The Grin Report - 2.0

This is a report into the state of MafiaReturns, from an objective perspective, considering the best interests for the game itself. This is an extremely lengthy document and if you are only interested in certain aspects, feel free to skip to the bits that take your fancy.

This should be considered an extension of the post I made as “Gwarble” several years ago. If you would like to read that, it can be viewed in the context of the actual discussion which prompted it, here: http://mafiareturns.com/comm/thread/93501/page2.

1.0 Introduction

When considering any problem in MafiaReturns, it is important to consider the wider elements that are associated with any one aspect, as many are intertwined. This means, for example, that when attack rises, defence must also rise in order to prevent things from becoming imbalanced. If this equilibrium is not maintained, a scenario develops where one aspect can be exploited to a point that the scales tip significantly in either direction, resulting in either extreme account longevity or continual premature death.

1.1 Principles of the game

The game is best enjoyed and played where nobody can place themselves out of harm’s way through any one feature of the game. This means that you cannot purchase so many bodyguards that you can never die, nor can you kill every single player on the game without running the risk of dying yourself. These checks and balances essentially keep the game “honest”; even if they may be ugly, such as wackback, they achieve the desired result and deter exploitation.

To this end, attack should always slightly outweigh defence, meaning that it is impossible to sit back and rest upon your laurels absolutely. You always have to be actively playing; actively competing and actively pursuing your interests otherwise someone has the opportunity to take this away from you. Proactive and not reactive should be the best stratagem to adopt, as this will enable the most activity, the most conflict and therefore the most enjoyment for the majority of the game. The site witnesses the greatest activity in the times of greatest conflict; therefore it should be a little easier to raise your wacking ability than to raise your defensive ability.

It has been an ambition of the Administration since real money was introduced in the form of credits, to maintain an entirely ‘free to play’ game, with real money never significantly impacting upon gameplay. This has always been borne in mind when introducing new features and making adjustments based upon individual actions. Similarly, the game always tries to stay pure to the genre within which it is set, the Mafia of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, dependent upon who you ask.

These forces are often competing against each other and the revenue derived from the game is key in supporting it, which is accepted and appreciated by the majority of players. However, the game is pitched as a ‘free to play’ game and it should be delivered as such. The role-play element can often be sacrificed for the needs of better ‘game-play’, as this is a game which people have to enjoy playing and not get bogged down in different styles of 1920s fashion.

No account should be the master of both offence and defence. A great initial attack gives an account a head start towards developing a powerful firearm. This is accepted at the sacrifice of defence, making that account more exposed to other gunmen. Defence answer choices start with a very low attack, incapable of killing anyone, yet they are less likely to die unless shot at by a very highly trained gunman.

The risk of wackback is lower for a wacker and higher for a defender. Whilst both attack and defence can be raised, they can never be raised to the degree that either one can fully compensate for the initial deficit in the other, stemming from the initial start up answers. Therefore a defensive Don with 10 Bodyguards should always have a higher defence than a wacking Don with 10 Bodyguards. A wacking Don with 100 kills should always have a higher wack than a defensive Don with 100 kills. Wackback should always be higher for a defence account shooting, than for a wack account shooting.

These are the principles that most effectively govern (or governed) the game. It is my belief that adherence to these principles should be strict, they should always be prevalent and they should be afforded paramount consideration before any change is made or finalised. Any change that has been made that has deterred from these principles should be immediately rectified.

1.2 The Current Situation

The current state of our world is one in which real money has been incorporated and coupled with an increased account longevity and has significantly contributed to the vastly overpowered accounts that surround us. We have a game economy that contains far too much money and the only major outflow for cash, death, is mitigated by some accounts taking so long to die that they virtually become infinite. As a result of this, they have greater wealth than ever before, allowing them to utilise the unlimited bodyguard feature to the extreme that they have several hundred bodyguards protecting them. Tweaks are continually made by the Administration in order to rectify this problem, however when already established accounts have previously benefited from the booming economy, short of pricing the bodyguards they already own out of manageable levels, the effect is most keenly felt by those at the lower end of the food chain.

Attack is greatly outweighed by defence, falling foul of one of the fundamental balances of the game. The strategy is to place your account beyond harm’s reach and empower a single account with several hundred bodyguards. This results in a near unassailable defence that can never be overwhelmed by any one individual. This in turn allows people to act in ways that would never otherwise be tolerated, enact policies that are largely unpopular and generally treat

the game as their playground. Whilst the option exists for the users to communally rise up and slay some of the stronger accounts by BG wacking them, this practice would flout the fundamental principles of Cosa Nostra, primarily loyalty to the family and require divergence from this, rather than fulfilling their obligation to defend their Godfather and Don.

Power makes the rules within the game and that is how it should remain. However, power that is gained or furthered through external influences, such as masses of bodyguards purchased via credits and accumulated over a number of years, presents a very real deterrent to playing the game, both to casual and hardcore players.

As a result of the copious amount of bodyguards that are being accumulated, accounts have grown to an age that the game cannot truly support. This in turn allows them, upon reaching the higher ranks, to invest in their supporters and utilise the demotion feature to purchase even more bodyguards at a discount price. As this new account will quickly reach the top ranks, they have now exploited the cheaper bodyguards and strengthened their established account. The outcome is a tremendous attack and a tremendous defence. This process can be repeated multiple times to further extend the playing field and disregard the principle of not becoming the master of both offence and defence.

Both defence stats and attack stats are off the charts and are far too high. This develops an enormous gulf between established accounts and new accounts. Too much time is required to reach the middle to upper echelons of the game, resulting in a lethargy settling over the entire site. It also results in established users leaving upon their deaths and non-playable members having to be introduced to enable some of the features to be utilised effectively.

There are an incredible number of crewleaders within MafiaReturns, most of which have a very poor NPM to real member ratio. A poor NPM to real member ratio is in my opinion where established crews still supplement their earnings with NPMs, even when they have an abundance of real members. In the case of my own crew, where we are established, we have a member:NPM ratio of 2:1. This results in increased revenue for my leader and my city. Accordingly, I assume that as NPMs can be employed by crewleaders to supplement their earnings, other crews are doing the same. This enables a support structure to deal with the cost of maintenance on such a high defence.

2.0 The Problems

Some of the problems have already been identified from the brief overview of the game that preceded this section. I have listed each of the problems below, and will address each one in turn, outlining what the problem is and why it is a problem.

