

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”

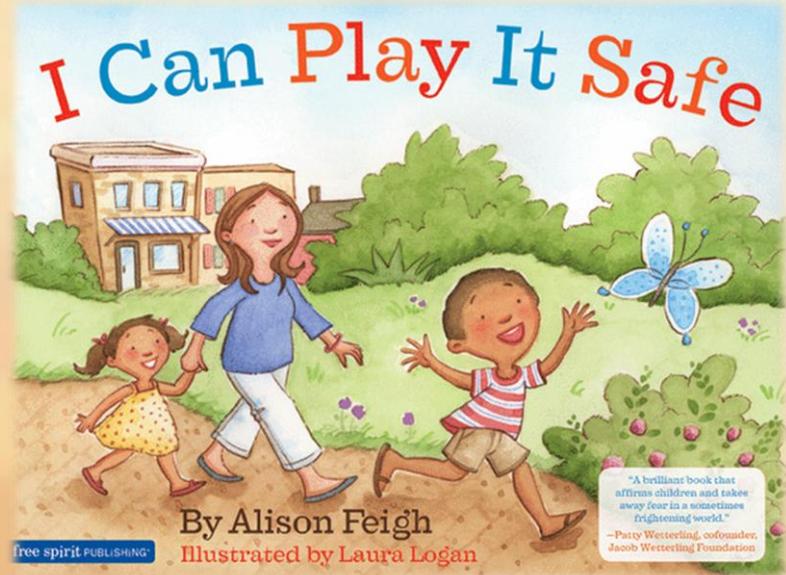


Harder to Sign Big Games



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

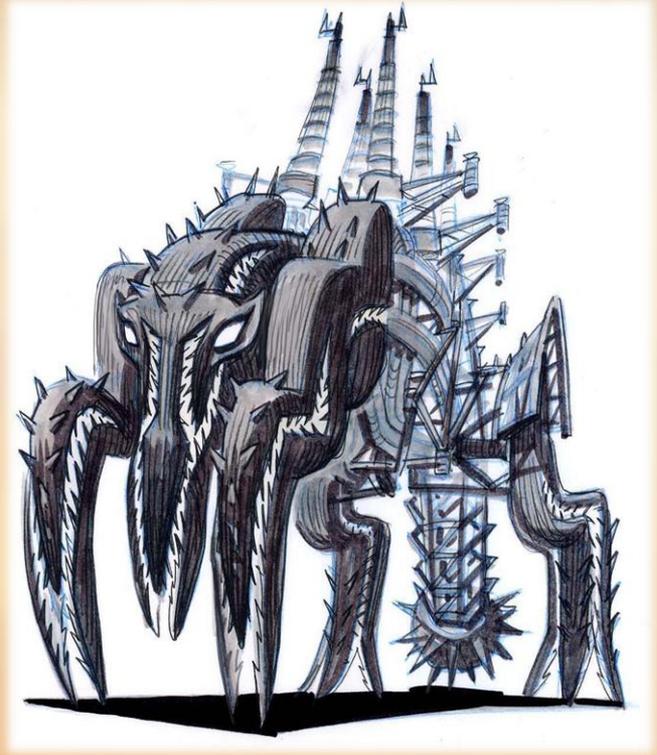
CHALLENGES

Challenges block your progress in the game and must be solved to continue. Each Challenge can be solved multiple ways using different combinations of dolls. Each solution you find earns rewards.



The Stories

- From prototype to full game
- Production challenges
- Solutions



The Stories

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



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**?

