

INDEPENDENCE DAY

WHY **IMAGINATION** WILL TRIUMPH OVER **ORTHODOXY**

INDEPENDENT MMO GDC

15TH APRIL 2007

RICHARD A. **BARTLE**

INTRODUCTION

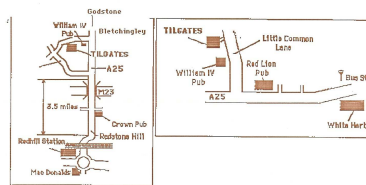
- IT'S SOMETHING OF AN **HONOUR** FOR ME TO SPEAK HERE TODAY
 - EVEN IF **MOST** ATTENDEES **ARE** IN ALCOHOL-INDUCED **COMAS** AT THE MOMENT
- WHEN JONATHON **INVITED** ME, HE WAS A LITTLE **ANXIOUS** THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULDN'T BE **SUCCESSFUL**
 - I TOLD HIM IT **WOULD** BE
 - AND I WAS **RIGHT**
- HOWEVER, I **DID** KINDA CHEAT...

DEJA VU

- THE THING IS, I'M **SURE** I'VE BEEN HERE **BEFORE:**

*Adventure '89 and Mugs
Megameet*

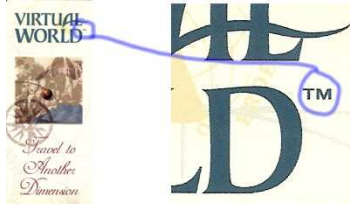
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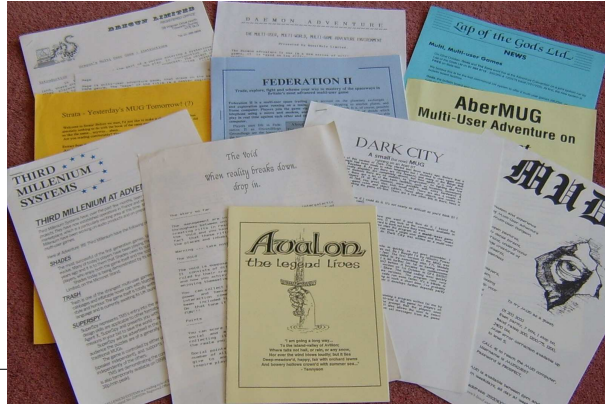
ADVENTURE '89

- **ADVENTURE '89** WAS A GATHERING IN THE UK OF **INDEPENDENT MUD/MUG/MUA/MU*/MMORPG/MMOG/MMO/PW/PEG/VIRTUAL WORLD DEVELOPERS**
- (I'LL JUST STICK WITH **VIRTUAL WORLDS**)
– IF ONLY TO DILUTE THIS BUNCH'S **TRADEMARK...**



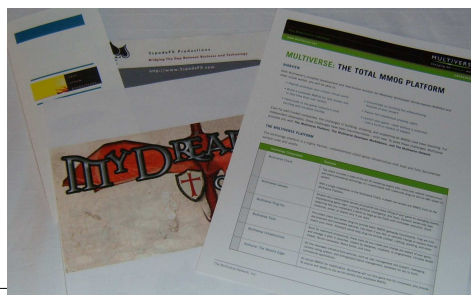
IDEAS

- ADVENTURE '89 WAS A SHOWPLACE FOR **IDEAS**
- PERHAPS **20** VIRTUAL WORLDS WERE SHOWN,
ALL OF THEM **DiffereEnt**



ASIDE

- YES, I **AM** THE KIND OF PERSON WHO COLLECTS **FLIERS** FROM AN **OBSCURE** CONFERENCE AND **HOARDS** THEM FOR **DECADES**
– YOU THOUGHT YOUR OWN IMGDC LITERATURE WAS **EPHEMERAL**, DID YOU?



