# The Wonderful World of UX
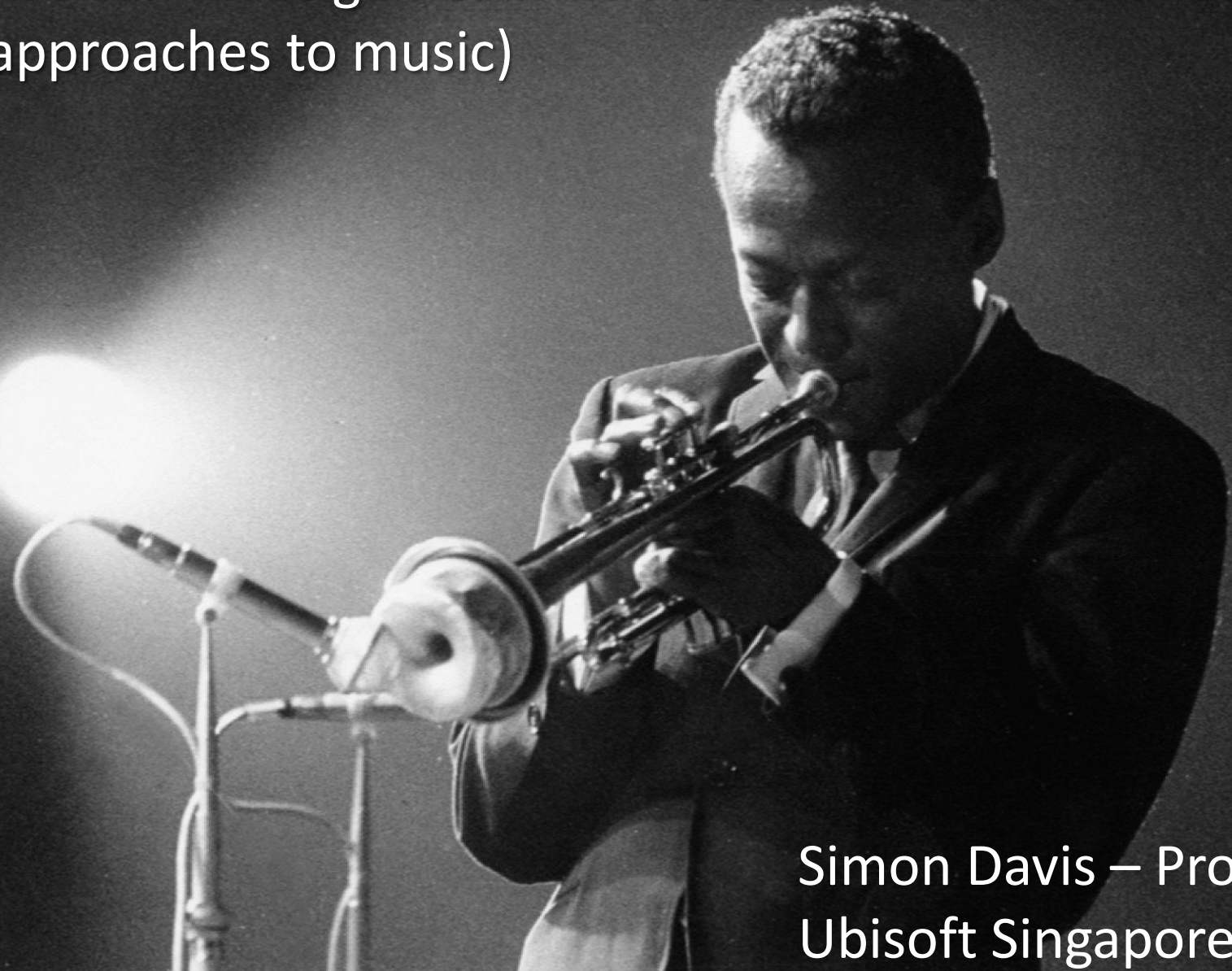(How we can make games which resonate better and learn from approaches to music)

Simon Davis – Producer
Ubisoft Singapore

# What the hell is this all about?

*UX:* Taking games from "WTF?" to "Awesome!" since 1961.

# What the hell is this all about?

- What is UX and how can we relate it to games?
- Why should you care?
- Different approaches to UX (Jazz vs. Blues)
- How can we create better experiences for our audience?

# A little background

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# "What the hell is UX?"

