

■ Video game review

This year proved gamers shouldn't 'Narc' on 'God of War'

Most developers have put their recent focus on new consoles, leaving consumers with an array of bad games

BY ANDREW MCCOLLUM
PULSE REPORTER

Aside from a few outstanding titles, 2005 was a weak year for gaming, especially when compared to

2004, which saw the release of three highly touted sequels: "Halo 2," "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas," and "Half-Life 2." 2004 also gave us "World of Warcraft," a gaming habit

that many can't seem to kick.

It seems that in 2005, many companies shifted their focus to the next console generation, leaving consumers out in the cold. But there were a few titles that bucked this year's trend.

2005 GAMING STUDS

'Resident Evil 4'

"Resident Evil 4" is 2005's game for dedicated gamers. In "RE4" players take control of Leon, a special forces agent on a mission to rescue the president's daughter from an enigmatic Spanish cult.

"RE4" approaches perfection. The game's weapons are solid, satisfying and fun to upgrade. The combat is frantic, and the boss battles are intense and memorable. But the game's stand-out element is its atmosphere: players get the feeling that it's them against the world as they shoot their way through old Spanish villages and dank castle corridors. The graphic engine does a great job of rendering the horde of creepy not-quite-zombie villagers.

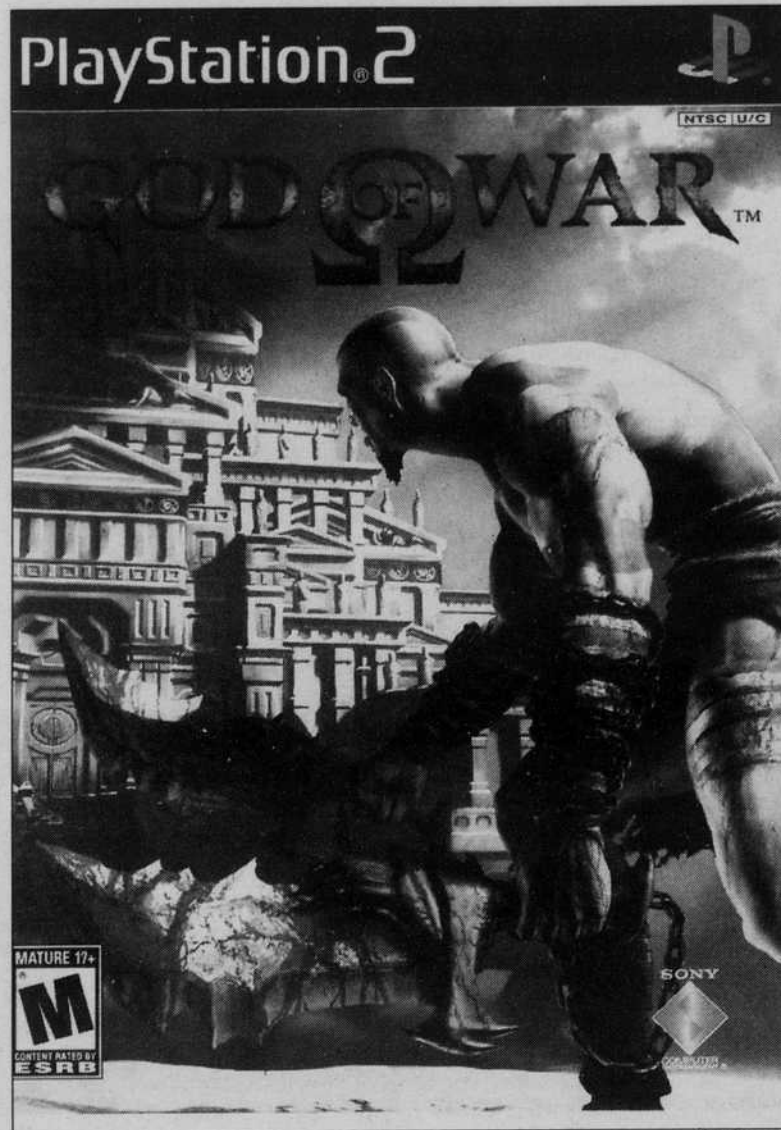
The fun doesn't end when players complete the campaign, either. There are loads of unlockables on both the GameCube and PlayStation2 versions of the game. "Resident Evil 4" is one of best single player games that has been released in years. If you haven't played it then go out and get it. Now.

