

# BTW



*Baka-Trio Webzine*

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## The Future of EVN Communities

**Special Feature**  
**The Great OELVN is DEAD**

### FEATURES

- The Moe Industry: Why is it Ruining Everything?
- Competition vs Co-Operation

# The Road Ahead

**W**hat lies ahead for the English visual novel scene? The answer: a very rocky road ahead. The fate of the community that we EVN creators live in depends on how we deal with a few key issues in the future.

The first issue is commercialism. As discussed in the editorial in the very first issue of BTW, there were two dissenting points in the question "Is commercialism in EVN's a boon or a bane?" One point stated that commercialism turned the once quaint and harmonious scene into a dogged rat race for fame and fortune. Another point contested that statement, saying that it all boils down to one thing: people not putting their hearts into their works. Combining those two points into a coherent one, we get this: commercialism is a double-edged sword. Whether it can do good or harm depends on its wielder. Since visual novels expanded with the rising use of the Internet, we creators do our best to produce and promote our works, by hook or by crook. The Greater Internet F\*\*\*wad Theory (normal person + anonymity + audience = total f\*\*\*wad) is highly applicable to us. Unless we restrain ourselves from showing our worst in these virtual halls, our works will reflect our abuse of power and belligerent negativity.

The second issue is a lack of genuine unity. "If you don't do anything for the community, what use are you to me?" That question is a symptom of this. Due to discontent with the state of the current community, a group of creators is plan-

ning to form a splinter group which will take back the harmony that was lost in the current one in recent years. On the surface, the reason for this schism is creative differences; but deep down inside, the polarizing attitudes and behavior of the people are to blame. Ultimately, unless we creators try to change our negative personalities, the GIFT will still infect us and lead to more disunity in an already fractured community.

The third issue is the attitude of the higher-ups in the scene. There are passive leaders, and there are active leaders. Passive leaders tolerate whatever status quo there is in a certain structure and always bow down to whoever are the power-brokers; while active leaders have actual backbone to improve an already good condition and ameliorate something that will manifest badly. Technical and creative skills are moot here; it all boils down to leadership skills. Leaders should balance between having an iron fist and being considerate to other people's feelings. Jose Rizal said it best: "Like people, like government".

In the end, we EVN creators are also human. We all chart our destinies. The power of creation that we wield will lead us to either a smooth sailing or a violent crash and descent to oblivion.



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# Episode 7: Sandara Park no Yuutsu

*PROLOGUE: The inevitable has indeed happened: Hero had a disgusting (and forced) transfer to GMA. And that happened on the day after the Deal Or No Deal incident. The ABS-CBN management, who's still under the possession of the unholy trinity (that is, Kris, Cristy, and Alfie) were happy to learn of that incident. And so were the GMA execs who seem to be ready to welcome Hero into their fold. And the planned meeting among the people who fought Jobert Sucaldito? It never went through due to scheduling conflicts. Meanwhile, Henry has other plans, but let's not get into them for now.*

July 17, 2006. The aftermath of the Deal Or No Deal incident.

Sandara is alone in her house, thinking of many, many things.

"I've become a casualty to what they did to Hero. I know that we're no longer a love team, but why was he still defaced? Is it because his true colors were revealed to the public? Or is it because Joseph forced me to break up with Hero in the first place? It was painful... but it was necessary... That reminded me... when Hero and I fought together along with John, Heart, Hiroyuki, Akari, and their friends."

And then she basks in those moments. Those moments that seemed like yesterday in the past, but now... only figments of her imagination that are destined to fade away.

[Flashback mode: The following are events from "To Heart: After Remembering the Memories".]

Hero: Thank God, you're back!

Sandara: Same goes for me.

Hero: I bet that you've heard of the bloodshed plaguing our country, right?

Sandara: Right. That's why I came back. To save this country that I regard as my second home.

Hero: You are not alone. I'm also fighting for that purpose. Let's fight together.

~~~

"Oooohhh... is it you again...?" Hero says while recovering from playing dead.

"Is it over...?" Sandara says while also recovering.

"Good thing I saved you and your butts from literal punishment," Multi says with a smile.

"Who are you, anyway?" Hero asks.

Multi introduces herself, and so does the love team.

"We plan to go to Basilan to save the Japanese hostages from the Abu Sayyaf," Sandara explains.

"To tell you the truth, I was one of them," Multi responds.

"WHAT?!" Hero and Sandara say surprisingly.

The maid robot then explains the events from her rescue by Super Sawsaw to her conversion.

"What an interesting story it is," Sandara commends.

