Chapter No. 3
"Hours 13-24: Deeper into the Jungle!"
In this package, you will find:

A Biography of the author of the book

A preview chapter from the book, Chapter NO.3 "Hours 13-24: Deeper into the Jungle!"

A synopsis of the book’s content

Information on where to buy this book

About the Author

The author of this book, Christer Kaitila, B.Sc. is a veteran video game developer with 17 years of professional experience. A hardcore gamer, dad, dungeon master, artist, and musician, he never takes himself too seriously and loves what he does for a living: making games!

A child of the arcade scene, he programmed his first videogame in the eighties, long before the Internet or hard drives existed. The first programming language he ever learned was 6809 assembly language, followed by BASIC, Turbo Pascal, VB, C++, Lingo, PHP, JavaScript, and finally ActionScript. He grew up as an elite BBS sysop in the MS-DOS era and was an active member of the demoscene in his teens. He put himself through university by providing freelance software programming services for clients. Since then, he has been an active member of the indie game development community and is known by his fellow indies as Breakdance McFunkypants.

Christer frequently joins Game Jams to keep his skills sharp. Over the years, he has programmed puzzle games, multiplayer RPGs, action titles, shooters, racing games, chat-rooms, persistent online worlds, browser games, and many business applications for clients ranging from 3D displays for industrial devices to simulations made for engineers.

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He is the author of the book Adobe Flash 11 Stage3D (Molehill) Game Programming Beginner's Guide (https://www.packtpub.com/adobe-flash11-stage3dmoelhill-game-programming-beginners-guide/book). He is one of the administrators of Ludum Dare (http://www.ludumdare.com/compo/) and has hosted a mini weekend Jam (http://www.ludumdare.com/compo/2011/06/05/ ready-for-the-june-minild/) with the theme of "all talk: dialogue and conversation". He also created the keynote lecture for Ludum Dare 21 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHD1QBP4ww8), an eight minute video filled with words of encouragement and advice.

His client work portfolio is available at www.orangeview.net and his personal game development blog is www.mcfunkypants.com, where you can read more about the indie game community and his recent projects.

He lives in Victoria, Canada with his beloved wife, and the cutest baby son you've ever seen.

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The Game Jam Survival Guide

What is a Game Jam?

Game Jams are fun. They are a creative, exciting, social experience. The goal of a Game Jam is to design a video game, either alone or in teams, as fast as humanly possible; usually in a single weekend. Some Jams are also great for making board games or card games!

Game Jams can be absolutely massive group events held in conference rooms and computer labs, or can be intimate affairs taking place in a friend's living room. Others are online-only events where people work on games at the same time in their own homes and share the results at a website.

The key ingredient in a Game Jam is time pressure. Whether spanning a 48-hour weekend, an entire week, or just a few hours, the essential attribute shared by all Jams is a limited time-frame. The deadline forces participants to speed-code. To cut corners. To think outside the box, and to whip something up as fast as they can.

Almost all Game Jams focus around a theme. This theme is often a closely guarded secret until the Jam begins, and participants are challenged to come up with a fitting game idea.

Occasionally, Jams have a competitive element: each entry is voted upon and a winner is declared.

Whether there is voting or not, Game Jams aren't really about winning or losing: they are community-run, highly social, feel-good events full of camaraderie from your game developer peers.

Whatever the format or rules, the goal of a Game Jam is to create your very own game as quickly as possible. Some rise to the challenge and finish amazing feats of programming. Many more fail brilliantly and never get to the finish line. Regardless of the outcome, everyone has fun. That's the whole point of a Game Jam.

The goal of this book

This book has a mission statement: build an amazing game that you're proud of and will entertain players, all in one crazy 48-hour Game Jam weekend—and survive to tell the tale!

Embrace the best practices and techniques of past Game Jam winners and avoid common pitfalls along the way to the finish line. You too can survive a 48-hour game development marathon with your mind intact and an amazing game to show off to friends and family!

