QUEER QUESTING:
The Portrayal of Gender and Sexuality in Video Games

BY: JESSICA THEIS

INTRO

An introduction to Queer Questing

Ellie and Dina, a couple from Naughty Dog's "The Last of Us 2."

By Jessica Theis

While video games have the incredible ability to transport players to new worlds and offer them immersive experiences, they have often been critiqued for lacking diversity and representation. This zine aims to explore the ways in which video games have portrayed queer identities and experiences, as well as the impact that they have on players, the game's story, and society as a whole.

QUEER CHARACTERS & THEIR IMPACT ON STORYTELLING

The Basics

Including queer characters in storytelling has had a significant impact on video games. It has allowed writers and game developers to explore new themes and storylines that were previously considered taboo or controversial. It has also helped to create a more inclusive and diverse media landscape where individuals from all backgrounds can feel represented and validated.

Queer characters also add depth and complexity to the story's narrative. By exploring themes such as identity, relationships, and discrimination, writers and filmmakers can create a more engaging and emotionally resonant story experience. They can also provide a unique perspective on the story, offering a fresh and original take on the narrative.
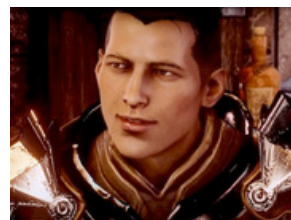
Queer Characters

Ellie from "The Last of Us: Part II": Ellie is a lesbian protagonist who is navigating a post-apocalyptic world after the death of her father figure. Her relationship with her girlfriend, Dina, is a central part of the game's storyline. Ellie often goes to Dina for moral guidance, which affects many of her actions, and has a huge impact on several of the game's most intense scenes.

Tracer from "Overwatch": Tracer is a queer character who was revealed to be in a same-sex relationship in a comic book released by the game's creators. Her inclusion helped to make Overwatch one of the most diverse and inclusive games on the market.

Krem from "Dragon Age: Inquisition": Krem is a transgender character who serves as a member of the Inquisition. His inclusion helped to break down stereotypes about transgender individuals and increase representation of transgender characters in video games.

HOW QUEER REP. IN VIDEO GAMES AFFECTS THE PLAYER

For players who identify as queer, seeing themselves represented in video games can be an empowering and validating experience. It can help them feel seen and heard, reducing feelings of isolation and stigma. On the other hand, for players who do not identify as queer, exposure to queer characters in video games can broaden their perspectives and increase their understanding of queer people and issues.

""In an article published on "The Guardian," titled "Meet the gaymers: why queer representation is exploding in video games," Keza MacDonald interviewed John Faciane, a Sims developer who says "I'm an openly gay man working in the games industry, so for me I have a vested interest in greater inclusion not just in the games we play, but in those who make games" and one of the main reasons he decided to come out was "was seeing representation of gay men within games – knowing that there were other people out there like me. Seeing people in the media and in games living their truths helped inspire me to be more comfortable with who I am."

HOW QUEER REP IN VIDEO GAMES AFFECTS SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

Research has shown that exposure to positive representations of queer characters in media can lead to increased acceptance and support for the LGBTQ+ community. A study by GLAAD found that exposure to queer characters in media led to more positive attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community among viewers.

In the context of video games, exposure to queer characters can have a similar impact. As more games feature queer characters, it can help to normalize queer identities and experiences, reducing stigma and discrimination. This, in turn, can lead to greater acceptance and support for queer rights and equality in wider society.T

The inclusion of queer characters in video games has also had an impact on the gaming industry as a whole. It has led to greater diversity and inclusivity in game development, with more queer developers and designers entering the industry.

Furthermore, the demand for queer representation in video games has led to the creation of more games that feature queer characters and storylines. This has created a market for queer gamers and helped to expand the reach of video games to a wider audience.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, the representation of queer identities and experiences in video games is a complex and ongoing subject that requires continued attention and effort from both game developers and players.

While progress has been made in recent years, with more games featuring queer characters and storylines, there is still a long way to go in terms of creating a truly inclusive gaming experience. By embracing queer identities and experiences, video games have the power to create more empathetic and compassionate players, and contribute to a more accepting society.

SOURCES

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