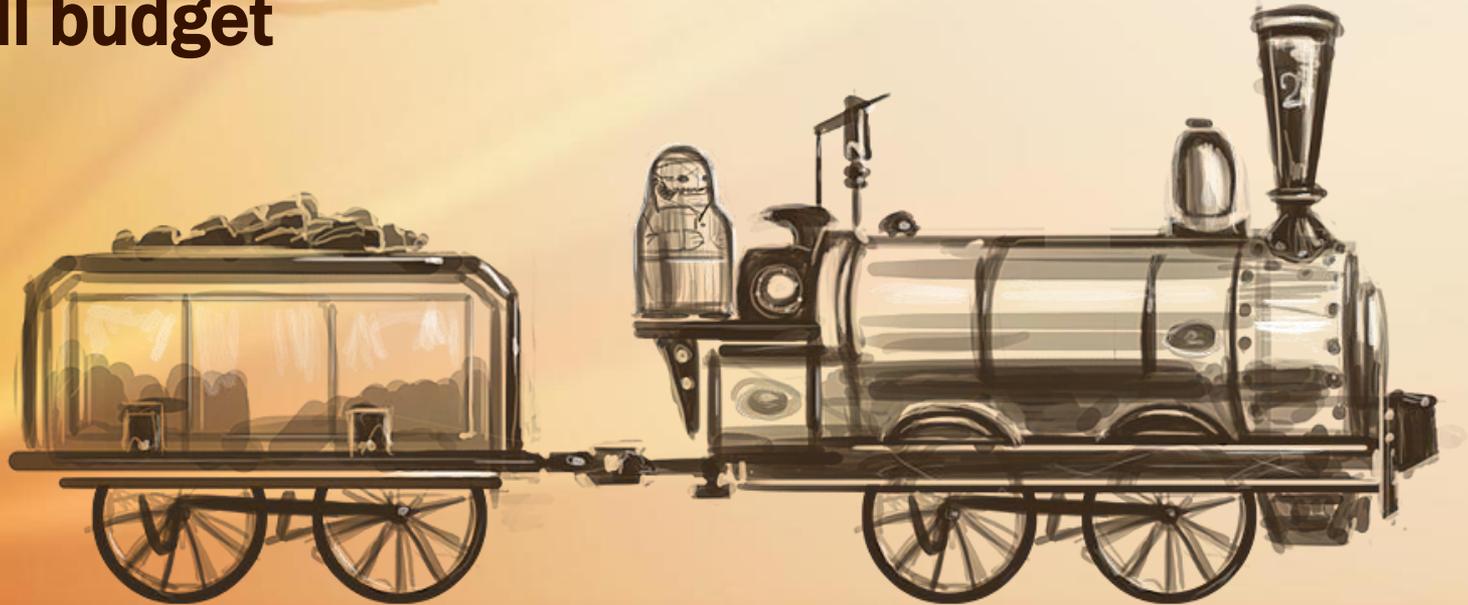


Production Challenge



Production Challenge

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



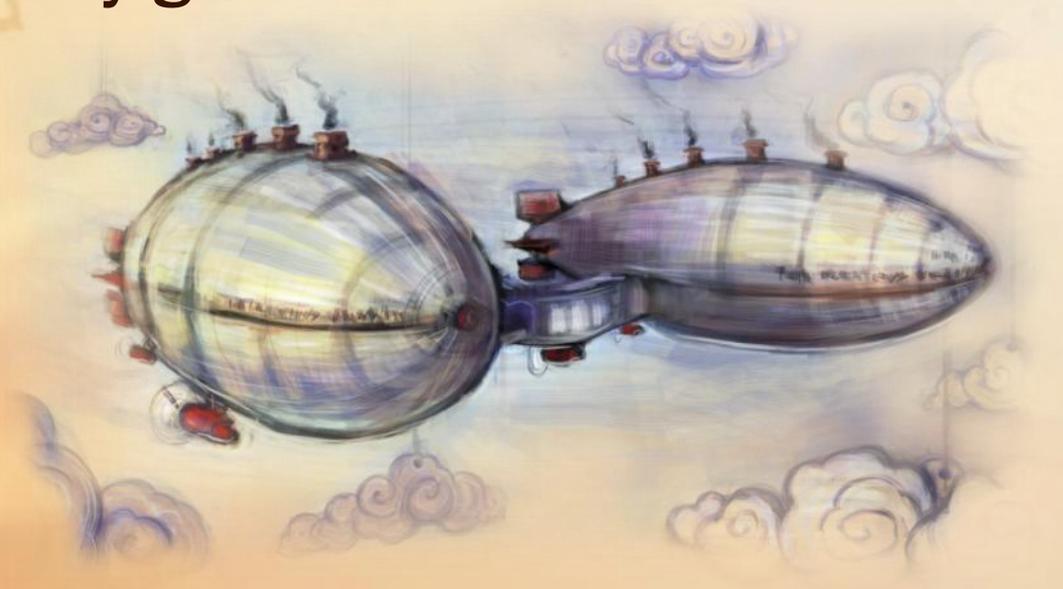
Production Challenge

- 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

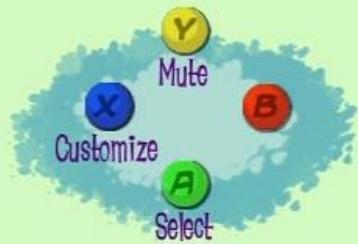
- **Idea:** *Experience the joy of music.*
- **Game:** Interactive musical toy.
 - Create your own **personal happy song.**
 - With help from musical **monster friends.**



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.**







happy gony!

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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- **Great opportunity.**



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...
- **Sesame Street!**
 - Very compatible **values**.
 - Return to original **inspiration**.
- 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.



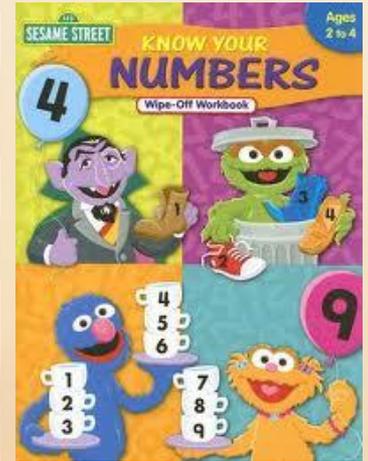
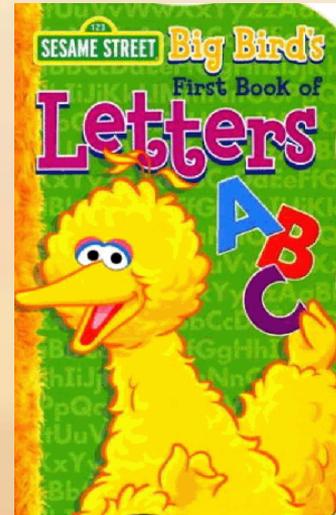
Sesame Adaptation

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



Sesame Adaptation

- Educational and entertaining.