UX ≠ New

UX ≠ Complex

*UX is how you make your game's enjoyment easier to access.*

# "What the hell is UX?"





*Early games used story and "trial and error" to guide users.*

# "What the hell is UX?"

UX ≠ Usability

UX ≠ UI Design

*UX is a collection of different practices.*

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

*The Drummer*

Information Architecture

Billy Cobham: "Information Architecture Hero"

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

Information Architecture asks:

- What are we trying to achieve?

- Who are our intended audience?

- Why will they play our game?

# "UX is a bit like a band..."

Example Information Architecture outputs:

- User stories

- Competitor analysis

- Content and functions

# "UX is a bit like a band..."



Jaco Pastorius: "Information Design Legend"

*The Bassist*

Information Design

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

## Information Design asks:

- What information will we show the user?

- Where will we present information?
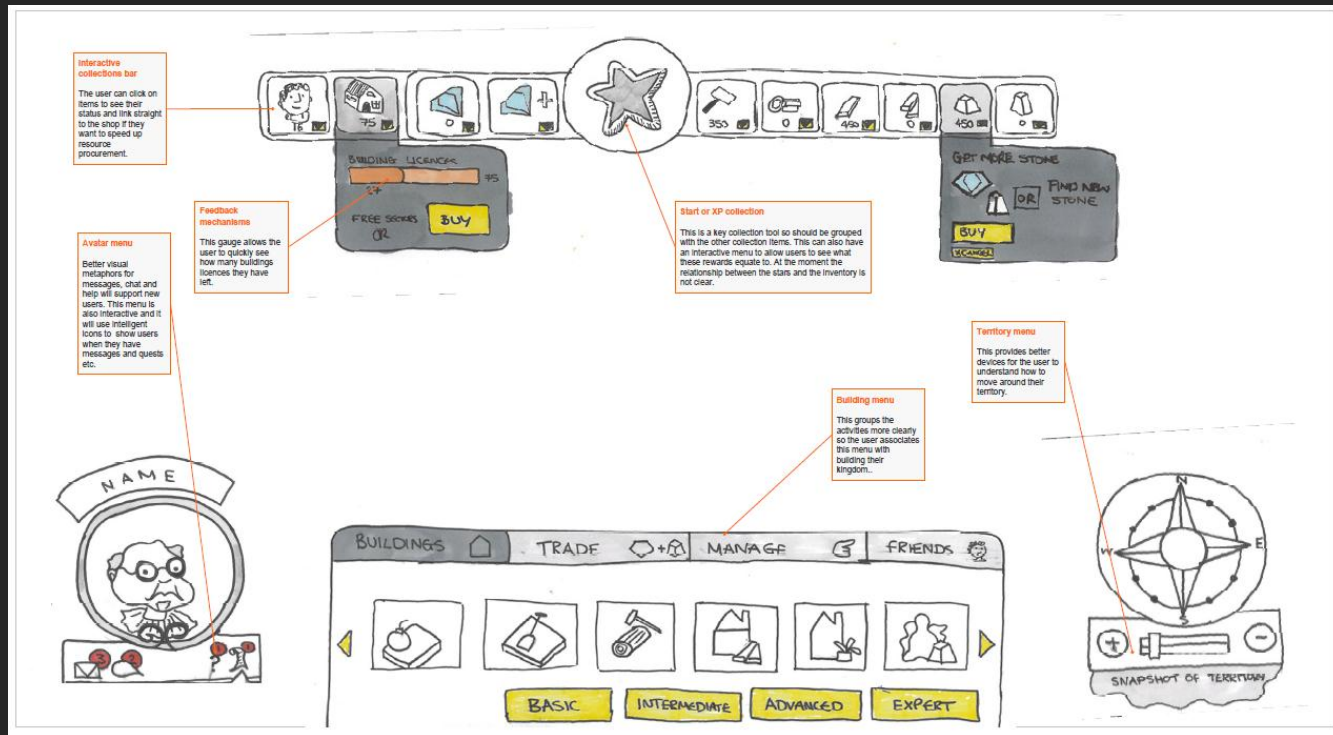
- How will we present information?

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

Example Information Design outputs:

- Overview plans for game

- Layouts for main screens

# "UX is a bit like a band..."

## Information Design outputs:



Example scamp

# "UX is a bit like a band..."



Bill Evans: "Interaction Design Idol"

*The Pianist*

Interaction

Design

# "UX is a bit like a band..."

Interaction Design asks:

- **How** do you do?

- **How** do you feel?

- **How** do you know?

