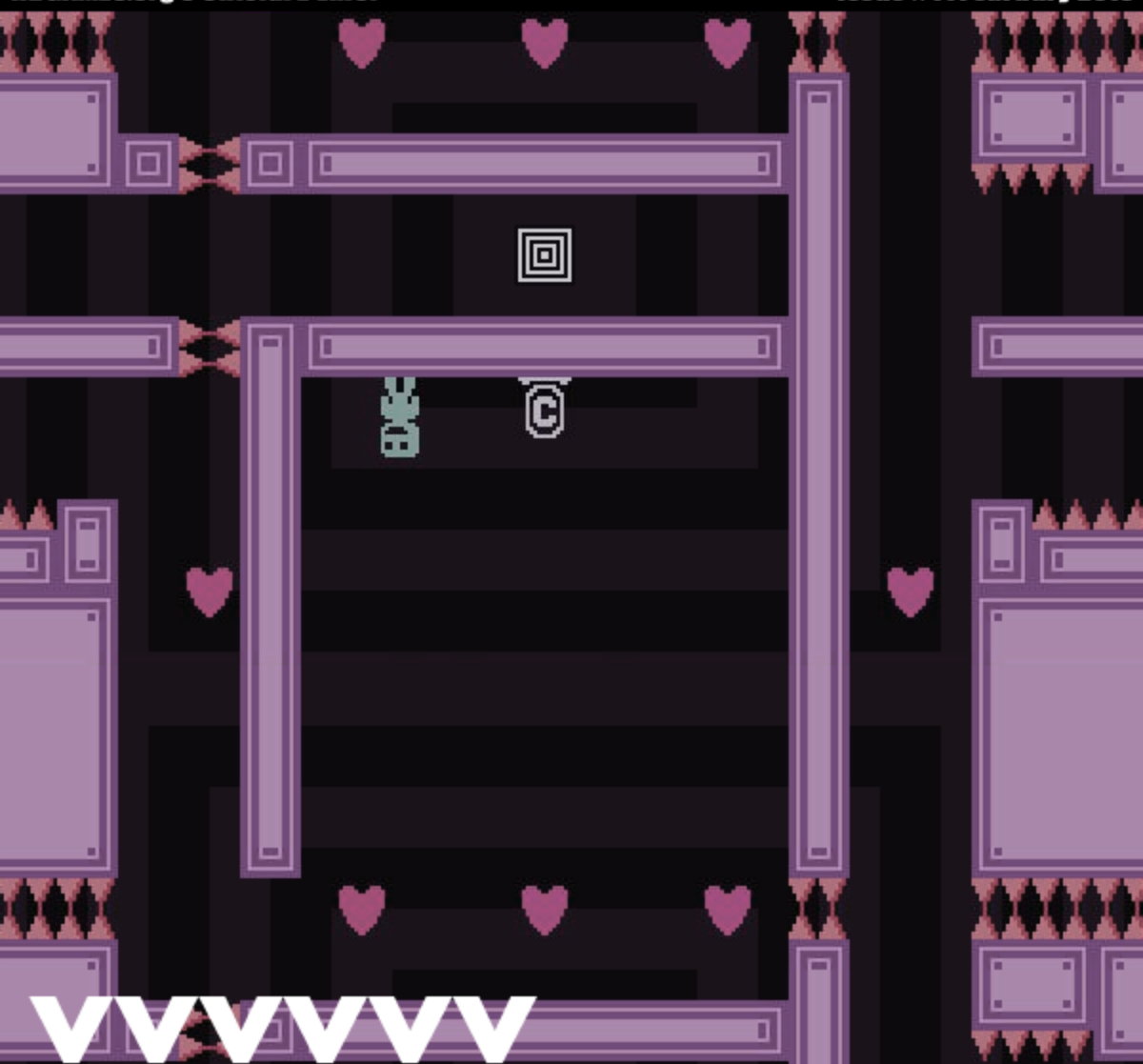


HBGAMES.org

The Ezine!

HBGAMES.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #11 February 2010



VVVVVV

Feature Review



HBGAMES

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Hello and welcome to February's issue of the monthly HBGames.org eZine.

I'm afraid this month has, frankly, been a bit of a downer. No new submissions, not even advertisements :) As such, we have had to make do and make some new articles too. I hope you aren't too disappointed in this issue. I think we will still manage to reach the 15 page minimum that I set, even if it does mean this magazine has broke our current trend and is therefore a few days late.

