Video Game Movies have one of the most notorious reputations, frequently cited as some of the worst movies ever made. But as recent movies have shown signs of improvement, how did they get this reputation in the first place? And are they as bad as they say?

[INTRO]

Why do I do this to myself. Ok.
To be clear, while movies about video games like Ready Player One, Free Guy, Wreck It Ralph or Tron, include references or familiar elements of real video games, these are often about a *fictional* game or at least an original story that just so happens to include some established video game characters.
[Pixels / Jumanji Welcome To The Jungle / War Games / Scott Pilgrim / Lawnmower Man / The Wizard / Matrix]

What I'm looking at are Video Game Adaptations, where a game or series of games provide the source material to make a movie. And I am sticking to movies, not TV, so no Castlevania, Witcher or Super Mario Super Show I'm afraid.
Because of the interactive nature of video games, this makes it a difficult medium to adapt compared to books, comics or tv shows. Earlier games can have loose storylines with blank slate protagonists and later games can have crazy long runtimes and a movie would struggle to fit in all that lore. So often creative liberties need to be taken to make it work and this is where many falter.

So I watched 64 movies in 3 weeks to answer the question, What Happened To Video Game Movies?

Unlike my analysis of Spoof Movies, this isn't just one genre. There's action, horror, animation, comedy, so the evolution of Video Game Movies comes with multiple influences. I shall note, I'm not going to judge the movies based on how faithful an adaptation they are to their respective games. Obviously if a movie studio is going to adapt a game and use it's popularity as a marketing tool, then it comes with expectations, especially from ardent fans, and it needs to represent that game well. But just because a movie sticks religiously to the source material doesn't automatically make it good nor does it make the ones that stray away worse. I mean 1999's Wing Commander was literally directed by the game's own creator and it still sucked. So I am reviewing these 30 years worth of movies based on their own merits to analyse where did they go wrong and where did they get it right?

[Sponsor]

But for some important context, a history lesson.

History Of Video Games

In the beginning we had computers that play chess thanks in part to Alan Turing, a technological genius who helped cracked the Nazi's secret code in World War 2, and was rewarded by being arrested for being gay, chemically castrated and later committing suicide. Woo, we're off to an awkward start.

__References__: 1950s Chess computer Ferranti Mark 1 / Turochamp, Alan Turing (Labouchere Amendment "Gross Indecency")

Then Willy Higinbotham (pause for laughter) used an oscilloscope (pause for laughter), but it wasn't chess this time, it was tennis. But then it broke.
1958 Tennis For Two (dismantled for parts in 1959), William Higinbotham

But what if you wanted to play video games outside of a lab, in an arcade? Like a pinball machine but with a Periscope (pause for laughter).
1966 Periscope, arcade cabinet

Look! Space games! It led to the creation of Unix which is what ran Jurassic Park. See, a little imagination goes a long way.
1969 Space Travel
1969 UNIX
(Jurassic Park: "It's a UNIX system. I know this!")

So people imagined having video games in your own home. Then the Odyssey came out. But never mind that, tennis is back! But "Yell!" the Odyssey yelled, "We had a tennis game first" except they didn't. Then lots of people had tennis games and it got confusing for a while.
1972 The Odyssey home console
1972 Pong
1974 Magnavox vs Atari lawsuit
Pong Clone Examples: 1976 APF TV Fun, 1976 Coleco Telstar, 1977 Nintendo Color TV-Game 6

But never mind that! It's the Atari 2600. Let's give it some ports, Space Invaders, Donkey Kong, Puc-Man, I mean, Fuc-Man, I mean Pac-Man, let's port that. I hope it isn't terrible-(IT WAS)
1977 Atari 2600
Space Invaders 1978 Arcade / 1980 Atari 2600
Donkey Kong 1981 Arcade / 1982 Atari 2600
Pac-Man 1980 Arcade / 1982 Atari 2600

There's a lot of consoles now. The Astrocade, the Intellivision, the ColecoVision. Is that it?-But wait there's more! Channel F System II! Commodore 64! Atari 5200! The Tandyvision! There's even video games about movies. Things are going grea-
1977 Bally Astrocade
1979 Intellivision
1982 ColecoVision
1979 Channel F System II
1982 Commodore 64
1982 Atari 5200
1983 Tandyvision One (Radio Shack)
1982 ET Atari 2600

Things are not going great. Home consoles are too big, too expensive and too many. And games are so bad, they got banished to a landfill in New Mexico. No one's buying video games anymore so this is it. Game over…
1983 The Video Game Crash
1983 Atari video game burial

But never mind that! It's the Famicom! Or the Nintendo Entertainment System, depending where you are. With the help of a robot with a gun, Nintendo saves the day! Super Mario Bros! The Legend Of Zelda! They even got a tennis game.

