From Film to Video Game:

An Analysis of Video Game Adaptations from the 2000s

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Abstract for Master's thesis

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Abstract:

This thesis sets out to examine video game adaptations, specifically the strategies used when adapting a film into the video game medium. The video games looked at are the PlayStation 2 games *Shrek 2*, *Madagascar*, and *Over the Hedge*, and the Nintendo DS games *Happy Feet*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* and *How to Train Your Dragons*. These video games were released in the 2000s, during the height of video game adaptations, but nowadays almost no video game adaptations are released. This paper aims to investigate the reason for this decline both from a historic point of view and through the analyses of the six video games mentioned.

The theoretical framework includes adaptation theories, video game theories, and lastly video game adaptation theories. Following that is a brief discussion on the history of video game adaptation and possible reasons for the downfall. The method for analysing the video games was to first watch the film and then play the video game. The analysis begins with a short introduction to the consoles used, followed by a comparison of the video game to the film, a description of the experience of playing the game, and the views of both critics and other players. Lastly is a discussion of the findings, along with suggestions for further research.

This study finds that the main strategy used is direct adaptation with minor additions, followed by making the adaptation into a sequel to the film. Most adaptations translated the events of the film into environments in the video game. The ratings of the critics as well as the number of critics reviewing the games lowered with each adaptation, showing a lower interest in the video game adaptations. Other reasons for the downfall of video game adaptations include the poor quality of the mass produced games, an emergence of mobile gaming, and an increase in cost to develop video games in general.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

While looking back at many of the video games I played during my childhood, I realised that not only were they adaptations of various films but also that I had not seen any video game adaptations in stores or talked about online in a while. I quickly looked up a list of video game adaptations from films to confirm my suspicions: almost no video game adaptations have been released in the last five years compared to fifteen years ago when almost every film that came out had its own video game adaptation. This made me curious as to why film companies stopped producing video games based on their new films, and thus this rabbit hole was made.

But what is a video game adaptation and how does it differ from other adaptations? The main difference is the interactivity of the video game that other media do not have. While questions of faithfulness and who is the audience are valid within this thesis, many other articles on adaptation are too focused on novels and films to be helpful here. Instead, I will be contributing to the study of adaptation by connecting it to video game theory. There are also previous theories on video game adaptations that are helpful for this thesis. However, many of them are quite old, so a newer perspective is needed. Especially presently as video games are getting more and more mainstream thanks to mobile gaming.

In this thesis, I will be looking at six video games that were released during the height of video game adaptations, namely 2004-2010. I have picked out three video games on the PlayStation 2, which is the most sold console while writing this, and three on the Nintendo DS, which is the second most sold console and most sold handheld console. The games in question are *Shrek 2*, *Madagascar* and *Over the Hedge* for PlayStation 2, and *Happy Feet*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* and *How to Train Your Dragon* for Nintendo DS. My method for analysing the adaptations was to first watch the film while taking notes on the plot, the characters and themes, and secondly to play the adaptation while taking notes on gameplay, plot, characters and themes. In the analysis, I will compare the plots of the adaptations to the films they are based on, what was added or omitted in the games, investigate whether the gameplay matches the story, and lastly compare my own experience of playing the games with reviews from critics and other players on the website Metacritic. Analysing these games can provide reasons for why the number of video game adaptations have diminished since their development. I will also further investigate the history of video game adaptations and their rise and fall over time.

In Chapter 2, I will present the theoretical framework, which includes theories and articles on adaptations, video games and video game adaptations. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the rise and fall of video game adaptations and speculate the reasons for their fall. In Chapter 4, I will analyse the video game adaptations in order of release, starting with the PlayStation games and ending with the Nintendo DS games. Lastly, I will discuss all my findings in Chapter 5 and provide ideas for further research in this field.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will discuss the different theories on adaptation, video games in general, and video game adaptations, and earlier studies that relate to this study. In section 2.1, I will discuss what counts as an adaptation and how one creates an audience for the adaptation. In section 2.2, I will discuss various video game theories, including the rules and mechanics of video games and how user experience is measured. In section 2.3, I will discuss video game adaptations, including strategies for adapting into video games, and how events in films get translated into environments in video games. Quite a few of my sources are fairly old, which is partly due to newer sources being hard to find and partly due to the video games I will be analysing being developed at a similar time. A newer source could have been helpful in providing perspectives on newer consoles, as even the Nintendo DS was seldom mentioned in any article, as well as views on mobile gaming.

2.1 Adaptation theories

Although most adaptation theories are written with novels and films in mind, there are aspects that can be applied to other media as well. One of these aspects is the debate on what counts as an adaptation, or rather what is not an adaptation, as Thomas Leitch, 2012, discusses in his article "What isn't an Adaptation, and What Does it Matter?". Leitch begins with Linda Hutcheon's definition of an adaptation as an "extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" and states that "brief allusions, 'bits of sampled music' and 'museum exhibits' are not adaptations" (Hutcheon in Leitch, 2012). Other than these restrictions, the borders are very wide, which makes it difficult to draw the line between adaptations proper and improper. Leitch discusses nine views on what adaptations are: only cinematic, only intermedial, counter-ekphrasis, texts dependent on the audience's acceptance of them being adaptations, a distinctive mode of transtextuality, translations, performances, quintessential examples of intertextual practice, and finally a distinctive but not quintessential instance of intertextuality. These views are limiting in different ways and none of them provide a clear answer for what is an adaptation and what is not. However, they show how adaptation studies have changed over time. The first adaptation theories were very cinema-centric, which unfortunately excludes all other media: "operas, ballets, theatrical plays, web pages, YouTube videos based on earlier texts – everything but film is eliminated from the field of study" (Leitch, 2012). In these theories, the novel/original text is placed over

the film/adaptation, which is seen as an inferior version of the original. A contrasting view to the cinematic is the intermedial only, which includes every medium but excludes intramedial adaptations and makes it difficult to differentiate between adaptations and other intermedial practices. Other views struggle with preferences to either the original or a specific medium, having adaptations not fitting in properly into other theories, or being too vague. Leitch concludes that it is a never-ending debate with no clear answer.

Another applicable aspect is who the targeted audience is and who ends up being part of the audience, as adaptations will often attract people who enjoy the target medium without knowing the original text. To produce a successful adaptation, the producers need to find or create an audience (Weedon, 2010). This can be done, at least among novel-to-film adaptations, by looking at novels that are both best-sellers and often loaned in libraries, as those people who read the book are likely to watch the adaptation as well. Making an adaptation will also bring the novel back into sales, as the marketing for the film will make newer audiences interested in the original text. This can easily create a successful brand where more media is thrown in, which awakens the interest of the original text once more. Weedon finds this most prevalent in various brands aimed at children, as stumbling upon a toy or a video game will get them interested in the film or book that are behind the brand. While video games are more likely to be made by a film company selling the rights to their characters and stories rather than a video game company seeking out the rights to a film, the same effect can still be seen. In his study on the audience's attraction towards adaptations, Weedon finds that video game adaptations attract audiences in a different way than other media:

> In terms of games, most were bought (often preowned) or received as gifts and swapped. However, those who played games showed a different appreciation of the game text. These adaptations were restricted to science fiction, horror films, thrillers, and children's films that fitted into the game genres, and only a third were selected by association with the film or book. For most students, the attraction was the game genre rather than the adaptation, although they did say knowing the protagonists and setting was an advantage.

> (Weedon, 2010)

Other adaptations were sought out due to their original text, while video game adaptations were sought out for their type of gameplay. While genre can be an important element when choosing a book to read or film to watch, the genre of video game usually entails a level of skill that the player needs to complete the game and the resolve to get good enough to enjoy

the whole experience. With video game adaptations based on children's media, the bar is often very low, while adaptations based on horror and thriller films can be quite difficult to master. Audiences will have these expectations when choosing a video game to play, and failing to live up to the level of difficulty expected of the adaptation will make for a failed adaptation. Knowing the characters and story is only a bonus, not a requirement for enjoying the adaptation, while fitting gameplay for the story is a definite requirement. Looking at the make-up of the target audience is quite important, as few critics seem to be in the target audience and thus will not necessarily review the adaptations in a fair way. User submitted reviews, however, could show a more fair judgement towards the adaptation, but it is also important to remember that people online are not always very honest or as credible as a professional reviewer.

Here is where the general adaptation theories stop working for video game adaptations, as their focus lies more in films and novels than the act of adapting generally. While James M. Welsh in the introduction words to *Redefining Adaptation Studies* writes about wanting to provide a wider view of adaptations, the rest of chapters in the book reference specific works that do not match with video games. Of course theories on faithfulness and creativity within adaptations are useful bases for analysing, but the missing aspect of interactivity makes it difficult to apply them to these specific adaptations. The main difference is adapting between other media does not really change the viewer or reader's roles, as they will still remain an observer no matter the medium, while the role of a video game-player is much more active than an observer. Being able to complete a video game requires more out of the experiencer than completing a novel or film or play.

2.2 Video game theories

Bernard Perron and Mark J.P. Wolf, writing in 2003, describe the vastness of video games in the introduction of *The Video Game Theory Reader* as

> everything from the ergodic (work) to the ludic (play); as narrative, simulation, performance, remediation, and art; a potential tool for education or an object of study for behavioral psychology; as a playground for social interaction; and, of course, as a toy and a medium of entertainment.

> (Perron & Wolf, 2003)

As one of the newest mediums of art, although the debate on whether video games are art or not is an ever ongoing debate (Robinett, 2003), the study of video games borrows ways of

analysing from the other media, such as visual analysis from cinema and narrative analysis from novels. Perron and Wolf argue that the video game is a unique medium that deserves its own theories, but a good starting point is to look at theories from other media and take elements from them when applicable. The biggest difference video games have from other media is their interactivity, use of avatars as a player surrogate, as well as the requirement of hand-eye coordination. The first video games had interactivity as their saving grace after all, as their graphics were not much more than a few squares due to low storage capacity.

While video games share elements with narrative stories, such as characters, settings and events, they are not held together by a narrative structure. Rather, they are held together by their rules and mechanics. Gonzalo Frasca explains the difference between narratives and simulations in his article on ludology in *The Game Theory Reader* as narratives being structured representations, while simulations are modifiable experiences. The participation makes the difference:

> Certainly, simulation challenges narrauthors because it takes away their source of power: the ability to make statements through sequences of causes and effects. To use a metaphor, narrauthors "train" their stories so they will always perform in an almost predictable way. By contrast, simauthors "educate" their simulations: they teach them some rules and may have an idea of how they might behave in the future, but they can never be sure of the exact final sequence of events and result.

(Frasca, 2003)

Frasca further explains this by introducing Caillois's distinction between paidia and ludus, paidia being a freer form of play, like make-believe, and ludus being games with social rules that can be written or just agreed, like football or chess. Simply put, ludus has a winner while paidia does not. Most video games include aspects of both paidia and ludus, as games with a freer form have rules of restriction, and games with a stricter structure and narrative include some form of freedom to the player. Lastly, Frasca introduces three ideological levels in simulations, which are the different levels where the game maker can insert their ideological beliefs, but also functions as a good base for analysing video games in general. The first level deals with representations and events, aspects that are shared with narratives, such as: objects, characters, backgrounds, settings and cut scenes. Games can have the same gameplay but show different ideologies by simply making changes to the representations and events. The second level deals with manipulation rules, meaning what the player is able to do in the game. These include all possible actions, even those that do not need to be done to complete the game, such as the player's ability to choose to pet dogs or kill civilians, things the player

can do but does not have to do. The third level deals with goals, meaning what the player must do to win or what is mandatory to do in the game. Game developers might encourage certain actions over others so that the player eventually reaches the goal of the game. There is a possible fourth level, which deals with meta-rules, giving the player the freedom to modify the game at different levels. Most often this concerns cosmetic changes, like changing the appearance of the avatar, but some games even include level builders, allowing the player to create their own levels with their own rules.

Depending on how the video game is made, the player's experience will differ. José Luis González Sánchez and his collaborators describe user experience as "all the sensations experienced by the user when performing a particular task in a particular system", and the concept of playability as the "quality of a video game in terms of rules, mechanics, goals and design". The playability of a game is in that case how the video game forms the player's experience of the video game. The difference between a user of other systems and a player of video games lies in their goals, as the user wants the experience to be productive and efficient while the player wants the experience to be entertaining and challenging (Lazzaro in Sánchez et al., 2012). There are a few different viewpoints on how to make a player's experience more positive. One is Akihiro Saito's four principles of 'Gamenics' (which stands for GAme + MEchanics + electroNICS): the video game should have an intuitive user interface and be easy to use, a manual should not have to be required to play the video game, the interfaces should help the player overcome the traditional learning curve, and the video game should provide the player with familiar interaction mechanisms or be somewhat based in reality so that the shift into the game's world is not as jarring. Others like to include flow and motivation as important parts of ensuring a positive player experience.

Sánchez and his collaborators go on to further define playability as "a set of properties that describe the PX using a specific game system whose main objective is to provide enjoyment and entertainment, by being credible and satisfying, when the player plays alone or in company", and list seven properties that can be used to measure a player's experience of a video game by observing the player or having the player report their playthrough. The first is satisfaction, the gratification or pleasure gained from playing a video game. Elements of satisfaction include how fun it is, if there was a sense of disappointment while playing and how attractive the video game was. The second one is learnability, the player's ability to understand and master the system and mechanics of the video game. Elements that affect this are the player's knowledge of the video game or similar games, the player's skill, the difficulty of the video game, any frustration the player feels while playing, how quickly new

challenges arise, and how often the player has a sense of discovery while playing. Third is effectiveness, the time and resources that are required for the player to enjoy the game. Elements here are how much of the video game was completed and how the game is structured. Fourth is immersion, whether the video game is believable for the player. Elements of immersion are the player's conscious awareness of the video game, how absorbed the player is in the gameplay, the realism of the video game's world, the dexterity of the player, and the socio-cultural proximity the game has to the player. Fifth is motivation, how the video game prompts the player to take certain actions and complete them. Elements here are how the video game encourages the player, how intriguing the world of the video game is, how much the player improved while playing, and how many different types of gameplay the video game has. Sixth is emotion, the feelings or behaviour the video game evokes in the player. Elements of emotion are how the player reacts to the video game, how the player behaves while playing, and the different types of sensory appeal the video provides the player. Last is socialisation, how the player perceives the video game in a group scenario. Elements here are how the players socialise while playing, if the players see themselves as a group, the players' individual roles in the group, how the players share both resources and goals, how the players communicate, and how they interact with each other and the video game. Sánchez et al. count all these elements into a point system that can be used when observing different player's experiences while playing a video game. It is important to point out that players of different skill-levels will find different elements more enjoyable than others, for example, experienced players are more likely to enjoy difficult challenges than inexperienced players, and inexperienced players are more likely to leave a video game satisfied without finding every secret.

