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BA COMPUTER GAMES DESIGN

THE GAME DESIGNER'S CONTEXT

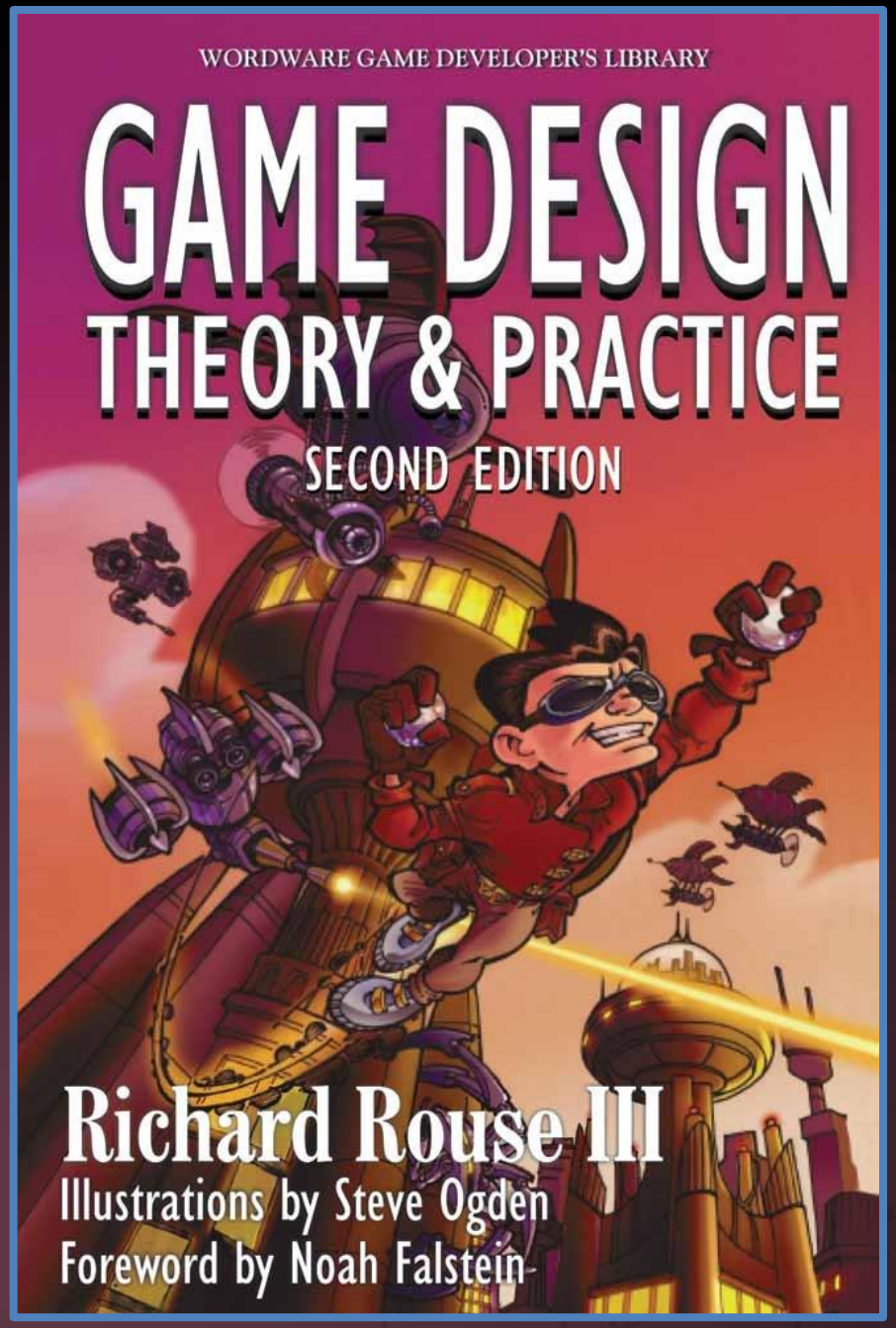
The Player's Expectations: What Players Want

Richard Rouse III: The Player's Expectations (Part 1)

- Why do players play games?
- What do players want?