1983 Famicom/NES
1984 NES Zapper
1985 R.O.B.
1985 Super Mario Bros.
1987 The Legend Of Zelda
1984 Tennis

So thanks to Nintendo's peripherals, it managed to save the video game industry by positioning themselves, not just as a console, but as a toy. But this gave video games a stigma that lasts to this day.

Video Games Are For Kids

Now we all know this isn't true, but this was the commonly held opinion in the late 80s and early 90s, since that was how they were marketed, and so the movies reflected this with the first ever video game movie, Super Mario Bros! But, not that one.

The Great Mission to Rescue Princess Peach was released in 1986, a full seven years before the live action one. This is a charming kid-friendly animated movie, and fits perfectly into Japan's culture of fantasy anime tales. In fact, when this movie was made, only the first Mario Bros existed, with Lost Levels coming out in the same year. It had little source material to draw upon but still had elements that would become Mario lore even today, like Bowser trying to marry Princess Peach. It's interesting to see how well Nintendo knew their characters even then.

After Bowser is defeated, the film ends with this dog character turning into a Prince. He's a furry? This is Peach's fiance and initially Mario is jealous of this, but he quickly respects her wishes. This is quite a surprising twist, but it neatly demonstrates Mario's heroic qualities. He is selfless while Bowser is selfish. Although saying this, Prince Haru does not appear in any Mario media ever again.

[Mario kill Haru]

However in the West, a 1993 Mario movie took on a different form. This was, to say the least, an attempt. An attempt to set Mario in the quote unquote real world by making it dark and gritty, so a pessimistic view of the world really. It's not so bad outside, is it? Ok don't answer that.

Influenced by Batman, Ghostbusters and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, this became a cyberpunk dystopia, but you know, safe for kids. Mario Mario and Luigi Mario set out to rescue Princess Daisy - Peach must've been busy getting busy - in this dinosaur dimension, which was made to be an incredibly 90s parody of New York. It's dirty, it's grimey and the people are rude, crude and full of attitude, so not at all like the games.

The Mario games were up to Super Mario World at this point, hence the dinosaur-people who aren't really dinosaurs except for that one dinosaur. However they were still generally pretty lax when it came to story. So this movie had the opportunity to reinterpret the games any way they wanted to. Their idea was that this the REAL Mario, and the game was the misinterpreted version, which is a bold strategy, and not one that paid off.

What didn't help was the very troubled production such as last-minute script changes and constant on-set fallouts. But despite that, a film got made.

The final result is pretty fun, but probably not in the way they intended. It's ludicrous and campy and not at all the "real world" grounded version they were aiming for. To look back on it now with a hint of irony, it's a perfectly fine kid-friendly cyberpunk adventure and I will never tire of Bob Hoskins being grumpy. But the Mario references feels so tacked on like lip service.

This is a similar situation to the 1994 Street Fighter movie. This would follow Guile's military war against M Bison but would sprinkle in other characters, like this reporter is Chun-Li and her crew is, I dunno, E Honda and Balrog, isn't Balrog a villain in the game? Who cares! Characters are just name-dropped bearing little resemblance to their counterparts. This isn't automatically a bad thing, but it only means something if you're a fan and if you are a fan then you know it's wrong. This also faced a troubled production, a genre mix of martial arts, war films and James Bond. In fact, the war film element gave it a creepy pro-military and anti-diplomacy vibe, like Team America but without the parody. And training for the martial arts got constantly rearranged meaning they often only did coordination hours before they shot the scene. This, along with the cuts made so it wouldn't get an R-rating, makes the film feel overly-sanitised. The reason for the scheduling changes was this movie's saving grace, other than Zangief.

Some may wonder why such a fine actor like Raul Julia would be in this film, but his children loved the Street Fighter games so he accepted the role so he could leave something behind for them. He died before the film came out, and no matter what you think of the final result, every moment when Raul Julia is on screen is an utter joy. But again, this camp and corny style is fitting for a movie aimed more towards kids. Violence that isn't too violent, cartoonishly evil characters, and even more cyberpunk! It's just more Turtles!

Likewise for Double Dragon. Camp, corny, non-violent violence, cartoon villains and cyberpunk. Like, this is a street gang's hide-out and it looks more like a kids playground and I want to live there.

