

BYTE

#19 Jun '19



**VOID
BASTARDS**

PATREON | BYTE MAGAZINE



BATTLE OF THE ARCADES

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE!

JUNE 9-10 CONTACT YOUR LOCAL TO GET INVOLVED

DONKEY KONG
FROGGER
GALAGA
STREET FIGHTER 2:
THE WORLD WARRIOR

GYRUSS
PAC-MAN
DOUBLE DRAGON
RAIDEN 2
BURGER TIME

BUBBLE BOBBLE
TAPPER
DIG DUG
MOON PATROL
BOMB JACK

EVERYONE COMPETES
8 PLAYERS PER ARCADE
WILL BE CHOSEN



THE AUSTRALIAN GAMES INDUSTRY: THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

Leading up to last month's federal election, Labor and the Greens each pledged \$25 million and \$100 million respectively towards establishing a new Interactive Games Fund if they were successfully elected.

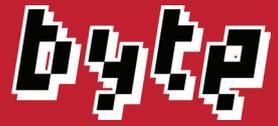
After the previous government fund was shut down in 2014 (has it really been five years already?!) this would have been very welcome news to the local industry. It's for this reason that the election result was a kick in the pants to Aussie game devs around the country. Thankfully it's not all bad news.

The Interactive Games & Entertainment Association (IGEA) released the below infographic that puts into perspective where Australia stands in relation to video game spending.

Think about that big number down there for a second. Four BILLION dollars. That's how much Disney paid for Star Wars in 2012. It is a massive market to tap into and the potential for game makers is huge.

For now the little Aussie battlers will continue to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. It's a good thing we've always loved an underdog story. With assistance from state governments and the help of creative arts programs it's still a possibility. They just might have to take the scenic route to get there.

In more recent years Australian creators have achieved success through pure creativity and passion. Games such as Hollow Knight, Hand of Fate, and Framed are now household names around the world. Imagine what they could do if they had more funding and support.



Australian Video Game Industry Value

A N I N D U S T R Y S N A P S H O T 2 0 1 8

TOTAL INDUSTRY VALUE: **\$4.029 BILLION**

TRADITIONAL BOXED RETAIL TOTAL **\$1.179 BILLION** UP BY **0.2%**
NPD DATA*

DIGITAL SALES TOTAL **\$2.851 BILLION** UP BY **39%**
TELSYTE DIGITAL MARKET MONITOR**

CONSOLE ACCESSORIES **\$217.2 MILLION** UP **18.7%**

CONSOLE SOFTWARE **\$493.1 MILLION** DOWN **0.1%**

TOTAL HARDWARE **\$429.5 MILLION** DOWN **3%**

UP **71%**

TOTAL DIGITAL GAMES **\$1.519 BILLION**
(DOWNLOAD AND EXTRAS)

UP **11%**

TOTAL MOBILE REVENUE **\$1.118 BILLION**

UP **31%**

TOTAL SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE **\$214 MILLION**

2018 had a number of **RECORD BREAKING LAUNCHES** of games including: Red Dead Redemption 2, Call of Duty Black Ops 4, Marvel's Spider-Man, Far Cry 5 and God of War

TOTAL INDUSTRY GROWTH OF **25%**

2018 DIGITAL TRENDS
Digital sales were driven by Fortnite, the battle royale genre and a stronger digital software presence from Nintendo Switch.



IGEA commissioned research from:
*NPD (52 week comparison, 1 Jan - 30 December 2018 v 2 Jan - 31 December 2017)
**Telsyte - IGEA Digital Market Monitor, Q1 - Q4 2018



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GAMES & UPDATES



DEATH HALL

Be brave and enter the Death Hall, where a monstrous blob will be hot on your heels as you escape its abysmal lair.

That's the premise of this mobile platformer, combined with the kind of super tight controls you only get in revered titles such as Super Meat Boy.

Plenty of replayability with its unique scoring system.

Death Hall is available on the iOS App Store for \$4.49.



INSIGNIA

Yet another game being made by one person, Insignia is the baby of talented developer Adam Younis.

The picture above doesn't do this game justice because you really do need to see the spectacular pixel art animations for yourself.

This metroidvania has some serious slick combat sprites and character styles. You can watch the development process live at twitch.tv/adamcyounis.

