BUBBLEGUM GALAXY

PROJECT SUMMARY

Bubblegum Galaxy is a cute building strategy game about rebuilding the galaxy tile by tile. Discover and design new planets, complete missions, explore your office and befriend your co-workers… all while trying to find out who deleted the galaxy!

Bubblegum Galaxy is the second game from Smarto Club, and began development in early 2022. While the project did not succeed in finding funding after a preliminary round of pitching, we are confident in our vision for the game and are currently improving the game's prototype before pitching again. If that fails though, we're still aiming to release a simple version!

INTENTIONS

Following the release of *Teacup*, Smarto Club's first commercial game, we originally tried to develop a similar exploration-focused narrative game. We pitched the project and received little to no interest from publishers and local art grants, so we decided to shelf it and begin prototyping a new game.

After that experience, we concluded that the smart thing would be to do a market study and identify interesting genres before beginning to brainstorm a game concept. During this study, we really liked "serene city builders" such as *Dorfromantik, ISLANDERS* and *Townscaper*, and believed they were an unsaturated genre with unexplored design potential.

Still, narrative is important to us as a studio, and we wanted the game to include it. And so, we decided to take a page from how *Hades* made the story an important part of an action roguelike, and use a similar structure to add a story to a building game: the game is divided between construction and office exploration gameplay, with characters in the office reacting to your actions during construction segments.

PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION

Like most indie developers, I wear many hats, but my main areas of focus are production, programming and business development.

As a producer, I handle project and budget planning, besides supervising the team's week-to-week tasks. As a programmer, I've programmed the majority of game systems, such as the construction gameplay. It's been much more challenging than the simple movement and exploration of Teacup, but I've enjoyed it! Finally, I handle most of the business related tasks such as pitching the game to publishers and applying to local art grants.

LESSONS LEARNED

We think *Bubblegum Galaxy* is a great concept, and this is reinforced by the interest many publishers have shown in the game. At the same time though, we might have bitten off more than we can chew, and believe that our failure to raise funds so far reflects that.

For example, the combination of planet construction gameplay and office narrative segments is one of the game's main selling points, but the absolutely different mechanics and art styles between these two modes makes it feel at times like we're working on two different games and don't have enough time to do either justice.

One thing we got right in *Teacup* was to focus on our strengths as a team — beautiful worlds and charming narratives. While they 're also important in *Bubblegum Galaxy,* interesting strategy design is equally essential; but, it's something we've been learning as we go, and is hindered by the fact we do not have a dedicated game designer on the team. The combination of factors like these led to a game that sounds great in a pitch, but feels undercooked when trying the build. The additional time spent working on the current version of the game has helped us work on our weaknesses and get closer to the level of quality we hope for the game, but we've learned for our next project to be more careful when scoping, especially if it's a project that requires us to work beyond our strengths as a team.