HBGAMES.org

The Ezine!

9 Years of .org

Who killed RPG Maker?

Darkness

Adding atmosphere without blinding the player

Introduction

HBGames has had it's own eZine since the glory days of RPG Maker back in 2005. Back then we were known as RMXP.net, under Lord Gradient who would shortly disappear - issue 5 was under RMXP.org, and issue 7 saw the final issue of even RMXP in our name.

Back in November 2009 I had the idea to bring back the eZine in an online form. Easier to edit, easier to read, it was overall a very unprofessional experience and, as with anything on the Internet, proved to be prone to disappearing off the face of the earth completely. PDFs aren't like that (well, they are, but not to the same degree). This time around, three years and four months since the last issue of the eZine, it's back, as a PDF, with an attempt at a more professional approach.

Looking back at the old issues it is amazing both how many people are no longer around after those nine years, but perhaps more amazing is how many *are* around. I'd really like to thank those who have stayed with us over the years. Next year will be the community's tenth birthday!

I hope this issue won't just end up as twenty pages of Wyatt, but I'd like to use the opportunity here to greet and meet some of our newest members (largely down to our successful Construct 2 contest) who have sticked around in what must seem like an old community that's lost it's backbone. I hope to explain how the site got where it is, where we see it going in the future, and the state of .org right now.

Well, thank you for reading *Issue 12*, and I apologise heartfully that issues 8 to 11 are no longer around in a complete form. I hope you enjoy it and I hope I will stop saying hope.

Amy, editor with a hat on

Amy Pond

Issues 8, 9, 10, 11 were made using HTML and are unfortunately no longer around in a complete form. Following some heavy searching I have managed to almost completely restore them, but there are several images missing, and overall I am rather unhappy with their quality to begin with.

They can all be found at HBGames.org - eZine link under Announcements. I did manage to find an unused Issue 12 cover:
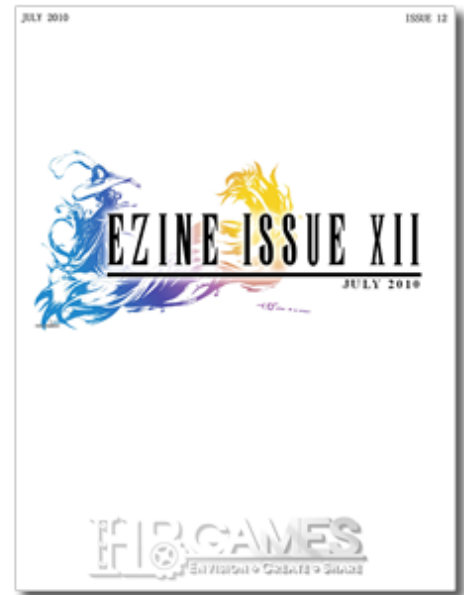
Although I haven't managed to find any actual content from it. Sorry!

Future eZines will always be available in PDF form - so they're either completely gone or completely safe. So long as one person stores them on their hard drive we're alright.

Very sorry about the loss.

CONTENTS

Write For Us

This issue's a little short and sweet, mainly to get something out there to kickstart the eZine, keeping content for future issues. If your game wasn't mentioned, or a game you like hasn't been in the spotlight, let us know. If you have something to get off your chest, why not write an article and send it in to us? Or post it in the **articles** board on HBGames.org and say you don't mind it being in the eZine in your thread.

We're always out to grab your hard earned work to whore it out for ourselves.

It'll stop us wasting space with crooked edgy graphics anyway.

Please don't be disheartned if you didn't feature in the **Spotlight** - it might actually be that you're too big and we're saving you for a future issue! Or we just haven't seen your work for whatever reason. Drop us a link!

Nine More Years

In May 2004 a friendly chap from *America* created a little website called RMXP.net. Nine years on, the community survives, in a larger, more diverse form. Huzzah!

Old pictures of what it was like in those early days are hard to find. This screencap, from November 2009, is actually HBGames.org using it's theme, painstakingly recreated.

SMALL FOOTSTEPS

For those who have just joined the party, RMXP.net was a website created for a yet to be released software, RPG Maker XP. The first and eventually largest English RPG Maker XP website, at it's peak the largest RPG Maker site in general, RMXP.net was relatively short lived, but loved by those who used it.

