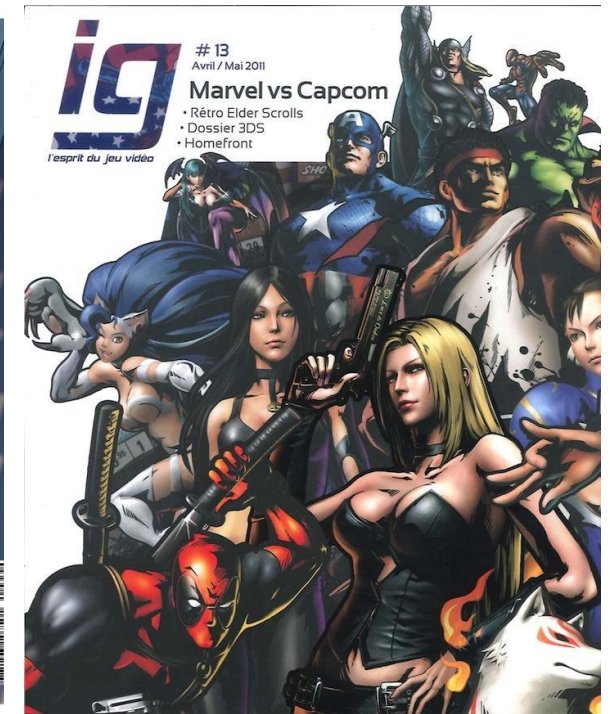




# HOW VIDEO GAME JOURNALISTS CONTRIBUTE TO SHAPE VIDEO GAME CULTURE

*THE CASE OF FRENCH VIDEOGAME JOURNALISM*

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# THE MULTIFACETED ROLE OF VIDEO GAME JOURNALISM

## ■ Historical Framing:

- Historically characterized as an "enthusiast press" closely tied to commercial interests and industry PR.
- Frequently reduced by academic literature to a simple "buying guide" or marketing mouthpiece.

## ■ Conceptual Re-evaluation:

- Transition from passive product promotion to active socio-cultural mediation.
- Dual mobilization of **ludic capital** (psychomotor, specific, encyclopedic) and **journalistic capital** (ethics, investigation, distance).

## ■ Core Thesis:

- Video game journalists shape gaming culture across **5 distinct fields of action**: evaluation/prescription, historical preservation, investigative watchdogging, live media streaming, and cultural artification



## FIELD 1 – PRESCRIPTIVE EVALUATION & CURATION (FROM "TESTS" TO "CRITIQUES")

- **Standardizing Evaluation Metrics:**
  - Institutionalization of numerical review scores and strict criteria (Graphics, Gameplay, Lifespan, Sound).
  - Creation of a shared "buying guide" framework for consumers.
- **Shaping Player Identity:**
  - Reviewing practices helped construct player preferences, genre canons, and the "gamer habitus" (e.g., console loyalty, expectation horizons ; Kirkpatrick, 2015).
- **Paradigm Shift from "Test" to "Critique":**
  - Rejection of technical scorecards in favor of holistic cultural criticism.
  - Shift from psychomotor ludic capital (how to play/win) to intellectualized ludic capital (how to interpret and contextualize



# STYLISTIC RESISTANCE & DISCURSIVE PLURALITY (THE "CLOSED ANGLE")

## ■ Resisting Standardized "Open Angle" Reviews:

- Standard consumer reviews ("tests") use "open angles" attempting exhaustive technical evaluation (graphics, sound, lifespan).
- Delayed publication schedules in monthly print media render standard buying guides obsolete.

## ■ Deploying the "Closed Angle":

- Restricting review scope to a single narrative, philosophical, or comparative lens to create unique journalistic "added value".
- Re-centering the review around subjective player experience rather than software performance.

## ■ Explicit Case Studies:

- *Emmanuel Denise on Animal Crossing: New Horizons* (Canard PC, 2020): "Psychoanalysis of a Tire" ; a philosophical reflection on boredom during COVID-19 lockdown, scored as »Locked-down/10".
- *Ambroise Garel on Payday: The Heist* (Canard PC, 2011): A homodiegetic, fictionalized review written entirely in gangster slang from inside the game's world

## Payday : The Heist

Chaotique bon

Comment j'ai fini au trou ? Longue histoire, mon gars. Une affaire de pognon, tu sais, et pas simple encore. Mais vu qu'on est là pour un bail, autant que j't'en cause, ça s'ra toujours du temps d'tiré.  
.....



