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Welcome

There’s long been something magical about designing levels for an existing game. Back in Wireframe #3, level designer Steve Lee described the revelatory moment, aged eleven, when his brother first showed him a Doom map editor. For Lee, it was the first step on a path that would lead him to work on games like BioShock Infinite and Dishonored 2.

Even for those of us who didn’t get into Triple-A development, the discovery that games aren’t just a predefined, unchangeable dollop of entertainment was a powerful one.

In 1988, the UK magazine Your Sinclair ran a type-in listing for something called Gauntlet Editor. It allowed users to create their own levels in the ZX Spectrum version of Gauntlet—an adaptation of Atari’s dungeon crawler. The program itself was bare-bones, but the results were pretty jaw-dropping if you were about ten years old; here was a game you already loved, but now it was running a maze-like level that you’d designed yourself.

As we’ll see on page 18, the ability to edit and modify games can lead to some pretty extraordinary fits of creativity. Without modders, we wouldn’t have the likes of Counter-Strike: Delta or Fortnite. Today, such games as Far Cry 5 and Super Mario Maker give players the ability to make their own maps. Maybe they’ll light a similar creative spark in today’s generation of young gamers.

Ryan Lambie
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