

“The Sweet Roll: A Project in Podcasting Gaming News, Discussions and Reviews”

by

Kenneth LaVond Wallace

A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Computer Science (Honors Scholar)

Presented May 29th, 2015  
Commencement June 2015



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kenneth LaVond Wallace for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Computer Science presented on May 29th, 2015. Title: The Sweet Roll: A project in Podcasting Gaming news, discussions and reviews

Abstract Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sara Jameson

This thesis – “*The Sweet Roll: A Project in Podcasting Gaming News, Discussions and Reviews*” – assesses the current gaming scene, including games, gamers, news, and reviews of gaming, and creates a pilot podcast *The Sweet Roll* as a demonstration and discussion of what could be done better. Through a review of some recent literature on gaming and podcasting, this thesis outlines how a better focused, more intentional, review platform can be made that takes into account more social issues, such as gender imbalance, independent games, and gamer reputations. The thesis hopes to demonstrate the feasibility of such a podcast platform, lead the way in new and better critique of the field, and inspire others who may have similar interests. This thesis is written in conjunction with the thesis titled “Production Practices and Editing in *The Sweet Roll* Podcast” by Joanne Davaz, University Honors College major in New Media Communication Digital Arts which focuses on sound and production in podcasting for *The Sweet Roll*.

Key Words: Gaming, gamers, podcast  
Corresponding e-mail address: wallaken@onid.oregonstate.edu

©Copyright by Kenneth LaVond Wallace  
May 29th, 2015  
All Rights Reserved

“The Sweet Roll: A Project in Podcasting Gaming News, Discussions and Reviews”

by

Kenneth LaVond Wallace

A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Computer Science (Honors Scholar)

Presented May 29th, 2015  
Commencement June 2015

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Computer Science project of Kenneth L. Wallace  
presented on May 29th, 2015.

APPROVED:

---

Sara Jameson, Mentor, representing Writing, Literature, and Film

---

Finn John, Committee Member, representing New Media Communications

---

Shawna Kelly, Committee Member, representing New Media Communications

---

Toni Doolen, Dean, University Honors College

I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

---

Kenneth LaVond Wallace, Author

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank Sara Jameson for all her help with the project. It wouldn't be done without her guidance.

I would like to thank Jodie Davaz for her excellent ideas and media skills. She is the best cohost and partner I could have asked for.

I would also like to thank Shawna Kelly for her help in providing wisdom through her expertise in the field.

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	
CHAP 1: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
CHAP 2: ON CRITIQUING AND CRITERIA.....	19
CHAP 3: METHODOLOGY: WHY PODCASTS?.....	23
CHAP 4: RESULTS-DISCUSSION-CONCLUSION .....	27
WORKS CITED .....	29
APPENDIX.....	33
APPENDIX A: FURTHER READINGS .....	33
APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED TRANSCRIPT.....	35

## INTRODUCTION

Due to my gaming passion, I have come upon this project to start a game and news reviewing podcast, called *The Sweet Roll*. I have chosen the media of a podcast because I enjoy podcasts, and I haven't found a podcast I think does a good enough job to be concise while providing entertaining news and reviews.

I've always been interested in podcasting because I'm often on the go, and I want to listen to what's going on in the gaming world. However, the quality of most current podcasts is very poor, and they don't fit in my routine well. They're either too long, too chatty, or too skimpy with important information. I aim to see why that is and to see if I can do better.

Because of my lifelong interest and involvement with online gaming, I am writing this thesis from a New Media / Digital Communication Arts perspective even though I am pursuing a degree in Computer Science. While I do enjoy programming and computers as a tool, my hobby has always been using computers as entertainment.

However, entertainment can also become a viable career. Traditional jobs rarely work for me as I'm so project based. I like to work odd, inconsistent hours, so this project would be excellent if it could ultimately become a source of income. However, I would still like to make this project even if it wasn't profitable. There aren't enough podcasts that are high enough quality to give gaming news justice, and I want to change that and create a market for myself.

Here's a little bit about my gaming background. I've been gaming on all major platforms for more than 16 years. I started off with MSDOS and Windows 95 when I was really little, and I hopped over to the NES, SNES and SEGA Genesis when they were

released and playable in my house. Since then, I've adopted every system but the most recent Sony and Microsoft systems: the Xbox One and Playstation 4. I'm currently waiting for decent games to release that are exclusive to each platform and for the consoles to fall in price, so I can afford them. I play titles from all genres. This wide experience has provided me with a depth of knowledge so that now I am looking at a career as a game critic, issuing regular assessments of new releases.

While in college, I have been President of the OSU Gaming Club since 2014. As part of my duties, I organize massive gaming parties each month with attendance numbers anywhere from thirty to 300 members. The participants actively discuss and play what they want with me at the event, and I constantly get their feedback about what they're playing, why they're playing it, and where and how they heard about the games.

Since I've been playing games for so long and with such variety, I've been around the best and worst titles. I also have belonged to a large community that loves to share their opinion about the pros and cons of different titles. Depending on the game, it's possible I can get a good read of how a game plays out based on the first ten or so minutes of gameplay. I never stop there, of course, because titles can always bloom in the middle to something much better or much worse. I also always discuss my judgement with others which has given me a good feel of what the "average gamer" likes.

Staying on top of game releases is the name of the game in my hobby, so to speak. Everyone is always craving that next new thing because testing the waters of a new toy is one of the most exciting aspects. Whether the game fulfills the hype or not is a completely different story. I am a slave to this cycle much like others, but I'm much more active in searching due to my tastes for less popular games. Being so in touch with the

gaming community also gives me some insight into how the community is viewed from the outside compared to how it actually is.

Gaming has often had a poor reputation as an activity and refuge for those who lack social skills, intelligence, grace, health, and/or drive to be useful in society. Being known as a gamer is very much a social stigma that is rarely true among us, and I aim to bring light to that at least a little bit in this podcast project. I want to show that the gaming community is often a very social group that aims to get together, solve puzzles, accomplish great feats, and support one another in having great fun and sometimes even making a livelihood. Gamers aren't just a bunch of asocial nerds. We're a community of clever, talented individuals who can achieve great things like in any other hobby.

Just like any coin, gaming has a bad side. I think that the bad parts of gaming, such as sexism, harassment, and racism, can be made better with good journalism and spread of information. While it is beyond the scope of this project, I would like to make a habit to include good journalism ethics and to discuss ethical problems in the gaming community as they arise in hopes that I can make others more informed in their decisions.

An example of one of the bad parts of gaming is sexism among the gaming community. Because of this, I also rate games based on who they're marketed for, and this makes me stand out as a reviewer. If there are a lot of promiscuous and scantily clad women, the game is obviously made for younger males, but it completely cuts off women and older men from fully enjoying the game. As a result, it has less of a targeted audience breadth, and that detracts from a game for me. I feel that a game needs to uphold standards of quality rather than just going for cheap selling tactics.

