gaming environments

global network player authority PewDie ie guild god Let's Play angel undead wth authentic mediatization Skill PVP dungeon contest
game rule system gameplay avatar WoW blessing noob kills demor race body fight op spell ingames FS discussion clan digital wedding
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simulation lol ludology The Last of Us death resurrection funeral runes ritua virtual identity buff priest salvation mag XBox 360PVE
narrative immersion community symbols

Local visitor at the India Gaming Show South 2018, Bengaluru / India. Photo by Xenia Zeiler, 20 January 2018.

Special Issue

Video Game Development in Asia:

Voices from the Field

edited by

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and Christopher Helland

Issue 08 (2018)

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An Ethnoludography of the Game Design Industry in Kathmandu, Nepal

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Interview with Ryan Sumo, Lead Artist/Business Developer at Squeaky Wheel Studio

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Kerstin Radde-Antweiler

Abstract
Interview with Ryan Sumo, Lead Artist/Business Developer at Squeaky Wheel Studio.
Keywords: Squeaky Wheel Studio, *Academia: School Simulator,* gamevironments

Q1: What is Squeaky Wheel Studio? When was it founded/created, and by whom? Why did you choose this name (and does it has a specific meaning)? Why or for what purpose?

Squeaky Wheel Studio is an independent game development company based in the Philippines that aims to be a developer of thematically unique PC strategy and simulation games. The name was intended to be a play on the saying "The squeaky wheel gets the grease", in the hopes that our games would make people pay attention to certain issues we were targeting.

Figure 1. Logo

Q2: What are the objectives, aims or concepts you want to share with the world? What is unique in Squeaky Wheel Studio, and in what way is it innovative?

Originally, our intent was to make entertaining games that bring attention to current affairs in developing countries, hence our first game *Political Animals*, which was loosely based on Philippine politics. Our vision has changed somewhat over that time, to be less about focusing on specific issues but rather simply getting people to question their motivations to improve critical thinking and self-reflection. For *Political Animals*, the question was whether or not you could win an election without "getting your paws dirty". For our current game *Academia: School Simulator*, the goal is to build out your school and increase its prestige. Later on in the development of the game, we will add issues that ask the player whether or not they are willing to sacrifice that prestige in order to do the right thing.

Whether or not we are unique or innovative is not for us to say. What I can say is that we are trying to straddle the line between mass-market entertainment and serious

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games in order to trick players into self-reflection while they are playing our games.

Q3: To date, what have been the most important achievements of Squeaky Wheel Studio? How did they come about? Do tell us about your most important game(s) please!

Figure 2. *Political Animals*

Political Animals was a financial flop, but it has garnered some recognition. It was recognized by commonsense media in their best of Education Tech in 2017 for Social Studies. We have also been working in tandem with a PhD student to use *Political Animals* in the classroom with high school and college students to stimulate discussions about politics. I was personally invited by a Tech/Future conference called Brain Bar in Budapest to discuss *Political Animals* in terms of morality in games.
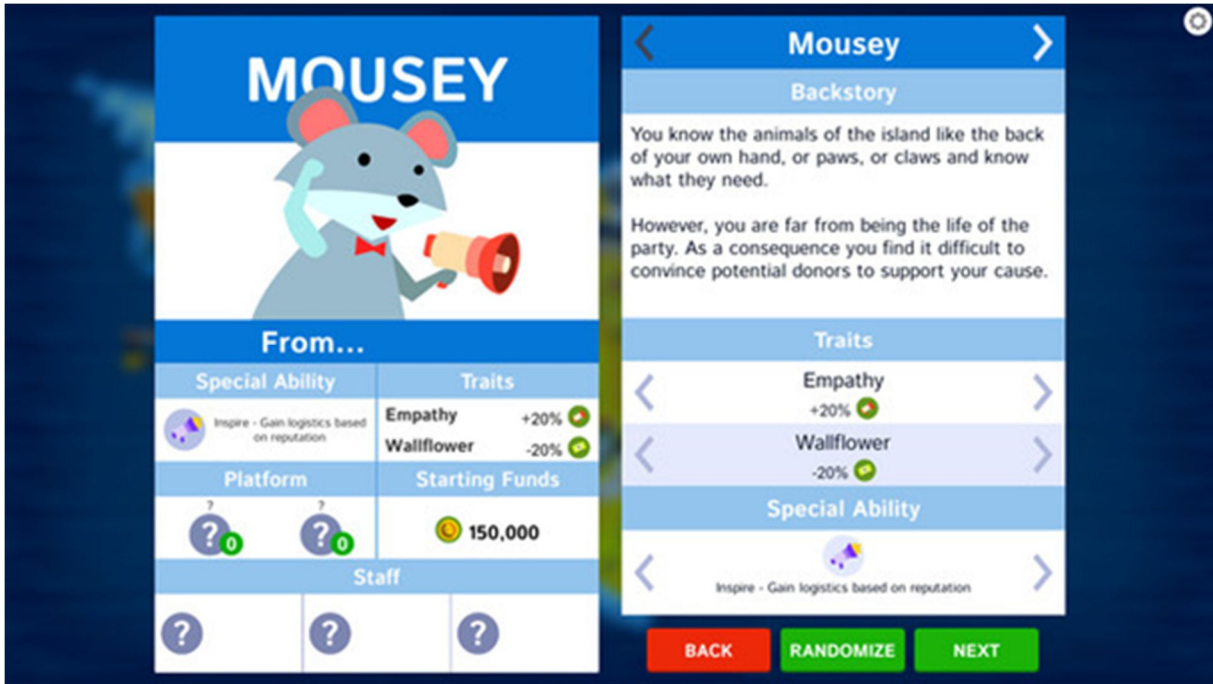
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Figure 3. In-game character

Figure 4. Moral Compass of the gamers

Our second game, *Academia: School Simulator*, did much better financially, but as of yet it is still in Early Access development, so it is not complete yet.

Figure 5. Academia School Simulator

Q4: In what way do you decide on new endeavors, e.g., do you follow an established process regarding how you formulate your projects?

First, is it an idea we are interested to turn into a game? Second, can it be financially viable given the current market situation? When we find a balance between these two things, it is what we choose to work on.

Q5: If it is possible for you to share this information: what is your next project about, and when and where can we look out for it?

Our current project is called *Academia : School Simulator*. It is a high school simulator where you build the school from the ground up and hire teachers, janitors, cooks,

guidance counselors etc. and go about the everyday business of running a school. It is a more typical game in the "tycoon" genre, but we hope to add some of the moral dilemmas similar to what we had in *Political Animals* as we reach closer to the finish line.

Figure 6. Start of the game

Figure 7. In-game scene

It is currently out on Early Access and can be purchased on Steam or on our website, cf.

Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/672630/Academia__School_Simulator/.

Web Site: www.academiagame.com/ and http://www.squeakywheel.ph/.