

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

Major phone carriers make you sign contracts with rigid data plans to trap you into a kind of forced phonogamy.

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Consumer Cellular, when freedom calls, we're here to answer.

Call us at 1-888-FREEDOM.

And even Volition, the Saints Row Studio, doesn't exist anymore.

At this point, we want to concentrate on good news.

We also want to make a podcast about this release.

It's already planned.

Now it's time for a studio to go, from which there have been very nice news recently.

Let's see from the controversy whether His Majesty should now have a case or not.

Insider knows why.

Of course, I'm talking about Larian.

The studio from Belgium has grown internationally.

It's behind Baldur's Gate 3, the summer hit of the year.

And Larian is an incredibly exciting studio,

because the AAA industry shows the middle finger.

They have managed to develop a great, extensive role-playing game without a publisher and without a cosmetic store or something like that.

And that's no coincidence.

Today, we're talking about what Larian is so special about, where they actually come from and how their future could look like.

Because they are currently at a point like the CD Projekt after the release of The Witcher 3.

As always, when it comes to studios and their structures, my first guest may not be missing.

He is a company advisor at 1789 Innovations

and a podcaster at Corporate Therapy as well as Critical Infinity.

Welcome, Humana Gafi.

Good day.

Yes, it's nice that you're there.

I can still remember your face in our last interview about innovation when I told you at the end that Baldur's Gate 3 doesn't have a publisher.

That's how it came to this topic today.

And you still have to make up for that. What does that mean now?

Yes, yes.

We'll talk about that, of course, with my second guest.

And I'm very happy that she's here today.

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

She's the head editor of my MMO
and has briefly visited Larian before the release of Baldur's Gate 3.
Welcome, Leia.
Hi, I'm very happy to be here.
I'm also very happy to see the topic and I'm very happy with you
that it's just nice to talk about something nice with the industry.
Yes, then start right away. You were at Larian.
How was it? How chaotic was it?
I have to ask directly, because I heard it was chaotic.
Oh, it was incredibly chaotic.
Yes, I was there at the time before the release
where they gave their last community update.
You have to say that they also did something very unusual.
Most gamers hate the Early Access system.
We bring out a game that isn't finished yet, but you pay for it already
and then we'll see where the journey goes.
And that's something that is more normal in the service area.
For example, Survival Games like Arch Survival Evolved
is a very popular model by the publisher.
But they did it for their massive role-playing game.
That was very unusual.
They weren't that much focused.
They had a little bit of a bludgeoning, and the summer came out of nowhere.
I met them when they went into Early Access.
Back then they were in Nürnberg, near Munich.
I was an hour in the train and looked at it.
Then I thought, yes, that looks awesome.
I will never be busy with it again until the release.
I kept that in mind.
Then the request came before the release.
You wanted to come by and take a look at it.
I thought about it, because we had tried to write articles in between.
It didn't work out that way.
I thought, to be honest, I didn't plan it for my MMO.
In the sense that it would be a big cover.
I thought we might make a nice game.
Maybe we could take two stories with us.
One bigger guide.
And then the topic for us as my MMO was done.
But I was personally very interested in this studio.
Because I had a very interesting conversation with them in Nürnberg.
And B, I also liked them from Divinity Originals 2.
So their first big breakthrough game.

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

So to speak.
Because they also had a lot of attention.
Then I tore it a bit back and forth.
And I thought, yes, I'm going to do it now.
Just because I was curious.
And then I was there.
And in the end I was just very happy that I did it.
And to answer your question honestly, it was damn chaotic.
But that also made it so beautiful.
Because you just didn't have the feeling that there is the big next publisher here with several locations, with several hundred employees distributed all over the world and employees.
But these are all role-playing players who want to present their game.
And yes, where do I start with chaos?
I'll start with one story.
There was a presentation of the new content.
That means what was shown in this community update.
We saw that as a press and the influencer and influencer.
And the studio boss, Sven Finke, comes to the stage and says, yes, I did something really great for you yesterday.
And I really have to show you that now.
He prepared a kind of prison break and wanted to show the whole system in the game.
And how cool that can be.
I thought about it yesterday evening and that it would be great.
That it would be great.
And his whole plan went completely backwards.
Everything that could go wrong just went wrong.
What he had planned with the break-in was wrong.
And the opponents reacted differently when he anticipated it.
I said, no, I did it yesterday evening.
Yesterday I tried it again and everything worked.
But at the same time you saw the charm of Baldur's Gate 3.
Because in this game, whoever played it knows that everything you paint and think how to do it will go wrong.
And you always have to think spontaneously about how to deal with the situation in which you just manipulated yourself.
And he demonstrated that.
That went wrong and it was a super funny presentation.
And he said, oh man, I wanted to show you.
And there should actually be explosions in the background.
And that would have been so cool.
But well, I'll try it now and so.
So that was nice.

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

And that's why I almost wouldn't have got my interview with him.
Because I was the first one who was in the plan and then the PR came to me.
We can't do that anymore.
I'm not planning it anymore.
But my whole preparation is only on this interview.
I need this interview.
Yes, we have to look.
And then they came to me three times again.
No, it doesn't work.
Oh, maybe it doesn't work.
And then it worked.
So it was great.
It was really great.
Yes, and I feel so reminded of CD Projekt.
Because that used to always have been a love-themed chicken coop.
And also the half of what they actually planned.
Whether it was on a fair, whether it was on interviews, it always went wrong.
Then the demo didn't work.
I sat in a fair demo where they were half an hour on a boss opponent.
Because he just wasn't able to break it.
Although they actually just wanted to show this fight.
I was standing at the fair and said, yes, now 15.30.
I have an interview for Einbart.
And they wave their lists and say, hey, what's wrong with me?
It's really, yes.
Yes, now that you say the PCs, the half of the PCs didn't work either.
So we should play the new content.
That was the new character and so on.
Dark Earth, who just came in the game a short time ago.
And we knew about it beforehand.
And we should be able to try it all out.
And then there's always electricity, there's always no PCs running.
Everything broke down all the time and the developers were like, no, no, no, no, no.
What are we going to do now?
But I have it.
Yes, something like that is quite exciting.
Yes, and now you have to take a look.
I mean, they have over 400 employees worldwide in several studios.
Now, what does it do to you as a company consultant
when you hear that such a big company is so chaotic,
at least at this press event?
So I think that's exciting.
You could say now, you said at the beginning that they show the middle finger.

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

But you could say, well, mirror, because they didn't even get my number.
That probably would have been better for the publisher.

But now, guys, I think the exciting thing is, if you listen to the numbers,
it's more about the changes.

So I tried, I can't remember, I went to this internet archive,
looked at some old interviews and so on.

And I think if you look at the studio from its development,
they somehow started in the 90s.

At some point, they started at the age of 39,
and then they were around 2001 or 2000.

They were almost only on three people before the insolvency.
And then they built up over time.

In 2014, 30, 2015, 40.

There was a big jump, 2019, 200.

And now 2023, 450.

So they doubled it once again, because it's G3.

And what can I say?

There are pretty radical jumps in very short periods
that maybe not everything is super professionalized
and super controlled.

That's understandable on the one hand.

But nevertheless, I think that's the exciting thing.

They got the economic success.

Now, regardless of whether it's the pair,
the pair things were successful.

And you could ask yourself the question,
does Michael really care about it?

How did they get it?

How did they manage to get a huge man,
a 450-man, you have to get that financed first,
without a publisher, to get the thing out of it?

You have to say good bye.

What's also exciting about this,
it's not a coincidence where all the localities are.

They are represented in every time zone.

I think you really have to figure that out.

Because of that, they never have a break in communication.

That means they can always make their social posts.