The site was more active than we've been since, and went down with some 320,000 posts in just a year and a half. The site was plagued with downtime. It's owner, Lord Gradient, who has not been seen since disappeared, allowing the site to die in his absense due to failure to pay for it's hosting.

During this turbulent time a member called Erk created a backup website, RMXP.org, which would contain mirrors of all the best content for if .net ever went down for good. From November 2005 .org would grow to become more active than .net until finally .net gave the ghost and died, never to return.

Not everyone made it to .org. The site never regained it's momentum although still became and remained the largest English RPG Maker website. During this time though many others had joined the bandwagon, creating their own RPG Maker websites, spurring some big rivalries.

In mid 2007, the owner of the site left for Japan, and the co-owner, Ccoa, became ill. She left the site in the hands of a member called Treg, with Erk's permission. Treg brought in his own set of staff who remained altogether a very short amount of time. This included the once permanently banned Despain,

RPG Maker FAQ
@ http://bit.ly/13mTYhc

HBGames maintains a pretty hefty FAQ for RPG Maker. It's been built up over the years and a couple of years ago was revamped with super easy clicky doodahs to make it simpler to get around.

If you're starting out in RPG Maker and don't know what teleport means, check it out!

Similarly, if you're an experienced user and find something you think should be in the FAQ, you can use the feedback form in the feedback forum or contact the staff another way. We won't bite (hard).

Many thanks to the users who have contributed to the FAQ over the years.

For more complex guides you might want to check out our tutorial forums - the best may feature in the eZine!

a notorious internet personality.

Despain eventually became administrator when Treg disappeared. A good moderator and community leader, but a figure of hate for many, this led to a split in the community and led to a lot of people leaving. Eventually the site's technical owner and hoster, Shadow, "put his foot down" and took the reigns.

Shadow's leadership was similarly shortlived but paved the way for new, friendly admins to come in, including Venetia, Sophist, and Sixtyandaquarter. Despain was permanently banned at the end of 2008.

2008 was a good year for .org and spurred our most participated in contest, under the leadership of Venetia and new moderator Perihelion, who would later become an adminstrator herself. Alongside mod Grathea, they would reside over a pixel war between two factions, between the members creating many pieces of pixel art and creating a new movement on the site towards creating individual art rather than frankensprites.

In 2009 this new movement had meant many had even moved away from RPG Maker itself. To accomodate the new game making softwares being showcased on the site, it was decided that a rebrand and namechange would be wise. In February we became HBGames.org (with no loss of data).

To our dismay Treg returned and revealed he owned the RMXP.org domain and killed activity a thousandfold by giving it to Despain. Despain's new website was very short lived but the impact of losing our domain caused lasting damage.

Recent moderator Wyatt, who had been around since .net, was made an administrator at this point and a major relaunch was attempted: new features such as a homepage, wiki, imageboard, resource manager, and fle host were created. Inexperienced, this led to the site being hacked, with all of Wyatt's additions wiped out in one foul swoop in 2011. .org itself lived on, hosted seperately.

In a dive of activity it was decided to move on again. We searched for new game engines that looked promising, to try and specialise in something new and exciting but also something *good*. Eventually we came across *Construct 2*.

Over 2011, a contest was held, our largest since the pixel war of 2008. This was an expensive extravaganza and it paid off. A dozen members were given Construct 2 licenses as part of the prize draw, with cash prizes on top. Some of the entrants, from Construct 2's website, have stayed since and become a vital part of the community.

2012 was a dud year. We failed you. 2013 will be better.

Are you Resourceful?

To try and boost creativity and get the resource forums booming again, anyone who posts at least two original game resources (or four frankensprites) will get a Resourceful badge on their profile.

c: Untra, DeathLock, Holder

MELIADUL 4
DARK KNIGHT

When posting resources you can use tags to sort your graphics into a variety of categories.

If your resource is derivative you should post so in your thread and give appropriate credit and licenses.

One thing is for sure however... it has been four years since our last administrator addition. That means, by far, we are at our most stablest, compared to the yearlong regimes of the past. Maybe we need more drama.

It's nine years since .net was created. Seven and a half since .org. Six years since Treg stole the kingdom. Four and a half years since Despain's much hated reign. Four years of HBGames.org, two years since the Construct contest, a year since our IRC merged with rivals RRR...

...What will 2013 bring?

