



HOT THE VIDEOGAME LIST

After many meetings, discussions, bickering and arguments, games™ has finally hand-picked the biggest names to have hit the videogame industry. We praise their contributions, and reveal who you should be looking out for in 2007

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THE NAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2007

1 Eiji Aonuma

This stalwart designer of a host of Nintendo classics, including several *Zelda* titles, began his professional life at Nintendo on Marvelous for the Super Famicom. Having impressed Miyamoto with his work, he was promoted to assistant director on the now legendary *Ocarina Of Time* and then director on subsequent *Zelda* titles. This includes, of course, *The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess* on Wii and GameCube and *Phantom Hourglass* on the DS. Whereas *Twilight Princess* is making a return to the darker and more adult theme of *Ocarina Of Time* and *Majora's Mask*, *Phantom Hourglass* is very much inspired by Link's lighter, cel-shaded antics in *Wind Waker* – a *Zelda* title that divided opinion among its fanbase. The



3 George P Georgeadis

Despite having a name like a horribly bungled palindrome, Mr Georgeadis is actually a bit of a smart cookie. He currently holds down several jobs at Dreamgazers Interactive, president and creative director among others, and has creative interests in photography as well as game design. Dreamgazers' current project is the ambitious and highly conceptual *Dreamers*, in development for PC and the big three consoles. *Dreamers* stars Jorge, a man afflicted with a chronic case of narcolepsy during which he experiences unusually vivid dreams that appear to have a purpose. This latest endeavour by the fledgling studio is an adventure game that has been described as "*Silent Hill* meets *The NeverEnding Story*" due to its fairy tale/psychological horror theme. As yet Dreamgazers and *Dreamers* is not signed to a publisher, but we anticipate that this will change come 2007, and we will be hearing a lot more George P. Georgeadis and company in the future.

QUOTE: "There are so few games appealing to women nowadays. I have so many female friends who love video games and they always complain there isn't much out there for them"

NOTABLE WORKS: Dreamgazers.com, Dreamersgame.com

FACT: *Dreamers* and Dreamgazers Interactive were borne out of a dream George had the night before he registered the domain name



approaching releases of the Wii and DS versions of *Zelda* could prove the peak or trough in Aonuma's impressive career, but that, of course, depends upon how well they are conceived. We've been playing *Twilight Princess*, and let us tell you: we're happy.

QUOTE: "Maybe if at some point down the road there is cooking in a game, you guys can all look back and say, 'Hey, I bet Aonuma did this'"

NOTABLE WORKS: *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*

FACT: Aonuma is a member of a wind orchestra called The Wind Wakers

THE FAILURES OF 2006



E3

The days when videogame journalists drinking copious amounts, doing lots of work and riding bucking bronco machines was over, this year, when E3 came to an end due to being a general waste of money. Fortunately, the seeds have already been planted and the 'new' E3 will soon be with us. Yee-haw.



GIZMONDO

The mess that was Gizmondo has taught many lessons to many people. The handheld market is difficult enough to crack without spending all your money on getting *Sting* and *Girls Aloud* to your launch party. It came as no surprise to anyone when the company went into liquidation earlier this year.

4 Jenova Chen

There is a decent chance you will have heard of *fIOW*, the popular online Flash game soon to be available for Playstation 3. It is just as likely however, that you will not have heard of Jenova Chen, its co-creator and the person behind its system of Embedded Difficulty Adjustment (EDA).

Indeed, *fIOW* and its predecessor *Cloud* were developed to showcase Chen's EDA concept. By embedding difficulty adjustment in the game design, Chen argues, there need never be another game that you have to give up on due to difficulty. This is vital for videogames to mature as an art form; after all, what good is a story if you never reach its conclusion. Current difficulty adjusters are like switches you turn on and off, EDA will be completely intuitive. High-minded stuff to be sure, but Sony picked up *fIOW* with a view to adopting the concept for its forthcoming games. That's quite an endorsement.

QUOTE: "The difficulty changes based on the player's subconscious will. It does not change by system or designer"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Cloud*, *fIOW*

FACT: Chen's name, Jenova, was taken from a *Final Fantasy VII* character. His real name is Xinghan

5 Kenta Cho

Like the golden era of home computing on C64 and Amiga, bedroom programming is back in a big way and is having a massive effect on the commercial games market. With independently developed PC games like

2 David Braben

Being the brain behind seminal games such as *Elite* and *Zarch*, David Braben might have expected to find himself in the legendary half of this list. That he hasn't is not to question his status as one of the industry's figureheads, but more to recognise the potential of his new project, *The Outsider*.

