YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD *EGG* DOWN!

Philip and Andrew Oliver always said they would never do Dizzy again, but a fortuitous culmination of several events during the Easter of 2017 inspired the creation of a new game – *Wonderful Dizzy*. Philip tells the story…

The year started with a 30th Anniversary logo of Dizzy, produced by Piotr 'PIT' Gratkiewicz. This led to several magazine articles and the opening of the Dizzy Eggsibition at the National Videogame Arcade in Nottingham.

Following the successful 2015 release of the found-in-the-loft *Wonderland Dizzy* on NES, at the opening of the Museum event on 8 April 2017, we announced a second found-in-the-loft Dizzy game – *Mystery World Dizzy*.

A week later and completely out of the blue, Dmitri Ponomarjov contacted me via Facebook from Estonia to say he planned to release a new version of *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy* for the Spectrum 128K. He and some friends had recreated it from scratch over two years. 'It's been a really interesting experience to make a new Dizzy game in 2017,' he told me. 'I first saw Dizzy when I was nine years old, it was *Treasure Island Dizzy*.'

I thanked him politely thinking it would be another average Dizzy-fan game. But on Easter morning I read several positive articles about the new release and one contained a video link. We were blown away with the quality. It was

much better than the original in terms of graphics, use of colour attributes and the smoothness of the sprites. We got back to Dmitri, praised him on his team's work.

At the same time, Henrique Olifiers launched the ZX Spectrum Next Kickstarter campaign: a new machine, fully compatible with the original computer, and packed with improvements and expansions. It had a massive backing and flew

Dizzy, taking advantage of the ZX Spectrum Next's features, graphics modes and sound.

past its initial goal very quickly. Henrique is a friend of ours and we thought it would be nice to be involved in some way.

Andrew and I chatted about this at work (35 years working together and

we still have desks next to each other) and concluded that it would be cool if we designed a new Dizzy game for Dmitri and his team to make and launch on the Spectrum Next.

It probably wouldn't have come to anything were it not for a sleepless night wondering what such a Dizzy game should be. While thinking over possibilities, settings and puzzles, I suddenly had a eureka moment – what if we based it around the *Wizard of Oz*, with the Yolkfolk taking on all the different roles? I spoke to Andrew about this in the morning and he agreed: it made perfect sense. If we were ever to do a new Dizzy game, the stars were never going to be this well-aligned again.

Putting the team together

I put together a short summary of the concept in under an hour, sent it to Dmitri, Jarrad, and Piotr, asking if they'd like to help make this dream a reality and they all said yes. Andrew contacted Henrique, and he was excited at the prospect enough to offer free Next development kits to those working on the game.

The characters

Having decided on the *Wizard of Oz* theme it was time to work out exactly what that meant. In the original Dorothy was the protagonist, but this would have to be Dizzy. He would have to meet the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion. Obviously we had to feature the four witches: The Wicked Witch of West set on vengeance after Dizzy killed her sister, The Wicked Witch of the East by landing a hut on her, and the Good Witches of North and South. Of course, the story wouldn't be complete without the Wizard of Oz and the Munchkins.

