

# Entertainment

## 2010: A Look Back at Gaming's Five Biggest Splashes

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The year 2010 was great for video gamers.

I know my wallet was greatly dented over the past year because there were so many fantastic titles to play. And because it was so hard to play everything, I've narrowed down the list to my top five game picks of 2010.

Coming in at No. 5 is "Alan Wake," an original game that debuted in a year that featured a sea of sequels. "Alan Wake" provided gamers with a unique, psychological thriller that revived the genre and created an immersive world filled with interesting characters, a solid story and super environments. Taking place in the Pacific Northwest, "Alan Wake" is nothing but beautiful. The setting also allows the player to feel completely isolated, which gives the game a creepy atmosphere. This game is nothing short of pretty when it comes to level design. Some lip-syncing errors and rough character textures, however, pull down the presentation a bit. Even so, I was entranced with the story and loved how it was told like a TV show. The soundtrack and dynamite vocal acting also gave this game a polished feel. The gameplay is a bit repetitive but the main focus is the wonderful, creepy story told by Remedy Entertainment. "Alan Wake" turned out to be a fresh experience that I hope to see re-created in the coming years.

No. 4 on the list is "God of War III." The God of War series is known for its gameplay but not for its characters. The opening scene of "God of War III" is truly one of the best that I have ever seen and it rightly sets the tone for the game. The gameplay is truly stellar and engaging. In other words, I never got tired of fighting. Each boss battle was a unique experience that delivered in one way or another. My favorite part was using the items attained from certain gods after killing them. The items became tools that helped your quest. "God of War III" set the bar high for a lot of games thanks to its sleek presentation, great controls and memorable boss battles. The game created some fond memories.

Third place on my list is Rockstar Studios' "Red Dead Redemption." Rockstar has a reputation for creating fantastic games. They turned out the masterful "Grand Theft Auto" series, the fun school game "Bully," and have always delivered immersive, full experiences. As a sandbox game, "Red Dead Redemption" has a compelling storyline about a man who tries to escape his past.

Over the course of 15-20 hours, a player

takes character John Marston on a quest to free his family and clear his name. The cool game features include hunting cougars, bears and deer and playing a bounty hunter. Hopefully, there will be a sequel.

Coming in at a very close second is "Halo: Reach." I've always been a bit of a Halo fan (ever since the first installment in the series came out). I recall playing "Halo 1" and "Halo 2" with 15 friends in a basement – the center of our universe at the time (it was when we were in middle school, after all). Fast forward six years later and the series is still my favorite first-person shooter. By the way, I loved the 2001 novel, "Halo: The Fall of Reach," but loved the video game even more.

The gameplay for "Halo: Reach" was so crisp and perfect that it easily dwarfs any version of "Call of Duty."

For "Halo: Reach," the presentation values in the campaign are the best for any FPS. I was so glad to see Bungie stick with character development after "Halo 3: ODST."

"Halo: Reach" has jaw-dropping art that may be the best I've ever seen. Lush backdrops really complement the mood set in the fantastic campaign. Also, the difficulty was a treat and really put the player into the game. It wasn't too easy – it was just right. "Halo: Reach" is a close second for my "Game of The Year."

Which leaves my pick for the No. 1 title for 2010: "Mass Effect 2."

This game from BioWare blew me away. I wasn't a big fan of the first version (it took me three tries to get through). But IGN's continued coverage and its reviews convinced me to finish the first installment and later pick up "Mass Effect 2."

Turns out this was the best decision that I had made all year. I spent so many hours in the Mass Effect universe and honestly cannot wait to go back.

A compelling narrative, excellent gameplay and fantastic characters make this game the best of 2010. Add some DLC and you have a masterpiece.

It's very rare that I'll get wrapped in one game so much. But when one comes along and makes you do as much research after you've beaten it, you know that the game is better than good. "Mass Effect 2" is the no-brainer, no-doubt-about-it pick as my game of the year.

As I have said earlier, 2010 was an amazing year for video games. Players saw great game after great game come out and "wow" us. After such a fantastic year, it's going to be a tough 2011. But with titles such as "Uncharted 3," "Mass Effect 3," and "Little Big Planet 2," coming out, the New Year should be interesting.

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