

Video game violence blows up into controversy

Mortal Kombat is latest rage

SPOTLIGHT

By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

UNL sophomore Aaron Carlson falls back in a pool of blood after being kicked in the head.

Carlson retaliates with a brutal jab to the other warrior's chest. While the man sways, on the verge of death, Carlson incinerates his flesh—leaving only skeletal remains.

Carlson fought the battle from his own dorm room—through a video game called Mortal Kombat.

The violence, Carlson said, is why he purchased the game, and the violence is "what makes it fun."

Violence in video games, such as Mortal Kombat, has been under fire because of the alleged effects it can have on game players.

Mortal Kombat was developed by Midway Corporation for arcade play. Sega of America and Nintendo Entertainment Systems of America distribute the game for home play. Sega's version includes a bonus code that activates the additional gore. Nintendo has no such code and has also toned down the violence.

With Sega's code, a player has the opportunity to enact a series of finishing moves. The victor can do a number of acts to his fallen opponent, including pulling the spine from his body, incinerating his flesh, pulling out his heart, or blowing off his head.

Chad Collett, a junior political science/Spanish major and sales associ-



James Mehlsing/DN

ate for Kay-Bee Toys at Gateway Shopping Center, said many video game buyers are college students.

Recently, he said the most popular game has been the Sega Genesis version of Mortal Kombat.

"The Sega Genesis version is selling a lot better than Nintendo's version," he said. "The age group the game is targeted at is mainly college students—and we like violence. In our own fantasy world we like seeing someone's head pulled off."

Freshman Chris Nelson said the game's appeal was incredibly widespread.

"We counted one time, a minimum of eight people in this room (watching) the first day we got it," he said.

Nelson and Carlson disagreed over the controversy about whether video game violence is a serious problem. "I don't know if you'd consider it violence," Nelson said.

"I mean, just look at the TV. You

see more gory stuff watching the news. I think you have to establish that this is just a video game."

Carlson said he did consider the game violent. But that violence is a vital part of the game, and it should not be considered harmful in itself.

"If you take it seriously, then you have to have more problems—outside of playing the game," he said.

Collett said the theory that video games are making people more violent was false.

"I don't think video games are making people more violent," he said. "It is not making society a more violent place either."

He said the concern of people emulating the violent action in the game also was unjustified.

"I mean, when I was a young kid I watched Star Wars and I played like I was Han Solo, but that wasn't harmful."

See KOMBAT on 10

Kroker's virtual book could confuse readers



Spasm
Arthur Kroker
Music by Steve Gibson
St. Martin's Press

"Spasm" is a virtual book, existing both in hard copy—paperbound book, and soft copy—audio, from an included CD.

As such, it occupies a narrow space—out of phase, or between phases—in the middle of the current cultural paradigm shift.

And as author Arthur Kroker shows, the shift is bigger than we imagine.

Our cultural ground is over a fault line, and the changes we note—that some have called "shifts"—are really only stress fractures in the visible surface strata.

In the substrata, where value judgments get made, massive and invisible forces work an inconceivable alchemy on our cultural identity.

"Spasm" is an attempt to make visible these invisible—because internal—mutations. It contains a largely arcane knowledge.

Maybe it's inevitable, then, that "Spasm" should be hard to follow. Like the ancient alchemists, Kroker relies heavily on an occult jargon.

Even in his technique Kroker seems to be making a statement about the alternating transparency and opacity of language.

Still, it puts "Spasm" out of reach of many readers, and that's a shame. Kroker's very forceful arguments get lost in his own information stream—overloading the reader and shutting down the process.

"Spasm" does the post-modern trick on post-modern culture—taking it apart according to various and shifting levels of abstraction—and comes up with some radical ideas.

When Europe began rediscovering the art of ancient Greece and Rome after a long "dark age," they dug up beautiful sculptures, nudes, without heads, arms or often, legs. These were pure white marble and seemed idealized, perfected bodies.

Of course when these statues were first conceived they were full bodies. They were also painted in—to us—garish colors, and dressed in real cloth.

The idealized Greek vision did not even exist until later generations invented it.

The shift that occurred between when those cultural artifacts were lost and the age that reinvented them are comparable in their implications to the current shift.

Our culture is experiencing a rapidly expanding rift between what we think we know and our experience.

The shift is best represented in technology, and digital information processing in particular.

Sampling, digital photography and data transfer are—byte by soundbite—degrading and reconstituting reality.

At some point, while we weren't paying attention, reality became recombinant—and potential frames of reference exploded.

Now it's virtually impossible to accept any single world-view to the exclusion of all others.

We, according to Kroker and a handful of other thinkers, no longer inhabit the "best of all possible worlds."

By virtue of the new "virtual" reality we live in all possible worlds, together.

—Mark Baldridge

MUSIC REVIEW



Courtesy Polygram

"Face the Heat"
Scorpions
Polygram

The Scorpions 16th release, "Face the Heat," starts out rockin' you—almost "like a hurricane"—but swiftly cools into mediocrity.

The album's first release, "Alicia Nation," is definite Scorpion-style rock 'n' roll. The band's new bassist, Ralph Rieckermann, shows he can hold his own with this experienced group and take the place of departed Francis Bucholz.

The album holds its intensity through the next song, "No Pain No Gain," another heavy track that shows why the Scorpions are still around after more than 20 years.

But after these two powerful tracks, the quality of the album fades, with a couple of quite decent ballads being the only other mentionable songs. The first of these, "Under The Same Sun," has a noticeable "Wind Of Change" tone to it, but still manages to be distinct.

"We all live under the same sun/ we all walk under the same moon/ why, why can't we live as one." The lyrics proclaim the same hopeful attitude as "Wind Of Change" and this song might have what it

takes to make it on the charts.

The second ballad and final track of the album is "Lonely Nights," a love ballad that is pretty good, but it's not original enough to make it very far.

These four good songs don't add up to enough to make this album a 'must own.' Die-hard Scorpions fans may want to pick it up—especially if they have the first 15.

For everybody else, just wait for the songs to hit the airwaves—and be ready to hit record on the tape deck.

—Joel Strauch



Courtesy MCA

"Bat Out of Hell II:
Back into Hell ..."
Meat Loaf
MCA

This is not a heavy metal album, as the title and cover art might lead you to believe.

Nor is this a bunch of drunken cowboy tunes, as the 10-to-12-word song titles might lead you to be-

lieve. This album contains nothing but powerful, heart-seizing, classic rock 'n' roll—and all the world's children couldn't be luckier.

Meat Loaf has returned. Yep, the big guy with the voice full o' passion has again teamed up with songwriter Jim Steinman for the sequel to—or rather, the continuation of—the 1977 smash "Bat Out of Hell."

Like its predecessor, the second "Hell" album is an excellent collection of songs about love and teen-age anxiety—delivered to the world through Meat Loaf's dramatic vocals.

Of course, it has no reason not to be excellent, damn it. Steinman has had 16 years to write the stuff.

Well, okay, a few songs on the new release may fail to match the quality of the original "Bat Out of Hell" material. But one new song—the one getting MTV airplay—runs circles around all of the old stuff.

That song is "I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)." Absolutely bitchin'.

In typical Meat Loaf fashion, "I'd Do Anything For Love" goes on for nearly 12 minutes, and every minute is packed with sentiment.

The song's mood alternates between delicacy and driving vigor as Meat Loaf—whose real name is Martin Lee Aday—promises to be loyal to the woman he loves.

This will be the song you memorize all the words to—just like you memorized all the words to "Paradise by the Dashboard Light" when you were in kindergarten, except this time you'll know what the words mean.

See LOAF on 10