

#notGDC article(?), or, my attempt to feel productive while procrastinating on so many other things

By Spencer Saunders

I know very little about GDC and very littler about #notGDC.

I have not made any video games. I've made a square move on a grey background and not move when it collided with a darker grey wall. I've accumulated almost 60 hours in RPG Maker which I believe rounds to just about zero hours of...something. Quality creation I guess.

I have made approximately two tabletop games.

I have completed exactly one card game. There is one copy of it in existence and it goes everywhere with me. Rather, it goes everywhere with my backpack, and my backpack goes with me probably 40% of the time. It is basically a more drawn out version of that Mario Party 2 mini game, Day at the Races, where you choose a Thwomp, Whomp, Boo, or Bob-Omb and hope that they win, with absolutely no input on your part. (This is the second best mini game, of all mini games ever, after Bowser's Big Blast)

I have made a second card game, but sort of just made the cards with a rough idea of the rules, played it once, and haven't written down anything more about it in the several months since.

I have made a prototype for a Monaco: What's Yours is Mine-like board game. I made it with my cousin, we tested it once and realized how slow and broken and awful it was and have not been back to it since. At one point early in the design, I had thought about emailing Pocketwatch Games to see what they thought about it being an officially licensed thing. I am glad that I did not.

I have design plans, and varying amounts of prototype cards, for a Reigns card game, a kart racer card game, an Until Dawn board game, a Super Hexagon card game, and a Call of Duty deck-building game. Not to mention countless attempts at a card & dice game inspired by fighting games and sidescrolling brawlers.

I am currently, which is to say haven't touched the thing for probably a month, working on a game that I designed with my cousin that is about being a pyramid and fanning your opponent pyramid with fronds in some sort of surreal boxing match. It also involves genetically engineering the optimal frond. The entire design is completely done and completely un-tested. I just need to draw 30 or 50 gosh darn (I don't know #notGDC's policy on strong language) fronds and then get it printed and then it can sit in my backpack, unplayed, next to the other game.

All of that adds up to, as mentioned previously, approximately two tabletop games.

I think what I am trying to convey is that I have nothing to offer. Or rather, I don't know what I have to offer, so instead I'm just offering a story, for myself mostly but maybe someone else will be like, "neat".

I'll be beginning my graphic design senior thesis next fall. It'll probably involve making a game of some sort. Despite my track record (which to be fair is more games than most people have made) I think it's probably what I'll be most enthusiastic about.

I have several dream games.

The Super Hexagon card game, mentioned previously.

I played SUPERHOT: The Card Game at PAX Unplugged last November and bought it on the spot because it felt revolutionary. A single player card game that isn't some variant of solitaire. If that can be a thing that works, and works well, why can't I make a single player card game based on one of my favorite video games? Someday, when I have a design that works and is fun and feels like the source material, I'll email Mr. Cavanagh and then the game will get made and I'll be super happy for a couple weeks. In the meantime, no one else steal it.

A card game inspired by Donkey Kong Junior.

I think about Donkey Kong Junior several times a day. Level 2 might be my favorite level from any video game. It looks amazing, feels amazing, and is so elegantly simple. Ugh. Uuuggggghh.

A card game that is like a walking sim, but, y'know, a card game.

I have no idea how I am going to do this. I don't know who wants this besides me. I don't know that I want it other than so I can say that I did it, and because I probably won't be making an actual walking simulator anytime soon.

An RPG based on a short story I wrote a few years ago that was inspired by a handful of silly questions.

Or honestly an RPG of any sort to start with. The Star Wars roleplaying game is my favorite game. The Core Rulebook is my favorite book. More favorite than To Kill a Mockingbird. I want to make my new favorite game.

I guess what I want to make are video games, but after two years of computer science classes and hating myself, I sort of don't want to deal with that for while.

To make a video game you just have to get the computer to do what you want.

To make a tabletop game you just have to get people to do what you want. I'm not sure which is harder yet.

Star Wars Destiny is the first TCG that I've really gotten into, that I've spent money on packs and boxes. It's honestly super inspiring. They've taken these incredible magic powers and massive ships and weapons and translated them so well into cards and dice. Again, ugh.

The magnaGuards don't die immediately when they lose all their hit points. They die at the end of the round, after each player has exhausted all the things that they can/want to do. In the movie they keep fighting after getting their heads chopped off. Inspiring.

I want people to care about the characters and worlds that I make as much as I do. As much as I and so many care about Star Wars. But that isn't realistic. Not at first anyway. Star Wars has had decades and at least a million or so dollars put into it. I've got a story about a sad dude meeting some rad people and a demon lady that are trying to stop the end of the world.

I've signed up for four game jams, according to my itch.io profile. Two of them were multiple months ago, so many that in the case of one jam the multitude of months would actually be better communicated in units of years (What the hell sort of sentence was that??). The other two are coming up. One of them is the jam for this very event that I guess this is written for.

Thankfully the jam page says that both poignant meditations and quality shitposts are allowed, so hopefully this falls under one of those two categories, in case I don't have time to make a game.

The other is a chess jam that starts in April or whichever month is coming up. I'd like to make a chess visual novel, but it'll probably have to be made out of physical cards. We'll see how that turns out.

The past year plus some months has been the most productive I've ever had. Though I've not been able to complete much in the way of games, I've made so much other dope stuff. I exhibited work in a gallery in January, and just made/wrote a book the other week. As soon as I figure out how to make my own font for it, I'll get it printed and be super happy with myself for at least an hour or two.

I think I use commas too much, and not always correctly. They're just so much fun.

Well, that just about sums it all up; my life story, more or less (mostly less). If this is accepted into #notGDC, then thanks to those people in charge. If not, then no hard feelings, I still have only a slight grasp on what exactly all this is.

Happy #notGDC everyone,

Spencer Saunders