HBGAMES *The Ezine!* .org

What happened to Dragonkid?

Freeing the RTP
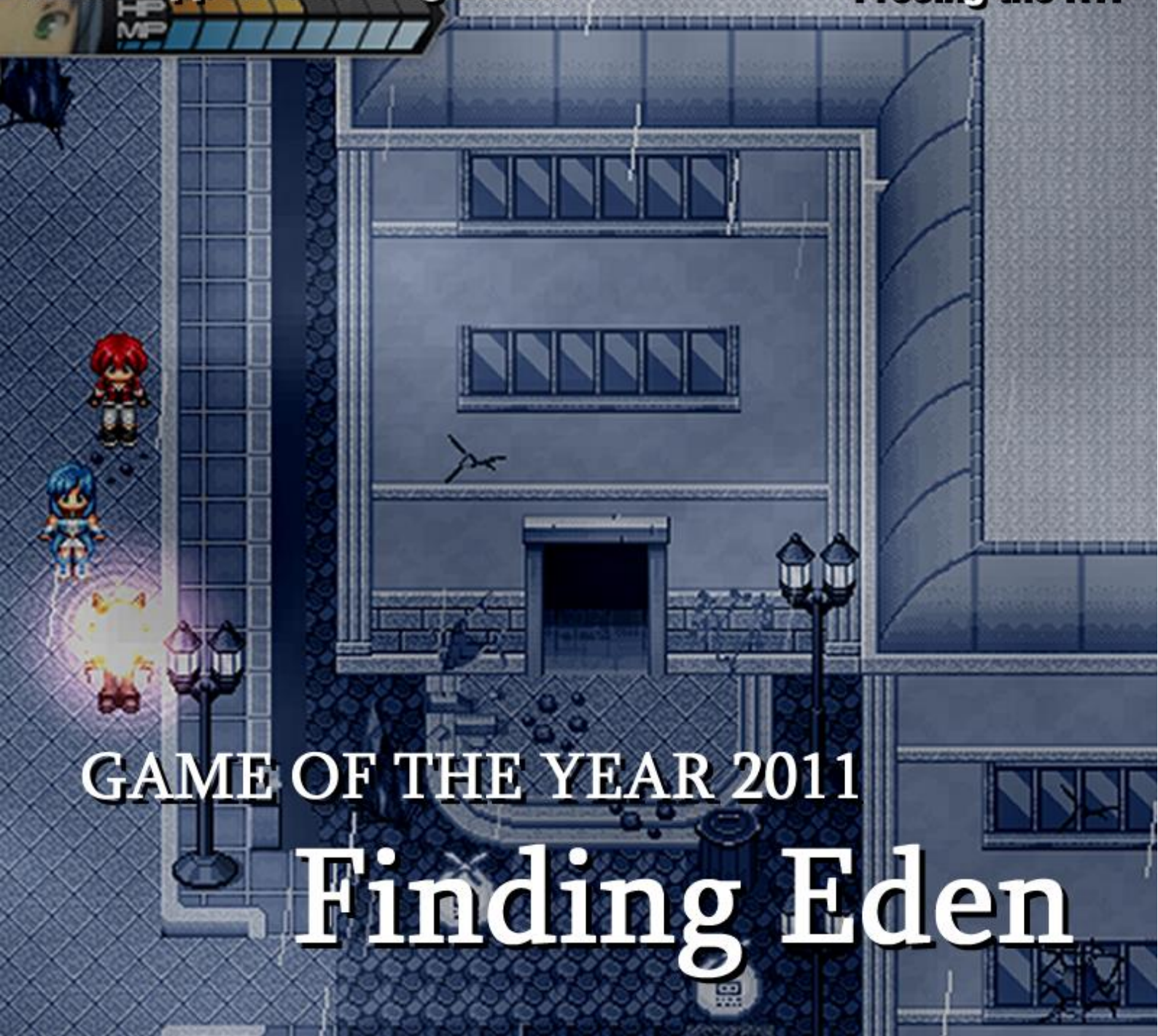
GAME OF THE YEAR 2011

Finding Eden

Introduction

Welcome to issue 13 of the HBGames.org eZine. The last issue went down well, so this time around we are keeping the same format. I have edited the cover pages of the four HTML based issues to keep them in line with the revived RMXP.net/RMXP.org eZine format, which I think looks much better. I still don't really like those issues (8 to 11) though, they're sloppy and poorly put together.

