



# Introduction to Game Development


Lecture 8





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# The Return Of The Console



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**Late 1980s**





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## Nintendo

- 1983 Nintendo - industry laughing stock
- Trying to release a games console months after the bottom has fallen out of the market
- But Nintendo of America felt
  - Kids aren't fed up of games
  - They're fed up of sub-standard games!!



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## Nintendo

- Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)
- Unmistakably a games console
- Contained a security chip so the Nintendo could control the quality of the games
- Developers not keen
- Nintendo had dozens of games from Japan





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## Nintendo

- 1985 - Nintendo needed a launch gimmick
  - The Zapper
    - Futuristic light gun
  - ROB
    - Robotic Operating Buddy
    - 24 cm
- Terrible reception
  - Consumer Electronics Show hated it
  - Focus groups hated it



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## Nintendo

- Refused to give up
- Concentrated on New York
  - Moved staff from Seattle
  - Allocated \$50m
  - Money back guarantees to retailers
  - \$millions of advertising
  - Demoed Zapper and ROB in malls/streets
  - 500 NY stores





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## Nintendo

- Christmas 1985 – 90,000 NES sold!
- Similar launches in
  - Los Angeles
  - Chicago
  - San Francisco
  - Texas
  - nationwide

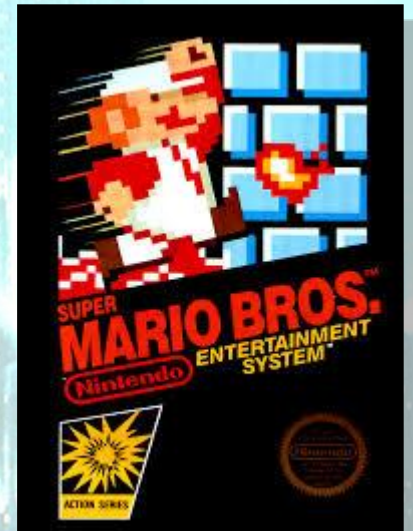




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## Nintendo

- March 1986 Nintendo release
- Super Mario Bros





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## Nintendo

- SMB sells millions
- Millions of NES sold to play it on
- Nintendo follow up with
  - Metroid – sci-fi action game
  - Castlevania – vampire adventure
  - Double Dragon – street fighting game
  - And
  - The Legend of Zelda





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## Nintendo

- Nintendo limited production
  - Stock sold out as soon as it arrived
  - No unsold stock
  - No price reductions
  - Frantic demand
  - Kept retailers under control
- Even so, NES was No 1 selling toy in US at Christmas 1987



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## Nintendo

- In 1989 23% of toys sold in US were Nintendo
- Nintendo Power
  - Nintendo's promotional magazine
  - Best selling children's mag in US
  - 5,000,000 per month
- Nintendo's premium rate helpline
  - 50,000 calls per week





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## Nintendo

- Backlash
  - Anti-Japanese feeling in US
  - Accusations of monopolistic practices
  - Blame for making US kids fat
  - Claims by National Coalition on TV Violence that 83% of NES games were violent



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## Nintendo

- Europe
  - Late (1987)
  - Home Computer well established in Europe
    - Better graphics
    - Cheaper games
  - Developers shocked by Nintendo practices
  - Nintendo had no Europe base/distribution
  - Sega beats Nintendo to Europe

