

You Won't Believe How This TV Website Solved Their Data Problem! (Spoiler: they used Bigpipe)

[Popular and competent television website The Spinoff](#) had a data problem! Who were they gonna call? No-one, because Bigpipe doesn't have a call centre! After they signed up like [you should totally do](#), we swooped in like an Internet-based Batman, swapping out their no-internets snafu for a sweet, sweet high-fibre diet. The Spinoff TV Editor Alex Casey reports...

We are a television website, which means that non-stop streaming, incessant screen-grabbing and re-watching our own hilarious Dominic Bowden vines makes up a huge part of our daily life. We're also still pretty new, and began with giant dreams far larger than our internet capacity would allow. With a fire in our belly to watch ALL the television, ALL the time, we were not disheartened by the fact that our new office didn't have a whiff of broadband to speak of. This was our Everest.

Being smack bang in the heart of Britomart, you might think we'd have a plethora of snappy public wi-fi to have to and to hold. But, much like the tooth fairy fiction-level "bus" wi-fi, you get past the login stage and are then left staring at a half-loaded picture of Paul Henry for the rest of the day. That's specific to me, by the way, Paul Henry isn't running some sort of sting operation on the internet – that I know of.



Allegations are running hot that Paul Henry is running some kind of Internet sting operation.

We tried hotspotting from The Spinoff editor Duncan Greive's phone. As an editor, you might think him data rich, swimming in piles of data. A regular Scrooge McData. But there were conditions – no streaming, not too many image uploads. Welcome to the Stone Age, nay, The Jurassic Age. I'm pretty sure cavemen would have been creating more dynamic #content than us under these extreme circumstances.

The internet was definitely present, but not making a huge effort to make itself known. More just slinking around from room to room and occasionally saying hello – a bit like me at a party. We didn't want the internet equivalent of terrible me at a party, we wanted the internet LIFE OF THE PARTY. The kind of internet that will pop download bottles all night long, and then have everyone over the next day to binge movies and TV shows until you all fall asleep.



#dynamic #content #qualitytv #blessed

Which is where we decided to invite [Bigpipe's fibre](#) to our atrociously-stocked party. And the internet became a *Jersey Shore*-level rager. I work most days from two laptops – one is for streaming television, the other is for uploading words, images, and video to our website. Sometimes, I'll chuck some telly on my phone just because I can. I don't even look at it, I just like to know it's there. People have always yelled at me to get more fibre into my daily diet – and now I see why. My television nutrition is healthier than ever.

– Alex Casey, TV Editor at *The Spinoff*

How To Make Your Own Videogame: Joe Chang talks about the Kiwi Game Starter

Ever wondered how you could create and publish your own videogame? Wonder no more. In 2014 the New Zealand Game Developers Conference launched the Kiwi Game Starter. The idea is simple: put New Zealand game developers in a Dragon's Den-like competition to pitch and produce a video game. It was a [huge success](#), with 18 teams entering, and this year's competition looks like it'll be even bigger. We love us some home-grown gaming, so Bigpipe has stepped up to sponsor [this year's event](#) with a \$5000 cash prize and two UFB Elite plans for the winners.