RANGE

- WHEN I **SAID** THE VIRTUAL WORLDS WERE ALL DIFFERENT, I **MEANT** IT:
 - *FEDERATION II* - SPACE OPERA
 - *THE ZONE* - ADULT (SCORE TO SCORE)
 - *DARK CITY* - CYBERPUNK
 - *STRAT* - HOLIDAY ON THE MOON
 - *TRASH* - "FIRE-BREATHING **CABBAGES** AND INFLATABLE HOVER-CARS"
 - *VOID* - MAGICAL ADULT
 - *PRODIGY* - ANCIENT BRITAIN
 - *EMPYRION* - UNDERWATER CITY
 - *SPACERS* - GENERATION SPACESHIP

FANTASY

- EVEN THE **FANTASY** WORLDS WEREN'T ALL THE **SAME**
 - *GODS* - END GAME PLAYERS CAN CREATE OBJECTS USING POINTS GIVEN BY WORSHIPPERS
 - *MIRRORWORLD* - ROLLING RESETS
 - *AVALON* - GRID-BASED IN PLACES
 - *BLOODSTONE* - OBJECT DECOMPOSITION (HUMANS MADE OF **260** PARTS)
 - *AMP* - OBJECTS WITH SHAPE
 - *STRATA* - INTERNAL CURRENCY
 - *WARLORD* - HIGHLY COMBAT-INTENSIVE

WHY?

- SO **WHY** DID THIS HAPPEN?
- WHY THE SUDDEN **FLOWERING** OF VIRTUAL WORLD DESIGN IDEAS?
 - WAS IT **ALWAYS** GOING TO HAPPEN?
 - WHAT FACTORS **ENABLED** IT?
- **FURTHERMORE**, DOES WHAT HAPPENED **THEN** INFORM US ABOUT WHAT **WILL** HAPPEN **TODAY**?
- **THAT'S** WHAT I'M GOING TO BE TALKING ABOUT FOR THE NEXT <HOWEVER MANY> MINUTES

RANDOM

- HERE'S A RANDOM FEMALE DRAENEI FROM *WOW*:



FACTORS

- OK, SO IT **WAS** ALWAYS GOING TO HAPPEN:
 - PEOPLE HAD SEEN WHAT WAS **POSSIBLE**
 - DEVELOPMENT **COSTS** HAD COME DOWN
 - THERE WAS **MONEY** TO BE MADE
 - THERE WERE **NO DECENT ENGINES** AVAILABLE
 - DESIGNING VIRTUAL WORLDS IS **FUN**
- AND GUESS WHAT? THESE CONDITIONS APPLY **TODAY TO YOU**
- I GUESS I'D BETTER **EXPLAIN** THEM IN MORE **DETAIL..**

POSSIBLE

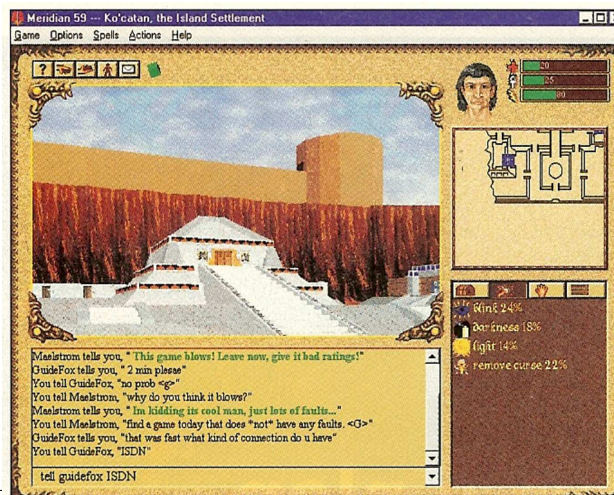
- IN 1989, VIRTUAL WORLDS HAD BEEN AROUND FOR ABOUT **10 YEARS**
 - THOSE WERE **TEXTUAL** WORLDS
- TODAY, THE ACTION IS ALL WITH **GRAPHICAL** WORLDS
 - WHICH HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR ABOUT **10 YEARS**
- PEOPLE PLAYED THE **EARLIER** WORLDS AND WERE **INSPIRED** TO CREATE THEIR OWN
 - IF THEY HADN'T SEEN THE EARLIER ONES, WOULD THEY HAVE **DONE** IT?

