A One Hour Television Documentary

"The Production Booklet"

By

Brent Stafford

In Dedication
to
Ray and Tuula Stafford

INSERT COIN:

THE CULTURE OF VIDEO GAME PLAY

"The Production Booklet"

By

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M.A. (School of Communication)
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Part 1

Inserting the Coin

Introduction

Welcome to *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play.* A one hour independent television documentary which examines video games and their impact on kids and their culture.

Over the past 25 years the video game has played a central role in the construction of our new information society. Once a mere technological distraction, the video game has evolved into a powerful media product whose influence permeates the very fabric of our culture. For many kids, video gaming represents their first experience with computer technology and provides a key focal point for the development of their social relationships—it's all many kids talk about and it's all they do. Extraordinarily, video gaming has become the top play activity for children, surpassing all other forms of play (Kline 1997). From school playgrounds to living rooms all across North America the video game is defining an entire generation and changing the very environment in which children play.

Edited for commercial broadcast television, *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video game Play* explores this extraordinary relationship an

entire generation has formed with their video games and takes a uniquely critical look at what has become an estimated 17 billion dollar a year business (Roth 1999). Produced to fulfill in part the requirements of the Master of Arts program in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, *Insert Coin* examines the video game industry, video game marketing, the history of video games and how video games are made. *Insert Coin* also takes an in-depth look at video game violence, addiction and isolation.

Upbeat and intended to cause debate, *Insert Coin* is thought provoking for any parent, educator or young person who is interested in what has become a key player in the technological revolution of the late 20th century.

The Production Booklet

The *Insert Coin Production Booklet* is designed to accompany the television documentary and help the viewer/reader navigate through many of the issues involved with both video games and the production of independent documentary television. In some cases, the *Production Booklet* will deal with material I intended to include in the documentary but had to cut for various reasons, and in other areas, I will tackle material which I felt needed further exploration. As you will soon notice the *Insert Coin Production Booklet* addresses multiple readers and

has a variety of different uses.

Teaching Aid

If you are a teacher or concerned parent the P*roduction Booklet* should be a valuable resource as it provides insight into many of the issues covered in *Insert Coin* while outlining suggested strategies for handling the material in the classroom or at home. Intended to aug-ment existing media literacy programs, the *Production Booklet* should help edu-cators frame discussions with students while encouraging open debate regard-ing video game issues. Dispersed throughout the booklet are "teaching aid" sections which are essentially a list of talking points. These talk-ing points are in the form of questions you might want to ask or gen-eral points for which to focus your discussion. While many of these sections deal directly with video game issues, a focus is also placed on helping students better understand communication media by promot-ing discussion on how issues are presented in the news and how audi-ences interact and consume media.

Independent Documentary Production

In addition to the teaching aid, the *Production Booklet* has also been written with the independent documentary producer in mind. In many areas I address independent producers and explain the process by which *Insert Coin* was created. Here I discuss how the documen-tary was made, how long it took and what was needed to produce it.

At the same time, we will also explore many of the difficult choices I faced during production. These areas of the *Production Booklet* deal with the specifics of what made it into the documentary, what was left on the cutting room floor and the overall communication strategy I employed.

I will also explore many of the pitfalls of documentary television production including: the difficulties in reaching your audience, constructing a point of view and the technical constraints of independent documentary production. These topics and corresponding voice will flow through many sections of the booklet. I have also peppered throughout the booklet clearly identifiable "Production Notes & Techniques" which I hope will be helpful to anyone who wishes to tackle a project such as this one.

Television Programmers & Distributors

The *Production Booklet* has also been designed to help sell *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play*. If you are in charge of purchasing programming for a network/cable channel or if you are an independent distributor of television documentaries, the latter half of the *Production Booklet* will be of the most interest. The documentary has been edited into six separate blocks to accommodate commercial breaks. Part 2 of the *Production Booklet* has been organized to address each separate block of the documentary. In each section I will provide a "rundown" of the issues covered, ex-

plain who the "players" are and explore the on screen visuals and style. While the total run-time for the documentary is 58 minutes a simple re-edit of the material could easily bring the total time to 47min 30sec. Please **Turn to page 25** to go directly to Part 2 of ***The Insert Coin Production Booklet.***

Other Issues

At the end of this booklet are a few short appendices which serve to tidy up the loose ends of the project. Here I discuss audience reaction to *Insert Coin*; specifically the responses to "Block 5—Video Game Violence" from a group of grade 9 students at Lord Byng Secondary in Vancouver. I will also discuss the pitfalls of the university ethics guidelines which govern this M.A. project and the related issue of the personal release form which assigns the legal right to make use of the media material shot. Also included is a section that outlines my attempts to sell *Insert Coin* and the initial reaction from network programmers and distributors. Finally, you will also notice I have incorporated high resolution color "snapshots" from the documentary into this booklet. I hope they will help bridge the gap between the visual and the textual elements of my Masters Thesis Project and provide the reader with a taste of the documentary's visual style.

<u>Why Insert Coin was made</u>

The Initial Concept

In the summer semester of 1997, while still an undergraduate student in the final semester before graduate school, I was enrolled in a digital video course instructed by Dr. Stephen Kline.

Dr. Stephen Kline
Simon Fraser University

For the last four years, Dr. Kline has been conducting research into multiple aspects of the video game phenomenon. With my previous experience in producing commercial broadcast television (see Producer's Bio), Dr. Kline and I began discussing the possibility of producing a broadcastable documentary to popularize this very important research.

The experiment was to attempt to use video production as a way to encourage debate on video game issues within youth culture. The immediate purpose of the project was to complete a short docu-

mentary for the Canadian Association of Media Educators' (C.A.M.E.) media literacy curriculum package for the public school system. However, with the support of Dr. Brian Lewis, my senior supervisor, the project soon became the focus of my graduate work and quickly expanded into what *Insert Coin* is today.

Meeting a Need

Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play was created to fill an immediate need for documentary television dedicated to exploring video game issues. To-date, very little focus has been placed on examining video games through television production. Certainly, recent tragic events have brought issues such as video game violence to the forefront of media attention; there are also a few weekly cable shows that celebrate video game technology.

However, according to SFU video game researchers, with the exception of *Insert Coin,* there are very few television documentaries which undertake a sustained examination of video game issues (de Peuter 1998). This is one of the reasons *Insert Coin* was produced. Whether *Insert Coin* runs on a commercial broadcast network or is used to augment high school media literacy programs, this documentary provides its target audience with a much needed overview of the video game debate.

Who is the target audience for Insert Coin?

The target audience for *Insert Coin* is a group of teenagers ranging in age from 11 to 17 years old. Predominantly male, the target audience is a mixture of die hard video gamers and those who have at least spent some time playing video games. Tenacious and quick to bore, this group of media savvy teens thrive on stimuli and are able to handle a multitude of varying inputs. They absorb

stimuli with a sort of MTV/MuchMusic reaction speed and are able to talk on the phone, channel surf and avoid doing their chores with the greatest of ease. Like many teens they feel a sense of invulnerability. They are quick to dismiss authority and reluctant to do as they're told. For this group of teens, the video game holds an almost revered stature within their peer group and constitutes a central point around which their recreational time revolves.

Producer's Bio
Mr. Brent Stafford, M.A., has been a working television producer, news reporter/ cameraman for the past 14 years. He has worked for numerous media outlets and runs his own independent production company called Shaky Egg Communications Inc. Mr. Stafford spent 7 years working for a CBC Television affiliate in Kelowna, B.C. where he shot, edited and reported daily news. Currently, he produces highly creative corporate video as well as independent documentary productions. Mr. Stafford completed his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Communication studies at the School of Communication, Simon Fraser University where he currently teaches digital television production.

Targeting Commercial Television

The primary intention of my Masters degree has been to produce a broadcast quality documentary for the commercial television market. As an independent documentary producer it was important to see the project through, from production to distribution, in an effort to prove media produced within an academic setting could find a home on the commercial airwaves (I hope this booklet will help in this endeavor).

The desire was to create a documentary which had the potential to be reach a large number of viewers within the target audience. Considering privately owned commercial television networks command the most "eyeballs" it made sense to attempt to meet their pro-

duction standards and story telling paradigm. The guiding philosophy at work here is that if a documentary does not get seen by its target audience then it has very little value.

This philosophy also had an impact on my decision to produce a documentary in the first place. A common complaint among academic colleagues is that once a written thesis is defended it usually collects dust on a library shelf. However, television is an extremely powerful communicative tool and with proper distribution a television documentary has the ability to reach a large number of people.

Therefore, it only seemed natural to gravitate towards producing a television documentary and to target it to a large audience—one only made available by commercial television. By deviating from the more traditional written thesis I have increased the probability that my thesis will be seen and have an impact. However, the decision to target a commercial audience and to tailor *Insert Coin* to meet the standard codes and conventions of commercial television has placed severe limitations on how I handled the material in *Insert Coin.*

Negotiating a Critical Approach

The Site of Tension

The fundamental challenge of my M.A. project has been to negotiate between incorporating a critical media literacy perspective to the study of video games and the desire to broadcast the documentary on a commercial television network. In the context of video games, a critical media literacy perspective is advanced by encourag-

ing youth to begin thinking about video games in a careful and reflec-
tive way. This perspective should encourage children to examine
how video games are affecting their lives; at the same time, it should
promote an understanding of how the structure of the video game in-
dustry favors the development of particular genres and story lines—

all in the name of low risk revenue
production. This site of tension ex-
ists because there are particular inter-
ests within the corporate media sys-
tem which place limits on the level of
critical perspectives acceptable in
commercial media productions.

The Roadblocks

This negotiation has been very trying as there are many road-
blocks in place which prevent critical voices from finding a home on
the commercial airwaves. These barriers manifest themselves in a
variety of ways. First, by definition, the commercial media is com-
mercial. Sponsored by advertising dollars, private broadcasters are
reluctant to run documentaries which promote a sustained critical ex-
amination of issues which may offend the free market ideals of its ad-
vertisers. Within the production industry there is an often unspoken
acknowledgement that the content of a television program is only
filler between the real show—commercials. Good commercial televi-
sion creates a positive atmosphere for the viewing of ads. So, it
makes sense for advertisers to think twice about buying airtime in a
program, with content, that threatens the positive atmosphere usually

created by commercial television.

