

Published Gaming Blog Posts

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[Atlantica Online, You've Been Great, But Away With Ye!](#)

It's probably safe to say that at some point in their lives most of the serious gamers out there have found themselves locked in a ceaseless battle to the death with the latest high quality MMORPG, unable to realize just how much the game has taken over their life.

You load up the game that first day, and find yourself slowly sinking deeper and deeper into a brand new, captivating world of magic and mystery. By the second day, you've forgotten everything except that this new game is now on your hard drive, ready to be played at any given moment.

After a seemingly unending period of time you come to learn that it is now next week, and yes, everyone else's lives have continued as normal while you've been locked in some dungeon somewhere ensnared by pixelated ecstasy.

I spent the last 6 days playing [Atlantica Online](#) ceaselessly. I'm trying to build a web design career, living off of funds from previous ventures and the kindness of my family, and yet I couldn't stop myself from being locked into this new version of online crack, and casting aside every last vestige of logical thought having to do with the fact that yes, I should probably be doing something more productive.

Now, I'm a seasoned gamer, and it really does take a really high quality game to entrench me solidly into the 'addicted' category, as I have been over the last 6 days with [Atlantica Online](#).



AO really is a great game, kind of a mix between Guild Wars and any of the WoW-style MMORPG's. The game's key feature is party-based combat, which is executed really brilliantly. There are PvP tournaments with cash prizes, and there is a real sense of community within the game, as the players work to support their guild and their nation. The PvP aspects and PvE aspects of the game coexist well, each complementing the other. It is really surprising that it is a free game, considering its high level of quality.

My dreams of attaining fame and fortune as a professional gamer in [Atlantica Online](#) were shattered this morning, when I was defeated handily in the first round of a \$1,000 tournament by a player 25 levels higher than me. It was a new server, and I'd played 8 hours a day for 6 days in a row, yet my party was basically a speedbump in the road of someone who had more time and more skill than I.

Luckily this sudden wake up call brought a bit of clarity to my video-crack addled mind, as I realized that yes, it probably isn't the best idea to spend all of your productive hours locked in mortal combat with undead devil monks and mutated camels with acid-spitting humps, even if there is a Pot o' gold at the end of the rainbow. It's been fun AO, but I'm done with ye.

If I can manage to avoid any more new MMORPG's with interesting, innovative gameplay, I should have some new posts on the way soon. To its credit, AO really is an innovative game, but it also has that unique MMORPG ability to remove any thought of anything but the game, which I suppose could be considered either a good thing or a bad thing. In the long run though, it's a lot of fun, and probably is best in small doses, if you can manage it.

Stay tuned for more here on PG - Whether it's three posts in 1 day or one post every 6 days, it'll be coming along. Maybe I'll actually get onto a schedule some day :).

Got something to say? Comments are welcome!

[Study: Gaming makes you smarter and richer, gets you laid more often.](#)

Turning for a moment to the realities of gamer culture, [Gamasutra just released an article](#) about a new research study from IGN Entertainment and Ipsos Media CT. The findings of the study pretty much dispel the old myth that all gamers are socially awkward geeks with no social skills who spend all of their time gaming.

It would seem that in fact, for the average gamer, life is really quite the opposite. According to the article, the study found that "55 percent of gamers are married, 48 percent have kids, and single gamers are twice as likely to go on dates in a given month than non-gamers."

In the occupational sphere, "Gamers apparently are bigger earners, too. The study finds that the average gaming household's income is \$79,000 per year, compared to the average non-gamer annual income of \$54,000."

In other words, it has now been statistically proven that being a gamer makes you smarter and more successful, and gets you laid more often.

Maybe somebody should write congress with the findings.

The Daily Score - ‘What Makes You Tick?’ - Free Adventure Game

‘What Makes You Tick?’ is an indie adventure game, created in 2007 by Matt Kempke. In the words of the game author himself, “WMYT is a homage to the classic adventure games like ‘Monkey Island’, ‘Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis’ or ‘The Dig’, but still it tells its very own story in its very own style.”

I find that the game has a very comfortable, engaging atmosphere and character. It really draws the player in, providing a relaxing and enjoyable game experience. The plot unfolds in a way similar to a good mystery novel, with the protagonist Nathan having been sent by his university to find the mysterious Dr. Coppelius, who disappeared one year earlier. The adventure begins with Nathan disembarking from a bus near the man’s residence, ready to begin scouting around.



The Adventure Begins.

Who is this Lovely Lady?

Shifty Characters at the Harbor.

The game has really excellent music, and the visual style is extremely appealing. I haven’t finished the game myself, as I seem to be an adventure-gaming mental defect of some kind, usually barely getting beyond the initial areas of a game. But the story is extremely engaging, and the game has definitely drawn me in. I find myself hoping to unravel more of the mystery and to unfold more of the plot, as I find the answer to each of the little riddles which present themselves along the way.

