for the SNES. Unlike that one, though, this one's actually quite good.

You play as Fox McCloud, leader of the Star Fox team of mercenaries, and are tasked with defending the Lylat System of planets from an attack by the army led by mad scientist Andross. In gameplay, this means flying through a series of various planets, gunning down enemies from inside your Arwing ship as you go, all while accompanied by your three teammates, Falco, Slippy and Peppy. The moment-to-moment gameplay is great; it controls well, the pace is consistently fast and fluid, and it's just a great time overall. It's an inherently enjoyable formula, but it's kept feeling fresh and unique by the consistent addition of new, interesting ideas; in one level you'll be flying through a dense asteroid belt, in the next you'll be in a tank on land, and so on. Every planet offers an entirely new experience, and aside from the slow, dimly-lit submarine section on Aquas, they're all excellent.

Another way the game keeps things fresh is with your teammates. Fairly often, one of your teammates will show up to help you out, and just like you, they can take damage. This means that, as much as they might help you, you also have to help them, and they'll have different things to say depending on how you do. They have a lot to say, actually; Star Fox 64's

plot is fairly simple, but the character writing helps keep it consistently engaging, with your main three teammates as well as the more minor characters who might only show up for a level or two all feeling like fleshed-out, well-rounded characters. The actual main story events might be very straightforward, but the Lylat System feels like a proper world inhabited by actual characters, not just like a set of areas meant to facilitate gameplay, which helps the game stick in your mind long after you've played it. Regardless, your teammates' appearances in missions still help each playthrough feel fresh; like yours, their health carries over between levels, and if they run out, they're left missing in action until they can get their ship repaired. There's even a section where, if Slippy gets taken out, you have to take a detour to go and rescue him, which leads nicely into one of this game's biggest strengths; its replay value.

Star Fox 64 is a very short game. It's the type that's intended to be beaten in one sitting, to the point where it doesn't even feature an option to save your progress at any point, but if you think this means you won't get a lot out of it, you're mistaken. The majority of levels feature some kind of extra condition that, if fulfilled, opens up an alternate pathway to a different planet compared to where you would have ended up if you'd played through the level normally. Some of these conditions can be a bit obtuse, like how Corneria's requires you to fly under all the archways near the end for Falco to compliment you and lead you down a different path, but most are fairly easy to figure out, and if you look for them you'll most likely find them.

I love this system. Even if you finish the game on your first playthrough, you'll not have come even close to seeing all that it has to offer, and the conditions for the alternate pathways strike a perfect balance between being well-hidden enough to be satisfying to discover but not so obscure that you need a guide to get anywhere interesting in the game. This is also where the game's strong world and character writing comes into play; alternate pathways

don't just feel like reskins of the levels from the easiest path, they're full-on new planets with new secrets to discover, and often, entirely new characters who only show up in one single, optional area. Despite the arcade-y setup, repeat playthroughs don't just feel like you're redoing the same game to get a higher score, but rather like you're discovering a new layer of the game's world. This, I think, is Star Fox 64's core appeal, and one it pulls off excellently, in

a way I haven't quite seen from any other game.

Overall, Star Fox 64 is a great time. The core gameplay loop is excellent, having a great sense of discovery to it, and although the story is fairly simple, the consistently engaging cast of characters more than makes up for it. It also helps that Falco is at his flirtiest with Fox here, for some reason. Not sure why, but I'm not complaining. I haven't talked about the presentation much in this review, but despite the fact the graphics haven't exactly aged the best (this game looks better in motion than in the screenshots, trust me), I still think the game's art direction is able to shine through in a way that means it's still far from an ugly game, even if the soundtrack is nothing to write home about. Regardless, though, I still like this game quite a lot, and would easily recommend it to anyone who thinks it sounds interesting.

Final Score

Gameplay - 9	
Story - 7	**7**
Look/Sound - 6	

Stray is a game about being a silly little cat in a post-apocalyptic world infested with swarms of flesh eating bug things called Zurks, released for the PS4/PS5 and PC in 2022, and on other systems later on. The main thing that stands out about Stray is the sheer level of detail it has going for it. For having only been made by around 20 or so people, it's an impressively detailed game, the world it takes place in being rich with lore and backstory the player can gradually uncover over the course of the game. Every location has so much time and care put into its visual design in order to convey each area's story with minimal words, and there are lots of fun little interactions you can have with the world's robotic inhabitants that make them ironically feel more human than most human NPCs in other games.

