

REKAMEMAG

ISSUE 3

AUTUMN 2010

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



**YOYO
GAMES**

COMPETITION 06
30 ENJOYABLE GAMES - OVERSIGHT

+ REVIEWS, ARTICLES, AND GENERAL GAME MAKERY GOODNESS

Matching Overbyte in issue run since today

I've been stunned by the positive reception garnered by Rekame Mag issues 1 and 2. Seriously. I was initially keeping the magazine a one-issue release and had no idea how well it'd go down. Generally, very well indeed. So I made a 2, and that went down just as well. There was basically no question on my part that a 3 would be made.

There's a couple of updates with Issue 3, mainly the new cover/logo. I thought it was time for an update, so I ditched the old logo in a lake and made a new one. It still uses the United font family but is cleaner and nicer to look at. It'll also ensure it doesn't pikey too much room in the GMC topic (something the older logo does quite nicely). In general it sticks with the style and typefaces established in the first two episodes though - one of my annoyances with a lot of e-magazines is their inability to stick to one theme.

So, onto something else: my newfound employment with YoYo Games. Leads me straight onto being stunned again - with just how well it went down. So, so many well wishes, so many people glad. It put one hell of a smile on my face to see it all, and I can only hope I work to deserve it all.

Same subject: a lot of people have been asking me what I do there. While I'm under confidentiality rules for the majority of stuff, I'm safe in saying that my involvement is within Game Maker itself, and with providing suggestions for upcoming versions. I recently took over the Spotlight on the homepage and try to refresh it every month or so too.

Infrequently Asked Questions

Q Why's this issue only written by you again?
A Simple - nobody contributed. Sean Buller (responsible for online in quite a few games, Game Jolt's Game Maker API, etc) was going to but was too lazy. It doesn't mean the magazine is shut off to guest contributions - if you want to write something, let me know.

Q Why are there too many arcade games reviewed? Why no meaty RPGs or [...] or Iji?
A I just personally prefer arcade games. Besides, for a game like Tji, if you can't find somebody's opinion on the internet without resorting to Rekame Mag, then you probably should have gone to Specsavers.

Q The lack of GM news in this magazine continues to disappoint me.

A It's been said before, here it is again - Rekame Mag does not contain a section on news because it's pointless. Blogs such as Game Maker Blog provide a far better service in this area - news is instant to appear and updated regularly. News in Rekame Mag would be 1-3 months old thanks to how scarcely it's released.

Q Why did it take so long to release Issue 3 when it's no longer than older issues?
A It's common sense - I went from 14 months of having nothing worthwhile to do other than two and a half hours of voluntary work in a shop every Wednesday, to a full-time career and near-entire independence through a need to shop for myself, cook for myself, operate a washing machine for myself (scariest of all), etc. That, coupled with fatigue from spending up to 40 hours in front of Game Maker a week (excluding when I'm making PC games, something that's also decreased significantly in frequency), means Rekame Mag is slower to happen nowadays. I maintain that I'll never cancel it - it'll just die out if I lose interest for life.

Q Why is [insert flaw] still a problem in Game Maker/on the YoYo Games website?
A I have no idea. I'm not a website developer or a developer of Game Maker. I'm a developer within Game Maker exclusively. That isn't to say I might do more if/when I learn new languages, but I'm not going to be exporting games to Flash or adding necessary comments when rating games when I only know GML.

Q What do you do with your wages?
A Excluding the payments for things like living, surviving (the usual), I'm a game whore. Since arriving I've bought a Master System, a NES, a SNES, a Saturn, a PlayStation, two Dreamcasts, a Wii, four Gameboy Advance SPs, two Gameboy Advances, a Gameboy Pocket, a Gameboy Colour and a PSP, along with at least five games for each (record-PSP with 14). I also splurge on new games like Red Dead Redemption, Skate 3, Uncharted 2 and most recently at time of writing Dead Rising 2.

Anyway, that's quite enough guff for one page. I shall no doubt be back sometime in the future with an Issue 4 of Rekame Mag. Until then, I hope you enjoy this issue, and have yourself a great day!

-Allison James

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

03: The Power Of 2
How, and why, to go about a sequel

04-07: YoYo Games Competition 06
An overview of 30 of the numerous fun entries

08: Your Game Is Like A Drug
What makes a game addictive

INTERVIEW

09: Terra Lauterbach
Creator of the Visit series, Super Space Rogue, Fetus and others

REVIEWS

10: Cool Dog
Arcade Puzzle // Gabor De Moov // 2002

11: Virus
Arcade Platformer // 3DCubez // 2010

12: Katamari Kazoku
Arcade // jsmithLMSL // 2010

13: Tower 3
Tower Defence // orse ost e7 o // 2010

BOOKENDS

01: Cover
The front cover of Rekame Mag 3

02: Welcome
You're on it

14: Spot The Difference
The catchiest type of STD today

15: The Last Word
Game Maker vs iPad: Which is better

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THE POWER OF 2

How making a sequel to your game could be a good move

It's difficult to begin this article. I was looking for something like "So you've made a great game..." or "You've made a part 1..." but the thing is - a sequel can come out of everything. Sure, maybe you have a great game. A sequel could capitalise on that. But if you've made a poor game, a sequel could improve on, and correct, its mistakes. Similarly, a [Game Name] Part 1 would certainly open the gates for a sequel, but at the same time, maybe a game with closure could do with expansion. Or maybe people just want more. Whatever the situation, there are some thoughts you should put into whether a sequel is the right thing to make.



Firstly, take a good, long look at all of the feedback your game has received. If the general consensus is that the game is great, but flawed in a couple of areas, then a sequel probably isn't needed. Just patch or update it to improve it where the faults apply... unless the flaws are in something major. If it's something like "bad level design" or "lack of variety", and you can muster up plenty of new ideas, then go for a sequel. Just make sure it differentiates itself enough from the original game.

If feedback contains a lot of "plenty of potential but poor game" or along those lines, then a sequel is likely a good move. However, don't do it until you've improved sufficiently to get the most out of the concept. Don't worry about the idea being stolen in the time it takes you to get better - you have the original as proof you designed it.

If, on the other hand, people think it's a poor concept (even if they liked the execution), don't make a sequel. Use the original as a learning process, and come up with a new, separate idea.

For a game that's pretty much universally considered great, then think about a sequel, but don't rush it. Make sure you can safely exceed the original with the next in the series

in every way. More/better levels, better graphics, better sounds. If you're putting money into the project (eg for artists or composers), think about putting a little more into this one. Or if you have some money to spare and you or your team is weak in a particular area, perhaps spend a little to commission someone professional to give your game another good boost. Just make sure that it exceeds it right, as comments complaining it's too similar to the predecessor will otherwise be common and bring its reputation down.

