

Hi. Thanks for answering my call for people to interview about Flash games. I have a bunch of questions outlined below and the more in-depth your answers, the better, but please don't feel pressured to answer every one of them.

Please note in this list of questions: when I ask you about "Flash games" specifically, I mean the ones released in-browser between 1999 and 2021. If you're still making games with Flash, great! I'd like to hear about it. But since this book is mainly focused on Flash games in the browser, I'd like answers based around that context.

Personal History

- **Tell me about yourself.**
 - **My name is Antony, I was and still am a Flash developer**
- **What Flash games did you make?**
 - **I made a lot of games, most of them awful, some of them I think were really nice! My well known games are IndestructoTank!, The SHIFT series, KOLM, Upgrade Complete, and a bunch of others made under the name of the-exp on Newgrounds and then for Armor Games.**
- **How else were you involved in the Flash community?**
 - **We used to attend as many Newgrounds Meets as we could, those were some of the biggest highlights of my time in the community. Online was just the thrill of making Newgrounds frontpage, and meeting and working with lot of super cool people.**
- **What was your first Flash game that you played, and on what site?**
 - **It was a game called Sheep, and it was actually a Shockwave Game. The first Flash game I can remember being blown away by seeing in the browser was the 3D XiaoXiao shooter.**
- **What do you remember about the community? How they interacted, voted, shared games with eachother?**
 - **I think the early community and Newgrounds were basically one and the same, before anyone made any money and when most games were made on the Flash timeline.**
- **What are your favorite Flash games? Both massive and obscure.**
 - **The games I've gone back to time and time again to zen out to are the William and Sky series.**
- **What was your favorite portal and why? Any runner-ups?**
 - **Obviously I'm a Newgrounds Kid now in my mid thirties ;) And once I became pro I obviously enjoyed working with other devs doing games for Armor like JMTB02, Con Artist and Joey Betz**
- **What would you consider your strongest memory of Flash gaming? It doesn't have to be necessarily the best.**

- I think the Newgrounds meets probably also take the cake here, or the times I went across to America for a few days to hang out with my Armor Co-workers.
- That and my 'breakout' moment of coming second in the big Armor Games competition. I won \$5000 and it was the most money I'd ever had. I had a new baby at the time and we were beyond broke. Then being offered a full time job by Armor to do what I love meant my entire life was turned around by this industry.
- Do you remember any portals, users or general stories that a casual community member might not know of? I'd love to get some more obscure stories into the book.
 - I remember there being a few portals and sites set up where they basically purchased a pre-built portal of game content and hosted it, which was the norm at the time, but I remember everyone being up and arms that someone had the gaul to charge people for the games we made. We thought that was totally scummy and there was a real sense of rallying against it.
- Overall, what is your favorite part of Flash games, major or minor?
 - I loved making a game that changed as it was made, there was never any set plan to follow all the way though, it evolved because the tools let it do so.

Developing for Flash

- What made you consider developing a Flash game?
 - I found Shockwave too hard to figure out at the time, but I could draw a shape in Flash and have it moving with keyboard controls in just a few lines and it went from there. Obviously my early priority was making Dragonball Z and Metroid fan games.
- How difficult was it for you to get started?
 - I had made some RPG maker games previously but Actionscript was something else entirely. Back then with AS2 it was actually very forgiving if you didn't mind it being janky - and I didn't mind it being janky!
- What was the first Flash game you released, and on what site? What do you remember about its release?
 - Dragonball Z AS On Newgrounds. It was very basic and actually barely worked as a game. You could eat it by just spamming the mouse.
 - Still playable on Newgrounds!
<https://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/181118>
- What drew you to making Flash games specifically? Did other platforms like Shockwave, Unity, Java or so on carry any appeal?

