

HBGAMES.org

The E-zine!

HBGAMES.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #19 May 2014



HBGAMES

London Tokyo Scunthorpe

Welcome to issue 19 of *HBGames the eZine*, the online magazine for HBGames.org. We're a fun, compact publication acting somewhere between a *This Week on .ORG*, *Project of the Month*, or various other initiatives. Basically this is a compendium of everything going on in the forums over the past month as well as useful tutorials, reviews, tips, etc.

New compact format

This month we are trying out a new, more compact format. This change means slightly smaller page sizes, shorter articles, and a smaller frame; we welcome your feedback even if it's a resounding "No! Change it back!". This is the same page size seen in issues 8 to 11 (but with column sizes fixed).

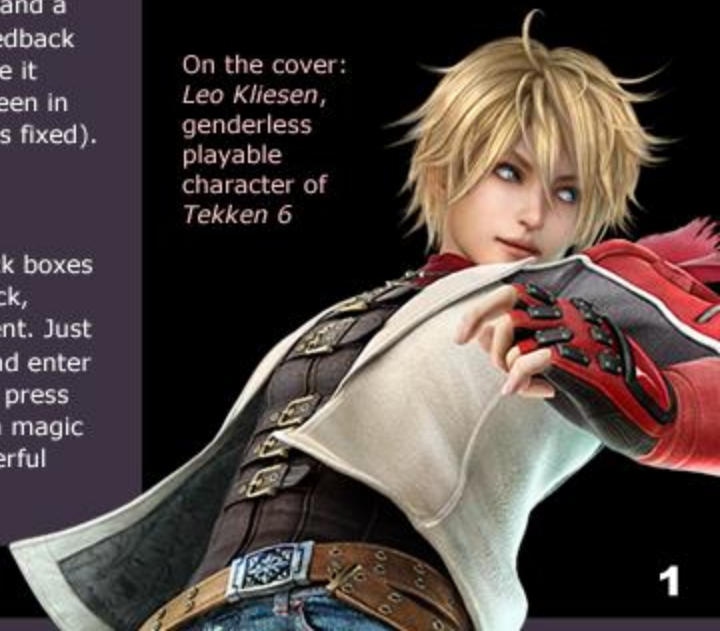
Quick find codes

Throughout the issue you'll find black boxes with QF codes in them. This is a quick, space-saving way of linking to content. Just go to the HBGames.org homepage and enter your code in the box on the left and press enter on your keyboard and through magic you'll be whisked away to the wonderful world of The Thing You Were After.

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On the cover:
Leo Kliesen,
genderless
playable
character of
Tekken 6



Inconvenient Game design

by CoyoteCraft

Backtracking: Rewarding or mandatory

Probably the most overused conventions in RPGs are fetch quests. You just came from a location and now a NPC wants you to march right back to kill a dozen monsters or retrieve an item. The reward probably isn't worth the time and you know there is no other reason to go back. However, should the player choose to revisit a location for no reason they should at least find something new even if it's something small like different dialog from the townsfolk. A player shouldn't feel like they are wasting time.

Hiding spots: Time consuming and sometimes inconsistent

Speaking of time, you need to be aware how much time it takes to explore every inch of a map. I've seen let's play videos of people checking every crack and corner for hidden secrets. They can spend up to 15mins checking every inanimate object in a house at the start of a game when all they were supposed to do was leave the room. So it's a good idea to start games in small empty places and clue the player in early on if things will be hidden or not. If there are secrets in one town then the player is going to look for secrets in all the towns.



RuneScape is notorious for substituting good puzzles with crate after crate to examine to find an object.

Repeating messages: Use save point?

Save here? Are you sure you want to overwrite? Continue playing? This isn't really a problem today with auto save features. The idea I'm pushing is to streamline interfaces to use the fewest button presses as possible. Or if an action is used regularly then an audio or visual confirmation is enough; you don't need a text message to say "action complete". Sometimes it's the other way around; if the player can see their HP is low then they don't need a flashing red screen and alarming sounds to remind the player.

