

CMS.608 Game Design, Fall 2010 | Transcript: Lecture 23

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GUEST SPEAKER: OK, so I'm actually to keep the discussion today pretty short because the games that we've got lined up are pretty long. Two of them I know are really good. One of them was good last year so we'll see again this year. [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE]. So we'll see. Are there 4 games at least.

AUDIENCE: I'm [UNINTELLIGIBLE] Mexico and Puerto Rico which will be five. I just haven't pulled it out yet.

AUDIENCE: I call Thebes.

GUEST SPEAKER: Cool. For people have you played Thebes before.

AUDIENCE: No.

GUEST SPEAKER: Good. OK. So for people who played San Juan last time, I think Puerto Rico's an interesting comparison. Because, San Juan actually, it's a sequel to Puerto Rico. So you kind of

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Which one was San Juan?

GUEST SPEAKER: That was the one where, how would describe it?

AUDIENCE: Is it related to Race for the Galaxy as well?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: You choose the action.

GUEST SPEAKER: Ah, Race? So that takes us right into today's game. So Puerto Rico is kind of what

was [INAUDIBLE]. Puerto Rico is the, I guess it was actually the first [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE] we needed previous [UNINTELLIGIBLE] inspirations. And San Juan's kind of the card game of this, which is why we introduced it earlier. Because you guys were working on card games. Race to the Galaxy is more of a spiritual succession as described in the reading. But you could also think of it as a clone with a few upgrades. Because it wasn't the same people. It wasn't the same people who made

AUDIENCE: It was [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: To clarify, the guy who did San Juan and the guy who did Race to the Galaxy were kind of collaborating. So the games are really similar because they influenced each other. But they were not strictly the same project.

GUEST SPEAKER: So you can think of it as multiple people from the same artist community turning out similar games at the same time.

AUDIENCE: Nice.

GUEST SPEAKER: But, yeah, informed by each other, and when Race came out it was very much seen as this is Puerto Rico with problems fixed, or the game has expanded my bad

AUDIENCE: And problems added, too.

GUEST SPEAKER: and problems added, too, and, of course, completely different scenes. But at least in terms of game mechanics, that's a nice connection that you can actually see among the games that you played before and you're going to be playing today. Not every single game that we've got here has got that kind of heritage factor. These games aren't specifically picked, to me, to match up with previous games or sequels. The only reason why I'm talking about sequels because we had to talk about them sooner or later.

Of course, *Battlestar Galactica* is really a [? rotation ?] of the TV series. And I wouldn't quite call this a sequel, in a sense, because simply, this is not based on a previous *Battlestar Galactica* game. I'm sure there were previous *Battlestar*

Galactica games that were based on the old '70s TV series that have nothing to do with this one. This is more of the adaptation. And the reason why I'm using that upgrade is so that we can be very clear in our vocabulary.

This is taking elements of something that's in a different medium, like the film or the TV series, and trying to figure out what in that TV series, in that world, that has been created, that fictional world, might yield interesting game playing. And this game is pretty much about figuring out who is the Cylon in and among all the players. Among all the players, there's going to be traitors. And you try to hide your activities, and you try to help people, help the human race survive, if you happen not to be a traitor. But some of the things that you end up doing in order to help the human race, not just surviving and not looking suspicious. If you played *Mafia* it kind of has a little bit of that feel. Only this is way more heavy [? weighing ?] of a game mechanics because they really, really wanted to make you think like the characters, that you have the same dilemmas that the characters in the TV show have.

AUDIENCE: Does the Cylon know that he or she is a Cylon?

GUEST SPEAKER: I believe that, I believe you can find out halfway.

AUDIENCE: OK.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah, if I recall the rules correctly. And then there are players who will know right from the beginning. So there may be more than one. In fact, there is really more than one.

AUDIENCE: I'm psyched.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK, so there were a bunch of different things that were listed in they were given as reasons why people want to do sequels. But for the most part the big one is just you're building off an established base. You're not having to rebuild everything from scratch. In many cases, a sequel doesn't actually cost less or take less time than making your original game. You just end up spending, hopefully, spending that development time a little bit more wisely. You avoid a lot of pitfalls because you're pretty much making a very similar game. The game industry's been one of those

fields where, oddly enough, part two, the follow up, tends to be better than the original. As opposed to how many movie sequels are generally better than the original? *Godfather*, that's one of them.

AUDIENCE: *Back to the Future.*

AUDIENCE: It's rare.

