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Two Sides of the Same Coin: The Life of an Indie Game Developer!  
 It was the 2nd of April, a pretty good Sunday afternoon if I do say so myself! T’was the day I would interview two game developers I had planned on interviewing for a while now. Both of whom I had semi-known personally. (One of them I already knew extremely personally) Nevertheless, the first person on the list was Matthew. I’ve known him for quite a while, for three years to be exact. So needless to say, I’ve known him for quite a while now. I clear my throat, signaling the start of the interview. A little surprised, Matthew claims that he didn’t study for the “test.” I reassure him, telling him that this entire interview wasn’t an interview, but rather, just a test. Now the interview itself finally begins.

I casually ask Matthew the first question, how long had he been developing games, and what his experience was like? A little hesitant, he replies and begins to stammer, “Do you mean like… forever..? Or like… like… I- uh…” After a few long pauses, he responds, explaining how he had begun to develop games at solely eight years old. Inspired by all kinds of games at a young age, wanting to make them himself, he realized just how long and complicated the process of game development itself was. Most of the people he had known growing up who were also interested in game development had ultimately stopped because they could not handle the process behind making games. Matthew however, kept going. Persisting despite how difficult, time-consuming, and overall stressful the process behind game development can be. Despite the hardships that come with actually making a game, Matthew believes it’s one of the most humbling experiences he’s ever had. For how it’s like though, especially as a solo developer, you’d have to be a jack of all trades and master at none. Having a basic understanding of at least programming, art, animation, sound, music, etc. as it is always important to know what you’re capable of learning and to stick with it. Maintaining a balance on what you can do is always important. Due to this being a condensed version of the actual interview itself, the text here’s been summarized. He felt flustered, realizing just how long he was rambling. Asking if I will include everything being told here. I initially said yes but looking back, just for the sake of some things being said here, and requested by Matthew personally, I won’t be including everything here.

As we move on from question #1 to question #2, I begin to ask Matthew how many games he has published thus far. He told me to prepare for a… less responsive response. He’s only published five games as of right now.

Question #3’s more of a personal question, regardless, I pull myself together and ask Matthew what game, by far, was his favorite to develop and why was it his favorite to develop it. Matthew hesitated for a moment. Sort of taking a moment as it was a really difficult question to answer… surprisingly. Regardless, he answers. Claiming that he doesn’t have a favorite as in every project that he’s recently been working on, he tries to enjoy the process behind it a lot more. Especially with him now using an entirely new game engine, he’s had a lot more fun developing games with it. Feeling a lot more intuitive, professional, able, and feeling overall restricted compared to the older game engine he was using. As well as satirical games he’s created in the past, despite them being ultimately jokes and Matthew having no real emotional attachment to them, he still is proud of the games and is happy he’s made them overall.   
 Now that we move on question #4, I eagerly ask Matthew the fourth question. One of which he lets me know in advance may have a boring answer. If there were any games that he’s created (or is currently in the process of making) that had deeply resonated with him. If so, why? Matthew said that it was every game that he’s felt this way towards. To water it down, he said that everything he makes, be it a satirical game or just a game with the genuine effort put into it, all have a purpose and should always be fun to work on. As it could prove that he could create something, even if it was just a very silly concept.

Question #5, was a surprisingly pretty easy question for Matthew to answer, so much so it even got him to chuckle when I asked him it. If he could be anything, like… ANYTHING! Besides a game developer, what would it be? Matthew confidently said he’d be a 3D animator. It’s something he has always loved since childhood. Preferring to sculpt and build using LEGO figurines rather than drawing on paper. Besides, 3D animation and video game making tend to overlap quite a lot.   
 Question #6 was also a short one as well. As I asked Matthew questions it was less banter and more straight to the point. Mainly because it was… quite a lot of off-topic side tangents but also because things he said normally could be condensed into a few sentences. We enjoyed the banter and discussions but for the sake of the interview itself, it was best to stay on topic. Anyway, for question #6, I ask Matthew where exactly he sees himself as a game developer 5-10 or even more years down the line. He wishes to work for a semi-big — not too big gaming publisher. “tinyBuild” being an example, preferring to work for studios that were big but not… triple AAA kind of big.   
 Question #7, Matthew told the story of an inspiration (To him, at least). As a response to the seventh question. What had inspired him to become a game developer in the first place? A solo developer by the name of “Pixel” online. Creating a hugely successful game by the name of, “Cave Story” ultimately made Matthew want to pursue a game-making career. The reason this game was the driving force to achieve such a goal was due to the developer creating quite literally EVERYTHING from scratch on his own. From the game engine to the art to the animation, to the story, to the programming, to… literally everything you could think of that involves game development and its process! Making Matthew follow in Pixel’s footsteps.   
 Because question #8 is answered exactly like question #6, wanting to work for a game studio, I will skip it… since even Matthew himself pointed out how he’d just repeat the same thing. We both laugh it off and head on to the second to last question.

