

GDC



CREATIVE PANIC

how agility

turned

TERROR into TRIUMPH

Welcome!



Crazy times!



Crazy times!

- Big games



Crazy times!

- Big games
- Small games



Crazy times!

- Big games
- Small games
- “Death of the Middle”

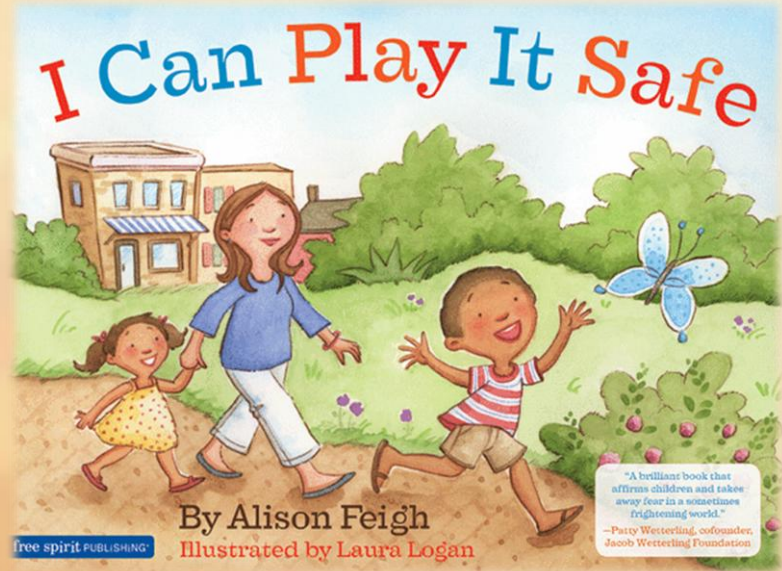


Harder to Sign Big Games



Harder to Sign Big Games

- Publishers averse to new IP



Harder to Sign Big Games

- Publishers averse to new IP
- Want to own IP



Harder to Sign Big Games

- Publishers averse to new IP
- Want to **own IP**
- Want to remove unknowns



How has Double Fine survived?



How has Double Fine survived?

- Ten years as a one team studio



How has Double Fine survived?

- Ten years as a one team studio
- We turned the **battleship**



How has Double Fine survived?

- Ten years as a one team studio
- We turned the **battleship**
- ...into a fleet of **tugboats**.



Amnesia Fortnight



Amnesia Fortnight

- Inspiration



Amnesia Fortnight

- Inspiration
- “Amnesia”



Amnesia Fortnight

- **Inspiration**
- “Amnesia”
- “Fortnight”



Amnesia Fortnight

- **Inspiration**
- “Amnesia”
- “Fortnight”
- **Small teams**



Amnesia Fortnight

- Inspiration
- “Amnesia”
- “Fortnight”
- Small teams
- “Complete Experiences”



Massive Success!



Massive Success!

- Morale Boost



Massive Success!

- Morale Boost
- New roles



Massive Success!

- Morale Boost
- New roles
- Usable game ideas



Massive Success!

- Morale Boost
- New roles
- Usable game ideas
- ***Saved company***



What happened?



What happened?

- AF1 (2007)



What happened?

- AF1 (2007)
- AF2 (2009)



What happened?

- AF1 (2007)
- AF2 (2009)
- *Brütal Legend 2*



What happened?

- AF1 (2007)
- AF2 (2009)
- ~~*Brütal Legend 2*~~



What happened?

- AF1 (2007)
- AF2 (2009)
- ~~Brütal Legend 2~~
- Four Game Road Show



The Stories



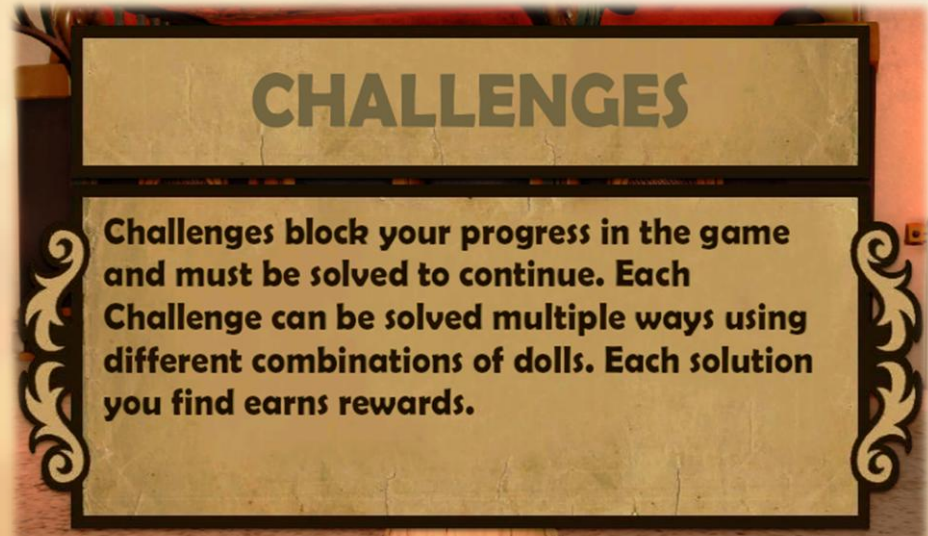
The Stories

- From prototype to full game



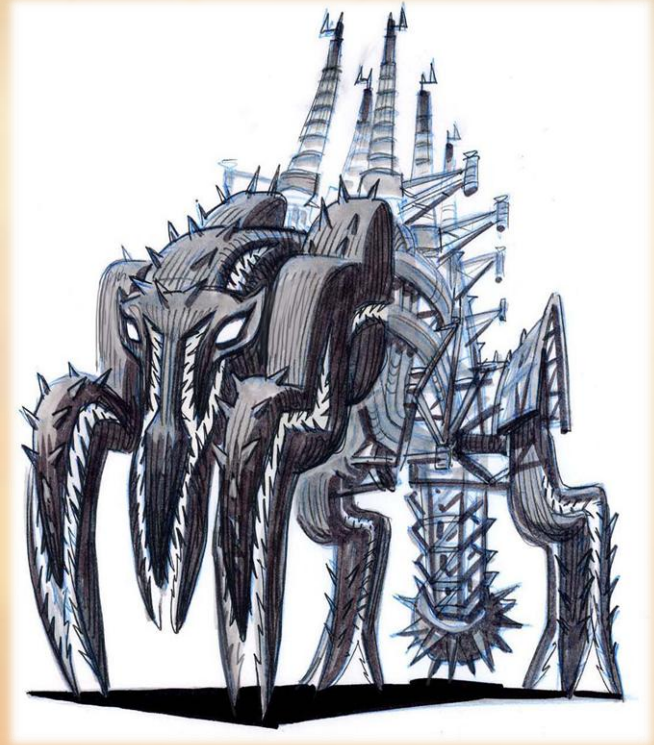
The Stories

- From prototype to full game
- Production challenges



The Stories

- From prototype to full game
- Production challenges
- Solutions



The Stories

- From prototype to full game
- Production challenges
- Solutions
- Project Leads



STACKING



Inspiration



Inspiration

- Expressionist Film



Inspiration

- Expressionist Film
- Identity



Inspiration

- Expressionist Film
- Identity
- Russian dolls!



AF Prototype



AF Prototype

- What can these dolls do?



AF Prototype

- What can these dolls do?
 - Hat combat?



AF Prototype

- What can these dolls do?
 - Hat combat?
 - Fight nut crackers?



AF Prototype

- Only 2 weeks to make it!



AF Prototype

- Only **2 weeks** to make it!
- Focus on stacking mechanic



AF Prototype

- Only **2 weeks** to make it!
- Focus on stacking mechanic
- An adventure game?



Production Challenge



Production Challenge

- An original, high fidelity game on a **small budget**



Production Challenge

- An original, high fidelity game on a **small budget**
- Personality



Production Challenge

- An original, high fidelity game on a **small budget**
- **Personality**
- **Expectations high**



Economy of Design



Economy of Design

- Start small and grow instead of big and cut



Economy of Design

- Start small and grow instead of big and cut
- Relate everything to core idea



Economy of Design

- Start small and grow instead of big and cut
- Relate everything to core idea
- Look for creative opportunities



Characters



Characters

- One character model for entire game!



