Survival horror

Survival horror is a subgenre of action @-@ adventure or adventure video games inspired by horror fiction that focuses on survival of the character as the game tries to frighten players with either horror graphics or scary ambience . Although combat can be part of the gameplay , the player is made to feel less in control than in typical action games through limited ammunition , health , speed and vision , or through various obstructions of the player 's interaction with the game mechanics . The player is also challenged to find items that unlock the path to new areas and solve puzzles to proceed in the game . Games make use of strong horror themes , like dark maze @-@ like environments and unexpected attacks from enemies .

The term " survival horror " was first used for the original Japanese release of Resident Evil in 1996 which was influenced by earlier games with a horror theme such as 1989 's Sweet Home . The name has been used since then for games with similar gameplay , and has been retroactively applied to earlier titles . Starting with the release of Resident Evil 4 in 2005 , the genre began to incorporate more features from action games and more traditional first person and third @-@ person shooter games . This has led game journalists to question whether long @-@ standing survival horror franchises and more recent franchises have abandoned the genre and moved into a different distinct genre often referred to as " action horror " . Still , the survival horror genre has persisted in one form or another .

Definition

Survival horror refers to a subgenre of horror video games . The player character is vulnerable and under @-@ armed , which puts emphasis on puzzle @-@ solving and evasion , rather than violence . Games commonly challenge the player to manage their inventory and ration scarce resources such as ammunition . Another major theme throughout the genre is that of isolation . Typically , these games contain relatively few non @-@ player characters and , as a result , frequently tell much of their story second @-@ hand through the usage of journals , texts , or audio logs .

While many action games feature lone protagonists versus swarms of enemies in a suspenseful environment , survival horror games are distinct from otherwise horror @-@ themed action games . They tend to de @-@ emphasize combat in favor of challenges such as hiding or running from enemies and solving puzzles . Still , it is not unusual for survival horror games to draw upon elements from first @-@ person shooters , action @-@ adventure games , or even role @-@ playing games . " Survival horror is different from typical game genres in that it is not defined strictly by specific mechanics , but subject matter , tone , pacing , and design philosophy . "

Game design

De @-@ emphasized combat

Survival horror games are a subgenre of horror games , where the player is unable to fully prepare or arm their avatar . The player usually encounters several factors to make combat unattractive as a primary option , such as a limited number of weapons or invulnerable enemies , if weapons are available , their ammunition is sparser than in other games , and powerful weapons such as rocket launchers are rare , if even available at all . Thus , players are more vulnerable than in action games , and the hostility of the environment sets up a narrative where the odds are weighed decisively against the avatar . This gameplay shifts away from direct combat , and players must learn to evade enemies or turn the environment against them . Games try to enhance the experience of vulnerability by making the game single player rather than multiplayer , and by giving the player an avatar who is more frail than the typical action game hero .

The survival horror genre is also known for other non @-@ combat challenges , such as solving puzzles at certain locations in the game world , and collecting and managing an inventory of items .

Areas of the game world will be off limits until the player gains certain items . Occasionally , levels are designed with alternative routes . Levels also challenge players with maze @-@ like environments , which test the player 's navigational skills . Levels are often designed as dark and claustrophobic (often making use of dim or shadowy light conditions and camera angles and sightlines which restrict visibility) to challenge the player and provide suspense , although games in the genre also make use of enormous spatial environments .

Enemy design

A survival horror storyline usually involves the investigation and confrontation of horrific forces , and thus many games transform common elements from horror fiction into gameplay challenges . Early releases utilized camera angles seen in horror films , which allowed enemies to lurk in areas that are concealed from the player 's view . Also , many survival horror games make use of off @-@ screen sound or other warning cues to notify the player of impending danger . This feedback assists the player , but also creates feelings of anxiety and uncertainty .

Games typically feature a variety of monsters with unique behavior patterns . Enemies can appear unexpectedly or suddenly , and levels are often designed with scripted sequences where enemies drop from the ceiling or crash through windows . Survival horror games , like many action @-@ adventure games , are structured around the boss encounter where the player must confront a formidable opponent in order to advance to the next area . These boss encounters draw elements from antagonists seen in classic horror stories , and defeating the boss will advance the story of the game .

