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SOKAY *zine*

SOKAY ZINE ISSUE 01 / Summer 2015 / zine.sokay.net

Hello Ya'!!!

Thanks for checking out this Sokay Zine. This is our experiment at showing the world what makes our games tick. Sokay Team has been creating independent games since we graduated high school in 2002. When we first started, we weren't yet aware that each game we developed represented ourselves and our perspectives of the world. It's a recipe that makes our work distinctly Sokay.

-Bryson

SOKAY TEAM IS...



**BRYSON
WHITEMAN**
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**DAVID
RODRIGUEZ**
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**CRYPTIC
CIRCUITRY**
soundcloud.com/cryptic-circuitry



Thank you for checking out this first issue of the Sokay Zine. It was written by Bryson Whiteman. Much love to our Family, Friends, and Significant Others for the support and putting up with our bull. Big ups to the real homies - our colleagues and associates. They say It never rains in Southern California, but at Sokay we make it rain. ©2015 Sokay LLC. Sokay and the Sokay hand icon are registered trademarks of Sokay LLC.

SOKAY GO!

Ready for a retro rush? Play Sokay games directly on your phone or tablet with the Sokay Go! virtual game console. See what it's about and what's in the works.

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THE MAKING OF THUGJACKER *(Part 1)*

Travel back in time to 2002. Back when Sokay just started. Back when Thugjacker was a spark in our imagination. This is the story how it (sorta) went down.

05

W.I.P. *(work in progress)*

Some info on projects from Sokay and our homies that are currently in varying stages of development. We start with The Crazy Program and Solar Grid.

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INTERVIEW: GABRIEL GAETE *(aka Gabotron)*

Each issue we'll try to highlight an artist from different fields. I have an obsession with what drives people in their creative journeys. Check out this dose of inspiration.

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SOKAY SELECT

We feel obligated to showcase and appreciate the games that have inspired us. The Dream Machine is an eerie and atmospheric adventure game you should check out.

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SOKAY GO!™



Have you ever have a dream where you could play some retro games on your phone? I mean, some real old school stuff? Like anytime or any place? Maybe you just wanna kill some time waiting in line at the bank? Or maybe you're at the courthouse waiting to dispute a BS traffic ticket?



With Sokay Go! you can play some bite-sized games for the times in between the important stuff. We're aiming to deliver basic and offbeat experiences to make you laugh and forget about the problems of today (and everyday). Wow... what a pitch, right? Check it out and see for yourself.

Some of these games may never come out, sorry!

STEP 1

Go to "sokaygo.com" on your phone or tablet's web browser.

STEP 2

Select a game to play some Sokay games on the go!

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some day!

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THE MAKING OF THUGJACKER

THE ORIGINAL SOKAY GAME

PART 1
OF 2



They say time flies when you're having fun. It's been over 10 years since Sokay unleashed its first game upon the internet. That game was *Thugjacker: Half*, a game about a thug that gets jacked. Since then, we've challenged ourselves by making each of our games in different genres and art styles. We've learned there's no better feeling than letting your ideas run free and transforming them into a game that people around the world will play.

When we started, we had no idea how to make a video game. Of course that didn't stop us. Our story went something like this...

In summer of 2002, Ricky and I finished high school. By that time, we had collaborated on several projects. The most important being an unfinished comic project we worked on together in 9th grade. With our new "eternal summer vacation" we were looking for something new to sink our teeth into.

That summer, Alien Hominid was released. It changed our expectations of what could be achieved with a Flash game. You know... those games you play in your web browser? The game was a run 'n gun shooter game developed by Newgrounds.com creator Tom Fulp and artist Dan Paladin. It was similar to the classic *Metal Slug*, with tight controls and fluid animation. From that point we felt it was our fate to create something comparable to the console games we grew up playing.

So where did we begin? For this new project, Ricky brought the initial concept. At first, I wanted to make a game similar to *Castlevania*, except the player used a big-ass hammer instead of a whip. Ricky was imagining something along the lines of a beat 'em up game, like *Double Dragon*. I was a huge fan of that genre so I went along with it. Ricky was handling character artwork. I did backgrounds, coding, and whatever else needed to be done.



From our first project, an
uncompleted comic.



Alien Hominid was an inspiration for us.

With a goal in mind, I joined the *Flashkit Games forum* and began my journey into Flash game development. By that time, I had already been working in Flash for a few years, making personal websites and animations with my characters. I had dabbled in making basic games in Flash but I always hit walls. My understanding of Flash's coding, ActionScript, was limited. This was different now, I had a vision to stumble towards.

