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<div align="center">More Than Meets The Eye</div>

There are two games. One with a beautiful futuristic city where the lights bounce off the buildings while the cars just soar through the sky and you can see the reflection of your character's face meticulously detailed, from every single hair follicle to the way the skin glistens in the rain, on the window. The graphics are very much an indicator of the very long decade of development time. The other game is a brown muddy mess that takes place in some desolate barren wasteland with very little signs of life in it. The models are very dated, most of them looking rather rough and ugly. The environment can look like paper cut outs and it very much reflects the eighteen month development cycle. However, what if I were to tell you that the brown, muddy, and rough around the edges game made in 18 months was actually the superior game? The superior game in question is "*Fallout: New Vegas*," a well beloved and iconic game developed by Obsidian Entertainment. The other is *Cyberpunk 2077*, a game by CD Projekt Red that was hyped up for a decade only to be panned upon release for its broken promises, mediocre writing, and even the glitches it had at the time.

Graphics are amazing and important. it's impressive how within the span of six years a game like the first Resident Evil went from being all polygons with flat textures, to the remake where you are seeing the zombies' every bit of decaying flesh falling out on their corpse or seeing the reflection of your character's body onto the shiny floor in the mansion. It's a great way to see how far games have progressed, like in the case of Metal Gear Solid franchise, having gone from blocky models with their clothes just painted and a limited camera view in Metal Gear Solid, to the full of life soviet jungle in *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* with meticulously crafted environment that has all sorts of animals just

slithering around through the lush green foliage. Graphics do an amazing job of helping immerse the player into a game. Insomniac's Spider-Man game is amazing and the graphics are still great on PS4. However, Playing Spider-Man Remastered on PS5 with even better graphics just makes the game feel even more exhilarating and realistic. Is it odd to say about a game where you play as a spandex wearing crimefighter that pretends being a spider? Absolutely, but I cannot deny just how much the graphics made a difference. I can almost feel the rush of the wind hitting me as I swing city to city above the bustling crowds in the busy city of New York. Every time I leap off large skyscraper and almost dive directly into the streets a part of me feels nervous before getting a feeling of immense satisfaction as I manage sling a web at different building and catapult myself into the air once more. I played the game on PS4 before and while I do agree that graphics aren't everything, I'd be lying if I said that playing it on PS5 didn't evoke that sense of childlike excitement. While I do agree that graphics are amazing and can definitely enhance a game, they shouldn't be what determines whether a game is good or not or worth checking out. A couple of my closest friends have disregarded otherwise great video games because of the way they look. Good graphics to them makes the game "more realistic," and thus better. When I was in high school, I would hear friends or acquaintances not want to touch certain "old looking" games because out of fear of the game playing poorly or being "badly designed." Those friends would as a result would often overlook what makes a game great . A common sentiment with this newer generation of gamers is that "Graphics are a good way of determining if a game is worth checking out." Now, while I agree first impressions are great, graphics shouldn't be what decides whether or not you should spend the full 60-70 bucks on a game. Back in high school, I would always hear people in my circles talk about how excited they were for *Call Of Duty Black Ops 4* because it "looked pretty." As a result of this a great many of these people in my circles ended up being disappointed with the game. The game had no campaign and had less features than Black Ops 3. By limiting yourself to games that only look "good" you're limiting your horizons significantly.

I have a friend named Daniel. He was your average kid who just played Call Of Duty and Grand Theft Auto only. We would always play and talk about video games together. He never really cared much for games that didn't look like something that would come out of real life though. At some point me and another friend kept talking about this game called "Persona 5." Persona 5 is this RPG that has an anime art style with all sorts of your overly anime tropes like fighting monsters using the power of friendship and whatnot, basically something that a kid like Daniel would avoid. However, he became curious about what the hype was all about and decided to give the game a chance. Then before you know it, he fell absolutely in love with it. He put in hundreds of hours into it, even getting all the trophies and reaching 100% on the game before I did. He then went on this anime rabbit hole and became completely enamored with all sorts of anime stuff. It got to the point where he became an even bigger anime fan than me, talking about all sorts of stuff I didn't know about. If it wasn't for his openness to try out games that weren't "graphically impressive," he wouldn't have gotten into the things he is into today like anime or learning Japanese.