THE BIG 3/4/5/...

- THE EARLY TEXTUAL DAYS BEGAN WITH **MUDI**
- **SEVERAL** VIRTUAL WORLDS WERE WRITTEN BY **PLAYERS** OF **MUDI**
- THE **BIG 3** WERE *MUDI, SHADES AND GODS*
- THEN THE **BIG 4** WITH *MIRRORWORLD*
- THEN THE **BIG 5** WITH *FEDERATION II*
– THERE NEVER WAS A *FEDERATION I*
- NONE OF THESE ACTUALLY **WERE** BIG COMPARED TO WHAT WAS TO COME, OF COURSE...

KO'CATAN

- *MERIDIAN 59: REVELATION*



BIG REVISITED

- **GRAPHICAL** WORLDS WERE WRITTEN BY PLAYERS OF **TEXTUAL** WORLDS
- THE **BIG 3** WERE *ULTIMA ONLINE, EVERQUEST AND ASHERON'S CALL*
 - SORRY, BRIAN!
- THEN THE **BIG 4** WITH *ANARCHY ONLINE*
- THEN THE **BIG 5** WITH *DARK AGE OF CAMELOT*
- NONE OF THESE ACTUALLY **WERE** BIG COMPARED TO WHAT WAS TO COME, OF COURSE...

THE POINT

- **BIG N** WORLDS SHOW WHAT'S **FEASIBLE**
- IN THE MINDS OF THE **IMAGINATIVE**, THEY ALSO SHOW WHAT'S **POSSIBLE**
- **ALL** PLAYERS WANT TO BE **DESIGNERS**
 - HOW HARD CAN IT **BE**?
- ONLY A FEW ACTUALLY **ARE** DESIGNERS
 - MOST JUST WANT TO **PLAY** THEIR DESIGNS
 - MORE ON THIS LATER
- BUT WHEN YOU GET A **CRITICAL MASS** OF DESIGN TALENT, YOU GET A **FLOWERING**

ORIGINALITY

- FRONT PAGE OF A PITCH CIRCA 1986:

ed

MONEY !

A true-to-life simulation of an actual private trading room, connected directly by satellite to the money markets in New York, London, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

You are a dealer in gold and world financial futures, trying to "beat the market" and make your fortune.

- NOT THE WORK OF A DESIGNER...

COSTS THEN

- THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY TEXTUAL WORLDS WAS HINDERED BECAUSE **MAINFRAMES** COST MORE THAN **OCEAN LINERS**
- ONLY WHEN **PCS** CAME OUT COULD **HOME** USERS THINK OF WRITING VIRTUAL WORLDS

The MUG is now run on a customised 386 PC running at between 6 and 7 MIPS. The computer is estimated to have cost over £20,000.

- COSTS WERE STILL **HIGH**, BUT BY 1989 THEY WERE **TANTALISINGLY** WITHIN REACH

COSTS NOW

- THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY **GRAPHICAL** WORLDS WAS **ALSO** HINDERED BY COST
 - COMPUTERS
 - BANDWIDTH
 - ARTWORK
- GRAPHICAL WORLDS **REMAIN** EXPENSIVE
 - TO **RUN** AS WELL AS **WRITE**
 - YET COSTS ARE **TANTALISINGLY** WITHIN REACH
- BESIDES, YOU'LL MAKE IT ALL **BACK**, RIGHT?

THEM THAR HILLS

- 18 YEARS AGO, EVEN **SMALL-SCALE** TEXTUAL WORLDS MADE **MONEY**
- HERE'S **WHY** (FROM AN ADV '89 *MUD2* FLIER):

AAUD's pricing structure is based around the "credit". Credits are units of time on the game (each one represents 12 minutes). As you play, your credit total is automatically reduced, 5 per hour.