Plunging the player into the role of a CIA operative who, by fair means or foul, has been set up as public enemy number one. Braben's aim is to directly address the assumption that nice graphics are the defining feature of next-generation technology by creating an experience that will be entirely new each time it is played. If that seems a groundless claim, it is because the techniques employed are completely new and can only be explained in practice. That a film is being made in conjunction with the game negates this idea – a film has a set ending, after all – but *The Outsider* remains a tantalising prospect.

QUOTE: "In storytelling terms at least, games have not yet broken free of their non-interactive roots"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Elite*, *Zarch*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*.

FACT: *Elite* was written by Braben and partner Ian Bell while undergraduates at Cambridge



Every *Extend Extra* and *fIOW* being rapidly snapped up for commercial release, 2007 is shaping up to be the year that indie games truly make their mark.

Although few of his own games have been as successful as certain others, Kenta Cho is especially important to the future of indie development for his shoot-'em-up design tools, used by several of the homebrew scene's most respected developers. The engine, known as BulletML, was used to create *Warning Forever*: a boss-rush shoot-'em-up that's regularly rumoured to be the next homebrew game that crosses over into the mainstream.

QUOTE: "I don't have to [think] about the market, so I can create games that I want to play"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Gunroar*, *rRootage*, *Torus Trooper*, *Bullet Markup Language*

FACT: Cho distributes his creations through ABA Games, which is named after his arcade high score initials



6 Harmonix

games™ has been saying it for years, and finally the world has taken notice. *Guitar Hero* threw the uber-talented Boston crew into the mainstream, and its sequel is set to tear up the charts this Christmas, and with a 360 version to follow, the whole world will be standing side by side with Gibsons in hands in 2007.

More importantly though, is the deal with MTV. The television giant has been swooping in to snap up parts of the game industry like a chubby teenager with a box of Milk Tray, and Harmonix along with Gametrailers.com is already under the MTV umbrella. What does this mean? A lot more *Guitar Hero*, you can be sure of that, and possibly some new peripheral music games too. Keep an eye on Harmonix next year – it could be doing some seriously big business.

QUOTE: "Suffice to say, we've had our fair share of drunken karaoke experiences" – Daniel Sussman

NOTABLE WORKS: *FreQuency*, *Amplitude*, *Guitar Hero*

FACT: Harmonix gave the world a taste of Freezepop, and we haven't looked back

7 The Housers

Sam and Dan Houser, the brains behind Rockstar Games, are in for quite a year in 2007. Aside from courting media controversy at every turn, the pair will be overseeing the launch of what can quite legitimately be labelled 'the biggest videogame of all time', *Grand Theft Auto IV*. After five iterations of *Grand Theft Auto III*, the next *GTA* could be the game that shapes the next half decade of game development, or it could be a re-tread of the same template that has served Rockstar so well over the first part of this decade. Either way, it's huge news.

The publishing and development house will also be thrusting the potentially genre-redefining *L.A. Noire* into the mainstream next year, a black-and-white game with a hard-boiled edge, it's another example of the firm's awareness of the cutting edge of cool.

QUOTE: "If you've got a stupid haircut, people will say you look stupid"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Grand Theft Auto*, *Canis Canem Edit*, *Manhunt*

FACT: Rockstar is currently hiring – you could create the next *GTA*

9 Paul Jackson

ELSPA's former director general, Roger Bennett, resigned his position in August after 16 years – almost the entire duration of ELSPA's existence since its formation in 1989. Stepping into his boots is Paul Jackson, who has been on the board of directors for 12 years himself. ELSPA has been the UK's voice of reason in an often maligned videogame industry, supporting UK developers and defending them from piracy and heavy-handed censors the likes of which the US and Germany suffer from. The videogame trade membership has flourished in the last decade, and as Paul Jackson has been part of this positive influence for more than a decade, his industry acumen will prove critical in 2007, when all three of the next-generation consoles and their range of software will undoubtedly be thrown under the scrutiny of those who would like to wholly sanitise videogames.