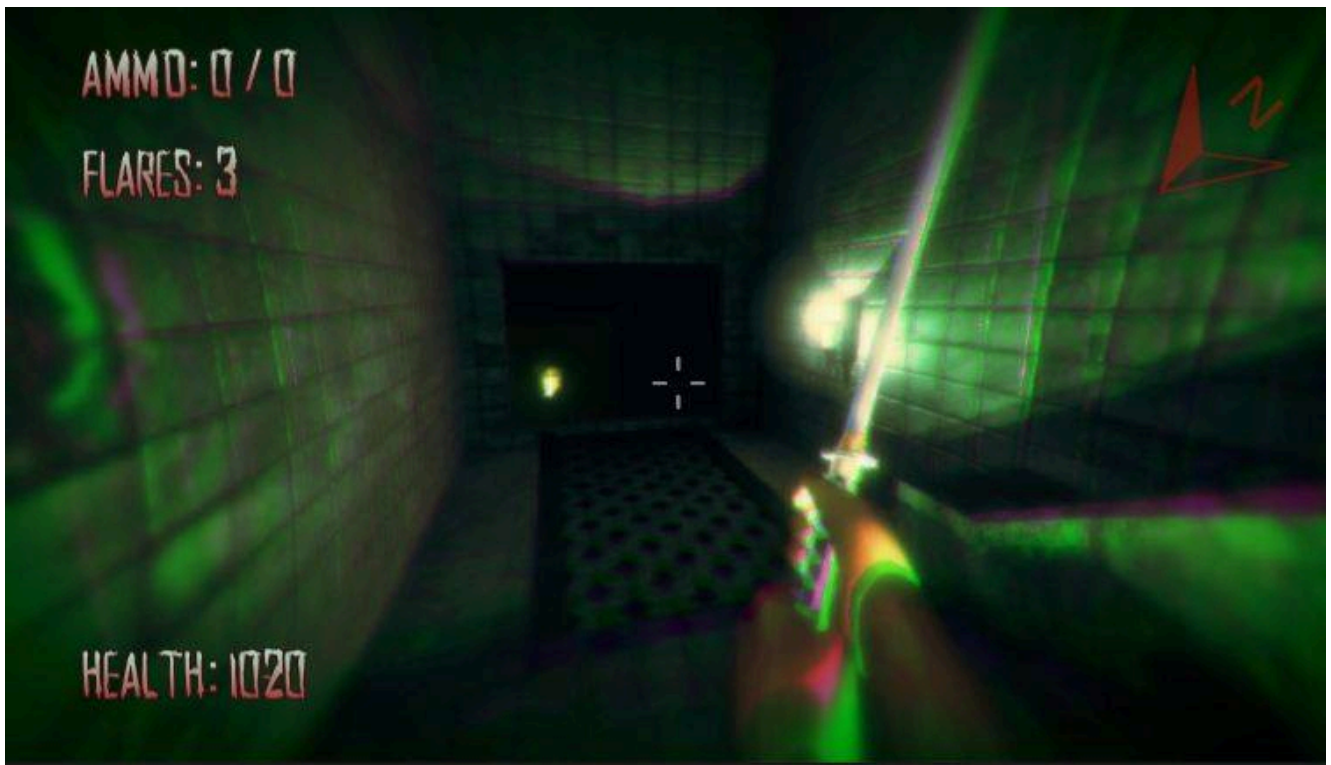
Last year's winner was procedurally-generated survival-horror game Phantasmal, which went on to enjoy a successful Kickstarter and has been tearing up Steam Early Access with a 9/10 user rating. Developer Joe Chang tells us how it went down.



Our team applied last year for the Kiwi Game Starter event with our survival horror roguelike game: Phantasmal. It was an incredible experience, and it was a lot how we'd imagine it'd be to pitch to a "real" publisher. This was particularly exciting for us, as to date we were more or less just hobby game developers.

This was an opportunity to compete on a national level as true indie developers. Although we had been making games for only a couple of years, our advantage was that we were veterans of the IT industry. Jeff, the lead developer, had worked for the

last decade plus as a corporate developer/architect and I had come from a software testing and test management background.



It was a daunting goal, but what we lacked in raw technical skill for game dev, I felt we made up for it with professionalism and pure determination. A significant portion of the contest was also business based – which I had some experience in.

The first part required a written submission of a business case for our game including a demo. We were shortlisted, and made it through for the “Dragon’s Den” presentation at NZGDC.

On the day we had an opportunity to demo our game to the judges and general public prior to the presentation. With much embarrassment, our demo struggled to run on Jeff’s old laptop, and I noticed that our other two competitor’s games, Swordy and Sector 42, were far more polished and technically superior.

I didn’t realize it right then, but David Brevik, the creator of Diablo, was also playing our game, and he was kind enough

to even help fix our clunky laptop when it crashed!

So I walked into the presentation with diminished confidence, but I was determined to still give it my best shot. Making games was still my life long dream after all!