Worldbuilding aside, though, the main thing most people will know this game for is its trademark Cat Gameplay. Stray takes a similarly detailed approach to its depiction of the cat you play as, with lots of small little events throughout that remind you that, despite everything, at the end of the day your character is still a cat who doesn't quite understand the significance of the events it's experiencing. When your drone companion B-12 fixes itself to your back like a harness, the cat flops onto the ground, refusing to get up for a while with this strange new thing on its back. When it interacts with a paper bag, it accidentally gets its head stuck in the thing, and your controls are briefly reversed as it runs about in a panic trying to get out.

The game has lots of little things like this, which might not necessarily enhance the gameplay, or matter much from a storytelling perspective, but they help add to the game's charm and personality immensely, making it a much more memorable experience overall. Stray is full of things like this; tiny little details in its world and characters which might not matter much individually, but come together to make the game so much better than it would have been otherwise. It's a game that's first and foremost about the world it takes place in, so having things like this to make it all the more believable is important.

However, you might have noticed I haven't once talked about the actual core gameplay. And that's because... well, it's kind of mediocre. It doesn't seem like Stray quite knows what kind of game it wants to be, attempting quite a few things but lacking depth in any of them. There's a lot of platforming, as you'd expect from a game where you play as a cat, but it's all very restricted – you just press Jump near a ledge, and the cat automatically jumps over to whichever nearby platform the game has decided that ledge should lead to. In fact, if you're running, jumping is handled automatically, so you don't even need to press the button.

This is... strange, but it's not the end of the world or anything. Occasionally, you'll need to interact with NPCs in order to progress, going back and forth within a specific area and fulfilling their requests in exchange for different items you can use and combine with each other to progress further in ways

that almost feel reminiscent of a point-and-click adventure game. These segments are, in my opinion, where the game is at its best; the rudimentary platforming mechanics suit the game well here, since being able to quickly and easily backtrack is important, and forcing the player to pay more active attention to their environment to progress compliments its worldbuilding

and attention to detail perfectly.

Unfortunately, I don't think the developers liked this sort of thing as much as I did. The first area to do it, the early-game Slums, is fairly basic with its use of these ideas, but that's fine for an area that comes so early on. Or, at least, it would be if this wasn't one of only two

times in the entire game where it plays like this. The only other area in the game to do this, the much later Midtown, doesn't really expand on these ideas in any meaningful way, and if anything actually felt like it had less going on than the previous Slums, with a smaller map and less moving parts and NPC requests to consider.

Overall, Stray is a great game, but you need to be the type who can accept its gameplay flaws to get the most out of it. The story, worldbuilding and aesthetic design are all excellent, and if

you also like watching silly cats do silly cat things you'll probably love this one, but the actual core gameplay leaves much to be desired, feeling at times like a mishmash of half-baked ideas, from platforming that barely counts as platforming to a few puzzles so comically easy I forgot this game even had them until I started writing this conclusion. As much as I love this game, I wish it did more with itself.

Final Score

Gameplay - 4

Story - 10

Look/Sound - 10

7

SONIC RIDERS™

Sonic Riders is a racing game released by Sega in 2006 for PS2, GameCube and Xbox, where you play as Sonic characters on hoverboards. "Waah, why does Sonic need a hoverboard, isn't he supposed to be the fastest-" shut up, everyone who complains about this lacks an appreciation for fun and is destined to live a thoroughly unremarkable life.