# "UX is a bit like a band…"



Stanley Jordan: "Visual Design Colossus"

*The Guitarist*

Visual

Design

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

Example Visual Design outputs

"Guide" which outlines:

- Stylistic conventions

- Visual communication (tied to Information Design)

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

*The Singer*

Usability

Eva Fitzgerald: "Usability Godess"

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

Example Usability outputs:

- A/B Testing
- Usability guidelines
- Accessibility guidelines
- Observational Testing

# "UX is a bit like a band..."

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

## Always remember these guys…



*The Audience*

# "UX is a bit like a band..."

**Information Architecture** – User research, project goals, high-level design.

**Information Design** – Plans, "What goes where"?

**Interaction Design** – How do we communicate, how do we perform actions, where do we perform actions?

# "UX is a bit like a band…"

**Visual Design** – Uniqueness, personality, communication.

**Usability** – How do people respond? How intuitive is it to use?

You don't need a team of experts or formal processes to begin implementing these practices into your designs.

# Jazz vs. Blues

# "Make a jazz noise here..."

*One thing I like about jazz, kid, is that I don't know what's going to happen next. Do you?"*
— **Bix Beiderbecke**

# "The blues is a mighty bad feelin' "

*"Simple music is the hardest music to play and blues is simple music."*
— **Albert Collins**

# The Jazz/Blues Spectrum

Jazz                                              Blues

←——————————————————————————————→

"Closed" Communication                "Open" Communication

- Complex
- Appreciated by specialist audience
- May require "expert" knowledge
- *Requires active listening to enjoy*

- Simple
- Easily appreciated

- Requires no specialist knowledge
- *Requires less immersion*

Typically, the more complex it is to understand or interact with something, the more challenging it becomes to convey emotion.

