Behind the Scenes on
The RMXP Episodes
You've downloaded Akasha Seal and Viaggio Scuro , now hear what these prospective creators have to say about Playable RMXP Movies

Read on Page 7
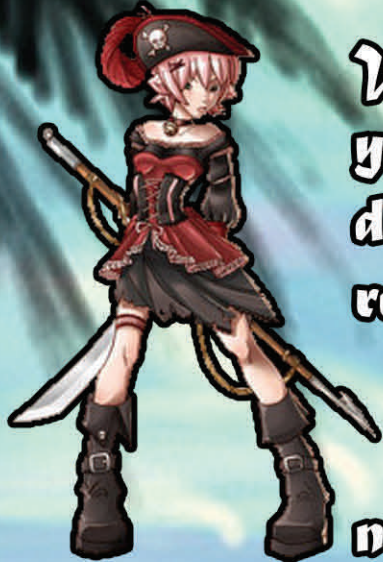
Interview with a Spriter...
Zanyzora
Read on Page 10
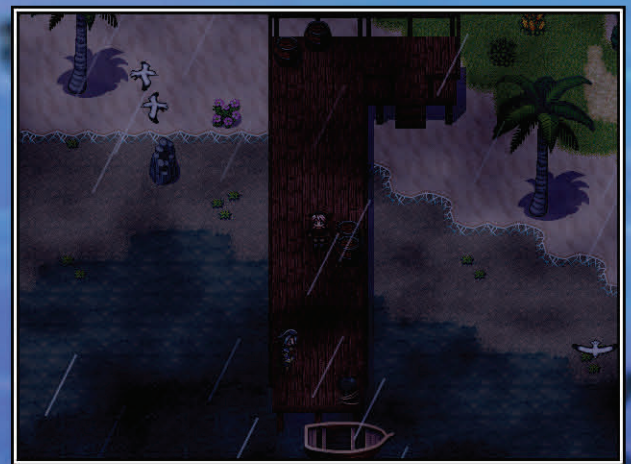
From Sea to Sky

A Charm Designs Project

When fate has spoken to you since your young age, it is only natural you'll journey deep into the mysteries of the world, and reveal hidden truths about its origins.

Meet courageous friends and near psychopathic rivals in your quest to set things right, in the name of all that is natural. The threat of Technology fuels your desire to put out the fires of the industrialized empire.

Aegean attacks Frog for 195 damage
Frog hits Aislinn with Water for 186
Aislinn hits Frog with Fire for 1874
Spider defends
Aegean heals Aislinn with Heal for 574

active

Aislinn
L: 509/695
S: 516/591
ready

Aegean
L: 741/741
S: 454/534
ready

Attack
Defend
Skill
Flee

Unique Battle Engine

Enhanced RTP Graphics

Table of Contents

Needs You

If you're interested in either writing an article for the E-zine or helping out as a staff member, you should post in the E-zine Forum @ RMXP.net or PM **Lene** as soon as possible. The more people willing to help, the better the E-zine will be!

Check it Out!

Rmxp.net's Hot Topics

RMXP.net News Update

http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=26380

There is a new skin option on the forums called "Skin 2.0 Icon Test" featuring icons created by our own Illustrationism. If you haven't voted on them already, be sure to check out this thread.

Could it Be True?!

http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=25573

The members discuss the possibility of a translated version of the popular Japanese RMXP sample game, White Ties. There are also mentions about starting a translation project on the Forums.

Legal and Loving It!

http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=25876

Want to win a free and perfectly legal English Version of RMXP? Then go see what this contest ran by Spivurno is all about.

Youth for Understanding

http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=23507

RMXP.net's own Soad brings up Youth for Understanding a year-long exchange student program and wonders what people think about this program. Want to help Soad out? Check out this thread.

Anti-Conformity

http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=26055

Chubbly leads a discussion on Anti-Conformity, with the question "What is a true Anti-Conformist?". If you think you have an answer to that question, why don't you post in the thread?

compiled by Lene

Community News

Written by: Chubbly

I must say it has been a somewhat eventful month. Not just for RMXP.net but for the entire world. But first off, let me bring up some recent events on the forum.

The biggest one, is the return of the mentally incapable Pumpkin King a.k.a Lapansee a.k.a Duplicate a.k.a Jack Skellington a.k.a...well you get the picture. TREG gave him a warm welcome...just kidding. Lapansee really needs to get a life.
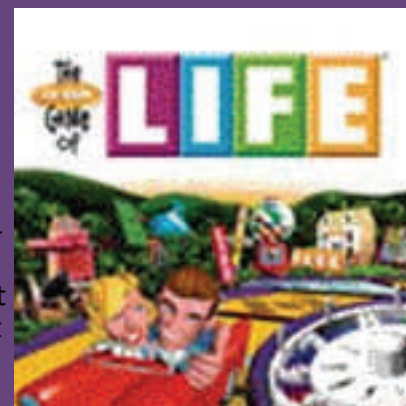
No Lapansee, <u>this</u> does not count...

With that aside, I'd say our Symposium is getting tons of attention. Topics about topics kids are reading and Tatoos and other "stuff" It's worth a read and a post.

Let me also remind readers that Warez, ROMs, and other illegal software is not allowed to be discussed. It's in the rules, I encourage you read them. Oh yeah, and while I'm on the topic, buy the English Version of RPG Maker XP. I remember a post saying you'll be in trouble if you use any translation, or pirated copy of it.

Anyone play Akasha Seal yet? 5 out of 5 Stars for the topic. A great download if you got some time to kill.

All right, now onto some huge issues. First up is Hurricane Wilma. Said to be the strongest in history AS WELL as coming one step closer to breaking the record of most hurricanes in a single year. Notice how it's Wilma with a Double-U? For everyone in the places it's predicted to strike in, stay safe.

And I'll leave it at that. Have a nice month.

The Gods of Terra: The Fifth Dragon

The FDDT needs you!
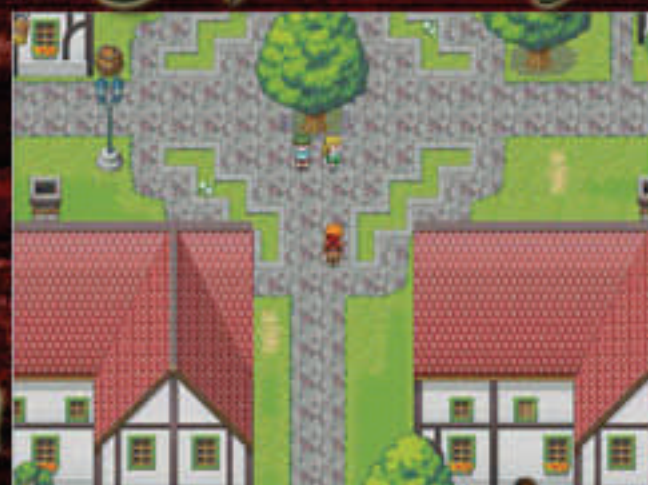
We are looking for experienced people to join the Fifth Dragon Development Team.

Available positions are:

- Sprite Designer
- Battler Designer
- Music Artist
- And much more!
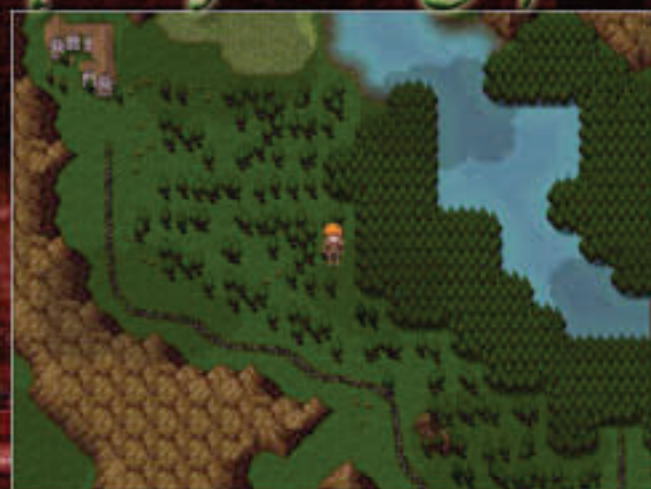
For full recruitment information, please visit http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=15536

For full game information, please visit thefifthdragon.coconia.net

Expected Features:
- Custom CMS
- Custom CBS
- Custom Sprites and Battlers
- Several Custom Scripts by Tails07
- And More...