They can always keep in touch with the community.

They can always say when there are updates.

They can always work on it,
to test it.

They can always be against complaints.

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

They can always tell people,
we've got the problems.
Good night.
We're going to hand it over to another team,
who's just woke up.
We're going to talk about the process.
I talked about it a bit earlier.
This constant,
we can work 24-7,
without breaking it.
That's important,
to avoid crunch.
I'm not talking about
when you're at the end of a project,
or something stressful,
you have to work with it
so you can shift over an hour
or work in the weekend.
That can happen in a few weeks.
People always like to change that.
That crunch just means
it's long-lasting,
so you can't work more
or less anymore.
They don't have that in the form.
That's a huge advantage.
When it comes to work,
where do I want to work?
Do I want to work with the company
who says in the last few months,
you have to shift over an hour
or do I want to work with the company
where Sven Winkel said
the founder, business leader
and creative lead,
which is a very important concentration
of roles on a person
where Sven Winkel said
that over an hour
and a month before release
were 10-20 minutes per person.
So crunch,
where you work

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

completely in the background
while playing,
what do you say?
I want to take a look at the course
of history
because I was amazed
when I read
into Larian's history
how often they were
on the ground.
How often this studio
had to be closed
due to normal points
and they had to give up.
After their founding,
Larian was founded in 1996
and her first project
was the role-playing
The Lady, The Mage and The Knight.
It was supposed to be
like Ultima 7
because Sven Winkel is a big Ultima 7
fan and said
we want to build a role-playing game
that also has this world simulation
where NPCs have needs
like eating and sleeping
where they have daily expenses
and they were able to do that.
They were allowed to do that
with the German publisher
Attic Entertainment
who developed the Black Eye
and published a few other games.
It was stupid
but Attic went bankrupt
and had to close
and also had the role-playing
The Lady, The Mage and The Knight
and then Larian was there
and even apologized
due to the amount of money
they had invested

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

in the studio and the project
they just didn't have any more money.
And then they
still didn't give up
but cradled the remains
of this development work
they rebuilt it
because
it wasn't possible
for a game that isn't like Diablo
to find a publisher
and then they built
Divine Divinity
which was released in 2002
and
wasn't successful.
That's when they said
they didn't deserve any money
because they didn't sell it
enough to close the doors
but it wasn't
a financial success
and also the successor Beyond Divinity
which I didn't test for GameStar
which I didn't know
but read again
71 points. It wasn't that great.
Sorry, I'm laughing.
I'll just introduce myself
Oh, that was me.
It was like that.
And then I liked it.
I had to make it at the weekend
I was
at some holiday weekend
where the game wasn't sent
to the editorial office
and then they had to deliver it
from Belgium to Munich
to my private address
where I took this CD.
Beyond Divinity wasn't that great.
There was the big news

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and one of them was still in the NPC
and fought with it
but it wasn't
what Larian had brought
and then they were
disappointed
but still didn't give up
but took on contract work.
So they did different things
for different contracts
and for a while
at least no games to hold over
water until
they started in 2006
with the development of Divinity 2
Ego Draconis
which was a completely different game
than the two before
that was so isometric and not pretty
action role games
Divinity 2 Ego Draconis was a 3D role game
where you were on your way
as a figure on the ground
and were able to fly around
and fight in the air.
They did that back then
because they said
we saw on the great new consoles
Xbox 360
are as beautiful games as possible
let's focus on that
let's focus on that as a goal
we're making games for these
new console generations
and it didn't sell
so well back then
so it's a chain of games
it wasn't a total failure
I think in Germany was the Daedalic
the publisher or DTP
one of the D companies from Hamburg
in any case
it was also a game where you said

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

but this Larian
how long does it still exist?
and then
they had the idea of being successful
you really have to say
because then they started to develop two games
one was when the next big thing
was planned
and one was a small project
which went along with it
and should have been ready
relatively quickly
the new big project
Divinity Dragon Commander
a real-time strategy game
which I don't remember any more
which was really cool
because you made such political decisions
with the factions that were there
how they crushed the dead
who were totally conservative
and then on the other side
the elves who wished for a liberal society
really cool
but during the development
you noticed
that's not our next big thing
a role-playing game
isometric with a hero group
that you lead to
and that's Divinity Original Sin
for that
at first they only had a budget
of 1.5 million euros
and then they thought
that in order to get it right
we need 3 million
and then they got into crowdfunding
and collected money
about Kickstarter
they collected donations directly
and as a studio
they got a budget of

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

about 4 million euros
I think 4.4-4.5 million
they had in the end
to finish this game
and
that was the moment
where they didn't celebrate
the big breakthrough
you said earlier
that was Original Sin 2
and of course Baldur's Gate 3
but that was the moment
that can be really successful
send this Dragon Commander away
finish it, release it quickly
we put the time
and the character we have
in this Original Sin
and that was
the beginning
of the real beginning of Larian
Divinity Original Sin 2
which was also started
with crowdfunding
at both Original Sin games
there was the Early Access period
to get into the game
but they also paid
to finance the development
through their Early Access
and then we are
at the point where they
made Baldur's Gate 3
that they had pitched
to Wizards of the Coast
where Sven Winke meant
about GOG
the publishing platform
the sales platform
they made contact to Wizards of the Coast
then Sven Winke went there
and was totally proud
that we wanted to make Baldur's Gate 3

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and Wizards of the Coast said
who are they?
and many years later
after Original Sin 2
or in the process
when it was coming out
then Wizards of the Coast went to Larian
and said
you could make really cool games
don't you want to play Baldur's Gate 3?
and Sven Winke said
I never thought about it
then it came to the point
that they made Baldur's Gate 3
and I think
this story is very remarkable
alone
because it shows
the content of this studio
and had to have it
until they came where they are today
and because it also shows
how central Sven Winke
is as a person
for this success
not only because he is the CEO
but
if he wasn't there
and always said
we have to make contracts
he also said
if Original Sin wasn't successful
if they would have gone back
we would have made contracts for someone else
until we could make our own project
but staying on this
I really want to
that was really
really central
you can even add
that it was really dramatic
at the beginning
I felt it in a documentation

and it was so dramatic
that Sven Winke
gave the people only weeks contracts
because they never knew
if they would survive the week
if you have a job
at the end of the week
there were only weeks contracts
and there were always some
and he also had
several times with the founders
he is the only one
who is there from the beginning to the end
so it is true that he
had this capability
he told that sometimes
he was completely blank
sometimes he could pay more
for the car
and then he had to call his wife
I am standing here
can't fill the tank
I need cash
he was completely blank
crazy
at the end of the development phase
of original sin 1
there were tax payments
even though the government refused
where they also had an interview
with Eurogamer
that normally the Belgian tax authorities
when you say we are in a difficult situation
as a company we can shift a payment
to the back
not to pay but to the back
normally the authorities say it is not a problem
you say you pay it
and then he said
you are the only one who got a job
who didn't let you talk
that one guy
who didn't allow him

and they did it anyway
which had a certain risk
but
the good thing was
at that time they saw
that the early access was good
that they had the early access sales
that there is a target group
for original sin
and with that
they also knew
that at some point they could pay the taxes
so they knew
that would probably go up from there
can you help me?
when was the original sin
published?
what year was it?
2014
what I found
exciting
was
I don't know if you had that in your story
but when was the break
with the publishers?
I think in this story
one thing that has been going on
for the last two years
is that he was frustrated
by the publishers
because he didn't have a lot of luck
with the publishers
who financed it
in the 90s
there was a financial crisis
where the publisher
came into the market
and wanted to publish a game
where it wasn't finished
and his problem was
we couldn't finish the game
and of course we got bad scores
and then it was sold less

and so on
and then it had to be around
2011-2011
that they made this decision
we went away from the publisher
and went to these contracts
and financed us with
these two projects
they belong to our own IPs
we don't have to share the money
with the publisher
and I also have something important
the publisher doesn't come
and dictates us what is happening
and of course
our game is also in competition
with other games
because we have bad scores
and then we don't have a good score
and we have to take that in our own hands
and that was probably a very brave step
not going this way
that was the point
that was the game where the publisher
got problems because of the financial crisis
so they had to finish it
I tested it
which I didn't know
and I only saw it in the article
but also there
I really don't know anything about this game
but there were plot holes
that didn't make sense
there were gameplay
when you are on the road
you can fight in the air
not against enemies on the ground
you have fire breath
but it doesn't hit enemies on the ground
which was a conceptual decision
that you have to land in a human
and then fight on the ground
where you notice that it's not full thought

