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COMM 105G

Media Critique: GTFO

*GTFO: The Movie and Razer: The Hax Life* is a documentary about women in gaming. Whether it be women that play video games, or work on video games, they receive a lot of unwanted criticism from their male counterparts, and this documentary shines a light on that. A lot of the women interviewed in the documentary and involved in creating games or working on games received death threats from fans. They tell these women that they ruined the game and that they are going to kill them and their family members. The women that play the games do not get it any better. Some guys have asked them for sexual intercourse and if the women are better than the men at games, they degrade the women and tell them they are fat, ugly or slutty. While men find this behavior funny and amusing, it makes women uncomfortable to call themselves a gamer or want to play and enjoy games. This movie is an eye opener to many on how exactly women can be degraded because of a mans fragile masculinity.

During class and in some of the readings we had, we discussed gender in games. I remember in one of the readings we had, female characters got special treatment when they first entered a game than any new members that were male. The other characters would show the new female characters around and paid more attention to them. (Curtis, Pg. 6). In *Where the Women Are* by T. L. Taylor she gives a great example of how women are portrayed in video games (Pg. 120, Figure 4.3). I always noticed how women were depicted in games; mostly having large breasts and being very close to naked. I know this is a strategic move on video game companies, the people that buy their games are usually adolescent men, so targeting them by having big breasted women is a smart advertising strategy, but it degrades women in a very harmful way. Men that play games expect women in real life to look the way these characters do, and it is very rare for women to actually look like this. That is why it is such a problem that when a woman plays better than a man, they say that she has to be ugly, fat or slutty. What they see as “women” and what is actually a woman are two completely different things. Many researchers have noticed that this is a problem, but it seems there is virtually nothing that can change this culture.

After watching this film, I wonder if there is anything we can do about this problem. There is not very many, if any, consequences that these people face while belittling a woman. The worst that can happen is they get banned, but they can always start a new account or find a way to get around being banned and so this is still an issue. I wonder if there can be harsher, more serious consequences for people that act in this way. For example, if somebody is calling a woman a slut, can their IP addresses be traced and the police find the person and give them a warning or a fine? If something like this were to be implemented, I know it would still happen but at least it would happen less and men would think about how their actions and words can have actual consequences.

Great job (though note that *Razer: The Hax Life* is the next film, not this one), especially the questions at the end. This is a great example of how virtual worlds can never be fully separated from the actual world and the social inequalities that persist in it: Is it a matter of the gaming community being toxic, or is it toxicity in other aspects of social life that migrate into gaming? I think that this is what a lot of game developers are trying to figure out. At my most optimistic, I think that a narrow focus on revenue streams could ultimately be a good thing since companies will realize that there is profit in making gaming attractive and enjoyable for women (who, after all, make up 51% of the world’s population!). But turning that focus into design is another question entirely. Maybe it’s all about balancing the gender distribution in game development itself?

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