

# PHOTO MODE AWARDS

THE ART OF GAMING PHOTOGRAPHY / *Issue 2025*



# WELCOME.

This year's Photo Mode Awards brought together an incredible mix of winners and finalists, each pushing what game photography can be. Across every category, the work on display shows a real understanding of timing, emotion, composition, and storytelling. These images aren't just technically strong, they linger, they say something, and they reflect the care and patience behind every capture.



Photo captured by Ayghan

The PMAs exist because of a shared love for games and the worlds they bring to life — and a community that genuinely appreciates this art form, taking the time to pause and really see it.

To everyone who submitted, supported, and helped shape this year's awards, thank you. And to our partners who continue to back this celebration of creativity, we truly appreciate it.

Welcome, and enjoy what's ahead.

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Photo captured by MdeavorVP



Over time, photo mode has become more than a feature. It's a creative space where players pause the action and engage with games in a different way, using light, framing, and timing to tell their own stories. This year's entries show how confidently creators are working within that space, treating virtual worlds with the same intention and care as any physical environment.

At its core, the Photo Mode Awards are about perspective. Every image in this magazine represents a personal choice, where to stand, when to press the shutter, what to leave in or out. Together, these decisions form a collective portrait of a community that continues to evolve, experiment, and see games not just as something to play, but as something to observe, interpret, and share.

In 2025, the Photo Mode Awards received more than 2,300 submissions from creators across 70 countries worldwide. That level of participation speaks not only to the growth of the awards, but to the strength and diversity of a global community connected by games and visual storytelling. The range of perspectives on display this year is broader than ever, shaped by different cultures, playstyles, and ways of seeing virtual worlds.



Photo captured by TakaSanGames

# INTRO



What makes this collection stand out isn't just its size, but its depth. These images show patience, intent, and a strong sense of authorship. They capture fleeting moments, quiet details, and powerful emotions, often revealing sides of familiar games that might otherwise go unnoticed. Together, they reflect how far photo mode has come, and how creatively it continues to be pushed.

None of this would be possible without the continued support of: CD PROJEKT RED, Bethesda, IO Interactive, 505 Games, Frontier, Sucker Punch, PLAION, Santa Monica Studio, Insomniac Games, Bend Studio, and Bandai Namco. Their support helps make this celebration of talent and creativity possible, and we're grateful to have them involved.

As you move through this magazine, you'll discover not only the winners and finalists who defined this year's awards, but also deeper explorations of photo modes themselves, alongside interviews and features that highlight the people behind the images. Each page reflects a distinct creative voice and a moment worth slowing down for. Together, they capture where the Photo Mode Awards stand today, and hint at where this ever-growing community is headed next.

# RODUCTION

# BEHIND THE SELECTION



Photo captured by Saskia

# HOW THE AWARDS WORK

The Photo Mode Awards celebrate creativity captured inside virtual worlds. Every image is created using in-game tools, shaped by timing, composition, and the photographer's intent. While styles and subjects vary, each submission is considered through the same creative lens.

The awards exist to recognise moments that feel deliberate and complete. In that context, a strong image is not defined by complexity or technical spectacle, but by how effectively it uses the game's world to communicate mood, story, or emotion.

Thousands of entries are submitted each year from creators across the globe. Across this volume of work, submissions came from all major platforms, with PlayStation representing the largest share, followed by PC, Xbox, and Nintendo. Despite this diversity, every image is approached with consistency and care, ensuring that each submission is given

the same attention, regardless of genre, platform, or experience level.

At its core, the judging philosophy values intention over perfection. Technical execution supports an image, but it is the clarity of vision and the strength of the moment that ultimately define its impact.

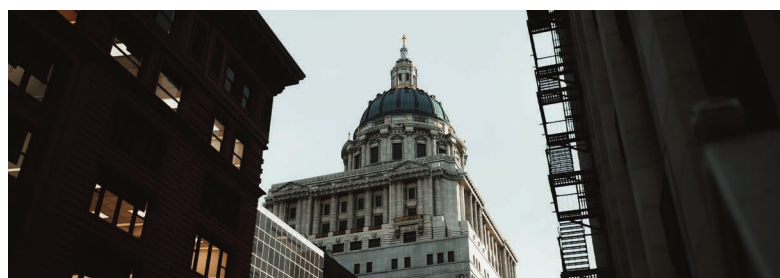
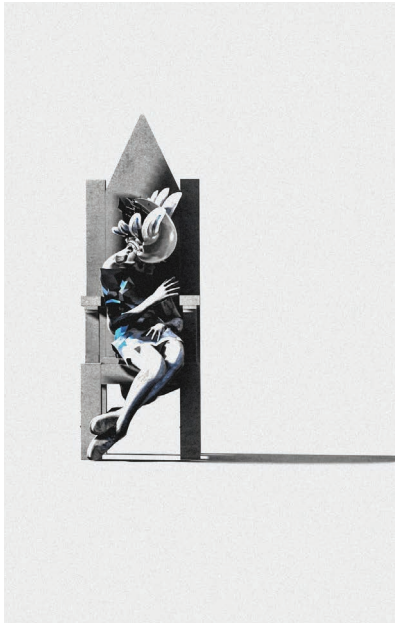
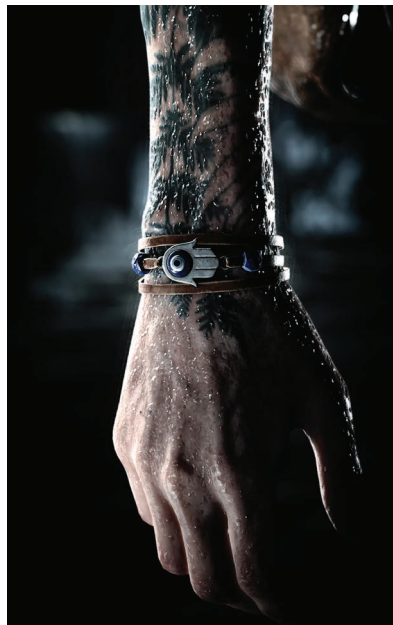


Photo captured by allixct



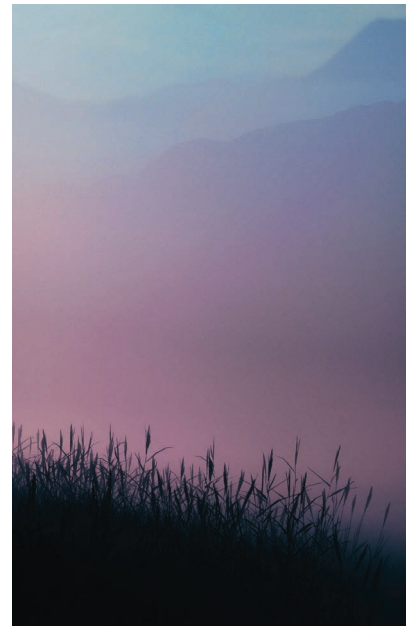
Submissions are grouped into categories that reflect different creative approaches to game photography. These categories highlight a range of styles, from atmospheric and narrative-driven work to action, portraiture, and technical precision. They exist to celebrate variety, not to limit interpretation.

Photo captured by spideytwo shoes



All eligible entries are reviewed by a panel of judges with backgrounds in game photography, visual storytelling, and creative direction. Images are assessed on composition, use of light, timing, and emotional impact. Where possible, judging is conducted blind, keeping the focus on the image itself.

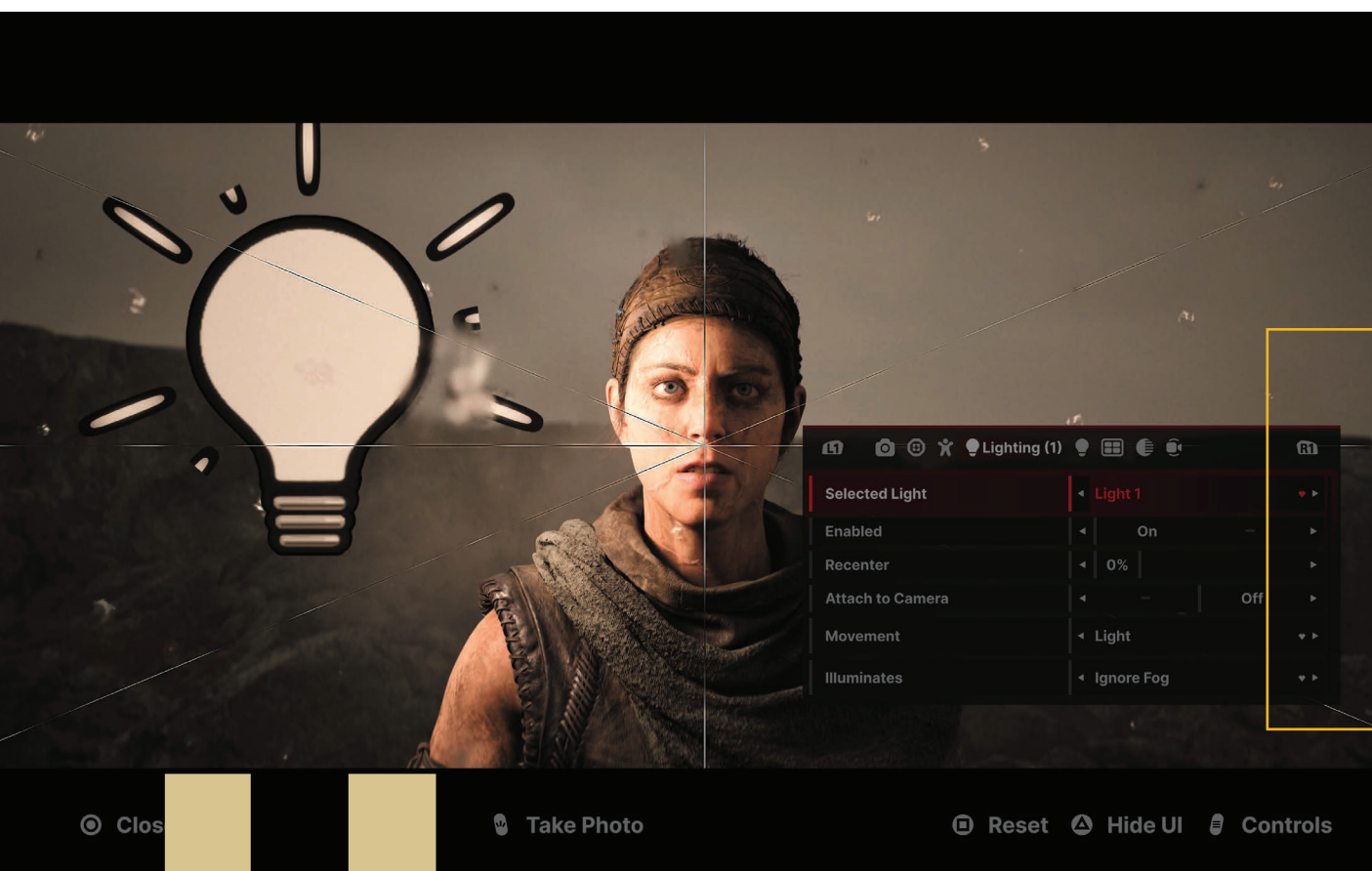
Photo captured by sneakymike



Images must be captured using in-game photo modes or approved tools. Post-processing is allowed, provided the image remains true to the original capture. Adjustments may enhance an image, but changes that alter character poses, structures, or the physical reality of the scene are not part of the awards.

The Photo Mode Awards recognise both curated selection and broader participation across the community. Jury-awarded categories reflect professional evaluation, while the People's Choice Awards highlight stand-out uses of photo mode tools and creative consistency across creators. Together, they represent two complementary ways of recognising work that resonates.

Photo captured by Photoingame



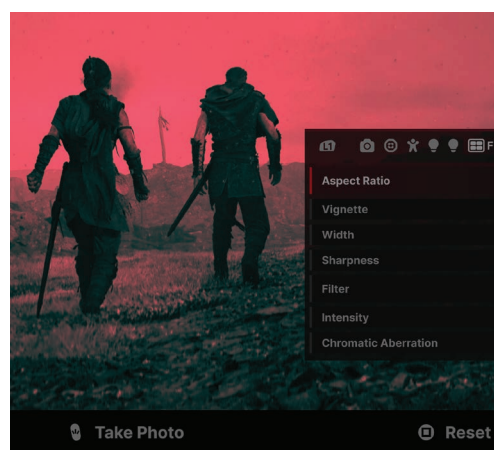
# H

ellblade II's photo mode feels less like a checklist of features and more like an extension of the game's tone. It invites you to slow down and really look at the world Ninja Theory has built, where atmosphere matters more than spectacle. With the game now available on PlayStation 5 as of August 12, 2025, it's a good moment to appreciate how thoughtfully this toolset supports the experience.

The lighting system is versatile and intuitive. With a 10-point setup, you can place multiple lights, adjust intensity, and shape shadows to draw atten-

tion where it matters. It's particularly useful in scenes where mood and contrast are more important than sheer brightness.

The Illuminate setting lifts darker areas just enough to reveal detail without flattening the image. Combined with hue and saturation controls, it's easy to tweak colors for realism or push them slightly for effect. The system is flexible, encouraging experimentation without forcing a particular style.



Fine-tune lighting, depth of field, and character placement, add motion, and apply filters and effects to create cinematic, story-driven shots.

# BEAUTY HIDES IN DARKNESS.

**D**epth of field (DOF) is simple but effective. Precise Focus Assist lets you lock focus on specific elements, which works well for close-ups or detailed shots. Autofocus handles quicker setups reliably. Adjustable DOF strength helps separate characters from their surroundings, giving a subtle sense of scale without drawing attention to the mechanics.

Senua can be toggled on or off, depending on whether you want the focus on her or the environment. Small adjustments to her position and rotation make framing easier without breaking

immersion. The controls feel supportive rather than complicated, helping you tell a story rather than distract from it.

The motion controls let you capture movement smoothly. You can adjust camera direction and speed to create slow, atmospheric sweeps or quicker, more energetic passes. Even small adjustments can make a scene feel deliberate, adding a cinematic quality without extra effort.

Filters and effects provide subtle ways to shape mood. Aspect ratios influence framing more than you might expect, while weather effects like rain and fog add depth to scenes. The filter range goes from understated to slightly styl-

ized, offering room to refine visuals without locking you into one look.

Overall, Hellblade II's photo mode is built to support storytelling rather than spectacle. Its tools encourage careful framing, subtle adjustments, and a strong sense of mood. The result is a photo mode that feels intuitive and purposeful, letting players capture moments that are cinematic, restrained, and emotionally grounded..

*Chosen by the community, and driven by a shared love for virtual photography.*

# THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

The People's Choice Awards celebrate the photo modes and creators that left a lasting impression on the community over the past year. These awards celebrate the creators and photo modes that the community connected with most, shaped by collective appreciation rather than a judging panel.

Entirely shaped by public voting, the People's Choice Awards recognise the developers who continue to invest in powerful photo mode tools, alongside the creators who transform virtual worlds into visual stories through their creativity and passion.

Voting for the People's Choice Awards opens once submissions close, giving the community a chance to spotlight what stood out most this year.

This vote focuses purely on the best photo modes across different genres, along with Creator of the Year — recognising the tools that pushed creativity forward and the people who made the most of them.

Every vote reflects something that stuck with you, whether it's a game that invited experimentation or a creator whose work left

a lasting impression.

Spanning a wide range of genres, these awards reflect how photo modes have become an essential part of modern games. Whether capturing high-intensity action, quiet exploration, character-driven storytelling, or finely detailed simulations, the People's Choice Awards showcase how players engage creatively with the games they love.





Creator of the Year recognises individuals who go beyond capturing striking images. Nominees are celebrated for their creativity, consistency, and the positive impact they've had on the virtual photography community as a whole.

## HOW THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS WORK

The People's Choice Awards are open to any game featuring a photo mode that launched or received a meaningful update between June 2024 and May 2025. This includes full game releases, DLC expansions, and PC or console ports that introduce or enhance photo mode functionality.

Previous winners are eligible to participate again, provided they meet the criteria, ensuring that continued innovation and meaningful updates are recognised year after year.

To qualify for a People's Choice photo mode category, games must include a dedicated in-game photo mode accessible via a shortcut or pause menu, along with the ability to move the camera freely within the game world. These tools are essential in allowing players to compose images, experiment with perspective, and capture moments beyond standard gameplay.

Games that replicate photography through in-game devices, such as mobile phones or character viewers, are not eligible, as these experiences do not provide the same creative flexibility or intent as a true photo mode.

If you believe your game meets the eligibility requirements and should be considered, you can contact the team via the official form to ensure it is reviewed as part of the selection process.

