# Monster Train Postmortem

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CEO, Shiny Shoe

80

440

20

20

4

20 10

5 30

0 10 45 -25

1 5

3

2 +3

10 +5

2

Restore

Train Stew

Restore

Train Steward

Restore 2 hea

Restore 2 he
Apply Rege

End Turn

- Founded in 2011
- 14 full time
- Monster Train most known original

# Monster Train Postmortem

## Pipelines and Process

# Team-wide Prototyping

Goal: find a promising concept in a genre the team likes

Multiple simultaneous prototypes across four sub-teams

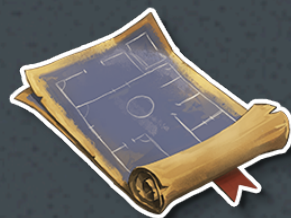Space to explore varied concepts, pivoting as needed
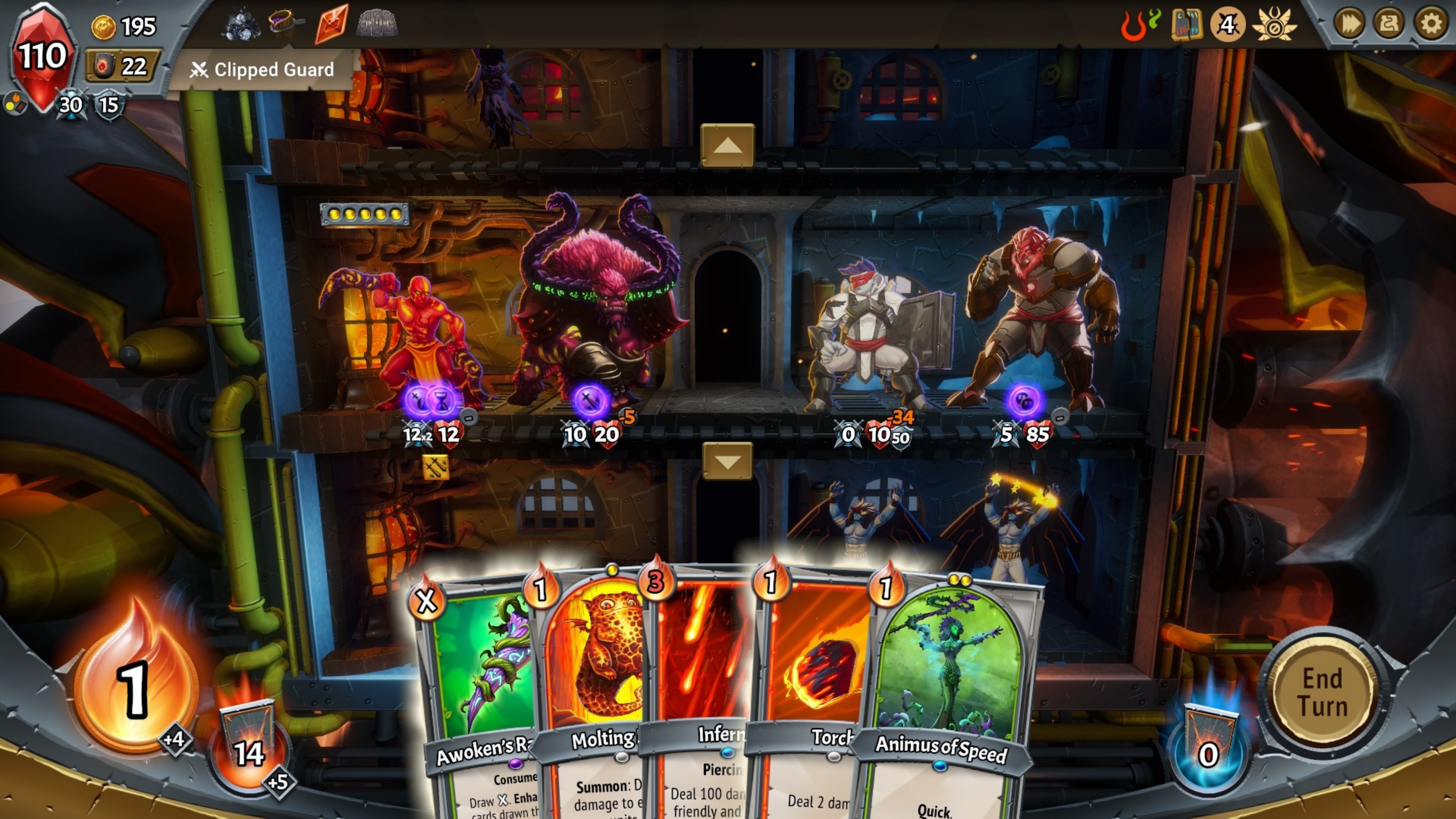
# Process: Pitching