By stepping into Flashkit, I was stepping into the heart of the Flash game development community. What I witnessed were the masters of the craft discussing the game development process. I learned through others, reading their questions and learning from their answers. Following examples and asking for help when hitting a brick wall.

Early on we were making fast progress on

Thugjacker. With Ricky's character concept, I hit the ground running. Within a few days I had a simplistic demo working. Suddenly we had a scrolling background with parallax, a character on screen and the ability to put the beat down on basic enemies. For the first time we built something that was not just interactive but felt like a game. The first prototype showed promise but it was basic and extremely rough around the edges. It wasn't fun yet, but it gave us hope.

Thugjacker became my side project while in college. I studied animation and learned coding by trial and error in my bedroom. I was looking forward to bringing the improvements of my art into the game. Once we had that original crappy demo together, we started working on getting some real art into it. Ricky sent sketches and I'd dump them into the game. It was constant revisions as we defined the art style.

After a few months of iteration, I scrapped the original code and started a new version of the game from scratch. The original prototype showcased that what we wanted to do was possible, but it was a mess. Over the course of development I learned enough to imagine a more efficient way to structure the game. A way to gain more control over how I designed levels and enemies. This wasn't too crazy because we were so early into development. It paid off in the long run because it gave us a more solid foundation. Within a month, we were much further along than we were before.

It wasn't long until we had the majority of the gameplay worked out, or so we thought. We had a hero character walking through the mean suburbs, with a scrolling background. We had enemies that you could fight. With all the elements in place it started to feel like a game but something was missing. The problem was that it just wasn't any fun. A quick comparison with a classic game like Streets of Rage made it clear what we were missing - interesting artificial intelligence for the enemies.

The AI, something we couldn't see, was going to be more challenging than I anticipated. How it worked up that point:

1. You'd walk until the screen stopped scrolling.
2. Enemies would come

This is the first concept sketch Deebone, drawn by Ricky in 2002. This is what got the game off the ground.



This janky prototype is where it all began.

directly for you at the exact same time.

3. You beat them up by mashing buttons as fast as you could.

4. Repeat.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't wrap my head around how enemies "thought" in the games I grew up playing. I knew intuitively how they should work, but I had no idea how to translate that into code. Here is where studying the masters came into play. From that point on, I changed the way I played games. When playing Streets of Rage, instead of focusing on reaching the goal and beating up as many enemies as I could, I looked at how the enemies acted and reacted. Where do they enter the screen? Which ones targeted me? What happened when I knocked a guy down? Oh, another one takes priority and targets me. Then the other guys wait at a farther distance and attack only when I come close. The patterns started to emerge. From there, step by step I put together an instruction set for the enemies to follow. Suddenly there was a challenge to the game. The enemies became more unpredictable and seemed to have a mind of their own. It became fun. It was at that

point that I felt like “Wow, we’re really making a game!”

From there, we finished adding in all of the enemy attacks. Polishing the timing and range of attacks. We then worked on designing the first stage. Starting easily and ramping up the difficulty as you progress. We added in features along the way. Beat ‘em ups typically had enemy names, we added unique names for every enemy. The idea of each enemy having a lifebar was from *Guardian Heroes*. The camera zooming while doing a “super” was from *Samurai Shodown*. Unique to Thugjacker, every time you hit an enemy, money flies out.

We added in a mid-boss, Jack Chedda, to spice things up. For that we experimented with adding in a cut-scene to reward the player for beating him. We wanted something straight out of *Dragonball Z*. We got caught up in adding details to the game. Whether it be little effects or revising the art. Thugjacker was planned as a 4 stage game but a year and a half later we were still on the first stage. During development we were sidetracked with other game concepts. Some were just sketches, some made it as far as demos. We realized we had to put that stuff to rest and focus on getting Thugjacker out the door.



We ended up cutting the second area of Level 1. It was a package sorting facility with a robot boss. The robot ended up becoming “The Captain.”

That meant making Thugjacker into a full game. Games have title screens. Games have pause screens. Games have a level you can actually finish. We trimmed the first level so we could focus on getting it done. We prepared to release the first stage of Thugjacker in July of 2004. I had a break from school and we went straight into crunch mode. The two major areas of contention were the first level’s boss and the intro animation.

The boss was a challenge because of all the animation and because its attacks were more unique than previous enemies. The boss had 2 different sets of attacks based on how much damage you did to him. With most of the other technical hurdles figured out, being able to focus on this one enemy made things much easier.