QUOTE: "I am honoured to continue the charge and am very excited at the opportunity to devote my experience to growing our industry voice and advocating for the needs of our members"

NOTABLE WORKS: ELSPA chairman of the board, ELSPA board member

FACT: He is also the former VP of EA Northern Europe



8 Atsushi Inaba

In a move similar to that of Yuji Naka's creation of PROPE from Sega, Atsushi Inaba helped form the Capcom-funded independent game studio Clover in 2004. It went on to develop *Okami*, the *Viewtiful Joe* series and *God Hand*, but Inaba and Clover's

Shinji Mikami's joint resignation as their leading men was a death knell for Clover – though *Viewtiful Joe*'s relative lack of commercial (despite much critical) success can't have helped its cause. Capcom is set to absorb Clover's assets back into the company at the end of March next year, but in the meantime, Inaba and Mikami seem to be at a loose end. And if the rumours surrounding a meeting with *Metal Gear Solid*'s Hideo Kojima are true, who knows what this highly experienced trio might bring to the table in 2007?

QUOTE: "I think making a game for a controller is a mistake. I think you make a game that is an interesting game and then if that controller makes the game more interesting then you implement those features"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Viewtiful Joe*, *Okami*, *God Hand*

FACT: The name Clover comes from its Japanese translation, Miba, which is derived respectively from the first and last two letters of Mikami and Inaba



Peter Jackson

After a slew of largely uninspired *Lord Of The Rings* licences, Peter Jackson's influence



on gaming appeared to be malign. His eager involvement with Michel Ancel's adaptation of *King Kong* and the adoption of a *Halo* movie as his pet project however, suggest that Jackson's interest in gaming runs deeper than the opportunity to make a few quid from tie-ins.

Jackson's choice of the untested though clearly gifted Neil Blomkamp as director of *Halo* proved unpopular with the studios, but is indicative of his commitment to making a great film rather than easy money. Jackson also recently opened Wingnut Interactive, a division of his effects house devoted to games, whose first project will be a new game based in the *Halo* universe – a collaboration with Bungie, and co-written and co-designed by Jackson himself. The expansion of the *Halo* universe will be all the more assured for his presence.

QUOTE: "Microsoft has built an amazing living canvas which allows the storytellers of our time to express themselves in a new medium"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Peter Jackson's King Kong*
FACT: Jackson hand-picked Michel Ancel for *King Kong* after playing *Beyond Good & Evil*

THE NAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2007

11 Tetsuya Mizuguchi

Narrowly missing out on the legends section, Mizuguchi makes it into our hot-in-07 list by virtue of his new studio, Q Entertainment. *Lumines* is set to take over the world, appearing almost simultaneously on Live, PS2, PSP and mobile phones, while his unique take on the medium of videogames will see him lap up more praise next year.

Talk of a possible new *Rez* is never far from the man's lips; certainly a sequel to one of the most innovative games of our times, but using next-gen tech would be superb. But it all comes back to *Lumines* – with a finger in every block-shaped pie, the potential long-term *Tetris* beater is sure to bring in phenomenal amounts of revenue for Q, meaning the inspirational Mizuguchi can get back to creating progressive and subversive videogames. Sounds good to us.

QUOTE: "I love all music. All genres. No special genre. Not only music, but the music videos"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Rez*, *Space Channel 5*, *Sega Rally*

FACT: The coverage of the Iraq war inspired Mizuguchi to create *Ninety-Nine Nights*



13 Nuclear Monkey Software

The free download *Narbacular Drop* stars Princess No-knees, who can't jump but must escape imprisonment by a demon via a series of portals. At first, the reason *Half-Life* developer Valve hired the entire team – led by Kim Swift – responsible for such a bizarre indie hit is confusing. But the simple portal concept

goes hand-in-hand with *Half-Life*'s sci-fi theme and puts a sophisticated spin on the FPS. Valve is releasing *Portal*, based on *Narbacular Drop*, as a part of its *Half-Life 2: Episode 2* bundle this spring. And since the original achieved cult status in 2005, there's no doubt that *Ep 2* will be a success – with much of the credit being attributed to the hard graft of Nuclear Monkey's original *Portal* project.