GUEST SPEAKER: It's really rare. I'm thinking the Clint Eastwood man with no name series, *Godfather*.

Any other?

AUDIENCE: *Back to the Future.*

GUEST SPEAKER: *Back to the Future?*

AUDIENCE: I don't know. I could go either way.

AUDIENCE: I don't agree.

GUEST SPEAKER: It could go either way.

AUDIENCE: It's arguable. It's arguable.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: You mean like *Empire Strikes Back*.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK, *The Empire Strikes Back*.

AUDIENCE: *Spider Man*, perhaps?

AUDIENCE: *Spider Man 2*.

AUDIENCE: I don't know. I felt like they were all bad.

AUDIENCE: They were all bad.

AUDIENCE: That's true.

AUDIENCE: It was better.

GUEST SPEAKER: But, yeah, as we

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: *Dark Knight?*

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah, I will, yeah, I'll give you that. But it's still kind of tough. Whereas how many good games sequels How many games can you think of where you played both the first, the original, and then the sequel to it?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Just the sequel.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK, well, some of them are spaced apart so far that you actually only ended up playing

AUDIENCE: Well, I mean like *Half Life*.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Half Life, Half Life 2*, for instance.

AUDIENCE: *Star Trek*.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Star Trek, Star Trek 2*.

AUDIENCE: *Age of Empires*.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Age of Empires I, II*, and then *III*.

AUDIENCE: *Shogun Total War*.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Shogun*.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: The *Total War* series.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah, *Total War* is kind of an interesting thing because they don't pitch them as sequels. But they very much pitch them as a series. And the whole idea is that if you liked one game, you actually know a lot about what any of the other games in that series do. Sure, graphically they're upgrading. Game mechanics wise they're trying to port a lot of things. Some of them are medieval. Some of them are Japanese.

AUDIENCE: In the readings, they mentioned that *Final Fantasy VII* was the sequel to *VI*. Is that correct? Is that correct nomenclature?

GUEST SPEAKER: And I will disagree with that, actually. *Final Fantasy VII* actually has a sequel, for instance.

AUDIENCE: Right.

GUEST SPEAKER: What was it, *Crisis Core*?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: There's a couple, actually.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: More than one

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: First of all, there's the movie. That sequel was the movie. And then they did a bunch of things.

AUDIENCE: Oh God, there were

GUEST SPEAKER: *Final Fantasy* [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] *Final Fantasy*

GUEST SPEAKER: an entry in a series but

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: But I think when it comes to, this is what we're going to be pitching to a publisher I'm not sure that Square Enix needs to pitch *Final Fantasy* themselves Think of another game that has an [? all ?] series, if anyone can come up with one.

AUDIENCE: *Baldur's Gate.*

GUEST SPEAKER: *Baldur's Gate* might be actually a good one because different companies end up working on different types of revisions. Actually, most of these well, actually, *Fallout* and *Baldur's Gate* both come from Interplay, I believe, originally.

AUDIENCE: They went out of business after *Bloodlands*. We were talking about this yesterday.

GUEST SPEAKER: I suspect that was before that

AUDIENCE: That was *Vampires Bloodlines*.

AUDIENCE: Yes, this came up yesterday.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: But basically leaving aside what makes a company go out of business the issue of when you have a series and then you have different companies making different versions, *Guitar Hero III*, for instance

AUDIENCE: *Knights of Republic.*

GUEST SPEAKER: *Knights of the Old*

AUDIENCE: The second one was [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE].

GUEST SPEAKER: So BioWare was the first one and Obsidian did the second one. *Fallout* was Bethesda, Obsidian, I believe. Obsidian's really built a whole business model around making part two of something.

AUDIENCE: Or expansion packs and stuff.

GUEST SPEAKER: Expansion packs, no. You have closely related to that. And in those cases,

sometimes, like in the case of BioWare, Obsidian connections, they have a good relationship, they've all written a lot of technology, and they are getting an advantage of we've kind of ironed out the kinks, we're just sort of continuing the story, especially the story based game. *Knights of the Old Republic*, clearly you've got to fit it within the *Star Wars* story. And they had the interest to basically keep the tale of these characters going, even more so for well, *Mass Effect* was by Bioware, but that sort of thing.

