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A Satire About Compliments And Game Design: nothing you have done deserves such praise

# **A Satire About Compliments And Game Design: nothing you have done deserves such praise**



Chris Priestman

Free Games

July 8th, 2013

3 Comments

There are studies out there that look into the effect that games have on us humans, many of which conclude that they can act as a good means of positive reinforcement in our lives and help to lift our spirits. Jason Nelson is the antithesis to that. Or at least the game he was commissioned to make by the National Endowment for Art, **nothing you have done deserves such praise**, is.

Like a few other games have done over the years, **nothing you have done deserves such praise** takes an inward look at games and how they reward players for doing the most meaningless of tasks. There are a few levels in which you are given something to do, something very simple. This could be falling, jumping or running – something simple and very mediocre, as far as gameplay is concerned. This allows for an exaggeration of the rewards you're receiving for following these instructions that lies at the heart of this satire.

It's a purposely ugly game overall, but dressed up in places to look a little more appealing. This, of course, is the equivalent of "a wolf in sheep's clothing" as Jason's effort is to isolate certain elements common in games, including images that we may recognize, so that they look out of place and serve to the cause of complimenting you. After just a couple of levels, the cacophony of sounds and mix of disconnected images and environments causes the compliments to be almost become

horrific in nature.

Perhaps the message is one of illustrating that excess of anything, even compliments, can be harmful.



If you're a regular player of games, then you'll know the kind of thing we're referring to here. Let's say you've jumped up a stack of crates. In some games, that's worth an Achievement or Trophy, which practically means nothing in and of itself, anyway. This specific practice is often employed by developers to make the player feel good about themselves so that they may keep on playing so they get that feeling over and over again. It's also been used heavily by certain companies to entice players to spend more money on a game or to simply buy it in the first place. "Why would you buy this game?" they ask. To earn the Achievements so you can "show off" to your friends, apparently.

*"our worlds (digital and breathing) are filled with needless and unearned praise. This art/poetry game satisfies your compliment addiction."*

This is part of the target of Jason Nelson with this game, but it's a little more encompassing than that as it's really about all of game design that positively reinforces the actions a player performs in a game. Personally, I think this approach to looking at games is slightly outdated now as we have games that aren't all about complimenting the player. Designers these days want to stretch the full spectrum of games and see what they can do, and it's much more than the happy ending.

Still, it's worth playing for its scornful nature and aesthetic of the ugly that's used as part of an overarching message.





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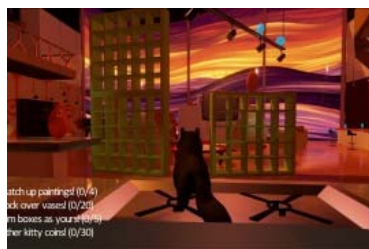
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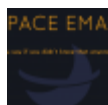
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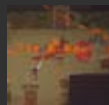
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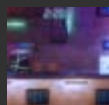
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