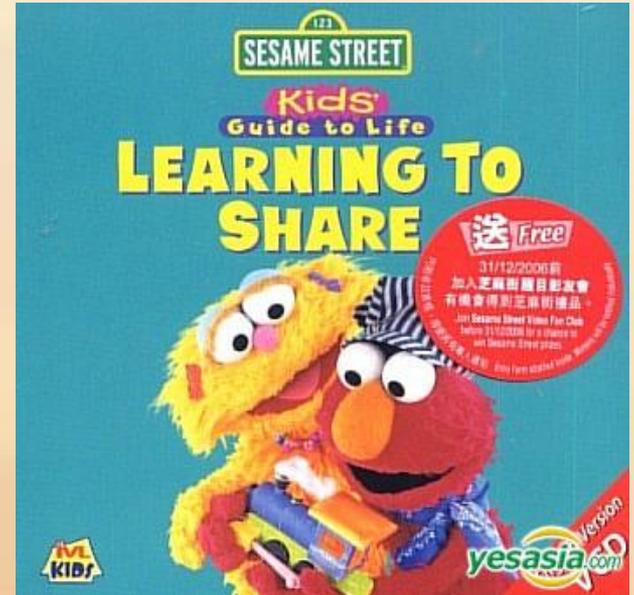
Sesame Adaptation

- 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

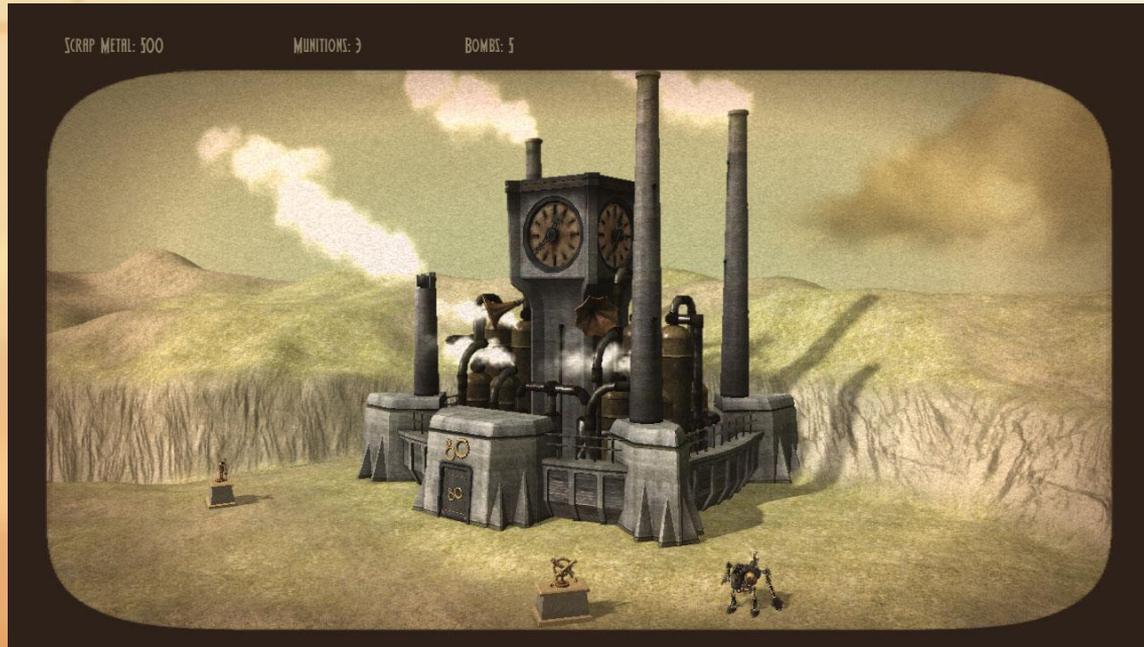


AF Prototype



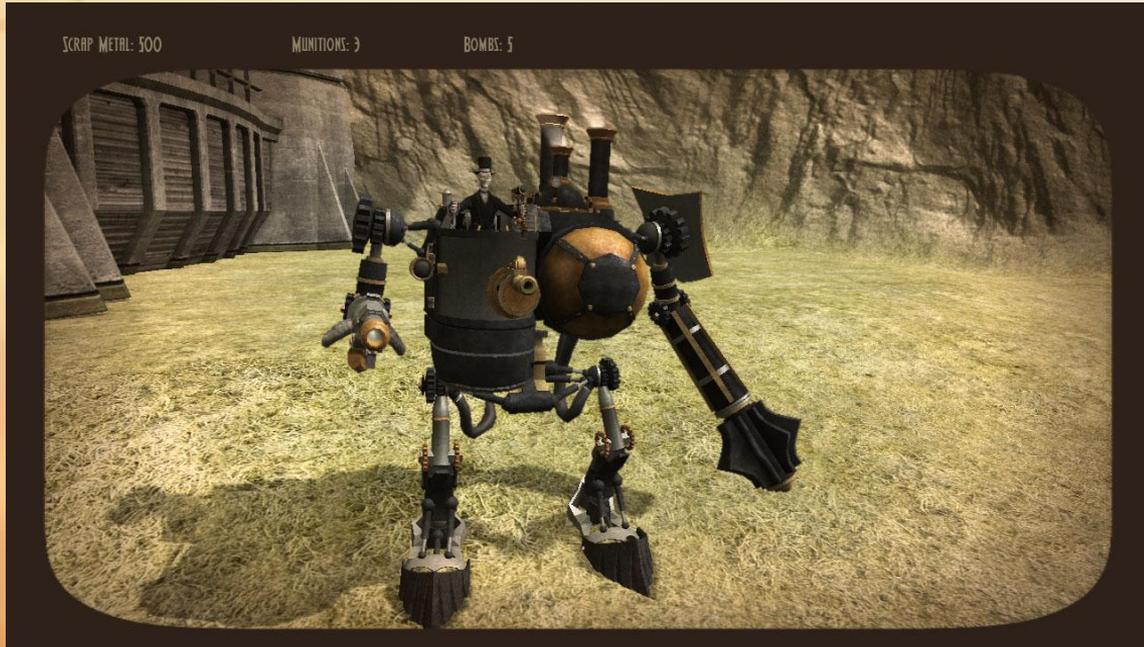
AF Prototype

- Steampunk Britain!



AF Prototype

- Steampunk Britain!
- Mobile Factories!



AF Prototype

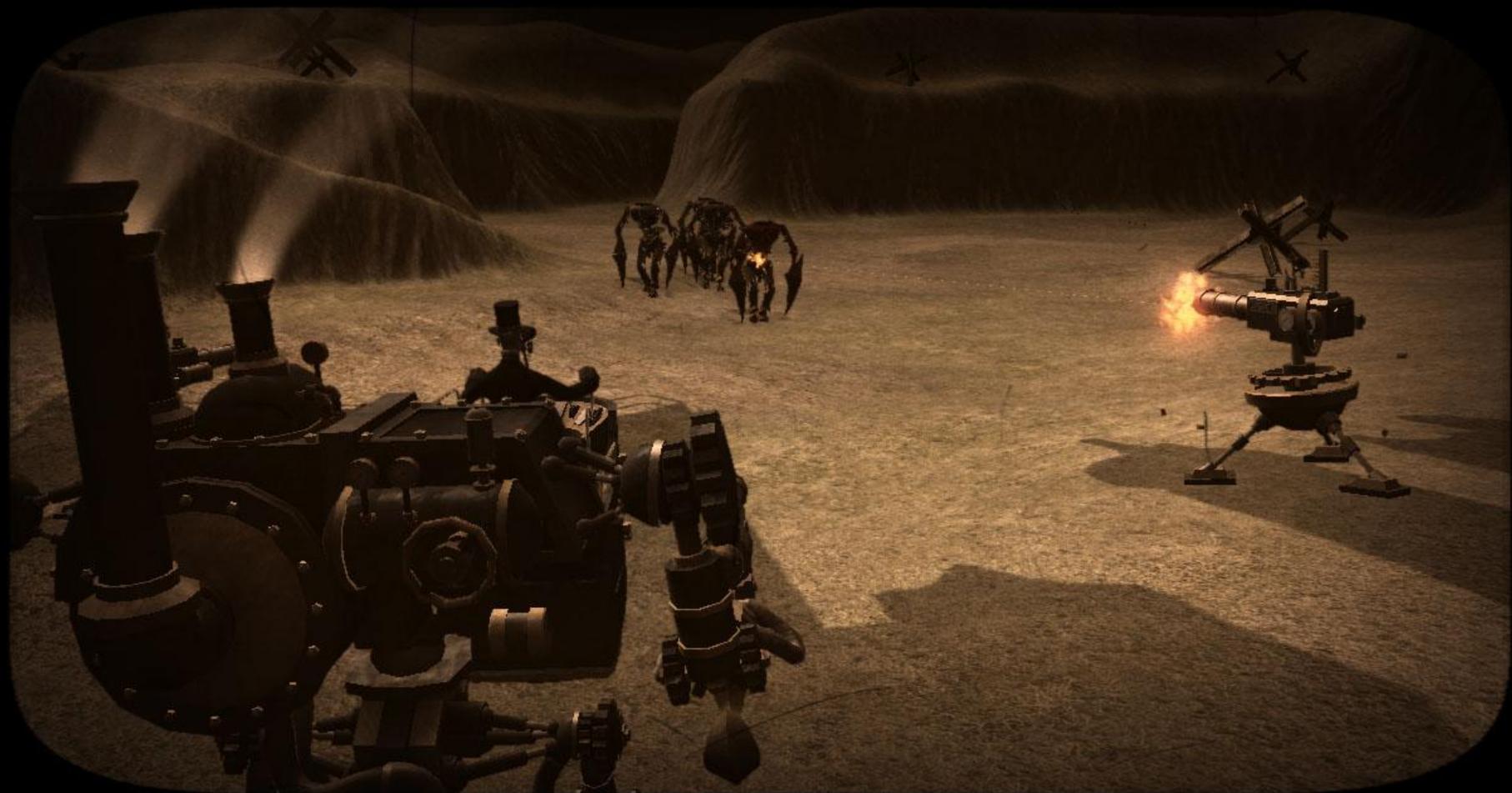
- Steampunk Britain!
- Mobile Factories!
- Zombie Robots!



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 Cutscenes



DF Brand Examination

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



What is it, really?



What is it, really?

- The answer is...



What is it, really?

