

= Mikengreg =

Mikengreg is an independent video game development team of Mike Boxleiter and Greg Wohlwend . Their games include Solipskier , Gasketball , and TouchTone . The two met in a game development class at Iowa State University and later began to collaborate on the Adobe Flash game Dinowauers . When the project was funded , they founded Intuition Games with other college friends in Ames , Iowa , where they worked on small Flash games such as Gray , Lifecraft , and Fig . 8 for Flash game sites such as Kongregate . Dinowauers was one of the first games signed for the Kongregate platform . Their other games involved controlling the weather , influencing individuals in a riot , and riding a bicycle . Boxleiter and Wohlwend worked on several additional games that were put on hiatus .

They later became Mikengreg in 2010 and released Solipskier in August for both Flash and iOS later that year . Its success let them take a more experimental approach towards their next game , the free @-@ to @-@ play Gasketball . Mikengreg ran out of money during the game 's development and the two lived on friends ' couches . The game was reviewed favorably upon its August 2012 launch , but did not earn near the developers ' estimates . Their next game , TouchTone (2015) , spent two years in development .

= = Intuition Games = =

Boxleiter and Wohlwend met in an experimental video game development class at Iowa State University . Wohlwend had attempted to help Boxleiter with a project , but quit after drawing a few aliens . Boxleiter said he " didn 't like [Wohlwend] much after that " . They met again as coworkers at the university 's Virtual Reality Application Center during Boxleiter 's final year of college (Wohlwend 's penultimate year) . Upon discovering their close interests , they began to work on an Adobe Flash game named Dinowauers while they completed college . Boxleiter graduated in 2007 with a degree in computer science , and Wohlwend a year later with a degree in graphic design . They concluded that they needed a company to make money while they worked on the game with collaborators , and around May 2007 , founded Intuition Games at the university 's Research Park . They decided to stay in Ames , Iowa due to its financial feasibility and local connections , but two other members of the team , Josh Larson and Ted Martens , lived in Des Moines and Chicago , respectively . The team met as students at Iowa State through work and game development circles . They saw Flash games as an easy entry point into full @-@ time self @-@ employment , but planned to eventually work on console platforms such as WiiWare . Before Dinowauers , the team made a game about a destructive porpoise , which was abandoned when Dinowauers received funding .

In their development process , Boxleiter and Wohlwend both proposed and worked on each other 's ideas , and would drop the ideas they found unexciting . The two also built games from keywords and brainstorming , and would flesh out the game mechanics through " heated " argument . Their labor as a team was divided in that Wohlwend always did the art and Boxleiter the programming , as reflective of their skills at the time . The pair agreed to an assessment of their partnership as " left @-@ brain right @-@ brain " , and agreed that " editing " ? the process of iterating through revisions ? was central to their joint work . As they worked , they always retained their prototypes . They both appreciated the " creative freedom " of being self @-@ employed , though they struggled with the business aspects , relative workplace " isolation " , low salaries , and lack of job stability . Both were motivated to do their own work instead of contracted tasks . They thought of themselves as artists and of their work as experimental . Boxleiter and Wohlwend worked long hours when making the Flash games , which they found exciting and unsustainable . At Intuition , they worked on games such as Dinowauers , Gray , Fig . 8 , and Liferaft and participated in at least six game jams . As of April 2010 , they had created 10 games together .

= = = Dinowauers = = =

Intuition 's first game , Dinowauers , is a strategy and action game where two players compete as dinosaurs to seize the most cavemen settlements on a single screen . Captured settlements provide resources for upgrades to the players ' dinosaurs . The object of this arms race is to kill the other dinosaur . It features online matchmaking . The game was built from an unfinished Flash @-@ based multiplayer strategy game started by Boxleiter and an image of a stegosaurus with a jetpack drawn by Martens . The team combined the concepts for a strategy game about dinosaurs fighting for food . They struggled with long @-@ distance communication , but used a project management website and Skype to stay in touch . When looking for a platform , Intuition originally pitched the game with a clay dinosaur to Adult Swim ? who was funding Flash games ? but was declined for not being " edgy enough " . In June , they then tried then @-@ new Flash site Kongregate via a connection Larson had made with its CEO Jim Greer at the 2007 Game Developers Conference . He asked the team to wait for their new Director of Games to be hired , who ended up being Intuition 's contact at Adult Swim . The contact had liked the idea and thought the game worked better for Kongregate than did for Adult Swim , and so funded the game by November 2007 as one of the first five for the Kongregate platform . The package was a one @-@ year browser exclusivity agreement that let Intuition keep the intellectual property .