Second, North American audiences have been bombarded by media frames which define how issues are discussed in the corporate media. Media frames have conditioned audiences to expect a certain kind of discourse—citizen as consumer—which discourages critical thinking. Third, audiences have pre-conceived notions regarding 'objectivity'. Many people still believe, albeit begrudgingly, that there is a tangible reality 'out there' which can be observed and objectively commented on through the media. The illusion is that issues covered by the corporate (news) media are framed objectively

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Production Notes & Techniques

Media Frames:
- All media is produced to fit within certain established media frames which impact the way in which people view reality and make sense of the world around them. Frames are a concept "referring to the organization of social knowledge and experience". Meaning that, as a culture, we "frame reality in everyday life in order to comprehend and respond to social situations" (O'Sullivan 1994, 122).

These roadblocks make it very difficult to produce an in-depth, wide ranging critical documentary targeted to commercial audiences. Why? Because programmers who are wary of offending their advertisers will most likely reject a documentary with a critical point-of-view. As well, considering that critical approaches tend to challenge established corporate media frames and that television audiences have had very little exposure to the kind of language employed in critical thinking, many viewers would most likely regard a critical perspective as biased. The corporate media has done a good

job of keeping critical voices off the air, so North American audiences are not familiar with the perspective or the language. With these factors in mind, it has been very difficult to negotiate a balance between incorporating a critical point-of-view in *Insert Coin* while targeting commercial broadcast markets.

Production Notes & Techniques

Point-of View:
- Media frames play a key role in developing what's called point-of-view (POV) and it's through point-of-view a story is told. Point-of-view is communicated through a variety of different techniques: the use of language, the internal logic of the story structure, placement of soundbites, shot composition and shooting style. However, what remains constant is that a POV usually provides, in some form or another, the reason for a story to be told—"a story's point-of-view exists because the storyteller has a purpose for telling the tale and is clear about his or her relationship to the story and its characters"(Rabiger 322).

The Sacrifices

To meet this challenge, sacrifices were most certainly made in the level of critical perspectives employed within the documentary. Most noticeably, I tempered certain arguments regarding the political economy of the video game industry. This critical perspective would typically include a sustained examination of the structure of the video game industry itself. Who owns what? How much money is made? What companies are in partnership? How are video games marketed? And how do these factors impact the trajectory of video game development and design?

While I do touch on several of these issues in the documentary, I have purposely left out a sustained examination of this area. I decided a political economy of the video game industry would make

Insert Coin less appealing to commercial broadcasters. Therefore, the jury is still out regarding the outcome of this negotiation. I am still unsure whether or not it's even possible to successfully navigate the roadblocks and produce a documentary that is true to the tenants of critical thinking while, at the same time, targeting the commercial broadcast market.

A Successful Critical Approach

While some sacrifices have been made concerning the level of critical perspectives in *Insert Coin,* I believe I have had some success in communicating a critical point-of-view to the study of video games. The roadblocks forced me to develop a communication strategy which would allow me to communicate a media literacy perspective in a manner which would not overtly contravene established corporate media frames. This is not necessarily the worst position to be in. In fact, a successful media literacy approach doesn't bring media into the classroom to tear it apart. As media educator Rick Shepherd states: "helping kids to develop critical thinking skills about the media is essential; teaching them that the media they enjoy is "bad" is a dead-end approach" (Shepard 38).

Therefore, the approach I have taken is to present material which should get kids thinking about video games—without dismissing the importance of video games to youth culture. This should open up the discussion to in include a variety of different avenues and

possibilities. It's up to kids, parents and educators to formulate their own opinions regarding video games. *Insert Coin* should help facilitate this process. However, while *Insert Coin* has a definite journalistic feel to it, it is not an objective piece of work. I have constructed, what I hope is, an implicitly critical point-of-view—woven into the fabric of the documentary.

Constructing a Critical Point of View

The challenge for producers of critical television who wish to target commercial audiences is to find a way to frame critical ideas so they may be integrated into established media frames and appear objective. This is the strategy I employed in *Insert Coin*. I have constructed an implicitly critical point of view through the language, the story structure and responses of interview subjects. The language used in *Insert Coin* is familiar to the target audience. Yet, it is subtly critical. At every point possible within the narration I relate video game issues back to market forces. Even though I have left out a sustained examination of the industry, the language should direct viewers to the market influence on video game development.

As well, point-of-view is often implicitly constructed within a media text by including or excluding certain sources (source bias) and by strategically positioning them within the body of the media text. Through story structure I have limited industry responses and strategically placed their sound bites in an attempt

to weaken the industry's positions on certain issues. Finally, I have also advanced a critical POV by generating targeted sound bites from interview subjects. In particular are the interview responses from Dr. Stephen Kline.

In July of 1997 I conducted a pre-interview with Dr. Kline which I used to develop the story structure and to write the specific sound bites I needed to tell the story. Using his own words, I wrote the sound bites and the script before I conducted the on-camera interview. This is most definitely not a standard practice. However, it allowed me to ensure the documentary would accurately reflect Dr. Kline's research and present a controlled point-of-view.

Teaching Aid

Questions:
- Ask your kids to write down how much TV they watch per week. The average Canadian Child watches 23 hours/week (Province 08/29/99).
- What are their favorite shows and why?
- What's your opinion about the kinds of stories told in the news media? Do you think the news media is fair?
- Do you think television news is biased?
- What makes them biased? Is it what was said, what was shown or both that conveys a point of view.

How Insert Coin was made

The Digital Video Revolution

Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play is a completely independent documentary production which could only have been produced thanks to the digital revolution. Over the past decade, television production has become decentralized as the tools of the trade become more accessible to independent producers. With the contin-

ual advancement of digital video technology, it is now possible for academic institutions and independent producers to own the equipment necessary for television production. A digital production suite with a DV camcorder connected by Firewire to an Apple G4 running Final Cut Pro can produce professional broadcast quality television at a reasonable cost. The digital revolution is democratizing television production as large corporations are no longer the only ones able to afford to play the game.

The "One-Man-Band"

As a result of the new freedom afforded by the digital video revolution it is now possible for a single producer to complete the production cycle: pre-production, production and post-production outside of the corporate media structure—with very little assistance from anyone else. *Insert Coin* was produced following this new mode of production. One person shot all the interviews and visuals, wrote the script, edited the documentary and hosted the program with no external financial support. The gear was provided by the SFU Media Analysis Lab and I relied on the invaluable advice of David Murphy, the school's technical coordinator in the area of digital effects.

I have also stretched the limits of what's known in the industry as the "One-Man-Band". Within the commercial media there are producers who are solely responsible for the production of short news features. However, they still must rely on the equipment and re-

sources of a large media corporation and very few produce documentaries of *Insert Coin's* length.

The Difficulties of a Single Producer

The single producer mode of production is not without its problems. Maintaining a level of consistency within the piece over a long production schedule is an immense challenge. With one person working on each area of the production cycle there is no one else to turn to for help. This poses a serious problem as it will inevitably take longer to produce the documentary and sacrifices in quality are most certainly made. The longer it takes to produce all the elements the more difficult it is to maintain the on-screen style, the tone of the script, the quality of the narration and overall production values. Another problem is that over a long production schedule your interests, approach to the material and skill level will undoubtedly change. Yet, a segment produced in one month has to look and feel the same as a segment edited 13 months later.

These factors demand the development of a production strategy to maintain consistency. One of the production strategies I utilized was to include in *Insert Coin* host "stand-ups"—the host appears on-camera within a graphical representation of the Apple desk top and addresses key points of the story. In July of 1998, I cut all the stand-ups for each block of the documentary. The stand-ups help maintain consistency because their look and feel are the same through

each block. They help bind the blocks together and are a key factor in maintaining a consistent feel and tone over segments produced several months apart. However, there were problems with this approach. Because I had to cut all the stand-ups at the same time they locked me into a set story structure which made it quite difficult to deviate from as my interests and approach to the material evolved.

Production Notes & Techniques

Pre-production:
- Define concept for your documentary and create a working hypothesis.
- Decide what it is you want to say (POV) leaving room for change.
- Identify your audience.
- Conduct research!
- Identify the "players" (Who you want to interview).
- Create interview questions and conduct pre-interviews (**Tip:** Use a regular cassette tape recorder so you can transcribe the interview and develop a language strategy).
- Do initial script outline (Write sound bites you might want and fine tune interview questions).
- Secure camera package, crew and book interviews.

Interview Facts

Production on *Insert Coin* began in July of 1997 and was completed in July of 1999. At the same time I also completed my graduate course work and produced 3 corporate projects. Over this two year period a total of 49 people were interviewed with the majority of interviews taking place in the first 6 months of production. The length of the interviews ranged from 8 minutes to 3 hours/person (the majority were 1 hour). Of the 49 people interviewed, 32 were teens

between the ages of 12 and 18 and the other 17 were either parents or representatives from industry and academia (not everyone made it into the documentary). These interviews were conducted using the lab's E.F.P. camera package and following standard television interviewing methods. Each interview subject was informed they may appear in a television documentary and had to provide either written or

verbal consent to the producer. A detailed description of the "players" will be provided later in this book.

Production Notes & Techniques

Production:
- Shoot interviews (Use proper hand held mic, Check Framing, Never shoot in front of window).
- Shoot cover video (White balance, Focus, Hold each Shot for at least 10 seconds).
- Shoot secondary source material (Material for Graphics, Posters, Photos).
- Shotlist and transcribe all interview and cover tapes (Make detailed account of all media material).
- Identify specific sound bites, natural sound-up's and visuals (Story components).
- Write script (Do paper edit).

Shooting the Pictures

In addition to the interviews a considerable amount of visual material was also needed to produce the documentary. Shoots were conducted in the following 16 locations in or around the Vancouver area: Nintendo Canada, Electronic Arts Canada, Radical Entertainment, Score arcade, Command HQ Arcade, Playland Arcade, Playdium (arcade), Roger's Video, Mc Donald park, Cameron Recreation

center, Lougheed Mall, Playland Amusement Park, Nintendo Power-
zone, two private residences and the SFU School of Communication.

As well, secondary source material
needed to be gathered. Images and
sounds from at least 33 different
video games were put to video tape.
Including all the interviews, cover
video and secondary source material

a total of approximately 40 hours of raw video was acquired, filling
20 two hour SVHS tapes.

