

# My Favourite Game

## Dave White

The pop-culture artist on bus-stop brawling, arcade stardom and the game that almost made him go bald

**Dave White** is a Liverpoolian artist who has been hailed as “the UK’s Andy Warhol”. A key player in the ‘sneaker art’ movement of the early 2000s, his work has led to several collaborations with Nike, including the release of his own version of the classic Air Max 95. Currently based in Dorset, his rural environs have sparked a recent professional interest in wildlife – but as a visit to his studio reveals, there’s still plenty of time for games out in the sticks.

### What’s your earliest gaming memory?

I was seven years old, in Southport, where there was a skatepark that I would go to every day in the summer holidays. This guy rolled up with a big box on wheels, unwrapped it, all these crazy alien graphics on the side – *Space Invaders*. I’d never seen anything like it before. He plugged it in, and that was it. That was me done.

### This was before games were available in the home. You had to go out and find them, right?

Arcades started to open – The Golden Goose in Southport, Las Vegas in Liverpool. I got a pound a week in pocket money, and we’d go out on Saturday mornings. I would play *Tron*; it’s one of my favourite arcade games of all time, I can still remember a lot of the patterns for the light cycles.

### You’ve always been into fighting games. How did you get into them?

When I graduated from university, I bought a Greyhound bus ticket from New York to California. *Street Fighter II* had

**LOST SECTORS** While White has held a deep interest in games for almost his entire life, he’s largely stayed away from them in his work. There was a commission for Capcom at the launch of *Street Fighter IV*, but by and large White keeps hobby and work separate. Yet he does have ideas. “I think often of servers being turned off on games,” he says. “All these environments – *Dust2* in *CS:GO*, *Crash in COD4*, things like that – when you can’t play the games anymore, you’ll still be able to recall every doorway, every sightline, in photorealistic detail. I think it might be interesting to paint them, so once the games are gone, these places live on.”



recently launched, and every Greyhound station had this machine with huge queues of people waiting to play. It was like nothing that had come before; it became an obsession, and I’ve never really lost it. I’ve been playing it since the start, and it’s absolutely my favourite game in the universe.

### We normally save that until later, but okay – which one in particular is your favourite?

*Super Street Fighter II X* [*Super SFII Turbo* in the west], because it’s almost like chess. The rules were all set, but each character was given a couple more moves. You knew the designers put these things in, not to be flashy, but to elevate people’s skills. I loved that.

### Do you play the more modern *Street Fighter* games, too?

I think *Street Fighter IV* was an absolutely perfect re-ignition of the series; anyone who could play *SFII* at a fun level could pick that game up and play it. I think *Street Fighter V* is atrocious.

### That, we assume, is why you have a *Super SFII X* cabinet in your studio, rather than an *SFV* one.

Yeah. The materials I use need a certain time to dry – sometimes an hour, or half an hour, or 20 minutes. Rather than literally watching paint dry, I come through and have a quick run through. That’s something that’s been a ritual for me for as long as I can remember.

### Is there a reason you don’t keep consoles in here?

(laughs) Yeah. If I come in here and I’ve got *COD: WWII*, or *Destiny 2* or anything I’m currently involved in, it’s going to change my mindset.

### If *Street Fighter V* isn’t doing it for you, what are you playing at the moment?

Games really have to be something special to hold my attention. We all have our piles of shame, but I’m much more selective now. *Dark Souls*, as much as I nearly went completely bald with it, I’ve never found a game like it – that makes everything look rubbish. I’m playing *Assassin’s Creed Origins*, and it looks phenomenal in HDR. It’s immersive, but I couldn’t play it all day, it’d do my head in. I play *PUBG*, too, but can only manage two games before the stress gets too much. They’ve got

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to be good games that keep me immersed; if they’re not fun then cheers, off you pop.

### So despite your profession, you’re not solely drawn to games where art is a focus? *PUBG*, for all its merits, isn’t exactly a looker.

If a game looks beautiful, that’s a bonus. To be immersed in a beautiful skybox, or a sunset, or a 24-hour cycle in *GTAV*; I love that, but it’s not the be-all and end-all. It’s about how the whole thing works, which still blows my mind. You take it for granted; you put a disc in, pick up a pad, and you’re driving around Los Angeles. It’s bizarre, and I love it. ■

White loves fighting games, but has less time for those built on long, frame-perfect combo strings. "I'm 47, and going through combo trials, you get to the last one and you've got to be an octopus on PCP to pull it off"

