THE PRAISED
THE LOVED
THE DEPLORED
THE FORGOTTEN

a view into the wide history of finnish games

KULTIMA & PELTOKANGAS

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A VIEW INTO
THE WIDE HISTORY
OF FINNISH GAMES

ANNAKAISA KULTIMA
& JOUNI PELTOKANGAS

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INTRO

The history of Finnish games is diverse. It consists not only of commercially successful digital games or board game classics that have knit together generations. Finnish game history is multifaceted both in terms of technologies and execution, as well as content and impact. The reception of games varies: some are highly praised, others become dearly loved, some are deplored and many will simply become forgotten. A game is a versatile format for a variety of works, by different creators and for different types of players. Games are valuable fixtures of cultural histories around the globe. Finnish games are in a precious role in the cultural heritage of Finland.

This book offers only a small sample of games. The idea for the book was conceived during an exhibition organised in a local museum during the Nordic DiGRA 2012 conference, Tampere Finland. Four researchers and roughly 20 students joined efforts to build an exhibition to introduce foreign visitors to local games. Game developers, journalists, historians and collectors lent a helping hand in putting everything together. The multiform exhibition reflected the different backgrounds of the members of the team – we ended up opening a diverse view towards Finnish games. Although the exhibition was open only for a short time, the success surpassed all expectations. The work conducted for the exhibition has been updated for this book, and it has served as a basis for the Finnish Museum of Games opened in 2016.

Game history is common knowledge, but not always easy to access. It is time to put more effort in recording the history for future generations as well as to trace the paths already forgotten. Games cannot, however, be understood simply by reading – they must be experienced. Hopefully this book will show a guiding light towards understanding games in a wider spectrum and bring everyone closer to the actual experiences.

Tampere, Finland, 2/4/2017
Annakaisa Kultima &
Jouni Peltokangas

1918

PUNAISTEN JA VALKOISTEN TAISTELU SUOMESSA 1918

PUNAISTEN JA VALKOISTEN TAISTELU SUOMESSA 1918

TYPE
Board game

PUBLISHER
Juusela & Levänen

Punaisten ja valkoisten taistelu Suomessa 1918 ('*The Battle of the Reds and the Whites in Finland 1918*') came out in time for Christmas in 1918. It is reputedly the first board game to be commercially published after the Finnish Declaration of Independence in December 1917.

The game describes the events of the Finnish Civil War which ended earlier in 1918. The verse form rules are rather difficult to understand, and the movements of the Whites are depicted in much more heroic terms than those of the Reds. Despite the slightly skewed worldview, the game can still be won by either party.

The game follows real historical events very closely. The locations and borders are in the right places and the final battles have a clear significance. An interesting detail of the game is that the headquarters of the Whites is located in Germany, while the Reds reside in Russia. This probably owes to the fact that back in the day there were talks that Finland should have a king of German descent as a ruler.

1918

KIMMO ANTILA TALKS ABOUT THE BOARD GAME PUNAISTEN JA VALKOISTEN TAISTELU SUOMESSA 1918 AND THE RELATED MUSEUM WORK.

I worked as a project manager in Museum Centre Vapriikki between 2006 and 2012 and my job was to develop permanent exhibitions, particularly ones related to the history of Tampere. We bumped into *Punaisten ja valkoisten taistelu Suomessa 1918* ('*The Battle of the Reds and the Whites in Finland 1918*') when we were working on the *Tampere 1918* exhibition closely with various parties in 2007. I've played digital games to some extent in my youth, Donkey Kong type games and a variety of recess games, I mean. I've never really been absorbed by playing, and I don't use my time on gaming. My children are now in their twenties, they have of course been playing more, and through them I've gained a whole new perspective of gaming, different from what I had back in the day.

I became interested in history at a young age. It tells us where we are now and what is going on, why we live in such a country, in Europe or in the world. History is a social science. It is wonderful and important that past phenomena are examined, as they help us explain the present day. My personal interest was kindled through my grandparents. My grandparents were born between 1909 and 1910, so they had recollections of what happened in Tyrvää, one of the arenas of war, in 1918. They had some horrifying stories, too. My grandfather recalled seeing the city burn down with his own eyes as a child. Recollections may arise either from witnessing an event first-hand, or being told about it. It may well be that he'd only heard stories of the incident. Nonetheless, it created a strong emotional experience that someone familiar, whom my grandparents had bought sweets from, was stabbed to death and thrown off a bridge. It's very likely that he did not actually see it, but the story that a familiar person experienced such a fate was strong.

For the *Tampere 1918* exhibition, we had people from the university doing back-ground research, and then a core group formulated the storytelling for the exhibition. At an early stage, the exhibition began to form into a kind of dramatic arc. It had a prologue leading into the subject matter, then the actual turbulence of events the exhibition would focus on, and finally an epilogue of the importance and reminiscence of the war. *Punaisten ja valkoisten taistelu Suomessa 1918*, which we placed in the epilogue, was discovered by Robert Alftan, with whom we had collaborated before. Robert is a long-time journalist and researcher, and he happened to have a summer house near Tampere. He was working on a documentary about a Swedish volunteer in Tampere. We were, of course, able to provide Roope with something and Roope was able to return the favour. In the winter of 2007-2008, he told us he had found this game, or game board, in a second-hand shop. We were naturally very interested in it, so Roope kindly donated the game board of *Punaisten ja valkoisten taistelu Suomessa 1918* for the museum collection. We didn't have any clue of what this game was, whether a number of these would exist or whether we would find any information about it. We began to investigate, and not long after we realised that one

copy existed in the National Library. So we went to the National Library, took a look at what they had, but their game did not include the game pieces either. The second-hand version, which we got from Roope, didn't have anything besides the game board. So we used the game from the National Library to copy the protective case where the game had been stored, and most importantly, the rules. Thus, in the version displayed in our exhibition only the game board is genuine. The case, rule book and game pieces are copies, or to be more precise, the game pieces are made on the basis of assumptions and conclusions.

We read the rules very carefully. They, in fact, described the game in great detail: there's a die, and these sorts of red and white game pieces. In addition, it should have pins, which are used to mark different strengths on these pieces. We've attempted to play the game a couple of times, but the rules are very complicated, at least at first glance. If you try to think of what age groups the game might be aimed at, it cannot be for very young children at least, since the player must be able to do calculations and manage strategies. The game was made already in 1918, which is perhaps the most astounding thing about this – that it was made in the same year the war ended. After all, this was still a time when, in perhaps the greatest tragedy of the war, a lot of people were still held in prison camps. It is a pity that not much information has been found about the artefact. We know that the game was made by the printing house Juusela & Levänen in Helsinki. Later on, Juusela & Levänen also

released some of the first publications by the Academic Karelia Society, so perhaps they were leaning somewhat towards the White heritage.

If you look at the rules of the game, you will notice that they are written in verse form. They also include a rather cleverly built-in hidden story about who has been right. However, this is not too highly emphasised. Still, the fact that the Reds will always start the game, for example, is already a clear reference to who it was exactly that made the first moves. The game includes historically correct places of battle, and it is well demonstrated throughout whether it was the Reds or the Whites who prevailed. Finally, as the representative party of the Whites arrive in Tampere, a convenient die roll will flatten the entire Red troops, and the final victory is very close.

I have been thinking about the rules and read them through several times, and made a couple of attempts to play the game. By reading through the rules a few times, you may notice that they have a sort of educational aspect. Similar to how children's books and other educational literature in the 1920s were used to bolster the nation and the tale of White Finland, it is clear that the Reds were the bad guys in the game. The Reds are described as a bunch of bandits, while the Whites get to be the noble sons. The sympathies clearly lie on the White side. In a way, this is of course obvious. History is written by the winners, and this is a game made in a certain way by the winning side. However, one could imagine that the

game may have been played from another point of view. The interesting thing is that either side can win the game in principle, so it does have that kind of playfulness and opportunity. Then again, it would be silly to make a game where the other side would win by default.

Playing the game also made you consider what the creator of the game has actually been thinking. What are they trying to say here? How strongly is the game building up the winning story of the Whites, or could it take an objective look at what happened? We also thought of strategic issues. In a way, playing the game gave a sort of a moment of clarity to the role of the Germans specifically. This is related to the result of the subsequent research and interpretation of why Mannerheim attacked Tampere at that exact point. The charge takes place in order for there to be sufficient time to reach a settlement before the German entry, so that the Germans would not be able to take a larger grip on Finland. This is also included in the game.

Interestingly, a few games similar to this one exist. One example is *Helsingin valtaus* ('*The Occupation of Helsinki*'), of which one of the local associations of history teachers produced a new edition. There is also a game depicting the events of the First World War, where the whole of Europe provides the game board. Juusela & Levänen published all of these games. Recently, I have seen at least *Helsingin valtaus* for sale, at a steep price, of course. These are naturally quite the rarities. These items are, of course, stored in the

National Library, for example, but it had not even crossed our minds back then that a game with such a subject matter would even exist.

We tried to dig up material and combed the year 1918 in many ways. We studied the newspapers of the time, contemporary stories, and so on. However, we did not come across any story where someone would have played this game or that the events of 1918 were handled in a game such as this. For instance, it is quite well known how children's literature was used as an instrument in attempting to build a sense of national pride and the story of White Finland. One would have to imagine that if this game was more widely available, someone would have surely mentioned it somewhere. Perhaps an advertisement or an announcement that such a game was now available. However, we found nothing. This is pure conjecture, but if the game were terribly popular, we probably would have encountered more copies or mentions of it. Today, all manner of items related to the events of 1918 are highly collectible. I do believe that the value of the game has been understood as it was taken to the second-hand store.

Generally speaking, this game astonishes people, as they tend to perceive board games and gaming as a modern or even a welfare state era phenomenon. *Afrikan tähti* ('*The Star of Africa*') is thought of as a really old game, for example. Another important thing is that the exhibition itself creates an oppressive vibe that awful things have taken place. Bringing such playfulness and frivolity into the picture

towards the end of the exhibition, at the epilogue, almost feels a bit macabre. How can we, and how have they been able to, deal with the subject at the end of the year in this manner? This is usually the strongest reaction we get from the game. I probably emphasise it myself in some ways while giving guided tours, putting it out there that on Christmas 1918 people could play something like this. One can paint the image that the game would be revealed unwrapping Christmas presents and everyone would play it together. However, we do not actually know who played it and how.

A game such as this would have required wealth at a time when people could barely afford food. It might have been a middle class or upper class pastime, and the middle class of the time can be thought of as the bourgeoisie. We should also keep in mind that it is, of course, not clear cut that all the representatives of the Reds were poor. We can only make assumptions and, therefore, these things are usually communicated to the audience through the exhibition texts, which sum up our perspective and what we're trying to say. The introduction text for this game is very short and laconic. No tools exist to explain it further, so we have not even attempted to do so. We simply have not been able to find out more about it.

The *Tampere 1918* exhibition will tell you what happened in Tampere in 1918. In effect, this too is told from the point of view of people, and what happened to some of them. As said earlier, the game is on the epilogue side of the dramatic arc,

leaving it as just another occurrence. By the time we get to the game, the story is ending and we are beginning to look back. This is just one example of it. The exhibition paints a strong picture for both sides of the story, and also depicts the story of the civilians. In that sense, this kind of a game in the epilogue is linked to the story of the civilians. The stories of civilians on both the Red and the White side intertwine here. The game fits the ending of the exhibition in this interesting way rather well."

1921

PESÄPALLO

PESÄPALLO

According to current knowledge, various bat-and-ball games played on the territory of what we now call Finland date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Influences from Germany, Sweden and Russia, among others, fused into 'king ball' in the late 1800s. Lauri "Tahko" Pihkala added some extra spice from US baseball, which resulted in a game called 'long ball.'

Through various experiments and changes to the field, long ball developed into the Finnish national sport, the modern day *pesäpallo* ('*Finnish baseball*'). The first official matches were played in 1922, and the first Finnish championship was won by Helsingin Pallonlyöjät ('the Helsinki Ball-batters').

The development of *pesäpallo* was tied to the spirit and events of its time. Between the wars, the sport was favoured by the Civil Guard, as it was thought to develop the skills needed in wartime. Since then, the rules of the sport have been modified on several occasions in order to make it more interesting for the contemporary audience.

1922

1938

PAJATSO

TYPE
Gambling arcade game

DEVELOPER
RAY

PUBLISHER
RAY

Familiar to all Finns from the corners of restaurants and petrol station bars, *Pajatso* ('*Payazzo*') is an important piece of the national game history. The first of these types of slot-machines arrived in Finland in the 1920s, brought from Germany by private businessmen. Domestic production of payazzo machines started in 1931 by Automaatti Teollisuus Oy.

In 1937, the Finnish parliament decreed that the maintenance of these slot-machines should only be allowed for an association founded for this exact purpose. Thus, payazzo machines previously owned by entrepreneurs were transferred under the management of the Slot Machine Association (RAY), founded in 1938. RAY also began the production of their own payazzo machines the same year.

Perhaps the most classic of these machines was the 50 penny payazzo of 1966, which stayed in use up until the early 1990s. The tale of the payazzo came to its end in March 2015, when it was reported that the machines would be discontinued. The last coins were fed to slots on RAY premises on 11 March 2015. The payazzo machines managed to produce a total of over one and a half billion euros for RAY over the years. Since their discontinuation, various mobile and online versions of the payazzo games have been published in Finland.

1951

AFRIKAN TÄHTI

AFRIKAN TÄHTI

TYPE
Board game

DEVELOPER
Kari Mannerla

PUBLISHER
Peliko

Translated into sixteen languages, *Afrikan tähti* ('*The Star of Africa*') is a classic of Finnish board games and has sold over four million copies. This all-time favourite of Finnish board games was originally inspired by Humphrey Bogart movies and place names found on the map of Africa. The name of the game itself came to Mannerla after the South African discovery of the world's largest diamond, whose largest polished piece is known as the Great Star of Africa.

In 1985, Amersoft released a Commodore 64 version of the game, with Mannerla's consent. Other publications include a card game version designed by Mannerla himself, as well as adaptations for Android and iOS. In 2014, an expansion called *Retkikunnat* ('*Expeditions*') was published. Mannerla, who made his actual career in advertising, developed other games as well, including a variety of solitaires and the board game *Inkan aarre* ('*The Treasure of the Inca*') which takes place in South America.

1951

1955
2015

NIM

NIM

DEVELOPER
Academy of
Finland
Mathematics
Committee

The history of digital games in Finland dates back to the 1950s, when engineer Hans Anders, as a member of a group working to design the first Finnish computer ESKO, came up with the idea of constructing a gaming machine.

In Nim, players take turns to remove any number of sticks placed in sets of rows, and whoever gets the last stick loses. Due to its simplicity, Nim was suitable for execution on the technologies characteristic of its time: relays and diodes. Similar machines had already been built earlier in the United States and England, among other places.

The Mathematics Committee gave *Nim* to the head of the committee, Rolf Nevanlinna, in celebration of his 60th birthday. The game did not see much use and was left to gather dust in Nevanlinna's possession, unlike, for example, the Norwegian NUSSE. NUSSE piqued the interest of audiences when it played the Nim game against the public on "the world's first data days" in the spring of 1954.

1955

1967

KIMBLE

KIMBLE

The popular Finnish children's board game *Kimble* is based on a licence of *Trouble*, developed in the early 1960s by the US Kohner brothers and Al Stubbmann. The Heljakka family received *Trouble* as a gift from their American relatives, and in 1967 Aarne Heljakka applied for an official licence to publish the game in Finland. Heljakka picked the name for the game from the protagonist of the 1960s TV series *The Fugitive*, Richard Kimble.

Games like *Trouble* and *Kimble* have been played under different names all around the world, and the basic principles are based on the national game of India, *Pachisi*. *Kimble's* specialty is the pop-o-matic mechanism: the die is enclosed in a dome in the middle of the game board, and pressing on the dome causes the die to roll, accompanied with a snappy popping sound.

Within the pop-o-matic resides also perhaps the most controversial feature of the game: the rolls performed under the dome are not in fact truly random. In 2014, Finnish statistician Tuomas Kukko researched the matter and found the dice would end up on its opposite end more often than it should if it rolled in an absolutely random manner.

1967

1979

CHESMAC

CHESMAC

PLATFORM
Telmac 1800

DEVELOPER
Reino Suonio

PUBLISHER
Topdata

The first commercial Finnish computer game according to current understanding is *Chesmac*, programmed by Raimo Suonio. It is a chess game programmed for the Telmac 1800 microcomputer.

Initially the programming of *Chesmac* was an experimental hobby for Suonio, but his activities took a commercial turn as Suonio landed a job in Finland's first computer store, Topdata. The game, published on a C-cassette tape, was sold through Topdata at a price of FIM 68 (Finnish markka, the currency of Finland up until 2002), and sold a total of 104 copies.