~~~

"Multi? What's wrong with you?" Sandara ponders.

"Y... you... see, guys... I can't eat."

"You can't eat?!" Hero is awed. "Are you on a diet or something?"

"No. It's because I'm a robot."

"A ROBOT?!" Hero and Sandara exclaim.

~~~

Hiroyuki and Hero: Now it's game over for fake jihad!

Akari and Sandara: Once we take you persona non grata out...

Multi and the rest of the unified force: ...THE HEALING PROCESS OF THIS UGLY AND BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY WILL BEGIN!

Unleashing all of their Special Moves at the same time, the members of the unified force give Abu Sabaya and Commander Robot more than just a lethal beating.

Abu Sabaya and Commander Robot: Allahu ak--- Gwaaahhhhh!!!!

With that, not even a physical or spiritual trace of the two can be seen again.

~~~

Hero: I. Am. Sorry. I know that talk is cheap, but I channeled my forgiveness and lamentations from my heart to yours. Via this forgiving mouth of mine. So once again, I am sorry. To heart.

~~~

"You call for the rule of law and respect for authority, but so brazenly display your defiance and disrespect for the same things you claim to be fighting for. Sandara Park, Korean Mystic!"

"You say you are willing to die for us, that you do all these things for the country and the Filipino, but you are not even willing to do so for us. Hero Angeles, Technological Swordsman!"

~~~

Hiroyuki, Akari, Hero, Sandara: Sword of Equality! Unification Slash!

The Robot of Solidarity makes a gradual V-shaped slash, similar to the finishing blow that Voltes V makes to its enemies. Because of the slash, Melficio Victorialuna is about to explode.

