

The Mic Drop, Season Three, Episode Four: Game Review: Hollow Knight

Larry Hi there. My name is Larry Achiampong. And welcome to The Mic Drop. The Mic Drop is a collaborative podcast with the sole purpose of creating a space for migrants by migrants exercising an agency in exchange for a shared space of collective thinking, storytelling and debate. It is created for a long term collaboration between members of Many Hands One Heart and myself, supported by hearts of grass. In this special gaming episode, I'll be talking with Arthur Britney about Hollow Knight, a 2017 Metroidvania Action Adventure title developed and published by Team Cherry.

Britney Hello, everyone. I'm Arthur Britney, and I'm here with my big friend, Larry. Hello, Larry. How you doing?

Larry I'm good. Arthur Britney, it's so good to be talking with you. It's been almost a year, right? It's been quite a while. And. Yeah, I'm so excited and happy to be talking with you today.

Britney I know it's been a while. I can't believe it. Times go so fast. You know it. It's crazy because I just realize I've been working in this project around three years now. Like, Oh my God.

Britney It's three years.

Larry Three years. Wow. Four years is in some ways it's not that long, but in other ways it's a very long time, you know?

Britney It's more longer than my longest relationship, I would say.

Larry Wow. Yeah. In which case, it's a very long time.

Britney It's very long.

Britney Yeah.

Larry But I'm just so excited to be talking with you today and. Yeah, well, what have we got in store for those listening?

Britney Right. So today we are going to have our gaming dose. Yes. And I'm really excited to talk about this video game that actually you introduced me, Larry. This is a video game because, you know, I'm a little bit of a mainstream gamer. You know, I love Nintendo and that kind of stuff. And honestly, I just played Nintendo video games like a thousand times, you know, just recently play again, The Legend of Zelda that we're on the Nintendo Switch, expansion pack. And I'm like, Oh, my God, I love this so good. And it like, it's like, difficult for me to get into new, new IP and that kind of stuff. But after this big introduction today, we are going to talk about Hollow Knight.

Larry Oh, yeah. You know what? I'm so glad that you that you said that that you admitted that to me, that you find it difficult to get into new IP. Because I have to admit that myself. I was actually going to say to you, you know what? Like, if I'm honest, I haven't played that many, you know, new games per se. But you know what? I feel like the more people that I talk to who play games and enjoy video games, the more I realise it's a similar thing because I guess nowadays compared to I don't know, let's say ten, 15, maybe 20 years

ago, you know, you wouldn't get so many games being released, you know, week by week, whereas now, yes, it's so difficult to keep up. And I mean, you know, for those that are listening, I'm I'm actually looking in Arthur Britney's amazing room and an incredible display of games like a beautiful mountain of games. And I'm just kind of thinking, actually, I've got a mountain of games I have to deal with that I've got to play for. And there's just no time in the day for it. Right. So I get it. You know, like you play the IP that you and for those that don't understand IP meaning you know intellectual property we play the that the games that we know the characters that we know right because of that familiarity. And we know that we're not kind of going to get let down in terms of quality. But I honestly, I'm appreciative that you trusted me in this case with Hollow Knight because it's completely new to you, right?

Britney Yes, in a lot of sense, as you know, because this is a metroidvania, which for our listeners, Metroidvania is a kind of game that is it's was originated in nineties I think.

Larry Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of like eighties eighties and really pushed. Yeah.

Britney I mean they had the term Metroidvania In the nineties. Yeah. Because the games that they are originated, it was from the eighties and nineties which is Metroid in Castlevania. So it's like a mashup of the characteristics or the principal themes that of these videogames that can create a military base. Yes. So basically it's like kind of like open world, but it's not an open world.

Larry It could be

Britney In, in simple words. So.

Larry Yes, yes.

Britney Hollow Knight, it's really great and it's a really good introduction to Metroidvania. And honestly, oh, when you talk about Hollow Knight, it's really difficult to find a moment where should I start, Should I started for for the art work, you know, the visuals. Should I start for how difficult it is? Should I start by the lore because these are the three things we need. We need to discuss.