‘What Makes You Tick?’ is a particularly good adventure game, really a shining example of the kind of uniqueness and sheer possibility for enjoyability which indie developers are capable of infusing into their creations. This game has a character and charm all its own, it really could be considered a work of art. Highly recommended.

You can find the game at the [author’s homepage](#). It is a free download. It has also been added to the [Gamebooty catalog](#).

The ‘Daily Score’ is a daily feature here on Philosophicalgamer, showcasing the best games on the net. Feel free to post any comments, discussion, or questions.

[The Daily Score - 'Commando 2' - Free Platform Shooter Flash Game](#)

The Daily Score for today, [Commando 2](#), is an excellent platform shooter, as well-crafted and enjoyable as any game in the history of it's genre.

Some of the earliest true classics in the history of gaming were platform shooters. Contra, the Mega Man series, and the Metal Slug series were some of the first examples of the kind of gaming quality which is possible within the genre. These games are etched into the memories of the slightly older generation of gamers who played them back in the 80's and 90's, after the never-ending play sessions which would ensue whenever such a classic was released.



Mmm, Easy Targets.

Earn New Weapons

Facing a Troublesome Tank

Commando 2 definitely delivers on the classic formula that made those games so enjoyable back in the day. Even if it is “only” a flash game, it is just as good as any of the platform shooters which have been released in the last three decades, which is a testament to the game's overall high enjoyment factor - they've made a quality game here.

With challenging and enjoyable gameplay, a multitude of interesting enemies to face, and over 30 different weapons to choose from, the game really delivers. The music, sound and visual presentation are all top-notch, delivering a compelling and satisfying overall experience.

There are several stages in the game, with new unlockable weapons to be found throughout. It's also possible to save your character for multiple play sessions, which is a definite plus. Commando 2 is well worth a play-through, and the game is free as in beer, so why not give it a go? You can play the game over at [Miniclip](#). I've also added it to the [Gamebooty](#) directory.

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The Daily Score - 'Notrium' - Scifi Survival PC Game

Today's Daily Score featured game is the PC sci-fi survival game **Notrium**. This incredibly well-crafted indie game was released to critical acclaim back in 2003, receiving several glowing 5/5 reviews on major indie gaming sites. It could easily be considered to be one of the best games of the early 00's.

Still, Notrium is relatively unknown within today's mainstream gaming community. I'd venture to guess that the reason for this is that knowledge of indie gaming was only beginning to filter into the general gaming consciousness at the time of its release. Despite the unfortunate timing, Notrium is an extremely excellent game. It definitely deserves to be better known within the gaming community as a whole.

The game has great atmosphere and immersion.. the world really pulls you in and keeps you wanting to see what interesting things are around the next corner. It feels like a commercial game, with compelling areas, items, and creatures, and a ton of variety in the gaming experience. While each game of Notrium begins in a similar fashion, ultimately the game sessions tend to branch out into unique experiences.



Landing on Planet Notrium Those Deadly, Deadly Lava Swamps Assaulting a Missile Base

The opening cutscene in Notrium shows your spacefaring character in the process of scanning for intelligent life on the surface of the planet Notrium. Suddenly, missiles come screaming up from the planet's surface, and your ship is hit. You make for the escape pod, with your only chance for survival being landing on the planet's surface.

You begin the game in your escape pod, with missiles approaching from every angle. Your first in-game goal is to land the pod on Notrium, by weaving through the barrages of missiles and entering the planet's atmosphere.

Once you've landed, you find yourself in a randomly generated world, with random areas and scripted events to keep the game's story progressing. Notrium is one part roguelike, one part action RPG, one part survival game, and one part science fiction action adventure. It is a unique experience, unlike any other game I've played.

In their review for the game in 2003, [Gametunnel](#) said:

“From the crew here who played Notrium, it was amazing how enthusiastic they were about this game. If you are looking for a game with a good bit of action, but plenty of thinking involved, give Notrium a run, you’re likely to be surprised by how good this game really is!”

Notrium is a rare, little-known gem. If it were released commercially in the late 90’s, I would think that it would today be considered a true classic. In terms of gameplay, immersion, and craftsmanship, Notrium is definitely close to being one of those rare perfect games which only come along every so often.

The game is freeware. You can find it at the [author’s site](#). It is also in the [Gamebooty catalog](#). This post is the third of the ‘Daily Score’ series, a new daily feature here on Philosophicalgamer, showcasing the best games on the net. Feel free to post any comments, discussion, questions, or anything else.