Programmed in Telmac's own CHIP-8 language and partly directly in hexadecimal machine language, the game was a respectable feat considering the computing power and memory capacity of the Telmac. It is also noteworthy that Suonio published separate instructions on how to save the game's current situation for later use in *Prosessori*, a professional electronics magazine of the time. This came in handy, as the game really took its time contemplating the next move; on the most challenging level, this could take up to an hour per move.

1979

1981

ÄSSÄ-ARPA

ÄSSÄ-ARPA

Ässä, the most popular and longest running scratchcard in Finland, is an integral part of Finnish everyday gaming. The scratchcard, now having reached over 35 years of age, was first introduced in 1981. Back then, the price for one was FIM 10 and the jackpot a whopping FIM 666,666.

The beginnings of *Ässä* were mottled with issues with the printing technology, which is why the production was transferred from the printing press of the Bank of Finland to England. The modern *Ässä* is printed in security printing presses specialised in scratchcards in Canada and England. After its launch, *Ässä* gained rapid popularity, and already in 1982 it produced 9.5 per cent of the total sales for Veikkaus.

Veikkaus scratchcards have become available as online versions since 2006. The range includes a number of scratchcards based on different themes, all the way from sauna to ice hockey.

1981

41

1986

PAINTERBOY

PAINTERBOY

PLATFORM
Commodore 64

DEVELOPER
Chart Top Design

PUBLISHER
Tikkurila

Painterboy is a promotional game commissioned by the major paint and lacquer manufacturer Tikkurila in 1986. The game features the adventures of Mestari and Poika ('Master' and 'Son'), who were the stars of the company's 1980s television commercials and various events. According to Tikkurila, this is the first promotional game produced for computers in Finland.

Painterboy was distributed on both cassette and diskette, and the purpose of the game is to perform a variety of contract painting works in accordance with the customers' wishes. The player must select the suitable paint for each situation, steer clear of accidents on the way to the site and finally successfully paint while avoiding obstacles.

The technical aspects of *Painterboy* were quite insightful; managing to fit an entire village and digitised audio clips, among other things, to Commodore 64's memory called for extraordinary creativity. Back in its day, only a few hundred copies of *Painterboy* were produced, and it has since become a collector's item.

SANXION

SANXION

PLATFORM
Commodore 64
Sinclair ZX Spectrum

DEVELOPER
Stavros Fasoulas

PUBLISHER
Thalamus

Sanxion, developed by the legendary programmer Stavros Fasoulas, is known as the first Finnish computer game intended for international distribution. It is a side-scrolling space shooter game, which is remembered particularly for the music tracks produced for the game by Rob Hubbard. One of these, played in the background of the game's title screen, is an adaptation of *Dance of the Knights*, a piece from Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* ballet. In fact, *Sanxion* went on to win the Golden Joystick Award for the Best Soundtrack of the Year in 1986.

Like other games of its time, *Sanxion* is very difficult and fast-paced, and defeating the game requires systematic learning of several sections and situations. Interestingly, the screen of the game is also split into two parts. The upper displays the player's ship from a bird's eye view while the lower and larger screen displays events from side view. *Sanxion* received reasonably positive reviews back in its day, and it even climbed to the top position on the British sales charts for a while.

UUNO TURHAPURO MUUTTAA MAALLE

UUNO TURHAPURO MUUTTAA MAALLE

PLATFORM
Commodore 64

DEVELOPER
Pasi Hytönen

PUBLISHER
Amersoft

The Finnish people's favourite comedy film character of the 1970s and 1980s, Uuno Turhapuro, had the honour of playing the main role on the first Finnish licensed game. Borrowing its theme from the film of the same title, *Uuno Turhapuro muuttaa maalle* ('*Uuno Turhapuro moves to the country*') is remembered in particular for the high level of difficulty. Game developer Pasi Hytönen himself has admitted that the level of difficulty was "perhaps exaggerated a little bit." Mechanics wise, *Uuno Turhapuro muuttaa maalle* is simple: the player controls Uuno across three side-scrolling levels while trying to dodge incoming obstacles.

Back in its day, the game sold around 2,000 copies, of which less than a hundred were floppy disk versions. Despite the reasonable volume of sales, the game has since become quite the collector's item within the game enthusiast community, and even the more common cassette version along with its supplementary material has fetched a price of up to 500 euros in an online auction.

1987

MIEKKA JA MAGIA

MIEKKA JA MAGIA

TYPE
Tabletop role-playing game

DEVELOPER
Risto Hieta

PUBLISHER
Ultimate

Designed by Risto "Nordic" Hieta, *Miekka ja Magia* ('*Sword and Sorcery*') is the first commercially published Finnish language role-playing game, and thus an important milestone in the history of Finnish games. The rules of the game are based on Hieta's earlier role-playing game *Acirema*. While the rules are similar to the popular role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*, Hieta's are in many ways simpler.

At its heart, *Miekka ja Magia* is quite straightforward in its fighting mechanics and use of spells, and unlike more recent role-playing games, it contains very little social interaction.

Hieta originally created *Miekka ja Magia* as there were no Finnish language role-playing games available at the time. The game is a rather typical small publication of its time, and it sold a few hundred copies. As the first Finnish language translations of role-playing games (e.g. *Dungeons & Dragons*, *RuneQuest*) entered the market, *Miekka ja Magia* was destined to fade into a fairly marginal product.
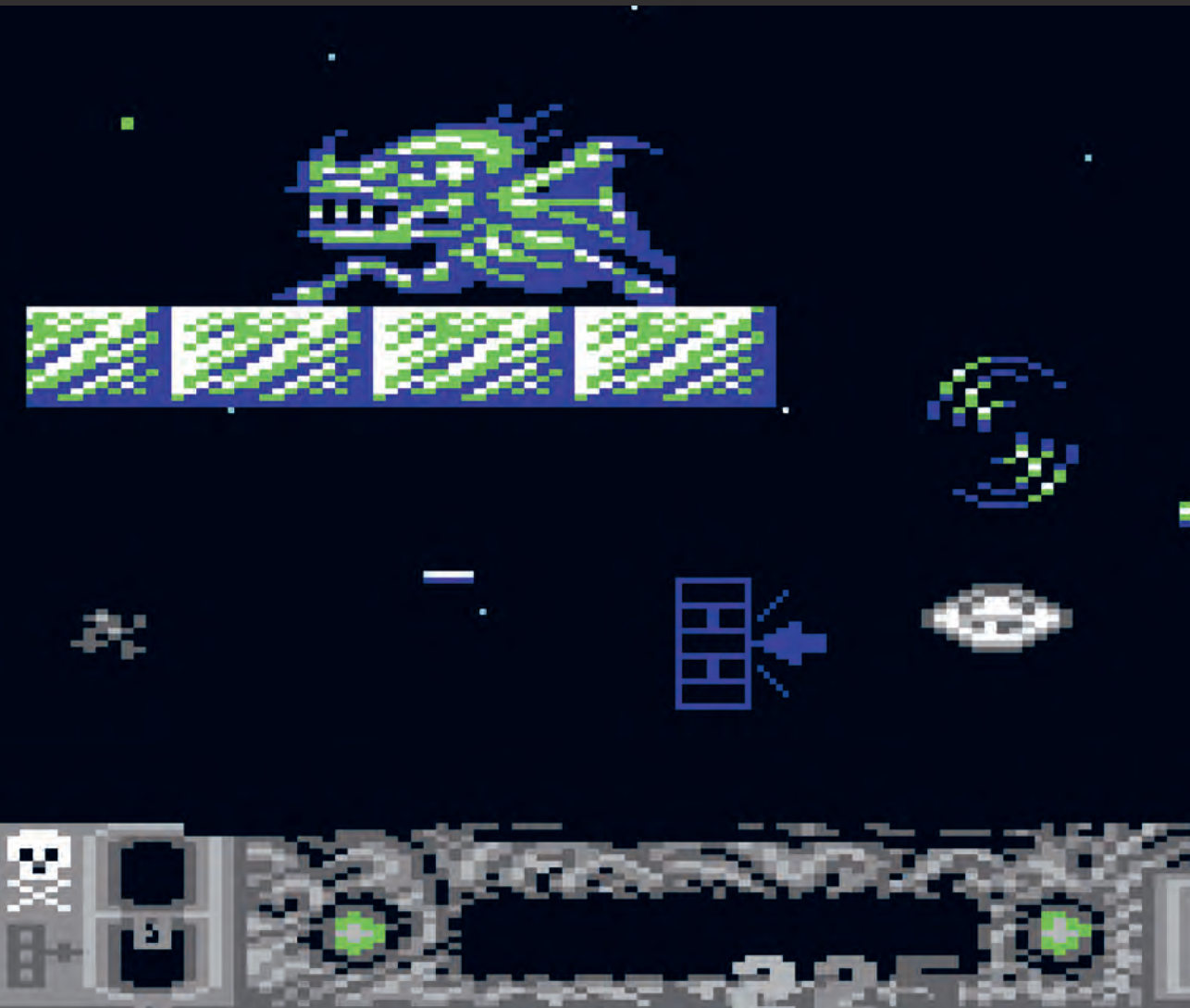
1987

1881988

NETHERWORLD

NETHERWORLD

PLATFORM
Commodore 64 (and others)

DEVELOPER
Jukka Tapanimäki

PUBLISHER
Hewson

Like his contemporary Stavros Fasoulas, Jukka Tapanimäki was among the most famous Finnish game developers in the 1980s. During his rather short-lived career, Tapanimäki managed to produce four commercially published games, all originally designed for the Commodore 64. *Netherworld* was the second in order.

In *Netherworld*, Tapanimäki combined elements from problem-solving and space shooters. The player must navigate their ship through imaginative levels while collecting diamonds. Back in its day, *Netherworld* received praise not only for its distinctive idea, but also for its implementation. The controls of the game are precise, and although the level of difficulty is fairly high, it is balanced in such a way that it feels rewarding to play.

Netherworld is also remembered for the music track by Jori Olkkonen, as well as its cover art, onto which the game's publisher Hewson placed Tapanimäki's face unbeknownst to Tapanimäki himself. Tapanimäki was greatly shocked to finally discover this at the press conference held for the game in London.

1989
1981

ALIAS

ALIAS

Various guessing games are an integral part of the long history of recreational and party games. A prime example of these, *Alias*, developed by Mikko Koivusalo, first spread into Finnish homes in the 1990s. Knowledge of trivia is not really required to play *Alias*, but verbal dexterity and social intelligence definitely come in handy. It has become one of the most popular board games in Finland.

The name *Alias* comes from the Latin word alias, meaning "also known as." The aim of the game is for the players to explain words on the game cards to members of their team. For each correct guess made within the time limit, the team gets to move their game piece one step closer to the goal.

Numerous and various versions of *Alias* have been made since its original publication – a Sami language *Alias* to name one example. The manufacture of the game still continues by Nelostuote Oy (now called Tactic Games Oy) at their factory in Pori.

1989

1990

BATMUD

```
Whirling Portal
A board of current events
A holy altar emitting peace around it
Demoncore ErocnomeD the Sprite God of Tits and
Canttura the Lich Evoker
Thukydides the Ent
Angfer the Minotaur
Nasu, the Boatcon'2017 prophet (spokesmascot)
Moerkoe, the JKLcon'2017 prophet (freezing)
Guest-8 doesn't have any conditions that need c
Hp:0/10 Sp:0/10 Ep:0/10 Exp:0 >n
Wedding chapel.
You have arrived to a beautifully decorated wed
The whole chapel is lighted brightly, and the a
of pure gold with silvery carvings in it. There
the gods of this mud on the northern wall, and
south, out of the chapel. The atmosphere is ver
Obvious exit is: south.
Ring restore and change automat
Hp:0/10 Sp:0/10 Ep:0/10 Exp:0 >
```

BATMUD

PLATFORM
Cross-platform

DEVELOPER
B.A.T. ry

PUBLISHER
B.A.T. ry

Opened in 1990, *BatMUD* is one of the largest text-based online games ever made. At the same time, it is also one of the first and the oldest representatives of the genre still in operation. *BatMUD* derives its name from the first server the game was hosted on (batman.cs.hut.fi) combined with the words Multi User Dungeon. These types of MUDs were precursors to the modern massively multiplayer online role-playing games.

BatMUD is a multiplayer fantasy adventure, offering numerous possibilities and freedom of choice. For instance, the game includes 44 different races, experience levels up to a hundred, detailed spell-casting and battle systems, trading between players as well as a large and open world with mountains and oceans. The game is played by typing commands such as "travel south," and the game responds with detailed explanations of what follows from the player's actions.

Having respectably survived for over a quarter of a century, *BatMUD* still continues to be updated and hosts thousands of active players.
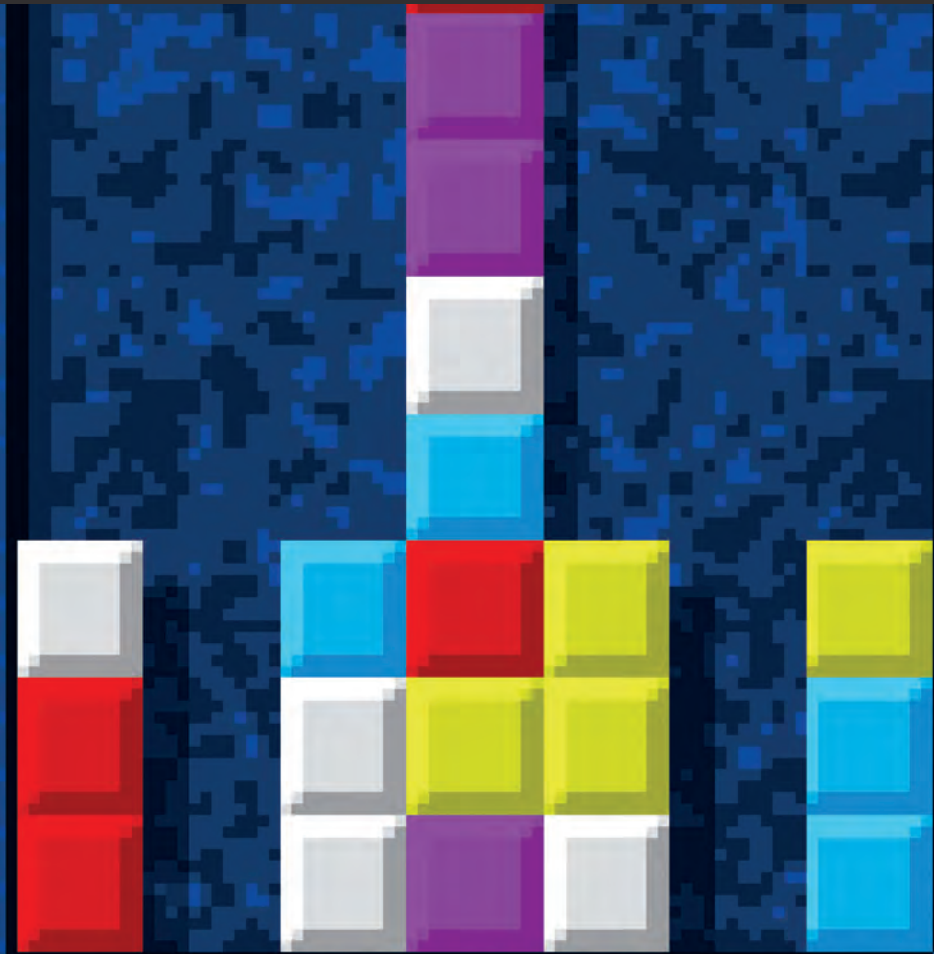
COLORIS

COLORIS

PLATFORM
Amiga
Atari ST

DEVELOPER
Signum Victoriae

PUBLISHER
Avesoft

Coloris is a puzzle game similar to Tetris, and did not achieve much success back in the day. The game was never exported outside of Finland due to fear of legal issues, as Sega had released a very similar game called *Columns* not long before *Coloris*.

Like *Tetris*, *Coloris* also features various types of blocks falling into a shaft, which the player aims to keep clear for as long as possible. However, unlike *Tetris*, the blocks in *Coloris* are uniform in shape, and consist of three parts, the colours of which the player can alternate. As three of the same colour are stacked, the blocks disappear from the screen.

Coloris garnered positive attention in hobby magazines, and Jukka Tapanimäki, a well-known game developer himself, gave it top marks in his review for *Mikrobitti* (a Finnish computer magazine), for example.