## FIELD 2 – HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & PATRIMONIALIZATION ("UNEARTHING" THE PAST)

### ■ Countering Industrial Temporality:

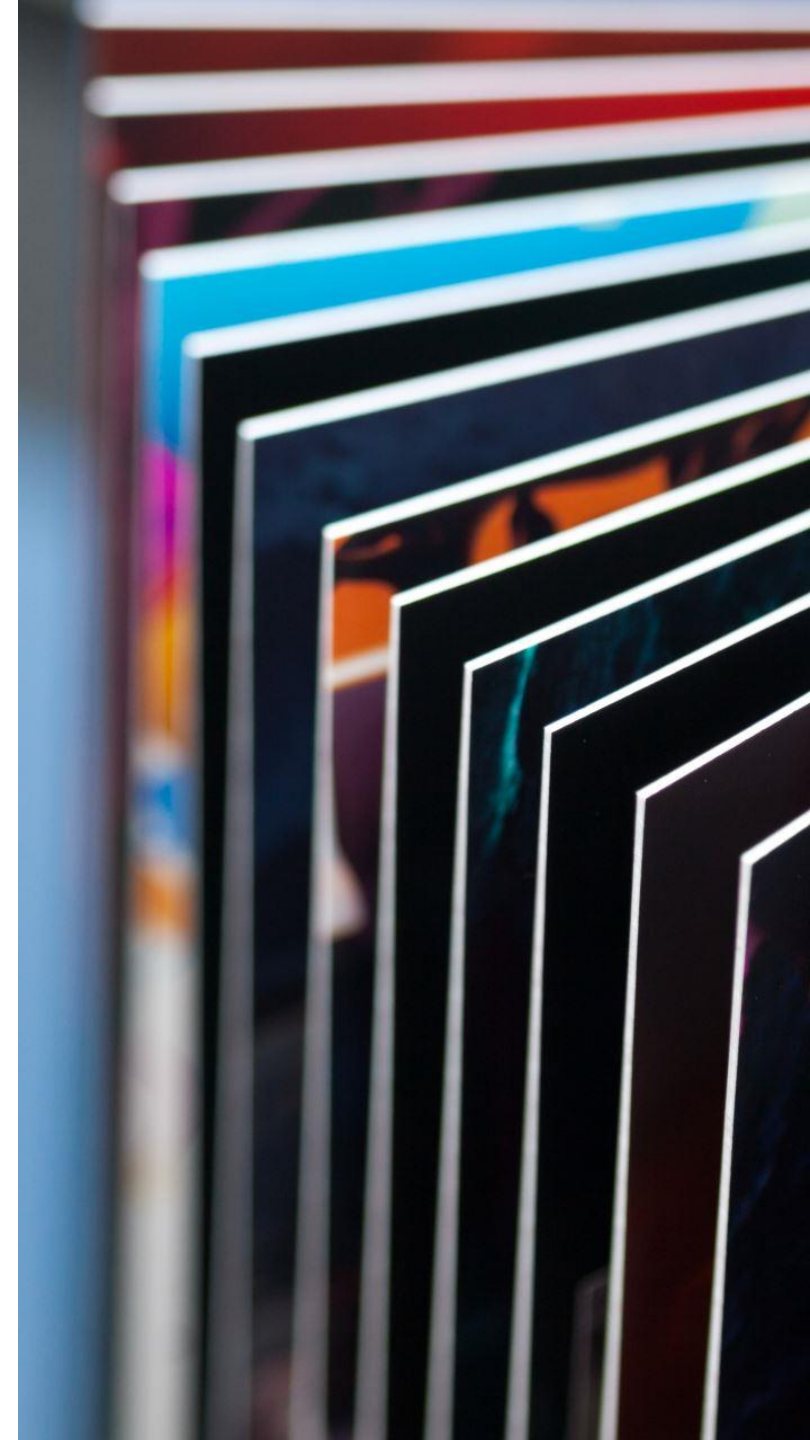
- Breaking away from the publisher-driven "inside the cycle" (news-preview-review).
- Developing "out of cycle" retrospective coverage unlinked to commercial release schedules.

### ■ The Technique of "Unearthing":

- Investigating unreleased prototypes, obscure titles, and forgotten developer trajectories.
- Constructing a non-linear, culturally diverse history of video games beyond commercial successes.

### ■ Accidental Archiving:

- Early journalism inadvertently preserved design documents, storyboards, and developer interviews that studios failed to archive



## FIELD 3 – INVESTIGATIVE WATCHDOG & COUNTER-POWER (EXPOSING LABOR CULTURE)

- **Exposing Systemic Industry Dysfunctions:**

- Deep investigations into excessive unpaid overtime ("crunch"), toxic management, sexism, and harassment (e.g., Quantic Dream, Rockstar Games, Cyberpunk 2077, ZA/UM ; Schreier, 2018)

- **Shift to "Peri-Video game perspective":**

- Moving focus away from the game product ("intra-video game perspective") to the human, legal, and social conditions of game production.

