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Today's Game Industry: The Developer's

Since its infancy, nearly a quarter-century past, the electronic entertainment industry has grown by leaps and bounds. Blossoming from 1980s children's video games to today's professional online tournaments and sophisticated military simulation tools, this fast-paced realm of evolving media has exploded into a multi-billion dollar industry. In 2001, the U.S. electronic entertainment industry had its most successful year. The software side of the industry alone hit \$6 billion in sales, up from \$5.4 billion in 2000. As a benchmark, the U.S. box office receipts for Hollywood movies in 2001 amounted to \$8.4 billion.

Once upon a time, though, the leaders of this industry were people who worked in garages for next to nothing. They made games because they wanted to build something that entertained themselves and their friends, and because they loved gaming. They were the market, and phrases like "publicly traded" had very little meaning to the game industry then. It was definitely a much simpler time in the early 90's, and starting a new game company was easy. If you had a game that was anywhere near commercial standards (which were very low at the time), all you had to do was send your game to every major publisher and the chances of getting your game published were staggeringly good. Publishers were always looking for new products to push...

Today, the chance of a newcomer getting a publishing deal with a completed game in their hands is already pretty slim, but actually making a game worth publishing is probably a more difficult task. Production costs for today's titles are well beyond \$1 million, sometimes three times that. The industry has grown up, and is beginning to be dominated by giant corporations. Just recently it's become obvious that the industry is going to be going through major consolidation, leaving small independent developers that may have had previous successes to go out of business. With all this going on, it will be next to impossible for new developers to enter the market.

As the consolidation continues, surviving independent developers will constantly face shutting down without a continuous publisher working with them. Those that are sucked up by large publishers or larger companies will usually lose their freedom to develop what they want and how they want develop it. There's a large list why independent developers choose to stay independent, but most will have to give that up to stay in business.

-by [Jeff Lindsay](#), game developer, staff writer for Digital Times® and co-founder of Progridium Software.

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The 1930's Mafioso underworld is a little-visited genre that has definitely been paid its due respect - and then some - by this new title. There have been a few strategy games in the past covering it, but Mafia, an action/adventure game, hits the spot.

First and foremost, I'd like to bring forth the biggest feeling that the game hits you with overall: the immersion. Remember how GTA3 (yes, here comes the inevitable GTA3 comparison) made you feel like you were in a movie, among the panning cut scenes and the moody piano accompanying the intro? Well, mafia does this ten times over - and it [\[scroll down\]](#)

Today's Game Industry: The Developer's Dilemma

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It's a given that a new development company will need a substantial amount of money to get started, just to develop their first title. With no track record, there's no way any publisher will want to invest in the company or fund the project. New companies will be on their own and will have to fight an uphill battle until they've had a number of successes. One doesn't do it in this industry; most companies will be unable to earn back the costs of their first title from its sales.

While it seems near impossible for a new company to make it in this still maturing industry, it can be done. It takes a passion for game development and a dedicated team of talented people to pull it off, on top of a real sense of business and the industry. There won't be many, and those that make it will have fought through very tough times. These companies and the people that make them up are the ones that will remind the industry where it came from and how it came to be...

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extends much farther than the great cutscenes and beautifully done intro. The whole gameplay itself lends to the intricate storyline and segues smoothly into the cutscenes.

Throughout the course of a game, you freely traverse a complete fictitious city - Lost Heaven. The amazing detail that spans it is stunning - from the shiny beautiful curves of the many different cars, to the varying sounds your footsteps (and bullets) make when impacting different materials, to the piled-up junk all over the abandoned jailhouse.

If you're looking for a cliché-filled world where everyone has an excruciatingly-heavy Italian accent and uses heaps of mobster lingo, fuggedabawdit. The characters (aside from being intricately woven into the storyline) are tastefully done and each contribute their own elements to the tapestry of the game.

There are only a few elements that snap me out of Lost Heaven back into my computer chair - most notably problems with aiming, especially when the line of fire and the camera's line of sight form an angle significantly higher than 0.

Of course, this manages to detract very little from this otherwise enjoyable game. While you're in a wild car chase firing freely out of the car window at your adversary, or casually making your way down the sidewalk rubbing shoulders with the local cop walking his beat with your weapons in your coat, you will always be able to find yet another way to lose yourself into this game's rich world.

-By Staff Writer and 3D Modeler,
Vess Velikov