

RMXP

The E-zine!

RMXP.org's Official E-zine!

Issue #6 October 2006

The Immersion Factor

Magic Part Four



Page 6!

Master of the Wind

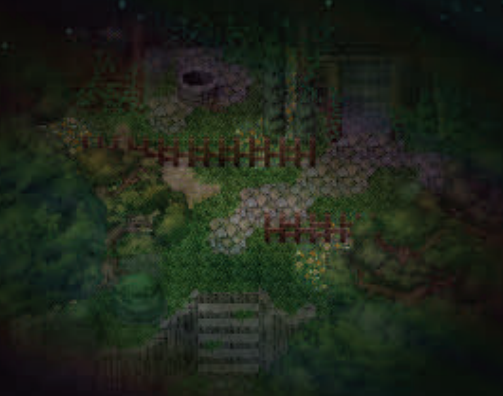
Not only is MOTW one of RMXP.org's most acclaimed projects, but it also contains October's Character of the Month. Read on to find the EXCLUSIVE interview with the men behind the game, and the COTM featuring Cade Mistral.

The Process: Sovay's Thoughts on Game Design

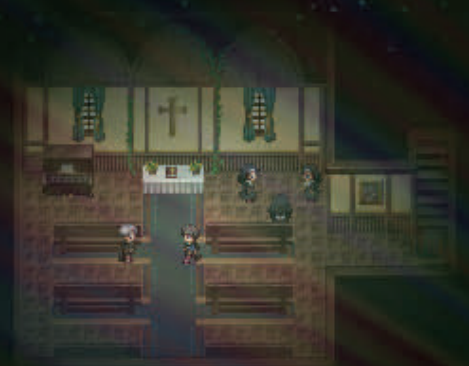
Nadir's Canon

a quest to revive our shattered history ...

... could be the only hope for our future



dark, elegant graphics



detailed environments



variety of characters



selectable scenes



watch the journey unfold at rnxp.org forums

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RMXP *The E-zine!* **Submissions now OPEN!**
The text 'RMXP' is in large white letters, 'The E-zine!' is in red script, and 'Submissions now OPEN!' is in white bold letters.

The e-zine is always looking for new submissions for future issues. If you have an idea for a feature, tutorial, or you just want to show off your latest story, be sure to stop by at the E-zine forum at the forums on RMXP.org for more information on how to get your articles in the next issue!

Submissions will be accepted beginning

TODAY!

Submission Deadline

October 21st

Jakob Fischer aka Pizzadude

(<http://www.pizzadude.dk>)
for the use of his font "Agent Orange".

Apostrophic Labs

(http://www.dafont.com/apostrophic-labs.d128?nb_ppp=50)
for the use of the fonts "Reprobate" and "Scriptina"

Sovay Jennifer Fox (aka Soavifox) for generously allowing her experience to be shared with the rest of the community.

Sithen-stock (sithean-stock.deviantart.com)
for the use of Sitean-Stock199.

pOPdOG FONTS

(http://popdog_fonts.tripod.com/) for the use of the font "Viper Nora"

Rob Jamieson

(<http://www.x2designs.co.uk/>) for the use of the stock photography "Devon Silhouette".

Vicious-Stock

(vicious-stock.deviantart.com) for the use of the stock photography "moon-and-stars".

TragicStock (tragicstock.deviantart.com) for the use of the stock photography "Stock 001".

The regulars at **#rmxp** on EsperNet for their answers and encouragement.

The **Master of the Wind** team, for allowing the use of their artwork to be featured on the cover.

Erk and Ccoa for providing the RMXP.org E-zine a new home.

All the **Readers and Contributors**, who are the lifeline of this publication! Thanks for patiently waiting.

About the Cover



Issue Six's cover features three main characters of **Master of the Wind** (Including Issue 6's Character of the Month: **Cade Mistral**, right). **ArtBane** and **Volrath** have been frequent contributors to this and previous E-zines, and it is an honor to have their project on the E-zine's front cover for October.

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TREG

RMXP.org The E-zine Staff Spotlight!



Name: Wings / Insane Irishman / Brian

Age: 21

Joined RMX.net/org: March, 2006

Date you joined the E-zine: July, 2006

Currently Working On: Commercial Game (*Untitled*)

"I am currently a self-employed professional web/graphics designer with over seventy-four private clients thus far. Originally born in Ireland, I moved to the United States under the stereotype that this country would provide a better life for me and my future family. Shortly after touching down I decided to join the United States Army to take advantage of the money for school and the faster course to becoming an American citizen. Throughout the training process I was given the nickname "*Insane Irishman*" by a group of my best mates for my actions out in the field. However it may of been further along down the road, an old BCT injury forced a medical discharge after three years of service at the rank of Sergeant (E-5) due to chronic [plantar fasciitis](#) in my left foot. To tell you the truth, it was probably for the better.