But of course, there's another 90s movie about iconic characters fighting to the death and it is called… Pokemon.

Pokemon Go To The Movies

Ok, I'll come back to Mortal Kombat, I promise.

Following on from Super Mario, anime movies based on video games were generally better adaptations. Most of the time.

Instead of being forced to be grounded into some sense of reality and face the limitations of visual effects, these movies can go much wilder with the spectacular visuals and better represents how the games feel rather than just how they look. For example, this does a better job at capturing the spirit of Street Fighter, rather than this.

However, this can render these kind of movies alienating to the uninitiated and in some cases just make no sense at all. Like why does the president in the Sonic OVA have a catgirl as a daughter. Did he fuck a cat? He definitely fucked a cat.

Pokemon: The First Movie came out at the height of Pokemania in 1999. Likewise, this film does very little to introduce audiences to what Pokemon even are, being treated as an extension of the TV series and presumes you've done your homework ahead of time. There is this sequence where Ash fights a random trainer during the intro and it does kinda do the explaining through visual storytelling. Summoning creatures from balls and making them fight each other, and the mood is kept light and jovial. You don't get any sense anyone is in peril or really getting hurt, it's fun and games, so I guess if you don't get Pokemon by this point... this is gonna be a looong 90 minutes for you.

In fact the real introduction of this movie is the introduction of Mewtwo, a man-made cloned Pokemon. We spend a long time on this sympathetic origin story with a surprising amount of philosophy for a film about an angry cartoon cat. This sets up the tone for the movie which is steeped in tragedy. And it does not let up, hitting you with blow after blow.

They're Pokemon, it's literally what they're made for!

For example, the friendly fight at the start is now contrasted against Ash watching Pokemon in a futile battle like he's watching a war scene of soldiers dying around him. But of course, no-one actually dies- oops

The tragedy reaches its lowest point as Ash symbolically dies trying to stop the fight. The desperation in Pikachu trying to revive his friend, all this is such a bold move, it's a powerful emotional moment, it's super effective. Of course, Ash has to be revived and the power of Pokemon tears is goofy, but I think after such a heavy build-up, it can have this one.

So the first Pokemon movie poses a lot of deep complex themes, despite being aimed for children. But perhaps they thought they went too far with it, because the subsequent movies scale this back.

Pokemon: The Movie 2000 - wow, that's a lot of sequels - tries to do some "only the chosen one can do this quest" type stuff, but all that amounts to is "go to island and get ball".

The third Pokemon movie has magical Pokemon granting a small girl's wishes, resulting in the land being slowly taken over. This is a really interesting premise, a child with untold undisciplined powers, this could really go places. Except she doesn't, basically staying in her house the whole time. I know that feeling.

The fourth movie actually does introduce the concept of Pokemon to newcomers, in the *fourth* movie, and while effort is made to get a sense of magic and wonder to all this world, it tries to recreate the familiar emotional beats from the first film, but it all feels a bit artificial at this point.

Because of the success of the Pokemon movies, Fox tried to replicate this with Digimon. But rather than create an original story, they just patchworked a selection of short films, and re-edited, re-wrote and re-dubbed the whole thing. It's just a cash cow, or cashcowamon. The result is, as you'd expect, a total mess. But for many of you, this is a piece of nostalgia you'll fight to the death over, so perhaps I should just shut my dumb mouth.

There has been a Pokemon movie released every year since 1998, and if you're wondering why I didn't watch all 20+ movies for this video -
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AljHVVSwVR0 "It's because… It's because…"]
THERE'S OVER TWENTY OF THEM!

In 2017, the Pokemon movies got something of a reboot with I Choose You! a retelling of the original anime episodes.
Then in 2019 Mewtwo Strikes Back Evolution is a remake of the first movie. While it's a pretty faithful retelling, it makes subtle changes that nerfs the impact the original had. The scientists at the start are now more innocent and it's Mewtwo who is cruel for daring to have an existential crisis.
Pikachu has this sequence where he runs up this staircase away from, I guess, evil Pokeballs, in the original you can see his power depleting in desperation and flops on the stairs exhausted. In this version he doesn't do that, so there's less suspense.
By holding back on the tragedy, this lacks what made the original special. It is an inferior clone.

