

Wait, Critical Gameplay

Chaos, fast, cacophonous, wonderfully kinetic velocity propelling us toward an even more invigorating sequel. Level upon level of fast, demanding, tension-heightening more. This was the era before the decline. An era where our games were racing toward the climactic end, where every moment increased our investment in a world of consistently, methodically increasing wonder. A world that sought to be more rich, to grow in value through pixel perfection, of aspiring toward simulation of that which seemed more rich. Games that reflected the seemingly unstoppable force of increasing worth and perpetual pixel flipping. It is a run and gun era, not reflecting, but being. Not thinking as much as reacting. Of seeing only what needs to be seen or what hollers, pronounces or declares its need for attention. Shoot that which gets in your way. Race to the end of the level. Speed toward the next achievement, if only to find more achievements on the other end. Or worse, rush toward an end to find nothing there. No more play, no more game, just the empty longing for more, or the desolate, whimpering, almost lingering question – was there something more?

Wait. Why didn't I wait? Why didn't I stop and listen. What did I miss? What am I missing? What charming little chirp of dissipating joy had I glossed over. Where did it all go? What do I remember? What has worth?

By 2005, popular games were very much engaged in the pursuit of more. More speed, bigger worlds, more worlds. It was inconsequential to be merely massively multiplayer, even though you may only meet a few of those players. It can be beat in 6 hours was more important than the ability to play it for 40. The shift had already occurred. The players no longer begged to play more, to stay out a little longer in the hope of finding something as yet undiscovered. Instead many players rushed through every experience, thrashing violently through world's half-consuming everything they

experienced. Half completed games lay in their wake, left with charming moments tucked away and quickly forgotten.

Like houses in a thriving real estate market, games were bought, flipped and consumed with the expectation that the next one around the corner would be better. There's no time to explore this one, not the big things, ignore the small things, and move on to the next one. This is that mindset that hears hollers, and ignores whispers. One that passes the best restaurants in town, to blow into the chain of off-the highway franchises.

It's been years in the making, but like anything under constant velocity, it's hard to stop it and even harder to go back.

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Critical Gameplay
a collection of art games in instruction

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