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

there were problems with that
and I think that was the point
that they said
Dragon commander had
but this original sense
let's do it without a publisher
let's finance it
plus
but also
in some sources
about venture capital
project based
I found the model
it's a project based venture capital
there is no venture capital
in the company
companies are founded
project companies
and for that venture capital is introduced
because if we talk about
the property structure later
it's just a small number
three
actually
maybe that's the ideal point
to address them
because
Larian
is 62%
about
Sven Winkke
the founder, CEO and creative lead
of his own games
he does with his own studio
is 8%
of his wife
and 30% of the rest
I just wanted to
introduce you to this
gasoline money
what he got
get it back
at that time the 8%

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

was like a tank filling
then I pay
in studio
and 30% are
Tencent
the Chinese publishing giant
is invested worldwide
from Activision over Paradox in Sweden
to Jäger in Germany
and so on
Tencent is everywhere
and 30% of Larian
they bought it
it's not a
decision-making minority
Sven Winkke is the majority
he can make decisions freely
it's not quite clear
when Tencent bought it
probably in 2018
Larian was converted
from the studio
in Belgium
to a
holding in Ireland
which was founded
and Tencent bought it
the property company
of this studio
there is the Larian studio
in Belgium
there is a double
in Dublin a holding
and there are 3 groups
exactly
and now the most important
question
who is Sven Winkke?
because
Léa told me
you met him in Belgium, I met him before
I have to tell you this
but Sven Winkke

there are 2 developers
that I always change
one is Sven Winkke
the other is the head
of the development studio
which was also taken by Paradox
a few years ago
and I know that I met them
more often
and I never knew who he was
that was so unpleasant
today I can distinguish him
at first
I have to correct
your pronunciation
because
Sven Winkke
speaks my Dutch
sharp
because
I have talked to him for a long time
in Dutch
because he is from
Belgium
and
I speak Dutch
and we have
talked for a long time
in Dutch
because Dutch people
don't know that
they are used to speaking
English
because they speak Dutch
and that means
they are always happy
and then I had
such a small home advantage
because she just had fun
talking to me in her mother's language
and I was also interested
why do you speak Dutch
and so on

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and so we came into the conversation
at such public events
to applaud a little bit
it is also quite common
that interviews are presented
you have time
to play
normally in a very professional
and very focused setting
you can only talk to the developers
when a publisher
is still behind
you have
at the big studios
Michael will know
is sometimes a PR or marketing dog
in the background
the farmer who takes care of it
interviews are often made
with AAA studios
not so much fun
because they don't have a lot of meat
that is just a wasted program
in the sense of blah blah blah blah
that is what we are allowed to say
that is actually everything that is already
on a website or something
and we now get that again
and that is
of course not the case with Laria
that means the developers
they were there all the time
with this professional part
with the people who work
I also worked with the head story writer
with the director
of publishing
because my PC does not work
to play
so I just dealt with
to talk to different people
and they were all super nervous
before the release

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

was already very
very interesting
and then there are usually
the official part
which is also part of the event
you go out in the evening and eat something
maybe drink a few beers
together
and that is also the free part
where you can also
with the people
it is for the developers, you have to say
and developers are the hyper exhausting events
when they present their presentation
they introduce new things
that is what you like to forget behind the screen
when you consume
they do everything
and they are in such an incredible
vulnerable position
because they show
their babies and they present it
for the first time and nervous
and then when this official part
is over, the people
usually breathe
we did it and then you get
a few more
relaxed conversations
and we were in a pub
the Hotty Totty
and in the Hotty Totty
we drank Belgian beer
and ate something
and in the Hotty Totty
I got the conversation with Sven
and
we mainly talked about
how it is to grow up in a big family
because he has four children, I have four sisters
and about that it happened
that we came to a close conversation
what is that for a person?

an incredible one, who is very relaxed
very relaxed
that is also what
in my opinion
is very important in a good leadership
that they can be such a calm anchor
and with the official event
where this community stream was
we also sat with it
then
the same thing they showed us
they also presented it in this community update
and then everything went really wrong
at the beginning
it was in our press event
that things went wrong
because of the presentation
it is a bit heavy
for this community stream
it was a bit overclocked
but what happened?
the internet fell out
the stream was slow, it was rolling
a save file was broken
where there was
some storage error
where they couldn't get to the part
that they actually wanted to show
and Sven
he is also very big
he is 2 meters tall
and he is also
just the long Sven of his team
and
then he stands in his ritter armor
explains things
and the ritter armor claps all the time
and he is the calm person
and laughs away
and you can see that
what you didn't see in the stream
in the background a huge team
of devs and technicians

and they all
shit, our stream
everyone is nervous
and what do we do now
and Sven just rocked it
he
from my point of view
I watched it in the second or third row
he brought so much peace
even if the technicians
were nervous
you didn't even have the feeling
that he just became angry or nervous
or something else
he just took it cool
but he knows all his background
with how
the development story of Larian was
he did a lot of things
he probably can't bring so much more
out of peace
and what was also very striking
for me was
how respectful
and recognizable
his employees talked about
no matter who you talked to
and you also feel
that now people
only say that out of kindness
or out of professionalism
it's a good boss
or if they really say
yes Sven
that's really Sven
you say Sven and the people
complain about their boss
each one of them confirmed
how crazy Sven is
how much he loves the game development
and that's really important
for him that good games are developed
that's really his biggest focus

and as I said
I have my day because I couldn't play myself
I talked to a lot of developers
and each one
spoke about Sven
you rarely see that
in the form
tell me, you told
that you also talked about
their development processes
globally
they have become super fast
super big
did they tell you
how they came to this
it can change the culture
of the company
did you
get something
or could you read between the lines?
no, we didn't really talk about that
because in the focus it was
Baldur's Gate 3
it was a release
and the head of that
you also noticed that it was only
the release
when was the event
two weeks before?
yes, let it be
for a month
and they were like
we have to get this release
that means we talked about that
also a bit
the development
it was six years
after two years
they could say that they are working
in the game
in their second year
four years ago
and that was the clear focus

with this
technique
that they opened this studio
that was
what they said
it was a very conscious decision
because from the beginning
we wanted to be able to
achieve 24x7 support
because they already had
the experience about Divinity
that they
had to fix a few things
because
they just don't work
they don't come out
or their games are
really big
Baldur's Gate is
I'm at 150 hours
and I started
to play the third act
a few hours ago
150 without the third act
yes
I mean
most of the games
take up to 80 hours
I'm already very slow
but I really look at every
cursed stone
and try a few different things
you can spend a lot of time
with the game without
repeating content
there is no fetch quest or anything
no matter what you do
it's a unique experience
and there is
of course
that there are some bugs
the first and the second were
very strongly tested by the Early Access

