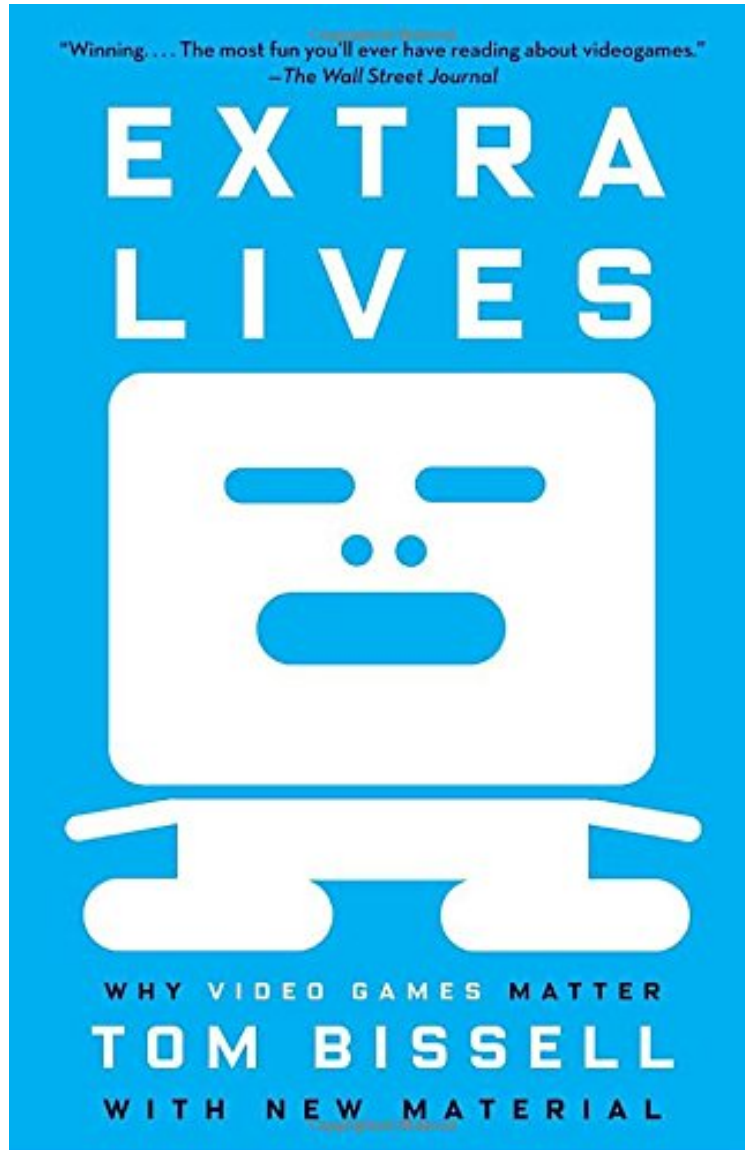


(Free pdf) Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter

Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter

Tom Bissell

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#314375 in Books Tom Bissell 2011-06-14 2011-06-14 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.99 x .72 x 5.14l, .57 #File Name: 0307474313256 pages Extra Lives Why Video Games Matter | File size: 44.Mb

Tom Bissell : Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great critical look at games, poor memoir By A Customer I enjoy Mr. Bissell's writing and critical thoughts on game design and story presentation. So that each chapter focuses largely on in-depth critiques of some of the most thoughtfully designed and innovative games of the last fifteen years, was absolutely this book's greatest strength. However, each chapter also ties somewhat loosely into his life during the