Melficio Victorialuna: AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH! As long as disunity exists... I will be back! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang PilipinaAAAASSSS!

~~~

Hiroyuki and Akari: Hey, guys. You're all familiar with that term, right? So why can't you all take it to heart?

Hero and Sandara: The ship thing that the President, Mrs. Roces, and Mrs. Aquino mentioned earlier can be applied to bayanihan. Imagine... imagine a large ship containing almost 90 million people called MV Philippines... sailing towards a new frontier called "progress"...

John and Heart: In the long run, it is sustained and ever-expanding civil society activity, and the kind of civic habits and dispositions they instill in people, that will make "trapo" (traditional politics) practices history. Forget about trying to fix national character, shoving abstract ideologies into our brains, or enforcing a moral recovery.

[End flashback mode]

"I thought... everything will be OK... but everything's been reverted to before. The chaos that we banished... might come back, I fear..."

And she finally drowns herself in a flood of tears. Just then... her cellphone rings. She immediately answers.

"Hi. This is Joseph."

She immediately hangs up and returns to her drowning in those tears.

Some minutes have passed, and Sandara is still in the middle of her melancholy. But a figure of a woman suddenly appears.

"Your break-up with Hero Angeles is destined."

"Huh?" Sandara is surprised to see that familiar robed woman.

"I will now introduce myself. I am Leknaat, the overseer of destiny. You, Sandara Park, one of the former defenders of the Filipinos' unity..."

"How... did you know me?"

"I knew of your bravery, your pure heart that enabled you to fight for unity. Now, you will once again defend the unity that may be destroyed by the thing called the Trapo Rune."

"Looks like... I know what you're saying..."

"You will band not only with Hero, not only with Joseph Bitangcol, not only with your Japanese friends, but also other people who are called the Stars of Destiny."

"And how will I do that?"

"How will you do that... it rests in your hands. But God Almighty will not falter in guiding your every step towards forming the Stars. Have faith in Him, have confidence in yourself... and the road will open."

And then Leknaat disappears.

"I have decided... I will fight again! Lalaban ako ulit! Just you wait, Hero. For the sake of our previous love, we will band together again. And Joseph, sorry if I hanged you up. We'll all fight together."

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Stars Introduced So Far

None

**Super Network Wars Continues next volume**

# The Great OELVN is Dead

By Mikey

**A**nd this is an observation, rather than a wish. Because - to spare you from reading if you don't really want to - in its place is now the "Impressive OELVN." The "Great OELVN" is dead, not by boycott or revolution - it's been killed simply by the passing time, evolution, numbers and the enabler that is Ren'Py.

So flash back to around 2006. It was back then when the Lemmasoft Community was probably at its most cohesive, and it picked up a story about the battle for the "Great OELVN," started by Dan Kim, associated with the then-new Blade Engine, and people gathered in one of 4chan's discussion boards. The attribute "Great" meant a visual novel produced by Westerners at which the Japanese fans wouldn't laugh. In fact, this Magnum Opus should be so good, they would find respect for the Western makers and understand that they could produce works equivalent to theirs. The Lemmasoft Community also started discussing this, and it has become a long-running topic in the whole OELVN scene at that time.

The journalistic question is of course always the "why." So why did people want to create the "Great OELVN"? The simple answer: because there wasn't one. There was no OELVN which would match the popularity and respect of Tsukihime, or Narcissu, or other doujin works. In fact, no one really cared about Western OELVN developers. This, then, was supposed to be something that puts OELVNs on the map, the one VN that changed everything. And yes, it may not have been exactly what the "Great OELVN" meant, but in the end it came to symbolize just that, at the very least for the LSC but no doubt for other communities as well. Proving themselves to the Japanese was what it was all about.

A year went by, then another one, and then more time had passed. And while there are now several candidates aspiring to be the "Great OELVN," the whole landscape of OELVNs has changed in the meantime.

The Ren'Py engine eliminated the need for a programmer, and as a result has brought a large amount of artists who will also write their own story and a lot of other new people to the OELVN scene. There is now no real shortage of individuals skilled in any aspect of the trade, and there have been small success stories featuring OELVNs in the commercial sector as well. The Magnum Opus that was to be the "Great OELVN" is still missing, but after three years generations have changed in the scene, and there has been an increase in the number of developers as well. The Magnum Opus, while still desirable, is not a precondition for the scene to respect itself anymore.

It reminds me of how the situation was back in the old days with computers. Remember that? How fast is your processor? How much RAM do you have? Discussions like that. It was a geeky discussion, because it was quantifiable and lent itself very nicely as the basis for prestige. But with new computers and the fact that games took off to consoles, speed and performance isn't really an issue any more. Nowadays, you buy a computer off the shelf, and it's always good enough to get you on the internet and play videos, and that's what matters. Speed has now been "commoditized," and everyone has it. Basic computers are now mainstream, and the geeky discussions have shifted elsewhere.

It's the same thing that is starting to happen to the OELVN scene. There are now more good artists than ever, more cool interfaces, more good stories, and so it's becoming harder and harder to really sweep people off their feet. That Magnum Opus, if released in 2007, would not have been just a landmark, it would have been a legend. Every single developer would have tried to match or surpass it, because every aspect of it would have been amazing and better than anything else. It would be something like the iPhone.