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and the third thing wasn't in the Early Access
so there were some problems
and that was
a very strategic decision
to say we want to be able to
always be able to test people
always be able to communicate
to the community
and that we always fix
and there they really have a system
also developed that it is possible
that real transition protocols
take place in a different country
that are waking up
a lot is chaotic
it also works very chaotic
when you look at community updates
it all works like
they are funny in costumes
and they do this
and the CEO himself is sitting in the back
but those are tough strategies
you have to say that
there is no coincidence
that they have gone through the ceiling
with Baldur's Gate 3
they are distributed in several countries
and 247 is a
very important strategic decision
what you said
at least what Sven said
in the interview was that it was already
rough to enlarge the teams so much
that they also noticed
they don't have any processes for it
there are no workflows
at the beginning
how to find team-to-team transitions
and how to be managed
by these larger teams
that was a nice
rough running water
but you

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

at least had
a very good project management
or a good project planning
at least
in this pre-production phase for Baldur's Gate 3
because it was only one year long
only planning
what do we want to do
what does this game need
how much player freedom do we want to give to people
can I take a skeleton
and throw it on the necromancer
as I recently did
with my barbarian
what do we want to implement
what do we need for these
intermediate sequences
for this film-like staging
that was the big jump in comparison to
original scene 2
they first made a very
apparently good plan
and then they started
to slowly implement it
in whom do we need it
so
as I said
if it went well
you can always say
the plan worked well
but I believe at least
because you didn't hear it
how it worked at CD Projekt
at Cyberpunk
and also at the Witcher 3
if you're honest
I believe that in this long planning phase
it helped a lot
to manage this growth
my speculation
and probably the early access
we already discussed it at Witcher
and I think

we already talked about it
is by the Skate 3 AAA
so could you sort it out
and maybe you could say
in the genre it's probably
that it's coming
and here it's interesting
I mean we had discussed it
in the early podcast
or we discussed it in the background
whether this step
in the early access
was so clever
for a narrative role play
and so on
and the question is
would you be able to
bring it to this level
with the team
to get the attention
without these decisions
when I think back
it's interesting for me
to understand this step
what does a publisher do?
Does a publisher finance it?
They take care of the distribution
especially physical distribution
and they take care of marketing
in the moment where they go
in self-publishing
they have to take care of everything
they have to finance themselves
probably the funding is
as much as in Divinity 2
but probably the investment from Tencent
could be supported
that they slide into the financing
and then the topic of marketing
and I ask myself
how did they get it?
How did they get it
without the big

what does the publisher bring?
The network, the experience
the channels
and so on
and that's what I think
to understand
you could argue
that there are studies
that go into self-publishing
to get attention on the product
to engage the community
and so on
and that's interesting to understand
what's different here?
What's different is that
everything is with them
and that's of course
with a risk
but there is also a lot of freedom
because nobody talks to them
and then we come to
one of the most important
it will sound very annoying
but one of the most important points
in their marketing strategy
was this thing with the bear and sex
because that's
not as random as it looks
at the end of the stream
because that was the point
where the whole thing took up
a lot of traction
and I have
with the director of publishing
that's Michael Dawes
who is very active on Twitter
is there
he is called
and he is
he is quoted a lot
because he talks a lot
about publishing and game studios
and so on Twitter

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

but with him I have been
keeping up with him for a long time
and
he is a little bit
the spider in the net
when it comes to this whole marketing
and
I will never forget
how funny it was
there was this stream
where a lot went wrong
but at some point they got the stream back
and
with this scene with the bear and sex
they didn't do that for us
that was a surprise
for us in the live stream
and
how it all came about
there is a scene for people
who are not in it
there is a druid
who can have a companion
and a vampire
and with the games
you can decide
if you make a scratch
or if you play a character
and in that case
they controlled the vampire
he is in a laun
he meets the druids
and
they are hanging together
and the druid
is not
not a big spoiler
you can listen to it
the druid
lived a long time under bears
that is part of his past
and when he is born
he turns into a bear

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and
then he turns back
and says sorry, I'm sorry
sometimes that happens when the tribe and blah blah blah
you know I'm a druid
and then they gave the audience
the decision
how could you choose the dialogue
options
you prefer to be in your human form
or you could choose
something like
the bear
I like that
and they know their community
they know
how juicy the community can be
let's say
they like bears
that means
the whole audience was
a bear
and then we choose
and then the scene comes
but you can't see it
the vampire is lying on the back
the bear goes over
and then
the camera swings over
and you see an egg horn
holding a nut
and then
the nut falls
and looks like this
and
that's how it looks
and
because there were so many mistakes
the presentation was unusual
and I had to go to the toilet
and I said ok, now they're presenting
the collector's edition
and then I come back

and Michael Dawes
meets me on the floor
looks at me
Tiktok just tied us up for the bear sex
and grins
really wide and happy
and I was like
awesome, good for you
because it's clear to me
that this is the best thing that can happen
because of course I wrote
parallel to my team
Yo, Larian Studios was just
doing news for a scene of bear sex on Tiktok
and of course we weren't the only ones
who took it as news
because it's just a funny
good entertaining
news
that was anticipated
that there are
heads behind it
that understand social media
that understand viral hits
that also understand their community
which is very important
that they are all role-playing players
including Sven
they also have drags
and
that's all
it looks chaotic
but it's planned chaos
I think this part is super exciting
because
this part is super important
that you have pros there
if you go into this self-publishing
you really have to take it seriously
and I had read an interview
it had to be from 2012
they just started
with self-publishing

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

and Sven also told
that the topic of distribution
was super important
and marketing
and he said
it's not like that
it's marketing and community
that's the kicker
and I think we're talking about
10-11 years of experience
and the pros are probably sitting there
so it's not like
we're doing a bit of social media
but the people seem to be sitting there
saying we have a feeling
that we might get some cool content
and of course
Baldur's Gate still draws as a brand
in that case
it's a big brand
and that was the point
where I said
this game
I mentioned at the beginning
it was never planned as a coverage
and that was the moment where I planned it
all the content plans
for the year
and I said
we're going full on
the game has potential
I saw the news worked great
it went on social media
and that was
the kicker
where I said
we need everything
it doesn't matter if we planned
resources or not
we're planning everything
the editors are going on
I still have a free outro
and it was

for my team
but we didn't plan it
now it's a viral hit
and that really did a lot
that you
understand the game
and the publishing
and the reality
and that's what they do until today
you have to say
one of the stars for how they use
these voice actors
they still get them
in the studio
to record
just for social media
so that
the whole voice actors team
have recorded
so that they
can play Dungeons & Dragons
and produce something like that
which has also given memes
in the community
and that's really
a social media game
one of the stars
I have something very interesting
I wonder
how is the structural difference
with the big publishers
because you said
that you can talk privately
and so on
and we know that
with big news companies
this polished talk is really important
because when you say
three wrong things
and then in the main collection
there's the idea and they all say
sorry we don't extend your contract
but against Sven

no one can say that
he sits on the driver's seat
and then they can deal with it
because the CD project is
very well noted
but I think it's really exciting
because now you have a studio
that will be in the next iteration
of his games
always move up a bit
but we don't have this pressure
that we have to talk politely
because if we say three wrong things
the analysts will punish us
and then we have to finish the main collection
and you can still have
a bit more drive
to have someone in the industry
Valve is also in this direction
but they don't communicate that much
they don't communicate at all
unfortunately not
but that you can get a spin
that's really exciting
definitely
that's why I said earlier
Sven Finke is the central figure
when you look at how he
shows himself in the studio
in the community updates
when he sits around in his ride
he's like a big boy
and that makes him so nice
because he...
you also notice that he's not playing
he's just a nerd
he's the one who likes to play games
who likes fantasy and science fiction
that's why my secret hope is
to play a science fiction game
because we all know that sci-fi is better than fantasy
you have to keep that in mind
but he