How about sequelising an old game, from your past? With these, there's less to worry about in the way of adding new features. Since you can sit on the border between remake and sequel, you may just want to give it a complete overhaul with your newfound skill, keeping the original concept but making it more fun, more intuitive, better looking etc for players.

These points mostly apply to games without much of a story. A different thought process altogether needs to go into considering whether a story-driven game should be "sequelised".



Firstly, was the original game's story closed off? Is there any room for expansion without making it seem contrived? This could include spin-offs, where the new game focuses on a character or characters that were not the focal point in the original, or even a different genre altogether (both of these are commonplace in television - think of Doctor Who, Torchwood and the Sarah Jane Chronicles). If entire closure was achieved, then don't go for a direct sequel. Make a spin-off if you really want to, or take the Final

Fantasy approach and have a numeric sequel, just with a new story and characters (back references are okay in these instances). If you still want to reuse the characters, however, how about a prequel? Make something that gives more details on the characters' pasts. All you need to watch out for is contradiction of points/storylines cemented in the original game.

If you made the original with a sequel in mind (a "Part 1"), it doesn't automatically mean you should create the second. Were people saying they were interested in seeing how the story continues, or did they seem burned out with the concept? If there are still dangling plot points but only a minority of players are interested in seeing how they end, you could always just finish off the story in text format, or even update the Part 1 with a little extra at the end to wrap everything up (make sure you provide previous players with a way of skipping to the new ending - if people weren't hugely interested in the ending they certainly won't replay the game just to see what



happens).

There's always exceptions to these rules though. If you want to make a sequel just because YOU want to, then go ahead and do it! You may not get perfect feedback but there will always be a section of the original audience that just wants more of the same, not to mention the newcomers that haven't played the original and will enjoy what is essentially a beefed-up version of the original. Whatever happens though, just make sure you enjoy yourself!

A good hard stare at 30 games NAL enjoyed from YoYo Games Competition 06—"Discovery"

As some may know, one of my duties as a newfound YoYo Games employee is to judge competitions (I'd guessed this would happen before I'd signed stuff so I entered their previous one just because it was my last chance to). With this duty, I wanted to release some information on some of the entries I enjoyed (not all of them).

Disclaimer time. The games noted within this article are MY OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCE. Therefore it will take into account bias from personal tastes (genres, graphical styles etc). It should be considered entirely separate from my professional opinions and in no way represents the ordering or votes submitted to the competition itself as a judge (in which I used my own judgment and ignored bias). Another thing to note is that, although the magazine will not be released until after the end of the competition, this was written entirely before the final results. I don't know who won or even which games any of the other judges currently favour (at time of writing it's on Round 2, with 41 games left in the running).

Lastly, while you are welcome to share your own opinions, I do not want, and will not regard, any rude or dismissive disagreements to my personal choices. There were a lot more than 30 fun games entered and I could not list all the ones I enjoyed.

With that in mind then, here's my list.



> Jaylas Labyrinth

While Jaylas Labyrinth wasn't massive in the gameplay department, it had some really nice touches that made it fun for me. Most noteworthy, its atmosphere was genuinely chilling—the feel in general but also the lighting hiding areas you couldn't see from your own position. Although it probably could have benefitted from more realistic lighting, the blockiness did give it quite a nice look.



> Skipper

A cute platformer with a nice amount of wit. I felt there was a little bit of style mismatching going on (would have looked nicer if everything shared the cartoony black outlines of the in-game characters), but varied environments, solid gameplay and the aforementioned humour made it a nice experience.



> Around The World In 33 Days

Gameplay style reminded me a lot of LocoRoco while the graphics were very World of Goo-ish. I enjoyed this game to an extent, though I definitely feel it'd be more playable on a larger resolution - the large character, the small resolution and the HUD combined made the entire experience feel very cramped. Build quality was excellent otherwise.



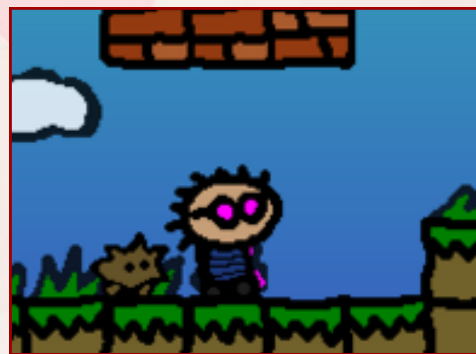
> Hubby the Clay Cube

Very, very mixed opinions on this. It's very pretty graphically, with a consistent, well-done style. Gameplay is generally good, if a little unimaginative. But what hurt it for me was the presence of more than one glitch - I recall the protagonist being teleported to above the room for no apparent reason on two occasions, and moving platforms would only move him around half of the time.



> Mayflight

I was impressed by Mayflight for a couple of reasons after my initial playing of it. Firstly, it was its creator's first Game Maker production (the game's professionalism is always evident), and something I didn't realise at first, it's entirely procedurally generated. It looks and is done very well, although the time-based gameplay wasn't massively to my taste (would have loved it to have been exploration-based—imagine an entirely generated Seiklus-like game!).



> YoYo

The name got my attention, the game kept it. YoYo is comparable to previous Game Maker game "Purple" in gameplay, but is more cartoony, features a rarely-seen "story that isn't awful", and has some nice little innovative features that make it really good fun to play. The hedgehog companion is cute too. I just wish the yoyo used as the protagonist's main weapon had more swinging options—sideways-only works but there was potential for more.



> WARP

Another mixed bag for me. WARP looked okay (though its style was near-identical to a number of other independent games, most notably Limbo), and it was very well made. But the gimmick has been seen before on more than one occasion (Wrapple, Go Up etc) and there were no other significant innovations to the game. Still good to play though.



> Owls

While the gameplay itself is nothing special at all in Owls (similar to Elephant Story, another entrant that didn't make this list though I did like it), its style, both aesthetically and atmospherically, is really, really good - and it really does make up for it. Good graphics can make a game nice, but great graphics can carry it into a pleasant little adventure. It's



got some genuinely funny touches to it too.