Characters

- One character model for entire game!
- The power of **accessories**



Characters

- One character model for entire game!
- The power of **accessories**
- Cheap to render!



Characters

- Personality with just a few joints?



Characters

- Personality with just a few joints?
- Torture your animators...



Characters

- Personality with just a few joints?
- Torture your animators...
- ...*they're clever*



Characters

- Personality with just a few joints?
- Torture your animators...
- ...*they're clever*
- Drag ass



Challenges



Challenges

- Multiple solutions



Challenges

- Multiple solutions
- Economic replay



Challenges

- Multiple solutions
- Economic **replay**
- Increased accessibility



Challenges

- Multiple solutions
- Economic **replay**
- Increased accessibility
- Solutions had **few** dependencies



Silent Film



Silent Film

- No voice



Silent Film

- No voice
- Small music budget



Silent Film

- No voice
- Small music budget
- Added more personality



Lessons Learned

- Embrace your limitations



Lessons Learned

- Embrace your limitations
- Find Essence Early



Lessons Learned

- Embrace your limitations
- Find Essence Early



Next Up...

- Defining vision early is essential...



Next Up...

- Defining vision early is essential...
- ...but how do you keep the vision intact when the **product must adapt?**





Once
Upon a
MONSTER

Inspiration

- Rewind all the way back to...



Inspiration

- Rewind all the way back to...

1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom



Listing Price: Only \$1,000,000



Inspiration

- Rewind all the way back to...

1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom



Listing Price: Only \$1,000,000



Inspiration

- Rewind all the way back to...



1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom



Listing Price: Only \$1,000,000



Inspiration

- **Rewind all the way back to...**
...the year two thousand and seven!



1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom



Listing Price: Only \$1,000,000





Inspiration



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ GDC



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ GDC



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ **GDC**
- **Childhood** heroes...



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ GDC
- Childhood heroes...
 - Bill Watterson



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ GDC
- Childhood heroes...
 - Bill Watterson
 - Jim Henson



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ GDC
- **Childhood heroes...**
 - Bill Watterson
 - Jim Henson
- **Making music.**



Inspiration

- Tsutomu Kouno @ **GDC**
- **Childhood** heroes...
 - Bill Watterson
 - Jim Henson
- **Making music.**
- **Insight** from an (ex) girlfriend.



AF Prototype

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*



AF Prototype

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*
- **Game:** Interactive musical toy.



AF Prototype

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*
- **Game:** Interactive musical toy.
 - Create your own **personal happy song.**



AF Prototype

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*
- **Game:** Interactive musical toy.
 - Create your own **personal happy song.**
 - With help from musical monster friends.



AF Prototype

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*
- **Game:** Interactive musical toy.
 - Create your own **personal happy song.**
 - With help from musical **monster friends.**
 - **Minimalistic environments.**







Two Years Later (2009)

- End of Brutal Legend is in sight.



Two Years Later (2009)

- End of Brutal Legend is in sight.
- Tim says...



Two Years Later (2009)

- End of Brutal Legend is in sight.
- Tim says...
“Let’s make a small game...”



Two Years Later (2009)

- End of Brutal Legend is in sight.
- Tim says...
*“Let’s make a small game...
...in addition to Brutal Legend 2!”*



Two Years Later (2009)

- End of Brutal Legend is in sight.
- Tim says...
 - “Let’s make a small game...
...in addition to Brutal Legend 2!”*
 - “Let’s pitch Happy Song!”*



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits**!



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits!**
- **Prototype not commercial**



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits**!
- **Prototype not commercial**
 - Monster friends are awesome.



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits**!
- **Prototype not commercial**
 - Monster friends are awesome.
 - Musical toy, less so.



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits!**
- **Prototype not commercial**
 - Monster friends are awesome.
 - Musical toy, less so.
 - Felt niche...



Pitch Problems

- Time to **pitch** the game...
...to the **suits!**
- **Prototype not commercial**
 - Monster friends are awesome.
 - Musical toy, less so.
 - Felt niche...
 - ...even for DF :)



Production Challenge

- Adapt the prototype, sign the game, preserve the vision.



Production Challenge

- Adapt the prototype, sign the game, preserve the vision.
- Two adaptations...



Production Challenge

- Adapt the prototype, sign the game, preserve the vision.
- Two adaptations...
 - Once for pitch.



Production Challenge

- Adapt the prototype, sign the game, preserve the vision.
- Two adaptations...
 - Once for pitch.
 - Once for signing.



Opportunity 1: Kinect

- Kinect announced at E3 2009.



Opportunity 1: Kinect

- **Kinect announced at E3 2009.**
 - **New platform, new opportunity.**
 - **Family oriented interface.**
 - **Demand for new mechanics.**



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Opportunity 1: Kinect

- **Kinect announced at E3 2009.**
 - **New platform, new opportunity.**
 - **Family oriented interface.**
 - **Demand for new mechanics.**
- **Great opportunity.**
- **But how to adapt for Kinect?**



Kinect Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of interacting.*



Kinect Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of interacting.*
- **Game:** Monster minigames!



Kinect Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of interacting.*
- **Game:** Monster minigames!
- **Keep what works:**



Kinect Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of interacting.*
- **Game:** Monster minigames!
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**



Kinect Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of interacting.*
- **Game:** Monster minigames!
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**
 - **Game that makes you feel happy.**



Kinect: Interaction

- Focus on character interaction.



Kinect: Interaction

- Focus on character interaction.
 - Multiple activities.



Kinect: Interaction

- Focus on character interaction.
 - Multiple activities.
 - More physical activities.



Kinect: Interaction

- Focus on character interaction.
 - Multiple activities.
 - More physical activities.
 - Monster can see players.



Kinect: Co-Play

- Parent-child co-play.



Kinect: Co-Play

- **Parent-child co-play.**
 - All activities two player.



Kinect: Co-Play

- **Parent-child co-play.**
 - All activities two player.
 - Intergenerational focus.



Kinect: Co-Play

- **Parent-child co-play.**
 - All activities two player.
 - Intergenerational focus.
 - Real world interaction, not just game world.



Kinect: Simple World

- Actual world.



Kinect: Simple World

- Actual world.
 - Context for activities.



Kinect: Simple World

- **Actual world.**
 - **Context** for activities.
 - Inspired by **storybook illustrators** like Eric Carle.



Kinect: Simple World

- **Actual world.**
 - **Context** for activities.
 - Inspired by **storybook illustrators** like Eric Carle.
 - Still **minimalistic/2D**.



Kinect: Narrator

- Add a narrator.



Kinect: Narrator

- Add a narrator.
 - David Attenborough-esque.



Kinect: Narrator

- Add a narrator.
 - David Attenborough-esque.
 - Provide **exposition** and **instruction**.



Kinect: Narrator

- **Add a narrator.**
 - David Attenborough-esque.
 - Provide **exposition** and **instruction**.
 - **Disembodied** and **omniscient**.







Opportunity 2: Sesame

- WB announced new **partnership** in 2010...



Opportunity 2: Sesame

- WB announced new **partnership** in 2010...
- **Sesame Street!**



Opportunity 2: Sesame

- WB announced new **partnership** in 2010...
- **Sesame Street!**
 - Very compatible **values**.
 - Return to original **inspiration**.



Opportunity 2: Sesame

- WB announced new **partnership** in 2010...
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- Great **opportunity** for game.



Opportunity 2: Sesame

- WB announced new **partnership** in 2010...
- **Sesame Street!**
 - Very compatible **values**.
 - Return to original **inspiration**.
- Great **opportunity** for game.
- But how to **adapt** for Sesame?



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*
- **Keep what works:**



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**
 - **Interactive gameplay.**



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**
 - **Interactive gameplay.**
 - **Parent child co-play.**



Sesame Adaptation

- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of helping others.*
- **Game:** *Collection of stories.*
- **Keep what works:**
 - **Monster friends.**
 - **Interactive gameplay.**
 - **Parent child co-play.**
 - **Game that makes you feel happy.**



Sesame Adaptation

- Storybook inspired world becomes...



Sesame Adaptation

- Storybook inspired world becomes...
...literal storybook.



Sesame Adaptation

- Storybook inspired world becomes...
...literal storybook.
 - Context for activities.