Larry There are a lot of things maybe maybe we start with the lore, you know, because then it just kind of gives people a bit of an understanding of what they're surrounded by. I mean, I'm happy to kick that off. I'm sure Arthur Britney, you probably you know, you're a bit better with that. But because it was a little while since I completed it, because I think I completed it before you did. And so when I was near finishing, I was like, look, I'm not going to score this game for you. But essentially Hollow Knight is set within a kind of fictional realm of of insects you play. And insects either. You know, The Hollow Knight, the title of the game, this character who essentially is moving across a range of different environments, which is within I'm trying to remember the name of the that the city I think was a hallownest. Yeah.

Britney Hallownest. Right. Yes.

Larry Yeah. And essentially what you're trying to do is you're trying to, I think, kind of bringing back a moment of time of of of of control in which, you know, that the legend of this Hollow Knight, as it were, you know, kind of like rained forth and there was kind of like a sense of order within the land. But you can see you can notice that from environment to

environment, there's somewhat and these aspects of disarray, there are different characters with different problems and issues or, you know, little puzzles and things that you have to solve. And what's really interesting, the thing that I found really interesting within the law of that is obviously it's set within this insects kind of kingdom. And each of these different types of insects, you know, within like different types of classes or what have you. So, you know, I'm trying to remember the that that that the place that you just mentioned Arthur Britnet. What's the name of that again?

Britney City of Tears.

Larry The City of Tears. Yeah. So I think I guess the City of Tears is essentially where like some of like the upper class kind of people are, for example. Right. And, you know, if you spend time actually talking to the characters, you really find and get a real kind of like depth for these stories of people's pain and also even the experiences of some of their own people. So there's a cultural kind of set of conversations that are taking place as well, even conversations that relate gender and something that was as well. Like I actually did some research when when I was playing the game and I did find out actually that apparently The Hollow Knight is actually genderless. And then also, if you're and I'm trying to remember the the name of that, the character, but there is a there is a character I think I'm trying to remember. I think that the blacksmith who is a queer character actually, and they have a relationship with someone else in the game, I forget their name. I think they they teach the the Hollow Knight certain techniques. I don't know.

Britney Oh, yeah, yeah, I know. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know who you're talking about. Then what is the guy that the the the master of the.

Larry Yes, the.

Britney Master, the teacher and the other one is there is there is the one that made the the needle.

Larry Indeed. Yes. Yes, precisely. And you know, and and I just I really found that beautiful. It was amazing. It was just, you know, hearing about these these these two people and that there's the that the way it's written is they don't it you know, they don't allude to the fact that they're in a relationship not until like you kind of like progress and get the things that, you know kind of like progressed the story and I guess I just really enjoyed that. You know, like from the point of view of somebody who, you know, I'm, I wouldn't say like a massive kind of like literature like person, but I love I love comics and you know that the way that the the game is designed, the illustrations, for example, which I'm sure we'll get into, is, is incredible. So you merged that with the beauty of the, uh, of, of the, the written language of the characters and so on. It's just, it's really, really compelling stuff. I mean, it, I think when I looked last time I checked my, my game log, I'd spent about 50 hours playing the game like I spent a long time playing the game. How long did you spend in the end?

Britney Right in for like the main campaign? He was around 32 hours, something like that for the main campaign. And then you got the DLC, the side quests and everything. Yeah, I ended up around 60 hours too. Wow. Yeah. Because there are many things to do. Many, many loads to do and yeah. To not confuse a little bit more people. I think we can mix up now. You mentioned about the different places. Yes. With how great are the visuals on Hollow Knight, you know, so yeah, unbelievable. And you know, the thing is, I am quite picky in terms of video games. I don't like video games. That looks real. Yeah, I don't like

much games that they are like I'm trying to make even the skin so, so real because is like scary a little bit for me. I like games that made you believe in fantasy, made you feel like you're in a kind of fairy tale or something like that. You know, when I started to play Hollow.

