# Waiting for Something to Happen: Narratives, Interactivity and Agency and the Video Game Cut-scene

**Paul Cheng**
Universiy of California, Riverside
1202 Humanities and Social Science Bldg., - English Dept. 40
Riverside, CA 92521
fasttrackxf@verizon.net

**ABSTRACT**
Since the appearance in 1978 of *Adventure* on the Atari 2600, the cut-scene (alternatively cutscene or cut scene) has been a key component to many video games. Often, the cut-scene gives narrative shape to the game experience, moving the player along through a series of events culminating in the story's end. Cybertheorists such as Hayles, Murray and Frasca have explored the ways in which digital interactive media and the video game introduce new paradigms of narrative and storytelling, as well new conceptions of interactivity and agency. However, in many ways the inclusion of cut-scenes raises many of the problems concerning the theoretical structures with which to investigate video games. Since cut-scenes often follow cinematic codes of representation, current theory often renders the cut-scene as passive and non-interactive, as opposed to the interactive nature of gameplay. Yet as film theory has shown, especially in the effects of suturing and such, cinema offers a kind of psychic interactivity that blurs the hard boundary often drawn between cinema and gameplay. The cut-scene then becomes the locus of the tension in video games between cinematic representation and gameplay, and subsequently, an investigation of the cut-scene and its role in the video game can offer substantial insight into the nature of agency and interactivity within the video game. Using the release of Capcom's *Resident Evil 4* and Ubisoft's *Peter Jackson's King Kong: The Official Game of the Movie*, both of which challenge the traditional definitions and uses of the cut-scene, this paper will study the different ways in which the cut-scene operates within the video game. It will not only discuss current conceptions of agency and interactivity within the video game, but also offer an transmedia framework, after the work of Marsha Kinder, with which to explore the relationship between narrative and gameplay, cinema and simulation in the video game.

**Author Keywords**
cut-scene, interactivity, agency, transmedia.

For digital media theory, 1997 was a banner year with the release of Espen Aarseth's *Cybertext* and Janet Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck.* In many ways, the discussion that these two seminal works raise about digital form and narrative as a whole, has had serious stakes for debates within video game theory regarding the idea of the "ergodic" and the narrative. Since those two volumes, the debate has, in many ways, become "heated and polemical [with] the potential role of narrative [in video games] being subject to both exaggeration and out-of-hand dismissal" [10]. It is King and Kryzwinska who summarize this ongoing question of narrative versus game play by asking "To what extent are games a medium with a significant narrative or story-telling, component? How far are game specific tasks...affected by the narrative frameworks within which such activities are situated" [10]? On one side, while Murray waxes poetic on the "promise [of the computer] to reshape the spectrum of narrative expression" [13], Eskelinen, working from Aarseth, describes stories in video games as, "just uninteresting ornaments or gift-wrappings to games, and laying any emphasis on studying these kind of marketing tools is just a waste of time and energy" [11]. However, this approach of "radical ludology" [11], whereby any serious discussion of framing or narrative is brushed brusquely aside, is clearly limiting in light of the fact that video games have undoubtedly presented strong attempts at producing narratives. More recent approaches to video game theory, such as those by King and Krzywinska's and Juul, have been much less polemic in their approach to the divide between narrative and play, suggesting models of video game theory that addresses this tension between the ludological and narratological. Even as Aarseth notes, "to claim that there is no difference between games and narratives is to ignore essential qualities of both categories. And yet...the difference is not clear-cut, and there is significant overlap between the two" [1].

The present state of video games, especially so-called "story-driven" games like the *Resident Evil* or *Metal Gear Solid* series point more and more to seeing video games within this overlap, and for us to consider video games as neither purely narrative nor purely ludological. In fact, video games can be viewed as both an ergodic medium, wherein the user engages directly with "the materiality of the text [and] participates in the construction of its material structure" [11], and a representational one, wherein the user engages with a variety of different signs to

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create semantic meaning. For the purposes of this paper, the often maligned "cut-scene" becomes a key object by which we can parse contemporary debates on this narrative-ludic divide. King and Krywinska characterize this divide and the role of the cut-scene, noting that, "narrative reliance on cut-scenes and other 'out of game' devices...is one of the main reasons why the narrative dimension is often seen as essentially opposed to that of gameplay" [10]. Similary, Juul observes that "cut-scenes are often considered problematic because they prevent the player from doing anything and are in a sense a non-game element in a game" [7].