Frasca's three ideological levels provide a concise way of looking at the elements of a video game, which is very useful for this thesis. While Saito's 'Gamenics' shows important aspects for a video game developer to keep in mind to provide the best possible experience for the player, it may be too modern since the video games that will be analysed in this thesis may be too old. Still, they may provide views on how the video games could have been better in hindsight. Lastly, the seven properties of Sánchez and his collaborators are useful tools to measure my own player experience, but aspects of them may be a bit difficult due to me having to observe myself and the ulterior motive of needing to play and finish the games for this thesis.

2.3 Video game adaptations

According to Elkington (2009), there seem to be three strategies used when making video game adaptations. The first and most common is direct adaptation, meaning following the original story to almost every detail while offering nothing new for the player if they have seen the original piece. These adaptations receive overall poor reviews and are the least liked by video game players. This is mainly due to a very linear and stale gameplay with an abundance of cut-scenes everywhere: "This design weakness means that players are not rewarded by events within the interactive game space, but in fact play up to a certain point, at which the game engine takes over and delivers a canned cinematic" (Elkington, 2009). The second strategy is transmedia storytelling, meaning that the adaptation is rather contributing to the narrative world than retelling the same story. This works well if the game manages to stand on its own without relying too much on the original film, and does poorly if it tries to be more of a film than a video game. Elkington adds: "in trying to be more like each other, the texts manage to sacrifice the strength of their own medium without realizing the strengths of the other, thus leading to a self-defeating project achieving negative synergy". The game needs to allow the player to explore the narrative world on their own rather than have them sit through another film. Elkington links the third strategy to the video game *Escape from Butcher Bay* that is based on the film *The Chronicles of Riddick*. The game functions more like a prequel to the film, allowing the player to explore the world without the restraints of the film. *Escape from Butcher Bay* received high critical praise for being separate enough from the film while still giving insights into the storyworld and its main character. Most critiques of video game adaptations seem to come from a desire to separate cinema from video games, which is very interesting as now, almost fifteen years after Elkington's article was written, the most popular video games seem to pull many elements from cinema, such as aiming for photorealistic graphics and focusing on non-interactive, non-skippable cutscenes rather than interactive gameplay (Collins, 2022). Video games outside of adaptations, as very few video game adaptations have been released in the last years, focus more on cinematic visuals rather than the actual gameplay, even though earlier video game adaptations were scorned for it.

When making a video game based on a story, most designers will start with building the environment. Events of the story get translated into the environments, which places a higher focus on the maps of the world rather than the narrative. Henry Jenkins notices this in a lot of games: "When game designers draw story elements from existing film or literary

genres, they are most apt to tap those genres - fantasy, adventure, science fiction, horror, war - which are most invested in worldmaking and spatial storytelling" (Jenkins, 2004). Since the playable characters are controlled by the player, the characters get simplified to allow the player to react to the situations how they want. This also places a focus on play rather than storytime, letting the player push the story forward. The environment helps push the story forward as long as it fits the player's expectations. It is important that nothing in the environment breaks the immersion, much like attractions in theme parks:

> If, for example, the attraction centers around pirates, Carson writes, 'every texture you use, every sound you play, every turn in the road should reinforce the concept of pirates,' while any contradictory element may shatter the sense of immersion into this narrative universe. (Carson in Jenkins, 2004)

Thus the video game provides narrative outlines while the player does the rest. Video games often include micronarratives, which can be localised incidents or just small events happening in the background or with background characters, that are not integral to the story but adds depth to the worldbuilding. These can be minigames or smaller side quests that are not necessary to do in order to complete the game. Jenkins points out the difference between plot and story, plot being all the events that are seen, for example, in a film, while story is what the viewer of that film puts together in their head while watching. In a video game, the story will often be hidden in the environment and can be seen in worn out setpieces and misplaced items, rather than flashbacks. Logs and diary entries are often used as well. This makes it up to the player to figure out how the world works by interacting with the environment.

Mark Rowell Wallin analyses the differences between video games based on novels and video games based on films in his article "Myths, Monsters and Markets: Ethos, Identification, and the Video Game Adaptations of The Lord of the Rings". Wallin finds that the adaptations based on the films are easier to exploit for recognisable elements than the ones based on the novels, as character designs and setting designs have already been experienced by the player if they have watched the film before. The *The Lord of the Rings* video games produced by EA are directly linked to Peter Jackson's films, as they include clips from the films, the same actors' voices and show three parallel timelines to mimic the films' cinematic model. The differences from the films come in the form of added fights, particularly smaller fights against minions before the big fight against a boss. Even peaceful encounters from the books turn into fights in the EA video games. The player always has to win as well, even if the source material differs. The *The Lord of the Rings* video games

produced by Vivendi and Tolkien Estates tries to follow the books directly with no affiliation to the films, but is forced to add parts to the games that are not in the books since it needs game play, for example running around collecting coins in the Shire. Wallin also remarks on the difficulty of trying to follow the source material as closely as possible while also avoiding predictability among fans of the books and films. While adaptations from novels to film usually exclude a lot from the original text, video game adaptations usually have to add elements to extend the length of the game, which in the EA games seemed to be mini-boss fights. One would assume that basing a video game on a novel could more easily translate everything without omitting parts. However, since controlling the character takes time and the player has to have things to do, some parts need to be omitted in these kinds of adaptations as well.

3. The rise and decline of video game adaptations

Video game adaptations of films have existed almost as long as there have been video games. While the earliest video games were very simple in both graphics and gameplay, having a pre-existing story to anchor to the video game helped the players get immersed in the video game. Video games have also existed in the same spaces as films: "arcade games can be found in multiplex theatres, home systems are hooked to television sets, and major video stores have video games, film, and television series rentals all in one place" (Picard, 2008), hence it was very natural to for the games to be based on films.

A quick glance through the Wikipedia-page of film to video game adaptations shows a quite steady increase of video game adaptations from 1979 to 1995 with two small dips in 1985 and 1989 (fig. 1). Picard (2008) explains these dips as a disinterest in video game productions in Hollywood due to oversaturation and poorly made licensed video games, such as *E.T* and *Tron*. While films were popular to adapt into video games, other media were common as well though they are not mentioned in the graph, such as comics and television series. This practice was most common in Japan, where animation and video games have been connected for a long time, and did not become as prevalent in the US until much later:

> In the United States, adaptations of animated films and television series was a less of a phenomenon, with the notable exceptions of games based on Disney characters (of which there are more than 100) and games based on the immensely popular series The Simpsons (of which there are more than 20), until the emergence of movies using 3-D computer animation made by studios like Pixar and DreamWorks. Every feature film from these studios has had a video game adapted from it so far. For this genre, video games have become the obvious tie-in products, since 3-D animation and video games share the same target audiences as well as the same visual style and technology.
>
> (Picard, 2008)

This can be seen in the rise and peaks starting from 2000 to 2009 (see fig. 1). While the same models could not be used in the film and the video game, since the consoles back then were not able to process as many polygons as newer consoles can, the simpler 3D-designs in the video games were still recognisable as the same characters as in the film. Thus making a video game adaptation was a natural add on to the franchise along with toys and other merchandise. Through video games, fans of the films could recreate their favourite scenes of the films, experience new storylines that expand the universes of the franchises, as well as fill in gaps of the stories that did not fit in the film.

What would then bring about the downfall of the video game adaptations that can be seen after 2011? Trevor Elkington, 2009, points out the phenomena of self-defeating productions that could be seen as one of the reasons. Self-defeating productions are productions that want to serve many masters but fail to serve any well, in this case wanting to appease both the fans of the films as well as the fans of video games:

> Video games based on film and television licenses must attempt to appease two audiences: fans of the original license, who expect a certain adherence to its details, and fans of video games, who expect adherence to common notions of gameplay. Reconciling these expectations presents a fine line bordered on one side by numerous possible mistakes and on the other by a long history of previous failures.

(Elkington, 2009).

Adaptations between films and video games in both directions are often seen as nothing more than cash-grabs, which leaves a bad taste in the mouth for many even before viewing or playing the adaptation. There are of course many challenges with adapting films to video games, including having many different studios working on the same project, the high expectations from fans and critics, and how to translate good elements from the film into a good playable moment in the video game. To avoid negative press, the video game adaptations would be released as close to the films' release: "film studios, particularly in the case of blockbuster action titles of the type licensed games are commonly based on, look to recoup their investment in the initial days of the films' international opening, as a way of counteracting any potentially negative word of mouth" (Elkington, 2009).

The critical score of the video game adaptations were continually worse than other video games and kept sinking particularly during the mid 2000s. This can be seen in the ratings of the Dreamworks Playstation 2 video games which were released two years apart from each other, as *Shrek 2* scored 71, *Madagascar* scored 69, and *Over the Hedge* scored 58. Elkington notes a prejudice towards video game adaptations, which can also be seen in the reviews of the three previously mentioned video games. More and more reviews criticise the video games as being made only for the film companies to make more money, which other forms of adaptation rarely seem to get criticised for. Another trend seen is less critics being willing to review these games, especially the Nintendo DS games as they got only 13 reviews combined. Perhaps this disinterest in and low rating of the video game adaptations made the film companies less willing to make video game adaptations of their upcoming films.

Another big factor in why video game adaptations are less common is the economics. Video games have gotten increasingly more expensive to make over the years, especially big

console and PC titles, with "the vast majority of games [costing] under $50 million U.S. dollars to make" (Koster, 2018). In his research, Koster looked at the costs of over 250 games from the 1990s to late 2010s, including triple-A video games, independent games and mobile games. Koster does not include the marketing costs, which can double the overall cost of developing the game:

> [a] triple-A game's marketing budget is approximately equal to 75 percent-100 percent of its development cost. [...] In mobile, it's not uncommon to hear savvy shops set aside three to 10 times the development budget for marketing, because the market is that crowded.
>
> <div align="right">(Koster, 2018)</div>

As demands for video games to look as good as possible with higher graphics rise, the cost of developing a video game rises as well. It makes sense that film companies feel no desire to spend all that money and time on developing a video game as well as marketing for it when odds are that the video game will be rated badly anyway. It is more likely that the companies will opt for selling the intellectual properties for their characters to appear in video games as either playable characters or costumes, such as the appearances of Disney characters in *Fortnite*, *Sea of Thieves* and *Kingdom Hearts* (Batchelor, 2021). The focus seems also to be on larger franchises instead of individual films, such as *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* and *Hogwarts Legacy*, games taking place in the universes of Star Wars and Harry Potter but outside the scopes of the films and novels. Not having the video games tied to a film allows the developers to not be rushed to complete the game in time with the release of the film as well as a freedom to explore the stories outside of the confinements of a film.

Where video game adaptations do seem to live on is in the various Lego video game adaptations. From Harry Potter to Star Wars to Marvel superheroes to Pirates of the Caribbean, Lego has produced almost two video games per year since 2001. In contrast to other video game adaptations, these receive "critical acclaim from both gaming magazine review and user reviews" (Wooten, 2013). The main difference seems to be distance from the films that the simple Lego-figures and storytelling of the video games offer. Rather than being direct adaptations of the films, the video games are set up as children playing the stories.

> The use of the Lego video games' cartoon-style graphics point to targeting young children in a manner that is similar to the 1980s Saturday morning cartoon advertising style. [...] The Lego video games do take certain liberties cleaning up the darker or violent material in favor of humor through parody for a family-friendly experience.

Retelling the stories in a more child-friendly and fun way is a very effective way of getting younger audiences invested in the franchises. Having the characters and environments of the video games made out of plastic Lego-bricks is also easier to work with for the developers than having to create realistic models and textures that is the usual trend among video games.

It is important to mention that the graph made based on the Wikipedia list is not completely accurate, as some video game adaptations are missing from it. Furthermore, some titles have multiple spots in the list due to the different consoles they were made for, while others have only one spot even though they were released on multiple platforms. However, it still gives a good overview of how popular video game adaptations used to be and how they are not anymore.

4. Analysis of the Video Game Adaptations

For this thesis, I have watched six films and played their video game adaptations. The films and video games were picked from a very shallow pool of video game adaptations I had available to me. Thanks to various streaming services, the films were easily available for me to watch. The Nintendo DS games; *Alvin and The Chipmunks, How to Train Your Dragon,* and *Happy Feet*; were picked first, as I had fewer Nintendo adaptations to pick from. Since those three were all based on animated family films from the mid-2000s, I decided to pick PlayStation 2 games that fit the same criteria: *Shrek 2, Madagascar*, and *Over the Hedge*. My method for analysing and comparing the original films to their video game adaptations was to first watch the film while taking notes of plot points and themes, and then play through the video game while taking notes of stages, gameplay, characters, difficulty, and plot points. These games also include manuals, which I will be looking through for the right terms and names in the games. For the games focused on music, I also took note of the songs used in both the film and the video game.

When analysing these video games, I will use Frasca's ideological levels as a guide for what to discuss. As mentioned before: in the first level are every visual and aural element of the video game, such as the characters, the environments and the cut scenes; in the second level is the gameplay, what the player is able to do; and lastly in the third level are the goals of the game, meaning what the player needs to do to win. The analysis will be useful for figuring out if the gameplay matches the film and the characters. Sánchez et al.'s playability-theory will also be used in a similar way.

I will also look at reviews on the video games from the site Metacritic, which offers both critical reviews that are on a 0-100 scale and user submitted reviews that are on a 0-10 scale. The reviews bring in more perspectives on the video games apart from my own, while also showing how people's opinions on video game adaptations changed over time. Negative scores are scores under 50 or 5, positive scores are above 74 and 7, and mixed scores are scores between negative and positive scores. It is important to mention that the critical reviews were written when the games were released, while the user submitted reviews could have been written anytime between the games' release and now. While user submitted reviews may show how the target audience felt about the video games, there is a risk that they are not completely honest and instead written as jokes.