Anyway, since Riders uses hoverboards, it plays quite differently to what you might expect from a "Sonic racing game". Your board has a limited amount of air which depletes over time, and if it runs out, you have to run along on foot, which slows you down drastically. Air can be recovered by stopping at pit stops, or performing tricks – if you jump off a ramp, you can do a series of tricks with the control stick, and if you hold the jump button before you reach the edge, you'll go higher into the air, giving you more time to do more tricks and therefore regain more air. Drifting is also a bit weird, costing a lot of air but being essential for tight turns and giving you a big boost in speed if you hold it for long enough. You can also get a speed boost at any time in exchange for spending some air. Additionally, the game also features three character classes, Speed, Flying and Power; Speed characters can grind on rails to gain speed, Flying can fly through the air through special floating rings, and Power can punch through obstacles to access secret paths. All class-specific actions also recover Air, encouraging you to play into your specific class' strengths.

Seem like a lot? Well, it is, and this was a complaint a lot of people had with this game when it released. It's a game that expects you to grasp its mechanics from the moment you start playing, and to be honest, it does a horrible job at explaining itself. The "tutorial" is really just a long video that tries to explain everything in one go without letting you do any of it yourself, and it's hidden beneath so many layers of menus I didn't even know it existed when I first played this game, and I doubt many other people noticed it either.

It might be hard for new players to grasp, but I'll be honest... I really don't care. Once you've gotten used to the differences in character classes and gotten good at managing air effectively, the game is great fun and endlessly replayable, and the core mechanics are so much fun to play around with that the suggestion of sacrificing any level of complexity to appeal more to new players feels downright absurd. Fundamentally, I think too many people went into this game with the wrong expectations; they expected a simple, Mario Kart-esque racing game that anyone could easily pick up and play, when that's really not what this game is trying to be. If anything, I'd say it's more comparable to something like WipEout or F-Zero, with less of a focus on casual fun and more of an emphasis on a blindingly fast pace, and being difficult but endlessly rewarding once you master its mechanics. It's not for everyone, but I don't think it's reasonable to criticize it for not being something it's not trying to be.

Gameplay aside, the story is... eh, it's nothing special, but it's got its moments. The game introduces the Babylon Rogues, three new characters who I'm actually quite fond of (ok, I don't like Wave, but Jet and Storm are cool), and although this clearly isn't a game with any real emphasis on its story, I still enjoyed the cutscenes where we got to see them interact with the main cast. They're a fun addition that helps to add to the game's appeal, and they played a big part in my enjoyment of the otherwise fairly standard and unremarkable story mode.

If you're the type of person it's made for, then Sonic Riders is a great game. It's fast, frantic and demands a level of skill in utilizing its mechanics that makes it all the more rewarding when you're able to use them to speed through the track at a breakneck pace. Adding to that is the game's strong sense of style, which permeates through the entire thing and makes it all the more enjoyable of an experience. I didn't talk much about this aspect of the game in the rest of the review, since it's fairly self-evident by looking at the images and background I've included and I don't have much more to say about it other than "it's really cool and I like it a lot", but Riders' whole aesthetic is incredible, and added significantly to my enjoyment of the game. The story might be nothing special, and it might not be the sort of game anyone can easily pick up and play, but these aren't goals it's trying to achieve; if you're able to appreciate the game for what it is, then you'll no doubt have a great time with it.


Final Score

Gameplay - 10

Story - 5

Look/Sound - 8

8

Metroid Fusion is a 2002 action platformer developed by Nintendo for the Gameboy Advance. Taking place after the events of the previous Super Metroid, the game sees Samus tasked with eradicating the new, dangerous X Parasite from the BSL research ship, all while being guided along the way by the AI known as Adam and stalked by the fearsome SA-X, a perfect copy of Samus at her strongest created by the X to kill her.

