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forgive my indulgence but 2020's been a big year for [@shmuplations](#), so here's a look back at everything that went up over the last twelve months—there's a lot of stuff I'm sure you all read & other things you'd be forgiven for missing, so let's recap (thread)

the year kicked off with shmuplations' first big video project: a subtitled translation of a 2016 NHK documentary on the 30th anniversary of Dragon Quest which features interviews with Yuji Horii, Koichi Nakamura, Akira Toriyama, and Koichi Sugiyama <https://t.co/JCWA15RTlx>



following DQ30 was one of the most popular articles of the year: an assortment of interviews with composers Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima concerning the music of Streets of Rage 1, 2 & 3 <https://t.co/QUtyC9W12Z> their comments on SoR3 in particular were full of gems

—In terms of your own music taste, by the way, what are you into lately?

Koshiro: Right now I'm only listening to club music and classical. Originally I got into classical music through pop, and learned the basics of music that way. Kawashima, however, studied 20th century classical music in college, so he took a completely different path from me. Interestingly, though, we've ended up in a similar place.

—Modern classical, that makes sense. I can see how that would lead to a more confrontational, provocative sound like that of SoR3.

Kawashima: There's some points of intersection between the two. Modern classical music is less about listening for simple enjoyment, but rather asks you to contemplate why a certain sound is there in the first place. There might be a really interesting idea hidden beneath an ugly or dissonant sound, and exploring that is part of the appeal. Its basis is not in traditional harmony, but in taking the sounds around you as they are and exploring the intricacies and nuances there.

However, one thing I don't want to do is just clumsily apply those modern classical ideas in game music. Take jazz, for example... the heart of jazz is improvisation, and that essence can't be fully expressed in sequenced music. I love jazz, but I'm not interested in trying to force it into game music. In that sense, though, techno is really an ideal midway point—its a genre that manages to take these weird, cheap sounds and somehow legitimize them. I think that conception was probably the biggest influence on the design of SoR3's music.

Koshiro: I agree, though I think the public still has a lot of misconceptions about what techno is, which does put up something of a roadblock. Even with these SoR3 songs, I suspect a lot of people will just write them off as throwaway club tracks like you might hear at Juliana's. (laughs)

Game Designers: The Next Generation profiled six potential successors to the likes of Shigeru Miyamoto & Hironobu Sakaguchi, some of who you may recognise: Kazuma Kaneko, Takeshi Miyaji (1966-2011), Noboru Harada, Kan Naitou, Takashi Tokita & Ryoji Amano <https://t.co/IWZU3PLvwX>

—So there are messages that you're hoping to convey to players with Shin Megami Tensei, then?

Kaneko: Yeah. There were manga and stories I read as a kid, stuff like Devilman. At the time, I was mainly impressed by the amazing scenes of ultraviolence in them. Now that I'm an adult, though, when I read something like the Book of Revelations, I'm struck at the similarities between the two, like how Satan is saved at the end. It makes me realize those were some really deep manga that I read. If 10 or 20 years from now, people likewise look back on these Megami Tensei games and go, "ah hah, so that's what they were talking about...", then as a creator that would make me extremely happy.



from the 2010 Akumajou Dracula Best Music Collections Box, a subbed video feature on long-time Castlevania composer Michiru Yamane <https://t.co/NMJe4ROozR> sadly, Chiruru has since passed; Yamane wrote these albums in his honor

<https://t.co/orlgPTDsKK>

<https://t.co/QnQl8KI9IX>



Chiruru (M) Age 3

one of the more unique translations of the year: a Japanese interview with director Lorne Lanning & producer Sherry McKenna about Oddworld: Abe's Odyssey <https://t.co/lvuZdZ52w2> I'm no Oddworld expert but I suspect the interviewer's predictions may not have come true

—I was playing it all day yesterday. The quality of the graphics really amazed me. Of all the Playstation games on sale now, I think it's right in the top tier, visually.

Sherry: Thank you. Do you mind if I ask you a question, actually? Did you find Abe's face to be a little ugly? We've been worried about that a bit.

—Hmm, you know, I think it would probably vary from person to person, but at first glance most people probably would think that he was a monster, or an alien, or some weirdo. But I imagine there are people out there who'd find him cute, too? I bet he'd be a hit with young girls today. With his unique hairstyle and all, they might be really into it.