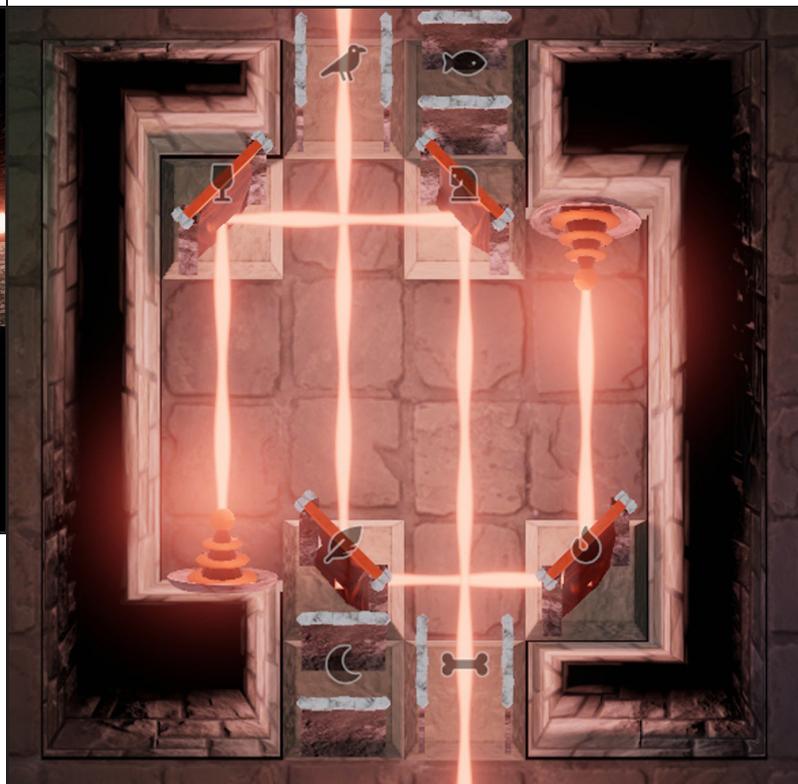


BRIDES OF VAMPIRA

Currently in development from solo-developer Taz Cebula, Brides of Vampira is a multiplayer action adventure title slated to release in VR as well as on PC and consoles.

Not a lot else is known about the game, but there have been some gorgeous screenshots released so far.

Head over to bridesofvampira.com for more info and to sign up for an upcoming demo.



CYBERMONK

While still in development, Cybermonk by FEED Games is one puzzle game to keep on your radar.

GAMES & UPDATES



VOID BASTARDS

The legends at Blue Manchu, based in Canberra and made up of former Bioshock and System Shock devs, have recently put out a gem called Void Bastards.

If you've heard rumblings in industry circles about this game, it's for a good reason. The writing is phenomenal, the sense of humour will actually have you chuckling, and perhaps best of all is they got the voiceover guy from Stanley Parable!

From the first ten minutes you'll know what you're in for and you won't want it any other way. The game doesn't so much hold your hand in the early stages like you would expect from most in-game tutorials. Instead it does a great job of clearly communicating things and supports you as you go.

It's evident that a lot of love and care went into the development of Void Bastards with little touches everywhere that just work so well. Even the loading animation is unique but you rarely get to see it due to the minimal load times.

The comic aesthetic all throughout the game is delivered beautifully and really pulls it all together nicely. Add in a splash of Doom-like sprite enemies walking the halls and you begin to get an understanding of the rich character Void Bastards has.

Two mechanics that deserve special praise are the character randomisation and the use of oxygen as a consumable. One makes sure every playthrough is different while the other adds the perfect amount of suspense. Together they can combine in really unusual ways that you need to see for yourself.

Comparisons to FTL or even Futurama are justified, especially when the first door you open reveals a room that should have Hermes singing the bureaucrat song in it. These similarities only enhance what is already a fantastic game that is well worth your time.

There are a few minor knocks against the game as of this article, such as being unable to use the D pad to navigate menus and the UI being a little small when playing the Xbox version from a couch across the room.

These are things that could be patched out in future updates, or I could stop being so pedantic. Either/or.

Interestingly Void Bastards is published by Humble Bundle, which adds this title to a list that includes A Hat In Time, Mothergunship, and Mineko's Night Market.

It's a smart move by Blue Manchu with Humble's customer base now exceeding 12 million people. I hope they enjoy Void Bastards as much as I have.

Out now on the Humble Store, Steam, and Xbox One.
Also included as a part of Xbox Game Pass.

