

# **HATRED & THE MEDIA**

## **To what extent is the media response to games containing excessive sadism and violence justified?**

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#### **Introduction**

Tom Bissell once wrote "Many shooters ask the gamer to use violence against pure, unambiguous evil: monsters, Nazis, corporate goons, aliens of Ottoman territorial ambition. Yet these shooters typically have nothing to say about evil and violence, other than that evil is evil and violence is violent" [1] I agree with the statement but are games such as these making that arbitrary? In my report, I will explore the "controversial" game Hatred to see at what extent is the media's response to its content containing excessive sadism and violence justified? I have played the game myself to get my own understanding of it and researched the media's response to it to hone my understanding of other people's opinions. This will include news reports & media companies like PC GAMER, KOTAKU & Newspapers like the guardian. I will explore sadism itself and conclude whether or not the media's response is justified.

#### **Hatred**

Hatred is a game released on June 1st, 2015 by destructive creations; it is an isometric shoot 'em up game where a player would play an unknown deranged male where they would go around relentlessly committing mass genocide for points. My personal experience was not fun because I found it difficult to play the game since it was buggy and generally unplayable no matter what changes I made in the options. However, I was not discouraged and disgusted by the games content and its purpose I was just simply bored.

## **PC GAMER**

Christopher Livingston at PC GAMER reviewed this game and made a brilliant point that in other games where a primary goal is to complete an objective and killing can sometimes be mandatory in order to do so like Hitman where you would have to kill and steal a guards clothes to walk around unnoticed it gives you a sense of morbid satisfaction and it makes you one step closer to a goal; in this however it does not, if anything it makes you ask a question to yourself that no game should "why am I doing this?" [6]. -Full review here

## **Kotaku**

Nathan Grayson wrote an article on HATRED too and in short, he believes that this game made him realise that "the line he draws between perfectly entertaining video game violence and upsetting video game violence is becoming increasingly arbitrary"[5].

## **The Guardian**

Keith Stuart wrote an article on HATRED mainly focusing on its marketing and controversy surrounding it but he summed up the game to be a "silly shooting game that seeks to tap dance between self-deprecating parody and pseudo-anarchic posturing so that it captures all sections, moods and arguing positions of its target demographic." [8] He argued that with all the media's responses to the game the developers themselves wanted this controversy and a game like this and succeeded in doing so.

## **Sadism**

The term Sadism and Masochism is used many times to describe this game. This game is about Sadism to its core. Sadism is the pleasure of harm and there is no real value to it [7], what value could possibly come from wanting to hurt someone for fun? Some seek sexual pleasure from causing pain that is known as BDSM but the game & the developers are not aiming for that, it is aiming for a feeling of excitement and adrenaline for the player when in reality it just leaves them confused and uncomfortable. "I think games that are exclusively about indulging in sadism do not have redeeming value, by definition the cannot teach us and make us think more deeply about the subject because as soon as you start to question these sadistic acts and question the horrors your committing the experience ceases to be about sadistic pleasure, it becomes about trying to understand the nature of sadism." [4] CEO of Divide by Zero Games James Portnow.

The following text is the first piece of dialogue in the game.

*"My name is not important. What is important is what I'm going to do... I just fuckin' hate this world. And the human worms feasting on its carcass. My whole life is just cold, bitter hatred. And I always wanted to die violently. This is the time of vengeance and no life is worth saving. And I will put in the grave as many as I can. It's time for me to kill. And it's time for me to die. My genocide crusade begins here." -Not Important (HATRED 2015) [3]*

As you can see this game is about sadism all it wants to do is inflict pain and kill, what value is there to this? There is value in asking why but not in the action of killing and hurting for fun itself. This game does not want you to ask why but its extreme violence indubitably does.

## Professionalism

Controversy is a prolonged public disagreement of which usually raises heated discussions, the CEO of Destructive Creations Jaroslaw Zielinski did an interview with Polygon in 2014 just after the trailer in 2014. When asked about the nature of the game his response was

*"The answer is simple really. We wanted to create something contrary to prevailing standards of forcing games to be more polite or nice than they really are or even should be. [2]*

*"Yes, putting things simply, we are developing a game about killing people. But what's more important is the fact that we are honest in our approach. Our game doesn't pretend to be anything else than what it is and we don't add to it any fake philosophy." [2]*

The problem with these statements is that they're double edged swords, the developers and CEO know this game is about sadism so of course a controversy would arise because of it. This raises the question whether or not they used controversy as a marketing tactic of which is sub-standard and can be seen as frowned upon in the industry; the other argument is that they could just be trying to explore/pursue darker areas of the industry of which can be admired from an artistic sense.

## Conclusion & Possible Solution

Hatred was always going to be a controversial game its simply about killing in brutal ways and gaining points in doing so. The problem did not lie in the game mechanics itself it came from the developers during delivery of the game, the developers did not engage enough in discussion during the controversy and

because of that the controversy was left to spiral out of control. The media's response is justified because they are entitled to their reviews of the game and considering the nature of the game it was always going to spark a discussion.

## References

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8. Keith Stuart. Hatred: Gaming's most contrived controversy. *The Guardian*, 05 2015.