This month sees some reviews, game design articles, world development articles, interviews, and more. I don't know what the more is, and don't ask me. Let's try and breach the 500 views on eZines, these really aren't getting the views they deserve if I do say so myself haha!

Remember, with the new format no downloads are required so long as you can view this page! But then of course you are reading this page right now, so you know that already. I think it's been a success overall, the new format. It's a bit stressful knocking these out on my own, it would be nice to have someone at least trying. It doesn't have to be much! Please, please, please check the non-eZine threads on the eZine board where you found this. They'll explain how to submit articles and whatnot.

Really must thank Reygekan. Their initial submissions from a long time ago are keeping at least one article in each magazine going!

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REVISED EDITION

This issue of the ezine has been recut and edited to a different format to what it was originally released in. The original version should still be accessible at www.hbgames.org, but this issue, created in May 2013, is more accessible and more professional in it's appearance and composure.

This may be done for older issues of the ezine in future, providing this one goes down well.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the original issue, and to all those who read this revision.

Amy Pond

Risk and Reward

If you take one thing out of reading anything I write ever for the rest of my life, let it be this article. If you can't read this, ask someone to read it to you (hey wait) because this is important stuff right here.

Risk and Reward can be summarized as follows. Risk = Reward. R = R.

HOLY CRAP THAT'S LIKE MAD SCIENCE RIGHT THERE AM I RIGHT? I'M TOTALLY LEARNING REY, REALLY YOU'RE SO SMART! Shut up. It's important that I outline even the most basic steps because somewhere out there, some thickhead isn't going to get it. Why is that so important though, and what does it mean?

When you use a move in a fighting game, there are dozens of variables to take into account (printing out the variable list for a fighting game would probably take a full cartridge of ink because they're pretty crazy about this kind of stuff.) You have to consider first the start up lag. If you cannot get the move in, then it won't be appropriate for the situation. Then you need to consider hitstun on the enemy, to know how much time you have to hit them with another move and start a combo. Then you need to consider hitbox size, to see if it's easy to hit with, size of your opponent, position of your opponent, and your size and position as well. You have to consider if your move is predicted and what kind of counters your opponent is preparing, you have to consider how many frames it takes for your move to finish, and then postlag to calculate both how easy it is to be punished and how easy it is to get a follow through and what moves to do it with.

That's a lot of information, for something as simple as pushing a button, don't you think?

So what makes certain moves using? That would be the reward. A stronger move has a better payoff. Better payoff means advantage which means winning. So what's there to keep the weak moves worth using? That's the risk involved. A powerful slow move is not a good start up because it can be blocked and punished, and you'll be too stuck in your animation to counter. Whenever you use any move, you take a risk. Low risk moves are extremely quick and only countered by your opponents ability to predict. A move that can be seen and prepared for before any damage can be done is extremely high risk. That's why you use them in mid-combo, the point of your weaker moves becomes then, to outsmart your opponent and put them in a position where you can hit with one of your stronger moves and finish the game. That becomes your win condition.

A move that's too hard to do with not enough payoff will not get used, even if it's a good move. If it can be punished too easily then it just becomes a dead move. Similarly, a move with not enough risk or too much reward will get spammed. This is actually better than the dead move alternative, because a spammy opponent can be countered as they become too predictable, however it should still be avoided as best you can.

Let's take this outside the fighter game genre. Let's look at RPG's.

Punch, my HP is cut in half. So now not only does my opponent have an advantage, they have the game because I don't have enough HP to survive their next oncoming combo. The opponent is not at fault. They are SUPPOSED to punish me, that's how you play the game. However, as a Game Designer, I should not be throwing in an extra punch myself.

Punishment has other forms. In an RPG, the Game Over screen is a punishment (which I've discussed in a previous article already.) Game Over screens also happen to be shitty systems. Hey, I've already found a connection! Losing all your items, equipment, etc., is also an example. This only applies when you take away something the player already had (progress, equipment, etc.,) due to a failure. Taking something away as part of a story arc or as a cost to preform a move does not fall under this category.

Let's sum things up.

- 1: Risk = Reward
- 2: Only a player should ever punish another player

Term: Risk -The chance of failure a player has in their attempt to commit a specific action or gain advantage.

Term: Reward -The amount of advantage or goal completion gained by a specific action.

