

INTERVIEW MET GREGG MAYLES

De gehele Rare community kwam woensdagavond samen om ontwerper Gregg Mayles flink aan de tand te voelen over de nieuwe Banjo-Kazooie. In andere interviews blijft de beste man wat oppervlakkig, maar in dit interview verteld Gregg Mayles alles wat we wilden weten. Community manager George Kelion was ook aanwezig.

Rare-Elite en Perfect-Rare werkten samen om een hoop vragen beantwoord te krijgen. We hopen dat we de juiste vragen hebben gesteld. Terugkijkend was het een geslaagde avond met ontzettend veel interessante antwoorden!



Donkey Kong Universe: Sure. The overall reaction from our site's Banjo diehards has been mixed, with many of them concerned that Nuts & Bolts is less a Banjo game and more a game with Banjo randomly stuck in it. How would you defend it to fans that were originally drawn in by B-K's move-based platforming?

Gregg: It's true that anyone wanting a carbon copy of the previous 2 games will be disappointed So I'm not even going to make out that it is. What I believe it to be is an evolution of the platform adventure genre

The genre is too stale, it needed shaking up. So we are trying something different. But within the framework of a 'traditional' Banjo game. It has a familiar structure, things to collect, characters to talk to and all the humor you would expect.

Perfect-Rare - Why have you been so quiet on Banjo-Kazooie since the X06 trailer? Was it maybe too early to tell everyone a new Banjo is coming or was it Microsoft's decision to promote the Xbox 360 with new fresh platform games?

Gregg: We have been hard at work trying to make our concept work. We didn't want to reveal anything until we were sure it would work. There were many times when I thought we would never be able to get it working! Too many game these days are previewed too far in advance. By the time they are released it feels like you have already played them. Anyway, you wouldn't expect any less of Rare!

Perfect-Rare - The music notes are clearly music themed. As we've seen in Banjo-Kazooie, both the bear and bird can play music. Why not make some music in the shop and for every music note you collect, Banjo and Kazooie play better music. And if you play good music , you earn many products. normal paying seems so dull.

Gregg: The musical notes have always been an oddity, in that they aren't really musical at all. None of the previous Banjo games have ever used musical notes for a musical theme. But at least in this game they are actually used for a larger role. There is many things that the player can buy around Showdown Town with the notes.



Perfect-Rare - Could you name some...besides blocks?

Gregg: You can buy upgrades to Banjo's basic abilities - speed, strength and stamina.

Perfect-Rare - RPG style?

Gregg: You can bribe the police! You can buy prebuilt vehicles. Plus some other stuff that we aren't talking about / yet to put in!

Roysten's Fishbowl: Does Kazooie still have some unique moves, apart from using Mumbo's staff? We've seen her attacking in a screenshot, but not much else...

Gregg: No, all of Kazooie's abilities are linked to the Wrench. Apart from her sarcastic comments! But there are more abilities that you have not seen.



Spiral Mountain: Are you able to explain in greater detail how the vehicle building will be integrated into the game? i.e. do we have to go into Mumbo's Motors to do it, or can you access the vehicle editor at any time?

Gregg: Most of the vehicle parts are found in Showdown Town. They are hidden all over and the player had to find them. Some can be bought, others won. You take them back to Mumbo's Motors where they are added to your parts store. You can go to the garage at any time apart from when in a challenge. You can also edit your vehicle at any time when not in the garage, e.g. if you want to take a part off or come across a new part lying around and want to bolt it on. It sounds complex but it isn't. You have a lot of freedom to do what you want, when you want. The idea is that you find out what the challenge involves, then either chose a vehicle that you think will suit the game, or make one.

You build up your parts, which can be used to make anything you want. You can then save your creations and then use the same parts to make something else. So if you started with 10 parts, you could use these 10 parts in as many ways as you want. When you find more parts they are simply added to the total available, allowing bigger and better vehicles to be made. So you build up your abilities as you would in any platformer game.

NewRare - We assume that you decided of keeping the original voices in the game but what's the secret for making a bear scream? Do you recruit an drunk guy?

Gregg: No, we recruit the lead programmer of the previous Banjo games and tread on his toes. He has to remember to cry out like Banjo though! It took us a long time to decide to keep the mumbling. People automatically expect real speech today but I think that would have ruined the Banjo charm.

RareWitchProject - In the gameplay footage we saw of a flying vehicle, a rocket was fired at another vehicle in the sky. Does the player have to manually target the other vehicles, objects and enemies, or is it an automatic thing based on who you're closest to. How does the combat system work in general?