LOHIKÄÄRMEPUU
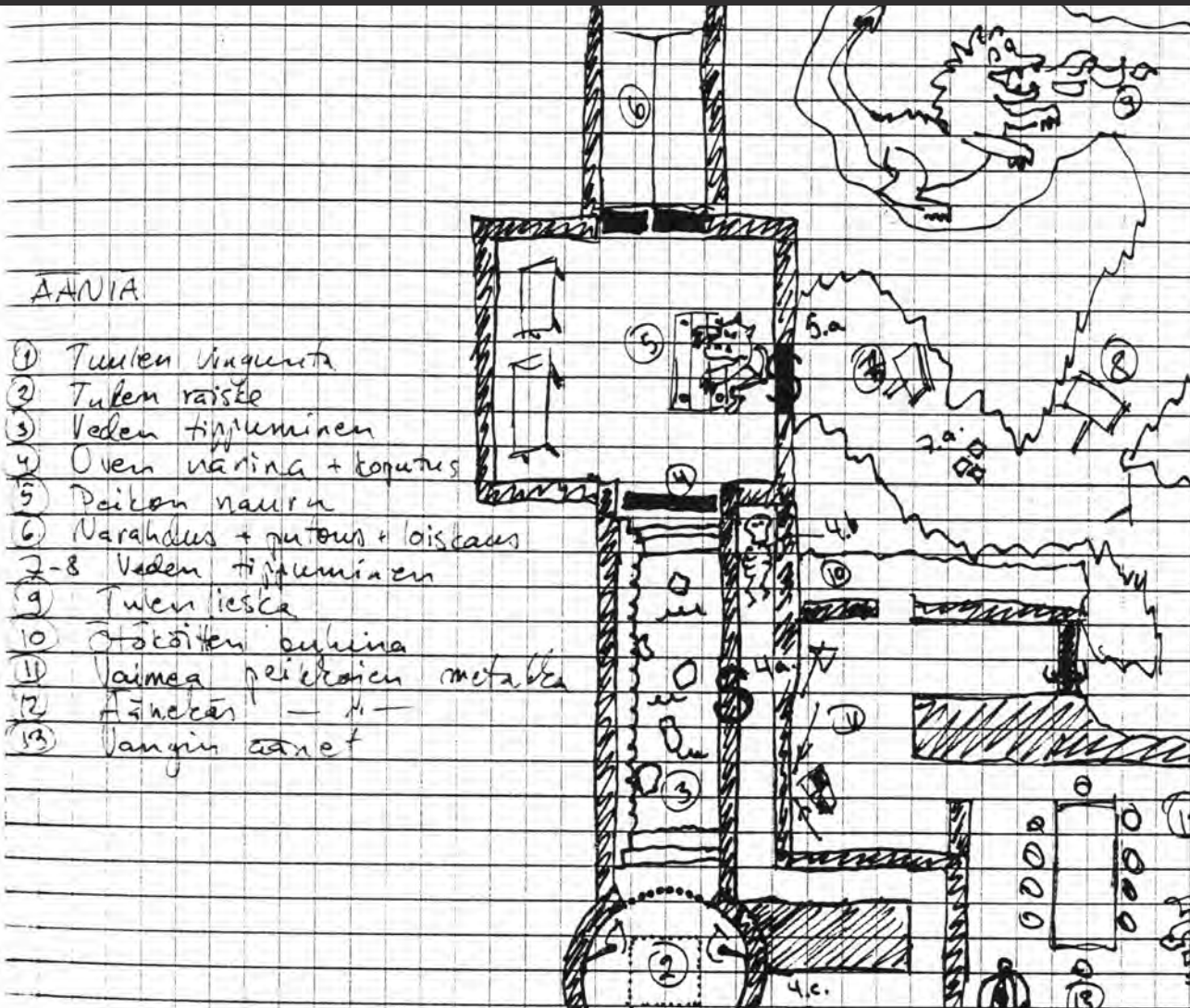
LOHIKÄÄRMEPUU

TYPE
Call-in radio show

DEVELOPER
Andy Pilke
Jari Pauna

PUBLISHER
YLE

Lohikäärmepuu ('*The Dragon Tree*'), aired on the young-adult oriented national radio channel Radiomafia (YleX since 2003) at the beginning of the 1990s, is a unique part of both Finnish game and radio history.

Lohikäärmepuu was an adventure role-playing game broadcast on the radio, to which listeners could participate by calling in on the live show. The show's hosts doubled as story tellers and game masters. The role of the callers was to try and advance the story by thinking creatively as they encountered various puzzling situations in the game.

Scripting the show was done by the creators of *Lohikäärmepuu* drawing up various maps of the adventures. Live transmissions and unexpected choices made by the players caused constant fluctuations in the game and set various challenges for the hosts. A large part of the game's popularity was indeed owed to the real-time insights and improvisational skills of the hosts, Andy Pilke and Jari Pauna.

ANDY PILKE REMINISCES ABOUT THE ERA OF ONE UNIQUE RADIO SHOW AND A STAPLE OF FINNISH GAME HISTORY, THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME LOHIKÄÄRMEPUU.
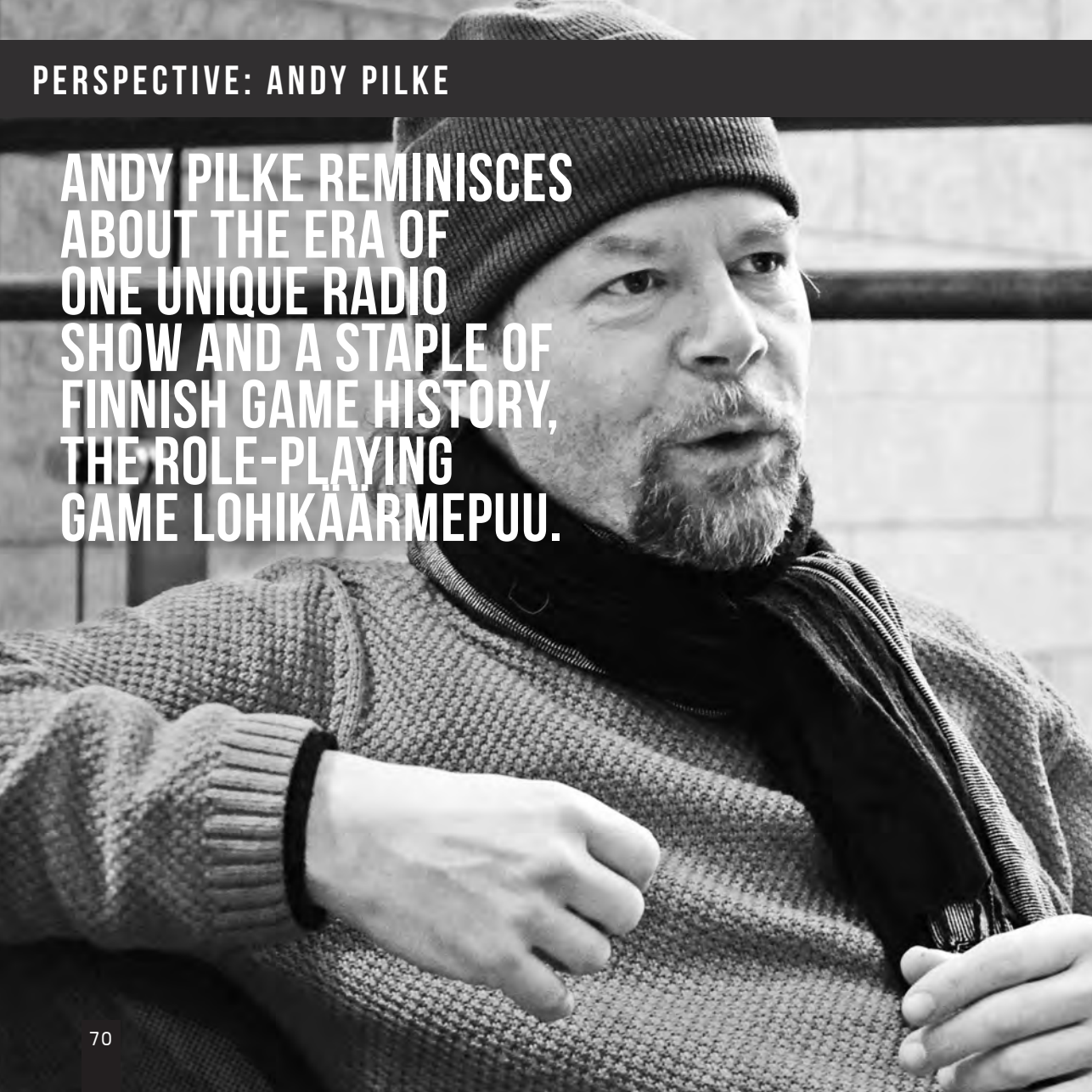
"I've been working in radio as a journalist, but moved on to online and new media business – as it was called back in the day – as early as the 1990s. I created content, multimedia implementations and web pages and, during the first half of the 2000s, I taught these things in technical colleges and universities of applied sciences. At the moment, I make a variety of online training solutions from videos and interactive implementations to varied mobile content. I started working in radio in the early 1990s. I worked as a quiz writer, music programme editor and interviewer for the Finnish radio station Radiomafia. Later on, I worked on an evening programme called *Kaapparilaiva* ('*Privateer*') at a local radio station, among other things. The programme involved a game similar to *Ariadne's thread*, where people had to guess what really happened after hearing the story that aired.

Lohikäärmepuu ('*The Dragon Tree*') was a role-playing game played on the radio. I had dabbled in some classic role playing before, and pondered whether it could work on radio. My initial concept was a pre-scripted story with all its twists and turns, plus some additional freeform bits. This, however, turned out to be too complex to really work. In any case, I'd been thinking that I would not do this alone. I called up people here and there in hopes of finding someone with experience in being a game master and with whom to mull over the programme's script. I managed to get a hold of Jari Pauna, who became the other host for the programme.

I believe the statute of limitations has passed, so I suppose it is okay to admit that the name *Lohikäärmepuu* was picked after a US role-playing brand Dragon Tree. Jari thought of the name and it just clicked immediately. We produced *Lohikäärmepuu* on a weekly basis on Radiomafia from autumn 1990 to late summer 1991, after which I continued solo on a version called *Seikkailupuu* ('*Adventure Tree*'). It aired once a month on Saturday mornings.

The radio producer initially asked us to do a test transmission, a so-called dry run, of *Lohikäärmepuu*, where a previously determined caller would participate in the show. The run was a success, we gained the producer's approval and the programme was slated to be aired. The first transmission was unnerving and it seemed at first that no one would call. Re-listening to that first broadcast afterwards, it does sound a little uncertain. Our confidence grew as soon as people started calling in, and the show eventually took off really well.

We always broadcast live; the story was never recorded beforehand. The story that initiated the programme was usually quite short. It roughly outlined the genre and the situation of the protagonist, whether it would be set in a Middle Age fantasy, a Tolkien style story, somewhere in the Wild West in the 1800s or a spacecraft. The current situation, characteristics and age of the protagonist were also disclosed. We take pride in the fact that even if we'd say, for example, "a young warrior," this was by no means gender-focused. There were a handful of courageous girls or women

who called in to participate. In these cases, the protagonist would then turn out to be female. In general, the characters could be of either sex, this made no difference. We alternated between taking in the first caller before reading the initial story and reading the story first before waiting for calls to come in.

It must be emphasised that this was the beginning of the 1990s, everything was mechanical, landline phones were used for calls and so on. We usually only saw some lights flashing, which indicated there were callers on the lines. Then we'd press a switch to pick a caller. Later on, we moved to another studio and a sound engineer came along who would then take the calls. This engineer was able to do a little pre-check on the next caller, enabling us to greet them by name and so on.

Usually the ambient sounds for *Lohikäärmepuu* were played from cassette tapes. They ran on an endless sound loop, which I had compiled. If a special effect was required, we'd run that single sound separately. The cassette was placed in the slot beforehand and played from there. On the table, we had a massive pile of these cassettes, which we then played alternately. It was a kind of guessing game for us to divine what the player would do next – will they shoot or make a run for it. Then, we'd quickly replace the cassette and adjust the story around this; "well your weapon is jammed and didn't fire yet, oh, now it fired, but the bullet strayed and hit a wall." The technological constraints, therefore, contributed to the kind of story we were telling. I also made

some of these sound effects on synths, by my own voice, or by other means. For example, the sounds of someone dying were usually my own rattles and wheezes.

Being a call-in radio show meant that the mechanics of *Lohikäärmepuu* were quite different from regular tabletop role-playing games. The why and how things which affect each other in tabletop games are usually regulated. They use dice or similar to measure the success of actions and the game master tells what will happen based on the numbers. We did not use dice to decide our storytelling, but might roll bone dice on a stone table for special effects.

We would normally create a map, or an approximate floor plan, of the game's events in advance. I usually had such a strong vision for a particular story that we were able to empathise with different situations quite spontaneously. Sometimes we would intentionally plant honeypot traps to corner the players, but I will never admit to trying to cause anyone to fail. However, if other players were trying to, say, crush some orcs, and one player would say, "I'll run away," we might say, "You cannot run away, you will die." Then they'd be on the line for maybe two seconds. We could afford to do this because we had so many people calling in.

Sometimes we'd have to cut corners and leave out previously planned steps in order to advance the story far enough over the course of the transmission. I don't think there was ever a time when we would have reached a certain point too

quickly. We were always able to drag it out and come up with more relatively credible stuff. Of course people are different, so we just had to try and guide the players on a case by case basis.

We got next to no prank calls, which was pretty amazing. On some of the very first shows we'd have stuff like a young kid calling in, getting through, and saying "crap" in a hushed voice. There was also an older man, who participated in more or less all of the phone-in and song request shows on the radio. You could almost hear him sitting in his rocking chair and being completely confused about our whole concept. That was alright, though, as he seemed like a really likable guy. Nonetheless, we had to move on pretty quickly and think of something nasty that would happen to that character, maybe that he acted too slowly and thus got his head chopped off.

Working together with the callers was really nice. Afterwards, I've heard that there were a lot of people who did not take part in the game themselves, but listened to the broadcast or recorded it on a cassette to discuss the show with friends the next day. We also got quite a lot of varied fan mail. Some had drawn cool stuff, really put some thought and effort into it. The whole thing had a real communal feel to it. After a year of doing the show, the producer and the channel decided that the show would be cancelled, and there was a huge outcry from people saying it was the best show ever and "I will never listen to Radiomafia again."

Although the early 1990s was rather experimental in terms of interactive storytelling, I don't know of anything quite like *Lohikäärmepuu*. It really did receive high praise in the world of radio. When executives from European national broadcasters were visiting, the station's then chief introduced them to our show. It was pretty awesome to sit there in the studio while the execs applauded and cheered for us. Our producer said he'd heard of some European guy who was doing a show in the same vein. It wasn't fantasy, but had various everyday situations. For example, a person would have to go to the kiosk, but had lost their wallet. Our producer told me that the host of this show was very skilled in manipulating people and got them to cry or lose their temper. People really had to struggle in those situations, and it was pretty harsh, but that was the idea of it. Our producer then thought that we, too, should be more like that. Sure, we killed everyone, but we should have been more ruthless, to wring more emotional reactions from our callers.

I feel that at its best *Lohikäärmepuu* was an experiment based on the tradition of storytelling, combined with role-playing. Although it was in a way a product of its time, many have subsequently said they feel it's a pity that stuff like this is not done anywhere anymore. A lot has changed in the radio business; nowadays, it's either hit music only or some special speech programmes. In the 2010s, we did two remakes of *Lohikäärmepuu* on Radio Moreeni (a local radio station in Tampere). It was very nostalgic, and a nice experience. Of course, at first you're thinking

about what it will feel like and will this amount to anything; but sure enough, I still had the touch for it. I was able to pull it off with a good vibe."

1993

SLICKS 'N' SLIDE

SLICKS 'N' SLIDE

PLATFORM
PC

DEVELOPER
Timo Kauppinen
Juha Kauppinen

PUBLISHER
Timo Kauppinen

Slicks 'n' Slide is one of the best-known Finnish shareware games. In this racing game, players compete either against the computer or each other in tiny motor vehicles ranging from motorcycles and racing cars to UFOs and tanks.

The top-down view of the tracks allows them to be fully displayed on the screen, and it is easy to get a grasp of the game. The responsive feel of driving in the game has received particular praise. Although *Slicks 'n' Slide* is a pure racing game at heart, newer versions of the game also came to include weaponry as well as damage to the vehicles.

While *Slicks 'n' Slide* can be played by up to four players simultaneously on the same machine, another popular feature is the track editor, which accounts for the longevity of the game's popularity. Thanks to new tracks produced by the fan community, there's no shortage of material to play through.