Sesame Adaptation

- Storybook inspired world becomes...
...literal storybook.
 - **Context** for activities.
 - **Bridges** real and fictional worlds.



Sesame Adaptation

- Narrator becomes...



Sesame Adaptation

- Narrator becomes...
...Cookie and Elmo!



Sesame Adaptation

- Narrator becomes...
...Cookie and Elmo!
 - Same function.



Sesame Adaptation

- Narrator becomes...
...Cookie and Elmo!
 - Same function.
 - Now part of the world.



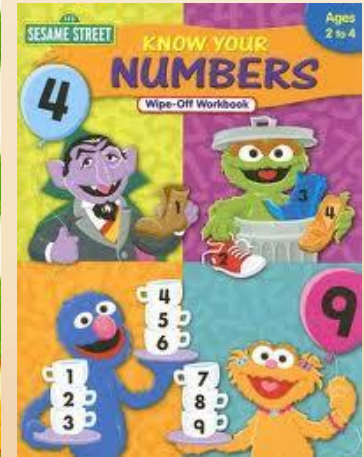
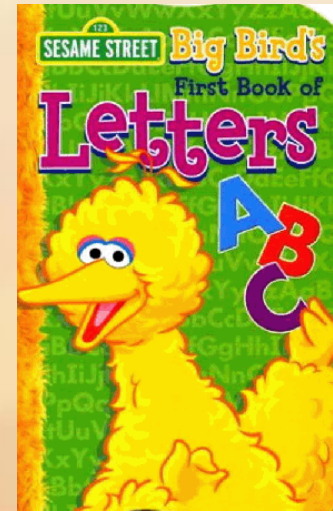
Sesame Adaptation

- Narrator becomes...
...Cookie and Elmo!
 - Same function.
 - Now part of the world.
 - More physical and funny.



Sesame Adaptation

- Educational and entertaining.



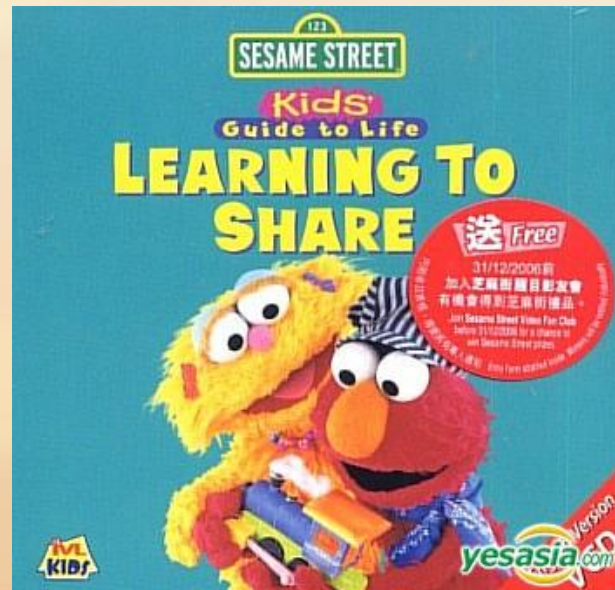
Sesame Adaptation

- Educational and entertaining.
 - Not numeracy and literacy.



Sesame Adaptation

- Educational and entertaining.
 - Not numeracy and literacy.
 - Use emotional curriculum.



Sesame Adaptation

- **Educational and entertaining.**
 - Not numeracy and literacy.
 - Use emotional curriculum.
 - Consistent w/ original vision.







Once
Upon a
MONSTER

Lessons Learned

- Must know your vision to stick to it.



Lessons Learned

- **Must know your vision to stick to it.**
 - i.e. *“A game about creating joy.”*



Lessons Learned

- **Must know your vision to stick to it.**
 - i.e. *“A game about creating joy.”*
- **Keep it simple.**



Lessons Learned

- **Must know your vision to stick to it.**
 - i.e. *“A game about creating joy.”*
- **Keep it simple.**
 - **One sentence or less.**



Lessons Learned

- **Must know your vision to stick to it.**
 - i.e. *“A game about creating joy.”*
- **Keep it simple.**
 - **One sentence or less.**
 - **Focus on experience.**



Lessons Learned

- **Must know your vision to stick to it.**
 - i.e. *“A game about creating joy.”*
- **Keep it simple.**
 - **One sentence or less.**
 - **Focus on experience.**
 - **Tell the team. Often.**



Lessons Learned

- Remarkable amount of **change** is possible...



Lessons Learned

- Remarkable amount of **change** is possible...
- ...If you **know** and **stay true** to your **core vision**!



Next up...

- Great to know your vision for one title...



Next up...

- Great to know your vision for one title...
...but what about your **brand**?



IRON BRIGADE



Inspiration



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!
 - Mech Shooters!



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!
 - Mech Shooters!
 - Tower Defense!



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!
 - Mech Shooters!
 - Tower Defense!
- Coop!



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!
 - Mech Shooters!
 - Tower Defense!
- Coop!
- A game about LOVE!



Inspiration

- Core Mechanic Mashup!
 - Mech Shooters!
 - Tower Defense!
- Coop!
- A game about LOVE!



