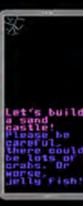8-bit graphics
Interview: Dave Haynie

Amiga 68k on Raspberry Pi 400
GameDev Stories: Outrage, Boss Machine
Soul Force, Magica, Wiz: Quest for the Magic Lantern
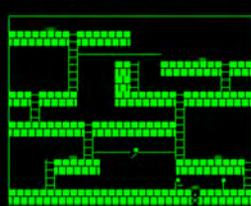
Outrage

■ author: Komek / translation: Anka

You can't cheat your feelings, you can't get rid of nostalgia, and deep down you're still an absent-minded youngster. Don't believe it? You're about to find out...

REVIEW

D o you remember how it felt to hold the joystick in your hand during missions of Hawkeye, Greystorm, Rubicon and smashing bizarre creatures and robots into bits? Well then, imagine this: you've got a chance to feel exactly like you did back in the day. Outrage is a time machine that will flood you with a positive wave of feelings from the past. The main reason being the origins of Outrage that date back to 1990. Holy crap, that's 30 years ago!? Yep, it's true. The exact story of the game's creation is described by members of the Cosmos Design group on the website www.outragegame.com. I must admit that this story brought a tear to my eye, due to the long and bumpy road to the goal, and at the same time the fulfilment of dreams.

The protagonist is a certain soldier, a survivor of a great and bloody battle. Unfortunately, the enemy attack was so strong that all his friends died when their base was attacked and completely destroyed. Feeling great pain and anger in his heart, he sets out to take his revenge without a second thought, so that justice may be served and his friends avenged.

We start the game with a basic gun, previously used to train new recruits, because it's the only remaining one with enough supply of ammo. At the starting point, advanced guns as well as bombs are available in very

limited quantity. But don't worry, during the game it's possible to purchase more of the better weapons and bombs, as well as replenish energy, and even buy extra lives. We can do this by using special shops, shown as small platforms marked with arrows. Obviously, nothing is for free, so to make purchases you need gold coins. You can earn them during the game by destroying as many enemies as possible in the form of various bizarre creatures. Bigger amounts of cash can be earned by defeating the big boss, located at the end of each level, with 5 levels in total. During the game you will often have to jump on small platforms over burning magma or chasms, which can prove to be tricky at first. The game is not easy, but as we know, practice makes perfect.

I really like the variety of multi-coloured pixelated scenery and all the objects are impressive. Similarly, bosses – they have a touch of horror, mystery. In general, the action of the game is very fluid, which makes everything feel natural. When it comes to matching the soundtrack to the game's action, it's also a great success. The music blends very well with the sound effects and pumps you up for battle. However, the most important and beautiful impression was that I could fully feel the nostalgia, the love for gaming from the second half of the 80s and the first half of the 90s. I am very happy that this game has finally seen the light of day.

Outrage is a story of love, regret, and anger – feelings that reside in each of us and we deal with on a daily basis. So let your emotions loose! ■
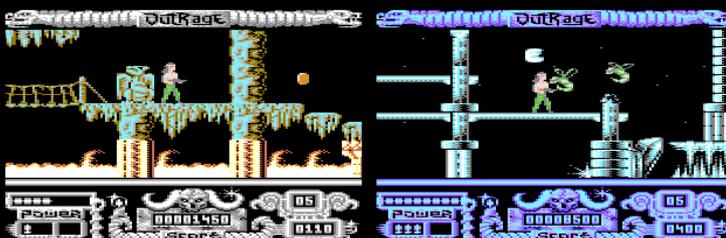
OUTRAGE

Developer: **Protovision/Psytronik**
Year: **2020**
Platform: **C64**

Return to the late eighties in style

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COMMODORE

GameDev Story: Outrage
Bernd Buchegger

author: Logiker

INTERVIEW

Never give up on your dreams. No matter how big the obstacles seem, there may still be a solution. This is the story of Bernhard Buchegger, who made his dreams come true. He fought for 30 years to get his game Outrage released. In the end he was rewarded not only with the release but also with awards. But read for yourself.

Hi Bernd! Thank you for the opportunity of this interview. After 30 years your "little baby" Outrage came into being. But let us start at the very beginning. How did you get in touch with computers, especially with the C64?