While I was still in the military, I attended Grantham University in Slidell, Louisiana to receive my Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Upon graduation, I taught elementary and middle school students for a brief period until I was spurred into web design. Looking back now, I certainly preferred teaching than sitting at a computer desk all day designing layouts for people you don't even know.

Overall I am not too hard of a guy to get along with. As I may be pretty straight forward most of the time, many mistake that type of personality for aggression. They couldn't be further from the truth. I also have been told that I do not have a conscience. This is partially accurate considering I do not do anything that I regret nor feel remorse for. Every action that I take on something or someone is personally justified and reasoned (*kind of makes you think doesn't it?*)."

Cade Mistral



**E-zine's Character of the Month
October 2006!**

Volrath urges players not to be put off by Cade's seemingly bland exterior, but to focus on the unique spin of the typical secret identity character. Judging by Cade's win in the COTM for this month, it seems players are doing just that. Here are some remarks from fans:

"I find Bones and Finley more fun, personally, but Cade really is a great character on his own, and the others really aren't much if they can't play off of him. The main character of Master of the Wind, he has many traditional superhero qualities, including a strong sense of right and wrong, and when he gets his mind set on something, he follows through with it- sometimes at the risk of losing loved ones."

~Despain

"Even if he does seem a little too standardly heroic, he's a very strong character, and can turn that clichéd role into his own style of morals."

~Anaryu

EXCLUSIVE! Interview

ArtBane and Volrath, the two creators of Master of the Wind, were interviewed by E-zine staff. If you ever wanted to know their take on their game, its success and the key to making a game the other people enjoy, read on...

E-Zine: So we all know about your project, Master of the Wind. Care to offer a quick summary of the core plot of the game? (Just for those who haven't read the thread.)

Volrath:

Master of the Wind is a superhero story which takes place in a fantasy world. Two armor shop merchants; Cade Mistral and his best friend, Bones the Skeleton, protect their hometown of Port Arianna as the costumed vigilantes; Shroud and Stoic.

They also have all sorts of different enemies ranging from; careless thieves to crooked business executives to fanatical cult leaders.

E-Zine: The main character of MotW, Cade Mistral, is a superhero accompanied by a skeleton named Stoic. What makes him unique compared to other RPG heroes?

Volrath:

Initially the blonde young man, Cade, might seem a bit bland when compared to the smart-aleck skeleton. Still, I think Cade adds a unique twist to the usual secret identity character. He is not a cipher like Bruce Banner (The Hulk).

Cade's commitment to justice can get out of hand, to the point where he can periodically be blinded by his self-righteousness. He's also all too aware of his good looks and charm, and risks losing the player's sympathy based on how he acts around some of the female characters. There's also a certain melancholy about him that shows up once in a while. Even though it hasn't been on display all too much, we still have five arcs to go.

E-Zine: So, the antagonists of MotW; the creepy vampire, Andau, and the shadowy Touten Corps. Care to describe them a bit? Maybe give a hint at the deeper nature of them all?

ArtBane:

Well, when you first meet Andau he seems like a pretty standard villain. His feedings at Port Arianna have earned the attention of our two heroes. When the game first opens they are chasing him down into an abandoned fort. It is not until an optional event later at his true hide out that the player learns of how he actually became a vampire. Then his motives become clearer, giving him more depth than your usual villain.

Volrath:

People seemed to really enjoy the villains of the first Arc, which made us work harder when we came to the several villains introduced in the second (Arc II). The Toutens are a multi-racial group displaced by the rampages of the now defunct Gallian Empire, which was dedicated to killing all non-humans. They don't really have any grand plan except for lots of stealing and mischief. Years ago, Cade himself was a member of the corps, which is a story he will reveal early on in Arc III.

E-Zine: Sounds great! Now I really want to get into MotW's battle mechanics. MotW uses RMXP's default battle system. What have you done to try and make it interesting and fun to play despite the rather poor impression most players have of the DBS?

ArtBane:

There is a lot of thought put into the battles adding more strategy. Depending on the level of the player a boss may react differently. In boss battles, there is usually more than one to go about them. I try to leave as many options open in battles to allow the player to adapt their own style. The battle system has some scripted upgrades. The most noticeable features are the combos and speed of the combat. These give the Master of the Wind battle system a distinct feel. But that doesn't mean it is set in stone. For Arc III, there are plans to add many new features that have never been seen before.

E-Zine: Any hints as to what those would be?