This issue promises more content than the last - less wasted space - as such the introduction will only take half a page. Happy reading!

Amy, editor in chef

Amy Pond

The HBGames.org eZine is an online magazine for the Home Brew Games community. In it you will find community articles about the website, handy tutorials and tips about indie game making, and spotlight features highlighting what's up and coming in our game making community.

Not a member? It's free to sign up and everybody is welcome regardless of their talent level. We have a significant lack of newbies - so even if you've never made games before we want you!

HB GAMES
Independent Games Forum

CONTENTS

Basic Tutorials

We need to better serve the newbie population. One step towards this will be a series of basic, starter tutorials for various game making softwares, which will feature in the eZine. If you can contribute, you can post the tutorial on the forums and point out in your post that you'd like it in the eZine (it's more useful that way). Thanks!

CHAT

HBGames has had a chat (IRC) channel since it's beginnings as RMXP.net. While the channel's hosting has been turbulent, the channel itself lives on and is always a fun place to chill.

Last year we merged with rival site RPG Revolution's IRC channel to create a dual channel called #HBR. Neither site dominates, and you'll find characters in both, some dedicated to their own site, others drifting between the two as has always been the way.

What is IRC?

Well, IRC is pretty much the standard for Internet chat rooms. It's a protocol, and you access it using an IRC client much like you use a web browser to access the HTTP web.
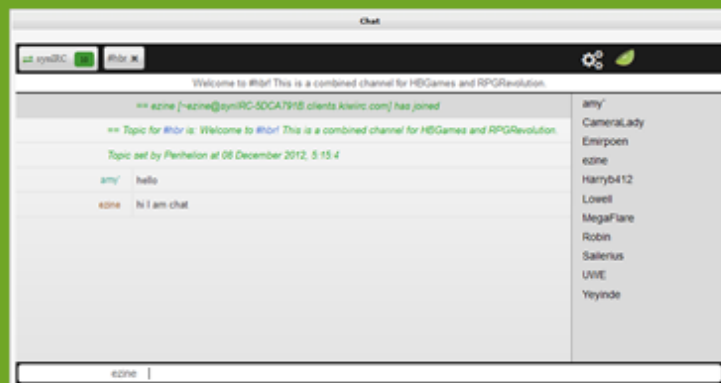
The quickest way to join in the conversation is to press "Chat" in the top menu of HBGames.org, and you'll instantly enter the chat room. Anyone's welcome!

You can use any IRC chat client if you don't want to use the KiwiIRC client which we currently link in the menu bar. The server is irc.synirc.com and the channel is #HBR.

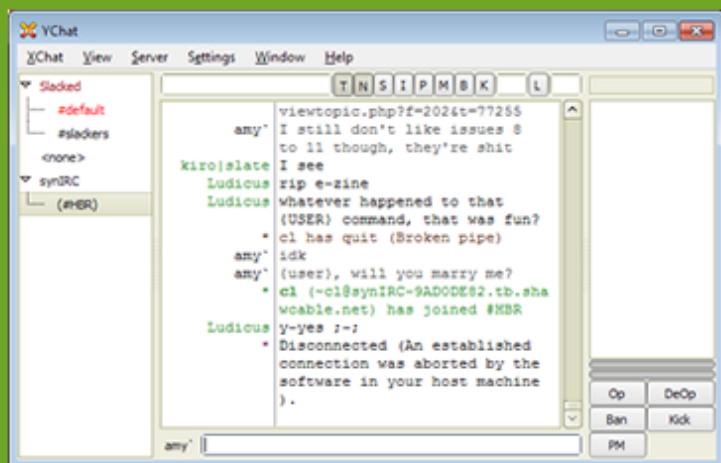*Ychat/Xchat, mIRC, and Mibbit are the most popular clients.*

So long as you follow the rules of the network we use (SynIRC) users can create their own channels too, which we'll happily list on the HBGames.org website if they're popular (i.e. used by more than just yourself).