But then you have the other angle where you just want to get the same success but you want to tell a different story, or in the case of *Guitar Hero III* have a completely different set of music. And in *Final Fantasy VII*, you had certain game mechanics and certain things that carry on from game to game. And definitely you want to carry the fans from game to game. But part of the appeal of the *Final Fantasy* series is that every single one is going to be a different story, not dramatically different but it's going to be a different story with different characters and a different world.

So but this is pitched very similarly when you go to a game company and your whole idea is how do we get the fans to buy even more, or even more fans, to buy version two. There are two edges to that sword, though, because what typically happens in a lot of sequel development is, they are trying so hard to please the original fans often by adding complexity, by adding things that build on things that players of the first game already know, that you actually start alienating new players. The game becomes just so complex or just complex enough that people start getting turned off.

A couple of weeks ago over here we played *Guitar Freaks* on Friday Games for Gambit. And the first version is actually extremely accessible. Once again, from the second version all the way up to, I think, the version 4 that we were playing, it is almost impossible for a new player to jump in because they've got one beginning friendly song and everything else is based for fans of the game. So you imagine a *Guitar Hero* game that's built entirely for people who've already mastered expert on the previous game. That's kind of what happened with *Guitar Freaks*. And in many cases, that might be enough if the game was particularly successful the first time

around, and you only get 80% of the fan base to buy the second version, that's still a lot of money. And it's a way lower risk compared to coming up with new IP from scratch.

And a lot of companies, when they're creating IP, they're very much specifically thinking, right off the bat, what are the sequel opportunities. Even now, because you've got downloadable content, so it's even narrower than that, is what are downloadable content opportunities? How do we release extension packs really, really quickly? And how do we create stories, worlds, technology that's just going to be able to anticipate all that.

There's a game up there now on Xbox Live Arcade called Monday Night Combat. And they did some of the old clever hacks to basically allow them to update the game on a week to week basis. Whereas typically that kind of a certification that's required from Microsoft is really expensive. Every time you want to release a new version, you have to put it through an entire rigorous QA testing schedule, again. But they came up with some technology that let them make at least game tuning changes on the fly without having to go through the Microsoft testing series.

So it's not technically releasing the sequel but they were very much thinking about how do we keep updating this game. I wouldn't be surprised if Steam started off as that. There's a battle net kind of started off as just an easy way for them to get up patches and to keep tuning this game, and eventually someone involved decides, hey, we can sell games this way. And launch was kind of bumpy. But it's fine now.

There is one thing which the book didn't mention which is the reboot, the sort of franchise reboot. This can sometimes happen when you have a publisher who's got control of an RP that kind of floundered halfway. Maybe there was a bad execution on creation and possible circumstance. Or they just play out the formula to death. And then they want to try to get a new batch of fans, a few people who liked the original one. And I was talking with the *Tomb Raider* game where they're just trying to they've rebooted the *Tomb Raider* franchise several times, at this point, each time trying to say, OK, you've probably heard from *Tomb Raider* from the huge

amount of advertising that we've done when you may not have actually liked the previous versions of the games. And we're doing to reboot this franchise by making a different game in that same world. In *Tomb Raider* we'll use characters and we'll use the fiction, but we'll change the game play significantly. Because we're not going after the old fans anymore. We're going after a new batch.

It's probably about the same technical challenge as updating, as trying to make a sequel for a completely new platform. Because they're basically having to write everything from scratch. But the good news, of course, is that all that previous advertising that you did a decade ago still works. Let me think of Can anyone think of a good example of a good reboot?

AUDIENCE: Is *Mario 64* a reboot?

AUDIENCE: No.

GUEST SPEAKER: I think it was seen to a lot of people that it was because it wasn't clearly a sequel to any of the previous *Mario* games. And it was kind of Nintendo kind of saying, hey, it's not

AUDIENCE: It's not really a clone of anything.

GUEST SPEAKER: It's not really It invented a lot of things for the first time, in fact. I would say that *Mario 64* and, of course, the way how they branded it, they didn't brand it *Super Mario World*, what *5* or *Super Mario 4* or anything, they called it *Mario 64* to sort of distinguish it from some of the

AUDIENCE: I would almost call IT an upgrade more than a reboot, though. Because it was mostly just a move from 2D to 3D.

AUDIENCE: It was more than that, I think.

GUEST SPEAKER: It's a good challenge because to the player it may seem like it's not that but for a technical point of view they had to continue to reinvent how Mario moves, the way how Mario jumps frankly, the way how the camera moves, it never used to be a huge problem in the 2D games, but was the primary thing that they've managed to

figure out how to get working in 3D was the camera. I wouldn't be surprised if their marketing pitched it a little bit like a sequel. But it was also very, very clear of this is going to be a whole new generation, you've never played *Mario* on anything like this, so don't expect your previous *Mario* experience to carry over necessarily.