Lorne: It's funny you say that, because making sure the game appealed to female gamers was a very important point for us during the development. Since Abe is totally different from the typical anime characters you find in Japan, we were a little afraid that Japanese players would be turned off or repulsed by him at first glance.

another fairly popular article was this collection of interviews concerning the making of Sonic CD <https://t.co/euDG3fhbdV> of particular note was the symbiosis between Sonic CD's musical aesthetic and Sonic's unlikely adoption as a '90s UK club music mascot

Ogata and I started holding strategy meetings. Our flash of inspiration came from the unique way Sonic was being handled by people in the UK. At clubs, DJs were using images of Sonic for their turntable slipmats, and stylish, fashionable magazines were using Sonic for their front covers. It was the early 90s, the time when club music was just beginning to infiltrate the Japanese music scene. And club music felt very welcoming and familiar to those of us who had spent time making music on computers, too. With their extensive use of sampling, "techno" and house music seemed to be brimming with new possibilities. And so Ogata and I decided that Sonic CD would feature club music (basically techno and house).

(this one also ended up being a little contentious due to an offhand comment one of the devs made about Sonic CD's place in the timeline, something I can't believe people still care enough to argue about)

these interviews, one with with Nintendo's Takaya Imamura & Sega's Hiroyuki Sakamoto and another with Sega's Toshihiro Nagoshi, cover the collaborative development of F-Zero AX/GX for arcade & Gamecube <https://t.co/Mz1PgPMMWt> Nagoshi's ideas for the memory card were...interesting

—(laughs) Is there a difference in how you use the Memory Card 59 compared to the VMU?

Nagoshi: Yes. I talked directly to Miyamoto-san about this, actually. I suggested making something players could use to carry the card around. Something you could hang around your neck, or a keychain. Just because the Memory Card is tiny doesn't mean people will carry it around. We're really thinking a lot about how to make it easier for players to carry the card, we've had several talks about it.

—To make the best use of it, like with the VMU?

Nagoshi: Right. I also thought about making something a bit stupid. Like a catch for your hat...although rain would be an issue (laughs). Or attaching the card to your wristwatch. I'd like to do something along those lines.

—Something like Falcon is wearing?

Nagoshi: Oh, that could be good...people might like to have things the characters are wearing. I might use that idea.

from the Valkyrie Profile 2 Ultimania book, this lengthy interview with several of the tri-Ace devs covered all manner of topics concerning the development of the game: the game design, the many technical challenges & very specific character preferences: <https://t.co/wGx0sEdreU>

—What were some of the hardest things to make for the battle system? Or things you were particularly conscious of while designing it.

Kitao: Basically there were a lot of problems surrounding the movement. A neverending stream really. (laughs) You could just hide behind two obstacles and attack enemies, for instance.

Nishida: As planners, we kind of just came up with whatever we wanted, which vexed Kitao to no end. (laughs) It's always like that though, in game development. The planners come up with a metric ton of ideas, but it's the programmers who have to suffer in actually implementing them. A lot of our conversations went like, "Wow, this would be an awesome idea... how can we pitch it to the programmers?"

Kitao: That stuff would get passed off to me, but I had a resigned attitude about it... "What can you do."

Nishida: I do seem to recall some screams of agony coming from your desk, though. (laughs)

—Did you ever try just ignoring them?

Kitao: Sure. But they'd just bring it back up another time.

Everyone: (laughs)

this collection of interviews with the developers of the original Front Mission for Super Famicom cover a bunch of topics, but I think G-Craft designer Masanori Hara offers a fairly succinct summary of the essence of Front Mission

—Does anyone else have anything to share, about parts of the development you feel especially proud of?

Hara: Hmmm... I would say the love aspects...

—You mean, romantic love?

Hara: Yeah. Like the complex relationship between Lloyd and Natalie. We tried to set it up with the hope that we'd get to make another Front Mission game, so we didn't want to focus too heavily on just robots. We thought it would be cool for players to catch a glimpse of those human relationships, as it were.

—What do you think the overall theme(s) of Front Mission is then, Hara?

Hara: Love, baby.

Everyone: (laughs)

another very popular translation was this Dengeki PlayStation interview, conducted after the release of the original Persona <https://t.co/D0suijadmO> Kazuma Kaneko and Kouji Okada discussed differentiating the game from SMT, the game's themes, character inspirations & much more

Aihara: One thing that surprised me was that big online fan club for Nanjo!

Okada: I was a little surprised to see how popular Nanjo was. I had originally thought Mark might be a big hit, but he kind of became a mouthpiece for the main character, unfortunately. Too bad, I thought he could have been a lot more popular than Nanjo.

Aihara: Nanjo's popularity is very unusual. The voice acting too, with lines like "yuke" (go) and "makaseru" (leave it to me)—it's an unusual voice.

Kaneko: Personally I thought Yukino would be a fan favorite, but I was 100% wrong on that one. (laughs)

Aihara: Yeah, Ayase and Yukino aren't popular at all.

Kaneko: Ah, is that so? And what about Elly?