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

he's the business leader
of this company
of us idiots
he made a video
about the Switch version
of Divinity Original Sin 2
where he says
now I can't play with my colleagues
the Switch version of Divinity
because my games are on Valve
on the servers
so I break into Valve
in a heist
which they also filmed in Seattle
he probably had a business term
and Clow brought
that to me
in my ritterism
and then you see
and it's a bit like
how it used to be with GameStar
with the Redaction or Raumschiff GameStar
not that it was produced
high-quality videos
but they were a bit... they were
even ironic, they were nerdy
and they were... I can say that
they were
there to show people that we are like you
we are like you
we are like
we are also like
we live half a day in Star Wars
or Header Ringe or whatever
or Spider-Man
I forgot to tell that
because in my interview
with him
I had an interview with him
we also had a little
I talked to him
for the first time
from person to person

a little bit closer
and
I asked him
for statistics
how...
how was the question again
something in the direction
what the statistics say
with what the players do
or something like that
because they collected a lot of data
from the Early Access
and then you sit with the CEO
you have to say that again
we can also agree
that CEOs in gaming companies
normally have a different role
than he is now
and you sit there
on a park bench
they brought us out
sitting on a park bench
you sit around the atmosphere
I don't look at the data
I have other people for that
because that will limit me
in my creative freedom
so if I knew
that the content was only 0,001%
then I would
think as a CEO
and I don't want that
because he is very deep
in this creative process
and says no, I want to have my game
that even if 0,001%
only see this content
then there should still be cinematic
there should still be a quest
so that the game is also meaningful
because we talked a lot about it
about the bad
bad play through

and
how to make the perfect bad run
that was the idea behind the interview
but it got a little deeper
about such content
in principle
because he said
no, a lot of this business
also
there are people for that
so I assume that
he will look at it as a CEO
and of course will make business decisions
or maybe he will do that with his wife
with her 8%, I don't know
but seriously, no
I just want to develop a game
and make good games
I don't know a studio where it is
with the CEO
at least no studio in this size
it is a typical indie
in indie studios it is like that
but not in studios with 400 people
and I think that is also an elementary
difference to the CD project
which was led by Marcin Iwinski
but for a long time
until recently he listened to it
but Marcin Iwinski
likes to be a gamer
but he is more of a businessman
he built the CD project
as a publisher in Poland
where funny enough another parallel
is Solarian because
the CD project was published
Baldur Skate
in Poland
they translated it into Polish
with professional actors
it was a great success
and that's how they arrived

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

at BioWare, at Interplay
and not only did they get
the Aurora engine
from BioWare for later The Witcher
but they were
at least allowed to develop
a PC version, a PC implementation
at CD project
Baldur Skate Dark Alliance
which was the console publisher
on the Playstation 2
it never appeared
but over this Baldur Skate Dark Alliance
there are other people
among others
Adam Bardowski
and Adam Bardowski is one of the key figures
of the Witcher series
which is about game design and vision
but Marcin Iwinski
was always a CEO
and Sven Finkel
of course he had to be a businessman
because he leads a million heavy companies
so it's not that
Solarian just
pushes a few euros
but he
said he has a finance team
that takes care of the financial things
I still meet the creative decisions
and I mean
let's imagine the dystopia
if Andrew Wilson would meet
the creative decisions at Electronic Arts
if Bobby Kotick would meet
the creative decisions at Activision
what would we get for games?
just sales
or mathematics
exactly
so
because

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

he is the CEO
who has the creative vision
he is the one
who can learn business models
and imagine that
with a publisher in your neck
and you sit there
and say
even if it's going to be expensive
to make this cinematic
we make it
because it's important
which publisher would say
or as a cashier
do we really need
this
a mega pompous cut
for the three people
who might say it's a bit exaggerated
or like with the bear sex
brand safe
is also an important word
it can be
that the publisher says
it's too unsafe
yes
I mean you can't make a picture of it
even though
with Original Sin 1
and 2
it was already very good
you can't make a picture of it
how risky a project is
like Baldur's Gate 3
despite the big market Dungeons & Dragons
you make a single player
ok with co-op but still
single player role play
iso perspective
with round based fights
a cinematic staging
which is much more resource-oriented
than with other classic role play

that was based on text
which was also with Original Sin
that was text
and plus
all this playful variability
that you have to develop
a whole mountain full of things
that people might not see
if I don't have this one relationship
with the bear sex
I never see a thousand other things
in the game
if I just go for it
it's a game again and again
logically
but
that has to be
for a classic publisher
the reddest cloth ever
if you say
ok 50% of the work in the game
flows into things that many people
probably won't see
and that's what they do
that's their business
and to get that through a publisher
would be
not impossible
of course you would have
found someone who said
ok I see
it would be cool but
it would be extremely difficult
and in the position of electronic arts
I can't imagine that the words
single player, pan and paper rules
round based fights, isometric perspectives
and things to develop
that many people won't see
in one sentence
and I have
an important element
not only in the process of development

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

the freedom to have
but also to have the upside down
that means now there is more money left
and more money left
also means financial possibilities
and I think that part is super important
we know
that a lot of game development
is incredibly dependent on project financing
publisher financing and so on
and that also makes a lot of pressure
then you might look at what is going on
on the market, you make a
arena shooter
or something like that
but the financial possibilities
to say the next project we can definitely do
we already have the financial possibilities
we can finance it
and so on
I think that brings in the spin
that you can stay calm in the process
and not
I think that was
interesting in the older interviews
with Sven
that he was already very frustrated
when you do all the work
then the publisher comes
then pushes the game out as early as you wanted
he also changed it 13 times in the process
and in the end
the money stays with me
then someone else gets it
and that's really exciting
there's no publisher
and on the other hand they don't have middleware
that's their own engine
they don't have to press Unreal
that's the only thing that remains
and that makes it interesting
to understand
what Tencent has in influence

not even the negative influence
but
you can imagine Tencent
is a big publisher
they can help him
with science, networks
or are they just invested
because they say that with Baldur's Gate 3
that's a good thing
that's a very good question
I think Tencent would have
already made a new update
we already did a podcast about Tencent
but there are many new developments
what Tencent is about
I have a theory about it
but I want to start at the end
because it has to do with the future of Larian
yes
cliffhanger
I can start at this point
because we always talk about money
and project financing
what we at least know
can't be exact
but from the statements of Larian
and from others
are the sales figures
since the original Sin
Sven said in the talk on the GDC
sold himself 2.5 million times
which is pretty great
for a game
they also saw that
and worked well
and then sold 2.5 million
Divinity Original Sin 2
that's what Sven said
he sold himself about 3 times
like the first part
which means at least 7.5 million times
which is pretty good
that applies to the platform

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

because they also released console versions
interesting for the console versions
back then
in contrast to Baldur's Gate 3
they worked with publishers
for physical
console versions
data carriers in boxes
were
but were
on the console market
everything was important
the digital market with Steam
was not that big
with the Playstation Store
Xbox Store
I only have Xbox Game in my head
where Microsoft sells games
they weren't that big
that's why you need physical versions
that's why you need
a publisher who can produce the boxes
who can press the whole thing on data carriers
who can give the whole thing to the market
Contact has too many big dealers
who then distribute it to the electronic markets
and and and
they used to have publishers
now at Baldur's Gate 3 they don't have any more
that's why Baldur's Gate 3 only
is available on the consoles
there are no physical versions
of Baldur's Gate 3 anymore
because they just didn't want
this publishing partner
plus because the digital
sales on the consoles
got a lot of push
because of this annoying pandemic
in the last years
you can't forget
by the way the pandemic
in an interview

