

CONFESSIONS OF A BEDROOM PROGRAMMER

Sitting in the back of my brother's car clutching my brand-new Atari STE I happily declared I was going to be writing my first game soon. The Atari STE came with a selection of games I was keen to play but the image of STOS the Game Creator, a programming package that came with the STE, was the centre of my dreams. The thought of being able to create any game I want, limited only by my imagination. Nothing in the world mattered to me at that very moment as I dreamed of hiding away with my copy of STOS Basic and creating my own games. Years later I have programmed countless pieces of code, a collection of popular games still displayed on various websites, and wrote many articles on programming which I proudly display on my website to this day.

Programming can be highly addictive as I soon found out. I would come home from work and aim to be locked away with my computers as soon as possible. My mother would call up the stairs to tell me family members had arrived and I would reluctantly leave my babies just to walk to the top of the stairs to say hello. If they were lucky, they would get my attention a bit longer if I came down for coffee. Times when I attempted a social life my conversation would be itching to come round to computers.

I ventured into the outside world in a desperate attempt to find an interest other than computers. I joined a karate class and started to enjoy the first year or so there until visions of my babies started to occupy my mind and I started skipping lessons. Then one night in the club my Sensei read out a list of people who had the lowest attendance that month and mine was the lowest with just one visit. My Sensei glared at me with anger in his eyes and said: "If I want to go on my computer then get knotted" or words to that effect.

I have to confess that I am an addict when it comes to computers. It came to the point where I decided to leave karate class and spend more time at home hidden from the world – just me, my computers, and endless cups of coffee which I would make just to have a reason to pop downstairs and see if my family are still there.

I discovered I had a programming bug at school when we learned how to type out simple programs on the BBC micro. Using drawing commands to draw simple shapes but was enough to whet my appetite for programming. I got myself a Spectrum 48K and was soon learning basic commands, enough to write a small and simple adventure game.

Years later I was programming in STOS on the Atari STE and Amos on the Amiga 1200 and this became a big part of my life. My social life was at a minimum; often I had to push myself. I hated the idea of dealing with any situations outside of the bedroom. I was in danger of becoming a real loner who would happily shun society and live in my own private world where people are pixels.

CONCLUSION

Thankfully I have improved over the years and have a better social life. However, I found I am still happier being at home with my wife and my PC. I don't have any regrets that I didn't spend more time in the outside world. But I will still like to remind others that programming is a very addictive hobby and can lead to you become a sad git like me.