Credits are bought in advance. The more you buy, the less they cost. The cheapest rate works out at 50p an hour, and the the most expensive is £1 an hour.
- £1 OF 1989 MONEY IS WORTH £2.08615 TODAY, WHICH IS **\$4.12421**
 - [HTTP://WWW.MEASURINGWORTH.COM/CALCULATORS.HTML](http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators.html)
 - [HTTP://WWW.XE.COM/UCC/](http://www.xe.com/UCC/)

PROFIT

- IMAGINE IF **YOU** COULD CHARGE £4 AN HOUR!
- PEOPLE FIGURED VIRTUAL WORLDS WOULD MAKE **MONEY** ENOUGH TO FILL SEVERAL **BARN**S
- SOME **DID** MAKE MONEY

On-Line plc, (formerly known as On-Line Entertainment), has released full details of its looming flotation onto the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market.

- MOST JUST ABOUT **BROKE EVEN**

CONDITIONS

- THERE ARE **TWO** WAYS TO MAKE **EYE-BOGGLING** AMOUNTS OF MONEY FROM DEVELOPING VIRTUAL WORLDS
- 1) **SPEND** EYE-BOGGLING AMOUNTS ON DEVELOPMENT
- 2) BE **LUCKY**
 - INDEPENDENTS HAVE TO AIM FOR THIS ONE
- **OF COURSE** YOU HAVE A BRILLIANT WORLD THAT **EVERYONE** WILL WANT TO PLAY
 - BUT SO DOES **EVERYONE ELSE** HERE

FIELD OF DREAMS


- IT'S EASY TO THINK THAT BECAUSE YOU **BUILT** IT, PEOPLE WILL **COME**

ONLINE review

DWANGO

Well, they built it. So where is everybody?

- OR THAT **ORIGINALITY** MEANS **PLAYERS**



1 Each time you log on to TalkWorld, you start off in a different location. The system tells you how many other users are logged on. You can teleport straight to another location or another user using the commands under View on the menu. Your screen shows your view of the world, the chat area, a compass and yourself.

2 You can choose an avatar before exploring. This is your screen representation. You can enter TalkWorld as a guest to see what it's all about, but everyone sees you in your underwear. To create an identity which others will see, you have to register on the TalkWorld site at: <http://www.etchinghill.com/> and set your user name and password.

3 If you get lost or just want to see how the world looks, select Map from the View menu. This shows you where you are and also indicates the position of other TalkWorld users who are logged on. If you're feeling smart you can use your compass to find your way to the area you want to visit.

STARK TRUTH

- YOU ARE **NOT** GOING TO GET **HALF A MILLION** USERS FOR YOUR VIRTUAL WORLD
 - THAT'S **NOT**
- YOU CAN REGARD **100,000** AS CAUSE FOR **CELEBRATION**
- YOU CAN REGARD **40,000** AS A **SUCCESS**
- YOU PROBABLY "ONLY" NEED **20,000-30,000** TO BREAK EVEN
- (BUT ACTUALLY, YOU DON'T **CARE**, DO YOU?)
 - I KNOW YOUR SECRET...

PROPHETIC

- HERE'S A FLIER FOR AN EARLY **US** VIRTUAL WORLD CALLED *PROPHECY*:



ENGINES (LACK OF)

- SO YOU'RE **NOT** USING A COMMERCIAL VIRTUAL WORLD ENGINE, YOU'RE WRITING YOUR **OWN**
- REASONS: THEY'RE TOO **EXPENSIVE**, THEY **DON'T** DO WHAT YOU WANT, AND YOU CAN WRITE SOMETHING **BETTER** ANYWAY
 - "AND SELL IT"
- THIS SITUATION WON'T **LAST**
 - OFF-THE-SHELF ENGINES ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE **ATTRACTIVE**
 - THAT IS, **FREE**
- IT'S HOW THINGS ARE RIGHT **NOW**, THOUGH

GOODNESS

- YOU MAY NOT **LIKE** THE **EXTRA WORK**, BUT A BESPOKE ENGINE IS **GOOD** FOR CREATIVITY
- THE **MORE** YOU WRITE IN-HOUSE, THE MORE **DIFFERENT** YOUR WORLD WILL BE
 - BECAUSE THERE'S A GREATER POSSIBILITY FOR **DIVERGENCE**
- THIS IS WHY THERE WAS SUCH A **VARIETY** OF WORLDS AT ADVENTURE '89
- IT'S **ALSO** WHY THERE'S SUCH A VARIETY REPRESENTED **HERE**

