Finding Aid to the
David Jaffe Papers, 1997-1999, 2017-2018

Summary Information

Title: David Jaffe papers

Creator: David Jaffe (primary), Parham Gholami (secondary)

ID: 118.10879

Date: 1997-1999, 2017-2018 (inclusive)

Extent: 15.2 GB

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: The David Jaffe papers are a digital collection of two games developed by game industry veteran David Jaffe. Files relate to two cancelled projects: "Dark Guns" for Sony PlayStation (1997-1999) and "VBL" for PlayStation 4 (2017-2018).

Repository:
Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
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Rochester, New York 14607
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Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, he has given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Conditions Governing Access: At this time, digital files in this collection related to game development (including game builds and/or prototypes) are limited to on-site researchers only. It is possible that certain formats may be inaccessible or restricted. Please see The Strong's Digital Games Files Access Policy.

Custodial History: The David Jaffe papers were donated to The Strong in January 2019 as a gift of Parham Gholami. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 118.10879 and were received from Gholami via digital transfer.

Preferred citation for publication: David Jaffe papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: Julia Novakovic, June 2020

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Gholami, Parham
- Jaffe, David
- Kononelos, Nick
- Riccio, Michael

Corporate Names
- 989 Studios (Firm)
- Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency (Firm)
- Sony Computer Entertainment
- Sony Interactive Entertainment, Inc.

Subjects
- Dark Guns (Video game)
- Game design and development
- Sony PlayStation video games
- Sony video games
- The Last Days of Planet Earth (Video game)
- Tornado Ball (Video game)
- VBL (Video game)
- Video games--Specimens

Biographical Note
David Scott Jaffe is an American video game designer, best known for the *God of War* and *Twisted Metal* franchises.

Jaffe worked as a game designer and director at Sony Computer Entertainment America for more than a decade. In 2007, he and Scott Campbell co-founded company Eat Sleep Play, Inc., which entered into an exclusive platform deal with Sony. In 2012, Jaffe left Eat Sleep Play to pursue other projects. He established the Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency in 2013; the studio's initial product, *Drawn to Death*, was released for the PS4 in 2017. Bartlet Jones closed down in 2018 following the cancellation of its latest project ("VBL").

As of 2020, Jaffe continues to be involved in the video game industry and hosts various video game live streams on Twitch.

Collection Scope and Content Note
The David Jaffe papers are a digital collection of text documents, graphic files, moving images, game prototypes, and other digital materials relating to two unreleased projects, "Dark Guns" (also called "The Last Days of Planet Earth") and "VBL" (or "Tornado Ball"). Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The David Jaffe papers are arranged into two series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The digital files are accessible on-site at The Strong.

System of Arrangement
  Series I: "Dark Guns," 1997-1999
  Series II: "VBL," 2017-2018
      Subseries A: Office documents
      Subseries B: Concept art
      Subseries C: Game builds
      Subseries D: Videos

Contents List

Series I: "Dark Guns," 1997-1999

> **Scope and Content Note:** This series holds a playable executable file and a video playthrough of the cancelled project "Dark Guns" (also called "The Last Days of Planet Earth"), designed and produced by David Jaffe. These materials are from between 1997 and 1999. (Files in this series are only accessible on-site at The Strong.)

> **Historical Note:** Following the success of his game *Twisted Metal 2* in 1996, David Jaffe received the greenlight from Sony to develop a new action game. The original concept—a third-person shooter—morphed into a "flying shooter" game called "Dark Guns," in which players controlled a UFO to destroy cities and abduct humans. (According to Jaffe, before production on the game even began, the team went through three substantial game design documents and spent a significant amount of money on concept art.) After four years, the game was ultimately cancelled by Sony, and Jaffe went on to design another *Twisted Metal* title, followed by the first of many games in the popular *God of War* series.

Digital-I

Folder 1   **Folder 01_ROM** [2 files] [Note: On-site access only.]
              Contains "DARKGUNS.BIN" and "DARKGUNS.CUE" [playable prototype], c. 1997-1999

Folder 2   **Folder 02_Video** [1 file]
- "Dark Guns – Complete" - .mp4 (58:24) [playthrough of "The Last Days of Planet Earth"/ "Dark Guns" for Sony PlayStation], 1999

Series II: "VBL," 2017-2018

> **Scope and Content Note:** In this series are text documents, graphic files, game builds, software tools, wireframe mockups, videos, and other digital materials related to the cancelled game "VBL" (also called "Tornado Ball"), designed by Jaffe and other staff members at the Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency game studio. These materials are from 2017 and 2018. (Some files in this series are only accessible on-site at The Strong.)