Britney I. I remember I started to play the first area. Honestly, this is going to sound a little bit shady, but it's like the first the first area started is everything black and white. So I was like, oh my God, this is like India. So they don't know much about colour and everything. And I was like, Oh, the game is going to be black and white is going to be so boring. And suddenly when you pass to the second area, everything switched to a green. And I was like. Oh, my God. This is green in not in not really far from when you go to the second area, you can pass actually to a third area, which is the fungus path. It is like purple and it's like, oh, my God. And then when you discover different the different areas, they are all with different colours and one specific colour representing everything. and I this this really suits with the lore, You know, because you know, where are you really? You know, there's for example, the Queen Gardens and the Queen Gardens are great, you know, and you see of course, the it looks like like a royal garden or something like that. Yeah. So it's, it's really nice the way they play with that and you have that there.

Larry And then also even the fact that because again and just to remind those that are listening, you know, it's it's a to the side scrolling metroidvania you know as Arthur Britney you know explained so you know, we're talking about a 2D kind of, you know, platform. It's not three dimensional. However, within the game, as you're moving across these environments, you can actually see an interaction between the foreground and the background. Sometimes depending on an environment, maybe you've gone across it for the first time, or maybe you're kind of backtracking after you've defeated an enemy, a certain boss or something like that. You can sometimes see certain characters maybe hiding in the background that are kind of looking, and they're kind of like they're shadowed. But like, you know, the layers of what's going on in the foreground in relation to the background is just really compellingly beautiful. I mean, it's I'm trying to think of, of another game to, to, to compare it to in terms of the, the quality visuals, maybe cuphead. Have you played Cuphead?

Britney Yes. Yeah, Cuphead is really great. Cuphead is great. But they are different styles. But. Yeah. Yeah, but. But yeah. Sometimes this is. This is something really interesting. But because Cuphead and Hollow Knight this they got this this in particular that they visual they tell your story, you know, because there's something of narrative within the visuals you're seeing, you know, like you said the Hollow knight has a or I mean, the vase, they Knight. They have like a minimalist design because they, they represent an empty vase, you know, they don't have feelings, they don't have genders. They like to say they are empty vase are living empty vase. So in that sense and you see, for example, or they're older or their characters or their bosses and they tell you a story or example.

Britney Is. Really cool there. This, this scatterbug, you know, the one that he actually throws you poop. You're like.

Britney Oh, my God. Yeah.

Britney It it's funny because in real life, scatterbugs, they do that, they do that.

Britney Yeah, they do that.

Britney So they big with that and you know, they, you know, they'll tell your story without telling you the story. You know, of course, Hollow Knight has their own storyline that lead to the score across the gameplay, but it's quite interesting. They are all they're kind of stories that they are not that explicit. it's sometimes, like you said, you discovered that when we play you like, for example, this relationship would be between these two guys that is there, or for example, the story of a hornet that you the you get to learn and you know, the interactions they are really cool.

Larry Yeah, yeah they're amazing. So yeah, you know, speaking of which, in terms of like the, uh, yeah. The gameplay, what was your, what was your foot around, you know, I guess like because he yeah. That the kind of like fighting system the mechanics yeah you can also have this you know within the game is embedded this kind of system this charm based system. Right. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Britney Yes. of course I can, I'm going to get into a kind of polemic thing that a lot of people write about this. But the truth is, there are different kind of gamers, you know? You know, and the fact that you like one way to gaming it doesn't mean you are less gamer than the other person you know. And this is why it is because I usually love Nintendo, because they are games that they don't require most challenge, you know. Some of them they are challenging, but they are enough to not distress you.

Britney Yeah. Yeah.

Britney So most of the of the games they play, pokemn doesn't have any challenge at all except playing. Pokemon Arceus. But that's another storyline. Right. And so that usually it has exactly just the amount of of challenging to to not make you feel you want to quit the game. Yeah but with Hollow Knigh is I want to quit the game all the time. All the time. Especially when it was there was one specific boss that I swear I don't know how. I don't broke my switch because it was a feeling of angryness. Frustratiness. Oh, my gosh. And he's this guy that is like, is that kind of worm? But it is. Yeah, it's it's a kind of worm what they do like tiny copies on themselves and they start to fly around you and, and these are really noisy. Noisy boss I suppose honestly.

Britney Because yeah he is.

Larry And they kind of and they swoop in don't they.

Britney Exactly. That's the most difficult for me.

Larry You know, I think one of the most difficult ones is for me, I think they were basically these these big kind of like Beatles. Be kind of like rhino beetles.

