**AI x Gaming**

**Week of February 24th, 2024**

# **Top 3-5 Key News Items**

**Key News Item #1:** Apex Legends' voice cast speaks out against AI contracts ([Link](https://www.cbr.com/apex-legends-voice-cast-responds-ai/))

* EA put forth a contract to the 31 French voice actors for Apex Legends to sign that includes allowing EA to train GenAI on their voices. The voice actors collectively wrote and signed a statement refusing to offer their voices for training and threatening to walk away from the game if EA can’t accept it.
* EA has yet to respond, but considering how dragged out these kinds of negotiations can get, it may be some time before a decision is made. Given the importance of voice actors in helping sell the character concepts to players, especially when first person and unable to see themselves visually, it may not be an easy decision to make.
* While Apex Legends isn’t at its peak, it still performs well and currently sits in 8th place on SteamCharts at the time of writing with 84,701 players online on Steam compared with Marvel Rivals 93,635 online. EA is no doubt concerned about ongoing live-service costs that include voice actor work, especially as more characters are added, although GenAI may not provide an immediate return.
* Realistically the current threat to voice actors is minimal as GenAI doesn’t have the same inflection ability and emotional range a human voice actor does, but that hasn’t stopped all kinds of actors from seeing the eventual writing on the wall and trying to at least secure their livelihood for as long as they can.
* While this can be thorny for game devs hoping to convince voice actors for existing characters to sign, it’s likely to be easier to pull off in future games. Veteran voice actors know what they’re worth, but greener actors looking for a big break may be much more willing to sign, especially if opportunities are much lower in a difficult financial environment for the scale of games that would employ them.
* Probably the best scenario is for voice actors to stipulate terms for AI usage that still include them with a minimum pay rate and allow using AI simply to accommodate for more dynamic responses rather than replacing the pre-determined voice lines.
* **Why does this matter to AI x Gaming:** Voice actors have a small amount of current leverage and time before AI catches up, but the writing is on the wall for many aspects of game development to embrace AI. This is far more true of games than animation as games require significantly more voice lines than a linear narrative, increasing the cost savings.

**Key News Item #2:** Game Devs seal their position on GenAI ([Link](https://gamerant.com/game-dev-no-generative-ai-seal-steam/))

* While Valve has added disclosure rules for using GenAI in games on Steam, it can help more to have a clear indicator itself that no GenAI was involved. To help facilitate this as well as acting as a signal of defiance against GenAI usage, a game developer created a graphical seal for game devs to use.
* The seal graphic states “This developer assures that no Gen AI was used in this indie game” and is already on a few games like [Mythwrecked: Ambrosia Island](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2000210/Mythwrecked_Ambrosia_Island/?curator_clanid=4218320) and [Rosewater](https://store.steampowered.com/app/1226670/Rosewater/?curator_clanid=4218320). With no particular place to put a seal like this on Steam store pages, developers have taken to using the Awards section on the sidebar which is for similarly formatted graphics indicating award wins and fits in nicely.
* The disclosure rules have inevitably led to gamers demanding a tag for AI usage to allow for filtering in or out the games that have disclosed the use of AI. While it’s likely Steam does eventually include this, [SteamDB](https://steamdb.info/tag/1368160/?displayOnly=Game&sort=followers_desc) in the meantime is coming to the rescue by allowing for filtering that uses the disclosure as the indicator with 5,071 entries so far.
* Valve is also already showing the potential need for the filter as its popular Next Fest started recently and it’s [already full of AI content](https://www.techspot.com/news/106974-steam-faces-backlash-promoting-excessive-ai-created-games.html) for at least the first few days. Steam has always had its share of shovelware-like titles, especially when Unity and Unreal asset stores grew, but AI continues to decrease the entry bar for making something that is closer to a legit game. Legit game or not it’s clearly not what most gamers want and thankfully the refund policy exists to help correct purchases under deceptive marketing.
* **Why does this matter to AI x Gaming:** Currently the biggest issue with AI usage in games isn’t that it exists and is being used, it’s simply being transparent to players. Much like ratings exist to help confer mature aspects like nudity and drug use, there needs to be a way for players to have a warning before purchase. Eventually AI usage as a tool will be normalized and disclosures won’t matter, but until we cross that threshold, game devs are at least trying to find creative ways to signal which side they are on.