Now while I do agree with some of my friends that a game looking realistic is great, it isn't always a good thing. By making games look more "realistic" you can start to lose some originality or even ruin a game. Realism within itself isn't inherently a good thing as much as I like realism in a video game. *Jump Force* was an anime crossover game that tried going for this "realistic art style," but ended up flopping and not being so well received. One of the biggest complaints I would hear from reviewers is that the art style felt out of place and too serious. The art style and trying to force an otherwise very expressive medium like anime into realism just didn't blend well. It reduced the very dynamic nature of notoriously energetic characters like Goku and Luffy. The graphics did draw in a lot of gamers though, my friends included, but the people who did play the game were ultimately disappointed. Once again it was a game in yet another long series of games that was a downgrade to the previous successor, having only half the roster and half the features. Going for better graphics that are more "realistic" shouldn't come at the cost of a great art style or gameplay.

This leads into the next problem, people avoiding games they could like because of the way they I have heard many of my friends say they won't pick up a game because of how "old" it looks since they think it will be an outdated piece of janky garbage that will play and run like crap. I understand the sentiment and I sympathize with it to an extent; I was even like that back then. When I was getting into Metal Gear Solid Franchise I was always worried about how dated and awful it would be since it looked a little outdated. Not only did the game look dated, but it even had the dreaded isometric camera. However, the more I played the game the more I found myself enjoying it, the graphics even started to grow on me after a while. I even found that the game, despite being roughly twenty something years old, actually aged better than some games made today or even later games in the franchise. The writing was impeccable, the gameplay was fun, and on top of that made me even more excited to play subsequent entries. I then played the remake "Twin Snakes" and found myself enjoying it a lot less, the game's bosses were way easier and the voice acting (barring Gray Fox) was a severe downgrade from the original. The voice actors had a lot less passion in their lines for a game that had way more dynamic action than the original. I've heard gamers say that graphics are always a great mark of progress, but that's not always the case. Shenmue 3 was a game created in 2019 and yet it already aged worse than Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty, a game that was made over 22 years ago. One of the biggest complains regarding Shenmue is its gameplay was still the same old backwards janky mess despite having brand new shiny graphics. The graphics are already dated, and it wasn't even made that long ago, compare that to Metal Gear Solid 2 whose graphics aged great and its gameplay even greater. Even look *at Legends Of Zelda: Wind Waker*, the game was also made over 20 something years ago and yet it also aged well. Because of their focus on a better art style over more "realistic" graphics, the game remains timeless and beloved by all sorts of gamers today, as opposed to some of the games made back then that tried going for realism but ended up aging badly. People to this day still get impressed by Wind Waker's art style and call it beautiful.

Most of my friends' and other gamers amazement with how great graphics look often blinds them to what games great in the first place. You could make a game with the greatest graphics in the world, but

what use is any of that when you don't have fun gameplay or even a great story? A good chunk of Gamers' love of graphics have made them take other aspects of gameplay for granted. I recall hearing my friends before praise just how amazing Marvel's Spider-Man PS4 game looked, completely ignoring all the other factors like the great story, good music, or fun gameplay. It brought back a once thought to be dead genre, superhero games, back into the fold. Spider-Man was a game that vastly improved upon an already existing formula within the past games with fluid swinging and one of the best superhero stories ever told in a medium. It made great changes to the usual Spider-Man game while also sticking to what makes those games so great.

Graphics aren't everything. They shouldn't be what determines whether or not a game is worth checking out. Basing how realistic a game's graphics are shouldn't be what determines whether or not they even have good graphics. A game looking too "old" doesn't automatically mean it's dated and unplayable. Graphics are great, but don't forget the other parts of what makes a game great. I suppose what really solidified this notion to me was when I was replaying the *Megaman Zero Collection* on PS4. In the middle of playing Zero 3 something hit me, I am playing this over GTA or Call Of Duty. Games which by all means should be more enticing to me because of how modern they are, right? They're these flashy games on console with realistic graphics, and yet here I am replaying ports of GBA games that are decades old. It was at that moment I realized that I found these games more fun and graphics really aren't everything. One thing I've learned making this essay, is that even I may have taken graphics for granted and just how impressive it is that a medium this young was able to have such a huge shift in quality within the span of 20-30 something years. It took 60 years for film to even get color, here video games are going from polygonal with *Ocarina Of Time* to going almost full realistic with games like *Marvel's Spider-Man 2* within the span of 25 years. Like video games, films themselves also face the dichotomy of having fans that overlook what makes moves great in favor of spectacle as seen in the abundance of CGI today in movies. *Cyberpunk 2077* and love *Fallout: New Vegas,* I can't help but be amazed at the leap in graphics.