

# Lone Wolf Ksatria

**Joe Dever** is the creator of the bestselling Lone Wolf adventure books and novels, including the character of Lone Wolf and the world of Magnamund. He wrote the books which formed the basis for the computer game *Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark*, and also worked as a consultant for the game with the games developer Ksatria Gameworks.

*Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark* (Ksatria Gameworks) was originally scheduled for an August 2008 release, though sadly the company ceased trading in 2009 and development for the game stopped. It briefly looked as though the game had been resurrected when a Japanese-based games development company bought both the rights and the code, but nothing more has been said, leading to the sad truth that the game will never be completed and released. We keep this document on our website as an incomplete archive of what could have been.

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## Proof of Concept

Some interesting "fallout" from this talk occurred the very next day as Joe Dever addressed an audience consisting largely of fans. Joe Dever is the creator and writer of a series of highly-advanced "choose your own adventure" style gamebooks in the 80s and 90s called the Lone Wolf series. The books are like single-player RPGs that play entirely in the reader's head, with the outcome being determined by a choice, a turn of the page, and a roll of the dice. They became monstrously popular with fans of fantasy and built up a small but fiercely loyal following over the years. The interesting thing about Joe is that he actually worked within Games Workshop at one point and left for precisely the reasons that Livingstone had outlined: he had an idea and he wanted to keep it rather than let others profit from it. So he took Livingstone's ideals to heart and made sure he was the legal owner of the story, character, and series he had conceived.

Like Livingstone, Dever has made a similar leap from analog to digital. But you might be surprised to hear that whereas Livingstone has stayed firmly on home ground in the UK, Dever now calls Singapore home, and is working on a retelling of the first Lone Wolf as a first-person, action/adventure, episodic game being developed by himself and a core team right on this very island. Dever finds the jump telling his story in a game to be not that huge a transition. The original books were, after all, written in the little-used form of "second person" where the reader was actually addressed and given choices. A video game



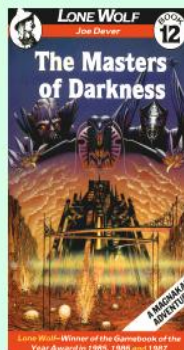
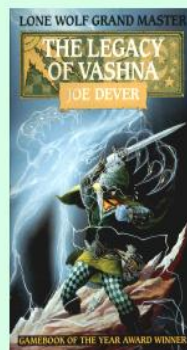
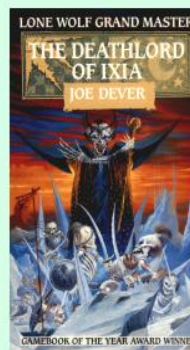
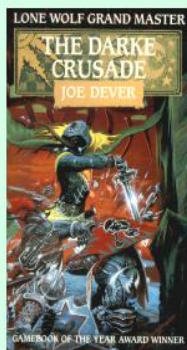
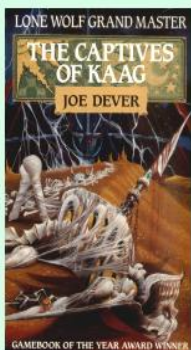
is merely the logical, digital extension of that. But in a way, Dever sees this as an opportunity to not just revisit well-loved, classic material, but to improve on it. He is going to be altering the beginning of the first book so that now players will actually see the cataclysmic battle that wipes out the Kai order, and is going to make this canon. "The bottom line is this," he admits. "The first book I wrote was the first book I wrote. And now, a long way down the road, I'm a much better writer than I was when I wrote that first book. And with that huge benefit of hindsight and having developed the world to where it is now—given the opportunity, and given the chance to go back and change some things, is there anything I would change? Well yes, there is, and this is what I'm going to do. This is my new vision of how it should have started."

Joe is with Ksatria Gameworks set up on the western end of Singapore and their big project—aside from the Lone Wolf game—is the graphics engine they have created for it. Like Epic and Valve, they plan to license this engine to other game developers. However, they plan to make their engine—dubbed kjAPI—much more affordable to allow developers without gigantic budgets to still have a fighting chance in an increasingly more competitive arena.



