



Rekame

ISSUE 2 | JULY 2010

MAG

A MAGAZINE ABOUT GAME MAKER, FOR GAME MAKERS, BY GAME MAKERS

You don't know how good GM is until you've stepped into number two

Well, despite initial plans to keep to a one-issue release, here is Issue 2 of Rekame Mag, featuring a refreshed layout and more varied content. I've also had contributions from other people, which I'm very grateful for and have been included attributed.

Layout-wise, I wanted to go for something a little more refined. I've ditched the fake file destinations from Issue 1, which I did like but were really just excess baggage and unneeded. The top has been compressed, allowing for even MORE content per page, and each type of page now has its own colour scheme for quick and easy distinguishment - Bookends are this purple hue, reviews are navy blue, articles are maroon and the interview is a kind of snot green.

I've had a look at some printed magazines, such as PC Gamer UK, Official PlayStation Magazine UK and Official Xbox Magazine UK (yeah, they're all UKed here), and based certain choices off those. Articles and Reviews have switched positions in the magazine and review pages are now tweaked.

Since I didn't go into it with the first issue, readers may have noticed the odd sidebar on reviews. I've always been discontent with overall ratings and rating systems - they're often dodgy, weird, or seemingly unfair. I've attempted to circumvent all this with Rekame Mag's system. How it goes - the Necessities are items all games are judged on, and make up 60% of the final score. These are things pretty much standards all games need to meet to be considered quality. The Optionals are ten aspects that are less needed. As such, only four out of the ten Optionals are considered. These make up the final 40%. All the individual scores are then added up into a final percentage (as it's /100) and, new to Rekame Mag Issue 2, are given a single word based on it:

0-10%: Dire
11-20%: Bad
21-30%: Poor
31-40%: Playable
41-50%: Average
51-60%: Decent
61-70%: Good
71-80%: Great
81-90%: Fantastic
91-100%: Stunning

For convenience, I've also added the essential details in a box located above The Final Say, as well as a clearer download button.

I'm pretty sure there will be a third issue of Rekame Mag sometime in the future, so this time around I would like to ask that if you have something to say about any Game Maker made game, good or bad (but preferably good) that isn't your own or a friend's, and hasn't already been covered by a review in Rekame Mag, please feel free to write one. Articles are also more than welcome.

To fill this space, here are a few more unfrequently asked questions.

Q Why don't you have a News section?

A It's unnecessary. Magazines are a poor format for news as they're too late to cover anything quickly. Websites like Game Maker Blog more than adequately cover the news aspect of the Game Maker universe.

Q Why did you choose to accept articles and reviews from other people this time round?

A A common complaint with Issue 1 was that it was all in one writing style - mine. I can definitely see why that would be a cause for concern! So the freelance contributions from other people mix it up nicely.

Q Will you ever accept other people in permanent positions and/or for editing purposes?

A I don't know, but for now I have no plans to. I enjoy the graphical design associated with it, and how it all works. I know I'm far from perfect but it's not any of my concern. Rekame Mag is, and always will be, a bit of fun on the side, not serious business.

Q If you get bored of making Rekame Mag, would you pass the rights onto anyone else to keep producing it?

A With the condition that I could do it again if I ever wanted to, then yes.

Q You copied [x] from my magazine!

A No I didn't. [x] is not an innovative feature that you invented, it's commonplace in magazines. Yes, this applies to everything I've been accused of so far. I'm sure people will continue to find other things I "blatantly stole", though.

Q Can we offer suggestions for articles/reviews/changes to other features of the magazine without actually doing much?

A Yes. The GMC topic is there especially for that kind of thing.

Until Issue 3, all the best!
-Allison James

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TIRED OF SINGLE PLAYER?

Dan Fornace takes a look at the applications of multiplayer in gaming

You've made it all in Game Maker. You jumped around your platformer, flew through your SHMUP, solved your puzzle game, and battled through your RPG. Now it is time to pit 2 or more players against each other in a match of skill, honor, and dedication.

Designing this game is going to be easy, right? You've already created great levels, characters and challenges in your other games. Now the only change is that there will be two player objects controlled with different keys.

Not quite, unless of course those player objects are completely identical. If you own the Game Maker Apprentice, then you may have read about Multiplayer Design and Balanced Differences. This is a great start to creating Multiplayer Games. The general theory is that you start with all character choices equal and then differentiate the characters by adding "equivalent" strengths and weaknesses.

This is all fun and good. You now have three characters with different attributes and you can spend the rest of your life balancing them by adding and removing more and more. But I am not going to tell you how to balance your game - that is up to you and your testers. I am however going to share my thoughts on what makes a good multiplayer game and what makes a frustrating one.



In multiplayer games, every player has the same goal - to win. In most games, players are fine with losing when they first pick up the game. They should not be able to beat a player who has much more practice than them. However, what new players do want to experience is *feedback* or reward even if they are losing. Whether that is a lucky Forward Smash with Ike, or a splatter thanks to some quirky Warthog driving, new players want to feel that they are advancing and can actually win even early into their play. If your game can keep experienced players loving it, while allowing new players to jump right in then you

have an instant classic.

But how do you do this? Well you could take the Mario Kart approach. Sometimes referred to as Rubberbanding or Handicapping, the general idea is that you give better abilities to the players in the late positions to allow them catch up to the players winning the race. I don't know a single gamer that doesn't hate the dreaded Blue Turtle Shell. Handicapping is not the worst solution and definitely has its place in children's games; however it is a terrible solution if you want to keep your pros playing the game for years.

Another approach is to do a Rock-Paper-Scissors experience, where certain characters or strategies counter each other. These games are very fun at first as players learn what beats what and think that they are coming up with new strategies, however once they master the game they often release how hollow the design is and how the game ends at the selection screen or is decided by who gets the correct power-ups. Rock-paper-scissors is very important to remember when developin multiplayer games but you design cannot rely on it solely.

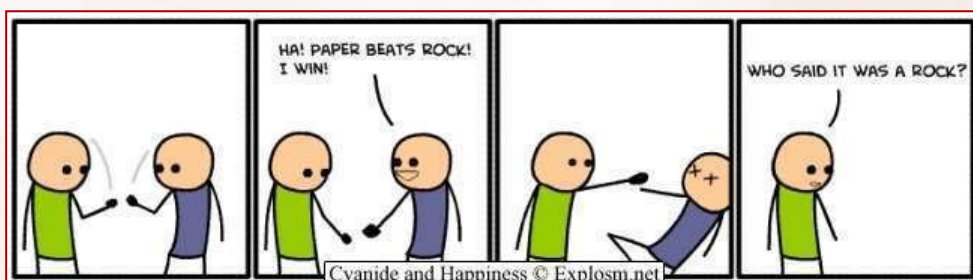
Players, who spend the hours to master your game, are not going to want to lose to their girlfriends who are playing for the first time. They are also not going to want the game to be simplified into a rock-always-beat-paper where they are just going through the motions. This is where my theory for multiplayer design comes in. I like to call it Feasible Strategies. The idea behind my theory is this: *Every strategy that the player can think up is at least slightly feasible in winning the game.* The idea is that anything the player does can and will affect their success in the match. Players should not have to play by the book. Your game should not be Western Duel, where you are able to do so much, but are both forced to simple, repetitive competition.