- Account Length
- Sign-up Answers
- Wealth
- Real money
- Increasing stats into perpetuity
- Bodyguards
- Game Secrets & Ambiguity

2.1 Account Length

The problems that exist within MafiaReturns all spawn from the length of accounts. When the oldest account only reached 1 month old, it was impossible to purchase 300 BGs for yourself and 100 BGs for everyone in your upper structure, because that money simply did not exist within the game. You cannot sell credits and purchase copious amounts of BGs, because there is nobody around with the funds to buy them from you. Similarly, after 1 month, even if you managed to kill absolutely everyone you still wouldn't have a wack stat of 1500, because there aren't that many people to kill.

Account length has exacerbated the existing flaws and put a huge spotlight on them, which is now impossible to ignore. Due to the greater length of time that any account is alive, they generate more income, they get more kills and they get more bodyguards compared to older accounts, with a few noteable exceptions (such as Eve & Sho) who actually had more than the existing accounts. This allows exploitation of these features which can be continually increased without any real counter measures to prevent them.

Money no longer filters out of the game, because regimes last for years and rarely entirely fall. This is the reason why any BG cap that is not extremely low will be ineffective. People have too much time to accumulate too much money, which enables them to move themselves beyond the reach of any aggressor.

Let us consider for a moment the average length of a game that you purchase for the PC or your Xbox. The campaign mode on most these games lasts approximately 20-50 hours and maybe you get 100 hours of gameplay for really huge games if you do all of the extras and additional things. By comparison, a middle of the road account, like "Chuckle", has 700 hours plugged into it. 700 hours. That is nearly 1 whole month of being logged in and this account is not even close to the top of the game, in fact, it is not even in the top 20 of Chicago. For the

same amount of investment in time, a user could complete all the latest RPGs, which are accepted as 'huge', several times over, and still have hours left at the end of it. This is not right and it should be no surprise to anyone that new users are not sucked in by a system that requires such dedication to even achieve middling success.

Nobody is prepared to risk something that they have worked so hard to build. It is easy to point the finger at the users and say ‘well if you don’t try, you will never succeed’ which is perfectly applicable and true. However, it is human nature not to want to throw something away that you have invested so much time and effort into in exchange for a relatively high risk play. Only very few players have this mentality and the game suffers as a result of the amount of time people invest into each account as a result.

2.2 Sign-up Answers

When a new account is created in the game, the user is required to answer a number of ‘start-up’ questions which will determine their initial skills. When account length is only on average about 1 month, this is extremely important and a greatly determining factor as to the style of play that is going to be mandatory in order to succeed.

Unfortunately, the length of time that our accounts last for has made start up answers redundant. There is no benefit to being on wack answers, because there is no need to be able to kill immediately. Everyone has time to survive long enough that they need not gamble on being a killer, as they have ample opportunity to train a gun and incorporate the initial benefits of being on defence, such as being less likely to wackback, into their account long term.

Additional features like the shooting range, enable a defence account to train a gun almost risk free as they raise their initial wack to a respectable standard before starting to shoot. This again renders starting on wack answers a waste of time. MIAs are virtually unmissable, allowing another almost risk free method of raising a poor wack stat and bodyguard kills are actually a 100% risk free method of increasing wack. This presents too much opportunity to utilise defence without any trade off and freely available, unlimited bodyguards have made any answers highly protectable. Even the lowest defence can quickly sky rocket when 300 bodyguards are added to it, which is something we see illustrated on an almost weekly basis.

Traditionally, people chose to use answers that enabled them to jailbreak so that they could reach the highest ranks and do so as quickly as possible, because they knew that they would probably die within two months and might not otherwise reach these milestones. I, for example, had never ranked higher than Boss before MafiaReturns and now I can regularly reach Don regardless of my answers. Any other answer choices beyond defence or stealth have died out completely, as short of extreme one off bad luck or individual stupidity, every single answer set can reach Don or Consigliere in a short amount of time.

The answer sets need to be re-evaluated and changed. They have no impact upon the game anymore and this is probably best evidenced by the fact that the answer choice of “1111111” was used by both Godfather accounts Tallien & Gwarble. This is a clear demonstration of how redundant the answers have become.

2.3 Wealth

Each individual within MafiaReturns generates too much money. This is increasingly more of a problem as accounts become older, further increasing the average wealth of every user. This allows funds for credits, bodyguards and hits.

This stems from several factors, the first of which is static drug prices. Drug prices traditionally fluctuated between accounts, so if I had 12k cocaine in Philly, you might only have 5k cocaine. Now, people can co-ordinate prices and ensure that they achieve the maximum return on each drug run, rather than being stuck with the same prices until you got lucky, which could sometimes take several days.

The removal of the fixed drug price limits has also greatly impacted upon the amount of money that an individual can generate. Historically, a Gangster could hold 5 units, Goomba 10 units, Earner 15 units, Wise Guy 20 units, Made Man 20 units, Capo 25 units, Boss 30 units, Consigliere 35 units, and Don 40 units. This meant that you had to wait for much longer until you could start making significant amounts of money from dealing drugs. In our climate, most accounts have more than 20 units before they are an Earner and some have this before they even reach Gangster allowing them to create more money.

Another major influence upon wealth is the introduction of drug front properties (DFPs) which are available to purchase, subject to the amount already in your city. These are a veritable gold mine and produce a certain drug up to the capacity at which you purchased it, provided you tip the FBN agent regularly.

As an example of this in my case, a DFP will cost me $713,244 and I can sell 24 units of Barbiturates in exchange for this purchase price. Currently on the market are Barbs for $5,800 and this produces a gross return of $139,200. After tax to my crewleader of say 30%, I’m clearing $97,400, which means that I’ll have recouped my original spend in just over 1 week. After that, it is all profit for me. Even allowing for days when I can’t achieve the maximum of $5,800 and I have to sell at a discount price, I am still clearly going to generate a lot of cash from this venture, which represents a 19% yield.

Crimes can also be co-ordinated for a big payoff in the form of multi-user crimes. These require minimal co-ordination and can use NPMs in the place of real people. They can generate a significant volume of cash if organized regularly and contribute to the increase in wealth of the general populous and are taxable earnings for a crewleader.

2.4 Real Money

A common misconception is that real money is the primary culprit for many of the problems that are endemic within MafiaReturns, but it is only one of a number of contributory factors. This is because credits are purchased with game money and whilst you can purchase credits with real money, these still have to be transferred into game money before bodyguards can be purchased with them.

Still, it would be completely naive and misleading to pretend that this is not a significant factor adversely affecting gameplay. Credits are a valuable commodity, which can be used to purchase MIAs, timer toolbars, NPMs and crackdowns. Therefore anyone who is looking to succeed has to have a ready supply of them in order to compete. This presents a huge opportunity to anyone who is willing to place large amounts of credits on the marketplace and in turn receive large sums of money. This allows a Thug with no ties to anyone to have a bank account of several hundred million gained through the credit marketplace.

