

# Chapter 3

## **DIGITAL GAMING AND THE MEDIA PLAYGROUND**

# Video Games as a Form of Story

## *World of Warcraft*

- ▶ Ushered in the era of the completely immersive online game
- ▶ Featured a beginner's guide that read like the narrative of an epic novel
- ▶ Expansions added settings, characters, and play features.
- ▶ Offers players the ability to create their own narratives



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL GAMING

- ▶ Industrial Revolution
  - ▶ Promoted mass consumption
  - ▶ Emergence of leisure time
- ▶ Digital games
  - ▶ Evolved from their simplest forms in the arcade into four major formats: television, handheld devices, computers, and the Internet

# MECHANICAL GAMING

- Coin-operated counter machines
  - First appeared in train depots, hotel lobbies, bars, and restaurants
- Penny arcade
  - Helped shape future media technology
    - Automated phonographs → jukebox
    - Kinetoscope → movies
    - Bagatelle → pinball machine



# THE FIRST VIDEO GAMES

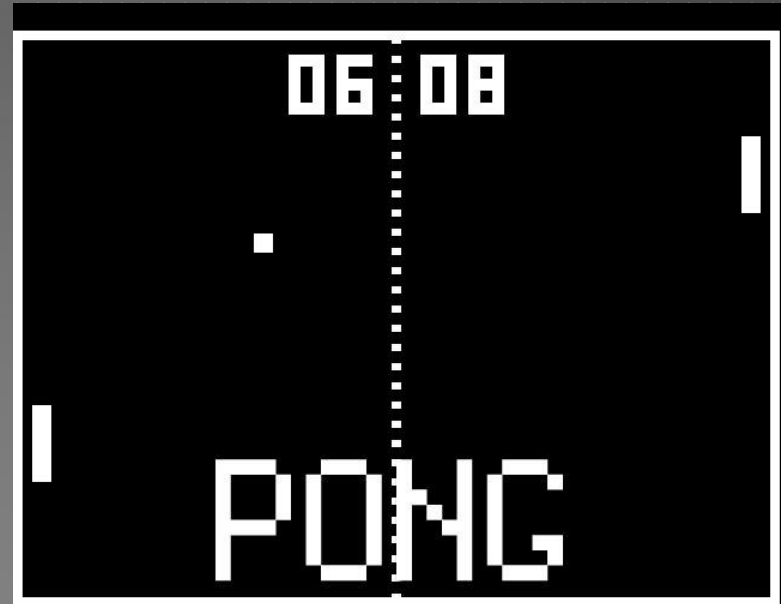
- Cathode Ray Tube Amusement Device
  - Key component of the first video games: the cathode ray tube (CRT)
- Odyssey
  - First home television game
- Modern arcades
  - Gathered multiple coin-operated games together