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With this book you will learn the secret techniques that master Game Jammers use to create winning entries. We'll start by exploring great ways to brainstorm and design a game based on a given theme. We'll discover the best tools and techniques to finish a game in a weekend of coding, with anecdotes and advice from past winners and losers combined with humorous words of encouragement which are sure to help you on your way. Finally, this book will present a list of Game Jams around the world, online communities worth checking out, and fantastic engines, art resources and people worth discovering.

If you follow the system shared in this book, you will be able to build an amazing game in a single weekend—regardless of your programming or game design experience.

What This Book Covers

Chapter 1, Before the Jam: Prepare Yourself for Success!—We begin with a positive and enthusiastic look at the mindset required for achieving success. Learn about finding creative freedom in constraints, preparing base code and art tools, forming a team, and using social networking. Discover the behaviors that you will want to avoid. This book features an infographic from a questionnaire answered by over 700 Game Jammers. It includes interviews with Ian Schreiber (organizer of the Global Game Jam), Eric McQuiggan (founding member of The Dirty Rectangles), Jason P. Kaplan (founder of the Game Prototype Challenge), plus Mike "PoV" Kasprzak and Mike "Hamumu" Hommel (Ludum Dare administrators).

Chapter 2, Hours 1-12: Your Quest Begins!—How to hit the ground running, reduce stress, and deal with the theme. Learn from the mistakes of others through an analysis of postmortem ("What went right? What went wrong?") blog posts and articles, presented in infographic form. Features interviews with Chevy Ray Johnston (author of the FlashPunk game engine and winner of multiple Ludum Dares) and Dr. Mike Reddy (organizer of the Global Game Jam). You will learn how to come up with a great plan, the best ways to design your game, and techniques for brainstorming.

Chapter 3, Hours 13-24: Deeper into the Jungle!—Learn how to stay motivated by always moving forward through the use of placeholder art and design simplification. Features an interview with Austin Breed (founder of the Newgrounds Game Jams). Find essential mechanics so that you can finish a playable prototype early, with time left over for polishing and play-testing.

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Chapter 4, Hours 25-36: Breaking Through The Wall!—The late stages of any project are always the most difficult. Discover techniques for working around bugs, dealing with stress, and keeping morale high. Includes a discussion of time management, code simplification, automation of art assets, iterative development, and when to break the rules of computer science. Includes an interview with Christopher "DarkAcreJack" Nilsson. From Occam's Razor to Brook's Law, we focus on common mistakes, ways to reduce production time, and dealing with imperfection.

Chapter 5, Hours 37-48: Getting to the Finish Line!—As the light at the end of the tunnel approaches, the really fun part begins. Learn techniques to finish on time and with your sanity intact. Deal with unforeseen hassles, tie up loose ends, trim the fat and polish polish polish. An exploration of the common features of winning games is also included. Featuring interviews with Pekka "pekuja" Kujansuu (Ludum Dare administrator) and Foaad Khosmood (director of the Global Game Jam). Learn what to do when you're in danger of missing the deadline, and how to package and submit your game. Focus on the importance of the name, description, and icon, as well as control schemes, difficulty balance and ways to "hook" the player.

Chapter 6, After the Jam: Fame and Fortune!—Congratulations! You did it. Now what? A discussion of all the ancillary activities you can perform after the Jam, such as playing and voting on games by your fellow developers, writing a postmortem analysis, preparing the game for a public (commercial) release, attracting sponsorship or advertisers and getting your game on app stores and portals. Features interviews from Chris "fydo" Hopp and Phil Hassey (Ludum Dare administrators).

Appendix A, Game Jams—A large listing of Game Jams around the world, with descriptions and website addresses.

Appendix B, Game Engines—A list of game engines that are frequently used by successful Game Jammers that includes information regarding what platforms they support and where to get them.