4.1 PlayStation 2 games

The PlayStation 2 (PS2) console (see Image 1) was developed by Sony and released in 2000 as the second instalment of consoles in the PlayStation brand. Compared to the first PlayStation, the PS2 offered a surprisingly higher quality in graphics, as well as the possibility to watch DVDs on it (Robinson, 2020). The PS2 could also play games from the first PlayStation, allowing for a big roster of video games being available to play at launch. It is still the best-selling console of all time, with over 155 million consoles sold worldwide (Sirani, 2023). In 2004, the PS2 Slim, a smaller version of the console, was released, and new games were produced until Sony decided to discontinue the console in 2013. The console required memory-cards to save the progress of the games, but they were not required to play the games. The controller included, known as Dualshock 2, had two analog sticks most often used to move the character and camera, four arrow buttons most often used for navigating menus as well as controlling characters, four round buttons with four different symbols most often used for commands such as jumping and attacking, the L1, L2, R1, and R2-buttons most often used for changing characters and weapons, the start-button to access a pause-menu, the select-button to access the heads-up display (HUD), and an analog-mode button. Not all buttons were used in all games, for example the L2 and R2 buttons are not used in either the *Shrek 2* or *Madagascar* video games. Additional controllers as well as the Multitap for connecting more than two controllers had to be bought separately. With the Multitap, up to four players could play at the same time, or eight with two Multitaps, but many games offered gameplay for multiple players by passing the controller. Other games would require various other accessories or controllers, such as the Singstar microphones, dance mats for rhythm games, or the EyeToy camera that could track motion.

The three PS2-video games I have chosen to analyse were sold as a 3-in-1 box of Dreamworks video game adaptations. They are all action games with elements of platforming and fighting. *Madagascar* is the only one that is almost exclusively a single player game, as only the minigames offer gameplay for multiple players. *Shrek 2* is the only one that supports up to four players with the Multitap. I will discuss the video games in their order of release, starting with *Shrek 2*. Due to the console being quite old, my playthroughs of the games may not provide me with completely accurate gameplay, as there might be delays in input that were not present when the console was new.

4.1.1 *Shrek 2*

Shrek 2 (2004) picks up after the first film with Shrek and Fiona's honeymoon. They get an invitation to go visit her parents, the King and Queen of Far Far Away, which Shrek is very hesitant about. His fears are proven correct when the King and Queen seem upset that they both are ogres. Fiona's Fairy Godmother is very upset too, since her son, Prince Charming, was meant to rescue Fiona and marry her. The Fairy Godmother convinces the King to hire an assassin to kill Shrek and tricks Shrek into going out in the forest to make up for being so rude. Shrek 'defeats' the assassin, Puss in Boots, who tells them everything and joins him and Donkey on their visit to the Fairy Godmother in her magic potion factory. Her not being in a very talkative mood prompts them to steal a potion to make Fiona happy. The 'Happily Ever After'-potion transforms Shrek and Fiona into humans and Donkey into a horse, and to make it last Shrek and Fiona will have to kiss before midnight. The Fairy Godmother makes Charming pose as human-Shrek, which Fiona is very sceptical about. The King is advised by the Fairy Godmother to give a love potion to Fiona. Shrek, Donkey and Puss in Boots overhear this and get imprisoned when they try to warn her. Luckily, Shrek's fairytale friends break them out and Shrek crashes the royal party just in time before midnight. Fiona, touched that Shrek would be willing to become a human for her, decides to transform them back into ogres since she loves him just the way he is. The film's theme deals with what one is willing to do for love.

Shrek 2 the video game is a 3D action-adventure video game, where one to four players can play together as long as they each have a controller. There are eleven chapters (see image 2), each beginning with a few storybook-pages read by the magic mirror, followed by a cut-scene that clearly explains what the player needs to do. Each chapter has both optional and required missions, and all but two have Hero Time-events, where one character uses their special ability to win a challenge. Examples of optional missions are collecting magic beans or rescuing all the seven dwarfs, while required missions range from defeating certain enemies to escorting three blind mice through a scary forest. There are five potions available at various times in each chapter: two for replenishing health, one for invulnerability, one for increased attack damage, and the last for turning enemies into easily defeatable frogs. There are also coins to be collected almost everywhere that can be used to buy upgrades or pay tolls.

There are always four playable characters (see image 3), and the characters that are not controlled by the player are instead controlled by the computer. The characters are all able

to jump, attack and interact with certain objects, but some of them have more abilities than the others. The playable characters are: Shrek, Princess Fiona, Donkey, Gingerbread Man, Big Bad Wolf, Lil' Red, Puss in Boots, Fairy, and human Shrek on horse Donkey. The characters will have reasons why they are leaving the party of four, for example, in the first chapter the playable characters are Shrek, Fiona, Donkey and Gingerbread Man, but Gingerbread Man wants to stay at home instead of going to Far Far Away, so Lil' Red joins them instead for the second chapter. In order to always have four characters in every chapter, the video game has both added characters in scenes they are not in, as well as added characters that have no role in the film. While Gingerbread Man and Big Bad Wolf are among the fairytale characters that Shrek and Donkey are good friends with, they do not have other roles in the film except for being housesitters while Shrek, Fiona and Donkey visit Far Far Away and breaking Shrek, Donkey and Puss in Boots out of jail. In the video game, however, Gingerbread Man has a more prominent role as he can be played in seven out of eleven chapters, making him the third most common playable character. Lil' Red and Fairy are barely in the film, as Lil' Red can be seen delivering food to Shrek and Fiona during their honeymoon and running away scared and the only fairies present in the film are the fairies trapped in jars when Shrek and Fiona share a romantic mud bath during their honeymoon. These two were probably added to have more female playable characters, as Fiona is the only other one. There is still a gender imbalance among the playable characters, as there are only three female characters compared to five male characters, and four chapters with no playable female characters. All the female characters are also in very few chapters each, as Lil' Red is in five chapters, Fiona is in four and Fairy is only in one.

Every chapter, except for two, have a Hero Time mission, where one of the characters, and thus only one player at a time, gets a moment to save the day. These range from platforming challenges to racing after a villain. Unfortunately, these are not evenly balanced, as some missions are much more difficult than others. Most are doable in a few attempts, while others took a long time to be able to do. For example, the Canyon Run in chapter two, where Donkey has to ride on his dragon wife to catch up to a carriage running away with Fiona while dodging trees to the left and the right, fly over piles of sticks and duck under bridges. The mission was very long, with a very easy first part that then became too fast and too difficult to react to. I was not able to do the mission and had to ask for help. This is in stark contrast to the following Hero Time in chapter three, where Shrek just has to punch a number of drunk men and then pick them up and throw them into a paddy wagon. The Hero Time missions do not have checkpoints in them, meaning one mistake causes the player to

start from the beginning, which can become very frustrating when the missions all start with a haunting voice exclaiming 'Hero Time!'. Most issues with these missions were with timing and hitboxes, meaning it was difficult figuring out when to jump on disappearing platforms and where the platforms ended. At times, I would have to mash the buttons to even be able to jump. Of course, it is difficult to know whether the gameplay-issues were due to using an old console and worn-out controllers and the experience was better when the game was new. It was mostly unfortunate that the most difficult part of the game was in the second chapter, and that completing the Hero Time missions are obligatory to complete the chapter, as without help I would not have been able to complete the whole game. Similarly, I was forced to do the whole chapter again from the beginning after taking a break from playing the Canyon Run, which was frustrating when the Hero Time mission was the only thing I had left to do. The gameplay of the video game does fit well, as the characters get into fights in the film as well, and the individual Hero Time missions align well with the characters. Always having four characters present is also very fitting, as characters are seldom alone in the film.

The video game follows the film quite well. It begins with Fiona and Shrek being invited to visit her parents in Far Far Away, after which Shrek, Fiona, Donkey and Gingerbread Man explore the Swamp while fetching Shrek a snack to eat during their journey. In chapter two, the video game takes a detour in the Spooky Forest after a witch has enchanted the onion carriage's horses into three blind mice to lead them to her house so she can eat them. This does not happen in the film, and narratively it is not clear why Lil' Red joins Shrek, Fiona and Donkey, though she is quite helpful in the video game. Fiona also gets kidnapped in an enchanted onion carriage by the witch, afterwhich the witch is not a part of the video game anymore. When the group arrives in Far Far Away, the King and Queen are shocked by Fiona and Shrek being ogres. The King has them doing errands around the centre of Far Far Away, including protecting Cinderella from muggers while she window-shops, fighting the Pied Piper and his infestation of rats, and collecting pieces of Humpty Dumpty. This is an interesting way of exploring Far Far Away, as the film does not linger long in the city.

During the night, Shrek reads Fiona's old diary and gets upset over how she wanted to marry Prince Charming back then. He takes a walk in the forest to calm down while his friends cheer him up, when Puss in Boots attacks them. The reasoning for Shrek being in the forest is different from the film, as in the film the King lures him out to the forest under the guise of getting on better terms. Puss in Boots is defeated in a rhythm game fashion, where Shrek, Donkey, Gingerbread Man and Lil' Red fight him off one by one by pressing the

buttons at the right time (or by just mashing the buttons in the right order). To get a happy ending, Shrek decides to visit the Fairy Godmother, but only Lil' Red and the people delivering a package from Jack and Jill's farm can get in. The group teams up with Puss in Boots to get the package from Jack and Jill's farm. Neither Jack and Jill nor their farm are in the film, but the journey there and the missions at the farm make up two chapters in the video game. On their way to the farm, they have to escort a sheep to his house as well as pay off a leprechaun to pass through a gate, neither character being in the film. At the farm, the three little pigs have taken over while Jack and Jill are on vacation, but the group has to help them do chores, including delivering the package to the Fairy Godmother. Gingerbread Man stays behind to help the pigs further while the others move on. Shrek tries to convince the Fairy Godmother that he deserves a Happily Ever After potion, but she believes that ogres do not deserve happily ever afters and sends them away, which is very accurate to the film. Instead of leaving, they decide to just steal the potion with the help of Lil' Red. While stealing the potion and running away, they have to fight against both the Fairy Godmother and Prince Charming, who are not in the scene in the film.

Shrek and Donkey drink the potion, becoming human and horse, but are shortly after put in prison along with Puss in Boots after overhearing the king and the Fairy Godmother plotting to trick Fiona into drinking a love potion, much like in the film. The fairytale characters that come to their rescue are different from the film, where it is the three pigs, the Big Bad Wolf, Pinocchio, Gingerbread Man and the three blind mice. The video game adds, as mentioned before, Lil' Red and the Fairy as playable characters, completely omits Pinocchio, and has the two trios as characters to rescue optionally. After being rescued, Shrek and Donkey, now as one playable character, along with Puss in Boots, Gingerbread Man and Big Bad Wolf, have to escape through the mines to quickly get back to Far Far Away. In the mines, frogs have taken over, imprisoned the dwarves and kidnapped Snow White while under the Fairy Godmother's reign, all of which is not in the film. Back in Far Far Away, Gingerbread Man creates a giant gingerbread man, who wreaks havoc on the city. The group has to guide the giant gingerbread man to the castle to get in. At the castle, Shrek and Fiona turn back into ogres, which infuriates the Fairy Godmother, causing her to turn the King into a frog. Shrek, Fiona, Donkey and Puss in Boots fight kights, lab scientists, trolls, Prince Charming and lastly the Fairy Godmother before earning their happily ever after. The magic mirror encourages the player to go outside before the credits roll.

The video game functions mostly as a direct adaptation, with a few differences that could be seen as Elkington's third adaptation strategy. These differences are the added

locations that further explain things that the film omitted, such as how the fairytale characters broke into the prison. However, most differences are just padding out the gameplay so that it is longer. It is interesting to see the added stakes to the story, such as rescuing Snow White in the mines and saving Fiona from the witch, as they have no further resolution in the story as a whole. The video game also borrows elements from the first film, such as Robin Hood and his merry men, who are enemies in chapter one, and Fiona singing until blackbirds explode. The Fairy Godmother's power over other fairytale creatures is seen more in the video game, as almost every enemy seems to be under her control, from the frogs in the mines to enchanted pumpkins in the forest chapters. Notable characters missing from the video game are Pinocchio and the Queen, as both of them have speaking roles with multiple lines in the film but not even a 3D-model in the video game. Pinocchio would have been a more fitting role in the Prison Break-chapter instead of the Fairy, but he might have been omitted since a female character was preferable. The Queen, while she appears in the storybook-illustrations before the chapters start, could have been depicted along with the King in the few scenes his 3D-model is in.

Much as Jenkins mentions in his article, the video game also translates the events of the film into environments. Every chapter is its own environment, even if two chapters take place in the same place, such as chapter three and chapter ten both taking place in the city of Far Far Away. Elements of the environments are used in multiple chapters, such as certain enemies and decorations, but they are always used in the same type of environments. For example, enchanted pumpkins are enemies only used in forest environments such as chapter two and chapter five, awnings that the character can jump on can only be seen in Far Far Away, and seesaws that two characters can use to make one character jump really high can only be seen in nature environments. Many of the environments have clear bounds of where the characters can go, such as fencing, barricades and steep slopes that shape the way forward. However, at times the boundaries are unclear, as some cliffs will kill a character while others have invisible walls stopping the character from falling down. The game does at times encourage exploring the environments with hidden coins and magic beans, as well as breaking everything breakable for coins. The environments do not always make it very clear that something is hidden there, as only after having read the included manual did I find out that Crazy Larry's Leprechaun Shop existed and was only available in certain chapters. The manual encourages the player to buy at least two upgrades before heading to the later levels, but that is very difficult to do if the player never encounters the shop. This reliance on the

manual for something that should have been said in the video game goes against Saito's Gamenics, but that might be due to the limitations of the video games at the time.