> **Historical Note:** After the release of their first title, *Drawn to Death* (2017), the Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency focused on a second project: an original, multiplayer sports game tentatively titled "Tornado Ball" (also called "VBL"). In the game, players on two teams would use powerful gusts of air from industrial-powered vacuums to move a giant metal ball around an arena, trying to score goals against their opponents; players would also be equipped with jetpacks in order to fly around the arena. Bartlet Jones worked with SIE San Diego Studio to develop a prototype in Unity, later creating a more advanced graphical model in the Unreal Engine. The title was cancelled while in pre-production in 2018, shortly before the closure of the Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency.

> **Subseries A: Office documents**
> **Scope and Content Note:** This subseries houses some office documentation from the Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency game studio, as well as documents related to the development of "VBL." Project materials include production plans, scheduling information, focus test notes, player feedback, a research report, and more.

Digital-IIA

Folder 1   **Folder 01_Administration** [3 files]
- "01. Bartlet Org Chart Nov2017" - .xlsx [organizational chart, Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency], 2017
- "02. 2018 Studio Holiday Calendar" - .PDF [company holiday calendar for payroll], n.d. [c. 2017-2018]
- "03. Close List" - .docx [outline for closing Bartlet Jones Supernatural Detective Agency], n.d. [February 2018]

Folder 2   **Folder 02_VBL documents**
01_Design [7 files]
> Contains 7 files (.docx and .xlsx) [production plans, screen flow documents, technical design plans, module ideas], c. 2017-2018

02_Production and scheduling [4 files]
> Contains 4 files (.docx and .xlsx) [production and planning information], c. 2017-2018

03_Sony focus tests [15 files]
> Contains 15 files (various) [focus test notes, specific player feedback, research report], 2017

Subseries B: Concept art
Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds digital artwork for various concepts and game details for "VBL," including scenery (arenas), characters (robots and models), logos, and more.

Digital-IIB

Folder 1   **Folder 01_Arena** [43 files]
Contains 43 .PNG files [various VBL arena concepts and mock-ups], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 2   **Folder 02_Art styles** [4 files]
Contains 4 .JPG files [art concepts of VBL robots], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 3   **Folder 03_Cannon** [1 file]
Contains 1 .JPG file [various designs for in-game cannons], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 4   **Folder 04_Character** [22 files]
Contains 22 .JPG files [various character concepts], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 5   **Folder 05_Helmet** [4 files]
Contains 4 .JPG files [various helmet concepts], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 6   **Folder 06_Logos** [3 files]
Contains 3 files (.PNG and .SVG) [VBL logo concepts], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 7   **Folder 07_Model** [8 files]
Contains 8 files (various) [modeling for robot concepts], n.d. [c. 2017]

Folder 8   **Folder 08_Outsourced art** [28 files]
Contains 28 .JPG files [various arena concepts and sign designs], 2017-2018

Subseries C: Game builds
Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains game builds, applications, wireframes, and screenshots for "VBL." (Some files in this subseries are only accessible on-site at The Strong.)

Digital-IIC

Folder 1   **Folder 01_Builds** [Note: On-site access only.]
01_PC (Unity Prototype)
Contains "BallControl.exe" application, n.d. [c. 2017]
02_PS4
Contains 3 development/ship applications for PS4, 2018

Folder 2   **Folder 02_Screenshots** [8 files]
Contains 8 .JPG files [screenshots from VBL], 2018

Folder 3   **Folder 03_Tools** [Note: On-site access only.]
Contains "BTPanoCreate.exe" application, 2018

Folder 4   **Folder 04_UI Wireframes** [Note: On-site access only.]
Contains 3 zipped folder of wireframes [Axure, Balsamiq, HTML], 2018

Subseries D: Videos

Scope and Content Note: This subseries holds video files relating to "VBL," including game mock-ups, teaser trailers, prototype gameplay, and more. (Of particular interest may be the pitch video, which explains more about the game design process for "Tornado Ball.")

Digital-IID

Folder 1   **Folder 01_Cinematics** [8 files]
                Contains 8 files (.AVI and .MP4) [mock-up clips and teaser trailers], 2017-2018

Folder 2   **Folder 02_Gameplay** [1 file]
                Contains 1 .MP4 files [video of prototype gameplay], 2018

Folder 3   **Folder 03_Pitch** [1 file]
                Contains 1 .MP4 file [video pitch with David Jaffe and Nick Kononelos for "Tornado Ball"], n.d. [2017-2018]

Folder 4   **Folder 04_Tests** [7 files]
                Contains 7 files (various) [prototype gameplay video clips], n.d. [2017-2018]