ArtBane:

Some new ideas include allowing buffs to stack, more equipment slots, equipment that affects players when they are in certain states, and a synchronization system that keeps better track of the combos than the current one.

E-Zine: Speaking of equipment, the player can create new armor in the back of Torto's armor shop. What made you decide to add that feature, and what does it add to the gameplay?

Volrath:

It seemed like a fairly logical gameplay element. They are armor merchants after all. This is their area of expertise (aside from owning bad guys). It seems natural and not like a gimmick.

ArtBane:

The only complaints we received about the system were that there was not enough different equipments to craft! That is why I am making plans to add a huge variety of new selections in the next arc.

Gino will also be able to craft specially made weapons if you give him the right materials.

E-Zine: Well, all of that armor and weapons needs to be used for something, which brings us to the subject of dungeon design. ArtBane has somewhat of a great reputation for dungeons and it really shows in MotW. What challenges and/or difficulties did you encounter in designing MotW dungeons, and what do you think the impact on the game was? What advice would you give to prospective mappers?

ArtBane:

The only real challenge is the extent of my own creativity. Coming up with ideas for the dungeon is where most of the time goes in creating them. Once I actually know what I want I can usually pump out the product pretty fast.

My advice to other game designers is to put more thought into the actual design than the mapping. Mapping is important but it is hard to design around an already established map.

E-Zine: As far as design goes, what other unique features have you implemented into MotW that you think enhances the gameplay experience?

Volrath:

I think one unique aspect of the game is that unlike most other RPGs, the story is not shoving you from one location to another. You get to see the impact Shroud and Stoic's heroic escapades have on Port Arianna, especially when Equipment King comes into the picture in Arc II. We also decided to skip on the world map idea, and have travel within Solest done by things like carriages and boats. There will be a great deal of that in Arc III.

E-Zine: So, on a more general note, what are the various difficulties and challenges you've encountered while making MOTW? How did you solve/overcome them?

Volrath:

One of the challenges was even getting the game noticed at all. It can be so frustrating when you put something up that took a lot of work and people ignore it. We had a demo ready right when we first put it up, too. After some revisions, it gradually got more feedback. This can be a competitive little community sometimes.

ArtBane:

That is the biggest obstacle I think a lot of projects have trouble overcoming. At least we had Despain on board from day one. That was a big help, he's our unofficial publicist, lol.

ArtBane:

Outside distractions can also be a problem. Keeping everyone on the same schedule is difficult especially with massive time burners like World of Warcraft eating up our artist's spare time. But we are all dedicated to the project, and I think that combined enthusiasm will keep us motivated enough to finish it.

E-Zine: Final question. What do you guys think was the best thing about making MotW? Do you have any advice to offer to other game makers?

ArtBane:

It has been a great experience making this game and meeting people in the community who enjoy it.

Also don't rely entirely on the forums for motivation. As much fun as it is getting feedback on your game it will probably not be enough to drive you to completion.

Volrath:

I spend a lot of time writing dialogue, so every now and then it feels like MotW is a play. When I get to see the complete project, with the art and battles and dungeons, it's very gratifying.

My advice to the RMXP community would be to focus on the "fun factor" rather than all the bells and whistles of scripting and visual gimmicks. Those things are great, but an interesting story and fun gameplay are the essentials. Being strong in those areas can make up for any other perceived deficiency.

Interview conducted by TREG.

Previous Character of the Month Winner!

December 2005/January 2006:

Calisto from Akasha Seal

Know a character that deserves to be featured in future E-zines? Be sure to catch the next nomination period by periodically checking the E-zine forum!

Contrasting

EQUILIBRIUM

On the Importance of Balance
by King Moogle

It was Thursday evening in a small town in the North Georgia Mountains. This was no ordinary Thursday, for it was in fact Thanksgiving; a celebration of everything culinary, nostalgic and Judeo-Christian American. It was around 5:30 in the evening, and our large, extended family just had sat down to dinner when the doorbell rang. Three of us instantly sprung up to get the door, and it turned out to be a Jehovah's Witness coming to ask if we wanted to learn about their god. Naturally, some of us (rude as it may sound) laughed at the bizarre encounter. However, we laughed not so much because it was unusual or stupid as because the person in question came on Thanksgiving Day, asking us to convert. The event itself was relatively unfunny, and out of context probably would offend several people. However, the stage was set properly for it to be considered funny at the time. The balance was lined up.

(continued from page ___)

All aspects of the creation of RPGs require special care to be paid to equilibrium. According to **Meriam-Webster's** dictionary, equilibrium is "a state of balance between opposing forces or actions". Without equilibrium a game often befalls the fate of its' abandoned predecessors, twelve pages back in the New Projects forum. The reason for this is primarily based in context. A comedy without a straight man or maps without elevation offer a world without contrast. According to Socrates, the only way to define something is to take the smallest group an object is a member of and determine what separates it from that group. Essentially, a game is defined by its contrast from other games. Similarly a map is defined by its contrast from other maps, and a hero is defined from the differences he or she bears in comparison to those not in a hero role.