I had the opportunity to play a few of the chapters with another person, which definitely was much easier than playing alone. Discussing what to do with another player works better than trying to convince the computer to do the right thing. The computer-controlled characters have a tendency of swarming around the player-controlled characters, which can actually hinder the player from doing certain tasks. For example, one of the puzzles in the Prison Break-chapter was to push a giant ball into magic locks, one of them being on top of a slope. When every other character was not helping the player-controlled character push the ball up the slope, even standing in the way at times, it was very difficult and frustrating. Jumping on the seesaws was also difficult, as you have to switch character to control after placing one of them on one side of the seesaw and hope they stay put when getting another one to jump on the other side. The computer-controlled characters had a tendency to die in battle as well, leaving the player with fewer chances of succeeding. Luckily the game offers health points back after the battle so that everyone is alive when continuing the chapter. More unlucky is when a computer-controlled character walks over the edge of a level and causes the chapter to reset to the latest checkpoint, which may be quite a while back.

Shrek 2 for the Playstation 2 received equal positive and mixed critical reviews with an average score of 71/100 among 32 critics, according to Metacritic. Most critics agree that while it is fairly basic for a video game adaptation catered to children, it is also quite fun to play. Positive aspects of the game include: being a multiplayer game, the comedy, the story and dialogue, the graphics, and a variety of gameplay. Negative aspects include: being annoying to play alone due to the frustrating computer controlled players, the in-game camera not always showing the best angles, being too short and too easy, and catering too much to children's sense of humour. The user submitted reviews have an average score of 7.0/10, with 40 positive reviews, 18 mixed reviews, and 13 negative reviews. While most of the positive reviews state a genuine love for the game for being a fun multiplayer video game, a few of them do seem more like jokes. Some of the genuine reviews also stated a big nostalgia factor in why they loved the game. As Metacritic does not require a written statement along with the score, there were no negative reviews to read through. From the mixed and positive reviews, the only negative aspects were that a couple parts were too long and that it is a bit basic.

Lastly I will measure *Shrek 2*'s playability with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties. Satisfaction-wise, I found the video game fun to play and that it gave what it had promised. It

was quite easy to learn, with a few instances of frustrating game mechanics. In terms of effectiveness, it did not take too long to complete, except for a few difficult hitches, and the video game was structured well. The video game was not completely believable in the universe of Shrek and I was never absorbed in it, needing many breaks while playing it. It is difficult to measure motivation, because I had ulterior motives for finishing the video game, but I feel like I could play the game again with other players. I was similarly not that emotionally invested in the video game, except for when I was frustrated at it or elated that I finished it. Playing it together with another person was fun and preferable than playing alone due to being able to converse with the other characters.

4.1.2 *Madagascar*

Madagascar (2005) follows four animals living in the New York Central Zoo, Alex the lion, Marty the zebra, Gloria the hippopotamus and Melman the giraffe. Marty dreams of going to the wilds, while the others think he should be happy with his life at the zoo. When a group of penguins accidentally break into his pen while trying to break out, Marty decides to break out too. When the others try to get Marty back, everyone (including the penguins) gets caught and sent off to Kenya. The penguins hijack the ship, which causes the boxes to get thrown overboard and float to Madagascar, which they think is another zoo. When trying to find the staff, they instead find the lemurs of Madagascar having a party. Alex scares off the foosa (fossa) trying to eat the lemurs, which makes the lemurs trust them. The wilds are fun for the herbivores, but Alex slowly becomes feral when he has no stakes to eat. After attacking Marty due to his hunger, Alex exiles himself to the carnivore side of the island. When the others see that the ship (with the penguins in charge) is returning to the island, they go to bring Alex back. With the help of the penguins, they defeat the foosa before leaving on the ship back to New York (though the penguins forget to tell them that the ship is out of fuel). The themes of the film are friendship, trust and getting out of one's routines.

The video game adaptation of *Madagascar* is a platform video game for one player. There are eleven levels (see image 4) taking place in New York, on a cargo ship in the ocean and on the island of Madagascar. The player can play as Alex, Marty, Gloria, Melman or the penguins depending on the level or part of the level (see image 5). Every character besides the penguins have power cards that grant them extra powers when collecting three of them. For example: Alex gets the ability to double-jump, Marty gets the ability to sneak, Gloria gets

the ability to butt bounce, and Melman gets the ability to helicopter glide. Every level will begin and end with a cut-scene, with occasional cut-scenes in between missions. Most of the gameplay is very linear, with required missions stated clearly to the player and almost no optional missions. The missions can be divided into two types, either platforming challenges where the player has to go from point A to point B by jumping and avoiding obstacles, or small mini-game-esque challenges that are most often timed.

The video game starts with a scene from the film, where Marty dreams about the wilds but here he instead is awakened by a child with an Alex-plush rather than Alex himself. Marty collects three power cards and gets the ability to kick, which he uses to kick open the gates to his pen and go visit his friends. Alex is busy getting ready for his show, jumping through hoops and roaring away pigeons. Gloria is challenged to a race by a group of ostriches, but with the help of some chilli-peppers she gets the speed to beat them. The penguins spend their time getting ready for their escape by fishing both fish and the visitors' souvenirs. Melman, being afraid of the germs coming from all the rubbish thrown into his pen, has to clean up everything. The first level does a good job at introducing the player to how the animals operate, but unfortunately only Alex and Marty's missions have them moving around while the other three's missions function more as timed challenges to get to know their special abilities. In the second level, the penguins invite Marty to escape to the wilds, but he has to sneak past security guards and zookeepers with the help of other animals at the zoo. It is a fun insight into how he escaped, as the film does not explain how he got out, the others just notice that he is gone. Level three follows Alex, Gloria and Melman individually searching for Marty rather than together as they do in the film. They catch up to Marty outside the Grand Central Station instead of inside it, probably to not have to render the inside of the station, and are captured by the police. All the escaped animals are packed up and sent away to a nature reserve on a cargo ship, where the penguins decide to take over the whole ship. In level four, the player will mostly control Skipper, the leader, and find a safe way for the rest of the troop to reconvene. Private, the cute and slightly clueless penguin in the film, is more assertive in the video game, acting almost as second in command to Skipper. After taking control of the cargo ship, they change course to Antarctica, which pushes the animal crates off the ship and causes the animals to wash up at Madagascar.

In level five, Alex wakes up alone on the beach and has to find his friends in the jungle. Here, the player is introduced to one of the added characters, a queen bee that needs help to find flowers to pollinate. After a handful of difficult trials, Alex finds his friends and they all meet the lemurs. This is different from the film, as they all meet at the beach before

they decide to explore the jungle together to find the nonexistent staff, but Alex does comically fall behind while they run towards the lemurs' party. The lemurs decide to trust the group and ask them to help them get away from the foosa. Marty offers his help in level six, both escorting them and carrying them past steep drops and strong winds. The level ends with a short escorting mission for Alex as well, where he has to scare off the foosa from a group of lemurs. The events of this level do not occur in the film. As thanks for the rescue mission, the lemurs want to hold a banquet with all the fruits and vegetables available in the area. However, it is the group's job to gather them all. Level seven has Alex, Marty, Gloria and Melman do different tasks to get the fruits and vegetables, such as collecting flowers for the queen bee and keeping moles away from a garden. This level also introduces Wilbur the warthog, a recurring character who has a crush on Gloria. The characters are not treated as servants in the film, rather the lemurs gather everything for them. After the party, Gloria and Melman are concerned for Alex as he has not eaten anything and is starting to look crazy. Melman heads off to the Baobab tree in level eight to find a steak-tree for Alex, but has to fight bugs that have infested the tree. Gloria has a little part in the level knocking out moles, before Melman has to escort Mort the lemur past Alex who wants to eat Mort. While Alex does hallucinate wanting to eat the others and bites Marty in the film, he very quickly exiles himself so as not to hurt them.

Marty, Gloria and Melman realise that they have to leave the island and decide to rebuild the rescue beacon that Alex built in the film but was not seen built in the video game. Level nine follows the three of them running around the beach doing different tasks to gather ten beacon pieces, such as smashing crabs and fighting three crocodiles. This level introduces an albino crocodile who is a martial arts master and his two disciples, and includes Wilbur and many of the lemurs as well. They do not rebuild the beacon in the film, instead opting to dress Gloria up as the Statue of Liberty and hoist her up on Melmans head to catch the ship's attention. With the beacon lit, they wait for a ship to notice but Marty cannot leave without Alex and goes to the Predator Side of the Island to get him. Marty enlists Mort as a guide to find the fastest possible way to Alex, which happens to be the 'No chance of survival'-trail. In level ten, Marty has to move fast so that neither Mort nor himself gets eaten by the predators. Mort has a little mini game in this level where he has to jump on mushrooms to gather falling fruit for Wilbur. The albino crocodile captures Mort and Marty has to race him down a water slide to get Mort back. Finally, Marty has to jump down a whirlpool to get to Alex. Marty's way to Alex in the film is not as dangerous as in the video game, though it has a few gags about the dangers of the Predator Side of the Island. Meanwhile, in level eleven,

Alex is attacked by the foosa while lamenting that he bit Marty. The penguins fly in on bats to give him the final power cards that give him the ability to attack with his claws. After fighting 15 foosa, Alex then has to battle the king of the foosa by throwing mangoes and clawing him. As Alex defeats King Foosa, Marty is thrown down from the whirlpool unto King Foosa and thinks he has saved Alex. They reunite with their friends on the beach, where the lemurs throw them a farewell party and then credits roll.

This video game is a direct adaptation as well, with very little added. The differences to the film lies mostly in the added gameplay, such as all the levels exploring Madagascar and the levels that expand upon the events. In the video game, the characters are more separated while doing their own missions than in the film. This does make sense, as it is a single player game, but a lot of the relationships between the characters are lost when the characters only briefly interact during cut-scenes. There are a handful of added characters to the game who were not in the film, and their roles are mostly set-ups for required quests. The most prominent one is Wilbur, who shows up in three different levels. His role is mostly flirting with Gloria, who does not like him back, and making what would otherwise be relatively easy quests much more strenuous. The albino crocodile shows up twice, both times to challenge Marty in different ways. The queen bee also shows up in two levels to challenge Alex in flower-related timed challenges. Other additional characters are enemies, such as King Foosa from the last level and the very aggressive zookeeper with a tranquilliser gun that shows up when Marty escapes and during the cargo ship mutiny. The adaptation being a platformer is very fitting, as it allows the player to explore the environments well. However, it would have been better for it to be a multiplayer game like *Shrek 2* and *Over the Hedge*, as the characters almost always move together as a group in the film.

The events of the film being mapped onto places is especially clear in this game, as the level selection map is a 3D-map of the world, starting in New York and moving to the right towards Madagascar. The sweeping motion of the selection can be slightly nauseating, but it moves the story along very well. Even the levels taking place in the same area show a different point on the map which works well for differentiating the levels. The two first levels take place in the New York City Zoo, the third in the streets of New York City, the fourth one takes place on the cargo ship taking the animals to Kenya, and the final seven take place on Madagascar, but in different areas of the island, such as the beach, the giant Baobab Tree where the lemurs live and the Predator Side of the Island where the foosa live. Enemies in New York and the cargo ship are mostly humans, such as zookeepers, police-officers and sailors, but birds and various vehicles are also harmful to the characters. At Madagascar, the

enemies are different kinds of predators, such as spiders, birds, crabs, foosa and bugs. Most enemies are limited to certain levels and even certain challenges within the levels, such as a group of very vicious tortoises that are only in a timed challenge in the beach level.

In terms of difficulty, the game is quite mixed. Almost every level has a difficult mission that takes many tries to be able to do. The difficulty lies in either janky controls or a time limit that is too short, or sometimes both. Gloria's missions are among the most difficult as most of her power ups are very hard to control. The only mission I had to ask for help to complete was a mission where Gloria had to smash a number of watermelons in a very short time. The game set up a lot of chilli peppers so Gloria could run into them, but since she is so difficult to control while under the influence of the chilli, it is frustratingly hard. Another move to use is her tumble-attack, but it is also very difficult to control. It took asking two separate people to help me before I could move on. Melman is also very difficult to control, and since he is deathly afraid of any kind of dirt he dies immediately if he touches anything dirty, which makes his platforming missions very strenuous. On a more positive note, the game does offer frequent checkpoints and the ability to come back to the same mission later on without having to start at the beginning of the level. There are also upgrades to be bought at the Zoovenir shop with all the coins the player gathers while playing, such as more lives and a coin-magnet to get more coins. The game offers three mini-games to be bought at the Zoovenir shop as well: Tiki Mini-Golf, Shuffleboard, and Lemur Rave, which is a rhythm game. These are the only multiplayer parts of the game, as up to six players can play mini-golf while passing the controller, two players can play the shuffleboard game while passing the controller, and two players can play the Lemur Rave using two separate controllers. The biggest downside is that the player has to buy the ability to play with multiple players with more coins, which does encourage the player to collect more coins.

Madagascar received an average score of 69/100 from 25 critical reviewers, with 12 positive reviews, 11 mixed, and 2 negative (Metacritic). The positive aspects of the video game include: being fun to play, a variety of gameplay, and being well designed. The negative aspects include: badly controlled characters and camera, being too short and too easy to play, being forgettable, and being catered to children and too boring for adults. A few critics call the game a simple cash-grab, and some also speculate whether the negative aspects are due to being made on a very short schedule. The user submitted reviews gave the game a higher score, with an average of 7.6/10 from 55 ratings. There are 32 positive scores, 21 mixed and 2 negative, though those who rated the game with a negative score did not bother to write a review. The positive reviews state that the game is fun and accurate to the

film, the characters are funny and there is a lot of variety in gameplay. The negative aspects are that it is too short, a little too easy for some players and a little too difficult for children, and the graphics were bad for its time in hindsight. It would seem like many reviewers see it primarily as a video game for children, but find it still worthwhile playing as an adult. User reviewers found it more replayable than critics, as one of the critics even stated that it would be better to rent the game than buy it.

Measuring the playability with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties, I found the video game fun to play and I feel it delivered what was promised. It was quite easy to learn, except for certain parts which I never managed to master, and the controls were at times very frustrating. The structure of the video game was good, and it did not take too long to complete (minus the one part I got stuck on). I was never completely immersed in the video game feeling that I needed to take many breaks while playing, and it was not very believable. Again, it is difficult to measure the motivation for finishing the video game as I had ulterior motives for finishing it, but I could see myself playing the game again. I was never really emotionally invested in the game, except for when I got frustrated or happy that I succeeded. The only social aspect I experienced while playing was asking for help when I got stuck, but playing the minigames could be fun with another player.

