I have a very comprehensive history as a critic. Since childhood, I have loved consuming all kinds of media, from books to movies and TV shows to video games. As a fairly quiet child who kept to themselves a lot, I loved immersing myself in brand-new worlds while experiencing different kinds of narrative-driven media. To this day, I prefer to watch movies or play games without much interruption so I can be thoroughly captivated by whatever I'm experiencing. I had an older brother who introduced me to the internet and the world of media criticism via sites like IGN and GameSpot.

By the time I was ten years old, I was checking out sites like IGN every day, keeping up with each new video game and movie review, even if I did not know about that media beforehand. Around this time, I also gained a deep interest in video games and the games industry. I continued to explore that space, going as far as to read independent news outlets. In high school, I saw a post on Twitter that DualShockers, an independent game website I frequented, was looking for new writers.

With no experience, I whipped up a very basic website and wrote a review of one of my favorite PC titles: Game Dev Tycoon. That review is quite rudimentary by my standards today, as it was fairly surface-level and emulating the style of review I saw on sites like IGN and DualShockers. It was enough to get me recruited as a volunteer writer, though. Within a month, I published my first official review on DualShockers, which was for the console port of Pac-Man 256. In the almost nine years since then, I have reviewed nearly 200 games.

That experience has caused me to intimately learn more about who I am as a critic. I consider my style to be more methodical and holistic because I like understanding the context within which a game is made and then expressing that to my readers. I then very clearly break down the game I'm analyzing piece by piece. By the time someone is done reading one of my reviews, I want the reader to understand what a piece of media was trying to accomplish from a broader point of view, even if I do not think whatever I am critiquing fully achieved that goal.

That contextually-driven perspective allows me to stand out from other game reviews, which are sometimes driven more by personal narratives established by their authors or simple feature breakdowns that don't tackle the subject matter on a deeper level. Because of the nature of my job, I don't find myself attracted to a specific genre. That said, I tend to prioritize gameplay first; if a game is narrative-driven, I analyze how the developers attempted to intertwine narrative and gameplay compellingly.

Throughout the rest of this newsletter, I plan on tackling critical analysis of a video game like I would in a review for Digital Trends. At the end of this journey, I will have a review that is

nearly twice as long as my typical published reviewer's, and I hope that length offers me the space to make even more profound, comprehensive insights into what I'm analyzing.