QUOTE: "Narbacular' is a nonsense word that came about because [we] wanted to make sure our website could easily be found when typed into Google"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Narbacular Drop*, *Portal*

FACT: Nuclear Monkey was formed from the students who developed *Narbacular Drop* over two semesters

12 Yuji Naka

Not just the head of the famous Sonic Team, but also the head of Sega's software development and the programmer of the original *Sonic The Hedgehog* game, Yuji Naka announced in March this year that he intended to create an independent videogame studio named PROPE, which was formed in May. While PROPE remains independent, Sega has provided it ¥1 million in funding and has first refusal on the publishing rights to PROPE's future developments – though Yuji Naka is free to sell these rights to a rival should Sega refuse. PROPE has announced no forthcoming titles as yet, though unlikely rumours circulated earlier this year that it was developing a sequel to the Sega Saturn's *NIGHTS Into Dreams*. It is likely that a Wii title is in the pipeline, as the *NIGHTS* rumours were prompted by an article suggesting PROPE was developing a Wii game featuring a flying clown. Whatever is planned, with Yuji Naka at the helm PROPE has considerable potential for the coming year.

QUOTE: "It can be possible that a new mascot will appear that may replace Sonic. But Sonic will keep on running for Sega forever"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Phantasy Star*, *NIGHTS Into Dreams*

FACT: In his early games, Naka was often credited as YU2 (in reference to Yu Suzuki) and Muuu Yuji

14 Yojiro Ogawa

When Yuji Naka left Sonic Team earlier this year, taking several other members with him, it understandably caused quite a stir. Without the man that started it all, however would the team ever find its feet after years of lacklustre franchise updates? It may go against commonly held beliefs, but even the brightest of creative intellects, when employed on the same task for too long, can lose some of their spark. Naka was aware of this, and so he left to work on some of his own ideas and chase his own ambitions. Once a major power in game development, what Sonic Team needed was a fresh approach, a new set of eyes. Step up Yojiro Ogawa, Sega stalwart and producer of the new *Sonic The Hedgehog* for Xbox 360 and Playstation 3. Ogawa has waited a long time for his chance to lead the way. He'll be anxious to make his mark.

QUOTE: "When we create a title, we would like as many gamers as possible to enjoy it"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Phantasy Star Online*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*

FACT: One of Ogawa's first jobs at Sega was working on *Panzer Dragoon Saga* for the Saturn

15 Piotr Orlovsky

Videogames are amid of a long struggle for maturity. Reflected in their tendency for cinematic conventions, developers are trying to bring a new level of psychological sophistication to the medium. Polish company Nibris could be at the bleeding edge of this endeavour with its forthcoming Wii title, *Sadness*; it could also be on the cusp of a grand folly, but who's to say.

Zelda, *Mario* and *Metroid* are classic brands so quality's almost assured, but *Sadness*' obsession with narcolepsy and German expressionist cinema, its pre-WWI setting and palette of black and white, makes it stand apart. Rumour has it that experts on the psychology of fear have been used as consultants. As long as it's scarier than the disappointing trailer, studio head Piotr Orlovsky should be all smiles.

QUOTE: "If you're counting on shooting, litres of blood and piles of dead bodies then unfortunately you won't find it here"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Sadness*

FACT: Nibris is also developing *Raid Over The River* for DS, a similarly bizarre affair set over multiple time periods and dimensions





Philip Rosedale

Second Life recently welcomed its millionth resident; if it wasn't a phenomenon before, it certainly is now. The media recognises the concept's potential, but how's to say how big *Second Life* will get. In the last year, real-world shops and services opened branches within *Second Life*, politicians lectured, bands played, and real money now runs through an economy recognised by the world's financial press and stock exchanges. If 2006 was the year that legitimised *Second Life*, then at the current rate of growth 2007 could be the year to see it rival *World Of Warcraft* as the essential online experience. Orcs aren't for everyone; *Second Life* has the potential to be universal.

QUOTE: "I'm not building a new game, I'm building a new country"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Second Life*

FACT: The hippo is the unofficial mascot of *Second Life*, a trend started by a popular forum thread



Steam (Valve)

Valve and its content delivery engine Steam, is about to embark on what could be its biggest year since release of *Half-Life 2*. Steam has already been expanded from Valve's own pay-per-download software range to deliver software from other publishers such as Popcap and Atari. It's proved both cost effective and popular so far and Valve is certain to expand its catalogue with more contracts next year. But the highlight for gamers is that *Half-Life 2: Episode 2*, out next spring; the highly conceptual and massively anticipated *Portal*, based on an idea by Nuclear Monkey Software; and Valve's multiplayer, *Team Fortress 2* will all be released as a bundle. *Ep 1* was an unsurprising hit, so couple *Ep 2* with the intrigue of *Portal* and the sequel to the popular *Team Fortress* mod, and we can smell another successful year for Valve.