# THE FIRST VIDEO GAMES (CONT.)

## ▶ Atari

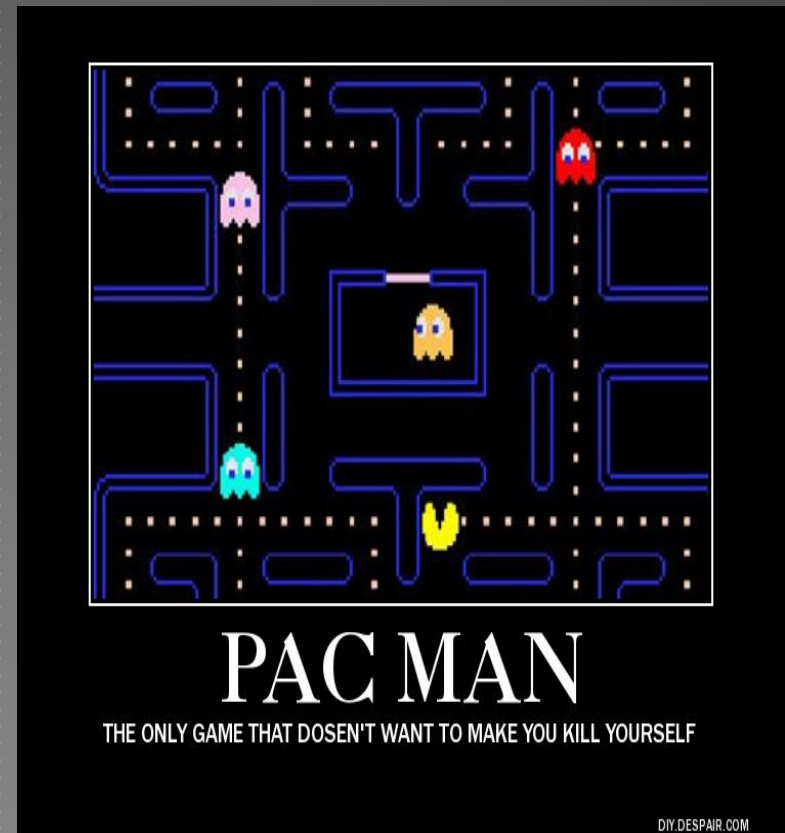
### ▶ Created *Pong*

- ▶ Kept score on the screen
- ▶ Made blip noises when the ball hit the paddles or bounced off the sides of the court
- ▶ First video game popular in arcades
- ▶ Home version was marketed through an exclusive deal with Sears.



# ARCADES AND CLASSIC GAMES

- ▶ Late 1970s and early 1980s
  - ▶ Games like *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man*, and *Donkey Kong* were popular in arcades and bars.
  - ▶ Signaled electronic gaming's potential as a social medium
  - ▶ Gaming included the use of joysticks and buttons.
  - ▶ *Pac-Man* featured the first avatar.



# CONSOLES AND ADVANCING GRAPHICS

- ▶ Consoles
  - ▶ Devices specifically used to play video games
  - ▶ The higher the bit rating, the more sophisticated the graphics
  - ▶ Early consoles
    - ▶ Atari 2600 (1977)
    - ▶ Nintendo Entertainment System (1983)
    - ▶ Sega Genesis (1989)





# CONSOLES AND ADVANCING GRAPHICS (CONT.)

- ▶ Major home console makers
  - ▶ Nintendo
    - ▶ Wii
  - ▶ Microsoft
    - ▶ Xbox and Kinect
  - ▶ Sony
    - ▶ Playstation series
- ▶ Not every popular game is available on all three platforms.