Already, this premise might raise some eyebrows. If you're being guided by an AI, then shouldn't that ruin the sense of exploration and isolation Metroid is known for? Well, as it turns out, Fusion is a much more linear game than its predecessors, the reason I avoided calling it a Metroidvania earlier being that it doesn't really play like one. Despite this, though, I actually think the linearity works in its favour, here's why.
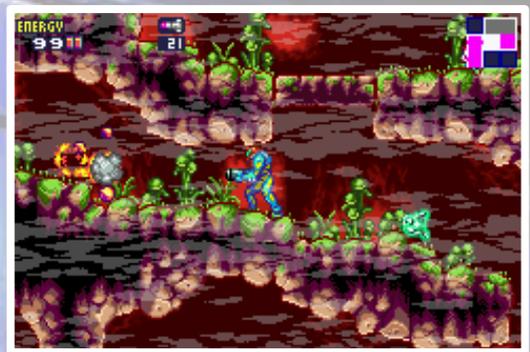
The threat you're up against in Fusion is fundamentally different to before. In Super, Samus just sort of happens to end up on Zebes while she's chasing Ridley, and the danger comes from the unknowns presented by this strange, uninhabited planet. By contrast, Fusion has the player on a ship that's been taken over by a sentient, intelligent force that will do everything in its power to kill you, its strongest weapon being the SA-X. At multiple points in the game, you receive updates on the SA-X's location and reports on its efforts to hunt you down, the game also featuring various sequences where you need to either hide or run away from it.

The linearity in Fusion is here first and foremost to benefit the game's storytelling; the experience of being constantly stalked and hunted by an intelligent enemy much stronger than you, all while trying to find any necessary upgrades to hopefully become strong enough to defeat it, wouldn't work nearly as well if the game didn't exercise greater control over where you can and can't go. The more restricted structure is also used to great effect near the end, but I won't elaborate so as not to spoil anything.

So, despite my criticism last issue of Metroid Dread's similarly un-Metroid-like linearity, I don't take nearly as much of an issue with it in Fusion. Aside from the fact that Fusion does it for better storytelling and Dread does it because it's scared of confusing new players, Fusion is very upfront about its linear nature; you know what you're getting from the start with Fusion, it doesn't try to trick you into thinking it's something it's not like Dread does.
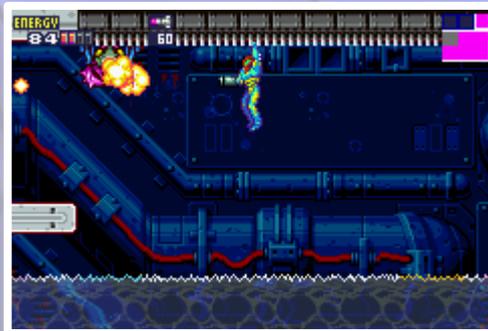

As is to be expected from a Metroid game by this point, Fusion also has an excellent sense of atmosphere to it. The whole game just feels so dark and foreboding in a way that perfectly matches the story and setting, and the graphics, soundtrack and art design come together amazingly to further enhance the experience. Everything about the game's presentation really sells the idea that you're alone in a place that wants you dead, and it only serves to further add to the experience.

Metroid Fusion is a small game, only a few hours long, but it's one I'm very fond of. Unlike Super Metroid, where everything was designed around the idea of being alone on a harsh, unknown alien planet, in Fusion you've constantly got the SA-X coming after you, and the design changes to reflect that. The game structure is now more linear, to help emphasize the effects of the SA-X's various attempts to sabotage the ship and guide the player away from (or perhaps towards) encountering it, and while I can understand not liking Fusion as a result of its more linear approach, I personally think it was well worth the change. Overall, Fusion might not be what everyone wants from a Metroid game, but I think that, appreciating it for what it is, it accomplishes what it sets out to do excellently well.

