

HBGAMES.org

The Ezine!

HBGAMES.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #29 July 2021

DARK HUMOUR
HOW NOT TO BE EDGY

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Drekivölker
Dusk of the Dragon



HBGAMES XEN CONTINUES

We Are HBGames

Welcome to the 29th (roughly) issue of HBGames.org the eZine!

We're going through changes, so if you can't access us at our home, try www.arpGMAKER.com where we'll always be found, or our Discord server.

In this issue we discuss dark humour and how to not be edgy. We take a look at some of the new games posted to HBGames, including the beautiful Drekirokr, below. Finally we take a look at mapping cliffs, and see whether we've been doing it wrong all this time!

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MAPPING: *Are we doing it all wrong?*

Ever since the early days of .net back in 2004 we've had it drilled into us that our mapping and world design is awful any time we have straight edges or blocky squares. As such RPG Maker cliff mapping has evolved into some kind of weird palaver where nothing can be square... Despite our entire world being literally made out of a square grid.

This is an opinion piece, and I'm not about to tell somebody else what looks nice to them, however I am gradually coming to the realisation that this is not how the tiles were originally meant to be used. In RPG Maker MV it is made even clearer, as we see cliffs become even squarer, and all tiles being based on clear blocks.

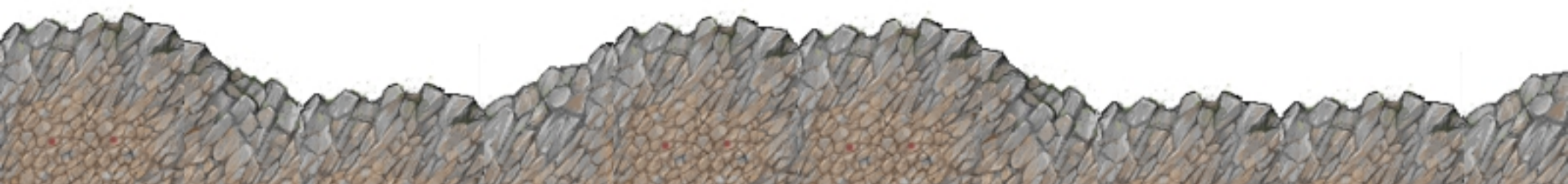


Cliffs can be mapped in a modular way but only if the tiles used are not square to begin with. To look natural we need a complete lack of straight edges. The quickest example I can think of where these are made of tiles is Pokémon Ranger.



These are different to any cliff tiles we find within RPG Maker however. Note how the cliffs curve in at the sides, and how there are absolutely no straight edges, even on the base of the cliffs, which are made up of small rocks and debris, with some greenery thrown in to the mix too.

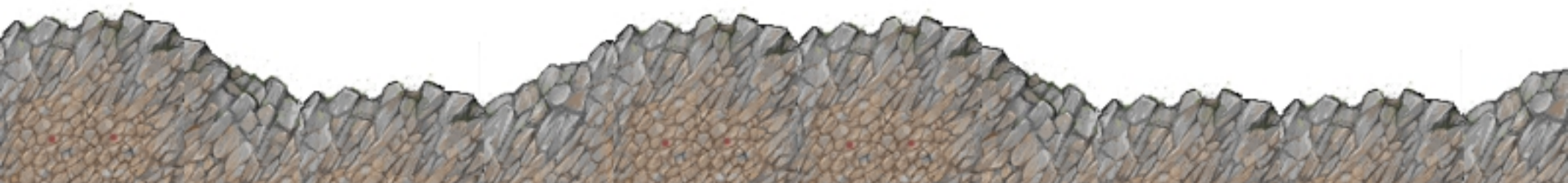
I don't believe we have any similar tiles in the RPG Maker repertoire. What we have are tiles closer to the original Pokémon games, which are notoriously square but designed to be so.



