

HBGAMES.org

The Ezine!

HBGAMES.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #16 February 2014



Mom, I play GTA!

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Hello and welcome to issue sixteen of the *HBGames.org eZine*! It's February, the RPG Maker contest is half-way through, and we have some exciting events planned. If you're new to the site, the eZine is a faux magazine we publish every month (or at least that's the plan) aggregating interesting articles and info from the forums, with tutorials and reviews thrown in. Here's what's in this month's issue...

January Blues

HBGAMES.ORG CONTEST

There may still be time to enter if you're reading this! You still have every chance. There are two copies of Enterbrain's *RPG Maker VX Ace* up for grabs.

Quick Jump

Throughout this issue you'll see quick jump codes. These are just a simple way to link to posts and threads around the forums without wasting space in the magazine. To use them, simply go to the homepage and enter a quick jump code in the quick jump box below the left hand menu and press the enter key. Simple!

Just look out for this symbol:

QJ 123456

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Mom: I play *Grand Theft Auto*

If I asked you what game was shown in the landscape below (and I hadn't already pointed it out in the title) you'd probably never guess. It's *Grand Theft Auto V*, the fifth generation of Rockstar Games' popular title, and it's still as controversial as ever.

When I first found out about the game, at the time the original title for Sony Playstation, my mother was understandably horrified and wouldn't let me near it. I used to sit with the Playstation facing the kitchen, playing *Cool Boarders* amongst other games, but one day started playing through the demos that my Dad had bought with the Playstation. One day I happened upon *Grand Theft Auto*, and I was hooked.

My mom had seen me play driving games: *V Rally* for one, which we played a few times together. But I was fascinated by the huge city I could explore in *GTA*. One day she asked me what the game was I was playing, and suddenly I had to tell her, and lost the game...

Later on when I grew up and moved onto computers, I downloaded *Grand Theft Auto 2*, and was similarly hooked. I moved on to *GTA 3*, and played it religiously.

Then I came to San Andreas and was overwhelmed. I still don't think I have a game in my collection which can surpass it.

Then the headlines came (or, rather, resurfaced).

Grand Theft Auto V had been released, and the newspapers were *livid*. *Grand Theft Auto* is killing our kids, turning them into psychopaths, criminals, car thieves, prostitute killers, and generally evil.

"What's that game you're playing? It looks really good!"... Mom, I play *Grand Theft Auto*.

Trying to justify that was difficult, and I can see why. On the one hand we have this game where we can solicit sex in the back of a car before letting the prostitute go and running her down, killing her with a bloody splatter and being rewarded for it with the money back. We can get guns, steal cars violently, and generally do anything. It's part of the design of the game that we have the choice to do anything we want to do, and that's what makes it so *interesting*.



I don't play Grand Theft Auto to kill prostitutes. I don't think I've even changed guns in San Andreas. I play it merely for that ability to do anything you want to do. It is rare that games offer you that ability.

Generally GTA comes with missions, forming a storyline, and that's *the game*. I have never completed a mission (to my knowledge); that doesn't interest me. Hell, if I could try out different cars without stealing them first I would.

What interests me is the sandbox aspect, the ability to play around and do anything I want to do. Driving a ten wheeler up a mountain. Racing the wrong way down a dual carriageway. Flying a stunt plane around a city under bridges. Not just that, but the scenery along the way is beautiful.

GTA is a big game. The maps are enormous and offer a lot of variety, much of it based on real cities. San Andreas for example has both Forth Bridges from Edinburgh, and driving over them, flying planes through them, or riding a motorbike along the rail bridge to explore it is just interesting and fun, and something you couldn't do in real life.

Just like you couldn't kill a prostitute in real life without suffering the consequences.

Are there no other games that offer the same experience, while neglecting the ability to inflict gore and violence?

I have tried many games - Driver, Italian Job, even Lego Racers 2 - there's not much out there in the same genre as GTA while not letting you kill people.