Final Score

Gameplay - 8	
Story - 10	8
Look/Sound - 8	
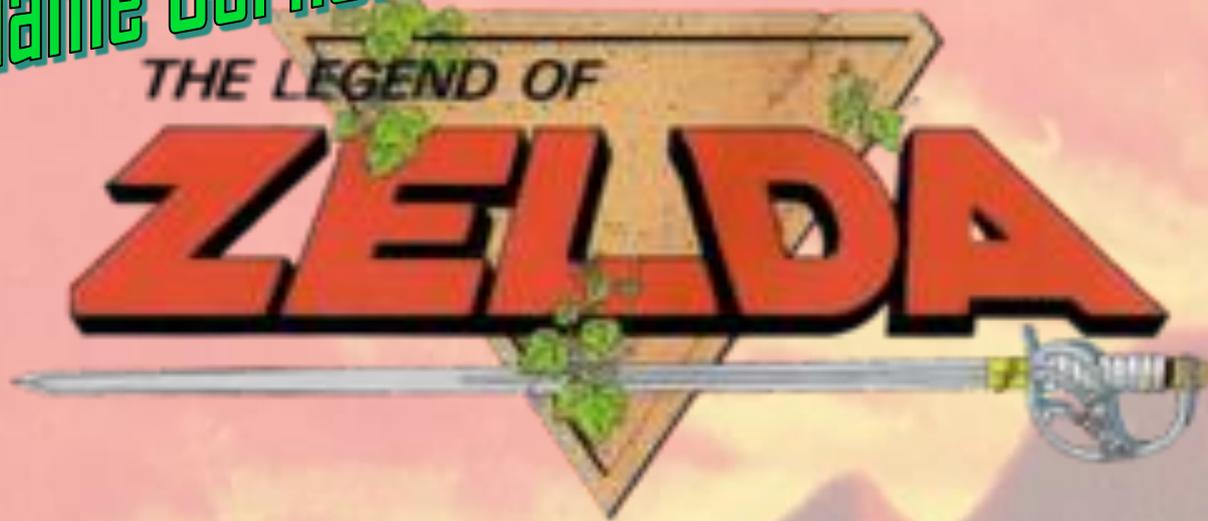
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

The Legend of Zelda, released for the NES in 1986 and referred to from here on as "Zelda 1", was so close to pure greatness it kind of hurts.

In Zelda 1, the player starts by being dropped into the area seen on the right, and... that's it. There's a brief text scroll that explains the story, but aside from that, you're left to go wherever you please. One of the first proper open-world games, Zelda 1 drops you headfirst into a large, sprawling, often confusing world, and I honestly love it for that. It's a game that's full of bizarre, cryptic puzzles, and hints delivered by strange old people living in caves, and it lends the game a sense of discovery that modern games can't match.

The game's refusal to give you a proper map is an aspect people tend to criticize, but personally, I love it. The only way to get anywhere with this game is to take out a sheet of paper, draw out a map yourself as you explore, and write down the often slightly bizarre hints delivered by the previously mentioned strange old cave people on the other side, along with things like shop locations and item prices. It's a game that really expects you to do everything yourself, and while this might not appeal to everyone, I found myself enjoying the early game so much more as a result.

Yes, there are hidden areas that can only be accessed by bombing random walls where you have no way of possibly knowing which walls to bomb, but even still, I have to disagree with the notion that you "need to use a guide" to play this game. If you do that, the game loses its sense of discovery and exploration, by far its biggest strength, and you're left with a much more straightforward and, honestly, more boring experience. I think if someone told me they used a map they found online for this game instead of drawing one out themselves, complete with full listings of all dungeon, shop and hidden item locations, I'd think a bit less of them as a person.

So far, you might be thinking, "this is sounding awfully positive for a Shame Corner article, where's the seething hatred I signed up for?", or something along those lines. Don't worry, that bit's up next. So, all this exploration's great fun, but what's the point of it all? Well, scattered across the map are nine dungeons, which you need to venture through and clear all of in order to beat the game. These are, quite frankly, shit. The first four are quite fun, but from the fifth onwards, the game falls back into the typical NES game habit of throwing fifty billion enemies at you with no rhyme or reason whatsoever, seemingly just for the fun of it. Additionally, by the time you've cleared the first four dungeons, most of the world has largely already been explored, leaving you with nothing more fun to distract you from the horrific later dungeon designs.

And, if that wasn't enough, even the process of dying and respawning is a pain. You start the game with three "hearts" for your life bar, and can get more by either clearing dungeons or finding secrets. This works fine early on, but there's a problem – whenever you die or load a save, you begin with three remaining hearts, regardless of your current maximum. This means that when you die in a dungeon, not only do you have to do the whole thing again, you also have to leave, go over to the nearest fairy fountain to restore your health, and then come back and try it again. I genuinely have no idea why you don't respawn with full health, it does nothing but add extra tedium to an already annoying experience.