But how do you develop feasible strategies? Make all your attacks equal? Not quite. The

way to go about this is to think about your game genre, whether it is fighting, racing, tactical, puzzle challenge, platformer, etc. Think about what is possible in these genres, and everything players can do. Think about your controls and all the possible options and combinations. Not everyone plays the game the same way you do, and the more you think about the possibilities, the more you can make them feasible.

The beauty of this design is that you can bring Rock-Paper-Scissors back into it very subtly. Let's say that running back and forth a lot happens to counter jumping up and down and attacking. Well if an experienced player is accustomed to jumping up and down and winning, then they will have to change up their strategy when he comes across a new player who runs. Maybe the experienced player comes up with an obscure strategy that nullifies the new player's running and it is up to the new player to adapt if they want to win the match. When every strategy is feasible, players will feel like they always had a choice and did not lose simply for not choosing rock.

Feasible Strategies give new players the feedback that they desire and allow experienced players to constantly come up with new strategies. Pros can learn from newbies and vice versa. If you can create a game where players use their imagination rather than repetitive key presses to beat their opponents, then you have successfully created a good multiplayer experience. Good luck on your multiplayer endeavors.



WHAT'S YOUR MEDIA?

You're looking to get your opinions public - what's the best method?

So, you have a pile of opinions, or a big sparkly pink balloon filled with creativity, waiting to burst into a flurry of public awe? I know the feeling! But there's a problem—how should you be going about it? On the internet there's a rather lovely variety of ways to go about it. I'll be discussing the most popular ones here, listing advantages and disadvantages.

MAGAZINES have recently exploded in popularity. I don't know why. They're the most limiting of all media, ignoring the majority of the advantages digital media holds over printed equivalents—they can only be released periodically instead of streaming content smoothly, they're slow to load, they require some sort of program to read, etc etc. Yet there's some sort of satisfaction to be had from making them. There are plenty of other advantages to them too, which is why I chose to make *Rekame Mag* a magazine.

Firstly, they're a far more "permanent" information source. Stick a PDF on a flash stick and it'll be there for years. Simple. You can print them out and they're pretty much perfect, thanks to the ignoring of digital enhancements mentioned above. Technically, the reader software point is moot too, as websites such as Box.net and Google Reader allow you to view PDFs online with no fuss. And they're an easy platform of media to archive—galleries with front pages, a simple list of download links for each episode, or even just chuck them all in one compressed folder and let people download them in bulk.

One final disadvantage, though, is actually compiling them. Writing your opinions only makes up a fraction of the work. You need to create (or get somebody else to create) a good, solid layout for the magazine. You need a quality piece of software to compile it. And, most annoying of all, you need a PDF converter. I had to pay for mine (novaPDF, which admittedly is incredible and well worth the price), having found no decent free ones.

So magazines not for you, but you like the general idea? How about a **BLOG** or **WEBSITE**? These drop many of the aforementioned limitations of magazines by simply allowing you to publish articles, reviews, thoughts etc one at a time. These can be categorised with ease (simply by tagging your posts with what they encompass) and separated by the viewers with one single click. Unlike with magazines, it's easy to create a professional-looking blog without much work. Using Blogspot or Wordpress will allow you to get

the basics sorted out in minutes, with drag and drop widgets providing all the functionality you'd want. Learning CSS, which is only a few hours' work (even less if you're fluent in any coding languages already) will allow you to customise its aesthetics into an entirely unique-looking site.

Disadvantages? To achieve the best level of professionalism will require a little bit of spending. You can cover up the subdomain your blog will initially be set up with with one of many known and oft-used services online, such as co.nr, co.cc or dot.tk, but in the end they're all flawed and aren't as good looking as a .com or .net. They're inexpensive—£5/\$10 a year, but it's still not free. You may also have to pay for extra privileges, or even a reliable hosting package, to achieve the best possible result. And, as with magazines, you will require either a level of design skill, or someone else that has. Wordart doesn't count.



Ugh. Graphical design. Hate. How about a **PODCAST** then? As long as you can get together a few other equally-minded individuals (single-person podcasts are, in general, very unentertaining), you could spend half an hour, an hour or whatever speaking your mind. They're great for the multitasking crowd as you could have a podcast running while doing something else—walking about, cleaning, game making, whatever takes your fancy. You'll probably have to record material for double the time you want the final podcast to take up, then edit it down afterwards, as it's undesirable to listen to unnecessarily left-in outtakes.

You'll want a good host for these. Downloading the podcast, and streaming straight off a website, should both be available to people. GM user Coolist's UpUrLoad is a good option for this, as it's free to use (requires registration for files between 10 and 100MB in size). Speaking of size,

though, you may be detracting some listeners by choosing a podcast. As a file likely to be passing the 50MB mark instead of the 1-2MB a magazine takes up and the equally small blog format, people with dialup or bandwidth caps will be skipping it, regardless of its content.

There have been some very successful podcasts as of late though—two GMIndie examples, featuring Sandy Duncan in the first, and two other YoYo Games high-ups, Russell Kay and Mike Dailly, in the second, have been near-universally praised for their important Game Maker-related content. There's also GMTalk, which I'm a regular part of, which I find very fun to participate in and always look forward to doing.

A spin on the podcast format is a **RADIO SHOW**. Similarly audio-based, these are done live. This allows people to actively call in and appear on the show. Of course, this also means that bloopers and mess-ups are unavoidably broadcast. They can be expensive to run, as you need live streaming technology, and very unreliable (as all previous attempts at live GM radio shows have successfully proven).

However, one technique employed is to mix the two together. Broadcast it live, and record it while doing so. Then, once the radio show has ended, edit the content into a denser, better podcast and release it as such.

Lastly, there's a video show. Basically a podcast with video feed, they require you to look your best, have good video editing software (and perhaps even effect-making programs to add panache), and have a great host (YouTube works). Game Maker TV, the first and best example of a GM-exclusive one, GMVision, and the non-GM exclusive, fantastic Bytejacker, have all proven that with a lot of work, video shows can be stellar. But without that work, as several others have proven, they just end up ridiculous.

But, no matter what happens and what you want to do, don't forget that you could always just join a current media source instead of making another new one. The majority of examples in all of these categories would welcome applicants for extra writers/speakers, as the work needed to maintain them is high. So just think about what you want to do and how you want to do it. And be glad that it's today instead of ten years ago, because nowadays, you can.

GM AND THE MAKERS

Rebecca Clare Smith, a non-game developer, describes her view of Game Maker and its users

This was an article written for OverByte Issue 4, an issue never released. It contains a reference pertaining to this which, out of context, may not 100% make sense.

To know those strange creatures involved in the world of independent game making is an odd thing indeed. They have bizarre habits such as inserting pieces of code randomly into sentences as jokes or following the workings of 4chan (and let's face it - nobody looking to be a professional in their preferred media really wants to be associated with 4chan) or getting into arguments over the best programming language to use (personally I prefer programming that involves using a television remote control).