UPCOMING EVENTS

QLD - XP ESPORTS NBA BRISBANE OPEN

JUNE 8

The inaugural NBA 2K19 Brisbane Open is here! Come and play in the biggest NBA 2K19 Championship to hit Brisbane with a grand prize pool of \$500*. This inaugural tournament will be open to all standards and be professionally run by our XP esports Queensland team. Make sure to sign up fast via our pre-registration link or send the XP Esports team a message if you wish to know more.

VIC - MELBOURNE OZ COMIC CON

JUNE 8-9

If you watch Arrow, Lucifer, Supernatural, Battlestar Galatica, The 100, or Shadowhunters, then boy do I have the event for you! Also including numerous fighting game tournaments hosted by CouchWarriors, there will be plenty to do all weekend!

AUS - BATTLE OF THE ARCADES

JUNE 9-10

Pincadia (QLD), 1UP Arcade Australia (QLD), 1989 Arcade Bar (NSW), GameRoom Essentials (SA) and Netherworld (QLD) will each call upon their greatest intergalactic arcade warriors to compete in a battle for the ages across original arcade games selected via the Australian keepers of the cabinets.

NSW - GIRL GAMER SYDNEY FESTIVAL

JUNE 9-10

The GIRLGAMER Sydney Festival as part of VIVID at Chatswood Sydney is an exciting and unique event celebrating the achievements of women in gaming, esports and industry. The live tournament will see players battle it out on stage, where they will compete in Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Blizzard's Overwatch and Super Smash Bros.

VIC - COUCHWARRIORS JUNE RANKING BATTLE

JUNE 15

Tournaments, casual games, tips and training - CouchWarriors Ranking Battles are a day long fighters festival. Play in the BAM Path To EVO! Season 2 begins.. details to be announced.

SA - ADELAIDE DEVELOPER TALKS

JUNE 19

The June's session of the Adelaide Game Developer Talks is almost upon us. This time we will run on Wednesday the 19th. We'll open the doors t 5:30 with talks starting at 6pm.

Venue: Game Plus Adelaide
Time: Doors 5:30pm, talks 6pm
Cost: Still free!

NSW - SYDNEY SUPANOVA

JUNE 21-23

Stephen Amell and Elijah Wood headline a list of guests that also includes Jeannie, Agent 99, Captain Pike, and the voices of Yugi, Kaiba, Eren Yeager, Goku, Vegeta and more.

WA - PERTH SUPANOVA

JUNE 28-30

Stephen Amell and Elijah Wood headline a list of guests that also includes Jeannie, Agent 99, Captain Pike, and the voices of Yugi, Kaiba, Eren Yeager, Goku, Vegeta and more.

QLD - SUNNY SIDE UP FGC MAJOR

AUGUST 10-11

Couchwarriors QLD's first Fighting Game Major hosted in Brisbane, Queensland! Australia's best will compete for glory over two days in all your favourite FGC titles!

THE BATTLE OF THE HEMISPHERES

Last month Pincadia, the 80's themed Pinball and Arcade Bar nestled within sunny Brisbane, organised Gala-Gala - The Battle of the Hemispheres which spanned an entire weekend. It is the biggest Galaga event in Australia and plans to extend the reach to other arcades across the world next year.

The event brought six international players to Australia, with Dwayne Richard, Jordan Dorrington, Mike Thompson and John McAllister representing the Northern Hemisphere, and Andrew "Barra" Barrow from New Zealand to Captain for the South.

It began with qualifying rounds amongst the Southern recruits, followed by 16 qualifiers and the top 4 finalists battling it out against the Northern team.

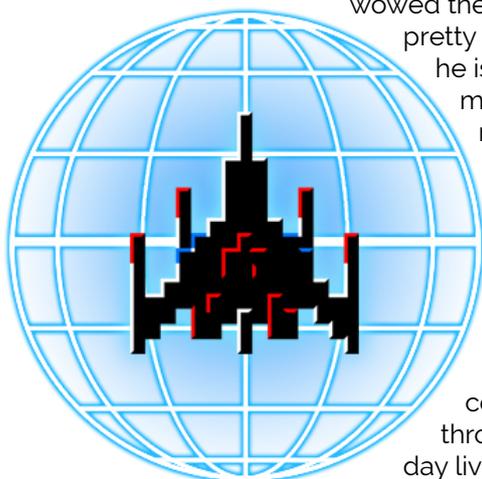
After a series of 1v1 matches, it all came down to the final between Andrew Barrow the Southern captain and Mike Thompson from the Northern team. In a display of that true ANZAC spirit, with a few tinnies under his belt, Barrow shunned his underdog status to bring home the trophy. On ya mate!