It dates back to the 1980s during the rise of the first home computers. My attention as a young boy was caught by an advertisement for a brand-new home computer magazine that I started to buy and read. I was soon fascinated by the new possibilities and the wish for my own computer rose quickly. That strong desire was first fulfilled by myself when I saw an affordable Sinclair ZX81 at a local electronics store and I bought it from my own pocket money. My family co-funded a small thermo printer and that way I started to experiment with my first basic programs during Christmas holidays. The lifespan of this little machine with its plastic keyboard was fairly short – I think I killed it through the thermo printer. My parents showed mercy and ended my misery with a Commodore VC20. I soon realised that the capabilities of this machine are really limited after trying to create a Karate game in BASIC (no joke!). Furthermore, some friends of mine already possessed a Commodore 64 with all these wonderful games and other fascinating stuff. My confirmation finally brought the ultimate upgrade with a Commodore 128 that included the floppy drive. After some CP/M and BASIC V7 tryouts I finally started with assembler coding. Soon the "go64" command was

the first to be executed when switching on my 128er and armed with an Ultimate Cartridge I finally had a decent setup for my coder career.

Small side quest: What is the best computer in your mind and why is it the C64?

Haha, what a "neutral" question! Well in terms of emotion it is without any doubt the good old breadbin. These were such exciting times back in the day where having a computer in your home was the exception and not the rule. Spending the whole weekend in front of the machine was a privilege for me and not work. Each new piece of assembler code or pixel art on the C64 was a personal milestone. All these activities created wonderful memories that are tightly bound to the C64. And Outrage brought back all these memories and still makes me smile whenever it pops up in my daily routines.

Did you mean natural or neutral question? I think both fit. Anyway, how did you get into the scene back in the day and how did you perceive it?

My first scene contact was established in an arcade hall in Graz where I watched a guy playing the famous space shooter "R-Type". The guy was playing incredibly well and I noticed that he entered "TSK" into the high-score list. I remembered that that acronym stands for the Austrian cracker group "The Softkiller Crew" and asked the guy. I turned out that he indeed was The Soft Killer of TSK and our talk resulted in a follow-up purchase of a few disks with actual stuff. During our next contact he informed me that a copy-party has going to happen during the weekend. Of course, I showed up at the party venue with a bunch of empty floppies in my bag. Soon I was lucky to find someone willing to share his material with me and this first C64 scene encounter ended up in friendship and the founding of my first group "Crystal".

Your nickname is Panther. Do you remember why you chose that one?

Sure, I remember that. I was always fascinated by the majestic appearance of this beautiful animal that unites grace and danger. I made this decision even before joining my first group. I found it always cool to have my personal nickname among all these other legendary names. I never changed this nick and kept it until today. The only thing that really drives me mad is the last German language reform when they changed the official notation to "Panter" – well I will keep the English version.

Can you tell us a bit more about Cosmos Designs, especially about its founding?

Cosmos Designs was the legal spin-off of the famous Austrian cracker group Cosmos where legends like Antitrack were active. The group was initially founded by Arny (Arnold Blüml) and McSprite (Hannes Sommer). Both guys originate from Carinthia (Editor's note: southern state of Austria). Hannes has grandparents in a village near my hometown and through my contacts network in Styria (Editor's note: another state in southern Austria) I got introduced to him. Since I already was an active coder and artist at that time and liked the idea of focusing on legal stuff like demos (and later games) I joined Cosmos Designs. Hannes, Arnold and me formed the core of Cosmos Designs that was later complemented by McLord (Karl Sommer, the brother of Hannes) as music composer. Also Hermes had touchpoints but never became part of the demo and games group – you can find the members from both groups on our website https://www.cosmos-c64.com.

This turned out to be one of my best personal decisions as their creativity and productivity was such an incredible inspiration to me. I likely would never have started a game project like Outrage without the assistance and motivation boost from these guys.

Which releases of Cosmos Design were the best ones in your mind?

Not an easy question as there have been so many.

Among the games section the "Fred's back" series was incredibly sophisticated from a coding and design point of view and raised the bar with every new release. By personal favourite is "Lions of the Universe" as I have always been a huge fan of horizontal space shooters like Armalyte. And Hannes was technically on par with this retro game legend.

Among all the demos we created it is even harder to select. "Cosmail" set a remarkable high standard with great contributions from all members within Cosmos Designs and new records like the 118 sprite multiplexer. This was a cooperative demo between Cosmos Designs and Black Mail. And last year Cosmail was voted Demo of the Year 1990 by scenehistory on Facebook.

So, let us focus on Outrage. What was the original plan for this game? How did you come up with idea? How long did it take to develop the game?

The "original plan" was to create my first C64 computer game and sell it to any C64 publisher. Hannes already demonstrated successfully how to achieve that. For that purpose, I chose a genre that was not already covered by other Cosmos Designs releases. And Hawkeye from Thalamus set a landmark in the field of run & gun games with its unforgettable mix of innovative gameplay, stunning graphics and incredible sound. It was soon clear to me that my own development will be established in that type of game. I pondered an innovative combination of game elements that I had never seen in another game to ensure that Outrage has its own twist and started with coding, graphics, animation

and level design. I was a young schoolboy at that time attending a boarding school and did all my work during my weekends at home. And this is not the most efficient strategy to finish a game. It kept me quite busy for 2 years until Boeder announced their talent competition in the 64er magazine. That was a big motivation boost as I now had a clear deadline and I wanted to hand in Outrage. Therefore, I intensified my efforts to finish it in time.