There seem to be different levels of game makers, too, and then there are those who are on the periphery (warning - this article may expand your vocabulary). On the periphery are people who aren't game makers but they can code websites and/or flash and/or other such things. These people hover about and occasionally dabble in trying to make games, but mostly these DABLERS play those made by others and support actual game makers by supplying website help or other technical support.

Then there are those quiet game makers who creep around learning to better themselves. These CREEPERS slowly better themselves in the margins, learning their craft and gathering groups of friends and admirers. Creepers sometimes gain friends amongst Dabblers. The Creepers like this so they can

get their little goblin hands on an online high score system.

Online high score systems... These are the places where all Gamers go completely OCD in their attempts to out-game each other.

After Creepers you get the NOOBETTES. The Noobettes are people you also get in the writing world. These are the ones who should be Creepers but aren't because they somehow think they are fantastic at what they do. Sadly, everybody else thinks that they are absolutely rubbish. These poor individuals usually cannot spell worth a damn. They tell everyone that they're great and constantly shove what they are doing in everybody else's face... oblivious to the fact that nobody wants to see their excrement. They are narcissists with ugly faces. Noobettes like to think that everybody likes and admires them. Noobettes are usually sadly mistaken.

Then there are the MIDDLE GROUNDERS. These are the people gaining recognition. They usually aren't too egotistical about it, but some can be. The Middle Grounders are often held in positions of some respect.



Most of them want to reach the next step up... the HEAVY DUTY MAKERS. The Heavy Duty Makers are the ones who have the widest recognition. Apparently they're mostly over twenty and tend to get either egotistical or drunk about it. I'll let you work out whether or not I mean that they get drunk off their success or just completely sloshed.

The ELUSIVE FIGURES are the last group. This group is, quite obviously, a small group. It consists of the 'amazingly busy' people who go on holiday too much run or work at some of the Game Maker sites that you can find around the internet.

These are the strange creatures you find

lurking around the independent game making world as seen through my eyes. I've unfortunately had dealings with some of the Noobettes, which we won't go into in too much detail. Suffice to say the Noobette came off worse but a couple of Dabblers, Creepers and Middle Grounders thought it hilarious. There are other things they find hilarious such as bad GM Magazines. I'm not saying OverByte is bad... apart from that it contains Broxter, too-big boxes at the end of reviews and guys with jaws that look like boxes. I think, to be honest, that OverByte is quite good. If I didn't, I wouldn't be bothering to write an article for it. Plus, RedChu is a good friend of mine and I think he's doing well being the editor of such a magazine when he has no previous editorial experience.

Unfortunately, this cannot be said for most independent game making magazines. Most of them seem to have a complete inability to spell, which is quite saddening to a person such as myself who adores the English language. One day, I hope these people will come to understand the importance of spell checkers and proof reading. How do they think real magazines get noticed positively? Here's a clue; it's not because they've used the wrong variant of 'there'.

Thus is my impression of independent game makers. They're strange creatures.

Some of them can't spell to save their lives. Some of them are narcissistic annoyances. Some of them get drunk far too often... But some of them are highly respected for their games and their treatment of others as well as showing innovative gaming designs. To get somewhere in this incredibly clustered world, the trick seems to be biding your time and gaining fellow game maker's respect...

Not throwing yourself naked in their face and expecting them to tell you that your body is as much of a work of art as the Venus De Milo when they really think you look like you have a pair of shrunken cherry tomatoes, a squashed marrow and all the beauty of an inverted mollusc.



COMMUNITIES PAST & PRESENT

A look at some of the websites designed for GM users to socialise in

They're a familiar sight. Websites designed for you to stick about, discuss and enjoy in. Websites that may innovate with their style or feature set. This is a look at some of the current sites, as well as a few that used to be.

GAME MAKER GAMES

Amongst the oldest still in existence is Game Maker Games. One of the two outside communities featured on the Game Maker website Mark Overmars ran pre-YoYo Games, it features a still-active forum, a staff-list with a number of impressive names, and a mechanism in which it doesn't actually store your uploaded games, just links them from elsewhere. This does unfortunately mean many of the games there are broken, however.



Probably the most popular, the oldest and the most active, Game Maker Community, an official community in both the Overmars and the YoYo Games periods, is a huge forum with over two million posts and over 100,000 members. Although only a forum, it's well known for being the best source for GM help and tutorials (even moreso than dedicated websites), and for a recent skin change and board engine upgrade that saw the majority of its members disappointed with its new looks.



GMShowcase was a popular approval-only Game Maker community pre-YoYo Games, which along with Game Maker Games made up the two unofficial GM websites showcased on Mark Overmars' version of the website. Highly popular at the time, its creator, Shaltif, came to an agreement with the newly-formed YoYo Games in 2007 which saw its library moved to the new official GM home and the closure of GMS.



64digits, another older website, is certainly an audience divider. The majority of its staying members have been there years. As such, they've grown into their own "thing", which often sees newer, immature members verbally attacked until they leave or grow up.

As long as you approach with caution and maturity you'll be welcomed there, but it may not be the best place to start.



Snow Moon, a website frequently accused of being too similar to 64digits, had a small community and never grew as well as it probably could have. It lasted around a year, between 2007 and 2008, when it disappeared without any huge warning.



SigmaNine, a website predominantly created by one person, contains a small but active community, and attempts to innovate with its feature list. Previously "TwilightPhantasm", which had been around since 2006, it refreshed its dark look into a blue style in 2009. It recently launched the first ever integration of Game Maker games into Facebook, with features such as status updating with scores and achievements obtained, which has renewed interest in its community.



Despite remaining up, GMARcade is now as good as defunct, as its creator is working on an independent successor by the name of "I Play Indie". For its time it had a loyal, if small, fanbase and was popular for particular games—JTR's "Death Worm" brought a lot of interest to the site.



Not limited to Game Maker, but with a large chunk of its community into it, Game Jolt is a well-built website with innovations such as advert revenue sharing, and a number of other planned features. It has recently been hit with a number of new members that have "left YoYo Games Forums because it sucks", which may turn some people off, but it's worth a look all the same.



RoketGames, amongst the most technologically advanced communities of recent, was a website that made integration of online elements a breeze, allowed for the

uploading of commercial games and suchlike. Well-built and with a loyal, pleasing community, it unfortunately recently announced its closure due to problems with funding the website. A shame, but it happens.



Along with Game Maker Community, YoYo Games Forums make up the two official forums for Game Maker users to converse. YoYo Games Forums is a far more casual community, not limited to talking about Game Maker and generally with a younger average user. Though many of its members have been there a long time, there are also quite a few new members which find it the friendliest entry point as GM communities go.



A highly-regarded forum not limited to Game Maker, but populated by many well-known GM developers. A great forum for intelligent, mature discussions about design, independent development events and anything of the like.



The Poppenkast and Braingale are two communities that differ slightly from others. They both contain publically accessible forums with a few different boards. However, both also have invitation-only areas where popular, skilled game developers can converse privately at will. The level of skill varies - The Poppenkast group is generally made up of well-known developers (mostly GM developers though they don't mention it as a limitation) whereas Braingale Team is for those not extremely popular, but skilled and deserving of more of the spotlight. It too accepts non-GM developers despite being predominantly those, though unlike The Poppenkast, Braingale Team is also made up of skilled music/sprite/resource developers.