> Artilerry F

I was surprised (though perhaps given the competition theme I shouldn't have been) at

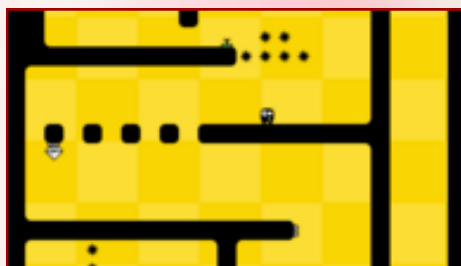
the number of good RPGs entered. Artilerry F is one of them—a side-scrolling RPG, pretty deep and very good looking. A little difficult for me, but I'm crap at RPGs so I have no idea if it's the game being too difficult or me being



too rubbish.

> Secrets of the Vengeance

Very similar to Artilerry F (though not "suspiciously" so), Secrets of the Vengeance differs mainly by offering three different characters to choose from and other finer details—though it's still a side-scrolling RPG



that was too hard for me.

> Core

A solid offering which was fun to play, Core can best be compared to Jumper Three in premise. It's very similar—bar graphical style and the side of the screen you have to leave to complete levels it's near-identical. That's its only real downfall for me. Otherwise, it's well

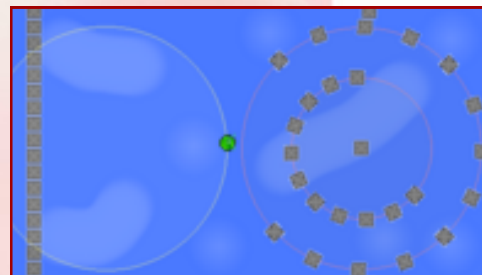


made and fun to play.

> Delta One

Some great touches to this one. The graphics were very well made (though not a fan of the

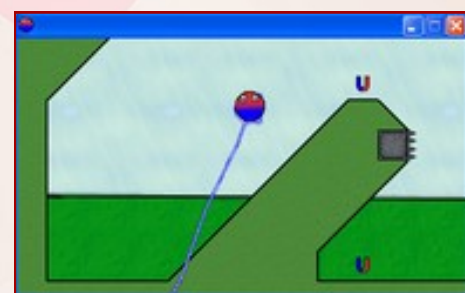
unvaried environments), the ragdoll physics on corpses was nicely done, there was a decent story that didn't get in the way, and some clever touches made it great. Personal favourite - the ability to drag an enemy's dead



body onto switches to activate them.

> Circle Rider

A very clever idea let down slightly by its execution, which was a little bland given just how much potential it had. But the idea, and a well-made mechanic to go with it, were nice.



Definite room for a sequel here.

> Magnetix

The idea of this game is great - holding a button to activate the nearest magnet (if one is nearby) to repel your character around the A competent physics engine and some truly



difficult levels make this good fun.

> Gods Watch

Part "Mirrors Edge", part brilliant, Gods Watch is a fantastically made parkour/action game which is great fun to play. Which is why I was gutted when it contained use of the Enter key and lost its eligibility. Nevertheless, it's a game recommendable to all, especially fans of



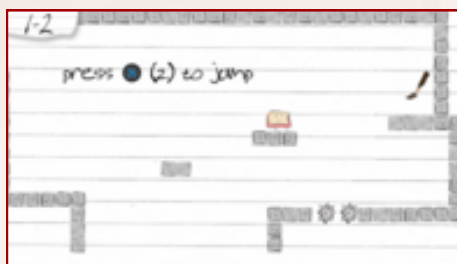
> You Can't Possibly Expect Me To Do That 2: I Drastically Underestimated Your Ability To Die More Than Once

Ignoring that the game is a sequel, this game (which's name I refuse to write again) has an incredibly smart concept - dying flings you off in the direction you were moving when you bit the dust, and certain areas, when hit, will bring you back to life. Good to play, though its presentation is far from perfect.



> Cleft

A nicely-done topdown-3D adventure game which sees you tarting around underground finding treasure and stuff. Some surprisingly pretty environments given most of it is dirt!



> The Ugly Doodle

"Pencil sketch", for lack of a better term, is a graphical style which seems to be quite popular nowadays. The first game of the style I recall is Super Mega Awesome Dude by Ryan Langewisch, and the newest is The Ugly Doodle. An above-average platformer, but things like the solid-red blood effect look out of place.



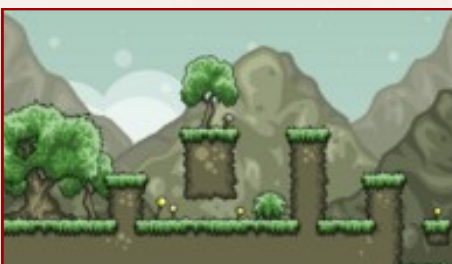
> Bubble Gems

Another good, solid platformer let down by slight aesthetic clashes. Whereas most of the game has a pretty cartoony feel, flame and ice effects look rather odd. But again, ignoring that, it's fun to play, long, and has a nice variety of environments.



> Crypt of Destiny

Looks very good (the lighting effect, usually added with no purpose whatsoever, actually has one here), and is generally of professional quality - actions are well animated and there's some nice touches. Perhaps a wee bit repetitive but it's not a major concern.



> Vest Trials: Approaching Dawn

While Vest Trials: Approaching Dawn isn't the most feature-packed platformer ever, it holds a charm akin to the likes of Seiklus, Kaipuu, and the non-GM Knytt series for its beautiful graphics and seemingly peaceful nature. For that alone, it's well worth playing.



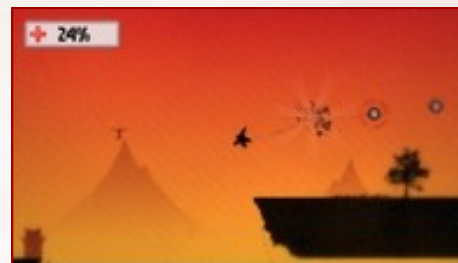
> BRAIN STORM: Tower Bombarde

Another sequel which shares its predecessor's unique concept. To destroy turrets, - you have to either spawn a shield which ricochets enemies' bullets back into themselves or into other enemies, or just have them shoot each other with some quick dodging. You can't directly shoot them. The only real flaw is that it had to lose the mouse controls which made the original Tower Bombarde that little bit more intuitive to play.



> Pisces Pisces

Just managed to make the fun list - funness is Pisces Pisces' only real downfall. It looks stunning—amazing graphics in both the 2D and 3D departments, and is a fairly chunky game where length is concerned. Just a shame it's rather repetitive.



> Prototype_03

Was generally a good fun, and well made, grappling-hook platformer (pretty much a genre in its own right these days). Only hurt by an initial need to get the hang of the controls—but once you have, it feels really nice to play and is addictive too.