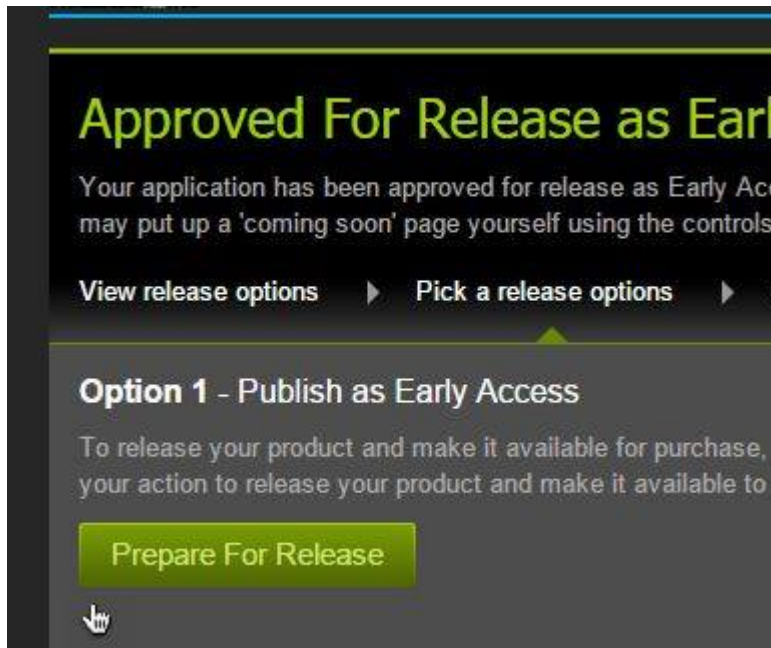
Fortunately, another skill that I had cultivated over the years was public speaking – I had been a member of Toastmasters for years, albeit on and off.

I made my presentation with as much passion and conviction as I could muster, and woohoo! We were successful!

I was absolutely over the moon – I never imagined I would get this far. I'd have to say that was one of the proudest experiences I'd ever had.

About the time that we won the competition, we were just about to wrap up our Kickstarter, which was also successful.

It wasn't instant, but not long after the Kickstarter, we were also Greenlit in Steam, which meant that we would be able to sell our game.



Overall, it was a great year. I can definitely say that the Kiwi Game Starter contributed to our success.

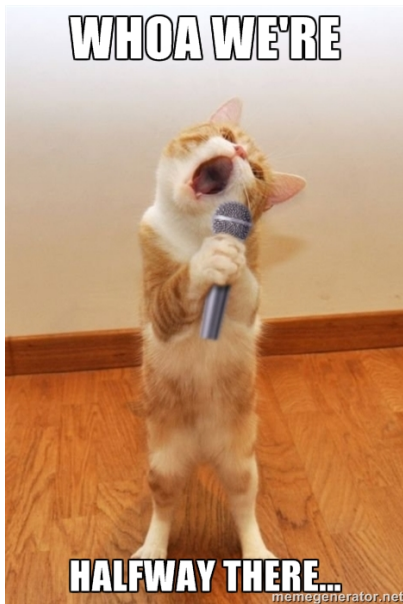
Since then, we have released our game on Steam Early Access, and we are still continuing to learn about indie game development every single day – it's an incredible journey!

[Check out Phantasmal for yourself at the Steam store](#), and make sure you check out our NZ Game Developer Conference coverage here at Blogpipe and on our [Twitter](#)!

Every Town A Gigatown: The Next Level of Ultra-Fast Broadband, Explained With Cat Memes

Good news, everyone! Would you like your town to be a Gigatown? It might just happen. The Government has announced

the scope for phase two of the ultra-fast fibre rollout, and there's some sweet tidbits in there. Read on...



Whooaaa, we're half-way there

The New Zealand ultrafast broadband project is coming along nicely, with the [latest figures](#) from June putting it at 54 percent complete. This means the goal of bringing fibre to 75 percent of Kiwis by 2019 is well on the way to being achieved. Excellent. But wait, there's more...

**UFB EXPANSION
PROJECT**



IS THIS BIG

UFB extension project

The government has announced they will spend up to \$210 million to extend the reach of ultra-fast broadband with the unsurprisingly-named “UFB extension project” (UFB2). The idea is a lot like the current project, with government looking at partnering with local power companies to form local fibre companies. Or they might contract this out to Chorus.



Gigatown for everyone!