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

of Baldur's Gate 3
was a creative exchange
that's why they came out
a year later
as planned
they were already
in the year 2022
and where we are
we didn't even scratch that
that they were
very smart again
what their marketing is
or the whole publishing strategy
without publishers
to present their release
so they were
so you really have to say
Genie Streich
was originally planned
exactly on the same day
more or less as Starfield
and Starfield is a big role
very big competitor
and the console release
it stayed the same
it came
that's it
that was
so smart again
but we'll stay with the PC release
the PC release
was released a month ago
and that's the only thing that's left
and they went viral
and were on TikTok
and I was too big
then there were the first news
where everyone said
the game is really cool
and something special
that means new people bought it
then the news came
oh by the way we're coming on the same day

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

on the consoles as Starfield
Starfield exclusive on the Xbox
but only on the PS5
how it
finally goes on
with the Xbox release
and that was
by the way, PS5 players
we know you don't get this other big role
because
that's now exclusive on Microsoft
it's coming to us on PS5
so that's exactly
the whole strategy
that it was targeted again
we'll come on the same day
and that was a fight
that's
I really had it before the podcast
that was good
because they went over this digital
distribution only
otherwise a month earlier
and then the whole trade would have said
what the hell are you doing? we planned
and then the trade is clean
and then it doesn't work
but because they went through this digital step
they could probably push it pretty fast
and that with Sony is of course mega smart
that's really the Q
I don't care what's coming
the Q of the year
was to put this release on the PC
and with that
to control the strikes
the whole August
and then Starfield comes
and suddenly this huge
Bethesda role plays
that usually
of course sells well
and the gamepass runs well

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

so we don't have to worry about Bethesda
but suddenly it's like
and
to have self-confidence
to do that
and that it worked
at the end
and gave them this wind
drive again
that would be remarkable
but that's reflected in the sales numbers
of the Jason Schreier from Blueberg
sorry
from the Blueberg
Jason Schreier once reported
that she had over 2.5 million sales
in the early access
so that's calculated
by a sales price of 60 euros
then that's 150 million
turnover
of which 30% go to Valve
but still 105 million
for larian alone
already good to continue
to finance
so alone 2.5 million
sales
in the early access
and then the belgian message
from all the unlikely places
on earth
the belgian message in China
released after two weeks
a statement
a message published on Weibo
the chinese twitter
where they said
now we are at 5.2 million
sales for Baldur's Gate 3
because they wanted to do advertising
for larian
you must have heard

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

from Baldur's Gate 3
when you come from belgian
5.2 million sales
within two weeks
probably early access
but you see
it was successful
what they did
they were probably only 25%
if you get over 10 million
revenue then it's only 25%
a little more cool
stayed
and xbox is still
even more
xbox
maybe for everyone who doesn't know
yes it still comes
there was the problem
that microsoft actually demands
in its publishing status
that players on the xbox series s
and on the xbox series x
so the stronger console
have to be similar to the features
that they offer
and on the series s they got the co-op
modus from Baldur's Gate 3
it just ruckled
it was reasonable
but they also offered it on the split screen
and that's just a decision
because Sven Finke is the creative lead
because he says he's having so much fun
playing with his wife in the couch co-op
that his game also has to have a couch co-op
there's no other reason
that he thinks it's nice
and that's why
they couldn't afford it
but to the point
they were so focused
what pc sales

they got on the gamescom
with Phil Spencer
and on the gamescom
they sold it
we'll make a video for you
on the gamescom
I met some of them
coincidence
tell me
how does it look
that
all the dlc politics
or the definitive edition
and everyone who already has it
have you
a look at
why don't you monetize it
you could monetize it
I think
that's part of my
core thesis
to which a lot of you
have already discussed
that they have
expanded the success factors
for games
which we have discussed a few times
the success factors
for the vice president
of amazon games
are actually three
team, tech and ip
team means
you need an experienced group
who has already released
a game together
or at least where the leadership
has already worked together
because the release is exhausting
there can be a lot going wrong
there comes an inexperienced team
there is a lot going on
there is a lot going on

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

so it is always valuable
when an experienced team
is together
tech means
people need to know the technology
and the tools to work
in the case of larian the divinity engine
now 4.0
but with the work since
2012
they already have a lot of experience
with ip
the brand is quite small
it is strong enough
and the factor about which
they are increasing
and that is the very important
why I say all that is not a coincidence
the success you have is
community
and to community
that is what larian already said
permanent community updates
permanent around the world
24 hours community
it belongs to the fast patches
that they can publish
then the studio in europe
starts to work on the patch
then sends it to canada
when the people are there
in the qa from the qa in canada
then continues to malaysia
to the studio in koala lumpur
to work on the feedback
then from koala lumpur goes back to belgium
maybe again and then it is published
and it has been working 24 hours
all the time
that is why they can quickly
publish patches
they changed the epilogue
for a companion in the game

they made new language recordings
they just patched it
on the feedback base
as soon as possible
they just came with their studio network
and made the entry into the mess
very quickly
yes, his majesty is dirty again
the cat in a guesthouse
you will know why
and it belongs to me
and it used to belong to cd
they don't let their games
alone
there was from divinity original sin
the enhanced edition
there was the definitive edition
of original sin 2
and now there will be a
enhanced edition
with a lot of security
or a definitive edition
or as always it is called
improved version
and that they make it free
for people who already have the game
and now this fan service
exactly this community builder
what maybe
if you think about it
not the profit maximization
because they could
demand money for it
but they collect goodwill
I would say
it is also
and in this case
especially if you really
experienced the people
and of course you can only live
if you want
you can look at it very cynically
and say yes

everything is always dark
but if you are directly
with the people and especially
like Sven
sees his knight and clappers
and you talk to him
you have a nice chat
with him, like I said
about life in the big family
and when he is standing
and says profit maximization
that is not my main goal
I want to make cool games
I believe him
I just believe him
and he also has a team
to collect them
he also proved it
he also proved it
he also proved it
even if I speak with the other leaders
or if you are now also
from the publishing director
Michael Dausser
when you follow his twitter
what I know
but also there
you often find very critical statements
against publishers
or games companies
who only go on profit maximization
and therefore just think very briefly
and
not create such a healthy
holistic system
which is also
more or less
CD Projekt Red and so on
but what is also unusual
is that people sometimes work there
because in game development
you often have that
when a big project is completed

then people will leave
then maybe you don't need so many developers
then maybe you don't need so many people
in marketing or something like that
and they have
as far as I can see from the outside
no high fluctuation
sometimes people who are already
at the beginning of the studio
who are now already
Divinity
2
were also there
for example the publishing director
he was already a publishing director for Divinity 2
and it is still for Baldur's Gate
and
that's just a lot of years
in such a company
which is not necessarily the norm
I'll say
which is also a good job
definitely
and what this community aspect is
Sven also said in an interview
on the official Dungeons & Dragons
YouTube channel
a core
of their teams
how they look at their games
or a
a property that they all have
Valarian is player empathy
so empathy for players
that they always want to know
what people think
about our game
he says himself, I want to keep people
I'm pissed with myself
and with what we have created
when it's not the case
when something is broken
when people say it's boring

and I just found
this stroke word player empathy so nice
that I would play at this point
that all publishers
immediately promote
the head of player empathy
that a position is made
that people look
ok, how do people look
at us
and why don't they
want to look at us
I have to laugh
because I'm sure
that in some of the business reports
Activision or EA
our values are player empathy
in addition to live time
monetization
you remember the EA
you remember the EA business report
in which we would
monetize a little bit
but we would like to monetize
but then these players and players
get on the roof
with empathy
and a smiling money
from the pocket
that's right
it's also
to make it even more interesting
for everyone
who followed the Baldur's Gate
it's not like
there is no criticism
it was
a buggy and still
they also have a lot to repair
it's also that
there are complaints about
that the third act feels
that the Oberstadt is missing

