

# *The Emergence, Characteristics and Future of Interactive Movie-Style Games under the Trend of Media Convergence*

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**Keywords:** Interactive Movie-Style Games; Media Convergence; Non-Linear Narrative; Audio-Visual Language; Artificial Intelligence (AI)

**Abstract:** In recent years, against the backdrop of media convergence, emerging literary and artistic forms such as "electronic picture books", "interactive videos" and "dynamic posters" have continued to emerge. As a core representative among them, interactive movie-style games have gradually attracted widespread attention. They not only expand the expressive forms of game interaction and narrative, but also possess high commercial value and social significance. However, current relevant research mostly remains at the level of discussions by the media and players, with few theoretical sorting and induction. By sorting out the core context, analyzing the core characteristics and prospecting the future trends, this paper aims to provide a relatively clear theoretical framework for game practitioners and researchers on the one hand, and offer a reference for the cross-media practice of the digital art industry on the other.

## **1. Definition Differentiation: Interactive Movie Game or Interactive Movie-Style Game**

New things born from cross-media convergence often lack a relatively unified definition in the early stage, which is reflected in the naming controversy of interactive movie-style games, as shown in Figure 1. At present, the industry and academic circles mainly have the following three expressions:

The first is "interactive movie game", which is an extension of the concept of "interactive movie" proposed by Professor Sun Lijun of Beijing Film Academy in 2005 to describe and define the future third generation of movies. The second is "interactive film-style game", whose concept was disassembled into "interactive" and "movie game" by Wang Guan in his article [1]. However, observing the English term of such games – Interactive Movie Games, "Interactive Movie" should be regarded as an integral concept, which is consistent with the media integration attribute of the genre emphasized in existing studies [2]. Therefore, in the view of this paper, the more accurate name for this game genre is the third one – "interactive movie-style game", which highlights its core characteristic and essential attribute of "interactive movie + game". Although the naming has not been unified, there is a consistent core consensus: a game form featuring strong narrative, filmization and multiple branches has taken shape and continued to develop in the current market.



fragmented plot and rough shooting were fully exposed. Eventually, the release of the first-person shooter game Doom in 1993 shifted the market focus, and FMV games were gradually shelved by mainstream developers. Videos were mostly retained in games as a means of cutscene narrative. Until 2015, the FMV game Her Story won both the TGA Awards for Best Narrative and Best Performance, becoming a milestone work of this genre and triggering another global wave of creation.

FMV games realized the combination of the strong narrativity of movies and the strong interactivity of games for the first time, laying the basic interaction mode for interactive movie-style games. Their visualized narrative approach and player selection mechanism have been inherited and optimized.

### **2.3. The Culmination of Interactive Narrative in Video Games – Interactive Movie-Style Games (IMG)**

Since the 21st century, the maturity of game graphics, motion capture and 3D modeling technologies, coupled with the decline in image production costs, has created conditions for the research and development of interactive movie-style games. Different from FMV games that rely heavily on live-action shooting, interactive movie-style games use 3D modeling and motion capture technology to create scenes and characters, which not only reduces shooting costs, but also breaks through the limitations of scenes, costumes, props and actor performances. Players can conduct limited free exploration in the game, rather than completely passive viewing [6], a design that balances filmic immersion and game interactivity [7]. The game menu and pause interface are usually designed in a filmic way, and image noise is specially added to the screen to achieve a smooth transition between preset videos and operation content, enhancing the game immersion.

The success of Indigo Prophecy showed people another possibility of game artistic expression. Quantic Dream Studio subsequently launched the "trilogy" of interactive movie-style games – Heavy Rain, Beyond: Two Souls and Detroit: Become Human, among which Detroit: Become Human is regarded as the culmination of this genre. The game Life is Strange has won many industry awards such as the TGA Award for Most Innovative Game of the Year and the Golden Joystick Award for Best Game Performance, maintaining high popularity.

Based on the development of adventure games and FMV games, interactive movie-style games have achieved in-depth innovation of film techniques and game mechanisms. They have not only expanded the expressive dimension of game art, but also attracted many film and television teams to participate cross-border, becoming a model of media convergence.

## **3. Core Characteristics: The Genre Markers of Interactive Movie-Style Games**

Interactive movie-style games not only draw on the design mechanisms of FMV games, but also break through the creative logic of other game genres that "game mechanics take precedence over game narrative", forming unique characteristics in narrative methods, interactive systems and audio-visual expression.

### **3.1. Non-Linear Game Narrative Method**

Non-linear game narrative is the main difference between interactive movie-style games and other game genres, and also the core mechanism of this genre. To control costs and avoid plot loopholes, other game genres generally adopt a single story line – no matter what choices players make, they will eventually enter the fixed plot set in advance (such as the design of "forced plot development"), which forces players to break away from embodied cognition and produce a sense of alienation. In interactive movie-style games, players' choices directly determine the plot direction and ending. For

example, *Detroit: Become Human* designs three protagonist storylines, including dozens of plot branches and multiple endings, and every decision made by players may trigger chain reactions [8], a narrative strategy that maximizes player agency and emotional engagement [9].

