



A LOOK BACK AT THE WEIRD AND WILD WORLD OF GAMING IN 2020

[NEWS \(/WEB/20201208194642/HTTPS://GAMECRATE.COM/NEWS\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/news) Dec 08, 2020

by: [Angelo M. D'Argenio \(/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/author/angelo-m-dargenio\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/author/angelo-m-dargenio)

The year 2020 was rough, man. Extreme times cause extreme changes, and 2020 definitely brought about extreme changes. Everything got a little weird this year, and frankly, we are going to look very different when we come out the other side. Let's take a look back at some of the strange, exciting, and surprising developments that took place in 2020.

The Next Biggest Thing Is Among Us





An old game that surprisingly found a second life in 2020 - *Among Us*. Originally released in 2018, this social deduction game was largely passed over. However, after the [Henry Stickmin Collection](https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/indie-games-month-three-classic-flash-based-games-get-remaster-treatment/26255) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/indie-games-month-three-classic-flash-based-games-get-remaster-treatment/26255>) came out, partially motivated by the impending death of flash, some streamers found themselves with a copy of *Among Us* after purchasing a bundle. After trying it out, they slowly learned that this sort of social interaction is just what we needed in our isolated world of 2020. Thus, a two-year-old game that was slated to cut off development suddenly rose to have more Twitch viewers than *League of Legends*.

Fighting Gamers Built Their Own Gaming Servers To Bypass Crappy Netcode

Fighting games were hit hard by COVID. The fighting game community (or FGC) relied on playing face to face to find competition. Heck, Japan still largely played in arcades. What was the FGC to do now that we were all isolated? Well, you'd think that they would just play online but fighting games are behind the times, and most simply do not have the netcode to allow for high-skill competitive matches online.





But necessity is the mother of invention! Enter Parsec, a desktop streaming service, and cloud gaming. Fighting gamers would pay monthly fees for a high-quality server on something like Amazon Web Services, install their fighting game of choice on it, and then connect via Parsec so that both players could have an extremely low latency experience. Major tournaments were run using this setup, which is so janky and yet still better than rollback netcode.

Older Games Got Modern Netcode And Suddenly Became More Popular Than Modern Games





Some fighting game developers took notice of the fact that the FGC would murder their firstborn child for rollback netcode. Arc System Works, in particular, integrated GGPO rollback into the 2012 game *Guilty Gear XX Accent Core +R*. Note, later versions of *Guilty Gear* had come out since, but the rollback was so good and the price was so low (only a few dollars on Steam) that this eight-year-old revision of an 18-year old game suddenly became the most popular and most played fighting game on PC for quite some time. Even now it is seeing a revival, with weekly tournaments being run, and new players getting introduced fairly consistently. That's just a testament (inside joke) to the power of rollback.