**Key News Item #3:** Activision forced to disclose Call of Duty’s AI use ([Link](https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/activision-confirms-call-of-duty-features-ai-generated-visuals/))

* After weeks of pressure and suspicion from players, Call of Duty: Black Ops 6 finally caved to adding the required disclosure to its [store page](https://store.steampowered.com/app/2933620/Call_of_Duty_Black_Ops_6/#app_reviews_hash). This finally provided the transparency necessary, but after the game had already made more than enough sales to be mostly unaffected. It has however helped its already negative reviews reach further into the dreaded Mostly Negative with many of the bad reviews also focused on bugs and crashes, and a total of 10,847 reviews and 6,585 of them negative so far.
* The disclosure however has highlighted a further lack of transparency, knowing exactly what in the game was created using GenAI. If it were simply used for subtle things or pre-production assets this wouldn’t be a big deal, but the game continues adding new content for sale. Players are understandably upset that items for sale or various battle pass rewards may be AI generated.
* Of all the games to not only try out GenAI, but to continually use it, CoD: BO6 is one of the most high profile. The game cost $650M just to make and the cost savings from using GenAI should be negligible next to that budget, especially when many of the assets are monetized. The only game probably more high profile right now would be if GTA 6 were to include GenAI assets, which of course is still a possibility, especially with the game already delayed once.
* Despite all the backlash, Activision still seems more than willing to continue down this path as it was recently spotted using GenAI art for a Guitar Hero Mobile Ad on Activision's Instagram. While it’s expected that mobile ads will use AI for rapid iteration and testing, this particular ad was neither creative or worth running. The art is extremely unattractive and features very obvious AI art distortions that could have easily been hand corrected, leading to the conclusion that there is clearly no quality control being done.
* **Why does this matter to AI x Gaming:** When the biggest games out there that can actually afford artists are using AI art while trying not to admit it, there’s a real problem for future game artists. While it’s not so problematic to normalize AI as a tool for artists, Activision seems willing to put out poor quality AI art and even monetize it. If this practice continues without negatively affecting the next CoD release it will unfortunately lead to a tacit approval from gamers that will bleed into other games.

# **Other News Items**

* **'AI Gaming Will Be Massive': Elon Musk Shares Game Created With Grok, ChatGPT** ([Link](https://decrypt.co/307892/ai-gaming-massive-elon-musk-shares-game)): After Elon’s Grok 3 demonstration at coding games, other would-be devs have started showing off far more advanced games built using Grok 3 including a flight simulator.
* **Experimental Xbox AI games coming to Copilot Labs** ([Link](https://www.tweaktown.com/news/103620/experimental-xbox-ai-games-coming-to-copilot-labs/index.html)): Microsoft wants to explore what it has accomplished with Muse and will start rolling out the ability to play with it to Copilot Labs users.
* **Microsoft will train its AI on a "catalogue" of games soon, Satya Nadella says, "and then start playing them”** ([Link](https://www.eurogamer.net/microsoft-will-train-its-gaming-ai-on-a-catalogue-of-titles-soon-satya-nadella-says-and-then-start-playing-them)): Microsoft also wants to double down on Muse by training it using multiple new games instead of just relying on what it learned from Bleeding Edge.
* **Anthropic used Pokémon to benchmark its newest AI model** ([Link](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/24/anthropic-used-pokemon-to-benchmark-its-newest-ai-model/)): Claude 3.7 managed to quickly steal Grok 3’s thunder almost immediately, but one of the interesting benchmarks used internally was having it play Pokemon, which made huge strides in this new model.
* **Impressive AI (LLM) in a horror game** ([Link](https://linustechtips.com/topic/1603630-impressive-ai-llm-in-a-horror-game-how-is-this-possible/)): This horror game uses the ability to chat with ghosts using your voice and a local LLM with a somewhat impressive implementation that will likely be copied.
* **Google Gemini’s AI coding tool is now free for individual users** ([Link](https://www.theverge.com/news/618839/google-gemini-ai-code-assist-free-individuals-availability)): As the arms race continues amongst AI providers, more and more is being released for free use and Gemini’s AI coding tool is the latest to make it there.