Nowadays, if that Magnum Opus was released, people would not be blown away any more. It would still be impressive, but people have already seen good



writing, great graphics and cool effects elsewhere. The wow factor can only be that big now. But more importantly, the significance of that OELVN to the scene would not be as absolute as it would have been in the past. Here, think of the Nissan GT-R. It proved a lot and pushed many boundaries, but it's no Ford Model T. And why is that? Because the car as such is commonplace, and the majority of people use it as a utility rather than a lifestyle. Likewise, the barrier of entry to making a good OELVN is now so low, even an impressive work will not feel god-like. Like it would have felt a few years ago.

The side-effect of de-mystifying isn't insignificant, and it only takes a look at the visual novel translation scene to realize its effects. Think back to the time when commercial visual novels from Japan, officially translated by companies like JAST or Peach Princes were limited to really only a few titles. They were often put down, because the works which were popular in Japan were not being brought to the English-speaking audience. As a result, there was a mysterious allure that these works accumulated. People were convinced they are leagues "better" than all of the mindless porn that was available back then. Remember how people said if only a few of the best VNs from Japan were translated? How everything would change if people saw the mastery of the Japanese makers?

And yet, here we are, at a point when just about every relevant and popular VN from Japan is translated, and it doesn't seem like the revolution really happened. What did happen was that things leveled out. There is no such thing as the "ultimate" Japanese work anymore, nothing unattainable to look up to, nothing to be secretly jealous about that you can't play because it's not in English. And on the day that the one that you hailed as the ultimate one arrives, you play it, you like it, but at the same time, there is something sobering about the experience. You are on a date with your dream girl, and you realize that she is, first and foremost, a person like any other.

And so, when you play your masterpiece from Japan, all that atmosphere of something ultimate inevitably disappears. Not because the work is worse than you thought, but because dreams and expectations have the comfort of the endless possibility - which you now don't have anymore. It isn't anything wrong, but it is something that's specific to time, means and experience. The appeal of things is different when we cannot reach them, and different when you then can. This is

true for your platonic love, the music you like, your VN that is only in Japanese, but also for your OELVN that you couldn't do.

Once you get to a state where things are attainable, that dream appeal is gone and you change the way you approach them. And this is why that "Great OELVN" is dead. It was indeed something like a dream VN, the one which would be released to a crowd of people without means of even coming close to it, and

as a result, it would have influenced everything. Unlike the intangible appeal of the great untranslated Japanese VNs which were unattainable theoretically, the "Great OELVN" would be something which would be unattainable practically. Every single aspect of it would be more detailed and better than any single aspect of any existing OELVNs. Like a Top Trump card, except every value would be top, and so it would be unbeatable.

There was a time when it was possible for this to take place, and if successful, the dominance of such a work would last a few years until it would stop being the only one, but even so, because of its historical impact, it would remain in people's minds forever. Like Kanon. Like the iPhone. But none of this happened, the times are gone, and now the "Great OELVN," as a concept, is obsolete.

What has taken its torch is now the "Impressive OELVN," one that cherry-picks the best people in their fields and combines their work into something definitive - achingly pretty characters, melodious original music, hand-drawn backgrounds, touching story and a great attention to detail and polish in an interface that's a joy to work.

But unlike in the past, now it's abundantly clear that the talent is in fact there - in other words, the "Impressive OELVN" does not need to prove it. And it's also clear that an eventual work like that will not be the "iPhone of the scene," a single reference point for everyone who wants to do something in the field from that point on. The "Impressive OELVN" will prove that it's organizationally possible to pull off something like that. It won't be an insignificant achievement - Western developers and artists don't have the typical cultural and lifestyle background that Japanese ones have, so there will definitely be a certain pride within such a release.

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***Once you get to a state where things are attainable, that dream appeal is gone and you change the way you approach them. And this is why that "Great OELVN" is dead.***

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There is a window of opportunity for the "Impressive OELVN" now, but as the past has proven, that window won't be open forever. Every month, more and more games are released, up to the point that it is almost impossible to track them now. Once again, the credit will go to the Ren'Py engine for this. Its accessibility has grown the Lemmasoft Community to the point where it lost its family-like atmosphere, and it has attracted artists giving more value to their drawings, which in turn fueled further expansion and initiated more and more groups working in their own circles independently. Its license allowed developers to go commercial easily, and that pretty much sealed the deal. It's been five years since the first Ren'Py game, and no factor was more instrumental in bringing about the current situation than the wide adoption of Ren'Py and the quantity of works it allowed to create.

And that brings us to the battle that lies ahead.