4.1.3 *Over the Hedge*

Over the Hedge (2006) begins with RJ, a starving raccoon, trying to find food around a resting point along a road. He tries to steal a wagon full of junk food and snacks from the den of a hibernating bear named Vincent, but accidentally pushes the wagon down onto the road when he gets caught, causing it to be completely destroyed. RJ promises to replace the wagon in a week to not be eaten, but realises that he needs help to do so. He finds a group of animals that have just woken up from hibernation to find half their forest replaced by a suburban area behind a hedge. He convinces them to go steal from the humans, though Verne the tortoise has a bad feeling about RJ and the humans. Getting hooked on the junk food, the animals steal more and more until Gladys, leader of the Homeowners' Association, hires an exterminator called the Verminator to place dangerous traps all over the backyards of the neighbourhood. Verne, not liking the junk everyone is eating and the dangers of the backyards, decides to give the food back to the humans but is stopped by RJ, who still is planning on giving the food to Vincent. The food is once again destroyed after a chase-scene

with a dog, which causes the animals to blame Verne for losing the food. RJ sees Gladys receive a big order of food for a party and comes up with a final heist to get all the food. Unfortunately they get caught in Gladys's kitchen and she calls for the Verminator. RJ betrays the others and escapes with the food while they are captured by the Verminator. When bringing the food to Vincent, RJ realises that his found family is more important than his debt to Vincent and crashes the wagon full of food into the Verminator's van. They manage to bring the van back to Glady's house and escape back to the forest, but are followed and trapped in the hedge by Vincent, the Verminator and Gladys. Using their final weapon, a caffeinated Hammy the squirrel, they manage to set off one of the dangerous traps in Gladys's backyard and trap all three enemies. Vincent gets sent to the wilderness, Gladys and the Verminator are arrested for the dangerous traps, and RJ is officially included in the family of mismatched animals. The film's themes are trying new things and trusting one another.

Over the Hedge's video game adaptation is a platforming video game for up to two players. There are 35 missions that can be divided into ten levels with two to four missions per level. The playable characters are RJ, Verne, Hammy and Stella the skunk. Two characters will be available for the player to play every level, the other one will either be controlled by the computer or a second player. Every level is set up as a heist with the goal of either stealing food or an electric device from a location. Every level will begin with a cut-scene where RJ goes through the plan for their heist with the other animals, and end with a cut-scene showing the outcome of the heist. Most levels will follow a structure of the first mission being the journey to the location, the second mission being the theft of the food or device, and the third mission being the escape back to the hedge. Every mission will have a set of primary goals, meaning required things to do, and another set of secondary goals, meaning optional goals that can at times be quite challenging. Completing goals will earn the player unlockable content, such as mini-games.

The video game kicks off almost half-way through the film, with RJ announcing to the other animals his plan for how they are going to steal food from the humans. There is no backstory for why RJ wants to steal the food or why the animals would want to join him. It seems like the player would have to watch the film to gather the info beforehand. The first four missions contain the story of the film while also functioning as a tutorial. The player plays as RJ and Verne in the first two missions taking place in Gladys' backyard and house (see image 6). The primary goals are very simple: get from one yard to another by opening a gate with a frog statue, break five birdhouses, disarm traps and toss food to Penny the porcupine. The secondary goals are slightly more challenging, such as never touching a laser

or triggering an alarm. Already in the first mission a new character gets introduced, which is Rufus the bluebird, who helps the animals get through the backyard by telling them to break five birdhouses. Inside the house, Hammy has to disarm the alarm by quickly pressing the correct buttons before time runs out. He gets called even if the player is not playing as him. The animals then have to find and toss food to Penny before time runs out. However, the animals get caught by Gladys due to being too loud. She calls in the Sniffer (the animals' name for the Verminator) and he captures all but RJ. During a cut-scene, RJ brings the food to Vincent, but changes his mind and drives the wagon of food into the Verminator's van to rescue his friends. Meanwhile inside the van, the player controls Hammy or Stella trying to open the other cages while fighting off 15 rats. Stella heads to the front of the van and crashes the can into Gladys' house. The animals run back to the hedge, Gladys and the Verminator in tow, only to find Vincent waiting on the other side. In mission four, the player controls Hammy or Verne running through the hedge. The player has to dodge and jump over branches, electric tasers from the Verminator and Vincent's claws until a timer runs out. The video game shows a slightly different ending from the film, as only Vincent and Gladys get caught in a net together and the Verminator runs free. The cut-scene ends with them finding all the food gone, and deciding that they might as well steal other things as well while they are at it.

The rest of the game takes place one year after the events of the film, making it both a direct adaptation as well as a sequel to the story. The player is able to choose freely which two of the four playable characters they want to play as, which will not alter the overall story, only bring in a variety of jokes in between missions. The cut-scenes will always include all the characters as though they are all present during the missions. The missions usually involve stealing devices, such as a projector, a television and a popcorn machine, but in some levels stealing a device is not even a secondary goal, it is just something the player can do if they want. Every second level takes place in the suburbs, while the others take place on a steam train and a shooting gallery, a mountain at a nature reserve where Vincent lives, a mini-golf course at an amusement park and lastly at Vermtech which is the Verminator's headquarter. Almost every level also introduces new enemies in the form of various wild animals that the Verminator has brainwashed with electric helmets. Some of them have special powers, such as gophers being able to dig underground to get away and chipmunks being able to fire projectiles towards the player, while others have a variety of weapons to help them fight the player. Additional enemies include various machines that the Verminator has built, such as flying grills that shoot flaming coals at the player, barrels with spinning

blades and tennis ball-shooting vacuums, as well as Mr Ropeley, the owner of the shooting gallery and amusement park, and the Verminator himself. Even Vincent gets brainwashed by the Verminator and opts to join the animals after they save him. The final battle at Vermtech is against the Verminator himself after he has kidnapped Heather the teenaged opossum. After defeating him, the whole laboratory explodes as the animals escape, and the Verminator is arrested hopefully for animal abuse.

As mentioned before, there are four playable characters to choose from and the choice only matters if the player prefers the look or voice of one character over another. All four characters play the same, the only difference being the animation of the energy attack. The character will always carry a weapon, but are able to pick up other weapons during missions, such as wrenches, plungers and shovels. There are also various launchers (guns) that can shoot ping-pong balls, ice, fire or sleeping gas bubbles, which can be picked up after defeating an enemy carrying one. While the player is able to pick among the four characters after finishing the first level, the use of the characters in these first four missions is not very balanced. RJ and Verne are used in the first two, Hammy and Stella are used in the third mission, and Hammy and Verne are used again in the fourth mission, leaving the only female character used only in one mission. Of course, this does align with how the characters are in the film, as RJ and Verne are the most prominent characters, followed by Hammy. The gameplay fits well for the story, as platforming and fighting in pairs works well in heists. While having more playable characters would be preferable, having the rest of the animal family as the supporting team in the heist works in the story.

Much as in Jenkins's article, the events of the film are mapped onto different locations. While many levels take place in the suburbs, they still feel distinct from each other as backyards have different sizes and decorations, the levels take place during different times during the day, and the security and alarms get more convoluted over time. The level designs feel very open, though there often are invisible walls keeping the player where they need to be. There are always decorations and furniture to break for health, energy and extra content, so the player is encouraged to look around for things to break. The perhaps most baffling part of the game is the humans' willingness to have brainwashed animals patrol their backyards as well as inside their homes, not to mention the lasers and electric floors with off-switches just out of reach from a grown human being. There are traps, sensors and bins spawning enemies everywhere, including the streets, which provides an interesting view of the world the video game is set in. The only safe space is The Woods (see image 7), which acts like the hub for the animals and the player. In The Woods, the player can select a mission to play, select a

mini-game to play, look at and try on all the hats they have found in the played missions, select which character to play, as well as look at all the devices that had been stolen. The rest of the animal family will hang out by the various stolen devices while discussing the previous mission or the coming one, at times bringing in micronarratives to the story. For example, Ozzy the opossum will sometimes reprimand his daughter for being reckless in the previous mission, or the porcupine parents will state their concern for their children's safety, which points to a life outside of the gameplay and further fleshes out the world.

When it comes to difficulty, I'd say that this video game is fairly easy. Every timed event, including the finding and tossing food to Penny events and disarming the alarm events, have generous timers and are doable in one try. The controls are very smooth, making platforming events much easier than in the previous video games discussed. The only minorly difficult parts of the games are all part of the secondary goals, which are optional, for example, rescuing the three porcupine children that often include tricky platforming or surviving a mission without losing health. Why rescuing the children of the animal family is an optional goal is strange since one would think that that would be more pressing than finding another electronic device to add to the Woods, but all the children are always alive and well in the Woods after the mission regardless whether the player saved them or not. The gameplay does become more challenging over time, but it never gets too hard to handle. The computer controlled character is also much better than the ones in *Shrek 2*, helping the player while not making it too easy. If one of the characters is defeated, the player can revive the fallen character faster by whacking them a few times with their weapon, which gets the characters back with half their health. The computer might attempt tricky platforming sections and die trying, but more often they will just appear next to the controlled character after the player has made it through.

Over the Hedge received an average score of 58/100 and mostly mixed critical reviews from 29 critics, with 5 positive scores, 18 mixed, and 6 negative (Metacritic). Positive aspects include: enjoyable for fans of the film and comic strip, fun to play, good visuals and audio, and a well implemented two-player mode. Negative aspects include: having a simple and unoriginal story, being catered for children, being too short and easy to play, not having camera control, and generally being an adaptation of a film. The reviews are very harsh, and feel almost prejudiced against video game adaptations in general. One critic states that the game adds nothing new to the film it is based on, which makes me wonder if they even played the whole game as most of the game is new material. User reviews are much more positive, giving the game a score of 8.5/10 from 23 ratings, with 19 positive

scores, three mixed, and one negative. There were only four reviews to read, which all had positive scores. The positive aspects stated were it being fun to play, allowing two players to play, having great voice-acting, and being playable for both children and "hardened gamers" (Metacritic). The only negative aspect mentioned was the troublesome camera and the gameplay being a bit repetitive. It is difficult to not be on the users' side, as I personally enjoyed the video game very much while trying to keep the nostalgic glasses off.

Measuring the playability with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties, I found the game very fun and satisfying to play and that it delivered what it had promised. The game was easy to learn while still managing to get more challenging over time. I was never frustrated like the first two video games made me. It did not take long to complete and was structured very well. I found it to be quite believable, but never got fully immersed in it as I needed many breaks while playing it. Once again, measuring motivation for completing the game is not feasible due to ulterior motives, though the promise of unlockables made me want to complete it fully and I will most likely play it again. Besides a very nostalgic feeling, I did not really get emotionally invested in the game. Having played the video game with other people before, I know that playing together with another player is more enjoyable than playing alone.

4.2 Nintendo DS games

The Nintendo DS, which stands for both 'Developer's System' and 'Dual Screen', is a handheld video game console that was first released in 2004 (NDS-Gear). It has two screens placed on a clamshell design, the one underneath being a touch screen, a built-in microphone, a plus-shaped control pad, four buttons with the letters A, B, X, and Y, a start-button, a select-button, an on/off-button, two buttons on the back labelled R and L, and a removable touch stylus. The game cartridges had enough memory to save the gameplay without need for a memory card. It had the ability to play Game Boy Advance (an earlier handheld console made by Nintendo) games, in addition to the cartridges specific for the DS (nintendo.com). The DS, however, featured the new at the time ability to connect to multiple DS consoles wirelessly, allowing for multiplayer gameplay as well as other interactions that used to be available online. It remains the most sold handheld console of all time, as well as the second most sold console of all time after the PlayStation 2 (Sirani, 2023). In 2006, Nintendo released a slimmer version called the Nintendo DS Lite, that also had brighter screens and a

battery that lasted longer. Nintendo released another redesign called the Nintendo DSi in 2008 (see image 8), with additional features, such as two cameras and an online store, and games specific for the DSi, but with the loss of being able to play Game Boy Advance games. There was even a fourth iteration in 2009 titled the Nintendo DSi XL, which was a larger model with larger screens and an improved battery life.

The video games picked are all made by different companies and are all different genres. *Happy Feet* is a Warner Brothers film and a racing and rhythm game, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* is a Twentieth Century Fox film and a rhythm game, and lastly *How to Train Your Dragon* is a Dreamworks film and an adventure game. They all offer some kind of multiplayer experience as long as two people have the game, but I will not try those features due to only having one cartridge of each game. I will discuss these games in order of release as well, starting with *Happy Feet*.

4.2.1 *Happy Feet*

Happy Feet (2006) follows Mumble, a penguin born into a tribe of singing penguins, where every penguin has a heartsong. Mumble has a passion for dancing right out of the egg, which the other penguins do not approve of. Since Mumble does not have a heartsong and is not able to sing, he cannot graduate and go fishing with his peers. The penguins are experiencing a famine due to a lack of fish. Mumble gets lost after the graduation party and meets another type of penguins after being chased by a leopard seal. These penguins like his dancing and invite him to their tribe where their leader, Lovelace, gives them more proof of aliens (humans) existing. Mumble returns to his own tribe to woo his childhood friend Gloria and inspires the young penguins to dance. Elder penguins think that his dancing caused the famine, so Mumble heads out to prove them wrong. He follows a fishing ship all the way to the US, where he is washed up on a beach and put in a zoo. After giving up trying to talk to the humans, Mumble gets their attention by dancing. The humans put a tracker on him and he leads them to the penguins who have to dance so that the humans find them. The humans film the penguins dancing and the world decides to stop fishing around Antarctica. The film has themes of following one's own passions rather than trying to fit in.

There are two different types of gameplay in the video game adaptation of *Happy Feet*. The first is a rhythm game, where you tap blue icons to the beat of the music to make Mumble tap dance (see image 9). The second is a racing obstacle course, where Mumble

belly-sledds down an icy mountain to either collect items or beat a time set (see image 10). In between these events the story gets told like a storybook, with pictures and text telling what happened in the film. There are 23 missions or chapters overall, with nine of them being dance missions, four of them being collecting belly-sledding missions and ten of them being time-trial belly-sledding missions.