SOON

- IT WON'T BE LIKE THIS FOR LONG, THOUGH
- WITH **TEXTUAL** WORLDS, IT WENT:
 - 1989 *TINYMUD*
 - 1989 *LPMUD*
 - 1990 *DIKUMUD*
 - 1990 *MOO*
 - 1990 *TINYMUCK*
 - 1991-PRESENT ONE OF THE ABOVE...
- THE CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION IS **REDUCED** ONCE GAME ENGINES BECOME A **VIABLE** OPTION

WINDOW

- NEW MEDIA ONLY GET **ONE** WINDOW OF EXUBERANT **Creative** EXPRESSION
- FOR GRAPHICAL VIRTUAL WORLDS WE'RE – **YOU'RE** – IN IT NOW
- BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THIS MAKES YOU VERY **FORTUNATE** AND **PRIVILEGED**
 - YOUR WORK WILL BE **NOTICEABLE**
- WE **WILL** SEE CREATIVITY IN WORLDS THAT USE GAME ENGINES OR WEB 2.0 SOLUTIONS
- WE'LL SEE AN AWFUL LOT OF **DIRE CLONES** THOUGH

DESIGNERS...

- “GAME DESIGN IS ACTUALLY A NEW PHENOMENON IN VIDEO GAMES AS A WHOLE. IT REALLY CAME ABOUT AROUND 10 YEARS AGO. ... ORIGINALLY, YOU'D HAVE A PROGRAMMER AND AN ARTIST, MAYBE. THERE WERE GAMES THAT WERE DONE BY JUST A PROGRAMMER. AS THE GRAPHICS ABILITY GOT BETTER, THEY HIRED ARTISTS. NOW, AS STORIES AND CONTENT ARE MORE CENTRAL TO THE GAME THAN THEY WERE A DOZEN YEARS AGO, YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE SOMEBODY WHO THINKS JUST ABOUT THE GAME, HENCE, GAME DESIGNERS.”
 - *CITY OF HEROES* DESIGNER JACK EMMERT, KEYNOTE AT 2006 SERIOUS GAMES SUMMIT

FINALLY - FUN

- THE **FINAL** FACTOR THAT MADE A FLOWERING OF CREATIVITY **INEVITABLE** WAS THAT **DESIGNING VIRTUAL WORLDS IS FUN**
- THIS IS THE MOST **IMPORTANT** REASON
- INDEED, IF YOU **THINK** ABOUT IT, IT'S THE **ONLY** REASON ANYONE **WOULD** DESIGN THEM
 - IT'S NOT SOMETHING THE REAL WORLD **NEEDS**...
- OF COURSE, IT **ISN'T** JUST **ANYONE** WHO'D DESIGN THEM
 - IT TAKES A **SPECIAL** KIND OF PERSON TO DO IT...

MOTIVATION

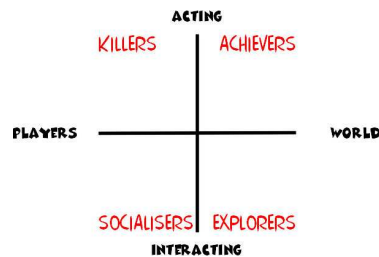
- THE PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED ADVENTURE '89 WANTED TO **CREATE WORLDS**
- SURE, THEY WANTED TO MAKE **MONEY**, TOO, BUT THAT WAS BASICALLY AN **EXCUSE**
- THE PROSPECT OF **GOLD RAINING FROM ABOVE** WAS HOW THEY **RATIONALISED** SPENDING THEIR TIME CREATING WORLDS
- **REALLY**, THOUGH, THEY CREATED WORLDS SIMPLY BECAUSE FOR **SOME** PEOPLE CREATING WORLDS IS **FUN**
- THAT APPLIES TO **YOU**, TOO!