Title Ratings
Compiled by The cry of Fallen Angels

Member: Hmaddict **Project Title**: The Gods of Terra
Member Explanation: My game revolves around the gods of Terra (the Planet).
Title to Story Correlation: Well, that's kind of obvious. Just like the member explained. Yet I'd like something else. You can call a game Brian when the main character's name is Brian, but it won't give you anything to add to the story.
Title Sound: The title sounds good. Maybe name it Gods of Terra, without the "the". But that's my personal taste.
Word Usage: You won't find these words in many titles, at least I don't know anything that comes near except for God of War at the moment.
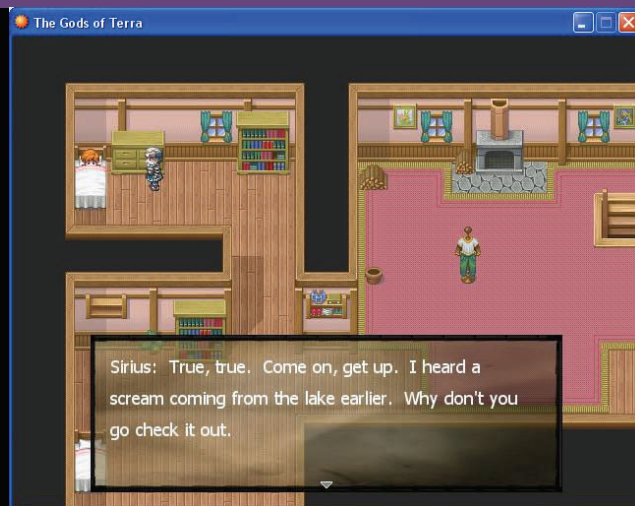
Score:
Title to Story Correlation: 31/60
Title Sound: 15/20
Word Usage: 17/20
Overall score: 68/100 A fine title, not anything special though.

Member: Arkayne **Project Title**: Eternal Dreams
Member Explanation: The main character through a whole bunch of events, chooses the existence and the reality of his world using his mind. His nightmares can get the better of him, destroying everything that they think is 'fake' and 'nonexistent', or he can choose to destroy these nightmares and live in a world that was seemingly created by his mind (in other words, live in an eternal dream).
Title to Story Correlation: Well, it is deep, I have to admit that. I'd like to see how it's done in game. Bit like the Matrix.
Title Sound: It doesn't sound great, all I have to say. Eternal dreams, try saying it out loud, and listen how the words combine.
Word Usage: Arkayne used the words Eternal, and Dreams. Which is cliché. Everyone just go and look how many times those 2 words are used for names. Especially eternal… Sorry, nothing positive to say about that.

Score:
Title to Story Correlation: 60/60
Title Sound: 5/20
Word Usage: 1/20
Overall score: 66/100. It's a shame the last 2 points ruined it. The link is superb, and when playing the game, you should be able to see through the title while proceeding in the game.

Member: ..::D::.. **Project Title**: Genesis Gemini
Member Explanation: It means "Twins Reborn" And it falls into the game through twin gods, who are both dead, who if were reborn would trigger a second Ragnarok.
Title to Story Correlation: A hard one indeed. I don't really know what to say. The hero should make sure the Gods won't be reborn, I suppose…
Title Sound: The title sounds fine to me, no objections here.
Word Usage: I feel real familiar with these words. I suppose they're Latin. But something says me I've seen this many times before… You'll get the benefit of the doubt.

Score:
Title to Story Correlation: 30/60
Title Sound: 15/20
Word Usage: 15/20
Overall score: 60/10 Not bad, just that the description was too

The RMXP Episode Phenomenon
Interview Conducted by: Andy6000

Some of you are probably wondering 'What is a RMXP Episode?' Well, a 'RMXP Episode' is not a game. It is a story, much like watching an episode of a TV series, but instead uses the RMXP game engine as a vehicle for its plot. It is similar to a 'choose your own adventure' game, only there is no choosing; you simply watch one long cutscene.

Andy6000: Why did you think up using episodes in the first place?

SK (SK): Well, the idea is not originally mine, though some people tend to stick me with it. I originally saw the concept of using an RPG maker as a medium for a fanfic, with a game called 'Maranda' for RM2K. It was a Final Fantasy III(VI) fanfic, by a guy named Brickroad. He also made a Chrono Trigger 'fanfic' in the same fashion, called "With His Fathers Sword." It was something I always wanted to do, but I could never do what I wanted with RM2K's interface. It just didn't have the freedom to use the kind of cinematographic techniques I wanted. So this was a long time coming.

Psgels (P): Well, mainly because yours and Kitty's were such a big success, and I had this story in my mind for quite a while.

VE (VE): I've always liked the idea of creating a "movie" of sorts. I love the visual direction side of RPG creation and I think the whole "episode" thing could open up a whole new realm of possibilities.

TREG (T): I thought of using episodes in the first place when I was informed that there were several people I knew were making them. They pretty much harangued me into the idea, though I'm finding I like it.

Lene (L): Because SK and Val [VE] were like "Do it!"

Andy6000: What advantages over a normal, playable, RMXP game do these episodes have?

SK: The biggest problem I face in my playable games, is giving the player an opportunity to play! Story and characters always takes priority for me, and sometimes it's difficult to remember that I can't bore people to tears between cutscenes. But, with Akasha Seal, I can get by and make no promises about interaction, balanced battles, or bug-free systems.

P: It means less work for the creator, when looking at custom scripts, battle systems, etc. The creator also isn't bounded by the fact that random battles, or other kinds of interactions with the player have to encounter, thus having more freedom. I also see that the episodes individually don't take too long, so someone can just watch it whenever they like, instead of playing a very long game/demo.

VE: I think the episode method allows for more freedom in the story. You can do pretty much whatever you want with it, and you don't have to worry about being tied down to any main characters or gameplay elements.

T: The advantage over normal RMXP games is that, quite frankly, I'm a lazy little b*****d and it's much easier to fake a battle scene using events than with an actual script.

L: The fact that you're able to see a completed result in a shorter amount of time. Plus you can be lazy about the more tedious aspects of RMXP.

SK: Most definitely. There are simply some things you can achieve with an episode in which you aren't acting through the role of the main character, that you can't in a game. It allows you to have a main character who has secrets that are unbeknownst to the watcher...Things that would influence the player if they knew. But since they have no part in the main character's actions, the main character can still surprise them.

SK (Continued): And as for graphics, it's a godsend to be able to create new tiles without having to worry about how the player will move around them, passabilities, and the dreaded priorities.

P: Well, it does give the opportunity for more intense story. In the way of the episodes, the plot doesn't pause because the player needs to navigate through dungeons, which allows for faster story pacing, which allows for (if used well) more Intense storylines. About the graphical usage: I believe that the episode will cause much less lag than an actual game, and that means that the creator can use the resources and graphics more free.

VE: I think it's a bit of both. The episodes certainly allow more graphical freedom, since less time needs to be spent on gameplay, scripting, databasing etc. But I think the focus of these is definitely on the story.

T: I see these episodes as a chance to use flashy cell-shaded explosions and lots of cool bloody effects to make up for the fact that my storyline is a weak rehash of Metal Gear Solid thrown in with cheesy music. After all, if you can't make a great and interesting storyline, make them ogle the pretty effects.

L: I see the episodes as more geared towards conveying a well-developed story. While graphics are nice, I don't think a lot of these episodes will feature original graphics, but rather try to make the most out of the RTP as possible without going overboard.

SK: I think voice acting is a good thing... But it just isn't for me. Akasha Seal's cast is far too large, there are going to be too many episodes to keep VAs for such a long haul, and to be honest, I want everyone to be able to hear the character's voices in their mind... And I don't want a VA to change their opinion of the way they think a character is. Brickroad didn't need voiceactors to make Maranda an interesting movie... I don't think Akasha Seal needs them. If I were to go that extra step, why not just make the episodes in flash? I chose RMXP as my series's engine because I like the feel of it, it's not something I want to stray *too* far away from.

P: The fact is, that all these voices need actors. And if you have a bit of a big cast (which I happen to have) it seems nearly impossible to record all of it. Another reason is that my episode plans to take about twenty minutes. If all the dialogue in that would be saved in an mp3 file, and that for each episode, then the size of the file in total would be enormous. Especially when you want to have good quality.

VE: I don't see anything wrong with voice acting, but I think it would be very time consuming and draining, especially when you can convey just as much emotion using a powerful musical score and written dialogue.

T: I'd say voice acting is tremendously difficult to coordinate in unison with your events and actions on the screen. Besides, I haven't seen the voice actor who can do my dialogue with a straight face.

L: Nope, I could probably swing voice acting in my episode if I really wanted to. Maybe in a later episode when I have more story written out. The problem with voice acting is that you need to prepare a lot of the script in advance before holding auditions and things like that. If you don't have a script planned out then you have a very good chance of losing your voice actors' interest.

Andy6000: What do you say to nay-sayers who make the accusation that RPG Maker XP is for making games only?

SK: I think they need to get their heads out of their collective butts. =^n_n^=

P: I'll say that RMXP was designed to be an RPG maker. This doesn't mean, however, that it can't be used for other purposes. there isn't anything wrong with typing between the lines. Furthermore, the episodes actually produce some worthwile results on short notice, instead of the ten-minute demo's you see all over the project threads nowadays.

VE: RPG Maker XP is a tool. What people use if for is their own business, and so long as people enjoy it, who cares. I say "Nay" to said nay-sayers! HA!