Below is a screenshot from the most realistic I've played - Euro Trucker Simulator 2. It's beautiful, with super realistic graphics and controls. But that realism comes at a cost. Drive over 30 in a residential area and you get a speeding fine. Drive the wrong way down a highway and you're in for trouble. And you can't, generally, do what you like. You are a trucker and you drive from A to B, with nothing inbetween... it starts out briefly fun and interesting but turns into a virtual recreation of the mundanity of real life, about as exciting as *The Sims* without cheats.

And you can't drive your truck up a mountain.



Why don't we make one?

Well, the team behind *Grand Theft Auto* is huge, and it is unlikely an indie game would be able to compete. The open ended world is only so interesting as it is so *big*.



It actually takes time to get from one town to the next, a rarity in driving games. There are motorways with realistic junctions, and even a pretty accurate rendition of the Hoover dam (that you can jump off on a BMX without worrying about the small problem of *dying*).



The GTA modding community is large enough to pull off something substantial, but there's a general feeling that this kind of game isn't wanted. A professor at my University once told us that a game where all you did was drive around wouldn't be a *game* (and therefore we shouldn't make it). Maybe it wouldn't be a game in the traditional sense. Would it matter? Do things have to fall under set rules in order to be enjoyable?

So yes, I play Grand Theft Auto. No, I don't kill prostitutes with stolen humvees. Yes, I have done things that I would never be able to do in real life in the game.



Like driving a car without lessons...

Until somebody comes up with the game I've described I will carry on playing *Grand Theft Auto*. Because while I would probably never buy a cheeseburger in a can, it does not bother me that the supermarket sells them; I can enjoy said supermarket without ever... erm... damn, why did I think of that? OK, bad example, cheeseburgers in cans need to be removed from society, but apart from that, well, I'm sure I had a point somewhere.



Resource Hacker

↖ This is the "hey, that font looks nice" issue

It's time for a questionable article.

Time and time again in our forums we get people asking how they can use certain programs on a small monitor. Sometimes they refuse to run, other times things just won't fit on the screen. Other times, the authors have made a mistake in making the software.

We can fix that. Sometimes.

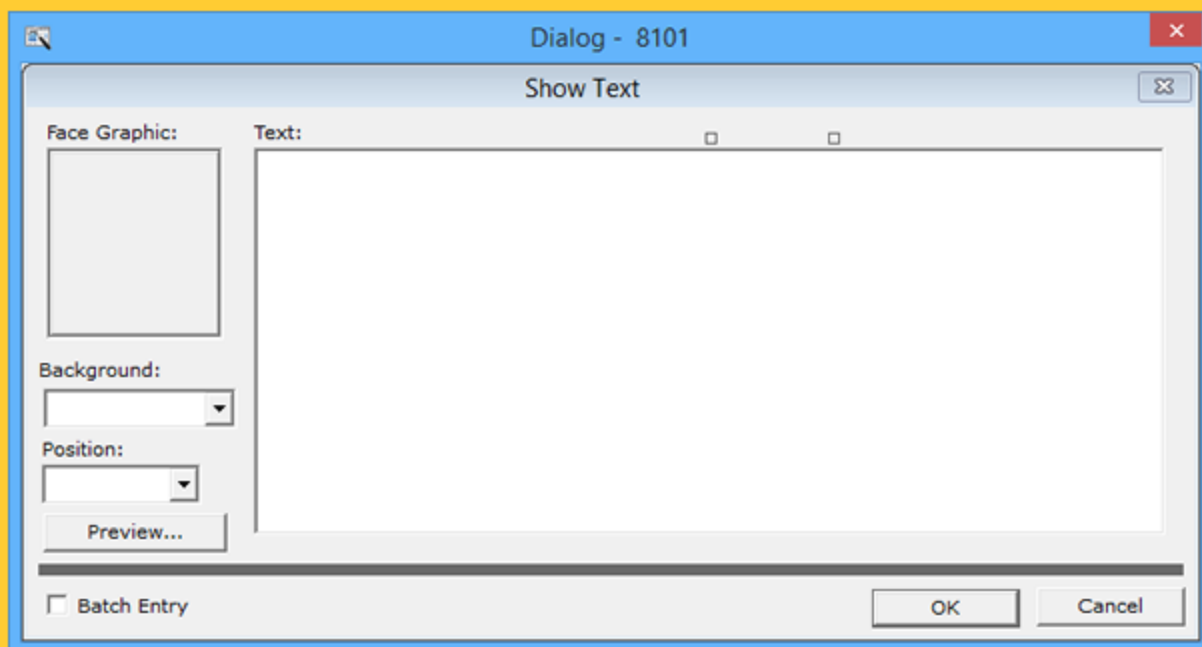
Resource Hacker is an editor for resources in programs. You can open a dll and edit resources in it (this includes the layout of windows if they're made using visual studio and such). You can't edit the actual programming, but you can edit the layout and positioning of windows forms, or "dialogs".