- Flash was the only game in town if you wanted your game seen by more than a few people. It was so far beyond any other platform in terms of no barriers to entry. PC gaming barely existed beyond big boxed products, and console development was for grownups.
- Did you work alone? If not, who did you work with, and how did you meet them?
 - Early on I did, and it shows - I'm not a great artist, and even worse with music. I loved teaming up with artists like Jim, Bomtoons, Ockeroid etc and eventually I started getting a budget from Armor to team up and it meant I could make games with real graphics.
- Can you give me just a quick, point-by-point overview of how you developed games? The technical side of things purely - how you program for Flash, how you create resources like graphics & sound (if applicable), how functionality improved & things changed in later versions of Flash, anything you can think of that might be noteworthy or interesting to the nerdy-minded.
 - At first I made games on the timeline in Actionscript 2, with the scripts attached to the in game objects. Over time this evolved into making frameworks to make more complex games with editors built in, and with Actionscript 3 becoming object oriented. Eventually I moved out of the Flash IDE entirely except for assets, and into Flash Builder, a much more code driven IDE.
 - Now that I use Unity, things have gone full circle and I am once again attaching scripts to the in game objects.
- Were there any interesting technical challenges you had to face while making a game in Flash?
 - I spent many years trying to push 3D in Flash, and had a few reasonably successful takes on it, mostly in pseudo3D flat planes like in Sequester <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS23JrRZEds> and Microboats <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvBL8uxmezw>, but it was always a struggle to make it work until stage3D and Away3D came about. Other than that Flash is still the best experience I've had with writing code once and having it run everywhere - the fact games I wrote in 2006 still run flawlessly today is testament to that.
- What was the development community like? Any forums or boards or other sites that are worthy of mention?
 - I'm going to be boring and keep saying Newgrounds - other than Armor Games and later Kongregate when I did work for them, Newgrounds was really the most solid Flash game community that wasn't centred around money.
- Did you make games as a hobby, on the side, or a full time job? Did it ever get 'serious', and if so, when?

- I made a dozen or so small games before I started to be recognised for doing quite well in the Flash game competitions hosted by Armor Games. Then once **IndestructoTank!** came 2nd in the big yearly one (2nd to the Last Stand, so I'm not bitter ;)) And I got a job offer to keep doing what I was doing but receiving a monthly salary, I went from dirt poor to reasonably comfortable overnight, though I spent nearly all of my time developing games non stop. I loved it though!
- What was your first "viral game", what were the circumstances around it, and what was it like inside your head and on your site/portal entry when it did go viral?
 - **IndestructoTank!** Got a glowing Newgrounds front page recommendation from Tom Fulp, and scored incredibly well on the site, making more views in a few days than all of my other games put together. It got featured on a bunch of other sites and basically spread across the net. When I saw it featured in a 'real' game magazine made of trees, it was amazing.
- Did you ever have a strategy when making games, marketing or business wise? Or did you just work on what was fun?
 - I really did just work on what was fun. Thinking of an idea, getting a thumbs up most of the time from Armor, and then just tinkering on it for a month and releasing the end result. It was rare I had to work to a spec, and when I did, the end result was usually not too strong.
- What was it like working with Flash portals like Kongregate? What sort of deals would you make, if any? Did you ever use something like Flash Game License, and if so, can you tell me about your experience with it?
 - I went from working with John Cooney (JMTB02) at Armor Games to working with him when he moved to Kongregate, so I never had to negotiate one anything business side, I was very lucky that way! I sometimes felt guilty that I was in a good position when people were discussing the difficulty of FGL and prices and haggling. I traded ownership of my IP and work in exchange for a steady salary - which is what I needed at that point in life - I had a young child and our main source of income was Flash :)
- How much did the community support you, and how did they contribute to your success?
 - I think I got quite a lot of support. I got fan mail (and still do from people who played my games as children, it's one of my favourite things ever)
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- **Were you around pre-and-post Macromedia era Flash? Are you able to draw a comparison between the two companies' handling of the technology?**
 - **My first version of Flash was Macromedia Flash MX, (Kazaa edition like everyone else at the time!) The transition to Adobe actually brought about AS3, and it was a very exciting time.**
- **Do you think Adobe buying Flash at the end of the day caused more damage than it would have if Macromedia hadn't been bought out?**
 - **I don't think so at the end of the day. Macromedia would likely have not done too much differently, and at first Adobe gave the entire platform a kick up the ass in terms of features. However, post mobile world, and iPhones non support, Adobe lost all interest, and ultimately were one of the main reasons for Flash's decline, there is a lot of blame on them!**