[The Daily Score - ‘Boxhead: The Zombie Wars’ - Free Flash Arena Shooter Game](#)

Today’s Daily Score is [Boxhead: The Zombie Wars](#), an arena shooter game created by the folks over at [crazymonkeygames](#), the makers of several of the most highly rated flash games on the net. The game is great fun; I would say that this game’s high enjoyment factor fully testifies to the fact that arena Shooters and brain-hungry zombie hordes are natural bedfellows. The game pulls off the ‘Survive the Zombie Horde’ feel of Night of the Living Dead or any other zombie movie or game quite successfully.

The weapons in this shooter are each uniquely useful in the player’s purposeful goal of raining death down upon the packs and masses of dead who roam the game’s landscape, and each weapon is fun to use in it’s own way. The variety of weapon types also allows for personal customization of your zombie massacring strategy, so you really can decimate the hordes of foot dragging corpse-spawn with a touch of personal style.



Can you Survive the Shambling Hordes?

Turrets, Standard-Issue Prairie Zombie Defense.

Ah, the Ubiquitous Death Barrel.

There are 4 difficulty levels, and several different scenarios to choose from. The zombies come at you in waves, and killing them en masse causes them to drop health and ammo, allowing for unceasing decimation of the putrid masses.

I find it particularly enjoyable to set up a line of barrels, then switch over to the shotgun, shooting the closest barrel. Boom, boom, boom.. dead zombies everywhere. You can also set up barricades and turrets, which are quite useful in the later stages.

At times on the higher difficulty levels, the entire screen is filled with zombies, as well as some rocket-shooting hell-spawn. The game is as difficult as you want it to be, and part of the fun can be found in inventing unusual ways to send the unfortunate undead back to the afterlife.

Boxhead: The Zombie Wars can be found in the [Gamebooty](#) Catalog, or the direct link is [here](#). This post is the second in the new 'Daily Score' series, a daily feature showcasing the best games on the net. Feel free to post any comments, discussion, questions, or whatever you feel like posting.

[Dwarf Fortress & the Player's Creative Will](#)

Among all of the games that have ever been made, I would venture to say that [Dwarf Fortress](#) is unparalleled by any other game in terms of its ability to allow the player total freedom to create something of their own within the framework of the gameworld. There is no other game which allows you as a player to flex your creative muscle within the framework of a gameworld to such an extent, while also having defined, set rules and having a well-defined overall goal to pursue.

I wouldn't call it a sandbox game; I've heard the definition of a sandbox game to be a game with no set goal, in which the player is free to do what they choose within the game. Dwarf Fortress is close, but it does have a goal - to keep your dwarves alive and well, and to build a thriving fortress for them to live in. It is within the context of this overall goal that the player is unleashed to create what they will within the world.

[A Million Choices](#)

In the beginning of a Dwarf Fortress game, you start with 7 dwarves, standing in the middle of a landscape, usually with a dangerous creature or 30 around to kick the game into high gear. The first goal is digging out a fortress for them to call home, a place where they can be safe and can begin to form a thriving dwarven colony.

Most games give you a few different choices at any given time, kind of like a multiple choice quiz, and they require the player to choose only one or two of them in order to win. The player is essentially herded down a set path, with 'wrong turns' along the way, and one specific avenue of success.

DF on the other hand gives you a landscape in which to make whatever choice you damn well please. Don't want to dig out a fortress? Okay, you can start chopping down trees and build a fortified compound on the surface, complete with arrow slits and ballistas lining every wall. There are myriad of choices to make along the way in DF, and the beauty of it is that you get to decide what strategy you will use, and the consequence or payoff of each choice is always unique and compelling. The breadth of choice at any given point in time is literally without limit.

Players have invented innovative new ways to send their enemies to their doom in DF, including lava traps, flinging them far into the horizon on retractable drawbridges, freezing them to death with a water trap, or letting the dragon that they captured earlier in the game go free as a mob of goblins approaches their fortress.

Unleash your Creativity within the World

The beauty part of it is that this all came from the players' minds, the game didn't tell them that they could send a dragon after a goblin siege, they simply made the choice to do so. Any choice that you make in DF ultimately results in some expected or unexpected result. There is so much to do in the game that you will literally find yourself playing it for months at a time.

I feel like this is Dwarf Fortress's best asset, its ability to give the player a giant playground within which they can make anything happen. It's all up to the player's creative will, to make of the game whatever they please.

The game seems to draw a certain creative, innovative sort of player. Some players have even talked about designing calculators and computers in the game through the use of fluid mechanics and pressure plates. Browsing the DF forums, it's surprising to see the level of intelligence and innovation of the playerbase. This game really does draw creative people to it.

