

FRIDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT														JANUARY 1, 2016													
BROADCAST STATIONS														PAY CHANNELS													
CABLE STATIONS														CABLE STATIONS													
PBS KUSD 2 8 (2)	Danube: Europe's Amazon Forest, Flood and Frost	Red Star Line: A Story of Immigration Migrants come to New York (In Stereo) [S]	PBS NewsHour (N) (In Stereo) [S]	Great Performances The Vienna Philharmonic performs. (N) (In Stereo) [S]	Masterpiece Mystery! Holmes and Watson investigate a case. (N) (In Stereo) [S]	Salute-Downton Abbey	Night of the Proms	BBC World News	Charlie Rose (N) (In Stereo) [S]	Tavis Smiley [S]	America's Heartland	Dakota Life [S]	Live! Lincoln Center	KTVI 4 4 (4)	Meredith Vieira	Ellen DeGeneres	News 4	News 4	ET	Caught on Camera	Dateline NBC "Deadly Connection" [S]	News 4	Tonight Show	Seth Meyers	Daly	Extra (N)	Paid (Off Air)

Year In Review

'Witcher 3,' 'Fallout 4' Lead AP's Top 10 Games

BY LOU KESTEN
Associated Press

Associated Press video game critics Lou Kesten and Derrick J. Lang's favorite titles of the year featured monster hunters, treasure hunters, guardian spirits and murder suspects:

LOU KESTEN

- "The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt":** This role-playing drama from Poland's CD Projekt Red set a new standard for weirdness when it sent his hero in pursuit of a flying ghost fetus. For all its baroque touches, "Witcher 3" boils down to a domestic drama about a jaded warrior and his impetuous adopted daughter — and it's quite moving.
- "Fallout 4":** The latest epic from Bethesda Softworks crams in a bunch of genres — role-playing, first-person shooter, even a civilization-building simulation — and veers from hilarious black comedy to heartbreaking tragedy. It's most memorable for its haunting vision of humanity somehow surviving after nearly destroying itself.
- "Super Mario Maker":** Nintendo gives its fans all the tools they need to build two-dimensional challenges starring Mario and his crew. Somewhere out there, kids are learning the ropes on their way to designing the games we'll be talking about 20 years from now.
- "Ori and the Blind Forest":** This melancholy yet action-packed adventure follows an orphaned spirit creature as it tries to restore life to a devastated woodland. It's the year's most beautiful game —

- and one of its most challenging.
- "Her Story":** Viva Seifert plays a young wife with a missing husband in this time-hopping mystery that takes place entirely within a police interrogation room. I'm not sure it's even a "game," but creator Sam Barlow's clever plotting and Seifert's nimble performance combine to deliver a knockout tale.
 - "Rise of the Tomb Raider":** Chapter two of the franchise reboot finds young Lara Croft searching for the secret to immortality. It's at its best when the Tomb Raider is, you know, raiding tombs, with clever environmental puzzles that work your brain cells harder than your reflexes.
 - "Pillars of Eternity":** A character cursed with mysterious visions tries to find out why babies are being born without souls in this indie role-playing game from Obsidian Entertainment. Fans of old-school classics like "Baldur's Gate" and "Planescape: Torment" will feel right at home.
 - "Undertale":** This lo-fi project from Toby Fox turns game conventions upside-down. A human child is trapped underground — but instead of killing all the monsters he encounters, he can negotiate with most of them. It's a thought-provoking approach, and one I hope more big game publishers will notice.
 - "Rock Band 4":** The ultimate party game returns, inviting you to jam anew with all those fake instruments that have been gathering dust over the last five years. The ability to download songs you purchased for earlier versions is a huge bonus. ("Guitar Hero Live,"

- which streams its tunes, is pretty good, too.)
- "Until Dawn":** A bunch of teenagers plan a weekend at a secluded cabin. What could go wrong? This thriller initially looks like dozens of slasher movies, but it twists all the familiar tropes into something perversely original. Throw in a witty performance by TV's breakout star of the year, Rami Malek of "Mr. Robot," and you have a nasty little horror gem.

DERRICK J. LANG

- "Fallout 4":** Despite its unforgiving density, "Fallout 4" was the year's most captivating title. I wanted to stop returning to Bethesda Softworks' stylish version of a nuclear-ravaged Boston and the staggering array of choices it presented, but I couldn't stay away from carving out my own destiny in this special role-playing saga.
- "The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt":** From the bonus swag in the box to the gratis downloadable content, the third installment in CD Projekt Red's sweeping role-playing series is as much of a love letter to fans of monster hunter Geralt of Rivia as it is to the fantasy genre as a whole. This majestic entry should be remembered for years to come.
- "Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain":** After a stunning 28 years of crafting "Metal Gear" games, Hideo Kojima's open-world coda brought the walls surrounding protagonist Snake down for the first time. In a year oversteuffed with open-world titles, "Phantom Pain" was the most technically flawless of them all.
- "Her Story":** Sam Barlow's

For all its baroque touches, "Witcher 3" boils down to a domestic drama about a jaded warrior and his impetuous adopted daughter — and it's quite moving.

voyeuristic mystery is a rarity. The game features a provocative performance by actress Viva Seifert and gameplay that almost anyone can engage with because it involves simply searching for words on a screen. If more developers created games like "Her Story," the medium would be taken more seriously.

- "Rise of the Tomb Raider":** Lara Croft is on a roll. After a much-needed reboot of the treasure hunting franchise, developer Crystal Dynamics keenly avoids a sophomore slump with a snowy, survival-focused second installment that meticulously builds on what made 2013's "Tomb Raider" an adventure worthy of the iconic heroine.
- "Ori and the Blind Forest":** This luminescent platformer did something that no "Super Mario Bros." has ever accomplished. It made me tear up — and that's not just because it's so darn difficult. Moon Studios managed to artfully balance intricate riddle solving with an emotional tale about loss and discovery.
- "Sunset":** While most games tell war stories from behind the barrel of a gun, "Sunset" dared to do so on the other side of a mop handle. Yes, it sounds boring to play as a housekeeper tasked with cleaning — and snooping around — her boss' penthouse. Belgium developer Tale of Tales made it a strangely evoca-

tive interactive experience.

- "Splatoon":** With an overreliance on a certain bouncy plumber, Nintendo has long been guilty of playing it safe. That totally changed this year with the introduction of the loveable paint-wielding squid kids. A splashy aesthetic and adrenaline-pumping action helped "Splatoon" successfully roll over all other multiplayer shooters.
- "Batman: Arkham Knight":** Rocksteady Studios' apparent swan song in their incredible "Arkham" series finally unleashed the Dark Knight across all of Gotham — complete with the Batmobile at his disposal — without sacrificing the cerebral storytelling or majestic fluidity of its well-oiled predecessors. Ben Affleck should take note.
- "Assassin's Creed: Syndicate":** After last year's buggy and boring edition set amid the French Revolution in Paris, Ubisoft's stealth series rebounded in 2015 with a jolly jaunt to old England. A brilliant recreation of Victorian London — right down to the pubs — was a spectacular playground for quirky twin gangsters Jacob and Evie Frye.

What were your favorite games of the year? Share them on Twitter with Lou Kesten at <http://twitter.com/lkesten> and Derrick J. Lang at <http://twitter.com/derrickjlang>.

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