Excitingly, UFB2 looks like it'll be a hell of a lot faster than the current standard – it features a range of new products including a *gigabit residential connection*. This means every small town that gets UFB2 will – potentially – be a gigatown! Hopefully this will give some incentive for Chorus and the local fibre companies to offer gigabit for people in UFB1 areas too.



What this means for you, person who can't currently get fibre but wants it:

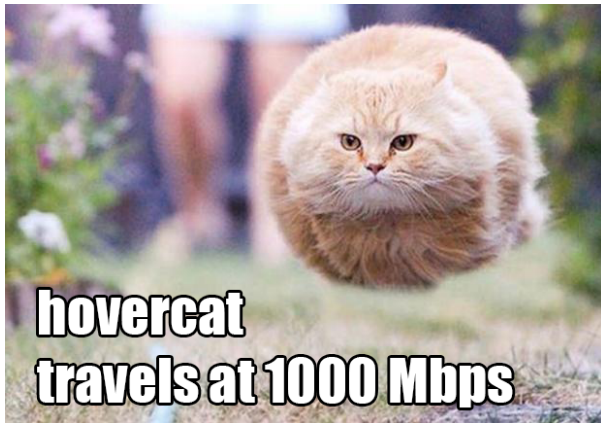
The government is looking at a list of more than 100 extra towns to get UFB2. They range from Wanaka (with an estimated population of 9251 in 2023) all the way down to Patea (population 893). However, the list isn't final. The aim of the project is to increase fibre coverage to at least 80% of the population, but there are [reports](#) that it might be possible to increase this to at least 90%. There are also plans to expand to fringe areas just outside the UFB1 area, so don't fret if you just missed out on fibre! We should know which towns will get UFB2 by the end of the year. The build should start next year, and the project should be completed in 2022. Good times.



Gotta go G.fast!

Interestingly, there is a provision for LFCs to use a technology called G.fast. While G.fast sounds like a new energy drink, it's actually technology where fibre is installed up to the kerb, then it uses the existing copper phone line to bring the connection inside the house. You just need to swap out a modem to get fibre-like speeds. This means there's no need to dig up the driveway and could save a bit of hassle with things like consents and install processes. However, G.fast is still an emerging technology, and overseas there are concerns about what speeds it can actually get. The

requirements do specify that any G.fast technology used must be able to reach 1Gbps and must be approved by the government.



The fibre future...

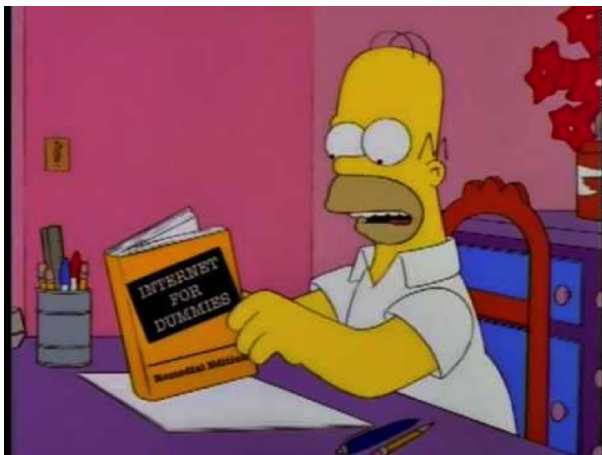
It's exciting to see where the New Zealand fibre project is going. Soon it shouldn't matter if a child lives in Auckland or in Twizel – they will be able to get the same digital opportunities. Bigpipe will be here every step of the way. We're currently offering UFB to Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin, and we will be expanding to even more areas in the future! (And if you want a nice zippy no-caps no-contracts ADSL connection while you wait for fibre, [you know where to find us.](#))

Other ISPs hate them! The FIVE CRAZY FACTS that Bigpipe competitors don't want you to know!

We heard you like clickbait, so we put some clickbait in your clickbait so you can get baited while you click.

1. Bigpipe is pretty much the opposite of the Hotel California.

With Bigpipe, you can check out any time you like. Unlike other ISPs, you can leave us any time you like too. We don't lock you in to long-term contracts. In fact, we don't lock you in to *any*-term contracts. You sign up, you pay your monthly bill and as long as you keep doing that, you're with us. But if you're not happy, or if you're going on your OE, or if randomly changing ISPs for no particular reason is your inexplicable hobby, you can leave. Any time you like, for any reason. We don't judge.



