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<http://howtonotsuckatgamedesign.com/?p=6419> by Anjin Anhut.
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This article is filed under [game criticism](#) and [game semiotics](#).



from the PC version of Spelunky

[Spelunky for XBLA](#) was recently released, earning well deserved praise for its rougelike gameplay and possibly endless replayability. Mossmouth (game company of reknown indie dev Derek Yu) overall created a fun and positive game about adventure, treasure and bravery.

But one set of very poor design decisions heavily taints the experience for socially and culturally considerate players, who refuse to see things through the rose-coloured indie-glasses.

About (accidental?) glorification of abuse, disguised as heroism.

UPDATE: there is a follow up article with a few clarifications and some learnings from the debate. [Go here](#).

Pitchforks and Torches



Alright, I'll be going then....

Hold it! Yes, you Spelunky fan! I'm not dragging a fun game down, calling Derek Yu a sexist for making it or you a sexist for liking it, nor do I demand boycotts or something. I'm just critically pointing to a specific set of design decisions and explore their connotations and effects. That's it.

Yes, there are way bigger fish to fry, [Äö/Ñ](#) big corporations enforcing stereotypes to sell units. So why crack down on this indie game from this indie dev? For one, I'm an unhappy customer. The problematic content really spoils a lot of the fun for me.

But more importantly, from a cultural perspective, it is just sad to find an indie dev being so hardcore reactionary on gender issues or at least oblivious to the backward-thinking nature of his designs. And it is not okay for indies, as it is not okay for big-players. Spelunky is now on the home-console stage and its performance on gender issues needs to be evaluated like the AAA performances, since it now has similar effect.

Help! Help!



FYI: She is not unconscious, she is dead here.

At the core of my problem with Spelunky lies the rescue mechanic. On an abstract level the idea is, that you save someone from the underground mine (or cave or temple or whatever theme the level currently has) and get rewarded by receiving one health point. So far, so good.

Now, the way you get hearts, „Äö/Ñ/“ the metaphor for health points in the game „Äö/Ñ/“ is by getting a kiss from whoever you just saved. A gesture of affection and gratitude for the hero. This is at least how it is verbally described in on-screen prompts. But what actually happens couldn't be farther from the truth.

After physically abusing the helpless damsel (the name for the game object), he drags her deeper(!) into the underground structure. After he got his kiss, he abandons her incapable ass in a shaft with only these options: to return to the mine she just got "saved" from or going even deeper into the structure. This is not how you save somebody.

Here is a walkthrough of the problematic mechanics and images in order of appearance:

1. Sexualization

The damsel's only active contribution is a kiss, while her appearance is of an attractive blonde in a red cocktail dress. Beyond her sexuality, there are no more aspects to the character. Maybe except her incompetence.

Oh, and you can buy a kiss in shops from time to time. So, prostitution, yeah?

2. Infantilization

The character is completely unable to do anything without the hero physically making her do it. On her own, she is either standing around yelling for help or walking around blindly until a wall stops her or she falls down. You can't talk to her and she is unable to follow you. So the character needs to be picked up and carried. When you pick her up, she gets unconscious.

3. Objectification

Once you picked her up, like any other item, you can use her as a projectile or shield if you like. You will get your kiss-reward by carrying her to the exit of the level, like you would with other items.

4. Justification of violence

These women need to be physically hurt for their own good. For their own good here meaning, for the player to get a kiss before he abandons them even further down the mines.

The AI is programmed in a way, that the character is walking back and forth without any perception of her environment. Walls will force her to switch direction, while she just blindly falls down any slope in front of her. This often can result in her death... so to keep her from walking into her doom, like a lemming, you need to knock her out with your whip.

5. Trivialization of violence (including murder)

She will never be angry with you. You can slap her or throw her around, in the end she will want to kiss you. But if you overdo the hitting or the using-as-projectile or if you plant a bomb too close to her... she dies. The only negative consequence here is, that she is now too dead to give you a kiss. But you still can pick up her corpse and use her as an object.

6. Glorification of sexual exploitation

Winning scenario: She is dependent on you, promises a sexual act as a reward, you physically abuse her, pretend like you are there for her, get the sexual reward and immediately abandon her.

I'm sorry to be such a killjoy here, but this is a horribly offensive presentation. With the original and default damsel-style of ...uhm... "women", this is like a complete shopping list of the grossest sexist sentiments. And it is presented as the desirable outcome for the player.

