

Life in an MMORPG

I am in Mor Dhona (or “More Drama,” as a catty player named Mint Dew calls this particular area in the sprawling kingdom of Eorzea), a central hub where players gather to buy, sell, and upgrade weapons and armor; engage in dorky yet endearing group dances; shoot the breeze and argue; or...other activities.

For instance: a scantily-clad blonde character named Lara Croft, standing suggestively with her bare midriff in the face of a seated silver-armored warrior, brazenly asks to be given “gil” (the in-game currency) in a rather aggressive display of panhandling—but is summarily rebuffed by the knight (“go do a quest”).

I have witnessed decidedly weirder goings-on over the past few months.

I’ve been an avid video game player for nearly 30 years, but have studiously avoided what are called MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) for a number of reasons (the biggest being that I never wanted to be one of those *World of Warcraft* guys who keep an empty two-liter plastic soda bottle nearby to urinate in should that become necessary during a heated hours-long battle).

My life in an MMORPG began this past April when I picked up *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, which is currently played by about two million gamers worldwide who pay a monthly fee.

FF14:ARR, as it is known, shares much in common with other RPGs: namely, you embark on a long save-the-world story quest while leveling up your character’s various skills, weapons, and armor—fighting monsters along the way and periodically facing “end bosses” (tougher monsters).

What makes an MMORPG different is the social factor: a player cannot simply enter a dungeon or take on a boss solo; depending on the type of “duty” (dungeon, boss fight, tower raid), he or she will be paired online with a range of 3-23 other players who will likely be complete strangers hailing from around the world.

You depend on these people—as they depend on you—to excel in their particular roles as the party travels through dungeons and/or fights often complicated bosses: these players are divided into tanks (who hold the attention of the monsters/boss), healers (who try to keep everyone alive), and DPS (“damage per second” dealers who must work quickly to take down enemies).

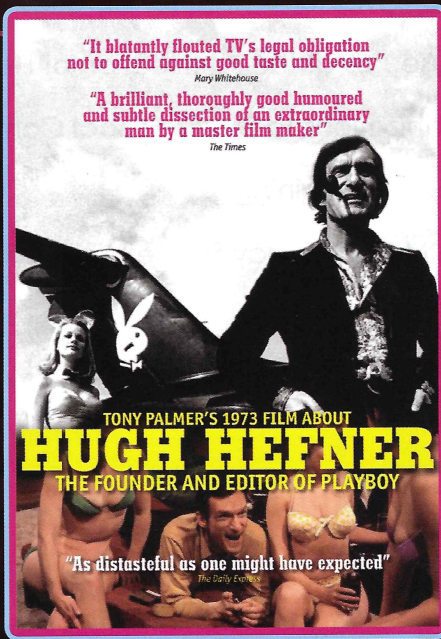
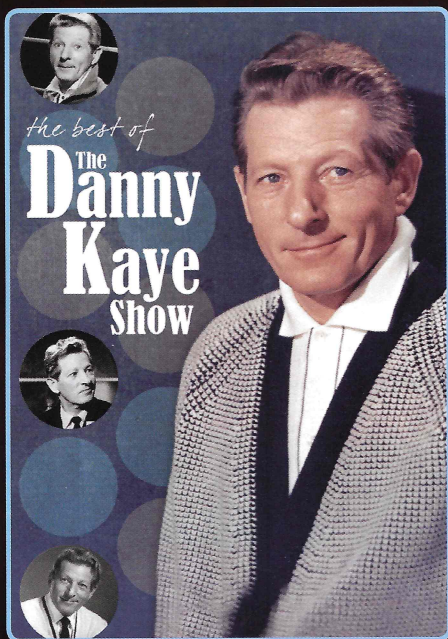
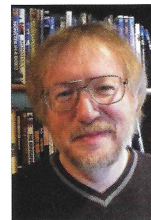
I have played alongside male and female characters (who may be the opposite genders

in real life) with names such as Arya Stark (among many other *Game of Thrones* monikers) and Biggus Dickus (nomenclature is no indicator of skill quality). Incidentally, no personal information is displayed onscreen—unless players share something in the chat box on the side of the screen (a crucial feature for giving and receiving directions during battle), but I have no doubt that players range in age from pre-teens to senior citizens.

Not surprisingly, the chat box will sometimes include mean remarks, but far more often it will be helpful encouragement, funny jokes, and the absolute quotidian (“be right back, gotta marinate the chicken”). Despite horror stories about rude and offensive behavior in MMORPGs, my experience has been overwhelmingly positive.

I don’t yet know how libraries can play a role in online role-playing games, but I would love to hear suggestions and/or experiences from others. Send me an e-mail at vidlib@videoliberalian.com, or if you play *FF14* drop me a message in-game. My level 50 dragoon DPS character is named Raney Dylan (the names of our two dogs)—on the Jenova server—and I am almost always up for running a dungeon.

Randy Pitman



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