



Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter

By Tom Bissell

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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.

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Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter By Tom Bissell Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. 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-scène* narratives of the mayhem. If anyone can bridge the aesthetic chasm between readers and gamers, he can. (June 8)

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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 we're 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

Review

“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 Review*

“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*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Collins:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the e-book entitled Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter. Try to the actual book Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter as your pal. It means that it can to become your friend when you sense alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated in your case. The book makes you far more confidence because you can know every thing by the book. So , we need to make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

Hilda Dumas:

Do you one among people who can't read pleasant if the sentence chained inside straightway, hold on guys that aren't like that. This Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter book is readable by simply you who hate those straight word style. You will find the information here are arrange for enjoyable looking at experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to deliver to you. The writer regarding Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter content conveys thinking easily to understand by many people. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different available as it. So , do you nevertheless thinking Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter is not loveable to be your top listing reading book?

Kerry Giles:

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