Just A Misfired Gag



A selection of pulp era book covers, with many inept blonde-in-red-dress ladies to save.

Personally, I don't see this sexist presentation as a result of sexist intentions. The graphical style does not allow for arousing images, so the sexual aspect is more symbolic than anything. Also the target audience for the game is not the typical AAA bro-verload (Sadly, I did NOT invent that word myself!).

Judging from the overall stylistic throwback to old pulp novels and serials (which also inspired the Indiana Jones movies) and to video game classics... it is just a reference to the classic "damsel in distress".

But an homage to sexist content is still sexist content itself. As long as you do not reference the sexist sentiments to break them or offset them.... you are just spreading sexist sentiments yourself. Looking at the poor state of female representation in video games and society in general, the decision to go all-out on the damsel in distress is a very poorly timed gag.

We are not past that sexist ideas yet, they are still mainstream. It is waaaaayyyy too early to attempt at scoring funny points with a throwback to those ideas.



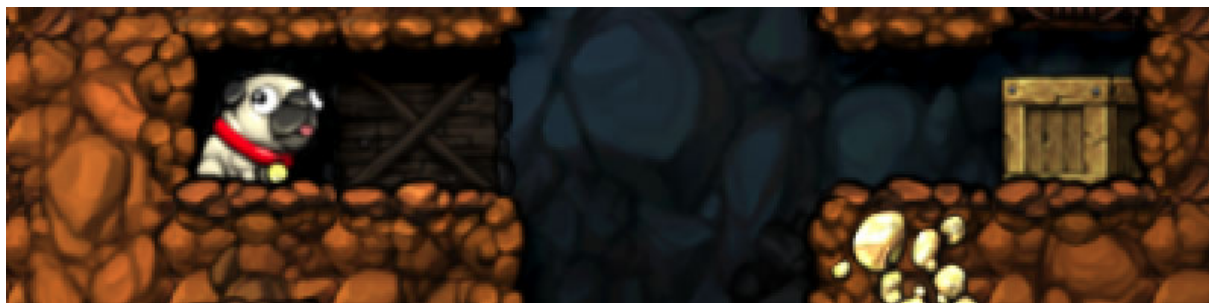
One of the most iconic blonde-in-red-dress damsels of video game history. (Donkey Kong arcade flyer)

But With The XBLA Version the Player Can Choose!

The PC version of Spelunky only featured the female damsels, while the new XBLA version let's you pick from several

styles (which is **celebrated** as a great new feature).

On an abstract level, I appreciate the choice for players, not only to pick their avatar's gender but also the gender of the love-interest, therefore allowing for all sorts of heterosexual and homosexual pairings... and also allowing the player to completely desexualizing it via the cute pug option. This is very progressive and forward-thinking. Great concept.



Awww, look at this guy. I really rather beat the shit out of this fella and abandon him in an environment, in which he is completely incapable of surviving. Really?

But in a concrete manner, it makes everything even worse. Since saving is not an option, you get to choose not who to save, but who to exploit and abuse. Since we do not have as much problems in popculture and society with abuse of men for being men... the buff guy is not that much problematic as a damsel style. It still is kinda ugly to witness, but at least it does not endorse common real-life abuse.

Animal abuse on the other hand is quite real, so smacking a dog around and using the dog as shuriken, maybe accidentally killing him, really does not feel any better, then doing it with another human being. Remember that outrage about that video where an US soldier threw a puppy over a cliff? That's the pugs gameplay of Spelunky in a nutshell. (BTW, I have 2 dogs in my family).

On top of that, it also exacerbates the sexist connotations of the female damsel, by telling the audience, that the standards for treatment of dogs (and a very questionable standard at that) is equal to the treatment of women. They are interchangeable without any adjustments to interaction. You can't verbally talk to dogs and dogs are not fully fledged persons... sometimes they even need to be kept on a leash or otherwise physically dominated... why does this apply to women (and men for that matter) as well?

Seriously, Mossmouth.