Term: Punishment -The act of removing progress, status, or equipment from a player in response to the failure of an action by part of the Game Designer.

- Reygekan



Older (and newer) editions of the HBGames.org eZine are available, funnily enough, at www.HBGames.org.



A great looking game this month: **Leomorn Sword**, by **derkunstler**, which you will find in the **Projects** forum.

Naming Places

A lot of people find strange satisfaction in using Japanese, Latin, and German translators to find strange and exotic names for their towns, villages, provinces and worlds in their games.

Something you need to think about is this: when is your game set? Where is your game set? The simplest answer is, in almost all RPG Maker cases at least, medieval England. We are talking the age of Kings here. Ok perhaps England is a bit too narrow-minded there; what I should say is Medieval Europe but think about it logically: your people are speaking English. Not German, not French, not Dutch - so it is safe to assume we are talking about old age England here.

It's useful, therefore, to find out English naming conventions when coming up with the areas of your game.

Shire

Shire stems from Old English for "Shore", and the country was split up into several Shires (each with its own shore!). Over time as borders began to change many of these shires, a lot of them ending up strangely land-locked but keeping the -shire suffix.

Examples:

Staffordshire
 Warwickshire
 Leicestershire

Features

Some towns were named after key features at that location. A major town at the end of a river for example would gain the -mouth suffix.

Examples:

Exmouth (town at the end of The Exe)
 Portsmouth
 Dartmouth (town at the end of The Dart)

Other river-based naming conventions include "ford", a common term in placenames. Crossing rivers in those days was both important for trade and also difficult. The major rivers didn't have many bridges - thus a bridge or a ford would be an important place to place a town!

Examples:

Pendeford
 Oxford
 Stafford
 Cambridge

Borough/Hampton - administrative divisions

If a town had a large populace it might also be the name of its administrative division and the two might have intertwined with one another.

Examples:

Southampton
 Northampton

Other areas which might need disambiguating - maybe two areas exist with the same name - would add an extra word to their name, maybe based on a river flowing through it (common).

Examples:

Stoke on Trent
Newcastle Under Lime
Weston Super Mare nb: latin for "on sea"
Burnham on Sea

Transport

Ports were obviously key to trade in old times and therefore we find names such as Stockport, Stourport, and so on.

Areas around one another

Areas nearby one another often share the same prefixes, usually deriving from a local river name.

For example, Stourbridge is nearby Stourport. Fordhouses and Pendeford are next to one another.

In the West Midlands, most major towns begin with a "W" - Wolverhampton, Walsall, Willenhall, Wednesbury, Wednesfield, etc.

Wednesfield and Wednesbury both derive from the same etymology.

Named after people

Towns are often named after the people who founded them. Wolverhampton takes its name from "Lady Wulfruna" for example (and, at the time we're talking about, was called "Wulfruneheantune").

Personally, if I ever get back into game making properly again, all of my placenames (major ones, at least) will follow this kind of structure.

You could of course invent your own prefixes or suffixes to use.

For example, let's imagine "gate" means a place with a gate in a long wall. We might have a wall such as Hadrian's, stretching across a continent. You can pass it at gates, and towns are built around them.

We could have Elmgate, Oakgate, Petergate, Gateshill, Westgate.

The county ruled by the Earl of Westgate might be called Westgateshire.

Hopefully this little guide has given a little insight into how to come up with some great, realistic, and unique names for your game. Have fun!

And remember, Cantham and Lencester sound a lot better than Ulrik'kakaka and Sven'ouon Eri'kson.



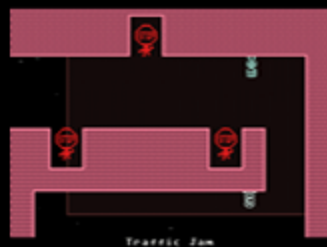


That's six Vs, in case you're keeping track.

VVVVVV (pronounce it however you will) is the latest thing from the guy who is named Terry Cavanagh, known previously for titles like *Don't Look Back* and *Pathways over on Kongregate*. Unless I'm missing something, this is his first commercial game; his other stuff has been strictly freeware. And it just came out two days ago, on the 10th! It's \$15 USD, though, which is fairly steep. Whether or not there's enough content to justify that price (for comparison, indie games on Steam rarely pass ten bucks) is sort of up in the air, but it's a fun little game nonetheless.



