

Timeline of Game Development in Australia

1980

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Australia's first electronic game company, Beam Software, is established in Melbourne by publishers Melbourne House. Beam Software goes on to develop more than 150 game titles.

1982

THE GAMES

The Hobbit, developed by Beam Software on multiple platforms (including Spectrum, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) and one of the first major games produced in Australia, is released.

Beam develops the 'Horace' series for Sinclair Spectrum which is distributed by Sinclair.

THE STUDIOS

Adam Lancman joins Beam Group as Financial Director and later become CEO.

THE SECTOR



Horace Goes Skiing,
Beam Software (Psion / Melbourne House), 1982

1983

THE GAMES

Beam Software's, *The Hobbit*, reaches No. 1 best selling position throughout Europe and is converted to most home computer formats. Sales exceed 500,000 units.

THE STUDIOS

Strategic Studies Group founded by Roger Keating and Ian Trout publishes the sci-fi-themed *Reach for the Stars*. SSG goes on to produce over 50 strategy titles including the *Decisive Battles of World War II* series.

THE SECTOR

1985

THE GAMES

Micro Forté releases *America's Cup Sailing Simulation* and sells over 60,000 units, setting a sales record in Australia.

Beam Software's *Way of the Exploding Fist* is the No. 1 Best Selling Title in Europe, selling over 500,000 units.

Halloween Harry, created by John Passfield, is published for the Microbee system.

THE STUDIOS

Micro Forté is established in Sydney by John De Margheriti, Steve Wang, Stephen Lewis and John Reidy.

THE SECTOR

1986

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Melbourne House sales account for 10% of UK market across all formats.

1987

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Beam starts development for Nintendo NES.

1990

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Warlords, created by Steve Fawkner, is published by Strategic Studies Group. *Warlords* is the first in a series of games Fawkner designs for both SSG and subsequently Infinite Interactive.

1991

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Interactive Binary Illusions is established in Brisbane by John Passfield and Steve Stamatiadis.

1993

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Interactive Binary Illusions releases *Halloween Harry* which becomes the best selling shareware game until the release of *Doom*.



Halloween Harry
Interactive Binary Illusions

1994

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Ratbag is established in Adelaide by Richard Harrison and Greg Siegele.

Torus Games is established in Melbourne by Bill McIntosh.

Tantalus Interactive is established in Melbourne by Trevor Nuriden and Andrew Bailey.

Games such as *Night Trap* (1993) and *Mortal Kombat* (1993) see the Office of Film and Literature Classification introduce a classification scheme for videogames.

1995

THE GAMES

Beam Software's *SNES Cricket* achieves No. 1 status in Australia and the UK.

Tantalus Interactive releases *Manx TT Superbike* on Sega Saturn and PC. It is among the leading Sega Saturn titles of the year.

Interactive Binary Illusions releases *Flight of the Amazon Queen*, a full voice CD-ROM game featuring the voice talent of Penelope Keith and Jonathan Coleman.

Beam Software releases *The Dame was Loaded*: a live action detective noir, point and click adventure. It is the largest multimedia production created in Australia at this time.

THE STUDIOS

Blue Tongue Software is established in Melbourne by Chris Mosely and Andrew Heath.

Auran is established in Brisbane by Greg Lane and Graham Edelsten.

Wildfire Studios is established in Brisbane, by Darren Baker specialising in arcade games.

THE SECTOR

1996

THE GAMES

Blue Tongue Software releases *AFL Finals Fever*, the company's first product and the first PC-based AFL football game.



John De Margheriti

THE STUDIOS

Beam Software obtains a listing on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX:BEM), the first game company to go public.

Micro Forté establishes its second studio and headquarters in Canberra.

Eyecon is established in Brisbane to create first person shooter titles and edutainment products.

Interactive Binary Illusions becomes Gee Whiz! Entertainment.

IR Gurus Interactive is established in Melbourne by Craig Laughton, specialising in equestrian and stadium sports games.

THE SECTOR

Qantm College is founded by the Queensland Department of State Development and Innovation, Arts Queensland, Northern Territory Government and a conglomerate of Queensland Universities.

Victoria is the first state to provide government funding for the development of a game, *AFL Live*, developed by IR Gurus.

The Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE) established by John De Margheriti officially opens its first campus, in Canberra with 20 students. It is the first college in Australia offering a certificate IV course in game development.