Within both mafia.org and this game originally, your ability to load yourself with bodyguards was directly relative to which of your contacts was alive and still willing to support you. With the introduction of the credit marketplace, anyone can trade openly with anyone else, ignoring fundamental concepts that should be prevalent in our world; rank, title, loyalty, allegiance, family. This means that regardless of skill in cultivating relationships and establishing contacts, anyone who is willing to divulge with enough money for credits can circumvent the fundamental principles of the game and load themselves with bodyguards.

The emphasis of too many game features is on “credits”. Whilst this enables the Administration to benefit financially, this could also be achieved whilst maintaining the emphasis on game currency and game play.

2.5 Increasing Stats into Perpetuity

In May 2010, I addressed the issue of stats increasing into perpetuity and I posed the question of ‘what next?’ if this issue was left unchecked and allowed to continue at the current rate. Unfortunately, we now know the answer to this question as the issue was left unchecked and we have accounts that have both colossal defence and colossal wack.

It was difficult for an account in May 2010 to overcome the gap between an established account and a new one and this has only widened even further into a void reminiscent of the Grand Canyon. It was postulated then that it would take 6 months of incredible work to reach a similar position to the top accounts at that time and now I believe this to be closer to 12 months. I did not believe that most common players would choose to play in May 2010 based upon that work rate scenario and I believe even fewer will do so now. I know that from my personal perspective, this is too much expectation for me to realistically achieve.

Stats are too high, and both attack and defence are off the charts, needlessly. There is no benefit to anyone of increasingly moving the finishing line further and further away. It is a deterrent to both new and existing players as they realise that they must continue to strive for a point that is so far into the future, requiring so much effort, that this effort exceeds the enjoyment to be gained from actually achieving it. This is extremely counterproductive and needs to be addressed and rebalanced.

There is nothing to be gained from increasing stats into perpetuity and I have seen no argument put forth by anyone that can demonstrate that it is. Why require 1500 kills to kill the strongest account and require this to take 1 year to accumulate, when you could achieve the same result with 250 kills in 2 months? A far greater proportion of the market for this game would be prepared to invest 2 months at a time rather than 1 year. This is common sense.

2.6 Bodyguards

This is the most highly publicised problems in MafiaReturns at this moment in time – the overwhelming amount of bodyguards within the game. We have continually seen the number of employed bodyguards grow since the cap was initially removed a number of years ago. I can remember having 30 BGs and thinking this was loads, I can remember having 90 and thinking I had too many and now, this volume is common place for any aspiring Gangster.

The reason that the bodyguards have become a problem is initially in terms of realism. It is laughably unrealistic that anyone, member of organized crime or President of the United States (even in 2011, forget about the 1920s), should be permanently protected by in excess of 300 people. The fact that we have Gangsters and Thugs subject to this level of protection is stretching the role-play element to breaking point.

The voluminous nature of the bodyguard problem also has a huge impact upon game play and we have seen the number of conflicts steadily fall since the introduction of uncapped bodyguards. We have gone from individual families doing battle, to the majority of the game being embroiled in every dispute, which happen on average about once every 3 months. This has led to people deciding that the game is too boring as well as too difficult, and we have subsequently witnessed their departure or descent into lethargy. Whilst we have more users than in the past, we would have more still if we could maintain our established players as well as bring in new ones.

We have too many bodyguards. Defences are too high, which in turn means that attack needs to be too high in order to combat the high defence. There is no beneficiary from having these things scaled into such a vast proportion. It takes more time and effort on behalf of a player doing the boring things, such as training a gun and criming to sustain your bodyguards, than is enjoyable. It generates less income for the Administration as there is a lower turnover of accounts, meaning that a minority purchase credits in bulk and the majority only purchase a

small amount of credits for each individual account lasting for months. If people had fewer bodyguards, they would have a lower defence and then they would then die more regularly. This would then mean that more people would be buying fewer credits but doing so more often, meaning in the long term this would generate more revenue.

The ability to ‘tank up’ an account with bodyguards lends itself to poor game-play and allows those who should not otherwise succeed to be untouchable. If we consider Roman for a moment, he would have died several times over if it was not for the initial bodyguards that he purchased on that account and he would never have reached the heights that he has. I’m not using this example as I’m bitter towards Roman or for any other purpose other than I know firsthand that this is absolutely true. When Deimne was taken down, Roman was left because it was not in our best interests wasting time trying to reduce his bodyguards to a level that he could be killed. This should never be the case and when we reach a point where people are forced to compromise as a result of the BG level of an individual member of a family, we have a real problem that has to be identified.

We have seen numerous examples where people have abused the bodyguard system for their own gains and then done pretty much as they pleased, safe from any repercussions that they could not see coming a mile away and have ample time to prepare for. This will continue to be the common practice unless bodyguards are set to a realistic limit that does not take years to overcome.

2.7 Game Secrets & Ambiguity

One of things that made the original mafia.org so exciting and such a success was that 99% of the people there had no idea as to the inner working of the game. There were no known scenarios and no known outcomes. This meant that when X shot at Y there was no guarantee that X would hit, no guarantee that he would miss and just about no guarantees about anything. This ambiguity as to the inner workings of the game is one of the things that made it exciting and enjoyable.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in MafiaReturns and nearly every person playing understands the kill totals and ratios required to have a realistic chance of hitting another target. Admins confirming to people their shot percentages after they have performed the shot is revealing precious information, which may seem innocent at the time, but is later exploited by players for their own gains. They will calculate how many kills they have, how many BGs their victim had, rank boost, crew boost etc and decipher the wack code. From information and other small clues which may have appeared harmless, people have sussed the BG:Kill ratio. People have sussed the increase to your wack stat that a BG kill gives you. These things are supposed to be unknown and the revelation of them significantly impacts upon game-play.

Similarly, Administrators and Coders who have playing accounts and then become involved in sensitive channels on the IRC network are presented with a massive conflict of interest. It is

natural that you do not want to lose your account any more than we do, partly for the reasons already identified. Whilst we do understand and appreciate that you want to enjoy your own hard work, there have been scenarios where crucial information has been deduced and revealed from comments that have been made in these situations. It is a difficult to balance the ethical responsibilities of someone who is privy to sensitive information and those of a loyal member looking out for the best interests of their family and yet this is the task that you have undertaken. It is critical that the former overrides the latter and no inkling is ever revealed as to the likelihood of any outcome from any action. If this is not possible, then perhaps it is time the roles of Administrators and Players became mutually exclusive.

We have witnessed a terrible decline in risk as a result of this revealed and deciphered information. It can be easy to point the finger towards the players and say “where have your balls gone?” and ship the blame for the stagnancy onto them, but it would be extremely inaccurate to do so. Their balls have been overruled by their heads, which is inevitable in a world where everyone knows that you need a minimum of 5 kills for every additional bodyguard that someone has. With visible bodyguard levels, why would I blow my account with 300 kills on a shot that I know I have very little chance of making? Ultimately, the answer is in play all around us, every day. I wouldn’t.