We decided to cast Yolkfolk in the various roles: Dozy as the Scarecrow; Denzil as the Tin Woodman; Dylan as the Cowardly Lion; Daisy the Good Witch of the North, with Dora as the Good Witch of the South. Dizzy's nemesis has always been the evil wizard Zaks, but in the Wizard of Oz his enemy is the Wicked Witch of the West, so we based her appearance on Zaks. Oh, and Pogie, Dizzy's pet fluffle, could play the role of Toto.
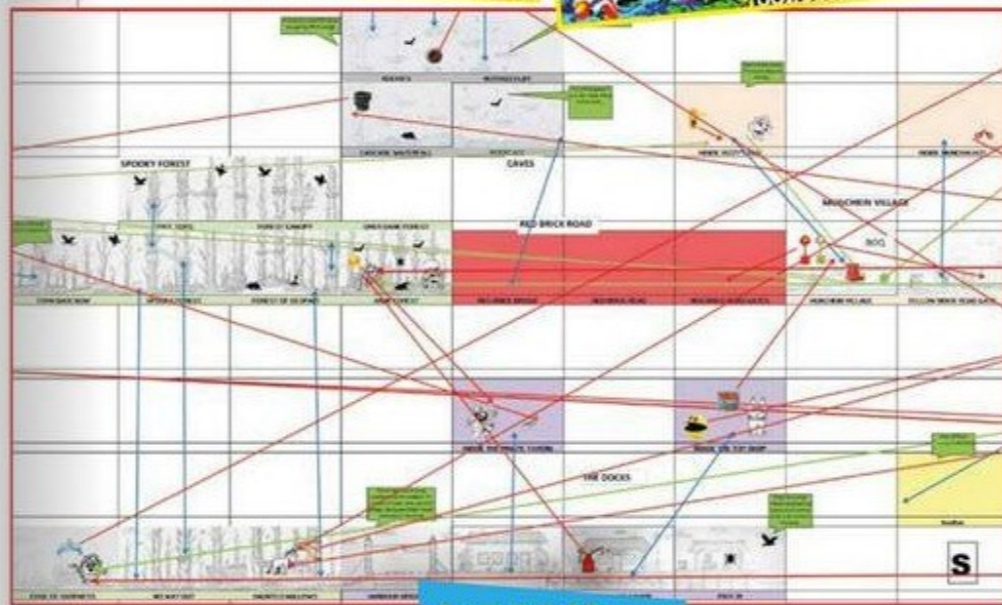
A snapshot of the Excel spreadsheet map for *Wonderful Dizzy*'s world.

Location, Location

Clearly the game has to start in the Munchkin Village, a safe place in which players can get a briefing of what challenges lie ahead of them.

There's the Emerald City, which is home to the Wizard of Oz and the castle of the Wicked Witch of the West. We also introduced homes for both of the good witches: The Crystal Palace for the Witch of the North and Ruby Chateau for the Witch of the South.

There's the Yellow Brick Road, the Red Brick Road, the Poppy Fields and the Haunted Woods of course. Also, expanding out the world, we've introduced a few new locations like the docks and the caves.

It really is quite amazing how well the *Wizard of Oz* story fits with the requirements of a Dizzy game!

Going into production

While we worked out the full design, we enlisted the passion and skills of a very talented group to make the game a reality. We roughed out the key areas on paper and then turned this into an *Excel* spreadsheet – one cell per location. Then we sketched a screen layout for each location, scanned them in and put them into the spreadsheet.

We thought up lots of puzzles and input small images into the Spreadsheet, overlaying them onto the correct locations. We did the same for the characters. Then added lots of arrows indicating where items needed

to be taken. Alongside this we created a Google doc which described all the characters, the puzzles, the key locations' features and all the dialogue. This we then shared with the production team.

A very international team

Based in Estonia, **Dmitri Ponomarjov** is responsible for most of the in-game graphics and also managing the production team. A Spectrum fan for 20 years, he feels it shaped his preferences in cultural and art aesthetics. One of those memorable games was *Dizzy – The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure*, which motivated him to learn English even before starting school. He says he was fascinated by the visuals of the first Dizzy game: 'When I saw the crystals on the loading screen, my

imagination was overwhelmed, and when I later saw the crystals in-game, that one small feature became one of the biggest cultural influences; I don't really know why.'

Evgeniy Barskiy lives in Novosibirsk, Siberia. He's responsible for the programming. His computer hobby began at the age of 12. He learned to program by trying to fix Spectrum games and eventually graduated from the Siberian University of Telecommunications and Information as a programmer.

Marco Antonio del Campo Gómez, based in Spain, created the loading screen, Poland's **Piotr Gratkiewicz** created concept sketches of the game's characters, opening and closing graphics and the logotype and poster. Meanwhile, British **Jarrod Bentley** is responsible for many of the in-game sprites.

Fellow Russian **Sergey Kosov** is creating the game's music, after receiving a great response for his music for Crystal Kingdom Dizzy, based on that for the Amiga version.

'We hope that Dizzy fans will be pleased to see a completely new and original Dizzy game in the classic 2D style of the originals'

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