> Obeos

Really nicely made RPG that seems to be a long, fun adventure. Occasional graphical style clashes diminish (but don't really hurt) the experience a bit, but for any RPG fan this is definitely worth a look. Engaging story, solid gameplay.



> Guardian RPG

A lot of RPGs were entered into the competition. But it makes sense—they fit great with the Discovery theme, a nice one can easily be made in three months, and they're great when done well. This is another one that was done well. Fairly "Legend of Zelda"-ish (well, until the combat initiates) in feel, if you want an idea before you delve in.



> TheSpinner

TheSpinner, an experimental game, takes a bit of getting used to, and is fairly short too. But as an experience (maybe moreso than as a game) it's worth a look. It's fun, in a rare case for a GM game fairly immersive, and it's very professionally made (as seems to be the standard from its developer).

Okay, so in an unmentioned twist, as follows are my three favourite games from the competition. Don't hurt me for my choices!



#3 > Blackout

Absolutely fantastic game. Reminds me a lot of an old cult classic game from the mid-1990s, "Loaded". But this 3D action adventure, with its solid gameplay, brilliant immersion, longevity, and outright massive professionalism, won me over instantly. But those bloody rats at the start—bah!



#2 > Final Columbus

In my opinion, the first great entry—though it was rather buried when the high-end games started tumbling in, Final Columbus stood out early on. A decent story (not perfect but not intolerable), great gameplay, and once again longevity all come to its side. The occasional graphical yikes doesn't matter—as a whole, it looks and feels ace.



#1 > The Hive

The obvious choice, but for damn good reason. It oozes brilliance in every field—its comic-book graphics are amazing, gameplay is varied, frantic and always fun, it's long, it's difficult, and it's absolutely incredible. If you haven't played it yet, you definitely should.

You can find the links to all 30 of these games, plus all of the other entrants as well,

by searching #YoYoComp06 on YoYo Games. After-thoughts

It was really fun judging and playing all the games - as I've mentioned before, these aren't the only games I enjoyed. Even the lowest-end games were frankly fun for a few minutes.

The theme, "Discovery", I noticed went ignored in a portion of the entrants. However, in an odd twist, the majority of the "highest-up" games seemed to incorporate it well. Definitely food for thought.

My biggest niggle was games that only included PSP buttons controls, even if before the game began they were documented. What should be remembered was that this was a PC game creation contest, not a PSP one—it hurt the playability of games where I had to keep faffing about remembering which buttons related to which keys. While most were mapped sensibly, a few were all over the place.

But, yes. If you have a nice portion of your time available with nothing to do, all of these games and any other entrants are highly commendable.

Do remember that this list, even the top three, only represents my personal opinion—not my judging face. As such, it does not represent what I submitted as a YoYo Games employee and/or as a judge. I let personal preferences and bias come into play here—professionally, I didn't (or tried my hardest not to).

Also remember that the entire list was compiled before I or the public knew the final results (it was done fully in Round 2, when 40 games were in the running), though of course due to its content I won't be releasing the magazine until after results have been

decided and publicised.

JUST A QUICK NOTE

I joined Philip Gamble, Jack Brockley in the fourth episode of the GMTalk podcast, guested by Josh Conley and Zach Reedy. You can listen to it from its Game Maker Blog page, which also includes a table of contents and list of links to things we were talking about, here:

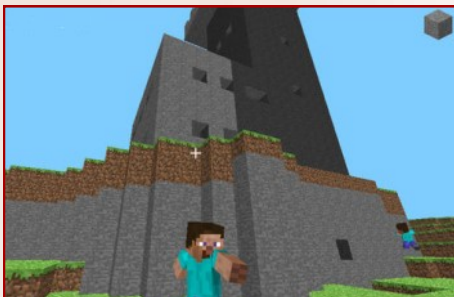
<http://3.ly/CaCP>

YOUR GAME IS LIKE A DRUG

Making your game as addictive as possible

I'll be honest, this article is 100% inspired by Minecraft. Publically available for a year and a half with continuous updates, and originally intended to be a fairly small game, a recent surge in sales has seen the game skyrocket in popularity. Sales of the main game have made its creator a millionaire. He's been able to quit his day job as a result of the newfound income. Heck, PayPal temporarily froze his account after he attempted to withdraw an accumulated €600,000 from it. Though it is irrelevant to Game Maker, the game costs €9.95 (about GB£8.20 or US\$14) currently, and will get you free upgrades for life - no monthly payments either. It's highly recommendable.

Now, if you've played it, or even read about it, you'll know how simple its premise is. You're presented with a randomly generated world made entirely out of cubes (which represent terrain, water, rock, wood, leaves etc). You destroy and create more blocks in the 3D environment. And that is absolutely all there is to it (until you get into Survival mode, which is slightly more complicated but not by that much). Yet it's insanely addictive - for the last week I have sunk at least three hours into it daily, with no tiredness of it as yet.



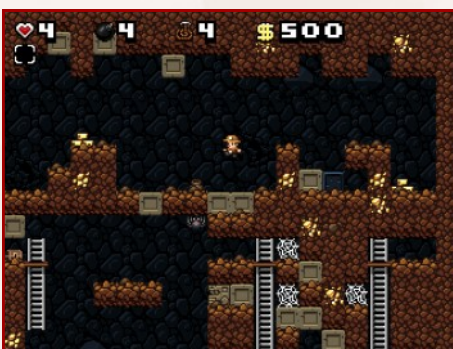
So what makes a game this damn addictive? The easiest way is to look at other games considered so.

The ability to create is a major addiction source. If you're one of the many that has had a go in LittleBigPlanet's level creator, you'll know it's a major timesink. The thing about it is you don't actually have to make full levels. There's hours of amusement to be had from toying with the tools - making as fast a vehicle as you can manage, making weaponry or defences, etc. Its sequel, out in January 2011, looks to expand the ability to mess about with AI, a Game Maker-esque system of variables and new tools, and more. There are other games which have addictive create modes, even if the game is flawed. ModNation Racers, with its weak weaponry and slightly floaty controls, is a joy to make things with.



It expands into independent development too. Games with level editors are often played far more than those without, and it's insanely frequent to see requests for a level editor in any level-based game.

Something else that can make a game addictive is procedural generation. Done right, it can make a game infinitely replayable, providing constant new obstacles and features. The prime example, of course, is Game Maker-made Spelunky, in which the procedural generation is done brilliantly. While storyline driven, all of the caves featured as you play are generated with a number of checks to ensure they're possible. A number of tools can be found to help you pass obstacles, there are shops and suchlike around, etc. People have reported playthroughs of the game in the hundreds and even the thousands, and the game has earned a lot of attention - it's perhaps one of the best known Game Maker games and has made several impressive lists including PC Gamer UK's Top 100 PC Games of All Time 2008 (which included ALL games, including multi million dollar budget commercial releases).