It's questionable because it almost certainly breaches the end user license agreement of the software you're using, but, often you couldn't use it without it.

Take for example RPG Maker XP's scripting window - it will not fit on small monitors, even some that the program will support. This makes editing difficult or plain impossible. By opening the dll in resource hacker you can edit the size and positioning of elements to suit your screen.

Or, in the example below, the text area can be made larger in the show text dialog - allowing you to, using scripts, use a larger message window. Buttons can be repositioned to be more logical, and you can even reorganise the event commands window to suit your own needs.

Decide for yourself if it's worth breaching EULA over, but there's no point using a software that won't fit on your screen or cannot use some of it's functionality (RMXP being limited to three text lines when it's built for four, for example). There are other applications, such as icon editing, too.



Win 1 of 2 digital downloads of RPG Maker VX Ace!

January Blues

HBGAMES.ORG CONTEST

Roundup

We're a couple of weeks into the January Blues contest, which doesn't end until the end of February remember. Now is still the perfect time to enter the contest - there aren't too many entrants so far, so you still stand a great chance!

This article's a roundup of what has been posted from our entrants, a best-bits of sorts.



Fractus Stellarum, by Injury



Stardust



Origami Rose



Strawberrii



Sleeping Duck



CoyoteCraft



Potion

The Wreck Room

Do You See What We Did There

The Rec Room is a popular board and a fun place to chill out, and Post What's On Your Mind is, in some respects, an asset, and the reason many come to HBGames. But it is a little problematic.

Sometimes content gets lost in PWOYM that ought to be posted elsewhere, where it would get more exposure for yourself, and benefit the site and other users greater. Art, game discussion, even some general discussion topics, should be posted in their own threads in the appropriate boards.

Anything posted in PWOYM that is quite obviously better elsewhere, such as screenshots, artwork critique, etc, **is liable to be moved to the appropriate section**. If it's moved we'll leave a note saying so, but please don't be too upset if it is moved. The Rec Room is not a private forum, and is not everything the site has to offer. The more people post art, games, and other content around the site, the more active those sections become, and the more people post in future. Keeping it all in PWOYM is a vicious, and unnecessary, cycle.

If it's something small and you don't think it warrants thread (it probably does!), there are, dotted around, several "PWOYM-like" threads:

The Demos Thread in Completed Games, for demo releases which don't have a project thread.

The Screenshots Thread in Project Discussion, for your own game's screenshots.

What are you working on? and the **mapping improvement thread** in Game Making Discussion.

The Sketch Thread and **Small Things Thread** in Artwork.

Enjoy the Rec Room, and enjoy Post What's on your Mind, just remember, there is a wider forum out there, and it's pretty cool!



*Holy good-looking game Batman! Check out *Intelligence* in the Completed Games forum, by Bizarre Monkey.*

QJ 891493

HBGAMES MUSICAL FESTIVAL

**THIS MARCH
CELEBRATING ALL THINGS MUSIC**

There will be a few small prizes going, including five video game soundtracks and a variety of games.

Venue: Ichycoo Park, The Special Events Forum, HBGames.org

World Creation:

Realistic Coasts

The coastline is a rather neglected aspect in a lot of RPG Maker games. Usually if you're at the coast you're either at an abrupt end of the land where the cliffs drop straight down into dead waters, or you're at a beach, which continues straight from grass to water with little transition between the two. Now this isn't necessarily a bad thing but I thought it would be interesting to explore these features and how they are made to try and bring a sense of realism to level design.