1997

THE GAMES

Auran releases *Dark Reign* which sells over 685,000 units and is rated in the Top 10 Real Time Strategy Games by Game Developer magazine in the US.

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

1998

THE GAMES

Ratbag's first game, *Powerslide*, wins Racing Game of the Year (and runner up Best Graphics Engine) with IGN.

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

1999

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

Beam Software becomes part of Infogrames Entertainment Group. Infogrames Melbourne House is born.

ndWare is established in Melbourne by Rob Murray, developing for handheld games and later expands into the mobile games area and trades as Firemint.

Micro Forté becomes the first game studio to raise venture capital and makes a \$9 million investment in R&D over the next four years.

Krome Studios is established in Brisbane by Robert Walsh, John Passfield and Steve Stamatiadis and five years later is Australia's largest game studio with over 340 staff.

Founded by John De Margheriti the Game Developers' Association of Australia (GDA) is established to represent the local game development industry.

Adam Lancman (CEO, Infogrames Melbourne House) is appointed inaugural President of the GDA.

John De Margheriti through the AIE launches the inaugural Australian Game Developers' Conference (AGDC) in Sydney.



Adam Lancman

2000

THE GAMES

Blue Tongue Software releases *Starship Troopers*, using new technology developed in-house.

Tantalus Interactive releases *South Park Rally*, the first Sega Dreamcast title developed in Australia.

Micro Forté releases *Fallout Tactics*, the next release in Interplay's fallout franchise, which sells over 300,000 units and goes to No. 2 in the US sales charts.

Infogrames Melbourne House releases *Le Mans Dreamcast* which is voted Best Driving Game on any platform worldwide by EGM.

THE STUDIOS

Irrational Games establishes a game development studio in Canberra.

Melbourne House celebrates 20 years in the industry and the release of over 150 titles.

Pandemic Studios, an arm of US parent company, is established in Brisbane.

Micro Forté commences research and development on massively multiplayer online game technology which is to later form Big World, a leading MMO middleware platform.

THE SECTOR

The Victorian Government launches Game Plan, a statement of support for the computer game industry.

2001

THE GAMES

By 2001, Ratbag has released three value products in their *Dirt Track Racing* series with total combined sales in excess of 2 million units.

Auran releases its first *Trainz Railroad Simulator* and goes on to release an updated version every year, growing registered online members to 120,000 by 2004 with 500 new registrations per week.

THE STUDIOS

Auran releases its 3D game engine which is extensively licensed in South East Asia.

Bullant Studios is founded in Melbourne by Ross Symons.

Halfbrick Studios is established in Brisbane by Shainiel Deo, specialising in hand-held games.

THE SECTOR

The Victorian Government launches Game Plan: The Next Level, its second game strategy which includes a \$250,000 commitment to subsidise Victorian companies' access to Sony PlayStation2 development kits.

2002

THE GAMES

Irrational Games Australia releases its first game, *Freedom Force*, which wins a number of awards including IGN.com's Best Strategy Game, Gamespot.com's Best Story and Best Acting and Computer Gaming World's Strategy Game of the Year.

Eyecon releases its network multiplayer first person shooter, *Gore*, worldwide.

Infogrames Melbourne House releases *Grand Prix Challenge* which is voted the Top Driving Game for the Sony PlayStation 2.

The Creative Assembly, an arm of UK based parent company, establishes a studio in Brisbane to co-develop *Rome: Total War on PC*.

Ratbag releases *World of Outlaws Sprint Car Racing* (an IP controlled by Ratbag).

Krome Studios self funds and releases *TY the Tasmanian Tiger*, retaining ownership of the IP with a distribution deal with Electronic Arts. TY goes on to sell over 1.3 million units globally.

Torus Games' *Doom II* is named Best First Person Shooter Game on GameBoy Advance at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3).

IR Gurus releases *Saddle Club-Willow Brook* on PC which goes on to become the Best Selling Children's PC title in Australia and New Zealand.

Grand Prix Challenge by Infogrames Melbourne House wins game of the year at the Australian Game Developers Awards.

THE STUDIOS

John De Margheriti establishes BigWorld Pty Ltd to focus on licensing the now commercialised BigWorld technology platform for MMOG game development to clients in Australia, Asia, North America and Eastern Europe.

THE SECTOR

The Victorian Government releases Game Plan: GameOn, its third initiative to support the Victorian electronic game industry.

The Victorian Government's world-first Sony PlayStation2 program is launched and managed by the GDA. The program provides 12 Sony PlayStation2 development kits to local developers plus a performance analyser.

