

Kept you waiting, huh?

Let's not waste any time with this. If you are reading this, then you know that Fallout 76 was a money sink, a bad idea, a glitch-fest, and many other negative things. It was a cavalcade of embarrassment of such proportions that not even the launch of the Playstation 2 or the Red Ring of Death plague could match up to it.

Well done, Bethesda. Well done.

Even better, because this is an Always-Online game, the usual modding suspects -- you know who you are -- could not come to the rescue and spend their own unpaid time fixing the game, and in turn drive more sales towards Bethesda without earning anything themselves.

Seriously modders, stop fixing these busted as hell games for free. Your time and toil is more worthwhile than that and you are wasting it otherwise. If that's too harsh a statement, then let me remind you that several who have tried to help fix this game by submitting bug reports or building tools like interactive maps got themselves banned for their efforts, while others are grinding for and selling loads of caps and other items on eBay for tens of dollars with impunity.

Now, with that out of the way, Fallout 76. The base game for now. Wastelanders comes later, though I may reference changes Wastelanders made to the base game here and there.

The reason we at No Mutants Allowed did not do a proper review of this back in 2018, well, was obvious. Every single person who has not drunk the Bethesda Kool-Aid for years and not rushed to their defense in the past could see the game for what it was, and knew where the problems stemmed from. We had a feeling this was coming with the release of Fallout 3 back in 2008, and more so with Fallout 4 back in 2015. Not only was Bethesda's penchant for glitchy games going to worsen the issues Fallout games had starting with Fallout 2, their willingness to abandon canon at a moment's notice, track record of poor writing with Emil Pagliarulo at the helm, and their willingness to cut out game systems that have role-playing utility for the sake of audience expansion and the almighty dollar was also going to spell trouble for the series.

One could say this is more Zenimax's thing than Bethesda's, but let us not forget that Zenimax only exists because Mr. Christopher Weaver, Bethesda's founder, created it as a way to support Bethesda. I doubt he had any idea until it was too late that the man he chose to run Zenimax, like a modern-day leech, which is fitting for a lawyer, would run him out of his own company, but that's exactly what Robert Altman did, and even without Zenimax breathing down Bethesda's neck, the major gameplay changes from Daggerfall to Morrowind and then to Oblivion and Skyrim were enough of a sign of what would come.

Remember, the publisher is not always to blame.

Now, although we did not do a proper review back then, I participated in the BETA for ten hours and logged everything I saw and found. Needless to say, it didn't take me long to realize that, after factoring in every bad aspect of the BETA and factoring out the things I tend to 'like' in Bethesda games, the game would suck. That fact that it did so exponentially harder and longer than I imagined still amazes me, and if I had to guess, that is more than likely why, with the release on Steam, so many between websites and players and content creators are playing defense for it and being nice to it.

We'll get to that. Trust me.

So, what problems does this game have, aside from the obvious?

Let's start with the presentation of the world, and to do that, let's start with what each game begins with: the video and voiceover that introduces you to the world ahead.

In Fallout 1, the video begins with an ad related to Vault 13 and the classic 'Maybe' by The Ink Spots begins playing. As the camera draws out, you see the TV you were watching set in front of a blasted hellscape of a major city, dashing the nostalgic feeling you probably had before the TV at last shuts off.

It's chilling, and possibly upsetting, to say the least, and then Ron Perlman speaks. He speaks on the subject of war, and goes over the details of the world leading up to the day the bombs fell. Then he gets to the subject of Vault 13, and says "Life in the Vault is about to change." Only when the Overseer speaks after creating your character do you then understand what the trouble is, and then Fallout 1 begins in earnest.

Mmm-mah. It's perfect. It sets the mood, and gives you the information you need.

Now, let's look at what Fallout 76 does.

It begins with the speaker dropping the 'War. War never changes' line. Right away, wrong. That line doesn't work with a general speech, but let's leave that and move on. He goes over how in 1776, Americas knew armed conflict was the only way to secure the nation's future, and brings up the fight against the Red Menace, aka China -- how ironic -- and the celebration of the construction of Vault 76 on the tricentennial anniversary of USA independence. He then talks about how it will be staffed with the best and brightest, the people who once the vault door reopens will have to rebuild the outside world.

Oh, if only.

And then it fades to white and we get the character creation screen while the Overseer details a bit about Reclamation Day, aka the day when Vault 76 opens and everyone has to leave. You are then lead down a linear route to gather supplies and other things you will use outside of the vault to start your mission.

