

# HOUDINI Video Game Editorial Guidelines

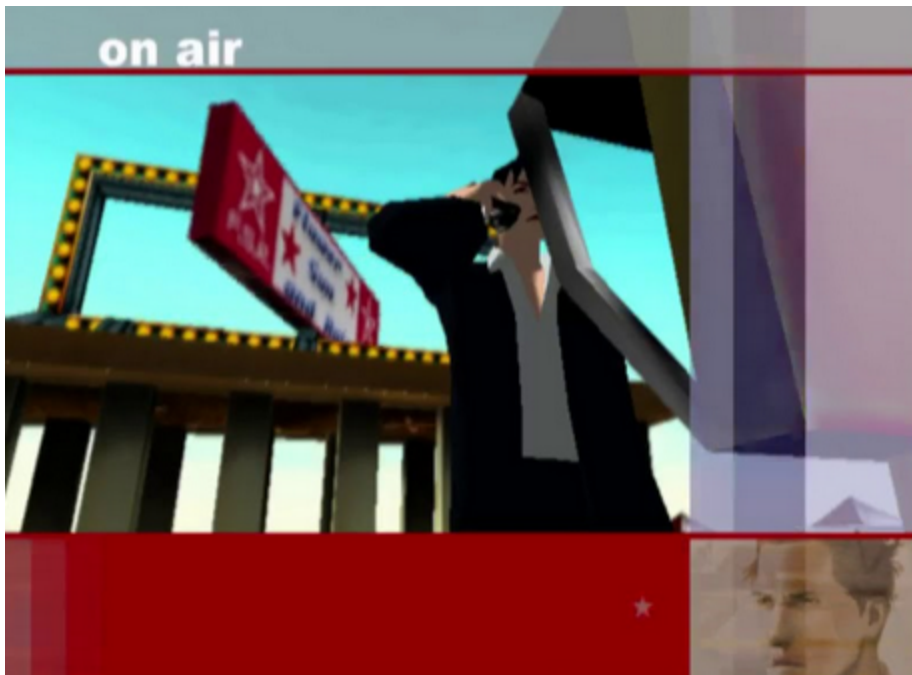
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Most mainstream gaming outlets operate in a **"Red Ocean"**—a saturated market where competitors fight over the same audience with near-identical content:

- **Shallow reviews** (arbitrary numbered scores, vague "feels good/bad" critiques)
- **Clickbait culture war discourse** (outrage over character designs, political grandstanding)
- **Corporate press release rewrites** (regurgitating PR-speak with no critical lens)
- **Top 5-10 lists & SEO slop** (low-effort content designed for algorithm feeding)
- **Esports coverage as sterile stats dumps** (no human element, no scene history)

Our approach carves out a **Blue Ocean**—untapped territory where competition is irrelevant because we redefine the standards.



# Content Requirements

## 1. Mechanical and Artistic Precision

Analyze gameplay systems, design choices, and aesthetics with surgical clarity. Focus on what makes a game tick—controls, level design, visual language. A *Tekken 8* piece might compare Knee's defensive play to Ali's rope-a-dope. Lean into the jargon (frame data, hitboxes routing, etc), scene slang, and other more indepth concepts.

## 2. Sleaze with Sophistication

Lean into sensual, provocative visuals to sell the game's style, gore, guts and butts. Use sex appeal strategically—highlight it as part of the game's identity, not as cheap titillation. Pair the grindhouse with the arthouse. ***sophisticated grindhouse games writing // neon lit Vice City written about with the respect a Kubrick film gets // Dead or Alive as modern Russ Meyer cinema // Bloodborne Caravaggio chiaroscuro***

## 3. No Culture War Nonsense

Game coverage must avoid culture war, conservative, or activist agendas. If politics enters, it must transcend petty drama and tackle class struggles—unionization at studios, corporate greed, or labor exploitation. Clearly label such pieces as political analysis, separate from reviews or essays. A piece on EA's unionization efforts is valid; whining about costume changes is not. We already offer serious political coverage via separate essays. We are a culture magazine, scenes have culture that is so much more interesting than outrage. A tournament report from your local FGC scene is the real culture we're after.

## 4. Visual and Stylistic Edge

Pair articles with striking visuals that amplify the game's aesthetic. For a *Soul Calibur* piece, use screenshots of dynamic fights or character close-ups to draw readers in. Captions should reinforce mechanics or art, not leer. Maintain a polished, sleazy vibe that feels dangerous but never corny. Screenshots as an art in and of themselves is a compelling narrative. For screenshots and visual heavy pieces/showcases, lean into the print roots of magazines for zine like, printable style graphics.