Britney They'd be like. Like you. Really? You play tag at the same time?

Larry Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So if you don't beat one of them quick enough in the in the right time, then the next one comes and then the next one comes up to three or four at once, like fighting. And that that stressed the hell out of me. Like, I can't tell you how many times I had to turn off the console. It's not it's like I have to leave, I have to get out of it. You know, it was just so stress inducing. And but, you know, I don't know about you Arthur Britney, but for me, when I'm because I do play games where the difficulty curve is, you know, there are differences sometimes, yeah, much easier games. And then other times there are games that are really, really hard. And for me, what what happens is if I'm a

really difficult place, I have to literally just put the game down. But for a while. And what tends to happen is by the time I come back to the game, more often than not, I tend to have worked out a way to kind of like beat beat the boss. And somehow I did like, I wouldn't like to fight the boss again. I'm not sure how to get through in a second, but I beat it, you know. And did you find it difficult as well, or did you find out when you did?

Britney Well, I find it very difficult, honestly. And well, I had the task because I was like, I need to do to play this game because this is my job right now. Like play. This game.

Britney Basically, I mean, I'm being paid for playing this game. So I was like, I need to play this game. So it was like quite interesting. This is like. The fact that it was, yes, difficult. And this is not something I'm doing my daily life because I like to use to beat the game and get away. I have enough problems in my life to do to get frustrated by that videogame. But the thing is here, it was different because, yes, it was frustrating in some moments, but at the same time, I didn't want it to quit the game. There was something that was inside of me that make me feel curious about what's going next. What's going in there? I mean, what's what? What's the next stage? Or this is going more difficult. And there was one moment, A, when you got this this this man, this, you know, fight. And everybody say, oh, the mantis, they are so difficult. But I didn't find them too difficult because I was prepared for the moment when I was fighting them, because I came from previous bosses and anyone say, no, this is too difficult. But I was mentally prepared that the bosses, they will be even more difficult. Difficult, difficult and difficult.

Larry Yeah.

Britney But definitely side note that none of the games bosses compares to the DLC bosses. That's another hell. That's another hell. oh my gosh!.

Larry Yeah. And there you go. I'm pleased.

Britney And I'm not gonna. I didn't complete the DLC, especially. There's one part when you need to beat all the bosses back to back. I was like, Yeah, yeah, no, I appreciate my life.

Britney Thank you.

Larry I did. I didn't even bother with that one. I'm trying to remember, I think one of the ones that I did the though was I think it involved the involved the kind of flight circus trip. You know. You know? Yeah. Yeah. That area in there at the beginning of the game where you have to collect. Yeah.

Britney I like that guy. Yes, I like.

Larry Yeah, I, um. I got, I found, I found the boss for that so hard, like. Yeah, I, yeah. When I think of game is trauma for me.

Britney But.

Larry But it was kind of fun at the same time. It, it was fun like, kind of like going around searching for the slots but the lost that last kind of bit of fighting that that that was, that was yeah, that was not easy. So that kind of brings brings us to some next point of like, you know, the music, you know, or some beautiful orchestral arrangements, you know, that the

music changes obviously as you you go from environment to environment there even times where if you're about to get into a big battle, the music intensifies even, you know, almost like in a very filmic kind of manner. Yeah. How did you find the.

Britney You know, it's really interesting and because the game what I'm sorry I'm going to mix up this with one of the mechanics of the game. There's one especial thing of this game that you don't have a map. You know, like when you go into to an area, usually in most game they'll show you the map or at least this be a you connect with these to the other place, and then you can explore it within this area. Mm hmm. So, for example, in Breathe of The Wild, if you go to the towers and you get the map, even if you haven't in check off all the area, you know which places you can go. But in this case, in Hollow Knight, you don't have a map. So when you enter to a new area, that gives you a lot of stress. But a lot of stress that you are going to want to die. I don't want to die because I just for the ones that haven't played the game. If you die, you lose all your coins in the game. So basically this is what mechanic got basically you die, you lose all your coins. So you need to get back to the place you die, fight with your ghost and you get back your money basically more or less that kind of stuff. So that was something that once you think want to makes you want to think twice, what you are doing, you know, because when you enter into a new area, when is this too risky? Oh, I am going to the right end. They are. So some ways that they are dead end, you know, and you need to come back sometimes they said, oh my gosh.