*If you have any suggestions for contests, articles, other events, or anything else you think will make 2013 great please don't hesitate to post. If you want to submit an anonymous post (that only staffcan see) use the feedback form in the **Feedback** forum and tick the anonymous box. Thank you.*

Who Killed RPG Maker?

I suppose the question to ask in response is, "is it dead?".

Back in 2004 when RMXP.net was created, RPG Maker was a storming tornado spawning websites such as GamingW, Creation Asylum, or RMRK, massive behemoths which have since fallen into obscurity. RMXP.net's fall from fame was largely it's own fault - and then RMXP.org's - and it's only really picking up now that we're HBGames.org. But were all RPG Maker sites doomed to failure? Is it a dying industry?

Fortunately we have other people to work that out for us.

Stats from **Google Trends**.

Searches for "RMXP"

Searches for "RPG Maker"
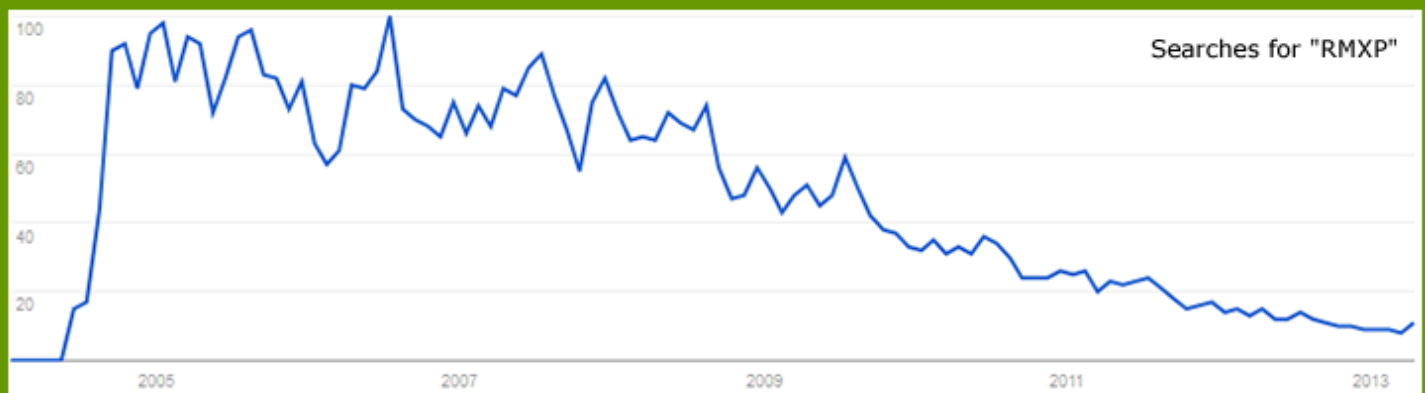
So it's dead?

RPG Maker was, very much, a fad. Creating your own Final Fantasy was seen as an amazing achievement - something which, initially, few picked up on - but then came the torrent of new blood through it's spread via piracy across the English speaking circles.

Back in 2004 the main demographic of RMXP.net was a 13 year old. It was very uncommon to have people over 18 - even more so over 22 - yet nowadays mid-twenties find themselves amongst the youngest users of HBGames.org.

What's happened?

Firstly, most games back then never got completed and if they did they were of a quality that would probably be unacceptable on HBGames.org today. During Despain's era, expectations were enforced much greater, whether that's a good or bad thing, and it became less "fun" to create games for that purpose. Nowadays the RPG Maker demographic is one that makes professional quality games and releases them for fun, rather than just twiddling buttons and calling it a Final Fantasy.

We've lost this demographic and I don't think it is returning at websites such as Enterbrain's own. Some people see RPG Maker as a stepping stone into a career in the video games industry, others see it as the epitome of it, with games such as Fated Haven or Laxius Power raking in the cash.

Secondly there is the lack of innovation in new RPG Maker titles from Enterbrain.

RMXP.net was at it's most popular when it was waiting for, and just after, the release of RPG Maker XP. For years we had used RPG Tsukuru 2000 and 2003, illegal translations distributed by piracy across the English net, and we were expecting good thing from RMXP. By god did we get them: scripting, higher quality graphics capabilities, and a much better mapping interface.

RPG Maker VX represented a severe backwards move to a much more basic engine and actually quite complicated to map with. Many, many restrictions were added, completely unnecessarily, and RPG Maker VX Ace did not really add to these.

