

Thursday, May 25, 2006

## Toronto Game Jam Jams Games Out Of Toronto



We've just spotted that the [results of the Toronto Indie Game Jam](#) are online, including ten downloadable titles and seven games that 'didn't quite make it' to a workable stage just yet - and the selection looks very cool indeed.

All created over a three day period, one of the initial highlights is definitely [Kalishnikitty](#) ("Graphically stunning. An animated cat! Parallax scrolling! Photo realistic explosions! They owe it all to version control. Be sure to play until the end...")

But also well worth messing with is [Glucose Maximus](#), in which "The goal is to feed the kids running towards the ice cream vendor. There are medic and ammo resupplying kids that will help you, don't kill them!" Niiice jam, guys!

Posted by [simonc](#) at 04:44 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## Bang Howdy! Gets Public Beta Spittoon



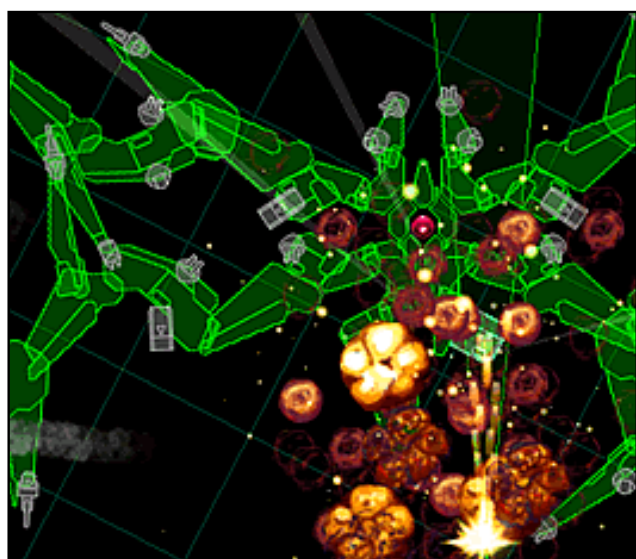
Good news, everybody! [Three Rings](#), the creators of the excellent casual MMO [Puzzle Pirates](#), have announced the [public beta for Bang! Howdy](#), a multiplayer online tactical strategy game for the PC, in which "players face off in the steam-powered Wild West, using casual strategy game mechanics in a variety of gameplay modes."

The game, which has a [Beta blog](#) and is "a hybrid between turn-based and real-time strategy gameplay, and is played in short fast-paced rounds", looks very neat indeed - and it's going to be 'play for free, pay for items' when it launches, just like a whole bunch of Korean titles like [Kart Rider](#) that have been super-successful.

Also, damn, it's steampunk, and has a great press release quote: "We been diggin' away in the mines for a good long while and we can finally report that there's gold in them thar hills," said Michael Bayne, director of "Bang! Howdy" and Three Rings' CTO. "Hitch up yer wagons and get ready to ride, because yer not gonna want to miss out on all the fun."

Posted by [simonc](#) at 10:48 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## Warning Forever, Interview For Right Now



Our fave interviewblog [Little Mathletics](#) (whose [Alistair Wallis](#) may be helping out GSW with some interviews soon!) has posted [a great chat with 'Warning Forever' creator Hizoka T. Ohkubo](#), and the intro sets things up really nicely regarding the Japanese 'dojin' title.

The piece explains: "If you were at all unconvinced about the amount of inventiveness in indie games, you'd do well to look at [Hizoka T Ohkubo's Warning Forever](#). Like bullet hell shmups, but don't want to go through the drag of fighting your way through levels to get up to the bosses? This is the game for you."

Interestingly, Ohkuba talks (for the first time in English?) about his next game, commenting: "'I'm working on a follow-up now, but it's been slow recently because I've been busy with my job. I'm aiming to get it finished sometime this year, but I'm sure you'll understand if it doesn't get done. Knowing that I'm a fan of the retro type 2D games, like [Warning Forever](#), you would think that would be what I'm making, but the next one will be an action game in 3D. It will be like [Warning Forever](#) in the way that it will be simple, and you will be able to play it at any time."

Posted by [simonc](#) at 08:36 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

More evidence of overindulgence? "Last year the company spent £2m on leasing cars. It also bought a share in a racehorse. Papers show about £400,000 was spent on watches, many for potential investors and people with whom Freer wanted to do deals." That's... quite a lot of cash.

