

# **namco®**

**September 2005**

## **Questions for Namco Developer**

### **Support Activity for Namco Museum Battle Collection**

An audience with Nakajima-san, producer of Namco Museum Battle Collection. Nakajima-san also worked on the graphics and motion of the original arcade version of Rolling Thunder. He also worked on the following titles:

#### **Arcade:**

- Baraduke / 1985 Designer
- Rolling Thunder / 1986 Designer
- The Genji and Heike Clans / 1986 Chief Designer
- Pac Mania / 1987 Chief Designer
- Ridge Racer / 1993 Visual Director
- Air Combat / 1995 Visual Director
- Alpine Racer / 1995 Visual Director
- Rapid River / 1997 Planning and Project Chief

#### **Console:**

- Alpine Racer 3 / 2002 Planning and Producer
- Namco Museum PSP / Producer
- Pac'n Roll / Planning and Producer

### **1. When you first started developing games did you ever think the industry would be as big as it is now?**

I always felt during the early years of working in the industry that there was huge potential for the games market. As demand grew I could see that the industry would go from strength to strength.

### **2. What do you feel is the most important part of a successful game: the way it plays or the way it looks?**

The number one difference between computer games and other forms of entertainment is the ability to involve yourself in real-time in the gameplay. Therefore the playability is always going to be the

most important part of a game. If I were to list the elements of a good game, it would be as follows:

- a) The central theme should appeal to the user
- b) The rules should be relatively simple but the concept must have depth
- c) The graphics are in line with current expected standards

### **3. Was there a difference in developing games for the arcades to developing games for console platforms?**

The appeal of the arcade format is that games can be picked up very quickly and you are more likely to play a game on this platform for a shorter period of time. In an arcade game, players look for elements such as an immediate response to the game play as well as immersiveness and competitive elements.

On the other hand the console is extremely popular because for longer periods, people can immerse themselves in a game and take as long as they want - therefore it's important that console games have a great more to offer in terms of content.

### **4. Which do you prefer?**

I like them both, but for different reasons; the arcade game can be a very animated experience, played and enjoyed together with friends and family, whereas that console game can offer an intense thrilling single player experience. We are lucky here at Namco in that we continue to develop games for both platforms.

### **5. Will simple games such as Pac-Man always have universal appeal, given how easy they are to pick up and get straight into?**

People in general do not like to learn complicated rules in a short amount of time. Good rules are usually simple, and it also has be emotionally involving for the gamers. For example in a game like Pac-Man you try and avoid the ghosts - but the situation is reversed when you swallow the Power Pellet. It can be frustrating

to try and complete a level whilst the ghosts are able to get you – but once the situation is reversed that frustration can be released as you turn the tables and go after the ghosts. Once the players

discover the pleasures of eating the ghosts, this motivates them further to eat more ghosts at the same time. To do so would require a plan. When the plan works, you feel a sense of reward. If the plan fails, not only would they feel gutted, but they would be eager to challenge it again. I feel that this is the how the players are excited by the game and by given this emotional experience, are gradually drawn in to the game.

**6. Do you feel that modern day games have lost sight of what makes a game something that people want to return to time and time again?**

There have been some game developers that have fallen into this trap. Some games are thought of as a success simply because they have stunning graphics and they look realistic, but in reality the game itself becomes repetitive and quickly lose its appeal. As we develop 3D graphics further, this in turn at least opens up the way a game can be played and interacted with, but again this must not become more important than the tactics and strategies you need to play a well developed game.

**7. Which type of games do you particularly like now?**

For arcade game, I like to play Gun shoot `em ups and driving games. On console, I play action and action-RPG games. Also, I like abstract, artistic games like Rez and Katamari Damacy, which do not follow current trends.

**8. Did putting together new arrangements of the classic arcade games bring back any memories?**

The arrangements have been made with the idea of protecting the classic games' rules and matching them with present tastes. We brought the graphics up to the PSP standard and the game is now also compatible with PSP's WiFi function. But as far as the game world and the layout are concerned, these are still the same as in

the original ones. We wanted to invoke the nostalgia these games convey whilst taking advantage of the new PSP technology.

**9. Do you think different countries have a different style of game they prefer?**

Yes, I feel that the player's taste differs from country to country. In particular the design of the characters and themes of the game differ. This has become increasingly more apparent as the technology for graphics have improved and now can express more realism.

**10. Are there any types of games that you haven't had a chance to work on that you would like to in the future?**

I would like to make a game linking the arcade to a console game whereby you can customise your machine (car, robot etc) and then race or fight with it in the arcade. Since Namco have both an arcade and a consumer division it would be great to produce a game that you could do this with.

**11. How long did games such as Pac-Man and Galaga take to develop?**

The games used to take more than 1 year to develop at that time. The work intensive part was research in the development of the game coding rather than the graphics.

**12. When did you realise that some of the games and characters you had developed had reached iconic status in modern day popular culture?**

I think we fully realised their impact in 1996 when the original Namco Museum for the first PlayStation became a worldwide hit. I realised that despite being a game in a fledgling industry (compared to other forms of entertainment), we already had a huge impact on popular culture, and left a memorable impression on the gamers.

**13. What have been your favourite titles to work on?**

So far my favourite titles were the original Ridge Racer and also Alpine Racer.

**14. Have there been any projects you have worked on that were not made into full games that you wish you could resurrect?**

I would love to resurrect a Ninja character, but set the game in the modern world. There have been Ninja games produced by other developers in the past – but I still feel there's room for a really well done game that captures the mystery of the Ninja in a city environment.

**15. Equally, are there any other classic titles that you would like to see remade, with the benefit of modern day developing?**

There are many games such as Motos, Xevious, Rolling Thunder, The Genji and Heike Clans, Mirai Ninja, The legend of the Valkyrie, Star Blade and of course Pac-Man.

**16. Where do you see the future of gaming, what areas do you think will change in the future?**

As the games become more sophisticated within the existing genres, the graphics and the game systems of large franchises will swiftly evolve. On the other hand, I feel that hand held gaming will establish itself, and serve the needs to provide casual games to an audience who would want to play whenever and wherever they are. Finally the delivery method for games will change, with gamers able to download games from the internet and at wireless hotspots.

**17. What future technology do you wish we had now that could be implemented into the gamer experience?**

At present, 3D technology for games is very much in a transitional period, such that the perspective between 2 objects and their relative position is difficult to display at times. Unlike films, it is critical to be active in this 3D world. Therefore, I believe it is compulsory to use a 3D image displaying device that is dedicated for video games. Also, a specific device, one designed exclusively for home consoles and another for portable consoles would be essential. For portable game consoles, I think that there is a high demand for the screen to be only visible to the player. This will allow the player to really concentrate, for example on a crowded train during rush-hour, without worrying about people peering over your shoulder.

**18. Finally do you feel we've had the 'golden age' of gaming, or are we seeing it now?**

I believe the games industry is only now reaching a period of business maturity. If asked whether video games can truly move people and change their lives, I believe that we are not quite there yet as in the movie industry. Although we are however, evolving at a phenomenal rate and the hardware and technical knowledge is constantly changing, we are still going through transitional period. The real golden age will come of course when system performance is no longer an issue. That's when we will see games that will truly take your breath away!