The Player's Expectations

Richard Rouse III, Game Design Theory & Practice



The Player's Expectations:
Why Do Players Play Games?

Why Do Players Play Games?

Video game designers spend a lot of time concerning themselves with what players are looking for.

They must have the ability to judge whether something is fun for themselves while also possessing an ability to listen to opinions given by others.

Why Do Players Play Games?

"Gamers generally do not want to buy a game that is only a clone of another game, a "new" game that offers old ideas and brings nothing original to the table.

Nevertheless, successful games can be useful, not for cloning, but for analysis."

(Rouse 2005:2)

Why Do Players Play Games?

"As game designers, we can look at the games that have come out previously, that we have enjoyed in years past, and try to determine a set of directives that explain what compelled us to try those games in the first place, and why they held our interest once we started playing them."

(Rouse 2005:2)

Why Do Players Play Games?

When considering what are players looking for, this is the first question that should be considered:

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Why Do Players Play Games?

"By understanding what is attractive about games that other media do not offer we can try to emphasise the differences that separate our art form from others.

To be successful, our games need to take these differences and play them up, exploiting them to make the best gameplay experience possible."

(Rouse 2005:2)

The Player's Expectations:
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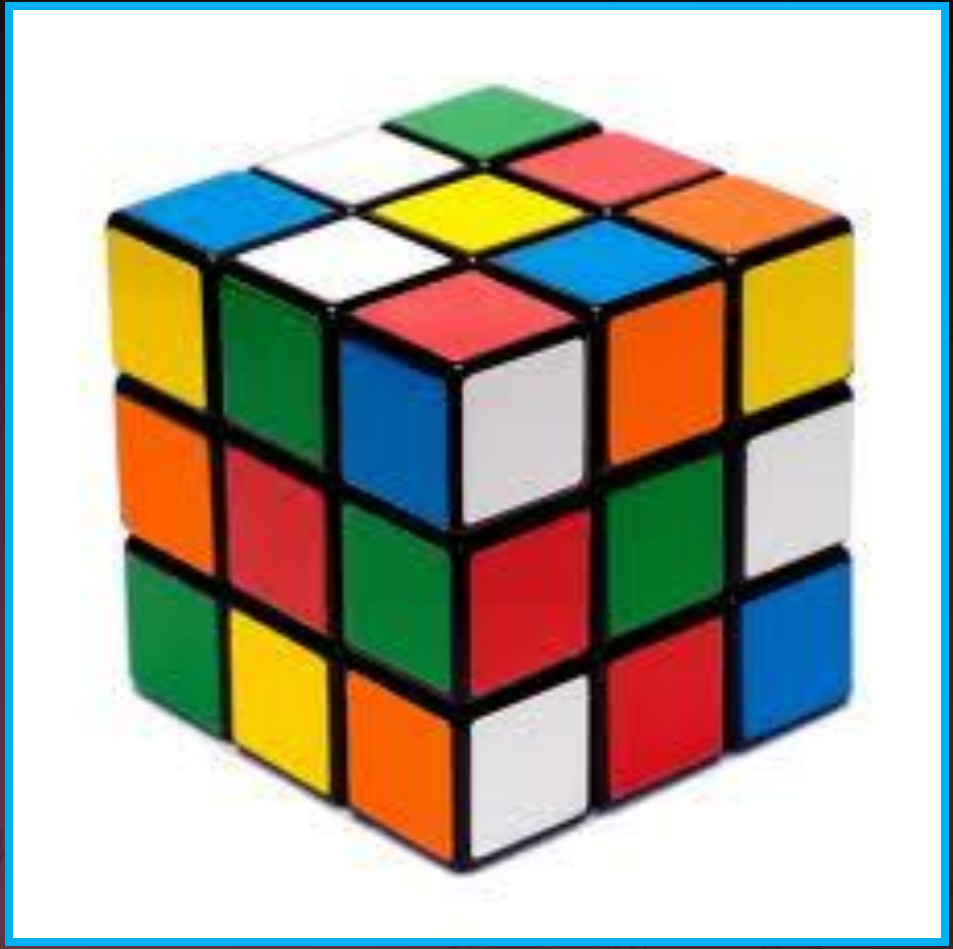
What Do Players Want?