History

Origins (1980s ? 1996)

The origins of the survival horror game can be traced back to earlier horror fiction . Archetypes have been linked to the books of H. P. Lovecraft , which include investigative narratives , or journeys through the depths . Comparisons have been made between Lovecraft 's Cthulhoid Old Ones and the boss encounters seen in many survival horror games . Themes of survival have also been traced to the slasher film subgenre , where the protagonist endures a confrontation with the ultimate antagonist . Another major influence on the genre is Japanese horror , including classical Noh theatre , the books of Edogawa Rampo , and Japanese cinema . The survival horror genre largely draws from both Western (mainly American) and Asian (mainly Japanese) traditions , with the Western approach to horror generally favouring action @-@ oriented visceral horror while the Japanese approach tends to favour psychological horror .

Several games have been retroactively described as survival horror . Nostromo was a sci @-@ fi survival horror game developed by Akira Takiguchi , a Tokyo University student and Taito contractor , for the PET 2001 . It was ported to the PC @-@ 6001 by Masakuni Mitsuhashi (also known as Hiromi Ohba , later joined Game Arts) , and published by ASCII in 1981 , exclusively for Japan . Inspired by the 1980 stealth game Manibiki Shoujo and the 1979 sci @-@ fi horror film Alien , the gameplay of Nostromo involved a player attempting to escape a spaceship while avoiding the sight of an invisible alien , which only becomes visible when appearing in front of the player . The gameplay also involved limited resources , where the player needs to collect certain items in order to escape the ship , and if certain required items are not available in the warehouse , the player is unable to escape and eventually has no choice but be killed getting caught by the alien .

Malcolm Evans ' 3D Monster Maze , released for the Sinclair ZX81 in 1982 , is a first @-@ person game without a weapon ; the player cannot fight the enemy , a Tyrannosaurus Rex , so must escape by finding the exit before the monster finds him . The game states its distance and awareness of the player , further raising tension . Edge stated it was about " fear , panic , terror and facing an implacable , relentless foe who ? s going to get you in the end " and considers it " the

original survival horror game " . Retro Gamer stated , " Survival horror may have been a phrase first coined by Resident Evil , but it could ? ve easily applied to Malcolm Evans ? massive hit . " Another early example is 1982 Atari 2600 game Haunted House . Gameplay is typical of future survival horror titles , as it emphasizes puzzle @-@ solving and evasive action , rather than violence . The game uses monsters commonly featured in horror fiction , such as bats and ghosts , each of which has unique behaviors . Gameplay also incorporates item collection and inventory management , along with areas that are inaccessible until the appropriate item is found . Because it has several features that have been seen in later survival horror games , some reviewers have retroactively classified this game as the first in the genre .

1982 saw the release of another early horror game , Bandai 's Terror House , based on traditional Japanese horror , released as a Bandai LCD Solarpower handheld game . It was a solar @-@ powered game with two LCD panels on top of each other to enable impressive scene changes and early pseudo @-@ 3D effects . The amount of ambient light the game received also had an effect on the gaming experience . Another early example of a horror game released that year was Sega 's arcade game Monster Bash , which introduced classic horror @-@ movie monsters , including the likes of Dracula , the Frankenstein monster , and werewolves , helping to lay the foundations for future survival horror games . Its 1986 remake Ghost House had gameplay specifically designed around the horror theme , featuring haunted house stages full of traps and secrets , and enemies that were fast , powerful , and intimidating , forcing players to learn the intricacies of the house and rely on their wits . Another game that has been cited as one of the first horror @-@ themed games is Quicksilva 's 1983 maze game Ant Attack .

In 1985 , Magical Zoo 's The Screamer was a bio @-@ horror RPG released for the NEC PC @-@ 88 that was set in a post @-@ apocalyptic research facility , while the gameplay featured shooter @-@ based combat and permanent death . The latter half of the 1980s saw the release of several other horror @-@ themed games , including Konami 's Castlevania in 1986 , and Sega 's Kenseiden and Namco 's Splatterhouse in 1988 , though despite the macabre imagery of these games , their gameplay did not diverge much from other action games at the time . Splatterhouse in particular is notable for its large amount of bloodshed and terror , despite being an arcade beat ' em up with very little emphasis on survival .