The End of Days

- **At what point did Flash go into "freefall" in the public consciousness, in your point of view?**
 - **I think the most obvious answer to this question is Steve Jobs' open letter! And thats mostly true. It at least turned public opinion very hard, and Adobe themselves never did a single thing that came close to matching the ire sent their way.**
- **Have you ever met anyone blatantly anti-Flash or anti-Flash games specifically? Did you try to change their mind? Were you successful?**
 - **I've met many, many anti-flash people. Ranging from it uses up too much resources in browser on banners, to people worried about the security implications, to people just hating for fun. In my opinion the web being free of Flash sure seems just as slow and heavy. Flash was just a tool that people used sloppily for their basic aims. Now that it's gone, they just use other technologies like html5 just as sloppily.**
- **What didn't you like about Flash as a platform, either during its peak or fall? Anything specifically egregious worth mentioning?**
 - **My gripes with the platform are nearly all Adobe based - there were so few new features or active development for issues in the last decade of the platform. There were several console games making use of Flash technology, but requiring entirely bespoke frameworks. I think the lack of console potential was a big sad point that made Unity so alluring.**

- **Around what point did Flash stop becoming profitable and/or getting enough back to cover development time? Did this make you want to stop making Flash games?**
 - I'm still making some money at the moment doing Flash work - but mostly just legacy stuff as well as a few projects of my own. I made a wrapper for the Last Stand Legacy Collection for Steam, and I'm now working on an improved version that will let me drop in my old games for Steam and Mobile.
- **How many people were still playing your games at the end? Did you ever find out overall total player numbers? Any thoughts on those numbers?**
 - I'd love to know what the total number of players was, I think it would make my ego happy, but it's basically impossible to tell. Nobody tracked anything accurately, and it was such a spreadable platform, that was one of its strengths. The numbers on the main sites are good enough, and there's still plenty playing today in various ways, as you know!
- **Any opinions on the state of the indie gamedev industry, and what it was like compared to Flash at its rise & peak?**
 - I think there was a huge crossover between the two, or more a grey area when people working with flash moved from Newgrounds to Tigsource and a wider Indie Games scene not centred around Flash. I wasn't much of a part of it, it always seemed very insular and more serious than the early Flash days.
- **How do you feel about Flash having gone away from browsers? Do you miss it? What do you miss the most about it?**
- **If you could do it all again, would you?**
 - Yeah of course, I think I was definitely one of the lucky ones, I had almost a decade of stable, fun and free development.
- **What have you been up to since Flash left the public consciousness?**
 - I now work for SEGA Hardlight studios in the UK as a Systems designer, but I still work on my own hobby projects. I recently did a Kickstarter for IndestructoTank! On Gameboy and it did much better than expected! I'm also actively developing my Flash wrapper for Steam and Mobile releases, and a friend of mine is about to launch a game using it you can find it at aquaboygame.com. Beyond that I'd like to work with Armor some more and potentially make use of some of my old IPs that they own. Oh, and as mentioned before, I just built the Last Stand Legacy collection for them, which was a great learning experience,

and that did very well, so I think it's likely they'll want more in future!

- **What do you think of efforts like AwayFL and Ruffle? Do you think they might recapture the magic of Flash in the browser if ever completed?**
 - **I don't think there's the numbers involved any more, and it's a different world we live in on the internet. Most entertainment is video based again, which is a shame really for the new generation - but then again the indie game scene is now massive, so it's not like they're short of options!**
- **Speaking of recapturing the magic, how do you feel about HTML5 games today?**
 - **I think html5 games today are almost at the point evangelists told us they were at when Flash was being phased out in 2013 :p Almost.**
- **How can we play your games now that Flash has been exorcised from most browsers?**
 - **Right this moment you can go to aquaboygame.com and wishlist the game on Steam if you're feeling generous! Other than that Flashpoint is a great place to play!**
- **Are you still using Flash for anything in particular today?**
 - **I've used Flash more in the last 6 months than I had in the last 6 years. I'd forgotten both how amazing and how frustrating it is. It's getting harder with the software (and hardware) required to work comfortably in it getting harder to obtain and use.**
- **Anything else you want to say?**
 - **I think you've done more for this scene than industry than anyone else has individually in nearly a decade, and I'm very grateful. You're a super cool dude. Thanks for being patient!**