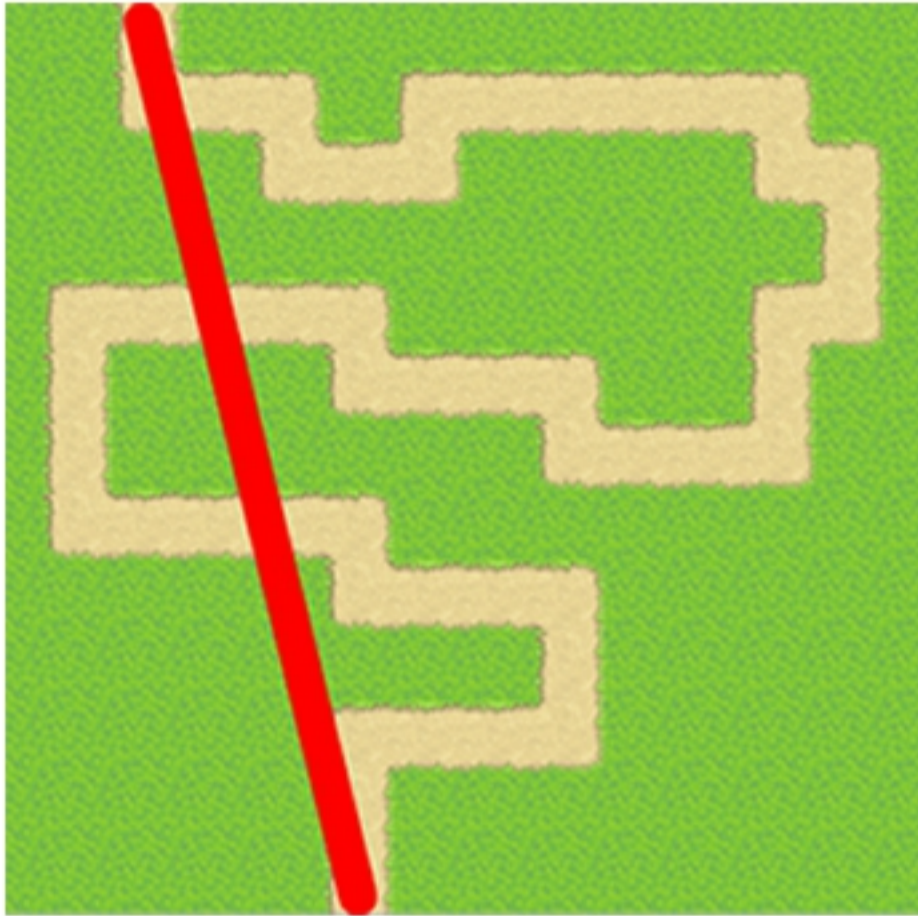
Coupled with the square bushy maze tiles and the similar castle walls, plus the grid-based nature of tiles such as trees that are based on repetition, I believe the RPG Maker tiles are meant to be used as below.



Now I do not claim to be a good mapper and that is by no means a good map (it has been years since I have tried to use the RPG Maker tiles) but I hope it illustrates my point. Breaking up straight edges with jankier, straight corners doesn't fix the problem.



Oh no, I hear you cry. Look how straight the path is! But what is the alternative? A round-but-still-quite-blocky path which looks even less natural than this?



The familiar Snake look is not a good one, and it's especially annoying to the player, who just wants to take the quicker, red route. It's just a way of making maps larger unnecessarily and it certainly doesn't look more natural, as nobody in their right mind would lay or make a path this way. It's all about desire lines and keeping distances as short as possible.

It's different if the paths are around obstacles, or around geographical features, but we just don't have the space for that in this 48x48 world.

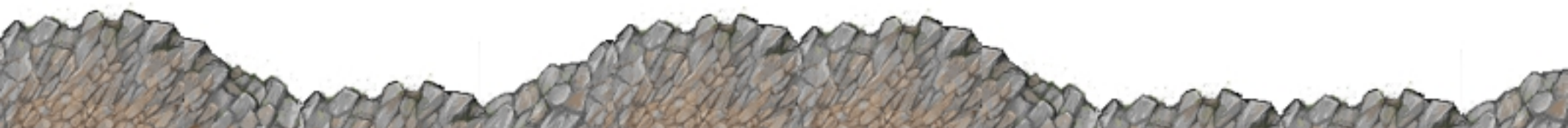
In parallax mapping this all becomes different, but there we also have the ability to create much more natural cliffs that are not confined to the limited nature of the tiles at hand.