Until the inner workings of the game become somewhat nebulous again, the game will continue to suffer for it.

2.8 BG Wacking

It is now entirely possible to train your wack stat without risking a wackback, through the destruction of bodyguards. Durdens have bodyguards and even those people with 100s of real kills can still snap up more kills and they do so without any danger. This enables the strongest to continue to kill and strengthen still further, whilst circumventing the wackback ‘check’ as a means of preventing people avoiding the risks associated with accumulating lots of kills.

BG wacking was a good idea that I do not believe is workable in our game. Unlimited bodyguards are determined to be allowable, because they can now be killed. We had a far more entertaining game when BGs couldn’t be killed and bodyguards were capped. I would gladly see us revert to this system and demolish BG wacking in exchange for realistically capped bodyguards.

2.9 IRC Notifications

One of the main criticisms of the userbase is that they have the option in the palm of their hands to take out anyone. If everyone took a shot at Roman's BGs, he would have no bodyguards left at the end of it. The difficulty of getting away with BG wacking has increased since the IRC network notification was incorporated into the game and this acts as a counter measure to attacks.

The original setup was that, when you were logged in, you were logged in and when you were logged out, you were logged out. That was it. If you weren't here to defend yourself, then that was one of those things. Some people considered it underhanded, others a pussy move and everyone had to accept it was effective.

We now have linked in an IRC notification for personals which will transmit the personals notification to an IRC user, which does not necessarily have to be the person who plays the account. This presents an alarm system for anyone who is happy to leave a computer hooked up to IRC all night, ready to be notified in case that something happens to their account whilst they are sleeping. This system deters people from utilising the BG wack option as they are unable to adopt the sneaky tactics that would ultimately be extremely effective.

3.0 The Solutions

This section will attempt to address the problems previously identified and present real, workable solutions to them. It will also attempt to destroy some of the misconceptions that have been presented as facts. I do not claim that these solutions are foolproof; I believe that they could be improved and will gladly seek to do so should they ever be realistically considered.

What I am certain of, is that the incorporation of these solutions in some form or guise into MafiaReturns will be to the betterment of the users. Therefore, this section will also address the benefits of rectifying the problems identified whether using the solution proposed or not.

3.1 Account Length

This is a complex problem and can be rectified by addressing the other issues that comprise it. If defence was lowered, attack would also plunge as a result. If you did not need 1500 kills to kill people, there would be no need for anyone to go to such extreme lengths in developing a gun. Indeed, if defence was lowered, I do not think it would be possible to develop such a high attack, because someone would kill you before you managed to achieve that and this is the crux of the issue. Attack is only so high because defence is so high. Defence is only so high because attack is so high. This is cyclical problem that cannot be rectified by allowing these things to increase into perpetuity. If both attack and defence were lowered, account length would lower with it.

The benefits from fixing the life of accounts are huge. It gets incredibly boring when you are on one account for a significant period of time and you run out of people to hate, people to love and people to fight. Eventually, you need a change of scenery which is difficult to achieve within MafiaReturns when you don't actively try to die. You often see the most effort put in by people within their first few days of an account, when it is fresh, new and exciting. Months and months as the same person breeds a monotony that isn't healthy for the game and can be witnessed by even the most cursory of glances in the direction of the streets.

I feel that I can only come so far with each account before it gets dull. I like my family, I like my city and I like competing against other people and despite this, eventually I want to change it up. I like to reinvent myself and rather than being an orator, be a merciless killer. Rather than be a merciless killer, be a whisperer and a schemer. Rather than a schemer, be a paragon of everything a Wise Guy should be. At the moment I can't do any of these things and I'm trapped within the same role I started 4 months ago. I am sick of it, how many others feel the same way?

The user levels within MafiaReturns are higher than a year ago, although it certainly doesn't seem like it. Whilst we have less members now than mafia.org used to when it employed a

shorter life cycle, our numbers have increased from what they used to be. Our difficulty, it seems to me, is in keeping the players that we have playing properly, with commitment and attempting to challenge. I believe this would occur if the time investment level necessary to do so was significantly reduced and account length was accordingly adjusted. This would encourage more people to take a risk on losing their effort, because their loss would be mitigated in terms of hours spend in production. When they stand to lose so much time and effort, it is only natural that they are hesitant to see it happen.

The drawback to shortening account length is that people die more often than they do at the moment. The reaction to this has been blown completely out of proportion and it appears to me that a belief has fostered that if people die they will quit. I ask you, who amongst us here hasn't died at least once? As 99.99% of you will confirm that you have died at least once and as you're still playing, I can only assume that it didn't put you off. Why then, is there such a fear that dying is going to drive people away? It won't. It hasn't. It doesn't. In fact, dying more regularly is better than dying less regularly and here is why:

Consider when you're writing an essay, completing a presentation or doing some other work unrelated to MafiaReturns. You're typing away and your laptop dies, "NOOOOOOOOO!!!!" you yell at the screen, madly shaking your fist and looking for a family member to throttle. Would you rather have this happen to you, say, 10 minutes into your task or 10 hours into your task? We would all answer 10 minutes as that way we lose the least amount of time/effort and have less to repeat to get back to the same point...

...so it is with MafiaReturns. When this account dies, I probably won't have another serious one for a few weeks or a couple of months. This isn't because I enjoy the game any less than I do now or because I don't like it anymore; it is purely because I can't bring myself to invest so much time into another character for it to ultimately die and for me to lose all that work. I can't be bothered. I sit back and work it out...'I'll have to do X amount of work, to reach this point and then it'll take me...X amount to be able to get revenge on those bastards!'

The bottom line from all of these calculations is that it'll be too much time, too much effort and too much hard work. Therefore the game loses another otherwise committed and (if I say so myself) handsome player. This has been the same process for many of the committed players that helped to build this game into everything that people love about it.

However, consider the alternative and rather than 700 hours, let us say I had just lost a month or two months of hard work, so 100 hours? I'd be working out what I need to do to get back to where I was and how to win, only in this scenario, the time invested and the effort would be a fraction of what it is now. Accordingly, I'm happy to do that and willing to keep going, because the finish line isn't 2 years away, it is a realistic goal and something that is achievable. It is because of this that I cannot feel that a longer cycle mitigates the problem of people dying, because everyone dies eventually. Only this way, when they do it is 10x, 20x, and hell 50x worse than it ordinarily would be. We should stop believing the falsehood that more deaths

would cause people to leave; it would encourage more to return.