Nowadays the new era of RPG Maker websites are catering to a program that is *worse* than RPG Maker XP. I am rather glad that as a community we have largely stuck with XP, but it does mean that we don't get the newbies.
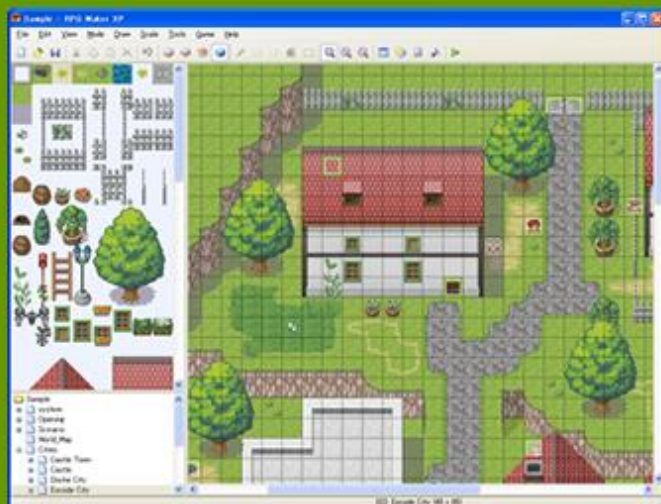
How do we fix it?

I think we need to learn to embrace newbies better. Everybody starts somewhere. Some games require a great deal of critique, as they are being professionally released. Others are being made for fun, and we're allowed to have fun playing them!

We need to push RPG Maker XP more, rather than VX or VXace. This, I think, is *HBGames.org*'s role in the RPG Maker sphere. We are best positioned, as the most active independent English RPG Maker website, to get RPG Maker *XP* big again. We could write good tutorials, maybe even books, get the eZine going again, and really promote what is a fabulous program... alongside our other engines, of course.

We don't need to step on the feet of the Construct or Game Maker crowd. They can carry on as they are. But alongside, we need to promote RPG Maker, and maintain our position as the leading RPG Maker site. This is our job, it is our past, and it is our future. And from you, reader, I need your feedback.

Coming soon to a TV near you:

BRING BACK RMXP

Starring Justin Lee Collins (assuming he's not in prison)

Bored with RPG Maker?

Here's an alternative for you to get your gears into.

Construct 2 is a HTML5 game creator, meaning no downloads necessary for anybody to play your creations. Based around a simple 2D editor, you can either code or not code, it's up to you. Similar to Game Maker, you can still create RPG Games - with a little work - and they'll be far more unique at the end of it.

Most of our **Completed Games** these days come from the engine and it's a very fast way to get onto the gaming ladder.

HBGames.org has a dedicated **Construct 2 Support Forum**, and accepts any titles in our games and projects sections should you wish to post them. As always, your screenshots are welcome, and we're always happy to help.

Construct 2

www.Scirra.com

**Price: Free,** other editions available from £79.99

Do you know about our

Homebrew Arcade?

The arcade's been here a while but it's a little underused. If you have a game you've created in **HTML5** or **Flash**, we can host it for you and let others play and comment on it in a handy arcade.

To players, you can find games to play live from your browser without any downloads necessary, free to play, within the forums. The **Homebrew Arcade** is located just above the **Completed Games** forums.

To play downloadable games, or games not hosted on HBGames's arcade, visit the **Completed Games** forum.
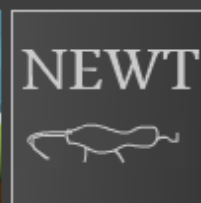
You can remove your game at any time by using the **modify** button. All games are checked to the best of our abilities before uploading. Malicious use is severely not allowed.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of every eZine issue should be available at www.HBGames.org. Unfortunately, issues 8, 9, 10 and 11 are partially missing, and issue 8 is a short, rather unprofessional attempt - a tester issue for the system used for these four issues.

This issue sees the return of the old branding and styling which is far better composed.

If you cannot find the issue you are looking for you can post in the **eZine forum** which should be located within **Announcements** at www.HBGames.org.

The HBGames.org eZine is free and only distributed online.

Shout Out

Some of our boards are going rather underused - yet there's still tons of content about for them!

General Gamemaking Discussion is a board where you can discuss new softwares, general chat about game making, and anything else game making related which won't fit into the support, project or resources boards.

Feel free to slip into **General Discussion** if you want to talk about anything that doesn't fit the HBGames theme.