Shiryou Sensen : War of the Dead , a 1987 title developed by Fun Factory and published by Victor Music Industries for the MSX2 , PC @-@ 88 and PC Engine platforms , is considered the first true survival horror game by Kevin Gifford (of GamePro and 1UP) and John Szczepaniak (of Retro Gamer and The Escapist) . Designed by Katsuya Iwamoto , the game was a horror action RPG revolving around a female SWAT member Lila rescuing survivors in an isolated monster @-@ infested town and bringing them to safety in a church . It has open environments like Dragon Quest and real @-@ time side @-@ view battles like Zelda II , though War of the Dead departed from other RPGs with its dark and creepy atmosphere expressed through the storytelling , graphics , and music . The player character has limited ammunition , though the player character can punch or use a knife if out of ammunition . The game also has a limited item inventory and crates to store items , and introduced a day @-@ night cycle ; the player can sleep to recover health , and a record is kept of how many days the player has survived . That same year saw the release of Laplace no Ma , another hybrid of survival horror and RPG , though with more traditional RPG elements such as turn @-@ based combat . It is mostly set in a mansion infested with undead creatures , and the player controls a party of characters with different professions , including a scientist who constructs tools and a journalist who takes pictures . In 1988 , War of the Dead Part 2 for the MSX2 and PC @-@ 88 abandoned the RPG elements of its predecessor , such as random encounters , and instead adopted action @-@ adventure elements from Metal Gear while retaining the horror atmosphere of its predecessor .

However , the game often considered the first true survival horror , due to having the most influence on Resident Evil , was the 1989 release Sweet Home , for the Nintendo Entertainment System . The gameplay focused on solving a variety of puzzles using items stored in a limited inventory , while battling or escaping from horrifying creatures , which could lead to permanent death for any of the characters , thus creating tension and an emphasis on survival . It was also the first attempt at

creating a scary and frightening storyline within a game , mainly told through scattered diary entries left behind fifty years before the events of the game . Developed by Capcom , the game would become the main inspiration behind their later release Resident Evil , which also borrowed various other elements from the game , such as its mansion setting , " opening door " load screen , death animations , multiple endings depending on which characters survive , dual character paths , individual character skills , limited item management , story told through diary entries and frescos , emphasis on atmosphere , and horrific imagery . The latter prevented its release in the Western world , though its influence was felt through Resident Evil , which was originally intended to be a remake of the game . Some consider Sweet Home to be the first true survival horror game . Travis Fahs of IGN claims Sweet Home is more an RPG despite its influence , and that Project Firestart (released in the same year as Sweet Home) more closely embodied genre conventions despite its lack of influence .

In 1989 , Electronic Arts published Project Firestart , developed by Dynamix . Unlike most other early games in the genre , it featured a science fiction setting inspired by the film Alien , but had gameplay that closely resembled later survival horror games in many ways . Fahs considers it the first to achieve " the kind of fully formed vision of survival horror as we know it today , " citing its balance of action and adventure , limited ammunition , weak weaponry , vulnerable main character , feeling of isolation , storytelling through journals , graphic violence , and use of dynamically triggered music - all of which are characteristic elements of later games in the survival horror genre . Despite this , it is not likely a direct influence on later games in the genre and the similarities are largely an example of parallel thinking .

In 1992 , Infogrames released Alone in the Dark , which has been considered a forefather of the genre . The game featured a lone protagonist against hordes of monsters , and made use of traditional adventure game challenges such as puzzle @-@ solving and finding hidden keys to new areas . Graphically , Alone in the Dark utilized static prerendered camera views that were cinematic in nature . Although players had the ability to fight monsters as in action games , players also had the option to evade or block them . Many monsters could not be killed , and thus could only be dealt with using problem @-@ solving abilities . The game also used the mechanism of notes and books as expository devices . Many of these elements were used in later survival horror games , and thus the game is credited with making the survival horror genre possible .

In 1994 , Riverhillsoft released the first fully 3D survival horror game , Doctor Hauzer , for the 3DO . Both the player character and the environment are rendered entirely in polygons , while allowing the player to switch the view between three different perspectives : third @-@ person , first @-@ person , and overhead view . In a departure from most other survival horror games before and after it , Doctor Hauzer lacks any enemies ; the main threat is instead the sentient house that the game takes place in , with the player having to survive the house 's traps and solve puzzles . It also uses background music that heightens tension and changes depending on the situation , and the sound of the player character 's echoing footsteps can change depending on the surface ; these would later be used in Resident Evil . The game is today considered a formative step in the creation of the survival horror genre , improving on Alone in the Dark .

In 1995 , WARP 's horror adventure game D featured a first @-@ person perspective , CGI full @-@ motion video , gameplay that consisted entirely of puzzle @-@ solving , and taboo content such as cannibalism . The same year , Human Entertainment 's Clock Tower was a survival horror game that employed point @-@ and @-@ click graphic adventure gameplay and a deadly stalker known as Scissorman that chases players throughout the game . The game introduced stealth game elements , and was unique for its lack of combat , with the player only able to run away or outsmart Scissorman in order to survive . It features up to nine different possible endings .