1993

STARDUST
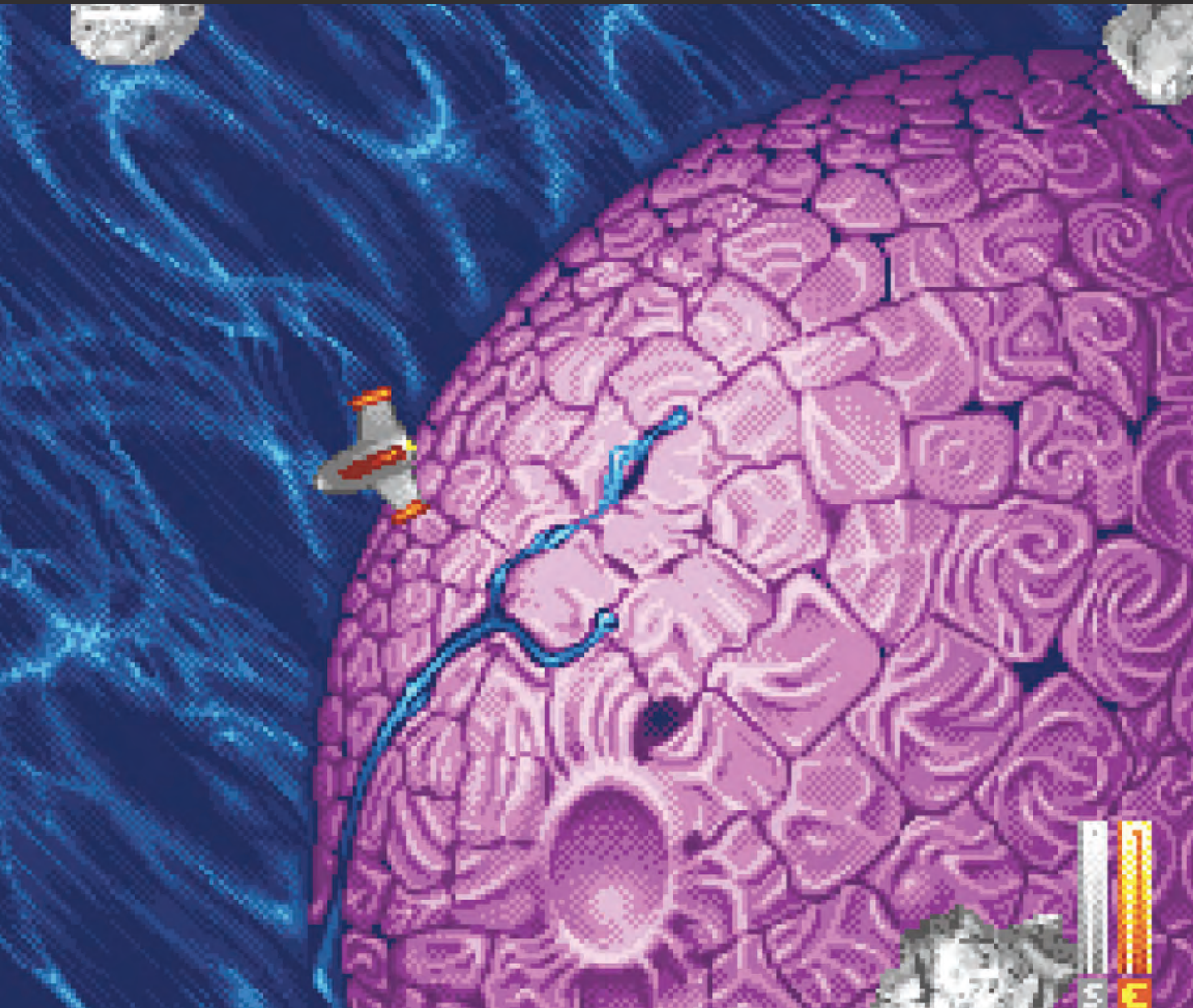
STARDUST

PLATFORM
Amiga
Atari STE
PC

DEVELOPER
Bloodhouse

PUBLISHER
Team 17

Originally a hobby project, *Stardust* is a space shooter, which subsequently grew into the long-lived *Super Stardust* franchise. Bloodhouse and Terramarque, hailing from the Finnish demoscene, merged in 1995 to form Housemarque, which has continued to develop the franchise. Housemarque is the oldest Finnish video game company still in operation.

Compared to its contemporaries, Stardust was graphically quite impressive and received praise for its gameplay. The player must shoot at asteroids and enemies floating on the screen while dodging them at the same time. Characteristically of its genre, the ship may be enhanced with more powerful weapons, protective shields and other accessories to facilitate this task.

Over the years, a number of sequels have been made to *Stardust*. Of these, *Super Stardust*, published in 1994, received the honour of being the first Finnish console game along with its 1995 port to the Amiga CD32.

1994
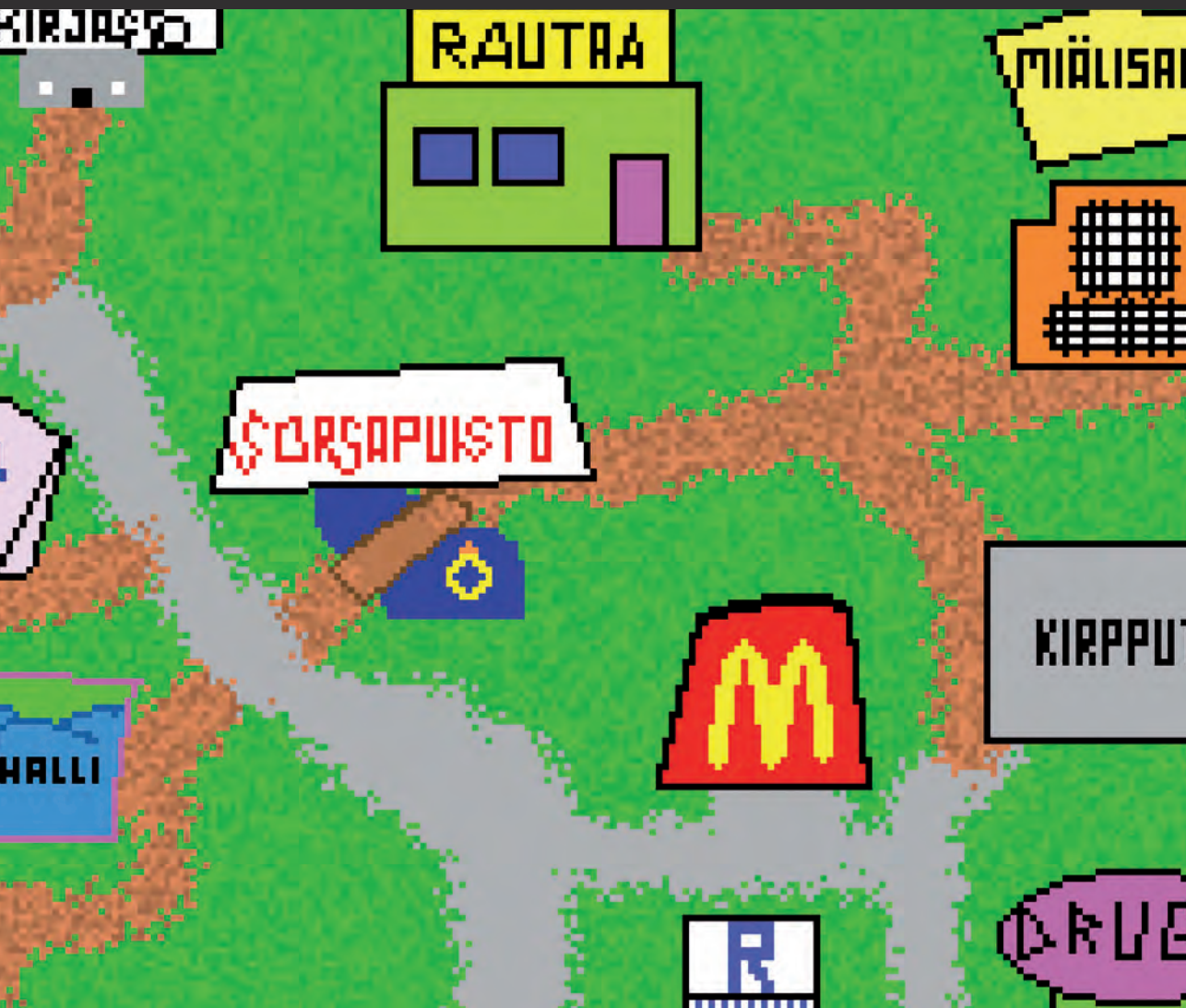
INVA-TAXI

PLATFORM
PC

DEVELOPER
Åkesoft

PUBLISHER
Åkesoft

1994

Åkesoft was a group formed by teenagers active in the mid-1990s, which during its relatively short life cycle managed to produce a host of games and software applications which were mainly based on rather questionable humour. Rather than gameplay or gaming itself, this tongue-in-cheek style was also the driving force behind *Inva-taxi* ('*Taxi for the disabled*'). However, this cult game managed to find its audience, as several people who spent time with computers in the 1990s still remember it.

The game itself is rather simple: the player is the driver of a taxi for the disabled, who must drive the customer to the requested location. The customers' speech has been deliberately made difficult to understand, and interpreting these speech samples is at the heart of the game.

The members of Åkesoft never revealed their true identities, but appeared under pseudonyms. Some may also remember Åkesoft from the questionable *Bepaquest* release, which even ended up in court due to harassment accusations.

THE MEMBERS OF ÅKESOFT TALK OF THEIR TEENAGE HOBBY OF GAME MAKING, SHARE CURRENT THOUGHTS ON THEIR GAMES' VULGAR HUMOUR AND EXPLAIN WHY THEY WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

"Åkesoft was born out of a few young lads' desire to cultivate strange humour and publish their own, deliberately quirky software. The group was in operation from the spring of 1993 until early 1996. The demoscene was quite lively back then, and far too serious in our opinion. The level of skill on the PC side also began to climb up to rather high standards for that time. I do not think there were groups of game developers quite like ours, at least not with a similar attitude. There were some individual humour games, but no real long-standing groups. Our group was pretty much outside the demo and game scene, and we were certainly thought of as quite the nuisance. Then again, that was exactly our aim. I believe nowadays this is called 'trolling.' Some Åkesoft members had contacts with other groups in the demoscene, but more as individuals rather than as Åkesoft. However, some of us also "represented" at industry events. From the start, Åkesoft worked without revealing the members' identities, so our contacts were minimal. We still actively hung around the BBS world and the demoscene. In 1996, we had quite a few unfinished projects, but they were never finished as life was taking us in different directions, and the whole thing began to seem too childish.

Our two original founding members learned the basics of programming languages in the early 1990s, and made a variety of text-based adventure games. Soon, text-based games turned into rudimentary games with graphics. The first of these was a simple construct in which the player swam around the pool as a yellow rubber ducky, dodging various obstacles. The duck was named Åke, and thus the name Åkesoft was born.

Our game ideas were the outputs of a rebellious teenage mind. Inventing vulgar and offensive humour is relatively easy. The game ideas often came as a side product of joking around, since we were a group of friends rather than a real game company. Our ideas were limited by our minimal programming skills, so we invested in what we knew best: absurd humour. We made games on subjects that would not cross the minds of anyone else, and parodied the more serious game and demo groups. Game ideas were formed both as a result of individual brainstorming and as by-products of the time spent together. The software and games by Åkesoft were jokes. We were learning to program, and we wanted to publish software, but we could not be bothered to do anything well. Any serious release might have felt wrong anyway, so we ended up taking the role of the jester. Åkesoft was taunting the seriousness and self-importance of the BBS world and the demoscene. We made fun of how each release package had to include certain types of files, and what they said; how the same patterns were repeated and greetings sent in intros and demos. Åkesoft's own "demos" were mainly meant as tools of jeering for our demoscene enthusiast acquaintances. It was amusing to watch how seriously and with great passion some acquaintances and enthusiasts we met at Assembly, a Finnish demoparty, for example, took the demos. Making our own demos with our unique style seemed like a good way to rile them up.

One of our key ideas was to test the patience of people and how far we could push the boundaries. The game *Sokkomato* ('*Blind Worm*') was actually not even a game. The idea was to test whether we could make people believe it would be some kind of a game. In reality, *Sokkomato* was twenty lines of code, and as you ran the application it waited a random amount of time between 0-5 seconds, after which it told you that you had died. We only made one issue of the fabricated news web-zine *Ilta-Panomat* (a cheeky pun on the Finnish tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat*). As for the real-time *Tampere-Rovaniemi* train simulator, we meant for it to be experienced through the eyes of the passenger, but with our skills all we could manage was to create a map of Finland's railways. We found this mishap much more fun than the original idea. In *Last Animal Action Hero*, the player had to escape their pursuers and try to get to "boning" in peace. This was perhaps the most technically advanced work by Åkesoft. *Kehkeytyksen riemulähteet* ('*The Gleeful Founts of Emergence*') was a never-ending, epic story generator, which naturally had no rhyme or reason. A large part of the humour was vulgar and bad, but we also had some fun stuff. For example, *Kuolinilmoitusgeneraattori* ('*Obituary Generator*') just gave us a laugh, and was not meant for bullying anyone. We kept our bar for releasing games very low.

The culmination of our operation was perhaps the Assembly '95 4k Intro competition, to which we churned out four works worth of garbage.

Games were crafted by each member on their own computers. Our tools of the trade were mainly QuickBasic, Turbo Pascal and Assembler. Scream Tracker was used for producing music. Some of the works were created by one person on their own from start to finish, and some were joint efforts by the whole group. Only about half of the games ended up being ever released. Ideas that were too complex for us to implement or a single programming bug we could not figure out could mean the project was left unfinished. Sometimes we would all gather around, especially when making sounds for the games. Brainstorming for games probably took place in school during recess or just hanging out together.

Inva-taxi ('*Taxi for the Disabled*') most likely turned out the way it did precisely due to a lack of programming skills. The simple displaying of graphics, playing sounds and controlling the game with a mouse was barely within our capabilities. If we would have had more skills, the game would likely have been more serious. Skill had to be replaced with rude humour. Moreover, with our attention span we could only tackle ideas that took a couple of nights to finish up. Back then, there was a popular show on the radio on Friday nights, hosted by this foul-mouthed presenter Pertti Salovaara. He had a competition for the worst joke of the week, which was won by, "Stick your

tongue out of your mouth and say, 'What are we taking?'" As the listeners did the aforementioned, the response was a joyfully squealed, "The taxi for the disabled!" The joke was in such poor taste that it was repeated over and over in school during recess. We pretty much knew right away that we would have to make a game out of it. *Inva-taxi* was not, however, a malicious game. It was not meant to offend anyone and we do not recall anyone giving negative feedback. The epic starting screen was made by one of our members, whose Åkesoft name we cannot remember and the real name we will not disclose. The cutscenes were directly lifted from the remake of *Leisure Suit Larry*. We believe the decisive factor for the game's success was a short article published in *Mikrobitti* (a Finnish computer magazine). The comedy in other Åkesoft software and games focused mostly on the nether regions, so they might not have humoured larger audiences for long. That's possibly why *Inva-taxi* was the one to emerge instead of some other title.

As for *Bepaquest*, it was just another project for us. The tasteless and offensive humour targeted many parties, but we were used to shooting up in every direction. *Bepaquest* was an unfortunate incident, and the subsequent trial was surely a tough process for all the parties involved. The legal process also contributed to the fact that our enthusiasm for publishing more Åkesoft works waned. During our time in Åkesoft, we could not see the games we made as tools for bullying in the same way we can today. *Bepaquest* was an unfortunate episode,

a result of recklessness at a young age. Intellect and judgement are still quite poor at the age of 14.

We do not know how much and what kind of bullying exists among schoolchildren and young people of today. Back in the day, we never thought of Åkesoft's works as bullying, with the exception of *Bepaquest*. Even then, we did not fully understand the gravity of that game. Today, looking back to just over twenty years ago, we can see how we did bully various parties through our activities. Any form of bullying is unacceptable, of course, and no bullying should be tolerated. It is unacceptable.

The reputation of Åkesoft may not have been particularly positive. Secret identities were a part of Åkesoft and came with the territory. We worked anonymously from the beginning, and with the attitude that our identities would never be revealed. We also did not want to associate our names to the kinds of stories published back then, and neither do we want it now. Our everyday selves are not related to Åkesoft, and it would be quite a drag to reveal our identities now.

As for the post-Åkesoft time, we can reveal that one of us has worked as a programmer in international projects all over the world for about 15 years, and another has worked as a software architect and engineer in various companies as well as made their own product development. A third person works in the theatre and music industry, both as a performer and on the technical side. The group of

friends that formed around Åkesoft is a little scattered around, but as our activities were based on friendship in the first place, all the members continue to keep in touch on a more or less regular basis.

Making games inspired us to learn programming, and delve deeper into the inner workings of computers. In 1995, coding was not yet a trendy skill to teach children in primary schools. Our know-how has been easy to commercialise in the job market, and breaking into the industry without an education in IT was actually quite easy, thanks to the basic skills we learned while making games. Åkesoft gave us courage and taught a lesson in how software in general is published. Similarly, our graphic design skills from logos to fonts originated during Åkesoft, unintentionally of course. We can make use of a lot of these skills at work nowadays. In other ways, the influence on our lives has not been that considerable.