# BEST ACTION PHOTO MODE

**This category celebrates action games that turn chaos into composition. From explosive combat to split-second movement, these photo modes give players the tools to freeze intensity without losing its edge. It's where precision meets power, and where timing matters as much as framing.**

The Best Action Game Photo Mode winner stands out for empowering players to capture moments that feel cinematic, raw, and alive.



**BLACK MYTH**  
GAME SCIENCE



**FIRST DESCENT**  
NEXON GAMES



**ATOMFALL**  
REBELLION DEV



**WUKONG**



**MONSTER HUNTER WILDS**  
*CAPCOM*



**STELLAR BLADE**  
*SHIFT UP*



**ENDANT**



**TEKKEN 8**  
*BANDAI NAMCO*



**GOD OF WAR RAGNAROK (PC PORT)**  
*SANTA MONICA STUDIO*



**DEVELOPMENTS**



**WARHAMMER 40 000 SPACE MARINE 2**  
*SABER INTERACTIVE/FOCUS ENTERTAINMENT*

# GOD OF WAR

## RAGNARÖK



WINNER

# GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK

by Santa Monica Studio

God of War Ragnarök continues to set the benchmark for what an action game photo mode can be, taking the top spot for the second year in a row. Built into a world defined by scale, emotion, and constant motion, its camera tools give players the freedom to pause even the most intense moments without losing their impact. Whether framed mid-combat or in quieter narrative beats, every capture feels deliberate and cinematic.

What makes Ragnarök stand out is how seamlessly its photo mode integrates with gameplay. Fine control over lighting, depth, focus, and camera movement allows players to shape images that feel authored rather than accidental. Character detail remains striking even in motion,

while environments retain their sense of weight and atmosphere.

More than a technical showcase, Ragnarök's photo mode empowers storytelling. From epic clashes to intimate character moments, it invites players to slow down and observe the craft behind the chaos. With the highest share of the vote once again, God of War Ragnarök reinforces its position as the definitive action photo mode experience of the year.



### **Stellar Blade**

by Shift Up

Stellar Blade impressed with a photo mode that thrives on precision and visual flair. Fast-paced combat, dramatic character animation, and striking sci-fi environments translate beautifully into still images, giving players the tools to capture elegance and intensity in equal measure.



### **Black Myth: Wukong**

by Game Science

Black Myth: Wukong delivers a visually rich photo mode rooted in myth and spectacle. Its strength lies in atmosphere, with sweeping landscapes and expressive character design offering photographers powerful visual moments drawn from a bold, stylised world.



### **Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2**

by Saber Interactive/ Focus Entertainment

Brutal, heavy, and uncompromising, Space Marine 2's photo mode reflects the raw power of its universe. Explosive combat encounters and imposing scale give players plenty of opportunities to capture pure force and aggression on screen.



### **Monster Hunter Wilds**

by Capcom

Monster Hunter Wilds rounds out the category with a photo mode built for scale and spectacle. Massive creatures, dynamic environments, and moments of calm between hunts provide a varied canvas for players looking to frame the wilds from their own perspective.

# BEST ADVENTURE PHOTO MODE

**This category celebrates adventure games that turn exploration into visual storytelling. From vast landscapes to quiet, character-driven moments, these photo modes give players the freedom to frame their journeys with intention. It's where atmosphere, composition, and discovery take centre stage.**

The Best Adventure Game Photo Mode winner stands out for empowering players to capture worlds that feel lived in, emotional, and deeply immersive.



**ALAN WAKE**  
REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT



**HOGWARTS**  
WB GAMES / A



**THE LAST OF US**  
REMASTERED (PC PS4)  
NAUGHTY DOG



**Astro Bot**  
TeamASOBI



**THE DARK PICTURES II**  
PSYCHO ENTERTAINMENT



**DAYS GONE REMASTERED**  
BEND STUDIO



**STAR WARS OUTLAWS**  
UBISOFT



**THE SIMS 4: REALM OF MAGIC**  
MAXIS / EA GAMES



**INFINITY NIKKI**  
INFOLD / PAPER GAMES



**MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN 2**  
(PC PORT) INSOMNIAC



**CALL OF DUTY: WARZONE 2**  
(PC PORT)



**HORIZON ZERO DAWN REMASTERED**  
GUERRILLA GAMES



**AVATAR: FRONTIERS OF PANDORA**  
UBISOFT



**ASTRO BOT**



WINNER

# DAYS GONE REMASTERED

by Bend Studio

Days Gone Remastered earns the top spot in Adventure Game Photo Mode by turning its sprawling post-apocalyptic world into a playground for visual storytellers. Built on the foundation of its original open world, this remaster brings a suite of enhancements that elevate every journey through Oregon's forests, towns, and ragged highways into a photographic experience worth savouring.

At the heart of its win is the newly enhanced photo mode. Players can now dial in the time of day, adjusting sun angle and atmosphere to suit the mood of any shot. An advanced three-point lighting system lets you place and tweak multiple light sources, shaping highlights and shadows with precision, while new logo and overlay op-

tions add polish to every frame. These tools give photographers the flexibility to craft everything from gritty survival portraits to sweeping wilderness vistas with intent and artistry.

On top of the camera improvements, the remaster's graphical upgrades — sharper lighting, deeper shadows, and richer textures — make the world feel more alive and a well-deserved winner in the adventure genre,



## Alan Wake 2

by Remedy Entertainment

Remedy Entertainment's Alan Wake 2 delivers a Photo Mode dripping with atmosphere. The eerie forests, neon-lit streets, and moody interiors let photographers manipulate light and shadow to craft cinematic, tension-filled shots that feel like frames from a thriller.



## Marvel's Spider-Man 2

by Insomniac Games

Insomniac Games' Marvel's Spider-Man 2 turns New York into a playground for Photo Mode enthusiasts. Mid-air webs, dynamic action, and sweeping city vistas let players capture motion, drama, and epic superhero moments from every angle.



## Horizon Zero Dawn Remastered

by Guerrilla Games

Guerrilla Games' Horizon Zero Dawn offers breathtaking Photo Mode opportunities, from lush valleys to mechanized beasts in motion. Players can frame their shots with perfect lighting and composition, turning Aloy's world into a gallery of vibrant, living landscapes.



## The Last of Us Part II Remastered

by Naughty Dog

Naughty Dog's The Last of Us Remastered elevates Photo Mode with raw realism and emotion. From crumbling urban environments to intimate character moments, every shot allows players to tell a story of survival and humanity through careful framing, lighting, and perspective.

# BEST RPG PHOTO MODE

**This category celebrates role-playing games that turn character progression, choice, and world-building into visual storytelling. From detailed character portraits to vast fantasy and sci-fi worlds, these photo modes let players capture the moments that define their journey.**

The Best RPG Photo Mode nominees stand out for offering creative freedom within deeply immersive worlds, where camera tools enhance atmosphere, identity, and storytelling.



ASSASSIN'S CREEDE  
UBISOFT



CYBERPUNK 2077  
CD PROJEKT RED



DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION  
BIOWARE/EA



**CREED SHADOWS**



**STARFIELD SHATTERED SPACE**  
*BETHESDA*



**FINAL FANTASY XVI**  
*SQUARE ENIX*



**2027 - PHANTOM LIBERTY**  
*ACT RED*



**RISE OF THE RONIN**  
*TEAM NINJA*



**FALLOUT 76**  
*BETHESDA*



**THE VEILGUARD**  
*EA*



**BALDUR'S GATE 3**  
*LARIAN STUDIOS*



WINNER

# CYBERPUNK 2077

by CD PROJEKT RED

CD PROJEKT RED's *Cyberpunk 2077* continues to set the standard for RPG Photo Modes, and Patch 2.3 only cements its place as a true standout in the industry. The update has expanded creative freedom in ways that make every shot feel cinematic, expressive, and uniquely *Night City*. Whether it's capturing neon-lit streets, dynamic characters, or the sprawling cityscape, players now have unparalleled control to compose, light, and frame moments exactly how they envision them.

This combination of scale, atmosphere, and player-driven storytelling makes *Cyberpunk 2077*'s Photo Mode not just a tool for screenshots, but a platform for artistic expression. It's a system that rewards patience,

experimentation, and vision, and that's why the game has earned its second consecutive win in the RPG category — it's not just about playing the game anymore; it's about creating your own stories within it.

This depth of creative control sets it apart from any other RPG, proving that Photo Mode here isn't just an accessory — it's a defining part of the game's experience.



### ASSASSIN'S CREED SHADOWS

by Ubisoft

Assassin's Creed Shadows offers a refined photo mode built around movement, contrast, and natural light. From sweeping landscapes to tightly framed action, its tools encourage expressive composition that feels closely tied to exploration and atmosphere.



### BALDUR'S GATE 3

by Larian Studios

Baldur's Gate 3's photo mode shines in character-driven storytelling. Expressive performances, cinematic framing, and choice-driven moments allow players to capture images that reflect the personal nature of their journey through Faerûn.



### FALLOUT 76

by Bethesda Game Studios

Set across a vast wasteland, Fallout 76's photo mode embraces environmental storytelling and discovery. It turns Appalachia into a visual record of exploration, survival, and unexpected moments shared with others.



### FINAL FANTASY XVI

by Square Enix

Final Fantasy XVI's photo mode lets players capture the epic like never before. From Clive and Joshua locked in cinematic combat to towering castles and sprawling battlefields, every shot showcases the game's scale and drama. Dynamic lighting and carefully framed moments turn each image into a scene worthy of its fantasy epic.

# BEST INDIE PHOTO MODE

**This category celebrates independent games that use photo mode as a creative extension of their identity. Often driven by bold art direction and unique visual language, these worlds invite players to capture moments that feel personal, expressive, and intentionally crafted.**

The Best Indie Photo Mode nominees stand out for proving that small teams can deliver powerful visual tools, turning distinctive styles and imaginative worlds into memorable photographic experiences.



**LUSHFOIL PHOTO MODE**  
MATT NEWELL /



**INDIKA**  
ODD\_METER\_GAME



**FLINTLOCK THE  
KEPLER INTERACT**



**NO MAN'S SKY**  
HELLO GAMES



**PHOTOGRAPHY SIM**  
ANNAPURNA INTERACTIVE



**#DRIVE RALLY**  
PIXEL PERFECT DUDE



**SINKING CITY REMASTERED**  
FROGWARES



ES / 11BITSTUDIOS



**PACIFIC DRIVE**  
IRONWOOD STUDIOS



**DREDGE: THE IRON RIG DLC**  
BLACK SALT GAMES / TEAM17



**SIEGE OF DAWN**  
TIVE



**LOST RECORDS: BLOOM & RAGE**  
DON'T NOD



**KARMA THE DARK WORLD**  
POLLARD STUDIOS / WIRED PRODUCTIONS



**WORLDS PART 1**



**TINY GLADE**  
POUNCE LIGHT



**ONCE A HUMAN**  
STARRY STUDIO

# LOST RECORDS

BLOOM & RAGE



WINNER

## LOST RECORDS: BLOOM & RAGE

by DON'T NOD

DON'T NOD's *Lost Records: Bloom & Rage* delivers a photo mode experience that feels inseparable from its identity. Rooted in memory, emotion, and reflection, the game encourages players to slow down and observe, using photo mode to capture moments that feel intimate and intentional rather than showy.

What sets it apart is how seamlessly photo mode supports the game's themes. Carefully composed environments and subtle lighting invite thoughtful framing, turning quiet spaces and fleeting expressions into meaningful images. The camera becomes a narrative extension, preserving atmosphere and emotion in a way that mirrors the story itself.

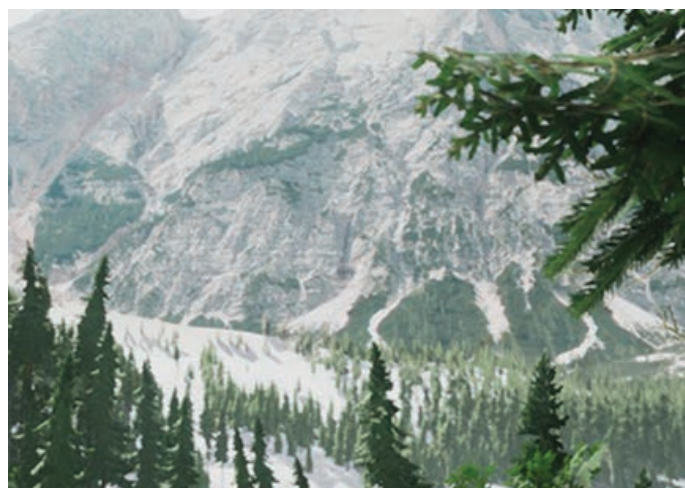
This thoughtful integration earns *Lost Records: Bloom & Rage* the Indie Photo Mode award. It's proof that innovation doesn't rely on scale, but on clarity of vision, and that indie games can deliver photo modes that are deeply personal and creatively powerful.



### **NO MAN'S SKY**

by Hello Games

No Man's Sky offers one of the most expansive photo modes in the indie space, built around scale, colour, and discovery. Its tools allow players to capture endlessly varied planets, skies, and alien landscapes, turning exploration into a constantly evolving visual archive.



### **LUSHFOIL PHOTOGRAPHY SIM**

by Matt Newell

Lushfoil Photography places photo mode at the very core of its experience. Designed with intentional pacing and minimalist tools, it encourages careful observation, natural composition, and an appreciation for light, space, and realism.



### **KARMA: THE DARK WORLD**

by Pollard Studio

KARMA: The Dark World uses photo mode to enhance its surreal, emotionally driven world. Through striking environments and controlled framing, the camera becomes a way to capture atmosphere and tension, reinforcing the game's distinct visual identity.



### **INDIKA**

by Odd Meter

Indika's photo mode complements its stark, unsettling tone. Sparse environments and deliberate framing invite players to capture images that feel symbolic, uncomfortable, and closely aligned with the game's narrative voice.

# BEST SIMULATION PHOTO MODE

**This category celebrates simulation games whose photo modes capture realism, precision, and atmosphere. From finely detailed vehicles and machinery to expansive environments shaped by light, weather, and motion, these tools let players frame moments grounded in authenticity.**

The Best Simulation Photo Mode nominees stand out for giving players control over detail and realism, turning technical worlds into striking visual showcases.



AGE OF  
EMPIRES II



FORZA  
HORIZON 4



NBA 2K  
21



MONSTER  
JAM



**GOD OF WAR: RAGNAROK**  
SIE STUDIOS, SKYBOX LABS, WESTLAKE INTERACTIVE



**WRECKFEST 2**  
THQ NORDIC



**FC 25**  
EA SPORTS



**GRAN TURISMO SPORT**  
POLYPHONIC GAMES



**F1 25**  
CODEMASTERS / EA SPORTS



**THE CREW MOTORFEST YEAR 2**  
UBISOFT



**NBA 2K25**  
2K GAMES



**MOTOGP 25**  
MILESTONE S.R.L.



**EXPEDITIONS: A MUDRUNNER GAME**  
SABER & FOCUS ENTERTAINMENT



**MONSTER JAM SHOWDOWN**  
ONE / PLAION



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR**  
2024 ASOBO STUDIO



# FORZA HORIZON 5



WINNER

## FORZA HORIZON 5

by Playground Games

Playground Games' Forza Horizon 5 continues to set the benchmark for simulation photo modes, combining technical precision with cinematic flair. Its camera tools give players unprecedented control over framing, lighting, and motion, allowing every shot to feel intentional and dynamic. From sun-drenched Mexican landscapes to high-speed highway chases, the photo mode captures the thrill and beauty of the world with incredible fidelity.

What sets Forza Horizon 5 apart is how seamlessly photo mode integrates into the experience. Players aren't just snapping pictures—they're composing images that reflect speed, scale, and personality. Every car, every track, and every environment becomes an opportunity

to create a cinematic moment that's uniquely theirs.

This combination of freedom, detail, and artistry makes Forza Horizon 5 more than a racing game—it's a platform for creative expression. Its photo mode is a defining feature of the experience, rewarding experimentation and vision, and it's why the game earns the top spot in the Simulation Photo Mode category.



### **MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2024**

by Asobo Studio

Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 elevates simulation photo mode to breathtaking heights. Players can capture sweeping skies, dynamic weather, and detailed aircraft with precision, turning every flight into a cinematic visual experience.



### **THE CREW MOTORFEST**

by Ubisoft

The Crew Motorfest offers a photo mode that celebrates scale, speed, and spectacle. From vast festival grounds to high-octane racing moments, players can frame shots that capture both environment and motion with cinematic flair.