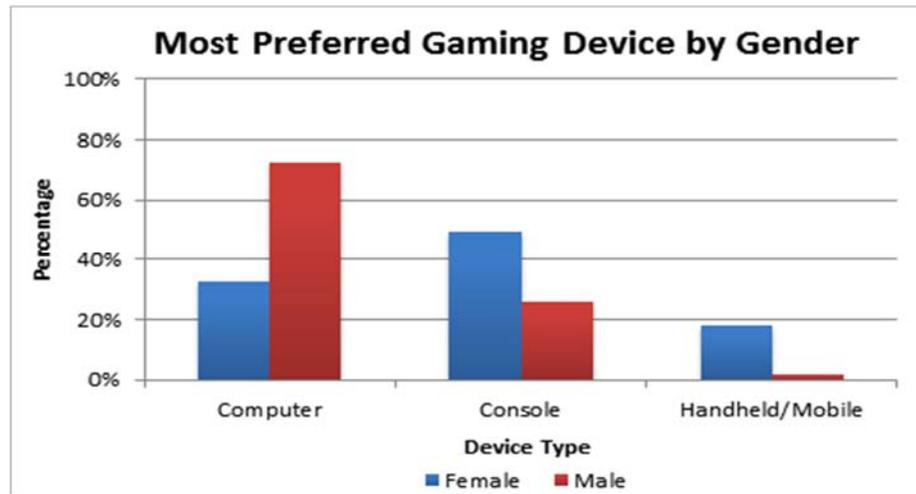


Figure 1: Gaming Device by Gender

There is much debate on whether or not there is a large difference in female and male gamers. An official survey by the Entertainment Software Association in 2014 was released recently that showed the demographics of gaming. It stated that the gender split is 48%/52% in favor of male gamers. See Figure 1 above showing the differences. These statistics give the impression that women have caught up to men in gaming. The study even claims that adult women far outnumber pre-eighteen year old males. This is not the full story, however. The study included all types and durations of gaming. This includes the “casual/social” section of gaming which adds up to 46% of the gamers surveyed. The Entertainment Software Association has no statistics for weekly usage of these games, for any overlap in categories, or for the gender disparity of those who consider gaming their main hobby aka “gamer”. (“Essential”)

When we do look at the platform used by gamers, we see there is a very large difference between male and female gamers. One might say that even handheld gaming (on a smart phone, tablet, Gameboy, etc.) is still gaming and how often one games doesn't matter. This might lead one to believe that it's okay that women are not in the

core gaming market because the casual market is “good enough”. Women make up to half of the gaming market, so some people believe that gender problem should be fixed or being fixed. While there are many aspects of gaming that are progressing in equality, some are not, and some are even regressing. Women are much more likely than not to feel shame for spending time playing games, to not have gaming as their main hobby, and to classify themselves as “casual/novice” players. Women, on average, spend around 6.5 hours per week playing games while male players spend roughly 17.5 hours per week playing games. (Phan, Jardina, Hoyle)

Women also play mostly non-violent games that involve no playable characters even though there is no non-violence preference among women (Phan, Jardina, Hoyle). There are also twice as many male players playing games on the computer than there are female players (Phan, Jardina, Hoyle). When we look at the top 3 genres associated to consoles - shooters (games with guns played in the first person) at 33%, action (games focused on controls and gameplay) at 19%, and sports games at 18.7% - we see that these genres are represented in order: 78%, 80%, and 85% male players. Gender equality still has a ways to go in the main gaming community (dennisscimeca).

This discrepancy has not gone unnoticed and has been tied to a lack of interesting main female characters that are not over sexualized. Since 1990, the percentage of overall character distribution is only 15% female which had held steady for 25 years (Gittelson). Main characters are even less gender balanced. Of the top 25 selling games of 2013, only 4% of them allowed an option of a female main character (Gittelson). And, of those games, none of them had a character that was not depicted as an “ultimate warrior” (stoic character clad in heavy armor that is a great fighter but conveys no change or feelings to

the audience), or a “damsel in distress” (character who is always in need of help from male characters). It’s also worth noting that all of these characters are hyper-sexualized with unrealistic body type, shape, and revealing armor/clothing (Gittelsohn).

This stereotyped representation of women is being addressed by many, including Anita Sarkeesian a pop culture critic and founder of the website Feminist Frequency in 2009. She released a Kickstarter campaign in 2012 to create a YouTube video series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* to speak out against the way that women are both played and portrayed in video games. The fundraising campaign had huge success and soon became a very heated debate in the gaming community over what she was claiming was “valid”. During a panel for Women of the World, Sarkeesian said,

“It’s been going on for three years non-stop ... It’s everything from sexist and racist slurs all over social media accounts... There are bomb threats and death threats ... You become hyper-vigilant. I don’t like to use the word ‘paranoid’ because there’s a sense of irrationality to that word. But there is nothing irrational about that fear” (Katz).

However, many gamers saw her as someone outside the culture trying to badmouth them and took personal offense. (Watercutter)

From there, several community members have been barraging her social media accounts with death and rape threats because of what she was saying. This went so far and was so serious that Sarkeesian has had to cancel entire events and talks due to fear that the event wasn’t protected enough by law enforcement. (Watercutter)

Since the launch of her *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* videos, she has been a spokesperson for change in the women vs. videogame debate. The video series is a commentary of common tropes in video games and a call for change and originality from developers. (Wattercutter)

There is some notice of improvement since *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* was released. Since Anita Sarkeesian started speaking out about the sexism in games in 2009 and sparking the GamerGate controversy, peaking in 2014, with Sarkeesian and female game developers, more games have started to come out with female protagonists - though the bet is still out on the trend toward less sexualization. According to Kim Gittelson in BBC News, Large triple-A titles (games with the highest amount of money backing in development and publishing) with a dynamic female playable character that were released just this last year include *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel*, *Civilization: Beyond Earth*, *Evolve*, and *Dead Island 2*. (Gittelson)

The gender discrepancy in the core gaming community is also both caused by and creates an atmosphere of harassment aimed at female players with 26% of female players having been stalked online, 25% have been sexually harassed, 23% have been physically threatened, and 18% suffer from sustained harassment (Duggan). While young males suffer from similar numbers in physical threatening, the rates are far lower in stalking at 7%, sexual harassment at 13%, and sustained harassment at 16% (Duggan). Anita Sarkeesian is again the leader in the debate on this issue since her speaking out against sexism in games has caused a massive influx of death and rape threats - about once an hour (Malone).