Goal: raise capital for production

Built prototype to a "first playable" with better visuals

Defined scope, team size, milestones, and ultimately budget

Track a pitch pipeline

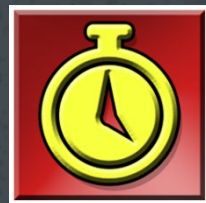| Target | Phase | Heat | Last Contact | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pub A | CONTACTED | COLD | 2019/2/14 | Waiting... |
| Pub B | PITCHED | WARM | 2019/2/16 | Seems interested... |
| Pub C | PASSED | DEAD | 2019/2/13 | Oh well... |
| Other Financier | NEGOTIATING | HOT | 2019/2/11 | Recoup terms? |

# Process: Establishing a Culture of Feedback

Goal: encourage team to always speak up with feedback

Repeatedly ask for feedback from whole team

Scheduled recurring playtests

In-game feedback tool

# Tool: In-game Feedback

Goal: easily share feedback with team

Report bugs, suggest improvements, give praise

**F8** Persistent on-screen call to action

Captured screenshot, log file, save game

80
50
16
20
0/100

0/1

⚔ The First Defense

Waves remaining: 3

1

0 5 25  4 1

3 +3
11 +5

Train Ste...
Resto...
Queen's In...
Queen's In...
Shardtail Queen

Restore 2 h...
Apply Reg...

Summon: D...
damage to t...
enemy...

Summon: D...
damage to t...
enemy...

0

End Turn
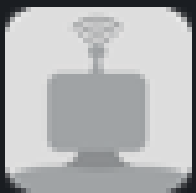
**bot** `APP` Today at 11:58 AM

🤖 **NEW FEEDBACK** 🤖
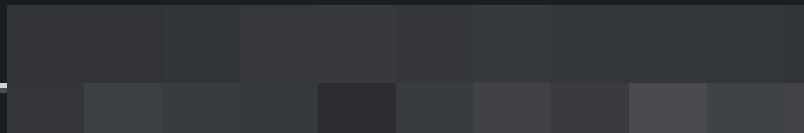
**User:** shinymark (Steam-███████████████)
**Environment:** Development
**Build:** 12847 (███████████████████/job/Shiny%20Shoe/job/hades-client/job/master/12847/)
**Run ID:** aee21cf9-5d92-4f17-ac28-bbf438d21929
**Time:** 2021-05-23 11:58 AM

---

**Comment:**

Waow this card looks so kewl! Good job!

3 replies

**feedbackbot** APP · 10 minutes ago

2021-05-23-11-57-05 ▾

```
1   2021-05-23T18:57:05 00 DEBUG [Engine] Booting AppManager on build #12847
2   2021-05-23T18:57:05 00 DEBUG [Engine] OS: Windows 10  (10.0.0) 64bit
3   2021-05-23T18:57:05 00 DEBUG [Engine] System Language: English
4   2021-05-23T18:57:05 00 DEBUG [Engine] CPU: 11th Gen Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-11700KF @ 3.60GHz - Cores:
    16 - Freq: 3600
5   2021-05-23T18:57:05 00 DEBUG [Engine] System Memory: 32443
6
```

**feedbackbot** APP · 10 minutes ago

save-singlePlayer ▾

```
1   {"runType":"Class","buildVersion":
    {"number":"12847","platform":"WindowsPlayer"},"analyticsPlayerId":"Steam-
    ████████████","analyticsPlayerFriendlyName":"shinymark","id":"aee21cf9-5d92-4f17-ac28-
    bbf438d21929","saveVersion":65,"score":0,"challengeId":"","pubsubChannel":"","pubsubPresenceTimeout
    ":0,"pubsubPresenceInterval":0,"initiatorData":
    {"shareCode":"","analyticsPlayerId":"","analyticsPlayerFriendlyName":""},"startingConditions":
    {"seed":497150984,"isBattleMode":false,"isFtueRun":false,"battleModeStartTime":"","battleModeTimerS
    calar":0.0,"battleWarmup":0,"version":"12847","mainClassInfo":{"className":"c595c344-d323-4cf1-
    9ad6-41edc2aebbd0","classLevel":10,"championIndex":1,"random":false},"subclassInfo":
```

**feedbackbot** APP · 10 minutes ago

capture ▾



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# Process: Scheduling
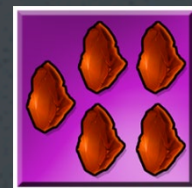
Goal: prioritize well, avoid blockages

Always focus on "what matters most right now"

Backburner or cut features that sounded good on paper but don't seem important now