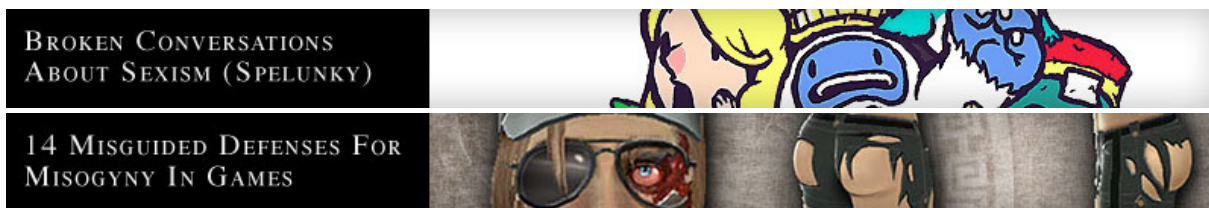
Why not really save damsels, instead of just dragging them deeper into the abyss and abandoning them? Why not have a rope coming from the ceiling, where damsels can climb up into their freedom? Why health upgrades through sex-acts? Why can't we save other adventurers/tourists/indigenous people and they share food or medi-packs with us?

Why do we need to knock the damsels out? can we just ask them to stop running around like blind idiots? (Oddworld did that quite well.) Why is there no negative feedback for killing damsels? Why can we kill them at all? It would be enough to have them attack us like the shopkeepers do or just have them run away from us.

Why do all the design decisions regarding damsels focus straight on playing on hardcore misogynistic ideas? And why did anybody think, it would be less sexist, if we just equate women with dogs?

There are a thousand things you could have done to not pander to sexist stereotypes, sanctioned abuse and power fantasies. How about a patch? Come on!

Related posts:



23 THOUGHTS ON "IT'S NOT OKAY, SPELUNKY!"



Someone

on **July 10, 2013 at 3:26 am** said:

Feminists are by far the worst thing to ever happen in society, as shown in this article.



Jason

on **February 13, 2013 at 6:15 pm** said:

Spelunky is a light hearted bit of fun not an example of bigoted social commentary. The only thing I took away from this page is that the author has a frighteningly grasp of the English language particularly spelling (spell checks being so ubiquitous these days it really is shocking) and also completely blind to pleasant satirical comedy in a brilliant rouge alike game.



JoeyD

on **January 25, 2013 at 5:16 pm** said:

i bought spelunky specifically because i heard you could beat cartoon women, dogs, and gay men.



Justin

on **July 30, 2012 at 3:02 pm** said:

As someone who identifies Spelunky as possibly his favorite game of all time, I agree this is a subject somebody needed to bring up. I'd be lying if I said I was not amused by how completely inept she is at protecting herself and by how she can be flung like a ragdoll into the path of danger, but when I really think about what I'm doing to that poor Damsel (using her as a projectile and meat shield only to be rewarded with admiration), I realize the undertones are quite ugly.

Extra Credits said it best in their analysis of the truly wretched game, Call of Juarez: The Cartel: Game designers have to think about what their mechanics mean (here's a link to the video if you're at all interested: <http://penny-arcade.com/patv/episode/call-of-juarez-the-cartel>).



ASleeplessWolf

on **July 22, 2012 at 11:46 pm** said:

As a sociology major and another person observing this constant onslaught of gender discourse in contemporary society, I see where you are coming from. But I won't jump into the fray here with more standard counterarguments. Instead, let me offer you a fresh, fun idea.

Perhaps the female, male, or dog actually proceeds after he/she kisses you. But in the next level, you realize that they have not given up hope in that previous mineshaft. They have gone deeper! After all, that is truly their only choice without supplies of their own. Now, when you, the player, find the damsel next, he/she, you discover, has stopped moving at a certain spot. In a way, they have demonstrated independence and strength for moving forward and getting THAT far without a weapon. They further demonstrate independence by running once you let go of them. The damsel may feel safe in the presence of you, the player, there with him/her, and yet they run! They run, trying to find the exit, usually failing without previous spelunking experience and supplies. Wouldn't the negative stereotype hide behind the player (usually a male player)? Yes. But the damsel does not! He/She makes a run for it, too terrified to act with coolness and rationality. If you saw a giant spider coming and you had no supplies, wouldn't you run? In this sense, the damsels represent the person/animal with no prior experience in such a situation. This applies to males, females, and beasts alike. The fear and sense of psychological urgency, then, is universal. The player must knock the damsel out if he/she really wants to save him/her; it is not abusive, but a caring action. The damsel is out of his/her element and needs help... Much like the Spelunker him/herself would be if he/she was in a different—perhaps more normal—setting.