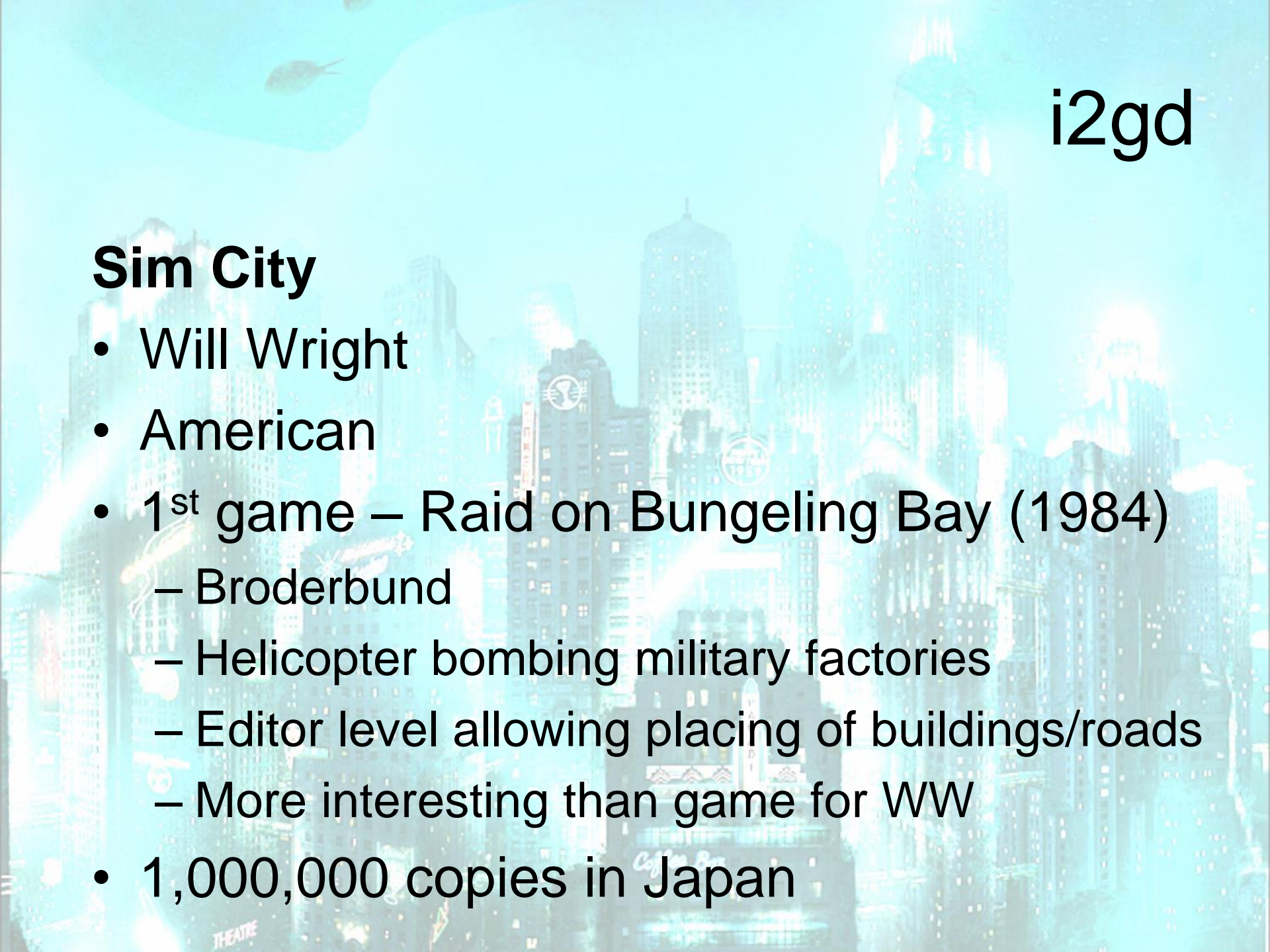




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## Nintendo

- By the end of the 1980s
  - Nintendo was Japan's most profitable company, ahead of Toyota and Honda
  - SMB3
    - 17,000,000 copies
    - \$550m (more than E.T.)
  - Mario more popular than Mickey Mouse
  - US games industry worth \$4,000,000,000 from \$100,000,000 in 1986