Production Notes & Techniques

Post-Production:
- Record voice bridge narration (Check pronunciation, Develop pacing and feel, Relax!)
- Load (digitize) all story components into non-linear edit suite (Voice bridges, Music, Sound bites, Sound-up's, Visuals, Graphics etc.…).
- Develop file management system (The key to a successful edit session).
- Edit documentary (Read edit software documentation, Pull your hair out in frustration).
- Back up data (If you don't you will be sorry)!

Post-Production

The next step in the production process was to break all the
gathered media down into the various components necessary to tell a

story through television. Each tape was shotlisted, transcribed and logged based on SMPTE time code to identify specific sound bites (short pieces of interviews), natural sound-up's (non-interview audio acquired in a natural setting) and the different visual shots. Each shotlist was then used to formulate the story structure, aid in the writing of the documentary's narration and provide the basis for a paper edit. With the script finally complete, the process then moved into editing. Edit sessions represent the majority of the time spent on the project. It took a total 932 working hours (23.3 weeks or almost 6 months of Monday to Friday 8 hour days) to complete the documentary. The entire documentary is 149 gigabytes in size and is stored on 76 CD-ROM discs and 10 DAT Back-up tapes.

Top Ten Writing Tips for Television

CLARITY, CONCISENESS, COHERENCE (Kessler & McDonald 149)
1). You must decide "What Am I Trying to Say?"
2). What you are saying forms the POV/Angle of the story.
3). Provide context for the viewer!
4). Make choices.
5). Control both language and ideas.
6). Be clear!
7). Be precise…use the fewest words possible.
8). Utilize one word adjectives.
9). Avoid redundancy.
10). Write in threes.

Part 2

'Press Start'

for

Insert Coin Segment Rundowns

Block 1: Opening

TIME :	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:45	**Opening Title Sequence.**	Video/Audio Collage with titles.
00:45 to 03:10	**Amusement Park/Nintendo Powerzone.**	Introduction to: video game influence, game players, and video game culture.
03:10 to 04:00	**The significant impact of video games.**	They have captured our children's imagination and changed the very nature in which kids play.
04:00 to 05:00	**The scale of video game industry/market.**	Video games are the top play activity for children with 17 billion dollars in retail sales.
05:00 to 05:30	**Video games are a new communication medium.**	They expand on influence of TV and Film/dedicated to fantasy and escape.
05:30 to 05:40	**Throw to Break**	Tease issues to be covered.
05:40 to 05:50	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.

Block 1 Rundown

Edited: July, 1998.
Block Runtime: 5 min. 50 sec.

Introduction

Video games are a powerful communication medium which are so much a part of the lives and development of today's youth. They have usurped TV as the favorite medium of youth culture and their explosive popularity has spawned a multibillion dollar industry. Block 1 of *Insert*

Coin sets the stage to begin our exploration of this very influential cultural industry. The opening block outlines how video games have become the top play activity for children. It introduces the viewing audience to video game players and it provides an overview of the rest of the documentary.

The "Players" (interview subjects)
- "Buzz"—The Machine Gun Shop
- Joseph Boy—Manager The Nintendo Powerzone
- Group of Kids (members of target audience)—Outside the Nintendo Powerzone
- Dr. Stephen Kline—Lead SFU Video Game Researcher
- Chris Thompson—Dir. Marketing Electronic Arts Canada

Block 1 Overview

(The block overviews provide only a brief description of the contents of each block. The intent is to provide the reader with a few words about what the "players" are saying. The overview does not represent the block in its entirety)

Block 1 opens with the sites and sounds of the Playland Amusement park in Vancouver. "Buzz" from The Machine Gun Shop describes how kids have become "more interested in the video game" then they are with seeking the thrills of the amusement park. Juxtaposed with the traditional carnival games and rides is the Nintendo Powerzone. The Powerzone is an interactive game pavilion located in the heart of Playland. Here we meet Joseph Boy, the manager of the Powerzone, and a group of rowdy, in-your-face video gamers. Boy provides a brief description of the Powerzone and its

clientele. While outside, the group of kids argue over which is the better game system Nintendo or Sony Playstation. According to the kids, the first thing they do every morning is get up and play video games.

Following a fast paced montage of video game images and sounds, Dr. Stephen Kline, who appears throughout the documentary, makes the first connection between video games and their impact on youth culture. Kline states that "video games have significantly impacted on how kids play" by changing "who kids play with, what games they play, and what they experience while they are playing" (Kline 1998).

The final player in Block 1 is Chris Thompson, Dir. Marketing for Electronic Arts Canada. E.A. is the world leader in the production of sports video games. Thompson emphasizes that video game systems are "a huge, huge market" and that the "volume of Sony Playstations, Sega Saturns, and Nintendo 64's that are sold in the market are astronomical" (Thompson 1997).

Key Issues

One of the key issues viewers should identify in Block one concerns the size of the video game industry. Today, with an estimated 17 billion dollars a year in retail sales (Roth) the video game industry is larger than both the film and television industries combined (Kline 1997). In fact, it's quite hard to even comprehend the scale of this industry. Since 1985, Nintendo alone has sold over 150 million game systems and over one billion game cartridges (Nintendo Web Site). Video games are big business, a business that produces a cultural product with an impact similar to TV and film.

Block 1 Teaching Aid

A key area for exploration in the classroom is the economics of the video game industry. As mentioned, a detailed political economy of the industry was left out of *Insert Coin*. However, the following questions should help get kids talking about the economic issues in the classroom.

Questions for Students:
- How many different game machines have you owned? How much did each game console cost?
- How many different games have you owned? How much does each game cost?
- What do you think is the total cost of all the games and different consoles you have owned over the years?
- Where did that money come from? Is the money worth it?
- How does the industry's desire to make money have an influence on the development of different kinds of game?

If you would like more information regarding the political economy of the video game industry, the following is a key suggested reading:
- *Paradox Lost*: *On the Interplay of Technology, Markets and Culture in the Information Age* (forthcoming), by Stephen Kline and Nick Dyer-Witherford with Greig de Peuter.
- "Brands Games" Under Currents". CBC-Vancouver. 24 Oct. 1999

Production Notes & Techniques

Block 1:

- It should be clear right away that television is the perfect medium to explore video game issues. To accurately comment on video games it's necessary to show them operating in their natural form—print based media can't do that. However, there are difficulties. It's necessary to use shooting techniques such as camera twists, pans and walking zooms to spice up the on-screen visuals of the games. Why? Because, video games are displayed on a flat 2D screen making it difficult to capture the full gaming experience on television (which is also a 2D medium).

- The intro & extro bumpers (visual effect montages) which provide the transition to and from commercial breaks are a key ingredient in the strategy to maintain consistency. The half semi-circle filled with fast cut video game images was developed in July of 1998 and used for each block in *Insert Coin*. They also provide a professional touch as most TV shows have bumpers.

- The semi-circle effect was also used to produce "Chyrons" which also help maintain a consistent look. Chyrons are on-screen textual elements which are used to communicate information in the form of a list.

Block 2: The History of Video Games

Block 2 Rundown

TIME:	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:10	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.
00:10 to 02:30	**Playdium Entertainment Corporation (High Tech Interactive Gaming Facility)**	Intro to: V.G. as a cultural phenomenon, the newest high tech games and facilities, the state of the art intense & realistic gaming experience.
02:30 to 4:00	**Early Video Games/Arcades**	PONG, Asteroids, Space Invaders, and Ms. Pacman.
4:00 to 5:30	**Home Video Game Market/ Market Crash of 1983**	Intro. of Atari to home market. Huge success, but the market soon crashed because of poor quality games.
5:30 to 7:00	**Nintendo hits the world market.**	Nintendo saved the home V. G. market/better games, replacing the "Its Sucks" with the "Its Cool" factor.
7:00 to 7:45	**Explosion of new game systems/Sega, Nintendo, PC based systems.**	The history of V.G. is wave after wave of new technology and new game design, creating the complex and realistic games of today.
7:45 to 8:15	**Current 1999 Video Games/ Multi media.**	Today V.G.'s are re-writing the boundaries between the real and the imagined.
8:15 to 8:30	**Throw to Break**	Tease Game Development & Design Block 3.
8:30 to 8:40	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.

Edited: March, 1999.
Block Runtime: 8min 40 sec

Introduction

Over the past 25, years the explosive popularity of the video game has come to epitomize our cultural predilection for new technologies. The development of video gaming technology has been driven by our society's deep fascination with technological progress.

Block 2 explores this relationship through a detailed description of the history of video games. From PONG to the most advanced interactive gaming systems, this block provides a unique perspective on the development of what is both a technological and cultural phenomenon.

The "Players" (interview subjects)

- Rhonda Hjorth—Playdium Entertainment Corporation
- Brent de Waal—SFU Video Game researcher
- Ron Bertram—Dir. Marketing Nintendo Canada
- Dr. Stephen Kline—Lead SFU Video Game Researcher

Block 2 Overview

(The block overviews provide only a brief description of the contents of each block. The intent is to provide the reader with a few words about what the "players" are saying. The overview does not represent the block in its entirety)

Block 2 opens with a vivid walking shot of the ten 64" TV screens belonging to the Indy 500 racing game. The Indy 500 is a 2

million dollar racing game that puts each player in a full size Indy light racing car. Located at The Playdium, an 18 million dollar interactive gaming facility, these sites and sounds place the viewer right in the middle of some of the most advanced gaming systems in the world. Here we meet spokesperson Rhonda Hjorth. Hjorth addresses the popularity of today's highly realistic gaming systems and marvels their development:

> It's amazing to see where we have gone, when we went from playing the hand held video games, the battery operated, to now where you are actually sitting at a machine. You are in control and it's taking you on this huge, big experience (Hjorth 1999).

Quickly, the pacing comes to a screeching halt with the introduction of PONG. Created by Nolan Bushnell in 1972, PONG was the very first widely played video game. As Brent de Waal, an SFU video game researcher, notes:

> PONG was important because it spawned an arcade culture The seedy pool hall began to be infiltrated by these video games and with the video game came groups of younger kids playing games, competing with each other and this concept of an arcade began to grow (de Waal 1997).

As the popularity of the video arcade began to grow games like Pacman, Galaga and Asteroids were forever embedded into the psyche of modern day culture.

The immense popularity of the video arcade gave birth to the home video game market. The Atari 2600 was the first console to deliver computer technology to the home as millions of North American Kids played games like Tank and Fighter aircraft.

