Best of 2014: The top 10 video games of the year

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With the launch of new consoles, expectations were high for 2014. Games such as "Titanfall" and "Watchdogs" captured fans' imaginations and offered a glimpse of what the next level of games would look like. Unfortunately, those hyped titles fell short of their lofty promises or had bugs that ruined the experience.

But that doesn't mean it was a horrible year. There were a few surprises, some refreshing new properties and older franchises finding new life. Here are my best games of 2014:

1. "Dragon Age: Inquisition" (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC) - For BioWare, the third time was the charm for this high-fantasy franchise. The studio finally delivered an epic experience in which players, as the Inquisitor, have to save the continent of Thedas from an ancient evil that has upended the balance of power. "Inquisition" goes places few games are willing to go, pulling players into a world so rich with history, religion and politics that it rivals "Game of Thrones."

2. "Sunset Overdrive" (Xbox One) - The biggest surprise was Insomniac Games' new intellectual property that perfectly marries "Jet Grind Radio"-style traversal movement with a good combat system. Exploring the open world of Sunset City is a joy, and the snarky plot full of self-referential nerd humor completes a package that's pure fun.

3. "Dark Souls 2" (Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC) - Heaps of praise have been thrown on the From Software's franchise, but I never understood

the appeal until I played this title. The game is punishing, but it teaches valuable lessons in how to play games - namely that patience and persistence can yield big rewards. There are also tense moments where it feels as though everything is at stake, an experience that few titles can match.

4. "Alien: Isolation" (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PC) - Historically, games based on this franchise have been horrible. But Creative Assembly looked to the original film for inspiration and created the most terrifying release in recent memory. As engineer Amanda Ripley, players have to find a way to escape a space station harboring the xenomorph.

5. "Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor" (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PC) - By far the most innovative entry in the field, this effort by Monolith Productions puts players in the shoes of Talion, a murdered ranger who is mysteriously resurrected with wraithlike powers. They have to explore Mordor and avenge the death of Talion's family. What makes this title stand out is the Nemesis system, in which Uruks that players battle remember the hero and act accordingly, effectively letting players forge the details of their own unique story.

6. Super Smash Bros. (Wii U, Nintendo 3DS) - Nintendo holds a special place in gaming. At a time when Gamergate dominated the conversation, it was the one company that could cut through noise and remind gamers the reason we enjoy playing. This update brings in a host of new characters, along with eight-player battles and the option to make your own stages on the Wii U version.

7. "Far Cry 4" (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PC) - Ubisoft's open-world series has hit its stride and, despite being mostly more of the same, the latest offering shows that the franchise has plenty of life with a compelling story in the fictional Himalayan nation of

Kyrat. The verticality and cooperative gameplay bring fresh ideas along with a memorable villain and a sense of exploration.

8. "South Park: The Stick of Truth" (Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC) - If you want to be offended - like really offended - and laugh a lot, look no further than this role-playing game by Obsidian Entertainment. Players are in the shoes of the new kid who must pick sides between Cartman and Kyle and try to stop a disaster from befalling the Colorado town.

9. "Bayonetta 2" (Wii U) - The follow-up to one of the best games of 2010 doesn't change much. If the gameplay isn't broken, don't fix it. Platinum Games retains the tight controls and smooth combat, but the team cranks up the action higher with bigger demons and monsters. The fact it also has a story that you can understand doesn't hurt, either.

10. "Forza Horizon 2" (Xbox One) - This sequel improves on every basic element of this open-racing [game](#). The new locales of southern France and northern Italy offer fans interesting regions to drive in while the new weather system makes sure that every hour of racing is unique. But what separates this title from others this year is the physics engine, which makes driving fun.

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