Hack ‘n’ Slash

Over time video games have greatly changed in quality and quantity, but a vast amount of video games come down to an rpg element of some type, whether it be the story, the leveling and grinding aspect or the adventure and exploration aspect. This is prominently shown in the critically acclaimed, 2010 game of the year from BioWare – *Mass Effect 2*. Even though it may be portrayed as a third person shooter its’ routes deeply lie in the RPG genre, and that’s a good thing.

1. Take for example a classic RPG, one of the most famous of all time in fact, the 1986 brainchild of the infamous creators Shigeru Miyamoto and Takashi Tezuka – *The Legend of Zelda*. Or take the third installment in the Final Fantasy franchise, Final Fantasy III. How is it that these games are still, decades after their release considered the best of the RPG genre? I believe it all comes down to imagination. Since these games had primitive graphics gamers felt they needed to discover the unknown, but since they could not clearly see what was there they had to rely on their imagination. Questions such as, is this a goblin or is it a fox? As a young kid I remember as soon as my daily video game playing time limit was up the next best thing to do was talk to my friends about video games, but since a lot of the games success relied on the imagination of the player it was always interesting to see the different experiences we all had playing the exact same game. Comparing video games from now to back then is like comparing a movie to a book. One may discover the same story in both, but how they imagine or see that story is very different. Yet even in this day and age people continue to both read books and watch movies as they both create their own experience and in the same way I feel this is why people still continue to enjoy high quality graphic games of this generation just as much as they enjoying playing a classic from before they were even born.
2. There is also the issue of freedom limitation in video games. Determining if a narrow straight path is required to tell a story or whether the player should have more room to decide how they want to play at the sacrifice of story. Another way to visualize this is comparing text-based games to the modern RPG / adventure games with 3D graphics. One may propose that text-based games gave the player more freedom as they allowed the player to choose every single step of the way without a specific “menu” of choices to choose from. However another may reason that a text-based game still has limitations as the difference between a “crouch” or “kneel” command in a text-based game could be the difference between enjoyment and putting the game down forever. Personally I believe the amount of freedom in each case is the same. It is dependent upon the producer of the game as they choose when they are creating the game what choices are given to the player to make and what choices are pre-determined by the game itself. After all a game can be as narrow as watching a movie with not much more than simple quick-time events added in à la *Metal Gear Solid* or as complex as an open-world environment with literally thousands of player choices to be made à la *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*.
3. Since the text-based games of the first generation to the modern era of gaming as it is today we wonder why it is that text-based games have seemed to of simply jumped off the deep end and never resurfaced? Game companies have tried to bring back text-based style with creations such as *Facade* yet no text-based games have yet to impress even a small part of the public in today’s gaming standards. Why is that? I believe it all comes down to consumer demand. If we compare the Japanese video games market to our own we can clearly see the difference in the most popular game styles there compared to here. That is because overall the Japanese market tends to buy more story-driven games rather than the market in North America which is more geared towards quick fast paced games that give a short burst of entertainment, rather than something one can sit down and put hundreds of hours into in general. This is all because of the public demand. What sells determines what will be created next. This is the same reason why text-based games are few and far between nowadays. There has been a massive push for ever increasingly more beautiful graphics, from wireframes, to 2D, to fake 3D, to HD, to real 3D and soon we are heading towards the augmented reality scene. This is all because that’s what the people want to play. Considering that North America has the biggest percentage of video game sales in the world it only seems natural that the content desired there will determine the content created around the world. We may see more text-based style games rejuvenated in the future with a different approach that will be more user friendly, but only time will tell whether that happens or not.