I've mentioned most of the well-known websites and communities here. There are others, and also unpopular, desolate or quiet sites that don't add much and aren't really notable. If you're looking for a community to join, one of these would be the best bet, as they're all well-made, featureful, and fun to be a part of.

PHILIP GAMBLE

The guy behind Game Maker Blog gives some opinions, a back story and such

Hi Phil. Please tell us a little about yourself.

I'm perhaps best known in Game Maker circles as the editor of Game Maker Blog but have been involved with Game Maker on and off for the past 8 years. I'm 20, from just outside London, and study Computer Science at The University of Birmingham.

I don't make fun games, I'm not an excellent programmer and sadly I don't have a long list of acronyms to reel off to you here.

How and when did you initially discover Game Maker?

My younger brother used to frequently make games on paper and coerce family members and visitors to play them. I expect I was like that too.

For some reason, presumably boredom, I decided to Google "Game Maker". Mark Overmars' website was the first result and I quickly downloaded the software and worked my way through Carl Gustafsson's Beginners Guide to Game Maker 4.0 Programming. This happened towards the end of 2002 at a time when I knew nothing about programming. I was fairly active in the old Game Maker Community for a couple of years but then went away and ran some advertising related websites (which I got involved in through promoting my Game Maker website!) for the next 3 years. I didn't return to Game Maker for anything more than an occasional glance until April 2007 by which stage YoYo Games had taken over the project.

Was it the first game development program you ever used? Which others have you tried (before or since)?

Game Maker was my first foray into programming. I had developed many bad websites prior to getting started with it but had never written any programs. Interestingly when I was first using Game Maker I didn't give GML a look in, besides using it when following tutorials, even after I had been using Game Maker for several months. It wasn't until after I had started programming in other languages at school that I decided to go back and have a look at Game Maker's built in scripting language.

Since discovering Game Maker I have briefly tried using other game development programs such as Scirra Construct but these have just been to see what they were like and how they compared to Game Maker. I have also experimented badly with the Flashpunk action script library which I know is winning over a fair few Game Maker fans.

Through my education I have made several mini games in Pascal, Delphi and a networked tanks game in Java - at the time I'm sure there was a deep level of satisfaction but none of the results would be fun to play for longer than 5 minutes!

In my last year at school I had some discussions with one of my friendly Computing teachers and Game Maker is now installed on all the computers!

Excluding Game Maker Blog, what have your main inputs been in the Game Maker universe? Have you ever released any games?

Few have played them but I did release 5 or 6 games in the period 2002-2004. Due to the free web hosting I used at the time the majority are no longer online but they included a snake game which I believe was pretty much a tutorial rip-off, a mini-football game which I awarded myself of 2/5 stars for, an eight-ball program cunningly disguised as a mystic sheep God (yes) and multiple versions of a take on space-invaders with pacman sprites. Typical first games I think.

The website they were posted on still exists at <http://www.freewebs.com/pgg3/Games/OurGames.htm> but none of the download links work due to the demise of

download counter and one of my multiple Freewebs accounts being deleted.

I don't think I am set out to be a programmer nor do I want to be one - since I returned to Game Maker all my visible involvement has been away from directly making games. That's not to say I haven't tried on many occasions to make and release a game. I have 50 or so games at various stages of development saved on my computer (and backed up of course so I won't need the GM decompiler...) but, as is too often the case, I am not currently working on any of them.

I think one of the main reasons I haven't been able to stick with any of the games is because I can't draw. I know this might sound silly but it really is off-putting when I am producing games when I see a crudely drawn character that doesn't match backgrounds I have found elsewhere. In my more recent projects I attempted to rectify this by using cartoony or minimalistic graphics and to be fair I think there was an improvement - some of these games got past the 5 level mark.

Aside from the embarrassment of my games I have contributed to the now defunct MarkUp and GameMaker Tech publications both as an article author and proofreader. I am a technical editor for Packt Publishing who are currently producing a book about Game Maker. I also run a service that enables Game Maker websites to exchange advertisements with each other (<http://gamemakerblog.com/gma>) and occasionally mediate GMTalk podcasts which most recently consisted of ensuring Josh got told off for mocking British accents and listening to NAL's singing and Jack telling his sister to go away.

How and when did you start up GMB?

In April 2007 when I returned to the Game Maker community I decided to launch a blog covering the subject. I had previously enjoyed running a blog on an unrelated matter but can't recall what my thought process was at the time, I presume I must have just thought it sounded like something that would be good fun to do.

How did it grow to what it is today? Has its aim ever changed throughout its existence?

Through a combination of hard work, regular article posting and good fortune! Originally the content wasn't all focused directly on Game Maker - for example one of the earlier articles was a tutorial explaining how to create PDF files. When the site started off there wasn't so much coverage of YoYo Games (mostly due to them being quiet) or other Game Maker websites as I didn't know what the popular sites were after being away for 2 years.

Throughout its life so far there have been a number of changes as the site has grown. We are currently on our third or fourth design, contributors have come and gone and there have been several phases of Game Reviews - the latest being the most successful thanks mainly to NAL.

I don't really think of the site of having a specific aim. If something is related to Game Maker, YoYo Games or the wider Game Maker community and I find it interesting or relevant I cover it.

Considering your new job, what is GMB's future?

I did question whether the blog would survive when I started at University but this in fact turned out to hand me much more time which I could spend on my 'projects' than I had previously. I actually wrote a list of things I wanted to do in my three years at uni and (rather sadly!) one of them was to double the number

of daily visits to the site - unlike most other items on the list this has long since been achieved and bettered. Game Maker Blog has only been online for 3 years and a couple of months but is already a Granddad in Game Maker time. There has been a big pile of Game Maker publications in various formats which have existed at some point over the last 3 years but I don't think any (English language) ones that were going in 2007 are still alive (excluding 64 digits as this is not solely focused on Game Maker nor strictly a publication). I have recently taken on a summer internship and within a couple of days it was plainly obvious to me that running a blog reporting on often time-sensitive news doesn't really fit in with working 9-5:30 plus commuting.

The blog has quite a number of regular commenters, turning them into article contributors is another thing entirely though. Since launch there have probably been 15 or so writers on the site and I have been and continue to be incredibly grateful for their generous contributions but the fact remains that 80% of posts are authored by myself. Although I have posted steadily over the last 3 and a bit years I don't think this can continue for more than another year or so due to a combination of work (I have been offered a full time job not related to games or programming) and the potential that I may again lose interest in Game Maker is still in the back of my mind - I think it's inevitable it will happen some day.

Lastly, what are your opinions of Game Maker and its universe?

The Game Maker 'universe' is a great place for meeting like-minded people. Game Maker users now form the largest group of users on my instant messaging software (still a long way to go before they infiltrate my Facebook...) yet I've never met one in real life! It's diverse and yet the same characters keep re-appearing. The universe is cyclical with the same issues coming up again and again year after year. Some members are very fickle, some fill their signatures with religious garbage and some are only out to promote crappy little projects which they are really proud of. A few make intelligent well-thought out contributions and are genuinely nice people with whom I can enjoy talking about both Game Maker and, more often than not, entirely unrelated things. Sometimes the community makes me laugh, sometimes it drives me mad and NakedPaulToast is always spot on (well so far...).

