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GAT316: Section A — Fall 2016

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**­**

Concept Milestone  
Target Employer & Game Concept Research

The Behemoth



About

The Behemoth is a privately held video game development company founded in 2003 by John Baez, artist Dan Paladin, and programmers Tom Fulp, Brandon LaCava, and Nick Dryburgh. Games by The Behemoth feature the comical art style of Dan Paladin, the featured artist for the company, utilize a unique art style and comedic approach to gameplay with heavy graphical violence. The Behemoth’s website is <www.thebehemoth.com>.

Location

San Diego, California

Company Size

According to The Behemoth’s LinkedIn website, [www.linkedin.com/company/the-behemoth](http://www.linkedin.com/company/the-behemoth), there are 11 – 50 employees.

Public Statement

As per their Facebook website’s about section, found at <https://www.facebook.com/thebehemoth/about/>:

*“We are humans. We like making games. We hope you enjoy them. The Behemoth is a small group of hardcore gamers with the modest goal of bringing craftsmanship and originality back to the game industry.”*

Job Postings

According to The Behemoth’s website there are two positions available: Senior Programmer & QA Test Lead. There was no additional information about the requirements for these positions or links to specifically apply for these positions. However, The Behemoth’s website accepts resumes with cover letters sent to [jobs@thebehemoth.com](mailto:jobs@thebehemoth.com).

Games

The Behemoth has seven published games and one known game, *Pit People*, currently in development. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by The Behemoth is an 81. The game with the highest Metascore is *Castle Crashers* with a score of 85. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Game Name | Release Date | Metacritic Score | User Score | Platforms |
| Alien Hominid | 2004 | 78 | 8.3 | PS2, GameCube, Xbox, GBA |
| Alien Hominid HD | 2007 | 79 | 7.5 | Xbox 360 |
| Castle Crashers | 2008 | 82 | 8.8 | Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows, OS X |
| Super Soviet Missile Mastar | 2011 | — | — | iOS |
| Alien Hominid: PDA Games | 2011 | — | — | iOS |
| BattleBlock Theater | 2013 | 85 | 8.0 | Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows, OS X |
| Castle Crashers Remastered | 2015 | 83 | 7.1 | Xbox One, Microsoft Windows, OS X |
| Pit People | TBA | — |  | Xbox One, Microsoft Windows |

Company Game Design Analysis

The style of games that The Behemoth makes have so far always been simple 2D games that feature Paladin’s signature 2D art style. While every game can be played as a single player, the majority of these games have multiplayer cooperative features where players work together to pass each stage. In their more recent games, like *BattleBlock Theater* and *Castle Crashers*, there are minor elements of competiveness where players are rewarded based on performance, but nothing that ultimately sways the game from being cooperative in nature.

The mechanics of most Behemoth games are usually simple arcade-like controls that involve 2D movement, jumping, and attacks. Simple mechanics allow players to quickly pick up and play any game by The Behemoth, which works well with the cooperative multiplayer nature of their games. Of their released games, *Castle Crashers* has perhaps the most complex player mechanics, with the introduction of button combinations for different attacking and magic spells. However, *Castle Crashers* can easily be played using basic controls, meaning players of varying skill levels can always enjoy the game together. Most currently released games by The Behemoth are arcade-like in style, with features like level-by-level progression systems, boss fights, players dropping in and out of play, and continuing after dying at the loss of score.

The Behemoth puts a huge focus on humor and absurdity into the games that they make. Much of the humor comes from visually through character designs, the environment, and animations. In the most recently released game, *BattleBlock Theater*, humor is supplemented with a cut-scene and in-game narrator. Humor is a huge part of The Behemoth games, making player deaths interesting and much less punishing, while keeping the general nature of their games light-hearted.