T: I'd direct them to go and deliver their arguments to VE. Last time I'll see them ever again.

L: Err...If it is possible to do something like this in RMXP, then I don't see why not? I mean RMXP wasn't made for MMORPGS and look what happened there.

So far there have only been two RMXP Episode Series released on the forums. You can learn more about these projects by reading the information below:

Akasha Seal Project Thread:
http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=24921

Viaggio Scuro Project Thread:
http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showtopic=25156

Soldier

"Lady Meier! She isn't here! The Hell Knight is gone."

It's a troubling thing when one doesn't know his own thoughts or motivations... Even more troubling when that person has power...
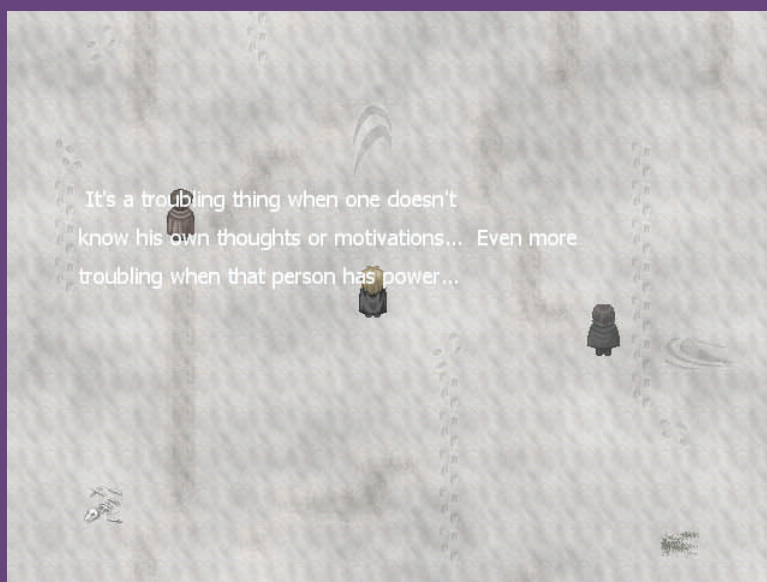
Interview With a Spriter
Written By: Knight of Elcar

Knight of Elcar (KoE): What's your name?

Zanyzora (ZZ): Dianne James

KoE:Where do you come from?

ZZ: I'm from New York City

KoE: How did you come to discover RMXP.net?

ZZ: I was googleing around looking for info on RMXP and found rmxp.net. I registered and it didn't take long for me to get hooked on this friendly and helpful community.

KoE: Was spriting initially what you where interested?

ZZ: Actually, at first, I was more interested in just learning how to make events and learn to map. Then I found the resource board and thought "I can make stuff like thei"..and the rest is history. My first stuff really was bad! But people gave really constructive criticism and got me on track.

KoE: How has RMXP helped you?

ZZ: I've learned a great deal from studying the styles of some of the really talented artists here, especially MimeSong, satana_81, ScriptKitty, Euphony, ccoa, sparkiness and so many more. I still have a great deal to learn, but being part of this community has given me so much support and encouragement. I am always amazed at the wealth of talent here.

KoE: How did you come to have such amazing spriting ability?

ZZ: Amazing..hmmm..I'm not sure about that. I make what I like and a lot of it is not useable for those sticking with the RTP graphics. I'm an artist by profession tho. I'm a textile Designer for a medium size garment producer in NYC. Like most areas of commercial art, textile design now relies greatly on digital imaging.

KoE: What don't you like about spriting?

ZZ: It's soooo hard on the eyes!

KoE: How did you react when the news of an English RMXP?

ZZ: I was thrilled! I did the Snoopy Dance of Joy!

KoE: Why do you think Enterbrain chose to release RMXP now after a long time of wait?

ZZ: I'm assuming you mean the English version? Hard to say, but my guess is they realized that they were losing out on the largest market in the world. Making money is what any company is all about.

KoE: What do you think of the gaming industry as it is today?

ZZ: What can I say? The advances that have been made in gaming in the past 20 years are nothing short of amazing. My first console was a ColecoVision..yep..I'm THAT old.. I literally played my way, first hand, through all the changes. The problem I see with gaming today is the emphasis on special effects and gorgeous graphics, often at the expense of gameplay. Just like the movie industry, once a company has a hit, they tend to glomm onto the idea and churn out sequel after sequel with little change in the storyline or mechanics. Very often, a game is rushed to market and is full of bugs, which require patching, altho, gamers DO enjoy exploiting those bugs, don't they? So many of the games I grew up with are classics today. How many of today's games will enjoy the same popularity 20 years down the pike?

KoE: What do you think of the community?

ZZ: I love this place! I have been a member of other large communities in the past. I moderated the very busy Zelda Board at cheatplanet.com for 3 years. But...I have never encountered such a well organized, friendly group as we have here! VIVA RMXP.NET!

KoE: What do you think of the administration and moderating team?

ZZ: rmxp.net has the most professional staff I have ever encountered. There is very little conflict among staff members, and they all really put in their time here, making sure the forums run well and are fun and a safe and friendly place to be.

KoE: Have any final comments?

ZZ: I'd like to thank you for choosing me for this interview. It was fun. I'd also like to express my gratitude to our members here, for all they do to make this place such a great place to be.

You can see all of Zanyzora's work in the
User Submitted Resources Forum at RMXP.net.
http://www.rmxp.net/forums/index.php?showforum=23

Drawing in Manga Style
by Veridianedge

Hello, and welcome to my humble little manga art tutorial. I, Veridianedge, will be your host throughout this little adventure into drawing. I'm hoping that this will inspire people to create their own unique face and battler graphics, adding personality and originality to their projects and games. Perhaps you've never drawn before, or perhaps you're a veteran artist just looking for a refresher course... no matter what the case, I hope this tutorial helps in some way.

Now that we have introductions out of the way, get out your pencils and erasers, kids... the first lesson is about to start. *taps ruler on chalkboard*

Lesson 1 - Basics of the Face

The face is one of our most important features. It's usually the easiest way to identify a person, and it allows us to show others how we are feeling. These facts make the face the best place to start when learning to draw a manga style.

In this lesson, I'll be covering the basic steps for constructing a face in front, profile, and 3/4s views. I've tried to keep the steps fairly open, so you can develop your own style rather than copying what I do line by line.

1.1 - The Front View

**Step 1** - Draw a circle. It doesn't have to be perfectly round or anything, just pretty close.

Step 2 - Draw two lines tangent to the circle, intersecting below it. The place where they intersect should be about the horizontal middle of the circle. The angle at which they intersect will help define the shape of the chin; a more obtuse angle will create a rounder, softer face, while a more acute angle will make the face sharper and harder.