Pivot, but keep in mind contractual deliverables

Organize work into weekly buckets / sprints

| | 5/24/2019 | 5/31/2019 | 6/7/2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Andrew | Major system designs | Class 4 & Class 5 card/blessing design, battles | Class 1 & 2 changes, Blessing impl |
| Brendan | Unit upgrade, event rework | Event rework, lore/visual design | Events, lore/visual design |
| Brian | Class 3 | Class 3 | Class 4 |
| Rose | Compendium | Compendium | Compendium, MP presence |
| Muhammad | Mutator system, Daily Run | Subclass tweaks, Card / blessing mechanics, flip sides | VACATION |
| Steve | Run sharing backend, deep links | Exploration of sync MP elements | Rich presence, BE environments |
| Owen | Animation system | Animation system | Seed determinism |
| Yujin | Train model, outsource prep | Train model, outsource prep, flip sides | Outsource prep |
| Loy | Spells | Spells | Character |
| William | - | Room concepts | Room concepts |

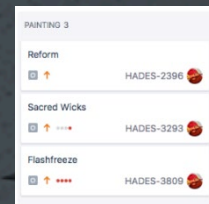SHINY SHOE

# Process: Art Pipeline

Goal: build a lot of high-quality assets without a large internal team

Define style guide, aka the project's "art bible"
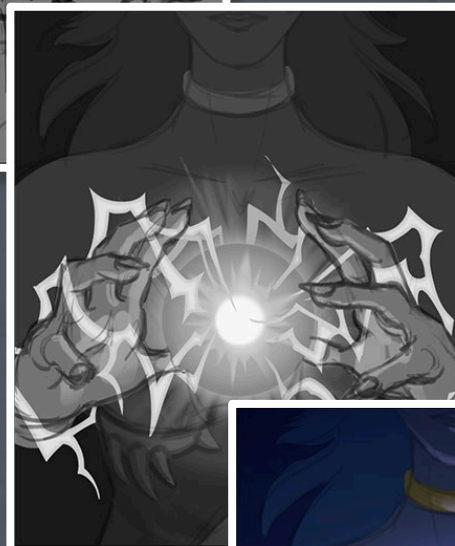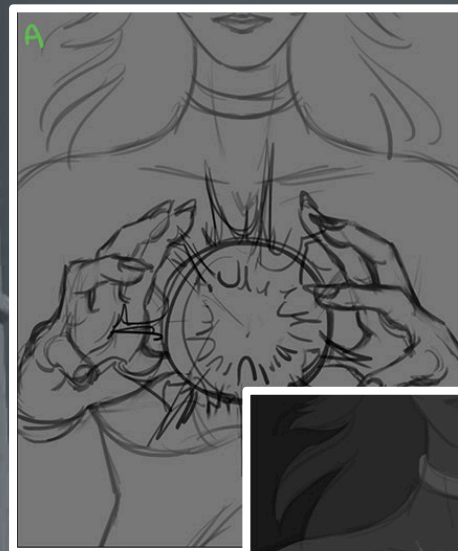
Define clear pipeline steps for each type of asset

Kanban board to track status of each asset type

Review gates at appropriate steps

# Art Pipeline Steps for a Spell Card



**Ancient Synergy**

Deal damage to the front enemy unit equal to 2x the number of spells in your deck, three times.

SPELL

- Design – paper description, lore, visual ideas
- Review gate
- Sketch
- Review gate
- Primary Painting
- Review gate
- Painting Polish
- Integration & Card Animation
- In-game VFX

# Process: Design Iteration

Goal: embrace emergent fun

Double down on what is working and drop what isn't

Any time a major pivot was agreed upon, immediately update master schedule

# Hellvent

Duplicate any card except your Champion.

## Cuttlehex

Endless.

End of Turn: Apply **Frozen** to a random card in your hand.

5 | MAGE | 3

## Fledgling Imp

**Summon:** Apply **Rage 5** to friendly units.

1 | IMP | 1

## Fledgling Imp

**Summon:** Apply **Rage 5** to friendly units.

1 | IMP | 1

## Imp-portant Work

Sacrifice Imp.

Gain 1🔥. Draw 1.

SPELL

## Horned Warrior

**1**

Multistrike 1.

**15**x2    DEMON    **5**

## Branded Warrior

**1**

Rage 4.

