

BY MOLLY MAHAN '09

Justin Bailey '98 is famous among video gamers, but not because he is working his dream job as a pitch evaluator and contract negotiator in the gaming industry. And not because he is at the forefront of industry expansion into other forms of media.

Justin Bailey is known because of a serendipitous decision he had nothing to do with: When the video game "Metroid" came out on the original Nintendo gaming system in 1986, there was a cheat code available online that allowed the main character to wear a pink jumpsuit rather than body armor, revealing the first female protagonist in video games. The code was 12 letters long: JUSTINBAILEY.

However even before Metroid, Bailey knew the video game industry was where he wanted to be. In fact, he started quite early — in fourth grade he programmed two games for the computer: One was a space adventure game where you protected earth from the invaders, and the other was a text-based game called "Snow Wars," which takes place on a playground and all the battle sequences are snowball fights.

By age 14, Bailey was working in the industry at Babbage's (the forerunner to GameStop), a shop that sold games for the computer. Although unusual for someone so young to be working, Bailey proved to the manager and other employees that he was a valuable asset and well versed in their product.

Because he understood that the video game industry is a business, not just fun and games, Bailey headed to TCU to study finance, particularly international finance because if he wanted to be successful in this field, he'd have to go outside of the U.S.

After college however, Bailey was derailed from the video game track and worked as a strategic consultant in television and film for Capgemini and Accenture. There his many clients included Disney, Microsoft, Film Roman, Overture Films, and Starz. For Starz in particular, he evaluated pitches and did strategic work for their OnDemand plans with Xbox LIVE and Disney.

Bailey says his return to video games came after the birth of his daughter.

"I saw the next generation coming and knew that it meant my time was up. If I wanted to do my dream job, I better push towards it now," he explains with bemusement. "I already believed that if I did what I loved then the money would follow. Now it was time to live up to that assumption."

Now he is living the dream: Until January, he was working for one of the oldest video game companies in the industry, NAMCO BANDAI Games America Inc., based in Santa Clara, Calif. Now he is with Perfect World, Ltd. doing much the same thing — heading business development and working to bringing Western gaming to China.

At NAMCO BANDAI, Bailey was a pitch evaluator and contract negotiator. He has worked with Samuel L. Jackson on

the "Afro Samurai" video game that was released in January of 2009 and Andy Serkis, of "Lord of the Rings" fame, on a new game called "Enslaved." He evaluated pitches and story ideas, sought out voice talent for the games and created the contractual agreements between NAMCO BANDAI and the actors.

But Bailey has bigger plans than just pitching and contract negotiations — he wants to revolutionize the industry into the new world of transmedia. Transmedia seeks to sell an intellectual product or franchise by releasing a game, followed by a film or some kind of web-based episodic content, so that the characters and stories continue, even after the game is completed.

Already many video games have movies and books based on characters and lore, such as the upcoming "Prince of Persia" film, which is based on the video game series of the same name.

There are also many games based on films and television shows, such as the aforementioned Afro Samurai.

"If you go into a bookstore today," Bailey explains, "you'll see at least three or four cases of books continuing the stories of characters from where they left off in the game."

Now, instead of films and books rising up out of happenstance, Bailey and others develop stories and characters accessible through the various forms of media, so that there is an overarching story line that can be enjoyed in a variety of ways, and not just in one media format. This will allow for more seamless storytelling and keep continuity errors to a minimum.

Because Bailey spent time segueing to the video game industry through radio-television-film departments, he is familiar with the more standard forms of entertainment, giving him a step up against competitors and allowing him to be at the forefront of this transition in gaming.

Bailey is certain gaming is going to change dramatically in the next decade. He likens the industry to Hollywood of the 1930s. It was a small field with a distinct audience, but now virtually everyone experiences the medium. In 2006, the Nintendo Wii gaming console was the first video game system to be advertised to a group outside of the usual audience, with many advertisements containing seniors, children, young adults and families.

Although Bailey's name isn't particularly new to the gaming world, it certainly has found a new meaning and purpose. His name is now synonymous with advancement and revolution for the gaming industry — even though there are still die-hard fans of the Metroid game that recall the cheat code with great fondness.

"Whenever I go to a video convention like E3 or PAX [Penny Arcade Expo], there is at least one person asking if he can have my name tag," Bailey says with a laugh.

Gaming as we know it will change dramatically in the next five years, Bailey predicts, and it is certain that he will be at the forefront. 🎮

Comment at tcumagazine@tcu.edu.

Game on



Justin Bailey '98 represents a new generation in the gaming industry, pushing towards change and revolution into how we perceive and access video games.

JOANNE LEE