AUDIENCE: I was going to say *Metroid*, as well.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Metroid Prime*?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah, that's a really good example. In fact, *Metroid Prime* was an instance where they gave the franchise to a completely different developer. Previously, it's all internal Nintendo. And then Nintendo went to a western developer, Retro Studios over in Texas and basically had them make the first western version of *Metroid*. But they had a very heavy hand in controlling that.

Whereas I'm not sure we're going to be playing this later *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* which just came out, kind of went the other way around. Western developers, a Spanish developer, decided to make a *Castlevania* clone. They loved *Castlevania*. And they were going to make a game that was just like *Castlevania* but they don't call it *Castlevania* because they didn't have the rights for it. And they showed it off at E3 or something, and Konami basically said, why don't we just turn this into a *Castlevania* game, Hideo Kojima to [INAUDIBLE] making it work.

AUDIENCE: It must have been their dream come true.

GUEST SPEAKER: That was probably their dream come true. That was probably what they wanted. And you had the advantage of the all the *Castlevania* fans now saying OK, this is going to be in canon, if we liked *Castlevania*, we'll probably like this one, which is exactly what they were trying to get across. It's like imagine the people who made *Torchlight* being approached from Blizzard saying why don't we just turn this into *Diablo 3*.

AUDIENCE: A bunch of people who made *Torchlight* were from Blizzard, right?

GUEST SPEAKER: I wouldn't be surprised.

AUDIENCE: Were they from the *Diablo* team?

GUEST SPEAKER: I wouldn't be surprised. In the same sense that a lot of people who built *Guild Wars* were from the *World of Warcraft* team. So that's less an issue of sequels and more an issue of that's just how the game industry works. People move from project to project and carry knowledge with them.

AUDIENCE: Like *Call of Duty* was [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE].

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes, *Call of Duty*, yes and

AUDIENCE: They got tired of it and were like we can do better.

GUEST SPEAKER: That's an interesting discussion of instead of sequels you have companies making effectively clones competing against the original franchise. And in this product case they're trying there's people who left EA on 2015, I believe, and then they started Infinity Ward. And they made a game that basically competed with the original.

AUDIENCE: The first *Call of Duty* was so ridiculously good, at least, it marked me when I played it the first time.

GUEST SPEAKER: But it's very clearly trying to be *Medal of Honor* the next version.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, clearly, yeah, no, of course, of course.

GUEST SPEAKER: So that's an interesting situation where it's hard to be a spiritual successor when you're competing against the original product. But you can think of them

AUDIENCE: BioWare did that with *Dragon* I mean not competing against [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE] *Dragon Age* because they don't have the rights to [UNINTELLIGIBLE] game anymore.

GUEST SPEAKER: Well, *Dragon Age* is more of a DND clone, I would say, which

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: *Empire Earth* reinvented itself with

GUEST SPEAKER: Which one?

AUDIENCE: with *Empire Earth*

GUEST SPEAKER: *Empire Earth*.

AUDIENCE: with zero success. It didn't do [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

GUEST SPEAKER: I kind of lost track of that series.

AUDIENCE: In the whole game, the first game was like, you can go through 15 ages. You can literally play a game against someone and go from prehistoric units to nukes in the same game with everything in between. And then they released the sequel which, I think, overseas and then it's like they [UNINTELLIGIBLE] themselves and go, we're going to simplify everything, there's just going to be four ages, kind of like in *Ancient Empires*, and we're not going to have this massive progression. And they tried to simplify everything. And it totally bombed.

GUEST SPEAKER: I think that's a rebooting. But I think that's a reboot gone wrong. That's a, our original game is not selling well enough among new players, maybe, and it's not entirely satisfying our old fans, so we're going to take this franchise that we advertised really, really well, and we're going to make it completely, effectively a new game, maybe with the same theme but a new game that targeted at a new set of players. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it bombs.

Might and Magic released a game called *Clash of Heroes*, Might and Magic *Clash of Heroes* for the Nintendo DS. Who's played any of the original Might and Magic games?

AUDIENCE: Different from *Heroes of Might and Magic*?

GUEST SPEAKER: Either of them, actually. So who's played *Heroes of Might and Magic*? Can you describe the game? What's it like?