In **Concept Development** you can discuss game mechanics, storylines, and anything else ready for a project that isn't quite at the right stage for **Project Discussion** - a board for posting your incomplete games, demos or not.

Project Discussion has a screenshots thread where you can post images for critique and praise.

Spotlight

Promising projects, good reviews, completed games and generally cool stuff from around HBGames.org

Here's something interesting. **The Dolls, Mystic Forest** is hin oxa's first game, made in four hours, but features entirely original graphics. To get a good taste of someone's very first steps in RPG Maker, give it a blast.

Another unique game is uDivision's **Circuit Spark**, featuring a rather innovative idea for a game mechanic.

Author of the Month: Pokemaniac
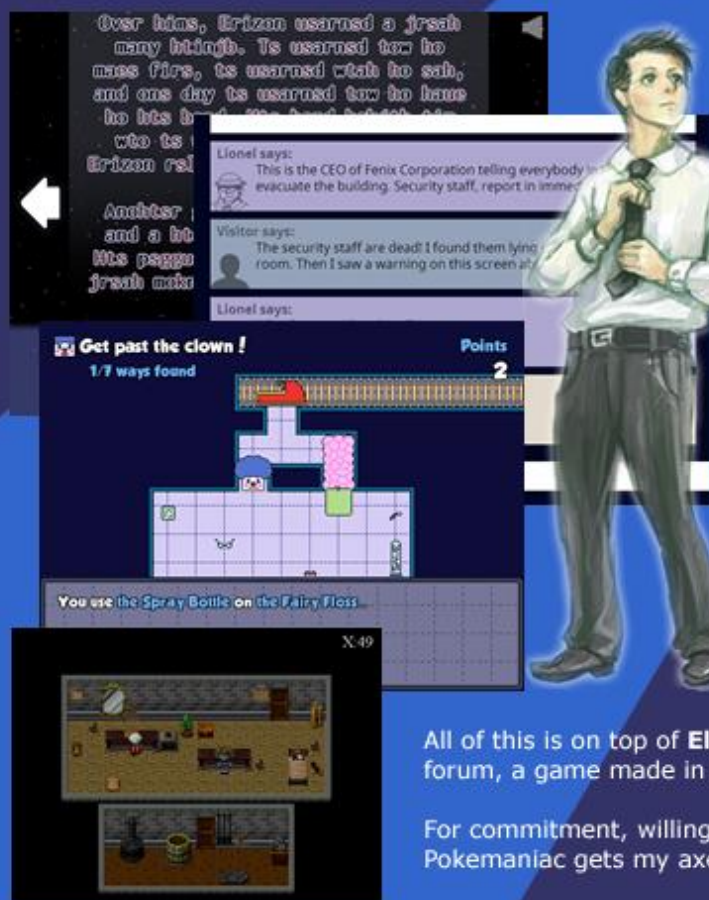
Back in the "good old days", the Completed Games forum was largely a joke. There were, for years, three games in it, of dubious quality.

Nowadays three games is nothing - in fact here are three by the same author!

Think Outside the Box is a puzzler, made in RPG Maker VX (but you'd never tell).

Stranger than Fiction is a word puzzle, something which I haven't seen around the site so far - it's always good to see new game mechanics and unique projects. In this game you have to decypher an alien language, to uncover a rather cool storyline hidden beneath.

Nobody has to Die is all about your choices in saving people from a burning building. I'd like to say more but I can't play it! It could be a porno for all I know. Whoops.

(It's not a porno.)

All of this is on top of **Ellipsus** from 2010, also available from the Completed Games forum, a game made in RPG Maker XP (becoming a rarity around these parts!).

For commitment, willingness to create custom graphics, and being generally a cool guy, Pokemaniac gets my axe (and my bow).

PROGRAMMER OF THE MONTH: XILEF

Over the past few months **Xilef** has really shown his programming prowess. He is one of few (if not the only) game makers on the site venturing into 3D, and it's going well so far, even if I don't understand just about anything he talks about. It's always a joy to see that he's posted something new in the **Screenshots Thread**, which can be found in the Project forum.

ART

Strawberrii

Loudmouth Girl

Wait up, Kyran, this isn't a race!

As if that wasn't enough, in the **Artwork** forums we currently have two overwhelmingly beautiful artists fighting against one another. **Strawberrii**'s Elves are amazing (and, refreshingly, she actually knows what boobs look like) while **Bacon** is just a massive pile of splurgy amazingness all over.