The term " survival horror " was first used by Capcom to market their 1996 release , Resident Evil . Resident Evil adopted several features seen in Alone in the Dark , including its cinematic fixed camera angles and some of its puzzle @-@ solving challenges . The control scheme in Resident Evil also became a staple of the genre , and future titles imitated its challenge of rationing very limited resources and items . The game 's commercial success is credited with helping the PlayStation become the dominant game console , and also led to a series of Resident Evil films .

Many games have tried to replicate the successful formula seen in Resident Evil , and every subsequent survival horror game has arguably taken a stance in relation to it .

= = = Golden age (1996 ? 2004) = = =

The success of Resident Evil in 1996 was responsible for its template being used as the basis for a wave of successful survival horror games , many of which were referred to as " Resident Evil clones . " The golden age of survival horror started by Resident Evil reached its peak around the turn of the millennium with Silent Hill , followed by a general decline a few years later . Among the Resident Evil clones at the time , there were several survival horror titles that stood out , such as Clock Tower 2 (1996) and Clock Tower Ghost Head (1998) for the PlayStation . These Clock Tower games proved to be hits , capitalizing on the success of Resident Evil while staying true to the graphic @-@ adventure gameplay of the original Clock Tower rather than following the Resident Evil formula . Another survival horror title that differentiated itself was Corpse Party (1996) , an indie , psychological horror adventure game created using the RPG Maker engine . Much like Clock Tower and later Haunting Ground (2005) , the player characters in Corpse Party lack any means of defending themselves ; the game also featured up to 20 possible endings . However , the game would not be released in Western markets until 2011 . Another game similar to Clock Tower Series of games and Haunting Ground , which was also inspired by Resident Evil 's Success is the Korean game known as White Day : A Labyrinth named School (2001) , this game was reportedly so scary that the developers had to release several patches adding multiple difficulty options , the game was slated for localization in 2004 but was cancelled , building on its previous success in Korea and interest , a remake has been developed in 2015 . Riverhillsoft 's Overblood , released in 1996 , is considered one of the first survival horror games to make use of a fully three @-@ dimensional virtual environment , second only to Riverhillsoft 's own Doctor Hauzer in 1994 . The Note in 1997 and Hellnight in 1998 experimented with using a real @-@ time 3D first @-@ person perspective rather than pre @-@ rendered backgrounds like Resident Evil .
 In 1998 , Capcom released the successful sequel Resident Evil 2 , which series creator Shinji Mikami intended to tap into the classic notion of horror as " the ordinary made strange , " thus rather than setting the game in a creepy mansion no one would visit , he wanted to use familiar urban settings transformed by the chaos of a viral outbreak . The game sold over five million copies , proving the popularity of survival horror . That year saw the release of Square 's Parasite Eve , which combined elements from Resident Evil with the RPG gameplay of Final Fantasy . It was followed by a more action @-@ based sequel , Parasite Eve II , in 1999 . In 1998 , Galerians discarded the use of guns in favour of psychic powers that make it difficult to fight more than one enemy at a time . Also in 1998 , Blue Stinger was a fully 3D survival horror for the Dreamcast incorporating action elements from beat ' em up and shooter games .
 Konami 's Silent Hill , released in 1999 , drew heavily from Resident Evil while using realtime 3D environments in contrast to Resident Evil 's pre @-@ rendered graphics . Silent Hill in particular was praised for moving away from B movie horror elements to the psychological style seen in art house or Japanese horror films , due to the game 's emphasis on a disturbing atmosphere rather than visceral horror . The game also featured stealth elements , making use of the fog to dodge enemies or turning off the flashlight to avoid detection . The original Silent Hill is considered one of the scariest games of all time , and the strong narrative from Silent Hill 2 in 2001 has made the Silent Hill series one of the most influential in the genre . According to IGN , the " golden age of survival horror came to a crescendo " with the release of Silent Hill .
 Also in 1999 , Capcom released the original Dino Crisis , which was noted for incorporating certain elements from survival horror games . It was followed by a more action @-@ based sequel , Dino Crisis 2 , in 2000 .
 Fatal Frame from 2001 was a unique entry into the genre , as the player explores a mansion and takes photographs of ghosts in order to defeat them . The Fatal Frame series has since gained a reputation as one of the most distinctive in the genre , with the first game in the series credited as one of the best @-@ written survival horror games ever made , by UGO Networks . Meanwhile ,

Capcom incorporated shooter elements into several survival horror titles , such as 2000 's Resident Evil Survivor which used both light gun shooter and first @-@ person shooter elements , and 2003 's Resident Evil : Dead Aim which used light gun and third @-@ person shooter elements .