Due to its inappropriate humour, we cannot really say we are proud of *Inva-taxi*. In any case, it is amusing to see how much attention our hobby has attracted. We were quite baffled and humbled to have our game chosen for the Finnish Museum of Games. It is great that a humorous game also gets to be included. On the one hand, we are rather embarrassed, but still you have to admit all of this makes you laugh, a lot. We are not laughing at the fact that we made a game poking fun at people with disabilities when we were young. We laugh at the fact that such an absurd piece of work has achieved such a status over the years.

Åkesoft seems to have been an experience of the generation for youth at the turn of the 2000s, which is quite baffling. It seems that it is part of the popular culture of its time, which is now wistfully reminisced by men approaching their forties. In recent years, we've been quite surprised to see how many Finnish people of our age actually know Åkesoft. The reputation of *Inva-taxi* is living a life of its own.

The reputation and significance of Åkesoft has stretched much further in Finland than we ever dared to imagine. Since games were distributed by copying and downloading from BBSs, we had no clue of how many games were downloaded and played at the time. We thought Åkesoft was a marginal phenomenon within our neighbourhoods and small circles. It became evident much later that the games had spread to the whole country, and that especially *Inva-taxi* had gained renown. Some were appalled, and some amused by this. One of us was once on an assignment on the other side of the world and was listening to the YleX web radio during their workday. All of a sudden, *Inva-taxi* and Åkesoft were reminisced on the show. It felt bizarre that our humorous hobby garnered so much attention that some people still remember it."

1996

ALIEN INCIDENT / MUUKALAISTEN YÖ

ALIEN INCIDENT / MUUKALAISTEN YÖ

PLATFORM
PC

DEVELOPER
Housemarque

PUBLISHER
Toptronics

Alien Incident is the first commercial Finnish point-and-click adventure game, and continues to be one of the few Finnish representatives of the genre. A Finnish language version of the game was published under the name *Muukalaisten yö*. This was rare in the sense that, due to the rather small language and market area, Finnish-language releases of games were few and far between, especially back in those days.

Alien Incident tips its hat to the tradition of adventure games, throwing humour and witty remarks into the mix with a variety of puzzles, like its predecessors. The making of *Alien Incident* originally began back in 1992, and it was initially developed under the wing of the game company Bloodhouse. The developers also intended to create a version for the Commodore Amiga. In the end, however, the game was only released for the PC, and so far remains the only adventure game developed by Housemarque.

1996

WINGS
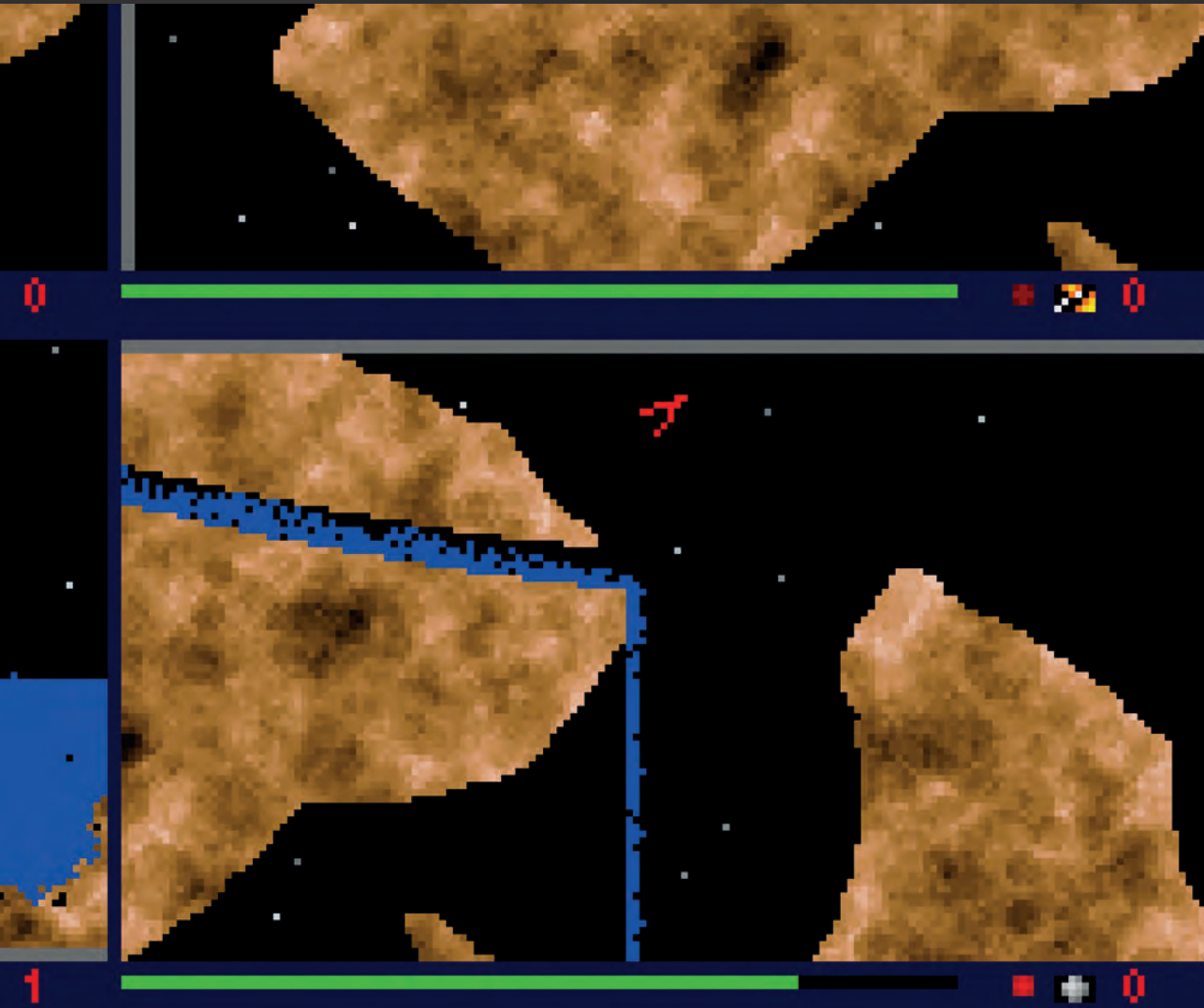
WINGS

PLATFORM
PC

DEVELOPER
Miika Virpioja

PUBLISHER
Miika Virpioja

In the 1990s, various cave-flyers were popular among home PC enthusiasts. Typically for games of this genre, players must take on each other while flying around in cramped caves on small, but heavily armed ships. *Wings*, released in 1996 for the MS-DOS operating system, was one of the most popular representatives of this genre in Finland.

Wings offers two different game modes, 'deathmatch' and 'last man standing' as well as more than thirty different types of weapons. In addition to the solo mode, up to four players can join either on the same machine or by connecting computers to each other via a null modem cable or modem.

Originally, *Wings* was released as a shareware game, and the field editor and other additional features were available only if they were paid for separately. Since then, the game was released as freeware, which increased its popularity.

1997

ELÄIN AKTIVISTI

ELÄIN AKTIVISTI

PLATFORM
PC

DEVELOPER
Mikko "Bemmu" Sepponen

PUBLISHER
Mikko "Bemmu" Sepponen

Characteristic of the computer subculture of its time, *Eläin aktivisti* ('*Animal Activist*') can have a politically incorrect tone, but it also serves as an example of news games. *Eläin aktivisti* took its inspiration from a widely reported confrontation in 1997, where a fur breeder from Orimattila opened shotgun fire on the Animal Liberation Front activists who had invaded his farm.

In *Eläin aktivisti*, the player controls a fur breeder, whose fox farm is the target of animal rights activists. The aim is to prevent the release of foxes by shooting the activists before they manage to reach the animal cages.

The game can be seen as a comment on a topical, controversial discussion concerning the incident, and there are various interpretations of the game's meaning. Depending on your point of view, the game can be viewed as a response to the actions of the animal rights activists, or it can be thought to suggest fur breeders are reckless shooters.

MATOPELI

MATOPELI

PLATFORM
Mobile

DEVELOPER
Taneli Armanto

PUBLISHER
Nokia

The first version of the well-known 'snake game' is probably the 1976 arcade game *Blockade*. A couple of decades later, *Matopeli* (*Snake*) by Taneli Armanto spread from the Nokia 6110 model to almost all Nokia mobile phones. Nokia also held Finnish Snake championships in 1999 and 2000.

The concept of the game is simple: the player controls a snake that eats dots appearing on the screen. Eating the dots makes the snake grow in length, and the game is lost when the snake hits either the sides of the field or its own tail.

The Nokia 6110 version offered a multiplayer mode, which was made possible by connecting two phones to each other via the infrared port. *Snake* was the most widespread Finnish game of its time, and the phones containing the game were the bestsellers of their time.

1997

1999

DROP MANIA

1999

PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
Ninai Games

PUBLISHER
Suomen Kotijäätelö

The puzzle game *Drop Mania* is remembered for its unusual distribution channel. You could not buy it in stores, but instead it was sold by Suomen Kotijäätelö Oy (a Finnish ice cream van company). *Drop Mania* was nominally priced at FIM 180, and owners of the Kotijäätelö club card could purchase one for FIM 15.

Drop Mania is a Tetris-like action and puzzle game in which blocks drop down from the top of the screen. The player's task is to get these blocks removed before the space is filled up. This is achieved by arranging the blocks of the same colour into groups that can be demolished with a special explosive block.

Ninai Games made further use of *Drop Mania* for their game *Rampage Puzzle Attack*, published for the Nintendo Game Boy Advance in 2001 as the first Finnish handheld game. *Drop Mania* also received a sequel in 2005 called *Super Drop Mania.* It was published for the Symbian OS and Windows Mobile platforms.

103

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING
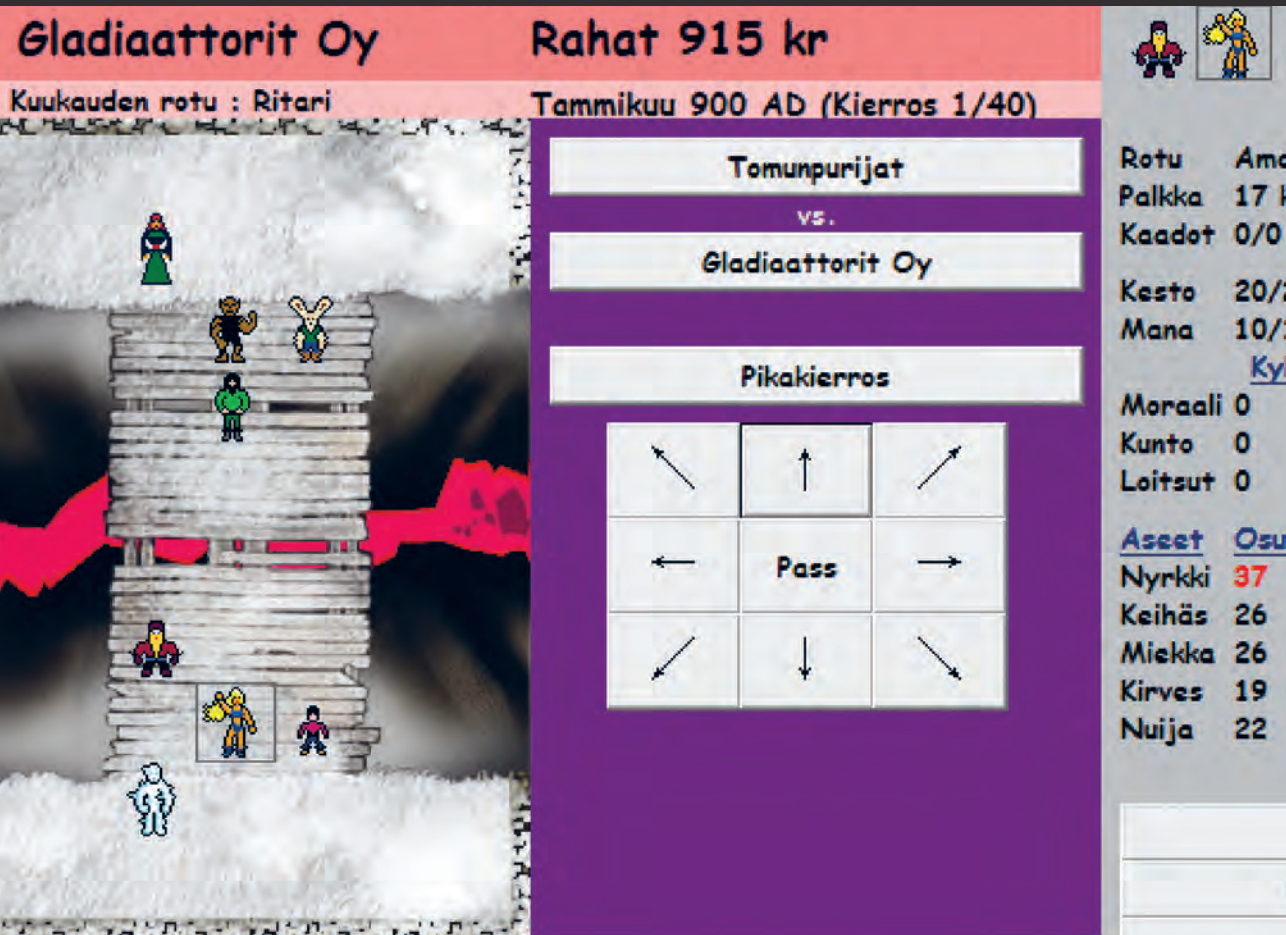
PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
Housemarque

PUBLISHER
Infogrames

Supreme Snowboarding (published as *Boarder Zone* in the United States) is remembered as one of the most impressive games of its time. Thanks to its spectacular visuals, 3dfx Interactive and Intel, for example, used the game to showcase the performance capabilities of their hardware at the 1998 E3 and the Game Developers Conference, among other events. *Supreme Snowboarding* also marks the first Finnish digital game to sell more than a million copies internationally.

In addition to its graphics, *Supreme Snowboarding* also received praise for its gameplay, and more specifically for its well thought out controls which comprised the arrow keys and three action buttons. The players delighted in the opportunity to pick their downhill routes freely within the game's fields, which was quite rare back in the day. *Supreme Snowboarding* received a sequel, *Transworld Snowboarding*, in 2002, which was the first Finnish release designed for the Xbox gaming console.

1999

105

200

AREENA 5

AREENA 5

Originating from a text game experiment made for the Commodore 64, the *Areena* franchise has established itself in the hearts of Finnish players. *Areena 5* is the last of the series made for the Windows operating system, as the newer releases are browser-based.

Game developer Seppo Suorsa has stated that the *Areena* emerged from the idea of combining a football manager game and fantasy themed role-playing game. This idea gave birth to a series of inventive management simulations, where the player's task is to guide their band of gladiators from humble beginnings to the big leagues. The *Areena* games never sought to impress by their visuals, but rather focused on the gameplay. In addition to thinking of suitable strategies, the management of the team's finances also requires attention.

The latest and seventh part of the franchise was published in 2014. All of the games, save for the very first one, have been available for download from the game developer's website free of charge.

2001

MAX PAYNE

MAX PAYNE

PLATFORM
Windows (and others)

DEVELOPER
Remedy

PUBLISHER
Gathering of Developers

A third-person action game, *Max Payne* was both a critical and commercial success and the best-selling Finnish computer game of its time. The production values of *Max Payne* were high and the game was made in grand style. For instance, the developers visited New York to film locations that were used to help provide an authentic atmosphere.

In addition to its storytelling, *Max Payne* is remembered for the bullet time feature. Inspired by the Hong Kong action flicks of the 1990s, the bullet time mode slows down the events of the game world, allowing the player to act more quickly than the surrounding world. The rather dark plot of the game presents the player with a revenge story, where Max wages his one-man war against criminals.

In 2002, Remedy sold the rights to *Max Payne* to Rockstar Games, who went on to publish subsequent sequels. The game came full circle in terms of its movie inspirations in 2008, as *Max Payne* was made into a Hollywood movie starring Mark Wahlberg.

RALLY TROPHY

PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
Bugbear

PUBLISHER
JoWood

Rally Trophy is still fondly thought of amongst Finnish car enthusiasts and car game lovers alike. Unlike conventional racing games which tend to focus on modern vehicles, *Rally Trophy* hosts historic cars from the 1960s and 1970s. The game includes a number of classics of the era, such as the Mini Cooper, the Volvo Amazon and the Ford Escort. The part of the co-driver of the Finnish language version of the game was performed by Finnish rally legend Rauno Aaltonen.

Rally Trophy is essentially a fairly serious game; it could almost be thought of as a rally simulator. The realism of the game is not limited to just the superficial aspects, as the very believable handling of the various car models provides a tough nut to crack especially for inexperienced players.

Rally Trophy marked the first release for Bugbear, which has been focusing on racing games. Bugbear later became known especially for the *FlatOut* franchise, which in turn was all about relaxed and reckless driving.

