Everyday

By Graydon Kupfer

# Everyday: A Critical Look at the Video Game Industry

- How the project got started
- Research on game companies and industry-wide practices
- The works that inspired *Everyday*
- The software and resources I used to create the game
- Limitations
- The themes of *Everyday*
- The impact of player choice
- Writing Challenges
- Closing Thoughts

Origins of *Everyday*

- Introduced to the Schreyer Honors College in Spring 2022
- Joined the program in Fall 2022
- Began coming up with ideas (the general premise and characters) for *Everyday* in October/November 2022
- Made official project proposal in April 2023
- Began writing the thesis in August/September 2023
- Created a small demo for the game in November 2023, with full development starting in January 2024
- Version 1.0 of Everyday released on April 17, 2024
- Version 1.1 coming very soon

Industry-wide Problems

- Exploitative practices such as crunch, mandatory/unpaid overtime
- Discrimination and harassment based on gender
- Lack of respect and appreciation for game testers
- General lack of good communication
- Denial and excuses from executives
- The challenges of coming forward and speaking out
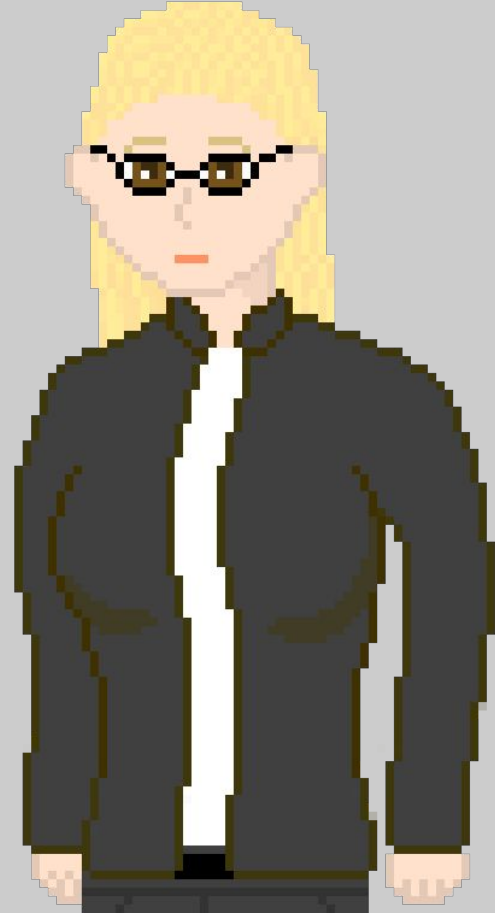
Inspirations

- Other visual novels
  - ***Arcade Spirits***
  - *Coffee Talk*
- Games with visual novel elements
  - *Stardew Valley*
  - *Persona* series
  - *Fire Emblem* series
- The game within the game
  - *MOON: Remix RPG Adventure*

