



Let's play

Description

If you have a weekend to spare you can while it away watching YouTube video clips accompanying gamers as they play through, and talk through, every level of *Grand Theft Auto IV* or *Minecraft* or game, old or new.



It's not as easy to return to a computer adventure game

as it is to watch a favourite film over and over. There's an effort to gaming. **Let's Play** saves you the effort. Other people's *playthroughs* rekindle memories of games once played, challenges won and time once frittered.

Let's Play videos are therapeutic, and vicariously social. *Let's Play* (also known as **LP**) is the latest manifestation of a genre of creative production known as *fan fiction*.

Verbally skilled and dextrous fans take some commercial entertainment product and overlay it with their own interpretation, weaving their own story lines, either with great love or in mockery.

Fandom

LP continues the tradition social critics recognised in the 1990s where consumers exercised their autonomy by *appropriating* mass media products such, as Star Trek, by turning them into their own

fiction, which they would share with one another. (Fan fictions were typically written by women sharing stories about the relationship between Kirk and Spock.)

Search [fan fiction Big Bang Theory](#). Amateur writers invent new narratives around characters they know very well from the popular TV show. Here the narrative overlays are multifold. *The Big Bang* TV series itself is about a particular breed of fan culture into Star Trek, superheroes and [Comic-Con](#).

There's a jackass element to some **LP** clips I've seen as louts crash, wise crack and guffaw their way through the game simulations. Others reverentially ponder every game move and detail, a style of investigation invited by the computer games *Myst* and *Riven*. In [Let's Play Riven \(Sequel to Myst\): Part 1 - We're Stranded!](#) Tommy Girl (Stephanie) explores every nook of the game world, and reads every line of Atrus' lengthy on screen journals, with commentary. It's bedtime stories for geeks.

Gamers can create **LP** videos thanks to the screen grabbing capability of most computers and some game consols. LPs are the ultimate spoiler, continuing the tradition of game cheat web sites that help frustrated gamers crack game codes, puzzles and work around the bugs. LP videos ostensibly breach copyright, to which games producers might be inclined to turn a blind eye according to a helpful [wikipedia entry](#). **LP** videos keep old games in circulation, giving them a new lease of life, and garner new fan bases.

Fan politics

LP videos also remind me that games are never just on the screen or in the arena. People play around with play. Gamers are not only playing against one another or on-screen adversaries, but trying to beat the game designer. **LP** videos are an attempt to arrest command from game developers and publishers. They at least keep the problematics of commercial publishing alive.

For cultural theorists (*aca-fans*) Henry Jenkins and Constance Penley, fan fiction also has a political dimension. It's another response to the commercial world other than consumer acquiescence or militant anti-capitalism. It's playing capitalism at its own game.

Bibliography

- Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge
- Penley, Constance. 1991. Brownian motion: women, tactics, and technology. In C. Penley, and A. Ross (eds.), *Technoculture*: 135-161. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Notes

- *aca-fans*: The 2012 new edition of Jenkins' book includes an interview in which he talks about academic fans.
- On fan culture also see: [Shōjo Manga morals](#), [Otaku architecture](#), [Sequel-baiting](#), [Brand me](#), and [No way logo](#).



Category

1. Play

Tags

1. computer games
2. fan fiction
3. play

Date Created

September 7, 2013

Author

rcoyne99

default watermark