[In related news, we got some gangtastic mini-posters for legendary Gizmondo title *Colors* in the office recently, from the company's former U.S. PR firm. But we still can't get a copy of the mythical GPS-enabled Gizmondo 'killer app', even though there are some press copies floating around - mail us if you've got one spare!]

Posted by simonc at 12:05 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

## GameSetCompetition: Win Totally Cool Death Jr. Swag!



So, thanks to our friends at [Backbone Entertainment](#), part of super-duper developer [Foundation9](#), we have a new GameSetWatch competition giveaway, and it's rather awesome.

To help promote the new *Death Jr.* titles being released later this year (and Backbone's largesse in general), the lucky winner gets the pictured loot (click on the pic to enlarge!) - a *Death Jr.* T-shirt, a mini 'C-4 Hamster' action figure (!), and best of all, a special metal *Death Jr.* Case Core Coffincase.

This is a smaller version of the cases generally used by exceptionally gothy musicians as instrument-holders, with a *Death Jr.* plaque on the front, a beautiful red velour interior, and a copy of *Death Jr.* for PSP hiding inside it - along with a couple of green *Death Jr.* lollipops, clearly the highlight of the whole package.

So, in order to win, you need to answer the following question:

*"When Death Jr. and friends appeared on the June/July 2005 issue of GSW sister publication Game Developer magazine, DJ was brandishing a scythe and pointing to a graph. What 'hilarious' joke descriptors are on the two axes of the graph?"*

Please send your answers to [editors@gamesetwatch.com](mailto:editors@gamesetwatch.com) any time before Friday, June 2nd at 12 noon PST. There will be only one winner randomly picked from the correct answers, the judges' decision is final, and the C-4 Hamster will not blow up in the mail, according to its packaging. Happy trails!

Posted by simonc at 07:41 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## The Return Of The TigSource



Whoomp, there it is! After a significant downtime, indie powerhouse site [TIGSource.com](#) has flipped back into life, just as swiftly as it exited the stage. With a pleasant new redesign and posts by a number of the previous writers (Dessgeega, Derek Yu, others!), looks like this could be good news for indie game fans everywhere.

The sidebar for the site says: "I'd tell you that we're back from the dead except we were never really dead in the first place. Just sleeping. Soundly." Suuuure. While it's been away, other sources we've been forced to peruse have included the ever-reliable [GameTunnel](#), of course, plus the slightly more casual [Jay Is Games](#).

But our favorite TIGSource offshoot, the [Indygamer blog](#), which was rating and linking to an insane amount of indie titles, has apparently gone on semi-hiatus "due to personal reasons", as of last Friday. Let's hope that editor TimW restarts, either on TIGSource or his own blog, soon.

Posted by simonc at 04:46 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

## The Exchange Student Gets Adventurous



We always get some odd press releases at [Gamasutra](#), and are happy to reprint them over at GSW, and the latest is introducing [The Exchange Student](#), "an interactive sitcom and it will be sold online in the form of episodes, for PCs and Macintosh."





The ever-helpful Aggro Me points the way to one of the craziest MMO-related videos we've seen here at GSW in quite some time - [an EverQuest II parkour video](#), in which various in-game characters do 'crazy jumps' across the fantastical architecture of Norrath.

For those not in the know, [parkour's Wikipedia article](#) explains that the 'sport' "... (also called freerunning, abbreviated to PK) is a physical discipline of French origin in which participants attempt to pass obstacles in the fastest and most direct manner possible, using skills such as jumping and climbing."

Oddly enough, there's been a couple of other parkour references in video games recently - [Marc Ecko's Getting Up](#) from Atari twinned elements of parkour and graffiti in a 'tough urban package', and a [GDC lecture from the Assassin's Creed team](#) mentioned that the Ubisoft title "strives for real world rules and drew influence from many sources including parkour". [EDIT: Oop, and Jare points out [Eidos' Free Running for PSP](#), which we hadn't spotted, and is out this month in Europe!] But heck, this is fantasy parkour with gnomes (elves? goblins? Hell if I know!), and as such, to be adored.

Posted by simonc at 01:10 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

## Virtual Iraq Game Exposes Iraq Veterans To Digitized Trauma



Sister GSW site [Serious Games Source](#), which is running two features per week on the whole 'serious games' phenomenon, plus a bunch of daily news, for those who dig that type of thing, has a [new write-up on addressing post-traumatic stress through games](#), and it's pretty interesting and thoughtprovoking stuff.

The article discusses the [Virtual Iraq](#) game, which "is based on the popular commercial Xbox game, Full Spectrum Warrior, using assets from the game on top of others that have been added", and "uses gradual exposure to trauma in a manageable way, which eventually leads to habituation and extinction of the syndrome."