ARCADE

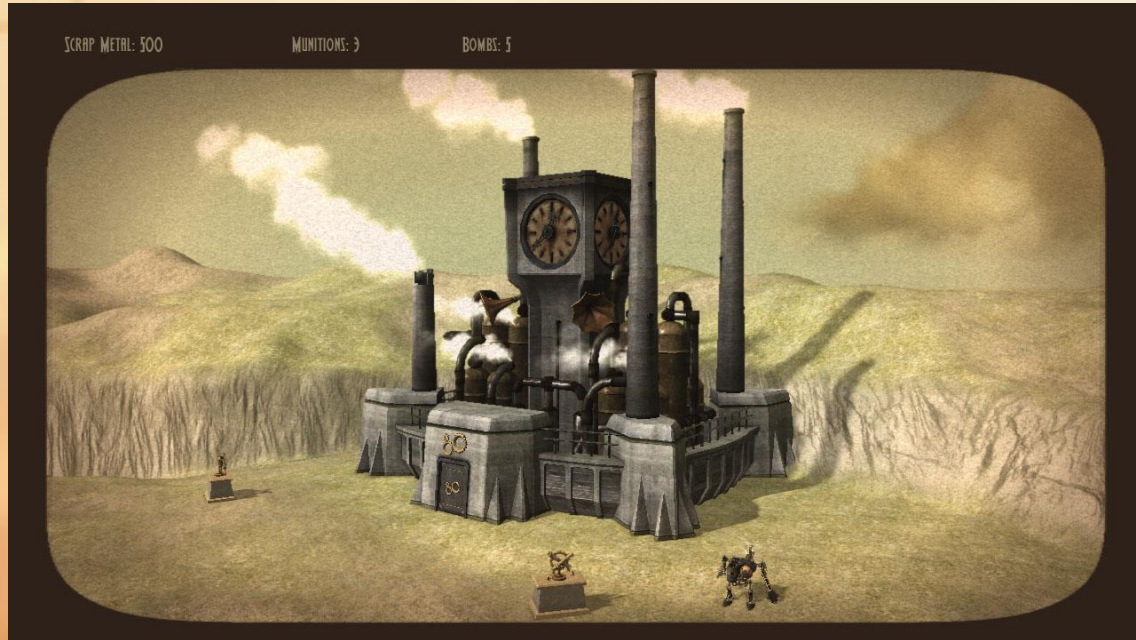


AF Prototype



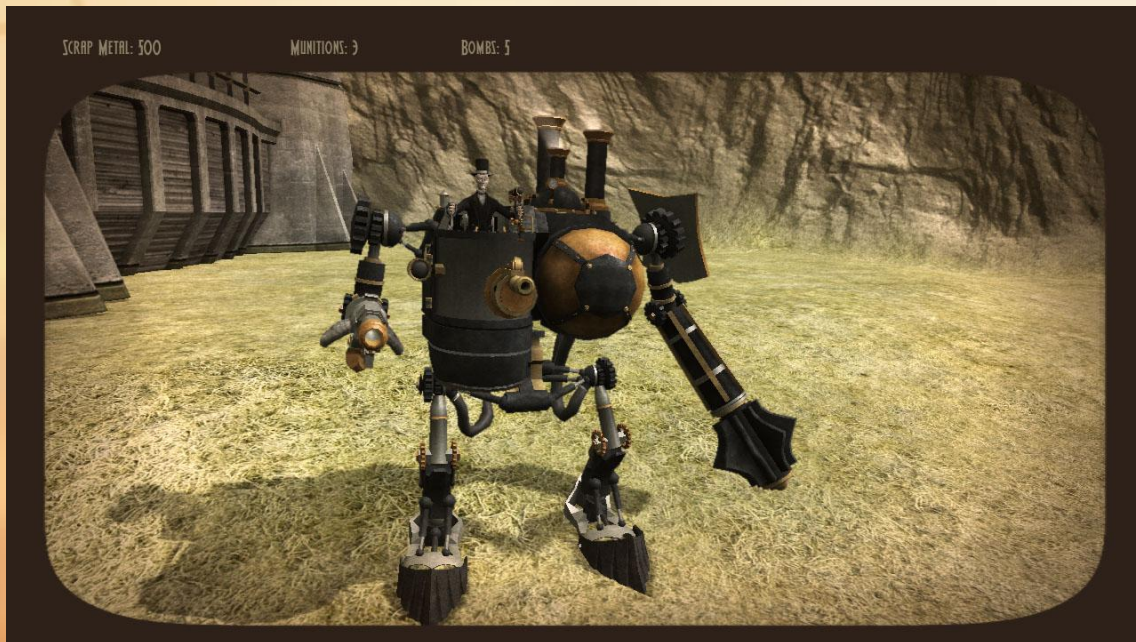
AF Prototype

- Steampunk Britain!



AF Prototype

- Steampunk Britain!
- Mobile Factories!



AF Prototype

- Steampunk Britain!
- Mobile Factories!
- Zombie Robots!



SCRAP METAL: 4900

MUNITIONS: 3

BOMBS: 4



Production Challenge



Production Challenge

- Inspired by Core Mechanics?!?



Production Challenge

- Inspired by Core Mechanics?!?
- That's not very Double Fine!



Design Fundamentals



Design Fundamentals

- Tim designs Top-Down



Design Fundamentals

- Tim designs Top-Down



Design Fundamentals

- Tim designs Top-Down
- I design Bottom-Up



Design Fundamentals

- Tim designs Top-Down
- I design Bottom-Up



Production Challenge

- Can these approaches work for the company?



Production Challenge

- Can these approaches work for the company?
- It's important to stand for something!



Production Challenge

- Can these approaches work for the company?
- It's important to stand for something!
- Is it possible to be different, yet **Double Fine**?



DF Brand Examination



DF Brand Examination

- Outside-looking-in:



DF Brand Examination

- Outside-looking-in:
 - 1) Story



DF Brand Examination

- Outside-looking-in:
 - 1) Story
 - 2) Funny Cutsscenes



DF Brand Examination

- Outside-looking-in:
 - 1) Story
 - 2) Funny Cutsscenes
 - 3) Characters



What is it, really?



What is it, really?

- The answer is...



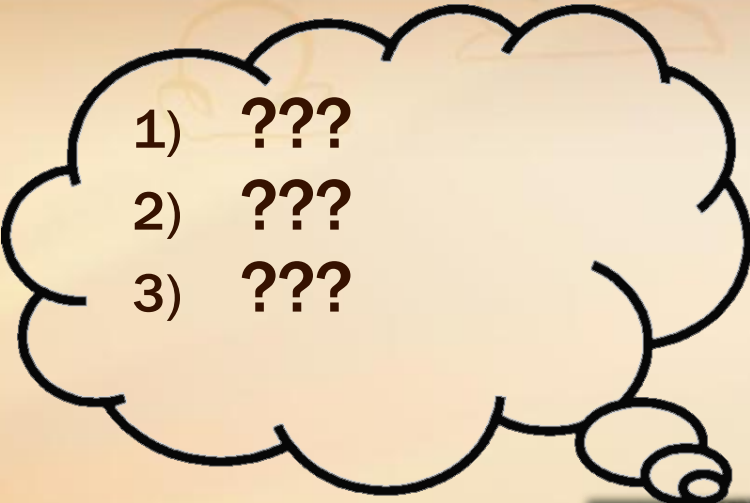
What is it, really?

- The answer is...
- ...we didn't know!



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters

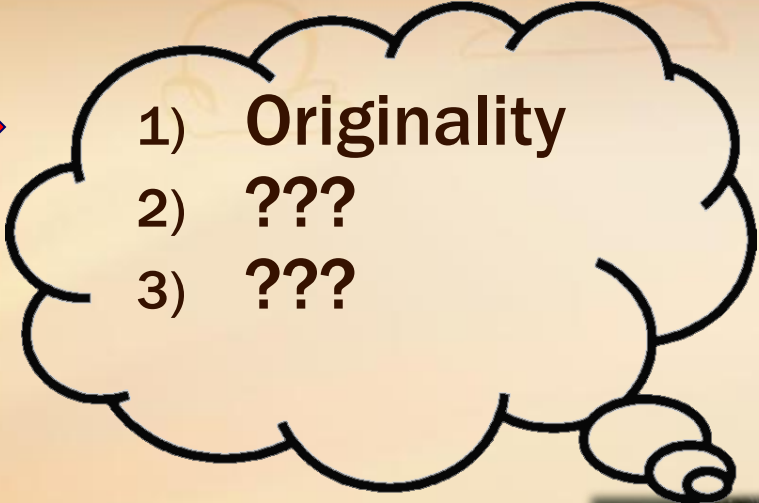
- 
- 1) ???
 - 2) ???
 - 3) ???



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters



- 
- 1) Originality
 - 2) ???
 - 3) ???



Originality

- 2007 Amnesia Fornight Setting:



Originality

- 2007 Amnesia Fornight Setting:
 - Steampunk Britain



Originality

- 2007 Amnesia Fornight Setting:
 - Steampunk Britain
- Felt too pre-packaged!



Double Fine Art Jam!



Double Fine Art Jam!

- 2D Concept Art Team for 2 Days!

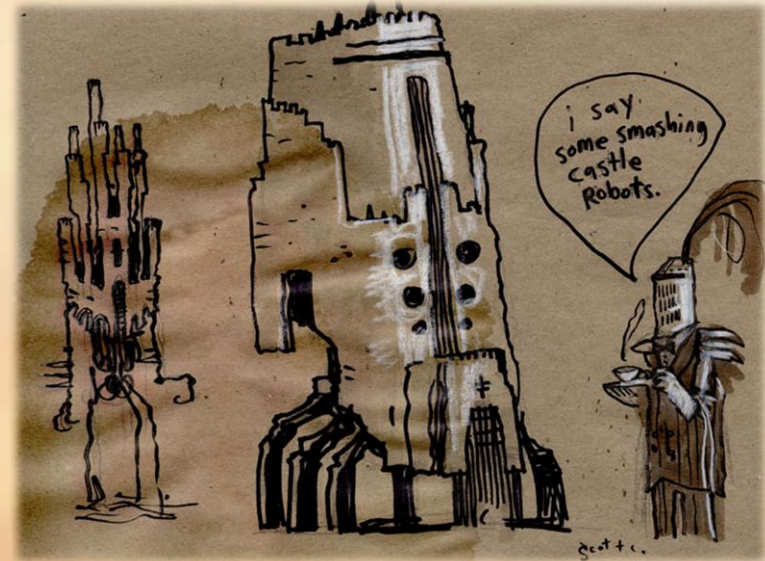
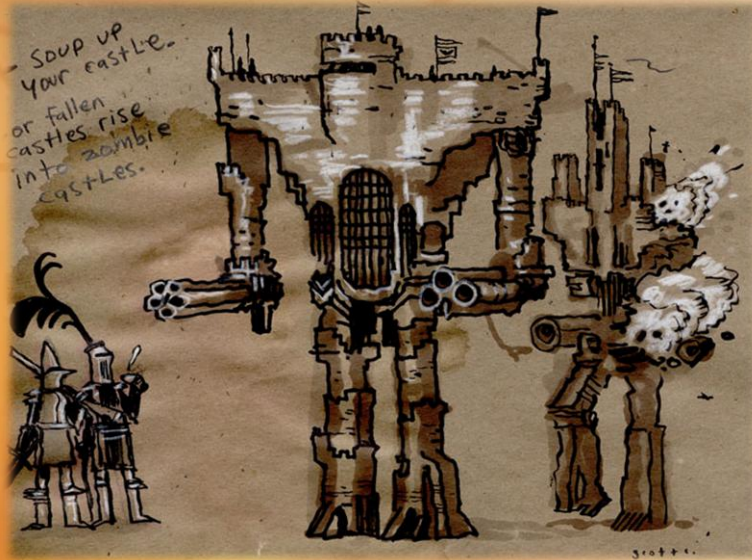


Double Fine Art Jam!