When the first stage finally came together I couldn’t believe we actually made it. That’s the point where I finally realized that Thugjacker was the real deal. With our final first stage, we went and demoed it with one of our close creative buddy Matt Coombes. He played it and enjoyed it but we still felt it was missing something...



This is what we looked like back then. Ricky on left, Bryson on right.



Deebone is thugnappped and dumped into an unfamiliar suburb. He encounters local code enforcers and apparently they don't think he belongs. It's time to fight your way back to the hood!



We ran out of time to implement this cut scene introducing our friendly neighborhood Code Enforcement.



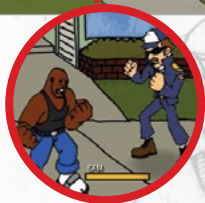
Mid Boss "Jack Chedda"

Code Enforcement Lv. 2

Clear out the weaker officers before focusing your attacks on Jack. Knock him down with a jump kick and have a super waiting for him when he gets up. Avoid his optic blast and you should do fine.



TIP: Knock out E-Man and wait until he disappears to score a fresh burger and prepare for the boss.



The first encounter with Code Enforcement is a simple one-on-one fight.



TIP: Let enemies surround you and give them a taste of a super.



TIP: Certain enemies drop fresh burgers randomly. Grab one to restore health.



TIP: An officer spawns after The Captain loses his hammer. Defeat him for a fresh burger.



"The Captain"

Code Enforcement Captain

A tough opponent. Deliver jump kicks and supers rapidly to get him to drop his hammer. Time supers so that you'll be invulnerable during his attacks.

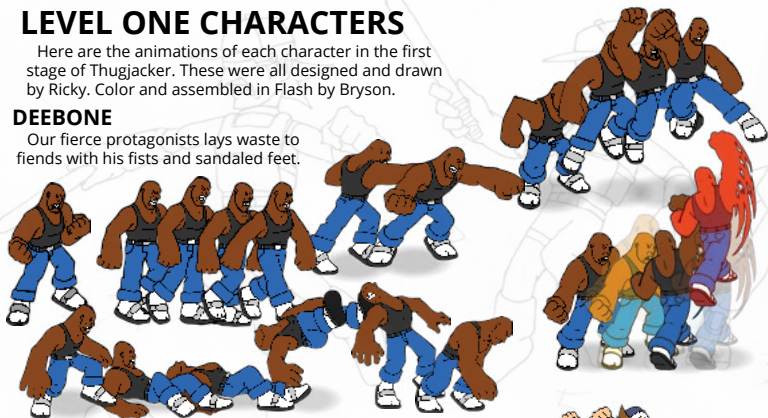


LEVEL ONE CHARACTERS

Here are the animations of each character in the first stage of Thugjacker. These were all designed and drawn by Ricky. Color and assembled in Flash by Bryson.

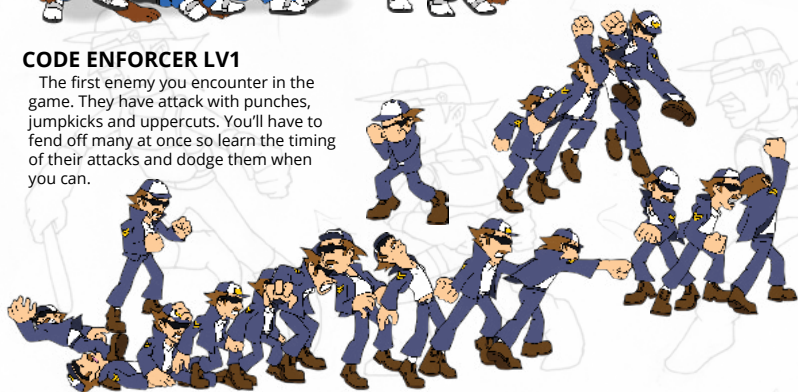
DEEBONE

Our fierce protagonists lays waste to fiends with his fists and sandaled feet.



CODE ENFORCER LV1

The first enemy you encounter in the game. They have attack with punches, jumpkicks and uppercuts. You'll have to fend off many at once so learn the timing of their attacks and dodge them when you can.



CODE ENFORCER LV2

Move up or down to stay out of the way of his optic blast. He has twice the attacks at his disposal.



E-MAN

Talk about being in the wrong place at the wrong time...