Pokemon as a franchise is constantly at war with itself because it's trying to justify, what is basically, cock fighting.
So Detective Pikachu avoids that, for the most part. Just like the game it's based on, it's a subversion of the familiar Pokemon format, focused more on being a comedy mystery.
Wait, is that Angels With Filthy Souls? Is this set in the same universe as Home Alone? I wonder what Pokemon Macaulay Culkin has?
Ryan Reynolds carries this film, quipping like a PG Deadpool, and the incredible vfx really brings the emotions to life. The CG Pokemon here flirt with the uncanny valley but that only adds to the creepy and noir-esque moments. Like the interrogation scene with an eerie looking Mr Mime, trying to get information out of someone who doesn't talk, that's a perfect meld of Pokemon lore with detective tropes, I like it. I wish it did this more. The finale instead turns into a pretty weak CG scrappy squabble, but the charm and character of the film makes this a great video game movie.

Now I was meant to come back to something, what was it again?
[COME OVER HERE]

Resident Anderson

So following from 90s efforts of Mario and Street Fighter, 1995's Mortal Kombat, directed by Paul W S Anderson, represents the first sincere attempt at a live action adaptation, something more faithful to the source material but with one vital difference. No gore.
In 1993, there was a US Congressional hearing because of violence in video games. Still stuck with this "video games are for kids" mentality, games like Mortal Kombat and Night Trap were heavily scrutinised for corrupting children. The result of this would lead to the ESRB, a rating system for games, just like movies.
[Morality! (like Fatality)]
While the Mortal Kombat movie was made separately, the controversy undoubtedly had an influence on the film. It was made to be PG-13 which meant no on-screen deaths but only for human characters. So frozen sculptures and CG lizards are fine, but for this dude. Bonk.

[27 min sub zero gets first death / 115 min ew bugs (stand in for gore) / 59 min finish him, just a hit, no fatality]
Despite this compromise, the film remains a cult classic among fans and some of the actors have even become alternate skins in the latest Mortal Kombat game.

Ironically these are the same three actors who were recast in the 1997 sequel. This film was stuffed with even more characters and fights but as a result this was a bloated mess.
Then in 2010 a fan-made short film, Mortal Kombat Rebirth, led to an officially made webseries Mortal Kombat Legacy.
In 2020 Warner Bros Animation released Mortal Kombat Legends: Scorpion's Revenge which begins a sort of redemption arc for the typically villainous Scorpion. Get over here and give me a hug.
This was the case too in 2021's live action Mortal Kombat. Now THIS is the movie the 1995 version should have been. Refreshingly violent! Personally I preferred this to the animated violence, but it's still better than this. [Journey Begins]

Following the mainstream popularisation of Girl Power in the mid-90s, along with the PlayStation generation marketed away from kids and more towards late-90s edgy teens, there was a rise in female-led action games. Which meant a rise in female-led action movies in the early 2000s. Resident Evil, Final Fantasy and Tomb Raider.

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, a title with all the keywords in it, starring the perfectly cast Angelina Jolie. For the most part this is another sincere attempt, with locations, set pieces, action, attitude, and a box office success, but it is such a slow slog to actually get going.
[when are we getting to the fireworks factory]
The 2003 sequel, The Cradle Of Life, cuts to the chase much sooner and makes for an overall more exciting movie. But Lara Croft is too good. I mean, when she can effortlessly pole vault onto a bloody helicopter, it's not exciting, there's no sense of danger.

Speaking of not exciting, Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within. A technological breakthrough that did not breakthrough the box office. This film was such a disastrous flop, it almost stopped the merger between Square and Enix.
Just imagine that - [Simpsons "imagine world with no lawyers"]
In fact, the film shared very little with the Final Fantasy franchise other than broad themes of life, death, spirituality and a batshit story that makes no sense. But you could remove Final Fantasy from the title and it'll make no difference. The main character Aki was planned to appear in other movies, making her a virtual actor, a performer they would own like the Truman Show. [Sims diamond] But like a puppet, she and the others are soulless wooden characters, and lack the emotion needed to carry an emotion-heavy story. And with a lot of technobabble spirit-waffle and no engaging characters, this is just boring despite Steve Buscemi trying his absolute best.
In 2005, Advent Children comes out, almost overcompensating for Spirits Within. As an epilogue to Final Fantasy VII, this to me swings too far the other way as it makes little to no sense unless you've played the game, so really this was made exclusively for fans. And like Lara Croft, it's hard to feel any suspense or danger when they're literally sword fighting in the sky.
[Lara Croft poles vaults in]

This brings us to Resident Evil. Written and directed by Paul W S Anderson, following the success of Mortal Kombat. Similar to Spirits Within, this has original characters which liberates them from sticking to pre-established game lore, but this is still firmly set in the world of Resident Evil under the umbrella of, well Umbrella. This is a great film, for half the movie it's a super tense and mysterious horror movie and she looks vulnerable until she kung-fu kicks a dog in the face and now it's a ridiculous action movie. This undercuts the sense of danger but unlike Lara Croft, this feels earned. Resident Evil games suit movies well, because you unlock new areas and abilities through progression. So the stakes keep escalating and the result is a lot of fun.