### **AGE OF MYTHOLOGY RETOLD**

by Microsoft

Age of Mythology Retold's photo mode brings epic mythological worlds to life. From towering structures to legendary creatures, players can compose striking scenes that highlight the grandeur and storytelling of its fantastical realms.



### **WRECKFEST 2**

by THQ Nordic

Wreckfest 2 turns chaotic racing into visual storytelling. Its photo mode lets players freeze collisions, dramatic crashes, and vehicle details, emphasizing the raw intensity and humour that define the game.



Michi Media's journey into virtual photography began in 2016 with the release of Rockstar Editor for GTA V. What started as casual captures of friends during online sessions quickly evolved into carefully staged scenes and deliberate "screenshot ideas." At the time, Michi had no idea there was a wider creative community around this work, or that it was called virtual photography. For years, those images lived quietly on Xbox until a push from a close friend, and last year's Creator of the Year winner, Ultra Violetra, encouraged Michi to share their work more broadly. Joining Instagram and Twitter/X changed everything, and just a year later, Michi now finds themselves reflecting on a much bigger milestone: being named Creator of the Year at the Photo Mode Awards.

# CREATOR OF THE YEAR IN FOCUS



Open-world games are where Michi feels most at home. The freedom to explore, grind, and lose hours to discovery is central to both the playstyle and the creative process. Titles like *Cyberpunk 2077*, *Starfield*, and the *Fallout* series serve as recurring playgrounds, offering vast spaces where atmosphere and scale can take center stage. Michi's editing approach mirrors that philosophy. It's subtle and intentional, focused on enhancing light and shadow, softening harsh edges, and occasionally introducing gentle color into highlights or shadows. The goal is never to overwhelm the image, but to quietly elevate what's already there.

## MY VP STYLE IS WHAT MAKES ME. IT'S MY CREATIVE OUTLET FOR MOMENTS IN-GAME.

What truly defines Michi Media's work is a refusal to be bound by narrative expectations. This isn't story-driven capture or a recreation of scripted moments, but a creative outlet that thrives on contrast, curiosity, and imagination. You won't find conventional scenes pulled straight from a game's storyline. Instead, you might see an astronaut standing beside a rusty MK1 Golf on a deserted road in Forza Horizon, or a classic Chevrolet Bel Air parked beneath alien skies on one of Starfield's moons. Each composition is carefully staged: the choice of light, shadow, and color is deliberate, and every frame tells a story without following one. Michi treats virtual worlds like blank canvases, combining familiar elements in unexpected ways that make players pause, look closer, and wonder how it all came together.

Beyond her technical skill and imagination, Michi Media's work is defined by curiosity and playfulness. She thrives on experimentation, whether placing objects in surreal juxtapositions, exploring remote corners of a game world, or seeing how light behaves at different times of day. Some of her most celebrated captures come from these spontaneous moments, where the ordinary meets the extraordinary. Her subtle editing enhances the scene without overpowering it, allowing the environment and her subjects to speak for themselves. Over the years, Michi has become a source of inspiration within the virtual photography community, encouraging others to push boundaries, try new techniques, and embrace their unique vision. For her, VP is more than taking screenshots—it's about crafting moments that linger in memory, sparking wonder and imagination long after the game is turned off, and ultimately what makes Michi Media our 2025's Creator of the Year.



Every year, Photo Mode continues to evolve beyond a feature and into a creative language of its own. What began as a way to pause and frame a moment has grown into a global movement, where players become photographers and game worlds turn into expressive visual playgrounds. The Photo Mode Awards exist to celebrate that creativity, spotlighting images that capture emotion, atmosphere, motion, and storytelling from inside the worlds we play.

That creative language has grown alongside increasingly powerful in-game camera tools, giving players greater control over framing, lighting, and mood. These features encourage a more deliberate approach to image-making, where moments are carefully composed rather than simply captured.

What sets virtual photography apart is the balance between authored worlds and personal perspective. While environments and characters are crafted by developers, the final image is shaped by the player's eye.

# PHOTO MODE

A fleeting expression, a perfectly timed action beat, or a quiet landscape can transform familiar scenes into striking visual statements.

The Photo Mode Awards exist to recognise this work on its own terms. Images are judged anonymously, with creativity, composition, and adherence to each category at the centre of the process. The result is a curated collection that reflects not only technical skill, but the evolving artistic voice of a global community.

Together, these images form a snapshot of where virtual photography stands today. Across genres, platforms, and styles, they reflect a shared passion for slowing down, observing, and finding meaning in digital spaces. The Photo Mode Awards are not just about winning, but about recognising the moments that remind us why we stop, frame, and capture in the first place.





Photo captured by monja\_vp

# DE WARDS 25

CREATIVITY. COMPOSITION.  
STORYTELLING.  
THE BEST PHOTO MODE CAPTURES  
OF THE YEAR.

# MEET THE JUDGES

For the 2025 Photo Mode Awards, we assembled a judging panel as diverse and talented as the entries themselves. These industry professionals span creative leadership, art direction, and community management, bringing their expertise to celebrate the very best in in-game photography. Their combined perspectives ensure that every frame is evaluated for artistic merit, technical skill, and emotional impact.



OUR GOAL IS TO GATHER THE MOST INDEPENDENT AND DIVERSE VOICES IN THE INDUSTRY, BRINGING TOGETHER DIFFERENT AREAS OF EXPERTISE. THIS MIX GIVES US A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON HOW EACH PHOTO IS JUDGED, ENSURING EVERY DECISION REFLECTS BOTH CRAFT AND CREATIVITY.

**- THE PMAS TEAM**



## How Finalists Are Selected

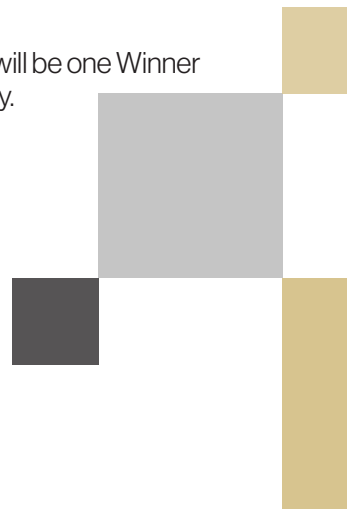
The PMA team will shortlist photos in each category to progress to the next round, with a minimum of 16 finalists per category this year. This approach increases the opportunity for individuals to be recognized for outstanding work. Selections are based on a photo's merit, adherence to the theme, and compliance with the rules.

The evaluation focuses purely on the images themselves, not the individuals who submitted them. Participants may have multiple entries advance, though no individual can win more than one category or prize. If a photographer receives the highest votes in multiple categories, the prize will be awarded to the next most-voted entry.

## Judging Process

The Photo Mode Awards are evaluated by our expert panel of gaming industry professionals. Each finalist is assessed on creativity, composition, and alignment with the category theme. The process is impartial and centralized, with judges making their selections independently—no judge has access to others' choices.

At the end of the process, there will be one Winner and one Runner-Up per category.





Top Row (Left to Right):

- **Kevin McAllister** – Creative & Product Lead on Days Gone Remastered and Community Manager at Bend Studio.
- **Kim Norman** – Senior Community Manager at Bethesda APAC.
- **Juha Vainio** – Head of the Control franchise at Remedy Entertainment.
- **Laura Beitzel** – Senior Community Manager at CD Projekt Red.
- **Dan McKim** – Art Director at Santa Monica Studio.
- **Antonela Pounder** – Director of Global Community at 505 Games.
- **Samir Arabi-Eter** – Global Community Manager at IO Interactive.
- **Shauna Jones** – Community Manager at Ubisoft.
- **Chris Gregory** – Art Director at Frontier Developments,
- **Liz “Blue Owlz” Barlow** – Community Manager at Santa Monica Studio,
- **Paul Crowther** – Senior Community Manager at Frontier Developments.
- **Claudia Ciardi** – Senior Social and Community Manager at NVIDIA GeForce Brazil
- **Aaron Jason Espinoza** – Advanced Sr. Community Manager at Insomniac Games
- **Amelia Kolat** – Senior Community Manager at CD PROJEKT RED
- **Con Tsompanis** – PR Manager at Bandai Namco Entertainment Australia

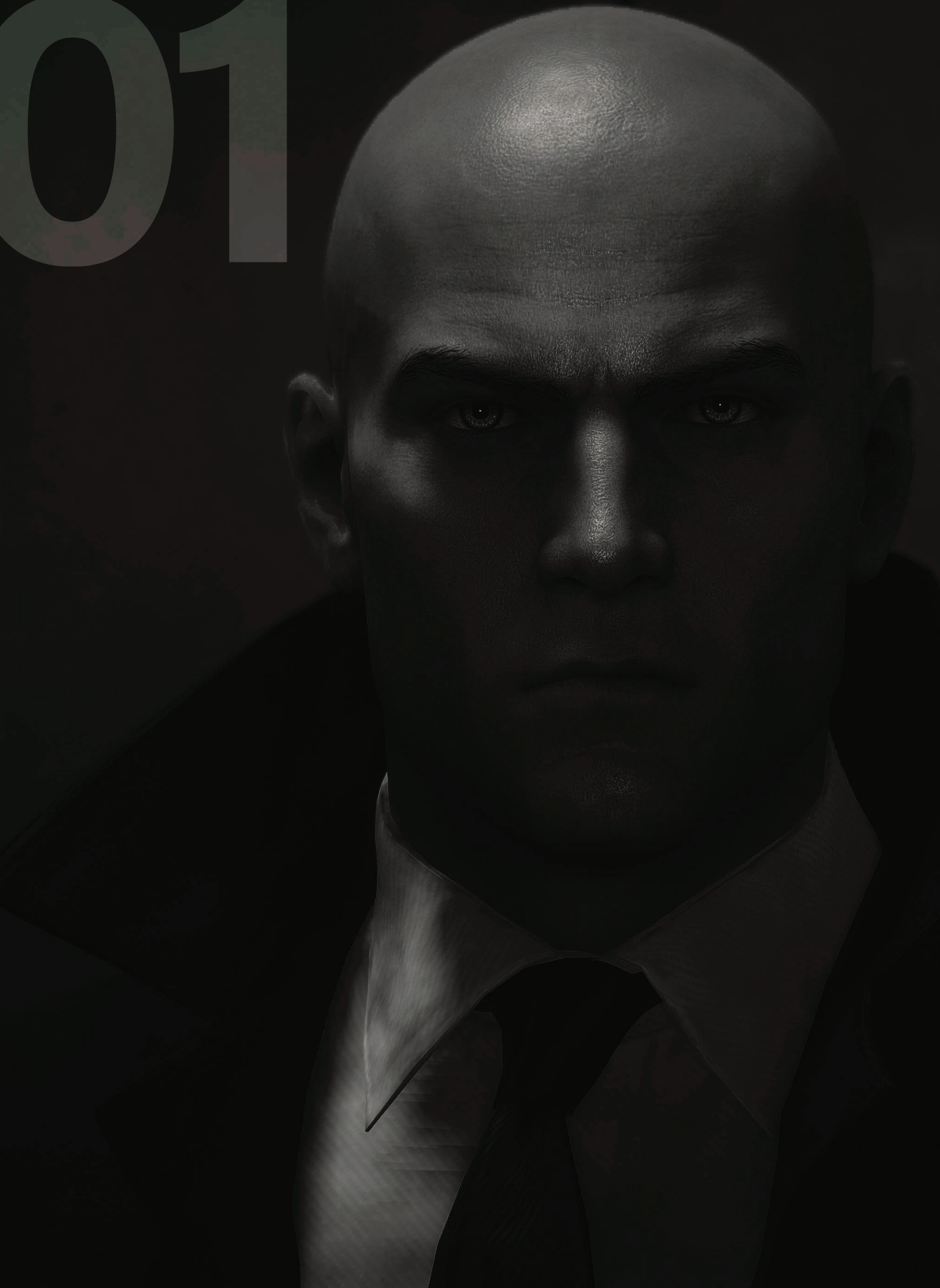


# THE PHOTO MODE AWARDS *WINNERS REVIEW* THE BEST IN GAMING PHOTOGRAPHY

**REVEALED**



01



# PEOPLE

## CATEGORY

This category celebrates photography that brings characters to life. Here, the focus is on capturing personality, emotion, and the unique presence of an individual—or a group—within a scene. Photographers use poses, expressions, lighting, and the

environment to tell a story, reveal inner character, and create an instant connection with the viewer. Every shot is an exploration of mood, narrative, and human—or fantastical—essence.

---

- Highlights the emotions, expressions, and personality of a subject.

---

- Utilizes environment, lighting, and pose to enhance storytelling.

---

- Can include individuals or groups, realistic or fantasy, aiming to evoke connection.



WINNER

# KRIEG VP

CAPTURED ON CYBERPUNK 2077

**BASED IN SOUTH AFRICA**

KRIEG VP's winning image stands out through restraint. Set within the dense, high-energy world of Cyberpunk 2077, the photograph chooses intimacy over spectacle, focusing entirely on mood, expression, and presence. It's a portrait that feels calm, deliberate, and quietly powerful.

Light and shadow play a central role, carving the subject's face in a way that adds depth and emotional weight without feeling dramatic for the sake of it. The simplicity of the composition keeps the viewer's attention locked on the person, allowing subtle details and expression to do the storytelling.

What makes this image especially compelling is how human it feels. There's no reliance on the game's usual visual excess. Instead, the frame invites the viewer to pause and connect with the subject on a more

personal level.

In a category dedicated to people, this photograph succeeds because it feels honest and confident in its simplicity. It's a strong reminder that sometimes the most impactful images are the ones that say less, but say it well.



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RUNNER UP



**THEIOTHART**  
Ghost of Tsushima  
France



**XANDROS VP**  
Senua's Saga: Hellblade II  
India



**TAKASANGAMES**

Assassin's Creed Shadows

Japan



**MICHI MEDIA**

Starfield  
United Kingdom



**ITSGUMAO**

The Last of Us Part II  
Spain

**ELEYAPLAYSGAMES**

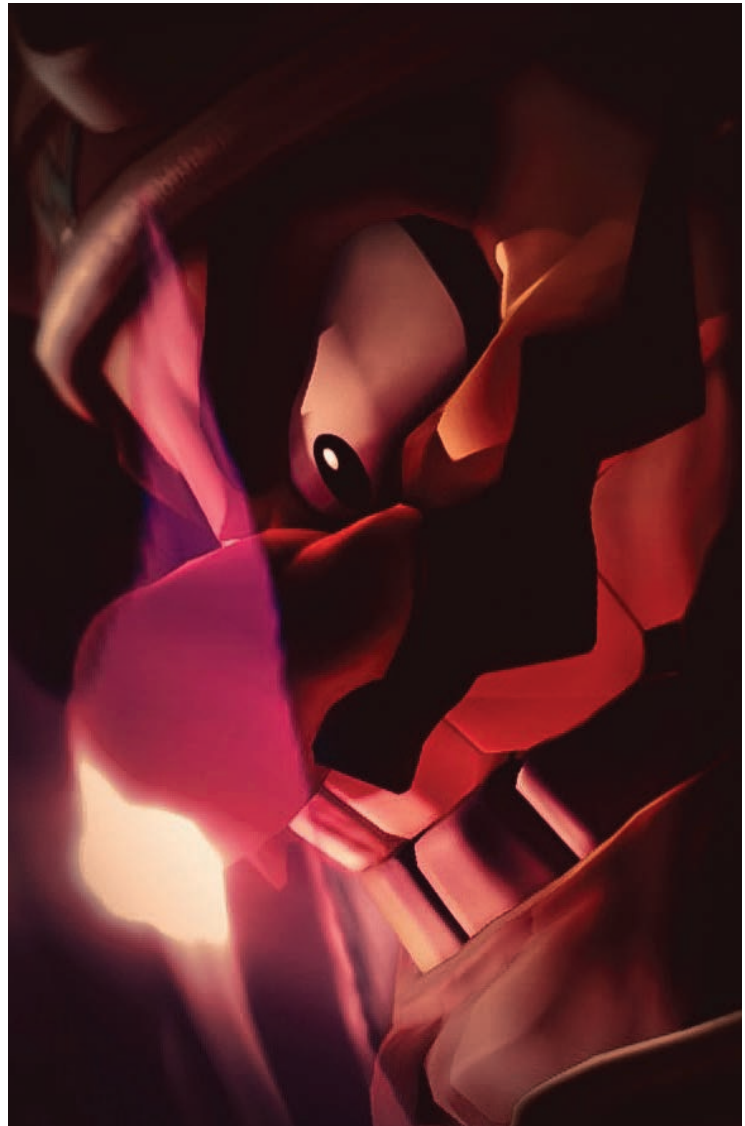
Cyberpunk 2077  
Australia

**ESMEEELISABETHH**

Kena Bridge of Spirits  
Netherlands



**CAPTURESKH**  
Star Wars Jedi: Survivor  
Canada



**LIQUIDFOXJAEGER**  
Super Smash Brothers Ultimate  
United States

**EVILESTHAR**

Final Fantasy VII Rebirth  
Italy

**EVEY**

The Last of Us Part II Remastered  
United States

**THORAXTHEIMPALER**

INDIKA  
United States

**NORICA CAPTURES**

Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
Egypt



**JOHNNYXBAGELS**

God of War (2018)

