Chatting molluscs and mobile gaming with Thoopid

By Lauren Hartzenberg   16 Feb 2017

In 2013 a cheeky garden mollusc on a quest for the perfect shell captured the hearts of mobile gamers young and old. His name was Snailboy, a slimy protagonist in a platform-puzzler designed and developed by Cape Town-based indie game startup Thoopid.

The mobile game, Snailboy: An Epic Adventure, enjoyed notable success in South Africa and abroad, praised for its impressive HD graphics and polished animation. It racked up over 500,000 downloads and scooped the award for 'Best Mobile Game' at the DevGamm Kyiv Awards in 2013.

Building on this success, Thoopid has released a second instalment titled Snailboy: Rise of Hermitron. This time the adventure is set in the depths of the ocean, where an evil hermit crab known as Hermitron is viciously taking over the underwater kingdom. Snailboy must sling, stick, swim and hop through 25 levels to help his new-found sea friends reclaim their kingdom and restore the Guardian Shell Statue to bring peace and harmony.

Visuals are stellar yet again and the game features interesting snail-based mechanics, and Snailboy comes complete with a few extra special abilities that only adds to the fun.

Simon Spreckley, one of Thoopid's founding partners, let us in on what it takes to create award-winning game design, the company's future plans, and his thoughts on the local game development scene.

▦ *Tell us the story behind Thoopid. How did the company come into being?*

Thoopid was founded in 2013 by avid gamers with award-winning experience in design, development, digital marketing and emerging media. We are based in Cape Town and we're determined to spread our goodness around the globe.

Why'd we call ourselves something as stupid as Thoopid? Well, when you try to say our name you sound stupid, so we're already one up on you. It's all about gaming, right?

▦ *What are the standout features of Snailboy: Rise of Hermitron?*

Well for one, the visuals are simply gorgeous! We've focussed on expanding the Snailboy world, the levels are vast and there's loads of exploration and discovery for players. To top it off we've added some "super" cool interactions to the game

play and Snailboy has way more depth to his abilities in this new title.

Snailboy is a rather lovable and infectious character. What inspired the character's design and 'personality'?

Snailboy was originally conceptualised based on the mechanic we had in mind for the first title. We wanted to stretch a little character and sling him across the screen. Naturally we thought a little slug would be ideal. With the second title, having learnt much through the process of making the first, his mechanics and design were finessed, getting a full make-over in the process.

Simon Spreckley

▦ *The Snailboy games have been praised for its visually stunning animation. What would you say are the golden rules for attaining this level of polish?*

The game was created using tools and workflows traditionally applied to AAA titles and Film & VFX; the same principles applied within a 2D game engine results in a very pretty mobile game. This combined with loads of patience, hard work and never compromising on your vision is how you get an amazing result.

▦ *Thoopid specialises in mobile gaming. Why this focus, and are there plans to move into PC or console?*

There is no other platform that has saturated the gaming market like the mobile device. It allows us to tap into a global audience instantly with relevant engaging content, which is really exciting for a small indie mobile game company from Cape Town. For now, our focus is mobile but who knows what opportunities the future holds with the constant change and development of technology.

▦ *Will Snailboy: Rise of Hermitron be launched on other operating systems aside from iOS?*

We would love to release Snailboy onto other mobile platforms and are considering Android and possibly Steam, but for now we are focused solely on iOS.

What are your thoughts on the South African game development scene at the moment? How does it compare globally?

The South African game development scene isn't lacking in the talent department and we've seen amazing titles being launched. It's also a growing industry locally but still small when compared globally.

The reality for us is that amazing titles take big investment to create and there are considerable marketing budgets required to compete with other top charting titles. This is the biggest gap in the success of our local game scene and what's happening globally. We know we are creating great content but we simply struggle to compete at scale when it comes to the marketing and visibility of our products globally.

Any advice for aspiring game developers and designers trying to crack the local industry?

The road to game launch is long and unpredictable. Stay motivated, eat your vegetables and remember to have fun! This is the game industry after all.

Download *Snailboy: Rise of Hermitron from the* [iTunes App Store](#)*. The first 5 levels of the game are free-to-play, after which a one-time payment of $3.99 unlocks the rest.*

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ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

Managing editor and retail editor at Bizcommunity.com. Cape Town apologist. Dog mom. Get in touch: lauren@bizcommunity.com
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