However, the home video game market soon crashed because of what Ron Bertram (Dir. of marketing, Nintendo Canada) calls the "It sucks factor". Here Bertram discusses what lead to the video game market crash in 1983 and how Nintendo turned around the industry—"if somebody has a bad experience", he says, "it's not like watching a television show where if you don't like the show you change the

channel…you've spent quite a bit of money to buy a game and we want to make sure that the game you buy provides great value" (Bertram 1997).

Key Issues

There are several key issues in Block 2 which need further development. It's important to regard the video game as more than just a technological phenomenon. In just a few short years we have witnessed the video game evolve from a mere technological distraction to a powerful media product whose influence permeates our culture—from the entertainment industry to high tech business. This incredible development could have only come about as a result of our society's insatiable appetite for fun and distraction. These eternal desires have propelled the video game beyond its *rasion d'etre* and positioned video gaming as an essential ingredient to our modern day digital society.

In many respects, we have the immense popularity of the video game to thank for advancements in computer technology. The never ending desire for better, faster and more realistic games has driven the development of home computing technology. Video gaming technology is intrinsically linked to home computing as game consoles were the first computers to enter the home. We should think of video gaming as a tool of indoctrination

into the digital world; indeed, for many, video gaming represents their first experience with computer technology.

The last issue I want to discuss concerns the historical development of the video game industry. The enormous success of Nintendo—in turning around the fortunes of the industry in the mid 1980s—is a result of more than just improving color, graphics and game design. Nintendo's success is due, in no small part, to the company's ability to control the design and production processes. As I mention in the documentary, Nintendo overcame the "its sucks factor" by instituting strict quality control over the software companies licensed to develop Nintendo games. They accomplished this task by incorporating a "security" lock-out chip which "made it impossible for any person or company to manufacture games for the Nintendo system—or system for Nintendo games—other than Nintendo" (McKendy 1997). However, this allowed Nintendo to achieve more than just quality control. Nintendo single handily restructured the home video game industry, allowing the company to maximize revenue production by controlling and monitoring the entire process of game design and production.

Block 2 Teaching Aid

Questions for Students:
- Are video games a new form of media?
- What kind of impact does the media (video games in particular) have on the way we live our lives?
- How have video games changed our society?
- Discuss video games as more than just a technological phenomenon.
- What makes today's video games better than the older one

•Continued on Next Page…
- Beyond better graphics, what other changes have been made? (i.e. convergence—cross promotion between movies, cartoons and video games; the style

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Block 2 Teaching Aid Continued

has changed from side screen to 3D worlds; complexity of the fantasy has increased).

- How have these changes impacted gaming?

If you would like more information regarding the history of the video game the following are a few suggested resources:

- *History of Video Games,* by Steven Kent, Jer Horwitz and Joe Fielder. Web Page <http://videogames.gamespot.com/index.html>
- *Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Videogames,* by Leonard Herman, second edition, (Union, NJ: Rolenta, 1997).
- *Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds*, by J.C. Herz, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997).
- *Game Over: How Nintendo Zapped an American Industry*, by David Sef, (New York: Random House, 1993).

Production Notes & Techniques

Block 2:

- An interesting production issue concerns the fast paced editing and graphical enhancement of the old Atari 2600 video games. The Atari games are not much to look at so I had to spice them up. When I introduce the Atari games they're inside a splashy graphic which creates a high tech, intense representation of the games. I have also used a very modern "electronic" music track as the background music. This was done to meet the *Insert Coin* production style—to keep the documentary moving quickly and the target audience engaged The problem is that this approach detracts from a more accurate representation of these older games. If I showed the games in their most purest form, the pacing of the documentary would have ground to a halt.
- Block 2 also provides the perfect example of why television is the best medium to use to examine Video games. In the latter part of the documentary, Dr. Kline comments that the history of the video game is characterized as wave after wave of new technology and game design. Over this section I have edited a montage of video game images showing the viewer the transition from older to newer games. You have to see the transition of the games (i.e. graphics) to really appreciate the evolution of the games.
- Keeping the documentary current is a huge challenge. Throughout the documentary there are several visuals, words or video games I used which date the documentary. These areas date *Insert Coin* as 1997, 1998 or 1999. It's impossible to keep the video games shown up-to-date. The challenge is that many games have new versions released every year—sports games in particular. Computer technology is the perfect fit for a consumer society. It must be upgraded every year (at least). So, inevitably the documentary is dated by the different games which I use and by a long production schedule.
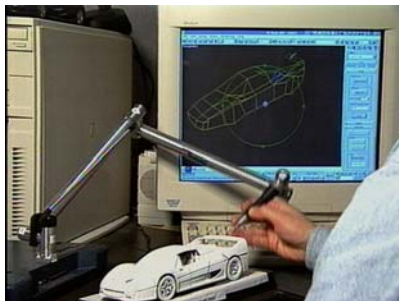
Block 3: Video Game Development & Design

Block 3 Rundown

TIME:	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:10	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.
00:10 to 1:00	**Modern V.G. Development/Key point "Realism"**	It is an extremely complex process. They have to design an entire world that kids become immersed in.
1:00 to 2:30	**Creating Fantasy & Escape/Intro. Radical Entertainment**	Kids must lose sight of their surroundings/The link between the technology & immersion (game play).
2:30 to 2:50	**V.G. Design/Intro. Electronic Arts Canada.**	What makes a good video game? Motivation, conflict, challenge, reward.
3:30 to 4:20	**Game Concepts**	Top game genres/How the ideas are found.
4:20 to 5:30	**Defining the game player's experience.**	The first step in making a video game. Graphic art, producer's etc.
5:30 to 9:00	**The making of EA's Need for Speed II.**	The look, feel and sound of the game. How this is created into the final finished product.
9:00 to 11:10	**The live TV broadcast model in EA's Triple Play Baseball.**	The creation of hyper reality by applying the live TV announcers & TV camera angles to the game.
11:10 to 11:48	**EA's design philosophy.**	Creating a game that recreates the actual experience and emotional rush of sports.
11:48 to 12:00	**Throw to Break**	Tease Video Game Culture/ Marketing Block 4.
12:00 to 12:10	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.

Edited: December, 1997. Updated with Host stand-ups and bumpers April 1999.
Block Runtime: 12 min. 10 sec.

Introduction

The complexity of the modern day video game is a result of the one key design element essential to the success of any video game—realism. All aspects of game development relate back to this concept. Block 3 of *Insert Coin* explores realism in video games by examining: the motivations behind video game play, the goals of good game design, how video games are made and the technological factors which control the player's immersion into fantasy. Through interviews with some of the top video game developers in the business and by following the step-by-step development *of Need for Speed II* (a popular racing game), Block 3 provides an inside perspective on the design and development of realistic sports video games.

The "Players" (interview subjects)
- Ian Verchere—Radical Entertainment
- Steven Rechtschaffner—Exec. Producer Electronic Arts Canada (E.A.)
- Hanno Lemke—E.A. Game Producer "Need for Speed II" (NS II)
- Kent MacLagan—E.A. Lead Artist NS II
- Robert Sculnik—E.A. Track Designer NS II
- Wei Shong The—E.A. Lead Software Engineer NS II
- Alistar Hirst—E.A. Senior Audio Engineer

Block 3 Overview

(The block overviews provide only a brief description of the contents of each block. The intent is to provide the reader with a few words about what the "players" are saying. The overview does not represent the block in its entirety)

Block 3 begins with Ian Verchere from Radical Entertainment in Vancouver. Radical is a software developing house which is on contract to create video games for companies like Nintendo. Verchere talks about the goals of good game design and how game developers must create a game which entices players to lose themselves in the game:

> one of the goals of a good game design is that the user becomes completely immersed in the experience, so that they are not thinking they're interacting with a computer, they are not thinking they're fiddling with a joystick.   The technology is so seamless and the design is so seamless that they just get into character and they completely lose sight of their surroundings and everything (Verchere 1997).

Verchere also explains the term "gameplay" and the conceptual elements which game developers incorporate into video games to motivate kids to play.

Following the opening section, Block 3 moves to Electronic Arts Canada. E.A. is a world leader in the production of sports video games. Here we are introduced to Steve Rechtscaffner. Rechtscaffner is an executive producer at E.A. and is responsible for the design and development of "Triple Play Baseball" one of the most popular series of baseball video games. In this section, Rechtsnaffner describes the process of game development—from the initial

concept to the completion of the production process, and he describes

players expectations regarding realism in sports games:

> Are the things you are expecting to have happen, happen. All the little details. If the guy hits a long fly ball to left field and you are on defense… well if you are running back you are going to want to climb the wall to try to take a last stab at it and if you can't do that you are going to go why can't I do that and all of a sudden you are going to be pulled out of that reality (Rechtsnaffner 1997).

The final group of players in Block 3 are the development team for E.

A's "Need for Speed II". These interviews address the specific technical processes needed to create a realistic look and gaming experience for "Need for Speed II".

Key Issues

One of the most interesting issues to emerge from Block 3 concerns the seemingly contradictory terms realism and fantasy. All video game developers strive to incorporate a high level of realism in the fantasy worlds they create. Developers of sports games try to capture and replicate intricate physical movements (of both human and machine), to encode them into their games. Developers of fighting and first person shooter games emulate the destructive forces of violent action. Developers of adventure and roll playing games create intricate fantasy worlds where the complexity of interaction creates the sense or illusion the player is inside a real society. All these different genres of games, in varying approaches, strive to capture a sense of realism within the fantasy. Video games are a realistic fantasy and it's a comment on our times that two seemingly contradictory experiences

can co-exist in such unison.

The desire to capture realism within a game demands a temperament for the minutia. "All the little details" must be worked out otherwise the player will be expelled from the realistic fantasy—the house of cards will be shattered. This concern is directed in several areas. First, the technology should be seamless and not call attention to itself. The gaming character must react in unison with the technology. If the player's character needs to make a hard turn right, the player pushes the button and it happens. Or, if the character needs to fire his gun, the gun fires in quick response. The technology should not become an impediment to the gaming experience. Otherwise, the player will be pulled out of the realistic fantasy.

