Video Game Reviews — Hitman, Max Payne, Psychonauts

Questions

How does the game feel?

How does the game make you feel? What emotions?

How intense is the experience? Is it too much? Were you prepared?

"The game excelled at making me feel 'this' way"

How do we judge different games? They can be so different with their experiences.

How did the game make me think? How did/does it affect me?

Who is it a game for? Who will enjoy it? What type of person?

What stands out? Negative? Positive. { what makes you want to play more? what makes you feel tense?

Clarity problems?

How well do new, unique features/ideas/mechanics work?

What was exciting? What was boring?

How does it compare to competing games?

[box top right] What makes a game "good"? How can you tell a good game from a bad one? Shock, surprise, bias, expectations? | (Criticism Types?) | Passive / Aggressive / Neutral

[left margin] What is the game trying to be? why? Does it accomplish that? How?

Elements (turn all of this into a tree / web. connected)

- Story – writing, themes, characters, emotions, pacing, voicing, acting, cinematics, cutscenes
- Gameplay – mechanics, interactions, feeling, variety, uniqueness, systems
- Graphics – immersiveness/presence, realism, style, art, - facial animations - character models - water, fire, etc.
- (Effects) Sound – immersiveness, realism
- Animations – fluidity
- Music/Soundtrack/Score - feeling, fitting
- Content/Length - fitting, enough
- Replay Value
- Personal Opinion – why I enjoyed it or disliked it, for me

[right column]
- Difficulty
- Navigation/Exploration
- Levels (design)
- Tone, Atmosphere
- Goals, rewards, decisions
- presence/realism/immersion
- gameplay systems
- Ways to play (single vs multi)
- presentation

Scores

No Score — Score based around consumer terms - buy, sell, rent, etc.

Percentage Score —letter grade

Score out of 5, 10, 100 (20, 25, 50)

Word Score / Sentence Score

[right]
- Opinion vs fact in game elements
- show the game, show its highs, show its lows, objectively
- Show Examples

Parody Review { New Idea — Specific Game Elements (for that game)
ex: Last of Us - less is more ("theme"-almost), a specific idea the game has. Uncharted - all odds are against you, underdog story.

Video Game Reviews (2)

Problem with Video Game Reviews/Critiques.
- different people reviewing — different opinions perspectives
- Similar writing style — not unique or different in how they talk/discuss the game, sometimes.
- too afraid to speak their mind
- don't make it relatable.
-

- Being bought-off : Gamespot told editorial team to be more concious of
  → accuracy and impact of scores
  - EGM had opinions, was blacklisted by Ubisoft
  - doesn't seem like they are explicitly "bribes", but more so indirectly through pressure and influence
  - publisher vs press (and ad revenue)

- Criticisms need reasons — "bottom-line it for people!"

Notes — Youtube is filled with independent critics.
(— find opinions that match your own)

- it's always changing
- When scoring games, some reviewers (Greg Miller) would compare similar scoring games to give "edges" to "better ones".
  ex:
- early at IGN (for Miller), there was no "gatekeeping" for publishing reviews, "just publish it"
- it's evolved to opinions and videos with more discussion instead of numbers.
- Colin Moriarty: "reviews need to be read through the lens of "subjectivity". – the numbers become
- the ~~numbers~~ meaningless when there's lack of cross-referencing of scales between outlets."
- Eurogamer is "notorious for really low scores" – scoring rubric is more reasonable
  → IGN is the opposite, giving recent games 7, 8, 9+ scores.
- "there's no objective way to review a game!"
- "gameplay is king – the way games feel to play is why we play games"
- put more focus on the desire of the consumer and reader
  - train them to move from the reductive nature of scoring over to something more thoughtful.

Kinda funny 2015

- "you can't possibly know how a person feels just by boiling down to a number"
- it's more enlightening - you find more enlightening things about a game
- Earlier at IGN (Miller says) there was (and might still be) a "top secret" facebook page for game reviewers from various outlets.
    - usually used for in-game help, when stuck, etc.
- For reviews...
    - be thorough, be fair, be honest, embrace subjectivity
    - talk about your personal experiences - "what happened" "I think"...
    - "if you take the time to read 2,000 words about a game you really care about, you are going to get way more out of that review than if you just looked at the score" "with you and why?"
    - Greg Miller: "How awesome is it that people can take the same thing and have such different reactions and be so different to it."
    - one of the problems (sort of highlighted by Dunkey) is ~~being the~~ the actual consumers/readers themselves. The gaming community can have ~~visceral~~ visceral reactions to drastically different review scores, and can't accept that these are different peoples opinions. some
    - Game Informer (Joe Juba):
        - it's opinion, your experience, do you like it? why or why not?
        - think about it from other perspectives if you're biased.
        - series history, developer history, genre history

- Review Methods ⟶ mention popular reviewers
  - Organic text/essay
    (1) - ~~spread~~ organically, naturally discuss the game, your experience, your opinion, etc.

  - Break It all down, element by element
    (1) - overall elements: story, gameplay, graphics, sound
    (2) - every element: gameplay, controls, feel, immersion, etc.

  - Pros and Cons
    (1) - positives and negatives listed out, one by one

  - talk only about the experiences that stood out to you
    - don't spoil though?
    - keep it general?

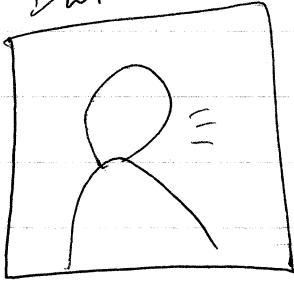 - Overall, how the game made you feel, why, how, etc.
    - what was the game trying to make you feel?
    - Did it succeed?
    - "this game did a good job making me feel ____!"
      - here's why (a little bit of explanation)

- mention popular reviewers
  - Angry Joe, Jim Sterling
  Critical, Girlfriend Reviews,
  IGN, Gamespot, Game Informe,
  Kotaku, Cynical Brit, Dunkey,
  Nakey Jakey,

Interview

"quote"
finishes   →