Aihara: Elly has some fans. Brown was surprisingly popular too. He tells everyone the origin of his nickname when they're all feeling sad. He's a real "mood maker", the kind of character who brightens everyone's spirit when the adventure gets hard-going.

this Gamest translation covers the making of the original Darkstalkers and features a lot of seldom-seen art and images from the All About Vampire mook <https://t.co/AINiBP5QcC> it also goes over some misheard character quips, including this dev-specific Morrigan mondegreen

Ohno: One of Morrigan's winning lines is "Mata denaoshite oide" ("Come see me again") right? The staff ended up hearing that one as "atari torinaoshite oite" ("fix your hitboxes!").

—Atari, as in hitbox?

Ohno: Yeah. When a special move hit in a weird way, or seemed to be too strong, the staff would hear it that way. It ended up being a kind of goading encouragement for the balancing staff—after a long day spent trying to balance everything, when they'd be ready to call it a day and go home, suddenly they'd remember that line from Morrigan: "fix your hitboxes!"

this "I Made That!" feature from 1991 offers some fairly brief developer discussions from thirteen different studios, including this very stirring message from the Megami Tensei team <https://t.co/1aBDblhwGA>

—Do you have any message for aspiring game designers?

Everyone: Don't do it! (laughs)

here's a rather recent translation of a dialogue between the creators of two versus STG, the 1996 'Twinkle Star Sprites & 2018's game Rival Megagun <https://t.co/IL8X62TnU9> unfortunately, I don't think either party has yet committed to a competitive axe-swinging buff dude game

Rempel: In my opinion, the recipe for a good shooting game is: up-tempo music, tight stage design, thirty-second stages, dynamic and over-the-top bosses and the thrill of blowing stuff up. I want to make games in other genres using that same recipe.

Matsushita: I feel you on that.

Rempel: Personally, I like games you can clear in around thirty minutes.

Matsushita: I like games I can play over and over, and games with compact stages, so I really hope Rempel makes an action game! I'm into action games starring buff dudes who swing axes, so something like The Legendary Axe would be cool. Half-naked berserkers, ya gotta make it happen!

another well-received interview was this long discussion from the Legend of Mana Ultimania book, in which many of the developers discussed the game's conception, monster and character design, crossover with the SaGa team & the endless ambition of director Koichi Ishii

—Another new thing in Legend of Mana is being able to select the gender for the main character.

Ishii: Yeah, basically we wanted all players, whether male or female, to be able to select a main character who could be an avatar or stand-in for themselves.

Shoda: But Ishii, weren't you saying you wanted a genderless option too. (laughs)

Kameoka: In the very beginning Ishii told us he wanted 8 different characters to choose from. Somehow we were able to convince him two was a better idea... or wait? Wasn't it 4? I think that was the number we settled on at first...?

Yagi: It was, yeah. But due to scheduling issues we knew it was going to be impossible, so we didn't tell Ishii and secretly changed it to 2.

Kameoka: I think there were supposed to be 15 different kinds of weapons too. That was another thing we had to convince Ishii wasn't going to happen... I mean, if you give this guy free reign, he'll spend forever making a game. He'll never stop! (laughs)

this 2011 interview with composer Harumi Fujita covers her origins at SNK, her work at Capcom and many of her freelance compositions including Pulstar and Blazing Star <https://t.co/yTPG3mIVxl> unfortunately, she can't recall every one of her works, for understandable reasons

—You've written music for so many games, I imagine there must be some "hidden" games you've worked on that we don't have listed above here.

Fujita: Yeah, I think so. My music may be in there but unfortunately I don't remember the names of those games. I was so busy I didn't have time to think about that then. Plus, I had a kid. (laughs) I was raising a newborn baby while doing all that work. I was working right up to the point I gave birth, actually—right after I finished sending my completed song to the devs, I rushed to the hospital and gave birth. I spent five days in the hospital, came home and slept for two days, and then got right back to work.

in this interview about Capcom's original dinosaur-themed horror game Dino Crisis, director/producer Shinji Mikami reflects on the primal allure of the dinosaur, how the game differentiates itself from Resident Evil & his evolving ideas on game design <https://t.co/PH9JX3JGiH>

—How's the overall difficulty looking, by the way?

Mikami: It's a difficult game. About on par with the first Resident Evil. There is an easy mode for beginners, though. But as you can imagine, when it comes to the fundamentals of a game like this, if it's not set at a certain level of difficulty, then the speed, strength, and terror of the dinosaurs won't be properly conveyed, and I wanted that to be at the forefront. I was actually very divided on the whole question of whether to add an easy mode. Adding it would allow everyone to experience the game, but then we might hear things like, "I beat it, it was too simple, there was no tension at all!"

—Despite those doubts, you went the kinder route and added an Easy Mode anyway. Throwing a bone to those who just want to beat the game, as it were.