At this point, you may not think there is very much wrong with this intro, and some might argue it's similar to the intro of Fallout 1. Those people would be dead wrong when considering the mood of these two videos, but let's further explain why.

With Fallout 1, players truly did not know what awaited them outside of the vault. The IP was new, and so were the surprises. This is not the case with Fallout 76. Not only did we know what would be outside of the vault and what the mission was, Bethesda could not shut up about it and spoiled nearly everything about the story with their marketing and press releases, including the fact that you would be the one launching the nukes that flush out the Scorchbeast Queen. Not only that, but being able to bomb a location and then farm the nuked area for a while before everything reset was touted as an end-game activity, meant to provide you with the best stuff in typical MMO raids fashion.

I doubt I have to explain why this runs so counter to Fallout's themes as a series, and why its promotion before the game released showcases how Bethesda never truly understood Fallout as an IP, but just in case...

Regardless of the pseudo-MMO nature of Fallout 76, in universe and in lore, we have examples of how dangerous and deadly these things are. In particular the end and post-game of Lonesome Road from Fallout: New Vegas. For those who have not completed the DLC, for one, what are you waiting for, and for second, if you decide to use the nukes, whatever area(s) you target will be completely destroyed and bathed in radiation back in the New Vegas game world map, and all related factions will love or hate you accordingly for your actions. Having the nukes and their aftereffects function as little more than switching on the end-game status of an area for a short while is rather pathetic and cheapens the thematic power of such warheads.

Speaking of the nukes, during the times that I have jumped back into 76 post-release to see how bad things are, it often isn't long before someone in the level hundred plus range drops a nuke on the server's world. And yes, I was once in a server that got nuked twice in quick succession and was in turn kicked because the server stopped working. I also notice these nuke launching players mostly tend to target out of the way areas in the corners of the map, like the edge of Cranberry Bog. Points for that I suppose, but when I hear that distinctive beeping of the nuke codes, it only reminds me of what a mockery Bethesda has made of such powerful weapons.

Next, let's talk gameplay and quests.

Before release, Bethesda made clear that not only were there no NPCs, but that holotapes would be the only way to experience the story. There are two types of holotapes you will come across while playing Fallout 76: Mission-based and flavor-based. While these sometimes overlap, such as the Overseer's tapes, to whoever was in charge of the writers group related to these things, I have to tell you, you need to learn how to separate these two styles when the situation calls for it, especially when the game has no living NPCs of any kind and the game itself is designed more around the Explore-Kill-Gather-Return gameplay loop than the story. (This holds true even with Wastelanders in play because aside from new NPCs in some areas where a dead body with a holotape could be found, such as the Morgantown Airport, little has changed about the progression of these quests.)

Think back to the holotapes you find early on when doing volunteer work for the...who were they...oh, The Responders. Think back to the holotapes you had to listen to when doing the resupply run mission, aka 'Safe for Work', at the airport. A few were written and directed as though it was dialogue from a living NPC who was traveling with you and giving you a personal once over as you did each step, a bit like Sunny Smiles during Goodsprings' 'Back In The Saddle' quest. From a narrative perspective, this makes the logs sound like the writers were trying to make up for the lack of NPCs instead of playing into that point. As we know from Bethesda's Fallout 76 presentation in 2018, the dev team no doubt knew the game would have no NPCs and therefore should have planned the dialogue and narrative of the tapes around that.

And once again, I must fall back on Fallout: New Vegas to pull up a contrast.

Starting as early as Doc Mitchel in Goodsprings, you can pry to learn a little more about certain NPCs you meet. In New Vegas, the majority of this is optional though can sometimes lead to things you can use later. In Fallout 76, optional details that players would have had the

ability to skip over in other Fallout games are forced into necessary recordings, and either bloat the runtime of the recording or make the flavor parts feel forced. (Because of Bethesda's penchant for stealing ideas people come up with for mods, among other things, I will not be sharing my ideas for how this would be done properly.)

As for the gameplay, as I said before, this game has one major loop it thrusts you into from the word go, both because Bethesda is not well known for the kinds of multi-tiered/layers quests we have seen in other RPGs up to 2018, and because this game was designed from the ground up to play this way: Explore-Kill-Gather-Return.