Dinowauers was finished in two years for a 2009 release . Their later games would only take a few months apiece in comparison . They abandoned the use of design documents after Dinowauers , and instead chose to refine and experiment in process . IndieGames.com reported mixed reviews from players and recommended the game as " good solid fun " for newcomers and veterans . The Escapist described the game as similar to Scorched Earth and " surprisingly complex " with its need for three tutorials . He complimented its " faux @-@ retro " soundtrack and aesthetics , which he felt outweighed the learning curve 's difficulty .

= = = Other games = = =

Intuition released Effing Hail and Gray around April 2009 . Players in action game Effing Hail control hail and wind to destroy the most buildings and midair objects within a time limit . The hail grows in size when the wind is used to suspend it in air . The game was published through Kongregate . As an example of their more experimental games , Intuition built Gray ? a game about " political consciousness " ? as a result of their frustrations during the 2008 U.S. presidential election . Players control a single character and try to end a riot by influencing other individuals in the crowd . The game was featured at IndieCade in 2009 .

Fig . 8 @.@ is based on one of Wohlwend 's college art projects . It went unused on their whiteboard for four months until they needed an idea , whereupon Boxleiter added game mechanics to the visuals . It took about ten hours to prototype the controls , and they tested a ten @-@ wheel bike before deciding on two . The scrolling camera was inspired by a game Boxleiter had been playing called String Theory , and they added the soundtrack last . Fig . 8 was funded by a sponsor . Boxleiter considers Gray and Fig . 8 to be " small games " . As projects , he considered them " more like vacations ... than actual work " .

Intuition attempted to fund their next game , Liferaft , via crowdfunding site Kickstarter . The game is set in a single day within an " abandoned testing facility ... in a post @-@ apocalyptic sci @-@ fi " world . The player @-@ character is a young woman named Goss who had been surviving off of lichen until a giant squid crashes into the room and allows her escape . Liferaft was built for release in three episodes : her escape , " revelation " , and " resolution " . The core gameplay revolves around a " Bionic Commando @-@ style grappling hook " . Intuition released a two @-@ level Flash demo where the game had 16 @-@ bit era graphics and music composed by Danny Baranowsky of Canabalt and Fathom . They expected development to take six months between November 2009 and February 2010 . They canceled the Kickstarter and put the project on hiatus in October 2009 for two small Flash games and an intern 's Unity project .

In March 2010 and under the moniker Mikengreg , Boxleiter and Wohlwend 's 4fourths was chosen among six games out of more than 150 submissions for inclusion in Kokoromi 's Gamma IV showcase . Submissions were based on the theme of " one button games " . The four @-@ player

game is played with two teams each controlling spaceships on each side of the screen . One player on each team controls the ship 's vertical height and the other fires the guns , which aim towards the center of the screen . Since every player only has one button , the vertical height controls boost the ship vertically when the button is pressed and leaves the ship to slowly descend when unpressed . The teams work together to shoot at and destroy enemy boss ships that travel through the center of the screen . Teams can also shoot each other 's ships as friendly fire is activated . The game was displayed at Gamma IV in San Francisco and at the 2010 Game Developers Conference . 4fourths was Michael Rose of IndieGame.com 's favorite game of the Gamma IV selections . It was later chosen for Brandon Boyer 's Wild Rumpus London event in September 2011 .

Mikengreg announced Liferaft : Zero and Solipskier in November 2010 . The former is a " prequel teaser " to the Flash platform game Liferaft that they had announced the previous year , a game of trial @-@ based challenges with wall @-@ jumping and grappling wherein girl clones attempt to swing and jump around test chambers to reach and ring a bell . Wohlwend and Boxleiter made the shorter version to limit the scope creep of the overall project . IndieGames.com named the Flash game their third best browser platformer of the year . Their other game , 4fourths , was put on hiatus for lack of resources . They were interested in making games outside the Flash market .