Step 3 - Now it's time to add our basic guidelines. The first will be a straight line down the center of the circle, ending where the tangent lines intersect. This is the guide for the center of the face. Now, draw a horizontal line across the center of the circle. This is the guide for the top of the eyes. Add another line below it, about halfway between it and the bottom of the circle. This will be the guide for the bottom of the eyes.
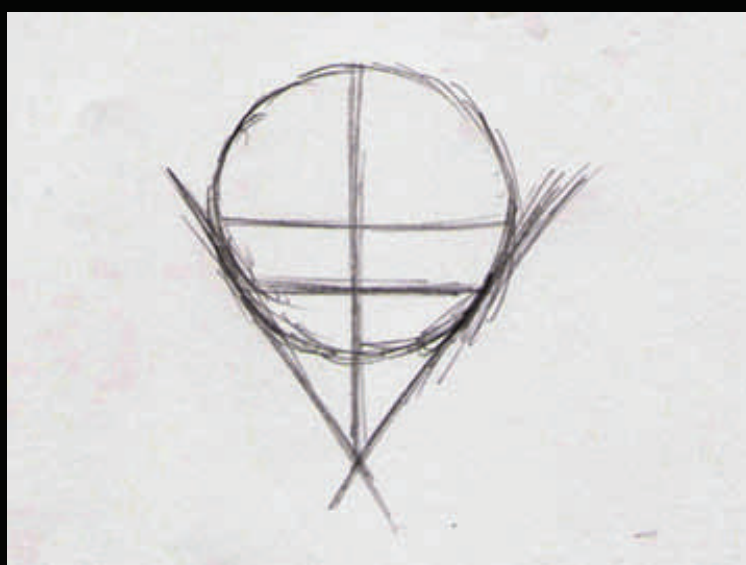
Step 4 - Our next goal is to start fleshing out the face. First thing I did was take a chunk off that sharp angle at the bottom where the tangent lines intersect. I rounded it out a bit, but left it relatively flat, because I wanted this character to have a fairly masculine jawline. Next, I drew rounded wedges using the the tangents as guides, placing the corners where the circle and lines intersect and where the chin line begins. Finally, I erased the excess of the lines, leaving only the primary shape I just created. Looks a lot more like a face now, doesn't it?
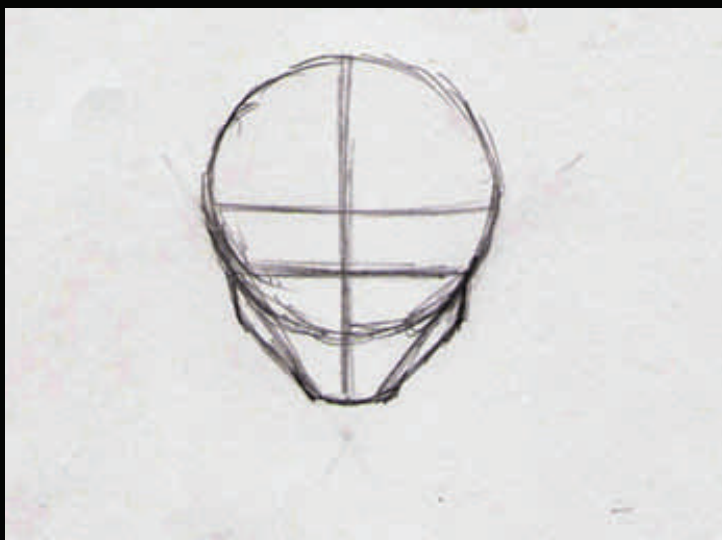
Step 5 - More guidelines need to be added before placing the actual facial features. First, erase everything inside that new shape except for the eye guides and center guide. Now, add a short notch halfway between the bottom eye guide and the chin. This is where the bottom of the character's nose will likely go. Make another notch halfway between the nose guide and the chin to show where the mouth will go. Now divide the area between the eye guides with four vertical lines, making sure that the three sections in the middle are about the same size, and the sections to the left and right of these are about half to two-thirds that size. These will complete the bounding boxes for your character's eyes. You may have noticed that I dropped the upper eye guide a bit; this is because I wanted this character to have slightly thinner eyes.
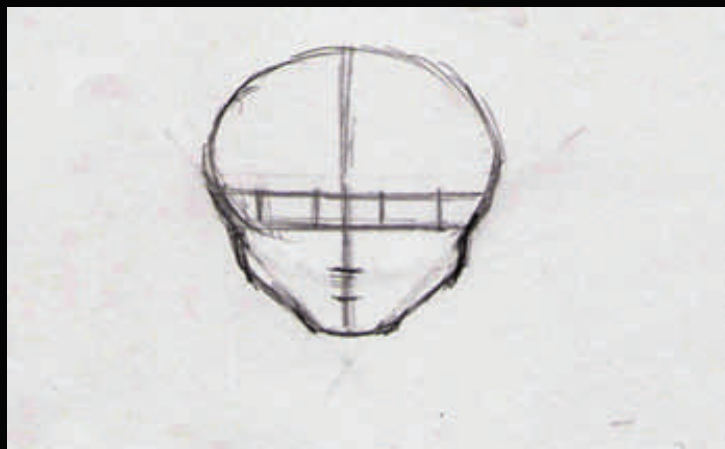
Step 6 - I know what you're thinking: "Woah, big jump! Where'd all that come from!?" Well, it looks like I added a lot, but I really didn't. All I did was draw in the eyes, nose, and mouth, using the guides to help in their placement. If you compare this step with the previous one, you'll see that each eye is in about the same place as the bounding boxes for the eyes used to be, and that the nose and mouth are at about the same place where I put the nose nothc and mouth notch. I'll go over the specific facial features in more detail in the next lesson. For the time being, though, use what you already know about facial features to place them how you will.

Step 7 - Now our character is really starting to take shape, isn't he? You'll see that I added hair, ears, and a chest. Admittedly, the neck is too thick, and there's no Adam's apple, but I think you're getting the idea, right? Note the extra lines within the hair... I left the curve of the skull and the hairline there to show that I placed them there. We're almost finished!

Step 8 - Finished! Here, I put more detail into the hair, added some age lines to the face, and put a crappy suit of armor over the guy's chest. If you compare this picture to the previous one, you'll notice that this guy seems to have aged about ten or fifteen years from the last image... I'll cover the aging process in a later lesson.

And so, there we have it: a completed front-view character face. In the next issue, I'll cover the side view.

Puzzles Part Two
Written by: Psgels

Well then, here I am again with the second part of my article about puzzles. This time I will talk a bit about mini-games, push the switch puzzles, ice-slide puzzles, and about puzzles in general. Like I mentioned before, puzzles are the things that keep your game interesting. You wouldn't want to have your player just beat up monsters. This will become repetitive after a while.

First, the mini-games. These are the most flexible puzzles, but also the hardest ones to create. You could, for example have a mining cart system. You'd have to pick the right order and route, or otherwise you'd get lost inside the mine or, even better, go around in circles. Pacman also did a good job in entertaining the player. What you have to know about the mini-games, is that they're very hard to make, and thus they should be used at some very challenging points of your game.
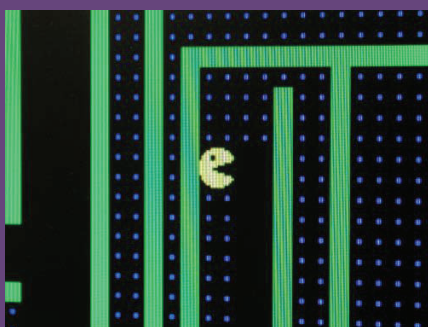
Then we get to another variant of puzzles—the push-the-switch puzzles. Basically, we have a switch that's pushed and a new door unlocks. The switch is, of course, well hidden. You could do this with some kind of plot event or you can use keys. You can even block the door with some kind of statue and make the player figure out that there is, in fact, a doorway behind it. This is also a very flexible variant of puzzles, but not a very challenging or flashy one. Another variation of this, is that you have an abandoned power plant, in which you'd have to push a button to activate it. Then the electricity works, and you can do lots of other events. It may be nicely packaged, but it still has the same concept of pushing a switch.

Most games nowadays also feature some kind of ice-slide puzzle. You're basically on a very slippery floor, blocked with obstacles, and you have to find your way to the exit. You'll notice that when you play one of these puzzles, that the hardest possible option is in most cases the one

which leads to the exit. The goal of these puzzles is fooling the player into thinking that he knows of every possible way, and then sneak a very well hidden other one in between. You should note that the area of the puzzle must not be too big and that there shouldn't be too many of those "hard points". You can, however, use all of your creativity into making the hard points as challenging as possible, to make the player feel that he really accomplished something when he finally solves it.

Then finally I'll give a few tips about puzzles in general. When you first start the game, the first puzzle should be challenging, but easy and short. Don't make it too long, especially not this early in the game. As your game progresses, try to make the puzzles harder, bigger and more challenging, and use the last dungeon for the most challenging puzzle of all. Also try to hide your puzzles. Don't give them a name tag, or make them say something like: "Hi there, I'm a puzzle. Please solve me." Try to blend them in with the environment. This way the player really feels that the puzzle and the game are one. You can do this with the help of the plot, but also the interact with the environment puzzles, discussed in the previous article, are very successful with this.

One of the easier ways to learn to make good puzzles is by learning from other games, for example professional ones. Take Golden Sun for instance, there are some of the best puzzles implemented and you hardly notice them. You also had a wide range of skills usable to solve those. The same goes with Zelda and the Minish Cap. There were lots of puzzles implemented and you had possession of about 20 different items to solve them. Zelda and the Minish cap, however made the mistake of not giving any information about how to use these things, which caused the player to wander around the world in the hope of finding something at certain times. So, when making puzzles, remember: provide a challenge, but do not create enough trees to make the player lose sight of the forest.

Yappertunes

As I type this, the blank page stares at me, screaming for me to type something. And believe me, you don't say no to Microsoft Word 2000, no sir...
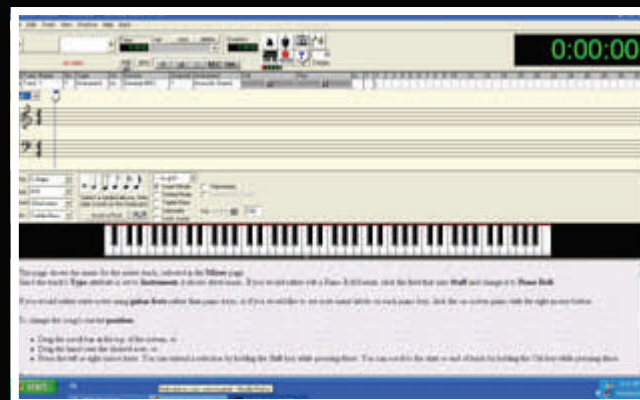
So, here I am, to teach those of you who do not make music, how to do so. All articles published in this column will need Anvil Studio. So why not get it now? You can download the latest version at www.anvilstudio.com.