As most people might know, the game didn't get released as originally planned. Information about this can be found on your great homepage www.outragegame.com which is very informative. What happened?

For those who have not read the story: Outrage was elected into the top 3 of the competition and the winners were officially announced in the 64er magazine. What an incredible success for my first game development! But things turned out totally different. Boeder waited several months before they finally contacted me. But not for negotiating the terms for publishing the game that was promised to the winners but for informing me that Boeder cancelled all its sales activities for the C64. That was a real slap into my face! Boeder offered to choose something from their catalogue as a compensa-

tion. Which I did – I send a reply with a complete list that included every single product within their catalogue. Of course, I never got all that stuff but that was worth it! I later tried to sell Outrage to CP Verlag but it was too late. The C64 market already was on its decline and overtaken by the new 16 bit machines like the Amiga or Atari ST.

In 2005 and 2010 you made two attempts to finally release Outrage. What was the main reason that it did not work out?

Mainly due to a lack of resources from the involved parties. The first attempt was undertaken by the guys from Protovision in Germany. Milo Mundt contacted me via IRC after he saw the information on the Cosmos Design homepage that the game has never been published. He offered to finalise and release it under the Protovision label. I signed a contract that granted Protovision 2 years of exclusivity until a possible release. I kept the full copyright on Outrage and that way secured the possibility to forward to someone else in case Protovision would not succeed. After a lot of waiting with all sorts of excuses we got in contact with Psytronik via David Simmons from Australia in 2010. They also offered to finish Outrage and Steve Day contributed a fantastic new title pic. But the unfortunate story continued – changes in the team, no availabilities, no significant progress and lots of friendly emails but without results.

Finally, in 2018 the circumstances improved significantly. What were the main reasons for that and who were the key players?

I was very close to changing the publishing partner again after we got another interest indication from Italy. But then Protovision and Psytronik started to cooperate on retro game projects and David finally managed to get the engines started. New people got involved like Sidney Arbouw and Tomas Matys and the first bug fix releases started to drop in. Arnold and I began to document the whole story of Cosmos Designs and Outrage. This became an integral part of the 28 page game manual. Lobo Spitoufs delivered these incredible hand-drawn graphics for the manual and the box cover, and the original in-game tunes from Karl got complemented with brand-new SFX and level tunes from Roy Widding. David Simmons from Psytronik and Jakob Chen-Voos from Protovision did a fantastic job to coordinate the whole team. Overall, a lot of gifted guys with a shared deep love for the Commodore 64 got involved in the making of Outrage to make the magic finally happen.

How did you feel when the game finally got into being and you could hold the package in your hand?

Oh boy, that was almost surreal to see how the final puzzle pieces all came together. Outrage grew so much bigger with all the improvements and additions that were contributed by the team. Arnold was a huge support to me during all this time and always helped to keep the communication going and the dream alive. Alone, I might have given up hope a long time ago. I remember well the day when I finally received a parcel from Jakob who sent 3 Outrage collector's edition boxes

for me, Arnold and Hannes. This was right in time before Christmas, but I decided to delay the unboxing as I wanted to fully celebrate this moment and dedicate my whole attention to it. I waited a few more days – after so many years that really did not make a big difference anymore – and spent a very special evening at my office fully dedicated to opening the collector's box and finally holding the dream of my youth in my hands. This is hard to put in words – imagine something between tears of happiness and a very broad smile from one ear to the other. 30 years – what an incredible journey! I filmed the unboxing and made a video for the team – my way of saying thank you to all these wonderful people I never met in person.

Are you planning any new projects on the C64 now or in future?

No, I do not have any additional hidden projects in my drawer. But Hannes still has some unfinished business with a few promising titles like "Born in Space" You can find the preview video at our Cosmos Designs channel on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tANn9X0iN_g . So maybe with a little help from our friends...

Finally, let us conclude this interview with something fun. A word rap! Just tell us in short, what comes into your mind, when you hear the following words.

Retro... Vintage

Analog... Digital

Politics... Not my business

Internet... Kickstarted the digital revolution

Burger... McBuchi

Fun... Friends

Breadbin... C64

Holiday... Beach

Sense of life... 42! seriously: my kids – my biggest game changer ever

Favourite food... Self-made pizza & burger & BBQ

Thank you very much for this insight into your Dev Story! ∎

Photo credit: Bernd Buchegger

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Further reading

Outrage: https://www.outragegame.com
Cosmos Designs: https://www.cosmos-c64.com
Cosmos Designs YouTube channel: CosmosC64