Equilibrium is applicable to almost all aspects of RPGs. Mappers in general need to understand that maps are neither too empty, too full, too dull nor exceedingly busy. Maps with too little elevation soon cause the player to lose interest, while maps with a high level of elevation generally cause visual confusion with the player becoming unsure of the overall concept of the map. Musicians need to remember the importance of equilibrium in both composition and implementation. The Prelude to Final Fantasy, a memorable piece, is a great example. The song begins with a series of fast arpeggios that rise and fall, catching the listener in a virtual wave of arrangement. However, the main theme follows with long notes and non-linear chord progressions that provide the contrast—the balance—that makes the song memorable. Take care not to have too little diversity in implementation as well; if every song in the game is fast, there won't be

“Essentially, a game is defined by its contrast from other games...”

enough contrast to give the player an adrenaline rush. If there is nothing in the game but dark, ominous music, the same applies; when something truly dark happens and menacing music plays, if the player is already used to it, the effect is lost.

Sriters need to take care when contrasting equilibrium and remember that equilibrium requires two opposing forces, but it never says that consistency is unimportant. If every man looks like every other man and every woman like every woman, players will be unable to define them as unique characters because they have lost their contrast, and therefore become unbalanced. However, if the sprites are too inconsistent, the player will lose their sense of equilibrium, and find that

the world no longer makes sense; thus the game will lose its immersion factor. And writers, of course, have countless applications of this principle. Comedic

effects require a straight man both for equilibrium and contrast; therefore, the straight man can serve as the hinge of the entire game. Serious moments need unserious parts surrounding them so the player can tell a tangible difference, and endless dialogue or exploring with no contrast can ruin a game just as quickly as having unbalanced weapons and items thrown at the player that ruin the equilibrium of the economy and the world.

Each individual aspect of this article is valuable and could merit another article in itself. However this was designed merely as an overview. Thank you for considering the value of contrast and equilibrium, to the game as a whole and to each individual facet. I hope that you find it useful in some way and be able to incorporate it into your own work.

King Moogle has been a member of RMX.org since March 2006. He is a beta reader for the E-zine and is currently working on **The Cerion Conception**.

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a dungeon hallway. The walls are made of rough, textured stone or brick, illuminated by a warm, reddish-orange light. In the center, a wooden gate with vertical bars is partially open, leading to a bright light at the end of the hallway. The overall mood is mysterious and foreboding.

by artbano
**DUNGEON DESIGN
DO'S AND DON'TS**

There is no set of rules to decide whether a dungeon is good or bad. No matter how you went about completing it, in the end all that matters is... **is it fun?** There are so many dungeons out there that work hard at torturing the player. These masochist style dungeons may appeal to a small niche of people but most players won't stand for it and they shouldn't either. Games are supposed to be fun and when it becomes work they become a chore. There is no way to cover all of dungeon design in one article, but I have focused on the aspects that I think may be most helpful.

Start your own design journal

You would be surprised how many great ideas you can come up with when just doodling away on a pad. It doesn't even have to be a design journal per se, but having one gives you a certain air of professionalism. Use it to draw zoomed out views of your dungeon maps to give you a better idea of the layout. Then when it comes time to map the dungeons it will have a more natural structure. It is also a fun thing to look back on to see how older ideas shaped into the actual product. Best of all it is a portable and accessible way to design (turned my throw away college class into creativity hour).

Mapping should not take priority over design

If it does, it will show when the player finds himself in the empty shell of a map. To add depth to these maps, thought should first go into the goal the player will be presented with. The layout of the map may be important to the completion of the task at hand. Rarely will an already completed map be flexible enough to properly execute a later conceived idea. When the innards of the map are completed, then it is time to make the map look pretty. I think Anaryu put it best when he said "A poor map with great gameplay is still interesting, but a great map with poor gameplay will be thrown aside much more quickly."

There are a few things you can be sure of in life: Death, taxes, and that there will be no more story until the end of the dungeon.

I blame our nostalgic memories of older RPGs for this disconnection. Most dungeons are based on the classic rules set by the forefathers of the genre. These games weren't rich with plot and dialogue in the first place, so it was no surprise when the dungeons didn't feature much of either. Now that RPGs do have richer stories, dungeons should no longer function as an intermission from the game's main plot. Rather than reward the player for beating a dungeon with more story, make the playing through of the dungeon rewarding.