Development Tools and Resources

- **Ren'Py: a Python-based visual novel engine**
  - Was easy to learn the basics, but may take more time to fully utilize
  - Good tutorials and online documentation
- **Paint.net**
  - Simple, no-nonsense art tool
  - Good options for image scaling
  - Used for *Stardew Valley*
- **RoyaltyFreePlanet on YouTube**
 - Where I found most of the music
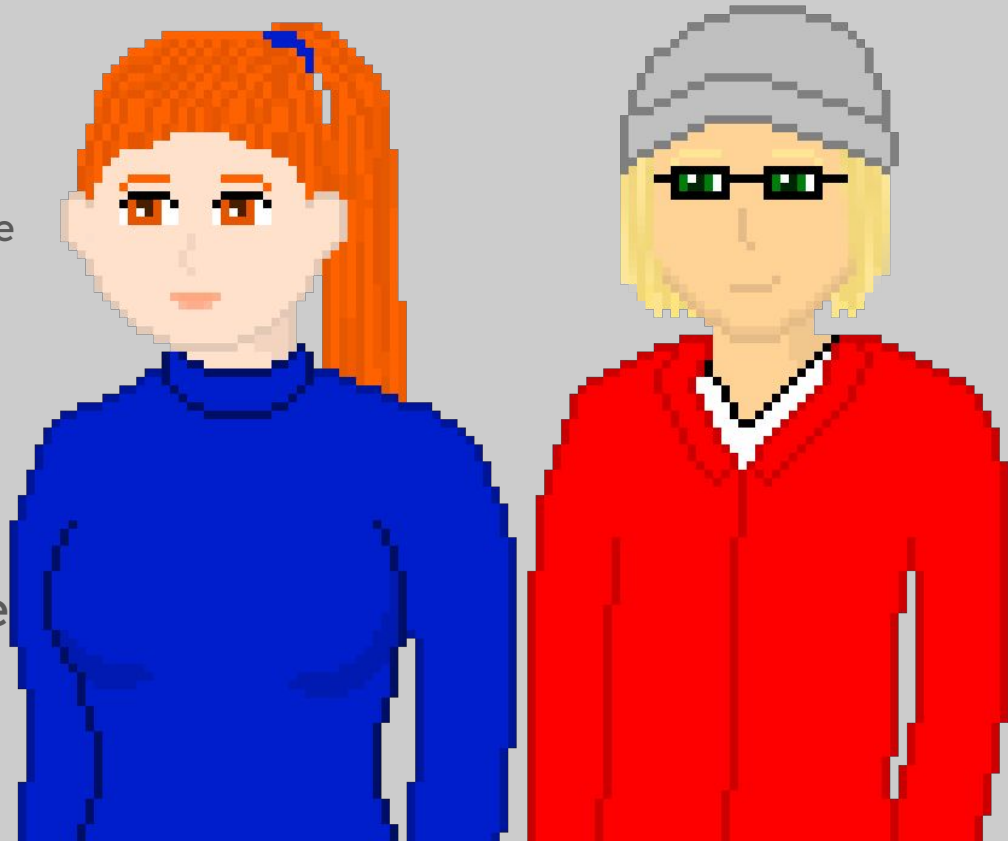
Creative Limitations

- Overall time limit (only a few months)
- Lack of time/skill to create the art
  - Character designs are basic and not very detailed
  - Had to use real photos as background images
- Lack of time/skill to create the music
- Had to be selective with adding/creating new assets
- Impacted the narrative

The Themes of *Everyday*

- **The problems faced in the game industry**
  - Possible explanations and solutions
- **Video game culture**
  - Topics such as game preservation, artificial intelligence, etc.
  - Some characters play video games, some don't
- **Work culture**
- **Communication issues**
  - Wanted to go deeper with this topic
- **Generational divide**
  - Some characters are in their 20s, some are in their 30s
- **Contrasting viewpoints and personalities**
 - Some are introverts, some are extroverts
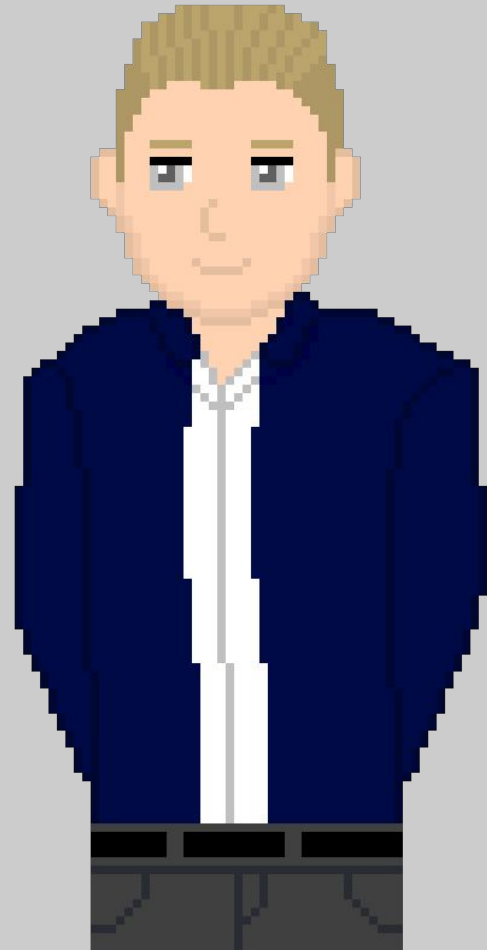
Player Choice in *Everyday*

