Sam Von Ehren

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Skills

Game Production
Ideation
Playtesting
Monetization
Data Analysis
Content Management

Game Design
Rapid Prototyping
System Design
Virtual Reality
Alternative Controllers

Management
Certified Scrummaster
Product Management
User Stories

Systems/Applications
Unity
Git
NodeJS
Jira
Shortcut
Unreal
AWS
React
Blender
Adobe Creative Suite

Programming Languages
C#
JavaScript
Python
React
C/C++
Lua

Honors
Webby Awards '21
La Biennale di Venezia '19
NYT Publisher Award '18
Indiecade Nominee '17
GDC.ALT.CTRL '17
Indiecade Selection '16

Education

New York University
New York, New York
Game Design MFA 2017

Wheaton College
Norton, MA
Computer Science BA 2010

Selected Work Experience

Game Maker
The New York Times | 2016-2021

- Created prototype pipeline, guiding a team of 50 through ideation, prototyping, and validation leading to 12 game prototypes A/B tested within one year
- Led multidisciplinary teams to turn successful prototypes into full games, including *Spelling Bee*, *Letter Boxed*, *Tiles*, *Vertex*
- Spearheaded further research and analysis, working with product managers and data analysts to optimize and iterate on released games
- Used learnings to devise and implement new monetization strategies
- Handled content pipelines, including sourcing content creators and building content creation tools
- Gave lectures and ran workshops to teach fundamentals of game design

Independent Game Developer
Various | 2017-present

- Designed, implemented, and integrated gameplay mechanics, monetization strategies, and various SDKs in Unity, Unreal, and React
- Created games for educational, medical, and entertainment purposes including *Math Mayhem*, *Highlandia*, *Likely Story*, *StarStarterRX*, *Street Writer*

Notable Projects

Spelling Bee   nytimes.com/puzzles/spelling-bee
A daily anagramming game based on a print puzzle by Will Shortz

- Led conversion to mobile, balancing game economy, and content pipeline
- Conceived new monetization scheme, which increased new user subscription rate by 500% making Spelling Bee a cornerstone of NYT Games

Kanji Cook   apple.com/us/app/kanji-cook/id1594259512
A Japanese learning game about assembling kanji characters, narrativized as cooking

- Designed game mechanics, performed all game programming, handled release management and content generation as part of a two person team
- Created custom python scripts to generate over 2000 levels using JMDict

Porton Down   porton-down.com
A psychedelic docu game about a mind-altering military trial and privacy implications of VR

- Designed and implemented game mechanics and flow, integrating custom *Tilt Brush* models, IBM Wattson, Leap Motion, and Arduino
- Nominations from La Biennale di Venezia '19 and Sheffield Doc Fest '18

Publications and Media Coverage

What It's Like to Be a Game Designer at The New York Times
www.nytimes.com/2019/01/05/insider/game-designer-times-puzzles.html

Emotional Fugitive Detector is the Voight-Kampff Test you want to lose
www.pcgamer.com/emotional-fugitive-detector-is-a-voight-kampff-test-you-want-to-lose/

NYT XWDs on Twitch Are the Perfect Way to Have a Little Company on T-giving
gizmodo.com/nyt-crosswords-on-twitch-are-the-perfect-way-to-have-a-1845757514