If there won't be any "Impressive" visual novels soon, it's possible that floods of simpler, shorter, well-executed games which are great short works by themselves will actually change people's expectations - especially the newcomers to the scene - in such a way that even a major "Impressive" release will fail to make a significant impact because it's too long, moves too slow, or because of other features which would usually be considered strengths. That large "Impressive" game concept will not be understood by people who have only played mid-length and shorter ones. And as for those who wait for the "Impressive" experience... well, if you play games that are "shorter than you'd have liked but still nice" for a year, you are just passing the time while waiting for the "Impressive." Play such works for one more year, and you are frustrated because the "Impressive" savior is not arriving. Be exposed to them even longer... and you break. You settle. You stop hoping, you stop fighting. But after those feelings are gone, you start seeing things with different eyes and your values will start to change to adapt to the reality.

And the reality is that, when viewed against the philosophy of the "Great OELVN" or the "Impressive OELVN" which are many times bigger, the shorter works indeed feel like they are inferior. Like how a blog post feels against a well-researched newspaper article. You don't instantly like these short commentaries because you came here expecting a long fact-based read. You may even think the sole purpose of any blogger is to break through and get hired by a newspaper. But, and you may feel this yourself already, that is not true. The blog is a different kind of content delivery, and as you grow accustomed to the concept, you stop comparing and start enjoying its benefits. So much in fact, that you may one day make it your primary information source and the newspaper article will struggle for your attention. And it's the same thing that can happen to small OELVNs as well. Their quantity and ease of creation could make them the blogs of the scene.

To summarize: the times of the hero, the "Great OELVN," are definitely over. The time is now for the "Impressive OELVN." If a few of those appear soon, they will be remembered. Not like revolutions, but for their sense of occasion. They will be like a social evening. Not necessary, but every now and then (if not misused for bragging rights) really nice for the scene, because it treats itself and affirms what it can do. But the question is, when?

When will the first "Impressive OELVN" come out, and will it not, like its predecessor, miss its time? If in the past, the OELVN scene could have been ruled by the "Great" dictator, now it can be ruled by the "Impressive" aristocracy, the few ones that stand out. But if that doesn't happen soon, the people will not wait for them forever. Smaller independent communities will form, self-sufficient and not particularly interested in ruling over the scene or worshiping blue-blooded works because they are not needed to justify their existence.

And it can be that people may just give in to this trend at some point and go the way of the blog. They may start enjoying the games which are available at the moment for what they really are. Their shortness, their production values. And they will stop fighting the idea that they are merely some sort of prelude to more spectacular games that will come in the future. "This is nice just the way it is."

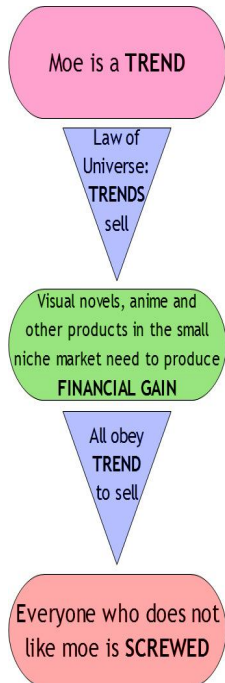
Which, actually, is what I always wanted for my own players to do as well.

# The Moe Industry: why is it ruining everything?

By Ghislain François René Magritte

**M**oe is *not* purely evil. In fact I often enjoy it, not to mention it gives comfort to otakus worldwide and billions of yen to Kyoto Animation... though some could argue the latter is not a good thing. There are good sides to moe, definitely, yeah. Okay. This article is not about them. The purpose of this article is mostly to make people realise that there is a dark side to moe and to provok... erm, just to make people realise that.

First of all comes a flowchart of what I call **The Moe Industry**, because flowcharts are obviously cool, nice and useful.



So first off, Moe is a **TREND**. A fad. This part is probably obvious to everyone except die-hard fans who consider it a holy revelation, but moe is phenomenon of fashion in the otaku market. It will probably become a turn-off to the general otaku public after several years. In 2020 there will be oldschool otakus who miss the 'ye olde good' ways of moe, just like how many miss the dating sims of the 90's today.

Secondly, there is a law in the financial universe that **TRENDS** have marketing prowess. Of course they do – a trend is a temporary tendency to appeal to the masses the product is marketed to, after all. So moe sells.

Because the makers in the professional otaku market, like visual novel or animation studios, need to produce **FINANCIAL GAIN** to be able to fund the creation of their products, the trend is obeyed. It has to be. We can see the result summed up in this picture:



In case you do not get the reference, Da Capo is a moe game franchise which has over 10 products in its line, many featuring the exact same characters. Sequels and remakes are a vital part of the industry, as you will notice when I explain the true essence of moe.

But as most makers have to either convert to the ways of moe or experience a financial death, people who are NOT into moe are essentially **SCREWED**. How this applies to fans of visual novels, manga, anime, etc. is quite obvious. Many former fans have turned their back to the mediums because all female characters have degraded into what are

called "moe blobs." However, the way in which a fad this strong affects the makers is even more sad. Moe is very unforgiving and predefined, which kills the maker's creativity as they must make products that fit the mould to succeed as a company.

You as a reader may be thinking by now: "But does this not apply to all fads? Is moe not just as dangerous as any other fad?"

There have been a million idealising descriptions for moe, such as "something that produces a warm feeling" or "an ideal that cannot be reached in real life," but in the end moe is **predictability**. A character is moe when it fits the general Japanese beta male's chauvinistic expectations of what a female character should be.