Now, if you loaded a new song, you should see the "Mixer" screen. What you see is the list of tracks, or instruments, that play your song. You currently have only one, called "Track 1". It is playing an Acoustic Grand Piano. Click on it now, and hit "Compose". You will now see a "Staff", the lines. On this staff, you will make music. Below it, you see a piano keyboard. Let's get into a bit of musical discussion about it. The white keys are labeled, so they're easy. The black keys are different, they're *accidentals* (sharps and flats). To figure out which one they are, listen. You see the key between D and E? That can be called *D SHARP* (up one semitone) or *E FLAT* (down one semitone). The flat symbol looks kind of like a b, the sharp symbol, a #.

Each step between a key, and the key next to it is called a semitone. 12 semitones higher is a whole octave, so it would play the same note, except higher . All *MAJOR SCALES* are formed of this pattern: Tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone.

Why don't you click on C, and we'll check it out? A tone up is D, another is E, and a semitone makes F because there's no black key. You'll find that the C Major Key uses only the white keys.

To make a chord of two or more notes together, hold shift, and click to two notes. Experimenting with different chords tells you what works and what doesn't. For example, a C and an E will sound happy, a C and an E Flat sound sad, and a C and a D sound like a baby puking into a harmonica!

Now, when it comes time for instrument selection, a good rule of thumb is to have a bass type instrument. This instrument does not actually have to be a bass, it can be any instrument as long as it's notes stay on the lower range. Usually, this instrument is supposed to fade into the background and not be very loud.

By the way, for all you newbies out there, to make a new track (instrument) just select **Track > Create > Instrument** (or rhythm, but we'll learn about those another time). To change an instrument, just double click on the instrument selection on the mixer screen and pick the one you want. We've barely scratched the surface, and next time will feature some more Anvil exclusive stuff, and some more knowledge that applies to all music.

Tutorial: Caves
Written By: hmaddict

Okay, class. Today we will take a look at how to create a simple multiple-map cave with entrances and exits and a couple simple puzzles. Without using sense and a little imagination, you might end up with a single-map cavern like this.
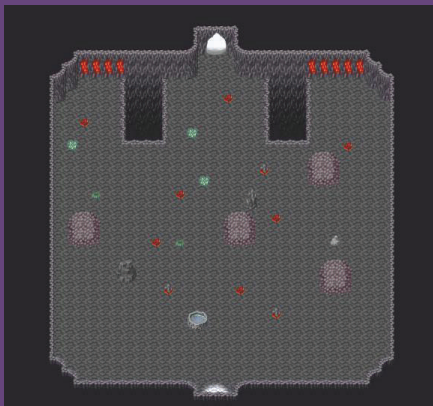
I've seen it happen! As you can see, it is an eye sore and will make you want to kill the mapper responsible.

The first thing to do is to set our map properties. A size of about 50x50 is appropriate for a small main cave. Set the tileset to anything with cave in the name (I used Fire Cave). Now we just have to name this cave. Anything will do. Now we get to start mapping!

On the lowest layer, lay down a few paths. Once they are how you like them, make a few of them wider. You should now have something like this:


The next thing to do is to put in your walls. Make sure that they're on the lowest layer possible. Note: the upper edge tiles MUST go on the 2nd or 3rd layer. Wow, we now have a simple cave that is a maze. Amazingly, you've now created your first puzzle. Go ahead and pat yourself on the back!

Now, add doors and some random junk. Note: you can effectively place random junk in a pattern so as to create a dead end in a seemingly open corridor (hallway). Be sure to include some treasure chests!

Using the above steps, you should be able to create some smaller open rooms to add. Make sure a couple of them have two entrances.

Now, all we have to do is to create our entrances, make one more puzzle, and link all of the rooms. Entrances should be made using the mountain tileset. Figure out where your door into the cave will be. Set wall tile near it and put in a path. Add some random stuff, including trees.
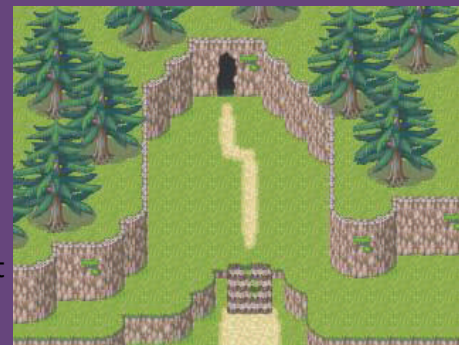

```
@>Text: Dou you want to touch the ball?
@>Show Choices: Yes, No
 : When [Yes]
 @>Play SE: '131-Earth03', 80, 50
 @>Control Switches: [0001] = ON
 @>Text: It sounds like a rock was moved.
 @>
 : When [No]
 @>
 : Branch End
@>
```

Now, go back to your main cave. Add one of the pole things that has a ball on top at a dead end. Go to the event layer and double-click on the base of the pole. The event page should end up looking like this:

Go back to your true exit form this room and set an event on each piece of that doorway. The graphics should be the same as that part of the door. They should all be set to Parallel Process. Go back to the layer you put the door and erase it. The event that shows the part of the door that the player would walk trough should have: Control Self Switch: A=ON in the event window. Create a new page and set it to Player Touch and Self Switch A is ON. In the event window, you should place: Transfer Player: (next map). The last thing to do is to connect all of your maps. Once you have done that, sit down and relax. You've finished your fist cave with a simple puzzle!

RMXP.net Fiction

Faces of Moon Written by Zanyzora

Smiles again, sweet crescent moon
For it is happy shining tonight;
When bandicoots dance, and owls croon
And stars shower forth,
their kindly light.

Frowns tonight, bitter crescent moon
Angry at the deeds that blacken the dark;
When the brave cower, and cowards swoon
And the stars shy down
only a handful spark

Hides away, mischievous moon
Laughing to itself-the night is full of love.
An old hag snorts, the nightingale picks a tune
And the stars glare enviously,
from the skies above.

Shines in pride, glorious full moon,
Illuminating earth, in a festival of light;
The air reminds, of a fragrant June,
And the stars bow low,
for, the moon is the Queen of the Night.

Goodnight My Love by Zanyzora

Slumber calls to me with a siren's song
beckoning, stretching out it's pale silver arms,
so like yours in the moonlight.
Powerless to resist I succumb
and melt into my dreams,
caressed by tender lullabies.
And there, across the star splashed sea
my life stands still,
and I see only you...your eyes,
your smile, your heart of fire.
I float blissfully among the memories.
In sleep, I am most perfectly yours.

The Wench By Zanyzora

I wish to be a saucy wench
and sit upon thy knee
beguile and bedevel thee
and shake my hair down free.
I want to dance away from thee
and turn and then dance near
and see the gleam within thine eyes
and thy husky breath to hear.
I wish for thee to utter "Wench!"
to reach and grab my hand
to look at me in only ways
that lovers understand.
I wish to dress in peasant blouse
and skirts designed to hide...
such lusty secrets 'neath their folds
where pleasure doth abide.
So come and be my shining Knight
in dashing pantomime
and pull me closely to thy chest
And crush thy lips to mine!
A saucy wench then I shall be
and my dream shall come true!
a modest maid for all to see,
And wench to only you.

As the Days Go By by Darthcourt

Lounging about in his new RTP land Alex sits in his chair patiently awaiting his 'sure to come climactic battle of Good Vs. Evil' that will eventually arise for him to face. On a whim he decides to go visit Gloria his girlfriend from that old Save the Town from the nasty Dragon adventure. He arrives at her Boxlike house and knocks. "Gloria! You in there?"

When noone answers He begins to get suspicious. "She wouldn't leave unless there was some heroic task that she had to tag along for. But if that was the case then why am I not there?"

He ponders this for a moment and begin to hear a fanfare of trumpets in the distance. "Why on earth would there be a fanfare when I haven   t done anything extremely heroic lately?"
He walks off to investigate the source. As he's walking he notices sign portraying the words, 'Our Hero the Great Vampire slayer!' This upsets him even more because he wasn't scheduled to slay a vampire until next week. He passes by some hurrying passerby, who bump into him without thought. This in itself was a surprise because normally if he was seen on the streets people would stop and bow to him. "Something is not right here," he muttered "And I, being the greatest (not to mention the only) Hero in the land must do something about it!"

Alex turns a corner and discovers A humongous Procession making its way down the street. As he peers around he notices Gloria swooning over a knight wearing copper armor that glinted when it caught the light. "That filthy %$#@!&! Why does she drool after this lowlife when the greatest hero that ever lived is in her presence!"

To Be Continued...

Delusions by Psgels
Chapter one: The Plan

The evening began to set in at Rivershore. It was a nice Sunday evening, in the middle of the summer. In contradiction with the previous summers, it had been lousy weather for the past few weeks. Today had, like all the previous days been a very rainy day, so everyone was spending their time inside. At that time, however, it was one of those rare moments that the clouds were gone, the sky clear and you could see the first stars appearing in the sky.