The second aspect of realism within the fantasy concerns the conceptual design of the game. Developers create amazingly complex and intricate societies where the level of detail is astonishing. In these worlds, the player must interact on a social level with simulated

characters in the game. This interaction demands that "all the little details" are believable. Dialogue must ring true; character's actions and interactions with the player must be consistent across time; and the motivation for action (the goals of the game) must make relative sense. This attention to conceptual detail and the desire to make the technology seamless are the ingredients to what's known in gaming circles as 'gameplay'. Great gameplay is essential to

maintaining a sense of realism within a game.

      The third aspect of realism I wish to discuss concerns the emulation of movement within modern day video games. Recent advancements in computer technology have put new tools into the hands of game developers. 3D modeling and encoded physical properties allow designers to emulate physical movements of machines (such as racing cars) and motion capture technology allows designers to capture the intricacies of human movement (such as a basketball player) with precision. These developments have brought the level of realism in games to new heights because they allow developers to 'digitize' properties of our physical reality and encode them into a game, thereby, creating the illusion of a realistic fantasy.

Block 3 Teaching Aid

Questions for students:
- What are the different genre's of video games?
- Which one's are the most popular?
- What are the ingredients of a great game?
- Why do you play video games? What makes playing video games fun?
- Do video games seem real? In what way do they feel real?

If you would like more information on game development and realism within video games the following are a few suggested resources:
- *Digital Illusion: Entertaining the Future with High Technology*, Clark Dodsworth Jr., ed., (New York: ACM Press, SIGGRAPH Series, 1998).
- *Video Kids: Making Sense of Nintendo*, by Eugene F. Provenzo, (MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Production Notes & Techniques

Block 3:

- The key production issue with Block 3 concerns the long production schedule and the scarce resources of the single producer mode of production. Block 3 was edited in December of 1997. This edit session represented my first experience with digital video production. Up until this time I had only worked on non-linear edit systems (the old guard). This exercise opened my eyes to both the possibilities and constraints of digital video. At the time our digital suite was barely functioning as a full TV edit system and I certainly had a lot to learn about the technology.

- There are technical problems and conceptual problems with Block 3 I wish I had the time to correct. First, the audio quality in the first half of Block 3 is very poor. I learned a very valuable lesson regarding input levels and termination of signals. I have fixed the problems with the BG music tracks when I did a clean up edit in April of 1999, but I did not have the time to fix the sound bites in the first half. As well, block 3 could have been re-written to focus on realism issues a little more.

- All these problems could be fixed with a re-edit. However, this block was produced before we purchased a DAT tape data storage back-up which allows the editor to crack open a piece any time a re-edit is necessary. Therefore, it needs to be entirely re-edited from scratch. I just could not bring myself to throw away an entire 11 minutes of edited material. The sacrifice of the one-man-band.

- What was done to improve the December 1997 edit was to incorporate the show bumpers and host-stand-ups. These two production techniques have proved to be invaluable as they allow Block 3 to fit right in with the rest of *Insert Coin*. I also took the time to add a few short voice bridges on realism.

Block 4: Video Game Culture & Game Marketing

Block 4 Rundown

TIME:	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:10	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.
00:10 to 3:00	**Game Testing.**	Game testing preserves the player's immersion into fantasy and ensures the game sells in the market.
3:00 to 3:30	**The Simon Fraser University Research Project.**	3 year project examining video game players, advertising, industry, and culture.
3:30 to 6:00	**Video Games have become a central aspect of youth culture.**	Who are V.G. players? Why do they play? and What is the video game culture?
6:00 to 6:40	**The key emotional experience is "intensity".**	Video games are about an intense emotional experience of conflict.
6:40 to 7:50	**Television advertising**	TV ads play key role cultivating "intensity" of video game play.
7:50 to 8:40	**Game Magazines**	Are the prime marketing vehicle. They nurture V.G. culture..
8:40-9:15	**Nintendo marketing strategy**	Nintendo does not market to parents. Why? Kids will bug their parents for new games just like Bart Simpson.
9:15 to 10:10	**Bart Simpson tie in.**	Sound-ups from Simpson's show during a media awareness seminar. Kids telling stories of bugging their parents for games.
10:10 to 10:20	**Throw to Break**	Tease Game Effects Block 5
10:20 to 10:30	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.

Edited: July, 1998
Block Runtime: 10 min 30 sec

Introduction

When looking at a cultural product such as video games, it's important to study more that just the media form itself. Identifying the target audience and examining how the medium is promoted in the

market are two very important areas. Block 4 of *Insert Coin* addresses these two key areas in three ways. The first is an examination of video game testing; this process is the front line of defense for video game developers. The second is an identification of video game players and their culture: who are they? why do they love to play video games? The third is an examination of video game marketing—the the marketing approach and the most effective marketing vehicles.

The "Players" (interview subjects)
- Duran Bodasing—Game Tester Radical Entertainment
- Lee Pederson—Dir. of Q.A. Radical Entertainment
- Chris Stewart—Game Tester Radical Entertainment
- Dr. Stephen Kline—Lead SFU Video Game Researcher
- Ezra Gray—A teen who loves video games
- Buddy Bonshor—A teen who loves video games
- Greig de Peuter—SFU Video Game Researcher
- Ron Bertram—Dir. Marketing Nintendo Canada
- David Miller—Canadian Association of Media Educators
- 2 Teen boys—Interviews from media education seminar

### Block 4 Overview

Block 4 of *Insert Coin* opens with the game testing department at Radical Entertainment. Here we meet Duran Bodasing, Chris Stewart and Lee Pederson; game testers at Radical. Bodasing and Stewart are interviewed while they are testing games and they comment on the levity of their work: "it's a fun house, we work in a fun house you have got to be grateful for that, I get to play

video games all day…some people have to move concrete blocks… I'm lucky!" (Bodasing 1997). Meanwhile, Pederson, dir. of Quality Assurance, discusses the technical issues related to game testing.

The next section takes a closer look at video game players by examining the player statistics gathered through the SFU Video Game Research Project and by talking with a group of diehard video gamers. Here Dr. Kline introduces us to the impact of video games on youth culture:
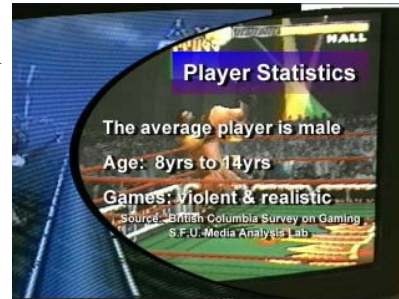
> It becomes part of the connection they have with their friends at school. It's what they talk about, they share games, they talk about those experiences. They go to arcades together, and as such we can say that they have created a youth interest that is probably on the scale of the interest in rock music 20 or 30 years ago (Kline 1998).

In this section we also speak with Buddy Bonshor and Ezra Gray. Both these teens love their video games: "I play video games for hours every single day of the week cause I love Video games". Question: "what's so good about them?" Answer: "they are just challenging, they may not challenge your brain but they are challenging, I like them and they are fun" (Bonshor 1998).

The final section of Block 4 deals with video game marketing and its impact on youth culture. Here we meet Greig de Peuter, a SFU video game researcher, who discusses the television marketing approach:

> The most defining characteristic of television video game advertising is

> constructing a sense of the intensity of the experience of video game play. The ad designers create these feelings of intensity to suggest to the gamer that they aren't simply getting a game, but rather, an experience they can be completely immersed in (de Peuter 1998).

Ron Bertram from Nintendo Canada also enters into the debate with his comments on Nintendo's marketing approach. He states that Nintendo doesn't market to parents and that while the parental seal of approval is something they like "it is not something that we actively encourage in our marketing" (Bertram).

Key Issues

One of the key issues I wish to address is the connection between game testing and game marketing. Game testing departments do more that just look for technical bugs which can disrupt the player's gaming experience. Game testers are there to ensure that the gaming experience meets the expectations of the target market. As Dr. Kline states in block 4, "the game tester is just one in a complex marketing process by which the developers of this game ensure that the game experience will sell in the market" (Kline 1998). Game testers make sure that the gaming experience meets what their design and marketing departments have identified as a salable product.
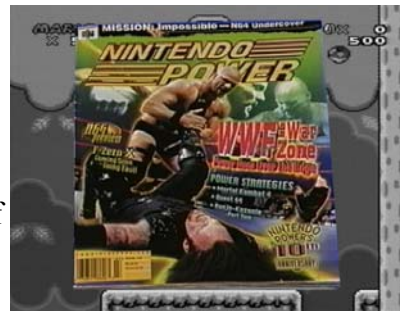
Another key issue in Block 4 concerns Nintendo's marketing approach. Nintendo doesn't market to parents of video gamers because they don't want Nintendo to appear boring to its target market.

They know that as long as their advertising approach is not boring then kids will just bug their parents "again and again and again" (Bertram) until they purchase the game. This is a key point which was discussed in the documentary.

However, one key marketing issue which was not discussed in the documentary concerns the promotion of video games through market synergies. This area deals with how "underlying business alliances and marketing strategies are shaping the trajectory of video games as a youth culture" (de Peuter 1999). For more information on the marketing practices of the video game industry refer to the suggested readings in the teaching aid.

Block 4 Teaching Aid

Questions for students:
- How many hours /day & /week do you play video games?
- Do you think you are a heavy video game player?
- Do you play and talk about video games with your friends? What do you talk about?
- Are video games a central part of your recreational time? Are they integral to your peer group?
- Why do you think more boys play video games than girls?
- What video game characters appear in other media? Name them and the different kinds of synergies. Ie. Mario has a movie, cartoon and video game.
- Does video game marketing have an impact on the games you want to purchase?

If you would like more information regarding video game marketing and other issues from Block 4 the following are a few suggested resources:
- *Paradox Lost*: *On the Interplay of Technology, Markets and Culture in the Information Age* (forthcoming), by Stephen Kline and Nick Dyer-Witherford with Greig de Peuter.
- *Game Over: How Nintendo Zapped an American Industry*, by David Sef, (New York: Random House, 1993).

Block 4 Teaching Aid Continued

- *Gargantua: Manufactored Mass Culture*, by Julia Stallabrass, (London: Verso, 1996).
- *Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds*, by J.C. Herz, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997).
- *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, by Marsha Kinder, (CA: University of California Press, 1991).