Appendix C, Helpful Tools—A list of handy tools to make your Game Jam more fun. Includes screen recorders (for creating time-lapse videos of your work), IRC clients, tools that help you generate sound effects, and popular level editors that work with common game engines.

Appendix D, The Community—A list of online resources to help you connect with your Game Jamming peers. Includes social networking links, active Twitter hashtags, enthusiast websites and blogs, IRC chatrooms, and community discussion forums worth visiting.

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Hours 13-24: Deeper into the Jungle!

“Try to avoid planning as much as possible, it eats time and blinds you from serendipitous opportunities.”

- LiquidAsh

Stay motivated!
Keep it simple. Don't give up. Don't do too many things at the same time: lay down one feature at a time and concentrate on what is most important.

The Global Game Jam in Vancouver, Canada

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In this chapter, we are going to focus on the techniques required to really dive in and plow forward toward the finish line. In particular, topics we will cover include:

- Staying motivated
- Prototyping with placeholder art
- Finding the essential mechanics
- Finishing a playable prototype early

Motivation techniques
Staying positive can be hard as the hours fly by. It is a common feeling by the end of the first day to be overwhelmed at one's lack of progress. Like in any software project, getting to the finish line always takes twice as long as you would estimate at the beginning. There are always unforeseen hassles, technical hiccups, and features that are required that you'd forgotten about.

We'll get over these by:

- Busting through "the wall"
- Showing off your progress
- Seeking support: have a chat

Getting over "The Wall"
Not giving up is the key to success. Just as a professional marathon runner knows about "the wall" (that point where you feel like giving up, like you couldn't possibly get to the finish line), if you plow past your self-doubt and smash through that wall of uncertainty you will find that at the end of the tunnel is a light. As you approach the finish line you will again become increasingly sure of yourself and your speed will increase. Soon you'll be able to taste it, it is so close.

All you have to do is get past the wall. One way to force yourself not to give up when you're feeling down and out is to take a break. Get some fresh air and approach the problem from a different angle after getting your mind off things for a while.

Share your work-in-progress
Another great motivational tool is posting screenshots of the work in progress. Sharing your work with others (your fellow Jammers, Twitter, your blog, and so on) will generate feedback and encouragement. Hearing what others think of what you've done so far can give you the little push to keep you going.
Keep in touch
Talking about your work will also give you good reason to finish, since you've publicly committed to it. It is easy to give up when you won't lose face, so post about your game everywhere so that people know what you're up to. You wouldn't want to disappoint your "fans", would you? Most importantly, engaging your peers is the best way to get a little pat on the back at just the right time. When you need it most, a simple kudos, a +1 or a like on your blog post can be all you need to renew your efforts.

Don't code in a vacuum—get out there and feel the support of others. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Get feedback from people. Show off your hard work. Encourage others and test their games, too. You'll find that whatever you give is what you'll get. If you encourage your fellow competitors, they'll do the same for you.

What the experts say: Austin Breed
To finish your game before the deadline, start on the hour the theme is announced, even if you only have time to jot down ideas. When you go to bed you will have the theme fresh in your mind, and sometimes the best ideas are discovered when you're in a relaxed half-sleepy state. Being able to wake up already knowing what the game will be gives you a head start; just don't forget to write it down!

A great way to come up with an idea to fit the theme is to get away from your computer and live in real life for a bit. I read somewhere that Shigeru Miyamoto created the mushroom kingdom after a walk in the woods. In my personal opinion, the best games reflect on things we feel and interact with in nature. Perhaps if more people thought like this we'd have less Call of Duties and more Katamari Damacies.

Austin Breed is one of the organizers of the Newgrounds Game Jams, a freelance artist and the creator of games such as Covetous, A Mother in Festerwood, and Distance.

Profile: http://austinbreed.newgrounds.com/
Game Jam: http://www.newgrounds.com/collection/nggamejams
Twitter: http://twitter.com/#!/austinbreed

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