Mikami: Actually, I believe that when we've overturned that long-held preconception—the one that says the whole point of playing games is just to "beat" them—then we'll finally be able to embark on something new with video games. Today, when players are presented with a branching decision in the story, I think most of them think about that choice in terms of gain, like "which option will get me to the ending?" But I didn't want to make Dino Crisis into that kind of a game.

in this 2014 interview, Game Freak founders Ken Sugimori and Junichi Masuda reflect on the unlicensed, guerrilla-style development of their first game, Quinty / Mendel Palace for Famicom/NES, and how it connects to the indie spirit of today
<https://t.co/XbqGrpmYWF>

—How did the game defy contemporary trends?

Sugimori: At the time, Super Mario Bros. had been a huge hit, so there were lots of side-scrolling action games being released. Additionally, the standard ROM capacity for game cartridges was increasing, so games started to become more flashy and expressive, with lots of dialog and text, elaborate stories, big eye-catching boss fights and so on.

Everyone else was heading in that direction, so we went in the opposite direction and did things nobody else was doing. "None of the old arcade games were like that", we'd say, and whenever some new game was hot, we'd vow to never do what they were doing. In that sense, we had a bit of a rebellious streak.

Quinty has no giant bosses and fixed, single-screen stages, so when we took it to Namco they apparently described it as "outdated". I can certainly understand why it didn't strike them as a particularly big deal, but in hindsight, it definitely stands the test of time as a well-crafted game.

I think that rebellious attitude has always been at the core of Game Freak. There's no point in imitating others, and we've always questioned the value of falling in line and doing the same things as everyone else.

this collection of interviews with Capcom & Takumi on the Giga Wing series is fascinating, not just for the insights it offers on the game itself but for showing just how serious Capcom was about fighting against the decline of arcades

—Regarding working together, I imagine every developer has their own different customs and practices that could make it difficult. I can see a lot of companies saying “let’s team up!”, but then running into problems fairly quickly.

Funamizu: The thing is, until very recently, many developers had a lot of pride, and each had different things they were prideful about. But with the recession continuing for as long as it has, I think everyone is becoming more willing to re-evaluate those hang-ups. (laughs) Now everyone has to throw away their pride and do the best they can, regardless of their past habits, and I think we’re all much more open to talking about new ways of doing things.

In Takumi’s case, their staff is all very young. So the weird pride I mentioned, they never had to begin with—quite the opposite, as they wanted to absorb any new ideas and were very cooperative. It’s a huge reason Giga Wing turned out as well as it did. I greatly admire their work ethic.

The way things have worked up to now, is that the big companies have created the hardware, with other developers relegated to the role of third-party developers. But with Giga Wing, Takumi was neither our subsidiary nor a third-party, but a partner we could talk with as equals while we made the game. It may indeed be a new way to exist as game developers.

—The fact that a company as big as Capcom is taking the initiative in that endeavor seems quite meaningful to me.

Funamizu: To be perfectly honest, the fact that we’re giving up our in-house know-how and secrets is not something we’re overjoyed about. But given the desperate situation of this industry today, we don’t have that luxury anymore. That was our own pride we had to give up. If not, Giga Wing wouldn’t have been possible.

taken from the Gunpei Yokoi's Game Museum book, this essay shares the late designer's own words on the origins of the Game & Watch and many of its signature titles, including this interesting observation about the two-screen G&W conversion of Donkey Kong <https://t.co/frmL32Ahip>

Looking at Donkey Kong, I can say that if the LCD had been oriented vertically, we could have made that game with just one screen. What I didn't realize at the time, however, was that by splitting the screen in two, we had inadvertently created another synergistic effect. The interaction with the two screens in Donkey Kong itself is really quite simplistic. And yet somehow the simple act of splitting the screen had served to make the game 10 or 20 times more fascinating to players. Donkey Kong for the G&W taught me that in game design, there are sometimes mysterious, hard-to-predict interactions like this.

A game that wouldn't have warranted any special attention on a single vertical screen, suddenly became far more interesting on a split-screen. What had happened? Well, when the player glances up at the top screen, it creates an urge to look down at the bottom screen. This push-and-pull of your attention turned out to be a huge plus for the gameplay. Were the two screens joined, there'd be no such effect, but once separated, you found yourself more drawn in to what was happening on the opposite screen, and consequently having more fun.

this collection of pre- and post-release interviews covers the conception, intention, production and reception to Game Arts & Studio Alex's Mega CD RPG Lunar: The Silver Star <https://t.co/jaaNEONJlw> here's a little insight into the real-world origins of the various characters

—Lunar has such a light, breezy quality to it, but you're telling me it was originally darker?