Company Game Design Analysis: Key Takeaways

* 2D Mechanics
* Distinctive 2D Art Style
* Simple Mechanics
* Cooperative Multiplayer
* Arcade-Like features
* Humorous
* Easy to Pick Up and Play

Valve Corporation



About

Valve Corporation is a video game developer and digital distribution company that is based out of Bellevue, Washington. Former Microsoft employees Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington founded Valve Corporation in 1996. Valve is most notable for their acclaimed game titles *Half-Life*, *Counter-Strike*, *Portal*, *Team Fortress*, *Left 4 Dead*, and most recently *Dota2*. Valve also develops and maintains their own engine, Source, and their own software distribution platform, Steam. Their website is <http://www.valvesoftware.com>.

Location

Bellevue, Washington

Company Size

According to The Behemoth’s LinkedIn website, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/haunted-temple-studios>, there are 1 – 10 employees.

Public Statement

As per Valve Corporation’s website:

*“When you give smart talented people the freedom to create without fear of failure, amazing things happen. We see it every day at Valve. In fact, some of our best insights have come from our biggest mistakes. And we’re ok with that! Since 1996, this approach has produced award-winning games, leading-edge technologies, and a groundbreaking social entertainment platform. We’re always looking for creative risk-takers who can keep that streak alive.”*

Job Postings

According to Valve Corporation’s website there are many positions available to apply for, some even not directly game designer related. In particular, I would be interested in applying to Valve Corporation for a Visual & User Experience Designer related position. In order to apply to Valve you must send an application and an online portfolio of work through their website submit form. The requirements for this position are as follows:

**Requirements:**

* BS/BA/BFA degree (or equivalent) in graphic, industrial, or interaction design (or equivalent)
* 6+ years of professional experience shipping world-class software and services
* A thorough understanding of graphic and user interaction design principles
* Highly effective multidisciplinary collaboration skills
* Personal commitment to quality, attention to detail
* Confidence with design communication tools
* Effective, articulate design communication and decision-making skills
* An online portfolio of work which conveys your capabilities

Games

Valve Corporation has 31 game reviews on Metacritic. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by Valve Corporation is an 85. The highest rated game for Valve Corporation is *Half-Life 2* with a score of 85 / 100. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores. Due to the many number of games Valve Corporation has made, I will only be including a list of games published since 2008.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Game Name | Release Date | Metacritic Score | User Score | Platforms |
| Portal | 2008 | 90 / 100 | 9.3 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux |
| Team Fortress 2 | 2008 | 92 / 100 | 9.1 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux |
| Left 4 Dead | 2008 | 89 / 100 | 9.2 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, Xbox 360, OS X, |
| Left 4 Dead 2 | 2009 | 89 / 100 | 8.6 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux |
| Alien Swarm | 2010 | 77 / 100 | 8.2 / 10 | Microsoft Windows |
| Portal 2 | 2011 | 95 / 100 | 8.8 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, PS3, Xbox 360, OS X, Linux |
| Counter Strike: Global Offensive | 2012 | 83 / 100 | 7.8 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, OS X, PS3, Xbox 360, Linux |
| Dota 2 | 2013 | 90 / 100 | 6.2 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, OS X, Linux |

Game Style Analysis

The style of games that The Behemoth makes have so far always been simple 2D games that feature Paladin’s signature 2D art style. While every game can be played as a single player, the majority of these games have multiplayer cooperative features where players work together to pass each stage. In their more recent games, like BattleBlock Theater and Castle Crashers, there are minor elements of competiveness where players are rewarded based on performance, but nothing that ultimately sways the game from being cooperative in nature.

The mechanics of most Behemoth games are usually simple arcade-like controls that involve 2D movement, jumping, and attacks. Simple mechanics allow players to quickly pick up and play any game by The Behemoth, which works well with the cooperative multiplayer nature of their games. Of their released games, Castle Crashers has perhaps the most complex player mechanics, with the introduction of button combinations for different attacking and magic spells. However, Castle Crashers can easily be played using basic controls, meaning players of varying skill levels can always enjoy the game together. Most currently released games by The Behemoth are arcade-like in style, with features like level-by-level progression systems, boss fights, players dropping in and out of play, and continuing after dying at the loss of score.