Sometimes you'll come in and find it's dead, usually when everyone is at work or school! Other times people just aren't talking because nobody else is, so don't be afraid to say hi. When we're chatting, we chat the world down.

Some users have the ability to kick or ban people if they're troublesome, but I forget the last time this actually happened, it's not really needed. Just be friendly, and everybody else will be friendly back in return. Everyone is welcome.

Kiwiirc is free and usable from most web browsers.

The *Mapping Improvement Thread* is a zone for you to post and get comments and critique on world and level design. You can find it in the **General Gamemaking Discussion** board, where you'll find gems such as this forest by **DJ**.

Give a newbie a helping hand - click "view unanswered posts" at the bottom of the forum list and you can see any topics which haven't had a reply yet.

2

Custom Graphics

Ever since RPG Maker 95 came out (and probably long beforehand) with it's in-built RTP graphics pack games in RPG Maker have mostly used the graphics that came with them. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Some of the most visually pleasing games are those whose authors take the effort to create their own graphics, no matter how bad. (I don't really think there is such thing as bad graphics when it comes to indie games).

Now that we've moved away from RPG Maker somewhat there has been an influx of custom graphics made for the games themselves, which is neat, but how can we do the same in RPG Maker (for those who never moved ship)?

*LDC Studios' **Grave Prosperity** is made in faux 3D, within RPG Maker XP. We don't all need to go this far... but come on, we had to highlight it here, it's pretty damned beautiful.*

I think the most important thing to highlight is that even if using the RTP, it is much better if the characters themselves have custom graphics, to look like some effort has gone into them, even if only an RPG Maker user would notice.

The easiest way to do this is frankenspriting, which can be done in Microsoft Paint with much ease.

1. Select the Eraser tool
2. Use the eye dropper to select a colour to replace
3. Use the colour pallette to choose a new colour
4. Using the eraser and the right mouse button, wave that magic all over the place

*Strawberrii's **Ghost Shards** is a good example of a game which uses both the standard RTP graphics of RPG Maker XP, but also a good amount of custom resources, more detailed than merely frankensprites, to good effect.*

While starting out, there is no reason why simple stick figures won't suffice. The easiest way to do this as a beginner is to open an existing sprite in Paint and erase then replace each frame of the sprite as you go along.

The Dolls - Mystic Forest (eZine issue 12) is a good example of using simple stick figures to create custom graphics for a game, to add that personal touch.

Using assets or resources created by friendly people in the community is always one way of course - but where's the fun in that? There are some very nice resources out there in the **resources board** but why not try downloading one and *frankenspriting* it to tailor it to your project, or try and create your own in the same style.

Example of a community posted resource. Sometimes characters like this are a little too tailored - why not try editing it to create your own boss or evil villain for your RPG projects.

*Posted by **corleonis***

Useful Software

Microsoft Paint comes with Microsoft Windows. Other programs which you may like:

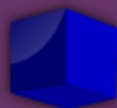**Photoshop** - although a bit over the top.

Paint.net - an alternative to Photoshop.

GIMP - a free image editing program.

oRPG Creator

While looking through the support forums for people to help I came across a new game engine that's gone a little hidden. Finding it was free and simple to get started and make a game, I decided to give it a shot!

oRPGcreator is a game engine by HBGames.org member **sim**. On first glance it looks to be a forum, but venture a little further and the games appear to be a kind of text-based adventure based on popular games such as **Darkthrone** of days yonder.

Without any tutorials within the engine itself, I found myself completely lost, as I'm sure any new player of the games would be, but I figure that's where the game creators come in, to create the appropriate documentation and instructions once we learn how to use the games.

It's quite basic but it certainly shows promise. I found a couple of errors but put this down probably to my own web connection rather than the game engine itself.

Areas took me back to my old online project, **Afar**, as they seem to be handled in a similar way, just without all of the fancy graphics. We can add our own, but the links between maps are doomed to be simple hyperlinks. This is much the way how games such as **TPPC** worked back in the day, and they were popular.

Overall, the engine is simple. I'd like to see somebody create a game in it because I think it could actually work quite well, with the right dedication behind it. Perhaps we could even hold a contest based around the engine to give it a kick start.

Until then I'm afraid I inevitably got bored, and this is where we leave **Amy's Quest**.