With this overview introduction, we can now move to Chapter 1, for a brief selected review of the literature.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

Normally one would bring up a literature review earlier and use the knowledge gained in their project, but I have decided to start by using the knowledge I've gained over the years to craft my podcast. The main reason for this was I wanted to give myself as much creative freedom and trusted my own skills first. This way, I'm not bogged down by status quo, and I can make what I feel are the best decisions. I have since gone back to look at what industry professionals to see how they answered the same questions I did and evaluated their decision and mine. (Kyatric)

In this section, I bring up first some important literature about game theory that is important to know in reviewing games and discussing gaming culture. I will then discuss the major video game conventions that happen every year that play a major role in determining what great games are coming the next year as well as what games were best from the previous year. Lastly, I'll discuss the major video game media influences that I've used to craft this podcast. I ensured that I drew influence from all sources of gaming media to ensure a quality product by synthesizing the best parts of every media.

The first literature to bring up is about classifying games and answering the question of, "Why are games fun?" Richard Bartle discusses this in his book *Designing Virtual Worlds*. He divides the gamer space into four categories: killers, achievers, socializers, and explorers. He claims that these four spaces divide the motivation of why gamers game and what makes them fun. It is then subdivided more precisely along a diamond Venn-Diagram. (Kyatric) See Figure 2



Figure 2: Bartle's Venn Diagram

Below I will describe each quadrant with examples from the MMORPG *World of Warcraft*.

Killers like to interact with other players by competing and attempting to assert dominance. Fighting games, PvP (player vs player), internet trolls, cheaters, and the professional gamers belong in this category. Their main motivation is to be the best above all other players, and they will tend to challenge anyone to a display of skill. In *World of Warcraft*, these players would be constantly in Battlegrounds and Arenas aiming for ranked spots in the leaderboard for their entire server. (Kyatric)

Achievers enjoy being the best as well, but they prefer to beat the computer and the challenge within the game itself as opposed to other players. They work for achievements in the game and feel rewarded when they overcome the challenge the game imposes on them. These would be the Raiders in *World of Warcraft*. They perfect their DPS (damage per second) over hundreds of hours of gameplay grinding for the top gear and looking for every possible stat boost. (Kyatric)

Explorers want to learn everything there is to know about the game. Their main motivation is to find the Easter Eggs, lore, glitches, shortcuts, and intricacies of the game

itself. While not competitive, they're extremely knowledgeable about how to succeed in a game with the best strategies. In World of Warcraft, these players complete all of the quest lines, read the books, find the perfect skill combination for the highest damage, and learn all of the backstories for every boss. They're the ones creating the YouTube with the theory of the best competitive strategies for the Achievers and Killers to use.

Socializers are players motivated by in-game communities and interactions with other players in a non-competitive manner. They like to feel immersed in the game as if being a character themselves and feel driven to create and indulge in massive communities. Being a guild master or guild officer in World of Warcraft is common among Socializers. They want to have a realistic human interaction with other players and genuinely try to make friends. (Kyatric)

The other four axes in Bartle's diagram shown in Figure 2 are Acting, Reacting, World, and Players which describes a general double dichotomy of players. Along the x-axis, Players includes those players who prefer interactions with other players over the rules of the game itself. On the flip side, World players usually want nothing to do with, and sometimes shy from, player competition and interaction. On the y-axis, we have Acting on the positive side being players that want to be mechanically excellent at the game and want to overcome the rules of the game. Interacting players are much more interested in taking their time to learn the game and use it in a much more "real world" manner. They're not interested in competition and more play the game for the experience itself. (Kyatric)

While this Venn Diagram looks like a division, most players are a hodgepodge of all of these characteristics. It is best to use this tool to give the game a goal and a

mechanic for different types of gamers to enjoy. The goal is to provide one or more of these services well without forcing players of one type to play in a method of another type. A game like World of Warcraft is so successful because it employs environments that allow for all players to thrive and doesn't force too much cross-contamination.

(Kyatric)

Comparing to what we've been doing in *The Sweet Roll*, this perspective shown in the Venn Diagram could be a great way to further subdivide our reviews. Each category can essentially be split into these categories, and we can explain why or why not a certain game might appeal to a type of player specifically. For example in the Gameplay category, we would bring up the mechanics of a game and what exists in the universe for each kind of player. Does this game have PvP; does it have interesting achievements; does it have difficult endgame content; does it have a mechanic for forming guilds, clans, or other social collections of gamers? These are the questions to answer when reviewing a game and can give more accurate information to the listener on whether they should get that game or not. (Kyatric)

Bartle's player types were developed in 1996 and were further updated to 8 player types in 2004 in his book *Designing a Virtual World*. Nick Yee has created the Daedalus Project since then in hopes of further modernizing Bartle's theory and making it practical. His main motivations for the project stemmed from the fact that the types could overlap or not be related at all even though they are not correlated or assumed to be correlated based on the model, respectively. Yee aimed to fix this by creating a new model through systemic, iterative, empirical data. This, he claimed, achieved 3 goals:

“1) Ensured that components of each motivation are indeed related.

2) Ensured that different motivations are indeed different.

3) Provided a way to assess these motivations.” (Yee)

Yee then went on to get rid of types altogether and came up with components and subcomponents. (Yee)

The three components are: Achievement, Social, and Immersion. Beneath these three main components are several subcomponents. Lastly, each component/subcomponent are not an end-all-be-all but are intended to overlap. Each gamer that takes the test for determining what kind of gamer they are obtains scores in each of these components/subcomponents that reveal how closely aligned they are with that category rather than that player only being able to be a single type. Now that we have seen a bit about gaming motivation, we will see how the industry uses these concepts. (Yee)

Major video game reviewers use these classifications indirectly. They don't actually bring up the various categories, but they will explain mechanics in terms of these categories. For example, common topics you'll find in today's game reviews are: has a good/hard endgame, is not pay-to-win, has steam achievements, doesn't have a toxic community, has a balanced Player vs. Player, etc. One can extrapolate the category of player that these things would be important to, and a game with all of these attributes would appeal to all types of gamers in some fashion.