Thus, U.S. Army physicians are able to simulate increasing levels of trauma, from "being attacked or ambushed" to more gruesome follow-ons, "providing 3D sound, vibration and even scents (such as gunpowder, cordite, body odor, garbage, burning rubber, diesel fuel and Iraqi spices)" to add to the mix, to attempt to produce therapeutic results. It all seems disturbing, but since the initial cause is so disturbing - if it works, or helps, we're all for it.

Posted by simonc at 12:12 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

## Kick! Punch! It's all in the Cellphone!



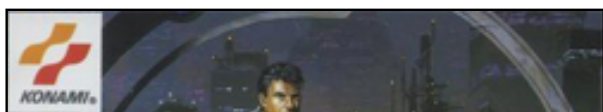
Ever since an urban legend that certain cell phone straps prevent cancer, it has been popular to feature them as promotional materials. Ever thought how useful it might be to have a weapon strapped to your cell phone? [Capcom's got your back](#), according to [Impress Watch!](#) In order to promote the upcoming [Sengoku Basara 2](#) (a sequel to the series known as [Devil Kings in the US](#)), if you preorder, you will receive one of five hero weapon cell phone straps at random.

[Maeda Keiji's staff](#) might also be [useful as a fishing rod](#) to snatch rare fish from your friend's aquariums when they're not looking! [Date Masamune](#) (that's as in Dah-Tay, not Win a Date with Masamune) offers his [triple set of swords](#), perfect for pricking random people you don't like in public! Meanwhile, [Saneda Yukimura's dual spears](#) would be good for picking your nose surreptitiously. [Chosokabe Morichika's harpoon](#) might make a wonderful little spear to hold taffy on until you want to eat it later. Last, but not least, [Mori Motonari's round, painful-looking dagger thingy](#) (pictured left) might...help you disguise yourself as a New Age practitioner?

The little weapons will also come with an exciting trading card! Oh boy! Capcom's also planning some other things, such as limited edition covers, a Sengoku diary and fortunetelling. Oh my! Check back later to see if the new Cooking Mama will come with a set of Ginsu knives!

Posted by szshou at 06:59 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## COLUMN: 'Parallax Memories' - *Snatcher*



[*Parallax Memories* is a [regular weekly column](#) by [Matthew Williamson](#), profiling classic '16-bit' games from the Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo, and other seminal '90s systems. This week's column profiles Konami's cyberpunk adventure: *Snatcher*]

section where you are to aim and shoot on a grid. The Konami light gun—[The Justifier](#)—can be used at these sections (though I can't imagine how it would be possible). Above the menus, you see your location from Gillian's perspective. "Looking" and "Investigating" will become your friends as you throw away logically looking in strategic locations and just search and look at everything a couple times before moving on.



### [Romantic Cyberpunk](#)

I don't mean to sound negative about the game, just its mechanics. The story is engaging and masterfully told. The characters in the game all feel like more than just two-dimensional caricatures of real people. The relationship between Gillian Seed and his wife is truly touching. Because of the intimate and personal nature of their conversations, I always felt the need to return to the privacy of Gillian's apartment when calling her, even though I could have been anywhere. And just like in his most famous series (*Metal Gear Solid*), Kojima constantly reminds you that you are playing a game.

I hesitate to give concrete examples for fear of spoiling the parts that make this game so exceptional, but the game twists your perceptions with questions in a conversation tree, with options in the menus, and even by using your TV against you. *Snatcher* creates some of the most original and memorable videogame moments I have ever witnessed.

Looking above, I realize there is too much to say about the game and all its little touches. Touches like the name of Gillian's mechanical assistant "Metal Gear Mk2," the little homages to Konami games like *Goemon* and *Castlevania*, the visual jokes and puns, and personal memos from Konami staff and Kojima himself. All these things are just a small part of the whole—even combined with the clunky controls—that make this one of the best stories told in a game ever. On October 27, 2005, Konami renewed the *Snatcher* trademark, and although all it means is that US law requires the renewal every five years, at least we know that they have not forgotten the series.

[*Matthew Williamson is the creator of [The Gamer's Quarter](#), an independent videogame magazine focusing on first person writing. His work has been featured on [MTV.com](#), [1up.com](#), [Chatterbox Radio](#), and the [Fatpixels Radio Podcast](#).]*

Posted by Matthew Williamson at 02:36 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

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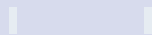
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