You are Captain Viridian, ace space guy. You and your similarly adorable technicolor crew are cruising through space, minding your own respective businesses, when suddenly something goes terribly wrong! You are forced to evacuate, but the ship's teleporter goes haywire, tossing you and your crew to random spots around a mysterious new area. As the leader of your crew, it falls to you to explore this new world and rescue your crewmates!



Even space explorers can't get away from the everyday grind.

VVVVVV is, at its core, quite simple. You can move left and right at your leisure using the directional keys, and reverse gravity with any number of other buttons. You can move freely in midair, but cannot reverse gravity unless your feet are touching a platform. It's a deceptively simple gimmick, but the level design is outstanding in how it puts it to use. The world itself is quite large, with a layout and a degree of freedom reminiscent of the Metroidvania genre. The challenges themselves vary in difficulty, but VVVVVV is, on the whole, quite forgiving. Checkpoints are placed quite fairly, generally before and after the really tough bits, so you're not gonna wind up breaking something out of rage most of the time. You are going to come to hate one room in particular, but it's purely for an optional bonus -- a "trinket," of which there are twenty. They unlock things. They're cool.



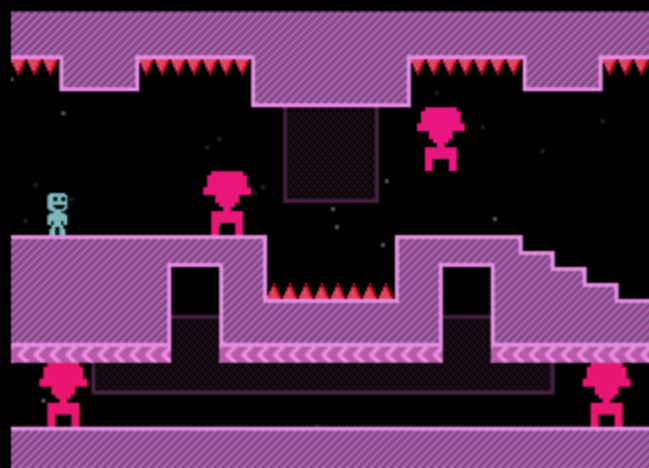
Hey, the maps remind me of Metroidvanias, too.

What do I like most about it? Oh man, the music. VVVVVV has an amazing chiptune soundtrack to it. I'm currently dealing with the toughest room in the game, contributing to maybe a hundred and fifty deaths so far, and I have not yet gotten tired of the music that plays there. That should say something.



This isn't it by far, but it should give you an idea of what kind of skills you're going to have to develop.

Get it, I guess. Don't pirate it, because that's a dick move and seriously it just came out this week why you gotta be like that. The gameplay is simple, fun, and new, the physics are tight, the music is bamf, and the graphics are simple and cute. Sort of reminds me of a less neurotic Jet Set Willy with a fun new mechanic.



Brass Sent Us Under The Top

Must be the room captions. I will be honest with you; I do not know what half of them even mean.

In case you missed my subtle ~*~computer magic~*~ in putting the site link in the banner, you can find the game at <http://www.thelettervsixtim.es>. There's also a demo there, containing the first level and one from later on, in case you want to get a feel for the game before you shell out Much Dollar Bills.

Basically? It's fun.

-mawk

Vacant Sky

vol. I contention



Top-Left: Mia, an enigmatic girl suffering from a similar condition to Auria.
Top-Right: The mage Rien faces off against a team of Virad special ops.
Left: The new Ascension system allows limitless customization of your hidden power.

Three mysteries to uncover

Claim your fate and seize the truth

Act II: Halo Locks

January 2010

Azure Awakening

Burst Focus

Burst Will

Dawn Aura

Winter Breeze

Auria



SHADOW

*He's the cool guy who at one time hosted .org.
He runs Slacked IRC network and shivers a lot.
But who is the real shadow or something?*

Many have tried... we have succeeded. We finally managed to track shadow down to his hidey hole to do an interview. And no we didn't just run out of time and pick whoever was on irc at the time. After all, boon was there.

como: Hello shadow, and welcome to your interview.

shadow: How strange dear sir, I do not remember such formalities. As I recall it all began with a "anyone wanna interview for ezine" followed by ":o".

como: Ah, but you see, they don't need to know that.

shadow: Let us continue our adventure together.

como: Quite.