Gregg: Depends on the weapon. We have quite a few, ranging from the Blue Egg Gun that fires unguided Eggs in a straight line to the guided missile you saw (called a Torpedile as it works in the air and underwater). You also have the Mumbo Bombo and the Rustbin to look forward to! Plus lots of other crazy weapons and gadgets.

MundoRare - How big is (i.e. how many components could contain) the biggest vehicle the player can build? And, also, can we create a mix of vehicles all in one? Like a hover-copter-4x4-submarine or something!

Gregg: At the moment it is 19 'blocks' high, wide and deep. So that's pretty big. We've built some real monsters. I made a nuclear sub the other night but it was too heavy and underpowered, so it sank! You can make a mix, yes.



MundoRare - Oh, so you have a limit of 'blocks', despite there are 1600 in the game...?

Gregg: We've had old fashioned galleons with jets. There are around 100 different types of blocks, with numerous examples of each. So around 1600 in total. But a 19X19X19 area is 6859 blocks! So don't worry about not being able to build something!

Perfect-Rare - Six years ago Microsoft told the game press a racing game was in development by Rare. Are there any elements from that game you have used for BK3?

No, the new engine for Banjo that allows the creation and control of the vehicles is brand new and WAY ahead of what that game was going to be. Generations ahead. I haven't seen anything quite like

what we've got. The ability to create a 3D vehicle that behaves how you would expect? A real achievement for our software team I assure you. What you have seen so far only scratches the surface of what is possible. You'll have hours of fun just making things - I'm sure of it!

Donkey Kong Universe - What would you say the traditional platforming/vehicle usage ratio is in the overall scope of the game?

Gregg: I knew someone would ask that! Mmm...I would say around 80% vehicles, but just a rough guess. Banjo gets in and out of the vehicles all the time, but the travelling is done in the

vehicles. A lot of the tasks require Banjo to get out and either do something to the vehicles, put something in the vehicles and so on. So you aren't in them all the time, but once you play the game and realise the freedom the vehicles have you will forget that they are vehicles and simply a different way of having abilities, albeit ones that you choose and combine. I know it is going to be tough for people to accept that vehicles, especially the old fans, but I believe they make the old games look limited and very outdated. People are always afraid of change.

Donkey Kong Universe - So vehicles are a must for completing most, if not all core missions?

Gregg: But change for the better is great, which is what I believe this game to be. Yes, it's going to take time for people to get it, I know! What also isn't clear is that the vehicles break up in the same way as they are put together. So drive off a cliff and smash into the ground and all sorts of bits will fly off. That's why you should look to make your vehicles strong or equip it with something to cushion the drop. Lots of thought required for you guys! But you can all do it in your way instead of trying to find out what solution I have designed. You may come up with a better method than I can! But no prizes though...

Roystens Fishbowl - What do Banjo and Kazooie lend to the vehicle building process, considering that it was originally a separate concept?

Gregg: Good question. Not a lot. Originally we had Banjo and Kazooie placing the parts together. But it was sooooooooooooooooooooo slow. We had to sacrifice their involvement to get the building process as fast and fluid as possible. A shame, but gameplay comes first. The building process is done 'magically' using Mumbo's Magic Wrench.

Spiral Mountain - Can you elaborate on how many Jiggies / challenges there are in total, and how they correspond with the Challenge Spheres we've seen in Showdown Town (i.e. one sphere features one challenge, or are there many challenges within each sphere)?

Gregg: Yep, easy. There are 96 Jiggy Challenges, then there are another 96 Challenges that are 'different' versions of the Jiggy Challenges, where further Jiggies can be won. Around 130 Jiggies in total I think. The Game Globes (as they are called), these are the game worlds. They have to be taken to set places in ST (Showdown Town) to activate them. Once a GG is activated, all the doors around ST that lead to that world are available. There are 6 doors into each world. Each door requires a varying amount of Jiggies to open it, so very much like the old game, but more in depth. Is that clear?

Spiral Mountain - Yeah, that's great. Is the number of worlds confirmed as 6, or do you have some lying in wait for us?

Gregg: So lets take Nutty Acres as an example. There are 6 doors into Nutty Acres. Each door leads to a different 'act' in Nutty Acres. Each act features a varying amount of Jiggies to be won. Some acts only have 1 jiggy whereas others have several. If the act door is open you can enter it, the order you tackle them in is only controlled by which doors are open around then.