Both observations identify the cut-scene as one of the locuses to the problem of narrative within the video game. Juul further highlights this problem by noting that the problem with the cut-scene is also a problem of "interactivity:" where the narrative elements of the cut-scene contrast directly with the more interactive game play elements that are chiefly used to characterize the ergodic and ludic in video games. Similarly, as both theorists suggest, a close reading of the cut-scene can then serve to highlight, define and interrogate not only the question of narrative vs. gameplay, but also that of interactivity vs. agency.

This paper will closely engage these questions of tnarrative, interactivity and agency within the cut-scene, not by exploring the whole history of the cut-scene and its capacity for narrative play, but by focusing on two specific games and their uses, or rather, their unique innovations within the realm of the cut-scene. Capcom's *Resident Evil 4* and Ubisoft's *Peter Jackson's King Kong: the Official Game of the Movie* released within a month of each other on the Playstation 2, both challenge the fundamental nature of cut-scenes within video games, and in many ways highlight the overlaps and problematics between narrative and game play, interactivity and agency. In addition, the cut-scene provides a way to talk about video games in a transmedia context, and to consider the way in which innovations in the the cut-scene can alter the meanings of interactivity and agency within this larger context as well.

At this point in the paper, it is important to note the way in which the term "interactivity" is being used. As suggested by the use of Aarseth's term "ergodic," interactivity here is defined in terms wherein "nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text" [1]. As King and Krywinska expand on the idea, "the videogame player has to respond to event in a manner that affects what happens on screen...success often depends on responses, effective hand-eye coordination and learned moves or skills effected through devices such as joypads and keyboards" [9]. In other words, "interactivity" is defined in terms of the users' direct influence in navigating through the digital text. This definition is many ways the same notion of the term as more broadly defined in larger media studies, where "interactivity" allows for "a more powerful sense of user engagement in media texts, a more independent relation to sources of knowledge, individualized media use, and greater user choice" [12]. Furthermore, "being interactive signifies the users'...ability to directly intervene in and change the images and texts that they access. So the audience for new media becomes a 'user'" [12]. The focus here is on the user's active and *physical* engagement with the text, beyond as Aarseth notes, "eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of the pages" [1].

Building on this definition then, the standard distinction made between game play and cut-scene is the fact that the former is "active" or "interactive" and that the latter is "passive." This is the problem that Juul points to his in definition of the cut-scene, because they "prevent the player from *doing* anything" (emphasis mine). Similarly, Rehak defines the cut-scene as moments in the game that are, "intended for viewing, not playing. At those moments, the game cues players (typically by shifting to a 'letterboxed' mode with black bars at the screen top and bottom) to remove their hands from the controls and simply watch information that advances the game's narrative" [18]. It is this supposed lack of activity that causes many theorists to characterize the cut-scene as moments of passivity within the larger interactive structure of the game, "generat[ing] considerable consternation among players and commentators alike" [15]. Grodal gives voice to this consternation when he suggests that the cut-scene actually "block[s] interaction" and because of this blockage, cut-scenes are "experienced...as more 'dead,' less 'vivid' than in a film context" [5]. In each case, the video game is defined as a ludic medium, highlighting the importance of game play and "participative involvement" [15]. These arguments about the nature of the cut-scene as "injurious to the video game experience as a whole" [15] are clearly those, to borrow Klevjer's term, of a "radical ludology," wherein anything that detracts from the so-called "interactive" element of video games is viewed as somehow undermining the only thing that makes video games unique as a medium. However, in each of these cases, the notion of interactivity is defined quite narrowly; as the Rehak definition suggests, interactivity only occurs when the player has his hands on the controller, in other words, as part of the cybernetic, or homeostatic feedback loop when the player engages in "some motor action via an interface" [5].

### The "Interactive" Agent: *Resident Evil 4*

But what happens when the player has to hang on to the controller during a cut-scene? This is exactly what happens in *Resident Evil 4.* The latest iteration in the popular series of the so-called "survival horror" genre, the release of this game was noted for a large number of design changes in the not only the construction of the game, but also of the control interface as well. Described by

reviewers in the popular video game media as nothing less than a "massive transformation" [14], *Resident Evil 4* also offered a significant change in the presentation of cut-scenes. This is in addition to the so-called "standard" usage of cut-scenes, as listed by Newman. These include, but are necessarily limited, to the following:

- practical computing issues
- save point
- respite
- progress/feedback
- reward
- story development [15]

In addition to these usages, *Resident Evil* also utilizes cut-scenes in two very specific and unusual ways that suggest different ways in which to view the notions of interactivity and agency.