periods in which he was playing these games, but none, save for the very final chapter, go into great, or interesting detail on his life during those periods. By the end of the book we are reminded of places in which his video game habit resided, along with his being, but we have hardly any reference point as to what was happening in his life at that point, besides what games he was most consumed by at the time. I enjoyed the final chapter the most, as it not only delved into his finely provoked game critiques, but also into his personal life and how games intersected with it in both destructive and fascinating ways. If you begin reading this book with that final chapter in mind (as it is a big part of the description on), you're going to be disappointed in your expectations for the rest of the book. If you enter into it expecting a thoughtful, insightful, and introspective piece of games criticism, you most likely will not be disappointed. Even if you disagree with many of his points, as I often did, it's still worth a read if you're a fan of games and a student of games criticism.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Part critique, part memoir. I loved it. By D. Hayes I loved this book. It is a critique of video games as a medium. No critique of an art form is possible without giving the context of the one experiencing the art, so Bissell obliges and fills us in. I wish he'd spent more time talking to more indies than Jonathan Blow. Even in 2010 and before there was lots of great stuff happening in the indie scene. I suspect it's because he didn't play indies and that would've broken from the memoir-ish aspects of the book. Throughout the book Bissell, by turns, loves video games and hates them and is proud of them and picks at them and plays them and tries to get away from them. This guy loves video gaming, clearly. He also has no idea exactly why and (spoiler alert) the book does not give a clear answer. However, I think that's a strength and a startling bit of honesty: this book is not going to be able to tell you why this art matters to you. That's your answer to give. This is his. No objective truths here because there is no such thing. The currency of mattering is emotion. Bissell focuses a lot on narrative and whether or not games with narratives work. Clearly they don't, he'll say. Then he'll provide a bit of narrative that worked. But, boy, that dialogue was terrible. But this voice acting in this other game was great. All these things are true at the same time of virtually all games. The most successful video games of all time have terrible formal structures or are super violent or racist or whatever. And we love them. The other reviews exemplify the ambivalence that Bissell displays in the book perfectly. One review talks about the storyline for Mass Effect like this: "...without a doubt a sci-fi story worthy of classic status regardless of medium..." but ends the review by saying "...[s]o why do games matter? They really don't." Which is it? Mind-expanding classic or light entertainment? Another review says the book is "entirely too academic" but "There is no sociological umbrella theory at work here, just Tom Bissell's own experiences." Again -- which is it? Did you want to position games in some higher-level framework, or didn't you? So, be warned. No answers, lots of ambiguity, more of a memoir than an instruction book. But, I think, also a great introduction to how deeply meaningful games can be for someone who doesn't quite "get it".

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. For Literate Video Game Lovers By Jiang Xueqin I really enjoyed Tom Bissell's Observer article about his video game addiction, specifically about his love of and obsession with Grand Theft Auto. He was honest, winning, and thoughtful in that piece, and the piece has been reproduced in its entirety as the final essay in a collection of essays about video games in "Extra Lives." While it is fairly easy to describe the subject and nature of Tom Bissell's Observer article (a writer becomes addicted to video games, and analyzes why he became so) the subject and nature of "Extra Lives" are much harder to pin down. It is essentially video game criticism -- an analysis of its gameplay mechanics -- but it also attempts to explore if video games can become great pieces of art and literature. As someone who both likes to read and who likes to play video games with literary pretensions (Final Fantasy VII, Warcraft, Starcraft, etc.) I was intrigued by the book at first, but soon found it too mired down by its own literary pretensions. Part of the problem for me -- and to be perfectly fair to the author -- is that Tom Bissell is almost completely focused on first-person shooter games (I prefer role-playing games or real-time strategy), and I've never played any shooter games. That said, I found it disappointing that there wasn't a much eclectic mix of video game genres in this book. While Tom Bissell introduces us to some great video games I was surprised that he didn't mention Blizzard at all -- a great video game company whose products are just as memorable and exciting as Grand Theft Auto and Bioshock.

In *Extra Lives*, acclaimed writer and life-long video game enthusiast Tom Bissell takes the reader on an insightful and entertaining tour of the art and meaning of video games. In just a few decades, video games have grown increasingly complex and sophisticated, and the companies that produce them are now among the most profitable in the entertainment industry. Yet few outside this world have thought deeply about how these games work, why they are so appealing, and what they are capable of artistically. Blending memoir, criticism, and first-rate reportage, *Extra Lives* is a milestone work about what might be the dominant popular art form of our time.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Grand Theft Auto IV is both a waste of time and the most colossal creative achievement of the last 25 years, according to this scintillating meditation on the promise and discontents of video games. Journalist Bissell (*Chasing the Sea*) should know; the ultraviolent car-chase-and-hookers game was his constant pastime during a months-long intercontinental cocaine binge. He's ashamed of his video habit, but also ashamed of being ashamed of the dominant art form of our time; by turning the eye of a literary critic on the gory,