The next item to discuss in this review of literature is E3, which is not a document but an event, in fact it is one of the largest video game conventions in the industry which often takes place in Las Vegas in April each year. Once a year, developers from around the world come together to showcase their new games for the year and represent what

they've come up with since. Giants in the video game reviewer community are invited to attend to look at all of the exhibits and new games and come up with awards. These awards are for the best in a particular genre, platform, or concept. In 2014, 29 critics came together to make 17 awards. The goal of this is to congratulate the games that made a major impact in the gaming scene that year, and to provide an innovative leap that can be expanded upon by later games. Giving a game an award also gives it the title "Game of the Year" or "GotY". Soon after getting this award, games very commonly release the game with a severe discount including all of the extra (usually paid for) downloadable content for the game. *Shadow of Mordor*, an exploration based stealth assassin game, did just this as it received the Game of the Year title and within weeks released a 50% discount copy of the game with all extra content included. (Futter)

E3 is specifically designed for companies, especially those that are part of the Electronic Software Association, to showcase their upcoming developments for the upcoming year to the public. There is often little discussed about game design or changes in the industry but instead is a consumer's guide to what new games and technology to look out for in the next year. While E3 has gotten smaller the last few years to try and refocus its goals, it still houses thousands of industry professionals and gamers for three days. The 2015 E3 will be hosted in August in the Los Angeles Convention Center. E3 is great for consumers, but to find discussions about game theory and video game mechanics, one would check out the GDC or Game Developers Conference. ("E3")

The GDC is a professionals only conference with over 24,000 attendees each year. It is unique in that it's the largest and longest video game industry event that is specific to industry professionals. Those that frequent the event are, "programmers,

artists, producers, game designers, audio professionals, business decision-makers and others involved in the development of interactive games gather to exchange ideas and shape the future of the industry” (“ABOUT”). It also houses the Independent Games Festival and the Game Developers Choice Awards which are shows that show off the best up-and-coming indie games as well as the best games of the year from the viewpoint of video game professionals, respectively. The GDC runs for about a week each year and is the place to look for the next year’s trends in the gaming scene. (“ABOUT”)

Unlike in many fields where a “look and feel” or a specific mechanic will be heavily copyrighted and protected, in gaming, it’s extremely common practice for a game to make a huge innovative leap by essentially creating a genre being followed up by games that have the exact same mechanic or “look and feel” that made the original game popular. There is no retribution or lawsuit associated to this. It’s just expected that the success of a great game is then given back to the community to explore and expand upon. There are many good examples of this, but one that happened just recently was the release of *Flappy Bird*.

*Flappy Bird* was a mobile game that became extremely popular extremely fast after its demo at E3 in 2014. The big draw to it was the difficult physics mechanic that made people lose very quickly and very often. It exploded in the gaming scene so much that developer took the game down because he felt it was “too addicting” after making thousands on the title. He then sold the source code for the game out for \$100 to anyone who would buy it, so they could make their own copy of Flappy Bird with any changes they wanted. The app scene then permeated with Flappy Bird clones with new features, skins, sound effects and more. (Rigney)

The next item to discuss is *GameInformer* Magazine, which is a publication that's been around for years. It focuses on monthly issues full of game reviews and previews for AAA and popular indie titles. In 2014, *GameInformer* was the third most circulated U.S. consumer publication and the top digital publication (Lulofs). It is a very popular and very credible magazine that has been publishing since 1991 (Lulofs).

*GameInformer* Magazine posts game reviews a bit differently than that of *The Sweet Roll*. It has five major categories:

1. Graphics
2. Sound
3. Playability
4. Entertainment
5. Replay

There is also a Concept section at the top with a brief synopsis of what the game is. None of these categories have scores on them but instead an overall score at the top and descriptions of the categories in one or two sentences to sum up how the game did on that topic. This is basically the short version of the review, however, as they then have a multi-page feature story that goes in depth on the author's experiences with the game. This is similar to what I do for reviewing, but it's not as in-depth as I am planning.

The categories have very brief synopses of how the game did which is great if you just want a super quick review. It's not so great if you want more information on if this game is right for you. The story that accompanies the reviews don't necessarily address the reviewing categories and are more of a news feature story about the game. It explains quirks that the author may have liked or disliked, but it doesn't give good, organized information to describe the game. There is also a high amount of opinion in the article which is not stated from an objective point. It makes statements like, "I didn't like the

graphics for x reasons” instead of statements like “the graphics for this game don’t fit the gameplay or style for x reasons” which is a much more useful analysis for people looking to pick up the game.

*ForceStrategy Gaming* is a YouTube Channel. Although it is not the top YouTube channel for video game news and reviews, *ForceStrategy* does have interesting methods and provides thought and innovation beyond what some of the top channels have. His popularity is also a realistic goal to achieve as opposed to the multi-million dollar channels like *PewDiePie*. Overall, *ForceStrategy Gaming* has made some interesting methods in using YouTube as a platform.

YouTube as a platform or distribution market for game reviews and news is pretty interesting. It’s much the same as a podcast as it’s an edited product that takes a bit of work to get out and is usually between daily and weekly in release schedule. The main difference is the video aspect. Having video makes the reviews more objective because one can show actual gameplay and have the viewer make up his/her mind on the game. This makes game reviews more powerful. What it trades, however, is news.

Due to the long time it takes to edit and release a video (up to several weeks), news often turns stale. Several times, Force has released news about a feature that no longer exists or a bug that has already been patched, but this is still pretty uncommon in Force’s channel. What Force does to counteract this is release a few news stories that usually have lasting impact: big features, indie games that are getting good reviews, discussion based opinion articles, etc. These are not time sensitive and are often safe to post days in advance. He also actively asks for comments about the feature and will

continue to post and talk with his viewers after the video is released. This adds a ton of personality and appeals greatly to his viewers.

As for Force's game reviews, he picks a game that has just been released that he's interested in and provides at least a few hours of gameplay. He then provides commentary over this gameplay with some insight into game theory but mostly keeps his opinions to himself to allow the viewer to decide on whether the game looks fun or not. He will go out of his way to explore and explain mechanics to give a good read on the game. This is opposed to other reviewers who will simply take snippets of gameplay and talk over them to make their point of whether the game is "good" or "bad". While Force cannot give a categorical review of the game or an overall impression because he cannot reach the end of the game, it still provides extremely useful information because people can actually see how the game feels. The drawback is that the viewer has to sit through hours of gameplay to get what information he/she needs. In *The Sweet Roll*, I can give a concise, categorical, objective, review of the game that doesn't require hours to get a good estimation on whether the game appeals to your specific gameplay tastes.

*GiantBomb* is a personality driven website full of game reviews, commentary and news. The podcasts are usually around three plus hours long and released weekly. They are centered around both gaming news, reviews, and social commentary as well as a few other categories. They are very well received and are mostly attractive due to their humor and wit. The creators of the cast are former writers of *Gamespot* - a competitor to *GameInformer* in game news, reviews and culture in digital form. They often have talking points and discussions, but they are very verbose and are often distracted.

*GiantBomb's* reviews are the same as *GameInformer's* but read aloud and with discussion. They take light of the game and will provide entertaining commentary as they talk about their experiences. Much of the review is muddled with inside references, opinions, stories and irrelevant material. There are also no well-defined criteria for their reviews. While this is entertaining to most, it doesn't provide a good medium for someone looking for gaming news and reviews. Gamers who travel over the day and wish to get their news on the go will not benefit from this three or more hour long podcast. Those trying to decide whether a new gaming title is worth purchasing can't make an educated decision based on the information gleaned from a *GiantBomb* Cast review.