The first of these usages occurs in several of the cut-scenes, where players are quickly prompted to hit certain buttons on their controller in order to affect the outcome of the action presented before them. Some of these moments are pretty simple: a quick press of the button allows the main character, Leon, to dodge out of the way of a swinging ax or a runaway truck. Others are often more involved: in one longer sequence, Leon must race ahead of a giant boulder, threatening to crush him unless the player successfully negotiates a multi-button combination. In both cases, the results are similar: if the player fails to time the button presses correctly, Leon dies a horrible death by ax, truck, or boulder, related, after a slight pause for disc access, in another brief cut-scene. On the surface, it seems then that *Resident Evil 4* offers a solution to question of the passive cut-scene by providing a form of interaction wherein the player directly affects the outcome of the narrative event depicted in the cut-scene. As the *Playstation Magazine* review for the game notes, because the game is "packed with interactive moments during cinema scenes," such as those moments discussed above, "*RE4* [sic], more than *Metal Gear Solid* even, is the closest yet a game has come to making you feel like you're the star of an action movie – *without taking away control from you*. Sometimes it's used just for dodging larger enemy attacks, but it still helps make the action look and feel damn cool" [14]. The question then comes to be, how much more control is actually given to the player?

Formally, these moments within the game have less to do with the other play elements in the game and more in common with the simplistic push button interface of interactive movies from the 1990s, such as 1994's *Under a Killing Moon*. The control scheme in the game play elements of the game are quite complex and allow for a wide range of navigational and combat interactivity. For example, using the joystick, the player can use Leon to engage in a spatial navigation of the world in a fully-formed 3-D environment. Furthermore, combat is distinguished by activating an "over-the-shoulder" perspective where the joystick can now be used to specifically aim and target Leon's weapon with an almost pinpoint accuracy, especially when compared to previous incarnations of the *Resident Evil* franchise. However, when it comes to these cut-scene moments, the dynamic use of the interface is boiled down to merely hitting the right button at the right time in order to activate one of two pre-determined cut-scenes: the first, where Leon succeeds, and other, where he fails. In fact, there is even a brief lag as the game console accesses the correct cut-scene. The "interactivity" described here is the interactivity similar to CD-ROM based "interactive movies" of the 1990s where "the interactivity...is described as selective, branching-type, or menu-based" [16]. Furthermore, this is "a closed interactivity in which 'the user plays an active role in determining the order in which already-generated elements are accessed,'" leading to the conclusion that this interactivity, is "in fact an illusion" [16]. Thus, these moments read less like a "solution" to the problem of interactivity within the cut-scene and more like a regression to an earlier form, where despite the raves of the review, the player actually loses a sense of control rather than gaining it.

Yet, it is interesting to return to the *PSM* review, where the reviewer describes the effect of these moments: where the game "is the closest yet...to making you feel like you're the star of an action movie" and the fact that the mechanic "helps make the action look and feel damn cool." While it is easy to dismiss the conclusions of this review as simply misinformed, it is important to note the way in which the review describes the effect of the use of these moments on the player. While "look and feel damn cool" isn't exactly precise critical language, it is defining the way in which these moments, coupled with the other interactive elements of the game, create a specific type of *representational agency* for the player: the feeling of being "the star of an action movie." I use the term "representational" to suggest an idea of agency wherein the user experiences agency not so much in terms of real-life, but in terms of a fictional figure, such as the hero of the action-adventure film.

Because the notion of "agency" lies at the center of my argument regarding the use of cut-scenes, it is important to not only define this term, but to contrast it with notions of interactivity. For Both Grodal and Murray, the use of "interactivity" has become a troubled term, and thus, each feels the need to not only more accurately define the term, but to expand it through the notion of "agency." "Interactivity" for Grodal and Murray, then, is similar in many ways to the notions of Lister and Aarseth, where it involves the user's physical engagement with the computer, and the ability of user action to affect the appearance of the

computer in some way. However, "the mere ability to move a joystick or click on a mouse" [13] it is not enough to describe the idea of agency: "But activity alone is not agency" [13]. "Agency," for both Grodal and Murray "goes beyond both participation and activity" [13] and into the realms of narrative and player experience.