AUDIENCE: Want to go, [? Fred? ?]

AUDIENCE: Well, it's like essentially just a turn based strategy game where you have cities and you have heroes. And these heroes lead armies. And you encounter other smaller armies and try to defeat them and stuff. And you have

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] city, you start with you have an economy.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, you have an economy and you build things in your city that can then produce better units for your armies and stuff. You can take over other cities and

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: Like *Civilization*, I would say.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, it's like *Civilization* but if you took *Civilization* and removed everything that wasn't military.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: And that was what played out and gave it its distinctive arena

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: turn based

AUDIENCE: You're trying to do stuff like battlefields where the turn based, you have your units on one side and the opponent's units on the other side. And you move units together. So if you have pikemen and bowmen, you have the clump of all bowmen who then move together as a unit.

GUEST SPEAKER: So *Clash of Heroes*, a Nintendo DS game in the *Might and Magic* series, and what they did was, they made a match three game. They made a game where you it's like *Bejeweled*. You take three bowmen, put them in a row, and then they become a bunch of bowmen who are going to attack. So they get the same idea of let's take and because the Nintendo DS has two screens, so the enemy's armies are on one and yours are on the other. It's kind of like sending troops up and down. But the

game play's dramatically different. It's effectively a franchise reboot.

They want to get the same idea of leading massive armies against each other. I think they take some of the characters, at least some of the technologies that came with the original *Heroes of Might and Magic*. But that's as far as it got. Everything else they changed. Because they were going for a completely different audience, the assumption being Nintendo DS players liked match three games like *Bejeweled*, actually really good. I'd encourage it if you like match three games.

I was going to put Sarah on the spot for having worked on *Thief II*, and *Thief Gold*, and *Thief 2 Gold*, and a number of releases. But maybe we can start telling us a little bit about your original involvement on *Thief*.

SARAH: Sure. Do you want me to stand up to actually hear me?

GUEST SPEAKER: I can bring the mike closer.

SARAH: So *Thief: The Dark Project*, I came on as actually as team tester. Part way through it I became community manager, essentially. And then I actually stepped into a design role for about the second half of the project. And I continued to work as a designer and project manager on *Thief II* and *Thief Gold*.

GUEST SPEAKER: What were you designing in *Thief*?

SARAH: In *Thief I*, I was pretty specifically designing game play for a level that someone else had already built. Building levels took a lot longer than putting in game play, at least from my point of view. I believe the person who built it thought that building levels was a lot faster than laying game play. So it was a good combination. But it was built by an artist who didn't have the scripting experience or the testing visions to go through and make sure that all the [UNINTELLIGIBLE] for the game play experience is working. So I was basically handed a level and said, OK, make it fun.

GUEST SPEAKER: Now *Thief* is a first person stealth game. Basically you're looking through the eyes of a thief who is not physically all that robust. But he can sneak. And he can shoot arrows, usually at your back, and hide.

SARAH: And the AI is, unlike in most games where the AI is tuned sort of aha, we noticed you, we charge you, the AI is carefully tuned to both tell the player if the AI sort of notices you, if the AI thinks he's looking for you and is looking for, and if he's actually coming after you. So that a player who makes a noise while sneaking up on them will realize that, oh, he noticed that, I should go be more quiet. So the AI feedback and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] was actually really pretty important to playing experience. If you didn't give the player an avenue to approach a guard from behind or to sneak up on them in some way, you'll pretty much guarantee the player will get killed. Because the player could not, in fact, take one guard on one to one many times. You could probably kill one guard face to face, but then he'd be sufficiently wounded that the second fight would finish him off. So you had to be giving the player channels and ways to sneak up and places to hide and things like that if you wanted to have an interesting game and a challenging game.

GUEST SPEAKER: And that's the game play we say you're talking about.

SARAH: Those are the game plays we've been talking about, yeah, placing AIs determining their path, putting this actually particularly had a lot of traps in it so creating the traps and giving clues to the player in games so that they could, A, either notice the trap was there before getting hit by it and finding some other way to trigger it, or notice that it was there or notice it was there and then discover how to get out of it.

GUEST SPEAKER: *Thief* is a 199

SARAH: Oh God, 1990, ancient at this point.

GUEST SPEAKER: 199

SARAH: 1990, 1996, it was released around the same time *Doom* was.

