gamevironments

Special Issue

Video Game Development in Asia:
Voices from the Field

edited by

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Issue 08 (2018)

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Abstract
Interview with Avichal Singh, Founder and Game Designer of Nodding Heads Games, Pune, India.
Keywords: Nodding Heads Games, *Raji An Ancient Epic,* gamevironments

Q1: Who is Nodding Heads Games and what is *Raji*? 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?

We are Nodding Heads Games and our first indie title is called *Raji An Ancient Epic*. The company was formed on 10th January 2017 by Ian, Avichal and Shruti.

When Ian arrived to teach at the Pune Institute, he was not brief on certain nuances let alone remembering all of their wonderful and in some cases tongue twisting names! He was a little perturbed with the Indian head nod for good reason or as it's affectionately called, the "bobble head"… Now, as a westerner coming in a fresh, not akin to this cultural extravaganza. Whenever Ian would ask the students, "do you all understand?", he'd receive a collection of nodding heads, not a yes, not a no, but heads see-sawing back and forth. Bear in mind that this can mean anything! From yes, no and a haven't the faintest of ideas what you're talking about. So … how did we come up with the name Nodding Heads … This is something very special and sincere

to India, this is heritage and it felt right when Ian had a Eureka moment and blurted out, "How about Nodding Heads, we're Indian after all"? And so, Nodding Heads Games we became… ;)

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

We all had a common vision to create a universe set in India. As gamers, we never got to experience a game like ours. We are very passionate about wanting to portray the rare beauty of Indian culture and mythology which was rarely explored in the medium of video games. Also, with *Raji* we wanted to tell a story that has a global appeal yet very Indian in its essence.

The whole universe and its setting itself is unique and comparatively new to the Western world. All the Hindu gods are existing in the Indian mythology but the story of *Raji* and its universe is something inspired by the myths and lores but fictional. We feel that Indian culture and myths is like a hidden treasure unexplored but has huge potential to shape great everlasting stories for global markets.

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

The most recent success and to date the biggest achievement has been our game *Raji* showcased at the E3 2018 in the Microsoft show reel. It was a proud and exciting

feeling for all of us seeing our struggles and hardships finally but slowly being recognized. Just this weekend we also got the news that we have been nominated for the Unreal E3 Awards for Unreal Underdog category. So, keeping our fingers crossed for this one. :)

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

Even though we knew what we wanted to do with the game initially we had gone through several iterations of the concept for over a year, but this was just tinkering with lots and lots of ideas. Once we'd settled on we started working on the development, pre-production took roughly two months where we blocked out the whole level, worked on the concept and started implementing the basic mechanics which gave us a clear understanding of what we needed to accomplish.

The art, design and programming departments work closely in tight process, which allow us to implement features more efficiently.

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?

Since we are passionate bunch of individuals, we do have a few ideas for our next projects. Though we won't be able to discuss them at the moment. But, to give some visuals about our art style, here is a game reveal trailer and some artwork from our ongoing project, Raji. An Ancient Epic: Game Reveal Trailer.

Figure 1. Artwork in Raji. An Ancient Epic.

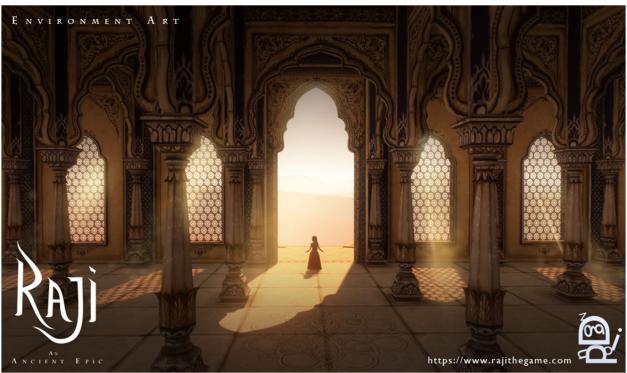Figure 2. Mandalas play a major role in the game.

Figure 3. Conscious effort to integrate specific architecture forms.

Figure 4. The main character of our game: Raji.

Figure 5. Raji on her quest.

Figure 6. Equipped with weapons Raji proceeds.

Figure 7. Raji roaming in a fortress.