FBW

on **July 10, 2012 at 4:47 pm** said:

This article is a stretch based on loose assumptions and an over reaction to a game's simple mechanics. While you can make your straw man arguments and laundry list peoples valid points, it doesn't change the fact that you're

grasping at straws and looking into this a bit too deep.



IntentionCurious

on **July 10, 2012 at 9:21 am** said:

By declaring what his game character symbolizes. You discriminated the "damsel" based on her outfit, assuming she was a sex symbol. Like I said, she could have been his wife for all we know. It's literally impossible to tell without a backstory, and assumptions like that are extremely unfair, especially with accusations as serious as misogyny. Whether or not you think the creators of the game had misogynistic intentions, blasting them the way you did in this article with as flimsy evidence as you presented is unbelievably unfair.

Beyond your goal, whatever it was with this article, you should be careful to make sure that the accusations you make match the wrongdoing at hand. The consequences otherwise can be dire.

Like I said, the only way you even have a case is if the creators did have some sort of 'bad intentions' with the damsel being so helpless, which you could find out by asking the game creators. Otherwise, the characters themselves are too ambiguous as entities outside of game mechanics they embody to say for certain what a character represents.

...oh and generally, when people have an issue with content, they contact the content creators in an attempt to resolve the issue. Based on how strongly you come off in the story, I would have hoped you would have taken a better approach to handling this issue. I'm not sure why you're doing this instead, as you're making pretty serious accusations about someone without approaching them about it.



Anjin Anhut

on **July 10, 2012 at 1:25 pm** said:

@intentioncurious:

You have no clue whatsoever how messages and culture work.

I do not (!) talk about people here, I talk about messages. As long as you are unable to separate the two and see messages as an objective parameter with measurable effects, you are talking about the wrong thing. My article is based on sociology and semiology, you know science, not on personal opinion or guesswork.

This article is not based on any sort of accusation of misogynistic intent.

Misogynistic intent is not a requisite for misogynistic messages.

Calling the damsel "sexual" is not a personal opinion, and not discriminating (WTF?), it is based on objective analysis of visual language and cultural understanding of such.



IntentionCurious

on **July 10, 2012 at 2:18 am** said:

Why is the damsel automatically a sex symbol? Maybe it's her husband trying to save her after she got kidnapped at a cocktail party, unfortunately still in her dress and makeup. Maybe the spelunker hero was told he could grab mad loot if he blew up one of the dog/girl on the altar and he's just a sociopathic treasure hunter. You've judged intention here. I don't think it's fair to say what the creators intentions are when the characters backstory is literally unclear. Maybe he left it up to player interpretation and you interpreted it this way. It's impossible to tell unless you ask whoever came up with the damsel, which I'm sure you could through Twitter or his website:

<http://spelunkyworld.com/>

yu.derek (at) gmail.com – general inquiries email



Anjin Anhut

on **July 10, 2012 at 8:43 am** said:

You,Äö/Ñ/¥ve judged intention here.

I actually carefully avoided that, i thought. Where do you read that?



Michael Weir

on **July 9, 2012 at 8:05 pm** said:

I respect your opinion and love this blog, but man.....Overreaching a tad here. Are you writing about spelunky, or this: <http://vimeo.com/5471805> ?

(double dragon arcade intro)



Anjin Anhut

on **July 9, 2012 at 9:01 pm** said:

Hey Michael,...

Which of my observations and which of my conclusions are wrong and why?
Cheers.



C418

on **July 9, 2012 at 3:35 pm** said:

This is silly, the game is in all essence silly, you are silly, everything about this is just silly.



Anjin Anhut

on **July 9, 2012 at 2:32 pm** said:

@Peter: Thanks for chiming in. I'm not sure myself, if to be outraged or something, since I also don't assert bad intentions (in contrast to big publisher, who surf on sexist sentiments to sell their stuff).

But I am at least alarmed about the casual nature of the sexism here. It feeds into a cultural narrative, which deserves all the outrage it can get. (And yes, the symbolism really spoils some fun for me, but that's just preferences).

Anyway, the "simple" argument is sure one to explore.

Cheers.