THE CAPTAIN

BOSS

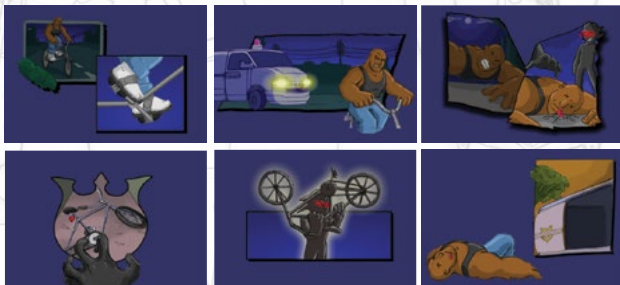
He means business. Knock the hammer out of his hands for any chance of survival. Jump kicks are your friend.



Animated Sequences

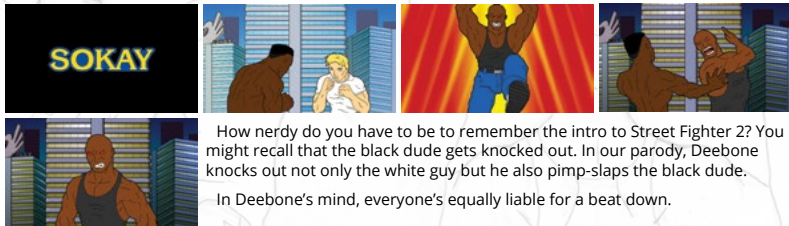
The Intro

We aimed to show, not tell, in this animated intro drawn by Ricky. We didn't use any dialogue in the game. This seemed to help with its universal appeal -- it continues to be popular in China and Russia.



The Teaser

To build anticipation, we scrambled to put together a teaser animation which was released a few weeks before Thugjacker.



How nerdy do you have to be to remember the intro to Street Fighter 2? You might recall that the black dude gets knocked out. In our parody, Deebone knocks out not only the white guy but he also pimp-slaps the black dude.

In Deebone's mind, everyone's equally liable for a beat down.

Check out these videos at:
www.youtube.com/sokaynet

We've got more to show & tell about the making of Thugjacker in the next Sokay Zine. Including details on the second level and it's reception online.

W.I.P. (WORK IN PROGRESS...)



thecrazyprogram.com

THE CRAZY PROGRAM BY SOKAY.NET

In *The Crazy Program* you play as Shermey, a playful monkey left in charge of monitoring a space cruiser's computer. Trouble erupts and he must remove a glitch from the system.

This game is Sokay's first endeavor into the puzzle game genre. It was first released in Summer 2013 on Android and will be making its way to iOS at some point in the future. A tweet from a fan suggests a console port may be worth the effort. We're working on it! ;)

It's our first game developed from the ground up in Unity and for mobile. It features a lot of 2D art which was a complication early on but we managed to release a barebones version of the game onto Android.

We're working on an adventure mode with animated cinematics to tell the story.



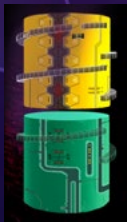
SOLAR GRID BY SLSTCE

In this game you must help a robot named Theo escape a robot prison named *Solar Grid*. Theo careens out of control down a spiraling track and it's up to you to clear his path.

The game is created by the team at SLSTCE. It's the creative vision of Roberto J.A. Jauregui, with coding by Juan B. Chavez and concept design by Jonathan Pyun.

Control in the game is handled by tapping and dragging traps and obstacles blocking the track. Try to collect as many floating sprockets as you can along the way.

solargridgame.com



INTERVIEW

GABRIEL GAETE AKA GABOTRON



So from my perspective, you do art and animation. Music and storytelling. How would you describe what it is that you do?

I use art, animation, music and storytelling and fuse it all together to create work intended to convey, explain and communicate concepts, ideas and information. I create work for myself and for clients but it all stems from the same communicative standpoint, although the understandability of my projects can range from, "Aha! I get it!" to "What the hell did I just watch?" it all has some kind of message to convey. For my clients I have to be very clear in communicating certain information. For my personal projects I use more abstract means to communicate ideas and concepts that can be more vague and difficult to understand, but represent the weird stuff that goes on in my brain.

I also take visual notes, I started taking visual notes in my community college classes and I found it as an invaluable and powerful tool to retain information. From client work, to games conferences to personal work I've created many doodle filled notes that really help me in synthesizing information.

What are some sources of your inspiration?

I'm really inspired by brain science, culture, human interactions, different perspectives, experiential video games, the way music affects us, animals, plants and my cats.

What kinds of obstacles have you encountered with expressing your creativity? And how have you overcome them?