Production Notes & Techniques

Block 4:

- An interesting production note for block 4 concerns my conceptual approach to writing documentary television. Unlike Blocks 1, 2, 5, & 6 Block 4 (and block 3) does not stand on its own. When I wrote block 4 I envisioned each block would flow into another. The commercial break was only a minor diversion. However, when I went back to writing future blocks I felt it was more important for the blocks to stand on their own—much like feature news stories. This may or may not be apparent to the viewer.

Block 5: Video Game Effects (Violence)

Block 5 Rundown

TIME:	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:10	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.
:15 to 2:00	**Video games have changed the nature of play.**	V.G.'s offer a limited play experience, they control imagination. They communicate values/norms and promote intensity.
2:00 to 3:35	**Into to Video game violence. Why kids like violence in games**	Violence has become more realistic & extreme. Violence is the only goal for many kids. Games are spectacularly violent.
3:35 to 4:55	**School shootings: Taber Alberta & Littleton Colorado**	Triggered new calls to curb violence in video games. The blood doesn't have any smell on a video screen. Industry responsibility.
4:55 to 5:25	**Mortal Kombat & early 1990's response to V.G. violence**	Outline of Mortal Kombat controversy and the institution of game rating systems and voluntary codes of conduct.
5:25 to 7:05	**The results of The SFU IA-CRUS Experiment**	This SFU experiment measures gamers physiological responses while playing violent & non violent video games.
7:05 to 9:30	**Desensitization/Meet 7 year old Stephen who is desensitized.**	Violence desensitizes kids. After repeated exposure they're no longer shocked & become emotionally numb to the act of killing.
9:30 to 10:05	**Industry's response to Violence**	It's up to parents to deal with the problem/responsible consumer.
10:05 to 12:05	**Parents & video game violence. Context/Behavior issues**	Parents & their role in allowing/ preventing kids from playing V.G.'s. Why providing context for violence doesn't work.
12:05 to 13:10	**What can be said for sure regarding the effects of violent gaming.**	V.G. violence doesn't lead to kids killing kids. But for kids who are emotionally disturbed the repeated experience of killing might have an effect.
13:10 to 13:20	**Throw to Break**	Tease Final look at game effects Block 6
13:20 to 13:30	**Bumper**	Video/graphic collage with music.

Edited: May, 1999
Block Runtime: 13 min. 30 sec.

Introduction

As the cultural prominence of the video game grows, so too does the concern regarding the effects of video game play. The video game has become a powerful communication medium which promotes a multitude of themes, values and norms which are embedded in the play experience. When youth spend an inordinate amount of time interacting with that play experience there is a very real potential they will be affected in some way. Block 5 of *Insert Coin* begins the examination video game effects by focusing on one of the most controversial ingredients of gaming—violence. Recently, tragic events such as the massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado have brought the issue of violence in video games to the forefront of public debate. Block 5 tackles this weighty topic by exploring both the physiological and psychological effects of violent gaming. From galvanic skin response to emotional desensitization Block 5 provides a powerful and sometimes disturbing look at this very important issue.

> ### *The "Players" (interview subjects)*
> - Dr. Stephen Kline—Lead SFU Video Game Researcher
> - Ezra Gray—A teen who loves violence in video games
> - CNN/CBC News Anchors
> - 2 Parents—Their children were killed in school shootings
> - Brent de Waal—SFU Video Game Researcher
> - Stephen Gander—7 year old boy desensitized to video game violence
> - Ian Verchere—Radical Entertainment
> - Pam Gander—Parent (Stephen's mother)

Block 5 Overview

Block 5 opens with the sights and sounds of three teen boys playing a simple game of pick-up basketball. With laughter and youthful zeal these boys are engaged in a very traditional play experience. In this section Dr Kline addresses the changes the video game has brought to more traditional forms of play. He states:

> Increasingly for young boys, coming home from school means going into their rooms and plugging into the video game system…when they are doing that we should remember that they are not outside playing with their peers, they are not exploring their neighborhood or forming social bonds with people around them, what they are doing is plugging into a pre-programmed game experience that controls their imagination (Kline 1998).

Dr. Kline also discusses video games and their role as a communication medium.

Following an explosive montage of video game violence the viewer is introduced to the spectacular levels of violence encoded into today's video games. Here we meet two American parents whose children were killed by fellow teens in a high school shooting. These parents are suing the
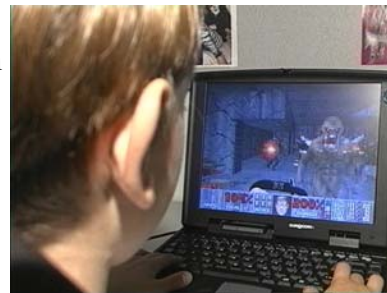
video game industry because they feel that violent video games are partly responsible for the deaths of their children: "I think the video games are the straw that broke the camel's back. We are not saying that this is the only thing that is causing it, but it is a contributing factor" (interview #1).

Next, we again meet Brent de Waal, an SFU video game researcher. de Waal is conducting the ICARUS experiment, designed to measure a variety of physiological responses of gamers playing both violent and non-violent games:

> One of the things about a violent game is that is creates a situation where the players have to really attend to the game. If they stop paying attention the games over, so with a violent game you get a tight feedback (de Waal).

From this research, both de Wall and Kline explain how video games are desensitizing kids to violent action.

At this point we meet 7 year old Stephen Gander. He loves violent video games. Through an eerily edited montage of sound bites it becomes clear Stephen is desensitized to video game violence: "it's fun to kill everyone around, it's especially fun with God mode on" (Gander 1998). During this section the issue of desensitization is thoroughly discussed and Ian Verchere from Radical Entertainment defends industry practices in this area:

> I think that violence and sexuality in interactive forms of entertainment are not problematic as long as people are forewarned about it, or have some level of understanding…like any other consumer product it's up to responsible parents [and] guardians, to take ownership of what it is that the peo-

ple they are responsible for, are looking at and doing (Verchere).

Next we meet Pam Smith-Gander, Stephen's mother. Pam is a single mother living in Vancouver and she has been trying to provide Stephen with the proper context necessary to understand violence in video games: "I try what I can…to try and make sure, that he [Stephen] understands that this is violence…[it's not] real…this is
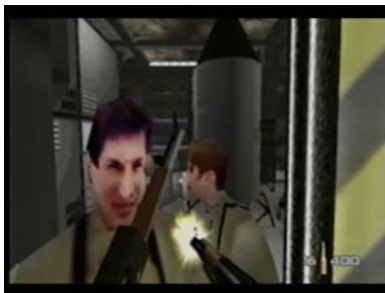
something that if somebody really did that to you that would really hurt" (Smith-Gander 1998). However, dealing with this issue is problematic for Gander. First, as video games have become fully integrated into youth culture it's hard to control her child's interest in popular games—violent video games are the most popular (Brock 1997). Second, the lure of the video game can be too much for some children causing behavior problems. During the interview with Gander, Stephen throws a minor tantrum because his mom is being critical of violence in video games.

Key Issues

There are many issues regarding violence and video games which could be further developed outside of Block 5. An entire doctoral thesis could be devoted to such a wide ranging issue. Therefore, I want to focus this discussion on two specific areas. The first is concerned with the industry's position on violence in video games and their assertion that it is up to parents to deal with the problem. The second area deals with the impact of the music I used in Block 5 and

where it came from.

The assertion made by Ian Verchere from radical Entertainment that it's "up to responsible parents [and] guardians, to take ownership of what it is that the people they are responsible for, are looking at and doing" (Verchere) is in conflict with statements made by Nintendo's Ron Bertram in Block 4. In Block 5 Verchere posits that video games should be considered just like any other consumer product and it's up to the "responsible consumer" to keep themselves informed regarding

the content and impact of the products they purchase. However, in Block 4 Bertram states that Nintendo doesn't market to parents be-

cause Nintendo doesn't want to be seen by their target market as boring. These two positions are incongruent. Under the ethos of the "responsible consumer", marketers communicate information about their products through advertising—information consumers then use to formulate their purchasing decisions. Advertising is one of the key vehicles for disseminating product information to consumers. However, according to Bertram, the video game industry is not about to target their advertising to parents. On the one hand, the industry is saying they do not market to parents; on the other hand, they demand parents be "responsible consumers" and stay informed about

the violent content of video games. It's a convenient 'catch 22' which helps deflect attention from the issue; game developers could at any time tone down the violent content in video games, only they would risk losing money because violence sells, and like television, it's cheap to reproduce a proven formula.

The second topic of discussion addresses the impact of my choice for music in Block 5. The music track plays a key role in setting the tone and feel of specific sections in a television documentary. The right music in the right place can communicate a point-of-view more effectively than narration or fancy editing. For Block 5 I needed ominous and foreboding music which would intensify the troubling issues related to violence in video games. I found the tracks I used, quite serendipitously, while playing *Resident Evil 2* one of the more violent and realistic games on the market. I turned down the sound (FX) audio on the video game and digitized the background music track. The music from *Resident Evil 2* sets the perfect tone for a block discussing the tragic deaths of school children. This provides a clear indication of the emotional state players experience while playing violent games.

Block 5 Teaching aid

Questions for Students:
- How have video games changed the way you play?
- What kinds of messages do you think video games communicate to kids?
- Are violent video games the most popular?
- What makes violent games more fun than other genres?
- Why do you think video game developers produce more fighting games than other genres? Is it because they can make more money with fighting games?
- Do you think violence in video games is a bad thing?
- Do you think violence in video games can lead to violence in real life? Why?

If you would like more information regarding violence in video games the following are a few suggested resources:
- "Video Game Culture: Playing with Masculinity, Violence and Pleasure", by Nola Alloway and Pam Gilbert, in *Wired-up; Young People and the Electronic Media*, Sue Howard, ed., (London: University College London Press).
- "alt.civilizations,faq: Cyberspace as the Darker Side of the West", in *Cyberfutures: Culture and Politics on the Information Superhighway*, Ziauddin Sarder and Jerome R. Ravetz ed., (London: Pluto Press, 1996).
- "Beyond Shoot Your Friends: A Call to Arms in the Battle Against Violence", by Celia Pearce, in *Digital Illusion: Entertaining the Future with High Technology*, Clark Dodsworth Jr., ed., (New York: ACM Press, SIGGRAPH Series, 1998)

Production Notes & Techniques

Block 5:
- The lengthy production schedule for *Insert Coin* paid off in Block 5 in a macabre sort of way. Because post-production on block 5 didn't begin until the summer of 1999 I was able to re-write the block to incorporate the recent rash of school shootings. While these events were tragic they happened at the most opportune time in the production of *Insert Coin*.
- As I mentioned in the key issues section the music tracks I pulled from *Resident Evil 2* set the perfect tone for Block 5. However, I also used music tracks from *Need for Speed II* throughout the documentary. It seems fitting that when I needed macabre music I found it in a violent video game and when I needed fast energetic music I found it in a racing game.
- Block 5 also provided the perfect opportunity to update the documentary. I used only the most up-to-date violent games in this block. Therefore, making it more difficult for the viewer to date when *Insert Coin* was produced. A sense of disorientation should be experienced by the viewer when they see the older games in Block 3 and 4 but newer games in Blocks 2 and 5.

