No Man’s Sky:

An Unexpected Odyssey

By Gehennakat

 When No Man’s Sky (NMS) was first being marketed in 2016 there were a number promises that were made by developer Hello Games just never materialized. I bought the initial game and played for a several hours before becoming frustrated at the network (a lot of game crashes), the lack of details, no multiplayer. I chalked it up to a bad buy and moved on with my gaming, and tossed NMS to the discard pile, the Island of Misfit Toys, for games, if you will.

 Now we fast-forward 2 years later and I start to hear rumblings about how much better its gotten, so I decide to check out the rumors on my new PS4 Pro. Now the first thing I realize is that multiplayer has been added and prompts you to continue your mission (mine), or join another. I picked up exactly on the planet I had left on working my way to the center of the universe. They call this the Atlas Path. I won’t rehash the entire experience (or try not to), but in summation you are an explorer known as the traveler who is basically tasked with reaching the center of the universe by following the Atlas path. The Atlas path is really the only main “story” where you follow waypoints that lead to Atlas stations in different galaxies as you make the pilgrimage to the center. You begin equipped with a multitool, an exosuit (for protection), a starship (once you repair it) and your wits.

 Before we get any further let me just say this game is significantly better now and runs (since patch 1.20) 1080p natively, at 60fps on the PS4 Pro (with 4k support too). That being said, ***this game is not for everyone***. It is not an action fest, there’s no arcing storyline dialogue (some of it is pretty entertaining though), or over the top gore kills. It is just a satisfying sci-fi odyssey. Also, if you are a completionist, you may want to let your friends and family know you’re going to be gone for a while.

You can literally create and do whatever you want. All your enhancements and gear is color-coded and skill based like most RPG’s. You don’t even need to do anything with the Atlas when you first spawn just take in your first world. The great thing is from that moment; the way the game turns out is up to you. Let’s take an example of customization based on play style. Your exosuit and multitool can be upgraded with all manner of enhancements. Depending on how you play you can tailor it to a ridiculous level. My multitool doesn’t have a lot of armament options aside from the main mining laser, a terrain manipulator (digs holes), and geology cannon (digs really big holes fast). I have a couple military add-ons in case things get bad, but I focus on exploration, mining, and research to get my tech and make my money (credits).

 My exosuit is similar in build, with my scanner array mostly upgraded to maximize scan times with minimal recharge so I know where the most valuable things are nearby. With the nature of a new planets’ atmosphere in question I make sure I have environmental upgrades, on my exosuit, to protect me in all environments. I may not have a blaster, but I can skip on the surface of Hoth without worrying about freezing to death, or mine rare elements of a moon that literally rains toxic waste. That being said, if you want to watch the worlds you discover burn, you can certainly tailor yourself to be damage focused. Your starship can be the same way, different ship types for combat versus hauling cargo, with different armaments, shields, warp drives, etc. The addition of functional base building, and creating warp gates, makes traveling across the universe easy and lets you save certain places that are rich in resources that may very scarce later.

We haven’t even discussed freighters and frigates, new alien species you meet, learning languages, story quests, uploading research data for everything you scan, the list goes on. The amount of side quests is limited to the size of your universe. There’s definitely a sense awe about the game now when you’re traveling around unexplored galaxies. You can focus on following the Atlas route marked on your star map, or go wherever you want. The environments are procedurally generated, to a degree, so every solar system is always a fresh experience yielding new treasures, resources, or even foes.