That said, let's get something out of the way early. I play the Bethesda Fallout/Elder Scrolls games, even New Vegas, as a hoarder. If it has good scrap/cap value or I think I've never collected it or it could be useful, I grab it and haul it to a place where I can pick through all of it, sell what I don't need, and repeat as necessary. And frankly, this feels like how the games are designed to be played given all the things you can loot, break down, sell, etc., so on that level the central loop of Fallout 76, and by extension Fallout 4, appealed to me.

However, I cannot and will not ignore how crap the main quests of both games are, nor the abundance of quests that have no depth to them beyond killing things while searching for an item or location or person of some sort. So prevalent is this trend that anytime I play these games now, I tend to have a playlist of Mythbusters episodes or other videos running in the background just to add some flavor to what I'm doing. That and it bugs me when I hear music from Fallout 1 and 2 in 4, seeing as Bethesda had zero hand in developing those two games. (Speaking of music, I swear I noticed a similarity to one music track in FarCry 5 at one point...)

Contrast time again.

Obsidian, before they lost their best talent to what they have now, and I do not say that lightly, showed exactly how to make this Search-Kill-Gather-Return loop work. They didn't simply throw places at the player and tell them 'Here, check these places out' like Bethesda tends to do with their sightseeing approach to open world design. They made a majority of the places worthwhile to visit, or put them in the player's way and give them the option to divert from the path and investigate these new areas.

For example, the town of Primm. Like Shady Sands in Fallout 1, you can pass right by it if you choose and miss the handful of quests, stacks of loot, potential reputation gains and nuggets of information related to not only Benny but Ulysses as well. Curious players however will at least check the town out, and adventurous players will take a stab at some of what Primm offers.

With Fallout 76, while you will have the initial gut feeling of 'Oh, what's this place' when you arrive at places like Flatwoods, in contrast to New Vegas and the trust Obsidian placed in players back then, 76 often showers you with possible goals or hints of them, or in some cases Events, as you draw closer to new locations and then start exploring them. (The Grafton Tourism Trap quest comes to mind.) So, while you might have had an initial interest in the location you were heading towards, because the Fallout 76 game devs don't trust you as much as the Obsidian devs did, these hooks are thrown your way in hopes that you will stick around for them if nothing else.

'Now, hold on', some of you might be saying. 'How can you compare a single-player game to a multiplayer one?' Simple: Because with one exception, which we shall not name, Fallout

has always been story and character driven. Even compared to the black sheep of the IP, Fallout: Tactics, 76 fares worse in the story and setting. Why? Because the story you do receive is narrated to you, like someone is reading you a book and to make them continue you have to 'play the game'. At no point are you weighing the outcomes of your actions against the needs of immediate, much less local, others. You simply follow a linear trail of holotapes and related quests starting from the inside of Vault 76, which I somewhat remember from my BETA days, through the hauntings of the Responders and other factions like the Brotherhood of Steel (WTF?) and the Enclave (Seriously?), and then end the 'official' story in the fields of Appalachia post nuke touchdown with a big fight against the Scorchbeast Queen. You then have the option of shooting more nukes into the world to get more high level supplies and gear, which you then build or enhance in order to do this same endgame gameplay loop again and again and again.

So, at best, you will play this game because you like the story/writing bits, to which I would say don't encourage this kind of storytelling as a standard because along with it comes low standards for everything else and Fallout doesn't need that, and at worst you play it because it's there and you want something to do for a few hours.

At least until it crashes, shuts down, freezes, glitches out, or any number of other things Bethesda games are known to do. It did each and every one of those things during my early and even recent time on the XBOX version, including locking up my console and forcing a hard reset to fix, and coupled with the Always-Online requirement as well as Bethesda's penchant for buggy games...

Now, let's use this gameplay segment to discuss something that relates not only to your survival in-game but your IRL wallet: The Repair Kits and Scrap Kits. The presence of these things within the Atomic Shop means the game shop is no longer cosmetics only and now has Pay-To-Win options available; do not let Pete or any other Bethesda apologist tell you otherwise. Need I remind you that the gaming industry has already crossed the line into operating parts of itself as casinos for children and the underage, and lies about that on the regular. See also any game that lets you use bought currency to gamble on items of value like GTA V, NBA 2K20, etc.; the excuse of not being able to cash out is the typical defense said companies will use to justify these actions, but however they slice it, gambling is illegal if you are under 21 for a reason: it is habit forming and, person depending but especially for children, very addictive.

