

Fans Gone Wild

When defending your beloved games go too far

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There's nothing quite like a good old fashioned nerd fight. Arguing over which fictional character would win in a hypothetical battle! Fiercely debating the specifics of various PC builds! And of course, everyone's favourite: the console wars! Yes, these fights are often as pointless as they are slightly pathetic, yet somehow they're a reflection of just how passionate and dedicated those fans can be. From comic books to films and every game adaptation in between, there's bound to be a nerd fight going on about it somewhere. Most likely on the internet.

Sometimes people can take it a little too far, crossing the line that separates Enthusiastic Fan Boy from Fox News Scapegoat. Here are a few instances in which someone maybe should have stepped in and uttered those four dreaded words: IT'S JUST A GAME.

Threatening developers

When feeling an immense bout of rage regarding a trivial aspect of one of your most treasured and sacred games, who better to direct that hate at than the people who made it? Yes, many developers have found themselves the target of insurmountable abuse from unhappy customers or seemingly disappointed diehard fans of their games. Is there anything worse than busting your ass for months-possibly even years- only to have some greasy little git threatening to murder your entire family for some of the small decisions you made during the creative process?

Jennifer Hepler, a senior writer on Dragon Age II, actually quit BioWare due to morbid threats made towards her children. Minecraft's Notch also received death threats following a



"SOUNDS A TAD OVERDRAMATIC, DOESN'T IT?"



Above: Zoe Quinn, developer and target of abuse in the midst of Gamergate.

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server shut down. Call of Duty's team are no strangers to online intimidation either, with developer David Vonderhaar and former Infinity Ward creative strategist Robert Bowling both being subjected to a good deal of virile internet troll vomit.

Though most developers familiar with these sorts of intimidation tactics admit that they mostly deal with empty threats, it still doesn't change the fact that people are threatening to straight up sniper people's children because someone decided to make a slight change to someone's player experience. Sounds a tad overdramatic, doesn't it?

Real-life retaliations to in-game situations

In April last year, a SWAT team surrounded the home of 17-year-old Long Beach resident Rafael Castillo after receiving news that he had murdered his own mother and was still armed, resulting in a two-hour standoff involving more than 60 police officers. Castillo, however, was completely oblivious to the

entire situation unfolding outside his house; he was still in his room, unarmed, headphones blaring as he played a few more rounds of Call of Duty. Earlier that day, he had beaten another young player in the game, who had decided to seek revenge by 'Swatting' his virtual killer. His mother was out shopping.

It's not just dumb teenagers who are ruining it for everyone. In 2011, a 46-year-old man called Mark Bradford stormed in to the house of a 13-year-old player who had been tormenting him in a similar game of Call of Duty and choked him. The two were neighbours and family acquaintances, and Bradford claimed the boy had been tormenting him in-game all day. He described his violent retaliation as a 'moment of madness' and was charged with assault.

Actual murder

We've all experienced the frustration of trying to explain the

Below: LEAVE PHIL FISH ALONE



Above: Mark Bradford choked his teenage neighbour after a heated Call of Duty game.

lack of evidence to link violent video games with actual violence over, and over, and over. It's painful. Unfortunately, the case against video-games-turned-my-son-in-to-a-serial-killer isn't exactly helped by actual, real-life cases of people being killed over games. In 2013, 18-year-old up and coming US rapper Lil Snupe was shot and killed by his 36-year-old friend Tony Holden after the two were caught up in a heated argument over a video game. In a similar incident a few years earlier, a man named Luke German was beaten to death with a metal rod after a game-related argument.

In an ever more brutal incident, 16-year-old Daniel Petric shot both his parents after they confiscated his copy of Halo 3, killing his mother and badly injuring his father. Petric then attempted to flee the scene with the game, but was caught by police and later sentenced to life in prison.

Right: Anita Sarkeesian on The Colbert Report.



Gamergate

Gamergate was one big, huge mess that has forever changed the way we see the term 'gamer'. Despite an attempt to brand the fiasco as an analysis of 'journalistic integrity' in the industry, it instead proved to be a hateful witch hunt against many prominent and outspoken women in games.

The entire incident started out with indie developer Zoe Quinn's ex boyfriend spreading rumours and nude photos of her around the internet, accusing her of sleeping with critics for positive game reviews and inciting an internet hate campaign against her. Quinn was harassed and shamed to unspeakable lengths, receiving countless graphic rape threats. Her personal details, including home address and family members' phone numbers, were leaked after her blog was hacked.

Many rallied in support of Quinn, which resulted in further attacks. Actress Felicia Day and developer Brianna Wu both had their home addresses released after speaking out against Gamergate, and developer Phil Fish left the gaming industry completely after the subsequent harassment and

hacking of his social media accounts after publicly supporting Quinn.

Outspoken feminist games critic and social commentator Anita Sarkeesian was, as usual, dragged in to this sudden tornado of misogyny. Her address was also leaked, forcing her to temporarily leave her home. She also cancelled an appearance at Utah State University after three separate shooting threats were made to the college, which the police refused to act on.

Stephen Colbert, who hosted Sarkeesian on his show to discuss the issue, speculated that Gamergate was a distinctly misogynistic attack on women due to the specific and intense retaliation towards women who were brave enough to voice their opinion, whereas most men who spoke out against Gamergate—such as Will Wheaton—weren't abused quite so harshly. Many women targeted by Gamergate supporters received rape threats.

So what does all this madness teach us? That gamers are hateful, violent idiots ready to attack at the slightest change in game play, or critique of a perfectly subjective media product? No, of course not. We're good people, really! Well, most of us. But maybe it'd be best for some of these angry young men

to take a moment to chill out, politely remove their sacred games from the untouchable golden pedestal they've built for them, and just play some Little Big Planet for a few hours to get some perspective. Or, you know, we could remove their internet privileges. Either one is good.

Below: Next time you teabag someone in Halo, just pray these guys aren't waiting outside your house.

Far Below: Streamer was 'swatted' by one of people he was playing against.