The Behemoth puts a huge focus on humor and absurdity into the games that they make. Much of the humor comes from visually through character designs, the environment, and animations. In the most recently released game, BattleBlock Theater, humor is supplemented with a cut-scene and in-game narrator. Humor is a huge part of Behemoth games, making player deaths interesting and much less punishing, while keeping the general nature of their games light-hearted.

Key Takeaways

* 2D Mechanics
* 2D Art Style
* Simple Mechanics
* Cooperative Multiplayer
* Arcade-Like features

Humorous

Psyonix



About

Psyonix is a privately held game studio founded in 2000 by Dave Hagewood that is based out of San Diego, California. Psyonix focuses mostly on the development of its own games, but also contributes to larger companies.

The most recognized game that Psyonix has released is Rocket League. With the success of Rocket League, Psyonix has shifted their business model to focus more on developing their own original games. Psyonix’s website can be found at <http://psyonix.com/>.

Location

San Diego, California

Company Size

According to Psyonix’s LinkedIn there are 11 – 50 employees who currently work at Psyonix (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/psyonix>).

Public Statement

As per their Facebook website:

*“Based in San Diego, CA, Psyonix is a critically-acclaimed independent video game developer and leading experts in Unreal Engine technology. For more than a decade, the studio has been a driving force behind some of the most successful games in the industry, including Gears of War, Mass Effect 3, XCOM: Enemy Unknown, Bulletstorm, Unreal Tournament III, Unreal Tournament 2004, Nosgoth, and the award-winning Sports-Action hit, Rocket League.”*

Job Postings

According to Psyonix’s LinkedIn, there are many positions available. The positions that would best fit my skillset are UI Programmer and UI Artist. These job listings do not the salaries for these positions but based off of the salary information at GlassDoor, <https://www.glassdoor.com/Salary/PSYONIX-Salaries-E433016.htm>, Programmers average between $72k – $78k and UI Artists average $77k – $83k. Both of these positions are areas of interest for me that I feel like I would excel well in. Requirements for the UI Programmer include:

**Responsibilities Include:**

* Architect, implement, and maintain new and existing interfaces and UI systems
* Work with UI/UX Lead, Designers, Artists, and Programmers to create high quality user experiences
* Work with UI Artist(s) to come up with practical solutions to graphical and layout issues; create dynamic and responsive UI that can scale and reflow to suit a variety of resolutions and localized content
* Implement final artwork from UI Artist(s); work with them to ensure assets are reconstructed in-game to match the mockup and vision
* Help to maintain a clean and optimized UI codebase, ensure consistent coding conventions, and help develop best practices
* Evaluate new software, UI development techniques, and ways to improve workflow and boost team productivity

**Ideal Candidate:**

* Has 5+ years experience, preferably within the games industry
* Is exceptionally competent in JavaScript and/or ActionScript or similar scripting languages
* Is highly proficient with front-end web development (HTML5/CSS3/JS)
* Has experience developing UI using Flash/Scaleform
* Has experience developing UI using Coherent GT or other webkit-based UI solutions
* Has a solid understanding of interface conventions and knowledge of current tools and trends in UI development
* Has shipped UI for projects across a variety of platforms (PC, console, mobile, etc.)
* Works well in a team environment with both programmers and artists
* Can listen to feedback and collaborate with others to come up with creative solutions to challenging designs

**Additional Preferred Software:**

* Flash/Scaleform
* Unreal Engine 3 & 4
* UnrealScript
* C++

Requirements for the UI Artist include:

**Essential Duties & Responsibilities:**

* Concept and design UI across a variety of projects, platforms and styles
* Work with UI/UX Lead, Designers and Programmers to create high quality user experiences
* Work with the marketing artist to ensure a consistent brand that can also extend beyond the in-game UI to promotional materials
* Explore a variety of UI styles to find what works best for the projects; continue to raise the bar on the visual quality of the user interface
* Come up with practical solutions to graphical and layout issues; design dynamic and responsive UI that can scale and reflow to suit a variety of resolutions and localized content
* Export and deliver art assets to programmers for implementation; work with the programmers to ensure assets are reconstructed in-game to match the mockup and vision

**Ideal Candidate:**

* Highly skilled in graphic design and typography with a background in user interface, illustration and/or concept art
* Exceptionally skilled with Photoshop and Illustrator
* Has an attention to detail and can generate clear and concise mockups that anyone can understand
* Has an eye for motion graphics and can concept dynamic UI transitions and animated widgets
* Is a self starter that can design UI appropriate to the style and gameplay of various projects
* Has a solid understanding of interface conventions and knowledge of current tools and trends in UI development
* Has shipped UI for projects across a variety of platforms (PC, console, mobile, etc.)
* Works well in a team environment with both programmers and artists
* Can listen to feedback and collaborate with others to come up with creative solutions to challenging designs

**Additional Preferred Software**

* After Effects (or similar motion graphics software)
* Flash/Scaleform
* Unreal Engine

Games

Psyonix has 5 published games and worked on 2 games that were canceled. According to the professional reviews on Metacritic, the average score for games made by Psyonix is an 77 / 100. The highest rated Metascore is a tie between *Rocket League* and *ARC Squadron: Redux*, both with an 87 / 100. User scores submitted to Metacritic are similar to the professionally reviewed Metacritic scores.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Game Name | Release Date | Metacritic Score | User Score | Platforms |
| Vampire Hunter: The Dark Prophecy | 2003 (canceled) | — | — | — |
| Monster Madness | 2008 | 55 / 100 | 6.7 / 10 | PS3 |
| Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars | 2008 | 67 / 100 | 8.6 / 10 | PS3 |
| Whizzle | 2009 | — | — | Microsoft Windows |
| ARC Squadron | 2012 | 87 / 100 | 6.7 / 10 | iOS, |
| ARC Squadron: Redux | 2013 | — | — | iOS, Android |
| Rocket League | 2015 | 87 / 100 | 8.4 / 10 | Microsoft Windows, PS4, Xbox One, OS X, Linux |
| Nosgoth | 2016 (canceled) | — | — | Microsoft Windows |

Game Style Analysis

Out of all the game companies that I am interested in playing, I know Psyonix the least. I have only played *Rocket League*, but the game has captured my heart in an unexpected way. *Rocket League* is a 3D game made in the Unreal 4 Engine that features the rules of soccer applied to the gameplay of driving a rocket-powered car. The concept of soccer with cars was not immediately appealing to me, as I am not usually drawn towards sports games, but I tried the game anyways and quickly fell in love with the game. Since I can only judge Psyonix based on *Rocket League*, my analysis of Psyonix might not be entirely accurate.

*Rocket League* is an example of a game that is simple in concept and mechanics and yet very deep all at the same time. The concept of being “easy to pick up and play, yet difficult to master” applies very well to *Rocket League*. The game has simple controls and easy objectives that allow anyone to jump into the game and quickly understand how to play. The depth of gameplay comes from the interactions of player actions throughout the game. While the objective of the game is simple, hit the ball into your opponent’s goal, the complexity comes from the interactions of the players whilst playing the game. *Rocket League* gets a lot of mileage out of the limited mechanics of the game proving that sometimes less is more. This design philosophy resonates well with my own goals for game design.

Since the release of *Rocket League*, Psyonix has continued supporting the game by adding several other sports modes like hockey and basketball. In addition to this, Psyonix has also added “Mutator Mode” that allow for extreme gravity, awkward ball shapes, and other mechanical adjustments to the game. Psyonix has also released “Rumble Mode” that adds random power-ups to the game, such as spring-loaded punching gloves, that add to the chaos of playing a game. This mix of serious game modes and silliness is something that I love. It shows that the company is interested in supporting their games by providing variety and humor to even years after their initial release.