Mother Nature Can Kick your Butt

Most places your party will visit are probably hostile locations inhabited by territorial creatures that are not happy to see you. Whether you need to gain their affection or slaughter them for standing in the way of your noble quest, it is important to pick enemies that actually pose some form of threat. Cute little bunnies and bees are something you want to stay away from, although wererabbits and giant irate hornets are fair game. These inhabitants can also affect the experience by interacting with the party outside of the battles. Whether they are hostile or friendly or neutral they can make for some interesting puzzles. Bats can fly through maps holding in their clutches the only source of light, kobolds can attempt to crush you with giant boulders, or moles can lead you into a maze of holes (all examples of puzzles used in Master of the Wind). Nature is your friend (or enemy in case of the player) when it comes to dungeon design.

Don't be a save Nazi

Nothing kills a player's immersion in a game faster than having to replay an entire dungeon. Test your dungeons and place save points appropriately. If there is a lengthy scene with a boss fight at the end that may lead to death and frustration, place a save

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point in there or cut down on the scene itself. Make sure your save points don't trap the player in an endless cycle of game overs either. A poorly placed save can cut the player off from all form of help leaving them with no hope to continue. Allow the player to level, buy items, change equipment, or whatever else they may require. If your game doesn't restrict save areas, make it clear when the player should save. In those games I tend to save often in fear there will be a boss battle right around the corner I wasn't expecting.

Good things cost good money but even better things can be found lying around in dungeons

These items are usually sitting in a chest protected by some sort of puzzle or trap that the player must overcome. Categorizing chests can help people who want to put in the effort for only the real good stuff. Smaller chests can hold more commonplace items while bigger chests will have rarities that cannot be found anywhere else. When deciding the puzzle around these items, one can be a bit more creative since the item is optional. Puzzles that reward a clever player for doing them a certain way or answering a series of questions correctly are a few examples of smaller ones but they can be much more elaborate.

Games that only have dungeons where you walk from point A to point B while fighting progressively stronger monsters are not fun.

Be more creative with your layout. One of my favorite designs focuses around a central room in which all the other maps are connected to. There is usually one path at least that is closed off until the other routes have been visited. This opens up your dungeon to exploration and creates a unique experience for the player who can freely choose which path to discover first. Dungeons like these, which are designed for back tracking are more difficult to design than a linear path since players are forced to return to maps they have already seen before. But with some creative thought, an intricate puzzle that spans

back and forth between rooms can capture the intrigue of a player much more than an isolated puzzle could. Fortunately dungeon design isn't as black and white as this and there are many more layout options to explore.

Give them a reason to come back

This is probably the biggest problem with any game and the level design. Once it is completed it becomes a hassle if someone wants to replay the game and retrace the same steps they did before. My dungeons suffer from this problem also so this is more a discussion of theories to make dungeons more exciting to play again. One way is not to restrict one path of completion for the dungeon but to instead allow many optional paths. This can lead to different developments in the story or different pieces of treasure as a reward for going down one path over the other. Another way involves making the main path to finish the dungeon shorter but allowing several side paths that are optional for the player to complete. This gives the player the freedom to spend more or less time in the dungeon depending on how much they enjoy it.

Dungeon design is tough and few can pull it off real well. Relying on impressive visuals and mapping will not cover up poor gameplay. Spend some time designing your next dungeon around these suggestions I have offered here. Remember to keep an open mind in game design, because like I said before, there is no perfect way to do it.

*ArtBane has been a member of RMXP.org since May 2006. He is currently working along with Volrath on **Master of the Wind**.*



The Immersion Factor By Remote

A storyline's relevance lies in its ability to immerse those experiencing it into a fantastic, enthralling, and extraordinary world... a world that has been created through the eyes of another. For such a process to work, how it captivates its audience to engage themselves in the story and how it compels them to journey through it determine a story's success or failure.

The way I see it, the act of compelling someone to journey through your story largely depends on two factors:

1. The world; and
2. How you are able to immerse them into it

Through my interpretations of the RMXP community, many greatly underestimate the significance of the second point. To believe that the quality of a story depends solely on the quality of its world is simply not true. A story's capacity to engage the audience forms a vital if not large part of what makes the distinction between a good story and a great one. Both should equally be considered. A world created that fulfills our expectations of what we consider as being riveting is not enough to make a story when immersion is overlooked. Through its neglect, we the audience become mere spectators watching events as they unfold from behind the sidelines, when instead what we truly want is to be 'part of the action'. No readers in their right mind would want to read something so meaningless, so unfulfilling... they

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want to read a story, and they want to LIVE IT. Your world may make up for all things we see as lacking in reality, but this amounts to nothing if we cannot 'gain entry into it'. To engage oneself into a story means a whole lot more than simply viewing it.