No other game has this quality, as far as I know. Perhaps Second Life, but I don't know much about that game so I can't make an informed opinion on it.

Anybody have any other thoughts on this?

Is Linux Gaming Maturing or am I Just Growing Older?

I was pondering this question over the last few days, and I think I've found a satisfactory answer. I'm beginning to really feel that for gamers, Linux is becoming an entirely viable operating system. I've never been happier as a computer geek and a 25 year gaming veteran than I have been since the day several months ago that I finally axed that Windows partition and never looked back. While I think that part of the reason that I feel this way is that I'm growing older, I also think that it's because of some key changes which are happening right now. To explain this more clearly, I'll start by telling you a bit about my gaming habits of late.

Linux or Windows? Linux or Windows? LINUX!

Nowadays I use Ubuntu Linux exclusively. I spend my gaming time playing **The Battle for Wesnoth**, **Dwarf Fortress** through WINE (a Linux Windows Emulator program), **Eschelon: Book 1** (an indie RPG with old school gameplay), and several rogue variants. I also play a few old school DOS games (**The Magic Candle**, **X-Com**). And I have to say, I've never been more satisfied as a gamer and general computer guy.

Most of these games are obtainable for free today, as are the majority of Linux builds, and there are several benefits to using Linux outside of just the gaming sphere. I don't have to worry about my computer crashing randomly as is the norm in Windows, and I can run apps that are really useful and can customize my desktop with quite a bit of depth, which helps with the process of getting into freelance web design. Overall, I am extremely happy with my computer setup, even if I am still a gamer at heart.

It used to be that I couldn't do without having Windows. If I couldn't get my fix of **Eve Online**, or **Dark Age of Camelot**, or some of the other latest RPG and turn-based strategy games (**Galactic Civilizations 2**, **Civilization 4**), I'd never find the same level of satisfaction in my computing. A year or two ago I installed Ubuntu exclusively, then felt so game-starved that I reinstalled windows, despite having a strong dislike for everything to do with Microsoft.

So what's changed between then and now? I'm pretty sure that it can be boiled down to three different, fundamental changes. One involves my own increasing age, while the other two have to do with recent evolutions in gaming.

The 3 Fundamental Changes

The first change is the emerging relevance and importance of the indie scene. Indie developers are providing offerings which people who know games can really appreciate, especially in the face of the glut of eye-candy heavy, gameplay-devoid offerings being released by the mainstream industry today. The second is that WINE and other Linux windows emulators are beginning to hit their stride, allowing for a fair selection of Windows games to play in Linux. I really believe that within 2-3 years, the majority of windows games will be playable and very stable on the Linux platform.

But the third and final change, I really probably do have to admit, is simply that I'm growing older. I can be satisfied by a challenging game of multiplayer **Battle for Wesnoth**, or by the incredibly engaging and satisfying **Dwarf Fortress**, or even by going back to the old DOS classics, like **The Magic Candle**. I've felt like the big graphics-fest games haven't been worth playing for some time now, so I find myself going back to the old school charm of games that include the player's sense of imagination in the experience, and which were designed to create a whole experience, rather than just an adrenaline rush or a game which is only pleasing to the eye but is devoid of gameplay.

I used to enjoy games that were more action-based, but these days I prefer the slower-paced, more thought-provoking games. I never thought I'd be this way, an actual 'adult', but here I am. It's a strange thing. I guess when I'm 60, I'll be gaming, just like old hippies today still act like hippies. I wonder what the youngest generation 30 years from now will think about a whole generation of 60-year-olds being gamers. Thoughts to ponder.

A New Emerging Section of the Industry

Back towards the more important aspects of the topic, I do believe that being older plays a part (and some of you out there reading this may be experiencing the same thing), but I also believe that the more important emerging factor is that the gaming industry itself is maturing. The evolution involves the emerging, increasingly robust indie scene, while at the same time the possibility is becoming very real that we will soon be able to play any Windows game on the Linux OS.

The beauty of computers is that anyone can do whatever they want with them. While the big game publishers have been making what they're making, a good subset of very imaginative and creative people are making games for the love of games, and that makes all the difference.

On the other side of the coin, I feel that the mainstream gaming industry as a whole is devolving in a way, slowly becoming unremarkable as they continue to make mediocre games with huge budgets. They release many games every year, but I think it's fair to say that only 2 or 3 are worth considering for purchase most years, especially with the standard \$40-50 price tag.

Many of the indie games publishers are releasing Linux versions of their games, and these games are actually fun to play. I really feel that gaming has a bright future on the Linux platform, and that there is a bright future for gaming in general. It's great to see a new renaissance forming in the gaming world, after the dry times of the late 90's and early 00's. Rock on, indie game designers, and Linux programmers. We're at the start of a new era.