Key Takeaways

* 3D Game and art style
* Simple Mechanics
* Cooperative / Competitive Multiplayer
* Arcade-Like features
* Variety in Gameplay
* Not afraid to add fun through serious game modes or humor
* Easy to Pick up and Play

Monolith Productions



About  
Monolith Productions, also known simply as Monolith, is a video game developer founded in 1994 with the introduction of their first-person action game, Blood. Since becoming an acquired subsidiary of Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment in 2004, Monolith has worked on many successful games such as F.E.A.R and most recently Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor. More information about Monolith can be found at their website, <www.lith.com>.

Location  
Kirkland, Washington

Company Size  
According to The Monolith’s LinkedIn website, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/monolith-productions>, the company size for Monolith is between 201 – 500 employees.

Public Statement  
As per their Facebook website:

*“From the moment we plugged in our first PC in Kirkland, Washington in October '94, Monolith has been obsessed with combining stunning visuals, inventive narratives and bleeding-edge tech to bring a distinct brand of gaming experience to both PC and console. Starting with the first PC game we released, the terrifying first-person action game Blood, straight through to our most recent multi-platform MOBA Guardians of Middle-earth, our passion for storytelling and dedication to creating unique gaming experiences has driven us to bring award-winning products to you, our fans.”*

Job Postings  
According to Monolith’s Time Warner parent website, as of September 8th, 2016, there are seven full-time positions available: Recruiter, Designer, Sales Intern, Product Manager, Senior Designer, Advanced Software Engineer, World Artist, and Quality Assurance Manager. The summary of the Designer position, the one position that I would be interested in, is as follows:  
**SUMMARY OF POSITION**

Monolith Productions, a division of WB Games Inc., seeks a Designer to work closely with the Design and Production staff to create and maintain high quality game play system components.

**JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

* Work with System Designers, Game play engineers and content teams to create and maintain system components and manage data structures using proprietary WB tools and industry standard software.
* Work closely with QA and Consumer Play test groups to identify and resolve design / game play issues.
* Investigate and resolve game play issues identified by QA or team members during daily play through.
* Help keep updated design documentation, including but not limited to the current status of quest distribution and event locations.

**JOB REQUIREMENTS**

* Previous experience using Lua (or equivalent scripting language) a plus.
* Engineering or technical background strongly preferred.
* Experience scripting or coding.
* Experience working in the game industry preferred.
* Passion for game design.
* Attention to detail.
* Self-motivated, has initiative to learn with minimal direction.
* Strong verbal and written communication skills.
* Positive attitude, strong work ethic, and the ability to work in a highly collaborative team environment.
* Knowledge of the action/adventure and/or open world game genres.

Games  
Monolith Productions have published quite a lot of games. Many games that are pre-2005 are only DOS or early version of Microsoft Windows compatible. The following list is comprised of games post 2005:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Game Name | Release Date | Metacritic Score | User Score | Platforms |
| The Matrix Online | 2005 | 69 | — | Microsoft Windows |
| F.E.A.R. | 2005 | 88 | — | Xbox 360, Microsoft Windows |
| Condemned: Criminal Origins | 2008 | 78 | 8.8 | Xbox 360, Microsoft Windows |
| Condemmed 2: Bloodshot | 2011 | 82 | — | Xbox 360, PS3 |
| F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin | 2011 | 79 | — | Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows |
| Gotham City Impostors | 2013 | 65 | 8.0 | Xbox 360, PS3, Microsoft Windows |
| Guardians of Middle-earth | 2015 | 56 | 7.1 | Xbox One, PS3, Microsoft Windows |
| Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor | 2014 | 86 |  | Xbox One, Microsoft Windows |