Players Want A Challenge

Players Want A Challenge

Challenge is one of the main motivations for playing single-player games.

Games force players to think actively and try out various solutions to problems they may encounter.



Players Want A Challenge

Challenging games can be learning experiences and players will learn from them, even if the learning is only within the context of the game.

The Player's Expectations:
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Players Want to Socialize

Players Want to Socialize

There are many different forms of multiplayer gaming, from first-person-shooter deathmatches to persistent world role-playing games such as *World of Warcraft*.

'Casual gaming' has also expanded social activity in gaming with family-orientated products on consoles such as Nintendo's Wii as well as the explosion of social networking games in the 2010s.

Players Want to Socialize

Despite being played by people in different parts of the world players still chat to each other via basic chat functionality or headsets.

Players Want to Socialize

An additional advantage of multiplayer gaming is that human players are less predictable than AI and this has been suggested as one of the most appealing aspects of multiplayer games.

The Player's Expectations:
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What Do Players Want?

Players Want a Dynamic Solitary Experience

Players Want a Dynamic Solitary Experience

Some players want to social experience but others seek something dynamic that they can engage in by themselves.

Players Want a Dynamic Solitary Experience

Games are different from other solitary experiences such as reading books or watching movies because they provide a form of interaction.

The Player's Expectations:
What Do Players Want?

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What Do Players Want?

Players Want Bragging Rights

Players Want Bragging Rights

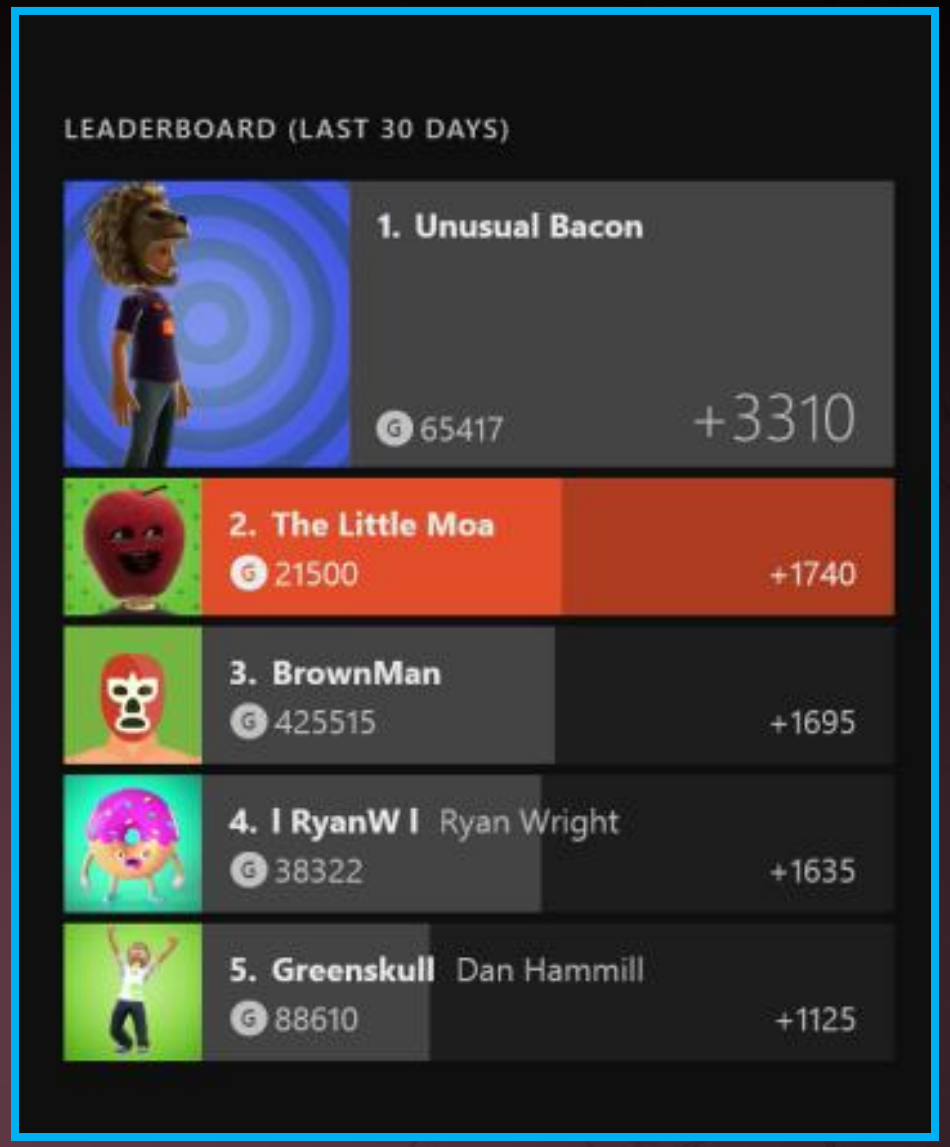
Players play games to win respect, particularly in shared experiences and multiplayer gaming.