I'm happy to be wrong, but no longer shall I disregard a newbie's project for being too blocky, when that to me is clearly how the creators of the tiles envisaged them being used! If your tiles are square, map square. If your tiles are round, map round.



This map by TomasReichmann on Deviant Art shows what can be achieved with parallax mapping, however I know from personal experience how resource intensive this becomes, quickly gaining huge file sizes for your project.

Is there an alternative - can we tile our way out of mundanity?

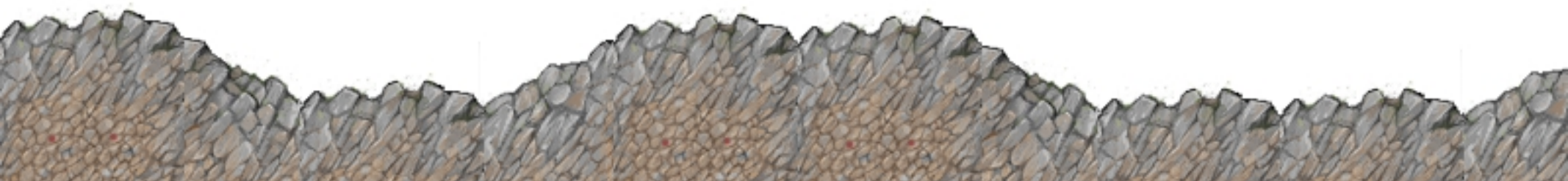


These cliffs by Daniel Cook of OpenGameArt show how a cliff tileset would need to look in order to map in the natural way we would all like to.



Ironically, because of their lack of uniformity, you wouldn't even notice that there's such a straight edge on the side – in RPG Maker we'd all previously be screaming oh my god, he used a straight line for five tiles! Slaughter him!

This asset is available to download at [OpenGameArt.org](https://opengameart.org).





Rumirez, a young lass who has managed to escape her orphanage walks down a suburban street to suddenly witness the end of the beginning- a hallowed reckoning from a force that could only be both divine and terrible.

Before long she finds herself cast into a place the locals call "Otherworld" and tries to make it a world worth living in!

Assisted by her pet rat, Gossip and her new friends- Flannel, Solistace and (insincerely) Junkheap... she makes a vow to make the best of her situation, or find a way home.

But what home is there...? For an orphan who has known no shelter but juvenile prison for so long as they can recall?

Junked: Heaven Sent Apocalypse is a short and sweet demo, featuring a brand new line up of characters each with a deep personality betrayed by a surface-level simplicity. It is a strategic RPG; well-polished and with an aesthetic and charm that are unmatched.



DARK HUMOUR

(Or, be Witty, not Edgy)

As a Brit, I am a big fan of black comedies. I once tried to search for these on the Internet and was presented with a list that began with Beverley Hills Cop and ended with Coming to America. Alright, I guess Black Comedy means something different in America, and that what I am really talking about is Dark Humour.



What I was looking for is something more along the lines of Black Mirror, which while not "funny" in the laugh out loud sense, touch a nerve in their observationalist humour and sense of irony. Irony doesn't beget a laugh but a "heh".

Dark Humour is probably the most difficult type of humour to use in a game, or indeed any medium. There is an incredibly fine line between something being offensive and being witty. Dark humour can be mistaken for edgy comedy, where people seek to offend as the basis of their act – think of Jimmy Carr or Little Britain where the humour is based around finding and exploiting our insecurities due to our wish not to offend anybody. That's a thing, like it or not, and it's a method of comedy. Not one I particularly use.

Dark humour is not edgy for the sake of being edgy. Rather, it is observational and requires a certain amount of humility and understanding of whatever topic you're seeking to look at.

Take Little Britain as an example. In scenes it purely makes fun of overweight people, by throwing on some fat suits and seeking to explore our personal inhibitions. That is not dark humour, it is just obscenity-with-a-purpose. In Gavin and Stacey instead weight is used not to necessarily make fun of people, but is used instead to be able to laugh with the people involved. I think the key difference is very subtle, and it's that we are laughing at the situation and how ridiculous it is - like in Blazing Saddles, where we are laughing at how ridiculous the concept of racism is, and not laughing at the racism itself. ('Saddles does venture into the Little Britain syndrome of course in places).