- 2D Concept Art Team for 2 Days!
- Generated a high number of ridiculous ideas!



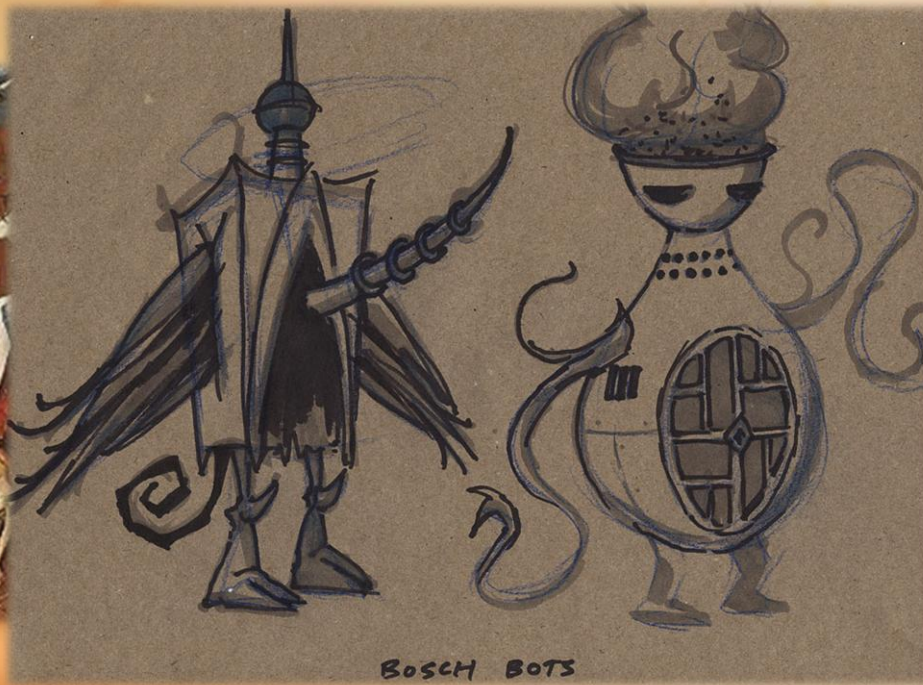
Castle Robots!



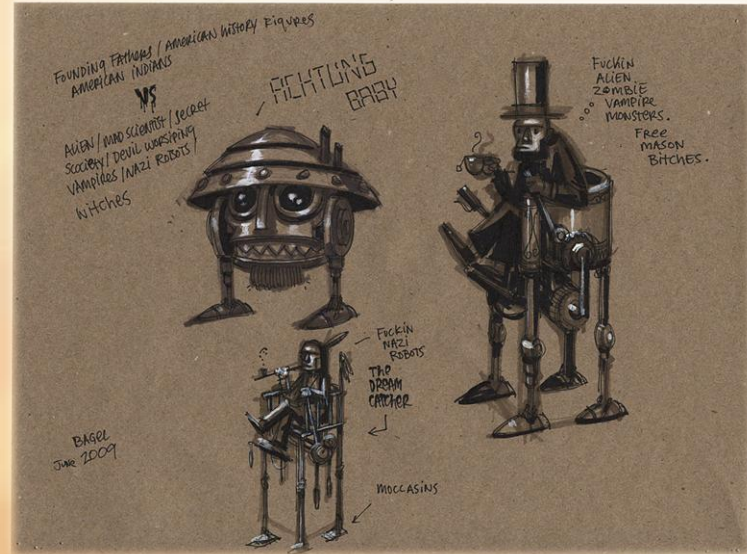
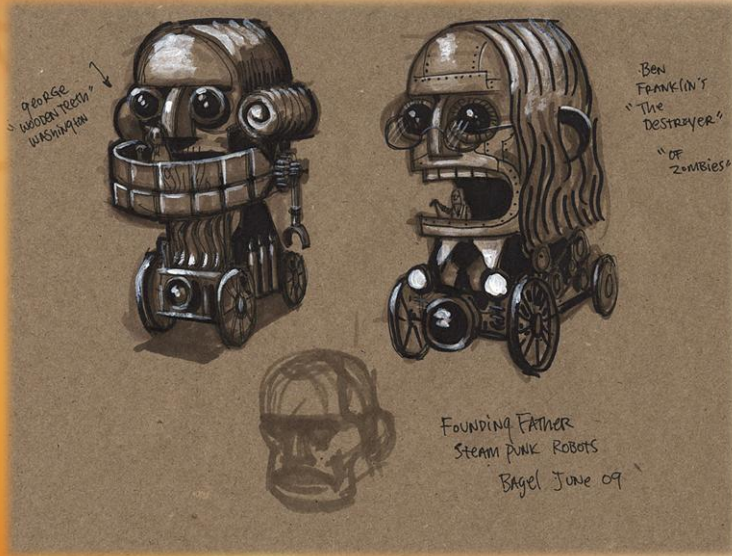
Bosch Bots!



Bosch Bots!



Founding Fathers!

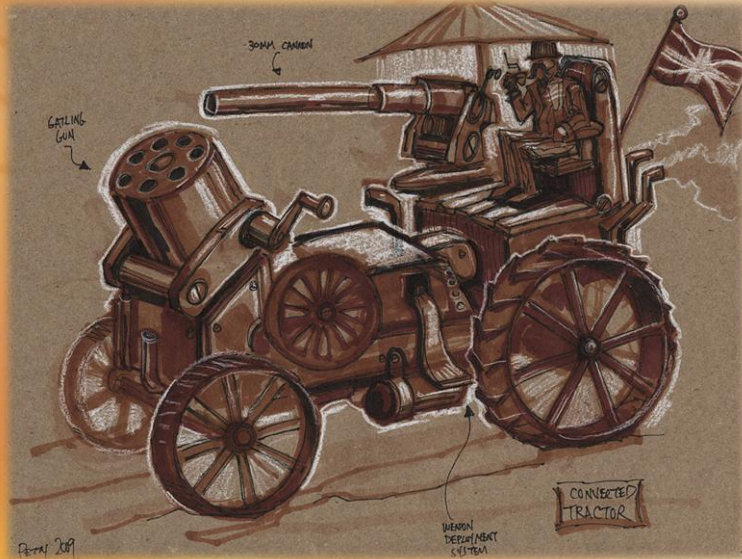


New Setting!

- Cherry pick the best ideas!



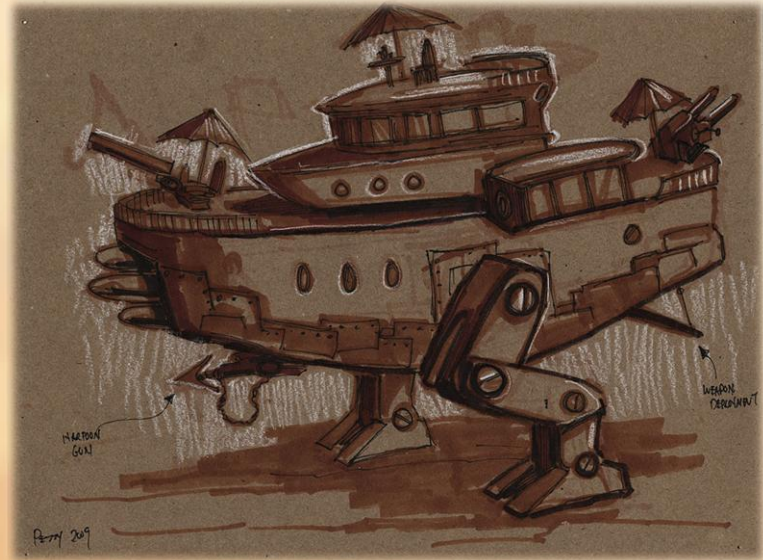
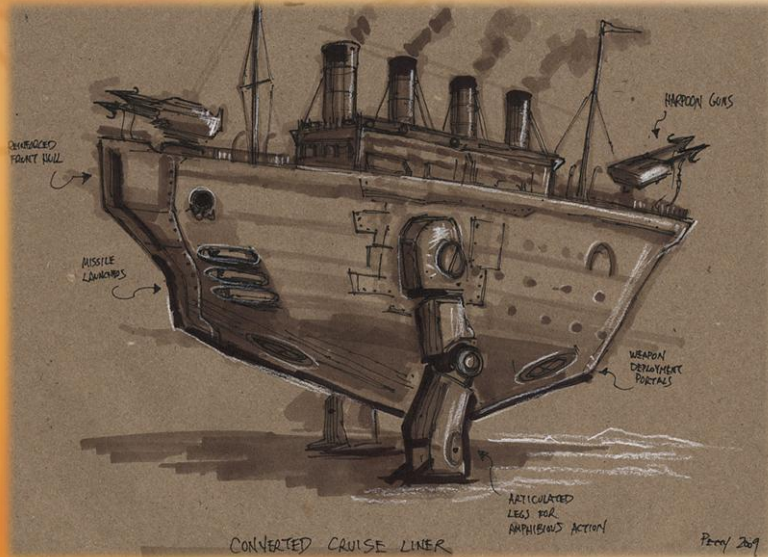
Makeshift World War I