Peter Moorhead

on **July 9, 2012 at 2:11 pm** said:

Ultimately I can't fault your logic on this one, but I think there are two fundamental flaws in this sort of analysis in the case of Spelunky, which are as follows;

1. You are applying very complex analysis to what is a very, very simple gameplay paradigm. Of course it doesn't hold up under detailed scrutiny, it's a game about rescuing damsels, trophy men and pugs from randomly generated mines! How did they get there? Why haven't they starved? Why isn't the ghost chasing them too? Why are there shop keepers at all? Is this some secret underground world with its own people and functioning economy?
2. Any misogynist elements in a game like this are, at worst, an unintentional consequence of game mechanics that are (at least when examined individually) perfectly harmless, and moreover, they are almost all implied rather than explicit faults, and therein entirely subjective. Unless Yu is secretly a complete psychopath, and the accidental abuse of virtual women in cocktail dresses by his thousands of fans brings him some sort of sick gratification, I seriously doubt it was done on purpose.

In any case, you are clearly breaking a butterfly on a wheel with this one. I know the "other shit exists" argument really isn't an argument at all, but Spelunky is most definitely not one of the games worth getting offended about. Your intentions are noble and your examination admirably keen and thoughtful, but Spelunky is definitely not worth getting offended over.



Random_Phobosis

on **July 9, 2012 at 10:13 am** said:

I always thought Damsel in Spelunky actually pokes fun at all the sexist stuff in games, because her uselessness is so much exaggerated. She's okay as projectile, but rescuing here can be too much trouble. Don't forget she also should be sacrificed to Kali, which is the only way to use her properly.

The other thing that probably will draw your attention is that if you try to beat the Damsel in kissing parlor, the Shopkeeper attacks you yelling "Only I'm allowed to do that!" I mean, to me this is intentionally silly, and calling this out as sexism looks pretty strange. The default "yeah, girls actually find it funny too" defense goes here.

By the way, in original Spelunky for windows, you could play as Damsel and save Spelunkers – dunno about xbla version.



Anjin Anhut

on **July 9, 2012 at 9:39 am** said:

@Chris: Yup, I'm with you on this one. I don't deal in guessing intentions, but I also don't see Spelunky aiming at the Duke-demographic. I hope the "misfired gag" section makes that clear. Cheers.



Anjin Anhut

on **July 9, 2012 at 9:36 am** said:

@Chris O: Thanks for the question. The answer to "when is it okay" is fairly simple... when it does no measurable cultural harm. I address this question already in the "misfired gag" segment: If sexism would not be a harmful mainstream sentiment in games culture, you know just some thing people with special interests do, the Damsels or Fat Princesses would not be an issue at all.

The question is not taste, or what kinds of jokes people get or if people get offended or not. It's about marginalization of groups of people, measurable marginalization and, if you want to make that one joke, no matter how much you contribute to the marginalization.

Also please do not mingle your rights with your responsibilities. It is your right to publish content that offends people and it is your right to make money by playing into harmful stereotypes.... no discussion about that. But if that is okay and if you deserve to be called out on that is another issue.

Cheers.



Onefifth

on **July 9, 2012 at 7:18 am** said:

There are a few additions I'd like to make as a designer that I feel should be at least noted. It's longer than I intended, feel free to just read the last paragraph if you're lazy.

The first is that the players core interactions with the game world are extremely limited. This is by design and is quite arguably the „Äö/Ñ/ correct, Äö/Ñ/π design. Games are fairly centred around interaction with a game world, and the majority of these interactions (for the majority of games) are abstracted through a controller. The controller is an awkward impersonal device where pressing buttons controls things in an inherently disjointed way. Minimizing both the controls and number of ways a player can interact with the game world not only simplifies the game for people just starting out, but helps shrink this disjointed feeling we'd naturally have. At it, Äö/Ñ/ Yes core this is the concept of immersion, something many games strive heavily to accomplish in order to create meaningful/enjoyable experiences. Another reason to keep the controls minimal is simply to aid the pace of a game such as Spelunky. The more buttons the player is required to use, the less quickly they can be expected to use them (or rather, the less time they will need to master the use of them quickly). This is important. (I, Äö/Ñ/ Yes I'll explain why in another comment if you really need me to.)