The soundtrack is also horrific. Yes, the overworld theme is iconic, blah blah blah, but every dungeon uses the same music, which wouldn't be a problem if the dungeon theme in question wasn't utterly insufferable to listen to. In a way, it's a fitting theme, being just as much of a dreary slog to listen to as the later dungeons are to play, but it gets extremely repetitive extremely quickly, and it only serves to make the experience of dying over and over to some truly absurd enemy placements even worse than it already was. Visually, though, the game's actually quite nice to look at; obviously the graphics are fairly simple, it being an NES game, but the enemy designs in particular are great, and although it's not technically a part of the game, I'm especially fond of the promotional artwork and the concept art used for the game's manual. Overall, though, a charming visual aesthetic isn't enough to save Zelda 1. It's the type of bad game that just makes you feel sad; the early game, when there's still lots of the world you haven't explored and the dungeons aren't absurdly difficult, is actually very fun, having a type of appeal modern games simply refuse to replicate, but the later dungeon designs just end up ruining it as it goes on.

Final Score

Gameplay - 3	
Story - none	3
Look/Sound - 4	

Stellar BLADE™

Hey, you know what fucking sucks? The internet. Now, if you have been on the web for the last year or so, you've probably seen discussions of this wacky little Korean game called "Stellar Blade", though probably not by choice. The game received positive reception from critics, but gathered a bizarre fanbase as well as a hate-dom both of which praise and criticize the game for all the wrong reasons. And I did what many of them didn't and played the game!

So, Stellar Blade is a 2024 action hack and slash RPG, one whose general premise is heavily inspired by another game – a 2017 modern cult classic NieR Automata. Both titles are character-based action games that heavily rely on you timing your dodges and attacks (and parrying in SB's case) with a female main lead exploring a post-apocalyptic landscape that is Earth. The devs wear their inspiration on their sleeves, even collabing with NieR itself.

I tell you about this to show why I was keeping this game on my radar in the first place, since NieR Automata is one of my top 10 games of all time, so I had something to compare it to, especially considering how strongly NieR's creator Yoko Taro felt about SB's quality. Well, did it live up to the hype? Well, it's complicated.

The game stars Eve – a pretty android lady who is a part of mass-produced fighter androids that come from space to fight monsters called Naytibas back on Earth. Her entire squad was wiped, but in the last moment she gets saved by Adam (get it?) – a mysterious young man who seems to know more than he lets on. Later they're also joined by Lily – a goofy engineer with a bubbly personality who assists Eve with making some wacky gadgets for her. The story features plenty of twists and turns during the course of its runtime, but it's all hindered by characters that don't show much in terms of personality. Lily is the only member of the main trio that isn't comically stoic 24/7 and thus was probably my second favourite other than Eve herself. The script as a whole felt very unintentionally robotic, perhaps being machine translated, but I digress. It feels like the story was written by someone who played NieR and wanted to pull the same kind of rug pulls and gut punches that game had, but forgot that what made NieR's story so good was that it had likeable, memorable characters to root for as well as its themes imbedded into almost every part of the game's narrative, while not sacrificing the more silly aspects and scenes, to make it so that when the brain fuckery comes – it hits and it hits HARD.

That being said, Stellar Blade's actual gameplay is pretty solid. Its combat is methodical without feeling too slow or that you're completely powerless against your enemies and as the game progresses you get many upgrades and new abilities to toy around with to suit your playstyle. It's nothing revolutionary, but rather a culmination of tropes and mechanics found in many action games that result in a very satisfying experience.

The world you explore has 2 kinds of areas: the more linear (but MASSIVE) hallways of death and destruction with plenty of branching paths hiding secrets and goodies to collect, as well as open world-esque biomes that serve as areas to complete quests, fight mini-bosses and collect a truck load of soda cans – the main trophy bait collectible of the game. Speaking of collectibles, the game also has plenty of cosmetics for you to collect for Eve as well as your party members, including costumes and accessories. That's kinda where most of the gooner
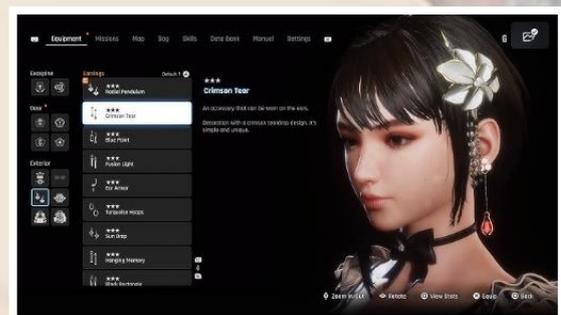
bait allegations for the game come from, since the outfits you can unlock for Eve can get absurdly revealing. I felt the need to mention that since it seems to be the one thing everyone knows this game for at this point, but there are some genuinely cool looking fits for you to find that managed to unlock my inner Barbie fan which I didn't even know existed.