TV Smoke Monsters



Boats with Legs



MOBILE TRENCH!



VS. TV MONSTERS!

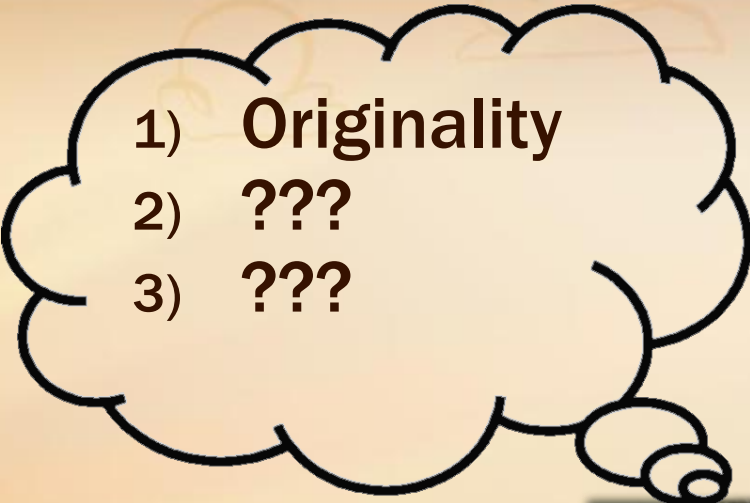


VS. TV MONSTERS!



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters

- 
- 1) Originality
 - 2) ???
 - 3) ???



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters



-
- A black-outlined thought bubble containing a list of elements.
- 1) Originality
 - 2) Personality
 - 3) ???



Personality



Personality

- Involve the whole team!



Personality

- Involve the whole team!
- The team has been soaking in the company culture for a long time!



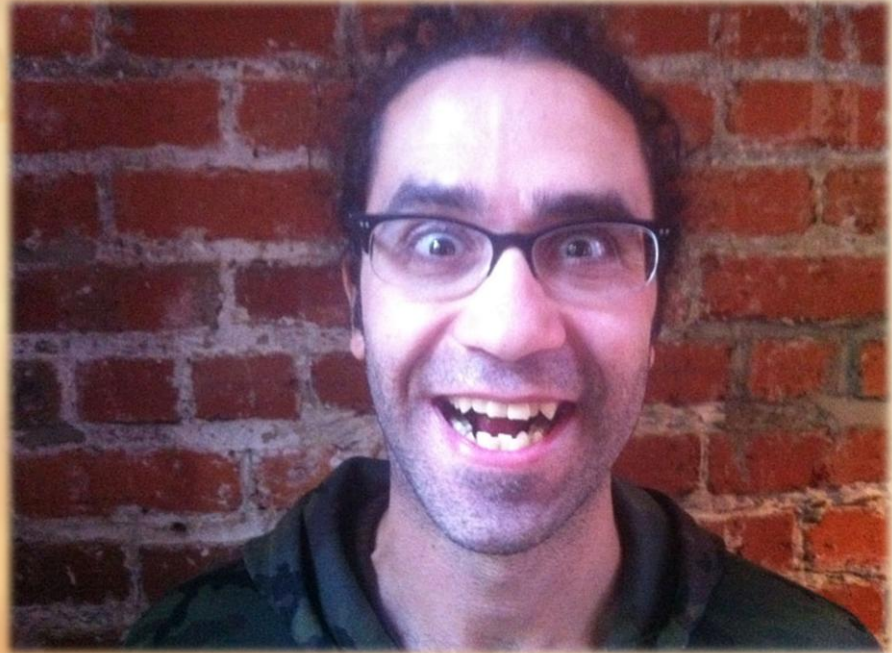
Personality

- Involve the whole team!
- The team has been soaking in the company culture for a long time!
- They literally **ARE** the company culture!

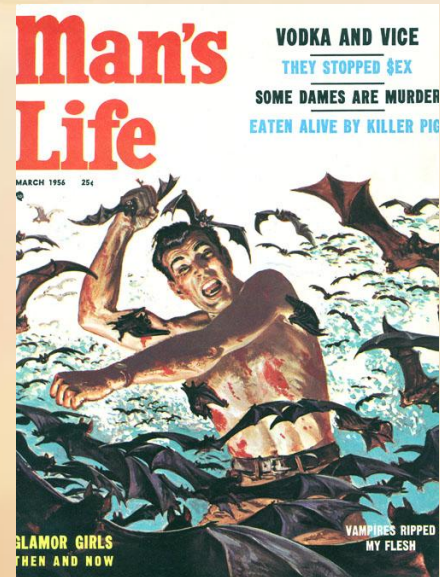
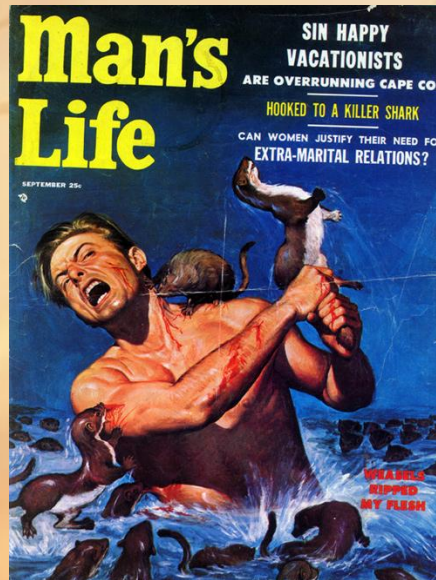
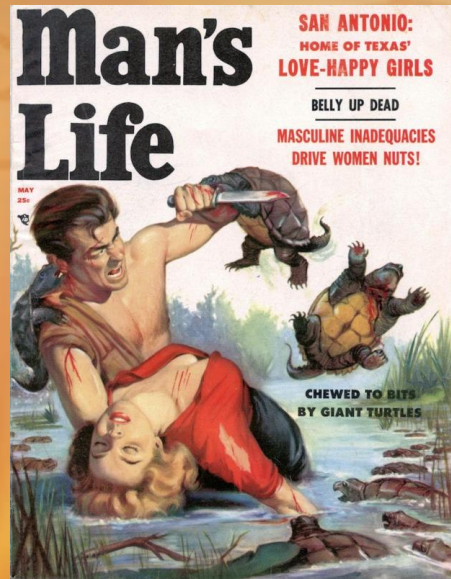