GUEST SPEAKER: And it's pretty impressive because in *Doom* you can't look up, I believe. You can shoot up but you can't

SARAH: Yeah. I think you can crouch. You can lean around corners. You can, in fact, shoot your bow while leaning around corners. And, yeah, you can look up and down and

all around.

GUEST SPEAKER: So that's *Thief I*. What happens when *Thief II* gets approved?

SARAH: Well, the first thing I had to do was convince people they wanted to do *Thief II*. Because while *Thief* was a great game and it's actually sold fairly well over time, its initial sales were not what publishers want to see. Because the initial sales a publisher wants to see is, oh my God, it sold 10 million copies, awesome. Instead what we did was we sold a fairly good first initial sell through and then it just kind of kept going. So the first thing we had to do was convince them that, yes, *Thief II* would be a good idea, enough people are continuing to buy *Thief I*. Those same people will all run out and buy *Thief II* on the very first day.

And the way we did that was, first of all, taking a look at forums and saying, hey look, people are pretty excited about this. They're enjoying it. It's got good lasting power. Our fans are going to stick around to play with it a second time. And that was sort of a marketing end analysis that led into a publisher.

And the other part was saying, OK, what are the improvements we're going to make to this game? How are we going to change this game to make it better than *Thief I* while still taking advantage of everything we did? So we created basically a big design doc with, here are the areas that we thought we could have done better in *Thief I*. Here's what we're going to improve. And here are the changes we're going to make.

So we're not going to make *Thief I*, again. We're going to take what *Thief I* was, add some improvements to it, make a deeper story, and hopefully get a more variety of game play was what we actually ended up aiming for in our initial docs. We wanted to give Garrett additional abilities, vary the game play. The game play in *Thief I* was all speed. We tried to have some additional types of missions in *Thief II*. But there was a little more face to face fighting. There was a little more subterfuge. Instead of just sneaking around, we also had, OK, so now you need to disguise yourself as someone and sneak in, sneak out again. You need to pass for them while getting a goal done and things like that. So we tried to find, what are additional stealth and

subterfuge issues and game play we can have?

GUEST SPEAKER: How many of those features in *Thief II* were inherited from dropped features from *Thief I*?

SARAH: A lot of them inherited from dropped ideas from *Thief I*. But when they first started designing *Thief* and I was not on the initial *Thief* design team so now I'm making up what they were talking about. It wasn't clear that it was going to be It was sort of like, it's going to be a stealthy game, but we hadn't actually defined what stealthy game play was yet. So it was *Thief I* that kind of told us what, this is what stealth game play that works. And once we found the one or two things that worked, we kind of went with that and put in that. It was in *Thief II*, we got to play around what are some other ideas of stealthy game play? What are some other ways to trick people into [INAUDIBLE]?

GUEST SPEAKER: And people that played *Metal Gear Solid* or any of the games in *Metal Gear Solid* series, it owes a lot to *Thief*, especially the really, really noisy end you see. It wasn't, I heard something, I wonder what's over there.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SARAH: DS X also.

GUEST SPEAKER: But DS X is also [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE].

SARAH: But that's what I'm saying is that DS X also actually took a lot of *Thief's* lessons and went on with them from there.

GUEST SPEAKER: Again, a lot of people working on [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE].

SARAH: DS X2, more DS X2, but yeah. Looking Glass folded and went out of business. And a lot of people moved to Austin to then work on *Thief III* and DS X2 and those projects there.

GUEST SPEAKER: I have a question about the *Gold* version.

SARAH: The *Gold* version? The *Gold* versions of the games are really a way to try to convince, from the marketing point of view, is a way to convince players to buy the same material again. I'm being a little cynical here, and I admit that. But we added new, we did, in fact, add, what we did was, we added several new missions. So it was expanded play.

And then we went back and problems that we knew were in the missions, we fixed them. And we actually added some richer game play to several of the missions that, oh God, we have to get this out the door, we have to get this out the door, this would be so cool if we could set this up but we don't have time to, and out it goes. And so we went back and we touched up over half of the missions. We added some additional game play. We added extra goals. We took areas where we thought the game play was particularly weak because we'd gotten rushed on finishing it and we made the levels a bit longer and a little more interesting in our opinion. And then we also added three new levels.

And it was kind of a chance, it was a do over. We had very limited programming resources so we didn't really get to add much in the way of new features. But we were able to go back and tune it and make significant changes to the levels, to the way that the guards worked, to the scripting behind the levels. Vin was working on a 3D mod. There's usually a fair bit the designer can do behind the walls of telling the AIs what to do and how to think and how the game play flows. And *Thief*, especially, had an extremely rich editor that more powerful, I think, than any other editor I ever worked with, even though it is now 15 years old, 15 years old, I think. It's still the most powerful editor for a designer I have ever seen.