# … and now for some examples

# Jazz: Grand Turismo

# Blues: Outrun 2

# Jazz: ARMA II

# Blues: Far Cry 2

# Jazz hands
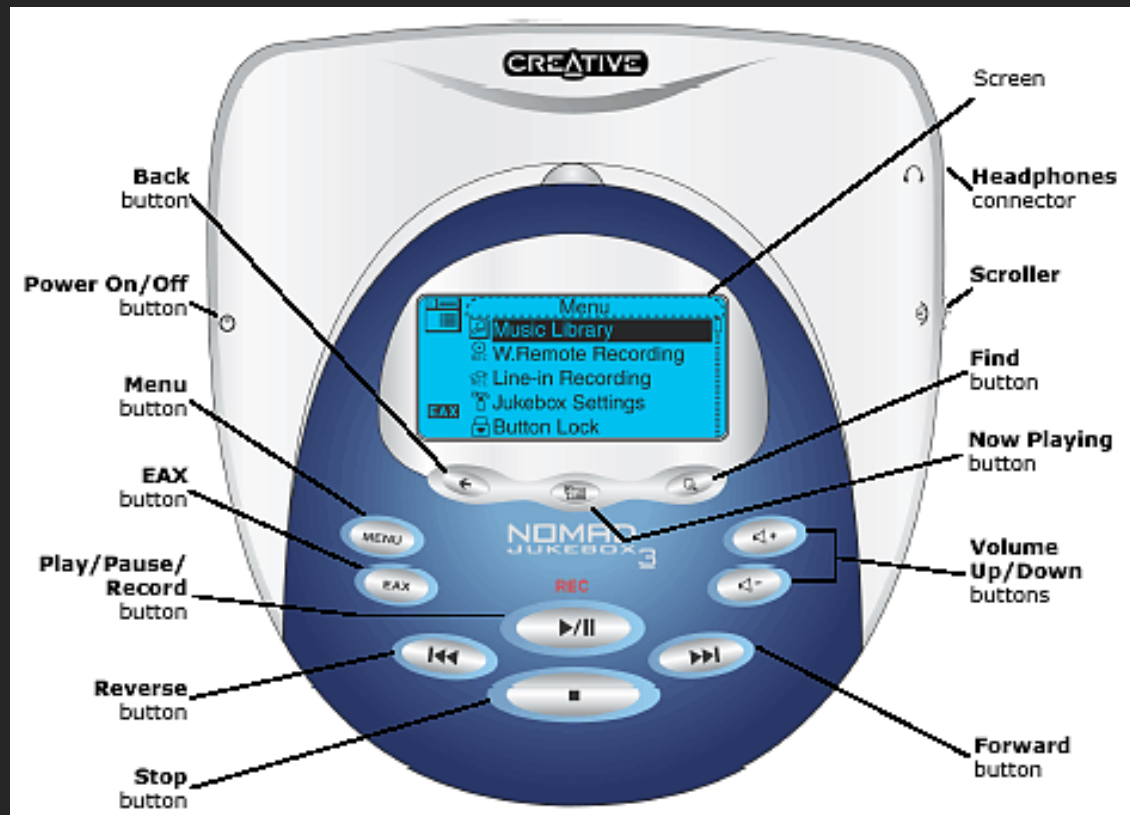
# Blues simplicity

# Jazz Visual Design

# Blues Visual Design

# Beyond games...

# "Non-audience driven" product design?

# "Audience driven" product design?

# The Iterations of GRO

# The Iterations of GRO

PLAY NOW | SOLO | MULTIPLAYER     PROFILE | INVENTORY | STORE     MAIL     FRIENDS | CLAN | L'BOARDS     OPTIONS | HELP/BUGS | QUIT

LOADOUT:  STANDARD EQUIPMENT ▼

SAVE  |  EDIT  |  DELETE

**ENGINEER: LVL 2**

**SGT MAJOR HERO.WARJUNKIE**

IGC: #5,182
GR$: $4,501

UPCOMING ACHIEVEMENT

UPCOMING PROGRESSION

| ◄ | Global | Trade | Friends | ► |
|---|--------|-------|---------|---|

**Hero.Myre**: so I put it on my head and it worked.  who knew?

**Hero.Tombstone**: just bought the [Finely Crafted Titanium Barrel] real cheap. you should all buy one.

**SittingDuck**: That's how it goes some-times.

Match starting soon! Who's in?

| PRIMARY WEAPON | **M16A4** ASSAULT RIFLE LEVEL 6 REQUIRED + CLASS RESTRICTED | HELMET |
|---|---|---|
| AMMO: PRIMARY | | FACE |
| SIDEARM | DMG 10.2  AMMO TYPE 5.56MM  ACC 91.7 | BODY ARMOR |
| AMMO: SECONDARY | RECOIL 15.3  MOBILITY -5.5  DURABILITY 120/120 | OTHER (COSMETIC |
| GRENADE | CONSUMABLES | |

SELF     TEAM     SPECIAL

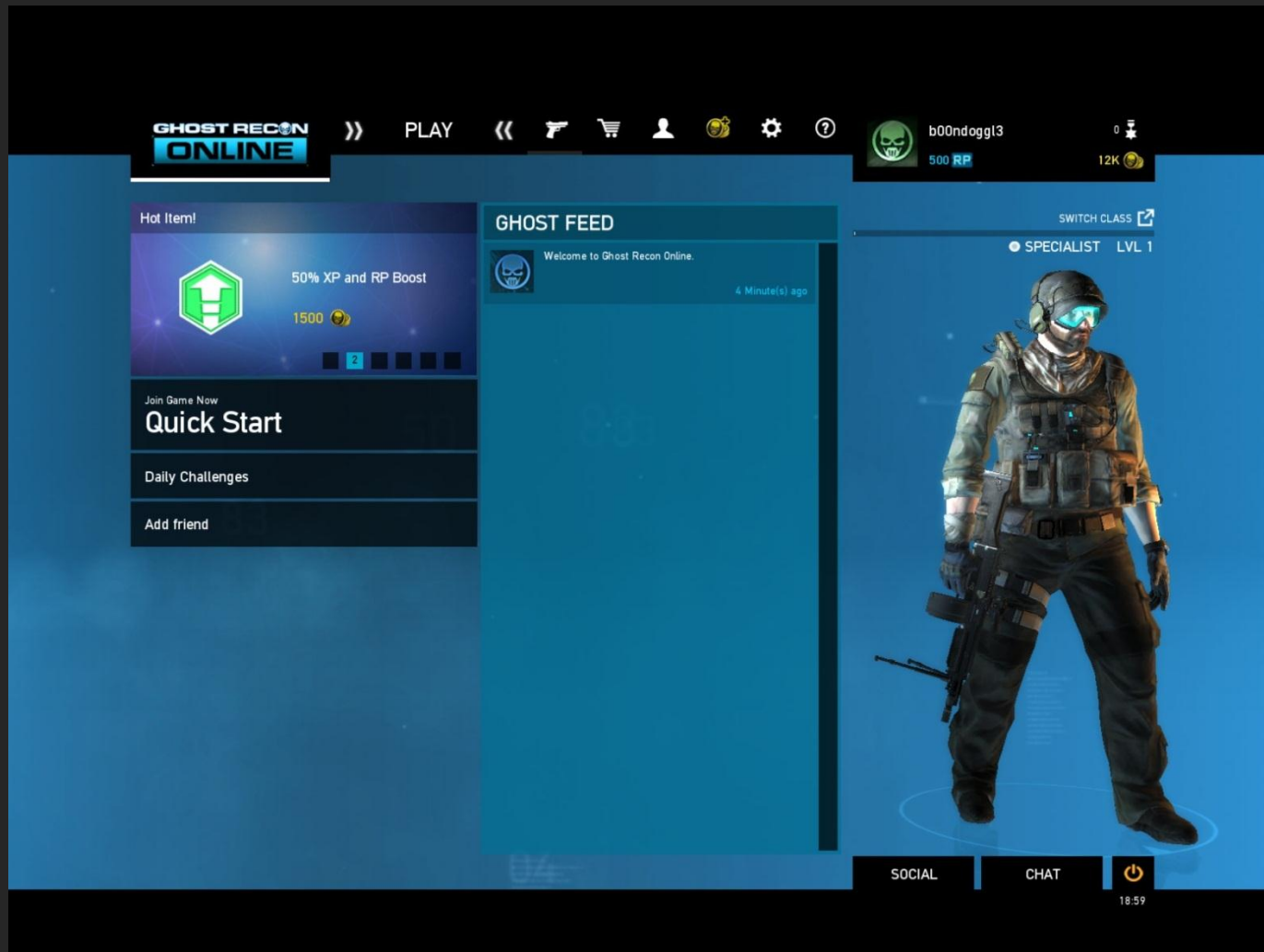| INVENTORY  |  CARDS | | SELL  |  DELETE | ↓ PAGE 1/3 ► |
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# The Iterations of GRO