Take a number: Please wait your turn

It's pretty common in online games to buffer advancement with cooldowns and wait times so if the player will have to keep coming back. And it's not a bad idea to limit the use of a super powered attack so it's not used every battle. But if there isn't a good reason to stop the player from doing something then they shouldn't be. If the player has to wait for the game's nightfall, they should have an option to advance time quickly.

Going back to fetch quests and repetitive messages. If the player already has the item or a series of times that an NPC will ask for then the dialog should progress seamlessly without the player needing to talk to the npc a second or third time unless the npc moves to a new location as a result. If it doesn't move then there's no reason to leave the area or "comeback later" unless the game uses a time mechanic.



If your game's playing loose with time mechanics to begin with, as in Grand Theft Auto,, notions of having to wait for certain times are largely pointless.

by CoyoteCraft

Affiliates

At present we only have two affiliates who actively link back to us: Chaos Project and the RPG Maker Resource Kit.

If you run an active site and think both we and yourself could benefit from link sharing please drop us a link and we'll discuss it.



Of course, affiliation means more than just link sharing, and we're always on the look out for new websites to work together with on events and other such shenanigans. We're especially interested in websites which are partially related, but not necessarily game-making oriented, in order for us both to reach wider audiences.

Discover content that's been missed using the "view unanswered posts" link at the bottom of the forum homepage.

Steal this Issue

Please feel free to share this and other issues of the eZine around the net, amongst friends, host it on your website, etc. All we ask is that you do not edit it in any way and do not claim anything as your own that isn't; other than that it's designed to be shared (as is *Advanced RPG Maker*).

Music Festival: Final Act

Over the past few weeks, music making and listening has been celebrated in a mini-event revolving around a music festival. People flocked from far and wide (ish) to post their tracks and enjoy others'.

A poll is now up to decide who wins, please vote if you can, we're short on them!

In the themed board you'll find awesome music by various people who took part in the event. Despite being over but for the poll, you're still welcome to participate of course!

Once the prizes are dished out following the poll the board will likely be broken up with content going to appropriate boards depending on what it is.

Q 918518

HBGAMES THE VIDEOGAME

Check out *HBGames the Videogame*, by Jason, Potion and Melanii.

A game based on the forum and its members, It's in the concept development board for now, and it's sounding interesting, especially Xilef's comments on how to take it further. Watch this space!

Q 918484



Q 918061

Agapan is a commercial RPG Maker game trying to get Steam Greenlit. As an interactive story, you choose your own path through the game, leading to dozens of different endings.

Written and Designed by Ivan Mendez, the game features beautiful drawings and graphics, mixed in with its own soundtrack.

Gender Free Gaming?

A friend remarked that they wanted to create a world for a game in which women are oppressed, a world of witch hunts and a patriarchal society, in order to have the main character, a girl, build her character in this harsh environment. The aim would be to show the struggles women face, and that you can still be strong in a world like this.

Which is alright. It's their game.

It led me to have the opposite thought, however. What about a world in which gender was completely not an issue, to such an extent that it would not matter what gender the main character (or any other character) was. Love, trial and punishment, opportunity, leadership - all of it would be available to anybody. In essence it wouldn't be a gender equal game because there would be no genders to equalise: it would be a gender-free game.

To a large extent I have tried to implement this in *Afar*, to varying success. Due to some confusion about the English language some dialogues end up muddled but for the most part it's quite easy to remove any mention of gender from the screenplay. As an MMORPG one of the first options available to a player is gender: male or female decides so much

in games such as *Guild Wars* or *RuneScape*: your entire wardrobe is decided by what option you chose that early on and quests and other events are based around this.

By not having this option a lot more freedom is given to the player. Should they want to wear a dress or a top hat they can do, regardless of their gender.

Graphics

Faces are available to everybody. Some are androgynous. Others are, at first glance, genderised - beards, long hair, make-up - until you realise these are themselves not actually gendered traits if they don't need to be. Anybody can have a beard, anybody can have long hair. Leave that decision up to the player and not on whether they chose male or female and suddenly there is a lot more variety available in the game.