Western developers began to return to the survival horror formula . The Thing from 2002 has been called a survival horror game , although it is distinct from other titles in the genre due to its emphasis on action , and the challenge of holding a team together . The 2004 title Doom 3 is sometimes categorized as survival horror , although it is considered an Americanized take on the genre due to the player 's ability to directly confront monsters with weaponry . Thus , it is usually considered a first @-@ person shooter with survival horror elements . Regardless , the genre 's increased popularity led Western developers to incorporate horror elements into action games , rather than follow the Japanese survival style .

Overall , the traditional survival horror genre continued to be dominated by Japanese designers and aesthetics . 2002 's Clock Tower 3 eschewed the graphic adventure game formula seen in the original Clock Tower , and embraced full 3D survival horror gameplay . In 2003 , Resident Evil Outbreak introduced a new gameplay element to the genre : online multiplayer and cooperative gameplay . Sony employed Silent Hill director Keiichiro Toyama to develop Siren . The game was released in 2004 , and added unprecedented challenge to the genre by making the player mostly defenseless , thus making it vital to learn the enemy 's patrol routes and hide from them . However , reviewers eventually criticized the traditional Japanese survival horror formula for becoming stagnant . As the console market drifted towards Western @-@ style action games , players became impatient with the limited resources and cumbersome controls seen in Japanese titles such as Resident Evil Code : Veronica and Silent Hill 4 : The Room .

= = = Transformation (2005 ? present) = = =

In 2005 , Resident Evil 4 attempted to redefine the genre by emphasizing reflexes and precision aiming , broadening the gameplay with elements from the wider action genre . Its ambitions paid off , earning the title several Game of the Year awards for 2005 , and the top rank on IGN 's Readers ' Picks Top 99 Games list . However , this also led some reviewers to suggest that the Resident Evil series had abandoned the survival horror genre , by demolishing the genre conventions that it had established . Other major survival horror series followed suit by developing their combat systems to feature more action , such as Silent Hill Homecoming , and the 2008 version of Alone in the Dark . These changes were part of an overall trend among console games to shift towards visceral action gameplay . These changes in gameplay have led some purists to suggest that the genre has deteriorated into the conventions of other action games . Jim Sterling suggests that the genre lost its core gameplay when it improved the combat interface , thus shifting the gameplay away from hiding and running towards direct combat . Leigh Alexander argues that this represents a shift towards more Western horror aesthetics , which emphasize action and gore rather than the psychological experience of Japanese horror .

The original genre has persisted in one form or another . The 2005 release of F.E.A.R. was praised for both its atmospheric tension and fast action , successfully combining Japanese horror with cinematic action , while Dead Space from 2008 brought survival horror to a science fiction setting . However , critics argue that these titles represent the continuing trend away from pure survival horror and towards general action . The release of Left 4 Dead in 2008 helped popularize cooperative multiplayer among survival horror games , although it is mostly a first person shooter at its core . Meanwhile , the Fatal Frame series has remained true to the roots of the genre , even as Fatal Frame IV transitioned from the use of fixed cameras to an over @-@ the @-@ shoulder viewpoint . Also in 2009 , Silent Hill made a transition to an over @-@ the @-@ shoulder viewpoint in Silent Hill : Shattered Memories . This Wii effort was , however , considered by most reviewers as a return to form for the series due to several developmental decisions taken by Climax Studios . This included the decision to openly break the fourth wall by psychologically profiling the player , and the decision to remove any weapons from the game , forcing the player to run whenever they see an enemy .

Examples of independent survival horror games are the Penumbra series and Amnesia : The Dark Descent by Frictional Games , Cry of Fear by Team Psykskallar and Slender : The Eight Pages , all of which were praised for creating a horrific setting and atmosphere without the overuse of violence or gore . In 2010 , the cult game Deadly Premonition by Access Games was notable for introducing open world nonlinear gameplay and a comedy horror theme to the genre . Overall , game developers have continued to make and release survival horror games , and the genre continues to grow among independent video game developers .

Shinji Mikami , the creator of the Resident Evil franchise , released his new survival horror game The Evil Within , in 2014 . Mikami stated that his goal was to bring survival horror back to its roots (even though this is his last directorial work) , as he was disappointed by recent survival horror games for having too much action .