SUMEA Launchpad is created by Sourti to provide a focal point for the Australian and New Zealand Games Development Industry and in particular to support those who wish to work in the industry.



TY the Tasmanian Tiger,
Krome Studios

2003

THE GAMES

Tantalus Interactive's *Top Gear Rally* wins the IGN Award for Best GameBoy Advance Racing Game. It also wins Australian Game of the Year.

Blue Tongue Software releases its first console title, *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis*, which goes on to sell over 400,000 units.

The Creative Assembly releases the multi-award winning *Rome: Total War on PC*. The game is one of the highest rating strategy games of all time.

THE STUDIOS

Infogrames Melbourne House rebrands as Atari Melbourne House.

Team Bondi is established in Sydney.

Gridwerx is established in Brisbane, specialising in online games.

THE SECTOR

Victorian Government announces a dedicated games export development program valued at \$200,000.

The first Women in Games event is held at the annual Australian Game Developers' Conference (AGDC) in Melbourne.

The Australian electronic game industry has over 40 companies and 700+ people working directly in game studios. Over \$100m is being exported annually.

2004

THE GAMES

IR Gurus Interactive releases *AFL Live Premiership Edition* which goes straight to No.1, making it the fourth AFL endorsed football game for the company to reach No.1 in Australia and sales in excess of 500,000 units since the launch of AFL licensed games.

Krome Studios releases the sequel, *TY 2: Bush Rescue*. Halfbrick Studios produces the GameBoy Advance version.

Irrational Games Australia ships *Tribes: Vengeance*, a sequel in the successful Tribes multiplayer online first person shooter franchise. The company also establishes a marketing and distribution deal with VUG for *Freedom Force vs The Third Reich*.

In 2004, four local game studios produce game titles linked to major Hollywood film properties: Krome Studios- *King Arthur*; Ratbag -*Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee*; and Blue Tongue Entertainment - *The Polar Express*; Tantalus Interactive – *Polar Express* on GameBoy Advance.

Auran releases *Trainz Railroad Simulator 2004* building on the success of the original.

THE STUDIOS

Torus Games celebrates ten years in the industry and development of over 20 game titles.

Tantalus Interactive celebrates ten years in the business with over 20 game titles.

BigWorld and Solid Networks announce a joint venture at the Tokyo Game Show to establish BigWorld Japan.

IR Gurus Interactive becomes the first Australian-based development company to sign a first party deal with Sony Computer Entertainment Europe for *Gaelic Football 2005*.

Auran signs an \$8.3m joint venture development deal to develop a MMORPG for the Asian market, using its Jet engine and the BigWorld technology, creating an Australian total solution.

THQ acquire Blue Tongue Entertainment, extending its operations to include studios in Brisbane and Melbourne.

THE SECTOR

The Microsoft Xbox Development Kit Program, sponsored by the Victorian Government, is launched in Victoria. A total of 21 development kits are made available.

Using the Victorian Government's new cash flow facility through Film Victoria to finance the game, IR Gurus Interactive develops *AFL Live 2005*.

IR Gurus Interactive's *Heroes of the Pacific* is the first game developed through Victoria's Sony PlayStation2 Development Kit Program to gain a publishing contract through Codemasters.

The Australian Game Developers Award for game of the year is awarded to *Tribes: Vengeance* by Irrational Games.

The AIE, with support from the Victorian Government, opens a Melbourne campus.

The Electronic Games Investment Fund Ltd is created by the Queensland Government.

The first Free Play: Independent Game Developers Conference is presented by Next Wave in Melbourne.

2005

THE GAMES

Irrational Games ships tactical assault title *SWAT 4* to critical acclaim.

SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, Pants! by THQ Studio Australia is nominated for Best Animated Videogame at the Annie Awards.

Heroes of the Pacific by IR Gurus wins game of the year at the Australian Game Developers Awards.



SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, Pants!
THQ Studios Australia

THE STUDIOS

BioWare partners with Pandemic.

The Creative Assembly is acquired by Sega.

Ratbag Studios is acquired by Midway in August for \$7 million and renamed Midway Studios Australia. Midway closes the studio in December just four months later.

Micro Forté celebrates 20 years as Australia's longest surviving independent game developer.

THE SECTOR

Film Victoria's Digital Media Fund receives \$4 million from the Victorian government.