In Spelunky (ignoring actions controlling movement for simplicity) interaction has been simplified to; "attacking/throwing": using whatever object is currently held (or a whip in the case of nothing), „Äö/Ñ/ picking things up, Äö/Ñ/π: which is simplified further to just couching and attacking, „Äö/Ñ/ throwing/placing bombs, Äö/Ñ/π and „Äö/Ñ/ throwing/placing

ropes, and the health giving object is concerned, it's again completely a design decision made to keep a challenging mechanic within the predictable bounds of the game world. Having a way to lose your hard earned "extra life" before you have to cash it in is a really fun mechanic. The ability for this collectible to wander away from you makes it significantly more challenging than just collecting (as demonstrated by the golden idol treasure present in some levels). A greater reward for a greater challenge, a pretty common game trope. Making the thing you are rescuing simply walk around keeps it predictable within the game world while accomplishing all our other design goals. While it would be feasible to have the extra life not move when placed down gently, it would completely remove the extra challenge. I'd be interested if you had another way you felt this could be achieved.

As far as the movement behaviour of the health giving object is concerned, it's again completely a design decision made to keep a challenging mechanic within the predictable bounds of the game world. Having a way to lose your hard earned "extra life" before you have to cash it in is a really fun mechanic. The ability for this collectible to wander away from you makes it significantly more challenging than just collecting (as demonstrated by the golden idol treasure present in some levels). A greater reward for a greater challenge, a pretty common game trope. Making the thing you are rescuing simply walk around keeps it predictable within the game world while accomplishing all our other design goals. While it would be feasible to have the extra life not move when placed down gently, it would completely remove the extra challenge. I'd be interested if you had another way you felt this could be achieved.

The second important thing to understand about games, is that they often use (much like any other form of artistic expression) non-literal imagery to represent concepts that are otherwise difficult to represent (on account of video games not being real and the whole disjointed interaction thing). Hearts representing lives/health is common, it's understandable, and it's fairly universal. It's a pretty good tool for designers to use to get a concept across. As far as Spelunky's visuals are concerned, I saw it as some fleshy blob monster in a dress vomiting up heart-shaped armor pellets into the air above me as I walk past, which my character then staples onto his own chest to protect him from damage (somehow...). The concept is so completely abstract and subject to the players interpretation, if one feels like over-sexualizing it, while I won't agree with them, that's their decision to do so.

I mean, stepping back for a moment, we're in a cursed dungeon/cave/jungle where the walls magically re-arrange themselves and "death itself has lots its way..." (meaning when you "die" you just wake up at the start again). In a land where death is clearly outlined as a non-permanent and a non-serious issue, what's the big deal about hurling someone into some spikes? They're just going to wake up in the next room (which they appear to do). On that note, who's to say we're bringing the thing were rescuing deeper? We've moving through "doors" connecting regions containing often vastly different climates and ecosystems. I always assumed there was a super wheelchair-friendly route back to the top between every such area. I think assuming there isn't is a negative way of looking at the whole situation. As Spelunky, I'm here to collect all the gold I can and finance some weird shotgun-wielding hermits dreams of becoming a successful store-owner in what appears to be the most dangerous caves ever constructed where the only customer is me. (Also there's an entire village of shopkeepers, again just for me, filled with identical clones?) The point I'm trying to make here is, if you are going to look super critically at one aspect of a game, you'd best be prepared to look at them all with the same depth and seriousness. Frankly, some bits of game just aren't supposed to be taken seriously and are left open to a lot of interpretations. How you see it isn't the only way it is or even the way it was intended to be. Getting angry about the way you chose to interpret a piece of art looks a touch self-centred.

With all that being said, I'll go ahead and back-pedal a bunch and say I get where you're coming from. There are some things that totally probably could have been done differently. I haven't put a ton of thought into how, because I'm busy enjoying and mastering the complexities, controls and interactions of the game. I think looking critically at how a game could be improved is important, but be constructive about it. If you are going to point out all the beefs you've got with a game, lets hear some solutions. You've done this a couple times, but the majority of what's written here is a bunch of questions and points with no feedback. I get you're good at pointing out problems, but who isn't? Let's see some brain flexing, list some of those "thousand things" that could have been done while keeping in mind the goals of designing a fun, challenging, intuitive and immersive game.

Alright article, 3/5.



Chris

on **July 9, 2012 at 4:53 am** said:

One point I feel is missing here and that is the tone and intention of the developer. If you take the games aesthetics as a whole it's very clear the intention is to poke fun at the pulp genre and play up the goofier aspects of it. It's not an endorsement of them. The addition of the dog and the hunk should demonstrate that the developer's intention is not to offend, as they went out of their way to give the player options (and adding a female heroin as a player choice).