United States



**FALCONSWIFT87**  
Assassin's Creed Mirage  
United Kingdom



**MAYBEILIA**  
Alan Wake 2  
Germany



**DEFROSTSAJ VP**

Lost Records: Bloom & Rage  
United States



**NIINAKANIIN.VP**

Horizon Zero Dawn  
Remastered  
Finland

**SIRBERTIMUS VP**

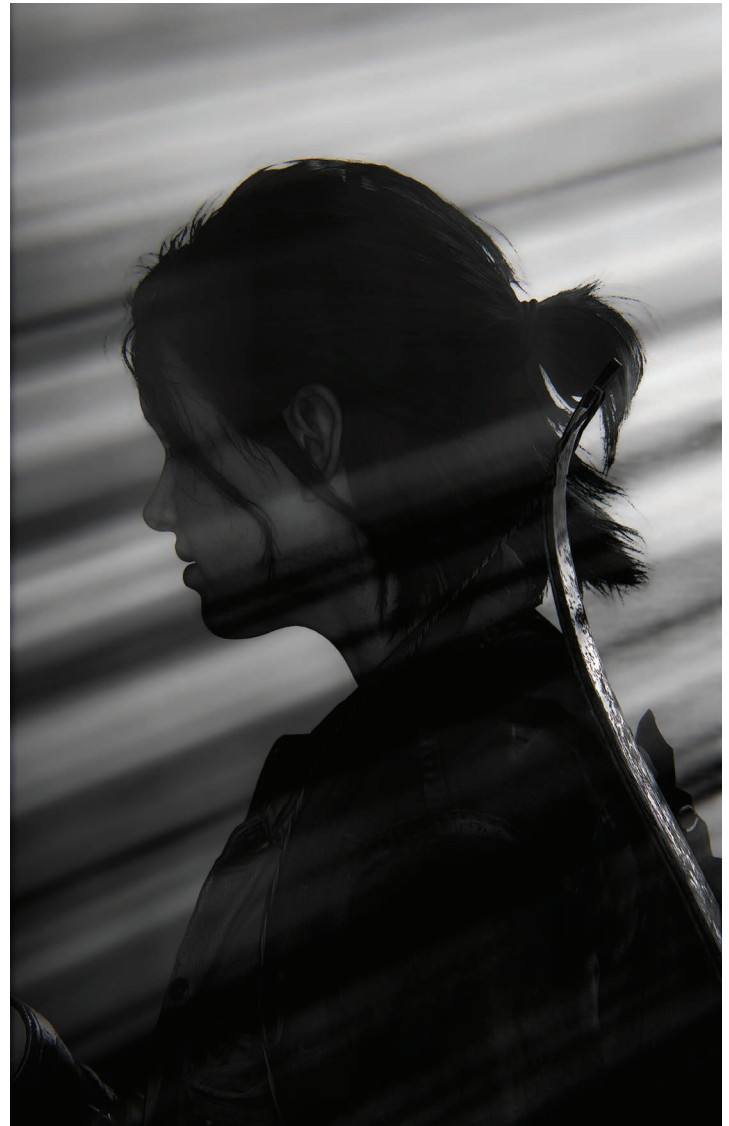
Assassin's Creed Shadows  
South Africa

**LYNARCUE**  
Elden Ring  
United States





**KHAALS VP**  
Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
Spain



**LUKEKASINGER**  
The Last of Us Part II  
Remastered  
United States



**THWIPPIP**

Red Dead Redemption 2  
Sweden



**HAZELGREEN VP**

Dragon Age: The Veilguard  
Germany



02

# ARCHITECTURE CATEGORY

Architecture photography focuses on capturing buildings, structures, and urban or fantasy environments, emphasizing creativity in composition, lighting, and design.

It can include exteriors, interiors, and cityscapes, showcasing both realistic and imaginative architectural spaces.

---

- Exteriors: The building's façade, skyline shots, bridges, monuments, and cityscapes.

---

- Interiors: Rooms, halls, or any indoor space, showing layout, design, and lighting.

---

- Creative angles and details: Close-ups of materials, structural patterns, or unusual perspectives that make architecture visually





WINNER

# GABRIELLA

CAPTURED ON CYBERPUNK 2077

**BASED IN CHINA**

In the Architecture category of the Photo Mode Awards 2025, XJ-QXZ66 captured the top prize with a striking shot that transforms a stark, geometric building into a study of angles, lines, and human scale. Taken from a high vantage point, the photo emphasizes the repeating zigzag of balconies, their sharp white edges contrasting with warm beige walls, creating a rhythmic, almost abstract composition.

What elevates the image is the subtle inclusion of characters on different levels, each peering out with curiosity or intent, giving life and scale to the structure while anchoring the viewer in the scene. The careful framing and warm, muted tones turn the building into more than architecture—it becomes a visual narrative of space, depth, and perspective. Judges praised XJQXZ66 for blending technical precision, composition mastery, and a keen eye for storytelling, making

this capture a standout winner in digital architecture photography.



PHOTOINGAME

Cyberpunk 2077

France

RUNNER UP



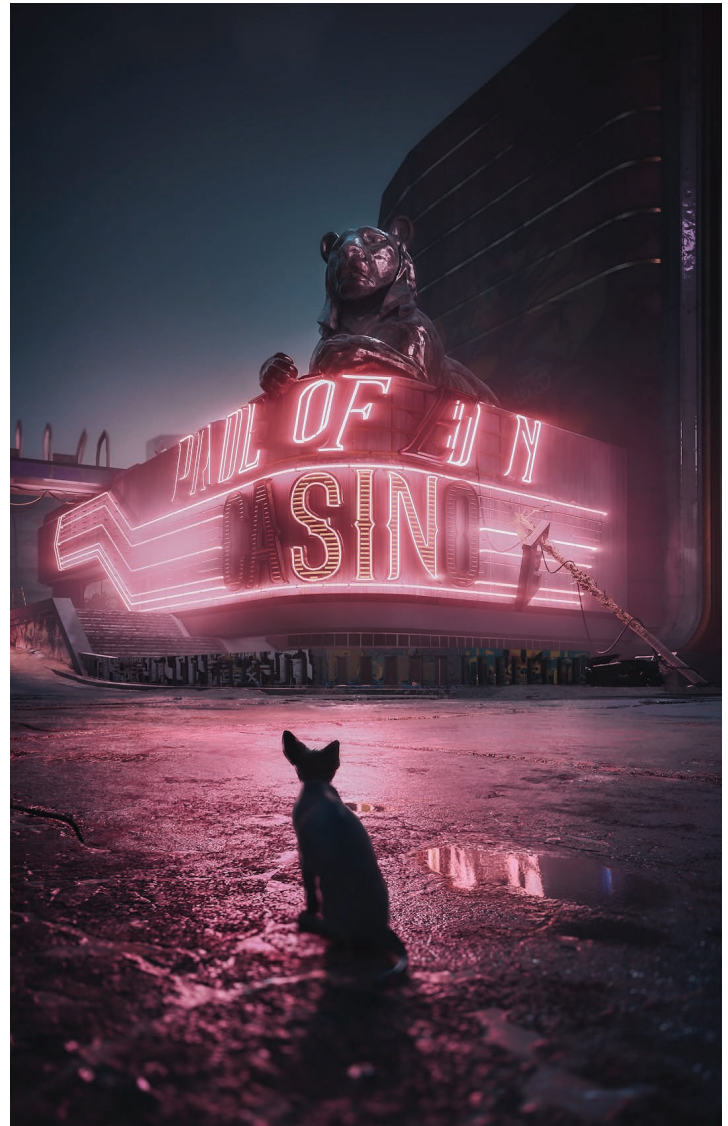
**CYBERTRIBAL.86**  
Control Ultimate Edition  
United States



**ALLIICXT**  
The Matrix Awakens  
The Matrix Awakens



**SASKIA**  
The Matrix Awakens  
Germany



**MICHI MEDIA**  
Cyberpunk 2077  
United Kingdom



**MSZOMBIE VP**  
Marvel's Spider-Man Remastered  
Germany



**SPIDEROFTSUSHIMA**  
Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
United States

**JONTYVP**

Cyberpunk 2077  
South Africa

**SHKEGULKA**

Alan Wake 2  
Russia

**FUZ**

Alan Wake 2  
Japan

**QUASYMODO**

The Last of Us Part I Remake  
Spain



**AYGHAN**  
Cyberpunk 2077  
France



**WISTFULEMBRACE**  
Marvel's Spider-Man  
United States



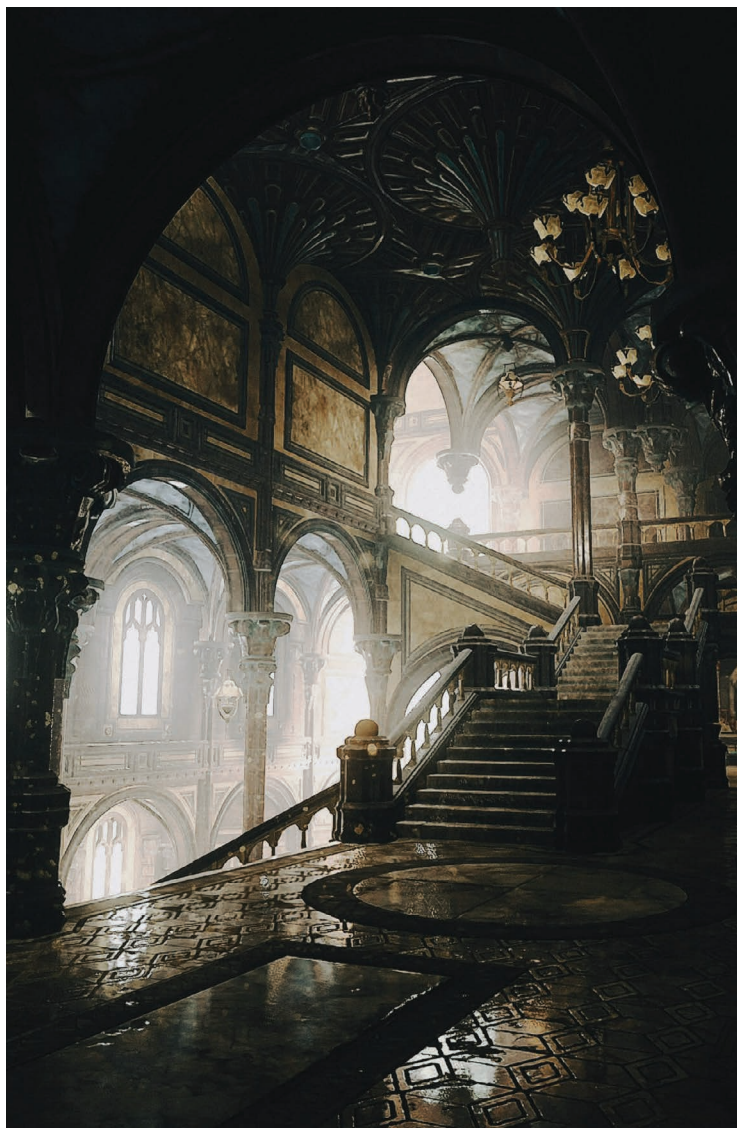
**THEONLYJESS VP**

Resident Evil Village  
United States



**MASHA.OO.PARASHA**

Dragon Age: The Veilguard  
Russia



**ARTYSTELY**  
Hogwarts Legacy  
Italy

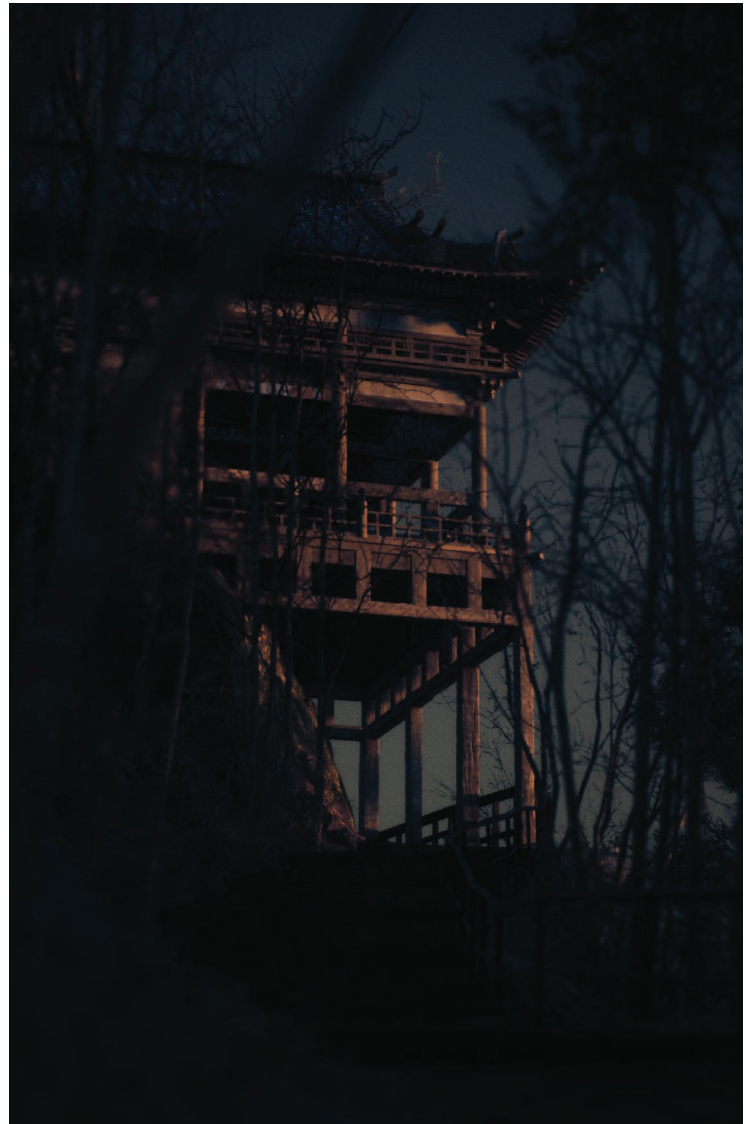


**IRONGAUNTLET05**  
Cyberpunk 2077  
India



**MORRIE PHOTO**

Alan Wake 2  
Japan



**TNOVIXALT**

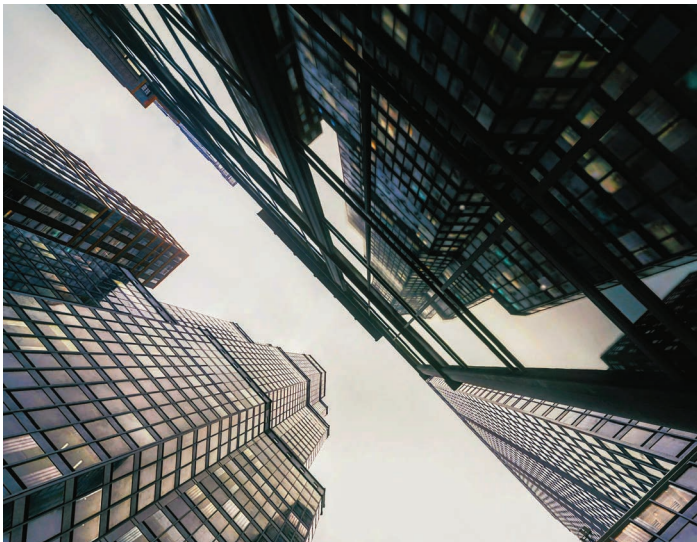
Lushfoil Photography Sim  
United States

**EFFY**

Kingdom Come Deliverance II  
United Kingdom

**ALIS JANSENDOTTIR**

Cyberpunk 2077  
Czech Republic

**PURPLEPAMPANO**

Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
United States

**SIRBERTIMUS**

Horizon Zero Dawn Remastered  
South Africa



**SARAH GURRADO**

Marvel's Spider-Man 2

France





# ACTION CATEGORY

Action photography captures high-intensity moments filled with movement, energy, and tension. It focuses on dynamic scenes where timing is everything, freezing

split-second actions from sports, combat, chases, or cinematic set pieces to convey impact and momentum.

