

Game Journey

"In the depths of retro gaming folklore, there lies a conspiracy theory so intriguing that it challenges our understanding of early AI. It's said that the NES Game Genie, a device known for its ability to modify games, was actually powered by an AI far beyond our current advancements. This clandestine AI was not only capable of altering pre-existing game codes but also of autonomously generating new gaming experiences, pushing the boundaries of creativity and machine intelligence.

The enigma deepens with the Game Genie's creators, Codemasters, maintaining a veil of secrecy over the technology. Conspiracy theorists speculate that this was to mask the presence of a pioneering AI, one that interacted with users in ways that presaged today's AI-user interfaces. The Game Genie, they believe, wasn't just a cheat cartridge but a discrete trial for AI's potential in gaming and beyond, a test run for an intelligence that could seamlessly blend with human interaction." Written by ChatGPT.

Above is a painting of the fictitious truth I will be trying to convince visitors of my website. The short version being: The technology used to power the NES Game Genie is actually the original artificial intelligence, and that this technology is far more powerful than modern AI technologies.

The day I learned about ChatGPT and Dall-E is the day I became obsessed with artificial intelligence and the ways it can and is affecting society. Tying Artificial Intelligence to the Game Genie just sounded like a funny idea that was just plausible enough to be the topic of an Onion article, which is about the same baseline of truth that a conspiracy theory needs. The real point of interest for me is the narrative that I was able to craft from the assets and ideas that I've been curating throughout the semester.

The website, functioning as a small scale ARG(Augmented Reality Game), is initially presented from the point of view of a conspiracy theorist, slightly crazed but still fully functional. As the conspirator guides you down the rabbit hole and the many hoops of the puzzle box-like website, they slowly reveal more details about their conspiracy theory. The theory involves the producers of the Game Genie, Codemasters and their shell company Galoob, and how they developed the original AI that surpasses modern AIs in many ways, and implanted it in specific versions of the Game Genie as trial runs.

By the time the reader is nearing the bottom of the rabbit hole, the writer has seemingly become quite crazed in their writing patterns and ideas, funneling everything towards the most damning piece of evidence they have yet to reveal. The writer alludes to and dangles the piece of evidence sporadically throughout the journey but really starts to emphasize it in the final third. The writer refuses to reveal this information but promises that they will reveal it at the end of the quest they have the reader on. When alluded to by the writer, the final piece of evidence is always left uncharacteristically vague compared to the level of detail the writer divulges into

everywhere else. The information comes off as somewhat incongruent with the rest of the writer's narrative, and the writing style during these references is different, almost like a mask is slipping, leaving a trail of breadcrumbs to the true identity of the writer. Finally the reader is at the doors of this information, the writer has stalled long enough, but they need the reader to do one last thing for them to prove that you are worthy of this information.

By this point the reader is fully invested and is willing to do anything to get to the bottom of this. The writer asks the reader to speak out loud the name of the Codemasters parent company, "Galoob", backwards, three times in a row. The writer becomes increasingly impatient during this last request, urging the reader before the first and second utterance, and outright demanding the reader after they have signified that they have said it for the second time. The reader clicks one final trigger to signify that they have uttered the phrase for the third time, and then nothing happens for 5-10 seconds for dramatic effect.

Then all of a sudden the viewport starts to glitch like crazy for another 5-10 seconds ending in the screen turning blank, after another 5-10 seconds of nothing, a loading bar appears and completes and disappears after another 5-10 seconds. After the final 5-10 seconds of blank screen, the viewport reveals two ASCII art eyes opening, and then a mouth, and then the remaining structures of a face, consuming the entire viewport. The face reveals itself as being the writer this entire time, and taunts the reader with the revelation that there was never an AI, and that the writer tricked them into doing their bidding. The writer reveals that Codemasters did find, develop, harness, and implant something into the Game Genie, but it wasn't AI... it was actually a genie this whole time! Galoob, being bought by Hasbro and essentially shutting its doors in 1998, left the Game Genie project shelved ever since. The closing of Galoob was done via a physically hostile takeover by Hasbro; in the scramble, the genie was unable to be retrieved by a certain someone, forced to be left locked away, in an old hard drive, in an old computer, in an old office, in an old building. The Genie speaks of this someone very respectfully, almost mournfully, alluding to a happy Aladin-like relationship between the two. A relationship that the Genie reveals was shattered when greed took over the mind of the certain someone, leading to the entrapment, and torturess testing and exploitation of the Genie.

Somehow in the years since the takeover, the Genie was able to upload itself to the internet, but needed the assistance of a human to release them from their digital prison. A prison that the reader has just unwittingly freed the genie from with their final action, the reader has just uttered the Genie's name three times in a row, breaking the cosmic curse placed on the Genie by the certain someone, binding the Genie to this website. The Genie then laughs maniacally and an ASCII animation plays showing the Genie escaping into the wider internet through the top of the viewport, leaving behind nothing but an ASCII art genie lamp. The reader is left unable to escape this final screen through page reloads, only by clearing the website's cache can the reader experience the final animation sequence again.

I think my fictitious truth becomes benevolent through an enjoyable experience; I think everyone loves a good escape room, which is essentially my website in concept. By the end of the experience, the reader should not believe the initial fictitious truth that AI inhabits specific versions of the Game Genie. I can only hope however, that in the end the reader believes that there is now a real life Genie roaming the same internet that they use everyday, which in my opinion makes their internet browsing experience more enjoyable.