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

from Baldur's Gate
from which Sven Winkes
in a community update swarmed
this really great
and the architecture style
of this beautiful palace in Oberstadt
that's a real highlight
the game however
is in Oberstadt
but only as a linear show place
for the final battle
for the showdown
and that's very strange
because there is a Krönungstadt
in Baldur's Gate
but it's not in Herzog's Palace
which would be in Oberstadt
but in the fortress Wurmfels
where it doesn't belong
there was a Krönungsseremonie in Baldur's Gate 1
which is of course in Herzog's Palace
where you just Krönung
but it's not in there
because the Oberstadt is missing
and there is
a companion
who also feels that the end of his story is missing
or at least another act of his story is missing
would
they are building the epilogue
which will be told in the end
about the fate of the companion
but at least with one figure you notice
there is something in the eye
with the others
you can't go to the Oberstadt
but only to a show place
without being able to explore
or you think
it's not what you would expect
in such a game
but at the same time
you have played 80 to 120 hours

and then to say
there is still something missing
or more than 150
when you turn each stone
it's always strange to say
there is something missing
there are also data miners
who have found things
the third act is of course
the biggest
I'm in the beginning
and at the beginning you already notice
that it's a bit of a performance
that it's a bit of a hakeleger
but as I said
the first and the second act are tested
until you go alone
and there was the third one
and I have
the third one
maybe another 150 hours
and who knows
I'm not going to start
a single other game
as long as I haven't finished it
whatever
but from many others
who have passed me
I have also heard
ending a bit
already satisfying
but a bit scary
and not very happy with it
but I don't know
how you say it
I already have 150 hours
and there is so much love
to the detail
alone that I play a druid
and when I turn into a animal
and that's an animation
when I go up and down
with an owl bear

alone that's something
you don't see in other games
let's take Diablo 4
I think Diablo 4 is a good Diablo
I liked playing it
there were some problems
but when you are on a horse
there is a teleportation
if you go down a ladder
then teleport your horse with it
because you run the gate
the horse also rides down the stairs
if you have a horse in the theory
those are little things
after 150 hours there are always things
where I think
there are deep details
and if it's a stupid stairs animation
yes
Diablo 4 was not in Early Access
it was only the first one
but Act 2 was a little more linear
than the first one
and definitely more linear than the third
and the second one is also the biggest
the first one was definitely bigger
than the second one
by the way, it's getting bigger
what brings the future?
that's the decisive question
which we can only answer
speculatively
but it was also the decisive question
CD Projekt has always become more ambitious
in the projects that you have packed
up to Cyberpunk 2077
which had the problems
when releasing
especially on the old consoles
but also on all platforms
we know because they are just so grown
that they
have grown

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

where you also hear
and where we also briefly talked about the podcast
with Miles
there were also
problems that their teams
did not inform constantly
that the communication was not working well
that feedback from the teams
was not taken correctly and continued
this whole structure
that actually has to exist
especially in such a large studio
with 700-800 people
was simply not there
I have to point out
we suspected all of that in our podcast
when we did the analysis
I also saw last time
a docu about CD Projekt
and we also talked about
the problem was the game development
the agile development
versus waterfall development
we also suspected all of that
and now the question
larian seems to have
better processes in control
there is no crunch
and now the question
where are you going?
Sven already said
there is a possibility
that the universe will remain
not 100% unlikely
that there will be an original scene 3
but only in many years
so now they will continue
with Baldur's Gate 3
and maybe a kind of DLC
if it is integrated
into the existing campaign
and not afterwards
because afterwards the heroes will become so powerful

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

in this D&D rule system
what I would like to talk to you about
I will not take over with your next project
but also
if you make a new project
no matter what it is
and it is flopped
are you out of the window?
yes because
I once did a milk girl
and I was thinking
450 people
full cost
5000 euros
you are relatively fast at 27 million
in the month that you have a cost
of 5 years
then it is 135 million
let's say
Baldur's Gate brings in so much
that you can say that it is easy
that it is flopped
but if the next thing is not stamped
it will be the next thing
of course
the cost rate is of course
450 employees
and one project
critical
so you probably have to
do Divinity 3
and
then make a second franchise
or a DLC
you have to do that
you have to make a difference
because otherwise
one thing if it kills you
and I mean they made several games before
they were smaller
but with the size
we are also at CD Projekt
one project alone

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

can take the risk
of not carrying such a big studio
they are currently setting
people on
I saw on LinkedIn
they are looking for
developers
and on Twitter the publishing director
wrote something
also because of
not advertising
but what is it again
thank you
they also made a few shout outs
but from
now again officially
I had seen
they just want to continue
because I did not get anything from the release
there were no news at all
I just see the publishing sites
yes and that makes
this thing with the release
I mean it is a special topic
it is a bit in the industry
and so on
but we have the situation
that it is not the case with Lara
that the sales fall down
but if everyone builds up
it is of course very nice
for them it is running very well
that means they could build up
but the risk
is of course
now it does not fall
down on three people
but now the fall will be deeper
because of course
I would also see pressure as the main risk
just pressure from the outside
because they are now absolutely
celebrated

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

today really researched
again thought about
where there are points now
from the game itself
okay third act and so on
maybe not so cool but I thought
where are they actually accessible
what could you miss
and I actually did not find anything
so with the view from the outside
how it looks internally you don't know
but the pressure is incredibly big
because they were now also
celebrated after the murder
and they have now shown it all
and then there was this meme
that other publishers said
yes something like that
we can not do
and that is an absolute exception
and so where the communities
also get on the roof and say
yes they can do it why not you
there is now a
so quasi such
maybe there could also be
a kind of never meet your hero syndrome
or something like that
it's just not in the scope of Baldur's Gate 3
or put the chips on it
or take over again
maybe come again
structural problems so they can
no longer do it so secretly because
now they are in the mouth now they are known
now they had this huge mark
now the people look more closely on it and
like this one already had the feeling
the first of the early access
in the four years he was a bit secretly
very connected
the own community and so
everything is very cozy and

that is also quickly gone when the success
is there so that I see it as
a very big risk factor
Yes, I don't think
that's such a smart idea, I didn't even think about it
but of course if you are
put on such a pedestal
from the outside and said okay
that's the gold standard
currently for at least
classic role-playing
yes then you can only very difficult
say that our next game will be smaller
and then so not only surface smaller
but somehow less ambitious
a bit back we don't need
it doesn't work
you have the structure with your
a lot of employees so
there is a return
from success
even if you would see it, it doesn't
go so far, that's not a
interesting question, it's generally a
interesting question so principally
of course but
yes
the creative spirit
also goes away a bit
then maybe you are
more in such an industrial
production, such an economic logic
let's better see
how we get such a middle thing
and so how it has
heard is that
they are always a bit
I grew up
look at the story, it was always
high ambition and so on
so the question is
and I would say
goals

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

you can set yourself on different levels
now it's just a goal
you have an extremely
classic role-playing game
and maybe it's the next goal
to work on it in a different way
so not the next iteration
of the same game
but say Divinity 3 plus
one thing where you say that
the company is on a creative level
I honestly think
as long as Sven Finke
keeps the cycle in his hand
it won't happen so fast
because
the long-term is to do the same
quickly
this conversation
we had
he said
Baldur's Gate 3 was with the moment
where he was
on the GDC
last time
and there they also had
Baldur's Gate
on the PS5
in an interview
he said
the project is now closed
I can't think about it
I probably won't play it
and now I need something new
he's such a guy
and the logical step
for him would be
Baldur's Gate 4
but when you think
very convincingly
we do 4
and maybe make another project
but they won't do it