Men's Magazine Covers

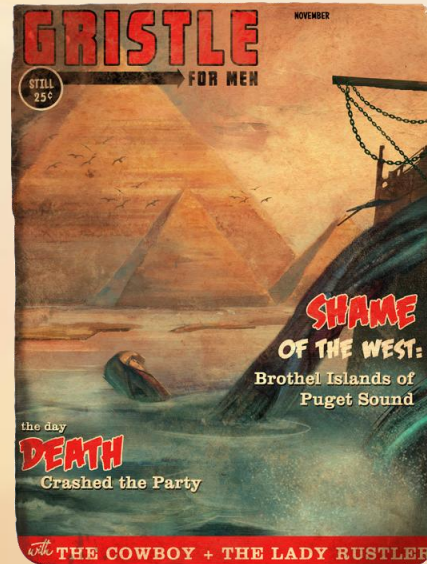
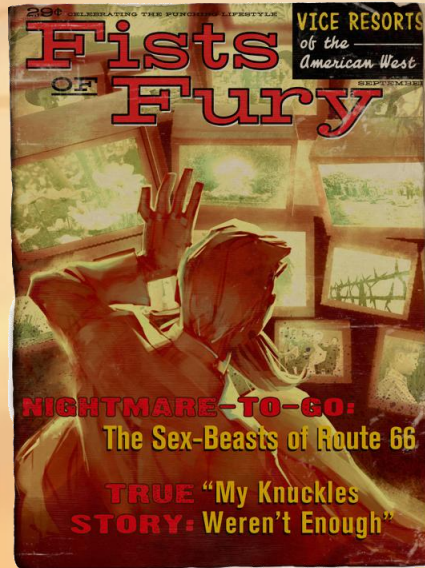
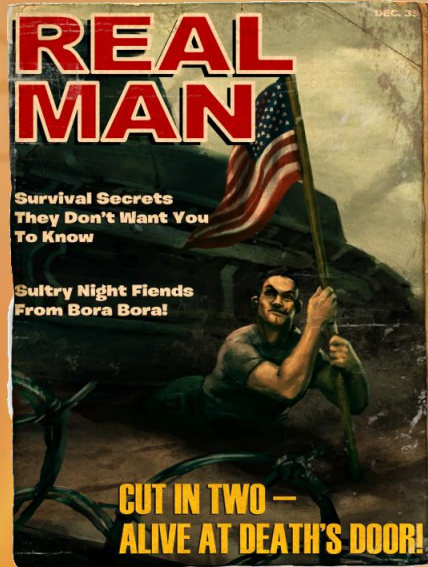
- Razmig Mavlian!



Men's Magazine Covers



Men's Magazine Covers



Saluting

- Chris Journey!



Saluting



Saluting



Saluting



Crazy Weapons

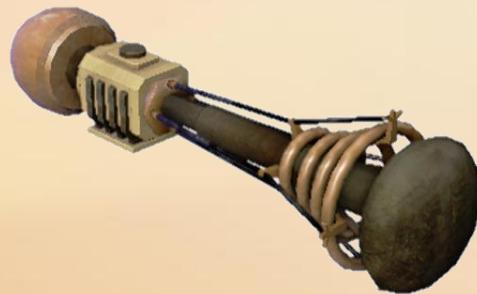
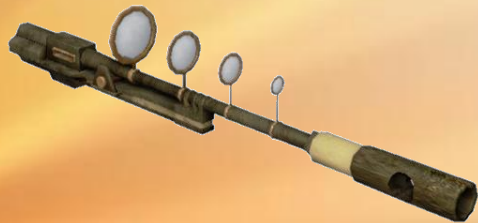
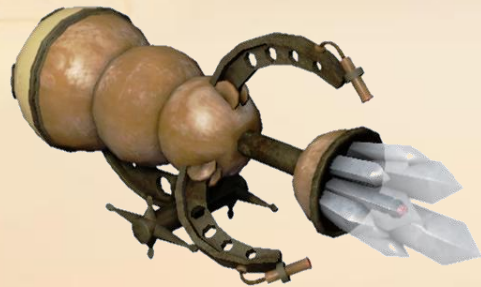
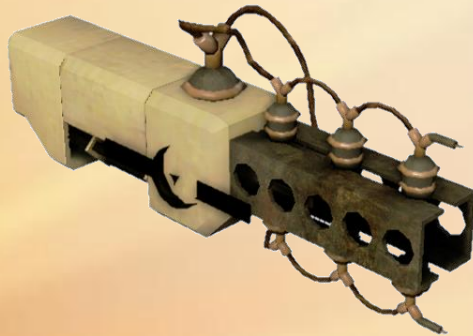


Crazy Weapons

- Geoff Soulis!
- Ran with a spreadsheet of weapon abilities

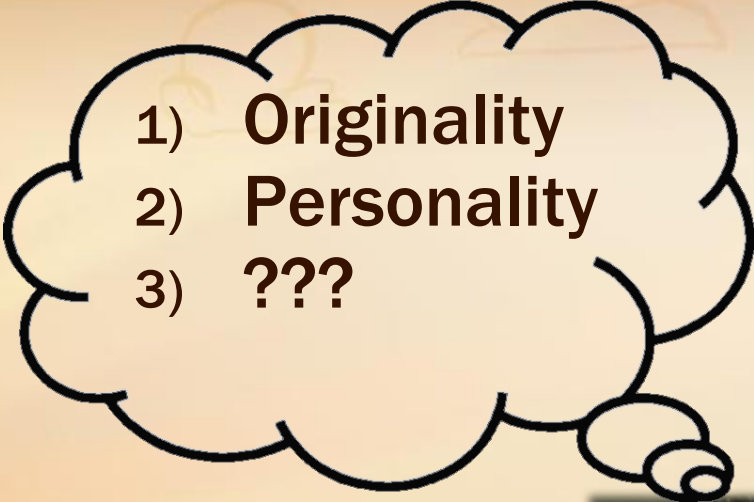


Crazy Weapons



Double Fine Brand!

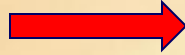
- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters

- 
- 1) Originality
 - 2) Personality
 - 3) ???



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters



- 1) Originality
- 2) Personality
- 3) Characters



Character

- Difficult to inject character into a mech game

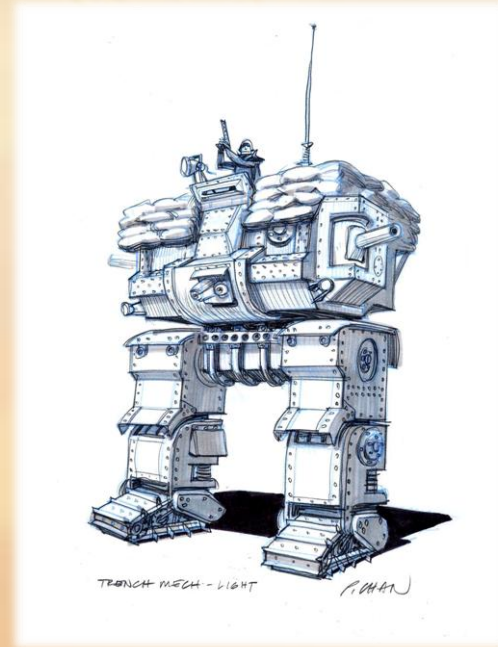


Open-top Mechs



Open-top Mechs

- Peel off the top of the mech and make it smaller



Open-top Mechs

- Peel off the top of the mech and make it smaller
- Pilot is more visible



Commander



Commander

- The Commander of the Mobile Trench Brigade was not a major gameplay piece



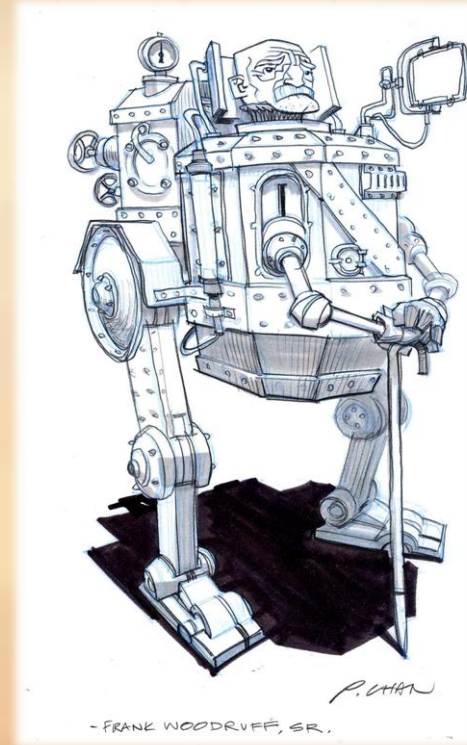
Frank Woodruff, Sr.