Another Northern traveler was Warren Davis, creator of the Q*Bert arcade game (more recently of Wreck-It Ralph and Pixels fame). Warren has decades of game development experience and shared the history of Q*Bert's design and gaming in the 80's during two intimate presentations over the weekend. Warren also

wowed the crowd with some pretty amazing tricks as he is an impressive magician and a member of Magic Castle in LA.

Pincadia welcomed previous Galaga world record holder Phil Day who expertly commented throughout the two day live stream (still



available at twitch.tv/pincadia). Phil is the co-founder of Galaga Forum and an avid journalist with significant influence in the Arcade community.

One of the more quirky elements of the weekend is that a number of the main participants decided to get commemorative tattoos together, which will make a fun little clip on social media from the footage captured over the weekend.

The event featured new artwork by Brisbane artist Penguin at Vertical Circus. By using a POV image of a pilot being captured in the signature alien tractor beam, the movie style event poster gave Galaga a modern feel despite being 38 years old.

Penguin has been a keen creator and animator for Pincadia over the last 6 months he has developed a full suite of images and artifacts, including the 3D pilot ship of the custom trophies, call to action animation, the puzzle event trading cards, and designs for the range of event souvenirs. These can be seen at pincadia.com/galagala.

Pincadia is grateful for all of the community support during Gala-Gala and has already begun to prepare for the same event next year. There's always more arcade fun to be had with plenty of upcoming events in the next few months. Follow the Pincadia Facebook page and website for updates at fb.com/pincadia and pincadia.com.

The poster features a vibrant, space-themed illustration. At the top, the text "Gala-Gala" is written in a stylized, green, outlined font. Below this, a large, glowing purple and blue tractor beam descends from the top, capturing a small alien ship. Several other alien ships are scattered around the beam. In the foreground, a hand wearing a white glove is shown holding a red joystick and a red button, positioned as if playing a game. The background is a dark space with stars and nebulae. At the bottom of the poster, the text "The battle of the hemispheres has only just begun!" is written in a bold, white font. Below this, the Pincadia logo is displayed, followed by the dates "MAY 25-26th, 2019" and the registration information "Register at pincadia.com/galagala". A small globe icon is also present in the bottom right corner.

TEN YEARS - BY PHIL DAY

November last year, at the Australian Kong Off II, I was asked what the classic arcade gaming (CAG) scene was like when I was competing for the Galaga world record in 2009. I answered, 'Lonely'.

2009

In 2009, I had no contacts with the US CAG community, and to my knowledge, there didn't seem to be a CAG community in Australia – certainly not a competitive one. Nor were there any full length Galaga games on Youtube. So when my Galaga cabinet (an upright Hankin 5) arrived at my door in late January 2009, I had no tactics as to how to take the World Record on Galaga TGTS (Twin Galaxies Tournament Settings).

Galaga TGTS requires the competitor to play Galaga on its most difficult setting - Rank D - with only five lives, and no bonus lives. The then 2,729,350 point world record score (2007) held by Andrew Laidlaw (USA) was an intimidating one. And there were only two other scores beneath his. Richard W Marsh at 1,557,580 points (2005), and David Nelson at 268,890 points (2006).

Within a couple of months I had passed Nelson's score. By June I passed Marsh with a score of 1.8 million. I then focused on regularly reaching 1.5 million points without losing a life. I felt this was necessary to beat Laidlaw's score. If I could get two 1.5 million points runs back to back, I'd have the world record, or if I performed three 1 million runs, or a comfortable mixture of either.

By August 2009, I scored 3.4 million points (a score that was rejected by TG due to the video camera's low pixel count). By October, I submitted a score of 3.2 million – a new world record – what was then an impressive score, and in some ways, it still is; currently ranked at no. 7 on the Galaga Forum leaderboard, it's also the only score in the top ten from last decade.

It's worth pointing out the score ranked at no. 5 is 6,169,130 points (Andrew Barrow, NZ), and no. 1 is 9,525,700 points (Armando Gonzalez, USA). As high as the 3 million points is for many players, it is merely a practice game for some. Who'd have thought?

2010-2017

In 2010, Laidlaw and I believed a Galaga TGTS game of 5 million would be a near perfect game, averaging 1 million points per life. We were not alone in believing a 5 million game to be the ultimate score.

The Twin Galaxies' Official Video Game & Pinball Book of

World Records (1998) states a score of 5 million points on Galaga TGTS is 'believed to not be possible' [pp. 864]. Laidlaw got very close with a score of 4.5 million (2011). His unprecedented score of 4.5 million, wouldn't be passed until 2017 by Andrew Barrow of New Zealand.