I certainly don't think your call for sensitivity is unwarranted and I understand where you're coming from I just think a little perspective is important here. The intention was to make a fun, challenging and addictive game with the thinnest veneer of story. It's miles from a game like Duke Nukem Forever, which depicts, unambiguously, a vulgar, adolescent power-fantasy view of women.



Chris O

on **July 9, 2012 at 3:54 am** said:

One thing I wonder about this line of thinking if it is your opinion that it is never okay to use violence against women/people/animals as a visualization of game mechanics. I have the feeling you are saying, "No, it is never ok", which is a bit extreme. I understand that as a society we are rife with issues about the visualization and characterization of women, but it is the responsibility of every artist in the world to fight against those stereotypes every time they engage in the act of creating something? (I snuck in games are art there which people are welcome to debate separately).

Fat Princess also features the objectification of women in an extreme sense, and has the added baggage of using weight gain as a mechanic to make it difficult to steal a princess away. These are intended to be humorous visualizations to help people understand on an intuitive level how the mechanics work. The fact that as a society we have built in recognition of certain visual cues is just that, a fact. As a game designer, as you saying we do not have the right to utilize imagery that is stereotypical negative to convey a game mechanic?

For instance, game "Moron Rescue" is a zombie game where I use attractive males and females to attract surviving humans (basic herding game). I use people I rescue as attractors and repulsors for future levels. If they get too fat, more zombies come and humans are not as attracted, and vice-versa.

I could used sheep dogs that were scary or fluffy to achieve the same end goal, without leveraging negative sexual stereotypes or the dehumanization of people in general. Lets say that the market rewards me with 50% more revenue on my zombie skin game, because hey, zombies and sexy people!

^ do I have the right to do that? Lets have more fun and say I'm supporting my wife and 2 kids from the revenue of this game. You say it is way to early to use those tropes as humorous elements, but I really like making a living, and for better or worse society is rewarding me for being an asshole (I will not make any moral argument over zombie being "better" than sheepdogs, lets just assume I know I'm being a jerk). Will you demand a patch for sheepdog skins? Why can't I just make a funny game that makes fat people feel bad about themselves?



Scott Lewis

on **July 8, 2012 at 8:01 pm** said:

"Why not really save damsels, instead of just dragging them deeper into the abyss and abandoning them?"

Because the player is going toward the exit and it would not make for a better game if the player had to go back to the beginning. The levels are often designed so that you can progress from the entrance to the exit, but not vice-versa.

"Why health upgrades through sex-acts?"

A kiss is a sex act? My grandmother kisses me; is that incest? There is a hint of "sexiness" with the kiss, but calling it a sex act is blowing it way out of proportion.

"Why can,Äö/Ñ/¥t we save other adventurers/tourists/indigenous people and they share food or medi-packs with us?"

That sounds fine, but the challenge and benefit of rescuing damsels makes the game richer and more enjoyable. I would be fine with replacing damsels with a game mechanic that was equally as rich if it was less offensive, but I haven't read a solution that fits the criteria.

"Why do we need to knock the damsels out?"

The damsels are "knocked out" to indicate that they are still alive. If they don't have spinning stars around their head when you carry them, they are dead. It is important signaling information.

"can we just ask them to stop running around like blind idiots? (Oddworld did that quite well.)"

It makes the game interesting because you have to make sure that you don't put them in danger. It is comedic. Males/females/dogs all run around like idiots. I honestly don't see the problem here.

"Why is there no negative feedback for killing damsels?"

You lose the chance to gain health, which is the most important resource in the game which is only gained through damsels. If you kill damsels by using them as simple objects as the game, you are playing the game wrong. There is not a intricate death animation, but there is negative feedback for their death.

"Why can we kill them at all?"

Because they are a valuable asset and otherwise you could use them as an indestructible tool to advance through the game. You have to guard precious resources.

"It would be enough to have them attack us like the shopkeepers do or just have them run away from us."

The game is already exceptionally dangerous. If the damsels attacked you like shopkeepers, then the game would be

unbalanced. No one would get near a damsel because it wouldn't be worth the risk.

"Why do all the design decisions regarding damsels focus straight on playing on hardcore misogynistic ideas?"