Rivershore was a nice and quiet town, surrounded by forests and hills. It had one main street, in which most of the shops resided. The street ended at the river called the Esther, which flows past the village at the northern side. Hence, that's why Rivershore is called that way. The main street is surrounded by a couple of blocks of houses, in which the residents of Rivershore live their daily lives. Beyond the Esther at the north lies a thick forest. Nobody ever comes there, and there isn't any bridge that leads to it. The east side of the village features a wide range of hills and trees. The children often go here to play with each other, including building tree houses. The animals also love these woods, squirrels are commonly spotted, and with a bit of luck you'll be able to see a rabbit or a deer. To the south, there's a road leading to neighboring cities. If one would walk at a fair pace, the nearest village could be reached in about an hour of walking. The road would also be surrounded by some beautiful looking hills. At the west, there aren't any hills, but there's just a flat forest. Many stories have been told about this forest. One example of this is comes from a couple of kids, about eight years ago: once they went playing deep in the forest, and they encountered a strange looking structure, which appeared to go underground. They went in, and somehow they were being able to see what was inside. In there, they saw some of the strangest looking statues they've ever seen. According to their description, one of them looked like a horse with angel wings, the legs of a lion, the head of a frog, the tail of a cat, and it was striped like a zebra. When the kids returned later, they couldn't find any trace.

It was at the southeast end of the village, where the forest began and the hills ended, where we see two out-of-place looking characters appear. They're both dressed in black. The first one, standing between the trees of the forest, is wearing a black cape, apparently long enough to cover his whole body. If we look closely we see that he's got brownish hair, green eyes, and apparently he hasn't brushed his teeth in a while. The other one is walking towards him. He wears a wide, flat, black cowboy-like hat, with a width of probably 60 centimeters. Underneath the hat, he wears black sunglasses, a long, black coat, black pants and black cowboy shoes. The weird-looking cowboy walks to the caped man, who begins to talk, "So, how did it go?"

"Well, I've found a boy," said the cowboy, "We've watched him for a couple of days. He's the typical shy, introvert boy, who would probably never think of running away. I've sent those two to go and get him. If all goes well, they'll arrive at midnight."

"I hope that you gave them instructions not to be seen."

"I gave them instructions to follow a certain path. This way, there are only two dangerous areas, but we have to take that risk."

"Hmm, I hope you know what you're doing. The boss has waited too long for this, I don't think he would like it to screw up at the last possible moment."

"Don't worry, these two already know the consequences,' said the cowboy, 'I've also told them that the boy must not know anything about it."

"That was a good move. I can't imagine what he would do if he found out somehow."

"Yeah, well let's go. We have to arrive before them, there's a lot of preparing to do."

"Okay, good idea. And let's hope that this works out well."

And the two characters disappeared into the forest, apparently in haste. Then, at the east part of Rivershore, there was a loud scream, followed by some struggle, followed by silence.

What makes a great protagonist?
Written By: Hugo Zelmar

Your game can have the greatest graphics and systems to be found on the net, but without a strong storyline, it would all be moot. And of course, you need a strong protagonist to move the story along. If your protagonist does not have a function, the character is nothing more than dressing.

First, not matter what kind of game you are making—and no matter what level your writing skills are at, you will need to develop the character's personality. This is the foundation for every main character. Throughout the duration of the game the character changes and grows. At the end of the game, the character you've been playing as should be almost completely different from when you started out. Why? Because the character has traveled the world, has fought giant monsters and witnessed massive destruction and the loss of his or her friend(s). The experiences that were produced for the character made him grow and learn. Without this element, the character will be flat. Every good RPG has this element. In Final Fantasy IV, Cecil realized that he could not save the world while his heart was clouded in darkness, so he became a paladin. In Final Fantasy VI, Terra, having discovered love in the aftermath of the end of the world, knows that she must take up the fight, using her awesome powers to defeat the maniacal and now god-like Kefka in order for her children and friends to live in a safe world. Just think of how dull Final Fantasy VIII would have been if Squall had the same personality throughout the entire game. Even he changed from an uncaring person in the beginning to a loving and thoughtful one. Of course growth does not always have to be good. Your character's experiences can drive him insane (like in A Blurred Line).

Second your main characters should have some kind of motivation for going on their quest. This is fundamental. If you have a character wandering around with no purpose of direction, the game will get really dull and pointless (Just think of the SaGa series). For example, Batman's motivation for risking his life to fight crime is to avenge the death of his parents. Cecil's motivation for taking down the Baron Empire was that he realized that it had become evil. And their motivation can change throughout the quest as well. Cloud's motivation changes throughout the story as he must save the world from Sephiroth's meteor.

That being said, here's a little brainstorming trick that can help you develop your characters. It is called mix and match. Here, we start with a group of clichéd characters and then mix and match the character traits to make more original characters:
1: Male, 21, Mercenary- Would do anything for money, but carries a strange secret.
2: Female, 18, soldier- Is the only person in the world who can use powers and is half esper.

3: Male, 13, explorer- Lives with his grandparents and can travel to another dimension known as dark space and is able to transform into a knight and an ethereal being.
4: Male, 16, Adventurer- Has blue hair and can transform into a dragon.
5: Female, 18, General- Is a general in the imperial army, and is actually the reincarnation of a woman who died 10,000 years ago.
6: Male 15-20, kid- Lives with his mother and travels through time.

These characters are pretty clichéd, right? I bet you can name each and every game in which one of these protagonists exists. When you mix and match the traits, the characters become more original:
1: Female, 21, Mercenary- Would do anything for money, but carries a strange secret, has blue hair and can transform into a dragon.
2: Female, 18, soldier- Lives with her grandparents and can travel to another dimension known as dark space and is able to transform into a knight and an ethereal being.
3: Male, 13, explorer- Is a general in the imperial army, and is actually the reincarnation of a woman who died 10,000 years ago.
4: Male, 16, Adventurer- Is the only person in the world who can use magic and is half esper.
5: Female, 18, General- Lives with his mother and travels through time.
6: Male 15-20, kid- carries a strange secret, and can travel to another dimension known as dark space

Here, the backgrounds were mixed and matched and the characters sound more original (albeit still a bit clichéd, but what isn't these days). Think of how different the personality of the mercenary would be if she was able to transform into a dragon, or how the thirteen year old who was a general in the army. Also, a female mercenary has a different feel than a male mercenary. Due to our cultural indoctrination, we can expect men and women to behave differently. We therefore expect a female mercenary to have a different personality than the male personality. In other words, it would take a different personality of a woman than a man to become a Mercenary in our society. So, we tend to subconsciously assign those personality traits to the character, even though all we really did was spell out the character's role and gender.

What do you think?

"It might be a better idea to get a lot of the basic things done (planning, plot, maps, events, etc) with default graphics, audio, and scripts, and then ask for those other things once you have something going that you know you'll finish. "

"I have a section in my game write up titled Destinations and Events. More than any other thing, this list has been the most effective in keeping me on track and motivated in my project. This section lists every town/dungeon the hero will visit, every boss battle the hero will fight, and every plot element and where it is revealed. It allows me to track my progress very efficiently and set goals more accurately.

If you decide to write your own, don't be discouraged by the time it will take. My game is relatively short and it took me about twenty hours to do the entire write up. It will pay off in the long run. Good luck. "

"Different people work in different ways, and you may be the type who gets creative bursts and then gets burned out. That's okay. The goal of all this is (though many may disagree with me) NOT to make RPGS, but to find some form of either affirmation or fulfillment. It may be affirmation through people telling you that you did a great job, or it may be fulfillment through achieving a personal goal.

Either way, as long as one of these are reached, you have achieved the objective of RPG-ers. "

Amateur Game Design
Written By Near Fantastica

People like my self will probably never produce a game for the RMXP community but the following are the 5 phases of building a game as taught to me by the people that do it best...

Design

1. Sit down design a setting, story, characters, etc...

2. Draw up a rough storyboard of how you want the game to look and feel, whether is a story heavy game or not. The storyboard layouts a general look and feel of your game and you don't need to be a great artists to have a good story board.

3. Draw up a rough map of the world as you envision it. Map editors for other games work great for this, it's not like you are going use it in the game, but it helps to have an idea of what the world looks like. The more detailed, the better.

4. Rough out a list of custom systems needed for the game play you want...

5. Build up the database with your heroes, items, weapons, etc, even if you don't have graphics for them yet.

6. Map out the dead world. I say dead because of the lack of events, not the lack of energy in the maps. Don't worry about going into great detail as most of that can be fixed later.

So far, nothing of this game is custom. This is when you should be marketing your game to others as an alpha. Good artists, scripters, mappers, and others are more likely to join the project if you have something to show for your idea, something that people can judge, grade, and weigh. This should also be the time you post about your project in the Basic Project Topics, since you have all the material to have your topic moved to Project Discussion & Recruitment where it will get a higher level of acknowledgment. After that, the next phase of development can begin.

Production

1. Script or request the custom systems needed for your game.

2. Replace the graphics as new ones become available—Tilesets, charactersets, backgrounds, menus, etc... It's best to do this all at once or a large part at once so you can record where and when you got things and from who. Giving people credit for their work is very important.