= = Solipskier = =

Their first game as Mikengreg was Solipskier , where the player 's finger draws the ground for the on @-@ screen skier to pass through a level filled with gates , tunnels , and walls . It was designed as a Flash game , which set the limitations for its mechanics . The game concept came from a brainstorming session about parallax scrolling , and was revised in fits of creativity . They paired the parallax scrolling with speed and began to prototype . Boxleiter first understood its potential when publishers fought for the bid to the game . They then decided to develop for iOS in addition to Flash , and to release both versions simultaneously . It was released on August 29 , 2010 and became their first game to receive public appreciation . Solipskier for iOS made around \$ 70 @,@ 000 in its first two months (as compared to \$ 15 @,@ 000 from the Flash release) , which gave them enough stability to branch out into non @-@ Flash platforms .

Boxleiter spoke at the 2012 Game Developers Conference Indie Soapbox on how indie stars were made from hard work and not from the Independent Games Festival . He added that winning an award at the festival for Solipskier was an insignificant aspect of his career .

= = Gasketball = =

Riding the earnings from Solipskier , Mikengreg continued to pay themselves their same salary but now had the means to try new ideas . Wohlwend estimated that they discarded about six " fairly polished prototypes " over the development of their next game , Gasketball . They were able to live on \$ 20 ? 25 @,@ 000 a year each in Iowa for the next two years while working on the new game . Wohlwend made somewhat more income due to other collaborations , such as Puzzlejuice with Asher Vollmer , but shared his income with Boxleiter . Even though Solipskier was successful , the duo did not have a following comparable to indie developers like Team Meat and thus felt like their external pressure was low . Instead , their pressure was internal . Wohlwend said he worked 100 @-@ hour weeks with no weekends or vacations while living off of the Solipskier funds . In making Gasketball , Boxleiter and Wohlwend felt that their game quality had improved continually , but found the idea of a million @-@ person audience " daunting " and Wohlwend questioned whether he could even recreate Solipskier 's success . When they ran out of money , Boxleiter borrowed money from his parents , and eventually they both went homeless , living off of the couches of friends .

Gasketball was released for iPad on August 9 , 2012 . They had decided to release the game as what they deemed to be an ethically non @-@ coercive free @-@ to @-@ play game , with a free base game and in @-@ app purchases for the extended content . Not as many players paid for the content as expected . This was due , in part , to the players ' difficulty in finding the purchase function . The game had been downloaded 200 @,@ 000 times in its August 2012 launch week and

was briefly ranked near the top of an iTunes top downloads ranking , though it did not break the top 200 grossing chart .

= = TouchTone = =

After Gasketball 's release , Boxleiter and Wohlwend planned a celebratory road trip to a game jam in Victoria , British Columbia . The game did not fare as expected , so Boxleiter wanted to use the jam to create " something new , ... something really small and perfect " . By the end of the two @-@ day jam , the core mirror reflection mechanics of TouchTone were in place , though it would take two years of sporadic work to finalize the remainder of the game . In TouchTone , the player monitors phone calls as part of a government surveillance program to find public threats . The story is told through a series of reflection puzzles wherein the player swipes the screen to reflect a beam around a room to its intended destination .

Mikengreg felt that their first theme of light , prisms , and audio signal too closely mimicked " a hacking minigame from a bigger AAA game like BioShock or System Shock " , but eventually paired the concept with a satirical Edward Snowden theme following the mid @-@ 2013 global surveillance disclosures . Their original efforts were jocular , but their concept became more serious as the story and " political message " grew deeper . Boxleiter wrote most of the script , which is over 20 @,@ 000 words . It was his first effort at professional writing , and it took him five months . He and Wohlwend would conference after each chapter for coherency . Boxleiter wanted the story to explore the " questions ... floating around the national consciousness " rather than be " heavy @-@ handed " and prescriptive . They playtested the game in public at the theater in Logan Square , Chicago , though they acknowledged difficulty in playtesting the story 's private experience . Mikengreg decided against including an option to skip puzzles , which they felt would spoil the game and the player 's capacity to adapt to increasing difficulty . They called this philosophy the " Derek Yu (of Spelunky) school of game design " . TouchTone was released on March 19 , 2015 for iOS . Review aggregator Metacritic characterized its reviews as generally favorable .