Barrow had been playing Galaga on and off since he was 12 years old (2000). At age 14, he scored 1,456,880 million on factory settings, he then hit a wall. More than a decade would pass before he started playing again. Barrow remembers:

"I hit 1.8 m in January 2015. Then 2.35m by March, then a very low 3 million in May. My big jump was in September - 4.18 million. But I sort of sat there for a while, I started playing far more seriously on all sorts of other titles, as I tend to do."

It wasn't until the night before the first Australian Kong Off (10th November 2017) that Barrow decided to have a game of Galaga. Barrow scored 5.4 million, this was to be the first time a Galaga TGTS score of 5 million was to be verified by Twin Galaxies.

Even though Barrow was the first to reach 5 million on Galaga TGTS, his score never received the attention it deserved. Played out on MAME, his 5.4 million score was published separately from the Galaga TGTS arcade leaderboard. Due to this, Laidlaw's 4.5 million world record was thought by many to be the highest score achieved on Galaga utilising only five lives.

It looked as though Laidlaw's 4.5 million had no active competitors. Then came Armando Gonzalez, who passed the elusive score with a new world record of 6,056,490 points. What once seemed so difficult for so long, became common place for an exclusive group of only five members. Andrew Barrow, Jordan Dorrington, Stephen Krogman, and Mike Thompson, would all join Gonzalez in the 6 million club.

6 Million Club

Gonzalez's score of 6 million seemed to pave the way for others. It's as if he somehow broke the spell. All of a sudden 4.5 million was no longer an obstacle, whatever extraordinary hold it had on Barrow, Dorrington, Krogman, and Thompson, was now gone. All four players would repeatedly pass 4.5 million. Even doing so on a single run.

All five members of the 6-million-point club have passed stage 255 on multiple occasions; and each have demonstrated runs of above 4 million without losing a single life – a clear and important indicator of the skills set the top five competitors have acquired.

A competitor on Galaga on Galaga TGTS will reach a score of 3million points at approximately stage 255. At which point Rank D Galaga commence scrolling through all 255 stages again, but not before introducing Stage 0 (a difficult stage due to its unconventional set up, speed, and attack).

A competitor who is capable of scoring 4 million points without losing a single life will have defeated all 255 stages and stage 0 and commence Stage 1. A Galaga competitor who can do that, has arguably nothing more to prove – they have beaten Galaga. But, because Galaga is capable of tracking the score into the tens of millions, competitors keep playing. Simply because Galaga Rank D has no finishing line, no ceiling, no actual kill screen. Arguably a problem for the top five players, if so, a problem for the track itself.

Marathon Curse

A great number of Galaga players are unable to reach 100,000 points – approximately 8 minutes. The current Galaga TGTS world record is 9.5 million points. Performed by Gonzalez, the world record score is the end result of over six hours of continuous game play. Of course, it is possible for the score to be beaten, and it may well be beaten by a 6 million club competitor who chooses to chase it. But like most classic arcade tracks that require hours, they become a test of something altogether different.

Typically, many hundreds of hours of practice are required for a competitor to hone their skills to make a reasonable attempt at the Galaga TGTS world record. And should their attempt at the world record fall short, it is potentially a dent in the competitor's confidence. Consequently, a second attempt, a third, and so on, may result in the competitor being psychologically fatigued, thus, they tap out.

But there will always be those who have the inclination and necessary qualities to topple high scores. But as they get higher and higher, they typically take hours and hours more of game play, better known as 'marathoning'.

Historically, Gonzalez is the highest performing Galaga player to date. In 2018 he broke the two longest standing Galaga world records. The twenty-nine-year unchallenged Galaga marathon world record; and the seven-year unchallenged Galaga TGTS world record. He is undoubtedly the greatest Galaga competitor at performing uninterrupted runs.

His most famed run occurred during his most recent Galaga TGTS world record result: 9,525,700 points. Gonzalez's run began at stage 1 and ran through to stage 255, past stage 0, and onward ending at 6.1 million points (approximately 4 hours).

2019

To my knowledge, there has never been such great Galaga players as the top five players playing in the year 2019. While such highly skilled Galaga competitors are active, I feel it would be a disappointment not to find new Galaga tracks that equals their true ability. Once constructed, a new arena will exist for high risk, fast paced, and elegant gameplay.