In order to clarify his use of terminology, Grodal uses the additional word "agency" to describe the player experience of "interactivity." He further goes on to say that "the only necessary condition for experiencing 'agency' and interactivity is that our actions *make a difference*" [5, emphasis mine], not only in the appearance of the screen, but more importantly, in the *player's experience* of the narrative, or the "different stories" [5] of the game. As Grodal says, "the key element in agency and thus the feeling in interactivity is the ability to change the player's experience" [5]. Similarly, Murray makes the argument that "agency is the *satisfying* power to take *meaningful action* and see the results of our decisions and choices" [13, emphasis mine. This idea of "meaningful action" for Murray as well takes place in the context of the video game as a "narrative," whether enacted in the form of the spatial navigation of maze or labyrinth games, or the solving of puzzles in so-called journey stories such as *Zork.* While it seems that Murray's notion of agency is unduly anchored to narrative in myriad ways, her view of agency as "the thrill of exerting power over enticing and plastic materials" [13] is broad enough for application beyond just her narrative. The importance of both Grodal's and Murray's discussions of agency, and which applies to this paper's discussion, is the notion that agency links player effect to player affect. That is, the player *feels* a sense of agency from they way the video game responds to her input.[1]

In the case of *Resident Evil 4,* the use of cut-scenes is integral in the creation of representational agency. As pointed out earlier, these larger cut-scene moments are not the only usage of the cut-scene within the game. In addition, scattered throughout the game are moments where button activation activates much shorter cut-scenes. For example, early in the game, the player can prompt Leon to jump out of a window in a dramatic low angle cut-scene with a context specific push of the "A" button. The game then quickly switches back into game play mode with no discernable lag. In fact, the game is full of moments like these that allow Leon to interact with specific parts of the environment in different ways. Through these cues, Leon is able to jump over logs, push down ladders, hoist Ashley onto his shoulders or catch her when she jumps down, and even apply well-placed spin kicks. Of course not all of these moments are strictly shown by an activated cut-scene, such as this moment when Leon jumps out the window, but the overall effect is to add to the repertory of actions available to the player. Though limited situationally in terms of elements in the game environment (for example, Leon must be positioned correctly in front of the window before the cue appears), it still provides an increased number of options to the player: simply put, the player is allowed to *do* more. Similarly, the runaway boulder of the larger cut-scene can then be read as providing a similar moment of this type of agency, where the player is allowed to do something incredibly "cool" in dodging aside at the last second, ala Indiana Jones.[2] It is this increased availability of options, partially articulated through different cut-scenes and cut-scene innovations, that, while based on an almost regressive model of interactivity, that actually increases the sense of player agency in the game.

While the load time in accessing the new cut-scene is a problem, most notably in the longer ones, as indicated above, the fact that cut-scenes are rendered through the game engine as the game play is a significant visual element in this creation of representational agency. Advances in game programming and design have allowed programmers to utilize the in-game engine to produce the cut-scenes, as opposed to using pre-rendered. The advantage of the former is that there is less of a visual gap for the player to bridge in moving from game play to cut-scene, maintaining "a more uniform aesthetic" [10], keeping the player immersed within the game world. This distinction is especially relevant in the case of *Resident Evil 4*, because not only does this allow for the interactive component of the cut-scene on the technical level, it also helps maintain an uniformity and relative smoothness in moving from game play to cut-scene and back, aiding the player in sustaining the illusion of the coherent game world.

**Narrative Supersystems: A Transmedia Context**

In his study, Klevjer makes explicit the role the cut-scene has in creating this coherent game world, but with serious implications when it comes to the notion of video game agency. He argues that one of the most important features of the cut-scene is its ability to create "a narrative-oriented framework within which subsequent sequences of player activity are situated" [10], pointing out the cut-scene's role in establishing a coherent fictional world, often based on pre-existing film genres, such as the horror or action genre for the *Resident Evil* series. However, Klevjer argues that these "story-game[s]" offer "a contradiction. We want freedom of action, and we want to do the same as the hero from the movies does. The illusion of potent agency in a mythical world — as any representational event — is a paradox, creating conflict when we play." Thus, the paradox of the narrative framework is that at the same time it constrains true agency, it still creates the conditions for the actions of the player to "be meaningful within a mythical fictional universe." In the end, Klevjer suggests that the "conflict between narration and play is not a question of discursive levels...but a conflict of agency. There is a balancing, and a struggle, between the agency of the story-game and the agency of the player." Thus, the cut-scene becomes a key element in the definition of video

game agency by helping to create the narrative conditions and fictional world in which the player is allowed to play "make believe." For games which utilize cut-scenes, the cut-scene plays an integral role in creating "established fictional genres" within the game and placing the user "as a typical subject in a typical world." Klevjer's notes that a player often "wants to do the same as the hero from the movies does," suggesting the "voice of a genre" that speaks to the player is almost invariably that of film. Given not only the amount of crossover between video games and film, but also the role of film in popular culture, Klevjer's move seems a logical one to make.