- **Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations & Impact:**

- Specialized and generalist media partnerships (e.g., *Canard PC* & *Mediapart*, *Le Monde "Pixels"*, Jason Schreier at *Kotaku/Bloomberg*).
- Spurring labor activism (STJV union creation), legal actions, and studio policy reforms



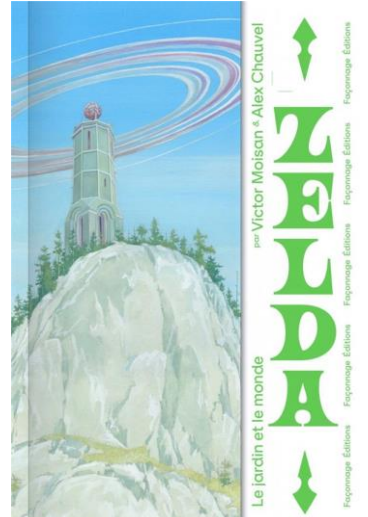
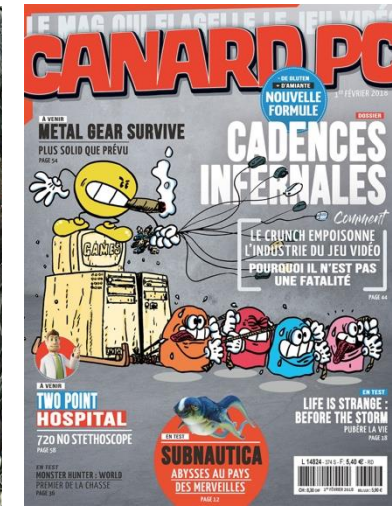
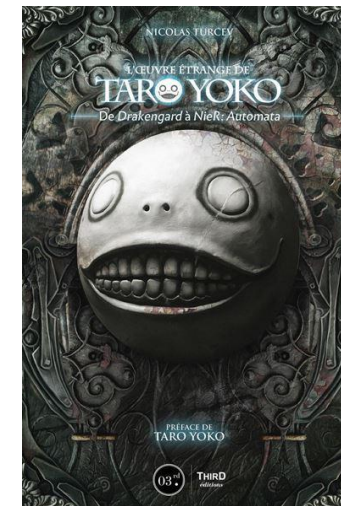
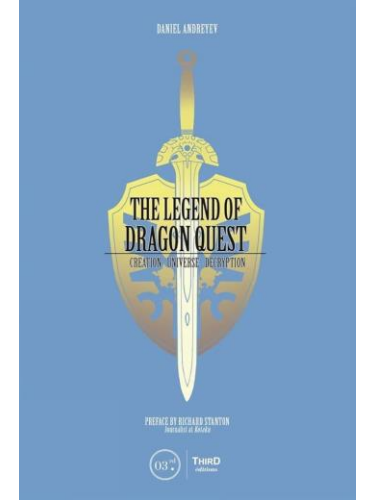
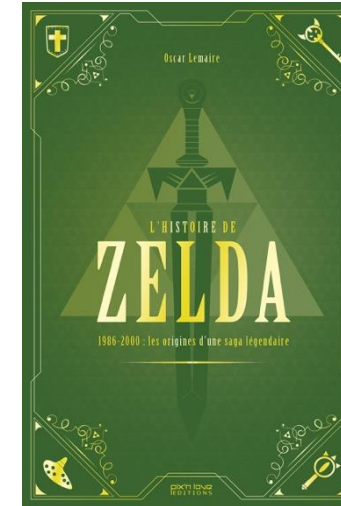
# FIELD 4 - MEDIA HYBRIDIZATION & COMMUNITY MEDIATION (LIVE STREAMING)

- **Audio-Visual & Platform Transition:**
  - Adapting to digital disruption by expanding onto live-streaming platforms (Twitch, YouTube).
- **Evolution of the Journalist-Audience Relationship:**
  - Evolution from 1990s print "paper friends » (Dozo & Krywicki, 2018) to embodied live hosts.
  - Co-construction of meaning through live chat interactions, real-time debates, and participatory commentary.
- **Editorial Autonomy & Cooperative Outlets:**
  - Rise of subscriber-funded, worker-owned independent media (e.g. Origami)
  - Decoupling from publisher press circuits to maintain editorial freedom.



# FIELD 5 – CULTURAL LEGITIMATION & ARTIFICATION PROCESS

- **Driving the "Artification" Process:**
  - Positioned at the forefront of legitimizing video games as complex artistic objects in the public sphere.
- **Essential Intermediaries for Independent Games:**
  - Acting as crucial curators and prescribers for indie creators (e.g., Annapurna, *Stardew Valley*, *Disco Elysium*) who lack AAA marketing budgets.
- **Cross-Disciplinary Analytical Frameworks:**
  - Applying analytical methods from film, literary, and sociological criticism to decode game themes, politics, and aesthetics.
  - Bridging industry practice, player culture, and academic research (Game Studies)



# CONCLUSION – SYNTHESIS OF THE JOURNALIST'S IMPACT ON GAME CULTURE

- **Synthesis of Contributions:**
  - Video game journalists shape culture across **5 complementary dimensions**: evaluation, historical preservation, labor watchdogging, live mediation, and artistic legitimization.
- **Transforming Industry & Public Perception:**
  - Shifted public discourse from pure consumerism to critical, ethical, and artistic engagement.
  - Forced studio leadership to reckon with human costs and workplace sustainability.
- **Enduring Structural Tensions:**
  - Ongoing struggles against economic precarity, platform algorithms, and consumer resistance.

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