Thank-you for taking the time to answer these questions.

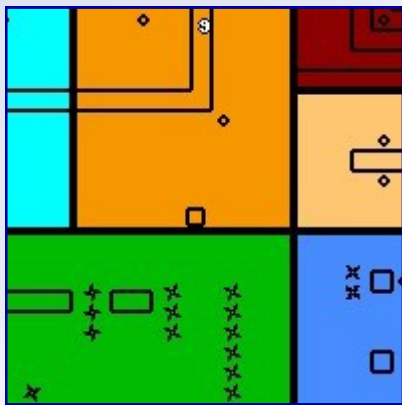


A PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 ORBS

An abstract art/puzzle platformer game by Ryan Langewisch focused on collection and confusion

On a list of up-and-coming independent game developers, you'd be mad not to include Ryan Langewisch. Past releases of his, including *Super Mega Awesome Dude* and *The Night Lightning Struck*, were fantastically-executed games that received good reviews and their fair share of publicity upon release. So, after a hiatus of nearly 10 months since his last game, *All the Dinosaurs Are Dead*, I was pleased to see a new release under his "Legendary" alias, titled "A Picture is Worth A Thousand Orbs".

The title, though it may not seem it, describes the game quite well. It's an artsy affair in which you move through a number of abstract rectangular areas collectively resembling a piece of avant-garde art, collecting 1000 orbs. The twist is that you don't move between these rectangles in the usual style. If you move to the top barrier, you'll just move up. You can't get through the bottom one. Where it gets quirky is with the left and right barriers - they actually rotate the screen so the barrier you passed through becomes the floor. Naturally, some orbs can only be collected with particular orientations, so getting used to the game's mechanic and working out how to enter rooms in any angle necessary is essential.



There isn't a huge amount of variety - depending on your taste it will either make the game boring, or (as with me) it won't matter a bit. Gameplay consists of you, hitting orbs, standing on walls/floors and avoiding razor-like obstacles that return you to the first "room" (thankfully, with all collected orbs intact) in one collision. In many ways it's as much of a puzzle as it is a platformer - although you'll spend a lot of time precisely jumping to hit orbs and avoid the killers, just as much is spent planning out routes to ensure the room with that one orb you can't get is in the right orientation for getting it.

As you probably presumed from how I've

described it currently, the game is graphically simple, but efficient. The player is a black rounded rectangle. The orbs are black rounded circles. Walls are black rounded rectangles (though walls "conjoin" with each other to create a pleasant-to-look-at aesthetic). The killing obstacles are cross-like sprites, coloured black. The main difference comes from rooms, which, though are separated by black borders, are each a different colour. This is where it most reminds of abstract art - y'know, those pretentious pieces which sell for thousands purely because their creators have a famous name, despite demonstrating about as much talent as an unsuccessful fart. One thing I didn't like graphically, though, was the HUD and the menus. They didn't fit the aesthetic to me.

Music will be a love or hate. To suit the game, Langewisch has included some soothing classical music. I personally loved it. Sounds are minimal, but that really doesn't detract from the experience.

In general, the game feels well-made. I encountered no serious bugs while playing, though the slight "jump" of the character's coordinates when passing from room to room was a tad annoying. It's not a huge problem though. The game's well programmed - you can't move into another room if there's a wall blocking the exit point, and you can't pass through corners to avoid an infinite transition loop. I experienced minimal lag while playing, but this is as much a problem with me as it is with the game. One of my problems with the engine though, which Langewisch has addressed, is the lack of variable jumping. The player has a fairly strong jump as it is, which will occasionally mean you cannot do it in a short room because it'll throw you into the room above. Problems where it means I can't get a seemingly-obtainable orb were few, and can be accessed through different orientations and positions.

Overall, it's a good game and a good addition to *Legendary's* already-great portfolio. Fun to play and explore, it mixes puzzle and platformer elements in a unique, interesting way and is well worth your time.

THE DETAILS

Developer: Ryan Langewisch
Release Date: 9th June 2010
Genre: Puzzle Platformer
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/DTNK>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 16/30
Graphics: 07/10
Replayability: 04/10
Originality: 09/10

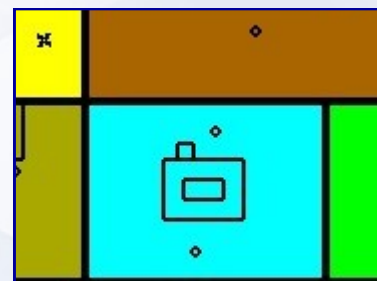
OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10
Challenge: 08/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: 09/10
Longevity: 09/10
Memorability: 08/10
Message Success: XX/10
Potential Reached: XX/10
Retro: XX/10
Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

70 Good

Won't contain enough variety for some, but for others it's a solid, fun platformer



NINJA RUSH

Arcade action with ninjas nunchuks up a solid, addictive experience

Ninja Rush is essentially an on the rails platform shooter. This genre, if one may call it that, has been around since the birth of computer gaming and most things have been tried and tested already, saying this Ninja Rush doesn't bring anything innovative to the table but it does have an interesting and effective take on the old techniques. Romeo Mazzei, our developer, has been a gamer since Commodore 64 and strongly enjoys games of that era even if technology as brought us "better" alternatives. With the memories of the Atari and its accessibility along with the motivation of Yo-Yo Games Competition 05, Romeo has created a game with great accessibility and authentically creates a retro-esque feel.

As the name suggests the game revolves around a silent protagonist who just so happens to be a ninja. The story of this ninja is conveyed in typical retro fashion, showing you what is a wall of text before diving into a level, the best game I can compare this to is "Golden Axe". Golden Axe for those of you not of a certain age was an RPG for Sega Megadrive that displayed rather ridiculous events between the the levels such as - and I paraphrase - "The village just so happens to be on the back of turtle, it ferries you across the sea". In Ninja Rush it's all that explains what is happening. Earth has been invaded by robot aliens, Earth's defences have shattered and so its only hope of survival is our protagonist. As far as stories go it's rather clichéd but for a game with mechanics as simply defined as Ninja Rush, it can get away with not even having a story at all.

Disappointingly, Ninja Rush has no music and no sound effects. The only sound you'll hear in the game will be the clicking of your keys as you frantically hit the fire button. It really could have used a catchy tune and some sound effects to boost the feel of the game, but I can always play some death metal tetris over it. If the mentality the game was created with is taken into account though - to create a game that stirred memories - and the retro theme, it's excusable - Atari games often didn't have any either. I suppose its only fair to remind you, the reader, that the game was made for YYG Comp05 and so was limited by file size and time restrictions that Romeo has noted were a major factor in his decision not to include music.

Graphically, what can I say? In my opinion the graphics are great. Okay so they aren't Crisis standard but what is when its made

independently, especially when its made in Game Maker. In fitting with the retro genre the graphics are suitably retro. Big blocky pixels make up our characters, heads up display amongst others. Some would say Ninja Rush could be done with a graphical update, which seems to be the trend with a lot of Xbox Live Arcade games these days, exchanging the blocky pixels for sheik vector graphics. I however think this is the best way to display something based off something as retro as an on the rails shooter.