If we embraced a shorter life cycle, people would be more prepared to take risks. I'm probably one of the most ambitious and adventurous players who logs in to MR. I'm prepared to risk it all and go for broke and I'm willing to throw away 700 hours work for the chance of something bigger and better. There aren't many people here like me (thank god, right?) willing to sacrifice an account when you could lose and I don't even blame them. If it wasn't such a mammoth task to build a moderately successful account, more people would gamble for an opportunity. You cannot be surprised that JimmyShitbag isn't willing to roll the dice with his year of effort, where as he might with a few weeks worth of effort. He doesn't have as much to lose, which is more likely to make him prone to taking a chance.

There is nothing to be lost from making all of the exciting and fun elements of the game more achievable, whilst still reflecting a reasonable amount of work. There is nothing bad or to be feared from people dying more regularly. There is nothing bad about the casual player being able to have an impact on the game. There is nothing bad about having to be proactive to stay on top. Think of all the great players that this game has had, either currently or under any previous guise. Do you think that they wouldn't have risen to the top anyway? Can you honestly claim that they didn't work hard to get there? Of course not, it is just relative to where we place the goalposts and at the moment, the goalposts are about 5x too far away.

A common misconception is that if defence was lowered, people would die every 48 hours. This is completely inaccurate and the history of both MafiaReturns and mafia.org tells us that. I appreciate that some people did not play the old game, or this one initially, but I can assure you that people lived far longer than 48 hours. There was no mass 'wackathon' because ultimately people realise how to survive and they incorporate this into their playing style. There is no precedent for the misinformed view that things would deteriorate into chaos, because they didn't, haven't and ultimately wouldn't.

The difference would be that people died sooner, but nothing like the suggested period of 48 hours, which is wholly inaccurate. Even during the cycles, people survived far longer than 48 hours and that was a glorified free for all, where everyone knew that they only had two weeks to survive. In reality, if defence was adjusted to levels similar to either where it was initially within MafiaReturns or to where it used to be in Mafia.org, then account length would be on average 1-2 months with exceptions either side. This would be a colossal improvement.

I would welcome a counter argument as to why taking 12 months to achieve something is better than being able to achieve it in 3 months, as I am yet to hear of any reason why that would be the case.

3.2 Sign-up Answers

Since the matrix was compromised, every available answer set has been discovered, tested and put into operation. This therefore requires the corresponding stat to the answer to be switched and the problem will be temporarily solved. Provided that this information is then not revealed, the sign up answers once again become a mystery and players will have to determine for themselves, through actual playing of the game, what the best and most effective combinations are. What I mean by this is:

Where; A = Wack, B = Defence, C = Stealth and D = Petty.
Make it; A = Defence, B = Stealth, C = Petty and D = Wack.

I appreciate that the actual answer matrix is not that simple, but even mixing up the answers will present people with a problem in discovering the actual corresponding stats and thus render all the known information redundant. Mafia.org incorporated a system where you didn't always get the same amount of questions and this again raised the difficulty level in knowing indefinitely what answer set you had procured for your account as well as for repeated use thereafter.

I'm sure numerous people would be happy to volunteer new questions and new answers if we wanted to overhaul this aspect of the game entirely. I hear that Ellis Island is planned and I'm sure contests have been held for this sort of thing in the past. This could comfortably be incorporated into that, if it isn't being already.

A wider problem associated with the sign-up answers is that fact that the skills they develop initially are redundant long term. This would require account length to be addressed in order to be resolved. Even mixing up the answers would not solve this problem, because even 111111 with enough time can train an exceptional gun and build a very high defence.

If account length was brought back down to a realistic point, then the benefits of choosing wack would be evidenced and the disadvantages of being on defence would also become more pronounced. Currently, we are seeing neither of these and any blend of answers will do a satisfactory job, with defence being the most favourable option. This would not always be the case if people did not automatically survive long enough to reap the benefits of a defence account, which was traditionally the case. I believe it should be again and that the game would benefit from the variety of scenarios lop-sided accounts present.

The shooting range and MIA benefits should be significantly lowered, making it much more difficult to raise your wack stat. This would again make starting on defence much more of a challenge and would mean that you would have to gamble with scoring a wackback or settle for

a poor/mediocre gun. Wackers should have to accept a low defence and survive by their ability to outthink and outscore the opposition. A jack of all trades, master of all trades should never exist.

3.3 Wealth

The wealth problem can only be truly solved by death. There is too much money in the game and this is one of most paramount problems that we face. How do we combat it?

The first way that this can be reduced is by reverting to fluctuating drug prices. This will mean that co-ordination for drugs is impossible. You will have to gamble on whether you have picked the right city or not and hope that you can offload your drugs for a profit at some point.

Set units and potential unit reductions would be another way in which we could reduce the amount of wealth in the game. 5 units up until Goomba, 10 units up until Earner and so on, right the way up the chain. This is a reversion, but too many units too fast, leads to too much money too fast. By limiting the units that people can trade in, we are directly limiting their ability to make money.

Another option is to have potential unit reductions, where you temporarily lose your units you have earned, similar to when you have been demoted. This could occur when you fail to bribe the FBN agent within a certain amount of time, possibly when you fail a felony (it could be a drug bust and subsequent surveillance from them to check you're not being a bad boy) and get jailed. This would temporarily reduce the amount of cash that any one account could generate.

DFPs need to be evaluated and changed. They create too much money for far too little effort. I made a suggestion to how I believe someone could earn the DFP and also generate some interest in the business district (http://mafiareturns.com/comm/thread/74738). It could also benefit from being either 10x more expensive or the rewards being 10x less. The reason for this is that with reduced account length, the problem would be reduced, but not solved and we would still have too much money. By adjusting the payout levels to make sure that you had to survive several weeks to see a positive return, in a world where it was difficult to survive for several weeks, players would have to reconsider the purchase of them and whether they suited a long term strategy. This would reduce individual wealth. For example,

In my case, a DFP will cost me $713,244 and I can sell 24 units of Barbiturates in exchange for this purchase price. Currently on the market are Barbs for $5,800 and this produces a gross return of $139,200. After tax to my crewleader of say 30%, I'm clearing $97,400, which means that I'll have recouped my original spend in just over 1 week. As it is extremely easy to survive for 1 week, even allowing for days when I can't achieve the maximum of $5,800 and I have to sell at a discount price, I am still clearly going to generate a lot of cash from this venture and quickly which represents a 19% gross yield.