2. If you don't love us, we fail. (Literally.)

Other ISPs keep you in a relationship with them by locking you in, which is actually kind of an unsettling metaphor if you think about it. If you don't like their service, you pay them to leave. That's not good for customers, so we do the opposite. Since you can leave Bigpipe any time, we make sure that our customers are happy. We have to, even if we didn't

want to (we do want to.) This means providing the best internet (we were rated #1 in NZ webpage download speed by independent ISP monitor TrueNet right from when we launched) and great customer service. The only thing that keeps you with us is your love, and the only thing you'll pay to leave is nothing at all.



3. We don't provide phone access to Crowded House's greatest hits.

EVERYWHERE YOU GO – *your call is important to us. You are number 39 in the queue* – ALWAYS TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU. No-one likes calling customer support, so we made it so you don't have to. We've ditched the call centre, which means you get faster, better-quality service without being tied to a singing tech support line that – occasionally – features a clueless overseas outsourced operator. If your broadband goes down, email us from your mobile phone, and we'll get our entirely New Zealand-based support team – I can literally see them from my desk, hi guys – straight on to it. It's a much better use of your time than sitting on hold with tech support. And if the situation demands it, we'll be happy to give you a ring.



4. NO CAPS. Also, no crap.

Other ISPs bundle their broadband offerings with bloatware, like unnecessary phone lines, unwanted calling packages, and useless modems. Bigpipe does broadband. That's it. Just really, really good broadband. This means we can keep our prices low, and make our ADSL, VDSL and fibre offerings the fastest available. There are no data caps and we don't throttle you. You get to choose your own modem / router. You get to choose if we're good enough to stick with. You choo choo choose.



5. We don't use annoying clickbait headlines and numbered-list blog-posts.

Unless the irony is just too good to pass up.



Oh hi, I didn't see you there. (The reason I didn't see you is because you are at a computer, and I am at another computer in a completely different place, so it would be kind of weird if I could see you. Try not to think too hard about it, I'm not.) I'm Josh Drummond, the new marketing coordinator at Bigpipe. I wrote the preceding blog post as part of the job interview process. Either the rest of the Bigpipe People liked it, or they didn't read it, because I got the job. I felt like it'd be a shame not to make use of my parody of horrible clickbait articles making heavy use of The Simpsons memes, so now you get to read it too.

Batman Arkham Knight Review

By Gerard Campbell

@gamejunkieNZ

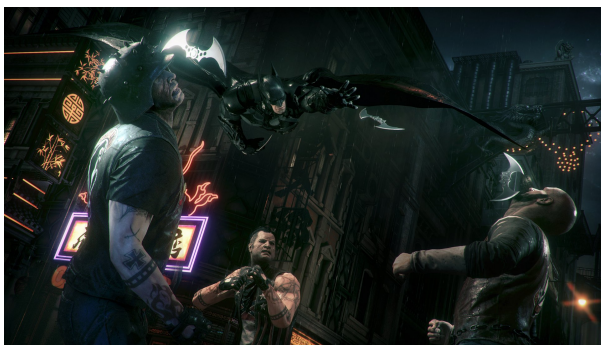
Of all the superheroes, Batman is my favourite.

I love his vulnerability because he has no superpowers, his frailty because he's human and his slightly psychotic bent: A trauma-riddled past combined with a dark, brooding persona.

In *Arkham Knight*, Rocksteady's final chapter in its *Arkham* series (Origins doesn't count as Rocksteady didn't make it), dark, brooding, slightly psychotic Batman is back patrolling

the mean streets of Gotham City, gliding, swooping, socking, kapowing and biffing Gotham's Most Wanted – including the game's titular bad guy the Arkham Knight – and I couldn't be more happy.

(As an aside, I bought the Arkham Knight Collector's Edition on PlayStation 4 which comes with a nice Batman statue that's sitting on my computer desk, some additional DLC, an art book, a comic and a steel case. It cost \$199: The most I've ever paid for a video game related item.