To use dark humour we need to be poking fun at the ridiculousness and absurdity of the situation itself and not the people involved. It's almost a different kind of laugh. In *The Office* (UK version) we are laughing at how daft the world of work is, we are not laughing at the things that David Brent actually says. That's actually where the US version differs and where it becomes emphatically a different programme and why the two do not gel together at all.



How dark aspects such as prostitution are dealt with is another example. In some films we are supposed to laugh at the working girls themselves. In *A Million Ways to Die in the West* on the other hand we are laughing at the situation itself and the absurdities that surround it. Similarly to *Les Misérables* (theatre), which while not a comedy has clear comic effect throughout – we are not supposed to take Thernardier's side but we can laugh at how ridiculous the situation in which our characters find themselves is.

It's as difficult as irony, and as awkward to grasp and put into action. Further, it's the cornerstone of British comedy, and I believe is the reason why it does not work well overseas. It's very easy to mistake dark humour for offensiveness and crudeness. It's easy to miss the subtle difference between laughing at somebody and laughing with them or at their situation. And it's certainly a different kind of laugh entirely – and often more of a subtle sigh.

So really, what it boils down to is the purpose of the humour.

When trans folk joke about identifying as an apache attack helicopter, they are laughing at the absurdity of the comparison in the first place. When nastier folk use it they have a different motive at hand altogether.

Make a game that cuts into the heart of what life truly is, not one that seeks to offend at every opportunity and calls it Edge.



FANFANTASIA

WHEN SUN SHRINKS
IN DISTANT SKIES.

Surreal Cosmic Progeny

BEWARE THE DEMON
WITH TRIANGLE EYES.

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crazychimps.biz

Drekirokr

Dusk of the Dragon

There has been a conscious emphasis on custom graphics in this issue and perhaps no game showcases that more than Drekirokr, by Orochii. Available in both English and their native Spanish, Drekirokr is set in a post apocalyptic world in a glorious hybrid of sci-fi and fantasy.

The mantra of the game is to show off how GBA style low-res graphics can look, and this is matched by wit and wisdom in the characters and storyline. The game is based around a lively world with a simulation of real time passing which influences much of how the world appears to you.



Centrepiece of the game is one of the most beautifully orchestrated battle systems in any RPG Maker game. Pixel art is used to its best to provide fluid, beautiful battle animations, where we find out cast of characters fighting some stunningly executed monsters, with side mobs that feel part of the party rather than an afterthought, turning boss battles into a thought out scene that are fun to engage.



This doesn't stop within the battle scene however, as they are met with witty dialogue and animation on the map scene, making the whole game feel fluid with a great sense of flow and place.

Menus are lightweight and simplified, which works perfectly with the limited screen space and graphics available, yet doesn't hinder the game's functionality.



Drekirokr is kicking up a storm on Steam, where it has been released in an early access form - the majority of reviews are positive and this is reflected around the net where various websites are picking it up on lists of the Best Indie Games of 2020.

The game has quickly become a favourite on HBGames too, and is currently at time of writing the top rated game on the new system, with every rating 5 stars and rave reviews.

Available to download now from our new Games Manager!



[Drekirokr's pallet, by the way, is perfect for its limited graphics]

Our members' verdict





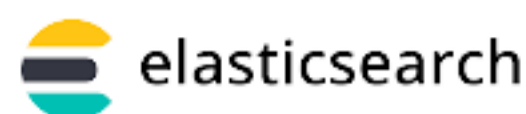
Enter a land of pastel colours, cute monsters and furry friends in the cuddly world that is LavenderSiren's head. We have been treated to three games - Jello and the Valley of Duh, above; A Snowball's Chance, below; and None Pizza with Left Beef - which is an epilogue to *Homestuck* which is also available in an MSPaint Adventures style comic.

Only one, however, features adorable flying bathtubs.