(Like, seriously, these should really be in a gallery or something)

Bacon

ROOKIE ERRORS: DARKNESS

Often in the screenshots thread a game pops up, usually a horror game, where the main feature seems to be overwhelming darkness.

You get the picture.

Ever since the first graphical overlays started appearing, mainly due to a tutorial on cosmetic lighting by Calibre (it wasn't his fault), any game that has needed a night time scene has plunged the player into darkness for effect.

The real effect, of course, is a complete inability to see the player and the gameplay at all. It detracts from the scene more than anything. The main reason for this is that monitor calibrations can be so out between different users (and most people use factory settings) that creators think they have achieved just the optimum brightness to be able to see anything, while still being dark and edgy, when in reality most of their player base cannot see a thing.

There are scenes where this might be useful, and sometimes you don't want the player to be able to see for good reason. But when you're exploring at night, there are other ways.

This old screenshot (one of mine from... seven years ago!) is what we're going to use. A simple scene to walk around in the day time, at night we want to add effects.

The first mistake is to simply darkern the screen. This leads to a rather brown image. Twiddling with the sliders, adding blue and upping the contrast makes sense. This third image is what is plaguing the screenshots thread these days.

The simplest fix would be to just not make it so dark.

I find that with quite a bit of fiddling, a good effect can be achieved, but must admit I am not happy with it here. Adding blue makes sense for a moonlight scene but without some actual editing in an image program it's futile to achieve a nice look.

The main issue is the other colours blending with the blue, so in this next image I have also desaturated the base image. At night, colours are hard to see.

Simply upping the contrast can be a good way of showing night time, especially if it is not quite the dead of night.

By far my favourite effect however is for showing midnight. Just because the character cannot see does not mean the player themselves need be blind. In this image I have desaturated it completely before adding some green. This gives the effect of night vision, coupled with high contrast to pick out only the details.

The player knows it's night time and that the character can't see. But we can.

Almost every player of your game will be using factory settings. It's painful, but fair, that telling your player their monitor isn't calibrated right isn't going to go down well. Without a calibration as part of the game itself, you cannot rely on it.

RPG MAKER
CHEATS

Double click an autotile and it will turn into a set of individual tiles that you can place any way you want, without worrying about merging with other tiles and other nasty doolallies.

RPG Maker XP and VX largely share a lot of the same systems - move RGSS200e.dll, Game.exe, and grab the RPG classes from the tutorial, and you can use RGSS 2 in RPG Maker XP. Probably works vice versa but will ultimately lead to the universe imploding.

Using too many tiles in your tilesets? If you share the same tile over and over again it might be worth creating a characterset instead to save effort.

Trying out someone else's script? You can wrap the entire script in:
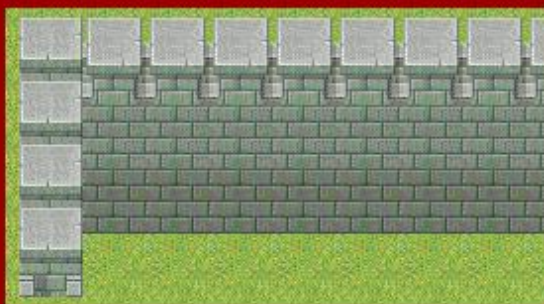
```
if true == true
   # script goes here
end
```

Then, when you want to turn the script on or off, change the second "true" to "false".

The most wrongly used tile ever, this one (and it's sister), is actually...

Battlements!

(I bet you feel a little silly now.)

JuurianChi has done a rather awesome thing and posted royalty free music for all to use on the forums. You'll find them in the **audio resources** forum. Cool!

Venetia has started a HBGames **Terraria** server, which sounds awesome, even if this editor has no idea what a terraria is. I heard it's big, and addictive, and... (back in a few hours, playing Terraria)

http://bit.ly/XSNPag

AND FINALLY...

Gamer Proposes with RMVX

A gamer has proposed to his girlfriend using RPG Maker. No, really!

It took 160 hours for Marchaka to create **Michele's Quest**, which used in-game and real-life tactics to pop the question. You'll be happy to know the answer was... yes! (Although as final bosses go, I can't help but think a dragon would have been an easier task).

Said person, strangely, isn't a member of HBGames.org. What is wrong with the world.

So, future newlyweds of HBGames... get programming!