Another thing I must praise the game for are its aesthetics. I'm not the one to hype up the amount of polygons I see on screen, but Stellar Blade is a beautiful looking game that feels like it actually utilizes the hardware of the PS5, from the detailed mechanical designs of many of the characters and enemies to all the particles that get spewed everywhere on screen during each combat encounter. The environments themselves range from overgrown ruined cities and other common urban areas conveniently lit up by big neon signs to massive sci-fi laboratories and even spaceships decorated by the same neon lights and even Asian-inspired décor.

The soundtrack is also full of bangers, not going to deep into it since music is really subjective, but I'm amazed by the range of Stellar Blade's OST, since it has everything from somber piano motifs with subtle use of synths to bombastic metal tracks for some of the bosses, it helps every major moment in the game stand out in my memory.

To sum it up: Stellar Blade is ultimately a good and an extremely misunderstood game, but one that feels derivative of what came before it. It's very consistent across its entire run (in a good way), to the point where I wish there was more for me to latch on to. It's an enjoyable experience, but not the one you should drop everything you're doing to go play. I recommend it, but maybe at a discount or if you can locate an affordable physical copy and you're probably in for a good time. Digi signing out.

Final Score

Gameplay - 8

Story - 5

Look/Sound - 9

8

Strategy Guide

Chaos Legion ranking, from worst to best

For this Strategy Guide, I'll be ranking the various Legions available to the player in Chaos Legion from least to most useful. There's a lot to get through here, so let's get straight into it!

The Shield Legion, Arrogance, is undeniably the worst one. Its assist is a "parry" that only works after you've already taken damage (extra useless as you can use assists from hitstun anyway), and it's not like it's any good summoned either. It's primarily defensive, only able to deal damage once it's absorbed enough attacks, but when Legions like Guilt, Hatred and Blasphemy can use wide area coverage to defend you and deal consistent damage at the same time, this isn't worth much, especially when it's so small and easy for enemies to slip through and attack you anyway. It might be better levelled up, but using it at the start is so painful I really don't care to find out.

Next is Hatred, the Power Legion. Hatred is a slow, bulky Legion with a focus on close combat, which is why it's so odd that it can barely deal any damage. Its attacks are slow, and are all capable of knocking enemies down, which can be useful, but its damage is shockingly low. By the time you unlock it, you'll likely have already levelled up a few other Legions' attack power, meaning you'll really need to grind for this one to be worth using at the point you're at. Using it does allow Sieg to use the Breakdown Enchant while it's not summoned, a strong charging attack that can effortlessly topple hordes of enemies, but to be honest, your best bet with this one is to level it up enough that Breakdown becomes unlocked even while you're not using it, and then never touch it again.

And now, we get to the Legions you might actually want to use, starting with Flawed, the Claw Legion – although, this one's still not very good. It's excellent at delivering rapid, targeted attacks to mechanical enemies, and its jumping attack pattern allows it to easily evade enemy attacks, but against organic enemies, it's completely useless. Its assist sets a trap on the ground, and once an enemy steps on it, the Legion bursts out to deliver a flurry of attacks, which is moderately useful and admittedly excellent for dealing with stationary turrets, but only okayish against anything else. That's a good way to describe this Legion, really; not bad, not good either, just okayish.

Next is Guilt, the Sword Legion. The first Legion you get, this one is easy to use and generally very solid; while summoned, it has great damage and area coverage, great for dealing with large crowds, although it being attacked is a serious risk if you haven't levelled up its defence enough. Its assist is also excellent, allowing Sieg to dash through enemies and have the Guilts cut them for big damage, perfect for moving around the map and dodging out of tight situations. It's not an absurdly strong Legion, but it's a solid choice, and definitely worth using.