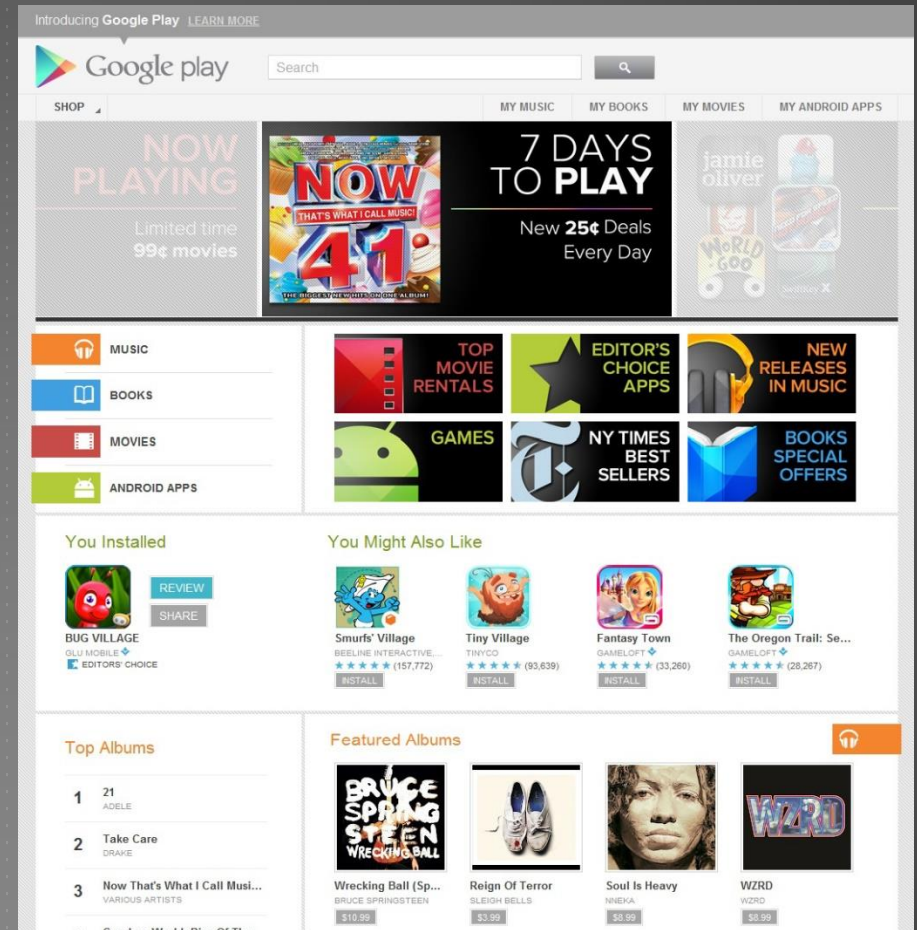
# GAMING ON HOME COMPUTERS

- ▶ Advantages over early consoles
  - ▶ Greater versatility
  - ▶ Faster processing speeds
  - ▶ Better graphics
- ▶ Resurgence in PC gaming
  - ▶ Free-to-play games
  - ▶ Subscription games
  - ▶ Social media games



# THE INTERNET TRANSFORMS GAMING

- ▶ Online connections are now a normal part of console games.
  - ▶ Made live online multiplayer play possible
  - ▶ Enabled the spread of video games to converged devices
  - ▶ Paved the way for social gaming, virtual worlds, and massively multiplayer online games



# MMORPGS, VIRTUAL WORLDS, AND SOCIAL GAMING

- ▶ Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs)
  - ▶ Set in virtual worlds
  - ▶ Large groups of players
- ▶ Online fantasy sports games
  - ▶ Actual sports results determine scores in their online games.
- ▶ Popular in social networking sites

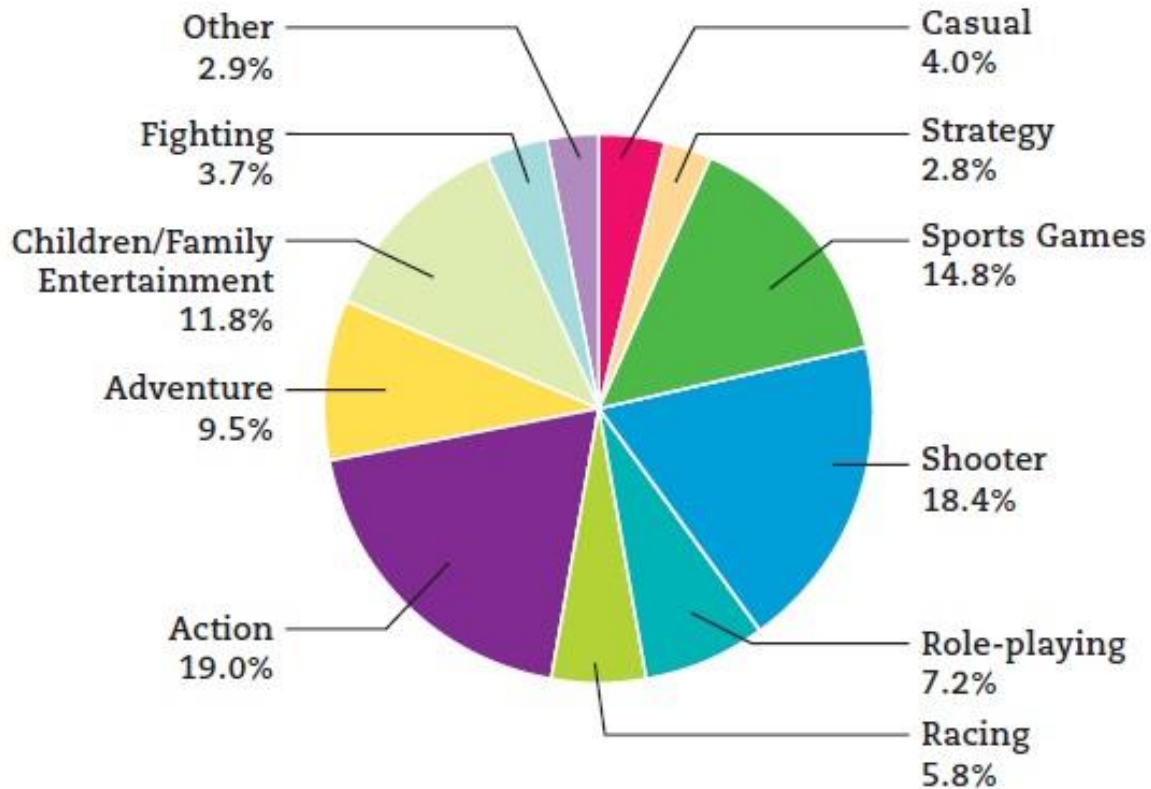
# CONVERGENCE: FROM CONSOLES TO MOBILE GAMING