Tomi: Yes, the overall style was of Lunar is "light", as you say, but it was always meant to be a backdrop for the drama between the characters that would unfold. Within this lighthearted atmosphere, we wanted to tell a moving, dramatic story.

—Each character in Lunar has a great deal of personality.

Tomi: That's because they were modeled to a large extent on friends and people we actually know.

Hino: Ramus is the most enterprising of the characters. In terms of what we were aiming for, he's the character I feel we really nailed.

Shigema: He's not especially "cool" or anything. Nor does he have any special abilities that he uses to get his way. He just wants to do things, and he does them. It may seem plain, but I think it's very realistic.

Tomi: Shigema and I are both like Ramus. We're instigators. We like to rile people up and get them in on our schemes, which usually end up bringing them to grief. But in the end things turn out ok, and you know what they say... all's well that ends well. (laugh) It's quite a thin line though, between success, and being chewed out by everyone if something goes wrong... (laughs)

Shigema: You said it all there, I think.

here's a pair of interviews with Arc System Works' Hideyuke Anbe & Daisuke Ishiwatari about the original Guilty Gear <https://t.co/GTZtFNnj8L> there isn't a ton of pre-X GG media out there (especially pre-headbanger Daisuke photos), so I was happy to see this post pick up some buzz

—Is there anything you wish you'd done differently in Guilty Gear?

Anbe: We have had some complaints about the difficulty. Players saying it's too hard and they can't beat it.

Ishiwatari: But according to our debuggers, who were some highly skilled fighting players, the game was balanced. I guess we shouldn't have trusted them. (laughs) I think Guilty Gear is actually pretty easy to beat, once you learn some of the game's tricks and techniques.

Anbe: We got some feedback from the European version that I remember too. We gave them the ROM, and they played it and reported back to us. They wrote (in English) that "I can't beat Millia no matter what I do. Your game is not possible to beat." (laughs)

easily the most popular article of the year was this (quite self-deprecating) composer commentary from Final Fantasy Tactics's Japanese sound test, which was cut from the international version and never fully re-implemented in subsequent ports <https://t.co/crsXmeLTdM>

8. [Night Attack](#) – My older bro Sakimoto, when he first heard this song, said to me, "It sounds like something that a foreigner would make if he was trying to write something 'Japanese' sounding." Damn, bro! That's harsh! But yeah, it's true that I have been playing too many Western games lately. I really did want the atmosphere to feel like a night raid, but the latter half of the song sounds like the soldiers are all dancing around or something. Bah. (Iwata)

another very popular article was this collection of Klonoa interviews, which also includes comments from almost every original dev and a smattering of little-seen concept art <https://t.co/CIFxBqj8n> here's one quote on their desire to make something accessible but not childish

—Did the target demographic you chose influence the development?

Yoshizawa: I think really young children are probably still playing their Super Famicom or Game Boy. And the people interested in the Playstation are probably at that age where they're consciously trying to act more mature and adult, right? So we didn't think it would be a good idea to make Klonoa into something overly childish.

I also think children aren't really into things that are too kiddy, or too directly aimed at children. We wanted a story that wasn't consciously "aimed at kids", but would rather be something that could raise kids up to its level, if that makes sense.

—Something within the reach of a child, in other words.

Yoshizawa: Right. And by the same token, something that wouldn't feel off-putting to adults because it was "made for kids".

—A solid action game.

Kobayashi: Right. We didn't design it to be a simplistic game for kids. We thought of it as an action game a junior high schooler could enjoy.

this interview with Intelligent Systems director Ryota Kawade & Nintendo's Hiroyasu Sasano covers the creation of the original Paper Mario for N64 <https://t.co/bib3UFN0gW> this quote in particular seemed relevant to some of the arguments concerning the series' recent direction

Since our first priority was to protect the atmosphere and setting of the Mario universe, we decided to only use characters from the mainline Mario games. The side characters from Super Mario RPG therefore do not appear. I think that with Mario, sticking to the "main road" is the best. Plus, it would feel weird to have heavy themes like "betrayal" in the overall cozy, heartwarming atmosphere of the Mario world. (laughs)

sadly, one of the least-read articles of the year was this massive Star Ocean 4 interview from the official guidebook <https://t.co/cbHZuHofP1> for a time, tri-Ace really could be considered the most ambitious mainstream JRPG studio—or, as they put it...

—It sounds like there's a lot of people at tri-ace, irrespective of their department, with that strong spirit of creativity. Is that true?

Sawamura: Hmm, I wonder. There may be some truth to that, for how things work here.

Iwao: Well, on the other hand, it has an affect on our productivity... people go way overboard sometimes. (laughs) Our basic stance is to imagine ourselves in the shoes of the players, and as long as we can make something fun, we're good.

Sawamura: That's true.

