

# After abrupt closure, Game Informer staffers reflect on the video game magazine's impact

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Days after Game Informer abruptly closed, former employee Ben Hanson recalled the joy he had working for the iconic Minneapolis-based video game magazine that was widely seen as a beacon for games coverage.

"The impact this [magazine](#) had out of that small office in Minneapolis is just incredible," said Hanson, who worked as a Game Informer video producer from 2010 to 2019.

Hanson spoke with bitterness as well as pride after the news last week that Game Informer's parent company, GameStop, had decided to shut down the monthly magazine and lay off its 13 employees.

A GameStop executive on the video call did not give a reason for the closure, according to one of the laid-off employees, and GameStop did not respond to a request for comment.

GameStop also shut down the magazine's website and removed thousands of online articles. Links to its articles now redirect readers to a short "farewell" statement. Many readers and former employees posted on [social media](#) that they were furious at GameStop for not preserving the decades of work.

"I'm angry that they did it in such a cruel way and took down the website," said Hanson. "So much of gaming's history was lost, just from their ineptitude."

Andy McNamara, who served as editor-in-chief for more than 27 years, said he was appalled by the headline of the corporate goodbye message, which used the gaming cliché of "The Final Level."

"Our team would have argued, to the core, with all their passion, about how much they hated that headline," said McNamara.

While he was upset with GameStop's handling of the closure, McNamara said he wanted to focus on highlighting the publication's work over three decades.

Game Informer began in 1991 as a newsletter for the [game](#) retailer FuncoLand. Each month's issue had a colorful cover story that often revealed a highly anticipated upcoming game.

Game Informer would send writers around the world for exclusive interviews with the creators of classic franchises, including "The Legend of Zelda" and "Final Fantasy."

Hanson said one of his most cherished assignments at the magazine was interviewing Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of "Donkey Kong" and "Super Mario Bros."

"That was the most 'pinch me' moment I could imagine that made me think, 'You're the luckiest person in the world,'" said Hanson, who left Game Informer in 2019 to create MinnMax, a company that produces gaming podcasts.

Game Informer employed 40 people at its peak, McNamara said. It had more than 8 million subscribers at one point, and in 2019 it touted itself online as the fifth-largest consumer print publication in the United States.

From the early 2000s to 2020, the magazine operated out of a stylish office at 724 N. 1st St., in Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood. The office had life-size statues of popular video game characters, and an expansive library of video games.

Lead video producer Alex Van Aken, who moved to Minneapolis from Colorado in 2020 for the job, said he knew when he was hired that GameStop had faced financial struggles. But he said the desire to work as a games journalist for the magazine outweighed his fears.

From a business perspective, Van Aken said, he doesn't understand

GameStop's decision to shut down the magazine's website.

"To me, it would make more sense to keep those channels online for the passive revenue alone from running ads on thousands of articles from the last 20 years," he said.

Although staffers were not given a reason for closing the magazine, Van Aken speculated that the decision was made as a cost-saving measure. GameStop has had financial issues for years as gaming fans moved from buying copies sold in brick-and-mortar stores to instead downloading them online.

"They are a [retail store](#), and even with as much fandom as there was [from the magazine] and the many benefits that came from that fandom, if you're needing to cut head count, it's not necessarily business critical," he said.

The project Van Aken is proudest of, he said, was a 17-minute documentary about an acclaimed cave exploration game, "Spelunky." He flew to California to explore an actual cave with the game's creator, filming as they clambered around and discussed the concept of perfection in game development.

While Van Aken has seen snarky posts about the financial feasibility of physical magazines in 2024, he said the magazine's subscriber base was "much healthier" than what some online were speculating about.

Many of Game Informer's previous employees went on to find jobs in the game industry. During a recent trip to the Summer Game Fest convention, Hanson said he was shocked at how many of the developers and others who still cover video games got their start in the industry at Game Informer.

Hanson's company, MinnMax, is trying to preserve and celebrate the history of Game Informer by posting unreleased videos on YouTube.

Unlike traditional news outlets, Game Informer's hiring managers would often prioritize hires who had a passion for video games rather than simply strong writing skills. In some cases, new employees would be picked because they brought strong knowledge of a game they loved.

"We had some great applicants, but at the end of the day we would be like, 'Man, we've really got to shore up our knowledge of Final Fantasy,' and this person brings that," McNamara said.

Asked about the legacy of the magazine, McNamara said he thinks it helped connect both longtime gamers and newcomers with games they loved.

"We got a chance to write a chapter in the history books of video games while [video](#) games were growing and changing," he said.

The final editor-in-chief, Matt Miller, released a statement on Wednesday thanking the teams that worked on the magazine. He said he's figuring out what his next plans will be.

"Whatever obstacles and frustrations were thrust into our path in recent years, I'm proud of each and every issue of Game Informer we shipped," Miller said.

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