Did you know?

This was our logo for a very short while in early 2010. It never caught on.

The forums asked: *Whatever happened to dragonkid?*

Dragonkid, the mascot for RMXP.org, was based on an entry to a mascot contest by artist Wumpi. It lasted quite a while.

A few years in, Despain came around and told us Wumpi wasn't happy about it, how it was actually a boy called Sparky, and to remove it.

We've never actually had any word from Wumpi herself on the matter but the mascot was removed. We'd have to ask her if we want it back I guess, but Dragonkid itself is Tana's work.

The only version of Wumpi's original Sparky that I can find is one that has been traced and coloured in:

Given it was an entry to our mascot contest there'd be no harm in using it, but Wumpi hasn't been around in many years, nor have Despain or Tana. Perhaps we will have a new mascot some day, made by people still active. Still, a nice little bit of .org history.

Drama will be drama.

RPG MAKER DC

On March 30th, Enterbrain announced RPG Maker DC, a tabletop game creator. Now, at first glance, it seems an April Fool, and probably is. Yet it was announced on Table Top Day, and they went on to say "this is not an April Fool".

Not much info to go on yet, but they have a mailing list you can subscribe to at:

http://games.rpgmakerweb.com/rpg-maker-dc/

Feedback

Juggling an online community such as HBGames isn't easy, especially when you're in a hyperactive mood and want to do lots of cool stuff to help out - and don't have any suggestions or feedback to work off. If you really wanna see something, or you want us to be doing something we're not, please, please let us know, however daft you think it is. The **feedback forum** is always open.

Interesting Places

Ace of Spades

Ace of Spades' game is looking better every time it's posted, and in this scene we see a lighthouse on a cliff edge. Presumably the sea is behind us and it's warning ships of the rocks, or perhaps it's a watch tower. What I like mainly are the vines leading to other levels of the cliffs, normally in RPG Maker games cliffs represent the edge of the game world which is a little boring.

You know, I've played a lot of games, and it actually gives me pleasure to say that my favourite area, and the one I think is the most unique out of any of them, is from a game that seems to be hated by others. This is a town from **Tree Soul Kingdom**, by 9robin3. RTP plus edits.

Western towns are common in our games but for some reason we shy away from dark, Victorian cities. Batman's game is going well this way. All we need now is someone to take on the "satanic mills" of Manchester, or the back streets of inner-city Manhattan.

The horse and carriage are a nice touch but the street looks too clean to me!

Batman's game

HBGAMES
GAME OF THE YEAR 2011

Regretfully, we didn't hold our annual .ORGy awards in 2011 or 2012. They're the basis of our Game of the Year award, which three fantastic games have won so far. In order to make any future awards actually mean something, we're holding two polls to find our favourite games from 2011 and 2012. The requirements: they must be complete or close to it, they must have been released between May and May of that year's award slot, and just in case any don't fit in the poll (max 30), the first games whittled off will be any that break the rules, were posted on behalf of somebody else, or are only very quick games.