Word Choices

It's a complete misunderstanding that the English language has no gender-neutral words. This is pushed by people such as Richard Dawkins who think that they must use He or She when referring to anonymous people whose gender is unknown, but they're, in short wrong

The gender neutral words "they", "their", "them" are and always have been perfectly acceptable; it is a modern idea that only He or She are usable in official contexts. There is no immediate need for often mocked gender-neutral pronouns such as Xe or Schklee.

The problem with these pronouns is they're not *just* singular: "they" can mean one person or it can mean a group. However, to say it cannot be used as a singular because it's ambiguous is hypocritical when deciding it's acceptable as a group (despite still being ambiguous in the same way).

Throughout Afar I replaced any mention of He or She with They. It can be a little jarring especially to people to whom English is not their first language, but it is grammatically correct.

Use in real games

Angroginity has often been central to Japanese games and J-RPGs, if only in the design of characters and the clothing worn.

"What if Link was a girl?" is often asked, but what if Link was neither? What if we were never told - would it be a problem? For the most part the games would play exactly the same, it would just need a few word choices changing.

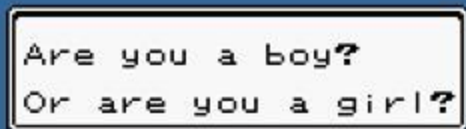
Some games do go as far as not telling you the gender altogether however.



The best example is Leo Kliesen, a playable character in *Tekken 6* and other games in the series. Leo is referred to by name alone or gender-neutral pronouns and has no costumes that reveal the torso, unlike other female characters, and is able to select female hair options, attacked by Anna's Slap Happy attack (only available against male characters), can equip male only items such as sledgehammers, and can be customised in *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* to look like female Sora from *Kingdom Hearts* or the male Indiana Jones.

The development team stated they wanted to develop a character who would be loved by fans regardless of their gender and so purposefully made them gender ambiguous.

While they go a large way to make this happen they fall short of actually gender neutralising the game. Why are sledgehammers male-only weapons? Why do characters have attacks that can only be used against certain genders?



Can it be done?

In conclusion, gender-free games are certainly possible. There are many ways to do it and creating a society within a game that does not bias based on gender is easy. Simply neglecting to ask the player their gender is even easier, and completely unnecessary if you have customisation options. (Why not let every player choose every possible combination? Don't limit yourself!)

Should it be done?

I am by no means saying this is the future of gaming. If your game doesn't suit it, don't employ it. But it *can* be done and in the context of MMORPGs is a logical future move.

More and more gender is becoming less of an issue in our society. Maybe our games will come to reflect this, or maybe games will be used, as in my original tangent, as a way of portraying worlds where gender *is* an issue, as a warning or simply as a plot device. We can enjoy World War II films despite not agreeing with the things going on.



Forum Changes

The RPG Maker boards have had a bit of a reshuffle, and work well as their own identified zone rather than just an afterthought. They are now accessible via www.arpgmaker.com, and their page titles have been changed to reflect that they're the RPG Maker section, which should hopefully positively affect Google rankings amongst other things. They still function as an integral part of HBGames.org and nothing has changed with that respect.

Welcomes

We'd like to welcome back **Skyla Doragono** after her absence, and also welcome back **Xamusel** who has already made an impact in the IRC channel.

Other Engines

Please feel free to post content for engines that aren't RPG Maker - we're still the site for that. If you can think of good ideas for special events to cover from them, let us know, and if you want to write for the eZine about another engine we'd welcome it with open arms.