Though it's an example of procedural generation at a complex level, it need not be difficult to do. Arcade games, mainly arena/scrolling shooters/boss rushes/bullet hells, are easy as pie to generate gameplay of on the fly - simple checks on score, time elapsed or similar allow gameplay to curve neatly in difficulty while still providing a different gameplay experience each time played. Platformers are also relatively easy to procedurally generate, though you'll need to

come up with a few checks to make sure levels are possible (or provide Spelunky-esque powerups or tools to allow traversal of otherwise-impossible-to-pass obstacles).

Then there are online highscores. These are brilliant for upping a game's addiction, providing players with a desire to be as good as they can at a game, improving their ability and their score through multiple plays to climb up the charts. It need not stop at a simple list of highscores either - Facebook connectivity is a way of not only increasing addiction, but also coverage. Imagine someone with 200 friends on Facebook plays a game, which then posts his/her highscore in a status update. Say 20 of those play the game to try to beat the score, and also get status updates. That's around 400 people providing competition to just one person through a simple system. It could even go viral, like Minecraft did (though not through Facebook), and reach millions. Many of the game's players will be fighting for the higher spots in the highscore list.



Lastly, and perhaps most easily, make the game interesting. Make sure that, if it does contain a story, the gameplay isn't just a boring filler between cutscenes - it'll kill the interest of many, and any reason to replay the game will be gone. Multiple endings/story branches are good, but be sure the game is interesting enough to warrant going through the first half or so again for them. If the story is pointless and adds nothing or very little to the game, just ditch it or relegate it to a small back story screen for the few that will be interested. The story itself could be done in a different media format - a novel or a short film for instance.

In general though, addiction can be achieved as long as a game isn't boring. Show it to a few people, see how long they play it. If they refuse to stop, you're probably onto something.

TERRA LAUTERBACH

AKA rotten_tater: A game developer that's far from rotten

Thanks for agreeing to the interview, Terra. Please introduce yourself.

Well, my name is Terra Lauterbach, also known as rotten_tater around the internet. I'm a game developer from Wisconsin, USA. I've made about 15 games over the course of the last 6 or so years, and most of them were for competitions. I'm currently in college studying Game Design, and I really like to think of myself as a game designer, as opposed to artist or programmer.

How did you come up with the username "rotten_tater"?

When I was in high school, I was fairly proficient in music and decided to take up composing my own for a change. Once I had started getting good at it, I wrote a strange little song about my love for potatoes (singing and everything!). I unimaginatively named it the "Potato Song" and made a music video that quickly spread throughout my school. I was contemplating starting up a band at the time too, and I thought it would be a great band name: The Rotten Taters.

When and how did you discover Game Maker/game development in general?

When I was very little and playing SNES games, I had discovered that humans actually made video games, so I was very excited to imagine myself as one of the guys who'd show up in the credits. (I credit beating Kirby Super Star for the realization.) Later on in middle school, I was fiddling around with game creation and was sloshing and groaning my way through RPG Maker 2000. I'd finally gotten fed up with it, and decided to take up other programs. At the time, Matt Thorson had made Super Stickman Escape and Hold Off Red, both games that were really interesting to me, and somewhere on his site he had mentioned Game Maker. I don't even remember how I happened upon Game Maker or even Matt's work. It's been such a long time!

What do you consider to be your best, and most successful, games released so far?

It's really hard for me to gauge, but I would say that the Visit series is one of my more widely viewed set of games. They've had countless features around the net, and people still mention them to me every once in a while. Successful in terms of "uniqueness" would go to Descent. A lot of people have talked about it as some sort of gem, which is really cool. Plus, it's one of my easier games to get attracted to. Lastly, my personal favorite game is a tie between Mind Shock and Thunder Gun. They're both crazy cool, but they haven't gotten nearly as much exposure as my other titles, and even so, I *love* them to death.

How did you develop the idea for "Fetus"?

Game Jolt was holding its Minimal Competition back in 2009, and I really didn't think that I had time to crank anything out for it. The competition was only a week long, and half of it had already passed. However, sometime during that week (not sure when) I had a really crazy, messed up dream about having to beat up what I could best describe as a Fetus. It looked more like the version in the game than an actual little baby thing. This (somehow) inspired me to make a game that made just as little sense as the dream letting it perfectly slide into the competition, and Fetus was born four days later.

I understand you're currently making a sequel by the name "suteF" - anything you can say about it?

First of all, it looks about ten million times better than the original. I've upped the number of colors present, and I've also had a year's worth of improvement in my pixel art skills to back me up, and four months of work on the title instead of four days. The puzzles are greater in number and diversity as well. You now have the ability to jump (though it's only straight up) as well as hefting yourself up short walls.

I've also made a greater effort to explain the background story in game as well as flesh it out in documents I'll be releasing on the suteF website as release time approaches. I've been working out a plan with one of my friends to print an analog 'companion book' to go along with the game, and even make it available in PDF form for everybody. The whole thing still in the works, though.

However, one of the biggest achievements I've squeezed into suteF is this sort of dynamic changing of the game rules over time. Seemingly random things start happening to you throughout your journey in suteF and hopefully when no one is expecting it.

On the technical side, the beginning idea for suteF was to create it using YoYoGame's Competition06 specifications for a PSP game, in hopes of getting it ported at some point. Of course, I didn't make the deadline, but there'll be no harm in asking them once I get it done though, right?

You've said on your blog "suteF" will be done for IGF 2011. What are your plans and expectations for the event?

I plan on entering suteF into the Student IGF for sure. The end goal of it is mainly to get both me and the game a lot of exposure; who doesn't want people to play their games? suteF was made with the YoYoGame's PSP specifications in mind as well, so it could be a really good excuse to ask you guys over at YoYo to... port it? *winks*

I'm not certain that suteF will be a finalist, since

it's such a strange game, but you never know if you don't try. Shooting really high has always been something I've been willing to try.

There's also a sequel to the "Visit" series in the works - is this still going, and are there any details you can publicise?

At the moment, Visit3 is basically on the shelf. What I've gotten done mostly has to be completely reworked, and suteF has taken a large amount of time away from side projects like Visit3. Maybe sometime in the future I'll be able to start it up again, but it seems unlikely at this point. It wasn't wasted time though, I learned a lot about C# programming in the process, which is starting to prove pretty valuable.