If these tracks aren't created, I sincerely believe competitive play on Galaga Marathon and Galaga TGTS, and many other classic arcade game tracks, will dwindle and as good as die. Of course, there will be those who disagree, possibly a great many will disagree. But before they do, I'd ask them to gauge the difference between 'testing' and 'evidence' before settling on what is the 'proof'.

The word proof is more synonymous with test than evidence. A pudding to be defined good or bad, can only be determined in the sampling of a slice. All other evidence that would 'prove' it is in fact pudding, is irrelevant.

My point being: There are a great many classic arcade gaming tracks, and many of them are unofficially grandfathered, or very close to being unofficially grandfathered. These are tracks are worthy of the utmost respect, but this doesn't mean that they are 'good' tracks – that is, they may not be the most suitable tracks to showcase the true ability of our highly skilled competitors, and therefore attracting the attention of spectators they deserve.

The 'lonely' classic arcade gaming environment I encountered in 2009 is long gone today, and I'd like it to remain that way.



Rank	Points	Percent	Player	Date Verified	Verification Method
1	17,684,050	100.00%	ARMANDO GONZALEZ	2018-10-31	TGSAP
2	15,999,990	90.48%	Stephen Krogman	1989-06-01	Referee
3	15,243,300	86.20%	Brian Bailey	1982-08-18	Referee

BEFORE YOU GO...

It's with a heavy heart that I announce this is officially Byte Magazine's final issue.

After 19 issues over the past two and a half years, I've made the decision to wrap things up at a time that felt right for myself and the magazine.

I want to take this chance to thank you, the reader. Your support throughout this journey has helped me more than you'll ever know.

Why?

This is something that I've wrestled with for a little while now and there are several factors that have played a key role. Running a project like this by yourself takes a lot of work and I couldn't be prouder of what has been accomplished.

I'm my own harshest critic and as a result I want to improve every iteration of anything I do. With a magazine, that's easy in the early stages when you're still finding your feet, tweaking layouts, and fine-tuning things to run smoothly.

Byte Magazine is by no means perfect, but as the kinks were worked out month after month, the process became more streamlined due to the systems that were put in place. That allowed me to focus more on content, but it also meant I no longer had one of my core measurements of success. There was no longer the glaringly obvious improvements between issues.

At this point I was relying on metrics as my main way to know if everything was still working, but when the numbers plateaued I found myself spinning my wheels without anything to grip onto.

There was always the vague lofty goal of somehow working full time on Byte Magazine, but seeing the recent news of Hyper Magazine and Game Informer Australia's closures really made me step back and take stock. If the biggest gaming mags in Australia, one of which was backed by a nationwide retail chain, couldn't make it then what chance does anyone else stand?

I believe there is still a place for print media within the Australian games industry, but I don't know what form it takes going forward.

Special Thanks

In these past two and a half years I have met countless people and made numerous friends along the way. I have so many people to thank who have helped me out during the life of Byte Magazine (formerly known as Brisbane Byte):

- Chris Ryder from Mail Boxes Etc in Brisbane was immensely helpful when he agreed to be the printing partner for the magazine. Great service and made everything run smoothly. I highly recommend MBE Brisbane for anything you need printed.
- David Zwierzchaczewski from Autodesk really stepped up when he came on board as the magazine's sponsor for the past 12 months.
- Ray from Zed Games who was gracious enough to allow me on as a regular guest on 4ZZZ. Jack's alright too.
- Ben from Netherworld, Nick from Free Space VR, Stephen from 1 Up Arcade, Tanya and John from Pincadia, and Babak from Pinball Haus AKA the five families of Brisbane gaming. Your support and advice has been instrumental to the magazine's success.
- Joel and Jordan at Trade Media for being a shoulder to lean on and giving the magazine a much needed boost in the early stages.
- Stephen Berg, programmer extraordinaire at Sponge Games, who has always had my back and was the very first person to pledge to the Patreon. I think it's safe to say he's Byte's #1 fan. Cheers bud!

Most of all I have to thank the game developers of Brisbane. Adric, Megan, Anthony, Morgan, Kim, Cheryl, everyone at sqhub, Truna who is the heart and soul of the community, and so many more. From day one you have all been so welcoming and easy to work with. You make the Brisbane gaming scene as great as it is.

For now I'm looking forward to E3 and then I'll be weighing up my options. My experience with Byte Magazine has taught me many lessons that I aim to take with me as I forge a career within the games industry. This isn't the last you've heard from me.

A sincere thank you,

Scott Beeby
hirescottbeeby@gmail.com

THANK YOU