Canadian Content in Video Games

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Vancouver, Canada
Introduction

Video Games in 2003: $746 CAD million

EA Canada's 1000 person studio in Burnaby:
Larger Canadian Companies

- EA Sports
- Ubisoft
- BioWare Corp
- Radical Entertainment
Canadian Titles
# Canadian Video Game Developers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>EA Canada</th>
<th>BioWare</th>
<th>Ubisoft Montréal</th>
<th>Radical Entertainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Burnaby &amp; Vancouver, BC</td>
<td>Edmonton, AB</td>
<td>Montréal, PQ</td>
<td>Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
<td>900 + 170</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Games</strong></td>
<td>NBA Live Def Jam Wrestling Need for Speed FIFA Soccer &amp; UEFA Euro SSX 3 &amp; Tricky MVP Baseball Sled Storm</td>
<td>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic Jade Empire Neverwinter Knights Baldur's Gate</td>
<td>Myst IV Prince of Persia 1 &amp; 2 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell &amp; Rainbow Six 3 Batman Tarzan</td>
<td>Simpson's Road Rage &amp; Simpson's Hit and Run Dark Summit Powerplay Hulk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Survey of Canadian Video Game Developers*
Hockey Games

Hockey Games on GameRankings.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Plat</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Reviews</th>
<th>Avg. Vote</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Main Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. NHL 99</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Electronic Arts</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. NHL 2002</td>
<td>PS2</td>
<td>Electronic Arts</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. NHL 2K3</td>
<td>XBOX</td>
<td>Sega</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. NHL 2001</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>EA Sports</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ESPN NHL Hockey</td>
<td>XBOX</td>
<td>Sega</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>85.6%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
French-Canadian Video Game Culture

Sony's Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain:
Government Regulation and Aid

From www.LeadingEdge.ca:

**TAX**

Q. Are there any tax rebates, credits or cash refunds for R&D costs?

A. Canada offers extremely attractive research and development tax credits

For example, the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) program:

- **35 cents on every $1** spent on qualifying expenditures, to a maximum of $2 million
- do not even need income to qualify for the SR&ED program because it is a cheque not a tax deduction!
## Canada at World Cyber Games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank by Gold</th>
<th>Nations</th>
<th>Counter-Strike</th>
<th>FIFA 2004</th>
<th>Need For Speed</th>
<th>Starcraft</th>
<th>UT2004</th>
<th>Warcraft 3</th>
<th>Halo</th>
<th>Project Gotham Racing2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Korea (South)</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>G S</td>
<td>G S</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>G B</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>G B</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
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Competitive Canadians

Canada's Guillaume Patry ("Grrrr_ca"):
Canadian Game Development Market Map (Detail)
Deposit Coin?

• Financial future uncertain for even large game companies such as EA and Ubisoft
  • Financial funding such as SR&ED, Telefilm New Media Fund and others needed for smaller innovative game companies
From LeadingEdge.ca:

When I hear entertainment executives discuss the need for "Canadian content," I smile and think about EA's FIFA Soccer franchise. The FIFA Soccer game series -- produced right here in BC -- has generated more than CAN$1.6 billion worldwide. In the growing cultural and economic phenomenon of videogames, Canadian content rules the world.

Don Mattrick, President
Worldwide Studios
Cultural Conclusion

Currently there is a strong argument that games made in Canada have little culturally distinct:

“Asked if made in Canada games had any distinctive traits, Canadian developers were usually ruefully nonplussed; a spaceship in a sci-fiction game might be decorated in the colours of the local hockey team; one the dozen or mercenary warriors in a shooter is described as French-Canadian and grunts his few lines in a Quebecois accent; one developer came up with a game involving 'a Mountie and a grizzly bear' but 'it isn't likely to get off the page.'”

- The Political Economy of Canada's Video and Computer Game Industry
New Possibilities for Canadian Games

Pax Warrior: Educational

Swordfish: GPS Location-Based

Code Zebra: Academic
• Games are now worthy of academic research
• Games being made in Universities and other institutions could be more culturally reflective due to context
Future Research

• Much more Canadian specific video game research is needed due to being combined with North American statistics, however it is often difficult as the information collected is often of a confidential nature.

• Easier to detect narrative aspects in culture, but is there a certain Canadian ludology?
  - National Game Study by NRC & New Media BC
  - The Canadian Video and Computer Game Industry by Nick Dyer-Witheford funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Links

BioWare Corporation: www.BioWare.com
Electronic Arts Canada: www.EACanada.com
Radical Entertainment: www.Radical.ca
Ubisoft Canada: www.Ubisoft.ca
Contact

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