Okay so I've avoided talking about what we are all really interested in, the game play. We don't control what direction we travel in like all games of the genre but we do get the ability to speed up or slow down using the arrow keys of the appropriate direction. This ability has got to be killed or damaged more times than it has actually helped but you will need to use it at some points. Other than the speed adjustments we are given 3 extra abilities, we can shoot a seemingly unlimited amount of shrunken, jump and epically action slide. I found it most effective to just keep tapping space to keep firing to provide a sort of buffer between be and the enemies. Jumping and Sliding have to be used a lot to hit or avoid hits by some of the enemies. Some fly saucers can't be hit without jumping and you'll want to kill them to grab some more health.

There are 3 areas to "explore" (run through like a super ninja) but even if you can't get past the first you'll have great fun trying. Certain little parts appear to be randomised from the order of the enemies to the colour of the cars. After killing enough enemies the screen will flash and "Enemies Level Up" will appear on screen, this is the first sign of increased difficulty and Ninja Rush pulls no punches immediately doubling the difficulty.

After a few days of on/off playing the challenge starts to wear thin and the lack of alternative modes really hurts the re-playability. A Time Trial mode wouldn't go a miss and would encourage people to keep playing to get better and better scores, as it stands you don't get much reward for completely a stage or "area".

Ninja Rush is one of the best on the rails games I have played in along time, if you are a fan of the genre, retro games or just want something a little different from the current overused game types I recommend you take a look at Ninja Rush.

THE DETAILS

Developer: Romeo Mazzei
Release Date: 27th March 2010
Genre: Arcade Action
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: @Alex@

<http://3.ly/yEAp>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 27/30
Graphics: 07/10
Replayability: 06/10
Originality: 03/10

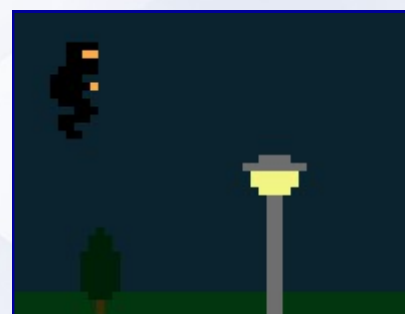
OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10
Challenge: 07/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: 07/10
Longevity: XX/10
Memorability: XX/10
Message Success: XX/10
Potential Reached: 09/10
Retro: 08/10
Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

76 Great

A great on the rails game that soon becomes difficult and addictive. Worth trying out.



ESSENCE CHILD

Back in the time machine for another Game Maker oldie

One of the advantages of having been a Game Maker user so long is that I have a lovely stash of games that I remember today, that, even if flawed, had a great impact on me. Bopper was one of these, Essence Child is another.

Essence Child, a taxing puzzle game by a group called Living Energy Productions (who, as far as I am aware and can find, did nothing before and have done nothing since), sees you directing three coloured balls through a number of isometric levels into appropriately coloured holes in the ground. Obstacles such as switches and walls that can only be passed by particular colours bring the challenge, meaning you have to keep thinking about the positions of three different "players".

A good thing to me is that the gameplay doesn't force speedy thinking. You can take as long as you like to twist your brain around the levels in-game, which start off easy but are whisked into mind-knotting hardness by a devilish (but fair) learning curve—you'll be glad the game lacks a time limit, some levels will have you stumped for a long, long time.

One of the best things about Essence Child, though, is its non-linearity. Similar to Worms Blast (betting nobody knows Worms Blast either) levels are dots on a twisting, splitting set of paths. If you're truly stuck on a certain level, you can backtrack and go for an alternative route. You don't even need to complete all the levels to finish the game (though there's a pleasant sense of accomplishment if you manage to beat the

lot).

In a welcome twist, when you finish the game and get to the scrolling credits, the game has one last surprise in store—a massive, uber-difficult last level which to this day I have not completed (and don't know if it's possible to even do so). It definitely puts the cherry on the difficulty cake.

For those that desire more levels, the game comes with a comprehensive level editor that allows you to make your own or download others'. Good luck finding the latter though; as popular a game as Essence Child was half a decade ago, it has since fallen into obscurity. In over three years on YoYo Games, and despite being Featured, it has garnered just twelve comments.

Graphically, Essence Child nowadays looks somewhat substandard. It's fairly banal, with themed but aged aesthetics and some fairly old-looking particle effects. But that's to be expected. When it was a new game, though, it really stood out—it was incredibly rare to find Game Maker games with consistency in graphical design and... whoa, particles! The banality is not to say it's particularly bad—it's definitely functional and fits well with the calm theme the gameplay possesses. Music and SFX suit the game fine though are never spectacular.

In all, it's a fantastic game. Ignore its age, it continues to this day to pose an addictive threat to your challenge reflex and is well worth the download for what you get.



THE DETAILS

Developer: Living Energy Productions

Release Date: Unknown (apx. 2004)

Genre: Puzzle

Suitability: All

Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/p7U4>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 25/30

Graphics: 06/10

Replayability: 08/10

Originality: 05/10

OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10

Challenge: 09/10

Download Size: XX/10

Execution: 09/10

Longevity: 08/10

Memorability: XX/10

Message Success: XX/10

Potential Reached: 09/10

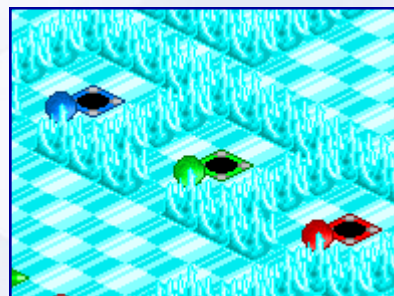
Retro: XX/10

Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

79 Great

Ignore its age. Essence Child is a taxing, relaxing and addictive puzzle game

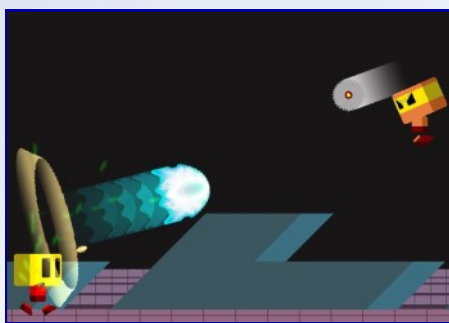


ANYMAN

Not just any old man in this entertaining action game

Anyman is far from the typical game made in Game Maker that I would download off a whim. But I have to say I certainly do not regret my decision to download. "Anyman" is an innovative arcade game by Golden Beast Studios. Comparisons could be made between this game and typical on the rails shooter, while the game is a shooter the player does have a degree of control over the movement of there player. However I tend to see it has a blend of on the rails shooting and platform fighting.

"Anyman" has neglected to use the horizontal aspect present in most fighting games in order to provide a simplistic two button control style. The player is able to jump or shoot using the right and left keys respectively. We are put through a series of challenges against new and varied enemies that require you to drastically alter your play style, with the damage you took in round 1 carrying on to the next round you have to be careful at all times to avoid residual damage and eventual death. In the ways of game play there isn't too much variety as all fights seem to degrade to nothing more than button mashing. The only real variety comes from the different attack patterns of the sequential opponents who use anything from energy shots to bricks to giant lasers in feeble - or conversely incredibly well executed - attempts to derail you.