The songs in the dance missions are songs from the film, but even though there are nine dancing missions they use only five songs, meaning they reuse most of them twice. The Dance Meter shows how well the player has timed the taps. If the player does well, a crowd and Mumble cheers. If the player does poorly, the crowd boos and Mumble falls. It is quite difficult to fail the songs as the player needs to miss quite a few icons before the song ends. Interestingly, there is a crowd cheering in the background of every song, even when dancing was not accepted by the tribe. This is most likely due to the designers wanting the player to feel like they are doing well in the game no matter how far they have come. Most dancing events come at fitting points in the story, however towards the end a few dancing missions are added in awkward places to balance out the belly-sledding. For example, when Mumble leaves to talk with the aliens, Gloria wants to follow but Mumble turns her away quite rudely. This turns into a dancing event where Mumble tap dances to "I will survive" by Gloria Gaynor with Gloria (the penguin) applauding in the background, even though she should be very upset. A similarly awkward dancing event is when Mumble misses the fishing ship and dances to make it wait for him, which it does not.

In the belly-sledding missions, the player controls Mumble by either sliding the stylus on the touchpad or pressing on the control pad. The obstacles range from ice blocks and rocks to giant rib cages and buoys. Besides the items for the collecting missions, there are golden fish icons that give Mumble a boost and purple coils to help him jump. The collecting missions have Mumble collecting: musical notes before his first singing lesson, love stones to talk to Lovelace, seaweed for elephant seals to find out where the aliens are, and finally courage on the way back from the zoo to tell his tribe about the aliens. Here the elephant seals have gotten a bigger role, as in the film they only warn Mumble to not go to the aliens. There are more items to be collected in the missions than is required, which leaves room for error. Many of the time trial missions are introduced as races against his friends or dangerous situations where he has to get away from predators, but no other characters are seen during the mission. Nothing bad happens if the player fails the mission, the mission just stops and the player is prompted to try again. The player gets a lot of help during the time trials, such as checkpoints that give the player more time to finish the mission as well as the items

mentioned previously. The difficulty of the missions increase over time, but they are still very manageable for a child.

The video game is very much a direct adaptation, as it follows the film quite closely. However, being a very short video game, a lot is omitted. The storybook 'cutscenes' make the characters more simplified than in the film, and the type of gameplay the game has does not allow for much exploring the world. Unlike the previous game discussed, the events of the film are not translated into environments. This is most likely due to the setting being mostly Antarctica. Some backgrounds during the dancing missions change depending on where Mumble is, but the sledding missions look mostly the same with a few more obstacles added with each mission. The gameplay does align with the film though, as it is difficult to imagine the video game in any other genre. The story is very peaceful, so a fighting game does not really make sense, and since penguins do not move well except when belly sledding or swimming a platformer would not be fitting either. However, there could have been more songs included outside of the story for more gameplay, like an arcade that unlocks after completing the game, as there are songs in the film that are omitted from the video game. There is a point to be made on whether the film adds anything to the video game, as the few little storybook-pages in between the levels are easily skippable and nothing of the story is seen in the gameplay.

There were only three critical reviews on *Happy Feet*'s DS game, two of which had mixed scores and one negative, for an average score of 46/100. The only positive aspect mentioned was that having two types of gameplay was fun, but that was still not enough for the game to be good. Other negatives included: bad graphics, repetitiveness,and just being boring to play. To quote one critic: "The 'it's for kids' excuse won't wash, we're afraid" (Official Nintendo Magazine UK in Metacritic). The 10 user submitted ratings were all negative with an average score of 0.6/10. The reviews agree on the bad graphics, repetitiveness, and how boring the gameplay is. The only positive aspect was the soundtrack, but buying the game for the soundtrack would not be worth it. One reviewer stated that the game promised three different types of gameplay on the box, with swimming as the third type of gameplay, and was very disappointed that swimming was not included. It does say on the box: "Step into Mumble's Happy Feet as you belly-sled, dance and swim through Antartica on an amazing adventure", which makes it sound like swimming is part of the gameplay. The biggest fault of the video game seems to be that one has to buy it to play it, as the gameplay is very similar to various contemporary mobile games which are much cheaper if not free to

play. One could assume that it would not be as harshly rated if it was one of the many flash-games online that were popular at the same time.

Measuring the playability with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties, I had some fun playing the game, but it was not that satisfying to complete which I feel is due to the storybook format not celebrating the victories like other formats would. It is very easy to learn and near impossible to fail at. In terms of effectiveness, it took over an hour to complete (while taking notes) and was not really well structured due to odd dancing parts. I did not find it very believable, mostly due to the odd moments for the dance missions, and was never immersed in it, due to the gameplay being so short and simple. Motivation is once again difficult to measure due to ulterior motives, but nothing really invites me to play it again. I was never emotionally invested in the video game, though a few of the songs are kind of good. Though a multiplayer mode is available, I do not see a need for playing the game with someone else.

4.2.2 *Alvin and The Chipmunks*

Alvin and The Chipmunks (2007) follows the unsuccessful musician Dave, who after his final rejection at a recording company accidentally brings home three talking chipmunks. After he hears them singing, he lets them stay with him as long as they sing his songs. The chipmunks make his life very difficult until they finally perform in front of a producer and rise to fame. The producer tricks the chipmunks into leaving Dave and exploits them until they are too sick to sing. Dave saves them from going on a dangerous world tour with the power of family and brings them back home. The main theme of the film is that fun and freedom is not always what is best for children in the long run.

The video game adaptation of *Alvin and The Chipmunks* does not follow the plot at all, it rather acts like a sequel to the film's origin story. The video game is a rhythm game with small glimpses of plot in between the songs in the form of conversations between Dave and the chipmunks. At the start of the game, the chipmunks dream of performing at the Rockathonapalooza, which then prompts Dave to arrange concerts for the chipmunks so that they are popular enough to perform at such a big event. They start at smaller locations, such as a local prom, a ski resort and a mall, before going to bigger stages, such as The Tree House, The Painted Desert, and finally the Rockathonapalooza. The player can choose

between three difficulties: easy, normal and hard. The video game also has a quick mode, where songs get unlocked after they are played in the story mode.

The gameplay is very similar to other rhythm games from the same era, mainly to hit a symbol as it reaches the bottom of the screen (see image 11). The symbols in this video game are records, which go from black to black with flames to flaming gold and finally flaming platinum records the more records you hit in a row. Occasionally blue hold records will come, which means the player has to hold the record until the line ends. These are particularly hard to hit, which causes the combo to reset. The songs also have mini events, where the player has to quickly do one of four actions before time runs out: tapping drum pads in the correct numerical order, scratch a record to fill up a meter, drag a dot along a line, and lastly shout 'Alvin!' into the DS microphone (or just blow into the microphone, it cannot tell the difference). The game warns the player to not miss too many records and try to keep the Rockometer in the green. The song fails if the Rockometer becomes red and then the player has to start over. Unlike other rhythm games, such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, where you can hear the instruments miss the notes and the crowd starts booing when the player misses multiple notes, there is no audible penalty for playing badly in the *Alvin and The Chipmunks* video game. The songs keep the same quality throughout no matter how many records the player misses.

Since the Nintendo DS has two screens, the gameplay of this video game happens on the bottom screen. The top screen is used for titles and a map of the United States in the menu, and a video of the concert and the score while playing the songs. The map of the United States (see image 12) shows how each location moves the chipmunks from the east to the west, closer to the end goal of Rockathonapalooza. During the songs, the top screen shows the chipmunks playing the drums, the guitar and the bass on top of a stage. The stage changes depending on what venue they are at. However, the animation of the chipmunks is quite stiff, like animatronics at a themepark. It does not look like they are singing the songs at all. But since the player will be focusing on the lower screen while playing, the top screen perhaps does not need much detail anyway.

The biggest departure from the film is the plot, as the video game does not follow the plot of the film at all, rather it acts almost like a sequel to the film, employing the transmedia storytelling strategy. It is difficult to not notice that the take-away of the film is that the chipmunks should be allowed to be children and touring is not something they can handle. However, in the video game, touring is perfectly fine and something Dave urges them to do. Perhaps touring is okay as long as the songs they play are rock songs rather than pop songs.

The only song that is in both the film and the video game is the christmas song that Dave writes in the film, although it is the rockier version rather than the classic "The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)" from 1958. The chipmunks in the film are advertised more like a boy band, while they are a rock band in the video games. This big difference seems to be due to the video game being made at the same time as the film, but by a completely different team. The video game even has an ad for the film in the instruction booklet with the text "In Cinemas December", which hints at the video game being released before the film.

There are only two critical reviews available on Metacritic for *Alvin and The Chipmunks*. The first one is a mixed score of 50, with the review: "Painfully thin" (n-Revolution Magazine UK in Metacritic). The second one is a negative score of 45 from IGN, which just encourages the reader to play another rhythm game unless the reader's child really likes "the furry". The user submitted ratings do not have an average score since there are only four ratings, but two gave the game a positive score and one gave it a mixed score. The only review, a mixed one with a score of 5, stated mostly negative aspects, such as the controls being unfair at times and the music being grating: "It's kind of a technical mess, but it looks decent graphically" (Metacritic). Notably, there is not much to review and not many willing to review what little there is.

Measuring the playability of the game with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties, I found the game very mediocre though I did not expect much of it. It is quite easy to learn but near impossible to master as the controls were very inaccurate. In terms of effectiveness, it took the length of listening to a full album to complete and the structure was very basic. I was never immersed in the game due to the short and simple gameplay. Again, motivation is difficult to measure due to ulterior motives, but nothing invites me to play the game again. I was never emotionally invested in the video game and I see no need for playing the game together with somebody else.

4.2.3 *How to Train Your Dragon*

How to Train Your Dragon (2010) takes place in the fictional Viking village of Berk, which is infested with sheep-stealing dragons. Hiccup, the chief's son and welder's apprentice, is not allowed to join in with the dragon-fighting as he is not strong enough and his inventions only hinder the others' efforts. Nonetheless, Hiccup manages to shoot down one of the most dangerous dragons with one of his inventions, but nobody believes him. When Hiccup finds

the wounded and trapped dragon in the forest, he finds himself unable to kill it and instead sets it free. The dragon spares him in return and runs off. Hiccup's dad, Stoick the Vast, puts him in dragon training with the other teens while he himself goes off to find the dragons' nest. After the first lesson, Hiccup goes back to the forest to find the dragon trapped in a valley, unable to fly out. He studies it and eventually manages to bond with it, even naming the dragon Toothless. Hiccup's findings turn out to be very useful in the dragon training sessions, as he manages to defeat the dragons without hurting them. Unfortunately, the price of being best in class is to kill a dragon at the coming-of-age ceremony. Hiccup decides to run away on Toothless, but is followed by Astrid, a classmate he has a crush on, who threatens to tell the others about his dragon. After a very persuasive ride on Toothless, during which he takes them to the nest, Astrid offers to help Hiccup out if things go wrong. At the ceremony, Stoick gets angry at Hiccup for not killing the dragon, causing Toothless to come and defend Hiccup. Stoick captures Toothless to lead them to the nest, but is not prepared for the enormous dragon that the other dragons fear. Hiccup and the other teens come to the adults' rescue on the other captured dragons. Hiccup manages to defeat the enormous dragon, but loses a leg in the process. The film ends with the village embracing the dragons and deciding to train the dragons instead of killing them.

The video game adaptation of *How to Train Your Dragon* is an action-adventure video game where the player can train and fight with their own dragons. The player can choose to play as either Hiccup or Astrid, which offers a slight change to the story. The gameplay is mostly turn-based combat against either wild dragons or other characters' dragons (see image 13). The player can have up to six dragons, and is also able to customise them. There are also two mini-games: the forgery where the player can create new armour for their dragon, and the flying obstacle course where the player can collect money. The player can also battle against another player in multiplayer mode, but if only one has a game-cartridge both will have to use the same type of dragon.

The game begins one year after the events of the film, at the first annual Thor'sday Thursday Dragon Celebration Tournament. The village is challenging their youth to become the first Dragon Master by fighting with their dragons in a tournament and completing different tasks. These tasks include fetching a number of items in the different areas and beating certain dragons or dragon trainers. Other quests will emerge while attempting the tasks, such as trying one of Fishleg's flying obstacle courses, helping another Viking find something they have lost, or fetching different meats to get a new dragon. The youth of all the different clans quickly form into teams to try to keep Hiccup and Astrid from winning,

but the player will always win. The biggest villain is Snotlout, one of the bullies in the film who Hiccup befriends at the end, who in the video game wants to cheat his way into becoming the Dragon Master. Depending on who the player plays as, his reasoning for wanting to beat them differs. He does not want Hiccup to be the Dragon Master because he still thinks Hiccup is too weak and too much of a daddy's boy to lead the Vikings, and he does not think Astrid can be a leader because she is a girl. Snotlout convinces the twins Ruffnut and Tuffnut as well as a few other kids from his clan to join him in stealing the items Hiccup and Astrid have gathered or even ambushing them to make them late for the tournaments. The player will always show up to the tournaments at the last minute, while the character the player does not play as will sometimes miss out on the tournaments. Eventually, the twins as well as some of the other kids realise that Snotlout will not pay them back for their efforts and opt to help Hiccup and Astrid instead. The final task before the final tournament has the youth traversing the Dragon Tooth Mountain to find a bell, but instead there are a lot of Vikings needing help. Turns out the bell was a misdirect and helping three different people is the qualifier for the final tournament. Since Tuffnut and Ruffnut helped Hiccup, Astrid and Fishlegs, they qualified too. Snotlout, having stolen a bell, demands to be part of the tournament anyway, so the player defeats him before being crowned as Dragon Master. The player can choose to continue playing after the credits roll, but since the quest of defeating three very strong dragons on the mountains was too difficult, I stopped playing here.