3. Overlay the maps with a second round of detail if you did the maps in the first phase and then release your progress to someone else. They will see things different then you and hopefully help fix some of your mistakes.

4. Overlay the dead maps with the events—NPCs. enemies, environmental objects, etc...

5. Script the events for movement, speech, interaction, battles, etc...

"I make it up as I go, I don't plan or anything. Story ideas and such come to my head as I work along."

Alex_Knight

"My plan, when I get around to it... was to make the game with RTP and script everything I can myself... Then, once I have that done, worry about swapping the RTP art out for original art and RTP music out for original music. That way, any artist I ask for assitance will have a finished project to do work for, not something that might never be finished.

That and I don't have to worry about artists or musicians not getting things done one time for me. "
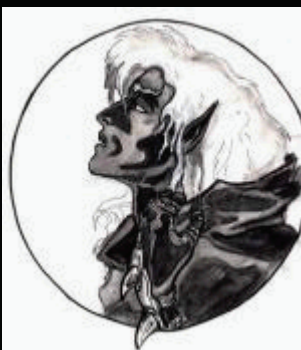
Almost everyone can make a good game. RTP or not. (I think). There are a decent amount of good ones on the forums right now. It's to bad that it sometimes comes down to a popularity contest if you want your game to be played. As for custom stuff? For me, I just keep learning, and as I learn I want to do things better. Ya, it's bells and whistles, but if it makes the game better??? Why not. I've been re-doing the same game forever because I keep getting better at using XP (and making graphics), but I should finish my project instead of starting over 1000000 times. I've only got (max) about 1/4 o my story done before I start over.

For me though, new or not, RTP or custom... I'll play the games. I like to.

By now you should have a game world that is fully functioning. Maps basically completed intractable NPCs, intractable Enemies and all the rest. This is where I would beta the game. In this beta there should be little or no story elements yet so you're not giving too much to your beta testers. After all lights are green you can start the next phase of development...

Overlaying

1. Overlaying is as much as a step as it is a phase. This is where you overlay the game with the story elements, events, drivers, enemies, bosses, and what ever else you have concocted.

Sounds simple enough eh? But in reality this is the hardest part the development, this is the nitty-gritty. At the end of this phase you should have a fully completed game. When you are content about the story and feel of the time you can begin the next step of development.

Testing

1. Test it, then test it again, then test it again, and again and again...

Get the point yet? When you think you done it enough do it again. Spell check the overlaying events, test all the story elements, make sure it plays the way you envisioned it. When you have tested your game like you have never tested it before, you can move on to the final phase of development.

Release

1. Release the game...

Simple right? Well, it's not over yet. I will pay money to amateur game designer that releases a game that does not have any bugs. Despite all your testing and testing and testing, people are going to find bugs in your game so kill them and continue to update.

Well sit back have a drink and enjoy your product of a few months to a few years hard work. Welcome to the world of an amateur game designer.

Telling a Story: The Personal Style of your Game
Written By: Ccoa

When you design a game, you cannot consider the game as a whole. Instead, you break it down into manageable parts, the story, the characters, the battle system, and so on. These divisions seem natural given the nature of RPG Maker XP. You can also think of your game divisions as being divided into to broad categories, from which these subcategories spring: substance and style.

Substance is the true skeleton of any game. They define how a player interacts with the game itself, and provide decision points for the player. Battle systems, menus, even directional controls fall into this category. All games have substance.

Style is the wrapping of the game. Stylistic elements exist to bring the player fully into the story, world and characters. Typically, this category includes art, sound, and text. They provide a way for the player to interact with the substance in an intuitive way; they also tell the story. Not all games have style.

In an RPG, both elements are necessary. RPG's are *role-playing games*. Thus, they must have stylistic elements to bring the player into his or her role(s) in the game.

RPG Maker XP provides you with the basic tools to make a game with both style and substance. You're provided with battle algorithms, code to control movement and collision detection, and tools to give the user decision points. RMXP also provides you with a vast collection of default graphics, which are generally regarded as well-made. So, you may ask, what is left to do?

Obviously, you can alter the default substance and style of your game, and you are heartily encouraged to do just that. But these things can be taken from plug-and-play scripts, or from graphics provided by others. You need not write a single script or make a single charset to create an RPG using RMXP. So what is left?

Style. The one thing we must make for ourselves in our games is style. Particularly the story and characters, and how they are presented to the player. This is the element of the game that is completely ours to mold. I won't spend this time telling you how to make a compelling story with three-dimensional characters. There are plenty of resources to help you with the actual crafting of the story.

What I'd like to talk about is the presentation of the story. Just writing your story out to the screen is not enough to immerse the player in your world. Neither is just throwing him or her directly into your world and expecting him to pick it up without any hints whatsoever. A happy medium must be struck, where you spin out just enough story to keep the player interested, done in such a way that he or she doesn't become bored and switch it off.

A big part of this balance is cutscenes. The opening cutscene of your game can be likened to the opening paragraph of a novel. If you don't intrigue the player and make him interested in learning more, than it's likely that they won't take the time to play through your game. Certainly you can draw them in later, but by then it may very well be too late. Driven by boredom and the promise of dozens of other amateur games, your player has moved on.

Be sure to use your special effects effectively, even the default weather can be used to add mood and eye candy. Battle animations can be used in the cutscene to make action more effective. If they're available, emotional poses can add a lot to the
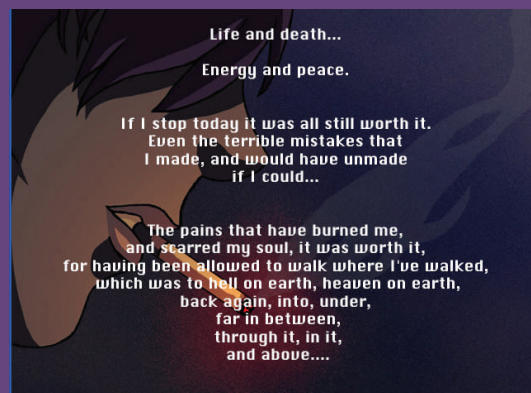

Final Fantasy VI grabbed us in the first five minutes, and never let go.
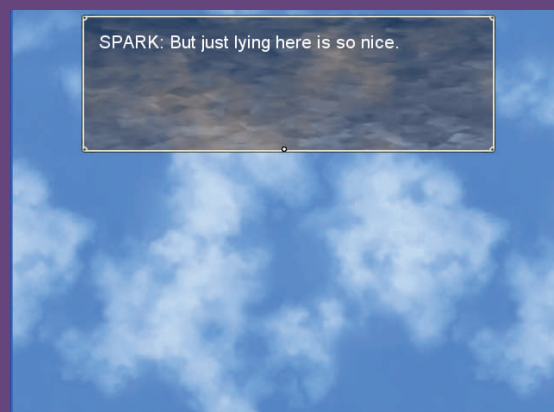
Fallen used a panorama to good effect to simulate looking up at the clouds.

Fear of Life made good use of innuendo and lyrical writing to draw the player in on the very first scene.

player's experience, but you can simulate emotion just through the way your characters talk and behave.

Give the player a tantalizing taste of your world and main character, just enough that he wants to see more, but not so long and verbose that he wants to go elsewhere. Consider what the player needs to know, then consider what he wants to know. Never give the player everything he wants to know, rather, give him enough that he's interested and still craving more.

Perhaps the most important is the very first impression your game makes. What are the first words your player reads?   Are they interesting? Well-written? If you were playing a game that opened with those words, would *you* want to know more? Ask yourself these questions as you craft your opening sequences. The most important question you can ask yourself of your opening cutscene is: "If I were coming to this fresh, would I be interested?"

You should also consider how to present your story. Typically, stories are presented from a single main character's point of view, in the present tense. You can choose to break this mold by telling the story in the past tense, as the hero looks back. Or you can tell the story from the perspective of multiple heroes, or even from the perspective of non-player characters such as important figures or even the villain.

Consider also how your story unfolds. Too many plot points and cutscenes, and your player may lose interest. Too few, and you may never tell the story you envision. Be sure to balance the amount of time the player can play your game, with the amount of time he experiences the story. Whenever you can combine the two, be sure to do so.

Also consider how your characters change throughout the story. Dynamic, three-dimensional characters are more believable and involving than static, two-dimensional ones. Give your character a deep involved back story, even if it's never revealed completely to the player. The other part entails having your characters react realistically, within the confines of their characters, to the situations that they encounter.

In conclusion, the core part of creating your own RPG is in your story, and how it is presented. The style of your game is what truly differentiates it from every other, and is where your creative talents can be showcased. A slick, intriguing storyline presented in an interesting way is what differentiates a good amateur game from one that is merely mediocre.

Final Fantasy X-2's opening was lighthearted and fun, while still introducing the essentials of the world and characters.

David
I've never seen a house this big.

Ceaser's Folly's hero, David, is a naïve, smart-alec country bumpkin.