The 2011 poll has already been held and we found our winner; the 2012 poll has now started!
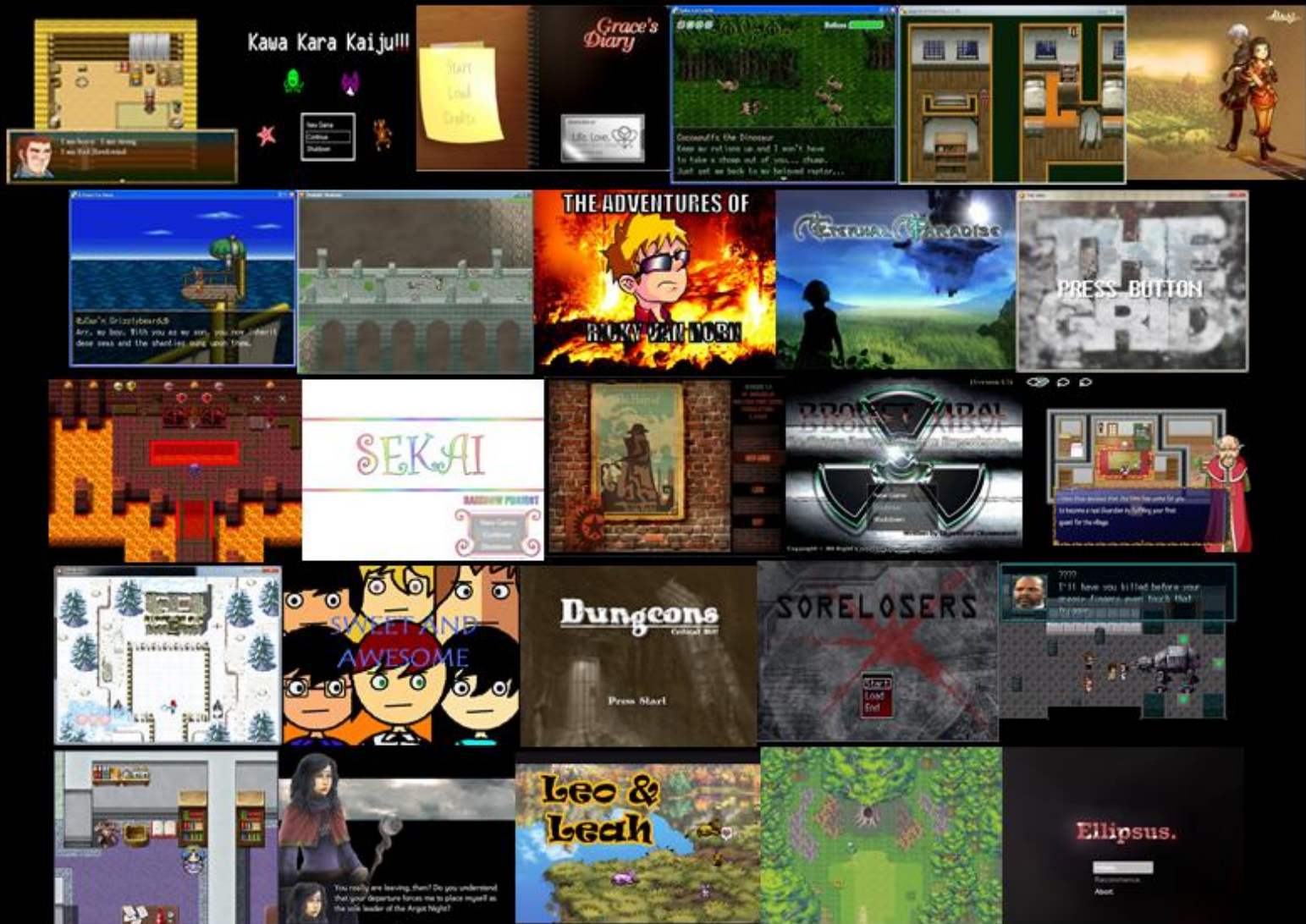
Third Place: Leo & Leah

Leoh and Leah, by Strangeluv, is a seven hour long romp created in RPG Maker 2003. Inspired by Donkey Kong and Mother, the game's pretty graphics and unique characters take the player through a world inhabited by anthropomorphic animals and beautiful scenery.

Second Place: The Grid

The Grid is Tomas's game, a motion puzzle made in HTML5. At first it feels like your typical Sokoban but play for a bit and you are thrown into a world of wacky rules and tricky, but compelling scenarios. I found this entirely too addictive.

Game of the Year:
Finding Eden

Finding Eden, by Sailerius and Hirei, was originally created for a post-apocalyptic game contest, but has evolved into something really quite special. Playing using an ABS, you play as the two survivors of the end of the world, trying to survive in an unforgiving environment. As you switch between characters the other is controlled by AI.

With combat being real-time you're always kept on edge, but if you balance your mana right (an objective of the game being to collect this) you'll be alright.

In all as the game is completable in under an hour (a requirement of the competition) you'll be left wanting more at the end - but that's got to be a good thing.

With this Sailerius becomes the first person to win our Game of the Year award twice, and consecutively - Vacant Sky won in 2010.

What is the RTP?

If you're using RPG Maker XP, and let's face it most of us are, you'll have used the RTP at some point. You had to download it to even use the software. But what is it?

If you don't know the answer then it probably explains why so many released RPG Maker games are unplayable to those without it.