So the reason why moe is more destructive is that due to its nature, it is in fact an industry of predictability that makes products that fit into certain moulds over and over again. Childhood friend heroine, tsundere heroine, little sister heroine... you get the point. This results in what could be named the changing faces syndrome. Practically all moe characters are but archetypes with a new hair colour and a couple of cute habits or weaknesses slapped on top of them. Moe gives no room to new ideas or originality, and as said before, favours sequels as you know what you will get when you buy that Da Capo 25<sup>th</sup> or whatever. Even if there was, say, a space adventure fad, makers can still make their own original space adventures based on their own imagination and ideas, something moe does not allow. This is what makes it worse than your average market trend.

When it comes to moe, truly independent, strong women are completely out of question, as the man cannot use them at will. Since they have their own opinions... they might act in a way the player cannot predict. Moe characters are submissive, quiet women who dedicate themselves to the man without question. Fanboys will shout tsundere as I mention this, but the tsun-side is nothing but an excuse that makes the girl look less like the attractive bag of meat without its own will that most moe characters truly are. A moe girl can be successful financially, academically, socially, aesthetically or athletically, but she should never make the average player feel inferior compared to her (he is likely to be insecure already). As a result most moe girls are weak in a way or another.

I completely understand if you think the previous paragraph is feminist venting, and I would usually label those words as such myself. But we must remember that this is Japan we are talking about – compared to how developed and affluent it is otherwise, it is perhaps the most chauvinistic country in the world. Moe enforcing the already strong gender stereotypes is worth noting when we take this into account. Heck, I even love and prefer submissive women, but I am getting tired of *every single freaking girl* being weak and generally mundane in bishoujo visual novels.

Some say the true power of moe derives from the immersion that the change of moe creates, but I note that in the general public that is called a story. No sensible, immersive plot can take place without breaking moe, perfect predictability. As of late there have been some 'moe shows' which simply constitute of moe blobs doing, well... nothing meaningful, which of course results in no story being present. This just establishes the point all the more. Plot twists, changes and development are not moe, they are the exact opposite of it.

Moe is not perfection. Moe is not ideal. Moe is not warm and fuzzy to those creators whose companies slide into bankruptcy because they wanted to make a real story with original characters. Moe is a superficial way of convincing the customer nothing exciting or new will happen by providing them the comfort of stereotypical characters.

Moe is a fad that is ruining the industry in the eyes of many for a very good reason.

# COMPETITION VS. CO-OPERATION

## or How to Maximise Productivity & Welfare in Creative Environments

### By Hime

Once upon a time there was an animal called *homo sapiens*. Over the course of a long history that has very little to do with this article, the species won an evolutionary competition with the other human species and filled the Earth, making innovations no other animal had been able to achieve before. We had good selfishness and competed with the other species, but many believe that the focus on our individual selves and on the competition was a secondary factor. The foremost factor that led to our victory – no matter what opinions one may have about that victory – was our communal focus on *each other*. Co-operation has been very much necessary to get us where we are right now as a species. We simply could have not achieved this if we had not lived in larger and larger communities in which people helped each other with both selfish and altruistic motives stemming from the human nature.

But during the course of the history – particularly the part that has followed industrialisation – the values of our global society have been changing from communal and co-operative to individualistic and thus competitive. Regardless of whether this is considered positive or negative in general, few will disagree on the fact that it has its disadvantages. I think one of these faults lies in what individual-focused, community-blind competition does to creative efforts, a phenomenon many of us have witnessed in art communities, music communities, literature communities and, for the readers of this lovely webzine, especially visual novel communities. I will elaborate on the effects of overly competitive thinking on the case of visual novel production.

Since what happens at the moment of publishing a visual novel mostly has nothing to do with thinking and a lot to do with the release of huge amounts of dopamine and adrenaline, I will talk about the effects of competition before and after the release. So what does it do to the progress of completing a creative piece pre-release? The primary motivation self-focusant thinking gives a person is a motivation à la Daft Punk: harder, better, faster, stronger. The main goal is, crudely speaking, to show one's own superiority. This does have its bright side, as it usually leads to works that appeal to the general public and are high quality according to the norms of the community. But these works are few and after a certain level is reached, the production of individuals and, if the values are shared by most of the community, also of the entirety dies. Game over for the community in question

since the competition has been won by someone.

Another problem is that superiority can be shown otherwise, a dilemma that comes to play when we are talking about multimedia works like visual novels. For instance, what is the point in finishing your visual novel for artists who derive their inspiration from competition? They can just draw pretty pictures, show them to everyone, receive praise and there is their reward. Competition may not motivate people to do finished, complete works. Even a partial piece of work can do what these makers want, which is to prove that they can do their creative work better than everyone else, so why bother wasting their time completing the game? Many makers inspired by competitive values give up, or rather, declare their victory in a competition that may never have existed in the first place, at this point.