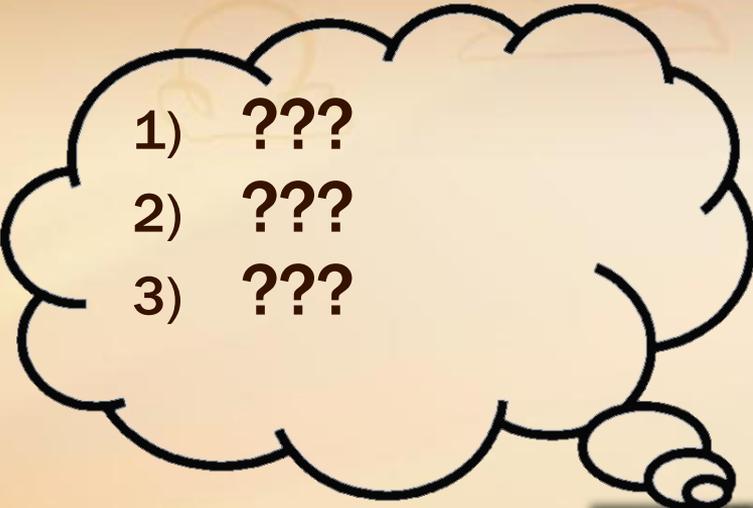
- The answer is...

- ...we didn't know!



Double Fine Brand!

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

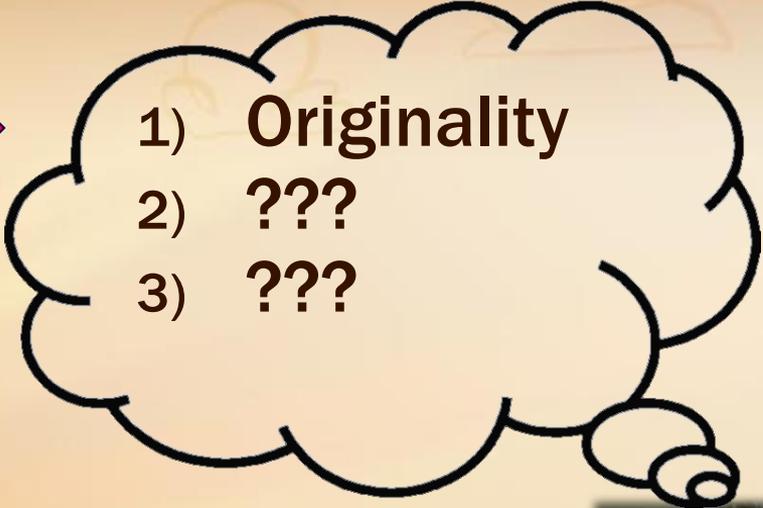
- 
- 1) ???
 - 2) ???
 - 3) ???



Double Fine Brand!

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



- 
- A hand-drawn black thought bubble containing a list of three items.
- 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!

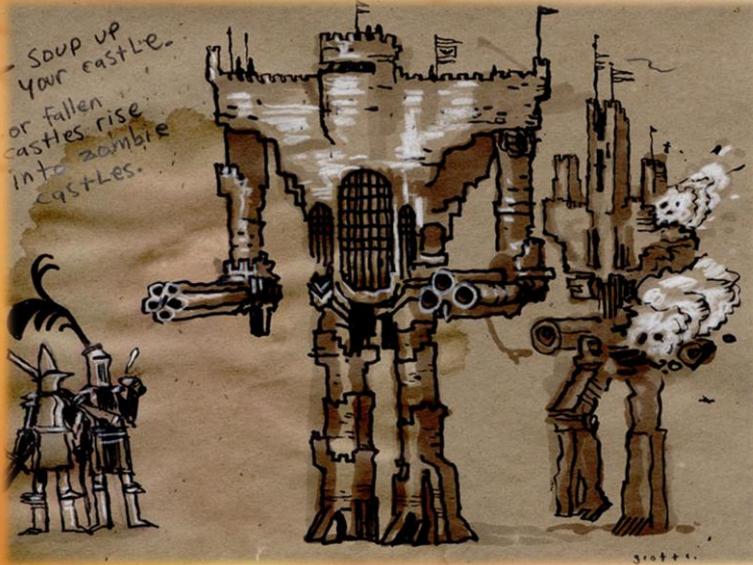


Double Fine Art Jam!

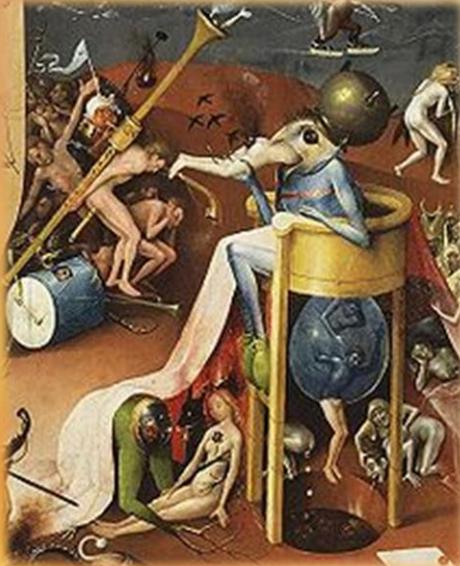
- 2D Concept Art Team for 2 Days!
- Generated a high number of ridiculous ideas!



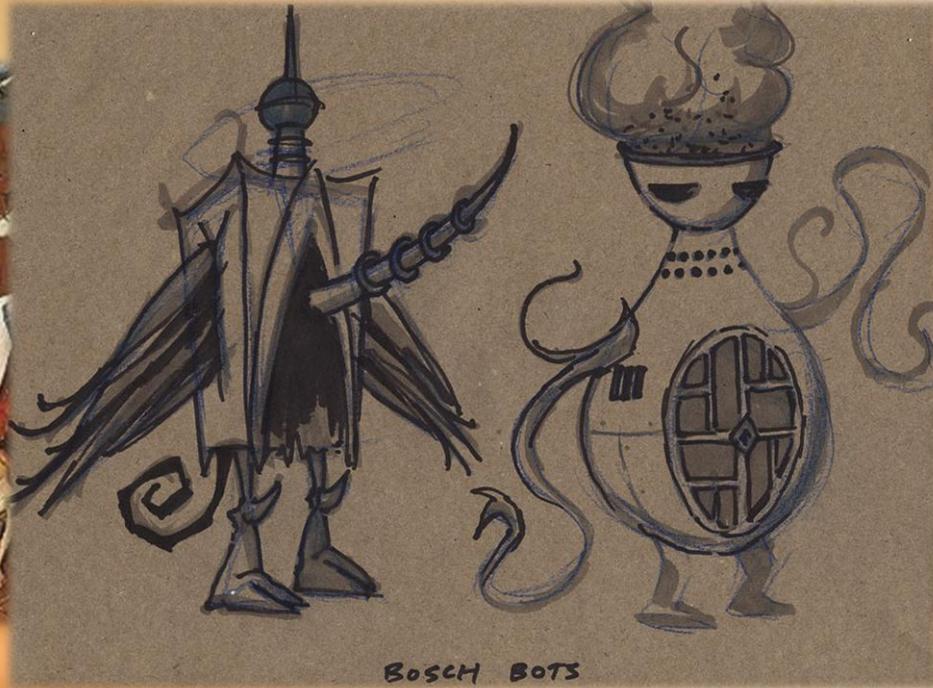
Castle Robots!