I think *The Sweet Roll* is better for news and reviews because of our brevity, still entertaining discussions, and well-defined criteria. We've taken the meat of a *GiantBomb* Cast and removed all of the extraneous information, and gamers can get what information they're looking for in fifteen minutes or fewer. They also get a much less biased and more objective review, news, and discussion.

For other important research and scholarship in the field of gaming, check the Further Reading at the end of this thesis.

Now that we have looked at some of the research in the field – primary and secondary – Chapter 2 will look at criteria for reviewing games.

## Chapter 2: On Critiquing and Criteria

This chapter looks at the criteria one should use when reviewing games.

Although several books on “how to” review video games have been published, I use my own criteria drawn from experience. When analyzing any game, I look at:

- gameplay mechanics
- art and effects
- audience appeal
- storyline
- music/sound

I use these criteria for all games. These are not a "good vs. bad" criteria as what is good in one game, if implemented exactly same in another game, could be bad. Instead, I examine how that aspect of the game impacts the game's fun or goal.

For instance, take the art appeal of a game like *Broken Age* which has beautiful hand-painted landscapes. This works great in the point-and-click adventure, but if the same art style were implemented in a fast paced action shooter like *Call of Duty*, it would be distracting and annoying. I think of these categories more as, "does this aspect of the game detract or help the goal of the game?".

The first and foremost category that I consider are the *Gameplay mechanics*, which means what the game uses as a medium the player can use to interface with the game.

For example, I ask:

1. Do the mechanics fit the atmosphere of the game? Are they intuitive or does the initial explanation give enough information to figure it out?

2. Does the game glitch often, or is it polished all the way through?
3. Does the game keep me entertained just by playing it, or is it boring?

Every game must uphold to these questions, or it is in danger of becoming a glorified movie or worse. The game has to be fun for people to play it.

The Art and Effects factor is also a very important quality. Where most would say that every game needs to have the shiniest polygons, that's not necessarily true. There is a massive resurgence of retro style games like *Shovel Knight* and *Castle Crashers* which are immensely popular, but they have the graphics of an 80's game. This is because the art style needs to match the game. The game can get away with shoddy graphics if that's the part of the work of art. There are also many games with very simplistic mechanics but have hand painted artwork for the all of the art assets in the game. While they might not be shiny 3D polygons, they still draw the eye and are part of the atmosphere of the game. Examples of this are games like *Bastion*, *Transistor*, and *Broken Age*.

This is the reason I include a "target audience" section in my reviews. There are thousands of female gamers out there that are looking to play games that relate to them, and so there should be a system to easily discover those games.

Story can be very important for a gamer, or it might not. This category in particular seems a little controversial among gamers. There are classic gamers from the Roleplaying realm where a good story is necessary for enjoying the game, but then there are those that just want to skip all the cut scenes (periods of cinematic that convey story to the player but have little to no involvement from the player), and go straight for the action. Both of these gamers love story, however, just in different contexts. One gamer wants to play the game and have the story brought all at once in chunks of cut scenes and

HD video while the other wants the story to be told through the gameplay and the player's actions. A good comparison is Square Enix's *Final Fantasy* titles to From Software's *Dark Souls* franchise. One is very full of story depth and cut scenes which are thrown in your face while the other makes you search for the story through interacting with characters and looking deeper into the scenery and atmosphere of the game.

A good sound clip makes anything more realistic, and nothing spoils a game like a sound that doesn't make sense to the context - or if the sound is just plain annoying. Games with distracting soundtracks or annoying NPC sounds make the rest of the game look worse even if the rest is amazing. Sounds doesn't need to be the best bit-depth or high quality, but it needs to match the rest of the game.

Now that this chapter has looked at reviewing criteria, the next chapter will show the methodology of obtaining new games for reviewing.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter looks at how a reviewer obtains new games for reviewing in a timely and cost effective manner. The best place to look for games depends on what kind of focus one wants to have in their podcast. For our podcast, we centered on Indie games (Independently developed games with little to no publisher backing) because they needed the most news coverage, and we were unable to get review copies for big title games because we were just starting out. If independent games are your focus, then the Steam just released section is fairly good because of the Greenlight system where developers publish their own games. Steam is a very popular game shop and distribution client from Valve. Another good source is *GameSpot* as they have a detailed release schedule for any developer that submits an entry. *GameSpot* is also good for big titles, but the best big title source I've found is *GameInformer* because they will have some of the most anticipated games as well, so it helps with finding priority.

Getting games also depends on what the focus is. If it's Indie games one is looking to review, then one will most likely end up buying the titles as they come out to review them. Buying games can be expensive with game prices at \$50 to \$80. However, a lot of Indie developers are excited to get some news coverage of their game, and if one puts an emphasis that the review will help both an Indie podcast and the Indie developer, then the developer will be more likely to oblige and provide a free review copy. The best method to request a review copy is with a professional email to the publisher (or developer if there is no publisher) stating the intention to review the game in the podcast with a link to one's website with work samples and an estimated release date of the

review. When starting out, most will simply not respond, but some will refuse with feedback, and some will accept and send a review copy.

Those of us in the gaming community have our favorite news sources and sites that show us the greatest upcoming titles. A list of the news sources I use on a daily basis are:

- *VG247* for a mass of very fresh news all throughout the day
- *GameInformer* magazine for upcoming titles and really anticipated games
- *Giant Bombcast* for quality news discussion weekly in a podcast
- *Force Feed* for daily big news breaks and some discussion
- *GameSpot* for a detailed list of every game coming out and on what console

Combined, these sources give me up to date news on both games and game culture. With it, I'm able to pick and choose what I feel to be most newsworthy and compile it into a podcast. I include games, game reviews, and game culture in the mix as discussion of what is happening in gaming world is just as, if not more, important than gaming itself.

When gamers find what news sources work for them, they will soon be inundated with hundreds of news bits a day. I have to determine what is important to our podcast's goal and what will be interesting to our audience. For my podcast, I focused on indie games that were doing really well. Whenever a news story about an indie game came up, I would usually include it to my news list for the week. I would also include stories that didn't make sense to my goal because they were just big stories for gamers in general. These usually had something to do with a controversy in the community: a new triple A would come out broken, or a bunch of people cheated at a big tournament, or a new awesome device would be coming out soon.