.....

como: What's it like being Canadian? Do you have mountees? Why does your flag have a red ganha leaf on it? Who shot JR? Texas is in Canada, right?

shadow: There's no mountees anymore. There's RCMP in some areas, but they wear blue cop uniforms and ride in cars.

como: Oh :{

shadow: If by Texas you bean Alberta, then yes it is. It's a maple leaf btw.

como: :<

shadow: I don't know why there's a maple leaf and why it's red.

como: B-but I have a maple tree in my back garden... c-can't I s-smoke it?

shadow: It would probably taste like Aunt Jamima maple syrup.

como: ;o maple syrup is so much better than golden.

shadow: It's cold in here. Any other questions?

como: Why shorts?

shadow: Because they are cumfy and easy to wear.

como: Oh... Slacked itself is not related to rmxp, so what was it's niche when it was created? Was it just for a group of friends, or was there... another site?

shadow: There wasn't a niche originally. I created it because on the network I was on my friends and I were constantly getting harassed by the ops. They even took over my channel and ran it fr me because they thought I couldn't.

como: Oh :x

shadow: Because some of my staff were "trolls" or some shit.

como: Was it a small network?

shadow: No, it was one of the big 3 :x

como: Oh, I didn't think they interfered like that!

shadow: Well, at that time efnet, quakenet, and webchat were the big three, and dalnet just under that. Webchat is full of abusive staff ;o

como: I've never heard of those, except for efnet ;x

shadow: You've never heard of Dalnet?

como: In fact the only large net I've been to was Rizon. We're cool now that we have #music ;o

shadow: Goin out for a bit

Shadow was never seen again.

FIVE YEAR ANNIVERSARY CONTEST

On October 4th, 2009, in the humble corner of the internet we call HBGAMES, history was made. A groundbreaking new contest, unlike any other. Prizes offering countless riches and glory. The winner... immortalized forever.

Entrants from every corner of the world imaginable - ranging from the harsh wilderness of American suburbia to the dizzying and confusing world of "towns" - flocked together to unite for this great cause. Foes, yet at the same time, friends.

One by one, the entrants fell, vanquished by time, procrastination, and education. The remaining entrants struggled to hold on for dear survival, but even the toughest of the tough reached a point where they could fight no longer.

In the end, only five entrants emerged from the dust. Battered, but not broken, they came to me. In their hands, a game.

There were two prizes. In 2nd place, a respectable \$50 was to be offered. But the real prize was the rare and elusive first place position. More money in this sole place would be offered than all the contests in HBGAMES.ORG's entire history combined. \$150.

Only one could claim this magnificent prize. The fates of these five entrants were to be in turn, judged by five jurors. Experienced in the world of game design, they picked apart each and every game, looking in every corner, dissecting every piece of code, to determine the one and only winner. Dadevster, Sophist, afrodesiac, Sailerius, bacon - together, the decision was made.

But who won? After a week of judging, we had to decide.

2nd place: Regi: NEWT



NEWT was a great game. It was particularly lauded for the atmosphere that was created by the music, the perfect difficulty level, and the whole premise overall. We've played many text games before, but to say this is one of the best we've played would be an understatement! Everything about it was smooth and had a nice flow to it. Judges felt satisfied with the ending as well. Congratulations, Regi! Enjoy the \$50! (I'll see you at that super fancy restaurant tonight! Thanks for dinner! ;D)

1st place: Zekallinos: HARMONICS TD



Wow. Harmonics TD is an incredible game, and the judges were unanimous in their decision that it should win 1st place. Everything about it was fantastic - the graphics, the gameplay, and the music especially. It surpassed all our expectations. A big congratulations to Zekallinos is in order! You worked hard for this, and you deserve the \$150.

HB GAMES

Color by TECHNICOLOTM

Thanks for reading and supporting the eZine - we hope you enjoy it and future issues as and when they come out. Other issues are available at HBGames.org.



We'd like to thank everybody who contributed articles to this issue of the eZine, and anybody who does so in future!

If you're after support or want to learn how to use any game engine to it's full, feel free to check out the forums, where we have a variety of boards for support topics, project discussion, completed games submissions, and resources and other assets for creating games, mainly focused around Enterbrain's *RPG Maker* but branching into other engines too.

If you enjoyed this month's big contest, look out for future competitions, which will likely be announced in the *HBGames.org eZine!*