**With Lone Wolf already immortalised in print, the next challenge is turning it into an episodic game.**

**The Howling: Just a few noted examples of the best-selling run of Lone Wolf 'gamebooks'.**





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What's The Story?





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# Leader Of The Pack

Developing the First Game of the Last Magnakai





WORDS LEON RYAN

DESIGN KHANG LIP

TITLE: LONE WOLF  
FORMAT: PC  
PUBLISHER: TBA  
DEVELOPER: KSATRIA GAMEWORKS  
RELEASE: TBA

A head of you, the faint light of at the end of the passage continues to grown brighter. The walls of the tunnel grow slick with slime and ichor as you progress. An evil sense of foreboding now creeps upon you, even as you realise that the ground is marked with the passage of many clawed feet. The occasional discarded tool or broken weapon all suggest the movement of many bodies. You grip you sword with clammy hands, even as your heightened Kai senses whisper to flee the other way.

Presently you finally reach the end. Your eyes, previously accustomed to the darkness of the tunnel are temporarily dazzled by an intense light source. Blinking and grouping about, imagines soon come into focus. A huge hulking shadow becomes a giant torso. Blurred lines sharpened into a wickedly spiked crown, the two pin pricks of red now materialise into glowing pupils, flaming with malice. The mild foreboding has by now erupted into full-scale spine chilling horror. For before you stood a being of such blackness, that ever pore in you body screams for escape. What do you do?



When your monastery burns down, it's time to get angry.

A literal page right out of childhood for many. When the gamebook series first came out, Lone Wolf was truly the alpha male of the pack. Offering a wholly new approach to the role-playing genre, the gamebook was affordable and more importantly did not require a room full of geeks to play. Readers were swept away in the haunting tale of Lone Wolf, last of the Kai monks as he discovered his entire clan massacred, and is the only person aware of a massive invasion. First travelling to warn the capital, his adventures soon took us to arctic wastes and arid wastelands, before finally coming full circle as Lone Wolf begins to once again reform the ancient Kai order.

For such an established fantasy name, there has yet to be a definitive Lone Wolf game. A brave few have tried though, the earliest incarnations being simple pen and paper RPG campaigns. Joe Dever himself oversaw many of such efforts, being an avid *Dungeons and Dragons* player. As the information age dawned, several more attempts were made to translate the magic so evident in the books into a digital experience.

There was even an aborted attempt at making a MMORPG by fans with the support of Joe Dever. The second coming might finally have arrived for the Kai faithful and it begins right here, in Singapore.

# LONE WOLF



## Dancing With Wolves

Ask game designer Raymond Toh how he likes his job, and he might just say "With lots of coffee". With a small mountain of concept art and reference books piled on his table, the faithful coffee cup remains always within reach. Beyond his table, a couple of posters and the odd figurine are the only indication that this is a gaming studio. For anyone expecting Bungie's Seattle office, Ksatria GameWorks will be somewhat of a let down. There isn't a room dedicated to old arcade cabinets, nor is there a play den with every console ever released. What Ksatria does have though, is a bona fide development team, working on a title of ambition and scale well comparable to major international titles.

Currently in development, their debut title Lone Wolf is set to have all the trappings of a serious entry into the FPS genre. And no, that was not another infamous GameAxis typo. Lone Wolf will depart from its gamebook RPG roots and offer a FPS romp through the lands of Magnamund. And as if tackling the often blotched medieval FPS niche wasn't daunting enough, the team here at Ksatria has even gone ahead and crafted their own in-house graphics engine to power their title. And all this, from the sunny shores of Singapore.

Implications on the local game development scene aside, the game itself is shaping up to be something worth keeping your eye on. Playing as Lone Wolf, players will re-live the original series of gamebooks written by Joe Dever. Unfortunately, since the actual game has

no release date in sight, specific game details are being subjected to all the cloak and dagger secrecy of a work in progress. What we do know is that the game will be released in a serialised content, with each episode featuring 5 levels. This is not a fixed number however as Dever, who now acts as the lead game designer, may assign longer levels to more significant events. Fans of the gamebook series will be pleased to note that Joe Dever plans to use the game as a platform for re-imagining the Lone Wolf canon. A poignant example will be evident once the game starts. Unlike the gamebooks where Lone Wolf returns to his monastery to find everyone



A designer's life – the glitz and glamour and the coffee.