This would spawn five sequels.
Apocalypse has Alice escorting a child out of an infected city, but this is all action with no horror. Bloody escort missions...
Extinction ups the ante from an office, to a city, to the world infected but this is just uninspired. Like they go to the ruins of Las Vegas and all they do is open one shipping container, that's it. Uuh. The crow scene is pretty cool though.
Afterlife is set in a prison and then they go to a boat and uuugh.
Retribution is in some facility full of clones of the past characters and monsters in recreations of world famous locations like an evil Epcot and it's just uuuuugh
But then it ends on the White House, surrounded by zombies, this will be our Final Chapter. Oh boy, this is what they've been building up to.
The Final Chapter - so anyway, after that White House stuff - no, wait, what? What happened with the White House stuff, we just cut to later?! We don't even get to see it?! After everything, this is a total anti-climax. Everything from before gets undermined with stuff like "I thought you were dead" "nope, that was my clone lol". There's no satisfying closure, and the sequels seem more obsessed with trying to recapture the magic of that first movie. They even bring back the famous laser hallway. Twice.
More established characters from the games are dropped into the story but each time they just look like some cosplayer scooped up from Comic Con [free hugs] rather than something that fits in this world. And even then characters come, go, get sidelined, die, come back. Die again. Maybe they should've been left alone to exist in the CG movies.
As the sequels go on, I can only assume Alice In Zombieland was a lucky fluke. Because it's clear there was no plan. At the end of Extinction, she's given force powers, which she uses in Afterlife, but then in Retribution the first thing Wesker does is depower her. But it makes no real difference, by this point Alice is still so OP, there are no stakes. Only the steaks the zombies make out of whichever gang of humans she hangs around with this time.

After Resident Evil, Anderson along his wife, Milla Jovovich, made Monster Hunter in 2020 and it's more… desert. Instead of setting the movie in the game's world, there was the bizarre decision to have soldiers from the US Military get teleported in by a magic thunderstorm. This idea isn't even from a Monster Hunter game. This was apparently inspired by a Monster Hunter themed bonus mission in Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker, where you can hunt monsters with machine guns. You know, a joke, and not one worth basing a whole movie over. The result is an unsatisfying and incoherent mess which has struggled to perform, especially because a line of dialogue caused the film to be pulled from circulation in China, which I won't repeat here, because I don't want to be pulled from China.

So Paul W S Anderson has directed a lot of video game movies. I wonder if anyone else…
sigh ok fine it's Uwe Boll.

I Hate Video Games

Uwe Boll is one of the most infamous names in video games. Having made a few horror
movies, he would adapt House Of The Dead in 2003. This would be a totally fine corny
zombie action movie, in an irony-watch kinda way. But this film feels more like bullet porn.
Like this shoot-out has this bullet go ptchow and then explode and hit the zombie bsh bsh
bsh. And so many spinning rotations like he's trying to out-Matrix the Matrix. And other
absurd choices like gimmicky wipes and constantly cutting to the gameplay footage. And not
just a couple of times. Stop. Stop! STOP!
There's creeping shots by characters barely obscured.
Crash zooms into zombies at random points.
These directorial decisions destroy any sense of tension or build-up, because Boll is not
interested in telling a story. He's interested in making action scenes. Like this shootout lasts
for almost 10 minutes, and it's exhausting and- [gameplay cutaway] Aaah STOP!

Alone In The Dark is a summary of my love life but it's also Uwe Boll's next adaptation.
Which is about these monsters that appear in the dark because- oh no wait it's just more
bullet porn.
There is constant failure to escalate the situation. So while there's military gun-go-bang-bang
stuff, it's jarringly interspersed with this tomb raiding where snakes happen, then this guy
gets halved, then this thing happens, and that thing. There's no build up.
Ok, what do I mean by build up? So in Jurassic Park, the electricity is turned off, so the
T-Rex escapes, everyone's helpless and vulnerable, this leads to the characters abseiling
down into the enclosure while the car gets pushed down, which causes the kid to get
trapped in the tree, which causes the car to fall from the tree- All the time, they're scrambling
for their lives. THIS is good build-up. And most of the time the threat is a parked car.
This is attempting suspense, but they're not helpless, they're not vulnerable, and there's no
cause and effect, so it amounts to nothing. It's emotionless, just like 2006's Bloodrayne.

