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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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Interview with Zainuddeen Fahadh, Founder of Ogre Head

Studio

Xenia Zeiler

Abstract

Interview with Zainuddeen Fahadh, Founder of Ogre Head Studio, Hyderabad, India.

Keywords: *Ogre Head Studio, Asura, gamevironments*

To cite this article: Interview with Zainuddeen Fahadh, Founder of Ogre Head Studio. *gamevironments* 8, 31-37. Available at <http://www.gamevironments.uni-bremen.de>.

Q1: What is Ogre Head 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?

We are Ogre Head Studio, an independent game company that I (Zainuddeen Fahadh) founded with my friends Neeraj Kumar and Aubhik Nath on 14 April 2014 in Hyderabad, India.



Figure 1. Logo of Ogre Head Studio.

We started Ogre Head Studio to make epic games inspired by Indian myth and culture. The Indian game industry is renowned for its service/outsourcing and mobile game sector, and as such, our opportunities were limited. As a result, I pitched the idea to friends and colleagues to join me in bringing a change in the Indian games industry by making original games with quality and unique gameplay. So, Ogre Head Studio was formed!

Ogres are stereotypically deemed as boring creatures, and as game developers, we hope to eliminate boredom and teleport you to a fantastical realm when playing our games. Hence, the name Ogre Head Studio which kind of symbolizes the death of boredom. Also, we believe that it sounds EPIC! :)



Figure 2. The founding team: Zainuddeen Fahadh, Neeraj Kumar and Aubhik Nath.

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

There have already been great games inspired by Western and far Eastern cultures (Japan). However, we believe that we can introduce the gaming audience to whole new mythology and world. India has a rich culture and heritage with fantastic mythology. As game developers from India, we would love to adopt our ancient myths and amalgamate it in our games for the global gaming audience.



Figure 3. Asura in action. One of the game ads.

We believe that "Game-play is KING!" and you will be fascinated to learn that the Indian mythology if applied wisely in games, can inspire not only the lore but also the game mechanics. There have already been other mediums like TV series, anime, etc where Indian mythology has been adopted, but at Ogre Head, we do it differently. We do not base our games on Indian mythology but take inspiration from its rich culture and folklore to hyper fantasize and craft new stories. As a result, our games are unique and fresh!

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

Releasing our debut game *Asura* was the most significant milestone of our studio. When we started the company, everyone in the Indian Game Industry was sceptical

that a small team like ours (2 people for the most part) could develop a game like *Asura*. The game was planned to release on PC platforms. However, most developers in our country were making games for mobile and considered development for PC games as a far-fetched idea. But we were adamant and young with great ambitions. It took us three years and countless hours to develop *Asura*. Eventually, the game released to excellent reviews and sold a good amount of copies to bring us the much needed financial stability.



Figure 4. Asura on his quest for vengeance and revenge.

Asura is an Indian myth inspired Rogue-like. It is a brutally difficult game with a procedural skill tree, which changes every time your character dies. You play as a demon called "Asura", who is on a quest for vengeance and revenge. The game released on PC platform (Steam, Humble and GOG) on 17 April 2017.

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

As I mentioned before, we believe that Game-play is King! So generally, it is the game mechanics, which inspires us to prototype new ideas. If the demo is fun, then we infuse our culture/myth with game design for the players to enjoy. Do note that this is not a rule set in stone. There are times when we might read exciting lore about our culture, which inspires us to develop unique game mechanics. Our goal is to teleport our players to a new realm, and since Indian myth has not been explored in games, we think our audience will find it fresh and unique.



Figure 7. The yogi – a character in Asura.

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?

It is too early to share information regarding our next project but SOON! :)