Firstly, we need to know how the coast itself is created. Basically a coast is just an area where the land meets the sea, created by tectonic plate movements and whatnot; all we need to know is that rocks meet sea, and the sea acts upon the rocks with immense force along the way. Cliffs are not made of one type of rock (we discussed this in a previous issue on rivers) meaning some rocks are much harder than others. In our games, we can represent these quite accurately, but some simple cliff tiles will probably suffice. Sandstone is hard, as is granite. Limestone and clay are soft. Chalk is I believe somewhere in the middle.



Image: BBC

There tend to be lines where two types of rock meet, in a zebra-crossing pattern of hard, harder soft, hard, etc. This all has much influence on how the sea erodes (or doesn't erode) each bit of rock. You can probably guess what happens, but won't realise the features this creates: what we end up with is a wavy line of sticky-out-bits ("headland") and bits curving inwards wherever the rock is weaker ("bays"). In these bays the water has been slowed down by the headstones, and as we discussed on rivers, where water is slower it tends to drop whatever it is carrying. In this case this is sand, and so in these bays is where we end up with our beaches.



Example of a bay (snorkeldivehawaii.com) - showing a beach which forms as the water slows down, loses energy, and drops the sand it carries.

Water is forced in at whatever direction the waves are moving. When it comes back out again it is slower, and so instead follows the contours of the land - this means it goes in one direction and out another - and it takes the sand along with it. This process, called "longshore drift", makes the beaches move along the coast. So, your map will have two headlands with a beach in the middle - but the sand will be mostly pushed up against one of the headlands in particular.

When erosion does finally manage to break it's way through the headland it creates some interesting geological features which we will get to shortly; for now all we need to know is that when it does break through the beach can be snatched altogether and end up further down the coast. Sandy beaches slow down the water decreasing erosion, so in contrast, when the beach is taken away, the land is much more vulnerable. This leaves any settlements on top in a very precarious position!

So what are these interesting features created by the erosion of the headland? You'll recognise a lot of them from the best coastal photographs, and they're all created in the same way. First, we need to be talking about a very specific type of headland – a thin strip between two bays open and at risk of erosion. The water also has to be hitting it from the right angle for it to erode horizontally through the thin peninsular.



A sea arch - Encyclopædia Britannica

As the water is at the bottom of the landmass and not eroding the top at all, we first of all end up with a cave, carved out of the side of the rock. This cave gradually gets deeper and deeper, working it's way through the rock. These caves will make interesting locations in games, but a more unique feature is what happens when the back of the wall is broken through, as it creates a sea arch. This arch can be wide enough for boats to pass through. It would make a good transition between two coastal maps as it creates a pinch point perfect for the teleport events and such.

The rock continues to be eroded, and if there is soil on top it is worn down from above at the same time, and eventually if the rock is low enough the top of the cave collapses, forming boulders at the bottom of the cave. We now have a shorter headland and a structure called a stack at the end. There can be multiple stacks, in a long line, along a headland and they make a really interesting landscape – the RPG Maker XP tilesets actually come with tiles for stacks and the boulders inbetween them but I have never seen them used in their correct context.

Eventually the stack gets eroded around the base being shaped gradually to resemble an egg-timer. Eventually the top just falls off and crumbles into the sea. This leaves a sharp point sticking out of the water – called a needle.



A large needle with a lighthouse atop - picture credit Michael John Grist

All of this makes for very dangerous sailing for anybody approaching by boat or ship. Lighthouses, rather than being located on land as often in RPG Maker games, are usually located at the end of a headland – on a large enough needle – to stop boats hitting the stacks and fallen rocks between them.

Who said coasts had to be boring?

Rivers, Part Deux!

Following last year's article on realistic rivers I decided to have a go, one of my first maps in RPG Maker VX Ace.

Multiple streams run into the same one river, from different sources. Here a smaller tributary meets the main flow, the stream being much shallower.