- ▶ Consoles become entertainment centers
  - ▶ Multiple forms of media converging in a single device
- ▶ Portable players and mobile gaming
  - ▶ Portable devices are facing competition from smartphones and touchscreen tablets

# VIDEO GAME GENRES

- ▶ Electronic Software Association organizes games by gameplay.
  - ▶ Action games and shooter games
  - ▶ Adventure games
  - ▶ Role-playing games
  - ▶ Strategy and simulation games
  - ▶ Casual games
  - ▶ Sports, music, and dance games

# FIGURE 3.1: TOP VIDEO GAME GENRES BY UNITS SOLD, 2011



# COMMUNITIES OF PLAY: INSIDE THE GAME

- ▶ Two basic types of groups
  - ▶ PUGs (Pick-Up Groups)
    - ▶ Elite players
    - ▶ Noobs
    - ▶ Ninjas
    - ▶ Trolls
  - ▶ Guilds or clans
- ▶ Players communicate through voice and text.



**PICK UP GROUPS**

You're never far away from a party

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# COMMUNITIES OF PLAY: OUTSIDE THE GAME

- ▶ Collective intelligence
  - ▶ Gamers sharing their knowledge and ideas
  - ▶ Modding
- ▶ Game sites
  - ▶ GameSpot.com, Penny-arcade.com
- ▶ Conventions
  - ▶ Penny Arcade Expo (PAX), Blizzcon, and the Tokyo Game Show

# ELECTRONIC GAMING AND MEDIA CULTURE

- ▶ Fantasy league sports have spawned a number of draft specials on ESPN and a regular podcast on ESPN radio.
- ▶ Electronic games have inspired movies, and video game spin-offs are common for blockbusters.
- ▶ Comic books and animation have also inspired video games.

# ELECTRONIC GAMING AND ADVERTISING

- ▶ Advergames
  - ▶ Video games created for purely promotional purposes
- ▶ In-game advertisements
  - ▶ Ads integrated as billboards, logos, storefronts, etc., within games
  - ▶ Some can be altered remotely so they can be tailored to players based on numerous factors.



# ADDICTION AND OTHER CONCERNS

## ▶ Addiction

- ▶ Associated with an increased incidence of depression, social phobias, and increased anxiety
- ▶ More likely to affect males
- ▶ Games are often addictive by design, with elaborative achievement systems.



# ADDICTION AND OTHER CONCERNS (CONT.)

- ▶ Violence
  - ▶ Most games involving combat are intentionally violent.
  - ▶ Concern over personality traits of certain types of players
- ▶ Misogyny
  - ▶ Games such as *Grand Theft Auto 3*
  - ▶ May be due to the male insularity of the game development industry



# REGULATING GAMING

- ▶ *Death Race (1976)*
  - ▶ First public outcry over violence in electronic gaming
- ▶ Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)
  - ▶ Labels games based on sexual and violent content
  - ▶ Categories: EC, E, E 10+, T, M 17+, and AO

# THE FUTURE OF GAMING AND INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- ▶ Gaming technology will become more immersive and portable.
- ▶ Gamification
  - ▶ Embedding of interactive game experiences to bring competition and rewards to workforce training, classrooms, social causes, and everyday business processes