Anyway, during the BETA, I did notice my weapons and armor broke down at faster rates than they have been during my most recent runs, so I suspect Bethesda is well aware that they're stepping on toes with their lies about these things and as such are trying to save face by dialing back how fast your equipment degrades. However, I seem to recall Bethesda making it a point within Fallout 4 that your stuff never breaks because, as they implied, it annoyed some players because it made them go get said things fixed before resuming their adventure. I however will contend that they only allowed this role-playing system back into full use in Fallout 76 because they had plans from day 1 to introduce these kits and scrape some money off impatient players.

Hell, we know by now they were planning on selling lunchboxes with prizes and buffs in them, as well as the option to buy Perk Cards directly, so these kits, and the fridge that keeps your food good for longer and the scrap collecting Protectron, are more or less permanent test-the-waters items.

And I doubt, although I hope, that the Steam player base has learned from this last year and a half of embarrassment and rejects buying these things if they cannot resist buying 76.

(My doubts were confirmed, and how; Bethesda Stockholm Syndrome is worse than I thought. Not only are websites like RPS and Polygon shilling for Bethesda and against open criticism of a faulty game, reviewers on Steam are doing the same like willing lapdogs. And the rating reached Mostly Positive on the backs of those reviewers as of the 17th; Steam restricting the ratings allowed to count towards that score to only those who bought the game on Steam seems to be part of the reason, so Bethesda.net buyers will not have their voices counted. How fucking pathetic.)

Speaking of those Perk Cards, let's discuss those for a moment. Aside from being a further dumbing down of the Perks system the OG Fallouts used to define one's character outside of SPECIAL, Skills, and Traits, the fact that, like your character's appearance, they can be changed out at a moment's notice and also allow things like picking higher level locks, means players have little reason beyond desire to create a new character. This is not how Fallout works, but as I mentioned before, Bethesda had plans to sell Perk Card packs for Atoms, which one can buy with real money, so there is that to consider.

Lastly, let's go back to Fallout 4 for a minute. Fallout 4, from my time spent with it, was the moment when operant conditioning, or in laymen's terms The Skinner Box, was put in front of most other reasons for playing the game. Why do I say this? Because that is the end goal of the game outside of the main quest, itself a railroaded and forgettable journey that only exists in the state it does because Bethesda's writing team is collectively awful. (If you want proof of this, go to Fort Hagen before you find Valentine or get Dogmeat to follow the scent trails and you will find the elevator leading down to where Kellogg is has been hidden from the game. No finding your spouse's killer by accident for you.)

And if you follow the main quest of Fallout 4 as Bethesda wanted you to do, you have no choice but to let Preston and his people move into Sanctuary Hills, starting off the settlement building loop if you had not started doing that in other places yourself. Bethesda likes to claim that system is optional, but with this fact in mind, as well as 4 of 6 DLCs with it as a focus, and a requirement that you have to use it if you want the Minutemen as your allies against The Institute...I hear that 'Tell Me Lies' tune winding up again.

And as bad as the operant conditioning in Fallout 4 was, 76 is noticeably worse. Explore-Kill-Loot-Return is the whole point of the game, because that's how you get the things you need to build your CAMP, your weapons, etc.

Now, with all of that established, let's change gears to the other half of this review: the Wastelanders content.

A few points to go over before I begin:

- If you had the game already installed on console, the old game client gets fully patched over before you can play the Wastelanders content, so set aside a few hours to download another 55 GB 'patch'. (For shit sake Bethesda, not this again.)

- The new dialogue checks are almost completely dependent on your SPECIAL stats, which is to be expected with how the game is designed, and with the story segments restricted to instances, once things happen you can't save scum to get the result you want. (Personally, this is a nice change over what we got with the quicksave-quickload method of doing things in

Fallout 4, but it still means a butchering of the SPECIAL system and no way to specialize your character beyond percentage increase and ability-to-do-this perks.)

- Some early SPECIAL checks require hyper-focus on one stat via a few levels to achieve, though my first instance of this was not affected by the fact that my character was wearing a Vault 76 suit.

- The game still runs as badly as I remember from the early days, though on PC it runs considerably worse, with constant lag spikes that will get you killed or cause issues with shots or melee attacks. (For reference, my CPU, which is a stock quad-core 3.7 GHz AMD Athlon, barely 3 years old, was running at 92% load regularly with 76 running, which I never have happen outside of doing video rendering/DVD ripping; not even Fallout 4 with almost 100 mods loaded into it demanded that much from my CPU.) The XBOX One/PS4 don't seem to have this issue, so along with the software being an unoptimized mess, it must be something on Bethesda's end with their servers.