The RTP, which stands for Run Time Package, is a collection of graphical and musical assets in a compressed folder. The RPG Maker XP, VX, and VXace systems come with an RTP each. The idea is that because many assets will be shared by more than one game, if we distribute just these assets on their own seperately, then individual games become much smaller in file size. It sounds pretty win/win.

Unfortunately that's not much help for people who don't want to use the RTP, and if they don't know they're even using it they won't know how to get rid of it.

Getting Rid of the RTP

It's more complicated than you'd think, but thankfully it's actually quite easy:

1. Copy every graphic you want to use into your own game /Graphics/ folder, and any music. (Best to copy them and not import them, as importing has errors.)

2. Locate and copy/paste RGSS102e.dll (or your equivalent for your engine) from C:\WINDOWS\ into your game folder.

3. Close your game and open Game.ini in your folder. Open it and change RTP1=Standard to RTP1=   and leave this blank like the other two lines.

Now you're all set. You can change the RTP, but as Enterbrain never released any others, you can't in practice. It makes you wonder whether they really thought through every feature of the program.

Cheetahxzing has posted a quite interesting paper on **secondary game objectives** which is quite interesting. You'll find it in the general gamemaking discussion forum.
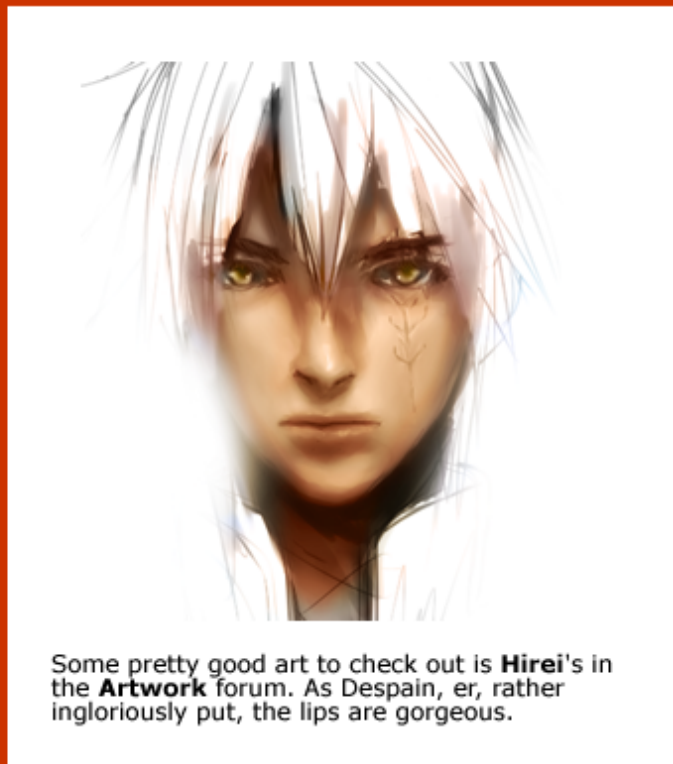
Some pretty good art to check out is **Hirei**'s in the **Artwork** forum. As Despain, er, rather ingloriously put, the lips are gorgeous.
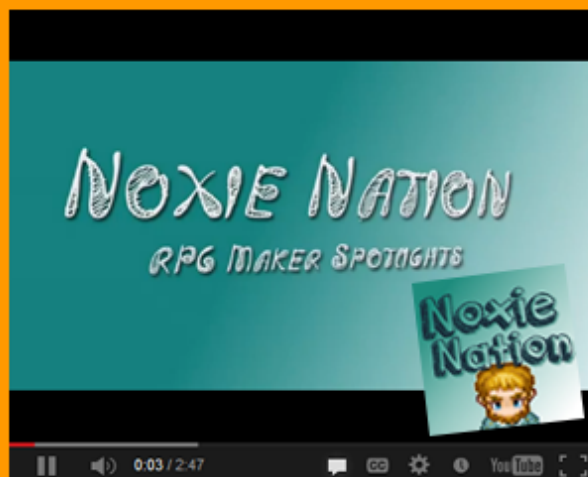
Noxie Nation continues to make some cracking reviews in their Youtube thread in the **General Gamemaking Discussion** forum. Really worth checking out if you haven't already.