seemingly puerile genre of ultraviolent, open-ended shooter games, he finds unexpected riches. Bissell bemoans the uncompromising stupidity of their story lines, wafer-thin characters, and the moronic dialogue, but celebrates the button-pushing, mesmeric qualities and the subtle, profound depths these conceal the catharses of teamwork and heroism in the zombie-fest *Left for Dead*, the squirmy moral dilemmas of *Mass Effect*, the mood of wistful savagery suffusing the rifles-and-chainsaws-bedecked denizens of *Gears of War*. Bissell excels both at intellectual commentary and evocative reportage on the experience of playing games, while serving up engrossing *mise-en-scene* narratives of the mayhem. If anyone can bridge the aesthetic chasm between readers and gamers, he can. (June 8) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From *Booklist* Might as well get this out of the way: Bissell is addicted to video games. So much so that he pretty much missed the last presidential election because he was playing a new and highly anticipated game. Here he explores not just his own affection for video games but also the games themselves. What separates good games from bad? Where do video games fit on the sliding scale of art? A video game, Bissell tells us, is a form a self-surrender, but a different form than, say, a movie. We have no influence over what happens in a movie, but we do in a video game. In playing a video game, we are, in a sense, the authors of the stories were acting out. Bissell explores the key elements of video games: dialogue, character design, voice performance, visual appearance. Do the best games approach something akin to virtual (or perhaps alternate) reality? Not just for gamers, the book should also appeal to readers who have some serious questions about the nature and impact of video games and their increasing popularity. --David Pitt Winning. . . . The most fun you'll ever have reading about videogames.

The *Wall Street Journal* Bissell has written the finest account yet of what it feels like to be a video game player at this glorious, frustrating time, a rare moment when humanity encounters, as he writes, a form of storytelling that is, in many ways, completely unprecedented.

New York Times Book Even if *Extra Lives* wasn't the only book to deal with the future of videogames in a serious manner, it would probably still be the best one.

Newsweek This journalistic memoir is not only about the meaning of video games; it's about the heat and hesitation of love.

Los Angeles Times Bissell is a Renaissance Man for our out-of-joint time. . . . His descriptions of simulated gore and mayhem manage to be clinical, gripping, and hilarious all at once. He transmits to the reader the primitive, visceral excitements that make video games so enticing, even addictive, to their legions of devotees.

The New Republic What should videogame criticism look like? Bissell's book offers plenty of tantalizing possibilities. . . . A deeply personal work, as entertaining as the video games it profiles. . . . It's also the first book about videogames that non-gamers can actually enjoy.

Entertainment Weekly A master prose stylist, the erudite Bissell is frequently insightful.

The *Boston Globe* For anyone who has spent a weekend thrilled by the prospect of beating a game, *Extra Lives* will cast the addiction in a new, cerebral light.

The *Washington Post* Bissell, a whip-smart writer, is engrossed by the new artistic and narratological possibilities that video gaming opens up to us, and his prose is never dry or academic rather, it's sweetly personal, and always engaging, even as it pushes its readers to reconsider gaming's lowbrow status.

Time Out New York A fascinating book. . . . *Extra Lives* is like taking a private tour at a very exclusive museum, filled with lost masterpieces you never knew existed. You may not find yourself becoming a collector, but you won't soon forget the experience.

San Francisco Chronicle Fantastic . . . I wish, someday, to play a game that will stay with me as long as this book about games.

Farhad Manjoo, *Slate* *Extra Lives* is the first truly indispensable work of literary nonfiction about society's most lucrative entertainment medium. Bissell's commentary is marvelously astute and his enthusiasm for videogames beams through every inch of text.

Paste An important, relentlessly perceptive book. . . . Bissell proves that it's possible to ruminate on the past, present, and future of video games in a way that is both intellectually rigorous and consistently entertaining.

San Francisco Bay Guardian Full of surprisingly penetrating analysis of the real-life skills video games actually test and develop. . . . Bissell moves analysis of video games to the next level. . . . [*Extra Lives*] should help usher in a widespread, much more serious consideration of how video games have taken up permanent residence in our increasingly screen-based world.

The *Plain Dealer* Bissell is a serious and seriously good writer. . . . The video game industry now pockets more of our money than do its counterparts in music and movies, but you'd never know it from glancing at a newspaper or magazine, where Nashville and Hollywood still get far more profiles, business items, and, of course, reviews. *Extra Lives* is, among other things, a wonderful example of how and why this imbalance might be fixed.

The *Christian Science Monitor* For gamers . . . *Extra Lives* offers some much-needed smart talk about a medium ripe for a paradigm shift.

Richmond Times-Dispatch Bissell's style has been compared to that of a young Hemingway. So had Hemingway spent way too much time playing *World of Warcraft* and *Fallout 3* on Xbox . . . he might've come up with something like *Extra Lives*. Ostensibly a work of criticism and attempt to answer what a video game is, the book is also an ode to Bissell's love-hate relationship with a maddening, invigorating new art form.

The *Village Voice*