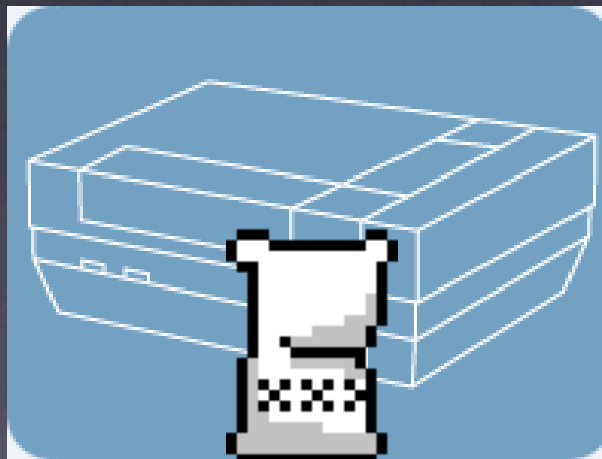


Postmortem

Sack of Flour, Heart of Gold

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Sack of Flour, Heart of Gold

- About the game
- What went right?
- What went wrong?

About the Game

- Under development primarily June 2001 - May 2002
- Inspired by poorly done rom hacks and Disney half-filled flour sack animation tutorials
- Independent study credit at Carnegie Mellon

Design

- Designed by the entire team, but overseen by Bob
- Evolved from our own knowledge of game stereotypes and conventions
- Emphasis on learning the NES and making a fun game, rather than creating an engaging or coherent story

What Went Right

A team with specialized talents

- 5 people, 5 main jobs
- Programming, Engineering, Artwork, Music, Level Design
- I could have made a game myself, but it would not be nearly as good

What Went Right

Prior experience with important concepts

- Photoshop, pixel graphics
- Qbasic music
- Game programming

What Went Right

The team's physical proximity

- We all lived on the same floor
- Seeing each other's work was easy
- Meetings could be any time we were awake
- Seeing each other often made us constantly think about the game

What Went Right

Testing small cases, building up

- Quarter-sack joystick demo
- One-screen collision test
- Single enemy test
- Two-screen, multi-screen scroll tests

What Went Right

The internet

- Able to market the game worldwide for free
- Thousands of hits in just a few days, once it hit the right websites
- GameSpy side panel this summer
<http://www.gamespy.com/articles/july03/famicom/index17.shtml>
- I still receive regular emails from people who find the webpage
- The internet has donated \$12 via PayPal, and \$1 via US Postal mail

What Went Wrong

Creating development tools with the game

- **Tool vs Game**
One must be designed for the other
- **Tool vs User**
Designing the tool vs training the user
- **Changing development environment**
 - migrating assembly to nbasic
 - assembly where nbasic wasn't possible
 - making the language easy to implement, rather than intuitive to use

What Went Wrong

Unknown platform and time limitations

- Color restrictions kept changing
- Background tile restrictions
- Designed a much bigger game
 - larger levels, 4-way scrolling, supermarket
 - space helmet, underwater, dough mech, Broose
 - mini bosses, purple monkey with a cape

What Went Wrong

Platform testing

- Works great in Jnes!
- Graphics glitches in various emulators
- Couldn't test hardware until the end

What Went Wrong

Hardware

- Reverse engineering dev carts
- Memory mappers (MMCI vs MMC3)
- Chip speeds
- Other graphics problems

What Went Wrong

Research material

- Documentation written in bad English, with bad humor, by people who only sort of know what they're saying
- Conflicting sources
- No comprehensive documents, only ones describing parts of the NES

Advice

- Development teams with specialization are good.
- Scale your design way back, and expand “if you have time”.
- Test on as many platforms as possible.
- Design for what you can already do.

Questions