Any other projects you have planned or in development?

Once suteF is done, I've planned to start work in a small team. One of my friends, Jake Ruesch, will likely be contributing as an artist, but the rest of the group hasn't quite been formed yet. There really aren't any plans laid out yet either for what kind of game, but we really want to make something using the XNA framework.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

One of the biggest things to hit me in the face lately was YoYoGame's announcement of their plans to make Game Maker games work on iPhone and iPad. It's been unbelievably exciting to get this kind of news. Depending on how YoYo continues their progress on the runner, and how often they contact devs to be ported, it only means that Game Maker is going to become an even greater fighting force in game development. I would probably crap myself in excitement if they ever contacted me about doing some port. I really wouldn't have to dedicate myself to learning so many new development platforms like I've been doing lately either.

Thanks again for your insights and the interview.

You're welcome! This was really fun!

COOL DOG

He's gonna take you back to the past, to play the awesome games that kick ass

If you've been with Game Maker for a number of years (before YoYo Games), you've probably at least heard of Cool Dog. Made in 2002 using Game Maker 4.2a, which predates it being commercial software, it was one of the first Game Maker-made games I ever played (partly as it was released as open source, which meant its filesize was very dial-up friendly). If you don't remember Cool Dog and you play it nowadays, chances are you'd consider it mediocre, and compared to the games of today it is. But for the others, this is a blast from GM's past. A reminder of the days when GM's official site was a smallish, grey affair, when games required Mark Overmars' personal approval to be displayed there, and when an in-built 3D engine was an unlikely dream.

So enough of the back story, onto the game. Cool Dog is a platformer with cartoonish aesthetics, that sees you controlling a water pistol-wielding dog that's being followed by a vacuum cleaner-wielding mouse. You read that right. The aim of the game is to "clean up" the level by having the mouse vacuum up all the green bars from the level's floors, while avoiding a variety of dog-hurting traps and animals. It can get a little tiresome having to constantly retread ground to get to each "dirty" floor (not all floors are "dirty" to begin with), but the cutesy variety of graphics help delay the feeling of repetition.

It carries a number of themes popular in the early 2000s of Game Maker games. The main

menu is a completely misfitting, graphically rendered, static screen (same as with Essence Child, reviewed in RM2). It has the all-too-familiar MIDI mixes of commercial music such as Hot Butter's "Popcorn" and Jean-Michel Jarre's "Zoolook", and the sound effects are simple and minimal. But it also carries that distinct feel that a lot of effort has gone into creating it.

As well as this, though, there are quite a few relatively new concepts introduced. Text was drawn with a custom, "sprited" typeface, something very scarce back in the 4.X days. Infact, nearly everything was drawn - the timer, the life and water counts - giving it a really pleasant look.

There are no serious complaints to be had with the game, though several little niggles hurt it a bit. The mouse's AI is the most obvious - he floats very awkwardly, and takes quite a bit of guidance to clean up all the floors (which he will often miss by hovering above the ground or being too far beneath it). The password system is a dodgy replica for saving, as it requires you to remember or write down the password. Not all levels contain one either. But they're not severe, and are hardly complaint-worthy for a game on its eighth birthday.

More a curiosity than an outstanding game, Cool Dog shows its age quite clearly. But it doesn't matter - it's still perfectly playable and will give you its fair share of enjoyment.



THE DETAILS

Developer: Gabor De Moov
Release Date: 2002
Genre: Platformer
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/9KCC>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 16/30
Graphics: 08/10
Replayability: 05/10
Originality: 08/10

OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10
Challenge: XX/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: 06/10
Longevity: 08/10
Memorability: 10/10
Message Success: XX/10
Potential Reached: XX/10
Retro: 07/10
Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

68 Good

You'd be barking mad if you didn't give this one a try, if only for the novelty factor



Would be nice if you could catch one instead

Every now and then, comments and reviews on a game will catch my eye. Virus had several claiming it to be the best game on the website, giving it rave five-starful reviews. But the screenshots didn't look anything special, and the username of its creator was enough to raise an eyebrow. I decided to give it a chance though - surely with all those good reviews it would have some smashing gameplay!

Insert Family Fortunes buzzer here.

Virus sees you controlling a green softbody, through a black and green world, by twisting around the camera and having it fall in the direction the camera's pointed. Think of games like Triton - it's similar to that. Throughout the game there are spikes you have to avoid, and collectibles you have to nab, to successfully finish levels.

The first problem was the presentation. The softbody looked nice, though it may just have been the product of a package such as GMPhysics, but everything else felt thrown together. The game's background was an odd mishmash of misfit triangles, the menu/intro section was just plain odd, and the overall style of everything seemed to clash wildly.

The second: the game is very, very buggy. You hit a wall at any random given angle and speed, and you're wedged in it. By shaking the camera around you can occasionally dislodge yourself... or you could go through it the

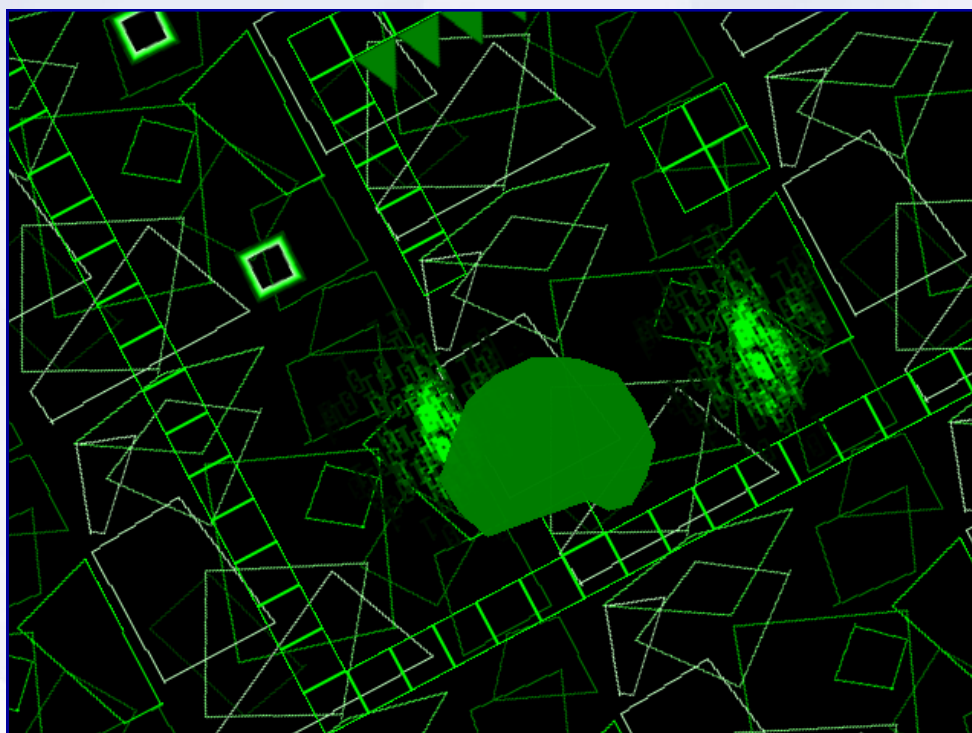
wrong way and end up stuck in purgatory. The premise itself is there, and with a lot of effort and bug fixes, it'd be a decent game.