Yamagishi: tri-ace has been like that from the very beginning, a bunch of overachievers.

Everyone: (laughs)

this collection of Shining Force II pre-release interviews is interesting not only for the background info it gives on the game itself, but as an active glimpse at some of the ways it changed during development <https://t.co/hpjmojVxrM>

—In many ways, there's a lot of pressure for Shining Force II to be better than the original and Gaiden games.

Takahashi: Yeah. I always feel like we're "battling" with the previous games, so to speak. That's why we talked a lot together as a team, about how to deliver a satisfying ending for players. We'd built this story up for them, from the opening to the mid-game climax, so we knew their expectations would be running high.

Finding the right tone for that ending has taken a lot of trial and error. One day, as I was working on it, my brother Shugo sat down beside me and quietly said, "Seeing as this game has turned into such a big production... I want to cry at the ending." I then spent about a month thinking about how to do that. I came up with something, but deep down I wasn't sure if it was a good idea to do that to players at the end of the game. I showed the staff what I'd completed, not knowing what they'd think. Then one of the staff spoke, with tears welling up in their eyes, "This is really good!" So yeah, I've got some confidence in the story this time.

Aquanaut's Holiday creator Kazutoshi Iida discusses the response to his first game, his relationship with Artdink, his goals with the then-upcoming Tail of the Sun and his mixed feelings about "fascist" Nintendo <https://t.co/KR8IUJWHHp>

Tida: Nowadays you have people saying things like, if something isn't "fun", then it's not a game. I'm suspicious of that line of thinking. I think it threatens to stuff all games into a set mold. When I think about it objectively now, and look back at games like Crazy Climber and Frogger and ask myself if they were actually fun, I think the truth is they weren't all that fun. It's kind of an exaggeration, but you could say I wanted to create an "un-fun game". (laughs) I think the possibilities of games is wider than that. All is permitted; nothing is forbidden. No doubt, a typical game studio would see what I'm doing as very strange, and there has been some awkwardness on that point over the last several years. As you can probably tell I've got a lot of affection for indies and independent artists. I hope I've paved the way for more creators like that on the Playstation.

this 1992 Famitsu interview with the Final Fantasy V team covers, among many other things, how they knew from the beginning that Gilgamesh was destined for greater things <https://t.co/E8HYLxgwzW>

Nomura: There's an event that features a new character who is unlike any we've ever had in a Final Fantasy game. I knew that if we weren't careful, he could end up being more popular than the heroes themselves! Also, there was a certain boss who I was worried Nintendo would veto up to the very end. That and the last boss, that one was so hard to draw it brought me to tears. It's very memorable for me.

Hudson's director on Bloody Roar 3 outlines the choices behind the new game systems, the character revisions & his hopes for a future game (most of which were realised via Bloody Roar Extreme), as well as the results for their online "beastorizer" poll <https://t.co/mIWRjClqba>

This interview was conducted in response to the results of a fan survey asking for new beastorizer ideas, the results of which were as follows:

Top 10 most-suggested beastorizers, in order of popularity: Dragon (western/eastern), Bird (hawk/eagle/falcon), Four Symbols (dragon+phoenix+tiger+tortoise), Penguin, Kitsune, Bear/Polar Bear/Grizzly Bear, Elephant/Mammoth, Kangaroo, Dinosaur/T-Rex, Snake (python, anaconda, cobra)

Other suggestions: shark, turtle, moa, crocodile, rhinoceros, pig, mouse, lizard, stoat, carnivorous plant, eel, panda, scorpion, Asura, chicken/gamefowl, hamster, hedgehog, goat, frog, Inugami, hercules/stag beetle fusion ("Crimson Insect"), octopus/giant squid/kraken, gorilla, mongoose, bee, coyote, sea lion, hyena, Kirin, Angel, mantis, wild boar, mosquito, crab, flies, dugong, cheetah, Oni, iguana, shrimp/crayfish, black panther, orangutan, Kappa, sheep, Garuda / Tengu, armadillo, flying squirrel, finch, bison/buffalo, mantis shrimp, golden lion tamarin, dog, Cerberus, Japanese wolf, monkey, lemur, Griffin, skunk, koala, Zombie, archerfish, cat, Human, powered suit/exoskeleton, antelope, centipede, Tanuki, butterfly/moth, grasshopper, devil stinger, jellyfish, basilisk, spider, Fairy, Fenrir, dolphin/whale, weasel, Medusa, Minotaur, "were-chimera (based on Uriko's boss form from the original Bloody Roar), frill-necked lizard, centaur, artificial beast, sunfish, crow, Deep One, axolotl, owl, wolverine, peacock, silkworm, Lamia, vampire squid, ant, Anubis, clone, Tsuchinoko, Chupacabra, horse/zebra, cockroach, unicorn, sabre-toothed tiger, ryukyu kingfisher, ostrich, anomalocaris, jackal, Phoenix, Devil, gecko, Sphinx, sloth, Mermaid, sea otter, Nightmare (Muma/Incubus)

