Justin Williams Laser Explores the "Metroidvania" Genre

Justin Williams Laser explains the oddly-named genre and lists some of his favorites.

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Justin Williams Laser points out that there are some video game genres that are self-explanatory—most of them, in fact. First-person shooters are shooting games that put you behind the camera of a first-person viewpoint. Strategy games employ some sense of strategic thought. Even games with more esoteric genre names like "platformers" can be easily sussed out: you jump on platforms. In the case of the Metroidvania genre, no amount of logical thought will lead you to the correct definition unless you know the origins of the name.

If you're at all familiar with classic video games, Justin Williams Laser explains, you might have already figured out how this genre received its name: the genre "Metroidvania" is a portmanteau of the titles of two classic video games, Metroid, and Castlevania. Justin Williams Laser points out that while the games couldn't be more different thematically (Metroid tells the story of Samus Aran, battling space pirates on an alien world in the future, while Castlevania stays firmly planted on Earth in medieval times, and documents a vampire hunter's battle against Dracula), the two shared common gameplay elements that at the time, weren't so common.

One of the first of the genre is commonly considered to be the first Metroid game. In this game, released in 1986 for the Nintendo Entertainment System, you are dropped in the middle of an enormous game map, with little to no powers of your own. The map, while open-ended and encouraging exploration, still guides the player along a "main" path, leading to new areas. In these new areas, you obtain new powers that allow you to traverse new paths and unlock new areas. Justin Williams Laser explains that this is one of the core concepts of a Metroidvania game; a game must follow these tenets to be considered part of the genre.

Justin Williams Laser clarifies that at this point in time, the term "Metroidvania" had still not been coined, as the Castlevania games being released at the same time as the original Metroid were still being made in the vein of classic platformers, where the gameplay is separated by levels, and the player generally only moved from left to right in order to progress through the game.

While the style of game Metroid introduced began gaining popularity (Justin Williams Laser points out Super Metroid, the sequel released in 1994 as an example), it wasn't until Castlevania: Symphony of the Night was released in 1997 for the PlayStation that the genre truly began taking off. It was sometime soon after this time period that the term "Metroidvania" was coined, although as Justin Williams Laser points out, no one is completely sure who originally invented the term.

Today, you can find a veritable ton of Metroidvania games of varying quality. Justin Williams Laser lists Dead Cells, Cave Story, Blasphemous, and Axiom Verge as some modern-day choices, just to name a few. One to definitely check out is Bloodstained, released in 2019 and created by Koji Igarashi, the man credited with establishing the defining features of the genre with 1997s Castlevania: Symphony of the Night.

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