The first issue of *Advanced RPG Maker* has been released and so far has gone down well around the net, with useful feedback received. See it at its new site: www.arpgmaker.com

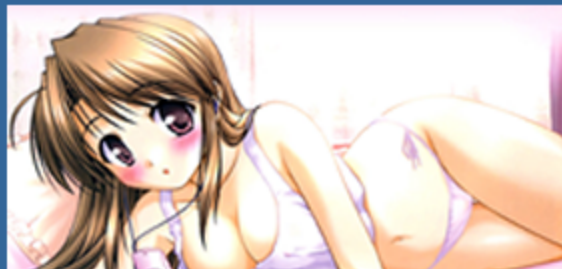
If you've ever spent some time searching for RPG Maker graphics on Google Images you will probably have noticed there is a pretty big community out there devoted to adult games in RPG Maker. Some are dating games, others are hentai choose-your-own-adventure fests, others are normal looking games with sex thrown in. Personally I have never had much of a problem with sex in games, although quite obviously a lot of people do. All the same, it's always seemed weird to me that the two scenes - the English RPG Maker communities on the web and the apparent sex oriented game making world - have never mixed.

Are sex games allowed on HBGames?

Yes! However, there are some conditions.



1. Use the "NSFW" topic icon.
2. Tell us explicitly what we're getting into in the thread.
3. Any explicit content should be in spoilers. Consider people arriving via Google, searching on the forums, or waltzing in unexpectedly. Any spoilers containing such content should be marked as so.



Mapping Contest

In 2010, Bacon held two mapping contests. The second, in June, got a great deal of entries, but they never featured in an eZine, so here are the best in all their glory.



We're holding a new mapping contest along a similar vein, the thread can be found at this QJ Code: **QJ 918636** the best entries will be featured in the next issue of the HBGames.org eZine!

*Something Old, Something New
Something Borrowed, Something Blue*

On May 1st HBGames members got together to redesign the site, giving it a fresh new look, the site's first blue theme for five years (having previously always been blue). Thanks to help from Xilef, Jason, Perihelion and others we came upon the perfect blend, using Xilef's accents on topic icons and such to provide a more graphical view and using complimentary colours to better highlight new posts and new content.

There are now handy buttons on the homepage linking to a variety of places, and various other little edits, such as properly compressing images, restyling board links and page titles, and some new additions to the board header randomisatronics, the forum is now fresh and crisp following the previous red skin.

This isn't it though - your comments are more than welcome to improve on it in the future. The site is built around you!

QJ 918783

HBGAMES
Where nobody knows you're a dog

Home Forums Chat Arcade Gamemaker Downloads Donate Rules Adv. Search

Logged in as: Princess Amy (Logout)

HBGames.ORG

User Panel - Mod Panel - New Posts - My Posts - 0 new messages

Hey, we're on Facebook! Holy crap, we're on Twitter now, too!

Administrative (hide)

Forum

Staff Forum
The staff zone is for staff or ex-staff. If you're staff or ex-staff, go to the staff zone. It's a way of life.
Moderator Forum, Administrator Forum

Topic	Posts	Last
9023	94230	26 Apr 2014, 05:11 In: New Report! By: ZenivZan

Community Center (hide)

Forum

EVENT: HBGames Music Festival

Announcements and Updates
Announcements from the staff regarding site and forum news and other official information.
The eZine, Site Discussion, Archived

Topic	Posts	Last
20	91	01 May 2014, 11:15 In: Re: F Music Festival Clos... By: Princess Amy

Game of the Year

It's that time of the year - where we pick out one game to rule them all - the HBGames.org Game of the Year ceremony. Game of the Year is a time when we look at not just one game in particular (our overall winner) but all of the games made this year, a retrospective look at the productivity of the forum. There have been some great titles this time around.

During the next month you can vote in a poll in the News and Announcements board at HBGames.org. You are able to choose any three games from the Completed Games forum this year (and can change your mind later on should you so wish). At the end of the poll, which will be just before the next issue of the eZine, the votes will be tallied up and the game with the most votes will be crowned Game of the Year 2013.

The winner will be announced in eZine issue 20 in June 2014.

There have been 29 games released this time around, which is one or two less than last year. We've stayed around that mark for the past four years so there has been very little change in productivity (which is good). Hopefully however 2014 will see even more great games.

Quantity is no measure of quality however, and as you can probably imagine, some games are better than

others this time around. Some are short minigames, others are epics which have taken years to produce. Choose wisely!