2001

115

2024

STAIR DISMOUNT / PORRASTURVAT

Force: |||||||||||
Heading: 0.00°
Pitch: -0.00°

STAIR DISMOUNT / PORRASTURVAT

PLATFORM
Windows (and others)

DEVELOPER
tAAt

PUBLISHER
tAAt

Porrasturvat is an interesting example of the creativity of game creators operating in the margins. The player must nudge a figure called Spector down the stairs, causing him as much injury as possible. The more injured Spector is, the more points the player scores for their performance.

According to the game's programmer, Jetro Lauha, he came up with this exceptional idea for a game as he was about to stumble on the stairs at his workplace. Published under the demoscene group tAAt, established in 1992, *Porrasturvat* was made for the 2002 Assembly game development competition, which it also went on to win.

Porrasturvat is one of the first computer games to make use of realistic physics modelling and the so-called ragdoll effect. Versions for Mac, Linux and a variety of smartphones have since been made, and the game has also received a number of sequels based on the same theme.

LECTURER MARKKU REUNANEN SHEDS LIGHT ON THE PAST AND PRESENT OF THE FINNISH DEMOSCENE, WHICH ALSO HAD ITS HAND IN GIVING RISE TO THE FINNISH GAME INDUSTRY.

"I am a lecturer at the Aalto University Department of Media, a position where I ended up largely through demos. I'd already taken an interest in programming, graphics and sound back in the 1980s when I got my first home computer. I come from the rather small town of Vammala, which didn't really have an active scene. We saw some demos and the like in the early 1990s, and together with some like-minded, enthusiastic people, with few contacts and limited knowledge, we began to explore what this 'demoscene' was about. Eventually in 1994, we got to experience the grand world style as we took off to the Assembly demoparty in Helsinki and the Abduction demoparty in Rovaniemi. It was a slow and difficult start, as we didn't really have any contacts; we had to build a team and learn the tools, software and other technologies more or less from scratch.

I was the founder of our demo group called Fit (1991). The first demo by Fit was *Division by Zero* (1993), to which a friend drew some pictures, and then the program displayed the pictures and played music on the background. Soon we began to learn things, making 3D graphics and getting some multi-channel music to play. When things really took off, the development was rapid, and we discovered some documentation and so on. Later, as young researchers together with Antti Silvasti, we wondered if demos were ever researched academically. We began to make a list, which grew into the *Demo Scene Research* bibliography. My licentiate thesis for Helsinki University of Technology was about demos. The number and quality of publications on the subject was not terribly high at the time, so I aimed to remedy the situation on my part.

The origin of 'demo' is the word demonstration, in this case usually attempting to showcase a new technology or audiovisual expertise. Demos are executable programs that display graphics and often play music. They are expressions of expertise made both for the community and for the makers themselves. An intro, in turn, is a small demo, ranging from one to sixty-four kilobytes in size. An intro can also refer to 'crack intros,' which were placed at the start of pirated games to display prior to the actual game. The first intros were often mainly customisations of the starting screens of games, replacing the original graphics and texts. These began to appear as early as the start of the 1980s. Various audiovisual effects in crack intros became common in the mid-1980s. Soon after this, there was a rise in demos that were no longer associated with games per se, but functioned as independent works. Initially, for example, the music might just be snatched off wherever instead of being composed by the creators. By the 1990s, a sort of artistry had begun to form, and people took pride in the fact that the music, graphics and code were home-made.

Of course, the thing about demos is that if you've made some yourself, you'll be able to better appreciate and understand them. At times, people have attempted to make demos more visible and understandable by taking them to an art museum, for

instance. On the other hand, some of the demos made are so marginal that they must be intended for a very limited audience. It's difficult to talk about the scene as a whole, as it is rather divided into a variety of device-specific and national scenes. Then, you have these old crackers, and there may be multiple generations inside the same devices or countries, and so on. What you appreciate now, what you've seen when you were young and what left an impression creates this kind of multidimensional nature. For my own part, I best recall the *State of the Art* demo (1992) on the Amiga, which had the kind of techno video look, which at that time was my favourite style of music, too. Realising you could do such a different type of demo, and that not everything had to be cut from the same cloth, was an awe-inspiring moment for me.

Back in the day, I mostly contemplated demos on the basis of whether they were technically feasible, new and amazing. Nowadays, I observe the overall design and rhythm more, and this is the direction the demoscene has taken anyway. For example, in the 1980s and early 1990s, a new way to scroll would be considered super cool. During the 1990s, the demoscene itself started talking about design specifically. We began discussing design, creating uniform colour schemes, pacing the demos differently and so forth. The sense of community was a natural part of it all, and very few people would probably be making demos if it weren't for demoparties, demo groups and friends as well as being a part of the scene.

The demoscene is, on the whole, a fairly Western and Northern European phenomenon, whose heyday coincides largely with Commodore computers. Countries where Commodore 64 and Amiga devices were abundant were the heartland of the demoscene. Since the demoscene has its roots in crackers and pirated games, and the Commodore 64 was once a very popular computer, the development grew and then continued quite naturally on the Amiga.

Demoparties, in turn, were initially called copy-parties before any actual demoscene existed. In the Netherlands and Germany, homes to Europe's largest piracy and cracker scenes, people gathered at weekends to copy games from each other and to show the latest titles they'd acquired. Later on, as piracy had disappeared from the mainstream, or at least from sight for various reasons, these meetings started to focus more on demos. In Finland, one event rises above all others: Assembly, which has been organised since 1992, and can stand up to international level in terms of its size, and especially earlier also in terms of contests held for demos, audio and graphics. Typically, these major traditional parties, The Gathering, The Party – which has since ceased – and Assembly, have at some point began to include gaming. They've come full circle in a sense. However, the social aspect has always been there, nowadays perhaps even more than any real competitive atmosphere.

The fundamental and obvious connection between digital games and the demoscene is that the cracker scene, of course, was entirely dependent on games, and revolved around them completely. The cracking and circulating of games is the kind of connection which exists historically, even if in the case of the demoscene it has practically died out. The other tie-in is that many game companies of the 1990s especially were founded by people in the demoscene. After all, the people of the demoscene have played a lot. Back in the 1990s, this was not widely discussed, as the demoscene aimed to stand apart from mere players. Nowadays, gaming has become more presentable, and of course skills in performance oriented low level programming languages as well as pixel graphics and composing are well suited for making games. Of course, today there's so much computing power and you can always buy a new graphics card and so on, that breaking the limits is no longer really a thing, except perhaps in terms of algorithms, style and space, how small a space can you fit the demo into. The hardware itself is not so constricted these days, so it's not as exhilarating to try and squeeze every last drop out of it.

It's hard to say how things went outside of Europe, but in the 1980s there was already quite a large group of crackers and early democoders moving on to making games for the C64. This was not viewed in any way strange. I personally recall how in the 1990s, when these noticeable game companies began to rise from the demoscene, the surrounding discussion had, not exactly a negative, but a rather questioning tone, "oh, he's commercialising his expertise now." Then again this was also seen as cool, since it brought visibility for the scene. On the other hand, the scene circles have lamented the fact that many of the groups that used to be active and prestigious disappeared into the gaming business, possibly never making demos again. The demoscene has given rise to such Finnish game companies as Housemarque, Remedy, Mr. Goodliving and Riot-E. Similarly, Bugbear has its background in the scene as well as the now defunct Sumea, which even took its name from a demo.

Thinking of the present and the future of the demoscene, the skill level is high. All the lessons learnt have accumulated over the years due to the fact that the same people who made demos back then are still making them now. Of course nowadays they'll have all the demands of real life with families, jobs, and so on, weighing on the background. New demos still keep appearing at a fairly stable rate, so I don't see the demoscene going away in the near future. When these old-timers start nearing the grave, perhaps the demoscene will pass away along with them. Not many young, new groups appear nowadays. The current high level may also scare people into thinking that it's not worth taking years to learn new things in order to be able to produce anything new or cool.

If you think about what your average citizen of today should know about the demoscene, the least would be the fact that such a long line of digital culture exists. Even if it's quite hidden from the

mainstream, it has given rise to a huge amount of talent. Another is the existence of such media art and a community, of which not much is known, but which has been very active and played a significant part for those involved. Rather than thinking of whatever useful business skills were acquired, I would like the latter point to be the takeaway from all this."

2003

MIKÄMIKÄ-TV

MIKÄMIKÄ-TV

PLATFORM
TV/SMS

DEVELOPER
Outer-Rim

PUBLISHER
YLE

Around the mid-2000s, various SMS based services and games had become popular screen time fillers outside of regular television broadcasts in Finland. The Finnish Broadcasting Company joined the ranks of service providers in 2003 with the *Mikämikä-TV* ('*Whatwhat TV*') quiz, playable via SMS.

The quiz was broadcast during night time on the TV2 channel, and offered the players four possible answer options to various questions, to which they had one minute to respond. The players could also order hint messages to their phones.

Mikämikä-TV was rather long-lived a production for its kind, but nevertheless public interest in these expensive SMS games began to decline over time. In April 2011, The Finnish Broadcasting Company ceased these types of paid services and began to broadcast a variety of news feeds in their stead.

2003

GAME DESIGNER JAAKKO KEMPPAINEN REMINISCES ABOUT TV GAMES, A GAME HISTORY CURIOSITY IN FINLAND, SOME OF WHICH HE ALSO TOOK PART IN CREATING.

"The earliest TV game I remember seeing is probably *Vesisota* ('*Water Wars*'). The players would send SMS commands to make the game characters move in a grid and shoot at each other with water guns. I don't recall seeing anything like it before this. My career with TV games began when I moved on from multimedia and programming, and started working for Outer-Rim in 2002. Our first projects were also television games playable via SMS, such as *Putti* mini golf, quiz games, memory games and so on. The vast multitude of such games came out between 2003 and 2006, as a sort of a golden age for TV games. On one of the company's summer outings, we visited a local home electronics store and tuned all the television receivers to display the games we'd made. Our games were broadcasted on four different channels simultaneously, as I recall.

Starting the work on our first TV game was exciting in all possible ways. We felt like the project would be a dark horse, as no one had done anything like it before, and thus it was also uncertain whether it would amount to anything. Expectations were rather high and the project had massive potential to grow into something really huge. The initial success was indeed quite good, we made more games, the company kept growing and so on. At best, we had eight people making games, and these TV games were at the heart of everything.

TV games such as these no longer exist in the same sense as they did in the early 2000s. At that time, YLE (the Finnish Broadcasting Company), for example, broadcast a test transmission after programmes ended, and commercial channels had nothing to air after official broadcasts either. SMS playable games were thought to be appropriate fillers for these times. These games were broadcast on television channels, which provided a screen for the players. The players in turn sent text messages from their mobile phones to influence the game's events. For example, *Putti* mini golf appeared as a miniature golf course on the television screen, and anyone of the viewers could start playing by sending an SMS to the number displayed on the screen. A golf ball would then appear, and after this the game was controlled by sending messages such as "strike by force 100 in the direction of 360." The lane was displayed for a few minutes and it could host as many as fifty players making attempts simultaneously. After a couple of minutes, a new lane would load onto the screen and new players could take their turn in trying out the game.

Participating in these games was technically quite difficult. The player would have to write a text message including a specific, usually one-letter command for the controls, followed by a series of numbers. This had to be sent to the correct number, and there was a several-second delay. Dozens of other players appeared simultaneously on the same small television screen. Every player's operations had to be presented in such a way that they

could make out what they were doing and also got the idea of other players' advancements. This proved quite the challenge for the developers of these games.

As I recall, back then, one SMS sent to YLE's channels would cost 70 cents, and slightly more, maybe 80 cents, for the commercial channels MTV3 and Nelonen. Subsequently, prices climbed to 95 cents per SMS. This was indeed quite expensive and the topic was discussed, for example, in an editorial of a Finnish tabloid newspaper *Iltalehti*. The editor ruminated that these idle, trivial games were depriving children and the parents of children of their money. And there were indeed some players who must have sunk hundreds of euros per month on these SMS games.

However, any profit from these games was primarily pocketed by telephone operators and television channels, and the game developers received a rather small percentage in the end. I was left with the impression that a large part of the players were adults who played on a workplace provided mobile plan or similar. Peak hours for *Putti* were in the afternoon before the popular Finnish soap drama *Salatut Elämät*, whereas *Mikämikä-TV* which, as I recall, was broadcast during night-time on YLE channels, attracted players evenly throughout the transmission. The same people might play this quiz game every night for weeks on end, which is of course terribly expensive. As far as I see it, a big incentive for such games has always been that people get their name to appear on the TV, and it is kind of cool, especially if you manage to place high on the score list.

The general public and media perceived these games as a real gravy train, and the makers of the games as rich tycoons, and so on. These journalists had made some calculations based on maybe an hour of following the programme, counting the number of text messages coming in, multiplying the numbers by the prices and pulling some more numbers out of their hats. Then they figured all of the money must go to the developers of the game, concluding that they must earn tons. While fingers were pointed mainly at the game developers, broadcasting companies did receive some of the blame, too. No one seemed to notice the phone operators' part of the business. In reality, we received only a very small part while the phone operators and television broadcasters hogged the larger pieces of the pie.

The Finnish game company RedLynx also made some successful games. Their games were very pretty and often much simpler than ours. Perhaps this was also the reason behind their greater success. Later on, games like the beach volley game were introduced – I cannot recall whether this particular game was produced by RedLynx. Anyway, the game included a show hostess in a bikini playing beach volley against the players. This showed such direction in innovation that the shine of our nerdy games began to wane little by little at this point.

I suppose at this point the so-called early adopters started to move on. New game concepts were introduced and the players' journeys would continue. Foreign trade never really picked up either. We did have some games broadcasting in Hong Kong or wherever. There were, however, so many intermediaries, that after all this I'm not even sure how much money eventually came back to us. Around this time, I was beginning to feel a little bored with this job myself so, after taking a year off, I went to work for another company to create casual games, virtual worlds and that kind of stuff.

Looking at the TV games of today, a variety of guessing games and such, you must admit they're pretty lightweight for games. Back when we were making similar games, they would invariably include strong gameplay features. Although they were designed to turn a profit, we always tried to make the games fair to an extent so that people had a genuine possibility to succeed instead of simply being cheated out of their money. Since then, game hosts have gained a pivotal role in trying to attract players to call in and participate in the games. The medium of television invites human interaction, and the current trend with these games seems to revolve quite strongly around a living person.

In a way, these TV games were ahead of their time. I believe that these SMS games were a Finnish invention, but they never got much coverage abroad. There are times when you might be channel surfing in a hotel room somewhere in the world and happen to bump into something similar. Now, years later, I've met people who are telling me they are doing "this kind of interactive television, and they have games on TV, and this is a rising trend."

In Finland, this phenomenon was panned completely and sunk into oblivion. It is such an oddity in our national game history that only a few people would even want to look back on the whole era, and nowadays it is rather difficult to find much information about these games."

AIRBUCCANEERS

AIRBUCCANEERS

PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
LudoCraft

PUBLISHER
LudoCraft

Modding, aka modifying of computer software and games, has long been a good way of making the transition from a game enthusiast to a pro. *AirBuccaneers* began as a mod for *UnrealTournament 2004,* and it placed third in the international Make Something Unreal Contest in 2005.

The game pits forest bandits and notorious Vikings against each other in a battle for the domination of the North. In the Deathmatch type matches players steer hot-air balloons equipped with cannons, which are used to fight other teams. The landscapes and themes of the game have a strong basis in old Finnish or Northern mythology.

AirBuccaneers was born in the University of Oulu Game Research Unit, which has operated as an independent company under the name LudoCraft since the beginning of 2007. Alongside other projects, LudoCraft has also produced the imaginative *Dragonfly Variations* (2005) and *Spawns of Deflebub* (2006) mods for the UT2004 platform.

2004

2004

PATHWAY TO GLORY

PLATFORM
Nokia N-Gage

DEVELOPER
RedLynx

PUBLISHER
Nokia

This turn-based strategy game, released exclusively for the Nokia N-Gage gaming phone, was an exceptionally ambitious undertaking for a gaming device with such a small screen. Thousands of images of authentic venues formed the basis for the level design of *Pathway to Glory*, and the developers consulted experts on the Second World War to ensure the accuracy of the historical aspects featured in the game. Movements of real Finnish soldiers were recorded through motion capture technology in order to make the characters as realistic as possible.

Pathway to Glory was also technically very complex, as it utilized the GPRS network for its multiplayer game, bringing together players from all around the world. *Pathway to Glory* attracted plenty of positive reviews, and it has been considered as one of the best games released for the N-Gage. The N-Gage itself, published in 2003, never achieved wide popularity. However, the device seems to have become quite the collector's item nowadays.

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2006

DRAGONBANE

DRAGONBANE

TYPE
Larp

DEVELOPER
International production team

A live action role-playing game organised in Älvdalen, Sweden, between July and August of 2006, *Dragonbane* had a budget of nearly one million euros, and is remembered for its high production values. On site there was, for instance, a mechanical fire-breathing dragon. The production of the dragon's movements caused the organisers plenty of headaches.