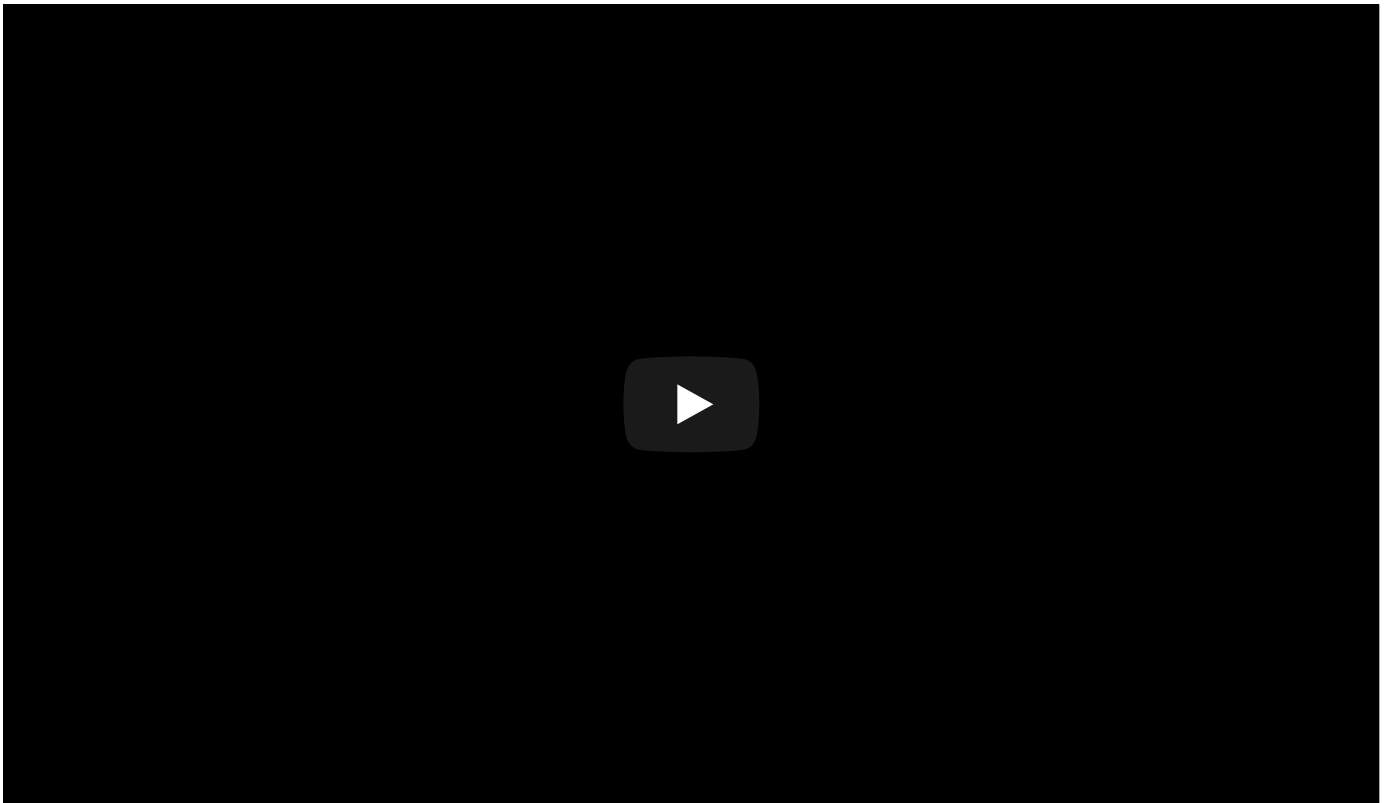
The Second Next Biggest Thing Is Social Early Access Games



When *Among Us* struck it big, streamers started looking for other games with similar mechanics, that is, mechanics that largely involved talking to friends over voice chat. Some landed on party games like *The Jackbox Party Packs 1-7*, but many others landed on early access games that made proximity chat a major focus of their gameplay. One notable title was *Phasmophobia*, a ghost hunting simulator that actually required you to call out the ghost's name to anger it. Another was *In Silence*, an asymmetrical survival game where one player plays a blind monster who is hinted at the other players' location any time they use voice chat. This was a huge innovation this year and I wouldn't be surprised if we see more prox-chat games come out in the years to follow.

The Board Gaming Community Is The Video Gaming Community Now





Another community that suffered from COVID was the board gaming community. Again, this is a community that largely depends on getting big groups together to enjoy their favorite past-time, and that suddenly became very dangerous. As a result, tabletop simulators like... well... *Tabletop Simulator* skyrocketed in popularity. Now you can even find major board gaming tournaments run over virtual board game platforms like this. It's a cheap and easy way to get into the hobby.

Pro Sports Are Also E-Sports Now



With professional sports largely becoming unsafe, many traditional sports leagues turned to video games as an alternative. NASCAR launched the eNASCAR iRacing Pro Invitational which allowed their drivers to race against each other in expensive sim racing rigs. The MLB and NFL also had small leagues to celebrate select athletes after major events like the Pro Bowl were canceled.

Itch.io Raised \$8.1 Million For Black Charities Through A Bundle With More Than 1000 Games

After the protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder and the rise in civil unrest in the United States, many organizations did what they could to support black charities and to further the artistic work of people of color. *Itch.io* killed two birds with one stone, offering a cheap \$5 bundle of 1,741 games, many of which were produced by people of color, queer developers, and other marginalized developers who had their work boosted alongside other major indie titles such as *Celeste*.

It raised \$8.15 million for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and Community Bail Fund. I just want to reinforce how huge this was. These games, put together, would usually cost \$9,518. Multiply that by the 814,514 contributors that bought the bundle, and you get \$7,752,639,432 worth of games, literally billions of dollars of product, all for the sake of racial justice and equality.

Everything Was Canceled And Everyone Went Full Direct

With COVID raging, we couldn't go to major industry events like E3. As a result, every company went full "Nintendo Direct." From big names like Sony and Microsoft to smaller developers, like SNK or the indie developers at Devolver Digital, everyone had a direct to consumer presentation to show around E3 time. Then, guess what? They didn't stop. They kept coming throughout the year and they are still coming, culminating in the announcements we are going to get at The Game Awards this year. Frankly, this is probably going to change the face of game marketing as we know it. E3 may be a thing of the past, and direct streams are the wave of the future.