PLAYERS

- **EVERYONE**
 - WHO WATCHES **MOVIES** THINKS THEY COULD **MAKE** ONE
 - WHO READS **BOOKS** THINKS THEY COULD **WRITE** ONE
 - WHO **PLAYS** VIRTUAL WORLDS THINKS THEY COULD **DESIGN** ONE
- BUT **NO!** MOST **PLAYERS** CAN ONLY DESIGN WHAT THEY WANT TO **PLAY**
- **DESIGNERS** DESIGN WHAT THEY WANT TO **DESIGN**

ON FUN

- PEOPLE WHO **PLAY** VIRTUAL WORLDS DO IT FOR A **REASON**



- PEOPLE WHO **DESIGN** THEM **ALSO** DO IT FOR A REASON
 - THEY WANT TO **SAY** SOMETHING

FIGHTING TO DESIGN

- THAT JACK EMMERT QUOTE WAS MISINTERPRETED
- EARLY GAMES **WERE NOT** DESIGNED BY PROGRAMMERS, THEY WERE **PROGRAMMED** BY **DESIGNERS**
- PEOPLE CREATED THE GAMES NOT BECAUSE **PROGRAMMING** WAS FUN, BUT BECAUSE **DESIGNING** WAS FUN
- THE SAME APPLIED/APPLIES TO VIRTUAL WORLDS
- **YOU** FIND DESIGNING YOURS **FUN**
- OTHERWISE, **WHY** ARE YOU DOING IT?

ADVICE

- HAVING BEEN HERE **BEFORE**, I'D LIKE TO OFFER SOME **ENCOURAGEMENT**
- APART FROM THAT "YOU'RE **NOT** GOING TO RETIRE TO THE CARIBBEAN" THING...
- FIRSTLY, YOU MAY THINK THAT **YOU'RE** LAGGING BEHIND, BUT SO'S WHAT'S **AHEAD** OF YOU
- REMEMBER THAT **SCREENSHOT** FROM *M59* ?
- HERE IT IS **AGAIN**, THIS TIME WITH ITS ORIGINAL **CAPTION**:

BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE

- THIS WAS **ONCE** STATE OF THE ART



This is just a sample of the beautiful architecture found in Ko'catan

CATCH-UP

- WHATEVER YOUR GRAPHICS, THEY'RE **ALWAYS** GOING TO LOOK **POOR** ALONGSIDE WHAT COMES OUT **LATER**
- EVEN WITH **TEXTUAL** WORLDS WE GOT **COLOURED** TEXT AND GUI CLIENTS
- DON'T **FRETT** ABOUT IT!
- SO LONG AS WHAT YOU HAVE LOOKS **PROFESSIONAL**, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE **AMAZING**
- AND EVEN IF IT IS **AMAZING**, IT WON'T BE FOR LONG

NOVELTY

- ANOTHER THING: IT **IS** POSSIBLE THAT TWO PEOPLE HAVE THE **SAME** IDEA INDEPENDENTLY
- IF SOMEONE ELSE'S WORLD HAS A PREMISS **SIMILAR** TO YOURS, **DON'T PANIC**
 - UNLESS IT'S A "MAGIC RETURNS AFTER WORLD DESTROYED IN CATAclySM" SCENARIO – **THEN** YOU CAN PANIC...
- THE **PREMISS** MAY BE THE SAME BUT THE **DETAILS** WILL BE DIFFERENT
- EVEN SOME **CLONE** MUDS SURVIVED JUST FINE

