

NAMES AND GAMES

DOMAIN SUMMIT

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INTRODUCTION

- THE **BRIEF** I WAS GIVEN WAS TO TALK ABOUT **NAMES** AND (COMPUTER) **GAMES**
 - I'VE NO IDEA IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE **EXPECTING**, BUT IT'S WHAT YOU'RE **GETTING**
- I'VE BEEN **INVOLVED** IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY SINCE BEFORE THERE **WAS** A GAMES INDUSTRY
- NAMES ARE **IMPORTANT**
 - FOR **DEVELOPERS**
 - FOR **GAMES**
 - FOR CHARACTERS, LANDS, SPELLS *ETC.* **IN** GAMES

DEVELOPERS

- GAME DEVELOPERS NEED A **NAME** FOR THEIR **COMPANY** OR **STUDIO**
- THIS IS THE **BRAND** THEY WILL PUT ON **ALL** THEIR GAMES
 - ITS **CRUCIAL** THEY GET IT **RIGHT**
- HOWEVER, THESE ARE GETTING LONGER AND **WEIRDER** (OR BOTH) OVER TIME
- **LONGER** BECAUSE THEY PUT "GAMES" OR "ENTERTAINMENT" OR "STUDIOS" AT THE END
- **WEIRDER** BECAUSE DEVELOPERS ARE WEIRDER

EXAMPLES

- **UKIE** LISTS **2,241** UK GAMES COMPANIES
- THE LAST 10 **START-UPS** IT RECORDS ARE:
 - PANDA CAT GAMES
 - REPUBLIC GAMES
 - SERIOUS POINT GAMES
 - KINDRED SPIRIT GAMES
 - GAME SOURCE ENTERTAINMENT
 - PARABLE STUDIOS
 - INFERNO STUDIOS
 - DUBIOUS DESIGN
 - TILKI AI
 - DEAD GENETIC

METHOD

- THERE IS **METHOD** TO THIS **MADNESS**
- YOUR NEW COMPANY NEEDS A **WEB** PRESENCE
- YOU'LL HAVE TO **ACQUIRE** THE DOMAIN NAME **BEFORE** YOU SET UP THE COMPANY
 - OTHERWISE, ITS **CURRENT** OWNERS WILL HAVE YOU OVER A **BARREL**
- BUYING A **SNAPPY** DOMAIN NAME WILL BE TOO **EXPENSIVE** FOR A START-UP THAT HASN'T YET STARTED UP
- SO: GO FOR SOMETHING **LONG** OR **WEIRD**

FULL AND PART

- COMPANIES WANT NAMES THAT ARE **unique**
- IF SOMEONE HAS ALREADY **THOUGHT** OF (BOUGHT) THE NAME, WELL THAT'S **NOT** UNIQUE
- THEY'LL APPEND **WORDS** TO **MAKE** THEIR NAME UNIQUE, BUT THEN ONLY **USE** THE **NON-UNIQUE** PART DAY-TO-DAY
 - BLIZZARD, RATHER THAN BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
- THEY'LL USE **ACRONYMS** OF FULL TITLES
 - MY FIRST START-UP WAS **NAMED** MULTI-USER ENTERTAINMENT LTD., BUT WAS **CALLED** MOUSE

GAMES

- AS WITH BOOK TITLES, GAME NAMES **CAN'T** BE **COPYRIGHTED**, SO YOU CAN **CALL** YOUR GAME WHATEVER YOU **LIKE**
- BUT **BEWARE** TRADEMARKS AND **PASSING-OFF** LAWS
 - FARM FARM FARM FARM – FINE
 - FARMOPOLY – **PROBABLY** FINE
 - FARM THEFT AUTO – DEPENDS ON HOW **LITIGIOUS** ROCKSTAR'S **LAWYERS** ARE FEELING
 - FARMVILLE – YOU'LL BE **SUED** INTO THE **GROUND**

WAYS TO NAME GAMES

- FROM ROGERS, SCOTT: *LEVEL UP!* 2ND EDITION, WILEY, 2014
- A **LITERAL** TITLE IS **EASY** TO WORK OUT
 - NAMED AFTER MAIN CHARACTER, *SONIC THE HEDGEHOG*
 - NAMED AFTER MAIN LOCATION, *CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN*
 - NAMED AFTER A GAMEPLAY ACTIVITY, *COMMAND & CONQUER*
- AN ACTION/**COOL** TITLE CAPTURES THE **SPIRIT** OF THE GAME WITHOUT MENTIONING **CONTENT**
 - *DARKSIDERS*, *BRUTAL LEGEND*, *GEARS OF WAR*

MORE WAYS

- A **PUNNY** TITLE TRIES TO MAKE YOU APPRECIATE ITS **CLEVERNESS**
 - *SYSTEM SHOCK, HALF LIFE, DEAD SPACE*
 - NOT USUALLY INTENDED TO BE **FUNNY**
- A **PURPLE COW** TITLE IS ONE THAT MAKES PROSPECTIVE PLAYERS WONDER **WHY** IT WAS CALLED THAT
 - *LITTLEBIGPLANET, RESIDENT EVIL, NAUGHTY BEAR*
 - IT **STANDS OUT** AND GIVES OFF STRONG **VIBES**
 - WARNING: THESE MAY BE **NEGATIVE** VIBES