**Slay**: Apply **Rage 3** to friendly units.

**10**    DEMON    **5**

# Process: Tech

Goal: iteration speed, knowledge sharing, build stability

Pull request workflow

Automated collection and reporting of errors

Continuous, automated builds

**bot** APP 5:00 AM

**Development**
*Top Errors for 1/28/2020*

**#1** | Occurrences: 3 | Game versions: 7023 7028 | Browse files...
NullReferenceException
RewardDetailsUI.Clear ()

**#2** | Occurrences: 2 | Game versions: 7023 | Browse files...
ArgumentOutOfRangeException: Index was out of range. Must be non-negative and less than the size of the collection.
Parameter name: index

**#3** | Occurrences: 1 | Game versions: 7051 | Browse files...
NullReferenceException: Object reference not set to an instance of an object
SaveManager.NewProviderAvailable (IProvider provider)

**#4** | Occurrences: 1 | Game versions: 7051 | Browse files...
NullReferenceException: Object reference not set to an instance of an object
HeroManager.Start ()

**#5** | Occurrences: 1 | Game versions: 7051 | Browse files...
NullReferenceException: Object reference not set to an instance of an object
RoomState.Setup (CombatManager combatManager, SaveManager saveManager, MonsterManager monsterManager, PreferencesManager preferencesManager, RoomData roomData, RoomUI roomUI, SpawnPointUI spawnPointUIPrefab, UnityEngine.GameObject setPlacementPreviewUnselectedPrefab, UnityEngine.GameObject setPlacementPreviewSelectedPrefab)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5245192 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 4:23pm | Build-9559 |
| 5245109 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 3:59pm | Build-9558 |
| 5245071 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 3:46pm | Build-9557 |
| 5244928 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 3:02pm | Build-9556 |
| 5244772 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 2:16pm | Build-9555 |
| 5244674 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 1:48pm | Build-9554 |
| 5244220 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 11:30am | Build-9553 |
| 5244184 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 11:17am | Build-9552 |
| 5244087 | Jul 2, 2020 @ 10:48am | Build-9551 |

SHINY SHOE

# Process: Alpha & Beta Testing

Goal: fix all recurring player complaints before launch

Ran both a private and public beta

Near daily updates for private beta

In-game feedback feature paid off massively
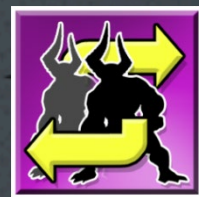
Every few days organized all feedback, sorted it by frequency, prioritized it, decided assignments

Professional QA running simultaneously

# Process: Community Management

**Goal:** stay directly connected to our players

Discord main community gathering place

**Mods** Set rules, select moderators

**Shiny Shoe** Empower team members to engage with community

Weekly developer streams
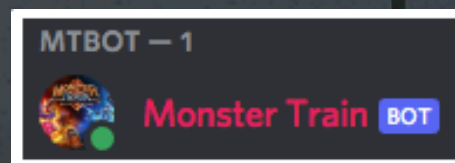
MTBOT — 1
**Monster Train** BOT Discord bot to aid gameplay conversations

**Branded Warrior**

**Rage 4**.

**Slay**: Apply **Rage 3** to friendly units.

> *It is said that no one can match a fully matured Hellhorned Demon in combat. I have yet to see this proven false. Though I can't say I'm seeking out that opportunity...*

1

Branded Warrior

Rage 4.

**Slay**: Apply **Rage 3** to friendly units.

10   DEMON   5

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# How did it turn out?

## GLOBAL TOP SELLERS

All Products

| enter search term or tag | | Search | Sort by | Relevance ▼ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

19,906 results match your search. 699 titles have been excluded based on your preferences. However, none of these titles would appear on the first page of results.                    ⚙ ▼

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monster Train | May 21, 2020 | 👍 | -10% | ~~$24.99~~ $22.49 |
| No Man's Sky  VR Supported | Aug 12, 2016 | 〜 | -50% | ~~$59.99~~ $29.99 |
| Sid Meier's Civilization VI - New Frontier Pass | May 20, 2020 | 〜 | | $39.99 |
| Sid Meier's Civilization VI : Platinum Edition | | 👍 | | $47.04 |
| The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - Game of the Year E... | Aug 30, 2016 | 👍 | -70% | ~~$49.99~~ $14.99 |
| PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS | Dec 21, 2017 | 〜 | | $29.99 |
| The International 10 Battle Pass | May 25, 2020 | 👍 | | $9.99 |
| Terraria | May 16, 2011 | 👍 | | $9.99 |
| Shadow of the Tomb Raider: Definitive Edition | | 👍 | -82% | ~~$109.96~~ $19.58 |
| Dying Light Enhanced Edition | | 👍 | -70% | ~~$59.99~~ $17.99 |

24ᵀᴴ ANNUAL AWARDS

## DICE
### FINALIST

PC GAMER
BEST CARD GAME
2020

RECENT REVIEWS:     Overwhelmingly Positive
ALL REVIEWS:     Overwhelmingly Positive

# Summary

- Prototyping & pitching

- Culture of feedback & tools

- Flexible production pivots

- Well defined and efficient art pipeline

- Tech focus on iteration speed & stability

- Pre-release feedback from betas

- Community management via Discord

Guide to the Rings of Hell

1  Limbo

2  The Cliffs of Fallen Souls

3  Bogwurm's Remains

4  The Waxen Arches