

Cyberpunk 2077 and the dystopian future it unintentionally implies

A Google news search for *Cyberpunk 2077* turns up hundreds of articles about the game since its release this Thursday, December 10, and almost all of them address the title's many bugs, glitches, and further technical problems. Most major projects release with a few imperfections that get hammered out in the following weeks and months, but this is not that.

This is gaming history in the making. This is the 21st century's answer to Atari's disastrous *E.T.* launch that reshaped the industry and dealt a deathblow to Atari that took nearly a decade to prove fatal.

The term “unplayable” has been used to describe video games before, but in this case it's meant literally. Many players stopped playing by default. The firefights of *Cyberpunk 2077* aren't survivable if V is blinded by trees a quarter of a mile away rendering through every other texture. And that's assuming the player can even get the game to launch.

Players feel betrayed by CD Projekt Red, who not only knowingly released an unfinished game, but were calculating and purposefully deceptive about it. One high-profile video review includes a preamble explaining that pre-release gameplay footage was unavailable due to CD Projekt Red's restrictions on that content, restrictions that have gained a lot of context in the last three days. The review in question awards the game a score of 9/10. They're not the only outlet to do so.

Looking at Metacritic, professional reviewers gave the PC version an average of 90/100. But users gave it 6.6/10. It's even lower on Xbox One (3.2) and lower still on PS4 (2.6). That's a horrifying outcome for a widely anticipated release from a major studio.

This vast difference between player's reviews and those of news outlets demonstrates the problem doesn't lie exclusively with game studios. It came out that CD Projekt Red promised its employees bonuses if they achieved a 90/100 on Metacritic – not an unusual practice in a notoriously cutthroat industry. Their executives have since reversed themselves, but seeing as *Cyberpunk 2077* is sitting on 90/100 anyway, that reversal means nothing. This dynamic motivates developers to game the review system, and getting a good review and making a good game don't necessarily go hand in hand.

Will this turn players off to video games? No. Will this change the way players approach the process of assessing and buying video games? Certainly.

And that's the real danger behind *Cyberpunk 2077*'s botched launch.

Making ambitious video games like this is a massive financial undertaking and studios are heavily dependent on launch and pre-launch sales to justify these projects. When Bethesda gets around to *Elder Scrolls VI*, it's a safe bet that millions of burned customers will think back to *Cyberpunk 2077* before clicking Add To Cart. If enough people decide to wait for player reviews to come in, that could be a sledgehammer blow to studios already reeling from the financial challenges of the project in question. That's going to disincentivize studios from pouring half a decade and \$100+ million into a single project, and that in turn will have disastrous consequences for the players who hope to see games continue to advance and dazzle them

further every year.

Cyberpunk 2077 is available now on PC, PS4, and Xbox One.