Breath of Fire IV was told partly from the point of view of the villain, Fou-Lu.

Magic
Written By: Near Fantastica

The ancient occult sciences retain their power to entrance us even in thus age of science and skepticism. In contemporary stories, nailing a few elements of magical lore into the solid timber of realism can provide the essence of a fantasy plot. From the most primitive tribes to the most sophisticated modern city, mankind believes in magic. We mutter spells (knock on wood), curse in holy names, and conduct miniature rites (throwing spilled salt over a shoulder). So, too in all times and places, both professional and amateur wizards, witches, shamans and magicians attempt to discover magic's secrets.

HISTORY

Magic differs from religion primarily in tent: religion is an appeal to the gods; magic attempts to force their aid. The nature magic of pagan religion goes back to prehistoric times. The word "magic" probably derived from the Greek word magician, the science of the priests of Zoroaster (Assyrian / Babylonian), or from megas, Greek for great. Early Middle Eastern civilizations created a divide between the high magic of priests and the low magic of the people, which persists to this day. The chaldeans refined and shaped astrology, oracles practiced from holy temples, and harvest rites became public functions. But less exalted magicians practicing in small towns. The countryside or the neighborhood, offered inexpensive protection against the Evil Eye, explained dreams, foretold the future and sold amulets talismans and other magic wares.

Ancient Babylonian and Egyptian magic systems were among the earliest known, already thousands of years old when Athens flourished in 400 B.C. or the Caesars resigned in A.D. 1, and many of their secrets sought. The mystery religions of ancient Greece and Rome, themselves descended from the savage primitive rituals of harvest and hunt, degenerated into the magic of the middle Ages, which the Christian church condemned as witchcraft. At the same time, the church appropriated pagan holidays and a pantheon of gods and goddesses. As religions succeed each other, they often demonize their predecessors. Old Testament Hebrews made demons of hell of Babylonian, Egyptians and other Middle Eastern deities, both male and female. The magician practicing black craft depends upon who tells the story: most of us are familiar with the version of Moses versus the Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus (they turned their staves to snakes; Moses turned his into a bigger snake, which ate theirs). In the Egyptians version, according to witchcraft researcher Margaret Murray, "the wise priest of Egypt defeats the miserable foreign sorcerer whom he had saved from the water when a child."

European Magic before the Crusades remained largely a hodgepodge of ancient religions and surviving folk magic. Following the Crusades, oriental theories and practices modeled on those practiced by the Sufis, Byzantines and Moors of Spain created European high magic. Secret societies and secret sorceries flourished, based on Alexandrian Neoplatonic ideas, the Hermetic books and the Hebrew Kabbalah. Basic principles included the Hermetic tablet's injunction: "As above, so below"; the idea that everything in the universe is associated through a series of secret connections between numbers, letters, the heavens, the elements (earth, air, fire, water) etc.; and the conviction that one could magically tap the infinite creative power of the universe. The refined development and application of the magician's imagination played an active role in medieval ritual and high magic.

At all times and places, however, the low magic of necromancers, who called upon the spirits of the dead, invoked hosts of demons and peddled love potions and talismans, coexisted with both established religion and ceremonial high magic. During the medieval era, both deeply superstitious and religious in a way difficult for most people to imagine today, some magicians practiced a black art that was essentially a desecration of Christian rites, symbols, liturgy, biblical passages and holy sites. Muslims who practice black magic do the same things with Islamic religion. These practices survive today but should not be confused with pagan witchcraft, or Wicca, which are revivals of the ancient world's mystery religions (Rome, Egypt, Babylon, Greece) and have nothing whatsoever to do with Christianity.

The Force

All magic shares certain general features. The concept of manna, a magical force in virtually everything, has been called the "mother idea of magic." This idea of a universal force latent in all creation is common to primitive peoples: manna is called Manitou, pokunt and waken by various American Indian tribes; ancient Peruvians called it huaca; in Mexico, it is called naturalism; and in Lake Tanganyika, it is called churinga or booolya. Larry Niven writes a series of popular novellas speculation g that this force, which our mythology and legends suggest was once much more powerful than it now seems, could be used up. He called the first story, When the Magic Goes Away. Story ideas lurk everywhere in this material.
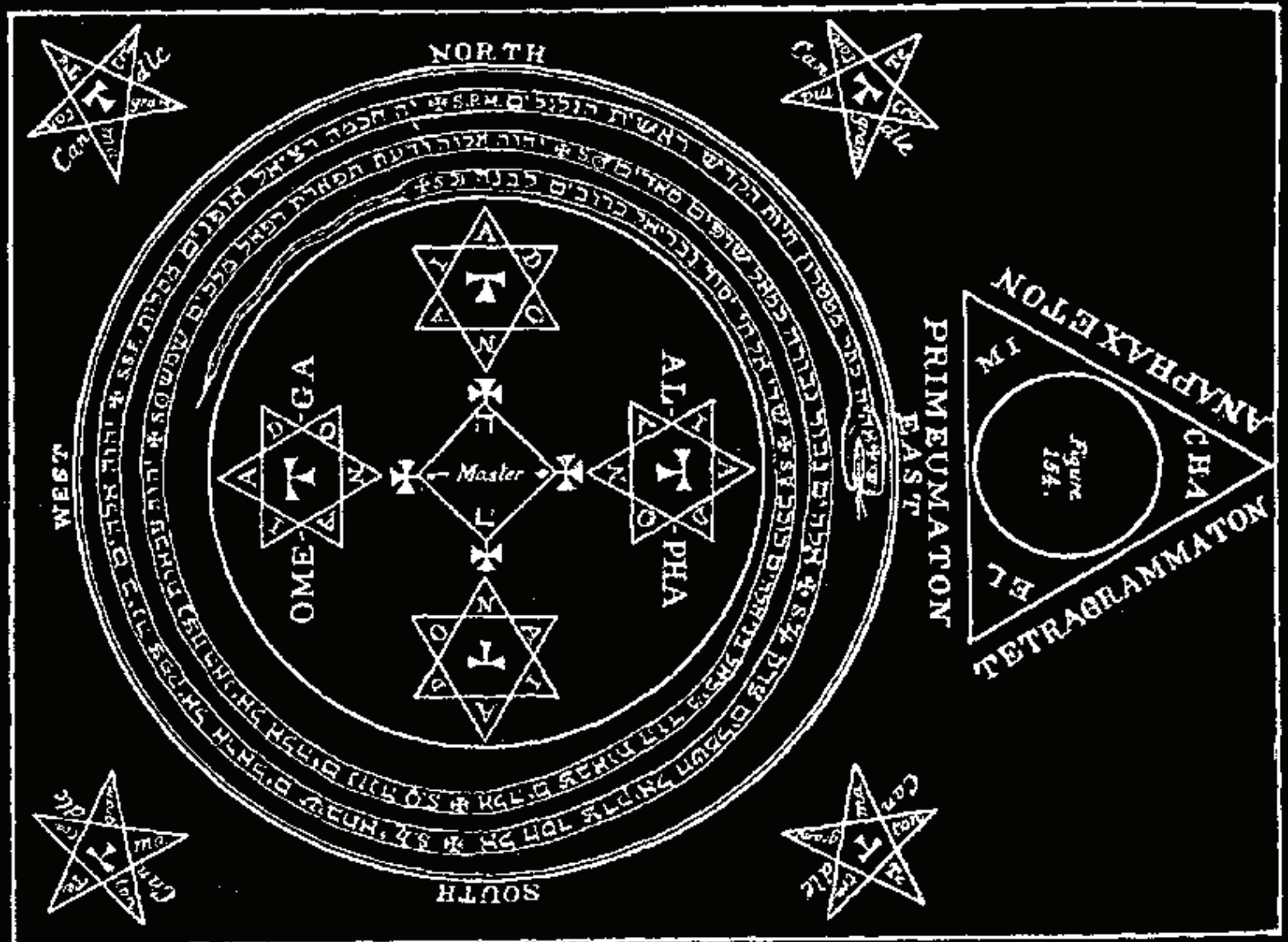
The ability to tap this magical force, or manna, is almost always extremely limited. Everywhere, tradition binds magic, ruling its access and use, and magical power traditionally lies in the knowledge of spells and rites. Sometimes it is invested in the person of the wizard. The rules of magic are limited, but it has many classes of practitioner.

Two Words

Most Magical systems assume there are two worlds, one is the material, everyday, mundane world of reality in which experience and practical knowledge work, The other is a supernatural world, usually accessible only though a medium, the wizard/witch/wise one. Primitive man, for instance, nearly always recognized a natural and supernatural order. He applied knowledge of soils and planting times or where the fish or game were found, but performed magic to ensure good weather and protect himself from accidents.

Magicians attempt to control the unknown: the weather, abundance of crops or hunt animals, the course of a love affair of the outcome of a battle. Magic gives a house sturdiness after it is built with conventional means. Magical rites promote an abundant crop, but seeds are sill planted.