

Has Cannes missed the point of games culture?

By Will Guyatt

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If LinkedIn is an indicator of anything - the South of France would have felt like the Saddle Ranch at E3 this week, as a sizeable percentage of the UK's creative industries decamped for the annual Cannes Lions conference.

This year, it claimed to be all in on games - but from the outside staring in, something felt off - a bit like 80s TV legends The Krankies being announced as the host of this year's Golden Joystick Awards.



Cannes Lions' website modestly describes itself as the "world's biggest celebration of history-making creativity", but its representation of the games industry feels to me like anything but.

With the 'Entertainment Lions for Gaming' now into its third year - and over 300 campaigns being entered, with only 36 shortlisted, you have to wonder what's gone on when a Gordon Ramsey fronted mobile game is runner-up to footballer Erling Harland in the "Partnerships with Gaming Talent" category. Based on this alone, Cristiano Ronaldo's random oil-money appearance in Fatal Fury has to be in contention for 2026?

Elsewhere in the Entertainment Lions for Gaming, the Deadpool vs Wolverine Xbox controller sculpted to look like Deadpool's arse cheeks for competition winners was named the "Best use of Humour" - ahead of the chance to play Doom on your Husqvarna robotic lawnmower, once again probably only experienced by a handful of gamers - but my god, how we all laughed.

I'm trying hard not to be overly snarky about games finally getting attention at Cannes Lions - but I think I've finally worked out why it feels so wrong to me.

The awards themselves, and the brands involved are celebrating games as another way to flog more of their stuff - like an ad campaign on any other platform du jour - instead of the world's most popular, culturally relevant creative medium.

I'd love to see a bit of a reinvention of the awards for 2026 - perhaps recognising a bit more of the abundant creativity the games industry has to offer - rather than endless gimmicks or random celebrity tie-ins.

Is it time for the Develop Conference to head to the South of France, and show just how special this industry is?



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