HBGAMES XEN

new features & functionality



Search functionality on forums has always been a bit, for lack of a more pertinent term, shit. Try searching for bits of code, or specific users, and you'll usually fall flat and find yourself heading to Google.

Being a seventeen year old community at this point we have a wealth of resources, tutorials, and just general game design chat available to us at HBGames. It's a shame that's not often easily within reach.






So, we introduce **HBGames Xen Enhanced Search!**

A combination of four addons for Xenforo working together to provide a better search experience for the entire site. Rather than being based on MySQL queries, as forums such as RPG Maker Web currently are, we instead use *Elastic Search* which is quickly becoming an industry standard for some chonky companies out there. This is the basis of Xenforo's *Enhanced Search* which we have now implemented. We believe we are the first and presently only RPG Maker website to do so!

New functionality includes the predictivity shown on the right - type in any term and the site will use Elastic Search to guess what you might have been looking for. This is based on previous searches, common misspellings, and all the knowledge in the plugin which we won't pretend to understand but are happy to exploit for our own means!

In short, there is now a big, useful, search bar on the HBGames homepage for your pleasure.

Erk

-  happy birthday erk
-  Passability Demo on Erk's Ultimate exterior/interior tileset
-  Are Erk and Ccoa really gone???
-  Erk's HK Orc Template
-  Erk's HK Orc ???

EDITORIAL: ADULT GAMES

It's no secret that I am a bit of a lefty liberal, that is to say, I firmly believe in peoples rights to live their lives however they wish as long as they hurt anybody. As such I do not subscribe to the Mary Whitehouse belief that video games are dangerous and we should all run and hide from anything the least bit different.

I've taken the decision to allow adult games on our website. But, there are some caveats.

What do I mean by an adult game? Really I mean any game which happens to have adult content which we wouldn't want an under 18 seeing. It's subjective, and it's not really definable, however we shall go with the generalness of the Don't be a Dick rule, and go with a simple Don't be Malicious rule for these games.

Nekogotchi



I don't want to see 500 Newgrounds-esque games which just feature ripped or straight copied hentai pictures in them thrown into a default RPG Maker game. What I want to see is quality, custom art that clearly has a lot of work behind it. It also has to be a game (although we've always allowed "visual novels" on the site too).

There are a lot of games out there that would never be played if we just didn't allow anything that might offend some of the more prudish out there. That said, I have created an age-based system to stop any content being offered to anybody who does not go through the rigmarole of setting their age on their profile (which usually means asking how to do so). I figure anybody who really wants to see the content can go through a couple of hurdles to do so.

There is on most content you post on the site the ability to add an [Adult Content] prefix. This goes on the left next to where you type in a title. Applying this to a thread, game or resource defines that content as adult and hides it automatically to any viewer who hasn't gone to the trouble of creating an account and then setting the age on their profile.

This is just a test, I suppose, for now, and we will see how it goes. We have started getting our first few adult games now, due to me unceremoniously advertising the site in r/RPGMaker, so we will play it by ear and see where the future takes us.

It's quite clear on the site what content is adult as anywhere the title displays you also see the big purple box (it's actually fittingly coloured #b00b69).

Barkeeper

Developed by
Eventidegames

Holding the dubious honour of being the very first Adult Game to feature on the new HBGames system, Barkeeper by Eventidegames is now available to download from the games manager.

Barkeeper is a sandbox where you take on the role of Steph, a soldier who decided to retire and run a bar, with the help of her Aunt Cass and Dahlia the bartender/bookkeeper she begins her journey as a barkeeper.

Work as a waitress and deal with customers who get a bit touchy after a few drinks, whether you tell them off or actively encourage it is up to you, though your tips might be lower if they don't cop a feel. Explore the small town of Ember and interact with its citizens, from the perverted masseuse to the magician in the park, you'll have plenty to encounter. The town of Ember has much to find and do, as you progress through the game you'll learn more about Steph's past and unlock new content, so make sure you revisit some places as there may be more to find.

FEATURE REVIEW



dagger2 · ★★☆☆☆ · Thursday at 10:53 PM

This game is absolute trash and I therefore love it.