As the river gets tributaries joining it, it gets wider and deeper, but also slower. Rocks are deposited here as the river is not fast enough to carry them.

As the river gets more powerful it erodes further, opening up new routes. Here the old route still exists. Eventually rocks will be deposited in the slower stream, blocking it off to create an Oxbow Lake.

Towns are often sited on rivers, or at the location of bridges as important trade routes. Here a town sits next to a bridge over the main river.

As the river turns, the water moves faster on the inside of the bend. On the outside, slower moving water drops sand and silt, creating this bank.

Finally our path doesn't wander across the river willy-nilly; that would be a waste of resources. It crosses the main stream and a tributary to provide feature bridges, but beyond that the river is not crossed.



Participation Points

While you're posting on HBGames.org you'll now accrue *participation points*. They come in three flavours, depending on where you're posting: Projects, Support, and Resources.

The algorithm used is complex and hidden, so as to avoid abuse, but in short:

- Short, spammy posts and quick remarks do not get points
- Starting a new topic gets you a bonus, but not if the topic doesn't meet topic standards!
- Images and media are better than text
- Detailed, verbose text is better than quick splorts

There are two leaderboards: one measures totals over all time, while the other is reset regularly (currently planned to be monthly but may be tweaked in future) so you can see how you're faring against other users.

Points don't currently get you anything, but there may in future be a use for them, including real-life prizes and other goodies for good performers.

There are also now a variety of points available as prizes for the January Blues contest!

Projects	Support	Resources
Princess Amy	5	1
coyotecraft	5	0
boon	2	0
Xilef	0	12
shadow	0	5
Princess Amy	0	3
shadow	0	0

Projects	Support	Resources
coyotecraft	28	9
DJ	19	7
Princess Amy	18	6
Erichermit	17	3
Stardust	12	3
Nuri Yuri	9	14
Princess Amy	7	12
dac420	6	6
Jason	3	5
RedRedd	3	2
Glitchfinder	2	1
		0

Extending RPG Maker

In the RPG Maker Support section you will find a new board called *Extending RPG Maker*. It's a space for applications and other programs designed to compliment RPG Maker, taking it beyond it's limitations.

As an example, check out *Xilef's GLSL shaders* thread, for using OpenGL shaders in RPG Maker.



SPOTLIGHT



WholeTone Games came by to drop of two interesting titles: *Jesus Christ RPG*, and *Divide by Zero*.

QJ 914522

QJ 914524



Underground Space Wars, an RTS being developed by *theweirdn8*.

QJ 915563



Looking particularly stunning is *Dies Irae: Phantatom Elements* by *Zankoku no Yami*.

QJ 914327



Coyotecraft has posted a bunch of resources in the resource forums.

QJ 915591

Check out *WandererofMyst's* music in the audio forums:

QJ 914259

In the background: art by DJ

QJ 915138

Xilef has been playing around with OpenGL within RPG Maker. Here he has used OpenGL shaders on the final bitmap to create some neat effects - but you have to see the video in his thread to get the

full picture (the potential for underwater scenes is awesome and should provide some good variety in our games!)

