

'Video games changed my life...'

Computer and video games are loved to the point of obsession by the gamers who play them and derided and dismissed by the uninitiated. *This Gaming Life* is a literate and highly accessible tour through the world of computer gaming that asks provocative questions about an increasingly significant part of our popular culture. Gaming journalist Jim Rossignol explains why games are worth paying more attention to, and argues that perhaps we should begin to think seriously about the place that they have in our society.

There is a wall of negativity attached to computer games. Typical associations might include: obesity, solitariness, meaninglessness, nerdy behaviour, and zombies. Boris Johnson once described children playing them as "like blinking lizards, motionless, absorbed." He went on to claim that "these machines teach them nothing. They stimulate no ratiocination, discovery or feat of memory."

Jim Rossignol takes issue and presents an entertaining and highly illuminating case for a more positive perception of computer gaming. He shows that games have inspired artists, transformed rags to riches, and entertained bored people on Sunday afternoons. And he is convinced that games can make us better people.

This Gaming Life describes Rossignol's travels from his days as *Quake* genius in London's corporate gaming culture, to Korea, where gaming is a high-stakes televised national sport; and to Iceland, the home of his ultimate obsession, *EVE Online*. *En route* he discusses some of the more philosophical questions that gaming throws up.

What is the true value of gaming? There are strong arguments that lift gaming beyond the trivial. Just as the term "art" suggests that strolling through a gallery isn't simply time spent staring at walls, so the term "gaming" would also suggest that games involve more than twitching in front of a monitor.

Is it an antidote to boredom? The core function of games is to cure the serious malaise of boredom and perhaps the proliferation of gaming reflects the fact that boredom is a rather unacknowledged problem that is much more widespread than might be thought and merits more attention.

What does the growth of gaming mean for our future? Research shows that regular gamers have improved spatial cognitive skills, enhanced visual attention and the ability to process multiples tasks with greater efficiency. There is also a symbiosis between game developers and players that is almost unique in the creative industries. Games are often developed by the players themselves, playing online and communicating as part of a highly connected and engaged community that is truly supranational. Gaming points the way to a new, playful, collaborative media that has no precedent in human culture.

The book also includes a useful playlist that works as glossary, explaining a wide range of different styles of games that are interesting or significant.

Jim Rossignol is a games journalist who has written for *Wired*, the BBC, *PC Gamer*, and also rockpapershotgun.com. He lives in Bath.

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This Gaming Life
Travels in Three Cities
Jim Rossignol

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