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

because it will be more important
to build their own market
Divinity Universe
and I really appreciate Sven
he doesn't have a publisher
but now I need something
and if it's going to be the sci-fi game
he's a science fiction fan
it can be good
that we get a sci-fi
Yes, imagine an open world
game in a sci-fi game
in an ego perspective
where you can see different characters
Yes
if he's bored
maybe he does it with Gabe Newell
and they do this brain-machine
interface and then you make role-playing games
in the fantasy
I think
I can imagine that
computer games are always bored
you have to grow out of yourself
because Gabe Newell is always
bored with computer games
He also plays
and he also tells
he plays Magia
because there are so many different possibilities
and he likes to think about problems
and how to solve them creatively
Yes
Good
I think
the whole technology part
is a risk factor
because
you have a different engine
but the Divinity Engine
is very locked
on isometric party role-playing games
that we love

but you can't say
let's take the Divinity Engine
and make it a great shooter
as a small project
it's not ideal for that
you can always change it
or there are enough other engines
but at least the engine
with which you know
you have developed cool and other things
for your games
it's more or less fixed on a genre
not optimal
because who knows
when you make the next project
how popular is the isometric party role-playing game
in 5-10 years?
I also thought that
genres change with time
we know that in the 90s
the genre was huge
then it was completely gone
and I think your success was
when the classic role-playing game
was no longer represented
and you came back with it
and the question is
if you set yourself on a genre
that's a huge risk
but they made this Drachen-plane-game
that wasn't an isometric thing
I don't want to go back
that's the one risk factor
I think the second risk factor
is because
it's so important
Sven himself
because if he doesn't want to go on
anymore
we don't want to wish him
he should stay healthy
but there can be moments in life
that can bring you to say

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

I can't do it anymore
from healthy reasons
from other family reasons
it can always be something
what if he can't go on
as the central figure of this company
it wouldn't mean that Larian will close
but he would have to
at least think that he would sell his shares
and now
this is my thesis
here it is
Tencent buys
in Holdings
with individual
or family members
to be able to take over
these Holdings
if these family or individual people
don't want to go on anymore
or don't want to live anymore
because that's at Uesoft
Tencent is also involved
in this family property
it's at Larian's case
Tencent has to
just sit and wait
the flow is patient
where you have to say
that's a huge risk
you see it in Germany with the family
and the next generation
that the transition works well
is super critical
but what is Tencent's plan
maybe we don't know
the transition
that's why Tencent is in peace
and we are able to keep Larian's creative
juice on the right
we have to think about it
Tencent is now at the beginning of the 50's
a game cycle

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

we are sitting there for about 5 years
if you make such a game in the big order
like a
Baldur's Gate
how many games do you want to make
when we
go from this 5 years time
there are up to 60 games
there are already 2 games
if it stays with the best health
I think up to 70, 80
or so we'll get to that
it also looks very healthy
that's true
it looks very fit
but the question
I already asked
there were other songs
I looked at them
and thought
could someone come as a successor
maybe someone who already has
a backhand
I think it will be important
that the spirit will be carried on
it depends on who you are
what kind of knowledge transfer
will be given
I can't imagine
that there will be any kind of
emergency plan
if he would get
some kind of problems
or from tomorrow
we all don't want that to happen
I can't imagine that there will be
no emergency plan
because I think it's important
for him that everything is
important from the heart
and his people are important
you can also notice that
in this old docu

where he also said
yes, and then he sat there
and couldn't pay 30 people
you notice that
that's already bothering him
and I think if you are such a guy
there is almost never a plan
especially with the company
and now comes the special
I also work with private equity
and you can't imagine how many meetings
I sit and then some manager says
but what if he will drive from the car
then we are blank
that's a standard sentence
the company has 100 companies
hope can be
there are people who are hard to translate
what I wanted to say
what is important is that
the company culture has been built
and then maybe you can only hope
that people take the rudder
in their hands who don't care
the second rig is important
I think it's super important
but I mean, they are now going the way
they made this crazy jump
I mean, what is my time
in 2015
40 people
and seven years later 450
we have 10 of them
and I think
we will play on a different level
in a different league
then pull up structures
and of course at some point
you have to say I have to
build up the next leading rig
and maybe not anymore
to be directly involved in the games
but then see that we have two or three projects

running at the same time
and do a little bit like Ubisoft
more or less, right?
Yes, how many do it
like for example Pharaes
where Sid Meier is
the great guru
where they also said
we will give new civilisation games
to a new generation
also a new designer
so that they can try out
and that we will simply pull back growth
for this position
I think at this point one thing is super important
not to work on a single game
but to achieve a culture
and decision structure
so that people
have a higher value
than economic decisions
that can make a good leading role
and this spirit keeps people
who really say
even if it's just 0, what was 0%
we have to do that
because it's in the game
that the work has it
and that's what we're here for
and I think that's probably
the next construction work
when we say it's done
now you can take the next step
to achieve this culture
of layers and the idea of game development
knowledge transfer
with your own house, your own engines
is also very important
I mean World of Warcraft is another case
because in games it's a service game
which goes on and on
but they also have problems
because there are some people

who know this mega old engine
and that's always a risk
when you have your own house
tools and products
where you also have
exactly this factor
and that also comes
in more companies than your favorite
that do their own thing
there's this one guy
who's been working in the company for 50 years
who knows what you have to do
and it's a critical tool
for the whole company
and that's a house engine
so knowledge transfer
is also very important
So what would happen to the game
Yes, I don't care about the idea
that's what Larian is doing
to this incredibly
exciting
construct
because you have
they are so strong
because they have a strong
central figure with Sven
because they have someone
who is also in the position
to reject things that don't fit him
to reject business models that don't fit him
but at the same time
there's a big risk
when this figure is no longer there
and where you saw it a bit
why this is a problem
was Paradox
Paradox had a very strong
business leader
in Fred Wester
who made many good decisions
at the time
he pulled Mountain Blade for her

[Transcript] GameStar Podcast / Mittelfinger an die AAA-Industrie: Baldur's Gate 3 war kein Zufall

among others
he brought this company
to the strong growth
I don't like it anymore
I just wanted to do something else
I don't want to
I was dissolved
and then suddenly it didn't go as well
until his successor
had to be dissolved again
he was taken back
because they just saw
Oh no, without him the company is in crisis
and that's the biggest strategic dilemma
you can put in
that you say oh my god
that this one person is so important
What are we going to do if there's no more of them?
Can we not answer in the case of Larian?
But that makes the future exciting.
Larian, I have to say, at this point I have to admit it openly.
I have said before, Sven Finke often changes with the boss of Triumph Studios,
because they come from the Netherlands and Netherlands and the famous part of Belgium and so
on.
I'm just out there, I can't get any further.
That's not going to happen again.
I've never had Larian so much on the screen.
I have to admit it.
Even in the original sense, not so much.
Never as an exciting studio.
Now I have you on the screen, friends.
And now I'm really excited to see what they're going to do and how they're going to do it.
Sauron's Eye is set on you, on the edge in Belgium.
And then we'll see exactly how it's going to go with them.
And how they're going to expand their strength.
How they're going to expand their community.
And how they're going to do it.
At this point I say thank you both.
That was a great...
It got a little longer when I had planned the talk.
Thank you.
Yes, thank you very much for taking the time and telling and organizing.
It was a great joy.

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And of course thank you to all of you who watched and listened to us this time.
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A subscription is always good.
Bye.