the third subbed video feature for this year was a gargantuan Skies of Arcadia interview with Rieko Kodama and Shuntaro Tanaka, conducted by IGN Japan just last year <https://t.co/RDlhUVMQdr> the two-hour video reveals all sorts of details, with this being perhaps the most crucial



this Darius Gaiden interview from Gamest covers the game's broad concepts & the devs' efforts to maximise the 2D capabilities of the F3 hardware, as well as a lot of game-specific questions <https://t.co/90CwyiHJm8> anyone who knows the game will know how nutty this would've been

—Changing the subject here, but... Crusty Hammer. He's a fierce one. (laughs)

Kato: Did you know, he was actually going to be the stage 1 boss at first.

—Seriously?

Nagayama: Yeah. (laughs) He was weaker. Ultimately we went with the angler fish though. So when we went and put Crusty Hammer back in the game, this time in the later stages, we tried making him a little harder.

—"A little"...? (laughs)

Nagayama: We ended up making him too strong. We sort of balanced the game difficulty around that, though, fully expecting the player to die once when they faced him and be powered down. It makes a full power-up no-miss clear a bit harder to achieve. Players weren't dying as much as we wanted, you see.

in this 1999 interview, Hideo Kojima gives an overview of his body of work up to and including Metal Gear Solid and expounds upon the artisanal nature of game creator <https://t.co/zcvkg4C7V4> he also promised his next work would be a "crowd-pleaser", maybe he meant ZOE...

—By the way, you previously stated that while you are the director, you considered yourself a craftsman or artisan. What parts of your games do you feel justify that term?

Kojima: Games are something you use, and your impression and evaluation of them comes from your using them. So we game creators are not "artists". I mean, we are creators in a certain sense. And naturally I want to move people, but the interactive experience of the user comes first. Games are also tools—something to be used. They don't gain acceptance until they are used; artistic self-indulgence won't do. In our business, it's no good to make a game that hardly anyone can play. It would be like tea no one can drink. An attractive aesthetic alone isn't enough either. So in that sense, we are craftsmen.

It's completely possible to do both of course: to have a playable, "usable" game and within those boundaries also infuse it with your individuality and artistic spirit. If the player gets your game and finds the controls pleasing, and on top of that thinks it's artistic, I've no problem with that, but it's important to realize that a game isn't a painting. No one wants a knife that won't cut, right? Imagine you're ready to filet your fish and you take your knife out. If that knife has a speaker in it and can play music or some gimmick, that's all good and well, but who will buy a knife that won't cut...? Who buys a knife on looks alone? No one.

this grab-bag of interviews goes into brief detail on a variety of games and topics related to Alpha Denshi/ADK, the SNK-affiliated studio most remembered for their work on Neogeo, with the through-line being their conspicuous infatuation with ninjas <https://t.co/EaTuG4tggk>

Originally, our game design was based around using whatever was convenient and at-hand at the time (laughs), but I guess at some point the mystical awesomeness of the ninja imprinted itself in the heads of our planners. Since World Heroes it's been impossible to deny that Ninja Maniacs work at ADK. (laughs) Scheming in the shadows, these ninja-obsessed planners' efforts finally culminated in Ninja Master's, ADK's homage to all things ninja.

these interviews & comments from the creators of Capcom/Nude Maker's ultra-immersive mech combat game Steel Battalion barely touch on the game's famously elaborate controller, but there's plenty said about the "vertical tank" design & the game's aesthetic <https://t.co/oEifZDBjkW>

—How did everyone feel when they saw the final visuals with all the trimmings?

Yonezuka: That we'd given it our very best, I think. Satisfaction. If you ask me whether the graphics are "high quality", well, I think there are still some rough spots. Though they still have grit, the visuals came out more impressionistic than photo-realistic.

Takeyasu: It was a novel approach we took. It felt like we were ahead of our time, like future games to come would probably imitate this aesthetic.

Yonezuka: I think focusing on the positives and our strengths, and not getting hung up on the negative, really paid off for us. To make an analogy, it's less like Hollywood and more like a Hong Kong movie. It's a whole different vector we pursued.

Tasaki: I'm very satisfied with the finished product too. I actually got completely absorbed in the game when I was playing it during the debugging. There haven't been many games lately that you can focus on like this.

these interviews delve into the background of Wonder Project J2, a cult "communication adventure" game released for N64 exclusively in Japan <https://t.co/rpFssGJRnv> among other topics, the interview covers the nature of the game's more interpretive & less deterministic game system

—What were you trying to make when you made WPJ2?