---

- **Emphasis on movement:** Showcases motion, speed, and physical energy through timing, pose, and framing.

---

- **Peak-moment timing:** Captures decisive instants where action, expression, and impact come together.

---

- **Visual intensity:** Uses composition, camera angles, and effects to heighten drama and create a sense of power and urgency.



WINNER

# LVNARCUE

CAPTURED ON ELDEN RING

**BASED IN UNITED STATES**

For the Action category at the Photo Mode Awards 2025, LVNARCUE took the top prize with a shot from Elden Ring that doesn't just show movement — it makes you feel it. What sets this image apart is how it captures a pivotal moment of confrontation: the silhouetted figure of the player character poised against an enormous, looming enemy, frozen at the very instant before impact. The way the light breaks across the scene highlights the contrast between the dark, ragged form of the foe and the subtler details of the adventurer's stance, giving the frame a visceral sense of tension and momentum that draws you right into the fight.

There's real visual discipline in the composition. The low viewing angle amplifies the scale of the threat, while keeping the hero's silhouette crisp against a bright background gives the image clarity without sacrificing drama. You can see every nuance

of posture and weapon angle, which makes the still feel like the climax of a larger story rather than just a paused moment. This kind of decisive framing and ability to communicate energy through light, shadow, and silhouette is exactly what the Action category was designed to reward: a dynamic scene that doesn't just record an event, but elevates it into visual storytelling. The judges singled this shot out because it balances intensity and clarity in a way few action captures do.





---

## RUNNER UP

**AMICH VP**  
Gran Turismo 7  
United States



SASKIA  
The Crew Motorfest  
Germany



**ARCHIE HANNA**  
Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
Ireland



**UYSCUTIIIO**  
The Last of Part II  
Saudi Arabia

**THEPHOTOMODEFILES**

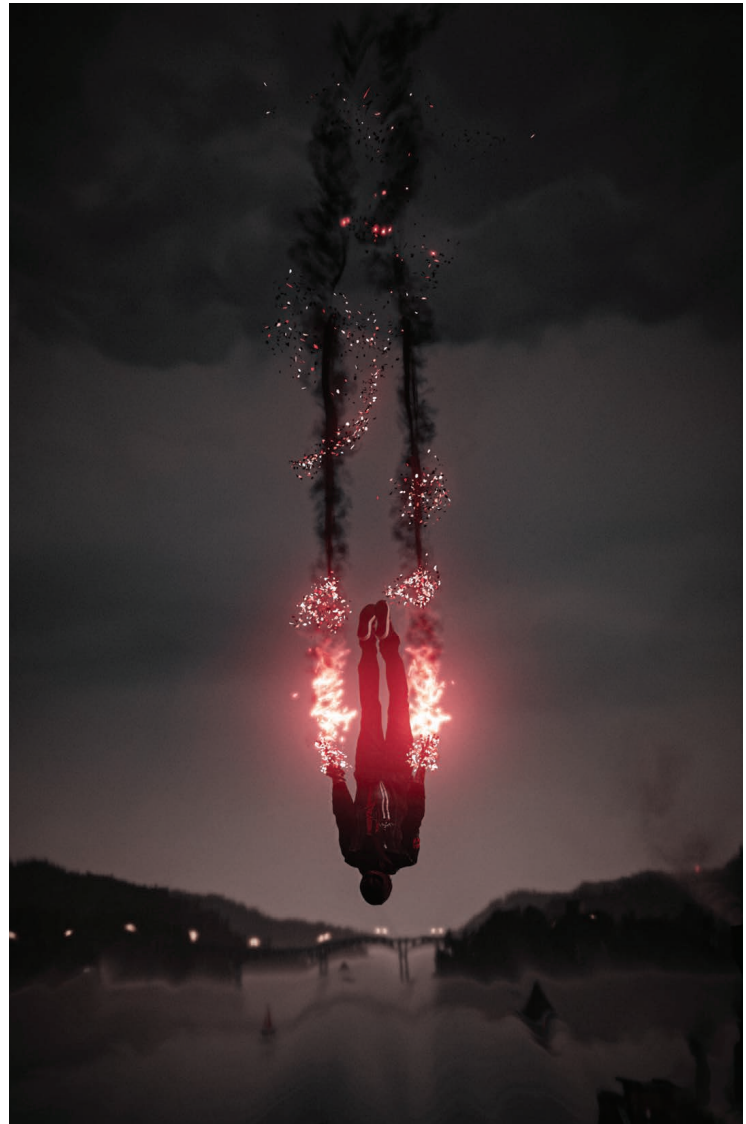
The Last of Us Part II Remastered  
United Kingdom

**LOSGA94**

Star Wars Jedi: Survivor  
Italy



**WITBYY**  
Gran Turismo 7  
United Kingdom



**KILLED BY LAG**  
inFamous Second Son  
Canada

**COP FILIP**

Star Wars Jedi: Survivor  
Slovenia

**ELEYAPLAYSGAMES**

Everspace 2  
Australia

**MDEAVORVP**

Far Cry New Dawn  
United States

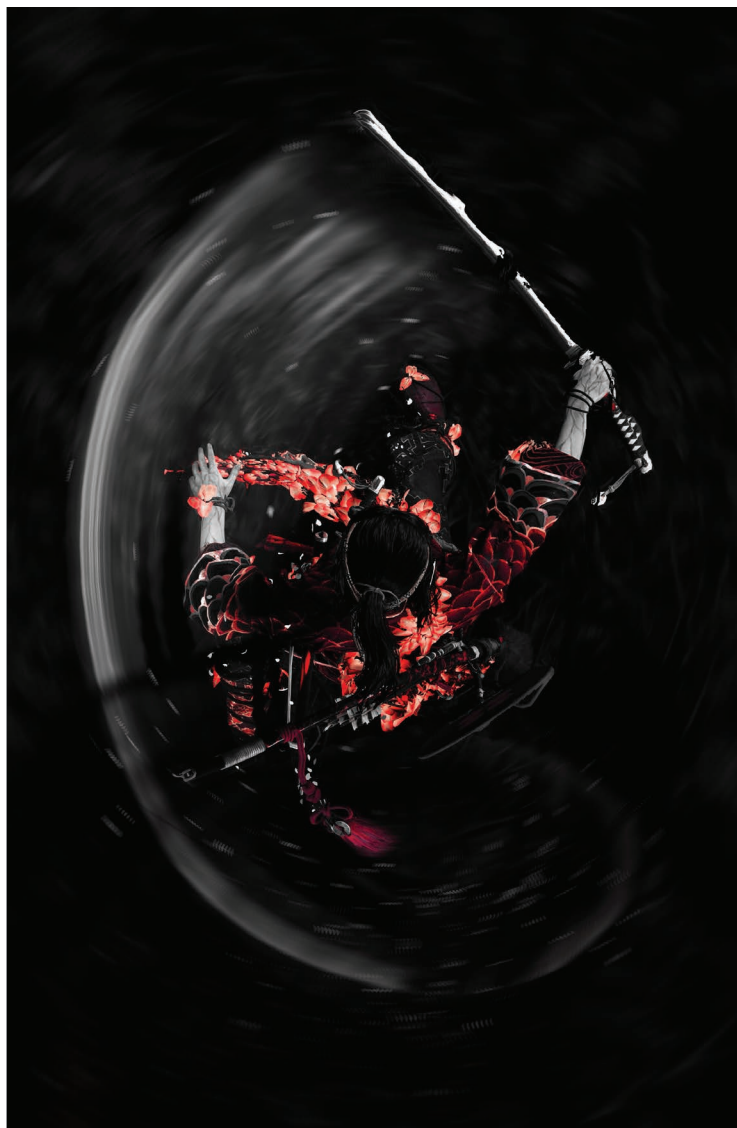
**PMI PLOTNIKOV**

Senua's Saga: Hellblade II  
Russia



**JB JAWBREAKER**

God of War Ragnarok  
Japan

**HAZELGREEN VP**

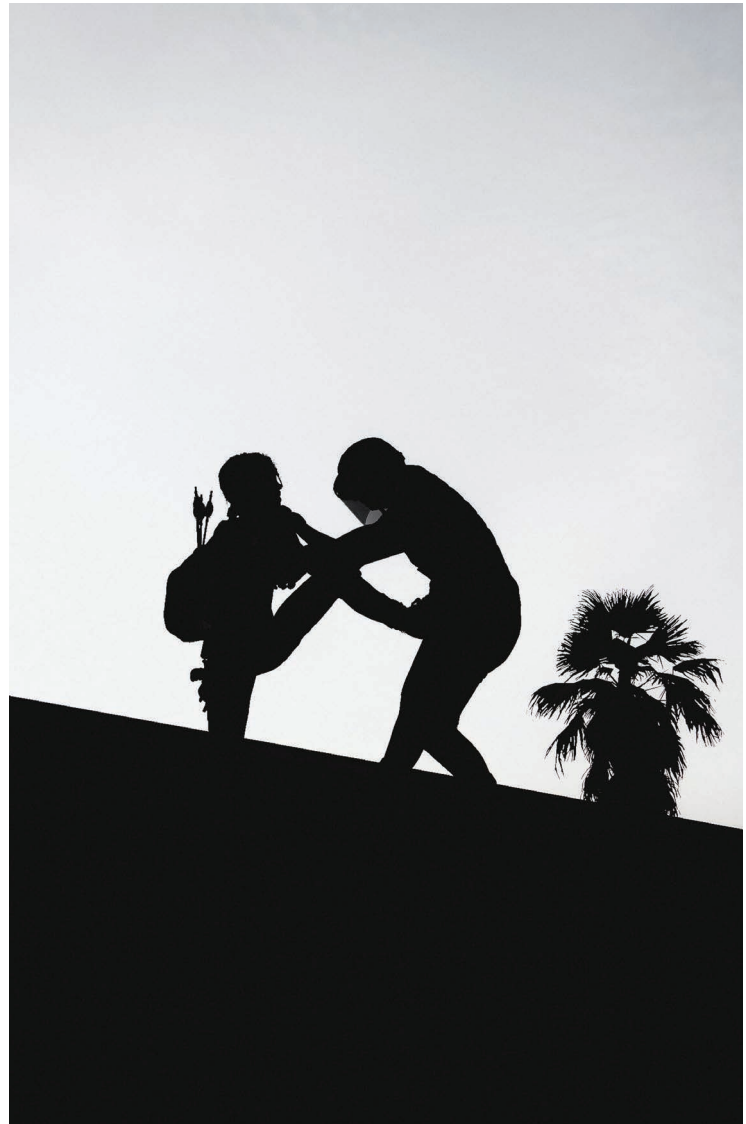
Ghost of Tsushima: Legends  
Germany

**NUMASEDI**

Assassin's Creed Shadows  
Spain



**AGGZGAMING**  
Steep  
India



**TLOU2VP**  
The Last of Us Part II  
South Africa

**SECONDCAPTURE**

Stellar Blade  
Argentina

**TAKASANGAMES**  
Assassin's Creed Shadows  
Japan



**CAULDRONSHOTS**

Horizon Forbidden West  
United States

**ASTROGHOST001**

Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
India



**SCREENCHE**

Alan Wake 2  
Spain



**SHADOW II**

Stellar Blade  
Spain

**SPIDEYTWOSHoes**

Marvel's Spider-Man 2  
United States

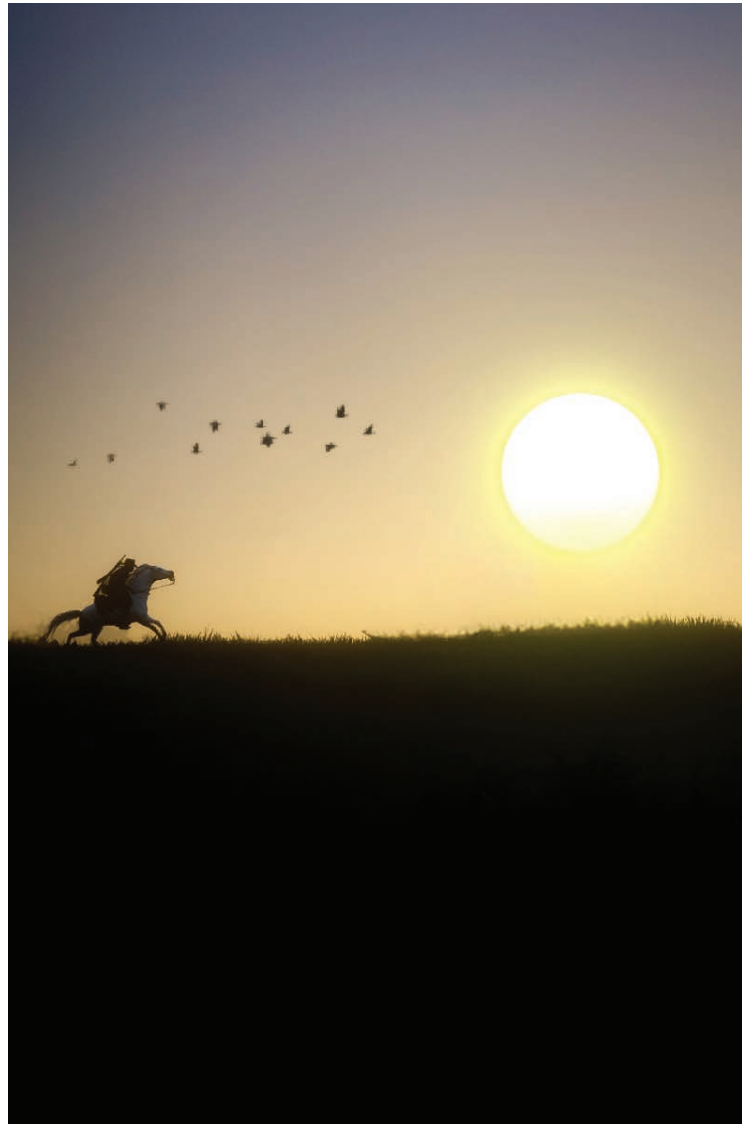
**ADWARFLEGIION**

Warhammer 40k: Space Marine 2  
Canada



**FOUNDYNNEL**

Riders Republic  
United Kingdom



**CAPKEN VP**

Red Dead Redemption 2  
India

# CLAIR OBSCUR: EXPEDITION 33

## PHOTO MODE

When *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* arrived in early 2025, it didn't just look different, it felt different. That impact was quickly recognised at The Game Awards, where it took home multiple honours, including Game of the Year. Its painterly art direction, soft brush-stroke textures, and restrained use of colour gave the game a visual identity that immediately set it apart. Every environment feels composed rather than constructed, like a living canvas shaped by light, shadow, and emotion. It's a world built on atmosphere, where silence and framing carry as much weight as dialogue or action. From the opening hours, it was clear this was a game meant to be studied, paused, and admired.

That made the absence of a Photo Mode at launch all the more noticeable. *Clair Obscur* constantly presents moments that beg to

be captured: a lone figure framed against an empty horizon, a soft glow cutting through fog, a quiet cutscene that feels more like a painting in motion. The free "Thank You" update changed that entirely, introducing Photo Mode and transforming how players could interact with the game's artistry. Rather than feeling like a late addition, the mode fits seamlessly into the experience, giving players the freedom to slow down and fully engage with the visual language the developers worked so carefully to craft.

Opening Photo Mode through the pause menu immediately reveals a toolset built with intention. Full camera freedom allows you to pull away from the action and explore scenes from perspectives never possible during normal play, including full access during cutscenes. This alone elevates the mode, as many of the game's

The camera feels fluid and responsive, encouraging experimentation rather than precision micromanagement. You can drift through environments, reframe characters, and discover compositions that feel entirely new, even in familiar locations.

### **A Painterly World, Finally Framed**

The core camera tools strike a strong balance between accessibility and depth. Adjustable field of view, aperture, focus distance, and grid overlays provide everything needed for thoughtful composition without overwhelming the player. Colour grading options invite creative reinterpretation, offering fine control over exposure, contrast, saturation, and temperature. The included artistic filters, such as Oil Painting and Sketch, feel particularly well judged



**WHAT STRUCK US MOST WASN'T JUST THE FREEDOM OF THE CAMERA, BUT HOW THE LIGHTING TOOLS LET US RESHAPE EMOTION, TURNING QUIET MOMENTS INTO SOMETHING DEEPLY CINEMATIC.**





Rather than masking the game's visuals, they lean into its hand-crafted aesthetic, reinforcing the sense that *Clair Obscur* is as much about art as it is about gameplay.

Lighting is where this Photo Mode truly distinguishes itself. The ability to place and adjust up to ten spotlights is exceptionally rare and opens the door to an almost cinematic level of control. Shaping light across a character's face, isolating environmental details, or rebuilding an entire scene's mood from scratch feels closer to directing a shot than taking a screenshot. Small lighting changes can dramatically shift the emotional tone of an image, and the game's painterly surfaces respond beautifully to this level of control.