Immersion is a critical thing and to achieve it requires the audience to have the capacity to understand what it is you are presenting to them. Comprehension is a necessary ingredient to the absorption of a story. Without this, the ability of your audience to take in and interpret what is given to them would be missing and the connection between audience and story will be greatly severed. The ramifications of our misunderstandings would see the onset of inconsistencies being created because the 'justifications' of why things occur are simply not available to us. Just as plot holes in literature cause detriment to a story, black holes in knowledge can generate the same effects. Audience and story begin to slowly drift apart creating detachment, and this is obviously not good.

Such complications drastically increase in severity when originality enters into the picture. To be original is to enter into new and unfamiliar territory. And it is this unfamiliarity that greatly diminishes an audience's ability to understand and immerse themselves into a plot. How one addresses this, making an original ideas accepted, requires the very same steps when trying to instigate change. For change to be successfully implemented, part of it requires the effective 'preparation' of those to

be subjected to it. Change is to leave your comfort zone, to enter into a strange and alien world. It can be very daunting, if not overwhelming to those subjected to it. Hence why the effectiveness of its implementation and execution is to be strongly considered.

Relative to literature, how such a concept is introduced successfully to an audience I think requires the inclusion of material that gives the most benefit in terms of what can provide to the audience a fair idea of what is to be expected. This ensures your audience has a fair idea of how they are to accept the story/concept without having all the complexities of the subject matter being dumped on them and overwhelming them beforehand. In the

“No readers in their right mind would want to read something so meaningless, so unfulfilling... they want to read a story, and they want to LIVE IT.”

end, absorbing the story-- immersing oneself into it-- would be much easier. Instigating such change should always be a gradual, efficient and an effective procedure.

To be more specific, let whatever material you decide as being the 'introduction' that paves the way for whatever it is your preparing your audience for be informative of at least one of the many crucial aspects of the subject you are introducing (effective). Through your plot, let it be concise and straight to the point (efficient). People can easily determine when you are just simply drawing things out, which is why you have to be careful in that regard. Drawing things out unnecessarily can eventually become tedious for the audience. On the flip side, one should also consider on whether or not what you provide as being 'enough'. Introductory material that is but a fleeting moment is just as bad as not having any at

all. Stay with your audience and don't jump to far ahead of them (gradual). Fail in any of these points, and you've lost your audience.

“familiarisation is established through a proper introduction, and developed through sustained exposure to more in-depth material.”

Past the introductory phase, right at the point of actually bringing in the new concept, your audience should have familiarised themselves enough (through your 'introduction') with its concept that they are now able to have a vague understanding towards it. Timing and the ability to determine what your audience might know are crucial here. To fail in this aspect is to fail in the delivery of its message, its essence. Without this, your concept is still basically meaningless. Inadequate preparation fails to make ready your audience in the accepting of whatever new concept you are bringing in. Not being ready is to not be able to absorb it.

At the actual inclusion of such a concept into the plot, we can use the familiarity we established to up the ante and provide a more comprehensive and substantial inclusion of 'components' pertaining to our once unfamiliar concept, i.e. to delve deeper into the subject matter. Even though we're past the introductory phase, familiarity can still be built upon to make our absorption process even much more easier.

Summing up the 4 previous paragraphs... familiarisation is established through a proper introduction, and developed through sustained exposure to more in-depth material.

Speaking on the subject of familiarisation that arises out of 'sustained exposure' like clichés, such stories are easily accepted by the

masses due to their (I believe) easily translatable story. Because it has been repeated so many times, that all the intricacies of its sub-

ject matter has been drilled into our head, we therefore know what is going on and how to take it. Such forms the rationalisation of why easily understandable stories captivate people. Clichés address the notion that people wish to be 'part of the action'. Their nature of being easily predictable and how they involve concepts we are very familiar with means few, if any, would be lost in the 'complexities' of its plot. What arises out of this understanding is the ability to immerse oneself into a story ... and it is through this undeniable proof that what people truly look for in a story is the ability to actually live through its tale.

Remote has been a member of RMXP since January 2006. He is not currently working on a project in RMXP at this time.

The Process

sovay's thoughts on Game Design

edited by Lene



picture of Me!

sovay Jennifer Fox a.k.a. "sovaiFox" a.k.a. "Fox"

23 year old Game Designer



Marketing Designer
for

I have used RPG Maker since '95 but I rarely post serious projects as I plan to make a commercial game eventually. RMXP allows for that potential so my main project is tightly under wraps.

Recently, a card game I designed got picked up by Cambridge Games Factory, a small start-up company that works out of Cambridge, MA. I got hired on as Marketing Director and part-time Games Designer.