MundoRare - Pretty much like DKR, isn't it?

Gregg: Jiggies control pretty much all progress. Yes, it's more like DKR than the other Banjo games. But I'd say there is even more freedom. You visit Nutty Acres Act 1 and see stuff you will be doing in Act 3 and Act 4. It's very clever like that. We don't set up different stuff per Act, you see stuff in earlier acts and then get to do things with that stuff later. Hard to explain, but you'll like it!

NewRare - How long have you worked for this sequel? Had you envisaged to make this new game suitable for the old consoles like the original Xbox or actually like an addon developed for 64DD?

Gregg: No, this game would not have been possible before. The sheer computing power required to make the vehicles work and the physics involved could not have been done. It's the fact that you can combine anything in any number that makes it such a technical challenge. This is actually the 3rd Banjo 3! We scrapped two other approaches. Didn't think they offered a big enough step forward. I bet you didn't expect that!

Perfect-Rare - Shocked!!

Gregg: So I would say it started after Ghoulies. But then got scrapped a couple of times. Then I worked on Pinata. Then came back to Banjo again! Oh, and I think I did some puzzles for Mr. Pants too!

Donkey Kong Universe - I love you.

George Kelion: MARK! Right, next?

RareWitchProject - Humba, Are you able to discuss her role in this new game, or is that still under wraps? PS: She's a bit of alright. Would ya?

It's still under wraps. But she has a major role, thought as much.

RareWitchProject - Is there a limit on how many of your vehicle creations you can save?

Gregg: All the 'major' characters (Mumbo, Bottles, Humba, etc) have multiple roles. One in the 'real world' of ST and 'acted out' ones in the game worlds

Gregg: There will have to be a limit to stop our software breaking, but it will be a very large number Hundreds I'm sure.

MundoRare - Let's discuss the multiplayer a little bit ;-). Are there any offline multiplayer options, and will this mode be all vehicle-related or we'll get some minigames a la Banjo-Tooie? And are there any plans for a co-op mode?

Gregg: Yes there is offline stuff, they are all vehicle related. Yes, there is co-op in multiplayer, we have spent a lot of time on the multiplayer. One designer and several engineers have been on it full time. It should be good! Races I'm sure you can imagine, but we have plenty of unique multiplayer stuff? Vehicle football? Vehicle golf? Kickball for modern day! But this time you can cheat by picking up the ball and flying in the air where no one can reach you! Or building a giant box and hiding the ball in it. Lots of ways to play..

Donkey Kong Universe - Gregg, nice to know you worked on IMP (one of my personal favorite Rare titles). As for my question: You knew this was coming: Earlier you mentioned two other approaches before the vehicle-based approach we have now for the game. Care to elaborate just a little bit on what they were in concept?

Gregg: The first one was a remake with a difference. The plan was to pretend it was a carbon copy remake, but then stuff changed. In Mumbo's Mountain a giant queen termite was going to break out the top of the termite hill and you had to get conga to lob his oranges at her. That kind of stuff. Clever, but a bit 'last-gen'. So we dumped that.

Donkey Kong Universe - As for the second?

Gregg: Then spent a while looking at a game where Banjo and Grunty went head to head all

the time. Grunty was always on the levels, trying to do what Banjo was doing. The Ai for this was going to be a real pain and again, we didn't think it offered the angle required to get Banjo noticed, so we scrapped that too. Then along came the vehicles...

Banjo-Universe - I don't think this has been covered, but is it safe to assume that vehicles have taken the place of transformations then?

Gregg: Yes, think of them as lots of transformations. We kind of reached the limit of the transformation in B-T. After the T-rex where do you go?

Perfect-Rare - Now that you are the person in charge of the title, can you give us something you chose to do you would not have been able when the 'brothers' were still there? Could you name one?

Gregg: I was in charge of all the Banjo games, so nothing has changed. Boring answer I know... You wanted scandal, didn't you?

Perfect-Rare - Would be nice :P Just kiddin'.

Perfect-Rare - But not much of a change since the brothers left?

Gregg: Maybe we'll feature them as future Banjo characters, Like Trophy Thomas this time. Change happens all the time, some good, some bad. As in everything. But nothing specifically linked to Tim & Chris leaving. Banjo has changed a bit for instance... Rare has changed as we now actually speak to people occasionally. You move with the times or get left behind. I try to stay ahead of the times!