YET MORE WAYS

- A **DRAMATIC** TITLE SOUNDS MORE LIKE THAT OF A **MOVIE**, REFERRING TO ITS THEME
 - *THE SUM OF ALL FEARS, THE SUFFERING OF ISAAC, THE LAST OF US*
 - YEAH, THEY OFTEN START WITH "**THE**"
- A **REFERENTIAL** TITLE REFERS TO SOMETHING **IN** THE GAME THAT YOU WON'T PROPERLY **UNDERSTAND** UNTIL YOU **PLAY** IT
 - *HALO, UNREAL, PORTAL, SPORE*
- NB: **LOGOS** ARE BEST WITH **SHORTER** TITLES

COLONS

- GAME NAMES CAN BE **EXPANDED** USING **COLONS**
- THEY CAN **COMBINE** TWO TYPES OF TITLE TO CREATE SOMETHING **UNIQUE**
 - *CLAIR OBSCURE: EXPEDITION 33*
- THEY CAN **EXTEND** AN EXISTING **SERIES**
 - *BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM/CITY/ORIGINS/KNIGHT*
- MODERN SERIES MAY NOT **BOTHER** WITH A :
 - *GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK, ASSASSIN'S CREED SHADOWS*

IN-GAME NAMES

- IN MANY GAMES, TOKENS **WITHIN** THEM NEED **NAMES**
 - CHARACTERS, LANDS, SPELLS, CREATURES, QUESTS, ...
- SOME RPGS REQUIRE **HUNDREDS** OF THESE
- THE **MAIN** LORE CHARACTERS WILL TEND TO HAVE SOME **MEANING** TO THEIR NAME
- THESE ARE **NOT** NECESSARILY **SUBTLE**
 - MALFURION STORMRAGE IN WOW
- OTHERS ... EVEN **WORSE**
 - HEMET NESINGWARY (ANAG.) = ERNEST HEMINGWAY

IDEAS

- **JUNIOR** GAME DESIGNERS CAN QUICKLY RUN OUT OF IDEAS FOR NAMES
- THEY END UP **RIPPING OFF** POP CULTURE NAMES, PASSING THEM OFF AS **EASTER EGGS**
 - AL DEE THE **SHOPKEEPER** IN *TIBIA*
 - YO GI THE **BEAR** IN *BLADE AND SOUL*
 - BIGGS AND WEDGE **RED WINGS** IN *FINAL FANTASY*
- SOME REALLY GO **ALL IN** ON THIS
 - *WIZARDIOI* HAS A PAGE JIMMY IN *ABBAY ROAD* WHO WANTS HIS AXE, A LESSER PAUL

SYSTEMS

- **SENIOR** GAME DESIGNERS WILL WRITE NAME-GENERATION PROGRAMS AND USE THE **OUTPUT**
 - DIFFERENT CHARACTER SETS, LETTER FREQUENCIES AND SYLLABLE COMBINATIONS FOR DIFFERENT **CULTURES**
 - STICK IN **APOSTROPHES** FOR EXTRA EFFECT
- LANDS, ORGANISATIONS AND **CREATURE** TYPES DON'T **USUALLY** HAVE **WACKY** NAMES
 - THEY'RE OFTEN **BLAND**, BUT THEY'RE **RARELY** PLAYED FOR **LAUGHS**
- **QUESTS** ARE ANOTHER **MATTER...**

QUESTS

- **QUESTS** HAVE NAMES SO THAT **CHEATS** CAN LOOK UP HOW TO **DO** THEM
 - WOW HAS OVER **40,000** QUESTS, SO YOU CAN SEE WHY QUEST-DESIGNERS MAY BE **DESPERATE**
- QUEST NAMES ARE A **MORASS** OF **BAD PUNS**, REFERENCES TO WIDER **CULTURE**, **IN-JOKES** AND (OCCASIONALLY) ACTUAL DESCRIPTION
 - ARE WE THERE, YET?
 - WHAT THE FLUX?
 - MISSION: POSSIBLE BUT NOT PROBABLE
 - YOU'RE FIRED!
 - JUNK IN MY TRUNK
 - TALK TO THE HAND
 - STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND
 - ASSASSINATE CREED
 - LIBRARY OF ALEXSTRASZA
 - HELM'S DEEP

SPELLS

- SPELLS **ALSO** NEED NAMES
 - IN PARTICULAR, THEY NEED **COOL** NAMES
- THIS MEANS THAT THEY OFTEN BEAR ONLY A **SUPERFICIAL** SIMILARITY TO WHAT THEY **DO**
- IN *THE SECRET WORLD*, THERE'S A SPELL CALLED **EXSANGUINATE**
 - IT SUCKS THE **BLOOD** OUT OF YOUR OPPONENT
- I CAN SEE HOW THAT WORKS ON **CREATURES** AND, AT A STRETCH, **PLANTS** AND **ROBOTS**
- **ROCK** MONSTERS AND **GHOSTS**, THOUGH?

SUMMARY

- AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE AREN'T ANY NAMING **CONVENTIONS** IN COMPUTER GAMES
- TABLETOP RPGS TEND TO BE **FAR** MORE THOUGHTFUL IN THEIR NAMING, BECAUSE THEY'RE GOING FOR **IMMERSION**
- COMPUTER RPGS **SHOULD** BE GOING FOR IMMERSION, TOO
 - BUT ... **JEEZ**, 40,000+ QUESTS?!
- COMPANIES NAME **THEMSELVES** A BIT LIKE THEY NAME THEIR **GAMES ... BADLY**