NPMs create a significant amount of money for crewleaders. I have produced the following example on the basis of SexyBeast's crew, where the member to NPM ratio is 2:1, meaning we have 2x as many actual players as NPMs. The cost of NPMs are 10 credits and credit price on average has been assumed as $400,000 per credit, a realistic amount. NPM earnings are based on an average of the earnings of two 31 day old NPMs (Pacheco & williamportman):

NPM Earnings A		$6,671,785	
NPM Earnings B		$6,431,670	
Average NPM Earnings			**$6,551,728**
Less Purchase Cost of 10 credits	@ $400,000 each	-$4,000,000	
Average Profit Earnings per NPM		$2,551,728	
Therefore For SexyBeast	@ 18 NPMs	x18	**$45,931,095**

This shows that SexyBeast makes approximately $46,000,000 from his NPMs, who require no management, no maintenance and above all else, produce free money. This is on top of 36 real people also contributing to his earnings. This effectively generates $46,000,000 for free per month which can be used for amongst other things, the upkeep on bodyguards. This is shown below:

BG Upkeep	@ $12,000 per day	for 31 days	$372,000	
BG Upkeep for 100 BGs	@ $12,000 per day	for 31 days	$37,200,000	
Average Profit per NPM			$2,551,728	
BG Upkeep	@ $12,000 per day	for 31 days	$372,000	
Average BGs supported	per NPM			**6.8**
Therefore For SexyBeast	@ 18 NPMs		$45,931,095	
BG Upkeep	@ $12,000 per day	for 31 days	$372,000	
BGs Supported	@ 18 NPMs			**123.5**

This is one example from one Don, demonstrating that he is capable of supporting in excess of IWP status purely from his automated accounts, without consideration to revenue derived from other income streams.

The biggest reduction in wealth would come through death. People need to die more regularly to prevent them hoarding so much money. This money then is used to fund all the ancillary extras that make accounts so ridiculously strong. This is the problem that needs to be fixed and even if we address other factors, this cannot be ignored as problems will rear their heads again if it is.

3.4 Real Money

It is difficult to solve the real money influence as we do not want to compromise the revenue stream for the Administration and equally, I'm not naive enough to believe that they would make a change that isn't in the best financial interest of the game. After all, this supports the real life livelihoods of some people and that must be borne in mind.

My belief is that the real money scenario could be rectified by incorporating some element of realism to it. A Godfather and a Thug from opposite sides of the country would never do business together. Similarly, rival families would only trade together when they both benefitted from the deal and not when one party held the other to ransom. Therefore I propose that credit market transactions are limited by rank. What I mean is:

As a Gangster, I can only be involved in the marketplace with people of a similar or lower status to my own. I can deal with Thugs and other Gangsters, but all the other guys are going to tell me to get fucked.

As a Wise Guy, I might be prepared to gamble on doing business with an up and coming Earner, but I wouldn't put my neck out for some two bit Gangster out of Nowhereville. I wouldn't want other people to see my still dealing with the scum off the streets, I'm trying to show that I'm entering the big time and the only way to do that is to conduct myself in the right crowds.

As a Made Man, there is absolutely no way I'm going to be dealing with the common riff raff. I might stretch to doing a deal with a promising Wise Guy, but a Gangster or a Goomba? They can shine my shoes and then watch the door whilst the rest of us do business.

You can only deal with people of an equivalent or slightly lower status than yourself. The higher up you go; the more open you are to being a target of the feds and therefore you need to insulate yourself as much as possible. This means limiting your dealings to those other people who you can trust and have made names for themselves. You could employ your associates and your lower orders to do business with the scum, but that is always risky. How much can you trust an Earner with $50,000,000?

This presents a new game-play scenario making it more difficult to circumvent the reality of the situation, whilst still allowing everyone who wants to, to use real money on the credit marketplace. Anyone who wants to take advantage of this will then have to run the risk of their associates and lower orders potentially stealing millions from them.

Even if only the above suggestion was incorporated into the game, the impact of real money would be reduced with falling account lengths and by addressing the game money problem. With a shorter account length, people would have less money to spend on credits, meaning that more would have to be sold to raise money for bodyguards and this task would have to be repeated more regularly, if defence was lowered and by more people. Whilst an individual might not drop $1,000 into the credit marketplace at one time, 10 people might drop $100 every couple of weeks.

One of the fundamental arguments against a reset of the game is the scenario of ‘what happens to their credits?’ I believe that credits should be maintained by the individual master account and able to use once the game has been reset. That way, the person does not lose their credits and this minefield can be avoided. If the other issues within the game are addressed, then credit prices would fall and the economy would recover. No individual would lose out as a result of their having already bought credits.

3.5 Increasing Stats into Perpetuity

I have decided to quote my suggestion as Gwarble as to how to rectify this problem, because I still believe this is the best way to go:

“I have mentioned this in passing to other long term players and we've never really been able to agree on the best way to get around this problem. It is difficult to say 'after X amount of time you die' or 'after X amount of kills nothing helps anymore' because as Deimne put it to me 'I would just stop logging in', which is the problem. You don't want to make it pointless, but you can't keep the current system that creates such a huge imbalance. I've come up with the following; it was in fact, how I believed the system to work in my younger days.

I had believed that everything you did added a percentage of your total. What I mean by this is that your first 100 kills would be more beneficial to you than your second 100 kills and these more beneficial than your third 100 kills. To make this a little clearer:

Assuming my wack is 10 and each subsequent kill adds 1, divided by my total number of kills, 0.1, to my existing stat. Therefore, this would make my new total 10.1.

This would mean that if my wack was 100 and each subsequent kill adds 1, divided by my total wack, I would still get a benefit from the kill, but it wouldn't keep increasing my total at the same rate as before. I would get 0.01 for this kill rather than the 0.1 that I was getting initially.

I can't code and I don't know the difficulties involved, but I would have thought a system that incorporated tapered benefits based on your existing ability would be a far more balanced way to operate. It prevents a huge imbalance arising between those who put more of their lives into the game than is particularly healthy and those who play casually. It does this whilst not hindering them - they will still be stronger which reflects their increased workload, but a new

account should never be faced with the thought that, 'no matter what I do, I'll never be able to reach the top.'

The same I believe should be happening for defence. Each new bodyguard adds 1 divided by the total defence. Therefore if my defence is ten, a new bodyguard would add 0.1, but if it was 100, it would only add 0.01. I still get the benefit, but it is less beneficial.

This would mean that for the likes of Deimne and the other Godfathers their increased work still has a purpose and one who has done more will be stronger than one who has done less. However, it will do this to within a set level that is achievable by anyone (or not dependent upon where the coders felt it should go)."

What I would add to this suggestion is that defence need not operate in the same way. It would be best achieved through a fixed BG cap, set at a realistic level. The difficulty with this is through BG wacking, but I personally believe that this feature should be disabled and removed all together as I will elaborate on later.