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# The Iterations of GRO

# Finding your sound

- Be honest about who it is you're making games for.

- There is no right or wrong approach, only the right and wrong approaches for your game.

# Jazz Power

Ideally suited to games which focus on the following:

- Strategic thinking (RTS, TBS)
- Tactical play (FPS, RPGs)
- MMORPGS
- Games with an engaged audience who are willing to take the time to learn (Sports and Vehicle sims)

# Blues Feeling

Ideally suited to games which focus on the following:

- Emotional content (fear, tension, empathy with NPCs, etc.)
- Simple gameplay mechanics (casual, family, party, social, etc.)
- Games which have to engage users early on (F2P, iOS, online demos)

# Now that you've found your sound

- "Play the hits!": Know what your audience want and give it to them.

- "Sneak in some new songs": A/B, iterative testing.

- "Hand out some backstage passes": Get to know your audience.

# Additional Benefits

- Reduced support costs: Your game is easier to use and understand.

- Faster development cycle and improved prioritisation: Know what your audience like/dislike.

- Freedom: "The band" can riff and try new things.

# The Secret Sauces:

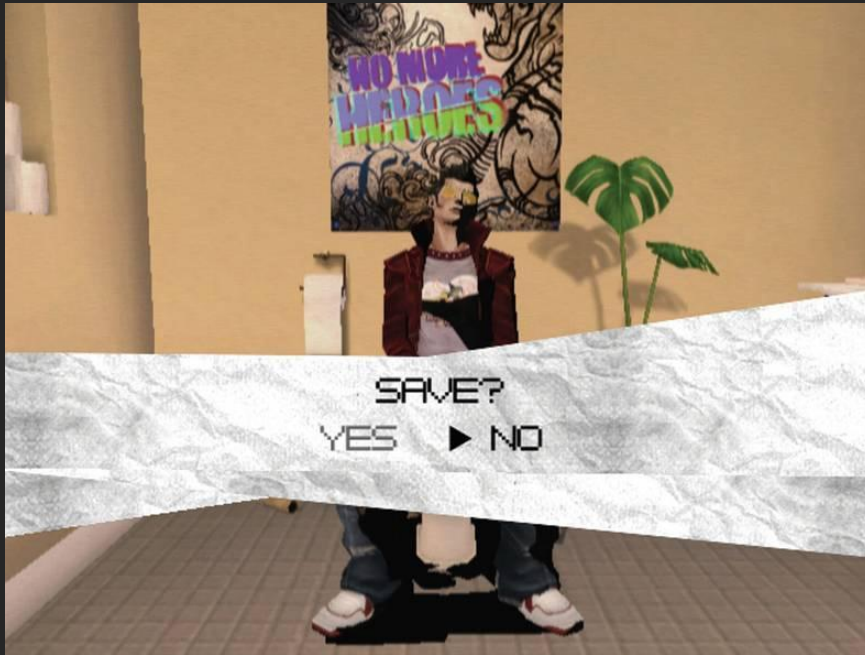# The Secret Sauces:
## Love the "Metagame"