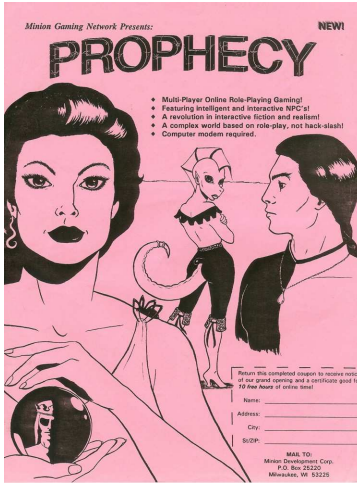
PROPHETIC

- OH YES, I SHOWED YOU **THIS** EARLIER



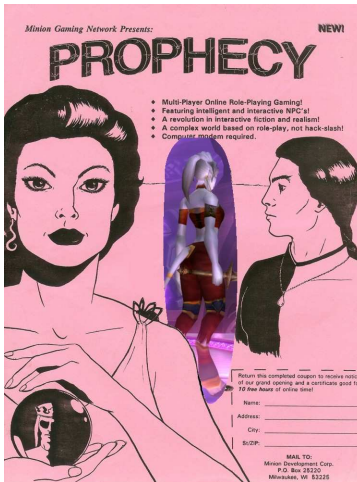
RANDOM

• **AND THIS:**



BLIND CHANCE

• **AND NOW THIS:**



DESIGNERS

- YOU ARE **DESIGNERS**, NOT PLAYERS
- YOU WANT TO CREATE A VIRTUAL WORLD **SO** BADLY THAT YOU'RE **HERE**, AT THIS CONFERENCE, RIGHT **NOW**, TO SPEAK TO **OTHER** DESIGNERS
- WANNABE DESIGNERS JUST **DON'T** HAVE THAT **COMMITMENT** OR **DEDICATION**
- ONLY **TRUE** DESIGNERS ARE THAT **DRIVEN**
- A VIRTUAL WORLD DESIGN IS **MORE** THAN A MERE IDEA
- IT'S PART OF YOUR **SOUL**

ORIGINALITY

- I'VE SEEN OVER A **DOZEN** OF THESE:

see

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- THE LATEST WAS **EARLIER THIS YEAR**
- NON-DESIGNERS JUST **DON'T GET IT**

EXPERIMENT!

- THE LESS YOU **HAVE**, THE LESS YOU HAVE TO **LOSE**
- YOU **CAN** TAKE BIGGER RISKS – SO **TAKE** THEM!
- DON'T HOVER IN THE BIG // **COMFORT ZONE**, YOU **CAN'T** COMPETE WITH THEM THERE
- BUT SOMEONE SPENDING **\$25,000,000** CAN'T COMPETE WITH **YOU** ELSEWHERE
 - BECAUSE IF THEY **BLEW** IT THEY'D BE **BURNED AT THE STAKE**

MONEY?

- WILL YOU GET **\$MONEY\$** THIS WAY?
- OK, SO IT **IS** POSSIBLE
 - SEE *RUNESCAPE*
- ARE PEOPLE **RUSHING** TO CREATE *A TALE IN THE DESERT* CLONES, THOUGH?
- **NO**, THEY'RE NOT
- BUT *ATTTD* GOT ANDREW TEPPER FUNDING TO DO SOMETHING **MUCH** BIGGER
 - **AND** HE ENJOYED HIMSELF DOING IT!

INDEPENDENCE DAY

- WHAT BIG N PUBLISHERS OFFER IS **EVOLUTION**
- THEY **DON'T** GET TO DO **REVOLUTION**
- YOU **DO** GET TO DO REVOLUTION!
- WHAT'S MORE, THE CONDITIONS ARE **ALL THERE, RIGHT NOW, TO DO IT**
- YOU'RE INDEPENDENTS, SO **ASSERT YOUR INDEPENDENCE**
- **YOUR DAY HAS COME!**

SUMMARY

- WHY AM **I** GIVING THIS TALK?
- WELL, IT'S BECAUSE I HAVEN'T **DIED** YET
- IN HISTORY-OF-VIRTUAL-WORLD TERMS, I'M A **DINOSAUR** WHO ISN'T YET **EXTINCT**
 - BY NOW I REALLY **SHOULD** BE EXTINCT!
- I WANT **YOU** TO **MAKE** ME EXTINCT
 - I WANT TO BE **SURPRISED** FOR ONCE!
- YOU **CAN** DO IT AND YOU **WILL** DO IT
- JUST REMEMBER TO HAVE **FUN** ON THE WAY!

QUESTIONS

- I GUESS THIS IS WHERE YOU **SHOOT ME DOWN**