Bosch Bots!



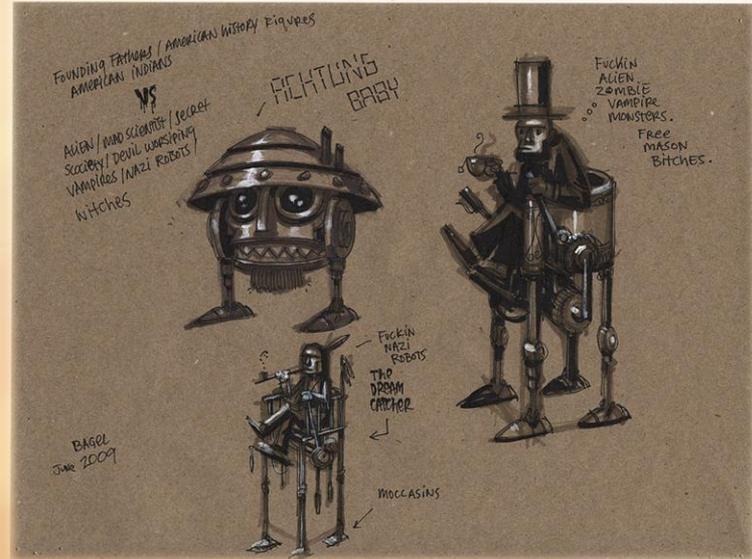
Bosch Bots!



BOSCH BOTS



Founding Fathers!

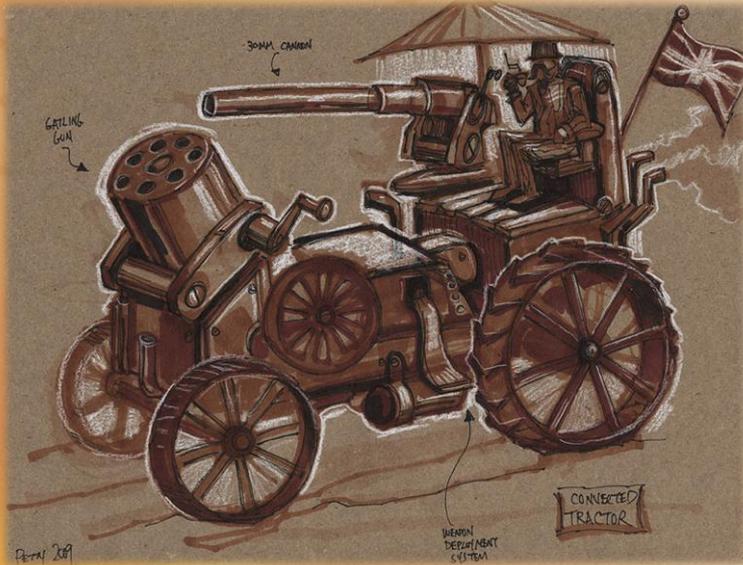


New Setting!

- Cherry pick the best ideas!



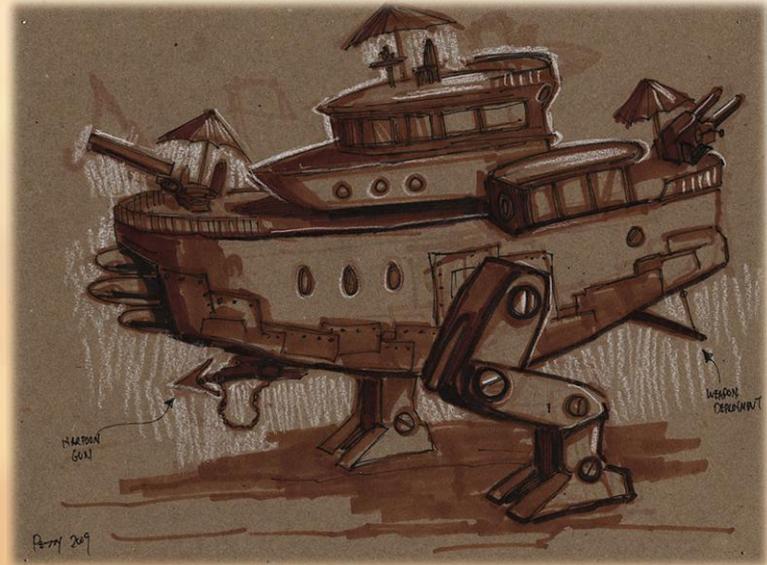
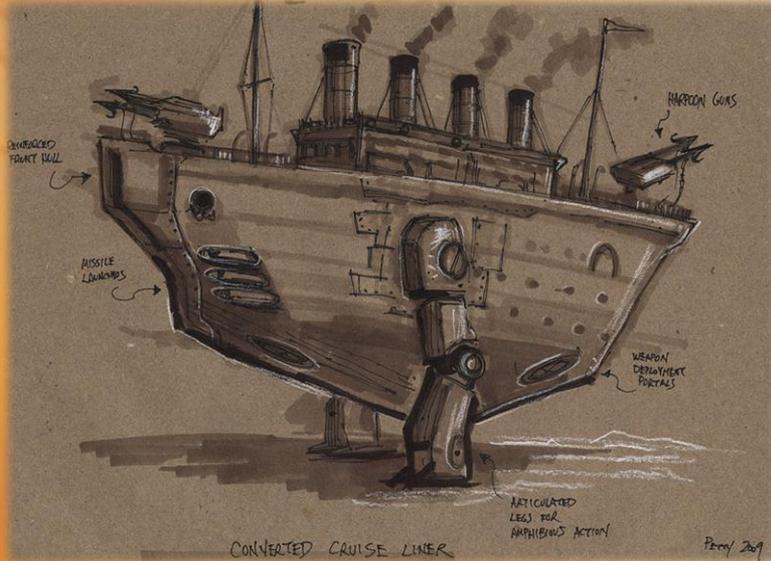
Makeshift World War I



TV Smoke Monsters



Boats with Legs



MOBILE TRENCH!



VS. TV MONSTERS!

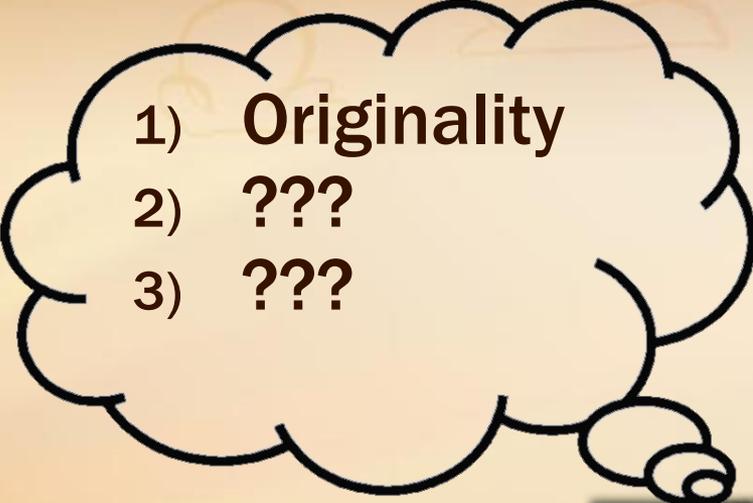


VS. TV MONSTERS!