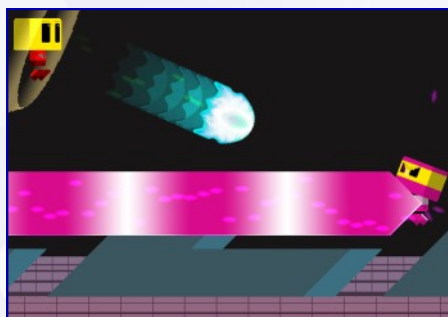
I've already mentioned that damage arrives on between fights, you do get a small refill of 50% of your total health so you should never lose more than 50% of your health in any given match. Unfortunately this is very difficult for the first time but does get progressively easier as you learn the attack patterns of the enemies, making the game - much like traditional exams - a test of memory rather than skill. There is a little strategy presented in how often you fire, or what type of shot you fire. One may elect to fire low damage shots often or large damage shots less often by charging the shot. Being hit while charging a shot causes a little flinch

which disrupts the charging so you need to know when it is best to charge and when you need to fire like a monkey with a machine gun. I decided to test out whether or not you even need to charge shots at all, I was able to get to what was claimed to be the final round, where I was pitched against "Dr Alien" a maniacal green alien with all the powers of previous enemies.

An artistic choice has been taken for "Anyman", a very simplistic approach has been taken. Golden Beast Studios has chosen to go for a two tone style rather than detailed sprites. This can take a little bit of getting use to but the colours and rather flashy effects more that make up for it. Each jump we - and indeed the enemies - take is polished eloquently with a bright burst of blue light that vaguely resembles an impact crater, each shot we fire after even the most minimal of charging becomes a giant ball of energy in a tribute to Dragon Ball Z style battling. This Dragon Ball Z style is echoed even more on enemies after the second where giant glowing lasers or other similar energy blasts become common sights.

Aurally "Anyman" doesn't have much going for it. There isn't anything that stands out as impressive or new. There however is a catchy techno tune and some nice science fiction sounding effects, the laser pinging sound for example sounds amazing, but I can envision it becoming annoying if I were to sit down to play the game to completion.

What I've had to say thus far as been largely positive but I do have one fairly major complaint, the "loading" screens. When the game is started up you'll be forced to what a production group logo and then a black screen for around 3 minutes, which in my humble opinion if far to long, I honestly thought something had went wrong the first time. Some games have been branded as "keyboard mashers" or "Button Mashers" well "Anyman" is certainly a mouse masher, the excessive clicking from my mouse soon became irritating.



THE DETAILS

Developer: GoldenBeastStudios
Release Date: 28th May 2010
Genre: Action
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: @Alex@

<http://3.ly/HmzH>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 23/30
Graphics: 06/10
Replayability: 06/10
Originality: 09/10

OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: 06/10
Challenge: 08/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: XX/10
Longevity: 08/10
Memorability: XX/10
Message Success: XX/10
Potential Reached: 08/10
Retro: XX/10
Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

74 Great

Want to destroy your mouse?
Anyman is the game for you -
intense and fun.



A slightly different puzzle

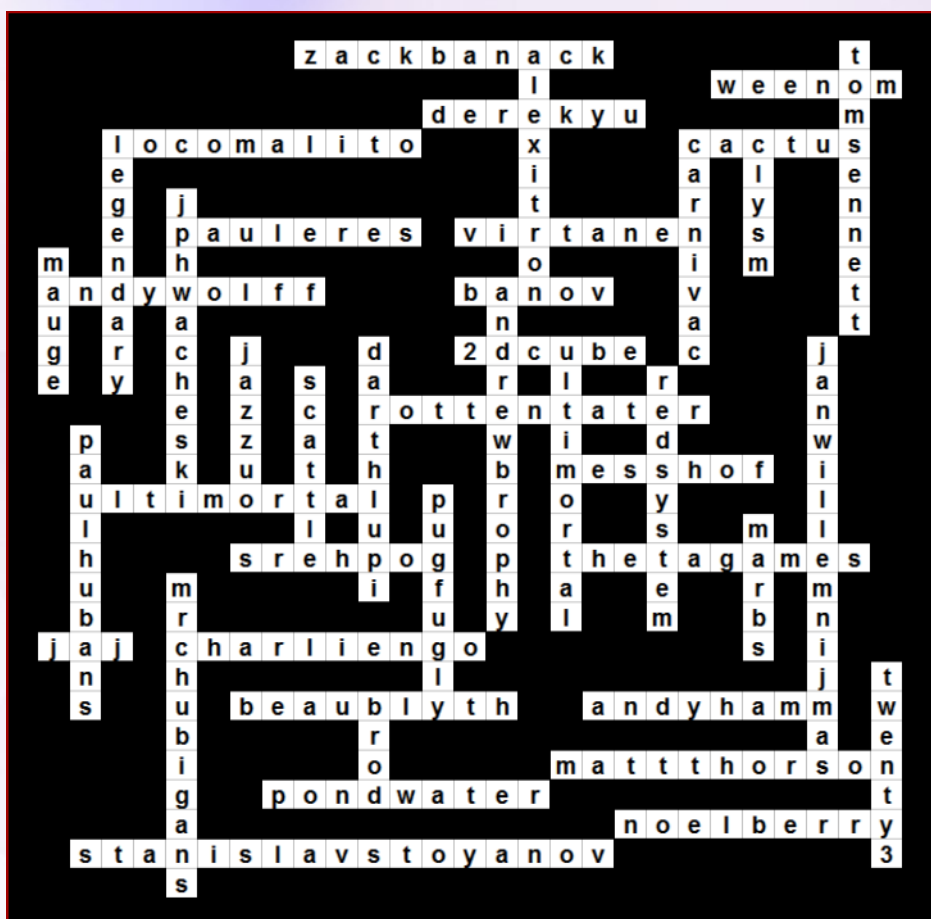
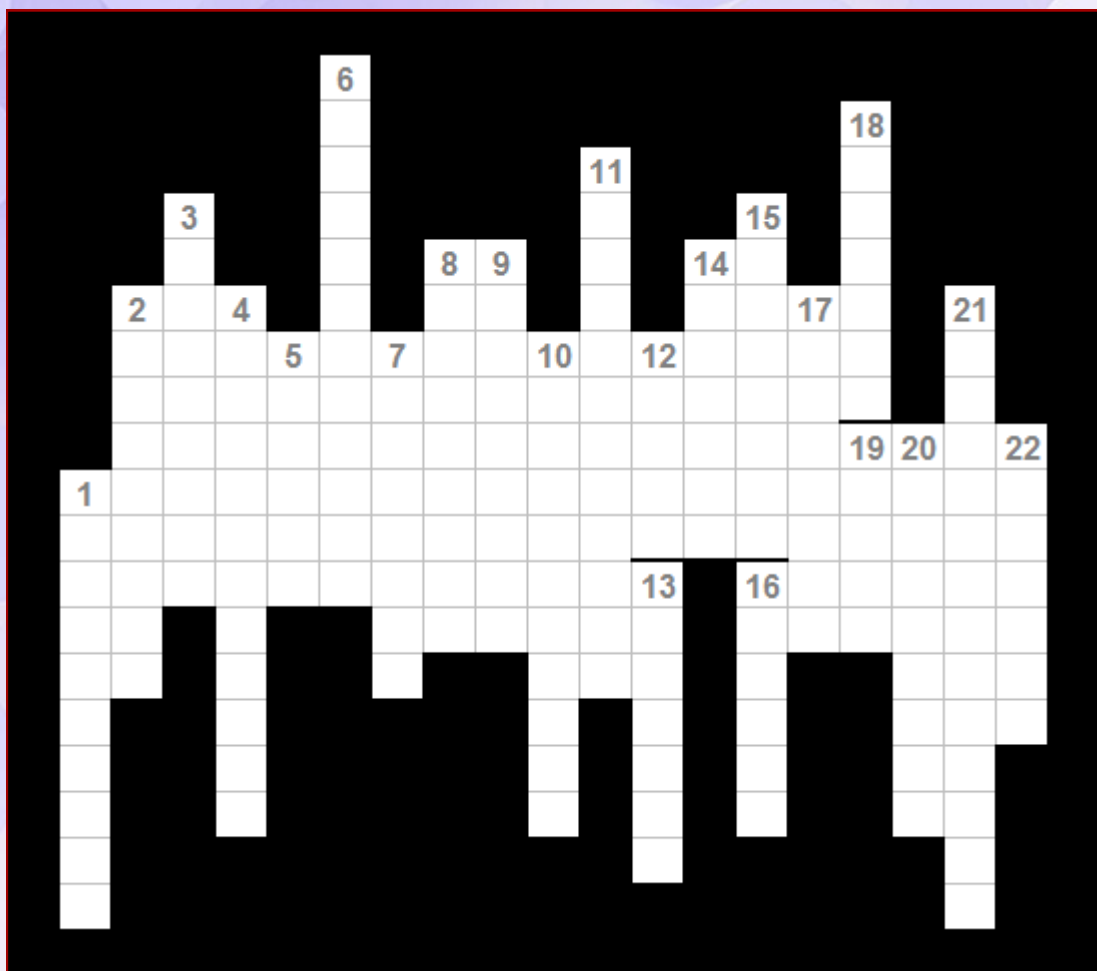
To make up for the slightly messed-up crossword from Issue 1, here's something a bit different. In Crossfire, you're looking for the name of a popular Game Maker game. This name appears horizontally somewhere in the puzzle. Vertically, the squares are filled with other popular Game Maker games, which you can work out by solving the anagrams shown. The first letter of the game name should be placed on the corresponding numbered square (not on the one beneath it). Game names can be more than one word, and anagrams will not necessarily carry the same spacing as the game name.