Block 6: Video Game Effects

(Isolation & Addiction)

Block 6 Rundown

TIME:	ITEM:	ISSUES & NOTES:
00:00 to 00:10	Bumper	Video/graphic collage with music.
00:10 to 1:40	Intro to Addiction & Isolation The Zone!	When a gamer reaches a point of psychological disconnection they have entered the zone.
1:40 to 2:15	Isolation/Getting lost in the flow of the game	Players lose themselves in the game/ they give up other activities in their lives.
2:15 to 3:20	Industry Response to Isolation	It's a myth. Playing V.G.'s is a healthy activity.
3:20 to 4:20	Video Games are Addictive	Video Games are experienced as a compulsive behavior.
4:20 to 5:15	Kids say games are Addictive	V.G.'s are designed to make kids want to come back for more.
5:15 to 5:55	Closing Remarks	It's been the kids, in their own words, who have told the story.
5:55 to 7:00	Closing credits	Video/graphic collage with music and titles.

Edited: June, 1999
Block Runtime: 7 min.

Introduction

　　　　While the issue of violence in video games is one of the most talked about, researchers are also studying other more ubiquitous effects of gaming. Specifically, researchers are interested in what they have observed as addictive behavior by heavy video game players and the subsequent isolation these gamers experience from the real world around them. Block 6 of *Insert Coin* continues our look at video game effects with a brief discussion of video game addiction and isolation.

Through interviews with die hard gamers, video game researchers and industry representatives Block 6 explores these contentious issues while closing up the documentary.

The "Players" (interview subjects)

- Male Gamer—Teen playing *Star Fox* at Playland
- Dr. Stephen Kline—Lead SFU Video Game Researcher
- Steven Rechtschaffner—Exec. Producer Electronic Arts Canada (E.A.)
- Ron Bertram—Dir. Marketing Nintendo Canada
- 2 Teen boys—Interviews from media education seminar
- Ian Verchere—Radical Entertainment
- Ezra Gray—A teen who thinks video games are addictive
- Buddy Bonshor—A teen who thinks video games are addictive

Block 6 Overview

Block 6 begins with a couple of die hard video gamers playing *Star Fox* at the Nintendo Powerzone. Staring straight at the game—never taking his eyes off the screen—one of the gamers talks about how he gets lost in the flow of the video game experience: "sometimes I lose myself in the game. My mom calls me , go throw out the garbage, and I go like UH, UH, and after an hour my mom goes why didn't you go throw out the garbage I go you never asked me" (interview #2 1997). When a player reaches this point of psychological disconnection he has entered what's called "the zone".

Block 6 addresses how heavy gamers are reporting feelings of isolation as they recognize that playing video games means cutting themselves off from other people and giving up other activities in their lives. In response, Steven Rechtschaffner from E.A. and Ron Bertram from Nintendo state that video gaming is a healthy activity and that isolation is the "biggest myth about video games" (Bertram). Rechtschaffner states:

> I think the ability to go into an alternative reality is great; it's a really healthy thing to do…maybe there are people who get lost in them, but I have a feeling that the people who want to live in those worlds more of the time than reality are going to find ways to do that regardless (Rechtschaffner).

Following the industry's remarks, results from several research studies are provided to help bolster the industry's position.

However, according to researchers, these studies fail to recognize the powerful psychological effect of the moment when an otherwise healthy activity turns to a compulsion and when compulsion begins to resemble an addiction:

> When we say video games are addictive we mean in the same sense that chocolate and television is addictive. We mean that video games are experienced as a compulsive behavior, a behavior that kids will give up other things that they also like to do in order to play. That they will play an increasing amount over time, and that they find it very difficult to stop (Kline 1998).

At this point we turn to the kids involved to see what they think about isolation and addiction to video games. According to the kids video games are addictive: "if you play them a lot and you like that game so

much you can't stop playing you have to keep playing" **"**Do you think you are addicted to video games?", "Yeah!" (interview #3 1997).

Key Issues

There are a couple of issues I need to address regarding Block 6. The first is concerned with what was left on the cutting room floor. When talking about isolation many video game supporters maintain that video gaming is a social activity. Ron Bertram from

Nintendo commented during his interview that many kids play video games together—interacting with each other. However, this is not necessarily the case. I had some great footage which refutes this position. The two teen boys playing *Star Fox* at Playland were

hardly interacting with each other and when they did speak it was usually in grunts and groans. Dr. Kline also addressed this issue in his interview and the entire section would have been very illuminating. However, I cut it from Block 6 to meet time constraints.

Another area which was cut for time and conceptual reasons was a discussion regarding the future of video gaming. I conducted some very interesting interviews at the now closed down Web Café in Vancouver regarding mutli-player gaming over the Internet. However, this section was also dropped due to time constraints and because for the most part, predicting the future of video gaming is quite

perilous and would certainly date the documentary.

The second issue I wish to discuss is concerned with how I closed up the narrative of the documentary. I decided to tie up the documentary very quickly. I provided no recap of the issues and I definitely didn't want to make any pre-dictions. Therefore, I decided to leave the final words up to the kids. For some viewers this may have caused some dis-appointed. However, I felt it was fitting and less problematic than finishing the documentary in any other way.

Block 6 Teaching Aid

Tips for Parents:
- Get better informed—take a hands on approach. Ask your children questions.
- Play some of the video games your children play.
- Find out more about the video game rating system.
- Research media literacy on the web.

Appendix A: *Insert Coin* in the Classroom

Introduction

On June 11, 1999 a good friend who is a Vancouver high school teacher invited me into her classroom to show Block 5 of *Insert Coin* to students. This grade 9 class at Lord Byng Secondary was the perfect audience to test the media literacy approach I have envisioned for *Insert Coin*. This was a very typical group of kids from the target audience. They were a rambunctious lot with extremely short attention spans.

At the start of the presentation I asked the kids if they thought the media was objective or if they regarded the media as biased. I then got the kids to think about all the different ways a news story conveys biased. We discussed the power of visuals and how point-of-view is constructed through narration. Next, we discussed why they like video games, how many hours per week they play and how many games and consoles they have owned. After this discussion the class watched Block 5 of *Insert Coin*.

During the viewing, I made a few interesting observations of the audience's reaction. At first they were extremely impressed with the pacing and the intense images of violent video games. A few comments, "that's cool" or "that game rocks" was heard from the crowd. Many of the students appeared interested in what Dr. Kline had to say regarding how violent games may desensitize kids to violent action. The kids seemed to be very open to the discussion.

However, the students had a very curious reaction to 7 year old Stephen Gander. During the eerily edited montage of black and

white sound bites many of the kids started to laugh. The laughter was instantaneous; as soon as Stephen began to speak. At first I was puzzled by their reaction then I realized that the laughter was a self-defense mechanism. To any adult watching this section it would appear pretty obvious that Stephen has been desensitized to video game violence. But these games are a part of kids' culture so to do anything else but laugh would mean they would have to admit video game violence is having an effect on how kids view violent action. The laughter was a result of experiencing a strong contradiction and can be seen as a strategy of containment to deflect attention away from the obvious impact of violence in video games.

The Teacher's Observations
(The following is an exert from high school teacher Mona Penner's account of the presentation)

Immediately following the viewing:

> Brent asked the students to explain the argument in the documentary, many students answered that it was about the desensitization of kids to violence due to repeated exposure to very violent video games. Some thought that he, as the producer of the documentary, showed that he was negative towards video games. And while they thought the argument was convincing, many felt it may have been too one-sided by showing only the most violent games. Brent used these comments to discuss the concept of bias and explain why he only briefly showed an opposing side to the argument in his documentary. He then asked the class how the images of violence made them feel. Predominantly, the students felt such games were just a form of entertainment and that they would only contribute to schoolyard violence if other factors, such as social isolation or lack of parental guidance were present. One student said it was up to parents to be responsible for sensitizing their children to the violence in these games. Another student expressed her concern that a younger sibling seemed to be addicted to many of these games…overall, it was a very worthwhile exercise which I feel had a positive impact on the class (Penner 1999).

Student Journals
(The following are exerts from the grade 9 student journals—provided by Mona Penner with student permission)

Student #1: "The argument contained in this documentary is simply that violent video games desensitize children. It was communicated by showing graphic violence from a number of games. Although there are many other contributing factors, I do believe that video game violence does have an effect on real life violence. However, I believe that a stronger effect of video games is a decrease of patience and creates a feeling of needed instant gratification".

Student #2: "I think in some ways violent video games do contribute to the violence in society. They might make someone want to be violent in school, because it amuses them."

Student #3: "I think video games has only a little part to do with us getting more violence. A lot of games only makes you feel that you have to challenge your friend or the computer. I think the main reason we play is only to win, but not to kill others. Of course there are some people take violence in these games seriously, but it doesn't affect our whole society".

Student #4: "I think once you're above a certain age you know right from wrong. You know that killing people is wrong and the consequences and the aftermath. Kids under a certain age of common sense should be carefully watched by their parents, as to prevent them from becoming desensitized".

Appendix B: Attempts to Sell *Insert Coin*

Introduction

In July 1998 I undertook my first attempt to sell *Insert Coin*. At the time I only had Blocks 1 & 4 edited so the pitch was for a unfinished documentary—this would enable the purchaser to make any changes or improvements they wanted. I targeted two broadcasters. The first was the Discovery Channel; broadcasting over cable. The other was the Canadian Television Network (CTV); a traditional over the air broadcaster. Both are privately owned commercial broadcasters. A colleague of mine knew the head of programming at Discovery so she wrote a letter informing him I would be forwarding a broadcast proposal. In regards to the CTV, I just phoned their local offices and asked for the person in charge of purchasing independent documentary television and sent her a package.