Ah, question #9, it was something that sort of surprised me with how it was answered — but not really. Which is what projects would he intends on publishing in the future. Be it soon or distant. He seemed unsure and told me that he was not one to plan ahead with future projects like that. He just prefers to work on one project at a time and cross that bridge when he gets there essentially.   
 Lastly, question #10, answered with extreme optimism, I ask Matthew if he would find any aspiring game developers, would he encourage them to pursue their careers in game development? An astonishing yes is how he had replied. Without a shadow of doubt. It’s according to Matthew, “A very rewarding field to go down.” The sooner you’d start developing games, the better you would become.

There’s no actual lastly here, he sorta just chuckled awkwardly and told me he had no final thoughts and proceeded to apologized for it. I told him that it was okay if he didn’t have any final thoughts. I was just happy he was willing to do this interview with me. Even if there were many times he was socially awkward about it. (Not complaining, he was very fun to talk to)

As for the second indie game developer, Shayne, an entire hour had passed, it being 3:20 PM to be exact. I was honestly pretty nervous about talking to him. Especially because we’ve never spoken in a voice chat before. Nevertheless, I brought my courage together and decided that I must do this. For the sake of my grades and all… so, let’s begin, shall we!?! Oh, I do need to mention that before we do actually begin, Shayne’s the complete opposite of Matthew. He was less… “energetic” than Matthew. Giving more cut and dry responses rather than long, in-depth, and cunning responses. Although their personalities and goals in life were completely different. So now would be good time to dive into the interview to explore that more.

For the first question, I begin asking Shayne the first question, question #1. According to what he said, he’d been doing it for nine years. It’s very confusing to learn when starting out, but once you understand what you have to do, you *really* understand what you have to do.   
 For the second question, he had only published seven games. Three of which being satirical games, another three being unfinished, and one still being in development. So, I guess you could say, he really meant to say three instead of seven. Still, Shayne having created seven games at all, is still a pretty huge feat.

Third question, and mostly every question onwards will have some relation to Project: Dissonance, one of the games mentioned in the previous question. The ambitious game that has been in development for almost an entire decade. Speaking of Project: Dissonance, it to Shayne, is his favorite. But also one he considers to be a chore in creating as the previous engine he had used he fought tooth and nail with in order to make his code function properly.   
 Similarly to question #3, question #4 is also related to Project: Dissonance. To put it simply, it’s game that resonates with Shayne. Mainly because it was one of the ideas he had as a kid, being able to make those ideas a reality now.   
 Question #5 is one that doesn’t relate to his project, instead, it’s just Shayne having a more different career path rather than something that overlaps with game development like Matthew. For Shayne, he’d like to work an IT job — one that he’s actually pursing a career in.   
 Unlike Matthew, Shayne does not feel as confident in what his future holds for him. Just exclaiming that if he didn’t get his act together, he may not likely get far in his game development career at all. So he wasn’t sure of how to really answer the sixth question.  
 Question #7 though was a bit more lighthearted though, talking about how fangames were the thing that had influenced him into becoming a game developer. Even being surprised when Matthew had said Pixel instead of fangames like he did.

Question #8’s response was just… hilariously straight forward and to the point. Preferring to remain indie just because he’s not exactly very fond of contracts.  
 At the the second to last question, Shayne talks about how he had never thought about any future plans. For years, he’d always been stuck in a stagnant state of mind — with just Project: Dissonance alone. It’d be weird for him to just… let it go all of a sudden.

Lastly, for question #10, Shayne would recommend people pursue their careers in becoming game developers. He’d even help people with just that before. Albeit not doing a very good job, but getting the job done! Task failed successfully?  
 Shayne also didn’t have any closing thoughts, although he also enjoyed talking to me through the interview and so did I. Even though those two may not have closing sentences, I do! I had a blast with this as it was nice to connect to the more technical side of Matthew and Shayne. Seeing two people pursue the exact same thing but with completely different mind sets. One having more clarity and confidence, meanwhile the other being more stagnant and uncertain of what’s to come. Despite this, both show signs in wanting to create something personal to one another. Which, regardless of the circumstances, I applaud both for pursing their goals, no matter how long or difficult the task itself may be.