This is about a half-vampire, who starts off getting tortured in a circus. And then this woman
comes over.
[6 min Look Rayne! We're getting out! Isn't wonderful! Well bye!]
Rayne says nothing this entire time. Does she WANT to leave? Does she even know this
woman? How does she feel Uwe?
Then these guys attack her and she goes frenzy mode and attacks everyone, including the
woman. Oh no? Does she feel bad about this? How does she feel Uwe?
[12:30 min She didn't mean to - she's my friend]
How do we know this?! She hasn't said or done anything so far that would suggest she is a
friend, the very opposite in fact.
[16 min "I only wish to kill vampires"] SINCE WHEN?! Tell that to whatshername. And all this
is just 15 minutes into the movie.
It's like these are being made by a robot because there's zero emotions. Just confusing and
senseless setpieces.

In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale is Uwe Boll's most expensive film to date with the novel concept of what if we put Jason Statham into Lord Of The Rings. Boll has referenced Lord Of The Rings before, but this is an utterly shameless rip-off.

Statham plays Farmer who is a farmer (wow). During an attack, his son gets murdered and because Boll doesn't know how emotions work, everyone is incredibly insensitive about this.

[25 min sad statham]

[29 min "king needs you" "son needed me" "does it occur to you - greater importance"]

There's more important things than your dead son, like the king!

[53 min "is he with your parents" "...yes… but he's dead"] Jesus Christ dude.

[54 min "you're all he needs"] Their SON is DEAD!

Then they slay the bad guy

[155 min "vengeance of a mother"]

Then they kiss and the film ends and the- wait, what? There's NO closure to their dead son. Even the mother seems over it very quickly. What could be more insensitive than THIS?

[Postal 3 min Oh it's literally 9/11]

Oh god.

Postal is Uwe Boll's attempt at a satirical comedy, and as someone who watched over 60 Spoof Movies for a video, I can tell with some authority, it is very shit.

Postal's stand in for comedy is to be as tasteless as possible.

Fatphobia, homophobia, xenophobia. Kids get shot, a woman gets shit in her mouth, something about sperm in baby bottles.

There's a massive emphasis on the Taliban throughout this movie who are trying to steal the crotch shaped childrens toys because they want to create a pandemic that'll outdo 9/11 - and that sentence alone makes this movie incredibly outdated.

This screams try-hard, what it thinks is edgy humour is just so boring, I genuinely fell asleep at one point, during POSTAL, because there's no thought put behind this. It's just shock humour and that doesn't mean all shock humour is bad.

But this is someone attempting a genre he just doesn't understand because he lacks the emotional maturity to handle it and the results are painful.

Following a return to bullet porn with Far Cry, Uwe Boll kinda stopped doing video game movies other than sequels to Bloodrayne and In The Name Of The King. I'm not overly familiar with the games these films are based from, other than House Of The Dead to an extent. So there may be the occasional nod here or there. But whether these adaptations are faithful to the games or not doesn't matter. They are lifeless. At best they are mindlessly boring and at worst they are sociopathic.

Uwe Boll has shown himself to be incredibly petty when it comes to criticism. He'd send harassing emails or challenge critics to boxing matches. Hell, he might even come for me after this.

In which case, Hi Uwe, I like this underwater bullet shot. But that's it.

All he has done is made the reputation of video game movies substantially worse. And he probably did that on purpose.

This Cinemablend article highlights how in German tax law, investments in movies can be written off, with only the movie's returns being taxable. Basically, like The Producers, you can make way more money making a bad movie, than a good one. This is how Uwe Boll can

sink millions of dollars into his adaptations, even though every single one of them have been a commercial flop. And this is something Uwe Boll openly admits to. This tax loophole was finally closed in 2006, which probably explains the lack of notable adaptations from Boll in some time.

In fact he's seemed to have found more success owning restaurants than making movies. Maybe he has good taste after all. Or maybe not.