* My totem creatures are foxes, dragons and spiders.

* I tend to talk about girls about as much as guys do.

* I enjoy life as much as possible!

currently she has put together a concept review team feedback so that she might get somewhere with them and make a commercial game.

ENTRY #1

A lot of my stories start as snippets from dreams. I awake and write it all down. The problem then is "Where did it all start? Who are they all?"

I figured out who the characters were in my first draft of the story. It ended up not working and I scrapped it. However, I already had the characters figured out, so it was matter of figuring out when and how they meet.



I have been working on and off on the story for a long time, scrappin' and scraping until I came up with a story line that flows and does not feel forced or amazingly clichéd or too similar to other games.

One more key thing is a song I wrote for the story. At some point I must find someone to put it to music for me...

For more of the process by Sovay, check out future issues. If you have any questions for Sovay e-mail

[RMXpeZine@gmail.com!](mailto:RMXpeZine@gmail.com)



Near Fantastica's

Magic

Part 4: Ritual and Ceremonial Magic

Ritual magic is the performance of ceremony to obtain material and spiritual power. Ceremonial magicians may follow one of two paths. In one path, the magician spends years of study and preparation learning the secrets of the **Kabala**; a series of **Hermetic books telling of a master's teaching. Throughout his studies he learns to** discipline his will and imagination, **allowing him to** leave his physical body and work magic on the astral plane.

This astral plane holds, in hidden planes, worlds of beauty and **unimaginable** terror. It **is literally a** twilight zone containing the highest dreams and darkest nightmares. The mystic ascends there **after training** his imagination and will. All of the higher occult experiences occur here. The geography of this astral world and means of access to and travel through it supplies the material taught by many esoteric schools of occult science.

The magician ascends **to** multiple planes by **performing** various rituals, but **he** must be **fit both in body and mind** to receive these teachings. Magicians map out some areas in this unimaginably vast territory, describing inhabitants, their living space **and** the language they speak. The student ascends the

planes as he rises in grade, and learns spells, **the** names of guardian **angels**, smells, colors and other symbolic aspects of the planes. He learns which demons inhabit the plane, which he defends against with the proper protective spells and rituals.

The simplest method of astral out-of-body travel is through visualization training. The student begins by relaxing, in a prone position and imagining his **life essence** rising from his physical body. With **proper** training, visualization is intensified until the magician's consciousness transfers to the astral "watcher".

Other methods, such as meditating on the paths of the *Kabalistic Tree of Life*, follow a specific protocol and traveling unprepared of leaping ahead of one's knowledge **is to be** considered dangerous and foolhardy.

Eliphas Levi's volume, *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic* (1865), proved hugely influential on the modern practice of this type of ritual, leading directly to the *Order of the Golden Dawn* and many other schools of modern ceremonial and ritual magic. The tendency of modern magic, however, has been to bring various systems of magic and occult science together in a synthesis that combines multiple schools. While not true of

all modern magicians, many dispense with the more complicated requirement of **traditional** ceremonial magic in favor of simpler but no less volatile systems.

Following the second path, a ceremonial magician may draw his magic circle, his pentagram of two triangles and call forth deities, spirits, demons and the dead following directions from a grimoire of **magical** texts such as the medieval, *The Key of Solomon*, which names hundreds of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and a **variety of** other gods, demons and spirits. The paraphernalia required to follow this path and the preparations of the magician are described in arduous detail in spell books. But this concept did not originate in the Dark Ages. Works **from** the great library of Assurbanipal reveal that **the** grimmores **are** full of spells **that** were common fifteen centuries earlier. Babylonian grimmores included *Utukki Limnuli* (evil spirits), *Labartu* (**hag demons**) and ceremonial texts such as the *Maklu*, which contained eight tables of incantations and spells against wizards and witches (making images of their enemies and **destroying** them is a major element).

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“It’s like a dark force and a good force. The dark force calling up demons is quicker, but you pay a toll...”

Another sixteen tablets **were available** on exorcism of evil spirits names, demons, goblins and ghosts.

This style perhaps reached its highest development when MacGeogor Mathers (a Golden Dawn member), translated into English **the Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage**, allegedly a fifteen-century guide but more likely an eighteenth-century work. It did away with most complicated ritual and paraphernalia required by European ceremonial magic.

Abramelin magic supposes the material world is created by evil spirits **that** the magician can **control** after he attains the help of his guardian **angel** (this is an ancient magical idea. The Golden Dawn magicians believed the magician’s “guardian **angel**” was actually his own true self.). Discovering this, the magician can force the spirits, (which may be **recognized** as **materializations** of archetypal ideas inside his mind or aspects of himself to do his bidding. The book includes a large number of magic squares **and** letter arrangements that represent and empower the magician’s wishes. Abramelin magic fascinated Aleister Crowley, who warned

that it was extremely dangerous to use without proper preparation.