- The base Fallout 76 content has not been removed, so the Responders and other major factions that you investigated the first time around will still be gone. (The achievements have already spoiled that you will find the Overseer, and it happens relatively quickly.) And as mentioned earlier, there are new NPCs in some quest locations where there weren't before, but they are unimportant and do not affect anything once your business with them, if any, is done.

- If you know about the NewDialogue Interface mod on Nexus, which has eclipsed 4 million downloads on the same service, you'll be 'happy' to hear Bethesda, more or less, swiped it for Wastelanders. So be sure to give Cirosan and shadwar some love. God knows Bethesda won't.

- The faction reputation system in Wastelanders is similar to the one from Splinter Cell: Double Agent on the XBOX 360, I.E. two binary meters representing two groups that rises and falls as you do things for or against either side. It also starts with the Raiders already hostile towards you, which compared to the Legion and NCR in New Vegas is a change that means a bias towards the Settlers.

- I'm detecting a whiff of 'wahmen power' with the current ratio of important friendly female NPCs you can have long talks with in the early game versus men, two of whom so far are either more like an extended CAMP tutorial or the obvious Raider introduction by the way he holds up the bar owner. I noticed this in the base game as well with many of the audio logs, so I wonder how far out it goes.

Now, let's begin.

Wastelanders begins with a retcon to the Fallout 76 'story': The Overseer left the vault several months, not hours, before you do. The first NPC you can talk to, a Mr. Handy named Crutchley, says so, and the recording you hear over the intercom is followed by new bits of dialogue mentioning the message repeating every 24 hours before the system makes a corrupted playback noise. (This might have something to do with the life support systems in Vault 76 shutting off completely once the All-Clear signal was received, so either it never came or the Overseer sabotaged the Vault's systems.)

Which begs the question: Why does Vault 76 still look like Reclamation Day was the day before you decide to leave? Answer: Because Bethesda.

When you leave the vault, or start playing again with an existing character, you will be pointed in the direction of two women accosting anyone coming out of the vault. They are asking about the location of some kind of treasure and implying the vault had one. And here is another instance of Bethesda spoiling the details of their newest content by blowing their load in the trailers and pre-release articles. The Wastelanders DLC involves a treasure in one of the vaults in the area, Vault 79, and whichever group you side with will eventually break into said vault and get the riches inside, which is the huge stockpile of gold bullion that was once housed in Fort Knox. Think GTA V's main quest, but with less interesting characters and the story about halfway along by the time you exit the vault.

At the first location you visit, there's a holdup going on and you will be introduced to the first SPECIAL checks, one PER, one CHA, and one LUC, all 2+, so if before you enter the area those are high enough, you can get an easier outcome to the situation. If you see a (-) next to the number, as you will during a later phase of the conversation, you have to have that stat or lower to get the result. Since it was a CHA check, it was no doubt the 'Dumb' option, or knowing Bethesda, the 'Sarcastic' option.

One thing I was disappointed to see was even though you have these options, you cannot select the ones you will fail due to low stats just because. This was something New Vegas allowed, which was funny in its own way, and not only that, you were given different dialogues for not meeting the bare level of Skill or SPECIAL. In 76, no matter your SPECIAL level, you will always see what your character means to say.

(Thank you, Cirosan and shadwar.)

However, I did notice a blatant call-back to New Vegas' 'Ghost Town Gunfight' quest. After you finish finding out where the leader of the gang responsible for the holdup in the bar is, you can ask the bar owner, point blank, 'What if I chose to help this gang instead of you?' Since the answer in both games was obvious, I did not ask this question, though another aspect taken from the New Vegas quest was a choice of how to proceed with resolving the quest – guns blazing or diplomacy – and a few optional objectives that can be pursued before going in. Because the world of Fallout 76 is much larger than that of New Vegas, these optional objectives are much more spread out, though all of them are also on the way to the ultimate objective.

Of course, even if you do the optional objectives, which get you a passcode to enter the compound without being shot and three Stealth Boys, you can easily sneak into the compound, into the area where the boss is, and run right for him and talk to him even if you've been spotted. As soon as you convince him of a deal, the guards go non-hostile until you shoot them. Fair enough. (I noticed a slight, yet colored, smoky aura around the lead Raider and his second-hand at this time. As if we needed Fallout to be any more gamey.)