F's In Chat

The mid-to-late-2000s saw the seventh generation of consoles with Xbox 360, the Wii and PlayStation 3, and this increase in technological power, well maybe not the Wii, games could feature a lot more story. With more to draw upon, this time also saw a surge of video game movies. To begin with they mimicked the styles of other movies in order to try and also mimic their success.
Doom dropped demons in favour of mutated people, so basically zombies, possibly trying to replicate Resident Evil.
No amount of beach volleyball will distract us from seeing DOA: Dead Or Alive as being clearly a Charlie's Angel rip-off.
And the most I can say about Elf Bowling is that it is a movie that exists... for some reason.

So this derivative approach didn't exactly help the reputation of video game movies. Likewise, were the false starts. Inspired by the success story of Lord Of The Rings, and by inspired I mean their eyeballs turned into little dollar signs, movie studios were trying to turn IPs into multi-movie deals.

This was also met with this post 9/11 era of angst, which just meant everything was very blue. Tomb Raider 2, Resident Evil 2, House Of The Dead, Doom, Hitman, Max Payne, Hitman again.
It's true what they say, I'm blue dub a dee dub a die.
Hitman and Max Payne in particular are such dry, bleak and miserable movies, it sucks all the joy out of the action scenes. These movies did well enough, but not well enough. After Hitman 47, there were even plans to make a Marvel style shared universe, with Just Cause, Deus Ex and Tomb Raider.
This is a similar case with The Legend Of Chun-Li, which was made to be an origin story as part of a series of Street Fighter films, like one's focusing on Ryu and Ken, which one would guess would lead up to the most ambitious crossover. Say what you want about the 1994 film, it at least had personality. This was just so dull and uninspired, that it immediately killed the planned sequels.

And therein lies the problem with getting ahead of yourself and planning a whole franchise because it can leave the first film lacking.
[Tom Cruise Mummy]
Sequels are a natural part of movies, and even Mario and Street Fighter ended on cliffhangers to tease sequels that didn't happen.
2006's Silent Hill is actually a pretty fun horror movie for the most part, until it starts overexplaining everything and killing any mystery but you know, it was overall fine. It ends on a cliffhanger, which just feels more in-keeping with horror, like oooh you thought it was over

and it's actually not. Either way, this did good enough for a sequel to be commissioned, but this wasn't great. I like the nurse scene, but that's it.
Either way this was a case of making a sequel since it deserved one.

But 2010's Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time, was slated to be a big deal from the get go. Disney wanted another flagship franchise, like Pirates Of The Caribbean, so they got Jerry Bruckheimer to produce this big budget adaptation. This was in this era where Disney were desperately trying to create their own Star Wars, like the utter disaster that was John Carter, until Disney just bought Stars Wars and everything else. But you can't get investors to back a film of this scale without the assurance it'll be a franchise, so to ensure this film will remain timeless, they whitewashed the entire cast. Huh.
Prince Of Persia is about a prince (oh), in Persia (no way), who becomes a fugitive when his adopted father is murdered. It centres around a dagger that lets the wielder travel back in time one minute, like a rewind feature. Strangely, instead of playing a parger lart [rewind] instead of playing a lather fart [rewind] instead of playing a larger part, the time travel is hardly used. Like Back To The Future doesn't have all that much time travel, but it at least played a much bigger role in the story.
By squandering this premise, the film is just ok, like the action and performances try their best, but overall it's unsatisfying. Clearly because this was meant to be a small part of a bigger thing, but despite it being one of the highest grossing video game movies, once again, we got no follow-up, so it's just another waste of time.

And that's one of the biggest problems surrounding video game movies. It only has a history of about 30 years, but it's surrounded by low reviews, cancelled sequels or commercial failures, like Ratchet and Clank. The studio, Rainmaker Entertainment, had already announced a Sly Cooper film but had to quietly cancel it after losing millions following Ratchet & Clank, which seemed to try so hard to please everyone, it pleased no-one.
So no matter how many individual cases there are of decent movies, because of the greater level of scrutiny, the general consensus starts to become that video game movies are all bad.

It's enough to make you angry. You know, like a bird.

High Score

In 2016 we got The Angry Birds Movie. Now expectations for this are already pretty low. The bad reputation of video game movies aside, this is a movie based on an app. This is probably the most shallow source material you could get. But to much surprise, this is more fun than it should be. It's obviously no Pixar movie, in fact with the tonally-off jokes for parents and the spontaneous pop songs, it shares more DNA with something like an Illumination movie.
Maybe it's just because the bar has been set so low, but by simply not being shit, they've delivered a semi-decent film from the most unlikely of sources. And yes, this is the movie where the Angry Birds drink piss.
The story is about a bird who is angry (no way), in a society of naive spoiled happy birds as these foreigners come over here and ruin this once great country and they're coming for our kids so we better go over to their country and blow them up and - oh no.