Third problem: it's too easy. Throughout the ten minutes spent playing (and completing) the game I never died by hitting spikes. It was only ever because I went through the walls and was stuck. Part of the challenge problem is how light the virus feels - you can swing it around any bend with little danger as it moves so slowly.

There are other bizarre quirks to the game. The softbody seems to shrink throughout levels, possibly as its innards get "stuck together". It's pretty good at contorting itself. This is beneficial though, as it makes it less likely to glue itself to walls.

Aurally is where the game is okay. While short and would be annoying over an extended time, the music fits the style of gameplay and helps recover a little of its atmosphere.

But, in all, it's a decent idea, killed by the execution, and in part I think it's because of the developer's lack of experience. I can't blame that solely on him, but when I enter a game with high expectations like I did here, I have enough disappointment to need an outlet. Was I being cruel? Maybe. But I wouldn't have written this review if I hadn't since found out that all those rave reviews were by the developer using duplicate accounts. You have to learn some time.



THE DETAILS

Developer: 3DCubez
Release Date: 7th April 2010
Genre: Puzzle Platformer
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/CHdR>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 06/30
Graphics: 04/10
Replayability: 02/10
Originality: 06/10

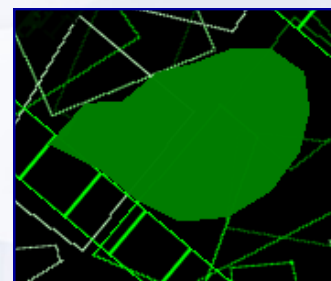
OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10
Challenge: 03/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: 01/10
Longevity: 03/10
Memorability: 03/10
Message Success: XX/10
Potential Reached: XX/10
Retro: XX/10
Sequel Improvement: XX/10

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

28 Poor

Makes me wish I was infected with Virtumonde again



KATAMARI KAZOKU

A rare faithful recreation of the unique Japanese franchise

I'll start this review by going on the record—I'm a massive fan of the Katamari series. Katamari Forever is the only game I've ever completed a second time directly after finishing it the first time. I won't bother with the "you're missing out" thing, but if you haven't played any Katamari instalments, the idea is simple—you're a little dude called Prince (or one of his many cousins). You roll your katamari, a big sticky ball, around, "picking up" loose objects. As you do so, your katamari increases in size and can pick up larger objects. And the entire thing is very Japanese—the presentation, the music, just the entire feel.

Now, all official Katamari instalments to date have been in 3D. So, upon seeing this 2D fangame, I was initially sceptical. I shouldn't have been.

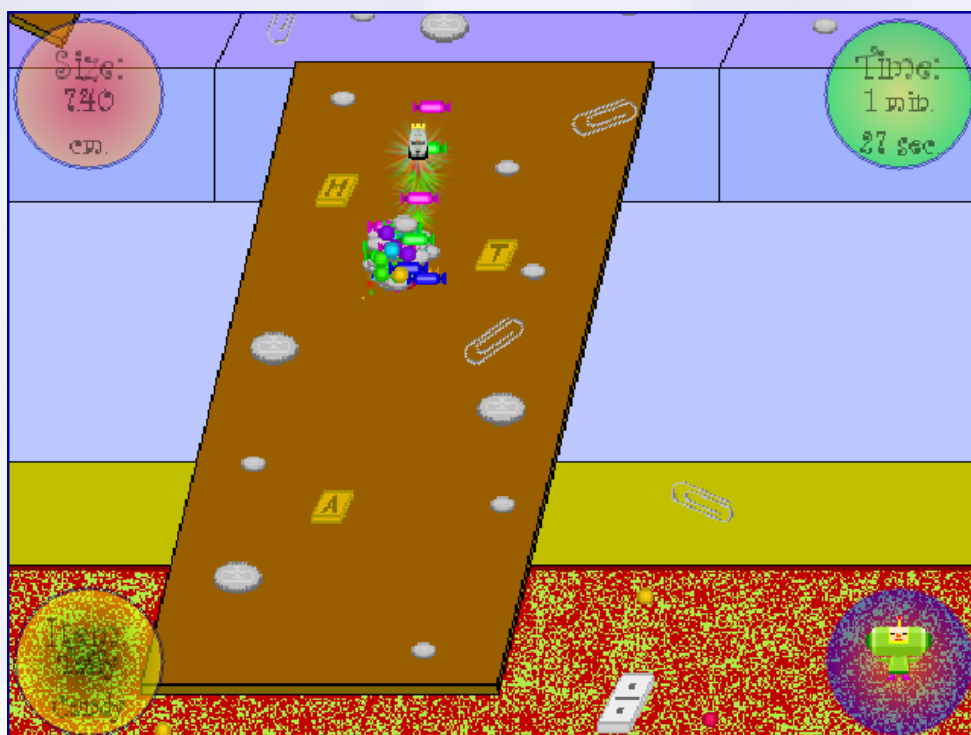
Katamari Kazoku, which utilises a 2D camera similar to overhead and isometric perspectives, sees you rolling your Katamari around picking up items in increasing sizes, to varying goals (picking up everything in the level, growing your Katamari to a circumference of 30cm etc). As with the originals, it's very difficult—levels require near-perfect planning through trial and improvement to ensure you're never wasting time (certain routes will contain items you can't pick up yet, others will have items so small they have barely any impact on your size). It becomes surprisingly frantic to play, but is great when you get into it.

If you can't get into it, though, Katamari Kazoku (once again, like the official series) won't appeal much. It's difficult from the off, with even the tutorial level being tight on its time limit.

Instead of separating my opinions of most of the aspects of the game, I'll say this—the feel of the game I absolutely spot on. The aural aspect, which is pretty much all ripped from the official games, helps it out with just a little copyrightful question mark. The style of language is spot on, keeping Katamari's feel without the stupid "stereotypical Japanese English" seen all too often in similar games.