# THE OWNERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION OF DIGITAL GAMING

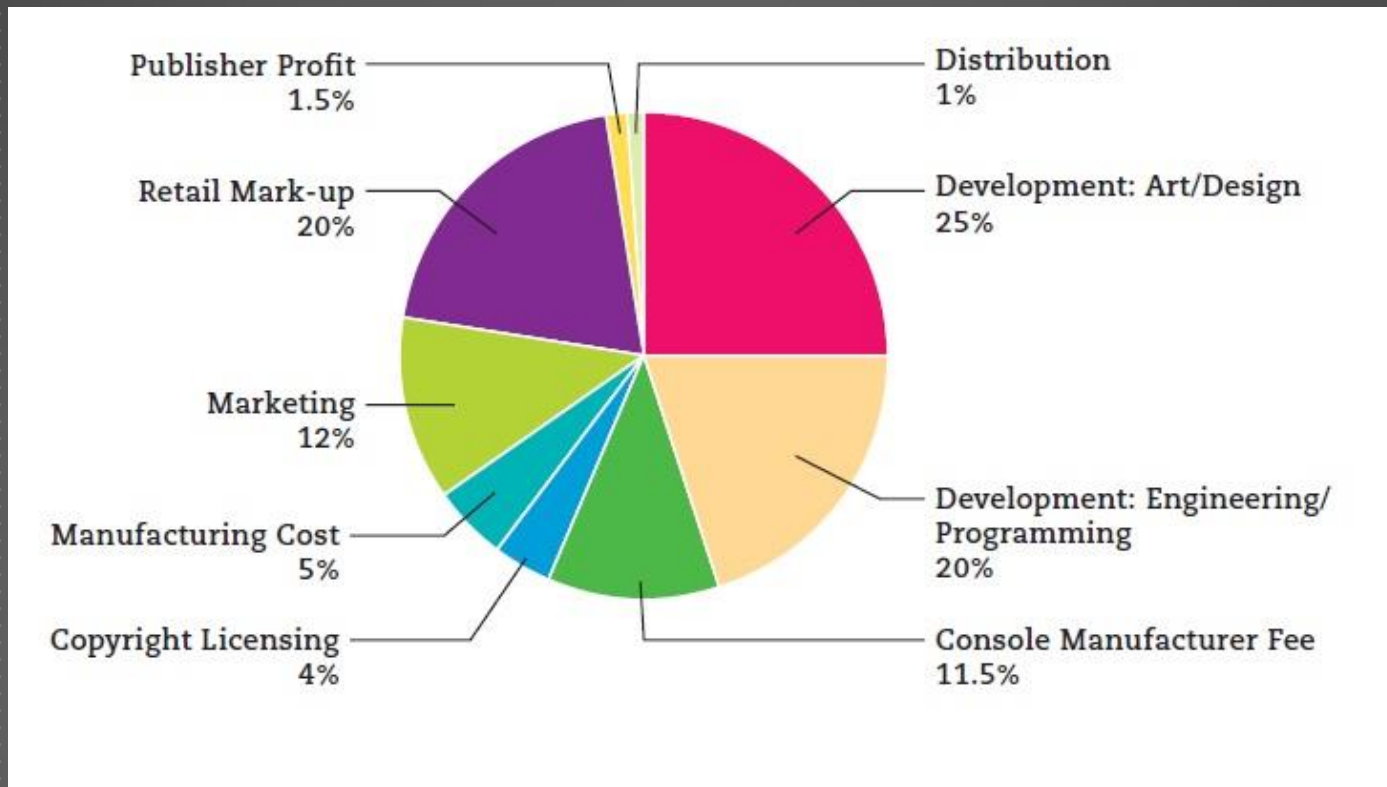
- ▶ Console makers
  - ▶ Major players are Nintendo, Sony, and Microsoft.
- ▶ Game publishers
  - ▶ Console makers (in some cases)
  - ▶ More often independent companies
    - ▶ Activision Blizzard and Electronic Arts
    - ▶ New major publishers include Zynga and Rovio



# THE STRUCTURE OF DIGITAL GAME PUBLISHING

- ▶ Development
  - ▶ Designing, coding, scoring, and testing a game
- ▶ Licensing
  - ▶ Royalties to console manufacturers
  - ▶ Intellectual properties
- ▶ Marketing
  - ▶ Often exceeds development costs

# FIGURE 3.2: WHERE THE MONEY GOES ON A \$60 VIDEO GAME



# SELLING DIGITAL GAMES

- ▶ Pay models
  - ▶ Boxed game/retail model
  - ▶ Subscription model
  - ▶ Free-to-play
- ▶ Video game stores
  - ▶ Department stores
  - ▶ GameStop

# SELLING DIGITAL GAMES (CONT.)

- ▶ Digital distribution
  - ▶ Each major console has its own digital store.
  - ▶ Digital download sites
    - ▶ Steam
    - ▶ GameStop
    - ▶ Origin
    - ▶ GameFly
  - ▶ Mobile devices
    - ▶ Apple's App Store and Google Play

# ALTERNATIVE VOICES

- ▶ Mobile gaming has provided an entry point for independent game developers.
  - ▶ Cost of entry has decreased substantially.
- ▶ Time and money are still needed.
  - ▶ Kickstarter
  - ▶ Gameifesto

# DIGITAL GAMING, FREE SPEECH, AND DEMOCRACY

- ▶ ESRB ratings do not have the force of law.
  - ▶ California tried to legally prohibit the sale of M-rated games to minors.
  - ▶ Supreme Court granted electronic games First Amendment free speech protections.
    - ▶ Will not make the rating system go away