The first person to correctly identify the hidden horizontal game name and post it on the Rekame Mag GMC topic along with feedback on the magazine will be awarded a review of any game of their choice (including their own), or an article of their choice (must be a topic worth an article).

1. I BE OUT HELL
2. PLUG LOOKS
3. I SEA CANAL
4. ALAS BUSINESS
5. EL TILT
6. INCHLESS CEDE
7. YELP SUNK
8. LITTLE SIM
9. I OUTED MAY
10. STINKIER JAN
11. ENDANGER GARY
12. BY LUW
13. LIKES US
14. LO BOUND
15. SEXS LOUD
16. LUPPER
17. OCHRE ROE
18. SCENTED
19. SCOUF
20. GENT CHEER
21. YOSHI FORK A CART
22. SIN MOOD

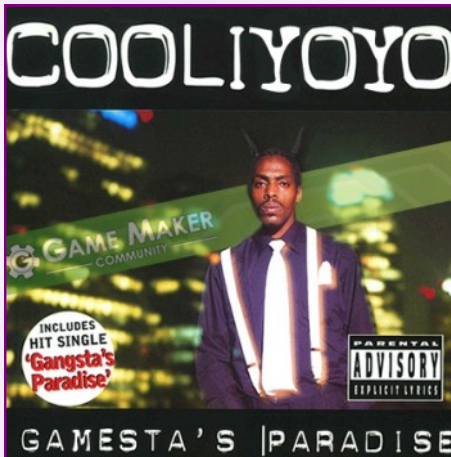
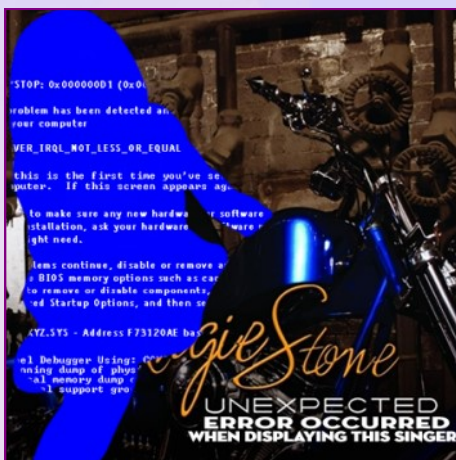
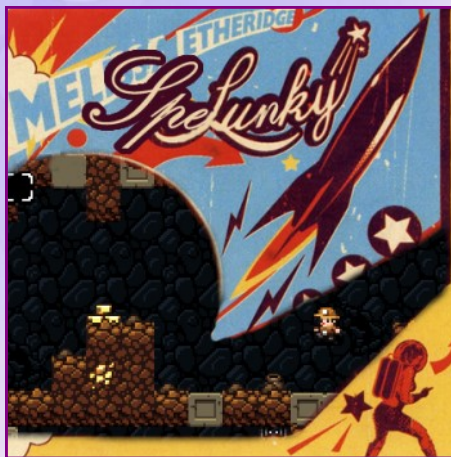
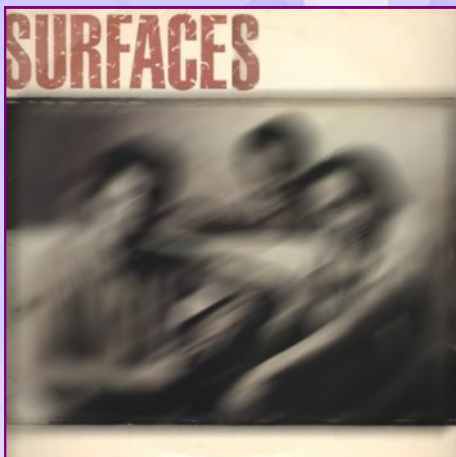
You are welcome to share answers and/or clues as help, especially once the horizontal game has been successfully identified. There are two effective ways to complete the puzzle—print screen this page, paste into Microsoft Paint or similar, and fill it in on your computer, or just print this page out and do it by hand (alternatively, to save ink, crop the puzzle out and just print that).

To the right: the answers to Issue 1's puzzle.



THE LAST WORD

If Game Maker was an influence on the world of music



Rekame Mag, Issue 2 of 1

Content written by Allison James bar:

- Tired Of Single Player? - Dan Fornace
- GM And The Makers-Rebecca Smith
- Ninja Strike review-@Alex@
- Anyman review-@Alex@
- Interview answers-Philip Gamble

Graphics compiled by Allison James bar:

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