Double Fine Brand!

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

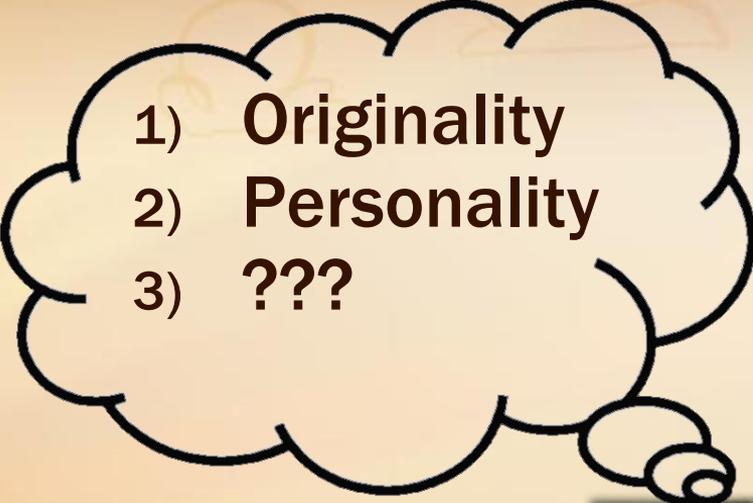
- 
- 1) Originality
 - 2) ???
 - 3) ???



Double Fine Brand!

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



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



Personality



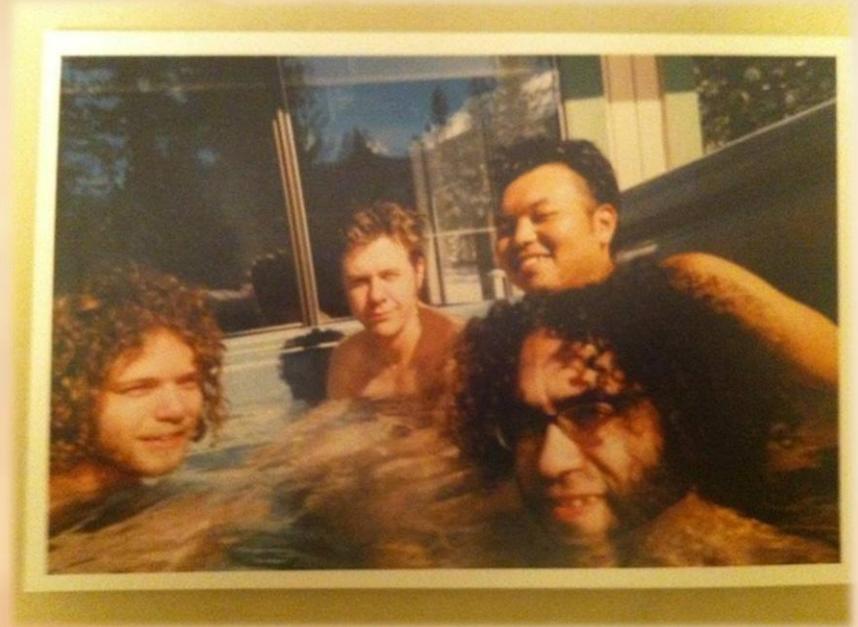
Personality

- Involve the whole team!



Personality

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



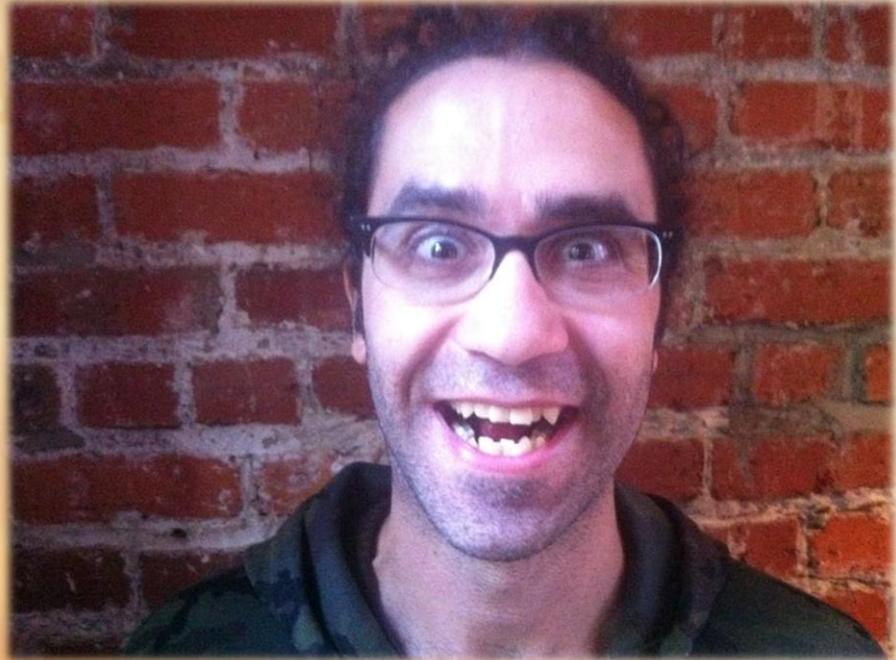
Personality

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

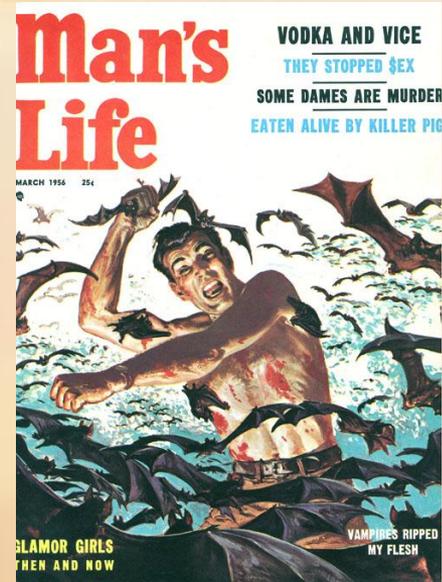
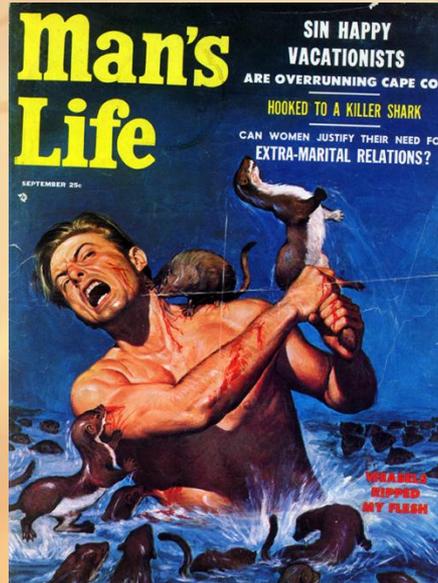
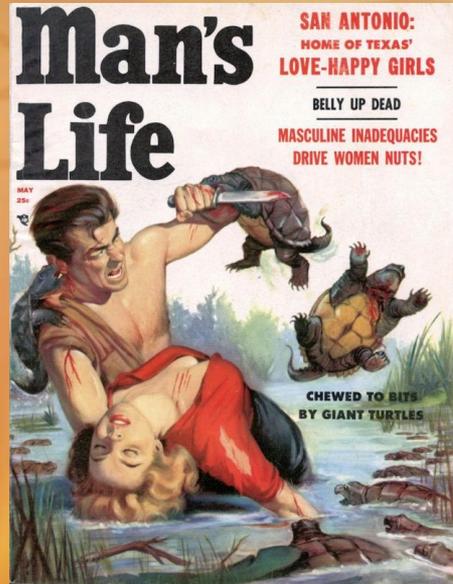