Both paths may be dangerous to the life and soul of inadequately prepared magicians. One practicing magician says, “It’s like a dark force and a good force. The dark force calling up demons is quicker, but you pay a toll. It’s dangerous and costly to the magician spiritually. The other path, meditating on the Kabalistic Tree of Life is slower, but still dangerous if you do not do it right.”

Both paths also evolved from ideas already old in Egypt when written down in ancient Greece. The occult sciences **derived** from these ancient moorings in sympathetic magic, the study of stars and rites **from** the Egyptian dead, to the Neoplatonic ideas of plotlines of Alexandria in A.D. 233, who sought “the ideal reality which exists behind appearances. This idea similar to Plato’s concept of elementary ideas, hence the “Neoplatonic” labeled Plotinus and his followers, Porphyry, umbilicus and Proclus, into out of body magical practice where they encountered gods and demigods, malignant **demons** and genii while in an ecstatic, medita-

tive, out-of-body state achieved through austere living and careful preparation. The Neoplatonic believed evil genii and **demons** might pursue and capture them if the philosophers/magicians did not escape by returning to their physical bodies.

Gnostics, who sought gnosis, or secret knowledge, **fathered and developed** refined Neoplatonic and other oriental magical ideas. Simon the Magus mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible, was a Gnostic magician (and the Bible relates only the canonical Christian version of his story). Gnostics were declared heretical by the Catholic Church as it solidified its accepted theology.

The Hermetica

The *Hermetica*, according to occult tradition, is forty-two books written by various authors, but attributed in a convenient fiction to Hermes Trismegistus, “Thrice Greatest Hermes,” a combination of the Greek god and Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth. The secret knowledge in these works are **laden** with occult symbolism. Their basic idea suggests that

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“The other path, meditating on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life is slower, but still dangerous if you do not do it right.”

the universe is a whole and is connected via a complicated system of correspondences, which is the import of the statement from the Hermetic work, the Smaragdine Tablet: “As above, so below.” Legend says the Hermetic books contain fragments of the magic secrets of ancient Greece and Egypt, which were originally contained on books lost when the library of Alexandria burned, destroying much of the collected knowledge of the ancient world. They include The Divine Pyramider and the Vision, which mix esoteric through from dynastic Egypt with instructions for the spiritual development of the soul.

Medieval Magic

European high magic kept a low profile after mainstream Christianity conquered the West in the fourth century. The thirty-sixth Canon of the Exumenical Council at Laodicea in A.D. 364 forbids priests and clerks to become magicians, enchanters or astrologers. It was merely the first of many cannons to follow forbidding various magical practices as the Church decided that magic and Christianity were largely incompatible. Most magic practiced in

Europe prior to about the twelfth century was the nature religion based on herbs and stones, the moon and stars and cultural superstition and remnants of the ancient mystery religions. The church regarded both as witchcraft or **black** magic.

When the Crusaders returned from the Middle East, they brought with them oriental ideas of theosophy (from the Greek Theos, meaning god and Sophia meaning wisdom) that claims one can know the nature of the deity absolutely through proper preparation, study and ritual. Magical systems in the Middle East, practiced by the Byzantines, the Moors of Spain and the Arabs, drew upon the Alexandrian Neoplatonic ideas. Paracelsus and Agrippa together virtually outlined medieval high magic principles between them.

Paracelsus (born in 1493 near Zurich) wrote several tomes outlining his complex ideas, which first **outlined the** astral body concept, established connections between the body and the planets and preached the importance of the willed imagination. “It is possible,” he wrote, “that my spirit, without help of my body and through

and ardent will alone and without a sword can stab and wound others. It is also possible that I can bring my adversary into an image and then fold him up and lame him at my pleasure. Resolute imagination is the beginning of all magical operations.”

The primary influences of Agrippa were due to the stories told about his own adventurous life. He was born Agrippa Von Nettesheim, Henry Cornelius (1486 – 1535), a German soldier, physician, alchemist, astrologer and magician, Agrippa knew eight languages and traveled Europe widely as a soldier and in service to noble patrons. His defense of magic, *De occult philosophic* (1531), and the tales surrounding his life (he made enemies freely, particularly among the medieval monks) made him one of the major figures who contributed to the medieval fascination with high magic. Agrippa regarded magic “as the true road to communion with God,” linking his mysticism to Neoplatonic ideas and modern magic alike.

Near Fantastica has been a member of RMXP.org since January 2006.

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