Perfect-Rare - If you decide to develop a new game with such an unique concept like Nuts & Bolts, aren't you scared another developer comes up with the same/sort like idea before you announced your plans with BK3? Especially since you keep quite so long...must be mind breaking at E3's...

Gregg: If someone wants to try and replicate what we have done they are welcome to try. It's been a real struggle with some extremely talented people. It has been by far the hardest game I have designed. It took us at least 6 months to write the vehicle editor and we are still working on it.

Roysten's Fishbowl - Can we expect to see a special edition version of the game?

Gregg: No plans either way at the moment. That's more of a marketing question. Maybe we'll release a version with all the team's favorite creations on it. There are some very disturbing ones I can assure you... I'm sure you are already thinking about what you may be able to create.

There will be no prizes at all for the first one who makes a flying profanity. Makes for a good future competition though...

Spiral Mountain - What is your own personal favorite level from the N64 Banjo games, and will we be seeing it in some shape or form in B-K:N&B?

Gregg: I like Rusty Bucket Bay. The design was neat and it all felt 'right'. A lot of people liked Click Clock Woods.

Spiral Mountain: Very neat ... except for the damned machine room propellers!!!!

Gregg: I also liked Witchyworld and Jolly Roger's Lagoon. I thought Grunty Industries was a masterpiece but it was too complicated! I have a favorite in the new game too, but I'm not telling you what it is! It took just a week to design, whereas some of the levels took two months! Sometimes an idea just works exactly how you expect it to and you can literally get everything right first time.



Sometimes it take ages and lots of reworking before things are right. The Showdown Town Map is a real beauty, but that took a lot of hair tearing out to get right. I think a lot of you will love Showdown Town. We've tried to make it a proper 'living' town. There's a police force, lots of shops (with silly names) and townspeople that you can chat to or run over!

NewRare - Banjo is a very popular serie for the gamers around the world but Microsoft always gets problems to impose his console in Europe. What might be the impact of your own game for a country like France?

Gregg: A good question. Europe is hard because there are many countries with different tastes. I think Banjo could do really well in Europe, as the 'building' concept is something that everyone can enjoy. Microsoft is putting a lot of effort into the European market and Banjo will be playing a key part.

You can always color your vehicles in the national colors of your countries! And then try and blow each other up in multiplayer!



RareWitchProject - Sorry, we are the RWP, so.....Will Stop n Swop finally be resolved in this game, or will we have some new mystery that fans will talk about for years to come?

Gregg: What do you think? I do have some plans... But I'm not going to ruin anything by saying anything else at this time



Rare-Extreme - With the challenges, can you assure me that you aren't going to do. What you did with Donkey Kong 64 and have the same stupid challenge 44 times! (Beaver Bother!!)

Gregg: Ha ha, you can't blame me for that one! Every challenge is different. Even the 'difficult' version of each challenge are way more than 'we just made everything tougher'. For example, in the standard version you can chose a vehicle of your creation, but in the 'difficult' version we'll provide you with a really crap vehicle that you must use!!

It might only have one wheel, or be ridiculously top heavy, or frighteningly overpowered. Or have no engine at all. We can do lots to you!

George Kelion: Fingers crossed!



MundoRare - First, sorry but I have to say this ;) As a lover of typography design I feel I have to ask if there is any chance to see the old BK typo back instead of Microsoft's Comic Sans. And anyway, for the real question... We know that the original BK game was codenamed "Dream". Could you share with us the working name of the Nuts & Bolts project, and tell us when the final title was decided?

Gregg: Comic Sans is a good choice for games as it is easy to read on High def and standard def screens. The old font was one we invented and its just not possible to do that when there is about 10 million languages to translate it inot. We tried lots of others but they weren't clear enough. It isn't final yet, if we find one better we will use it.

We've had loads of names. Banjo 3 and Banjo-Threeie were used. Banjo-Buildie was my favourite for a final name, but it didn't suit the new direction as it sounded to much like the

old games. We needed something that would appeal to everyone, not just the old (and very loyal thank you all very much) fans. It needed to be something that grabbed new players attention too. But don't worry, there's lots of in-jokes for you old timers to find that new players won't have a clue about!

Donkey Kong Universe - Gruntilda said to wait until Banjo-Threeie at the end of Tooie. Assuming Nuts & Bolts is "Banjo-Threeie", will there be an in-game explanation as to why it's not called that anymore? Furthermore, in screens and artwork we've seen Grunty "fused" to a character. Is that Dingpot?