Men's Magazine Covers

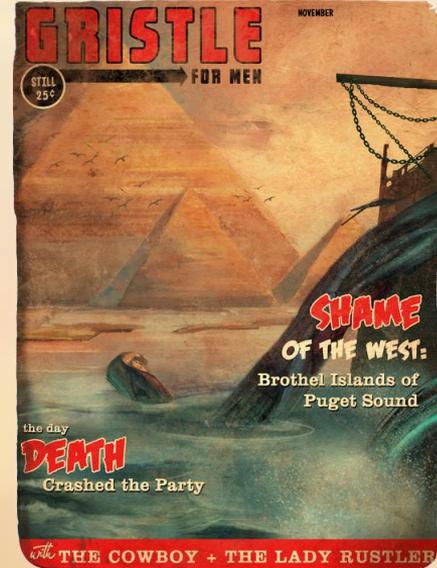
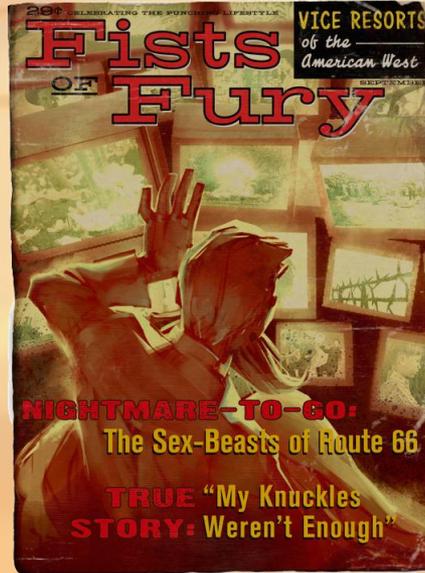
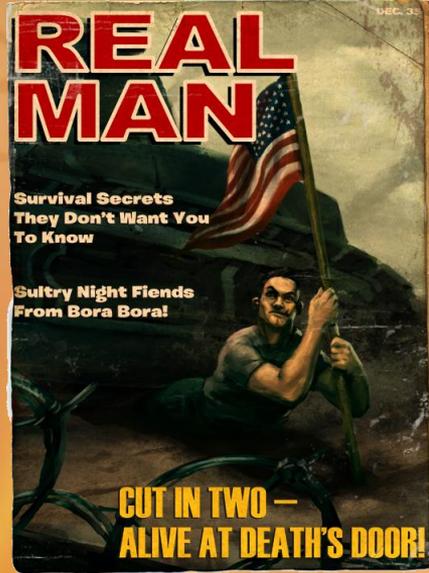
- Razmig Mavlian!



Men's Magazine Covers



Men's Magazine Covers



Saluting

- Chris Journey!



Saluting



Saluting



Saluting



Crazy Weapons



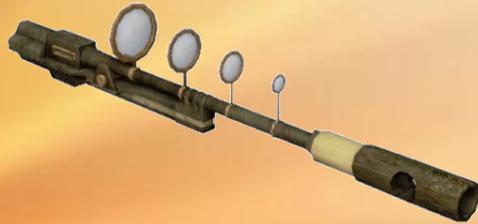
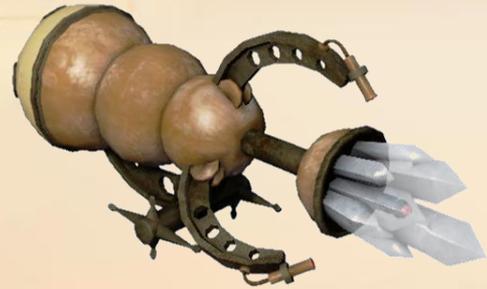
Crazy Weapons

- 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



- 
- A black-outlined thought bubble containing a list of three items.
- 1) Originality
 - 2) Personality
 - 3) Characters



Character

- Difficult to inject character into a mech game

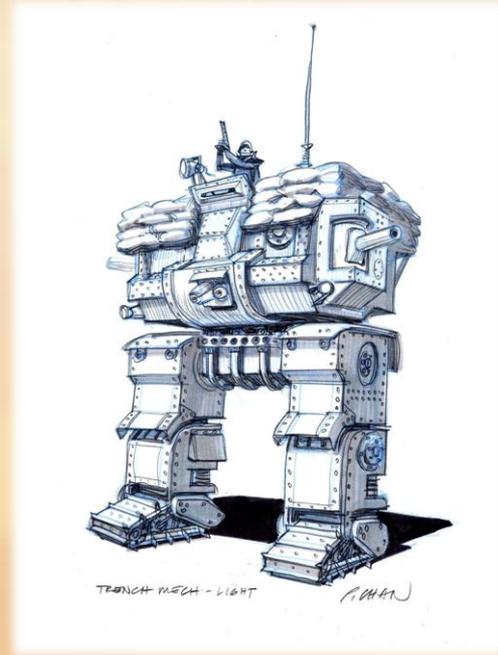


Open-top Mechs



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



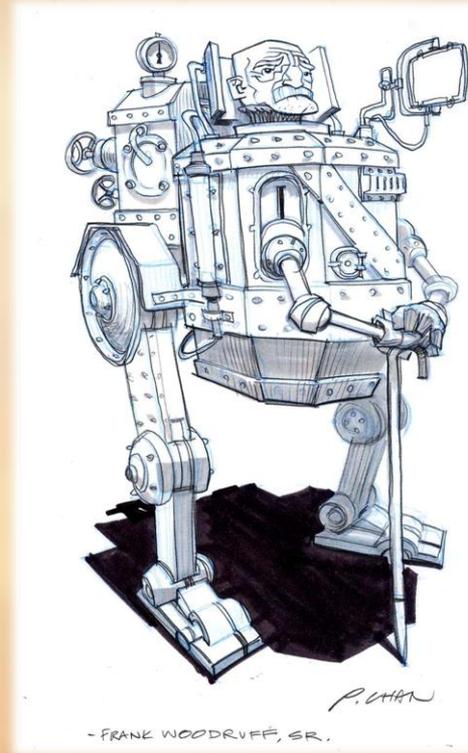
Frank Woodruff, Sr.