Ignoring the challenge, the main flaw of Katamari Kazoku is its graphics. Ignoring sprites and such that were taken directly from the Katamari series, they really aren't drawn all that nicely. It's far from unplayable in its current aesthetic state but an overhaul would make it nigh on perfect, as everything else is fantastic.

In all, with graphical enhancements this would honestly feel like the earliest game in the series (Katamari Damacy, the actual first game, was during the PS2 era) - it's that good. The sheer quality might, unfortunately, be too easily overlooked by those unfamiliar with the series (which is a vast majority of gamers) though. If you like the series, definitely play it. If you don't know it, try it anyway. It's a good introduction to an amazing series, and a great game in its own right.



THE DETAILS

Developer: jsmithLMSL
Release Date: 24th September 2010
Genre: Arcade
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/wAAK>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 26/30
Graphics: 03/10
Replayability: 06/10
Originality: 09/10

OPTIONALS (4)

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

COMES TO A TOTAL OF

82 Fantastic

Graphics are poor but in all this is a very fun, great adaptation of Katamari



TOWER 3

Don't need no money, don't need no fame, don't need no credit card to shoot their brains *it's the tower of love!*

Unless the turrets are particularly tall and thin, it's a rarity to see a tower defence game that actually contains the titular structure. They should really be called "turret defence". Tower 3 provides a very nice exception by giving the genre a nice twist, or perhaps more accurately a perspective change. For, instead of a top-down view where you place your defences in a grid-like area over a landscape, you drop them ontop of each other here and actually form a big tower. ...Or a big block.

So that's the basic game outline. "Components" of the tower vary in price and function. Many are guns, which have low (cheap) to high (costly) range. There are also turrets that fire little cluster bombs that spread their damage across the ground for further attacking. On the useful side, low and high powered generators provide your money income, and on the pointless side, standard blocks do nothing but absorb damage.

Why are they useless? One of the flaws of the game, which is its main downfall, is that it's too easy. A couple of the most basic weapons can see you through long enough to build enough generators (I usually ended up with two columns worth) to nigh-on max out your money (200 points) as quickly as you're able to spend it. And when you can literally fill the screen quickly and easily with weapons that are also easily replenished simply by buying replacements or more to surround them, all standard blocks do are take up space.

Despite this, though, there is a genuine satisfaction garnered from filling the screen with bullets and watching as every enemy that enters the screen is obliterated in seconds. It won't appeal to the hardcore audience or even those that like a challenge, but if you're not great at TD games (me) or you like a nice bit of easiness every now and then (also me), this will quench your metaphoric thirst highly effectively.

While it's far from perfect graphically, it's also completely adequate. The functions of placed/purchasable turrets are quickly associated to their appearance and colour, after which they're instantly identifiable. For that, the simplistic approach its developer (whose alias hurts my brain) took is good. It's also presented nicely, with mouse controls and the aforementioned simplicity meaning that, unlike many of the more complex tower defence games, its interface is easy to use and in no way convoluted.

In all, perhaps more variety would have made the game better—more types of turret, upgradable turrets, no money cap, more/harder enemies, or even a scaling system where, a certain way through the game in, the view moves out so the tower you've made is half the size, and you have to start adding bigger pieces as giant enemies come and threaten to stamp on it. Or something. But yes, it's still good to play, and I recommend it with ease.



THE DETAILS

Developer: orse ost e7 o
Release Date: 18th May 2010
Genre: Tower Defence
Suitability: All
Reviewed By: Allison James

<http://3.ly/yXKq>

THE FINAL SAY

NECESSITIES

Gameplay: 22/30
Graphics: 05/10
Replayability: 09/10
Originality: 08/10

OPTIONALS (4)

Aural: XX/10
Challenge: 04/10
Download Size: XX/10
Execution: 06/10
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

70 Great

Though slightly flawed, a fun and interesting twist on everyday tower defence



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

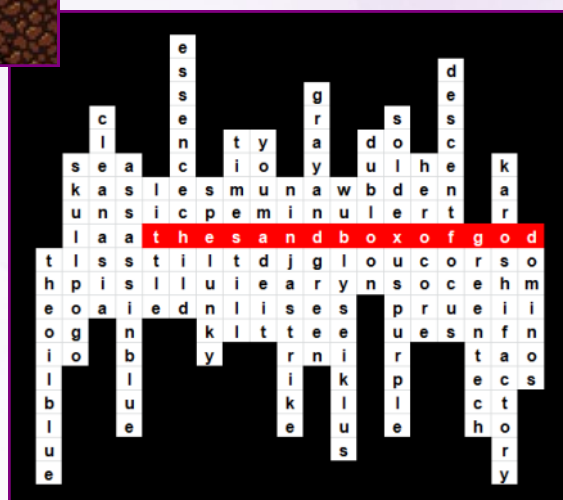
How childish.

Screw word puzzles, this issue it's time for a good old fashioned spot the difference! Can you find the six differences in the two screenshots of Derek Yu's "Spelunky"?

The first person to post the solution in the GMC topic will be able to choose an article topic for Issue 4 which I'll write, or any Game Maker game of your choice which I'll review - can be your own or somebody else's, as long as it's not already been covered in a previous Rekame Mag.

Remember - if you want to write something yourself you don't need to solve any puzzles! Just submit the work and, quality pending, I'll include it in the next issue without any fuss.

Below right: solutions to the Crossfire from Issue 2. Successfully solved by somebody who went on to not suggest an article or game!





vs



Self-explanatory product title



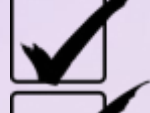
Can work with multiple resolutions



Has a free version



Can be bought relatively cheaply



Has a logo shaped like a gear



The logo of the company behind its distribution contains more than one colour



The majority of free games associated with it aren't just limited-functionality versions of overpriced alternatives



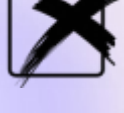
Can be used to create a wide variety of games in many different genres and without very many limits



Has a name which can be shortened to two characters without causing confusion due to the natural two-character shortening which would be given to another product in the company's line



Has a name which can be the inspiration for a wide range of menstruation-related jokes



Game Maker (9/10) wins!

Rekame Mag, Issue 3 of 1

Content written by Allison James bar:

- Interview answers—Terra Lauterbach

Graphics compiled by Allison James bar:

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- Fonts from the "United" family (United Sans, United Serif)
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The last last word: "Haggis"
Honestly, it's REALLY tasty.