- **Is *Everyday* technically a game?**
- **Player choice took a backseat to character interactions**
  - Many choices just serve as conversation starters or flavor text
- **Choices that effect character relationships**
  - Different variations of each character's ending
- **The final choice, which decides the ending**
- **Optional endgame scenes that will impact certain characters' endings**
  - This will be in Version 1.1

Challenges Faced When Writing the Narrative

- Balance between character moments and game industry commentary
- Deciding how the issues will be made known and how the characters will react to them
- Making sure that every scene involves discussion of video games, work culture, or both
  - There are one or two scenes that don't really touch on either
- Making sure each character's personal struggles relate back to the themes of video games and\or work culture
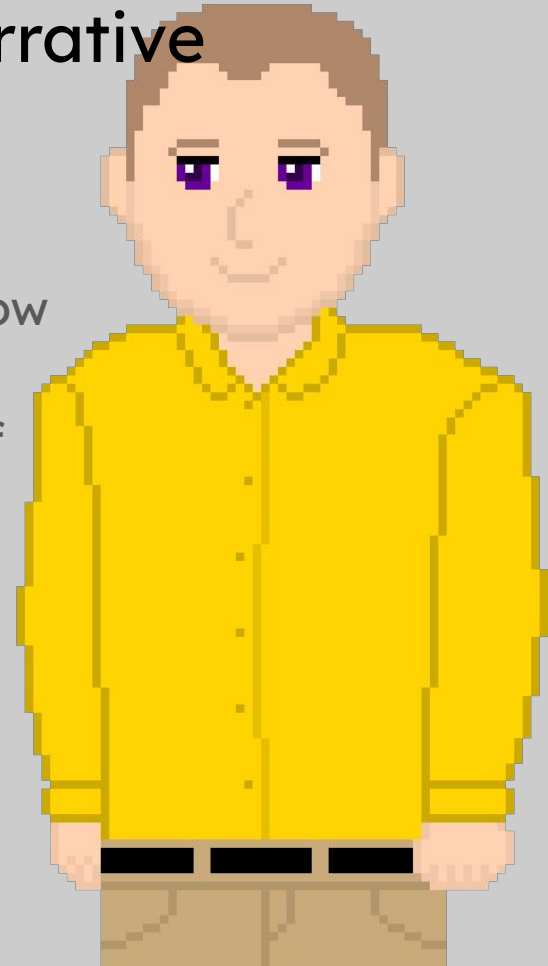
Closing Thoughts

- Satisfied overall with how the game/thesis turned out
- Original plan was much more ambitious
  - Original narrative outline had 13 chapters instead of 5, with many more scenes in each one
- Would like to improve/overhaul:
  - Player interaction
  - Character designs
  - Character arcs
  - Music selection
- Would like to cover more industry problems
  - Layoffs, aggressive monetization, etc.
- Mobile version?
- Want to inspire others to make similar games

Thank You!

Further Reading

Articles/journals on game industry problems:

Bulut, Ergin. *A Precarious Game: The Illusion of Dream Jobs in the Video Game Industry*. Cornell University Press, 2020. https://doi.org/10.7298/37xe-v673.

Cote, Amanda C., and Brandon C. Harris. "Inevitable or Exploitative? A Case Study of Consumers' Divergent Attitudes towards Video Game Crunch." *Media Industries* 10, no. 1 (July 24, 2023). https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.2357.

Cote, Amanda C, and Brandon C Harris. "'Weekends Became Something Other People Did': Understanding and Intervening in the Habitus of Video Game Crunch." *Convergence* 27, no. 1 (February 1, 2021): 161–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856520913865.

Politowski, Cristiano, Fabio Petrillo, Gabriel C. Ullmann, and Yann-Gaël Guéhéneuc. "Game Industry Problems: An Extensive Analysis of the Gray Literature." *Information and Software Technology* 134 (June 1, 2021): 106538. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2021.106538.

Vernace, Matt. "Loots of Their Labor: Analyzing Wage & Hour Challenges in Gaming's 'Crunch Culture.'" *AELJ Blog*, November 2, 2020. https://larc.cardozo.yu.edu/aelj-blog/252.

Visual novels and other games that inspired *Everyday* (check them out!):

Arcade Spirits   Coffee Talk   Stardew Valley   Moon: Remix RPG Adventure

Tools and Resources:

Ren'Py   Paint.net   RoyaltyFreePlanet