The video game adaptation is closest to Elkington's second strategy of transmedia storytelling, as it is more of a sequel to the film. However, since the film has a sequel that takes place five years after the events of the first film without mentioning anything from the video game, the video game feels more like an alternate universe. The first glaring difference is the addition of the other youth of the village, as in the film it seems like there are only six teenagers in the whole village, while in the video game there are many more. The designs feel quite lazy, as they look like worse versions of the teens from the film. The new teens will have the same body type as one of the original teens and be named something that rhymes with that same teen's name. For example, the teens from Fishlegs Ingerman's clan will all have a rounder body and have a first name that ends with -legs, such as Wolflegs or Mouselegs, and the teens from Tuffnut and Ruffnut Thorston's clan will have a slimmer body and have a first name that ends with -uffnut, such as Sluffnut or Stuffnut. Interestingly, no teens from the Haddock clan (Hiccup's clan) or the Hofferson clan (Astrid's clan) are seen, though some grown-ups with unique models show up briefly. This is most likely due to the

developers wanting the playable characters to stand out and their names not being that easy to create variations of. The new teens all have very simple clothes and haircuts as well as almost no accessories, which makes it easy to forget who is who.

The main difference between playing as Hiccup or Astrid is their gender. Hiccup will mostly be underestimated due to his reputation as a weak Viking who does not want to hurt other beings (ironic since the dragons are fighting each other) and the others think he receives better treatment because he is the son of the chief. Because Hiccup has read a lot about dragons, he will give advice to those who are kind to him. Astrid, on the other hand, is underestimated due to her being a girl. Even other girls think that she should not win because she is a girl, which is a little silly considering that they are also competing to become Dragon Master. A difference in story comes when Astrid gets injured in the Caves when playing as Hiccup, as Fishlegs is the one who gets injured when playing as Astrid. It is strange that Astrid is not allowed to rescue Hiccup while Hiccup is allowed to rescue Astrid, but it probably has to do with the hero of the franchise being above needing rescuing. One negative aspect of having two playable characters was that the game only allows one save-file on the cartridge, which meant that I had to delete my first playthrough to start a new one and thus had no way of going back and comparing the playthroughs.

The gameplay is turn-based battles between the player's dragon and another dragon, where the dragons take turns attacking each other. Each attack costs a different amount of energy-ticks that gets replenished at a steady rate until one of the dragons' energy is full, and does a different amount of damage to the other dragon. The goal is for the other dragon to lose all its health. Some moves can also heal or buff the dragon, such as increasing its defences or accuracy. while some attacks can give the other dragon a 'debuff', such as poisoning or burning that steadily hurts the dragon for a set amount of energy-ticks. After a certain amount of attacks, a special move can be activated, which will usually do critical damage to the other dragon. There are also healing items, such as herbs and berries, that can be used to heal or buff the dragon for an amount of energy-ticks. The moves can be switched before battles and using certain moves can unlock newer, hopefully better moves. The combat system is quite easy to get into and well explained in the tutorial. The biggest down-side is the inability to skip certain moments, such as waiting for the energy-bars to get full again and the animations for the buffs. Watching the opponent dragon doing its moves very slowly gets a little annoying over time. Also getting into random fights with wild dragons while trying to get from one place to the other is a little annoying, but since most fights are fairly easy to win, there is no point in running from a battle though it is a possibility. Running from a battle

will not allow the player to move past a dragon that is in the way of the player's path anyway, as the player will come back to where they started before the battle. Losing a battle has no repercussions, except for losing any items used during the battle and having to start a tournament from the beginning.

There are not many different kinds of environments in the game, only five separate maps with different environments. The main area is the village (see image 14), which is very small in the game compared to the film. The village has fifteen houses, an arena for the tournament and a stable for the dragons. Out of the houses, only four are visitable and they are the forge, the general store, a hub for the flying mini-game and Hiccup's house, which sometimes has quests. Outside of the village is a forest with a few spots where wild dragons can be fought. The player will have to walk along certain paths to get to each spot, and sometimes that path can get very long. From the forest outside the village, the player can get to the next area, which is a different forest with one flying obstacle course, a hut to get quests and an exit to the Marsh. All the other maps after the forest have the same contents as the forest, but a slightly different layout in their paths. From the Marsh, the player can get to the Great Caves, and from there the player can get to Dragon Tooth Mountain. The battles taking place in the different environments look distinct from each other, but there is not much detail there as the focus is more on the dragons. It is unfortunate that the dragons can not be used for fast-travelling to other areas, as one has to walk through the previous areas to get back to the village. This gets annoying fast when a new pattern for a piece of armour is found in the later areas and the player has to walk through up to four different areas while battling every dragon in their path to be able to forge the piece. While different woodland environments are shown in the film, the Great Caves and Dragon Tooth Mountain do not show up in the film.

The forging mini-game is the second largest part of the game, as the player needs to upgrade their dragon's armour quite often. After almost every battle, the player will receive metals and patterns for making new armour, and not upgrading is foolish. There are three different pieces of armour: a helmet, a chest-piece and a tail-piece. The armour will protect and enhance the attack of the body part it is on. The mini-game has five parts. First, the player has to blow into the microphone on the DS to melt the metal, but not do it too strongly or too weakly so as not to spill any molten metal. Second, the player has to pour the molten metal into a mould at a steady pace again to not spill any molten metal. Third, the player has to hack away the mould from the piece of armour before the timer runs out. Fourth, the player has to polish the armour before the timer runs out. Finally, the player has to etch in a protective rune into the armour. If the player manages to do all the parts without the timer

running out, the piece of armour will have a higher quality score. The player can also find pieces of armour after battling other dragons, but they are usually not as good as the ones the player forges themselves. Since Hiccup was a welder's apprentice in the film, the mini-game fits well in the game as it is something Hiccup would do. As everyone in the village is also encouraged to make armour for their dragons, it makes sense for Astrid to forge armour as well.

There is a flying obstacle course mini-game in every area and they are always part of a mission. Usually Fishlegs encourages the player to try out his new course in between missions to test it out, while in the Dragon Tooth Mountain the course is used as a shortcut in the story as the player still needs to walk there. This is the only part of the game where the plus-shaped control pad can be used, but the player can also choose to control the dragon with the stylus which is quicker and more precise. The R- or L-buttons are used to shoot balls of fire towards other dragons on the course as well as flammable obstacles. The goal is to collect as many coins as possible, which is usually around 80. The player can return at any time to beat their record or just collect more coins. Personally, I believe that the obstacle course could have been used as a fast-travelling system, where the player could opt to do an obstacle course instead of battling every dragon on their way back to the village. The flying obstacle course adds a bit of variety to the gameplay, but not much more. However, it does fit in the video game as there is no other way of including flying, a very integral part of the dragons, in the video game.

How to Train Your Dragon the video game for the Nintendo DS received mostly mixed critical reviews with an average score of 60/100 from 8 reviews (Metacritic). There were 2 positive, 5 mixed and one negative scores. Positive aspects included: great for children, works good on the DS, being "a solid monster fighting RPG" (Gaming Nexus in Metacritic), and it looks good. Negative aspects include: being a Pokémon clone, being too easy and monotonous, has a lack of variety, and is not very interesting. While one critic states that being a Pokémon clone works in its favour, another critic states that there is no point in buying and playing the *How to Train Your Dragon* game when one can buy and play the Pokémon games instead. Many reviews also compare the DS-version with the same game on other consoles and conclude that the DS-version is the best version due to the similarities with Pokémon. User submitted ratings are only five with an average score of 7.2/10, three of which are positive, one is mixed and one is negative. Only two reviews are available and they are both positive. Both state that forging armour for the dragon is the best part and that it is overall an enjoyable game. The only negative is that there is nothing to do after beating the

game, meaning that after the credits roll there are only a number of missions to do afterwards. Both critical and user submitted reviews think that the graphics of the game look great, which they probably did back when the reviews were written.

Measuring the playability with Sánchez et al.'s seven properties, I found the game quite enjoyable with the only disappointment being that I had to erase the previous playthrough to start from the beginning. It is quite easy to learn but gets a bit tedious when having to run a lot back and forth between the different areas. It took a while to play and technically I did not finish the game due to a steep increase in difficulty after the credits. I could get lost playing battle after battle, but did not find it fully believable in the universe of the video game. Motivation is difficult to measure again due to ulterior motives, but after 'winning' the final tournament I felt no need to keep playing the game. I got frustrated a couple of times while playing, but never got any more emotionally invested than that. I see no need for playing the game together with another player.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The majority of the video game adaptations based on 2000s animated children's films seem to be direct adaptations with a few additions to pad out the duration some more. These include *Shrek 2*, *Madagascar*, *Over the Hedge* and *Happy Feet*. *Happy Feet* is the adaptation that follows the story of the film the best, mostly due to the story book format in between the missions, and does not really add anything extra to the story except for a few dance sessions. *Shrek 2* is the adaptation that added the most to the story, as completely new environments and plot points were added to the video game. While *Over the Hedge* also added a lot to the video game, the additions took place after the story of the film, thus functioning more like a sequel to the film and first part of the video game. The rest of the video game adaptations function like transmedial sequels to the films, even though both *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Alvin and the Chipmunks* have sequels that have nothing to do with the video games. The video games are playable without having seen the films, as their manuals often have introductions to both the characters and the setting. An exception to this is *How to Train Your Dragon*, which does not introduce the characters or the story, so it helps to watch the film before playing the game. While this reliance on the manual is frowned upon by Saito and his four Gamenics, there might have been limitations with what could be included in the video games themselves and the target audience of the adaptations would probably know the characters before playing the games, so introducing everything again might have felt unnecessary.

When making video game adaptations, the main audience would be fans of the films who want to explore that world more than the film allows. A fan of the film would be very likely to buy any sort of merchandise linked to the film after all. When it comes to films catered towards children and families, one would assume that the fans are children and thus the video game adaptations have to cater to them as well. Many critics and older fans, however, seem upset or disappointed that the video games based on children's films are made at a difficulty level that children would be able to play. While people of different age groups are able to enjoy an animated family film, that does not seem to be the case for video games. Children find the games to be fun and even amazing in nostalgic hindsight, while critics with children often want to leave the playing of these games to the children, with some exceptions of course. Among the children, the video games seem more catered toward boys as there are more male playable characters than female ones and the female playable characters having much less screen time than the male ones. One exception would be *How to Train Your*

Dragon, where the player has the choice of playing as either a male or female character with equal amount of screen time. However, Astrid is not one of the toys advertised on the manual where four male characters and two dragons are, so the targeted audience still seems to be boys. Still, it is difficult to add female playable characters when there are very few female characters in the films themselves. None of the films chosen had a female main character after all, which would make for an interesting comparison.

Video games have since their development been a natural add-on to cinema, but in the last ten years the number of video game adaptations have dropped significantly. Reasons for this seem to be harsh criticism, an increase in costs and a lack of interest. Critics are less interested in writing reviews for video game adaptations while also rating the video games they do review very poorly. Film companies are more likely to licence out their characters to appear in various video games or make simpler mobile games instead of recreating their films as video games. Furthermore, the emergence of smartphones and mobile gaming in the 2010s may have affected the video game industry as a whole, which would also affect video game adaptations.

Elkington back in 2008 criticises the inclusion of interactivity in movies, such as the three endings in *Clue* (1985) and interactive films on DVDs, as only a minor niche, while Netflix in recent years has expanded its catalogue of interactive films and series, showing an interest in interactive stories overall. Perhaps the difference is the audience wanting new stories that are interactive rather than playing through a story they already know. This might be why I like the *Over the Hedge* adaptation the most among the games I played, as it continued on the story from the film like a sequel. It is also the only one of the films that does not have a sequel, so there is no other way to find out what happens to the characters. The *How to Train Your Dragon* video game was similarly praised for not retelling the same story again. Being part of the narrative has an intriguing effect on the viewer/player. Even if the story has an end that has been decided, getting to choose the way there is a fun way to contribute to the story. This can also be seen in many modern video games that look and feel like playable films with their photo-realistic graphics and dynamic camera-angles, for example *Until Dawn*, *The Quarry*, and *The Dark Pictures Anthology* which are all made by Supermassive Games.

Further research within this field is necessary to be able to draw more clear conclusions. Since all the games looked at in this thesis are both from within the same decade and in similar genres, many other types of video games are excluded. An interesting study would be to compare video game adaptations from different decades to see how the adapting

strategies have changed over time and how they were received by both critics and the average player. Another interesting study would be to look at other genres of films and video games as not being aimed at children might allow for more diverse gameplay. Similarly, a comparison of video game adaptations of the same film but into different consoles might produce interesting results, as certain video games might be preferable to play on one console over another. For example, a critic reviewing *How to Train Your Dragon* felt that the game worked best on the DS over other consoles (Metacritic). Video games based on other media, such as comics, novels and even plays, are also worth looking into, as many popular characters have their own video games (if not multiple).

Lastly, there seems to be a trend with video games being adapted into films and television series, the most notable ones from this year being the television series *The Last of Us* and *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. It would be interesting to compare the strategies of how a video game is adapted into a film or television show to the other way around. What would be left after the interactive elements are removed from the story? What happens when a silent protagonist suddenly has to have lines and a backstory? These questions are worth looking into as video games and their stories get more and more mainstream.

6. Swedish Summary - Svensk sammanfattning

Från film till videospel: en analys av videospelsadaptationer från 2000-talet

I denna avhandling behandlar jag sex videospelsadaptationer av familjefilmer från 2000-talet. Dessa är Shrek 2, Madagascar och På andra sidan häcken, som är Playstation 2-spel, samt Happy Feet, Alvin och gänget och Draktränaren, som är Nintendo DS-spel. Avhandlingens mål är att se hur dessa filmer adapterades till videospel, hur trogna adaptationerna är till originalfilmerna, samt utreda varför videospelsadaptationer inte utvecklas längre.

Som grund för min analys använde jag mig av olika adaptationsteorier, videospelsteorier, samt tidigare studier om videospelsadaptationer. De främsta teorierna som användes var Frascas tre ideologiska nivåer inom simulationer, som användes som en grund för analys av videospelen, Sánchez et al.:s spelbarhet och hur man mäter spelarens upplevelse, Elkingtons tre adapteringsstrategier för videospel, samt Jenkins teori om hur händelser i berättelserna förvandlas till omgivningar i videospelen.