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



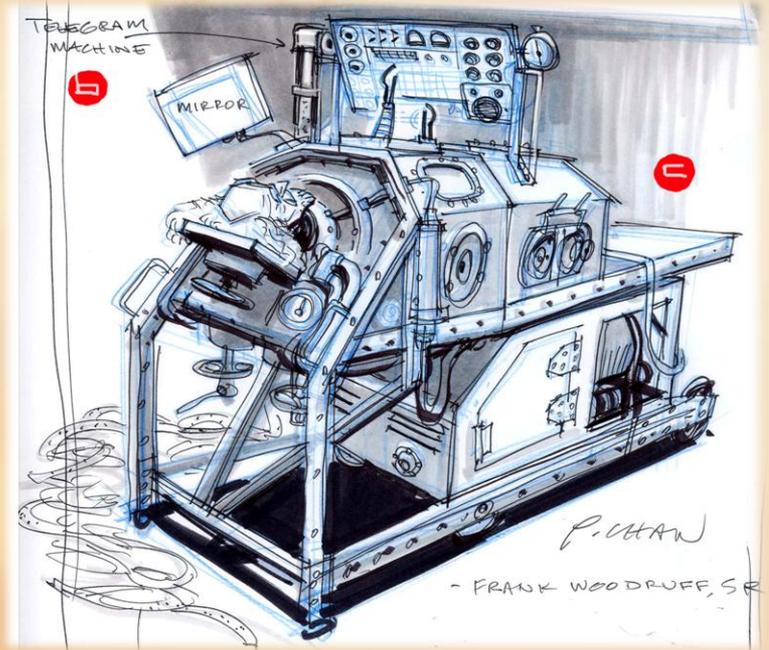
Frank Woodruff, Sr.

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Frank Woodruff, Sr.

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



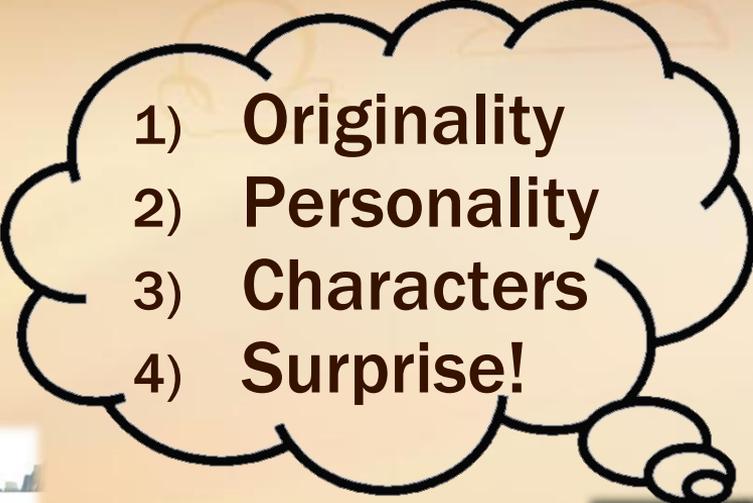
Double Fine Brand!

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



Double Fine Brand!

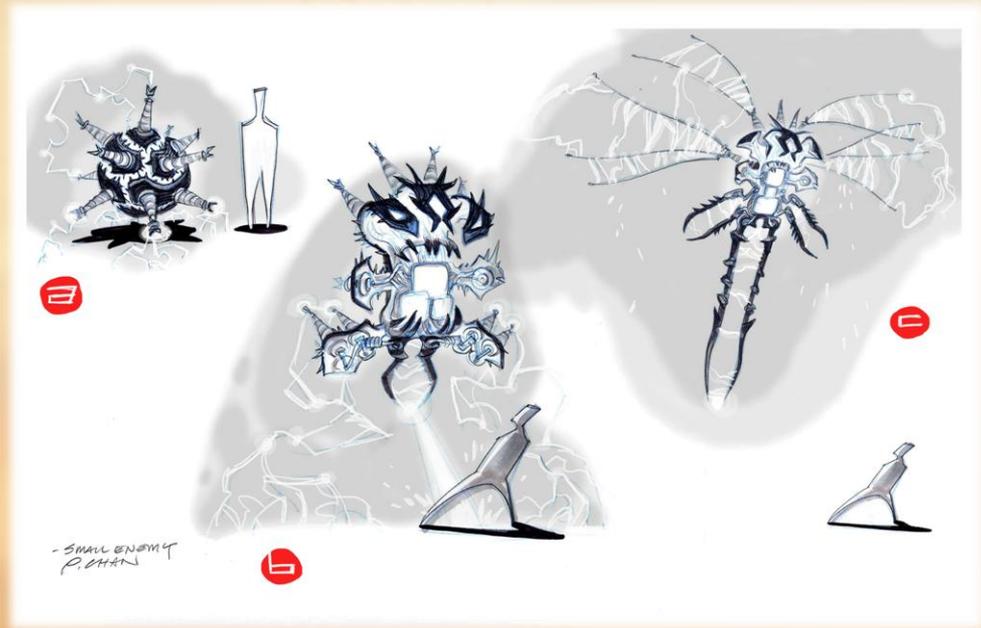
- 1) Story
- 2) Funny Cutscenes
- 3) Characters

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



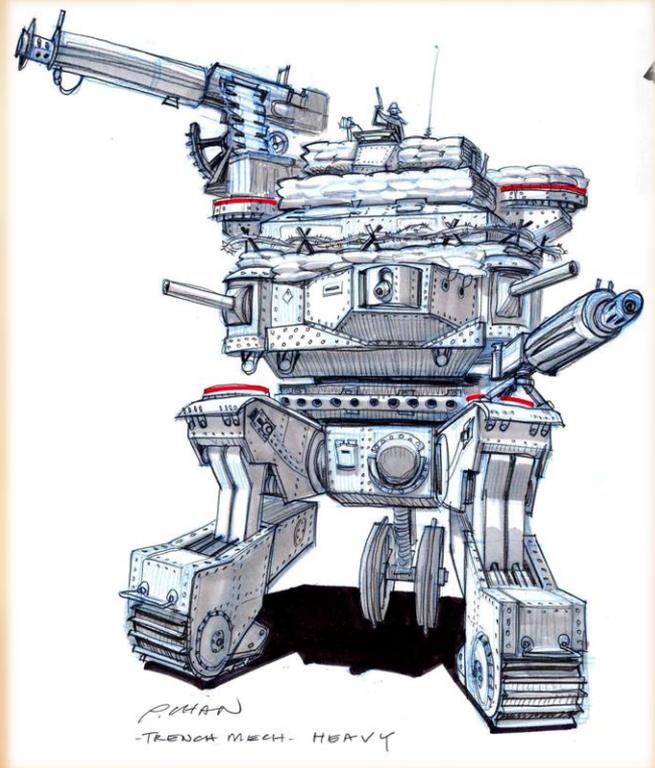
Lessons Learned!

- 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!

