



Art Books Music Film Indie Events DIY Worn Edu Gender Ret-spec

« I get angry, too | The Map Is Not the Territory »

Let's play: 'Nothing You Have Done Deserves Such Praise'

Jenn Frank · July 1, 2013 · Filed under [Design philosophy](#), [Reviews](#)



latest



[On Destiny and "game widows"](#)

[The Map Is Not the Territory](#)

[Let's play: 'Nothing You Have Done Deserves Such Praise'](#)

[I get angry, too](#)

This week's quicknotes:
[Feminist Frequency](#), [horror movies](#), and [toys for tots](#)

[The Oculus Rift is \(probably\) here to stay](#)

[On bullying](#)

I just played through Jason Nelson's latest, [Nothing You Have Done Deserves Such Praise](#) (via [Terry Cavanagh](#) at [Free Indie Games](#)).

I wrote about Jason Nelson's games [right here](#) in late 2010; NYHDDSP basically picks up where Jason Nelson's School of Games left off. It's a send-up of big-budge AAA titles, and in particular, the way those video games reward the player for jumping (and landing) in the correct places, for moving in a straight line from point A to point B. This game, like the best AAA titles, rewards the player with huge, unwarranted explosions.

One common reward in these types of games (and indeed, in most games) is the Power-Up. Of course, once the player achieves higher jumping ability—in NYHDDSP this ability is called "Super Legs"—the platforms are accordingly spaced farther apart. Since any New Ability is usually also necessary to proceed in a game, the player has ultimately "gained" nothing at all. He is, in essence, jumping the same distance as before.

comments



Jenn Frank

Ted says that it HAS happened -- but only while I'm reading. ...

Jeremy

Jenn, Has the reverse situation occurred between you and Te ...

Floor

I do not feel sorry for him. Unless you were harassing him e ...

masthead

Jenn Frank

Still, NYHDDSP might be less a condemnation of Obvious Game Design so much as it is a scathing remark on a larger "entitlement culture." It's taking piss out of achievement badge bros who have completed the same tasks another million players have already achieved. This has broader social implications. Especially in the educational system, but also in the workplace, students and underlings who conform are also rewarded: for falling in line; for showing up on time; for jumping when they are supposed to jump; for completing life in the "right" "order."

Completing NYHDDSP is less a matter of skill or intellect than it is a sheer act of duty—so why do we, the players, tend to feel so triumphant? For accomplishing even the bare minimum required to "pass" or "progress"?

I didn't notice during the first playthrough, but in NYHDDSP the player's sprite is moving through the human body, specifically through its limbic system I think? In the next-to-last stage—a Coin-collect in which the player's score artificially inflates by literal leaps and bounds—the player passes through the human head.

This is all an interesting thought experiment. But maybe the final stage ends too quickly. Its thesis—that we all play video games in a race against our own (geographic, sociocultural) alienation, to ward off our own sense of inefficacy—is a damning one.

[See also](#) »

[Talkin' bout Jason Nelson's art games](#)



About Jenn Frank:

Jenn thinks the Atari 2600, Game Boy Micro, and Apple iPhone are all viable game consoles. Email her at [jenn at infinite lives dot net](mailto:jenn@infinite-lives.net).

 [Permalink](#)

Leave a comment

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Psst... This site supports [gravatars](#) and [OpenIDs](#). You may also format your comment using [Textile markup](#), if you'd like. Comments may not immediately appear.

Delicious Robot

Kevin Bunch



Katamari!