In the end, this Photo Mode doesn't feel like an optional extra or a box-ticking feature. It feels essential. For a game defined by mood, composition, and emotional restraint, giving players the tools to engage creatively only strengthens the experience. *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* was already one of our favourite games of 2025, but Photo Mode elevates it further, turning fleeting moments into artworks and players into collaborators.

04





# INDIE CATEGORY

The Indie category celebrates independent games that empower players to express their creativity through in-game photo modes. It recognises the artistry and

innovation of smaller development teams who design visually distinctive worlds and provide the tools to capture, frame, and share them.

- 
- **Distinct art direction:** Showcases bold, original visual styles that define an indie game's identity.
- 
- **Atmosphere and mood:** Emphasises world-building through colour, lighting, and environmental storytelling.
- 
- **Creative vision:** Highlights the individuality and experimentation that small teams bring to their game worlds.



WINNER

# SCREENCHE

CAPTURED ON SKATE SIM

**BASED IN SPAIN**

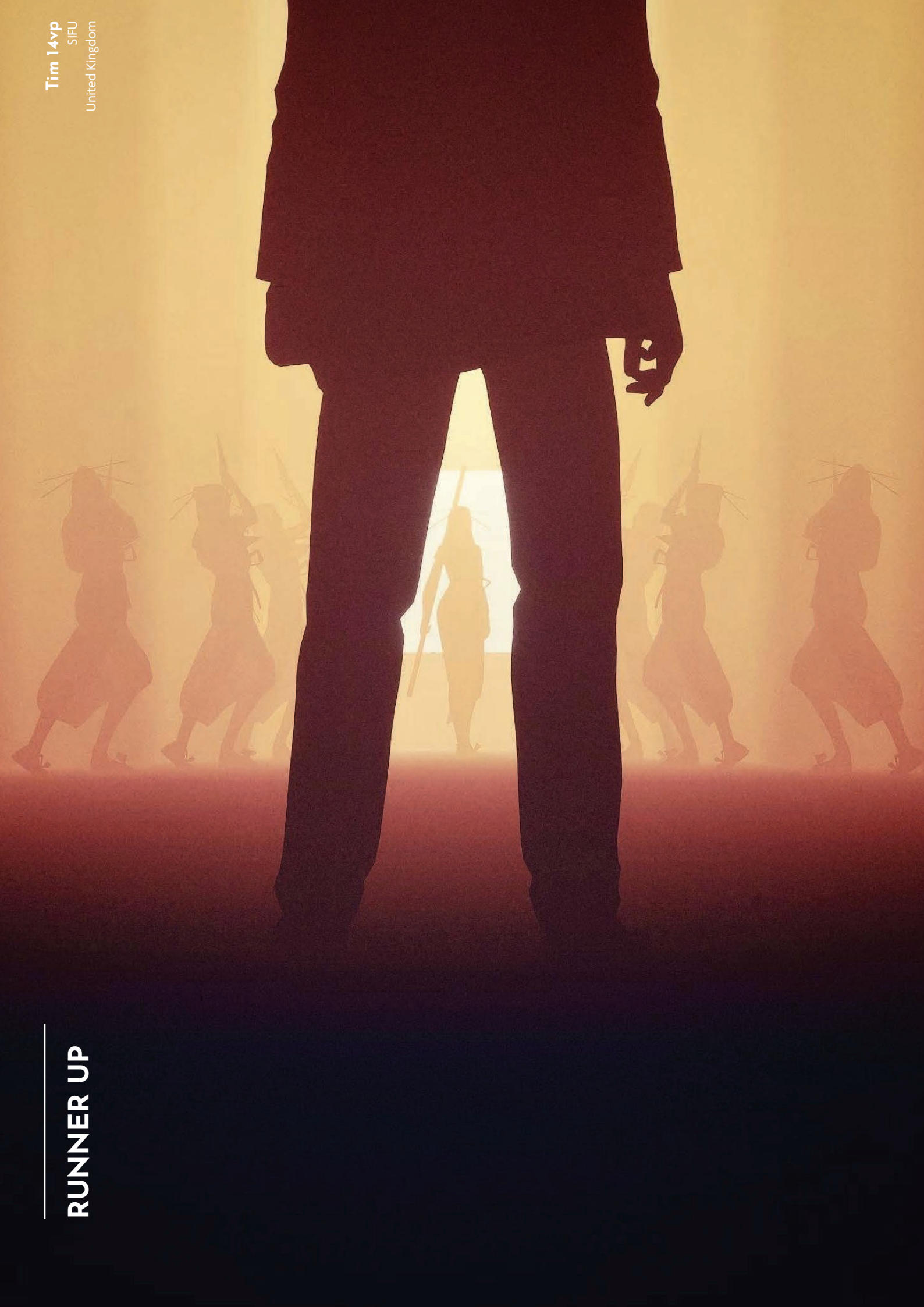
SCREENCHE's winning shot cuts right to the raw energy of skate culture. The board frozen mid-flip, wheels still in the air and heel just lifting off, gives the image a kinetic punch that feels almost audible. You can practically sense the weight shift, the grind of concrete under shoe, and that split-second tension right before gravity wins.

The urban backdrop, with its warm late-afternoon light and tidy mix of wood and metal, isn't just a setting — it's part of the rhythm. It grounds the trick in a real space, something familiar yet gritty, like an everyday spot elevated by pure skill. Rather than an obvious spectacle, this frame finds beauty in the ordinary: the worn bench, the weathered boards, and the slight blur of motion all work together so the viewer feels not just what's happening but how it feels to be there.

In a category that celebrates independent vision and creative use of in-game tools, this photograph stands out because it doesn't just show a trick — it makes you feel that trick. It's alive with motion and atmosphere, and it turns a single moment into something you want to watch again.



Tim 14vp  
SIFU  
United Kingdom



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**RUNNER UP**

**AYGHAN**  
Pacific Drive  
France



**KILLEDBYLAG**  
Firewatch  
Canada

**SPIDEYTWOSHoes**

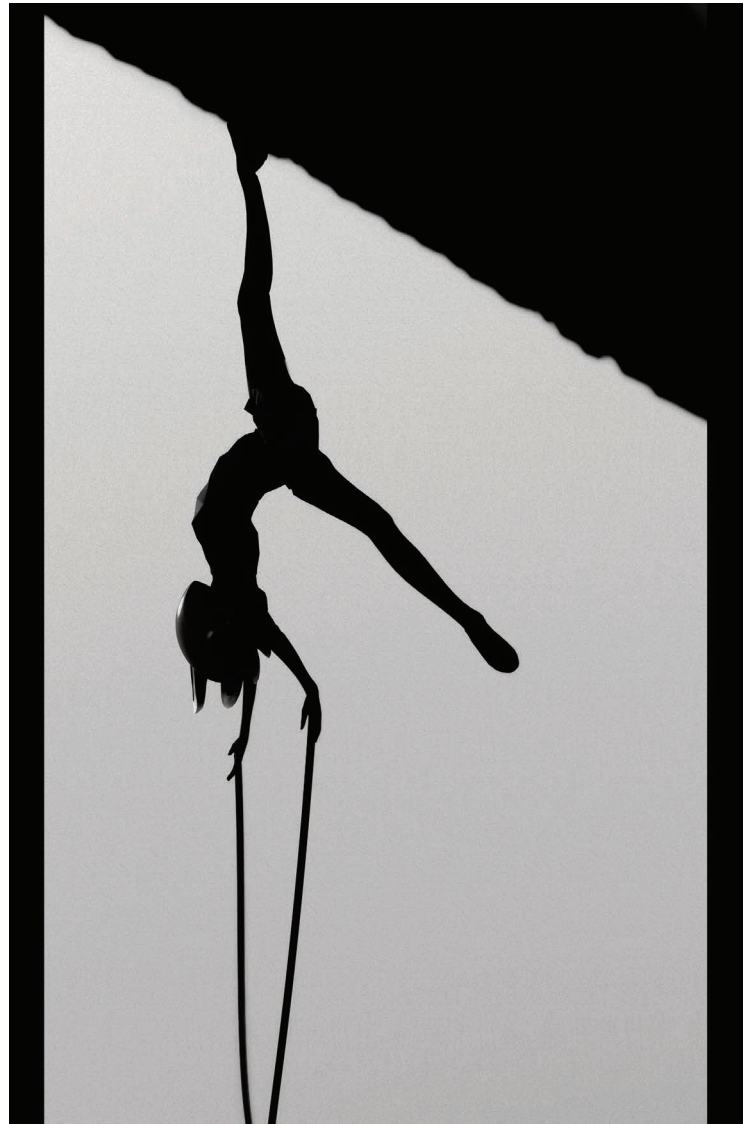
Bound  
United States

**AMICH VP**

Stray  
United States



**HORACE0816**  
No Man's Sky  
Taiwan



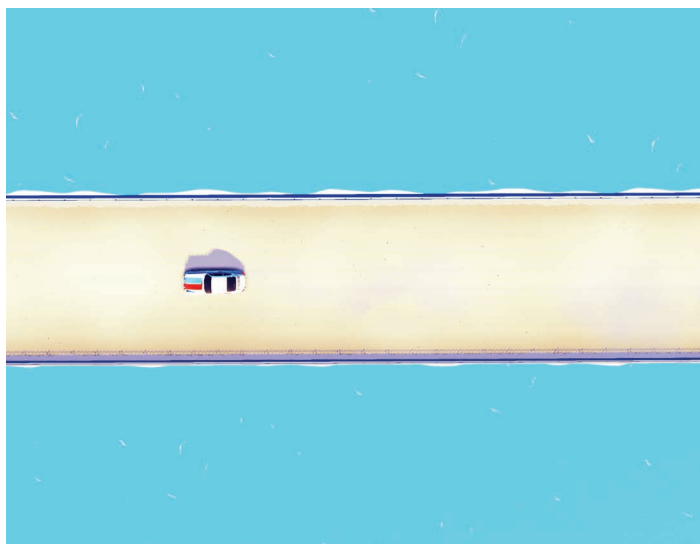
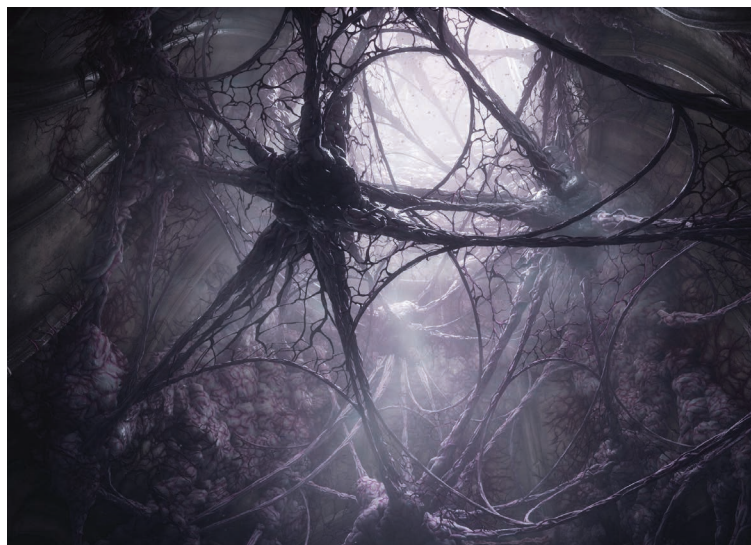
**CLL3AR**  
Bound  
Croatia

**BIRDKEY103**

Elite Dangerous  
United States

**FINGOLFINII VP**

Scorn  
Italy

**SUMMERS458**

Art of Rally  
United Kingdom

**PMI PLOTNIKOV**

Mortal Shell  
Russia



**KEEPYOURINNERLIGHT**

Atomic Heart

Hungary

**CARMEN 122**

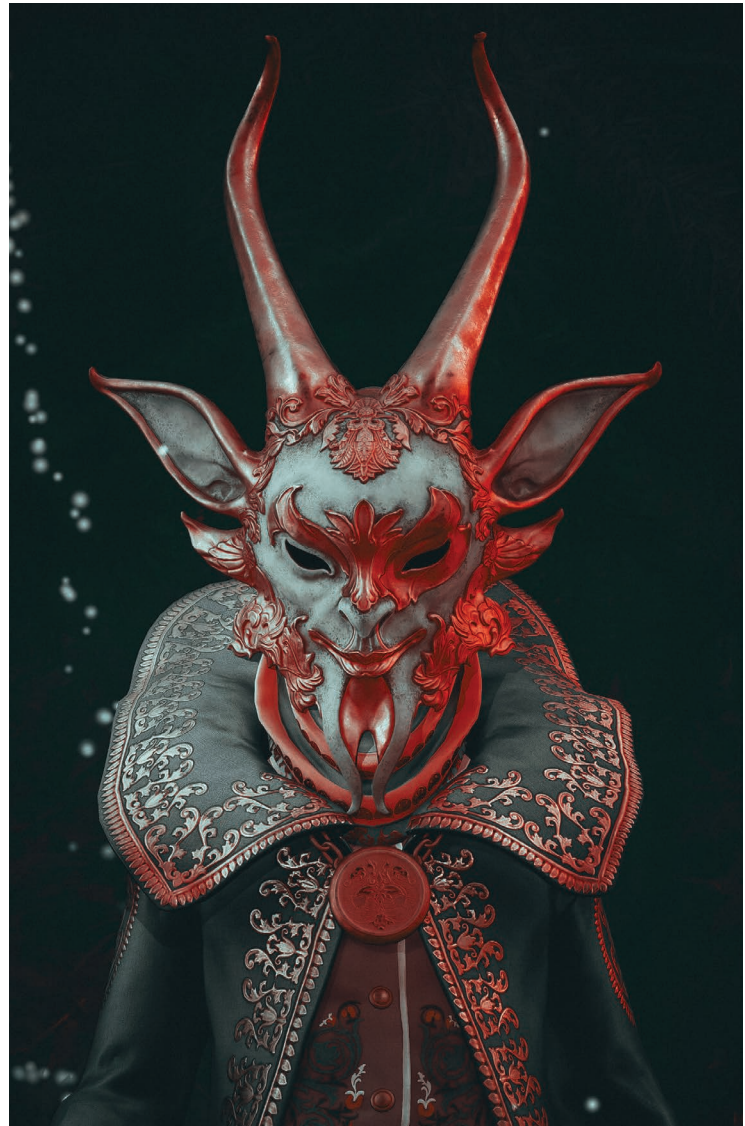
Lushfoil Photography Sim  
Spain

**SPIDEROFTSUSHIMA**

No Man's Sky  
United States



**COP FILIP**  
No Man's Sky  
Slovenia



**MSZOMBIE VP**  
Nightindale  
Germany

**PINO44IO**

Mandragora: Whispers of the  
Witch Tree  
Belarus

**WORLD OF GSHOTS**

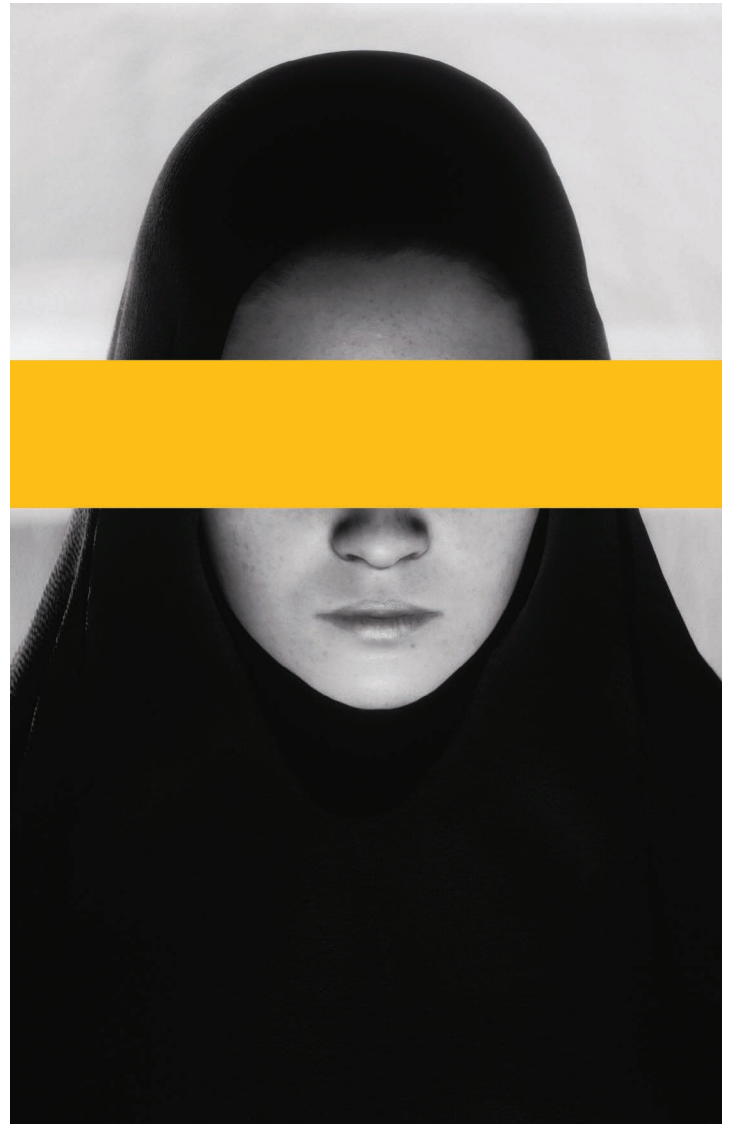
Beyond Blue

Germany



**TURID TORKIL**

Flintlock The Siege of Dawn  
Germany

**SHKEGULKA**

INDIKA  
Russia



**SECONDCAPTURE**

Cairn  
Argentina



**SNEAKYMIKE**

Lost Records: Bloom & Rage  
United Kingdom

05



# CLOSE UP

# CATEGORY

The Indie category celebrates independent games that empower players to express their creativity through in-game photo modes. It recognises the artistry and

innovation of smaller development teams who design visually distinctive worlds and provide the tools to capture, frame, and share them.