Knowledge is Paralyzing

Earlier in the HBGames Discord, ZenVirZan hit the nail on the proverbial.

“Knowledge is paralyzing, sigh. As I've become more competent and more aware of how things should be done, and how valuable time and maintainability is, it's made actually planning a project a monster too large to tackle.”

When we were kids we didn't care about client experience, lag, editor constraints and technical limitations. Indeed in the RPG Maker XP age where anything was technically possible, we just leapt into projects without worrying about their sensibility.

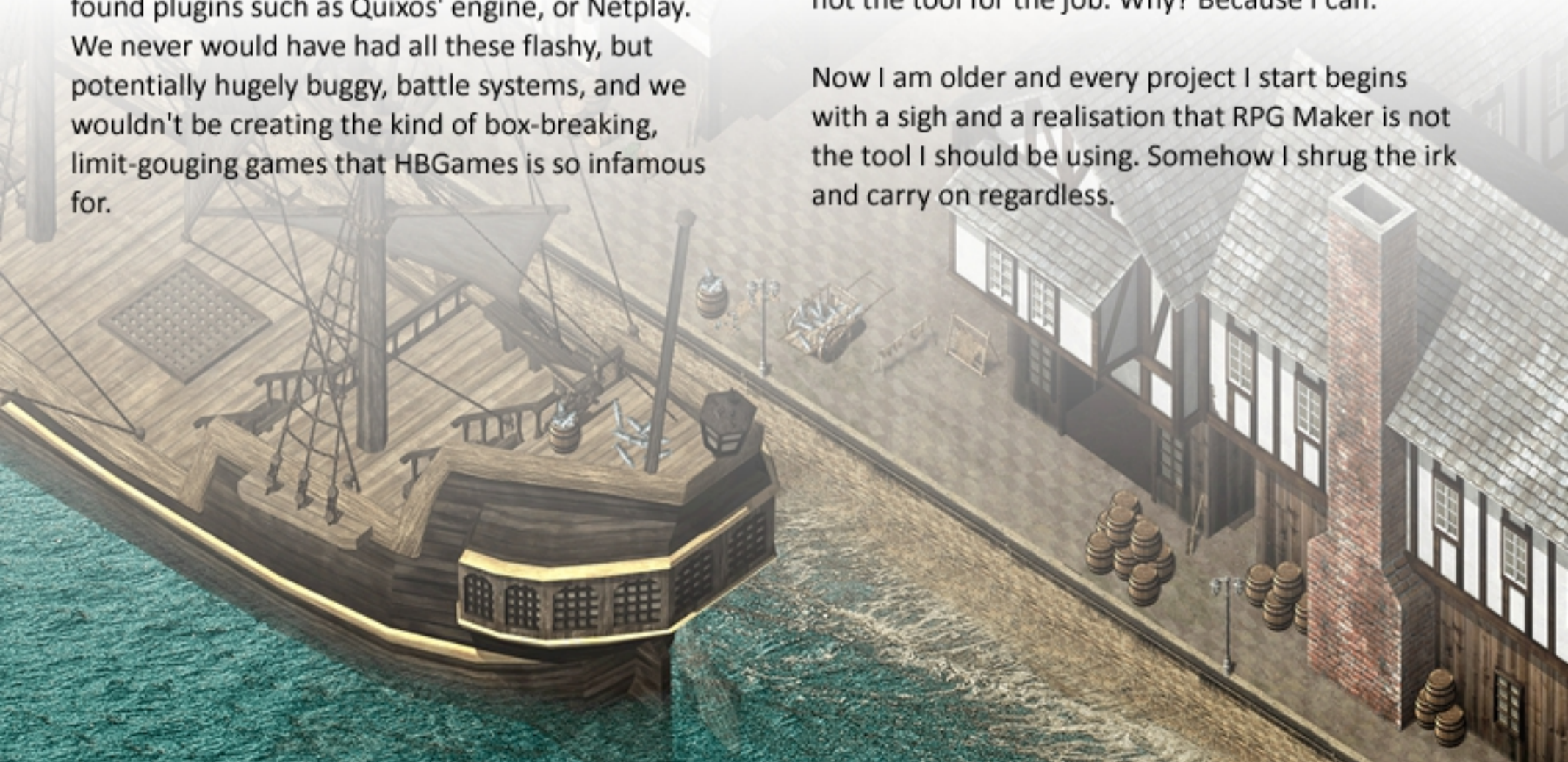
If we were thinking sensibly we never would have found plugins such as Quixos' engine, or Netplay. We never would have had all these flashy, but potentially hugely buggy, battle systems, and we wouldn't be creating the kind of box-breaking, limit-gouging games that HBGames is so infamous for.

