

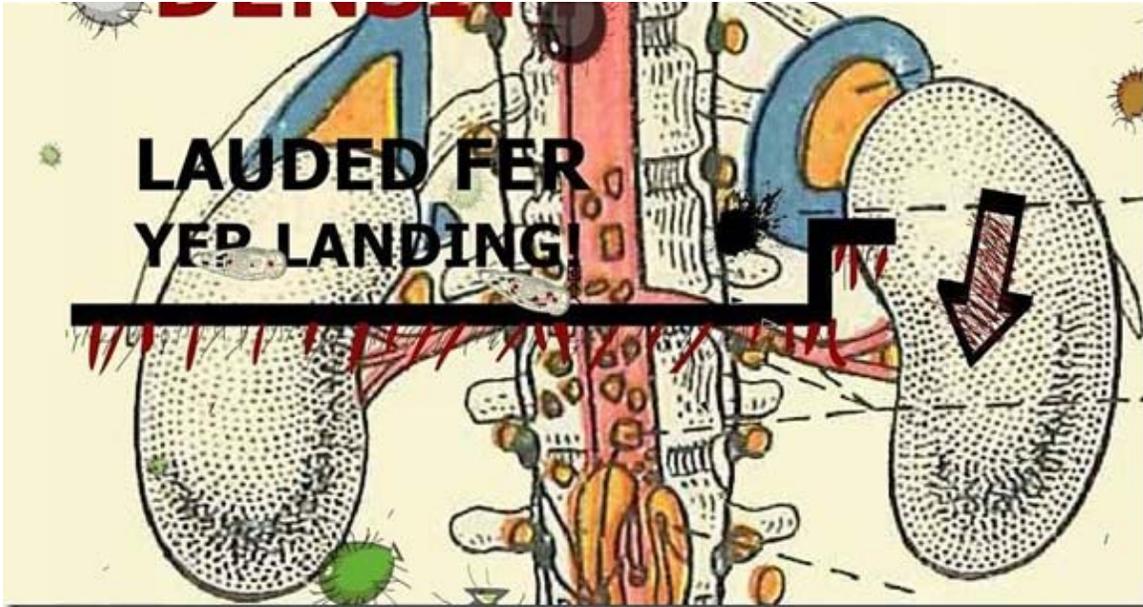
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‘Nothing you have done deserves such praise’: a game that explores our ‘addiction to praise’

May 29, 2013 By Samer Kurdi 4 Comments

We’re big fans of Jason Nelson’s games as art/poetry (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). This latest project, entitled ‘Nothing you have done deserves such praise’ explores our “addiction to praise” both in general and as reflected in video games.

At it’s core, ‘Nothing you have done deserves such praise’ is a simple flash game that has the same dynamics as thousands of others where you run around and jump. Two immediately noticeable differences, though, are the ever-present (and ever-positive seeming) messages and commentary, and the fact that you don’t die. In fact, nothing that you do seems to have any adverse effect on your character, who apparently can do no wrong, with praise heaped on him/her continuously. (The bad guys follow you around but have no effect when they finally catch up with you).



But be this as it may, 'Nothing you have done deserves such praise' is surprisingly pleasant to play, at least briefly. The game is designed to be thought provoking and, again surprisingly, it kind of achieves this ambitious goal, even as some of the praise is over the top and annoying. While initially you unconsciously accept the 'positive' reinforcement as you would any game (excellent, you jumped/opened the gate/made it to the end of the level), you quickly start to question and dissociate from it. (It kind of reminded me of the 'embarrassment' my son feels as I cheer him when his bat makes contact with the ball during little league baseball games, and the glares and dirty looks that he gives me after he's made it to first base!).



The one level in particular that resonated was one where your character runs around (not shown here) and grabs large gold coins that are scattered everywhere – “Score, Score, MORE Score”, which aside from making fun of every platform game in existence, can be seen as a critique of modern society, where everyone runs around trying to earn more, as if their value as a human being depends on it. The absence of any opposition (no bad guys that can really hurt you) puts the action of scoring into perspective, as a pointless activity. Regardless, you will do it anyway, and collect as many gold coins as you can, just because there’s nothing else that you CAN do. (Which may in some some sense redeem the notion of running around collecting gold coins perhaps?).

Whether we like it or not the concept video games as art has been with us since the beginning, and Mr. Nelson’s games work, in my view, because somehow they succeed in being thought provoking (they also win because you will likely take the time to play a few levels of this game, by being enjoyable at parts and by stimulating your curiosity to catch a glimpse of whatever the **** it is that is going on).

The end of the game warrants mentioning, because of it’s strangeness and brutality (or rather, the brutality of the end of both praise and non-praise alike). Would love to have your opinions/comments on the finale and on the game in general.

Check it out [here](#).

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Samer Kurdi Has been reviewing software since 2006 when he started Freewaregenius.com			

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 *Monimonika*

Huh... Am I supposed to fall off the screen and end with nothing but pale yellow and a never-ending white-noise soundtrack?

Monimonika

Ah! I did it again. Except now it's nothing but pale yellow and no background noise at all...

SamerKurdi

Yes, at first I was wondering, but I do believe that this is the ending, by design. Not only did they take away the praise and positive feedback, but they left us with no communication whatsoever. A total and abrupt fall from grace. 😊

Monimonika

The thing is, the first time I got this kind of ending, I was only at stage 4. I tried again and got past stage 4 to once again get the same kind of ending at another stage (forgot which number).

I guess deliberately going against the obvious script in the game deemed me unworthy... ;-P

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