How to decide what makes it in a podcast's news section can be tricky. People don't want to hear old news, so if the story is more than a couple days old and it's about a big story, then it's probably not worth posting it. If the story isn't big in nature and applies to your podcast's goals, then it could still be worth it if it's a couple days older. To make my life easier in deciding what was old news, I would only start looking for things to add three days in advance of my podcast release day. That way, I was able to include just about everything I found in *The Sweet Roll*.

The biggest struggle here is finding the expert one is looking for. For me, I usually found the expert first and then designed a topic around that person. To find individuals, I would ask gaming club individuals from Oregon State University and other neighboring colleges in the New Media/Digital Communication majors if they have any instructors that teach about Video Games and then get a hold of those professors. Booking them was simple as introducing our project via email, sending a link to our website, and asking them if there's anything that they're studying or teaching that they'd be interested in talking about. We also looked out in the community to game developers and publishers to see if anyone would like to be interviewed about their games using email as the primary method.

Topics usually come up naturally for most weeks. Either we had an expert booked to speak, or there was a major controversy happening, or an awesome game had just come out. If none of those things were happening, we then took to talking about elements of game design, fun aspects of gaming culture, or anything else we were interested and found fun to talk about. We made sure the topics were pertinent but entertaining.

The discussions were always very free form and loosely scripted. We wanted to make sure we stayed on topic and knew what to talk about, but we never wanted to be reading from a prompt. It made the dynamic much more entertaining and natural. We started with a rough script of what the topic was, what facts we had to give with citation and a general argument/synopsis of what the sides of the discussion were. Each of us (either just Jodie and myself or with experts) would play a side, and we'd argue from that vantage point. Not only did it make it a lengthy and interesting discussion, but it also bias corrected itself, so the listener could make his/her own opinion of the topic. The discussions should always be tailored to your listeners, so one should have a good understanding of one's audience.

The audience we had targeted for our podcast is pretty different from most projects, advertisements or even television shows. Since our main viewer is a hobbyist, specific demographics tend to fall to the wayside. While it is still important to cater our discussions in a way as to not specifically exclude groups, our targeted audience is gamers who enjoy succinct podcasts that are dense with information. Our audience also enjoys programming that is family friendly, respectful, and thoughtful. An example of how we meet these goals is in a transcript of a podcast in the appendix.

The transcript in Appendix A provides an example of one of our shows with annotations about the considerations I've discussed in this paper and how they played their parts in crafting the show. It has been annotated to demonstrate the components of a typical review and provide a template for consistency in regular productions. To create a script for a specific show, we made several generic talking points structured like in the transcript in the appendix. We added specific facts that needed to be addressed, but we

left out the nitty-gritty details, so we could make talking much more natural and easy to listen to.

Now that this chapter has covered the methodology of obtaining games and selecting news, the next chapter discusses our results and concludes the thesis.

## Chapter 4: Results, Discussion, and Conclusion

This final chapter will review and discuss the results and reflect on this project. There's a lot I've learned from this project. For example, it's a lot harder to produce a podcast that I thought. It takes hours of preparation, recording, and post production to get a good podcast ready to distribute. People that do this for a living are really working very hard and aren't as lazy as people make them out to be. It's also just hard to be entertaining on the spot at the same time I'm trying to formulate my ideas in a coherent manner. It takes a lot of hard work and talent to make a good podcast, and being knowledgeable isn't everything.

In the future, I'd like to move *The Sweet Roll* to a daily podcast if possible. This will allow us to provide up-to-date news and discussions without the risk of being stale. It will be a lot of games to play, but we'll also be able to get a plethora of games in advance. This will mean that I'll have time to balance games without needing to pull 60+ hour weeks in a single game to get it out on time.

I would also like to reach out and bring in more experts to talk about important aspects of gaming culture. *The Sweet Roll* should be a source of game news as well as a vessel for social change, and more discussions could very well change some peoples' minds and enact change. The gaming community's flaws are mostly based off misinformation and ignorance, and I would love for *The Sweet Roll* to be a source of information that corrects that.

In the future, there will be more time to catch up on the important resources in the Future Reading section following the Works Cited.

Overall, a gaming podcast should be entertaining, concise, and full of information that gamers need to know. Reviews should be unbiased and objective, so that the gamer can fairly decide whether a game is right for him/her. News should be fresh, unbiased, and relevant to the target audience. Lastly, discussions should be without rambling, have multiple sides, and be well researched without assumptions. These are factors I will remember and how I will continue to make *The Sweet Roll*.

\*\*\*

## Works Cited

- "ABOUT GDC." GDC 2015. UBM Tech, 2015. Web. 31 May 2015.
- Dennisscimeca. "The Gender Inequality in Core Gaming Is Worse than You Think." *VB GamesBeat*. VB GamesBeat, 19 Sept. 2013. Web. 4 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://venturebeat.com/2013/09/19/gender-inequality/2/>>.
- Duggan, Maeve. "Online Harassment." *Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS*. Pew Research Center, 22 Oct. 2014. Web. 4 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/>>.
- "E3 2015." E3 2015. ESA, 2015. Web. 31 May 2015.
- "Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry." *2014 Sales, Demographic, and Usage Data*. Entertainment Software Association, 1 Apr. 2014. Web. 13 Apr. 2015.  
<[http://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ESA\\_EF\\_2014.pdf](http://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ESA_EF_2014.pdf)>.
- Futter, Mike. "Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor Game Of The Year Edition Coming Next Week." *Www.GameInformer.com*. Gameinformer, 29 Apr. 2015. Web. 30 Apr. 2015. <http://www.gameinformer.com/b/news/archive/2015/04/29/middle-earth-shadow-of-mordor-game-of-the-year-edition-coming-next-week.aspx>>.
- Gittleson, Kim. "Is the Video Game Industry Sexist?" *BBC News*. BBC News, 13 June 2014. Web. 4 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-27824701>>.
- Katz, Brigit. "What's It like Being Subjected to Incessant, Misogynistic Trolling? Ashley Judd and Anita Sarkeesian Speak out." *Women in the World in Association with The New York Times WITW*. New York Times, 23 Apr. 2015. Web. 13 May 2015.