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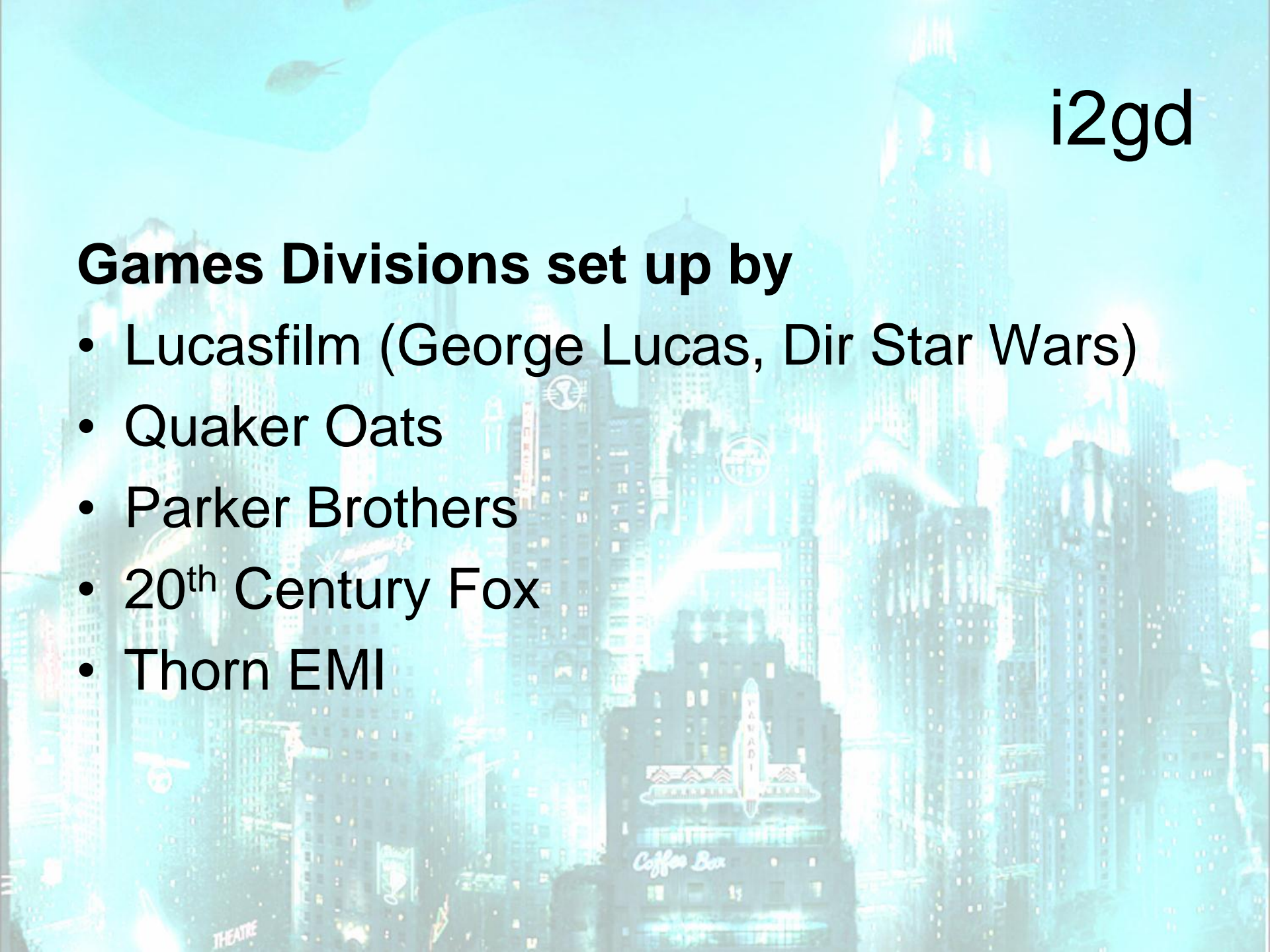
## **Sim City**

- Will Wright
- American
- 1<sup>st</sup> game – Raid on Bungeling Bay (1984)
  - Broderbund
  - Helicopter bombing military factories
  - Editor level allowing placing of buildings/roads
  - More interesting than game for WW
- 1,000,000 copies in Japan



## Sim City

- Will Wright begins to see editor level as a game in itself
- Calls game Micropolis
- Broderbund not interested
  - “how do you win or lose?”
- Changes name to Sim City
- Don Daglow of Broderbund convinces the publisher to release the game in 1989



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## Sim City

- Initial sales slow
- Time magazine article boosts sales
- Unusually sales increased each year
- Launched in Japan
- Massively successful





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## Populous

- Peter Molyneux
- English
- 1<sup>st</sup> game – The Entrepreneur
  - Sold two copies
- 1988 – Fusion
  - One of first game published by Electronic Arts
  - Sold poorly

