



April 8, 2013

Agenda:

- Article of the Week – *Learn to Appreciate Games that are Outside Your Comfort Zone*
- Elections
- Promo Materials
- Reminders
 - T-Shirts will be in by next meeting
 - Last Game Jam – April 20th
 - The 2nd Annual Showcase is on April 22nd

Article of the Week

Learn to Appreciate Games that are Outside Your Comfort Zone

by Patrick Miller

http://gamasutra.com/view/news/188826/Learn_to_appreciate_games_that_are_outside_of_your_comfort_zone.php

Game Developer magazine editor Patrick Miller explains how he stopped worrying and learned to love the games he didn't like, in this column from the [March edition](#).

Right now, you're reading Game Developer magazine [*on Gamasutra, anyway - Ed.*]. You're probably reading it at the Game Developers Conference, or maybe during your lunch break working at a game development studio -- hopefully, you're making games that you'd like to play yourself. Perhaps you've looked at someone's game and thought, "Yuck -- who'd ever want to play that?" Maybe you've even followed that up with, "Games just aren't what they used to be."

If that sounds familiar, well, cut it out! It's not good for you, the games you make, or the industry as a whole. Here's why.

(More than just) a miserable little pile of secrets

Video games are an incredibly diverse medium. When we describe other media (literature, film, music, and so on), we can establish a few basic common assumptions about the experience of consuming those works; music is something we listen to, books are things we read, films are things we watch, and the difference between artists and genres within those media are defined by content (novels and short stories and graphic novels).

You might say video games are something we play, but that's still vague; the word "play" could describe something I do with a soccer ball, or a Dungeons & Dragons crew, or slot machines, or the



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lottery, or a set of dolls. So, too, with video games: Some are (e)sports, some are rules-driven narrative experiences, some are games of chance, some are works of interactive art, some are toys. Pretty much the only thing one game is guaranteed to have in common with another game is the "video" part, and even that is questionable (see *J.S. Joust*).

Learn from thy neighbor

I'll admit it right now: When I started working at Game Developer this time last year, I was all excited to see what was going on with the core PC and console devs. Indies? Well, they're okay, but not my thing. Mobile? Sure, I guess. Social games? Free-to-play? If I have to. I mean, sure, they're "video games," but they're not really video games, am I right? Well, no, I wasn't -- and I missed out because of that mindset.

I wasn't really into social games, but a few months ago I tried the beta of Zynga's *The Friend Game*-- and had a lot of fun asking and answering questions with Facebook friends that I never would have otherwise asked. I never liked playing games on touchscreens, but now I spend more time playing *Super Hexagon* on my phone than I spend on Facebook or Twitter. And while I'm not a huge fan of free-to-play's effect on competitive multiplayer game designs, last year I spent more on free-to-play action games like *MechWarrior Online* and *PlanetSide 2* than I did on Steam games, because I was able to play them for a long time without having to shell out \$50 up front.

None of these games replaced the games I love; love for video games is additive, not subtractive. But in dabbling with games across the immensely vast spectrum of video games, I developed my appreciation for how devs had honed so many different skills, whether it's the folks who figured out how to tell a story that works on a TV or a phone, the artist who puts the pixels in exactly the right place, the programmers who make everything happen, and even the devious geniuses who persuade me to pay for (free) games. Even if you don't enjoy these games, it's worth trying to see what others like about them.

Leaving your Green Hill (comfort) Zone

If there's one thing I've learned in the last year, it's that we're all in this together. When a studio closes or a team gets laid off, we all feel it. When someone blames video games for youth violence, we all feel it -- even if you, specifically, don't work on violent games. Instead of moaning about how video games just aren't what they used to be because people are making games that you might not personally like, I urge you to embrace the spirit of game camaraderie. Play a game outside your comfort zone. Talk to a fellow dev who works in a different segment of the industry than you do. If you're at GDC, go to a session that might not be immediately relevant to your day-to-day job. You just might be pleasantly surprised.