- Kyatric. "Bartle's Taxonomy of Player Types (And Why It Doesn't Apply to Everything) - Tuts Game Development Article." *Game Development Tuts*. Tuts, 18 Feb. 2013. Web. 8 May 2015.
- Lulofs, Neal. "Blog." *Top 25 U.S. Consumer Magazines for June 2014*. Alliance for Audited Media, 7 Aug. 2014. Web. 6 May 2015. 2015.
- Malone, Luke. "A Breakdown Of Anita Sarkeesian's Weekly Rape And Death Threats." *Vocativ*. Vocativ, 28 Jan. 2015. Web. 4 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.vocativ.com/culture/society/anita-sarkeesian-threats/>>.
- Nofziger, Heather. "Platform, Not Gender, Drives Gamer Differences - EEDAR." *GamesIndustry.biz*. Gamesindustry.biz, 30 Oct. 2014. Web. 4 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2014-10-30-platform-not-gender-drives-gamer-differences-eedar>>.
- Phan, M. H., J. R. Jardina, and W. S. Hoyle. "Video Games: Males Prefer Violence While Females Prefer Social." *Software Usability Research Lab*. SURL, 23 Aug. 2012. Web. 4 Mar. 2015. <<http://usabilitynews.org/video-games-males-prefer-violence-while-females-prefer-social/>>.
- Rigney, Ryan. "How to Make a No. 1 App With \$99 and Three Hours of Work | WIRED." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, 5 Mar. 2014. Web. 30 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.wired.com/2014/03/flappy-bird-clones/>>.
- Watercutter, Angela. "Feminist Take on Games Draws Crude Ridicule, Massive Support | WIRED." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, 14 June 2012. Web. 27 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.wired.com/2012/06/anita-sarkeesian-feminist-games/>>.

## Figures Cited

Fig 1: Gender <<http://usabilitynews.org/video-games-males-prefer-violence-while-females-prefer-social/>>. 4 Mar. 2015.

Fig 2: Bartle's Venn Diagram. <http://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/bartles-taxonomy-of-player-types-and-why-it-doesnt-apply-to-everything--gamedev-4173>. 8 May 2015.

## Further Readings

Nick Yee's *Motivations of Play in MMORPGs: Results from a Factor Analytic Approach*

In this paper, Nick Yee analyzes Bartle's gamer motivations and modernizes the research.

He brings in weaknesses and strength in Bartle's theories and comes up with a more modern theory in gamer motivations. This paper will be part of the next step in the evolution of *The Sweet Roll*.

Yee, N. (2007). Motivations of Play in Online Games. *Journal of CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 9, 772-775. <<http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/motivations.pdf>>

Raph Koster's *A Theory of Fun*

In this book, Koster brings in discussions on what makes games actually fun and what gamers will do when given common situations. It brings up examples specifically to MMORPGs, but many of his claims can be argued for many genres of games.

Koster, Raph. *A Theory of Fun for Game Design*. Scottsdale, AZ: Paraglyph, 2005. Print.

*Game Studies* Journal

This journal is supported by The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), The Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, IT University of Copenhagen, and Lund University. This is an online forum designed to have academics in the gaming sphere submit their work in academia on games and gaming to be peer reviewed by other scholars. Its primary focus is on computer games with respect specifically to their contributions in aesthetics, culture, and communication

in gaming. Being three of the main goals of game designers, it's important to analyze material on them to increase the quality of one's game critiques.

"Game Studies." - The International Journal of Computer Game Research

Web. 31 May 2015. <<http://gamestudies.org>>.

### *Well Played Journal*

*Well Played* is in association with ETC Press, the Entertainment Technology Center, and Carnegie Mellon, and is for examining the meanings and experiences of actually playing games. Its main focus is to bring analysis and discussion to games that exemplify experiences unique to gaming. Reading and analyzing their articles such as "Nonverbal Communication in Virtual Worlds: Understanding and Designing Expressive Characters" and "Game Impact Project" would be a great way to bring more context and ideas for both reviewing and designing games.

"ETC Press." *Well Played Journal*. Web. 31 May 2015.

<<http://press.etc.cmu.edu/wellplayed>>.

## Annotated transcript of a

### podcast [intro]

*Jodie:* On today's Sweet Roll, we recap everything that happened on Blizzcon from Overwatch to Starcraft to Heroes of the Storm. Then, a review of Lords of the Fallen. This is – your The Sweetgaming Roll news podcast. I'm Jodie

*Kenny:* And I'm Kenny. *Blizzcon* happened this weekend. We have some really great announcements from the age-old company Blizzard. First one is a new IP coming out from them sometime in the next couple years or so. *Overwatch* is a 6v6 first person shooter game that's going to be objective based much like *Team Fortress 2* but won't have a death match option at all. It will be somewhat like *TF2*, but it will have MOBA elements because each class – there have been 12 announced – will have an ultimate ability and various abilities throughout the game and be able to use them and work together in this 6v6 manner. The beta is going to start sometime in 2015, so keep one eye on that and make sure you sign up for your beta profile in battle.net

*Kenny:* Next up is the new *Starcraft* expansion. The last installment of the trilogy is going to be *Legacy of the Void* – the Protoss campaign. They have announced that this will finalize the series, and the new announcement is that you will not have to buy *Wings of Liberty* or *Heart of the Swarm*, the previous two expansions, in order play the full game through the campaign and through the full online experience. My guess is because *Starcraft* is what people say is a dying game, they're looking get popularity in a new crowd to get people to join the game without having much difficulty.

*Jodie:* So, just to clarify, people who have already bought the first two, the vanilla game and first expansion will still have to buy this expansion, but people who are buying this expansion do not have to buy the first two.

*Kenny:* Correct. They might do some kind of compensation if you do have the first two games. That has not been announced yet. Uhh, they didn't really say much about it actually other than you do not need the first two games to play the game.

*Kenny:* Moving on. *Hearthstone* is releasing its first expansion after Naxxramus, this is the first full expansion. It is titled Goblins Versus Gnomes. It's going to introduce 120 new cards, and they will introduce compatibility with Android Tablets, so your iPhone brethren can be played with now.

*Jodie:* *Hearthstone* is one of the newer additions to the Blizzard universe, and it kinda follows a similar idea as *Magic: The Gathering* only, incredibly, much more simple, is that correct?

**Commented [KW1]:** Here we forecast the episode. This is generally unscripted but includes the major talking points of the episode

**Commented [KW2]:** Blizzcon happened only 2 days before the release of this podcast, so it was still relevant. It's also a very major conference in gaming since Blizzard is such a key player in the gaming scene. Because of this, it was relevant to our audience even though it wasn't about indie games.

**Commented [KW3]:** Bringing up the game and what the news is important, but it's also important to bring in speculations surrounding the story. Here, I bring up the convention of many game companies compensating players to avoid unfairness complaints. While this isn't part of the facts, it's still important to the discussion.

**Commented [KW4]:** Jodie often brings up clarity points in my discussion as I often forget that my audience may be less informed than I am in the jargon that I use.

**Commented [KW5]:** Jodie often plays the role of common hearsay in the community, so I can come back and debunk common misconceptions about the game.

*Kenny:* Yeah, not much more simple, but it plays a lot more simply because it's digital – you don't have to remember a stack of rules like you do in *Magic: The Gathering*.

*Jodie:* And *Hearthstone* is based in the same universe as *World of Warcraft*?