You can rescue men, women, or dogs. (Or all the above.) I find rescuing beautiful helpless "trophy" people (and plus goofy-looking dogs) is amusing rather than insulting.

"And why did anybody think, it would be less sexist, if we just equate women with dogs?"

The game states that trophy men, trophy women, and goofy pugs are all equivalent. I'm not worried about what the "trophy" community of people might think.



Anjin Anhut
on **July 8, 2012 at 8:43 pm** said:

Hey Scott, thanks for taking the time to comment here. :)

Though I really have to say, that you attempts at setting me straight are all misfiring. Your arguments is disjointed and set up like a laundry list. If you have a point to make, make it. But don't just go into debate-rage and shoot on everything that moves. You clearly have not thought out most of your answers here.

Also most of your answers consist of "this is how it works in the game" as if I don't already know what the game design intentions are. Using the "this is how it works" argument to defend the current state of things is a serious indicator for a lack of imagination regarding how to solve things without putting the player in an abusive position.

Here, one by one:

Because the player is going toward the exit and it would not make for a better game if the player had to go back to the beginning. The levels are often designed so that you can progress from the entrance to the exit, but not vice-versa."

Your setting up a false dichotomy here. The current state of things and your option above are not the only two ways to deal with this.

A kiss is a sex act? My grandmother kisses me; is that incest? There is a hint of sexiness with the kiss, but calling it a sex act is blowing it way out of proportion.

It's not your grandmother, it's a women in a red cocktail dress or a man in underpants and a bow-tie. The kisses by the human damsels are heavily sexualized. Kissing your grandmother is not the presented situation, a pointless comparison and has nothing to do with this discussion.

Why can we save other adventurers/tourists/indigenous people and they share food or medi-packs with us?

That sounds fine, but the challenge and benefit of rescuing damsels makes the game richer and more enjoyable. I would be fine with replacing damsels with a game mechanic that was equally as rich if it was less offensive, but I haven't read a solution that fits the criteria.

I'm not talking about a replacement for the game mechanic, just the visual representation. My suggestions regarding the motif keep the current game mechanics intact. Please, keep that straight.

The damsels are knocked out to indicate that they are still alive. If they don't have spinning stars around their head when you carry them, they are dead. It is important signaling information.

Why are the damsels not AWAKE to signal that they are still alive? "Keeping the knockout mechanic" versus "loosing the index for the characters to be alive" is another false dichotomy.

It makes the game interesting because you have to make sure that you put them in danger. It is comedic. Males/females/dogs all run around like idiots. I honestly don't see the problem here.

Your disability to see the problem with such jokes, is the major reason I wrote this article. Your proving the point.

You lose the chance to gain health, which is the most important resource in the game which is only gained through damsels. If you kill damsels by using them as simple objects as the game, you are playing the game wrong. There is not a intricate death animation, but there is negative feedback for their death.

Feedback is a communication solution from the software to the user. There is no such thing in the game. Also I already stated the negative consequence of not getting a kiss, no need to repeat that here.

Because they are a valuable asset and otherwise you could use them as an indestructible tool to advance through the game. You have to guard precious resources.

This is answered by the alternatives I stated below.

It would be enough to have them attack us like the shopkeepers do or just have them run away from us.

The game is already exceptionally dangerous. If the damsels attacked you like shopkeepers, then the game would be unbalanced. No one would get near a damsel because it wouldn't be worth the risk.

Okay, then let's have them run away or reject us. They don't need to get hostile mechanically, but they could give you the feedback, that your treatment of them is not okay.

You can rescue men, women, or dogs. (Or all the above.) I find rescuing beautiful helpless ,Äö/Ñ√/ftrophy,Äö/Ñ√/π people (and plus goofy-looking dogs) is amusing rather than insulting.

Your disability to see the problem with such jokes, is the major reason I wrote this article. PLease, look beyond your personal experience and look at the larger cultural implications. Thanks. Talking about “personal taste” in humor is completely pointless and not subject of my article above.

The game states that trophy men, trophy women, and goofy pugs are all equivalent. I,Äö/Ñ√/Ym not worried about what the ,Äö/Ñ√/ftrophy,Äö/Ñ√/π community of people might think.

Sorry, but this is just really ignorant and speaks to the privileged position that clouds your empathy for less privileged groups. Get a grip.