Even in single-player games, players will talk about how good they are at a particular game.

Players Want Bragging Rights

Offering incentives for players to brag about their achievements can **significantly boost replay value**.

- High Scores
- Leaderboards
- Trophies



The Player's Expectations:
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Players Want an Emotional Experience

Players Want an Emotional Experience

Players may be seeking some form of emotional payoff when they play a computer game.

The emotions that games can potentially evoke in players are much stronger than in other media where the experience is less immersive and less personally involving.

Players Want an Emotional Experience

It may seem strange that players would play a game to feel horror, fear or despair but many people enjoy films, books and music with these same themes.

Players Want an Emotional Experience

Emotional range is not something that has been explored as much as it could be in games.

"Game designers would be wise to concentrate on expanding the emotional experience in games beyond excitement and accomplishment, into more unexplored and uncharted emotional territory."

(Rouse 2005:6)

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Players Want to Explore

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One of the main motivations for players of level-based games is the desire to explore new spaces and environments.

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However, game exploration is **not** limited to spatial exploration.

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Players Want to Fantasize

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Games have the potential to be even more immersive than books or films because players can take an active role in a world of fantasy.

Players Want to Fantasize

People are attracted to storytelling art forms as a form of escapism – experiencing new worlds and activities different their daily life.

Games have the potential to be even more immersive than books or films because players can take an active role in a world of fantasy.

It is the interactive element of games that allow them to excel in providing a sense of escapism.

Players Want to Fantasize

Other parts of fantasy fulfilment include enabling players to engage in socially unacceptable behaviour in safe environments, or making choices in historical games that provide alternative outcomes to our own reality.

Good computer games can provide players with opportunities to see the world through someone else's eyes. It is fun to role-play and it is fun to fantasize.

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Players Want to Interact

Players Want to Interact

No other form of media allows the audience to be the guiding force in the experience they are having.

Game designers need to keep in mind the possibilities and experiences that games can provide when interaction is used effectively.

Players Want to Interact

Engaging interactive experiences are incredibly effective at keeping a players attention.

Summary

What do players want?

- Players want a challenge
- Players want to socialize
- Players want a dynamic solitary experience
- Players want bragging rights
- Players want an emotional experience
- Players want to explore
- Players want to fantasize
- Players want to interact

Questions?

Bibliography

Books

Rouse, R. (2005). *Game Design Theory and Practice* (Second Edition). Wordware Publishing Inc., USA

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