I've played all the Batman Arkham games to the end and for me while Arkham Knight might not reach the heights that Arkham City did, Arkham Knight is one of the best of the series, not only because this is a darker more unstable Batman than we've seen before but Rocksteady have refined the game play (the tag-team finishes are particularly well done), as well as adding a few new additions, most notably the Batmobile. More on that later.

This time around, Gotham is much, much larger, with plenty of tall buildings and towers to launch the Dark Knight into the air, and there's a tonne of stuff to do, ranging from taking out simple garden variety thugs robbing banks to taking on some familiar villains. If I have one piece of advice it's to take your time. Sure, it's tempting to focus on the main story mission primarily but explore and complete side missions.



One of my favourite side missions was having to hunt the nut job behind a series of bodies left discarded around the city, and the only way you knew there was another body near was when you hear opera music playing near where the body was. You then have to scan the body using one of Batman's wonderful gadgets to gather clues that can help track down the killer.

Side missions are also great for earning XP points, which can be used to upgrade Batman's combat moves, his suit, and the Batmobile (yes, you can drive the Batmobile) and its equipment, so you want to do them. Besides, it seems that if you want the ultimate ending you have to 100% the game, which means completing the frustrating Riddler missions as well. I haven't even attempted any of those yet.

The main story narrative is worth following, though, involving the Scarecrow and Dark Knight laying havoc on Gotham and without giving too much away, the return of a much loved villain adds a satisfying twist to the already dark nature of what's going on. I have to say, though, I was a little disappointed in the Arkham Knight: I was expecting a foe that was Batman's equal in terms of nous and physicality, but he seems to rely on military might and hired help to take on the Batman. Fans familiar with Batman lore and cannon should be able to work out pretty early on who the Arkham Knight is, too.

OK, let's talk about the Batmobile.



When I first heard that the Batmobile was going to be playable I was quietly excited. I mean, who wouldn't want to drive around in one of the most iconic superhero vehicles of all time? My first impression of driving the vehicle itself wasn't good: It handles poorly when driving at speed through Gotham's tight roads. I was smashing into buildings and things constantly. Things do get better once you get to grips with the powerslide ability, and it can transform into a tank bristling with armaments for when the going gets tough, but I felt at times the vehicle was relied on a too much by the developers, taking the focus off Batman, who should be the star of the show.

I'm loving the game but my biggest complaint about Arkham Knight is the number of times you have to use the Batmobile to battle the titular character's unmanned vehicles that patrol the streets of Gotham (they have to be unmanned, of course, or else Batman would be breaking his ethos of not killing anyone).

I could have dealt with taking on the unmanned drones/tanks a few times but the game throws up the vehicular encounters frequently during the course of the game. It felt as if these "destroy the drone tank" sequences were just there to pad the game out and while they can be made easier by using drone hacks and missile barrages at times I felt I was playing a tank simulator. I'm not alone in my feelings about the tank combat: I've spoken to several other people who are frustrated by how often the mechanic is used.

For me, Batman Arkham Knight is at its best when Batman

surprises a crowd of enemies, taking them on one at a time, and then delivering the knockout blows – not being confined to the Batmobile blowing up unmanned tanks. I don't regret buying the game.



Look, Arkham Knight is a fun, if slightly flawed, conclusion to Rocksteady's trilogy that lets gamers don the black cowl and cape and knock the snot out of thugs, but its showing signs that perhaps the franchise has done its dash. Rocksteady has made the right decision to not to make another game in the series but, of course, that doesn't mean Warner Brothers won't continue the series using another developer.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on your time with the game and what you thought of the Batmobile and tank combat. If you bought the broken PC version, is it playable for you?