The motivation behind training a gun is to be able to wack other people and whether we pretend otherwise or not, that is the primary motivation for many of the players here. Whilst they pretend to be mobsters, a significant part of what that title encompasses is being a bad ass and killing people. None of us are mobsters in real life (I don't think) and this game enables us to take on the role, but not when we require 1000s of kills to play it out. That makes for a disappointing situation, where for the majority of my account life I have to be a timid lamb, something the majority of people can achieve every day in their real lives. Stats increasing into perpetuity greatly restricts and limits the appeal of the game.

With tapered wack and a fixed BG cap, we need not see 1500 kills and 300 bodyguard defences. We would see much more achievable numbers, which would see an increase in activity, which have the knock on effect of an increase in entertainment, enjoyment and fun. Make no mistake; this game is most active when things happen. The more regularly things happen, the more people play. The more likely they are to succeed, the more likely they are to play and make things happen. These things are cyclical and rather than encouraging them to occur, we are doing our best to prevent them. This needs to change.

We have killed the casual player who puts in a few hours a day. These players make up the majority of the market for a game like ours. It is true that many games you purchase off the shelves are designed so that you can ultimately win and do so at your own pace, but every game should be designed so that you achieve if you put some time in. This is a relative concept to an individual, although if you consider when you first joined, I'm pretty certain your logic wasn't 'I'd like to play for 14 hours a day and in a year I'll be able to kick some ass. Maybe.' I expect it was more like 'I can have my own family and go Scarface on all of these

motherfuckers'. It should be no surprise that the appeal has been lost where so much is expected in exchange for very little reward.

3.6 Bodyguards

We need to cap bodyguards again. A 400 BG cap is pointless and more or less redundant – those horses have already bolted and no amount of slamming the stable door is going to fix the problem. That is not a solution; it is trying to heal a corpse with a bandage.

A real BG cap is the way to proceed and the way in which the game was the most successful. 10 Bodyguards worked and served the game brilliantly for years and years. There was no need to change this when it was changed and there is still no need for this to be uncapped. A higher turnover of account is better than a lower turnover of account, because it makes the game more exciting for everyone. Having to stay alive by your wits, your alliances and your brains rather than by your bodyguards makes for a more much enjoyable, proactive and rewarding game.

One of the biggest criticisms of this game is that it is boring. It was one of the biggest criticisms of the old game too and instead of rectifying that, we've moved further and further away from addressing it. We need to get back to basics and fix this mess. Everyone has too many bodyguards and several people have far too many.

As I stated before, wars used to depend upon how strong a family was and they were won by shooting family members to lower the leader's defence. This was combated by protecting those people who worked for you and ensuring that you had a family that was loyal and committed to you. Now, an individual leader can secure themselves and always should as a game-play priority. This means they are far more selfish in ensuring their own interests rather than the betterment of their family.

A further issue is the demotion and double demotion for bodyguards. This is wrong and requires immediate redress as it becomes worse on a daily basis. There are many viable solutions to this problem, the most simple of which is simply to maintain a constant price for bodyguards, regardless of rank. Equally, having a threshold price, at which once achieved it will never fall below again, is another viable option. This would mean once you hit Wise Guy and BGs cost $2,750,000 they would always cost $2,750,000 even if you got demoted back to Thug.

I realise and accept that people like me are part of the problem. I have taken a demotion and reaped the benefits of this exploit. I do this because it is advantageous to game-play to do so and accordingly I don't condemn the strategy behind anyone doing the same. From an ethical perspective as a user striving for a better game, I disagree with it completely and think it should not be allowed, which is my part of my motivation for writing this. If we do not close this loophole, even people who disagree with this move ethically are forced to utilise it in order to

compete.

It is easy, as with so many other things, to say that players can police this practice of demotion for BGs, but why would they when it is directly converse to their goal? Their goal is be as strong as possible and by preventing this from occurring, they would be weakening themselves, which is an unreasonable expectation of any player in any game. When a practice is against a player's best interest to do and still a very real problem, it needs to be addressed objectively, by the Administration.

A BG cap is essential as defence continues to rise off the charts and this is a contributory factor to virtually every other problem that I previously identified.

3.7 Game Secrets & Ambiguity

We need some mystery back. I don't want to know with absolute certainty that I can kill tita. I don't want tita to know with absolute certainty that she will never have a hope in hell of hitting me. That uncertainty is what used to fatally stay some hands and unequivocally force others. That is one of the things that made the game great and it has gone.

It must be tempting to reveal intricate information to some people when they ask you, desperate for the knowledge that you're the holder of, but you are entrusted with that knowledge for a reason. It must remain secret for the betterment of the majority and in MafiaReturns everyone tells someone. Even if you think they won't, they will and these things get out.

The benefits of BG kills need to be evaluated and changed. The answer matrix needs to be evaluated and changed. If BG wacking is to continue to exist and bodyguards are not capped low, then the ratio of Kill:BG needs to be evaluated and changed. People know the answers to all these things and it has ruined the fun factor of the game for many, many people.

Old wives tales add to the mystique of the game. I was raised on the belief that if you got your first kill in Chicago, it was worth more than a kill in another city. I was raised on the belief that you should perform at least 3 petties before you shot, because shooting cold was for morons. These little anecdotes might not seem like much but as much as anything else, they are what make MafiaReturns unique and special. They are what keep people playing and grow to like the game.
Please keep the inner workings of the game secret. Never answer guesses about anything and never confirm anything, wrongly or rightly absolutely. If the players were meant to know, the game would tell them.

3.8 BG Wacking

This feature should be condemned to the annals of history. It was a worthwhile attempt and a good experiment. We saw some truly intelligent use of this tactic, most notably in the Deimne

NY war, which would otherwise have been impossible. However, with a BG cap still in place, that situation would never have arisen anyway.

There is no game-play mileage in BG wacking and nobody wants to be sat around killing bodyguards in a war. Ask any hitter and they will always say they prefer to shoot actual accounts over bodyguards any day of the week, because that is where the fun factor is.

Before BG wacking was introduced, it was much more difficult to kill accounts that had a small number or virtually no bodyguards at all. On this version it was approximately 75 kills to kill a Capo and scaled upward from there dependent upon the rank of your target. On the old Mafia.org, it was not uncommon for Consiglieres with 300 kills to miss shots on crewleaders who had 10 BGs and a full crew. This would be unheard of in MafiaReturns, but demonstrates the fact that the different make up of the defence stat was perfectly viable for a number of years in the old version and could be incorporated into ours. It did not lead to site-wide apocalypses and everyone with a brain survived for more than 48 hours as they still would if this change was made.

Wars were much more entertaining when shots were traded between families rather than BG wack after BG wack. Reducing a defence was based upon removing families and this was a much more entertaining way of operating. It also meant that more shots were gambled upon and more people survived the first wave because no guarantee existed. We should seek to revert to these type of scenarios which are more enjoyable for everyone involved.