Spotlight

Autopsy is a survival horror by **Stiven202** - 6 hours long and created in RPG Maker XP. You'll find it in the **completed games** forum for download.

For drawing attention through screenshots, here's **Super T: Open the New World** by Duck Entertainment.

Bear Ballin' by **onezephyr** is a breakout-like game created for a contest. It's flashy, fast-paced, and definitely pretty to look at. The animations are great - especially when you lose, watching the ball float far down the screen exploding things along the way - and as it's HTML5 you won't need to download anything to give it a try, definitely worth it.

It's far more complicated than your typical breakout clone, something I found to my detriment. No cheatable levels here.

Artist of the Month: Silver

Visit Silver's Gallery in the **Artwork Forum** for some stunning landscapes and beautiful concept art.
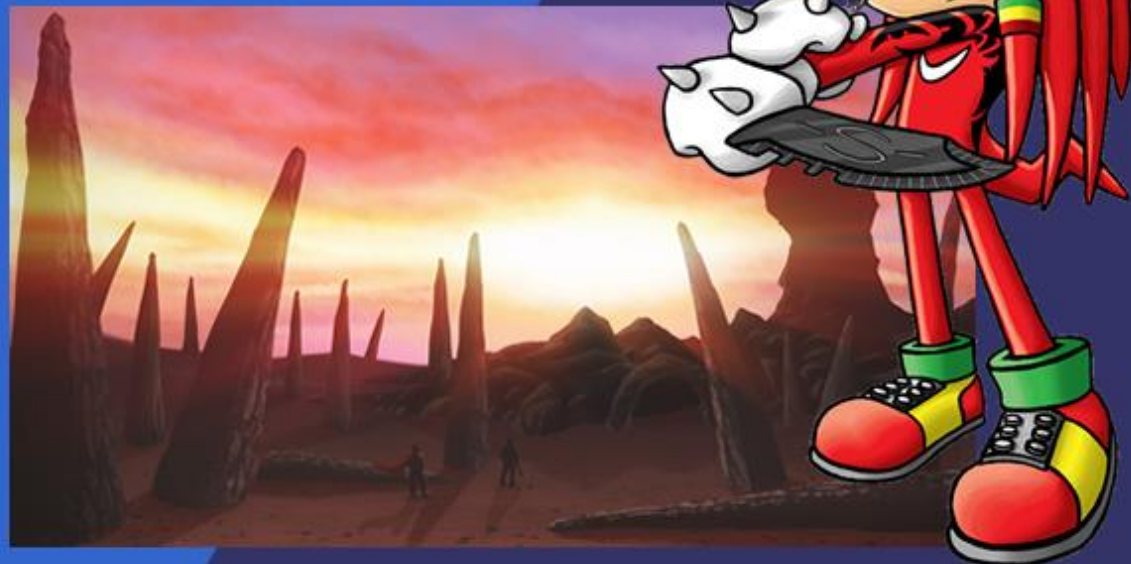
Because nobody else suggested anything to be I'm going to name drop my own project here, just because I posted it this week. **Chronicles of Afar: Tale of Three Witches** is made in RPG Maker XP, and is event-heavy with lots of custom animated cutscenes. You'll find it in **Project Discussion**.

Gamemaker of the Month: DJ

DJ deserves a shout-out this month for his upcoming games. They're in Korean, but who cares when they look this shiny and flashy.


That's before the nice mapping in general, with some pretty neat graphical edits alongside. DJ says there is a Korean demo of game **Metal Fable: The Hidden Power** (RPG Maker XP) coming soon, and I think it'll be worth playing even if it isn't translated (an aspiration for the future).

Keep up the good work.