GUEST SPEAKER: So did you feel You mentioned you looked at forums and you look at fan input. And how much of that, of what went into making the sequel, actually came from fan input? Or was it just like verifying what you already wanted to do.

SARAH: Part of it was to verify what we wanted to do. Part of it was to verify there was enough interest that people would want to do it. Part of it was to see, what did people like most? Which of the missions did people like most? Are there any good

ideas out there for how to play a game that we think, yes, they're right, we never thought of that. I think that one of the things people talked about a lot was actually disguise missions. And I think we had two disguise missions in *Thief II* where you're kind of disguising yourself as, no, no, no, no one looked at me, I'm just another guard walking around, don't worry about me. And that was something that we said, oh, yeah, that would be really cool. And that's something we had no time to implement for *Thief* but, if we're choosing new features to implement in *Thief II*, that was actually not an amazingly difficult one. Because you just, if you've got a way to put a tag on the play that says, oh, guards don't get upset when they see you.

GUEST SPEAKER: Did you have a situations where players came out with exploits that you tried to address in the *Gold* version?

SARAH: There were not, no, actually. There were a couple of places where people found bugs that were level enders that got people stuck that we went in and fixed. There were not a whole lot of exploits that I recall us trying to go in and fix.

AUDIENCE: So if somebody deliberately found something that put them on the roof of the castle or something like that, then you didn't want them trying to [INAUDIBLE]?

SARAH: If it allowed the player to get to a place when he broke the game, we did try to fix it. Because we tried to fix anything that was game breaker where you could get up on the wall and then leap off into the void. But sometimes what we'd do is, rather than stop you from getting up on the castle and proving how cool you were, we'd let you get up on the castle but we'd put in invisible barriers so you couldn't hurl yourself into the darkness and then crash the game. If players enjoyed finding those things so taking them out doesn't enhance the game play. And the point of the *Gold* project was to try to make something the game play was sufficiently enhanced that it was worthwhile to go out and buy again.

GUEST SPEAKER: So now we're in an environment where patches pretty much is downloaded, right?

SARAH: Yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: We don't necessarily have that situation in the year 1996. Is there still a role of

[UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASES] new releases?

SARAH: I think now again that would be an expansion pack. I don't think that you would do a *Gold* version. You'd do an expansion pack. And with an expansion pack patch you could fix old problems and you might introduce new games and of levels, but I don't think you do it with the hassle of doing a *Gold*. I think you just do an expansion pack.

[APPLAUSE]

GUEST SPEAKER: Questions for Sarah and her experience on it?

AUDIENCE: Pretty much all of your data points just came from forums where you

SARAH: Oh yeah, oh yeah, that was just one of the places where we looked. We also looked at sales and continuing sales and things like that. Like I said, that was actually more of a marketing sales to sort of do, here's why we think players will like it. Here's some experiences we got. Here's the hard data on our sales, how our sales are continuing, and the fact that while it did not come out and sell 100,000 copies the first month, it's continuing to sell 20,000 or 30,000 copies a month, which means that word of mouth is pretty strong, and people are continuing to go out and buy it and go out and play it.

And here's the forum where a whole bunch of people are using the editor released. And the activity in that forum is going up over time not down over time which indicates you've got more people coming into it, people are coming in, they're staying at and using it, and you've got more people continuing to come in, the community's growing, which means that there's interest there and there's people who are paying attention to project and are going to continue to pay attention to your product.

AUDIENCE: But also it gave for finding dead ends, for finding You said you fixed some of the dead games [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

SARAH: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah. Well, the difference between a let me think At our height,

we had a 12 person QA department. And 50,000 users is pretty big. And we did our best on testing it. And we had another 10 or 15 helpers through our publisher. But we had comparatively speaking a ridiculously small QA department for the game.

GUEST SPEAKER: But then you have the situation where someone notes something on the forum and then you can verify it with your QA team.

SARAH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: And you can actually figure out whether what they were seeing was exactly the problem they were describing.

SARAH: And it being a solely single player game I know a lot of games do large beta tests where they ask 500, or 200, or 1,000 people to play the game. We did not do any external testing like that at all. Yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: And this was also back in the '90s that wasn't being done.