## Populous

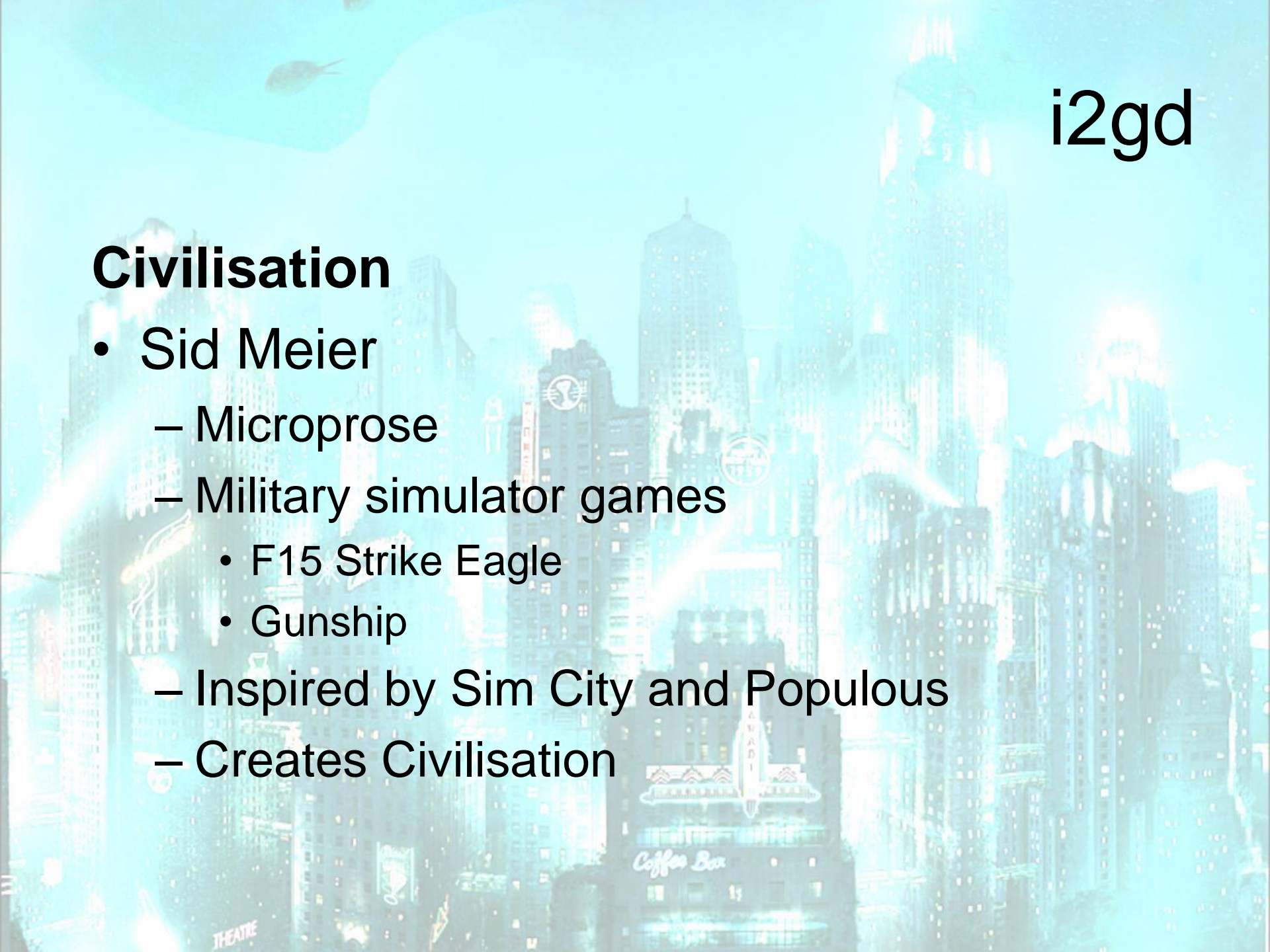
- Small advance paid by EA for fusion
- PM creates Populous
- Players are all-powerful
  - Change the landscape
  - Cause earthquakes
  - Create volcanoes
- Players as gods



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## Populous

- Released late 1989
- Initial sales slow
- PM pessimistic
  - Surprised to receive £13k cheque from EA
  - Astonished to receive a second, larger cheque
  - “and they just kept coming”
- Launched in Japan
- EA can't manufacture quick enough!



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## Civilisation

- Sid Meier
  - Microprose
  - Military simulator games
    - F15 Strike Eagle
    - Gunship
  - Inspired by Sim City and Populous
  - Creates Civilisation