Loosely based on Finnish author Mike Pohjola's work, *Myrskyn aika* ('*The Time of the Storm*'), the setting for *Dragonbane*'s adventures was the world of Valenor, which drew inspiration from the Iron and Middle Ages. The players could choose to take on the role of a dragon worshipper, dragontamer or witch.

Dragonbane has gone down in the history of Finnish and Nordic games as an ambitious project, which also received a lot of attention from the press back in its day. The Cinderhill set village, built during the year preceding the event, was left unused after the game ended. In the end, the village was burned down and cleared by the landowners in 2012.

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ANGRY BIRDS

ANGRY BIRDS

PLATFORM
iOS (and others)

DEVELOPER
Rovio

PUBLISHER
Rovio

With over several hundred million players and more than a billion downloads, *Angry Birds* is without a doubt one of the most successful products of the Finnish game industry. While originally published for Apple's touchscreen devices, after its rapid success the game has been ported to various devices and systems.

The *Angry Birds* brand has been successful throughout the world. Almost everything imaginable from soft toys to cookbooks and from key rings to theme parks has been made, sold and marketed under the wings of these fierce birds.

A number of expansions and various themed add-ons or sequels have been published after the game itself. For example, *Angry Birds Space*, released in March 2012, was marketed in collaboration with NASA. Additional releases include *Star Wars* and *Transformers* themed games, among others. The actual *Angry Birds 2* was published in 2015, and the animated film *Angry Birds* landed in movie theatres in the summer of 2016.

2009

CRAYON PHYSICS DELUXE

CRAYON PHYSICS DELUXE

PLATFORM
Windows (and others)

DEVELOPER
Petri Purho

PUBLISHER
Kloonigames

Developed by Petri Purho, *Crayon Physics Deluxe* is one of the most distinctive Finnish game releases. This puzzle game won the grand prize at the 2008 Independent Games Festival. Purho designed and programmed the first version of *Crayon Physics* in five days as part of his broader project focusing on the rapid development of game ideas.

In *Crayon Physics Deluxe*, the player must carry a ball on the screen to a predetermined goal. This is achieved by doodling among the figures and shapes already existing on the screen. The doodles are then turned into mobile elements in the 2D world by the game's physics engine.

The game's graphics, as the name suggests, look like they have been drawn with a crayon. The sketchbook-like layout encourages players to try and doodle all kinds of different solutions and structures to advance in the game.

2009

TRIALS HD

TRIALS HD

PLATFORM
Xbox 360
Windows

DEVELOPER
RedLynx

PUBLISHER
RedLynx

Voted by Xbox players as the best arcade game and the best innovation in 2009, *Trials HD* is basically a rather simple, but extremely challenging motorcycle game, which has sold over two million copies worldwide.

The player must pass the increasingly difficult tracks within the time limits and with as few mistakes as possible. While the game does not aim at realism, the controls of the bike and driver are still credible in its own way. The controls, consisting of a couple of buttons, are easy to get a quick grip of, but true command of the game requires trial and error.

Trials HD contains a large number of different secrets and references; so-called "Easter eggs." All of these combined reportedly form a greater mystery, the brainchild of RedLynx's creative director Antti Ilvessuo, which the gaming community managed to solve in 2012. In total, five *Trials* games have been published by 2016.

2009

TRINE

TRINE

Trine has sold well over a million copies and has been widely acclaimed for its gameplay, as well as its beautiful graphics and dreamlike atmosphere. *Trine* also received the E3 Editors' Choice award for Best Downloadable Game in 2009.

Trine, the third release in line by Frozenbyte, is a platform puzzle game set in a fantasy world. The player must solve various puzzles they encounter by alternating between and combining the talents of the three playable characters, a knight, thief and wizard.

In 2014, Frozenbyte released an improved version of the game under the name *Trine: Enchanted Edition*. It was also followed by sequels *Trine 2* and *Trine 3*, of which *Trine 2* won the Best Artistic Achievement award at the 2012 Nordic Game Awards gala.

2009

2010

FLOORBALL LEAGUE

FLOORBALL LEAGUE

PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
Prodigium

PUBLISHER
Prodigium

Developed with the help of financial aid granted by the Nordic Game Program, *Floorball League*, like the 1996 Swedish *MER Innebandy*, is one of the few floorball games ever made.

Prodigium Game Studios managed to acquire the official sports licence for the game, which was then made in collaboration with the International Floorball Federation, the Finnish Floorball Federation and the Finnish Floorball League. The licence allowed the game to include actual players from the Finnish Floorball League as well as the World Cup. Different game modes include, for instance, show-matches, league matches, the World Championships and a penalty shoot-out.

The developer of the game has given the gaming community access to the team and league editors of *Floorball League*, so players can create more content if they wish, and keep compositions of the teams equivalent to reality.

2010

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KING OF OPERA

PLATFORM
iOS
Android
Windows Phone

DEVELOPER
Tuokio

PUBLISHER
Tuokio

2010

Party gaming on tablets or similar mobile devices can be seen as a kind of continuum of traditional board gaming. Finnish game company Tuokio has specialised in making a variety of touchscreen playable multiplayer party games, of which *King of Opera* is the first in line.

In *King of Opera*, each player controls their own opera singer with the objective of getting past the other players and into the limelight. The game, based on one-touch mechanics, is a kind of an electronic version of the *King of the Hill* children's game. The game can be played by up to four players simultaneously on the same device.

After its release, *King of Opera* achieved moderate success. The game turned out quite popular particularly in Asia, and even spent a short while on the top list of paid iPad applications in Hong Kong.

2011

ECLIPSE

ECLIPSE

TYPE
Board game

DEVELOPER
Touko Tahkokallio
Sampo Sikiö

PUBLISHER
Lautapelit.fi

Various board games that require time and concentration have become increasingly popular. The space themed *Eclipse* is a great example of such a modern game aimed at a more mature audience.

In *Eclipse*, players control the civilisations of their own empires in an attempt to expand and to defeat their opponents at the same time. To achieve this, players must research and develop a variety of technologies, manage resources, wage wars while conquering new areas and so on.

Eclipse has received praise in particular for its functional resource management and basic mechanics. Some board game enthusiasts have considered it as one of the best, if not the best Finnish board game. The website BoardGameGeek, for example, has ranked *Eclipse* as one of the top twenty board games ever made.

2011

WILDCHORDS

WILDCHORDS

Various educational games and applications have been developed for all kinds of special purposes. *WildChords*, developed by Ovelin, is an application aimed at beginners interested in playing the guitar, and is played by strumming a real guitar. The aim is to learn the basics of playing the guitar in a fun and easy way.

The plot of *WildChords* is loosely based on the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; the player is tasked with catching animals who have escaped from the zoo by playing their favourite chords. The game's successful implementation led it to be elected as the best European educational game in 2011.

Since then, the developers of *WildChords* have published *Yousician*, a more serious application aimed at learning an instrument. Towards the end of 2014, Ovelin also changed its company name to Yousician.

2011

2012

CLASH OF CLANS

CLASH OF CLANS

PLATFORM
iOS
Android

DEVELOPER
Supercell

PUBLISHER
Supercell

The strategy and building game *Clash of Clans* is one of the most profitable Finnish games ever published. In *Clash of Clans*, players govern their own village, which they defend from other villages and clans. Due to its free-to-play model, starting and playing the game is free, but a variety of items to boost progress or success may be purchased through micropayments.

The success of *Clash of the Clans* has brought wide recognition for its developer, Supercell, which was founded in 2010 by game developer veterans who previously worked for Sumea (acquired by Digital Chocolate in 2004). In 2012, Supercell was honoured with both the title of Finnish game developer of the year and best Nordic start-up company of the year.

To give an idea of the scale of Supercell's growth and success, it is worth mentioning that Chinese Tencent bought a little less than three quarters of the company from the previous owner, Japanese Softbank, for 6.45 billion euros in June 2016.

HILL CLIMB RACING

2012

HILL CLIMB RACING

PLATFORM
iOS
Android
Windows Phone

DEVELOPER
Fingersoft

PUBLISHER
Fingersoft

Hill Climb Racing is a racing game series for mobile devices, made by Toni Fingerroos who programmed his first game already at the age of 10. The game has reached top spots on both the App Store and Google Play download charts in the United States.

The controls in *Hill Climb Racing* are limited to pressing the gas and brake pedals. All of the vehicles are more or less rickety, and the environments become more imaginative and more difficult as the game progresses. The goal is to get as far as possible before the fuel runs out or a fatal accident occurs.

Following the success of *Hill Climb Racing*, Fingersoft has grown from a one-man bedroom code shop into a successful game developer and publishing house. A sequel containing a multiplayer option, *Hill Climb Racing 2*, was released in late 2016.

LEGEND OF GRIMROCK

LEGEND OF GRIMROCK

PLATFORM
Windows
macOS
Linux
iOS

DEVELOPER
Almost Human

PUBLISHER
Almost Human

Almost Human was founded by four developers who had earned their spurs working for Remedy and Futuremark. Their first game, *Legend of Grimrock*, was published in 2011, only a year after the company was started. Following in the footsteps of classics of the past decades, such as *Dungeon Master* and *Eye of the Beholder* series, *Legend of Grimrock* is a classical dungeon crawler with a modern-day appearance.

Legend of Grimrock is faithful to its predecessors, right down to the game mechanics: movements span the whole length of the screen and the player can only turn by 90 degrees at a time. Unlike its contemporaries, *Legend of Grimrock* does not provide much help or advice, and the player must figure the game world out on their own.

This debut game by Almost Human received laudatory reviews around the world, and after its release became the most downloaded game on Steam. A sequel for the game, *Legend of Grimrock 2*, has since been published, and the game has also been ported on to Apple's mobile devices.

2013
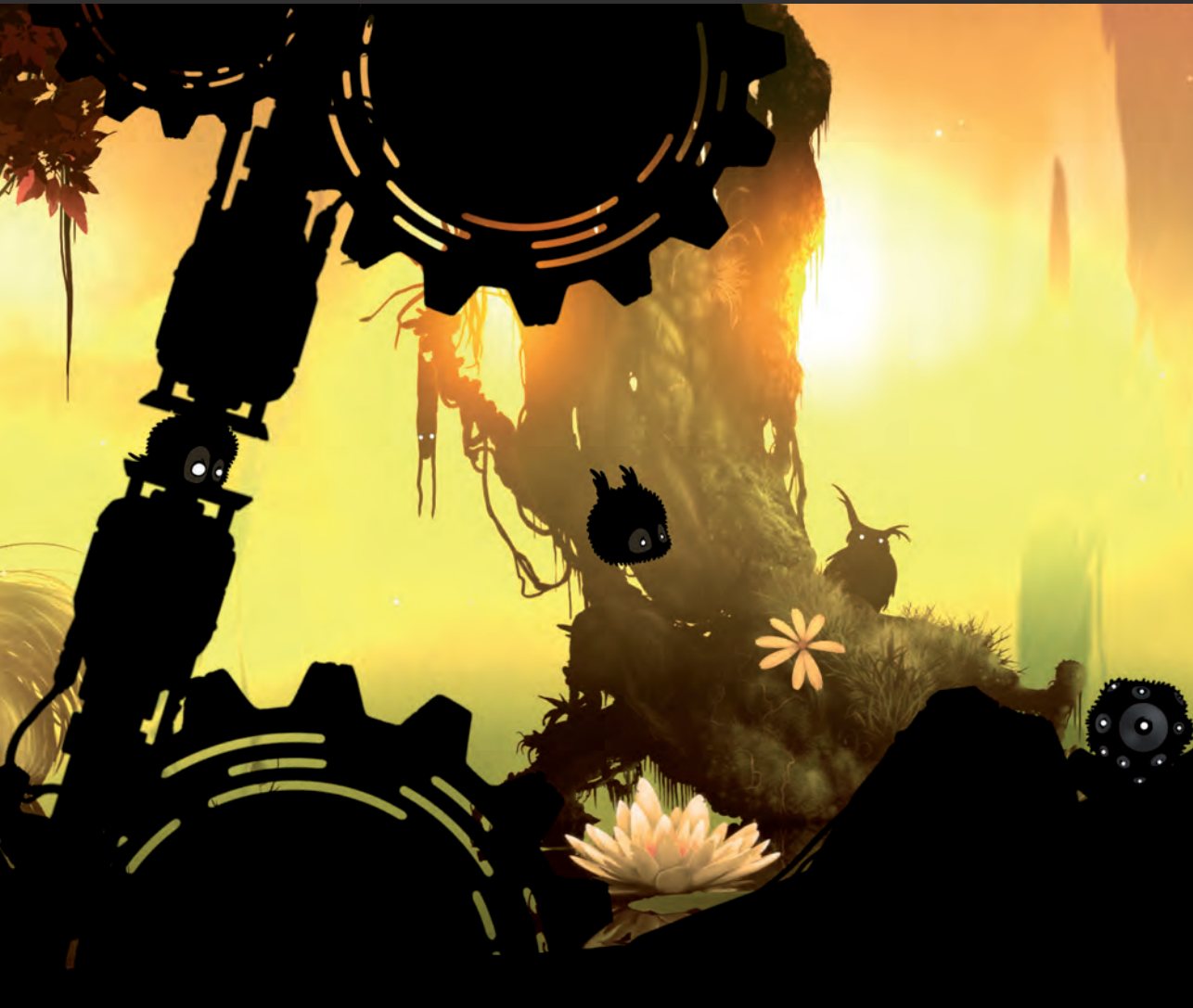
BADLAND

BADLAND

Badland, winner of the Apple iPad Game of the Year Award in 2013, is an atmospheric, side-scrolling action and puzzle game. The gameplay of *Badland* has been optimally refined with mobile devices in mind; touching the screen makes the game character rise higher, while lateral movement and falling down occurs automatically.

The levels of the game are divided into themes according to seasons, which change little by little as the game progresses. *Badland* has garnered praise for both its successful appearance and dream-like style and atmosphere.

Frogmind, founded by Johannes Vuorinen and Juhana Myllys who have formerly worked on the *Trials* games at RedLynx, became one of the biggest Finnish indie developer successes following the release of *Badland*. Supercell bought more than half of Frogmind in the autumn of 2016 for the price of seven million euros.

2013

THE SWAPPER
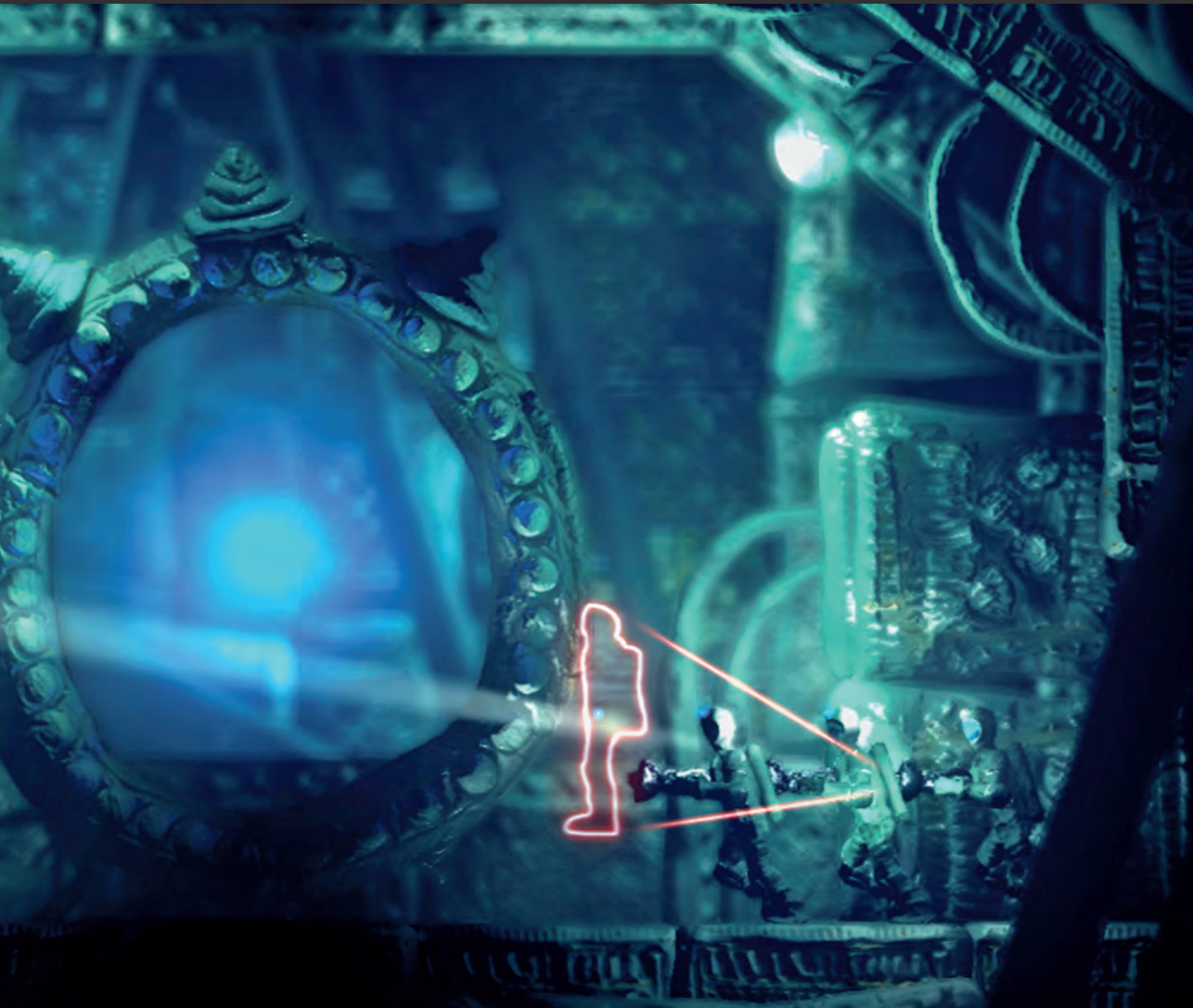
THE SWAPPER

PLATFORM
Windows (and others)

DEVELOPER
Facepalm Games

PUBLISHER
Facepalm Games

One of the first game projects to receive funding from the American Indie Fund, *The Swapper* originally started as a leisure project for two students. This science fiction themed puzzle game leans on its strong storytelling, and its specialty is levels and platforms made of clay. The developers of *The Swapper* created scale models, which they shot and recorded into the game instead of resorting to conventional, computer generated 3D models.