SARAH: Oh, yeah, it was not the sort of thing that was really done in the '90s as well. It's very much a developmental shift.

AUDIENCE: Did you ever explicitly ask on the forums if there were another sequel, would you buy it?

SARAH: I don't know. I did not do that. I was not on the forums. I helped with some of the forum data in [? reforms ?] but I didn't really post on the forums a lot.

AUDIENCE: Do you think that would be viable tactic, or would you just say, people would probably just say yes.

SARAH: I think that your data wouldn't be very good.

AUDIENCE: OK.

SARAH: The most you're probably going to get is the 1,000 people who read the forum say, yes. And that's 1,000 people. And that's not enough sales to justify doing anything.

AUDIENCE: Gotcha.

SARAH: It's more interesting, I think it's more useful to look at trends, if you've got a survey out maybe, I don't know.

GUEST SPEAKER: I've seen companies bring in focus groups, people who played the first game to come in and bouncing off either prototypes or features that they're planning for the second version to see how they will respond to them. I would say that the information you back from that is also not very good. But it might be something that is done to gain traction in internal studio politics, and it was like, well, we did this exercise where we brought these people in and they said these features are OK, so we can take the risk of [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE]. As opposed to driving the entire process [INAUDIBLE].

SARAH: Games don't respond really well to focus test based development.

GUEST SPEAKER: Or focus group

SARAH: Or focus group based development. Getting feedback on your games is great. Finding out how many people are likely to like your game is a lot harder.

GUEST SPEAKER: Especially if they can't actually see it when you're asking them the question then they have no idea what they're commenting on. They'll make something up that they think you want to hear, is, yes, of course, we'll buy a copy of the game. We loved the first one. Sure. But if they haven't actually seen the second version of the game [UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASE], so you don't actually know if that is the case. For those of you who do missed [UNINTELLIGIBLE] talk last week, he was talking about how *Inamplitude* which was a sequel *Was Amplitude*

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Oh yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: I think it was in the very first one. So that was *Frequency*. He was talking about how the folks from Sony were helping them run their focus groups. And they did two tests and one of the tests was, after they played the game, they did a survey of how

many people were planning on buying this when it came out. And they had a particularly high score, like 80% or something like that, like the highest survey I've ever seen.

But they also did a survey of how many people were planning on buying the game just by looking at the box before they had played the game. And that was a particularly low number. And the Sony people called it, said this is not going to sell. Because, sure, the people who played their game are going to enjoy the game. But no one's going to play the game in the first place because people can't figure out what your game's about.

And they tried to address those problems with the sequel. That's one thing which [? Brenda ?] talks about, your chance to do a do over, a chance for you to go back and fix the problems that you found in the first one, especially when you find those problems really close to ship date. There's nothing you can do about the first time around. But if you're lucky, you get a second chance to do it.

SARAH: I also noticed that *Frequency* was not called in, or rather, it wasn't *Frequency II*.

GUEST SPEAKER: There was a *Frequency II*. They called it *Amplitude*. So it was actually kind of a reboot as well because they kind of just wanted people, OK, let's pretend *Frequency* didn't happen and [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. And we'll make sure that our *Frequency* people who loved the game know what it is.

SARAH: Ahead of time. It's much easier to tell the small base who liked you, oh yeah, and buy this game, than it is to tell a large group of people who weren't interested the first time, no, no, you didn't like it the first time, but trust us, you'll like it this time.

GUEST SPEAKER: I've seen a couple of companies do effectively *Gold* versions every time they move to a new platform, like the latest platform which they release it on tends to become the definitive version that, if you're a big fan of the franchise and you're willing to buy this game multiple times, you want to get that because of the few extra features that they've put in. Maybe it's different endings. Maybe it's upgraded cutscenes. If it's a role playing game I see that a lot. Maybe they redid the cutscenes from

scratch or redid the audio from scratch. So it's the same assets but they're higher resolution.

And, of course, you have games that started out there like this online flash games and stuff like that and then you've got to move them to other platforms like DS or PSP. And those games tend to have not only completely reworked controls because the controls are different but also a lot more features because you have to now justify to people who may have loved the game but didn't pay any money for the first version to actually put down money for it now. So [? N ?] is a good example of that. There's a game that came out by [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and the DS and PSP what started life as a free flash game. And lots of people loved it. But lots of people didn't have to pay any money for their first version. So how much do you love it is kind of a weird factor. I guess we should start with the games.

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