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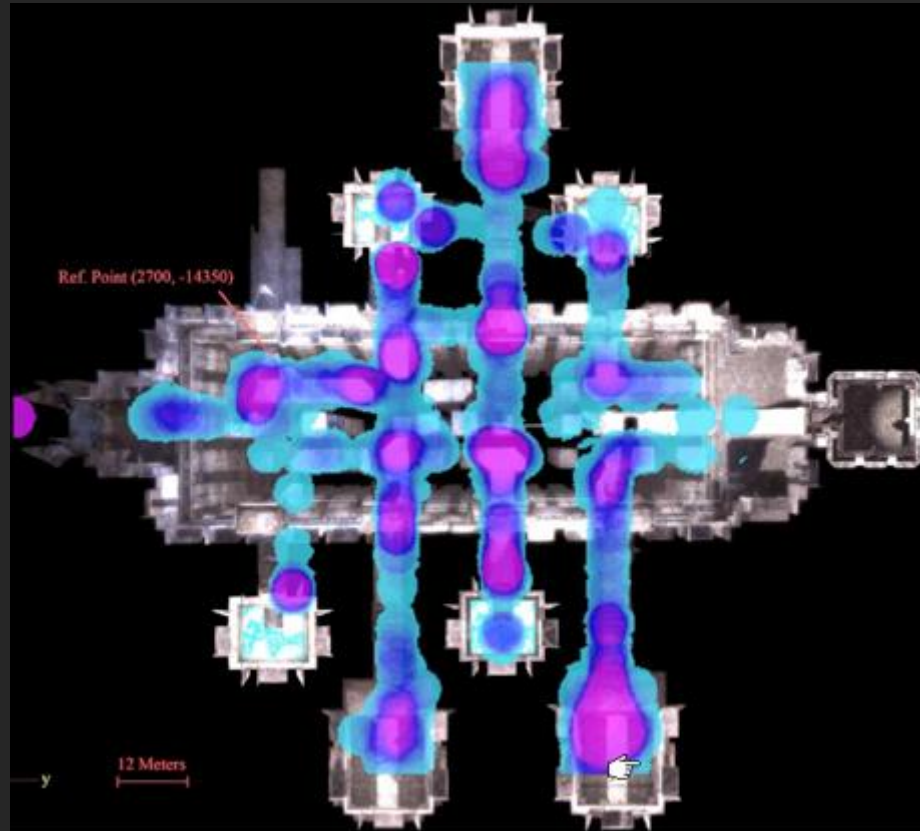
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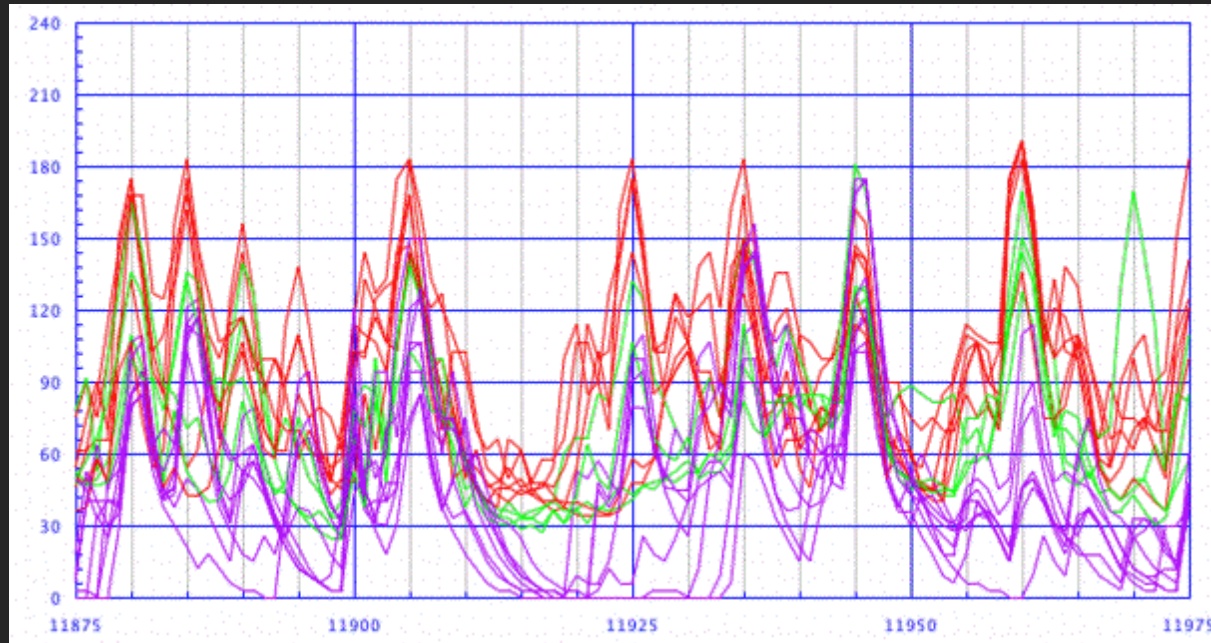
# The Secret Sauces:
# Data is your friend