The idea of *The Swapper* is also innovative. The player can create synchronously moving clones of their character, and in order to survive the dangers and obstacles of the game world the player can change the places of, or "swap", these characters. In addition to receiving positive reviews from around the world, *The Swapper* has won numerous awards, including the Best International Game Award at the 2011 Free Play event.

2015

CITIES: SKYLINES

CITIES: SKYLINES

PLATFORM
Windows
macOS
Linux

DEVELOPER
Colossal Order

PUBLISHER
Paradox Interactive

The city-building game *Cities: Skylines* took Finland by surprise in 2015. The game, which has, for instance, reaped the Finnish Game Developer of the Year award for Colossal Order, was both a critical and commercial success. On the week of its release, the game sold more than 500,000 copies worldwide, and by the end of 2015 it had already sold approximately 1.8 million copies. It could almost be said that the game has conquered the grandfather of the genre as players disappointed with the latest instalment of the *SimCity* series are known to have switched to *Cities: Skylines*.

Built on the Unity engine, the game is designed with possibilities for a variety of building and modifying in mind. The game developers encourage players to produce their own content and game modifications. *Cities: Skylines* has also been used as an aid to real-life urban planning. Colossal Order has been continuously releasing more content for the game, and official patches have added, for instance, a day-night cycle, natural disasters and snow with many other wintery elements.

2015

TUIJA LINDÉN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR PELIT MAGAZINE, TALKS ABOUT GAME MAGAZINES AND THE FINNISH GAME INDUSTRY.

"I have worked as the chief editor of *Pelit* ('*Games*') magazine for 25 years. I've also been involved with various computer magazines: starting up *Mikrobitti*, working for *Tietokone* and being the managing editor for *C-lehti*. After sort of drifting on to this side, I've now worked with magazines my whole life.

My own game history started by playing *Bubble Bobble*, it must have been one of the very first. We played it a lot at work, and I'd still be quite happy to play more. Another game I enjoyed playing was *Rainbow Islands*. *Dungeon Master*, of course, made a lasting impression. Some of my most treasured gaming memories include LucasArts adventure games, such as *Monkey Island*. As for Finnish games, the *Legend of Grimrock* series is close to my heart. Back in the golden age of the 1990s, games were quite literally played until "worn out," and that was part of the fun. At some point during the 2000s, a huge number of war games came out, but in a kind of a backlash I didn't want to play them at all. Since then, gaming has taken a bit of a back seat for me. I have to confess that nowadays I don't really play much. I try to go through all these Finnish games and mobile games as much as possible. The first mobile game that made an impression was *Angry Birds*. I've probably played through all of the possible levels. I really enjoyed playing it, and still have all of the games on my mobile. Somehow I feel that the kind of long-term, all-night gaming sessions are no longer part of my world. It occasionally gets rather hard on you that games often require quite a bit of playtime before you can write a review

you can stand behind. Playing can feel like work, for sure. I do still enjoy playing games that are mentally challenging and have a good plot, but I mostly tend to play lighter games on the iPad.

Pelit magazine first came out in March 1992. Prior to that, we'd made a series of computer game yearbooks, *Tietokonepelien vuosikirja*, since 1987, from one to three volumes per year. The first of these books came to be when Risto "Nordic" Hieta, Niko Nirvi and I rounded up all the game reviews from *Mikrobitti* and *C-lehti*, which was a Commodore magazine. The first yearbook had a short review text and one black and white image for each game. There were also a few additional pieces written specifically for the book. The yearbooks were a success, and people still recall them with nostalgia. There's this retro boom currently in the game world: people are combing through second-hand bookshops and such for these yearbooks, but they are very rare. The yearbooks were made until 1991, when three volumes came out: the spring and autumn editions, as well as a PC games' yearbook. At this point, the need and desire to have a magazine dedicated to games was great. Around this time, *C-lehti* was discontinued as the Finnish importer of Commodores went bankrupt. We then established the *Pelit* magazine, in a manner of speaking at least. *Tietokonepelien vuosikirja* went by the name *Pelit* at the time, and we simply expanded it into the magazine. This is the reason behind the simple name of the magazine.

Other game magazines have come and gone, but *Pelit* has been successful in staying relevant and interesting. We have monitored the market closely, and shaped the magazine according to it. We've been able to adapt, and we've worked together with our community since the beginning. In 1996, we set up Pelit BBS, and in 1997 we went online. In a sense, we built a community before such a word even existed. This happened quite by accident, I don't think we could manage to do the same again. We started as an Amiga, ST and C64 magazine. At some point, the PC came along, and towards the end of the 1990s we turned purely into a PC magazine. Then, along came the PlayStations and we established a magazine called *Peliasema* ('*Game Station*'), which was published for about four years. Subsequently, we decided that *Peliasema* should be merged with *Pelit*. That was the first time we involved consoles. We were at our grandest at that time, and had a circulation of about 40,000 for a long time. It was the golden age.

Game magazines have been important to the Finnish gaming enthusiasts, since prior to the Internet information was not easily obtainable. There were some English magazines for sale at Finnish kiosks, but they did not sell significantly. We had some licensed magazines, such as *PC Gamer* and others, as well as a Nintendo magazine called *Super Power*. *Pelaaja* ('*Player*') was launched fifteen years ago, and remains the only one to survive alongside *Pelit*. The situation in Finland is actually rather exceptional in the sense that we still have two print magazines.

Game magazines were the first to migrate to the Web, and since it is hard to make an earning online, little by little they all went under. Nowadays, YouTubers are the ones who devour websites. People used to play by themselves, but nowadays watching other people play is great entertainment.

Long before Facebook, our discussion forum participants always had to post on their own name, and their accounts were bound to their subscription number. You must be a subscriber to join in. No one could hide behind an alias. These members then began to meet each other at various gatherings and became friends. Discussions were terribly tidy because no one would fool around under their own name. Of course it's quite different nowadays even on Facebook, but at that time things were a bit different. The staff also participated under their own names, answered questions, were given direct feedback and presented with wishes. For example, we might ask what kind of a cover the readers would like to see on the next issue. It was rather simple, but very important to them that they had a direct connection with us. We genuinely hear our readers out, and we interact with them all the time. This was a pretty big deal especially back in the day before Facebook.

I'm grateful that I got to see the rise of Finnish game companies, and that the trade has evolved from this nonsense industry into a significant export industry. Remedy and others have done well in the line of business, but prior to the success stories of Supercell and Rovio no one

really paid any attention to the game industry. At the end of the day, Remedy and Housemarque weren't really national gems, but now they've started receiving grand appreciation as well. The massive success of the modern time mobile games came almost out from the blue, as well as the success of Colossal Order. It was an amazing feat for a city-building game to sell more than *SimCity*, which was thought to have no competition on the market. We knew that the *Cities: Skylines* was good, but having it sell so rapidly at the time was quite incomprehensible.

For 25 years now, we've been fighting against the notion that games would only be for children's entertainment. All the statistics show that adults play, and they play a lot. Sometimes people say that they do not understand anything about games or playing. I've began to respond that they must've played *Afrikan Tähti* or something similar before. Therefore, they can understand quite enough; it's just the same whether you play on a computer or a board. It's all gaming, having fun and playing. Rovio's Peter Vesterbacka, taking off in a grand way and declaring they were the real deal and their game would be big, was rather exceptional. Nothing like this had ever happened in Finland before. In that sense, Peter made a terribly good job in daring to open up and to think globally. The industry was, in a way, also misunderstood because, for example, Housemarque and Remedy had foreign publishers and the market was somewhere outside of Finland. We've come far enough from the image of games being nonsense that Finns held a game seminar for the King

and Queen of Norway, and gave advice to Norwegians on how to do these things. Seeing the Norwegians humbly seeking to learn from us really felt good. They called us their big brother the whole time, and for once we were thinking that we Finns are really good at something. After all, we've come a long way from having to defend our works and doings to get to meet the King and Queen of Norway.

Some Finnish games are perfected, worldwide successes, but many fade straight into oblivion. And you have to learn to walk before you can run. Even Supercell and Rovio made a multitude of games before they hit the jackpot. As these wild success stories become more common, however, people actually start thinking that making games is simple and easy. This is, of course, not the case. But sure, we're great especially in the mobile business. You can't really deny it when, for example, Supercell has three different games constantly in the worldwide top ten. And now Supercell and Colossal Order, among others, are going to, or have already, hit the Chinese market. If we can break through there, we will genuinely be global. It still won't be easy, as there are quite a few cultural differences.

I do believe and trust in our cooperative, international game industry, and the fact that we still have a lot to contribute to the global game culture. We might yet see some great success stories arising from the field of serious games, for example. I'm glad that we've already come so far that there is a lot to present, and plenty which we can be proud of. People should

understand that our history is much older than Supercell and Rovio. Games have been made in Finland for all computers from the start, the Commodore 64, and so on. People have had a burning desire to make games and get into the game business already back then. The *Pelit* magazine celebrates 25 years of age on the year of independent Finland's 100th anniversary. Back in the day, I wouldn't have dreamed of seeing this day. I think we may be the world's oldest print journal about video games still in circulation – perhaps with the exception of *Famitsu*."

2016

P.O.L.L.E.N.
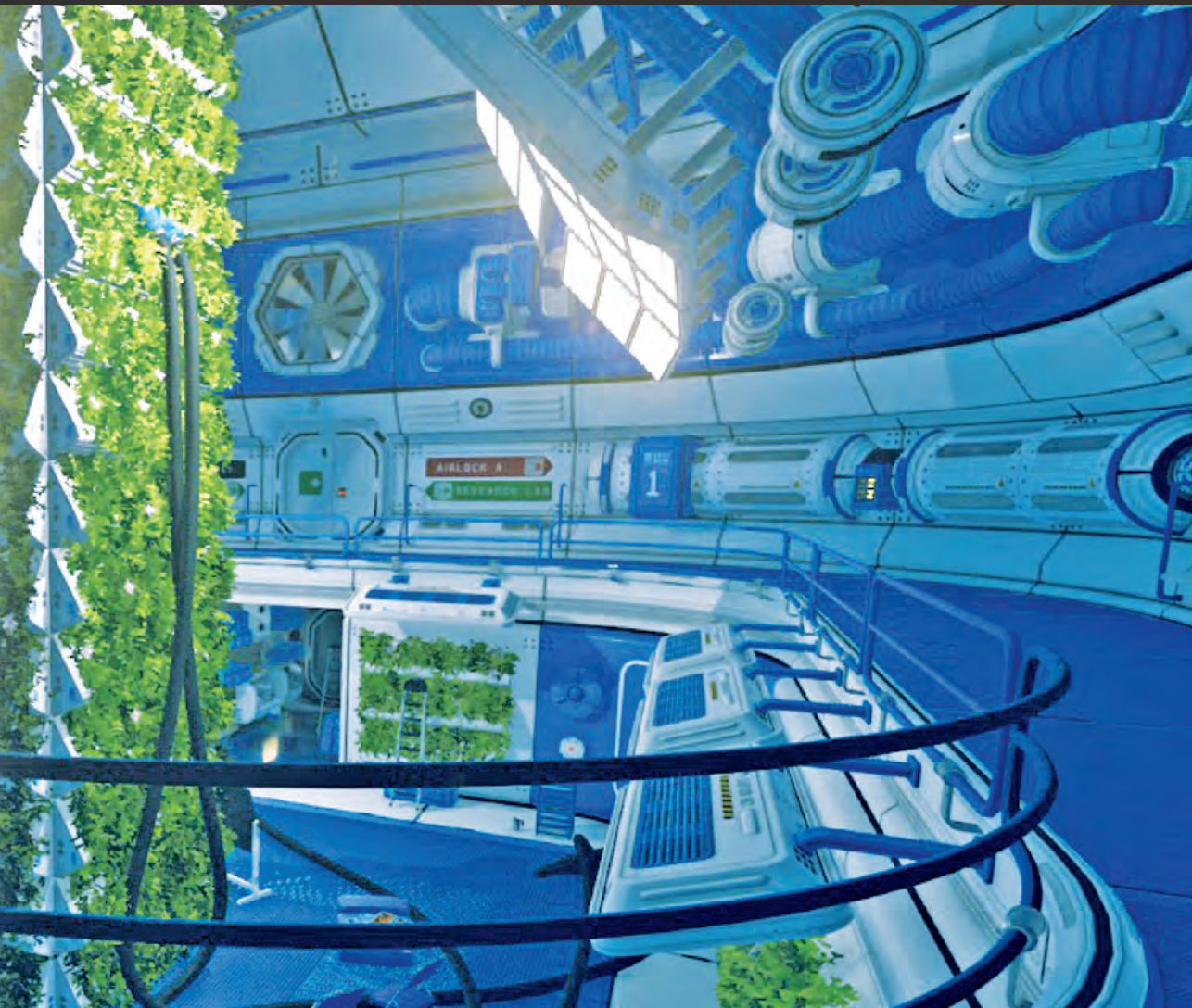
P.O.L.L.E.N.

PLATFORM
Windows
PS4

DEVELOPER
Mindfield Games

PUBLISHER
Mindfield Games

P.O.L.L.E.N., a first-person sci-fi adventure game, is the first release of Mindfield Games. It is also said to be the first Finnish game making use of higher class VR technology.

Developed specifically for virtual reality goggles, *P.O.L.L.E.N.* has garnered praise for its beautifully executed retro-futuristic world. Set on Saturn's moon, the story leads players to solve the mysteries of a space base in homage to classic science fiction adventures.

In terms of utilising the modern virtual reality technologies in Finnish computer games, *P.O.L.L.E.N.* can be thought of as a great and ambitious example. Although the game is designed with new technologies in mind, it can also be played on conventional PCs.

MY SUMMER CAR

MY SUMMER CAR

PLATFORM
Windows

DEVELOPER
Amistech

PUBLISHER
Amistech

My Summer Car, a game by Johannes Rojola, who has made various game prototypes and mods since the 1990s, is a quirky case in the field of Finnish games. It also offers exhilarating nostalgia as it takes players back a couple of decades and into the car-tinkering (and other) culture of the sparsely populated areas of Finland.

In the case of *My Summer Car*, the words "realistic simulation" almost fall short, since before the player gets to cruise along rural dirt roads on their Datsun, they must assemble the car with their own hands, even down to the smallest details of the engine. The game neither guides nor holds the player's hand, and the player has to cope with the challenges of everyday life all on their own.

The truthfulness of the game, while perhaps politically incorrect at times, has still delighted players from all over the world. This is evidenced by numerous YouTube videos and the number of people live-streaming the game as well as Early Access sales of over one million euros.

THANK YOU

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Koopee Hiltunen

Petri Saarikoski
Jaakko Suominen

Numerous Finnish
game developers
and enthusiasts

The Finnish Games Then and Now exhibition was held and organised by the University of Tampere Game Research Lab in collaboration with Media Museum Rupriikki, the Manse Games project, the Nordic DiGRA 2012 conference, Pelikonepeijoonit and Tampere University of Applied Sciences.

The exhibition project was carried out between 27 April and 17 June 2012. The exhibition was open to the public for only six days, during which it had a total of 1,018 visitors. The final selection of games consisted of 45 games made or implemented by Finnish makers, and more than 30 of them were made available for playing.

The work done for the exhibition also served as a basis for the crowdfunded Finnish Museum of Games which was established in Tampere in 2016.