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The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt game review

By Gerard Campbell

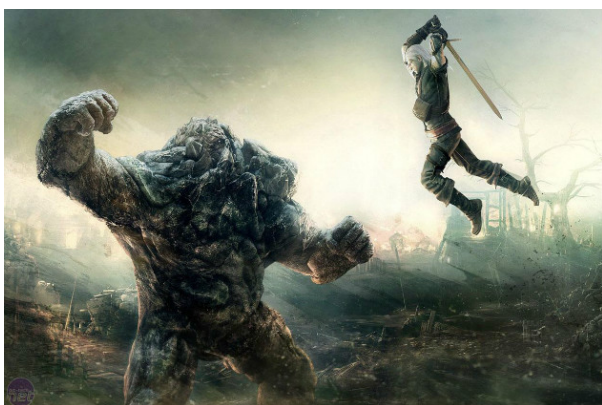
@gamejunkieNZ

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt isn't the game to pick if you don't have a lot of spare time to put into your gaming at the moment: It's a huge, sprawling game and for me, it's also a game that will capture your every moment, both when you're playing it and when you're not playing it.

In fact, I almost didn't get this blog written in time because ... I was too busy playing The Witcher 3 (I guess if that's not a good endorsement on how good I'm finding the game, I don't know what is?)

Truth be told, I never actually got around to finishing The Witcher 2, despite owning it on both PC and Xbox 360. I got up to a part where Geralt had to defeat some kind of giant tentacled swamp monster that had been terrorising a nearby village but then just gave up. For whatever reason, The Witcher 2 just didn't gel with me like The Witcher 3 has.

I'm playing The Witcher 3 on PC not console, and to my surprise, I am able to play the game with its graphical settings set to High using my ageing nVidia Geforce GTX660Ti graphics card (I plan to upgrade sometime this year to most likely a GTX970). Sure, I've locked the frame rate to 30 frames per second but everything has worked without a hitch so far (touch wood it continues).



Want to see the game in action? Here's some game play I captured using nVidia's Shadowplay software of the game. Looks pretty good, right?

Developer CD Projekt Red has received a bit of stick from online forums because the final visuals of The Witcher 3 aren't up to the impressive game play trailer the company showed in 2013. It's been dubbed "Downgrade-gate" but to me it's all just a moan by many for the sake of it and it's overshadowed what really is one of the best games I've played in a long time.

Perhaps one of the things I like about The Witcher 3 is the improved combat, which I've welcomed, as well as how Geralt's casts magic. It just seems to flow a lot smoother than the previous two games. The narrative is engaging as well, with its events following on from what happened in The Witcher 2: The Assassin of Kings (don't worry, you don't need to have played that game to understand what's happening in the new game), with Geralt having to eliminate an enemy known as the Wild Hunt as well as dealing with the Nilfgaardian invasion into the Northern Kingdoms.



The Witcher 3 is a mix of RPG and action but it's a game that doesn't hold your hand and if you let yourself get surrounded by tougher enemies or face off against much stronger monster too early things will end up badly. Very badly. You'll often stumble across monsters that are several levels above you – like I did while I was exploring a small island accessible only by boat and came across some hissing creature or the time I had to defeat a werewolf that was supremely more powerful than I was – meaning you'll likely end up dead (Here's a tip: if the monster or enemy has a red skull above their head, it's time to hotfoot it out of there).

The game world seems lived in, too, with villagers going about their daily business, children playing in the streets and bigger locations like Novigrad having a thriving eco-system. Often I've just stopped and listened to some of the conversations people have amongst themselves.



The game environments are also quite varied in terms of terrain and an impressive day/night cycle adds to the atmosphere. While I guess you could treat The Witcher 3 as a hack 'n slash where you just work on your sword skills and hope for the best, I don't recommend that strategy. The Witcher 3 has a depth that means you'll have to come to grips with its complex alchemy and levelling up system. You need to work out whether special oils are needed for a particular enemy type or which foes are susceptible to what magical signs (Axii, for example, blasts enemies with fire, while Quen is the ever helpful protective shield).

The game is vast, too. I've sunk 25 hours into it already and I've still only feel as if I've scratched the surface of what is clearly a massive game with a vast world to explore. With a game like The Witcher 3, you can either stick with the story missions or go off the beaten path and explore, which is what I have been doing – and I think it's a far better experience if you do that. There are a lot of surprises to find in villages, in caves and in the game's wooded areas. I'm loving The Witcher 3 despite the fact that I'm still coming to grips with the complex alchemy and levelling up system, and can see myself playing it for a few months to come, with only perhaps a break at some point to play Batman Arkham Knight.

How about you? Have you been seduced by the power of Geralt?

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