Quality Street

Looking through this year's games you'll probably tell that we've started to get a little lax with the rules and the quality expected from our game threads. This was a mistake, and from now on we *will* be enforcing standards on game threads.

That's nothing big and scary! - All it means is that we require **screenshots**, some **brief information**, and essentially simply more than just a download link, as is the case with a few games in this year's list. Vote with your finger - make sure the best games win - and next time around the quality will improve a thousandfold.

See *Advanced RPG Maker* issue 1 for an article on game project thread design, and don't be afraid to ask for help!

All games are accepted at HBGames.org, any engine, any size.

Game of the Year

Here's the full list of games released in the period being looked at for the poll, which can be found in the News and Announcements board on the forums.

Mini Crown	KaBOOM	QJ	896435
Rianon: The Search for the Stone Statue	Conect11	QJ	897555
Super T: Open the New World	duckentertainment	QJ	897638
The Dolls - Mystic Forest	hin oxa	QJ	896658
Autopsy: The Seventh Curse	stiven202	QJ	898146
No-one has to die	Pokemaniac	QJ	896815
Seeds of War	SeedsOfwar	QJ	901187
Water to the Deep	utanimo	QJ	901664
Doras Adventure: The Horror Quest	Draf	QJ	905650
Gaping Ridgequest 3-2 And the Quartx	Bluxxon	QJ	899550
Secret of Stormlot	sonixZ	QJ	907230
Love and War: Act I	Admiral Styles	QJ	906845
Castles at War	freezing_rain	QJ	910019
Lost Greenlight	Isumi	QJ	911090
Nightmare Johnny	Red-cube	QJ	911483
The Ultimate Saga	Reygekan	QJ	912509
Enix 1: Legend of the Hero	Erichermit	QJ	913502
Act of Terror: Season 1	freezing_rain	QJ	910295
Kawa Kara Kaiju!!!	The_Frenzy	QJ	913054
Divide by Zero	wholetonegames	QJ	914524
Jesus Christ RPG Trilogy	wholetonegames	QJ	914522
Sida Semen	Draf	QJ	916018
The Hermit	SleepingDuck	QJ	915022
Fractus Stellarum	Injury	QJ	913768
Construct Castles at War	freezing_rain	QJ	914343
The Lantern Collector	Rob_Riv	QJ	916192
Space Circle Arcade	Drago del Fato	QJ	916756
Xeostar 2	9robin3	QJ	908163
Agapan	Kursed1771	QJ	918061

SPOTLIGHT



Menu system by CoyoteCraft **QJ** 918462



Peyot War, parody by Gerttunk **QJ** 918534



QJ 917871



Persona meets Pokemon, Skyla Doragono

QJ 918328



QJ 918132

Screen resources by CoyoteCraft

Melanii **QJ 918033**



Bizarre Monkey

QJ 917802



Pixel art by Perihellion; amongst other work in her thread:

QJ 916768

THANKS FOR READING

(Cheers for Guildford and Basingstoke too, but you can keep Slough)



This is the part where we lay eZine covers on top of each other to waste space and advertise ourselves, even though the chances of finding this anywhere other than HBGames is pretty slim.

Look! Look at all the issues we made!

The next issue, due around June 1st 2014, will be the twentieth issue made so might be a bit special. Or might not! Exciting!

If you have any submissions, as always, just send them to Amy and they'll feature.

We rely on your submissions and content to stay afloat - but you don't need to submit stuff to the eZine to help. Just post around on the forums. Screenshots, videos, maps and other content can feature in the eZine, which is simply a summary of everything going on at HBGames.org.

Please consider donating if you have the time and money, as we are a not-for-profit and rely on member or staff donations to stay online!

Thanks to everybody whose content has featured.

Not happy with our content or style?

Say something!

We can only act on the feedback, comments and criticism we receive from you guys. Please let us know if we're doing a bad job and we'll strive to improve.

If something hasn't featured that you think is fantastic just let us know, we might not have spotted it. It doesn't matter if you made it or someone else.