From there, you're sent to hunt down Dutchess' missing bodyguards before she helps you any further, and at this point I'm getting the feeling that this new content is being padded to stretch out the runtime. More so when once you return one of the two guards, who is just the head of an Assaultron and like the others in Fallout 4 sounds like the VO was a lisping drag queen, you have to find a new Assaultron body for it, or whatever you choose to settle with, before you get any more progress. (While we're on this subject, a point we brought up with our Fallout 4 review that still stands today was that General Atomics robots like the Mr. Handy were not built like ZAX, I.E., they do not have sophisticated AI systems that can mimic human emotions and learning patterns.)

What follows this is a trip back into Gauley Mine after dealing with Crane, who was in the position I thought he was after Dutchess hinted at such, then to a RobCo demo area where you can get a free two star legendary before hoofing it back to the bar. If you chose to spare the raiders and made a deal with them, as I did, they'll be there demanding what you found. If you tell them the truth and show the weapon, they'll accept after another SPECIAL check, in this case STR -3, INT +4, or CHA +4. Going this route earns you some recognition with the Free Radicals, one of the raider gangs and the one I assume you will be helping in the end. (It remains to be seen if Bethesda will flesh this group out in any major way since at least two Raider gangs -- Blood Eagles and Mothman Cultists -- are always hostile.)

After this, you can find the Overseer at her home, but then you get Wastelanders biggest roadblock: you must get far enough in the original quest line to be immune to the Scorched plague, I.E. you must finish at least the Ounce of Prevention quest, which at least gives that quest some value, and you must be at or higher than level 20. Usually, I don't mind level caps in RPGs, but this cap also means you must traipse around Appalachia and find things to do to get you to that level before you can resume the missions and until then, you cannot gain or lose any clout with the Raiders or Settlers. Aside from that, if like me you found the general feel of Fallout 76 to be boring and a waste of time back before Wastelanders was a thing, by the time you hit level 20 you may be more willing to say screw it and walk away.

And I was getting the feeling in waves upon seeing that by level 11, my stash at my CAMP was going past 550 of the allowed 800. On that note, fuck you Zenimax and Bethesda. I may play as a hoarder, but I'm not coughing up 13 bucks to get that limit removed when I can stash thousands of pounds of stuff in all of your past games. (If you paid for Fallout 1st in any way, congratulations on being one of the many reasons why Bethesda and Zenimax treat their player bases the way they do. You are the problem, and will continue to be because you enable this to continue to be a thing.)

This is also where how huge yet empty Fallout 76 still is starts to bite it in the ass. If you're a new blood to this game, to which I would ask why you wasted your money, at best you'll be between level 8 to 11 by the time you reach this roadblock and if you bought Fallout 76 for the Wastelanders content, surprise.

At the time of this review, I have reached said roadblock and left the game aside in favor of going back to New Vegas and playing with some new content restoration and weapon mods. As far as I am concerned, and I'm certain many on this site would agree with me, this new content with Wastelanders, free or not, does not justify the \$40 cost of a copy of this game, the 18 months of frustrations and stupidity on the part of Bethesda players had to live through if they wanted to play the game, or the headaches and frustrations you will encounter to this day while playing a typical Bethesda game saddled with an Always-Online requirement. (By the way Bethesda, the majority of the world is not left-handed. Take a few notes from FarCry and fix that bow holding animation and position, or if you can't, make it a hand toggle.)

So, no. There is no recommendation for this game. Not only does it continue if not worsen the trends present in Fallout 4, from the reasons to play to the low quality of writing, I will borrow an analogy that I keep seeing on Steam and elsewhere to sum up what Wastelanders is in relation to the base game of Fallout 76: If you have been abused by another for 18 months, and then they give you a cookie, does that excuse the previous months of abuse?

I would hope not, but as is becoming clearer by the day, there are more clueless/sympathetic normies and sycophantic Stockholm cases than actual critics of this game, and that is why it is getting the current positive reception that it has. That and as I

mentioned a while back, Steam limiting the reviews being allowed to count towards that Mostly Positive score to copies brought on Steam, so the ones who got free copies thanks to having a copy on Bethesda.net and are still rightly angry at being sold a broken game 18 months ago get nothing besides scorn from the gaming press and the people mentioned above.

Keep that in mind when you hear positive things about Fallout 76 going forward. The truth hurts, and that is the truth.