---

- Distinct art direction: Showcases bold, original visual styles that define an indie game's identity.

---

- Atmosphere and mood: Emphasises world-building through colour, lighting, and environmental storytelling.

---

- Creative vision: Highlights the individuality and experimentation that small teams bring to their game worlds.



**WINNER**

# WINGSFORSMILES

CAPTURED ON ALAN WAKE 2

**BASED IN RUSSIA**

In a field crowded with stunning virtual photography from some of the most visually rich games of the year, WingsForSmiles has carved out a quiet masterpiece. Their winning entry in the Close Up category for the 2025 Photo Mode Awards turns a simple scene from Alan Wake 2 into something almost tactile — a study in texture, light, and mood that feels more like a still life in a gallery than a frame pulled from a digital world. The composition centers on an aged ram's skull resting on a windowsill, its curves and crevices sharply defined against the cool, diffused daylight leaking in through fractured wooden panels. This shot doesn't shout; it whispers, inviting the viewer to linger on its subtle interplay between shadow and structure.

What makes this image stand out is the way WingsForSmiles has coaxed depth out of minimal elements. The composition's restrained palette

and the contrast between the rough, organic surface of the skull and the smooth, muted planes of the window frame create an atmosphere that's both eerie and introspective — a quiet echo of Alan Wake 2's haunting narrative spaces. In a category defined by intimate detail and meticulous framing, this capture earns its place as a standout, reminding us why virtual photography can feel just as compelling and thoughtful as its real-world counterpart.



**WISTFUL EMBRACE**  
Ghost of Tsushima  
United States

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**RUNNER UP**



**RIAINWONDERLAND**  
CONTROL  
Italy



**MACROLIZ VP**  
Hogwarts Legacy  
Germany

**LISA\_WEST\_PIX**

Death Stranding Director's Cut  
United Kingdom

**PLAYPAUSEPHOTO**

Ghost of Tsushima  
Sweden

**SHKEGULKA**

Lost Records: Bloom & Rage  
Russia

**AQUELYRASS**

Cyberpunk 2077  
Germany



**AYGHAN**  
Cyberpunk 2077  
France

**CAULDRONSHOTS**

Cyberpunk 2077  
United States

**MSZOMBIE VP**

Alan Wake 2  
Germany



**FRAMECAPTUREVP**

Alan Wake 2  
United States



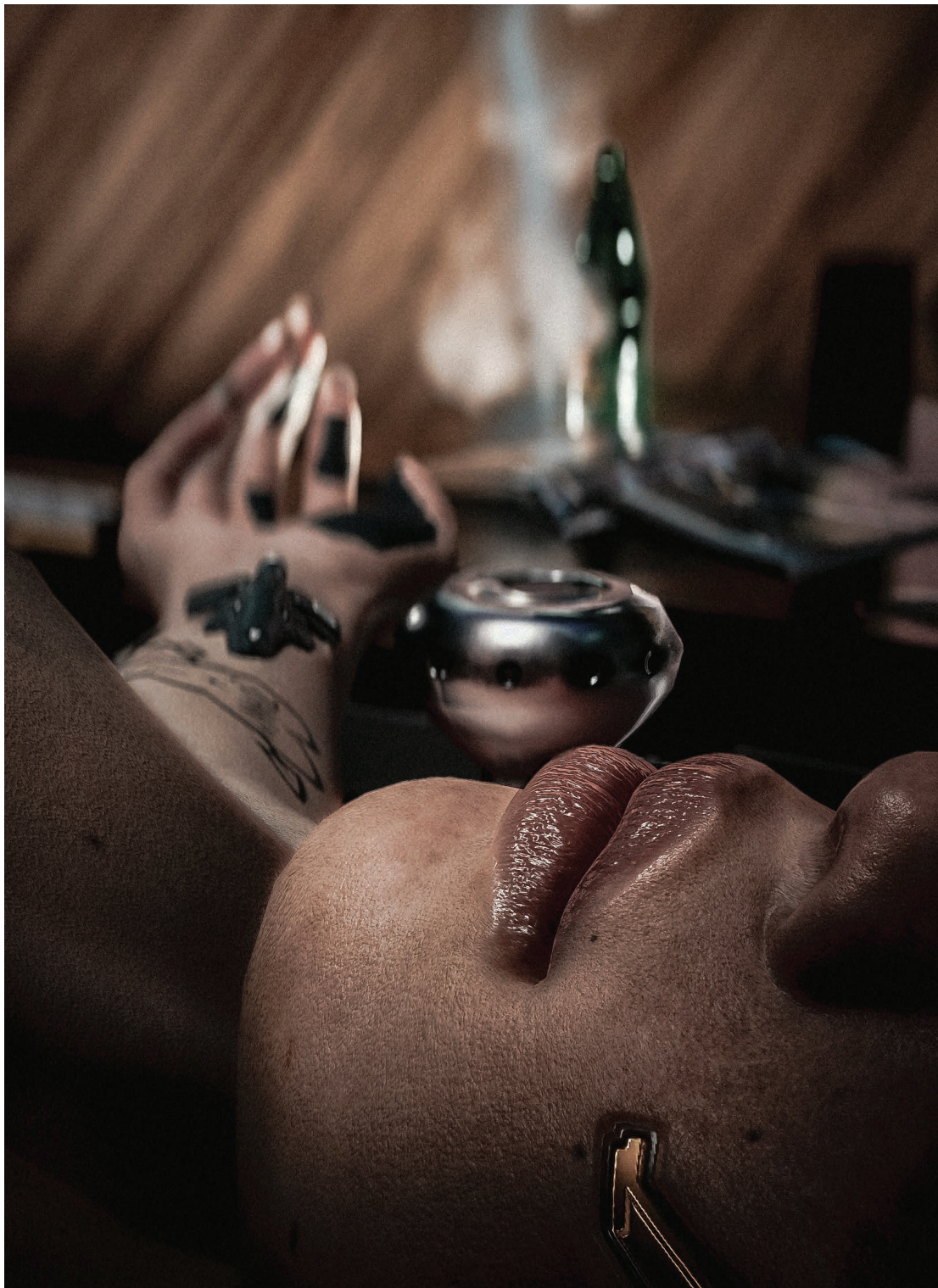
**MICHI MEDIA**

Forza Horizon 5  
United Kingdom

**SNEAKYMIKE**

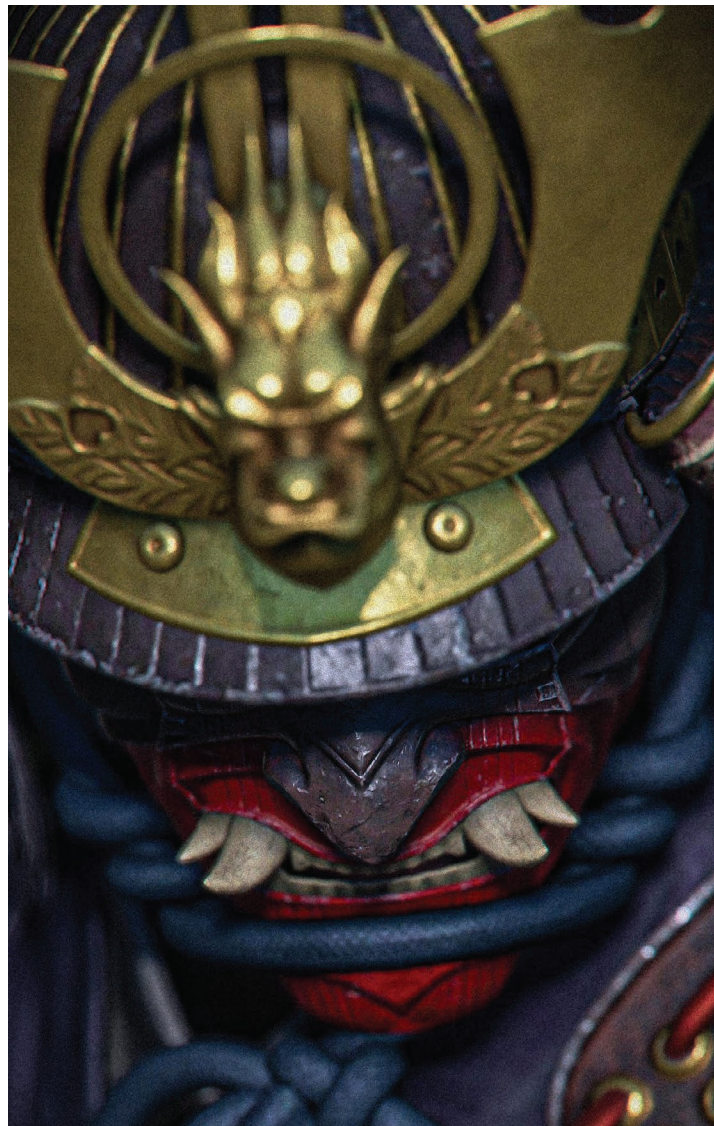
The Last of Us Part II Remastered  
United Kingdom

**THEONLYJESS VP**  
Cyberpunk 2077  
United States



**SLR VP**

Red Dead Redemption 2  
India

**BRANCAKES VP**

Assassin's Creed Shadows  
United States



**ARTYSTELY**  
Horizon Forbidden West  
Italy



**ASTROGHOST001**  
Uncharted 4  
India



**TAKASANGAMES**

Stellar Blade

Japan

**FOTONAUTA VP**

Drive Club

Brazil





**SASKIA**  
Red Dead Redemption 2  
Germany



**9B75**  
Stellar Blade  
Japan



**ELEYAPLAYSGAMES**  
Split Fiction  
Australia



**DEFROSTSAJ VP**  
Alan Wake 2  
United States

**XANDROS VP**

Senua's Saga: Hellblade II  
India

**SARAH GURRADO**

The Last of Us Part II Remastered  
France



**HORACE0816**

Indiana Jones and the Great Circle  
Taiwan

06



# NATURE CATEGORY

Nature photography focuses on capturing the beauty, scale, and atmosphere of the natural world, drawing attention to landscapes, wildlife, flora, and environmental

details found in outdoor settings. It celebrates the relationship between light, weather, and terrain, transforming natural scenes into expressive and immersive visual moments.

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- Natural environments: Showcases landscapes, ecosystems, and untouched or lightly altered surroundings.

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- Flora and wildlife: Captures plants, animals, and organic details within their natural context.

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- Light and atmosphere: Uses natural lighting, weather, and time of day to enhance mood and realism.

WINNER

# BELEGARSSON115

CAPTURED ON ASSASSIN'S CREED SHADOWS

BASED IN VIETNAM



Take a moment with the nature winner from the 2025 Photo Mode Awards, captured by belegarsson115 in Assassin's Creed Shadows. This shot doesn't feel like a backdrop from a game; it feels like a morning by a real marsh. Front and center, a heron — long neck, alert eye, and wings lifted in mid-adjustment — seems to hold its balance on shallow water that catches the light like glass. The bird's feathers glow with warm highlights against softer, cooler tones in the background, and the blurred reeds beyond give the whole frame a quiet depth that feels calm and alive at the same time. (Image)

What elevates this beyond a nice screenshot is the moment belegarsson115 chose to freeze. The heron isn't simply standing; it's in a gesture that suggests a story — maybe it's just landed, or maybe it's about to push off again. The light is low and golden, backlighting the wings so you see every curve and subtle texture, while ripples in the water catch tiny flashes of color. The background stays soft, letting the bird's form and the sense of place dominate, like a naturalist's sketch made in perfect light. This feels like virtual nature at its most believable and intimate.