Gregg: That is Grunty's seat. She stands in this to control her vehicles, it is Dingpot though. I'm sure we will make a comment that the name of the game is 'wrong'. Just like Kazooie bitches throughout the game that it would have been better with her old moves.

George Kelion: a CLASSIC!

Banjo-Universe - How big is this 'Showdown Town' exactly? There have been (almost unbelievable) rumors of its size.

Gregg: Yeah, it's been hyped up all silly. Size in terms of memory really. It's incredibly detailed. But not massive in physical size. It can probably be driven across in less than a minute.

Perfect-Rare - Why did you decide to make a completely different graphical style for BK3? You could have chosen to use the same style as, say, Kameo or Tooie.

Gregg: As with Viva Pinata, I wanted a distinctive look. The idea that all the worlds were 'constructed' like the player's vehicles fitted perfectly. Spiral Mountain is still the same though. That's looks really nice. And we have some cool stuff planned for it. Imagine 8 years of neglect... Banjo hasn't even mowed his lawn

Perfect-Rare - Pwef..this is a personal one; my First memory of the original BK was running through the long and fluid grass of Spiral mountain...now the ground textures look very clean..but flat...can we expect beautiful long grass and more 'filled' levels in stead of the clean/flat ground textures?

Gregg: Yes, long grass lovers everywhere will be satisfied with Spiral Mountain and Showdown Town



Spiral Mountain - Will Banjo & Kazooie be able to do any of their old moves or have they all been removed to make way for the vehicles? For example, I'm wondering how we defeat enemies in the platforming segments if there's no Ratatap Rap or Beak Bust or stuff like that.

Gregg: The Wrench provides the attacks. Banjo can still climb, edge grab, swim and slide though. Running baddies over or frying them with a laser is far more fun than a peck though! We have some very daft attacks!

RareWitchProject - So far, there has been just a glimpse of the things you can do with your vehicles (Propellers, Springs, Weapons). Would it be possible to explain a way to complete a mission that we've not seen, using a vehicle?

Gregg: GOOD QUESTION. Say there is a object that needs to be taken from A to B. How do you do it? Do you make a vehicle with prongs to push it? Do you make a vehicle to carry it? Do you try and take it via water? Do you fly it there? Do you whack it as hard as possible and send it flying? Do you try and pick it up? That's without deciding how the terrain and the baddies will come into play. Do you go for speed? Do you arm yourself to the teeth and crawl your way there? But remember, the 'better' you complete the task the better your reward. So it's not just a case of 'complete the challenge and get a Jiggy' anymore. Each challenge has been designed to offer multiple approaches (and some we probably haven't thought of). Even with simple races (which there are some, but nowhere near as many as everyone seems to think) you choice of vehicle is key. There's nothing stopping you using a plane on a water

based race. Some races require you to go on land, in water and in the air. Try building a vehicle for that!

RareWitchProject - Has that happened during testing, that someone has just completed a challenge differently in a matter of seconds for something you planned to take a while?

Gregg: Yep. Some of the challenges are down to less than 10 seconds, whereas initially it may have taken a few minutes. When you discover new vehicle parts it completely changes the way you think about the same challenge. That to me is the real difference over the previous games. No matter how good you were, you had to complete the task in the same way. Now you can keep searching for your own personal way and be the best.

MundoRare - I don't think anyone has talked much about the online aspects of the multiplayer or the solo mode itself. Is the multiplayer going to make much use of Xbox Live and will the co-op feature be available over Xbox Live or just offline? What about official Xbox Live ranking lists, swapping custom vehicles with other players, downloading new vehicle parts, the list is endless... Is Xbox Live going to be a selling point of the game or just an afterthought.

Gregg: You'll have to trust us! Er... anyway... :D Are David Clynick or Robin Beanland taking part in the soundtrack along with Grant Kirkhope? Will it be orchestrated? And any chances of being published by Sumthing Else? Last question guys Merrie Maggie is not back as yet, but Jolly is! Grant is writing most of the music, Robin is writing the rest. Dave is doing the production side and clever mixing stuff. We also have Steve Burke doing stuff too, so we have something for all Rare musician fans! We are planning to orchestrate some of it, but as you can imagine, some of the weird Banjo noises aren't really possible from an orchestra, e.g. a ship's horn. Never heard of Sumthing Else, sorry! Oops, it's the company that published the Kameo soundtrack Ah OK and the PDZ and Conker ones, I think No plans as yet then is my vague answer Vague and enthusiastic I like it OK, I think I need to do some work to try and make all these promises come true!