Everyone Bought Plague Inc And Other Pandemic Related Games

Plague Inc. saw such a huge sales boost right after the pandemic hit that it donated \$250,000 to the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the WHO COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund. It also added a brand new DLC based around this current pandemic after consulting with the WHO. In fact, basically, any video game about disease saw a sales boost. The digital adaptation of the *Pandemic* board game, for example, had a big boost, though most fans were just playing the legacy version on *Tabletop Simulator*.

Major Events Went Fully Online, And Somehow This Was More Inclusive

So not everything was canceled. Some events went online, and when those events weren't [canceled by Nintendo](https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/opinion-nintendo-shutting-down-big-house-2020-heartless/26401) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201208194642/https://gamecrate.com/opinion-nintendo-shutting-down-big-house-2020-heartless/26401>), they saw an actual increase in participants. Why? Well, it costs a lot of money to, say, fly out to a tournament venue, get a hotel room, pay a registration fee, and then participate in a tournament only to probably get stomped. However, when you can get stomped from the comfort of your own home, things are a lot different. It turns out that online tournaments are important to bringing new members into gaming communities and hopefully developers and publishers (who aren't Nintendo) will focus on this in the future.



Call Of Duty Doesn't Know What KBAM Is

This is a... weird one. So you know how I just said that tournaments went online? Well, *Call of Duty* did too. It went PC-only to allow easy access during the pandemic. However, it also restricted competition to controller only... which is weird? I mean, yes, keyboard and mouse (KBAM) is a better control method for shooters but, is that really the best way to ensure fairness?

The Next Big Gaming Rig Is A Giant Scorpion

This is a thing. That's it. It's a real product. I don't really think I have to say anything else here.

There Are Politics In Our Video Games!

Video games crossed over into politics and vice versa fairly hard this year. Joe Biden had an official *Animal Crossing* island that people could visit, and frankly, it was damn well designed. Meanwhile, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez organized several live streams over Twitch (playing *Among Us* of course) both to raise awareness for the election and to raise money for Coronavirus relief, and she's looking to bring in even more politicians into her streams. Might video games be the next big platform for political discourse? And I mean like, real political discourse, not just the guy shouting racial slurs at you after getting headshot three times in a row.