'God of War'

"God of War" is 2005's game for all gamers. Players take command of Kratos, a Spartan soldier turned hit man for the gods. Kratos flays his way through ancient Greece, gouging out the eyes of Cyclopes, beheading gorgons and impaling Minotaur on a quest to kill Ares, the god of war. Combat in "God of War" is amazing. Kratos takes on his enemies with one of gaming's coolest weapons: the Blades of Chaos, a pair of large blades attached to Kratos' arms by chains. "God of War" showcases some of the best boss battles ever seen in gaming. Even the game's puzzles are entertaining. Although the game is a little on the short end, odds are players will want to play through this masterpiece more than once.

'Guitar Hero'

Anyone who has ever watched



COURTESY

someone play "Dance Dance Revolution" or any of its ilk will be familiar with the concept of "Guitar Hero." Music plays as colored dots scroll down the screen. These dots correspond with buttons on the neck of the game's custom guitar controller. All you have to do is hold down the right button and pluck the "string" at the right time, simple enough. That's the beauty of "Guitar Hero": it's simple. Anyone can pick up the game and play through a few songs, which include more than 30 decent covers of artists ranging from Boston to Megadeth. The game starts players with three buttons and a whammy bar, but as the difficulty ramps up players will use all five buttons. "Guitar Hero" is an excellent play and it's almost impossible to put the guitar down after one song.

"Guitar Hero" is retailing for around \$70, but it comes with the game and the controller. With over 30 songs, and four difficulty levels ranging from easy to punishing, "Guitar Hero" is a good

choice for any music lover with a PS2.

'Shadow of Colossus'

"Shadow of Colossus" is 2005's cult classic. It isn't for everyone, but those who get into it are in for a treat.

"Shadow of Colossus" feels like no other game. Many games make players slog through a horde of menial enemies as they work their way to the boss. In "Shadow," the enemies have been replaced by 16 colossi, statuesque creatures that are often the size of skyscrapers. Players will climb and slay these monumental beasts.

Like "RE4," "Shadow of Colossus" benefits from an amazing sense of atmosphere. The game is quiet and beautiful, and there is an overwhelming sense of solitude as players explore the game's vast countryside. If you find yourself bored over winter break, go rent "Shadow of Colossus." It's definitely worth a few (or more) hours of your time.

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Music & Dance

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UO Choral Ensembles; \$5, \$3

Friday, Dec. 2 • 8 p.m., Beall Hall
OREGON JAZZ ENSEMBLE and JAZZ LAB BANDS
UO Jazz Ensembles; \$5, \$3

Fri., Dec. 2 • 8 p.m., Dougherty Theatre
FALL TERM LOFT
Department of Dance; \$5, \$3

Saturday, Dec. 3 • 1 p.m., Collier House
CHAMBER MUSIC ON CAMPUS
UO Chamber Ensembles; Free

Saturday, Dec. 3 • 3 p.m., Beall Hall
HARP CLASS RECITAL
Harp Students of Laura Zaerr; Free

Saturday, Dec. 3 • 5:30 p.m., Beall Hall
CONTEMPORARY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
Music of Arnold Schoenberg; Free

Sun., Dec 4 • 2 p.m., Room 198 Music
UO PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
UO Ensemble; \$5, \$3

Sunday, Dec. 4 • 5 p.m., Beall Hall
UNIVERSITY GOSPEL ENSEMBLES
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