# **Content Worth Consuming**

* **Hellblade Developer Ninja Theory Is Interested In Using AI, But Is That So Bad?** ([Link](https://screenrant.com/hellblade-ninja-theory-ai-op-ed/)):
  + Ninja Theory were recently involved in Microsoft’s Muse project, but they went a step further in expressing public interest in incorporating AI into their workflow. Thankfully they made clear that they don’t intend to use it to create content, but rather to make work processes smoother and improve overall development. Given Muse’s proposed usage as a tool for rapid prototyping and testing it would make sense that they may leverage that to help speed up the process of validating concepts.
  + Unlike most articles from gaming outfits, this piece rightly points out how games and movies have taken advantage of tool assisted development using machine learning and context aware AI tools. It does point out that of course some jobs doing tedious work were lost, but that the end result and production are much better off. The trick will be to find ways to use AI that enhance creativity rather than stifle it with mediocre computer generated output.
* **Minions: the rise of small, on-device LMs** ([Link](https://hazyresearch.stanford.edu/blog/2025-02-24-minions)):
  + This piece highlights the benefits of leveraging both local and cloud based LLMs through a “Minion Protocol”. As more devices start shipping with AI hardware enhancements like NPUs it’s realistic to start looking at how costs and connectivity requirements can be managed much more reasonably by shifting some elements of AI to local processing. This isn’t just for the purposes of running your own tasks, but also for games and other applications that need to leverage AI for part of their functionality.
  + Relying on cloud providers of AI is not only expensive, but it also comes with issues around privacy, reliability and shifting policies or priorities of companies like OpenAI. DeepSeek was a good demonstration of this with extreme privacy violations with the cloud version tracking things like keystrokes, and the offline version usable without considering any privacy issues and good enough speed.
  + A good example of the concept for games are libraries such as the Havok physics engine or FMOD for sound. Eventually games will start shipping more and more with LLM libraries to provide the benefits needed with the only real costs being additional hardware requirements. The benefit of the Minion Protocol concept, and likely others in the future, is finding the middle ground between aspects that should be handled locally and those that necessitate a cloud LLM.
* **HCI for AGI** ([Link](https://deepmind.google/research/publications/106025/)):
  + As AI starts integrating into more and more computing related devices, it becomes increasingly important that we consider Human Computing Interface (HCI) design. When Siri and eventually Alexa released, it led everyone to believe that voice interfaces would be the future of many things, but that turned out to be really difficult. AI voice interfaces will definitely be a thing, but there’s still a lot of questions on different ways to use AI from typing to voice to showing it images and video. This becomes even trickier when we start including AI in more wearable devices as many smart or AR glasses are moving towards. This paper helps explore some of the different areas to consider to integrate AI in more places, keeping the human using it in mind.
* **Avoiding pitfalls of AI for designers: Guiding principles** ([Link](https://blog.logrocket.com/ai-product-design-guiding-principles/)):
  + It’s not just UI that has to be considered with AI, there’s also general UX related to it. As we wade deeper into AI integration it will be important to try and share best practices and considerations. It’s similar to how early VR developers and companies like Valve tried to develop and share techniques and concepts to improve the VR experience as quickly as possible through all the unsolved problems like motion sickness.
  + As more and more developers and designers jump into using AI either to benefit the product or simply for fundraising reasons, there are quite a few side effects and speed bumps to consider. This piece provides a set of 7 quick considerations for designers to consider before trying to work with AI, but many of the tips and considerations are relevant for anyone working with AI.
* **Inception Labs’ innovative Diffusion model** ([Link](https://www.inceptionlabs.ai/news)):
  + With most LLMs converging around the same technology, there are some attempts to make for bigger paradigm shifts. Inception Labs is trying to change the game with its new Mercury LLM by adapting the diffusion technique from AI art generation to LLMs. Unlike the auto-completion style of text generation, Mercury is trained to use a noise based diffusion model that has supposedly resulted in 10x the speed, the same level of quality or better, and with a lower cost.
  + Currently Inception Labs is offering Mercury Coder playground use to try it out and see for yourself. Assuming this gets traction and proves itself out there will certainly be more models trying diffusion and other AI training techniques adapted to keep the arms race from stalling out anytime soon. This may also prove to be a model that runs more effectively locally than the typical LLMs assuming a model is open sourced in the near future.