Yoneda: There's nothing else out there that directly compares, so it's easy to think of it as an ikusei game (raising/caring game, usually translated as "life simulation" in English). But what I was aiming for, was having a character with a will and mind of their own, and as you move her around and interact with her, and solve problems together, doing all that would suffice to make an enjoyable game by itself. Then I thought it would be neat if, as you're playing, and your mind wanders back to your own life and self, if the events of the game and the game world had a kind of feedback effect on your real life. That's why I encourage players not to just try and reach the ending, but to experience and see as much of the character dialogue and behavior as they can.

Finally, for me personally, the final line of dialogue in the ending really encapsulates all my myriad feelings about the game. I'm very curious about how many people will understand it.

this 2000 Nice Games interview with composer Yasunori Mitsuda goes into his origins as a musician, his entry into the game industry (via a push from his mentor, Norihiko Yamanuki) & his work on Chrono Trigger, Radical Dreamers, Xenogears & Chrono Cross <https://t.co/lzBGNkYp2g>

—I've heard stories of you doing that the day before the deadline.

Mitsuda: Our office is totally networked, so you know anytime someone updates a file. So when someone from another department is looking at the folder, they can see I'm at it again, and my shenanigans get exposed. (laughs)

But it's true, I'm always working up to the end. It's pride, I guess, and my own sense of dedication. *I don't care what anyone says—I'm fixing this part!* That kind of thing. It's not about gaining approval, so much as it's a question of personal satisfaction. It actually leads to a lot of fights. As a composer, it's pretty common to beat yourself over the head after the fact, for things you wish you would have changed when you had the time. (laughs) I think players notice those flaws, so I feel I have to fix them first. Of course, if I worked in a different part of the development, I couldn't be so liberal with my updates, because it would cause bugs. But that's not a big concern with the music.

this article offers another huge helping of Skies of Arcadia info: 13(!) interviews with a variety of different staff members, plus interviews for external media like the manga & drama CD (with more to come!) <https://t.co/4paVyXrJTh> here's a point of focus for director Seimiya

—Speaking of your previous works, Seimiya, you worked on Advanced World War: Sennen Teikoku Koubou. We could see there, too, your abiding love for ships and ship design.

Seimiya: Yeah, definitely. Thanks to all the research we did for Sennen Teikoku, I've got a mountain of reference materials on tanks and ships. So I was able to give all sorts of detailed points on the ship design for Arcadia. I'd point out things like, "oh, hey, this metal sheet probably wouldn't be affixed with screws". (laughs) Of course Skies of Arcadia has its own time period and setting to contend with. Our ship designs first started out by taking Age of Discovery-era ships and adding WWII-era technology to them... but along the way I realized, "Hold on. I wanted these designs to evoke the atmosphere of WWI ships. This is all wrong!" I was really insistent on that. For example—and this is a little detail, but—there was a question of whether the cannons should be equipped with range-finders (scopes). We justified their inclusion by saying, "ok, these would be like a brand new technology in this world, so we can add them." As you can see, we were very particular, and even little exceptions like this had to be reasoned through. (laughs)

To my thinking, it's this strict attention to detail that lends verisimilitude to the world of a game, and allows players to believe it and get into it. There's a scene where Fina is rescued from Alfonso's battleship. We designed that ship to be the spitting image of a WWI-era ship. Later, when Alfonso escapes, he uses a boat that we designed with a slightly older image in mind.

lastly for 2020, this feature covers the origins & design ethos behind several classic & cult puzzle games: Puyo Puyo, Puzzle Bobble/Bust-A-Move, Panel de Pon, Columns, Magical Drop, Uo Poko & Babel no Tou <https://t.co/BuhfMeGHIH> Cave's

original concepts were more, uh, Cave-like

We started off making shooting games like Donpachi, but we decided to take a stab at creating something for the arcades in a new genre. I thought our agility as developers, and our idiosyncratic personality, would lend themselves to making a puzzle game, so from there, we spent the last year or so experimenting with a few different ideas. We went through several variations in those early stages, including stuff like a "Restructuring Falling-Block Puzzle" in which you'd lop the heads off redundant employees (laughs), but Uo Poko as it currently exists began to take shape around the beginning of this year.

on top of everything else, blackoak's lent his skills to a variety of professional game & game-adjacent translation work, some public and some less public—one such project you'll definitely have seen is Matt Leone's Street Fighter oral history series <https://t.co/Hoat3mUm3t>

...so with all that said, if you enjoy or appreciate the work done by shmuplations, plz consider becoming a patron! <https://t.co/X8bKjlm7LI> with your support, more (& more complex) material could potentially be translated more often, & patrons get to vote on what gets translated