QUOTE: Gabe Newell on a *Half-Life* movie: "Unless it's a great movie, unless it's as exciting a movie as the game was a game then it will never get made"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Half-Life 2*, *Half-Life 2: Episode One*, *Half-Life 2: Episode Two*

FACT: *Team Fortress 2* was originally planned as a mod for *Quake II* way back in 1998



Steven Spielberg

Having provided the original concept for *Medal Of Honor*, which was also developed by his studio DreamWorks Interactive, Steven Spielberg isn't exactly a stranger to the world of videogames. His brief flirtation ended when EA bought DreamWorks Interactive, but was rekindled last year when the legendary director signed a new three-game deal with EALA. These will definitely not be tie-ins with forthcoming movies, but original IP designed from the ground up to

THE FAILURES OF 2006



PS3 DELAY IN EUROPE

Europe gets treated like a second-class citizen as Sony gives the rest of the world PS3 before us. The consequences of this second delay will be very interesting indeed – but we'll have to wait until March to witness them.



UMD

A new way to watch movies and listen to music simply wasn't needed – especially when it turned out to be more expensive and more hassle. As a result no one owned any UMD discs apart from *Spider-Man 2*, which came packaged with the PSP.



LIK-SANG

We all love getting things from other countries. Unfortunately, due to spite on Sony's part and some court case, online importer Lik-Sang has been shut down. Boo.

work in the medium. Spielberg will retain the rights to convert each project into a film or TV series, but the emphasis will be on making each idea work as a game first. Spielberg's unrivalled gift for storytelling, coupled with the enormous influence his name carries, is just what the industry needs, and the first of his projects is due to be announced next year.

QUOTE: "It's important to emphasise story and emotion and character. This is one of the things that games don't do"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Medal Of Honor*

FACT: The ET arcade game was instrumental in the industry's 1983 crash



Suda 51

Goichi Suda aka Suda 51 (51 can be pronounced 'go ichi' in Japanese) has made more games than you'd think. Although best known for the quirky *killer7*, Suda has contributed to a long list of equally inventive titles stretching back to story duties on *Fire Pro Wrestling 3* on Super Famicom. 2007 will see Suda delve further into the realms of oddness explored in *killer7* with its spiritual successor, *Project Heroes*, as well as an unannounced title that he's rumoured to be working on with Hideo Kojima. Anyone who played *killer7* all the way to its shocking conclusion will know that Suda 51 is capable of producing games like no other – inventive, abstract, unpredictable and often controversial. Take it from us, Suda 51 will be big in '07 and beyond.

QUOTE: "It's the normal people like me who make crazy games. People who make normal games like *Contact* are the real crazies"

NOTABLE WORKS: *killer7*, *Michigan*, *The Silver Case*, *Fire Pro Wrestling 3*

FACT: Before becoming a game designer, Suda was an undertaker, dealt in real estate, worked as a graphic designer and even sold handbags



Hironobu Sakaguchi

Does a year pass without this man having some impact on the game industry? Sakaguchi already has *Blue Dragon* slated for the end of the year with a UK release next March, followed by *Lost Odyssey* and *Cry On* at an undisclosed future date. As the man behind the *Final Fantasy* series, he was able to land considerable clout to *Blue Dragon*, and has already seen 360 sales soar in Japan in anticipation of this title alone. The circumstances that led to Sakaguchi leaving Square and forming

Mistwalker have proved fortuitous enough for Microsoft so far, and although *Lost Odyssey* is currently being pitched as the game that will make or break Microsoft in Japan, the Eastern market is certain to have softened its stance on the console by the time *Lost Odyssey* hits shelves.

QUOTE: "I want to aim for a game world with lots of things you can seamlessly interact with in various ways, for the sense of a world where everything can be touched"

NOTABLE WORKS: *Kingdom Hearts*, *Final Fantasy*, *Final Fantasy VII*

FACT: Sakaguchi's work in videogames has sold over 80 million units worldwide to date

