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Interview with Shailesh Prabhu, Indian Game Designer

by gameenvironments

Abstract

Interview with the Indian Game Designer Shailesh Prabhu about his game *Sky Sutra*.

Keywords: developer, *Sky Sutra*, HUEBRIX, Multiplayer, game, multicultural

Q1: What is Sky Sutra, and who are you, the creator(s)?

Right now we are a nameless group of people making games on the side. I recently took up a job as a game designer in Copenhagen so I can move there, however we will continue to work on our new game, *Sky Sutra*. Our team is multicultural and located in Sweden, France, India and Copenhagen (one person each). Initially I had found a studio with the intent of making original games in India and continued to do so for nine long years but now I have decided to move to Europe and do the same. Hence the slight change in structure. This, however, allows us to make games we want, without having to fear commercial failure. It is very liberating. However, that still means we take the game just as seriously as before.

Q2: What is unique in Sky Sutra, and in what way is it innovative?

Sky Sutra is a Local Multiplayer, Two-Player, Competitive, Asymmetric, video game about Flying Carpets. The game features two roles, a leader and a chaser, both of whom are fighting for control of a flying carpet. The leader can control the movement of the carpet, which leaves behind a trail. The leader can momentarily

stop the trail by jumping on the carpet.

The chaser can only run on this trail and must avoid falling off. They can shoot and orb and direct it, in real time, to the leader in order to stun him and take his place. The game was inspired by Flemings left hand rule in Physics, which I was mulling over one day. But not in the sense of force, but by the concept of existing on different planes. How would a two player game work if one player was playing perpendicular to the screen, in top view (to create levels). And the other would play a sidescroller on those same levels.

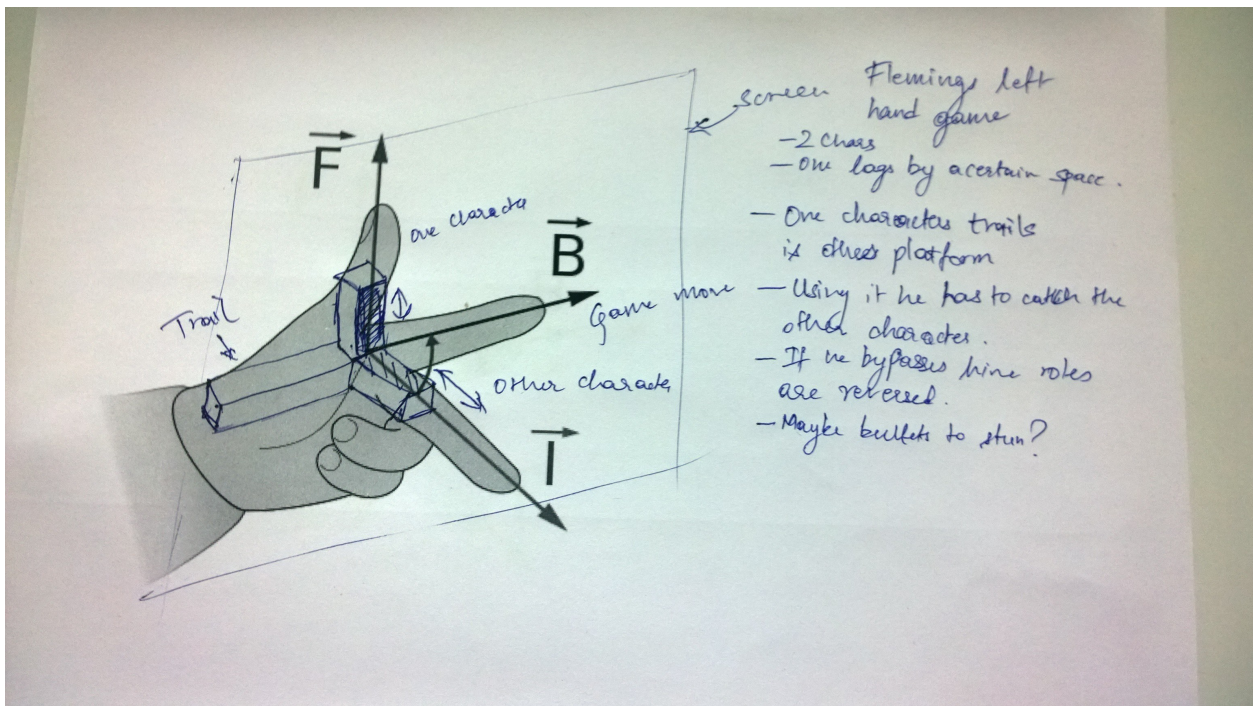


Fig 1: Initial pitch I made to my programmer

The game has been showcased in 2015 at The Indie Game Shindig in Kerala, India and also in 2016 at Now Play This in London. Both places the reception was really positive, a couple of people went out of their way to tell me how much they enjoyed it and that felt that we were on to something good.



Fig 2: The game ready to be showcased at Now Play This 2016 in London



Fig 3: The game being played by school children at the Indie Game Shindig in Kerala

Q3: How is the game related to video games and religion/culture?

I am not entirely sure. Initially when we were doing the concept art, it started off as a joke. Oh hey, as an Indian I should only make games about mystical Indian things! I don't believe that is true, we can and should make games about whatever we feel like. But we can also bring something fresh to the table. When we did inspect the idea closely, we thought it actually brought some interesting visuals to the game and then we just kept going with it. I think it looks like something unique and that is owed to the culturally themed visuals of the game.



Fig 4: Screenshot from the game

Q4: Why did you choose this name, does it has a specific meaning?

Sutra means, thread or narrative or story and well Sky is, the sky! I thought it was an interesting name for our gameplay. I am a bit worried that most people will think it is about sex in the sky or something, but it's not! I think the Kamasutra has made a lot of people connect Sutra to sex and numerous people have told me that, but by that logic Gamasutra should be about games of the ADULT kind. Anyway, we will see how the name goes!

Q5: To date, what have been the most important achievements of your company? How did they come about?

I think a game we did in 2012, *HUEBRIX*, did fairly well for us. It wasn't a huge success by international standards but for us, in India, it was a great start. We got noticed by

Q8: What is your next project about, and when and where can we look out for it?

Apart from *Sky Sutra*, I am juggling with a few more personal projects one is a stealth game and another is a fast paced arcade style game based on Soccer (but not really), both are really very early in their life cycle so I haven't really put them up anywhere. I actually also haven't yet made a website for *Sky Sutra*, which I should get on now!

We haven't made a big fuss about *Sky Sutra* so far, but as of now, the people who have seen it seem to have a positive impression of it. I think this is the only press coverage we have at the moment, <http://gadgets.ndtv.com/games/reviews/sky-sutra-is-part-shooter-part-platformer-all-awesome-and-made-in-india-773000>.

But that will change once we are closer to release. We are working very hard to get the game out in the next 3 months at least on some platforms.