

# LIFE IS STRANGE (SPOILER-FREE)

*NOTE: This is a review of this game's first release, not the remastered version. Elements of the game that are the same in both versions of the game are purely coincidental.*

*Life is Strange* is a game that was not highly anticipated from its beginning, yet became a diamond in the rough. *Life is Strange* is a chapter formatted video game franchise that has three main trilogies with one spin-off connected to the first game. It was developed by two studios, Deck Nine founded by Mark Lyons and DONTNOD by Oskar Guilbert, its first episode "Chrysalis" published on January 29, 2015 by Square Enix.

The concept of the game was inspired by *Remember Me*, one of DONTNOD's first works. After releasing a heavy combat game, the company wanted to take on a slower, more narrative, consequence-based game. *Life is Strange's* story was first launched into process during April of 2013 with a small team working on it. Their sights were not set on success or target audiences but on the story the game desires to tell. Stephen King's works had inspired the plot and universe of the game.

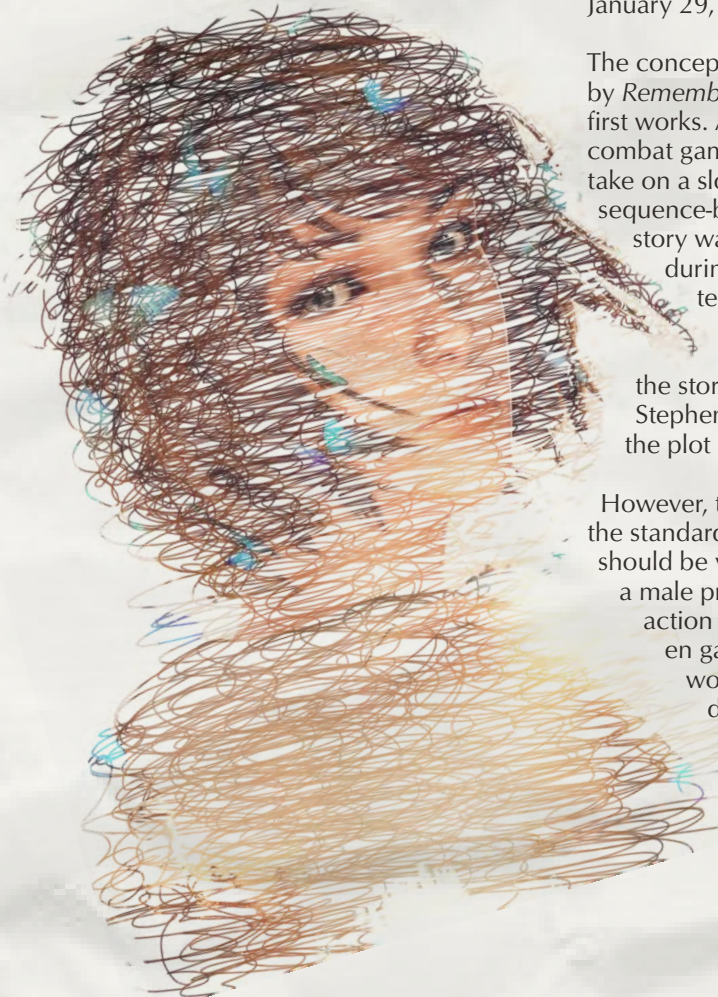
However, the concepts did not meet the standards of what society thought should be video games: there was not a male protagonist and not many action scenes as it was a story-driven game. The little fight scenes wouldn't stimulate enough dopamine to keep audiences interested, and the long-paced story wouldn't keep the audience's attention. Fortunately, on the brink of bankruptcy, Square Enix decided

to collaborate with them on the idea.

What was a surprise it was to see the video game skyrocket even as it became less known as the years passed. *Life is Strange's* art style was unique, it brought light to societal topics, and its story was engrossing. It went as far as to win awards such as Performance of the Year (VA: Ashley Burch), Best Episodic Adventure in PlayStation's official Magazine in 2015, and Best Story at 2016's British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards (BAFTA).

The game's design focuses on a scrapbook element, with protagonist Maxine Caulfield writing down the events of her life in a journal. The first episode, "Chrysalis", entails her life in Blackwell Academy. In this episode a storm is brewing that threatens Max's hometown, Arcadia Bay, and she has been thrown back in time to stop it. She is a photography student who discovers she has the ability to rewind time. After seeing her close friend, Chloe Price, get shot in the school bathroom, Max triggers her ability in an attempt to stop the scene. The game has a light hearted atmosphere before engaging in serious topics that surround main antagonist, Nathan Prescott.

The option to rewind time in this game seems fresh and thrilling! However, this special ability in actual gameplay just seems stagnant and very slow-paced. Honestly, having to go back in time just to pick a "better" option, only to arrive at a destination that doesn't seem all that





(Based on gameplay experience from Steam), Windows 10)

different from the first time, led to a lot of missed opportunities. For example, this often led to interactions with other characters that felt not as impactful, it was like watching them live out their life with Max not being significant in their life.

The game's dialogue writing isn't all that great. The spoken lines are often a poor attempt at being interactive and funny. How the characters execute each line is not all that enthusiastic and makes the audience shudder in embarrassment. The game tries very hard to immerse itself into "teenage language" with its horrible slang, clumsy pop culture references, and awkward jokes. It sounds like an outdated adult trying to fit in. While the overall storyline is great, the dialogue makes me internally scream. It would not have been much extra effort for the game writers to research how teenagers talked during the 2010 decade.

Even though this game has weaknesses, I do think the game is worth it to play - I give it 4 stars!

There are things to enjoy here: The story tackles mature topics and the game has a relaxing soundtrack! The character designs are decent, though they could have been improved. Characters movements, for example, are a little off-putting because their voices don't exactly sync up with their lips. The voice acting was not dull and was emotional.

The game is extremely engaging, almost like watching a movie. *Life is Strange* is extremely good at setting the mood with its music and beautiful scenery. Though the characters are cliché, their stories are interesting to dive into, and have traits that are endearing. This remains an incredible narrative driven game, which I highly recommend to those who don't like combat games.

**By: Cassiopeia Le,  
Editor-In-Training**