3.9 IRC Notification

In addressing this, we really have to have appreciation of where we are coming from and what we are trying to achieve. If we are happy that people can effectively have access to their account 24 hours a day then that is fine and this system enables that to happen. However, if we think this was not the original intention and being offline should be being in the dark and we want to incorporate a wider utilisation of the BG Wack feature, then changes could be made.

We could either remove the link between IRC and the game all together, meaning that you get no notifications on IRC of things that happen to your account. This would make more people stay active as they never know when they might be under attack, unless they are physically logged in to witness it. One of the traditional criticisms of this game and its predecessors was that it ‘sucks to die offline’, so this may not be perceived as a viable solution. It should be noted however, that many people accept that to be one of the composite components of the game.

Rather than a complete removal, we could only remove the notification to IRC for attacks and other threatening behaviour, meaning you would still get told when your accountant has received a payment but not necessarily when you have been pickpocketed or shot at. I believe this change would have a similar effect to the above, whilst still giving IRC users some sight of what is going on with their account.

Or, we could add a credit payment system for the use of the IRC notification tool. This would likely mean that fewer people would use it on the whole, but those that do would have to utilise credits to do, which they may forget to top up and believe themselves to have when they actually do not. I believe this would change the system only slightly if incorporated. It would however add another credit stream to the game. Before considering to change this and potentially using it as a tool to tackle the problem of risk/effort; weighing the opinion of the majority would be mandatory.

4.0 Conclusions

MafiaReturns has significant problems that have only worsened in the last year since I made my previous post. In another year, if left unchecked they will continue to worsen and we will lose more players. I know that we have more total users now than then, but think how much higher our net gain would be if we addresses these issues. Action needs to be taken as a matter of urgency if we intend to rectify the problems that inflict our game. We can no longer choose to simply ignore them and pretend they do not exist.

We need to address the amount of money within the game, both that which is real, introduced through credits, and our fictional game currency. This can be done through shortening the life cycle within the game and reducing account length. Prices can be static, units can be fixed, DFPs can be made more expensive and actually earned by those who do maintain them.

The development of more money-sinks should be made a priority and all suggestions in this regard should be considered in order to prevent further breakdown of the game economy. Even if all of the measures identified are taken, this is not a be-all-end-all and the problem of account length will still cause an inflated economy over time if it is not halted. Money has to bleed from the game or it will always be put to use by intelligent and competitive players into whatever venture is likely to reap rewards. At the moment, this is in the form of bodyguards, but rest assured, they will find something else to do with it.

We cannot allow demotions for the purchase of bodyguards and this practice must be halted. It creates accounts that are too strong and exploits a loophole that should not be allowed to exist. There will always be a difficulty in preventing the gap between the highest and the lowest becoming too wide, but this makes it a yawning chasm that may never close. This requires administrative guidance as it is unreasonable to expect players to hinder themselves.

Attack can be tapered and BGs can be capped. There is absolutely no benefit to either Administration or User from having the boundaries for success continually extended far into the distance. This is counterproductive and more conducive to failure than the continued efforts of the majority of the users. The majority of users would prefer real, achievable success in exchange for a worthwhile amount of effort. Justification for what qualifies as this effort frontier should not be determined by the extremities the minority are prepared to reach and rather to the desires of the majority. What most gamers want is a realistic effort/reward scenario and at the

moment ours is way off.

We have killed the casual player from having any input into the game and we need to find a way to bring them back. The measures identified still favour more work over less work and they do this within a realistic framework which will not be too onerous on new players. It should be our goal to bring the realms of success back into the hands of more casual players, otherwise our net gains will not be as substantial as they could be.

Secrets must remain secret and players need to be kept in the dark for their own benefit, even if they do not understand that is why they aren't being made privy to certain sensitive information. Risk is a measure of uncertainty and unfortunately we have certainty here. Until the wool is pulled over our eyes again as to what goes on behind the curtain, we will continue to see the percentages played.

We need to stop feeding our fears as to the consequences and worst case scenarios and instead consider the facts. Defence has rarely been this high (and it has consistently risen since BGs were uncapped) and a significant percentage of players are not enjoying it as much as they did when it was lower. Attack has never been this high and a significant percentage of players are not enjoying this as much as they did when it was lower. This tells us the answers and gives us guidance on what we need to do. We will not see carnage if defences and attacks are realistically lowered, we will see a return to some sort of normality without any danger to progress as a whole. History tells us that this works, where as worried speculation upon baseless views like 'nobody would make it past 48 hours' are completely worthless.

If the amount of money can be reduced, defences and attacks lowered and ambiguity restored, people will play this game for years to come. More people will keep playing this game and more people will return to this game if it is more accessible and easier to achieve success – not in terms of skill, but in terms of hours logged in. We ask too much and we see the results, people leave and do not return. Whilst we see new users joining the game, those playing it must also be satisfied. This is holding MafiaReturns back and sadly, it is continues to fall further behind what it has the potential to be every day that these issues are not rectified.

These changes are large scale and they would necessitate a reset of the game in order to be successfully achieved. The hesitance around a reset is understandable and I stand to lose much myself as a result of it. However, I can be objective and appreciate that these changes are what the game needs. These issues need to be addressed and the collective gain outweighs the loss of any individual.

5.0 Author's Note

I do not hide behind anonymity or wait until my account has died. I've said the same things as a Godfather, a Thug or currently as a Made Man with 100s of BGs and 700+ hours logged into my account. We cannot sweep all of this beneath the rug and pretend everything is alright because it isn't. If you don't believe me, ask the people playing now and ask them if they think the situation is better than a year ago when I made my last post as Gwarble in May 2010.

MafiaReturns has significant problems and I know I've put a spotlight on all of them, but please do not confuse my purpose here. I have done this to highlight the blemishes in a thing that I love and adore. I know I am not alone in that and I know there are many more people who used to love this and would again if the preceding adjustments were made. This is a great game...and there are plenty of great games not in production anymore. Do not let this become one of them. Take this report seriously and take action while we still have more than a handful of users.

5.1 Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks to those people who have taken the time to read all of this, as I realise it was a lot to ask and you've done well to have made it to the end. Well done. Additionally, I sought the opinion of a diverse range of people, in order to ensure that the view presented was not just my own and I would like to thank those individuals who provided valuable input and contribution. You have done a tremendous service and I thank:

DanK
Jerusalem
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Warrior
ClarenceWorley
tita
Juggling Dan
Leadfoot
El_Nino
Raptor
JkL
kong

g_man

I hope that I will be able to look back on this report and think that the preceding 11,237 words made a difference to the betterment of MafiaReturns. Here's hoping.

Grin.