Programmer of the Month: Dargor

Guess who continues to dominate the programming boards? Dargor's Final Fantasy VI SDK continues to push forward, now including a ROM to RMXP map exporter-convertor which is pretty special. I doubt we'll see many more people around this both talented and this dedicated to their work.
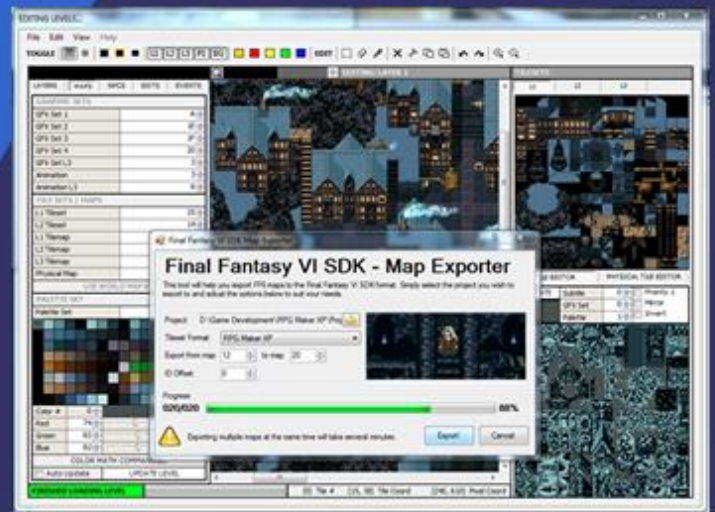
Rookie Mistakes

First scenes are important, especially if all you have to release right now is a five minute demo. Even if there is a really cool scene five minutes in, if you screw up your initial scenes, you can easily turn a player off.

I just, unfortunately, found this playing an old game from the forums. It brought back memories of the old days of RPG Maker, and frankly I'm starting to realise the rose tinted glasses I use when looking back.

I know I am guilty of the mistake I'm bringing up.

Here's the scene. The hero wakes up. They have lost their memory. There is a shout in a message box from somebody who the hero knows to be their mother (despite their amnesia). They wake up, having been lying on top of their bed sheets, and walk down stairs (except they don't, the player has to control this brief romp across a soulless room). They walk down the stairs, have breakfast, and their memory has returned. They are going on a quest.

...and the game begins.

It's a simple device to start a game but it really is an unnecessary one. Far from suggesting you drop the player in the middle of the action (which can be a little overwhelming), I do think that the opening scene oughtn't be so... boring, frankly.

I, ashamedly, remember creating a tutorial for this exact scene. It's probably egotistical to suggest people copied said tutorial, maybe they did, but I must have got it from somewhere too, probably playing an RPG Maker game myself back in the days.

In the last project I worked on in RPG Maker my initial setting was the player arriving on a ship - an equally unforgivable opening quite probably. Had I put more thought into it I'd probably have realised how boring this is.

I think back to some of the games I really enjoyed, such as Quintessence, and the *different* openings they had compared to the usual out there.

I think the clincher is that the opening is part of the story, and part of the game, and deserves as much thought and writing as any other aspect. If the message boxes (if they really must be message boxes) are boring to read ("son, wake up, you're having an adventure!") it can be really off putting.

Pokemon starts this way. Except it doesn't. Pokemon started with Ash Ketchum watching a Pokemon battle on his television first before going to bed and waking up... and he certainly didn't have amnesia.

Hum.

I suppose, in fairness, it can be a useful scene to have, if there is a valid reason for the hero to be living with their mother (and not their father?). So here are some tips on making this particular scene more playable.

Other Occupants

Even if it is just a closed, locked door, give the impression that the Hero isn't the only person living in the house. (If their mother is here they're not...)

Square Rooms

Oddly shaped bedrooms are confusing to navigate and make the scattering of objects cluttered. I know it's boring, but square (or rectangular) rooms are sensible.

Use Tiles Right

This tile:

Is designed to go on the third layer, with higher priority than the bed itself. That way it gives the impression that the Hero is *in* the bed, not *on* the bed. Unless you have the time to sprite some custom lying down and getting up sequences, stick to these tiles.

Don't Give them Amnesia

Amnesia is a lazy storyline, frankly. If you don't have a reason for it, i.e. you just thought it would be interesting, it's probably not going to be I'm afraid.

Sorry, I've got to go now, my er, mom's calling me.

It's breakfast time and I'm about to start a

Further, why is the Hero's bedroom always this shape?

And why is it always the only room in a house where clearly the Hero's mother lives?

I suspect it's probably the first attempt at mapping by the people in question - and it's in numerous games - so throw it away!

I actually threw up this map in a few seconds and it's still better than the one I was just in.

QUEST OF ADVENTURE