QJ 914217



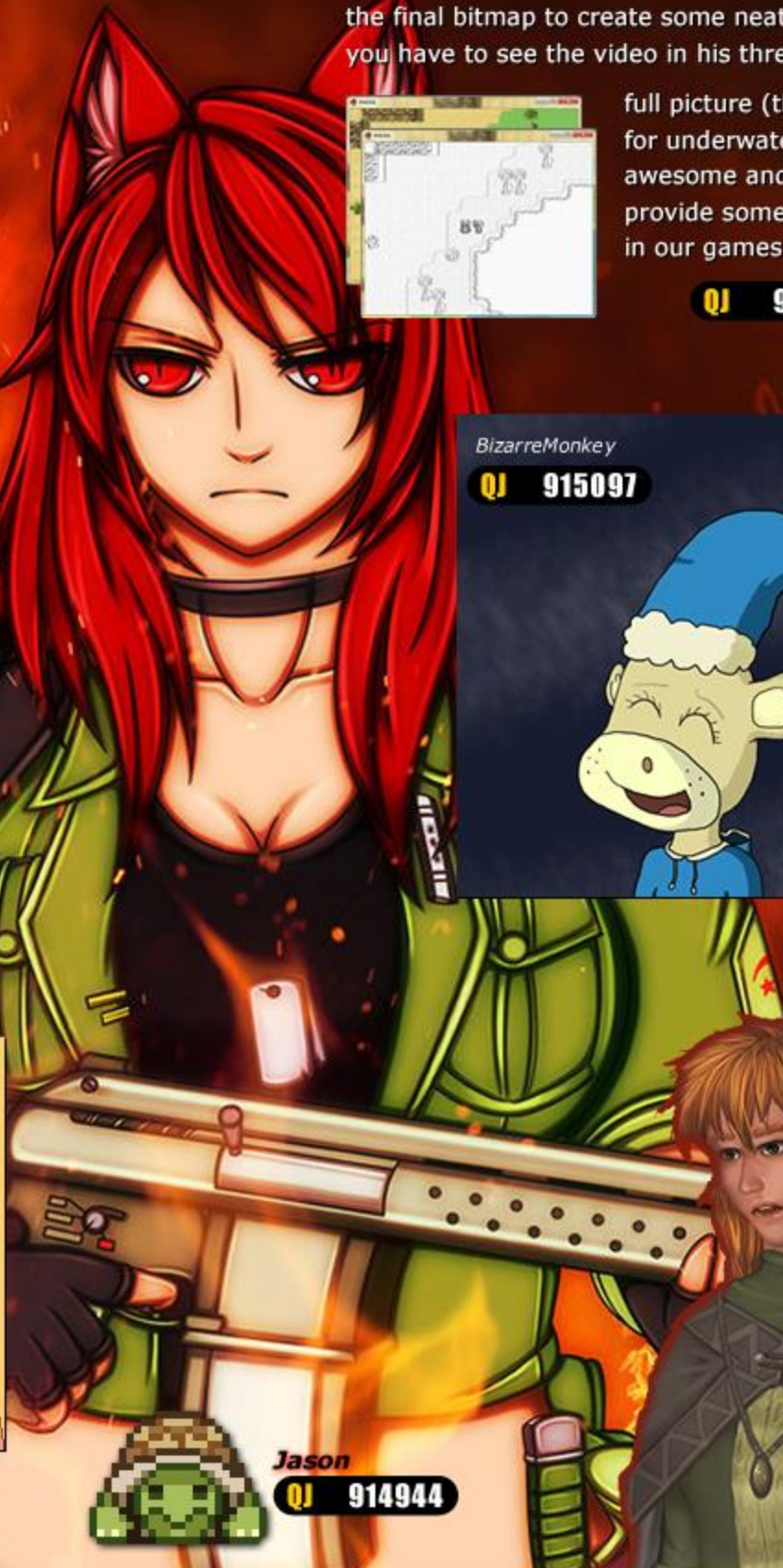
Strawberryii
QJ 915154



BizarreMonkey
QJ 915097



Xilef **QJ 915600**



Jason
QJ 914944



Ellenor
QJ 913297

Final Thoughts...

Across the Internet there has been a rise in trolling and other abuse aimed at games developers. I think people forget that indie developers do not have big companies to hide behind. Especially worrying is the abuse that openly female developers are receiving for publishing games to systems such as Steam Greenlight. This is not OK. It's not just "not OK", but we, for one, shall make a verbal stand against it. If you're getting abuse on the forums, it is OK to speak out, and you have our backing. If you're a game dev who's experiencing abuse at the hands of the wider community, unwarranted, you're more than welcome at HBGames. We're proud to be progressive.



If you found this externally, you'll find all 16 current issues of the eZine at www.HBGames.org

On the Cover

This month's cover is ~~some what of an experiment on the editor's part~~, boobies. It's boobies. Boobs, boobs, boobies, and frankly that is all. Boobies.

Don't forget to post your project threads if you're entering the January blues contest!