Next up are the two real powerhouse Legions, excluding Thanatos, who I excluded to save page space; Malice, the Arrow Legion, will probably be in your party for most of the game once you unlock it. It can't damage organic enemies, but its ability to deal with mechanical ones is vastly superior to any other Legion, even Flawed. When summoned, you can have it fire rapid shots at whichever enemy you're locked onto, which can tear through their health in seconds, and if you hold triangle, you can enter Sniper Mode, allowing you to target distant enemies with more precision at the cost of being left open to attack yourself, perfect for hitting the weakspots of enemy spawners. This Legion's one weakness is that its assist isn't all that useful, but with so many benefits while summoned, it doesn't need an assist to be strong.

Lastly, the strongest Legion in the game, and my personal favourite, Blasphemy, the Bomb Legion. Blasphemy is a funny one; when it starts out, it's only average, but once you level it up and become able to summon more of it, its true strength shows. When summoned, Blasphemy will float up to enemies and self destruct, causing an explosion that deals great damage and knocks down anyone it touches. You can also have it hide underground for a bit before this happens if you want, giving it evasive potential second only to Flawed. When you're able to summon multiple Blasphemies for increased area coverage, this becomes extremely powerful, allowing you to just blow up everything within staring distance of yourself and barely giving enemies a chance to move. Its assist is also absurdly powerful, allowing Sieg to kick it like a football, causing a massive explosion on contact and knocking targets into the air. This attack can also be cancelled into itself, allowing you to trap enemies in what I like to call the Football Death Vortex – and if you catch enough enemies in it, the Soul gained from each attack will outweigh the Soul spent on using it. If that wasn't enough, you can also angle the shot, making it great for hitting far-away targets. Blasphemy is far more demanding of resources than any other Legion, but if you use it right, it's easily the strongest.

What Do Those Funny Numbers Mean?

It's a short one this time! Since different people have different definitions of what a particular score out of 10 means (apparently some heathens think a 7/10 is "average"), I've decided to write a brief article defining how I use number ratings in my reviews. Take this one with a grain of salt when it comes to understanding ratings in Guest Edition segments, though.

10 – Absolute masterpiece. A game can be flawed and still be a 10, no game's perfect after all, but as a general rule of thumb, it needs to have a 10 in all three categories to qualify for an overall 10.

9 – Amazing game, absolutely love it, but it's got one or two small things holding it back, or perhaps just didn't have enough of an impact on me to feel deserving of a 10.

8 – Still excellent, but not a masterpiece. Often (but not always) used for a smaller game that I like, and which doesn't have any serious flaws, but doesn't do anything exceptional enough for a 9 or a 10. Still great in its own right, though.

7 – Solidly above average game. Great fun, easy recommendation.

6 – Slightly above average, not great or anything but it's good fun and I like it.

5 – Average. Kind of mediocre. Worth giving it a look if you like the sound of it, and I probably still enjoyed my time with it, but otherwise nothing special.

4 – Quite bad, I didn't really like it but it's got enough redeeming qualities that anything lower feels mean. Honestly, if you like the sound of it, might still be worth a look anyway.

3 – This one's shite, only worth playing out of morbid curiosity.

2 – Terrible game, inspires a genuine feeling of anger in me. Don't go near it.

1 – Should never have been made.

As a general rule of thumb, a 1-3 is a "don't play it", a 4 or 5 is "might maybe be worth a look if it seems like your thing", 6-8 is an easy recommendation if you like the sound of it, and 9s and 10s are games I'd encourage anyone to play, even if they don't seem like something they'd enjoy on the surface. Also, while I'm at it, I find it quite annoying when people act as if ratings out of 10 are useless and have no value. "Waah, games are too complex to boil down into a straightforward score out of 10", fuck me I'm tired of this kind of thing. You're right, a simple number doesn't convey everything about a game's quality, that's what the rest of the review's for, you blithering idiot. The number isn't the main point, it's just a nice little extra conclusion to summarize my thoughts and add an extra bit of detail, get over yourselves.