- Tim and Peter Chan developed a concept for the commander to be confined to an Iron Lung



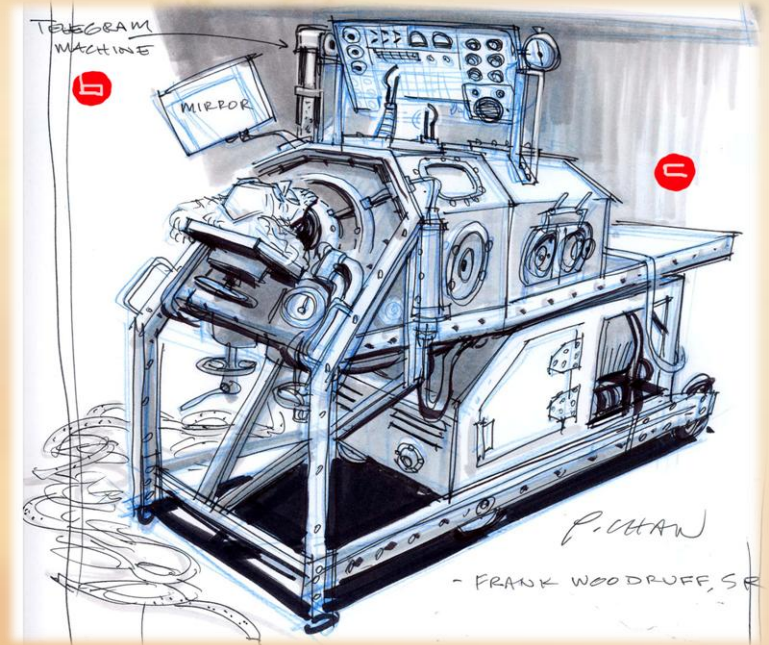
Frank Woodruff, Sr.

- Tim and Peter Chan developed a concept for the commander to be confined to an Iron Lung



Frank Woodruff, Sr.

- Tim and Peter Chan developed a concept for the commander to be confined to an Iron Lung



Double Fine Brand!

- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters



Double Fine Brand!

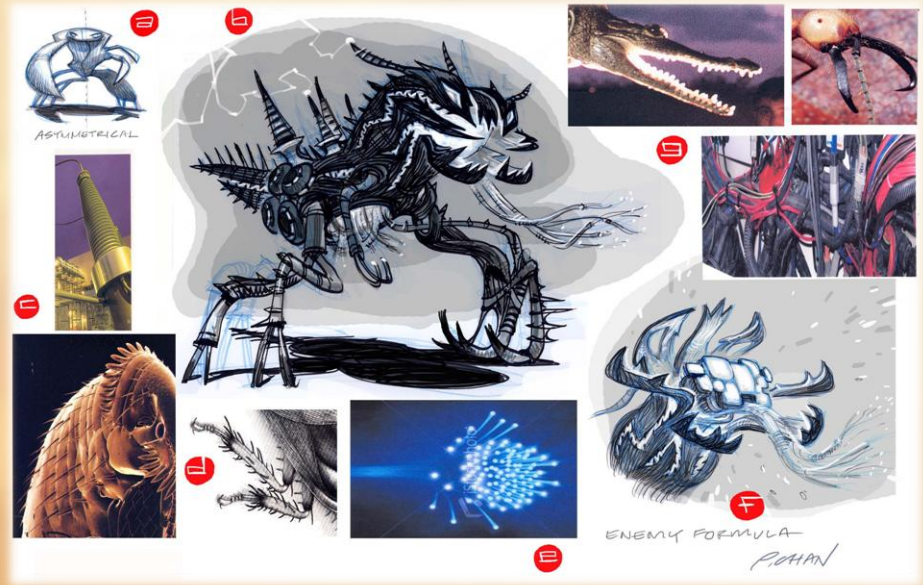
- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters

- 1) Originality
- 2) Personality
- 3) Characters
- 4) Surprise!



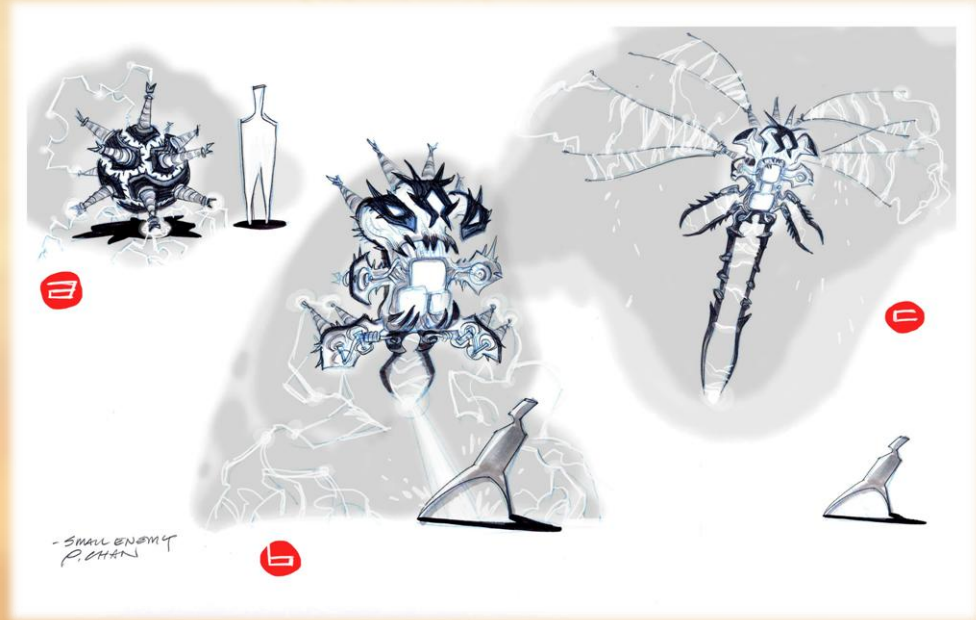
Lessons Learned!

- Identify your brand early – it helps drive decision making.



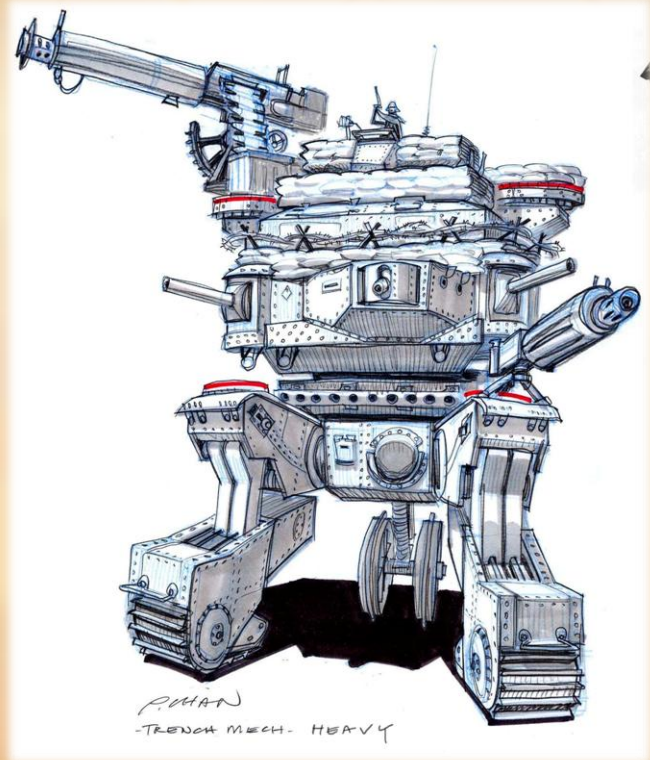
Lessons Learned!

- Don't feel beholden to what others think your brand is – it's up to you to define it.



Lessons Learned!

- Look for opportunities to apply your brand to the game without disrupting its core.



Amnesia Fortnight

- **Let's see Amnesia Fortnight now!**



Conclusion



Conclusion

- *These guys*



Conclusion

- *These guys*
- Agility->survival



Conclusion

- *These guys*
- Agility->survival
- Multiplicity-> growth



Conclusion

- *These guys*
- Agility->**survival**
- Multiplicity-> **growth**
- Diversification->**opportunity**



Conclusion

- *These guys*
- Agility->**survival**
- Multiplicity-> **growth**
- Diversification->**opportunity**
- Core principles



Questions?

- Thanks for listening!