I'd say my biggest obstacle is having ideas that might be a few steps ahead of what I'm actually able to do, whether because of time, budget or skill level. A lot of the ideas that float around my head are for interactive media, unfortunately I'm constrained by my lack of skills in coding and development. But luckily I can somewhat compensate by being able to communicate some of these ideas using motion graphics and art. But the bigger dream is to let people interact with my concepts. As far as overcoming this constraint, I'm still trying to figure that out, but for now I'm working within my constraints always with my sights set on the bigger picture.

I feel like you have a positive outlook on the world and that it's reflected in your work. Is that your intent?

I do have a positive outlook so I think by default my



photo by Stephanie Sparks

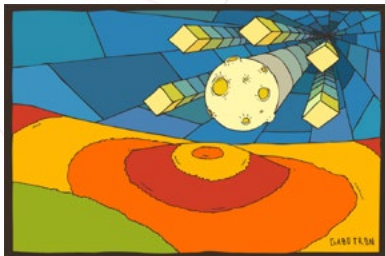
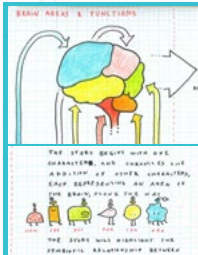
work tends to take on a tone of positivity. I would like some of my future projects to take on more of a neutral tone, but most likely they will skew towards the positive.

Last I heard, you were working on a book of recipes. What's that about and what's going on with it?

I was born in Chile, my momma makes excellent Chilean food. So I'm trying to capture all of my mom's recipes in a visual form so my sisters and I can make her recipes in the future. Once in a while, I'd bring over my notepad to my parent's house, and while my mom is cooking, I take visual notes of the ingredients, methods and techniques. I still have quite a few recipes to jot down, and when I get a few more drawn my plan is to draw and write a small cookbook and share it with the world.

Our paths first crossed during the Global Game Jam, how did you become involved with that?

I had recently become interested in the idea of making games around that time, was it 5 years ago?! Anyway, I was playing around with some interactive stuff on my own, when I heard about the game jam. I was a little scared and intimidated by the idea, but it turned out to be a really



enlightening experience. I got to meet some really awesome people (Bryson included) and one can really learn something about themselves and about humans in general. The things I've learned in those experiences have really carried through in other aspects of my life.

What's your most memorable project?

I would say TREEE is my most memorable project. It's a collection of little wordless comics, accented occasionally by small musical moments. One of the stories, "MOON" is an interactive story/musical instrument, although crude and somewhat simple on a technical level, it is representative of the kind of projects I'd like to create in the future. It's a blend of all the things I do; art, music, storytelling and animation with an extra element of interaction, an ingredient I'd like most of my future projects to have too.

Where would people go if they wanted to see your stuff online?

You can find a portfolio of some personal and professional work over at www.gabotron.com and find the TREEE comics over at www.TREEE.me

✓ **SOKAY SELECT**

THE DREAM MACHINE by Cockroach Inc.

In 2007, I found this game "Gateway II" on Newgrounds while browsing at work. I must've played it at least an hour straight and beat it in one sitting. I was captivated by it in spite of its minimal artwork -- boxy characters with no faces. It was a point-and-click adventure game like I played before but it didn't rely so heavily on fluid animation, voice acting. It didn't have the gags & one-liners that I was used to. But along with the clever puzzles there was a strange feeling of eeriness and the lure of "what's next?" That game was made by Cockroach Inc. in Sweden and I've been a fan of them ever since.

The Dream Machine is a follow-up in the same vein. It's a 6 episode saga, the first episode being released in 2010. In the game, you play as a regular guy named Victor. It's moving day and you're moving into your regular apartment with your regular wife. After a series of moving mishaps, Victor stumbles upon a dark secret of the landlord on his new building. Definitely not regular.

From there you must try to put together the pieces of the mystery of the building and its residents. Travel through dreamscape and possibly learn more about yourself than you'd want to know.

It's hard to not notice the distinct visual style of the game. To create game assets, the team crafted characters from clay and built sets to be photographed. And to top it off, the music and sound design has just as much attention to detail. It will take you away to a place where dreams are real.

available for PC & Mac on Steam

and www.thedreammachine.se

blog: dreammachinegame.blogspot.com



A behind the scenes look at the game's sets.

shop.sokay.net

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GAMEOGRAPHY



THUGJACKER: HALF



LUV TANK



SAMMY SAMURAI: RUNNER



RUSH HOUR PLUS



DONUT GET!



THE CRAZY PROGRAM

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