*"Data is what distinguishes the dilettante from the artist."*
*- **George V. Higgins***

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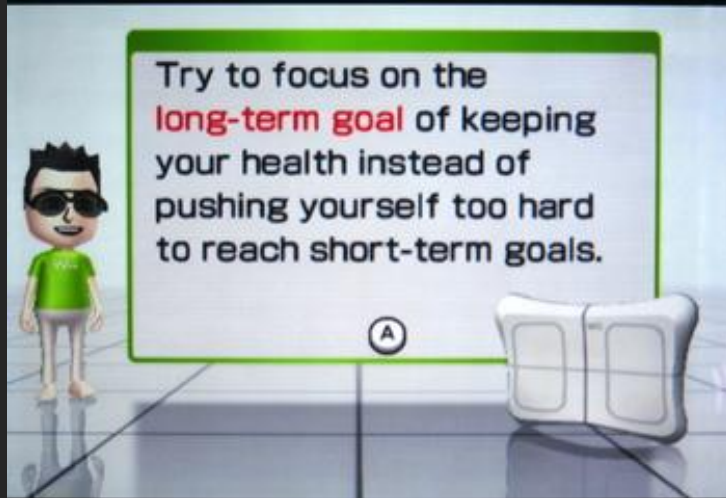# The Secret Sauces:
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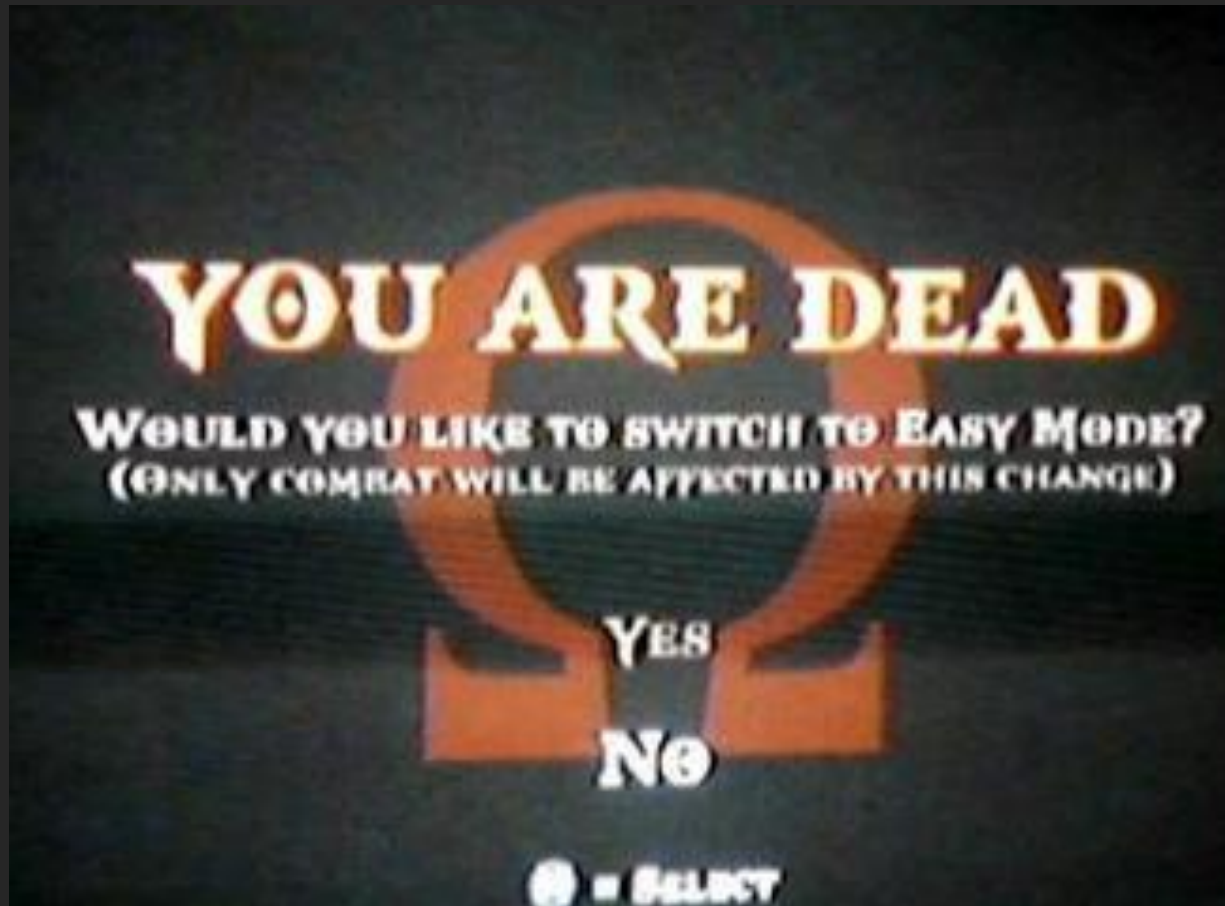
# The Secret Sauces: Emotional Intelligence