The Broadcast Proposal

- Cover letter—this letter should be short and be addressed to the head of programming or the person in charge of purchasing documentary television.
- One pager—the one pager introduces the documentary and outlines key concepts. The one pager should be punchy, straight to the point and written with television in mind. The introduction to the *Production Booklet* is a good example for a one-pager.
- Producer's bio and contact information—this is part of the one pager
- A detailed Rundown of each block and what is in it.

Cover Letter Example
Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: "Insert Coin" – One Hour Documentary

Enclosed please find a package outlining the one-hour documentary, "Insert Coin", which examines the impact of video games on our youth. "Insert Coin" is currently at the rough cut stage and I am seeking a broadcast license in order to complete post-production.

The enclosed package contains the project and producer specifics as well as a video tape of two rough cut segments, for your review. I would greatly appreciate any feedback you could give me regarding this project, and look forward to your response.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Best regards,
Brent Stafford, B.A.
Producer/Director

Initial Reaction

The reaction from both CTV and Discovery was not very hopeful. While each reported that *Insert Coin* was well executed and professionally produced there were two key issues respectively which prevented the sale of *Insert Coin*. The head of programming for The Discovery Channel felt that *Insert Coin* was not scientific enough. The Discovery Channel does not run documentaries with a social angle. For the most part they are strictly interested in science and technology issues. I knew this before I pitched to Discovery so I tailored my broadcast proposal to focus on the science issues in *Insert Coin*. However, this proved not enough as the blocks I had completed (BK 1 & 4) were more focused on social issues.

The head of independent documentary television at CTV also had reservations about *Insert Coin*. While impressed with the prod-

uct, she felt that *Insert Coin* had no shelf life. According to the head of independent documentary television, The CTV only purchases documentaries which can be broadcast anytime over a three year period. *Insert Coin* did not meet those requirements in her mind. *Insert Coin* was too "newsy" and focused on "current affair" issues. Again, part of the problem is that key blocks such as Block 2 the History of Video games was not produced at this time. As well, I think the three year expectation is problematic. Excluding a documentary which focuses solely on the history of the video game and the technologies that drive, no documentary could sit on a shelf for three years without being dated.

The Next Attempt

With production on *Insert Coin* now complete and the *Production Booklet* finished, I will now undertake my final attempt to sell *Insert Coin*. I will send a copy of the documentary with a short broadcast proposal and a copy of the *Production Booklet* to the CBC, CTV, Discovery, CanWest Global, WIC, PBS and The Knowledge Network. I will also send this package to national and international television distributors to see if they will pick up the documentary and sell it for me. These distributors could prove to be very helpful as they target more than just broadcast stations. Distributors also target educational markets.

Appendix C: Ethical Guidelines and Release Forms

Introduction

When producing independent documentary television it is of the utmost importance to secure the copyright of the images and sounds you capture during the production process. Legally, each interview subject and company representative must sign a Personal/ Company or Parental Release form that assigns **all rights of use** of the visual image/sounds of their person, child or company premises to the producer of the documentary. As well, in regards to *Insert Coin* I needed to secure the use of the images and sounds of the video games I used. This is a standard industry practice which protects the producer from legal action resulting from a complaint over the use of gathered media material. It enables the producer to make what ever use of the material he/she deems fit and the signer waives any legal right to control that use.

While the release form is a vital standard industry practice it is in contradiction with the SFU Ethical Guidelines and Declaration which govern all university research. Like independent documentary producers, the university must also protect itself from legal action; as a result of faculty and students conducting research based out of SFU. However, the intent of the guidelines which protect SFU is at odds with the intent of the personal release form. Once the documentary release form is signed, the interview subject can no longer decline consent to their participation in the documentary.

However, the SFU Ethical guidelines insist that all subjects in

the "experiment" be able to withdraw their participation at any time. This causes a serious issue for the documentary producer—you can not allow the interview subject to control use, once the release form is signed. As well the SFU guidelines and Declaration demand that the identity of all subjects be kept confidential. This is certainly not feasible and quite ludicrous when considering that television is to be seen and it's impossible to maintain confidentiality.

With these issues in mind it's clear that the ethical guidelines do not meet the needs of documentary television produced in an academic setting. Therefore, when I made my application for ethical approval I had to re-write the ethical declaration; effectively re-writing the ethical guidelines.

Personal/Company release Forms
(The following are examples of the Personal/Company release forms I used for *Insert Coin*.)

Personal Release Form

I hereby release Brent Stafford, B.A., producer of the television documentary *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play,* from any legal responsibility in relation to videotape, film, or other media materials containing my recorded image and/or voice or property. I understand that all rights as to the use of such tapes or other materials is given freely to the producer of *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play*.

I hereby waive any right to inspect or approve the finished product or the copy that may be used in connection therewith. And I release and discharge the producer of *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game play* from any liability whatsoever that may occur or be produced in the taking, processing, distribution, of publication, of such images. I also understand that no financial compensation for participation will be awarded.

It is also understood that any such materials (video, audio, film, slides, etc.) will be used with the highest integrity and discretion, with the intent to inform, educate, and communicate responsibly and ethically, the subject matter contained therein for the purposes of higher education.

NAME:_____
                        (Please Print)
ADDRESS:_____

_____
PHONE: (H)_____ (W)_____
SIGNATURE:_____   DATE:
_____

Company Release Form

Playdium Entertainment Corporation ("Playdium") hereby releases and discharges Brent Stafford ("Stafford"), the producer of *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play* (the "Documentary") from any and all present and future liability, claims, costs, actions and damages in relation to the use of video, audio, film, slides or other media materials (the "Materials") which contain images or sounds taken from Palladium's premises or which contain images or sounds of any of Playdium's employees acting in their capacities as employees.

Playdium hereby releases and discharges Stafford from any and all liability whatsoever that may arise out of the taking, processing, copying, distributing, or publishing of any images or sounds contained in the Materials.

Playdium hereby waives any right to inspect or approve of the contents of the Documentary or any copy that may be used in connection therewith.

Playdium agrees to indemnify and save harmless Stafford from any and all liability, claims, costs, actions, and damages that may be incurred by Stafford by reason of any claim made by a customer of Playdium's against Playdium or Stafford.

Playdium understands that all of the Materials will be used with the highest integrity and discretion, with the intent to inform and educate, and to communicate, responsibly and ethically, the subject matter contained therein for the purposes of fulfilling Stafford's requirements in the Master's Degree Program of the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University.

Playdium hereby acknowledges that Stafford intends to obtain a broadcast license for the Documentary, and the Materials gathered from Playdium's premises may be included in such Documentary.

Dated, this ___ day of _____, 1999.
Palladium Entertainment Corporation:

_____
Rhonda Hjorth, Dir. Sales and Marketing.

The SFU Ethical Declaration Re-write
(The following is the re-written ethical declaration I attached to my formal request
for ethical approval)

1. I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** to clause (i) on page 4 of the Simon Fraser Univer-
sity Request for Ethical Approval of Research form. I, Brent Stafford, B.A., have
secured the informed consent of my subjects in their participation in the television
documentary *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play.* (working title).

However,
        a). Due to the nature of the project, where is was impossible or impractical
to get the participant to provide their written consent in the form of the Personal/
Company and/or Parental Release form, verbal consent to use interview footage was
received. (See Attachments: IV, a, iv).

        b). Due to the nature of the project, there where circumstances where it
was impossible to receive written or verbal consent at all (see Attachments: IV, a,
v).

2. I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **do not fully agree** with clause (ii) on page 4 of the Simon
Fraser University Request for Ethical Approval of Research form. The point of con-
tention is the statement that "at any time" the participant may withdraw their partici-
pation.

        a). I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** that each participant was informed that by
        signing the Personal/Company and/or Parental Release form that they were
        assigning **all rights of use** of their visual image and/or images of video
        games etc. to the producer of *Insert Coin: The Culture of Video Game Play*
        (please see release forms attached). This request for right of use was ob-
        tained following the completion of the interview at which time the partici-
        pant had the right to reflect on their response to the interview questions and
        then either approve or refuse consent and fully withdraw their participation
        (see Attachments: IV, a.). If the participant signed the release form then
        they waived their right to inspect or approve the finished product or the
        copy that may be used in connection therewith, as well as, assign all rights
        of use of media materials containing their recorded image and/or voice or
        property to the researcher/producer.

        b). I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** that in accordance with standard industry
        practices all subjects had the right to inform the researcher/producer they
        wished to stop the interview and decline consent.

        c). I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** each participant was informed that I was
        a student in the School of Communication and any request and or problems
        could be handled through contacting the School of Communication. All
        release forms were on SFU, School of Communication letter head and con-

tact numbers were provided (approved by Dr. Stephen Kline).

3. I Brent Stafford, B.A., **do not agree** with clause (iii) on page 4 of the Simon Fraser University Request for Ethical Approval of Research form which states that the researcher "must maintain in strict confidence the responses of individual subjects".

> a). I, Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** that each participant, parent , and/or legal guardian was informed that their visual image and/or voice or property will be used in a television project for public viewing (including, but not limited to, distribution in the public school system or broadcast as written consent assigns all rights of use to the producer) and any such materials (video, audio, film, slides, etc.) will be used with "the highest integrity and discretion, with the intent to inform, educate, and communicate responsibly and ethically, the subject matter contained therein for the purposes of higher education" (see Personal/Company and Parental release form). *Insert Coin* will be made available for public viewing and confidentiality s unattainable (see Attachments: IV, b).

> b). Each parent, participant, and company representative (that provided contact information) was contacted in the month of August, 1998 and was provided an update on the status of the production. At this time the producer confirmed with each parent and company representative that a broadcast license with a Canadian broadcaster was currently being sought and that the producer would again call back when an air date and time was secured.

4. I Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** with clause (iv) on page 4 of the Simon Fraser University Request for Ethical Approval of Research form. I Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** "to carry out the research strictly in accordance with the proposal and the documents that accompany it, as well as any conditions imposed by the Ethics Review Committee.

5. I Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** with clause (v) on page 4 of the Simon Fraser University Request for Ethical Approval of Research form. I Brent Stafford, B.A., **agree** to permit my Chair, Director or Dean to observe the conduct of the research and to verify that procedures are followed.

_____   _____
   (Signature of Principal Investigator)   (Date)

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