

'Generation X-Box' not missing out on the game of life

by Brad Heap

The newspaper headline reads like Armageddon is only hours away, "Generation X-Box - missing out in the game of life", "Educationists have sounded a warning about electronic games, saying children immersed in Playstation and X-Box are at greater risk of doing poorly at school".

The latest research from the Competent Children study has been released and, as expected, the press is spinning the results to suit its doomsday news reporting. The April 2 edition of the *Sunday Star Times* published some of the results of the study in their article about how "Generation X-Box" is doomed. According to the *SST's* interpretation of the results students whose main interest is electronic games are more likely to be "at risk" [of performing poorly academically]. From this summary one would assume that a large proportion of youth is going to turn into poorly performing academic mush.

I certainly don't consider myself or my peers who have a "Generation X-Box" lifestyle to be performing poorly academically; after all, we are now studying at an institute of higher

education. I have been playing with electronic games since I was eight. I started on an Acorn computer at primary school and I am now in my second year of Computer Science. I play games primarily as stress release, and escape from our crazy reality - as do many of my fellow students.

Games are great. They allow me to escape from my pitiful existence of a poor student and become a top racing car driver, rugby player and fantasy hero, all from the comfort of my bedroom. They give me enjoyment, excitement and sometimes an adrenaline rush. They improve my hand-eye coordination, my attention to detail and allow me to relax. They have not turned me into an "at risk" student.

It is not just youth who play games. Most of the "hardcore" gamers I know are in full-time work and are over 25. In fact, Mike Dey and Josh Adams noted the following in last issue's Self-gamification (regarding the X-Box 360 launch party): "A lack of teenagers and an abundance of middle-aged gamers". Now that comment brings a question to mind: Where

are all of the poorly performing students? Maybe it is because they are non-existent. How can this be? The study certainly doesn't support this statement.

Well the study must be wrong. Well not the study, but the interpretation of the study by the press. The press has done a great job of twisting the facts to create a "news" article that give parents a mandate to bring back Charles Dickens and *Pride and Prejudice* rather than *NFS: Most Wanted*. The *SST* has written an article that reinforces the stereotype that states electronic technology is bad for you.

Myself and others are examples that this is clearly not true. In fact we are quite the opposite. We are hard-working, healthy, social, active students. Wouldn't it be nice to have a world where the press report the facts instead of creating a fantasy world for parents to live in? Maybe parents and the press need to exit the "Game of Life" and re-enter reality.