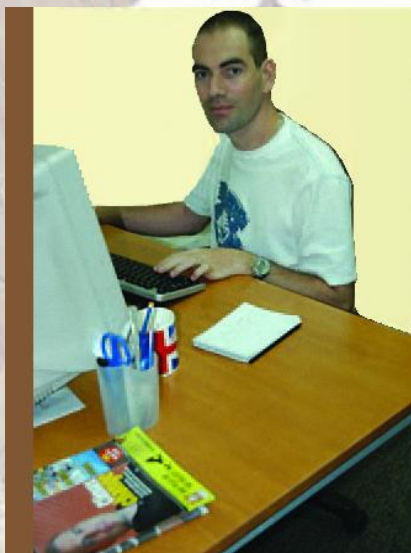


dead, the game begins with the actual graphic depiction of the Kai massacre. By re-visiting such scenes, Dever hopes to lend the game a greater maturity he feels that was absent from his younger efforts.

With most of the story being handled by Joe himself, the greatest challenge for Raymond is getting the FPS elements right, in a fantasy genre traditionally left for RPGs. After all, the term Medieval FPS might not really roll off the tongue. While there is a distinct appeal in disembowelling newbies with a long sword, the sad truth of the matter is that most melee combat has all the aesthetics of a Counter Strike knife fight. Hence the common wisdom that FPS needs guns, or at very least fireballs and lightning bolts.

**"Lone Wolf will depart from its gamebook RPG roots and offer a FPS romp through the lands of Magnamund."**

## Playing With Fire



The love child of lead programmer **Cedric Caillaud**, kjAPI is also able to provide texture mapping for models, an innovation previously seen in titles such as Gears of War. In simple layman explanation, the engine is able to render high poly models as textures which are then pasted onto a low poly count model. This translates into not needing to have a graphics card from NASA to enjoy gorgeous visuals while still capable of having more action on the screen at the same time.

"The philosophy behind the engine is to be as dynamic as possible," Cedric explains. "To this end, we have made it as expandable as possible so that newer technology can be incorporated into the existing framework."

While building all this from scratch is a monumental task, Cedric is quick to point out that being in a position to produce both the

game and the engine along side is a unique opportunity. "Since we are producing both together, we can add in newer features or modifications depending on what kind of feed back we get from the designers. Furthermore, it is technically easier to offer the engine as a separate tool, as opposed to two products meshed together."

For the regional game industry, offering kjAPI as a tool is just as significant as releasing Lone Wolf, if not more so. Already, the engine is available for free for all non-commercial projects and Ksatria is happy to license it to other development studios. "Hopefully, we will be able to offer a cheaper alternative to the Unreal Engine" says Cedric. Considering the prohibitive cost of buying one of the established engines, kjAPI will be far more accessible for regional gaming studios, a noble goal indeed for this fledgling community of game developers.



## FEATURE STORY

Flashy spectacular spells however are not at Raymond's disposal. In accordance to the lore of Lone Wolf, players will not possess any magical powers, but rather disciplines. So while Lone Wolf is able to make some very basic psychic attacks, melee combat remains the main focus of any fighting in the game. Further more, the game is wholly in first person, so unlike the Jedi Knight series of games, Lone Wolf truly promises melee combat at its most basic – in-your-face sword swinging violence. Properly capturing the feel of sword fighting is a Herculean task for Raymond, especially with the bad reputation it has previously had. "Melee combat is a big issue for us, and we have spent a lot of time playing titles such as Oblivion and Dark Messiah of Might and Magic, which we see both as competition as well as inspiration," he declares, "From them, we realise that even after so many games, melee combat is lacking. The sword strokes are unrealistic, the reaction of the enemy repetitive – so what we are doing is conceiving a new and better way of doing melee combat."