The connection between cut-scenes and film can be reached in a slightly different way when we consider Grodal's argument that "the more this motor interaction [agency] takes place in a world that simulates being an agent in a world that simulates aspects of a possible real world the greater experience of interactivity" [5]. It is interesting then to consider the method and kind of "action hero," or representational, agency offered in *Resident Evil 4* in light of this observation. There are very few people who would argue that the action movie actually simulates "a possible real world." But the game still provides the player with a powerful sense and large repertory of possible actions with few "real" world parallels, at least any parallels without the deployment of complicated special effects, stunt work and the like. Thus, the "possible real world" invoked here is the possible real world of film. It is important to note here that cut-scenes are only one part of the general strategy, which also includes the details of the game play environment and the use of music, with which video games like *Resident Evil 4* point to film traditions and genres.

It bears repeating at this point that the demarcation between game play and cut-scene as "activity" versus "passivity" is an overly simplistic one [9], and is focused almost too exclusively on the cybernetic feedback loop involved in video games. However, there is undeniably a filmic quality to the cut-scene. Rehak points to one of the reasons for this cinematic characterization when he notes the ways in which the cut-scene draws from the formal codes of film: "During cut-scenes conventional codes of cinema reassert themselves; viewing competencies developed through movies...guide players in the proper interpretation of 'unembodied' visual grammar such as shot-reverse-shot, dissolves, zooms...and so on" [18]. Two implications can be drawn from Rehak's observation. First, as the literature involving audience reception in film has shown, such as in the work of Laura Mulvey and the processes of cinematic suturing, film anything but a "passive" medium. Both Rehak and Grodal actually build their arguments on psychoanalytic and cognitive film theory, respectively.[3] Secondly, as a formal element in video games that specifically draws from the visual codes of cinema, it makes sense to position cut-scenes in a transmedia context to consider the ways in which such a context affects both the readings of video games *and* films.

These changes and observations regarding the relationship between cut-scene and game play, traditionally separated by theorists and gamers alike, ask us to reconsider the way in which we view and discuss questions of narrative, interactivity and agency in video games. The transmedia context that this paper proposes is similar to the idea of "entertainment supersystems" described by Kinder in her study, *Playing with Power.* Kinder uses the term to describe a system of transmedia interextuality "across different narrative media" [8], including movies, video games and Saturday morning cartoons which "construct[s] consumerist subjects who can more readily assimilate and accommodate whatever objects they encounter, including traditional modes of image production like cinema and new technological developments like interactive multimedia" [8]. For Kinder, the ultimate goal of entertainment supersystem as a transmedia construction is the creation of a new generation of capitalist consumers with an advanced degree of media literacy. In positing the notion of this system of transmedia intertextuality, Kinder provides a valuable context with which to look at the cut-scene, which is in itself a transmedia product. While this paper will not carry the analysis of the cut-scene to Kinder's conclusions regarding late-market capitalism, this paper can utilize this concept as a way to position the cut-scene, bridging two media through form and content, to allow us to consider the different modes of intertextuality between the two. It is important to note that, in suggesting this type of transmedia framework, this paper is neither attempting to somehow privilege film or to define video games in a primarily filmic context. Instead, it is offering a way to think about the ways in which film and video games work in conjunction, producing new frameworks for narrative and interactivity.

In fact, both Klevjer and Newman suggest a way of looking at interaction between the ludic and narrative elements of the video game that is related to this idea of transmedia intertextuality. As previously observed, the nature of interaction in a video game goes beyond that of the cybernetic feedback loop. Klevjer argues that "a cutscene does not cut off gameplay," but is actually "an integral part of the configurative experience. Even if the player is denied any active input, this does not mean that the ergodic experience and effort is paused" because the switch between ergodic and narrative results in a distinct "rhythm of gameplay" where the player is "constantly being thrown rapidly in and out of bodily ergodic effort." Newman makes a similar claim about the nature of video game interactivity, noting that "Videogames are highly complex, segmented arrangements of elements," including both game play and cut-scenes, and that whole "videogame experience is...the product of a complex interplay of [these] elements, each demanding and facilitating different degrees and types of participation and activity" [15].[4]

Both theorists note that in the transition between game play and cut-scene, between the ergodic and narrative, that there are still a complex series of interactions between the player and the game. While Klevjer folds this interaction into the overall ergodic framework of the computer game, Newman suggests a much broader picture. What both theorists demonstrate, though they do not state directly, is that a kind of transmedia mental processing that occurs wherein the player switches between the physical interaction of game play and the decoding mechanisms required of cinema. Klevjer describes how this "oscillation" between cut-scenes and play has become "a standard convention in story-based computer games" noting how "it is becoming a new kind of artistic language, developing its own rules." This is similar in many ways to Kinder's conception of the entertainment supersystem that produces savvier technological consumers, in this case, the creation of the player/viewer that can easily switch between the codes of the ergodic and the codes of the cinematic.