Inför analysen av videospelen började jag med att se på filmen och göra anteckningar av handlingen innan jag spelade spelet. I spelen noterade jag nivåerna, hur spelet spelas, karaktärer, svårighetsgrad samt handlingen. Jag såg även på recensioner av spelen på webbsidan Metacritic för att se hur kritiker och andra spelare upplevde spelen.

Shrek 2 är ett action-äventyrsspel där upp till fyra spelare kan spela som Shrek och hans vänner från filmen. I varje nivå finns alltid fyra spelbara karaktärer och de som inte är kontrollerade av spelaren/spelarna kontrolleras av datorn. Videospelet är främst en direkt adaptation av filmen, men tillägger även nya omgivningar, äventyr och karaktärer som inte finns i filmen. Som i Jenkins teori blir händelserna i filmen till olika omgivningar i spelet. Handlingen berättas mellan nivåerna som en sagobok eller i nivåerna som filmsekvenser. Kritiker gav spelet i genomsnitt 71/100 poäng, medan andra spelare gav 7,0/10 poäng, vilket visar att spelet främst mottogs positivt.

Madagascar är ett plattformsspel där en spelare kan spela som Alex, Marty, Gloria, Mellman eller pingvinerna från filmen. Videospelet är främst en direkt adaptation med tillägg av endast några karaktärer och några händelser tillsatta. Även i detta spel blir händelserna i filmen till omgivningar i spelet. Handlingen berättas som filmsekvenser i början och slutet av nivåerna. Kritiker gav spelet i genomsnitt 69/100 poäng och andra spelare gav 7,6/10, vilket visar att spelet främst mottogs positivt.

På andra sidan häcken är ett plattformsspel för en eller två spelare, där spelaren eller spelarna kan spela som två av karaktärerna RJ, Verne, Hammy eller Stella. Den första nivån är en direkt adaptation av filmen, medan resten av spelet utspelas ett år efter filmen vilket gör spelet till en uppföljare till filmen. Varje nivå är ett rån med en egen omgivning. Handlingen berättas främst som filmsekvenser i början och slutet av nivåerna. Kritiker gav spelet i genomsnitt 58/100 poäng, medan andra spelare gav spelet 8,5/10, vilket visar att kritiker gav mer blandade recensioner och andra spelare mottog spelet mer positivt.

Happy Feet är ett rytmspel och ett racingspel där spelaren antingen kan få Mumble att dansa genom att trycka på blåa ikoner i takt med musiken eller låta Mumble att glida på sin mage nedför snöiga banor. Videospelet är en direkt adaptation av filmen, även om mycket faller bort då det är ett väldigt kort spel. Handlingen berättas i början av nivåerna i form av en sagobok. Kritiker gav spelet i genomsnitt 46/100 poäng medan andra spelare gav spelet 0,6/10 poäng, vilket visar att kritiker gav mer blandade recensioner och andra spelare mottog spelet ytterst negativt.

Alvin och gänget är ett rytmspel där jordekorrarna är på turné runt USA. Videospelet kan ses som en uppföljare till filmen, men har i princip ingenting med filmen att göra. Varje nivå utspelas i en ny omgivning och handlingen kommer i form av några repliker mellan jordekorrarna och deras ansvariga Dave innan sången spelas. Två kritiker gav spelet 50 och 45 poäng av 100 och andra spelare mottog spelet främst positivt.

Draktränaren är ett action-äventyrsspel där spelaren kan spela som antingen Hicke eller Astrid och träna och strida med sina egna drakar. Videospelet utspelar sig ett år efter filmen och kan betraktas som en uppföljare till filmen. Handlingen berättas genom dialoger med andra karaktärer och är lite olika beroende på vilken karaktär spelaren spelar. Kritiker gav spelet i genomsnitt 60/100 poäng och andra spelare gav spelet 7,2/10 poäng, vilket visar att kritiker gav mer blandade recensioner medan andra spelare mottog spelet mer positivt.

Wikipedia-sidan för adaptationer från film till videospel visar att flest videosspelsadaptationer släpptes 2007 då 30 släpptes och sedan dess har mängden videospelsadaptationer sjunkit framtill 2020 då inga släpptes. Frågan är varför nästan inga videospelsadaptationer utvecklas mer. Den kanske främsta orsaken är att kvalitetskraven på videospel höjs alltmer varje år, vilket gör det väldigt dyrt att utveckla videospel. Videospelsadaptationer sågs som ett sätt för filmbolag att enkelt tjäna pengar på filmens hajp oberoende av kvaliteten, vilket gjorde att kritiker betygsatte spelen lågt och efterhand helt tappade intresse för dem. Filmbolag är inte intresserade av att spendera pengar på att adaptera sina filmer till videospel när ingen tycker om eller är intresserad av dem. Filmbolag verkar

hellre vilja utveckla mer enkla mobilspel eller ge tillstånd till att deras karaktärer finns i andra videospel som spelbara karaktärer eller kostymer. Fokusen verkar även ligga på att utveckla videospel i större franchisers universum utanför filmen.

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Appendix

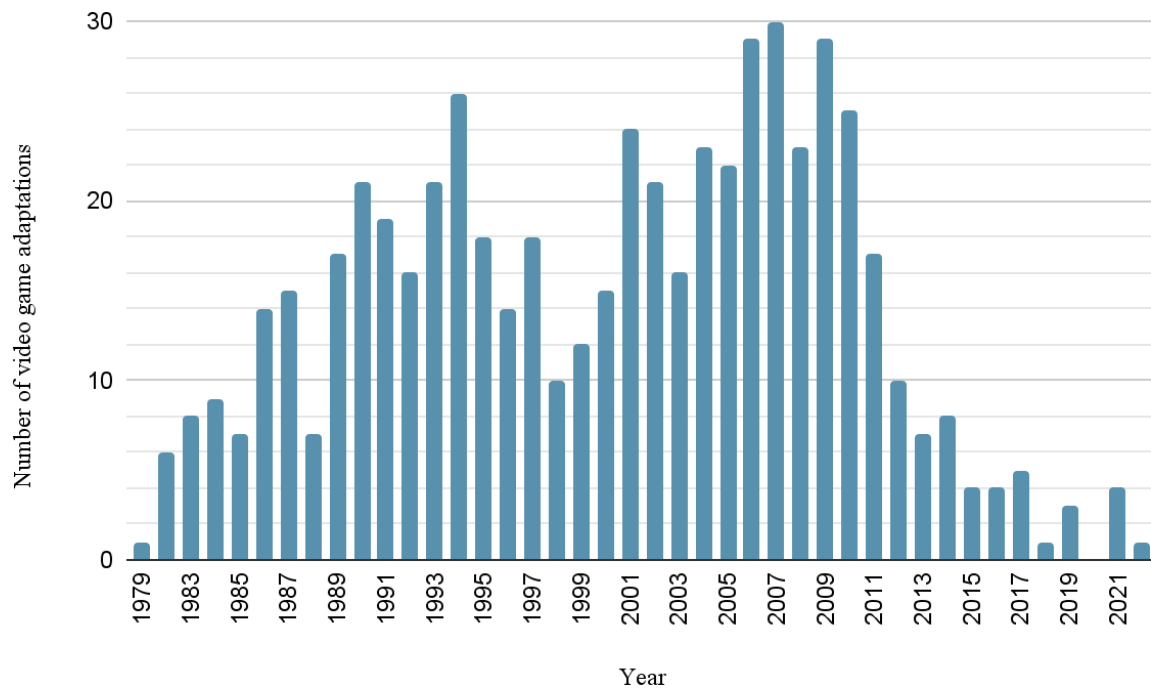**Figure 1: Number of video game adaptations per year**

Image 1: The PlayStation 2 console, the Dualshock controllers, and the boxes for *Shrek 2*, *Madagascar* and *Over the Hedge*.

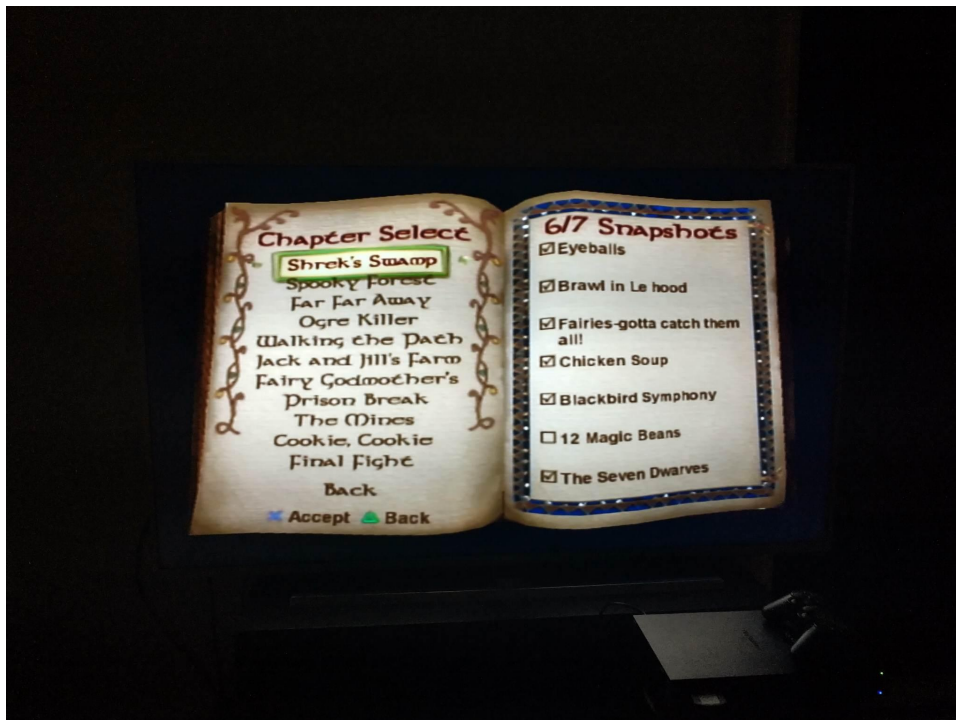**Image 2: The level selection screen for *Shrek 2*.**

Image 3: Gameplay of *Shrek 2*.
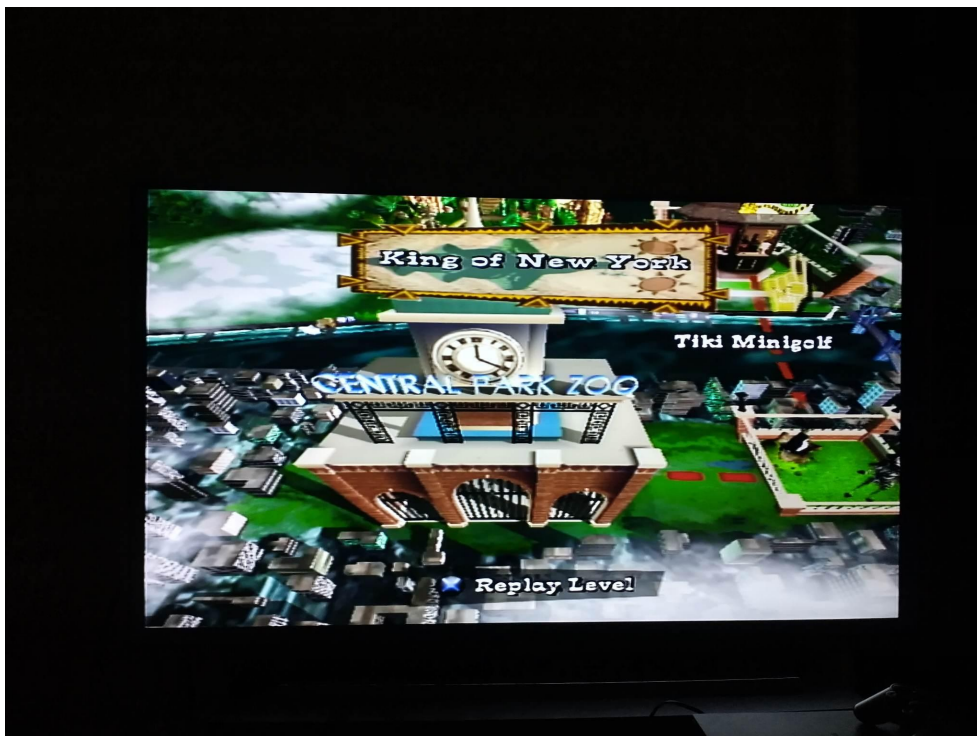
Image 4: The level selection of *Madagascar*.

Image 5: Gameplay of *Madagascar*.

Image 6: Gameplay of *Over the Hedge*.

Image 7: The hub-area of *Over the Hedge*, also known as the Woods.

Image 8: The Nintendo DSi console, its stylus and the boxes for *Happy Feet*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Image 9: Dancing mission in *Happy Feet*.

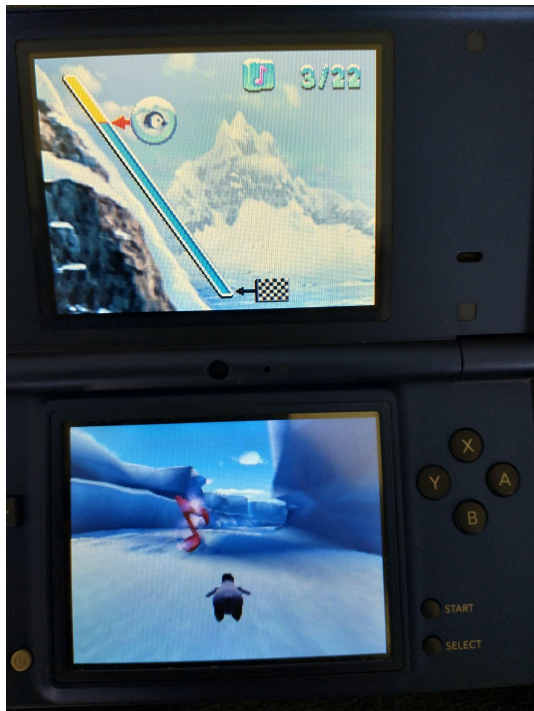**Image 10: Belly-sledding mission in *Happy Feet*.**

Image 11: Gameplay of *Alvin and the Chipmunk.*

Image 12: The level selection in *Alvin and the Chipmunks*.

Image 13: Dragon-battle in *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Image 14: The map of the village in *How to Train your Dragon.*