Britney I can't go back.

Britney It was a nightmare to come here, so I need to come back. So the thing is, there was one specific character. that he sings and. And every time I hear him singing, oh, my gosh, I feel like that was the happiest moment of my life.

Britney You know.

Britney Because I came from a long way. I don't know where I am. I almost die or maybe I die a couple of times. And just looking at him and know when I will met him, buy him a map. Make me feel like I can breathe right now and at least know. We got I'm I'm going to I'm going to be able to find a bench to save my game. Or something like that. So it was quite a decision that all the music played with that because something really simple, you know. You know, you are sometimes the music is not even that challenging. It's not even it's not even a screaming danger. Danger. There is that quite mild music that if you leave it like that, you can perfectly sleep. But they put it towards the this really is about to kill you. You hear this guy is like, Oh, yes, he's here. He's here because he's usually also close to the bench. So. So that that also makes you feel like you're about to be in a safe place.

Larry Yeah, it's funny you mention that, because, like, for me, it reminds me as an equipment, you know, a gaming equivalent of another game like Resident Evil, for example. You know, when you get into the at a typewriting area where whenever you find a typewriter in a, you know, that space that the music in there attempts to be like calm and relaxed and slow and. Yes, and you just know it's all good, you know. So when you were just kind of saying about like hearing via the person with the words or something.

Britney Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Larry Mm hmm. It's kind of like that, right? It it's just like. Yeah, like.

Britney Yeah.

Larry And you're just like, yeah, I'm safe. I'm fine. You know, all of that progresses is not, you know, gone would be in vain. So. Yeah, no, it's really, really cool. Yeah. So yeah, it's this game you would recommend.

Britney A 100%. I would recommend it. I'm trying right now to make my brother to play it. Yeah. Cause I'm really, I'm actually.

Britney Almost.

Britney A try to, to, to make him to, to play like, like really hard. As I told you, he asked me for a video game for Metroid dread and I thought, yeah, okay, I'll buy you Metroid dread. But if you, if you, if you play The Hollow Knight, if you're finished, so he's like.

Britney I need to play.

Britney Well, I would say he will have any regrets in playing it because it's, it's really a good game. So definitely the kind of game you want your games to play and suffer.

Larry Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I, I'm going to agree with you. I yeah. I highly recommend the game I think. Yeah, I think there's, there's, there's, there's a difficulty curve and spike at some points for sure. And some people might find that that quiet, you know, annoying. But I think if you if you stick with it, the game has a lot to kind of but what I'm trying to remember is there like hurt. Is there a, um, is there a difficulty level? Can you. I'm almost certain. Can you increase or decrease the difficulty level?

Britney No.

Larry Yeah. You've had it, though. You just go in and you play and it gets difficult at times.

Britney I think there's a DLC. After you beat them, they campaign that you have the options to.

Larry Yeah.

Britney To be able to to to play the game with a more difficult, level I think is like you die basically with one.

Larry Yeah. Yeah. That's like a survival version of that, right. Yeah. Die once and the game is over. You can't save anyway. You've got to play it from a straight through to the end. Yeah. That's yeah. I don't know.

Britney That I appreciate my life. I don't myself, I, you know, sometimes I have low self-esteem. When I see those challenges, I say there's people that they do that to themselves. So at least I love myself.

Larry It's just a bit more, you know?

Britney Yeah. Yes.

Britney Yes.

Larry Amazing. Well, it's so cool to be reviewing again. I look forward to, like, talking about some more games before we do go. What what are you playing at the moment or what are your plans? Do you have any plans for any particular games you want to play or.

Britney I just got Kirby and the Forgotten Land.

Larry . Oh, wow.

Britney So that's cool. I mean, Kirby is like. It's just.

Britney Like you can basically play a sleep, But. But the the art of the visuals of this game, they are really beautiful. So it's just so great. And of course, I been lobbying a lot Legends Arceus, even people say them I love and track them for the graphics. I really enjoy that. It was so addictive gameplay and I have a lot of of good times that followed with with Legends Arceus. Yes. What about you?

