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Video games missing the mark with LGBTQ community

Members of the queer community feel they are being ignored by game makers



Elliot Maxted, a 19-year old art fundamentals student, thinks video games should be more inclusive.

STORY BY JENNIFER STIENSTRA

The video game industry has a bad reputation of ignoring a large group of gamers, and it isn't just the women they leave behind.

Members of the queer community have been mostly forgotten because a select group runs the video game industry, according to Merritt Kopas, 26, who is openly transgendered and is an indie game developer based out of Toronto and

"I think that games, especially in the mainstream industry, are so overwhelmingly controlled by a narrow subset of the population," said Kopas.

"When you put a group in control of a medium, they're going to make things that reflect their personal experiences."

Cindy Poremba, a game design professor at Sheridan College, agreed.

"Most of the queer representation in games that I'm aware of are from queer developers," she said.

Elliot Maxted, a 19-year-old art fundamentals student, said that video games should be more

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inclusive; noting that not every gamer is a heterosexual cisgendered male and it leaves everyone else behind.

“Growing up you hope to see people like yourself in video games but when there’s nobody like it’s a little bit disheartening and you feel like the odd one out and you don’t have anybody to look up to in that way,” said Maxted.

Tyler Hargreaves, 19, a first-year child and youth worker student, agreed, saying that having the same kind of character gets old after a while. There’s more story-telling potential with different kinds of queer characters.

“There’s so much more depth you can go into it with other sexualities, not just gay and lesbian, and they’re missing a great opportunity,” said Hargreaves.

“It’s not accurate at all seeing as how one in 10 people are gay or identify somewhere on the spectrum and it completely gets rid of an entire section of people.”

Anthony Tran, 18, a performing arts preparation student, said that the video game industry shouldn’t focus on the sexual identity of the characters, but rather make it a non-essential part of the overall story.

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ELLIOT MAXTED

Art Fundamentals

“It should make sense a character’s sexuality is just another part of them, and not their main characteristic,” said Tran.

Whatever the opinion, more video game companies in recent years have been adding queer characters to their games.

For example, in the *Mass Effect* series, players have the option to pursue a queer relationship. In *The Last of Us*, it featured two queer females in a non-sexualized relationship.

“Changes are happening and that’s because people have been pushing for those changes,” said Kopas.

Maxted agreed, saying that he finds that companies that are more inclusive get a lot of support. To him, that’s a good thing.

“It’s definitely better than what I’ve seen as a child,” said Maxted.

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