If we went in with a Game Design Doc and began to look at what engine to use there is no way we would settle for RPG Maker. The minute we found ourselves planning out and looking at engine limitations, server performance, and indeed anything that would need a hacky workaround to implement, we would land on Unity, Construct, or some other industry standard.

But we were kids. We were open to anything and we didn't care for being told what to do.

In fact to some extent my personal RPG Maker experience has been lead by being told not to do certain things. Why make an MMORPG in RPG Maker? It's a huge undertaking, takes so much planning and different systems, and ultimately is not the tool for the job. Why? Because I can.

Now I am older and every project I start begins with a sigh and a realisation that RPG Maker is not the tool I should be using. Somehow I shrug the irk and carry on regardless.



We know better. I suppose the thing is what you do with that expression. We know better and so we do not do the thing? No. We know better and so we choose to do the other things. Not because they are easy, but because they are hard.

No, wait, that's Kennedy. But the point still stands. If we thought logically about things and didn't just leap into things we are not qualified, or technically able to do, we wouldn't have gone to the moon, because there is absolutely no way that 1960s technology should have got us there. Every time I see Apollo 13 and see them McGyvering and jerry rigging I think of the rigmarole involved in rigging up say, a phpBB forum as a backbone to an RPG Maker game. What? Why? Because we can.



**PROUD TO BE
DIFFERENT**

We've been called many things through the years, although the latest, an alt-left playground, is one that I'm taking as a compliment and not a sleight.

We had to ban a prominent member after over a decade recently. It's not something we take lightly - this is the first ban in a decade and indeed our only rule is *Don't be a Dick*.

There is something about HBGames.org that has always attracted people who are *different*. In fact that's true of the wider RPG Maker community too. We are never going to apologise for this, nor are we going to censor ourselves to fit a right-wing nut's limited worldview.

I am not saying we become a cute, fluffy, molly-coddled forum where any alternative views are stamped out and everyone conforms to our wishes; however, the Don't be a Dick rule is our mantra and our centrepiece. If you're told you're being a dick, just step back and reevaluate.

And Another Thing...

As part of the backbone of HBGames Xen we continue to stock up the games pages system with old games from around the site, converting threads in the *Completed Games* forum into fully fledged Game Pages. This gives them access to the comments, reviews, ratings, downloads and other functionality of Xen's games manager.

As such, you'll find a variety of *new old* games to play - all games have been tested to make sure they actually work before being added to the system (we've lost several hundred at this point).

There is still some way to go but we're nearly there!



What we haven't moved are development threads (there is little value in doing so as they are not playable content), although you are more than welcome to set up a Game Page for in-development games - that's part of the purpose of the system. Creating a games page gives you access to a discussion thread, as before, just in a more structured environment.



One game that screams of the "why not" attitude of the article about our childhood lack of self control is *Rob the Sea Dog*, in which Inquisitor's beautiful world map graphics are turned into nothing less than a fully fledged ship-on-ship war game, using the default, front-view, battle system of RPG Maker XP. And why not?



The game also highlights just how beautiful Inquisitor's old graphics packs look under a Mode 7 system, a feature which is not used quite enough in RPG Maker games (mainly because of how awful it makes the RTP world maps look - don't go there.)



All issues of HBGames.org the eZine are available on the website in our new HBGames Xen powered eZine manager (yeah, it's just the games manager with a different banner...). This makes them easier to discuss, rate, comment and share.

We've created many issues over the years, some of dubious quality, but others with some quite thought provoking and useful game making articles within their pages. What's your favourite?