**Watch as Man, Play as Kong: *King Kong***

Though this paper focuses primarily on the formal and aesthetic elements of the narrative supersystem, and the way those elements creates a crossover between video games and films through the vehicle of the cut-scene, it does not deny the market-driven imperative of such a transmedia context. Clearly, as the economic and business relationships of between the film and video game industries have evolved, the formal and aesthetic elements have developed in their own way. It is no wonder then that *Peter Jackson's King Kong: The Official Movie of the Game* (now referred simply to as *King Kong*) was viewed in the mainstream press as "widely touted as the missing link between video games and movies" [20]. Even it's awkward title foregrounds the close connection between the video game of the movie, finding a way to label it not only as "official," but the "official game" of the Peter Jackson's version of *King Kong*. While this paper seems like it is coming to some kind of conclusion regarding the venial nature of this economic aspects of this transmedia context, the awkwardness of the title actually speaks of the effort on the part of the game designers and filmmakers to develop a game that works very hard to bridge the supposed gap between film narrative and game play. In their attempt, they have created a game that interrogates and highlights the similarities and differences, in the terms of this paper, the ludic and the narrative, game play and the cut-scene, and creating new implications for the notion of interactivity and agency within the video game.

There are many unique aspects to *King Kong*. It uses a first-person perspective when the user plays as Jack Driscoll and also a third-person perspective as Kong himself. This switch in perspective has important implications in terms of agency that will be explored later in the paper. In terms of its cinematic presentation, *King Kong* consciously upsets several conventions of the video game in order to, according to game designer Michel Ancel, "put…you in the movie" [6]. To this extent, many items that would be considered standard for games, mostly in the form of on-screen indicators for life, ammunition or mapping, is noticeably absent. Instead, health levels are indicated by audio and visual cues: the screen turns red and the images blur to indicate severe injury and the music and sound effects change, as if your character is beginning to fall unconscious; the player presses a button to hear your avatar, Jack Driscoll, report on the amount of ammunition remaining: "I'm almost dry;" and the game is designed in such a way, through level progression and shorter levels, that a real-time mapping mechanic is rendered unnecessary. Most importantly, *King Kong* utilizes a game play dynamic first seen in the ground-breaking *Half-Life* in 1998. Narrative information commonly presented in cut-scenes is instead presented in the form of "dynamic story events" [6], meaning that narrative information, usually found in the form of dialogue and conversations or even key plot events, are presented as part of game play, wherein the player still has full game play control of the character. While such a dynamic is seen as the outright elmination of the standard cut-scene, to say that the game fully eliminates cut-scenes is a misnomer. What happens in *King Kong* is something much more complex, wherein the more traditional cut-scene is integrated with the game play elements in such a way as to suggest new ways in which a transmedia intertextuality can be developed between cinema and games.

The game itself, once the player hits "start," actually begins with a cut-scene, demonstrating one of the two standard usages of the cut-scene found within the game. In this case, the cut-scene utilizes film clips from the Peter Jackson movie to introduce the characters and situations leading to the game itself: beginning with Carl Denham plotting his escape from New York City and moving quickly through the gathering of the other principal characters of the movie, Jack Driscoll and Ann Darrow; the boarding of the *Venture,* the ship which takes them all to Skull Island; and ending with the moment the ship encountering the mysterious island. This particular use of the cut-scene testifies to the ease with which the cut-scene, along with its use of the filmic quality, of editing allows for the relatively quick and easy delivery of lots of information in a short period of time. This particular cut-scene allows for the quick creation of the narrative framework to deliver the player into the game proper. In addition, it clearly signals the transmedia context in which the game exists: it actually assumes a basic understanding on the part of the player of the movie from the game is adapted. However, after this initial use, these filmic cut-scenes using actual film clips no longer make an appearance in the game.

The next standard usage of the cut-scene actually appears when the game proper begins, with a cut-scene showing an image of an antique map and a dotted line