Games Lab is opened at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). This permanent space is dedicated to investigating games culture both internationally and in Australia.

Adam Lancman, president of the GDA since its inception in 1999, CEO of Beam Software/Melbourne House and a pioneer and statesman of the Australian Games Industry dies at age 46.

Evelyn Richardson becomes GDDA President and CEO.

Bond University study *GamePlay Australia 2005* published by the IEAA finds that 88% of the Australian population support the introduction of the R18+ classification for videogames. The report finds that the average age of a gamer in Australia is 24.

John De Margheriti announces that the 7th Australian Game Developers Conference is the last produced by the AIE.

2006

THE GAMES

Barnyard by Blue Tongue is the first Wii title produced in Australia and is one of the North American launch titles for Nintendo's new console.

Pandemic's *Destroy All Humans! 2* wins the 2006 GDA Game of the Year.

Medieval II: Total War wins best PC game for The Creative Assembly.

THE STUDIOS

Krome opens new studio in Adelaide (essentially acquiring the recently defunct Ratbag Studio).

Bullant Studios is renamed Big Ant Studios.

BigWorld Pty Ltd expands in to China with representative sales offices based in Shanghai and Beijing.

Krome Studios acquires Melbourne House from Atari. The studio is renamed Krome Studios Melbourne.

THE SECTOR

A high-end motion capture studio is installed at Deakin University campus with the Victorian Government making a \$500,000 matched contribution to the venture.

Qantm becomes the first private educator to deliver a certified Bachelor Degree in interactive entertainment.

First eGames Expo in Melbourne attracts over 15,000 visitors.

The GDA runs the first Game Connect Asia Pacific (GCAP) conference in Brisbane. It replaces the long running Australian Games Developer Conference (AGDC).

The Entertainment & Media Outlook: 2006 - 2010 report prepared by Pricewaterhouse Coopers calls on the Federal Government to introduce an R18+ classification for games.

Hits of the 80s: Aussie Games that Rocked the World exhibition at ACMI's Games Lab highlights the key role of Beam Software (Melbourne House) in the history of game development in Australia.

45 Australian game companies exhibit at E3 in Los Angeles.

Staff numbers of the major studios grow by 50% between 2005 and 2006.

2007

THE GAMES

Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords by Infinite Interactive is released on multiple platforms to international acclaim.

BioShock, developed by 2K Boston and Irrational Games (renamed 2K Australia) based in Canberra) garners many accolades including a 95% Game Ranking, the 2007 BAFTA award for Game of the Year, selling 5.6 million units on the Xbox360 alone.

Auran's MMORPG *Fury* is released. *Fury* is the most expensive game yet produced in Australia.

Auran releases *Trainz 2007* and *Trainz Classic*.

Infinite Interactive's *Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords* wins five Awards at the 2007 GDA Awards including Best Game.

Avatar: The Last Airbender - The Burning Earth by THQ Studio Australia is nominated for best Animated Videogame at the 2007 Annie Awards.

Tantalus ships *Pony Friends* on DS which becomes the highest selling handheld title developed in Australia, with 900,000 units sold.

THE STUDIOS

EA announces acquisition of Pandemic & BioWare.

BigWorld Ltd expands sales into USA, Russia and Eastern Europe.

Auran Developments the team behind *Fury* enters liquidation in December of 2007. Auran Games (the developer of the *Trainz* series) continue operations.

Activision announces it will merge with Vivendi Games in a deal worth US\$18.9 billion making Activision Blizzard the largest videogame publisher in the world.

THE SECTOR

Victorian Government purchases eight Xbox360 Development kits for local industry.

Victorian Government invests over \$1.26 million in four game prototypes - of which two investments almost total \$500,000 each.

A number of universities offer game-specific degree programmes including: QUT, Bond and James Cook University in Queensland; Swinburne, Deakin, RMIT and University of Ballarat in Victoria and Carnegie Mellon in Adelaide.

Qantm establishes a college in Victoria.

Tom Crago (CEO, Tantalus) becomes President of the GDA.

The IEAA's *Interactive Australia 2007* report finds that the average age of a gamer in Australia is now 28 and that 41% of gamers are female.

The third Free Play: Next Wave Independent Developers Conference is held in Melbourne at ACMI.

2008

THE GAMES

THE STUDIOS

THE SECTOR

ACMI includes key Australian games in its presentation of the Game On exhibition, a major international history of videogames.



Puzzle Quest
Infinite Interactive



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