In comparison, what happens with those motivated by communal and co-operative values is a different story. Unlike those who just wish to show their superiority, they often see the process of making the game itself rewarding to themselves, which of course gives them more strength to actually finish the project, as does the co-operative spirit and helpful population of the community. These creators are giving their self, not their ego, to the community through their works, and they may feel that their works are contributions to both themselves and the community. Instead of sharing a product that follows the norms of the community, they are enhancing the welfare of the community by sharing their own, individual efforts that have been made with love and care. While the end results are a lot more distinct and often less "pop," they are far more original and very likely to inspire others. When the finished creative piece does not demotivate others like in the competitive model, you can probably see how this maximises productivity in the long run, even if it may take more time to reach a certain level of technical quality. These values also lead to better co-operation amongst creators, which can help people make visual novels in not only larger quantities, but also in better quality.

What happens after the initial completion of a project also differs between these models, though in this case, what matters more than the maker's idea is the shared ideals of the community. If competition is seen as favourable in the eyes of the audience, this will have its consequences on the response. Artists, writers, musicians and creators alike are seen, speaking in



extreme terms, as slaves of the audience, the demands of which they should respond to. In the eyes of a competition-focused community, the makers have been objectified as they are, metaphorically speaking, treated like factories of creative goods. The reception by such an audience is hardly motivating for the maker, who may even find it depressing, as very few are able to meet the predefined standards which people assume they are aiming for, often without any factual basis. The maker should follow the norms, ideals, quality preferences and conventions presented by the general public, resulting in both unoriginal end results and a bored, oppressed maker from whom the joy of the creative process has been taken away. The views of this kind of audience tend to be selfish, and its members often do not hesitate to react to the contributions given to it with rudeness if they fail to fit into their personal, whimsical fancies. There is no genuine will to give constructive critique or help to the creator. Ironically since this thinking stems from over-individualistic values, the maker's individuality seems to be completely disregarded. Even when it comes to after-release, this approach seems to do no good for the maker or the community.

On the other hand, community-focused audiences seem to mainly respond with gratitude since creative efforts are not seen as products trying to meet their standards but as contributions of the community's individuals. Honestly, who as a creator would not find that nice? These audiences understand that when you make a game, that game will be about *you*, not "me, me, me and my ideas and my standards and also, me." They do not have the childish expectation that the creator is trying to make what they want to see, which tends to happen in competitive circles. The more humane approach also leads to the fact that the audience is open to a far wider range of styles, qualities and themes instead of looking for that one and only predefined standard. It gives a lot more room to the maker's creativity, and creators are able to share a piece of themselves instead of impersonal entries to the superiority race that the competition school of thought is all about. The community is not only more likely to motivate the maker, but as each and every piece is evaluated individually and cared about, the possible criticism following a release is often constructive and will help the creator reach their vision better next time. People with a co-operative mindset have real interest in helping each other. Overall, the opinions that such an audience presents will make the maker feel that they want to make more visual novels. They are encouraging and helpful.

I shall end this article with a personal look at my own past as a creator in the midst of a community. I have found that I make visual novels for myself, and shortly after the release of my first game, this view was doubted by someone – I cannot even recall whom. Nonetheless, that person asked something along these lines: "If you are really making visual novels for yourself, why do you feel the need to publish them at all?" At the time I found this remark deeply obnoxious and wanted to ask in return why I would not. But in the end, it did make me think,

and I am in a debt of gratitude to whoever it was because of that. After the years since then, I have learnt that most of the time what is the most beneficial to the community around you is also the best for yourself and vice versa. It seems to me that we, as human individuals, are actually less separate than we often want to believe. Truly doing something for yourself is at its core doing it for others – not to boost one's ego, not to repair one's inexistant confidence, not to seek for other magical and cheap solutions to deep-rooted problems in oneself, but just to give them an opportunity to enjoy something that *you* put *your own* heart into. That is the true communal and co-operative spirit, which is how productivity and welfare of a community can be maximised in the long run, and which, in my most sentimental and humble opinion, is also what creative communities should be all about to begin with.

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**Visual Novel Creators Community**



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