Sidebar: Gaming is almost entirely digital now, guides, tips, art and similar print-at-home content could be highly compelling. I can see a review for a PS2 game being paired with a cheat code zine in our Zine Rack, or a fan art zine. HOUDINI Magazine is 'post-print', and blending zine/digital content is compelling.

## 5. **Competitive Scene Analysis**

For fighting games, esports, scoring, speedrunning and other high level competitive coverage, prioritize esports history, player strategies, and tournament dynamics. Highlight how corporate neglect or community passion shapes the scene. Cite specific matches, players, or meta shifts to ground your analysis. Treat esports with the same seriousness as 'real' sports. Give us the player names, give us the insider scoop, the struggles, the stories.

## 6. **Timeless Content over Churn**

Mainstream outlets rely on constant output to stay relevant, not evergreen material. Content is built for longevity, offering timeless insights into mechanics, aesthetics, or scene culture. Reviews and essays provide historical context (e.g., comparing the launch of Cyberpunk 2077 to New Vegas). Competitive analyses cite specific matches or metas, serving as historical records for scenes like the Competitive Pokémon Community.



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# Strategic Goals

- **Own the Medium's Soul**

Outshine shallow outlets by delivering coverage that loves games for their craft. Respect the craft of the dev, the legacy of the arcade, and the contradiction between art and product. Right-wing rants about “woke” games and liberal clickbait both fail the medium. Our work—rooted in mechanics and style—exposes their irrelevance. The bar is so low for video game coverage, it's buried in the mud. Hoist the bar. Elevate the medium. Quality over quantity. We can't cover everything, but we can cover some things well.

- **Capture the Quick-Hit Consumer**

Respect the audience's demand for fast, impactful content. Rundowns and reviews should hit hard and exit fast. Essays can stretch longer, but only if the depth justifies it. Never pad for length. Length does not mean depth. Reject the clickbait slop, a 3 paragraph piece about your favorite Resident Evil REmake mod is more interesting than a Top 5 list. A Quick Recommendation is more compelling than a Top 5 list. A short competitive player profile is more compelling than a Top 5 list. A small post about the DnB soundtrack of an obscure PS2 game is **INFINITELY** more compelling than a Top 5 list.

- **Define Edgy Authority**

Crush the sanitized, advertiser-approved dreck clogging game coverage. Our love for the medium's raw edge—its blood, sex, and soul—makes everyone else look like spineless posers. This edge draws readers while grounding itself in rigorous analysis. We treat sex and violence as stylistic choices. HOUDINI is positioning itself as the face of the counter culture in the mid-late 2020s.

- **Counter Right-Wing & Liberal Co-opting**

Right-wing outlets use gaming to push politics, alienating fans who crave authentic discussion. Expose their shallowness by delivering superior, apolitical coverage. Our depth humiliates their obsession with trivial grievances like outfit censorship. Liberal outlets like Kotaku profit from rage bait, reinforcing culture war divides. Our coverage rejects this cycle, offering substance over sensationalism. We love the medium; they exploit it. We let our actual political articles speak on their own merits. The juxtaposition of superior coverage and serious politics gives our magazine an edge no other has.



## Style Inspirations

- **SNES Drunk:** Punchy, immediate and focused on gameplay.
- **Hardcore Gaming 101:** Exhaustive yet accessible, prioritizing underground games and history.
- **Mark MSX:** Sharp, non-political but non-industry, mechanically rich coverage with a love for fighting games and arcade culture.
- **Any Austin:** Irreverent yet in-depth discussions on environmental design as an art.
- **Vintage Playboy:** Provocative yet intelligent, blending sleaze with sophistication.
- **Adult Swim Bumpers/Aldous Huxley/Games as Fine Art/90s Zines**

## Prohibited Practices

- No culture war slop. Avoid terms like “SJW” or “woke.” This isn’t 2015.
- No victimhood or pandering to any ideology. Focus on games, not grievances.
- No score numbers. Play/Pirate/Pass if you need a metric.
- No AAA. Destroy the perceived hierarchy between 'indie' and 'AAA'. Bang for your buck, gameplay value and artistic merit matter more than major publisher backing.
- No filler. If a piece needs three parts, prove it with depth. If it can be said in 500 words, do it.
- No ogling. Treat fanservice like Criterion treats erotic cinema. Don't stare at the booth babes.