Yakuza Is An RPG Now

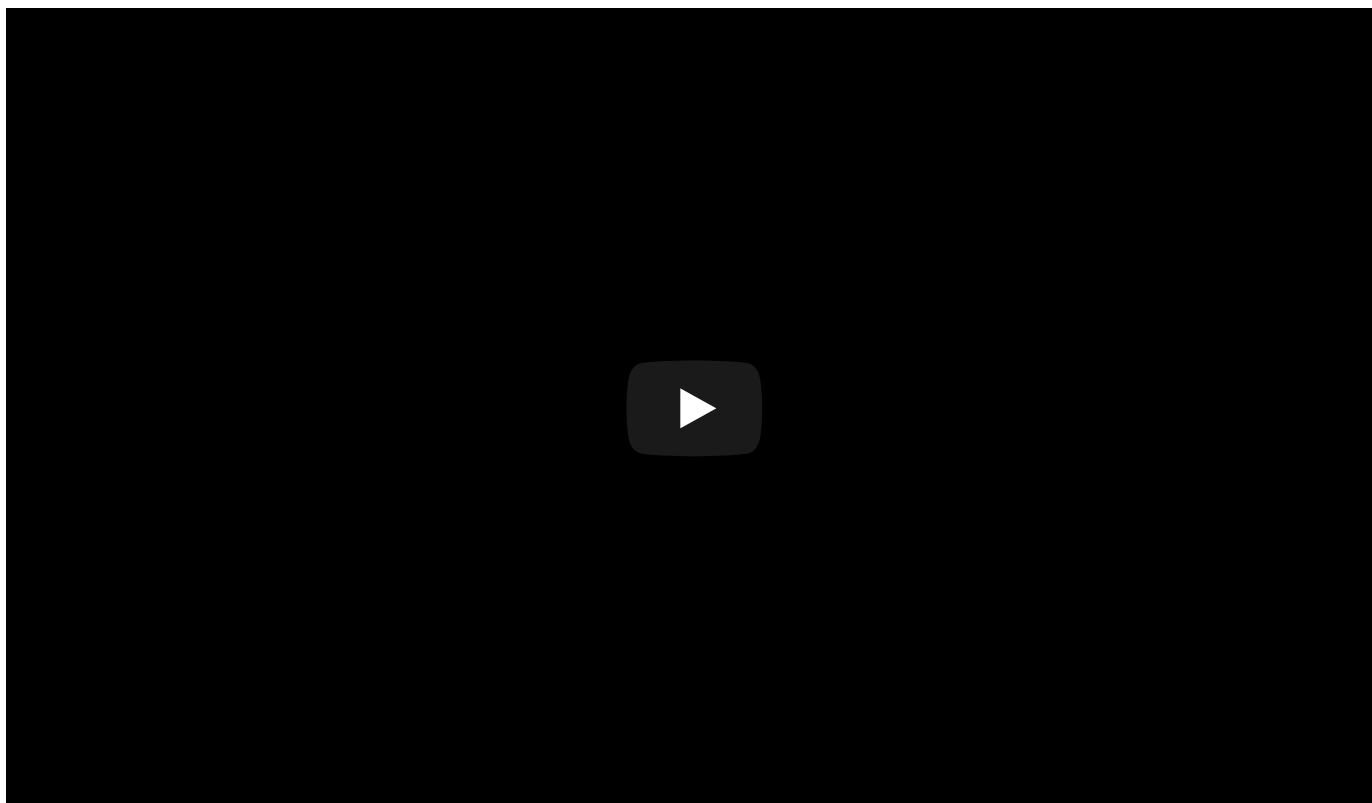




So, *Yakuza: Like a Dragon* was one of the most well-received spins on the series we have seen in a while, all because it was a turn-based RPG, something completely out of character for the series. Well, it's all because of an April Fool's joke. This video was shown off in 2019 and it wasn't supposed to be real. But fans reacted so well that they altered production direction with about a year left to go, in order to turn the latest *Yakuza* title into an RPG. The result, a fantastic new game that shows that even at 40 you can still be a hero.

Steve Was Added To Smash, All Bets Are Off





Yep, everyone who kept asking for Minecraft Steve for *Super Smash Brothers Ultimate* finally got their way. Who the heck knows who the next *Smash* character will be. My money is on Sora from *Kingdom Hearts*.

Somehow, Despite It All, We Survived

Look, there's a lot that happened last year, but we are still here. Maybe this time next year we can look back on all this and treat it like a bad dream, but we can say one thing - we are going to be living in a different world next year. Even if COVID goes away, the online innovations that came about during the pandemic won't. The gaming landscape has changed, and it's going to change more. Who even knows if E3 will be a thing next year? Who knows what our major tournaments will look like? Who knows if PS5s will ever be in stock! But through all this, the games are still here, as are the people who play them.

Have a Happy New Year everyone.

NEWS





PRINCE OF PERSIA REMAKE DELAYED TO MARCH

NEWS Dec 08, 2020

Over the summer, Ubisoft announced they were working on a fully remade version of their 2003 hit game, Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time . The release date...



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II GOES MOBILE

NEWS Dec 08, 2020

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – Sith Lords came out way back in 2004. It was the follow-up to 2003’s wildly revered, Star Wars: Knights of the Old...

REVIEWS



REVIEW: TWIN MIRROR IS A WHOLE GAME OF BOTTLEFINDER 5000

REVIEWS Dec 07, 2020

Platforms: PC (reviewed), PS4, Xbox One Dontnod has become known for being a studio that tackles some pretty heavy topics. Life is Strange not only focused...



REVIEW: HYRULE WARRIORS: AGE OF CALAMITY IS NOT WHAT YOU...

REVIEWS Nov 23, 2020

Platforms: Switch (Reviewed) Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity is not Breath of the Wild 2 . I’m going to repeat that. Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity is not...



VIDEOS



KEANU REEVES TALKS ABOUT WORKING ON CYBERPUNK 2077

VIDEOS

Nov 19, 2020

As we near the December 10 release date for Cyberpunk 2077, developers CD Projekt Red are consistently dropping new and cool behind the scenes videos about...



WHAT GAMES ARE THE 23 XBOX GAME STUDIOS DIVISIONS WORKING...

VIDEOS

Oct 21, 2020

Microsoft dropped a bombshell on the video game world with its recent acquisition of ZeniMax Media, the company that owns some of the biggest developers in the...