*"Go ahead and play the blues if it'll make you happy."*
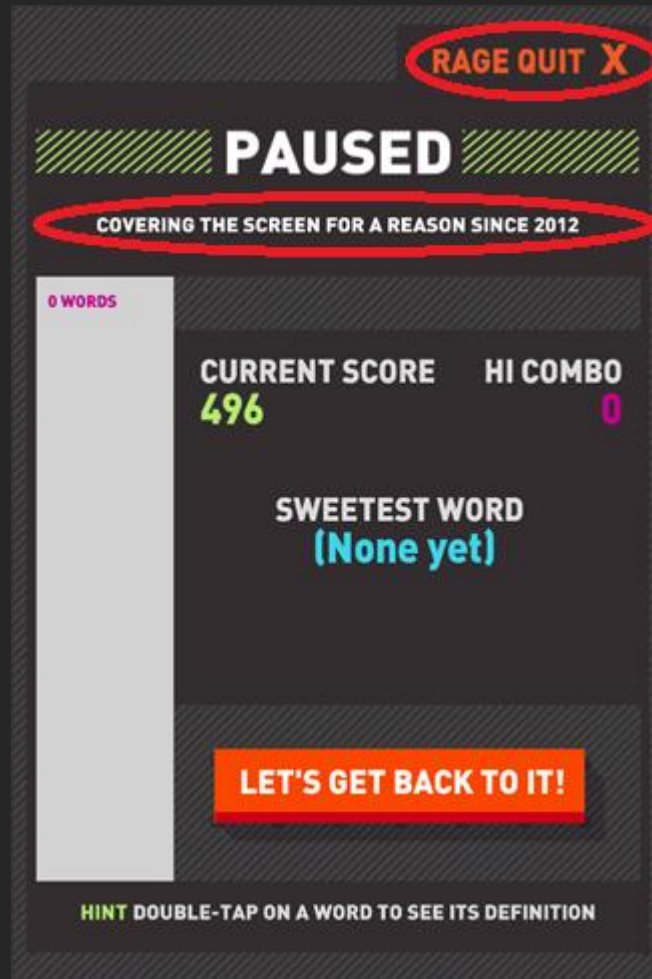— **Dan Castellaneta**

# The Secret Sauces: Emotional Intelligence

# The Secret Sauces: Emotional Intelligence

# The Secret Sauces: Emotional Intelligence

# Takeaways

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- UX has been a key part of game design since day 1.

- Any team has the resources and skill to consider UX within their game design. It need not be expensive or complex.

- Regardless of who your audience are: Make it as simple as possible. Then simplify it some more.

- "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

# Takeaways

*- Never forget the audience and take the effort to know them. Don't guess.*

*- Adopting a UX-centric approach will allow you to prioritise the areas which matter the most.*

*- Iterative testing will allow you to quickly and cheaply validate new ideas, allowing greater creative freedom.*

# Takeaways

*- Data: Love the data and it will love you back.*

*- Metagame: The game is the whole package, not just the core experience.*

*- Emotional Intelligence: Consider how users will feel, and how you want to make them feel.*

# Takeaways

*The most important thing to remember in music or UX:*

## OK ≠ OK

# It's been emotional…

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Twitter: bearvsgames