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## RUNNER UP

**DEATHSTALKER131**

Assassin's Creed Shadows  
Norway





**WISTFUL EMBRACE**  
Ghost of Tsushima  
United States



**SIRBERTIMUS VP**  
Assassin's Creed Shadows  
South Africa



**ASTROGHOST001**  
Red Dead Redemption 2  
India

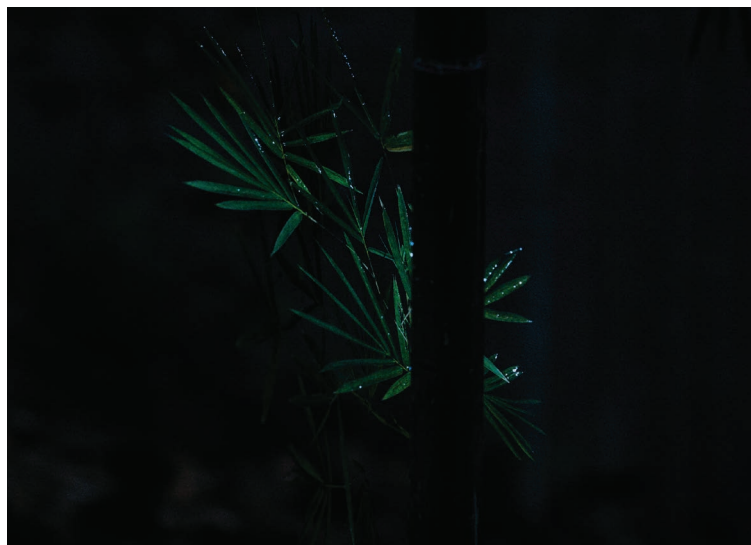
**MDEAVOR VP**

A Plague Tale: Requiem  
United States



**9B75**

Lushfoil Photography Sim  
Japan



**CAIQUE. VP**

Horizon Forbidden West  
Brazil

**2SPACEMONKEYS**

Red Dead Redemption 2  
Spain

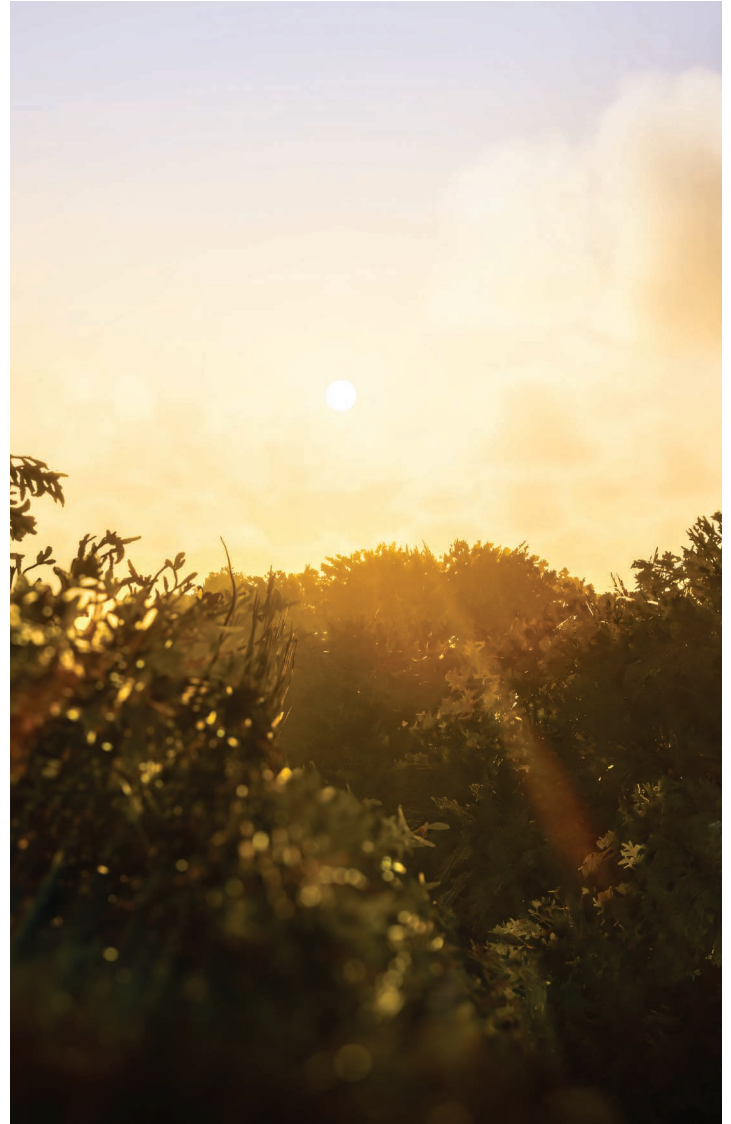


**CLL3AR**

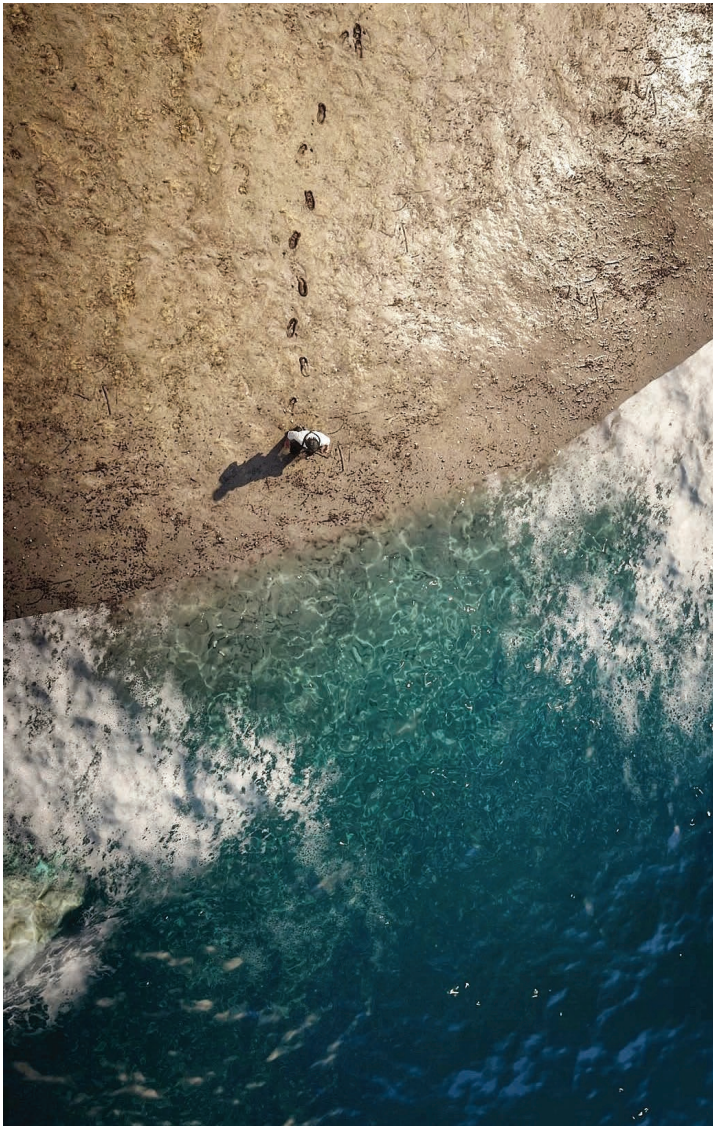
Avatar Frontiers of Pandora  
Croatia

**RAIDER WARRIOR**

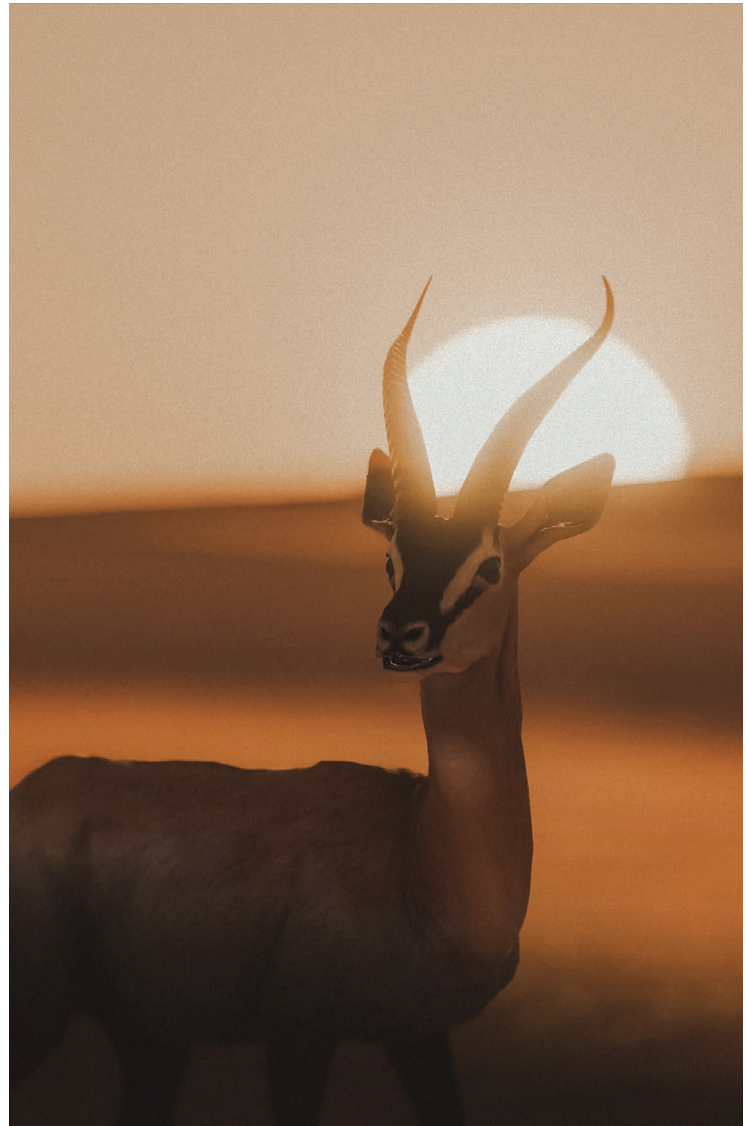
Assassin's Creed Valhalla  
South Africa

**BARTECHNO VP**

The Crew Motorfest  
Germany



**COCKTAIL331**  
Red Dead Redemption 2  
United States



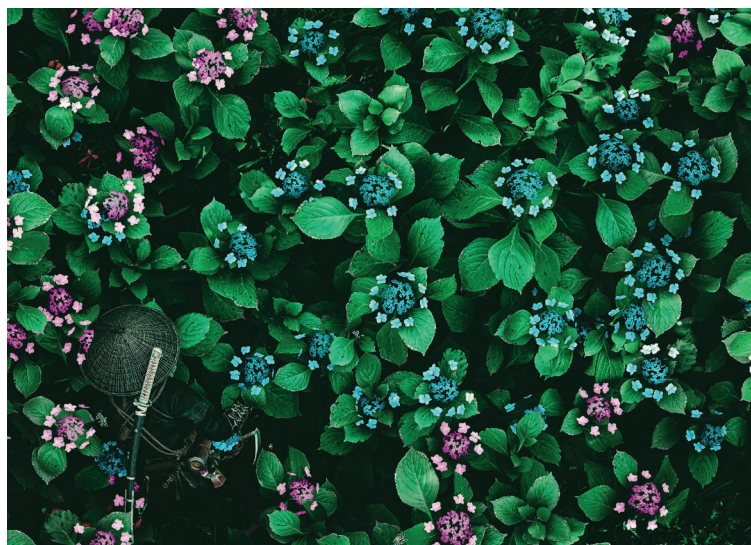
**SASKIA**  
Assassin's Creed Origins  
Germany

**WOLVENTALE**

Assassin's Creed Valhalla  
Canada

**QUASYMODO**

Assassin's Creed Shadows  
Spain

**SWAGSPIDER22**

Shadow of War  
United States

**MONJA VP**

Red Dead Redemption 2  
Italy



**PINO44IO**  
Generation Zero  
Belarus

**ESMEEELISABETHH**

Horizon Forbidden West  
Netherlands

**MSZOMBIE VP**

Assassin's Creed Origins  
Germany



**LENSESANDPIXELS**

Resident Evil Village  
Malaysia



**ALIS JANSENDOTTIR**

Ghost of Tsushima  
Czech Republic



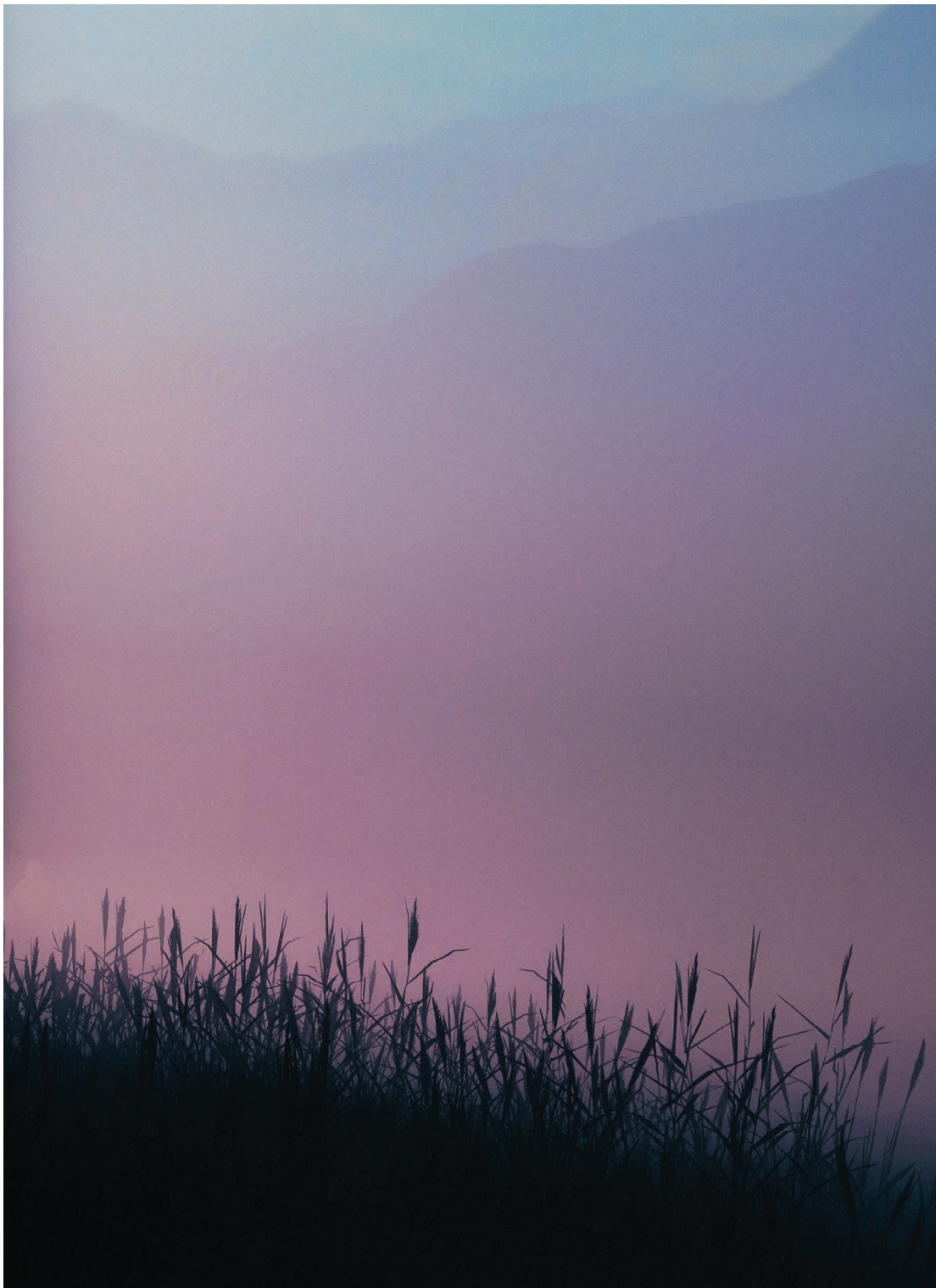
**WATERPELYN**

Horizon Forbidden West  
United Kingdom

**PHOTOINGAME**

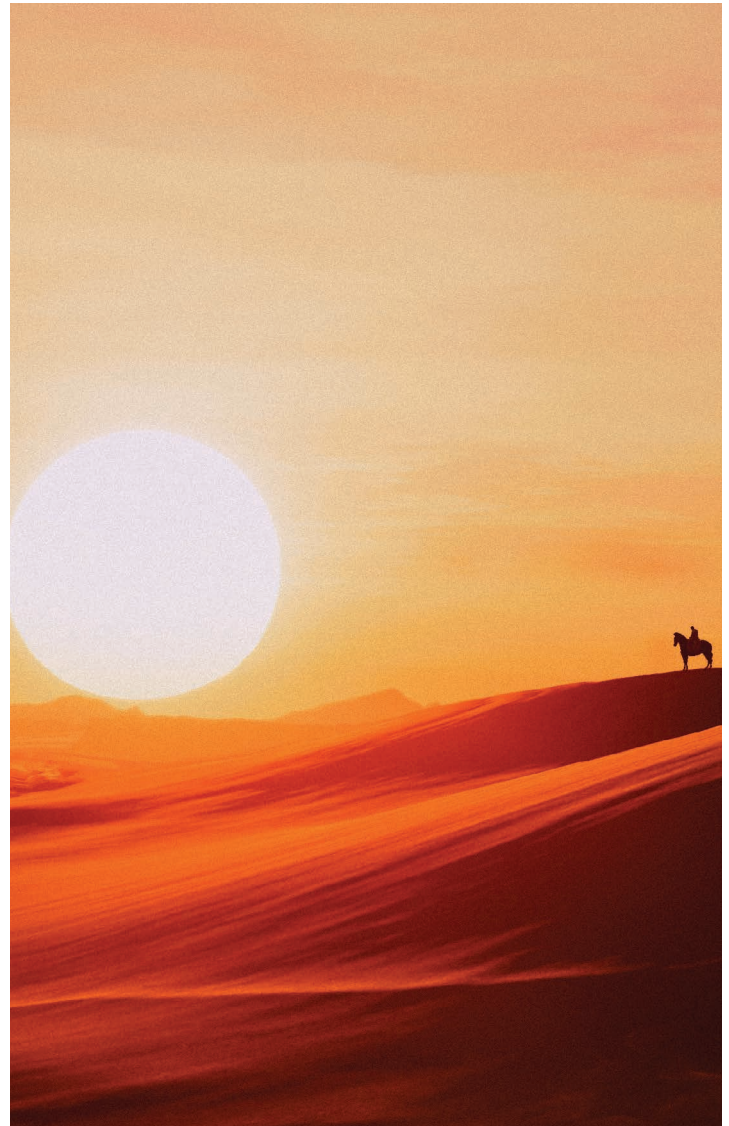
Alan Wake 2

France



**HAZELGREEN VP**

Black Myth: Wukong  
Germany

**SUMMERS458**

Assassin's Creed Origins  
United Kingdom



**TÓTH MÁRK**  
God of War Ragnarök  
Hungary



**WORLD OF GSHOTS**  
Hogwarts Legacy  
Germany

# THAT'S A WRAP: PHOTO MODE AWARDS 2025

As the Photo Mode Awards 2025 wrap up, we look back on a year of stand-out in-game photography. From cityscapes to character portraits, the winning shots showed the creativity players bring to the virtual world.

Each image impressed with its composition, lighting, and timing—whether capturing a battle, a quiet landscape, or a bustling game environment. The judges noticed the care and thought behind every frame.

This year highlighted a variety of styles. Some players went for dramatic, cinematic shots, while others focused on small details—the way light hits a surface or a character's expression. Every approach added something unique to the collection.





Players also made clever use of the environments themselves, framing shots so buildings, streets, and natural scenery became part of the story. It's these choices that make each image feel intentional and well-crafted.

PMA's 2025 has wrapped, and we're excited to see submissions when registrations reopen in 2026. We can't wait to see the new moments and perspectives players will capture next.

Thank you to everyone who entered and made PMA's 2025 a showcase of what's possible in in-game photography.

Photo captured by eleyaplaysgames



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