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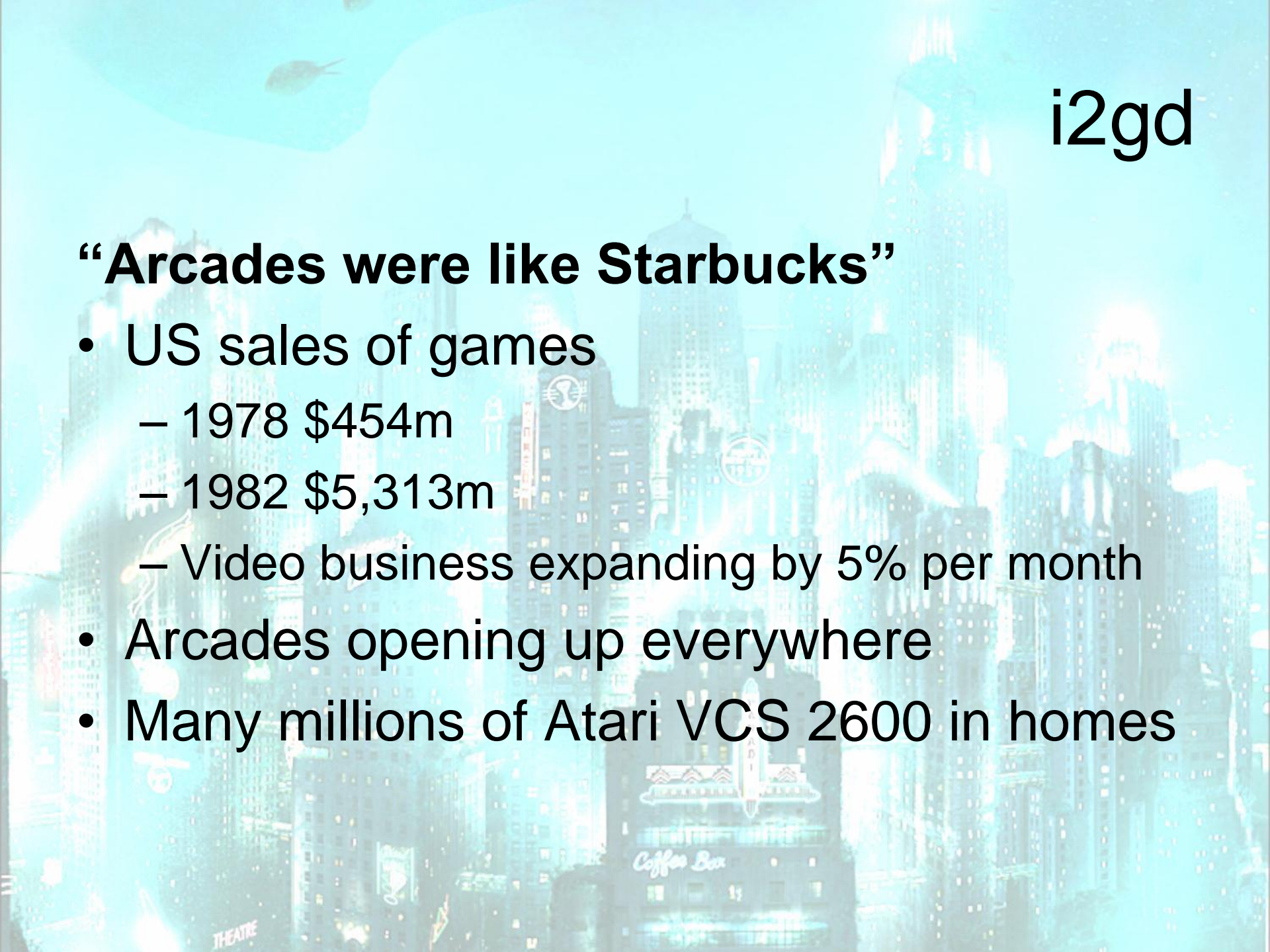
## Civilisation

- Player controls civilisation's journey through history
- Turn-based strategy game
  - Military conflict
  - Diplomacy
  - Exploration
  - City building

# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Russian mathematician from Moscow
  - Based on Pentominoes
    - Shapes of 5 squares
    - Jigsaw
  - AP creates programme with 4 squares
    - Tetris (Tetra, Greek for four)
  - Gives game to friends/colleagues





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# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Spreads across
    - Moscow
    - Russia
    - Eastern Europe
  - Soviet law prevents setting up business
  - No-one to buy it anyway as PCs rare in USSR
  - Spreads to
    - Hungary
    - Czechoslovakia

# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Contacted by Robert Stein in London
  - Stein wants to buy the rights
  - Sends AP a contract
    - AP agrees to begin negotiating
    - RS thinks AP is agreeing to contract
  - RS sells PC rights, home console rights and coin-op rights to Mirrorsoft (Robert Maxwell)



# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Mirrorsoft sell on rights
  - Five companies now developing versions
  - RS desperately trying to get AP to sign
  - Mirrorsoft launch Tetris
    - 100,000 copies in 1988 alone
  - Henk Rogers buys all Japanese rights

# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Sega buy coin-op rights for HR
  - Nintendo want handheld rights for Gameboy
    - Rogers goes to Russia
    - Stein goes to Russia
    - Kevin Maxwell of Mirrorsoft goes to Russia
  - Meeting with Pajitnov and State Dept
  - Astonished to find Tetris already on sale!!
  - Rogers and Maxwell realise Stein does not own rights



# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Rogers asks State Dept to hold off till he can return with Nintendo
  - Stein is forced to sign a stitch-up contract
  - Maxwell makes an offer including Maxwell Communications' USSR book publishing rights
  - Rogers and Nintendo make an offer
  - Maxwell given 24 hours to make a better offer but can't respond quickly enough

# Tetris

- Alexey Pajitnov
  - Rogers and Nintendo win rights
  - Atari had just released Tetris
    - Nintendo obtain court order
    - Atari left with warehouse full of Tetris
  - Tetris helped sell 40,000,000 Gameboys
  - Rogers became very rich
  - Pajitnov made nothing