### **3.2. Diverse Interaction Modes and Restricted Interactive Systems**

Interactive movie-style games have a high degree of freedom in mechanism design, and can integrate a variety of game mechanisms that all serve the plot needs, including but not limited to "click to solve puzzles", "dialogue trees" and "QTE" from adventure games; "free exploration" and "item collection" from role-playing games; "breath shake" and "bullet time" from shooting games. At the same time, they continue to innovate interactive mechanisms. In *Detroit: Become Human*, a time limit is set for QTE in the debate session, creating an excellent sense of tension with the cooperation of images and soundtrack. *Until Dawn* requires players to keep the handle still (with vibration feedback) to simulate the hidden behavior of characters in a tense situation.

However, the freedom and playability of most current interactive movie-style games are still limited. On the one hand, for the need of narrative integrity, game developers must recover a certain degree of control to avoid narrative out of control, and the consideration of lens aesthetics further limits the freedom of perspective [10]. On the other hand, it is due to commercial positioning. The target groups of interactive movie-style games include casual game audiences, game streamers and IP fans; harsh death penalties and high operation difficulty are bound to affect game communication and subsequent income.

### **3.3. Cinematic Audio-Visual Language and Emotional Expression**

To enhance the game's sense of immersion and engagement, interactive movie-style games fully draw on film audio-visual techniques, and improve the narrative and ornamental quality of the screen through smooth lens switching. Games can create independent action sequences for characters, and each appearance of the same character can have different action performances, further improving the sense of reality. *Heavy Rain* extensively uses close-up shots to capture characters' microexpressions and convey delicate emotions; *As Dusk Falls* adopts hand-painted style static lens switching to create a unique cinematic texture.

## **4. Future Prospects: The Development Potential of Interactive Movie-Style Games**

Domestic interactive movie-style games are still in the development stage and have not yet formed a complete ecological system, so they still have huge development potential. With their rich interactive experience and characteristics suitable for younger age groups, interactive movie-style games have attracted great attention and research value in the field of serious games.

### **4.1. Commercial Value: Cross-Media Communication and IP Aggregation Effect**

Interactive movie-style games have extremely strong communication power. Relying on low interaction thresholds and high immersion, they are deeply favored by game live streamers and video creators. *Detroit: Become Human* attracted a large number of "cloud players" in a short time through live streaming drainage, thus driving the rapid growth of peripheral products or game sales, and even giving rise to fandom culture. In addition to strong communication power, this genre is becoming an important carrier for IP incubation and development. *The Walking Dead* developed a game based on the original IP, further expanding the influence of the IP.

## 4.2. Social Value: Value Guidance and Application in Educational Scenarios

Interactive movie-style games have a strong value guidance function, which can make players gain insights and inspiration through stories. The game *Beyond: Two Souls* explores the importance of family affection through the story of the protagonist's adventure with her younger brother; *Detroit: Become Human* triggers thinking about the human rights and emotions of artificial intelligence through the depiction of three robot protagonists. In the future, with the gradual maturity of digital technology and artificial intelligence, interactive movie-style games will play a greater role in many fields such as children's early education, vocational training, knowledge learning, emotional talk and disease treatment.

## 4.3. Technological Innovation: Perfect Interaction Between AI and the Metaverse

The development of digital technology is currently driving interactive movie-style games towards "perfect interaction". With the advancement of AI technology, it has become possible for interactive movie-style games – as a carrier of "trans-narrative interaction" works – to realize AI characters responding to players' actions in real time. Some teams have used ChatGPT to enable non-player characters (NPCs) to understand players' instructions in real time and achieve autonomous responses of AI characters in small scenes. In the future, interactive movie-style games will realize real "infinite possibilities": every choice of players can trigger a unique plot, and the game world will have the ability of continuous evolution, becoming a digital space with entertainment, sociality and creativity.

## 5. Conclusion

As a product of media convergence, interactive movie-style games have experienced the narrative exploration of adventure games and the visual attempt of FMV games, and finally formed their own unique genre characteristics. Its non-linear narrative, diverse interaction modes and cinematic audio-visual expression have redefined the boundary between games and movies, becoming an important direction for the innovation of the cultural industry. At present, although this genre still has room for improvement in theoretical research, industrial ecology and technological application, with the release of commercial value, the expansion of social functions and the empowerment of technologies such as AI and the metaverse, interactive movie-style games are bound to usher in broader development prospects. In the future, we look forward to more high-quality works launched by domestic developers, promoting this genre to become an important carrier for the international communication of China's cultural industries.

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