So that has extremely nasty undertones, so seemingly in response Angry Birds 2 have the birds and pigs team up which doesn't happen in the games, but you don't need to know that. But they unite under the threat of a greater enemy and it ends with all parties getting along. At one point this was the best reviewed video game movie and yeah, it's pretty good. And this is Angry Birds.

Video game movies were becoming a big deal again. 2016's Warcraft based on a game made by horrible shits. Did you know Uwe Boll actually applied to direct this movie but Blizzard were worried he would harm their reputation? Ha ha ha. Anyway these movies tend to take two different forms, either an Alice In Wonderland where someone gets teleported to another world, like the Mario movie and the Mario movie. The other kind is like Lord Of The Ring, something already set within the world, but that comes with the burden of worldbuilding. And for something like Warcraft, this has to cram in a lot of characters and lore at such a rushed pace, it never stops to make you care. The Orc Chieftain is the only one given an emotional hook but he has to vie for attention with a swathe of other underdeveloped characters. Either way, this fantasy epic is the highest earning video game movie to date, yet somehow is still considered a loss? But it at least showed the market was receptive to video game movies, as long as they looked the part.
[Old Sonic design scream]

To make a movie based on Sonic the Hedgehog seemed like a no brainer, and talks even began as far back as 1993, but were dissuaded by the failures of Mario and Street Fighter. This was developed by Blur Studios who had experience animating the cutscenes of Shadow The Hedgehog and Sonic 06. Yeeesh.
So what was up with that design?
Well by all accounts this was to try and make Sonic gel with the real world, a reversal of that Alice In Wonderland formula. Paramount figured that while it might upset fans, the general audience would just become accustomed to the new design much like the constant design changes to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. This is what we in the industry call a stupid fucking idea. The design was overwhelming despised. It overtook any discussion of the film, it was a disaster after just one trailer. So it got pulled and the director announced the design will be changed. When the new trailer got released, this got such a better reception, people even theorised the bad design was done on purpose to capitalise on the outrage. But considering this design update cost $5 million and postponed the film's release date, that would be a pretty crazy move. But not as crazy as giving him a human girlfriend, turning him into a werewolf or making Sonic Boom.
Perhaps it's my own Sonic-nerd bias talking, but I really enjoyed this movie. For something that had everything going against it, it manages to be sweet and emotional, while still being a lot of family-friendly-fun. Even Jim Carrey is going old school so this is just a 90s celebration. It puts the character of Sonic front and centre, they could have crowded him with his large ensemble of friends or even his special abilities like Super Sonic, but they purposely kept the script stripped down and simple, which unlike Warcraft, allows us to follow what's going and in turn actually care about it. Like, Sonic, who is meant to be an alien, makes a lot of pop culture references, but that actually works because we see him absorb culture through TV, which he does alone. At one point he sees kids high fiving after a baseball game, which he tries to replicate but can't because he's lonely, then at the end when he's accepted, he finally gets that high five. It's subtle things like this that help make him endearing. Maybe I'm

reading way too much into this, it's not a masterpiece. But considering what it could have been, it's not a disasterpiece.

I think these movies are managing to succeed now because they are finding their own voice.
Ace Attorney is a wonderful quirky comedy / murder mystery.
Rampage is a dumb-but-fun Rock and also big monkey smash-smashy movie.
And Tomb Raider is a thrilling action movie, that drops the flawless Lara for one that's barely surviving which is way more exciting to watch.

These films along with Detective Pikachu and Mortal Kombat are finding their footing because instead of trying to fit the adaptation into a pre-existing formula, they are being true to themselves and being the kind of movies they should be.

This year saw the release of Werewolves Within, which is based on a VR game which is based on the party game Werewolves or sometimes Mafia. Where there's a secret killer among you and you have to figure it out through discussion and debate, like a furry detective. "The mystery is uwu"
The VR game seems barely relevant to this adaptation, but this film is a delight. It's a kinda murder mystery, but really it's about a quirky array of fun characters in a utterly charming dark comedy. Which is exactly what the film should be. It's silly. If it tried to make an actual paranoid horror movie then, well, it wouldn't much like the game then. Because in the end, games are fun, so the movies representing them should be fun too. I'm looking at you Assassin's Creed, you can't hide your boring movie under all that bloom.
AAHH MY EYES.