Larry Me. Good question. I've just come toward the end of playing Borderlands Part one. Well, replaying, actually, because I played it previously on the Xbox 360 was a 360 and then it got rereleased on the On the switch as a collection get Borderlands. You get to the prequel game, then you get Borderlands two. And yeah, I've just been replaying it and just really enjoying it as a first person shooter game. But it's kind of the, the visual style is kind of like so shaded and the characters are very kind of like unique and kind of like, you know, very, you know, out there and and I just kind of love it. The sound of the game as well as really cause some really unique kind of like RPG elements of it to and it's just yeah it's a blast to play. Call it call him once he player or you know playing on your own so yeah just coming to the end of that. And then I think I'm going to finally knuckle down to playing Metroid Dread perhaps. And maybe I'll get round to the last of us part two for the PlayStation. So we'll see.

Britney Yeah, we'll see. Well, I'm. I'm still a Nintendo lover, so.

Larry Oh, no, I'm honestly with you. Nintendo the way I mean, you know, I don't know. I love playing games across consoles, but. Yeah, no, I mean, yeah, I know you're the Nintendo person.

Britney Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I will. Maybe we'll have another. We can have another episode talking about why I don't leave Nintendo cause I have a b I, I had a Big, a Boig, a dilemma the last few days because I love Fortnite. I love Fortnite a lot. I like a lot. But honestly, the Nintendo switch is. crap because.

Britney I play Fortnite with a lot of friends. We got like or or Dream Team or squad. We are terrible building, but we have a lot of fun and that's the important thing.

Britney And the thing is you that my brother, for example, plays on the computer, my friends, they play on xbox or PS and they have a different drawing line, you know, so they can see enemies from distance. And I'm like. Where is them, where are them, I can't see them

Britney I mean like a they are trying to fight them and I'm like, I can't see any one until I go a little bit closer and they kill me. So it's like I started to, to think about, to get an Xbox

series S because it's like there there middle area between console of the new generations and the previous but I was like. Which games will I will play.

Britney You know.

Britney And then I started to think about the game pass and nothing really caught my attention. So think about PlayStation 4 because the 4 they are cheaper right now. But it's like, do I really going to spend around £200 just to play for now?

Britney You know.

Larry It's not such a good idea, especially for a game that is technically free, right?

Britney Exactly. Exactly.

Britney Exactly. So. So. Yeah, it's quite like interesting stuff to think about. Way to move from. I don't feel comfortable honestly.

Larry Yeah, I know that.

Britney They, they don't caught my attention. Except except this one game that came out and Xbox and game pass that really caught my attention. It's called Tunic.

Larry Tunic. Oh, yes. Which you play is this kind of fox, right? Yes. It's kind of inspired by the legend of Zelda.

Britney Yes. Yes, they call it. Yeah. It's like a link fox.

Larry Yeah.

Britney So I was like, yes. Well, if I if I bought the Xbox series, I will play a. Fortnite, Tunic. It may be that the New Resident Evil, that I haven't played because they are not on switch.

Larry Yeah.

Britney Oh, yeah. But people, as they say, usually, that if you are the Nintendo lover he is basically you get older console for games are not coming to switch.

Larry This is true. And this is this is exactly why I play games on other consoles. Essentially, it's games that are just not Nintendo based or coming to the switch. So no, but you know what? I agree. I think let's make sure that we do that in a future episode. We talk about the reason why we play some of the games that we do and maybe talk a little bit about our kind of like gaming journey. Because I'd love to know about your kind of journey of love to kind of share with you and others. You know how I've kind of got to the point that I am in gaming because, you know, weirdly, there was a point in time where I kind of fell out of love with gaming, and I'd love to share the reasons why. But as always, Arthur Brittney is so amazing talking to you. Thank you so much. And yeah, this is The Micr Drop.

Britney Yes. Happy to hear you and see you, Larry, and everyone at home. Stay safe. Take care and see you again soon.

Larry My name is Larry Achiampong, and thank you for listening to The Mike drop. If you'd like to listen to previous episodes of the series or to tune in for more episodes coming forward, please check out [Heart of Glass.org.uk](http://HeartofGlass.org.uk) additionally, The Mic Drop can also be found at anchor.fm