*Kenny:* Yes, it is called *Hearthstone: The Heroes of Warcraft* indeed, and it does have all characters from the *World of Warcraft* and the *Warcraft* universe.

*Kenny:* Uhh, next up is going to be *Heroes of the Storm*, Blizzard's new upcoming MOBA. The newest BETA is going to come out sometime in December, so make sure you look up for that. It's going to be a closed BETA. The release at Blizzcon has announced three new characters: Jaina, Thrall and the Lost Vikings. The first two are going to be your standard run-of-the-mill characters, but the last one is going to be the first character that is going to have 3 separately microable units. The three Vikings from the *World of Warcraft* quest line can be all played at the same time but you can be micro them individually, and they have ultimate abilities individually as well.

*Jodie:* So these 3 characters are from the *World of Warcraft* franchise, but is my understanding that *Heroes of the Storm* will include characters from all Blizzard franchises.

*Kenny:* Yeah. They seem to be favoring *World of Warcraft* lately as far as what characters are released. It could be there's a lot more content for those universes, but there is indeed quite a number of characters from other games as well. Like *Diablo*, like the barbarian and witchdoctor from *Diablo* are there as well as *Diablo* himself, and then you have Jim Raynor, and Nova, and Kerrigan from the *Starcraft* Universes. So yeah, the closed BETA does start January 13<sup>th</sup> of the new year, and keep an eye on that. So, there's also going to be 3 new battlegrounds as well released in I. They're looking for more content until the game's officially released, but the closed beta will look interesting. They've also announced that they are going to have ranked play as well – at least for the beta members and continuing on for the rest of the game.

*Kenny:* Moving on to *World of Warcraft*. They have released couple of little tidbits of information: new classes, a lot more respect for the entire balance of the game like they do for every other expansion and regular patches. They also announced they will be releasing a new pet called Argi – he looks like a little mountain goat – and is going to be released as a charity event for relief efforts for ebola. He comes out December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Kenny:* And in other news, we have another game review this week.

[sound effect]

*Kenny:* Uhh, *Lords of the Fallen*, I did go ahead and play through that. So, let's start off with the target audience of the game. The audience is much like the Soul's series – *Dark Souls*. The game as a lot simpler than *Dark Souls* I felt. Playing *Dark Souls* it took me 80-100 hours to beat the game simply because of the difficulty of it and the exploration of it. *Lords of the Fallen* did not have that length. I beat the game in a total of 12 and a half hours from start to finish without knowing anything about the game. And moving on to new game plus, it didn't take me much longer after that to beat the games after I figured out the boss mechanics.

*Kenny:* So I would say the audience is basically between 18 and 25, probably male because you do play a male character. There is one female in the entire game, and she is portrayed as very annoying throughout the entire game or is meant to be.

*Kenny:* As far as the gameplay itself goes, it did feel very fluid. It did feel a lot like the Soul's games. It even had the same control scheme, and it did have the same mechanics therein. The one difference that it has was that there was combo based play in this game. The timing at which you hit your attacks does matter, and it can greatly increase the skill cap of the game, but once you've mastered a couple of combos on a certain weapon you're basically set.

*Kenny:* The one thing I didn't like in the gameplay was that the game crashed quite often. The video card that I'm using is an NVIDIA card which is supported and even sponsored by the game, but it does crash quite regularly during boss fights or other times, and I never figured out how to fix that even though I did buy it through steam.

*Kenny:* Next up are the visuals of the game. The visuals were very pretty. The one drawback to it was that the voice acting was terrible and even the visual of the voice acting was really horrible.

*Jodie:* It was really ridiculous to watch. I wasn't playing this game, but I would look over and see Kenny's screen, and it was really funny to see the beautiful effects of the action sequences and the fighting, but then when people would have dialog, it would just be completely robotic as if mouths operated on a hinge that just went up and down and up and down. It was the complete inverse I would say of *L.A. Noire* where in *L.A. Noire* the faces were beautiful and the bodies were clunky and bad. This is the inverse: *Lords of the Fallen*. The visuals were amazing except the faces were just awful.

*Kenny:* Yeah I would go that far as well, but the rest of the game was very, very pretty. As far as the storyline goes, it wasn't very impressive at all. There was a small twist at the end which a lot of people really enjoyed, but I found it pretty predictable and predicted well before the end of the game, but that's just me. Other people have said that it's very impressive, and the story line was better than average – not great – but better than average.

**Commented [KW6]:** Though not an indie game, I wanted to review a game to test out the formula and see how it worked on AAA titles. There also wasn't much in the way of reviews at the time this podcast was released due to the very short play time and the lack of advertising on the game's part.

**Commented [KW7]:** It's important to compare games to games that invented the genre. In this case, the Souls' games invented the exploration based difficulty focused genre that *Lords of the Fallen* falls under.

**Commented [KW8]:** Audience is important to the review as gamers of all kinds are in our target audience. This particular game excludes many of our listeners.

**Commented [KW9]:** Gameplay is often the key to the review and will be the category we play off for the other categories. We consider it just as discussed in chapter 3.

**Commented [KW10]:** Art and visuals are considered with respect to the game's goal and the genre of the game like discussed in chapter 3.

**Commented [KW11]:** Jodie brings up other examples of the flaw I brought up. While *L.A. Noire* is not part of the genre, the comparison fits because both games aimed to be realistic.

**Commented [KW12]:** While the story may or may not be important to the game, it's important to bring it up if the game has a story as some of our listener's would be turned off if the game has a poor story. This is especially true because the main game in the genre, *Dark Souls* has a very creative and in-depth story line.

*Kenny:* Overall, I'm giving this game a 3/5. Gonna give the audience a 2/5 because it is pretty specific and doesn't include a lot of people. I'm gonna give the gameplay a 4/5 just because it is polished, but it does have crashing issues. The visuals are going to be a 4/5 as well because the rest of the game is pretty, but the voice acting and voice animation is horrible. And, I'm going to give the story a 3/5 because it's average to me and above average for other people, so I'll take that in to account as well.

*Jodie:* That's all the news we have for you this week. Next week *The Sweet Roll* will come at you with all of next week's gaming news as well as a couple of game reviews from each of us, so tune in. Thanks for listening.

<https://soundcloud.com/thesweetroll/the-sweet-roll-119>  
This podcast is approximately 8 minutes long.

**Commented [KW13]:** I missed sound in this review. This is because the sound wasn't very noticeable, but that fact is still important and should have been included.

Here, in Overall, I provide a generic rating system to how the review went taking in to account each category, but I then include a breakdown of each area in review form from the discussions in the meat of the review.

**Commented [KW14]:** This is a forecast to the listeners usually containing content for the next week. In this forecast, we didn't have anything planned, so we just had a generic ending.