To create a realistic melee experience, the emphasis then was to have a game engine reproduce realistic physics as well as the graphic intensity of the bloody exchanges. For this, the team has developed their very own in house game engine, dubbed kjAPI, a play of the malay word for fire, api (see Playing With Fire). During a short demonstration, Raymond first loaded up a simple level with a series of metal balls, all with different weights assigned to them. Using Lone Wolf's telekinetic powers, Raymond showed how the game detects the differing weights – the lighter ones are easily lifted up, while the heavier ones move sluggishly about. Lifting up one of the heaviest, Raymond then proceeds to nonchalantly demolish most of the walls by pushing the ball against them, before tossing it towards some chains hanging from the ceiling causing some to break and fall off, and others to get tangled up.

Monsters so gorgeously rendered you could hug them.

**"WHAT KSATRIA DOES HAVE THOUGH, IS A BONA FIDE DEVELOPMENT TEAM, WORKING ON A TITLE OF AMBITION AND SCALE WELL COMPARABLE TO MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TITLES."**







Staying true to the book's illustration style, all monsters are butt-ugly.



## FEATURE STORY

Even with such tools at his disposal, Raymond candidly admits that much of the game's appeal hinges on that crucial sword stroke, and perfecting it is an uphill challenge. Considerations such as the reach of various weapons, the "dead zones" of longer items such as long swords and staves or even the style of the sword slash itself are but few of the many challenges which Raymond faces. In particular, he cites feedback as perhaps the most important factor in creating a believable experience. Hoping to achieve this, Cedric speaks of assigning different reactions to each part of the NPC's body. So instead of twitching about constantly like the Half Life scientists, NPCs in Lone Wolf will react realistically to body damage.

Of course, fighting is not the end all of Lone Wolf. His disciplines also factor heavily into how players interact with the world. Right now, the plan is for 5 disciplines to be available, all of which are opened to the player. This way, players will not be forced to sacrifice disciplines in order to choose others – this is in keeping with Raymond's vision of an FPS with light RPG elements, rather than the other way round. The only experience gained is thus

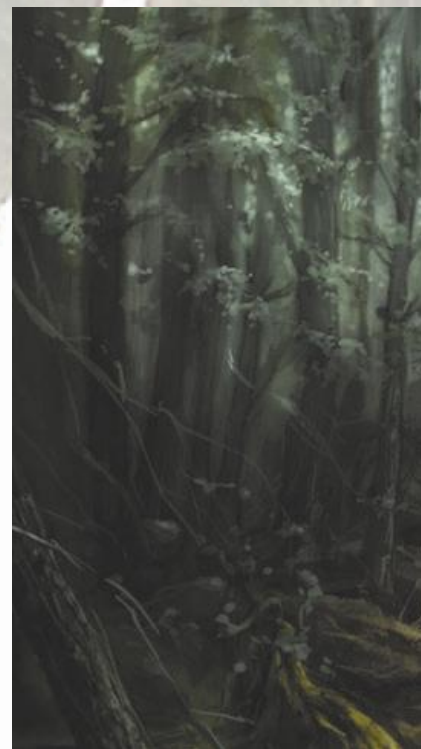
in the player himself, such that as the game progresses, you become a better and more skilled player. A great touch, since many of the powers are simply too cool to pass off. One in particular (we suspect this is Mind Over Matter) allows you to accelerate your movement speed.

**"WHEN A  
PLAYER SEES  
A BOSS, HE  
SHOULD GO  
WOW, THAT'S A  
BOSS, I BETTER  
NOT GET HIT  
BY HIM".**

To demonstrate how this transpires in the game, Raymond loaded up a level with a long bridge. Using several of

those weighted balls to crash down on the bridge, he then activates the speed discipline, slowing time to a crawl and proceeded to cross the bridge even as it broke apart. Here the emphasis on player skill is readily apparent. With the bridge breaking up, Raymond had to jump on broken pieces of the bridge even as they begun to fall off. Difficult, but definitely one of those stunts what will wow anyone once you have mastered it.

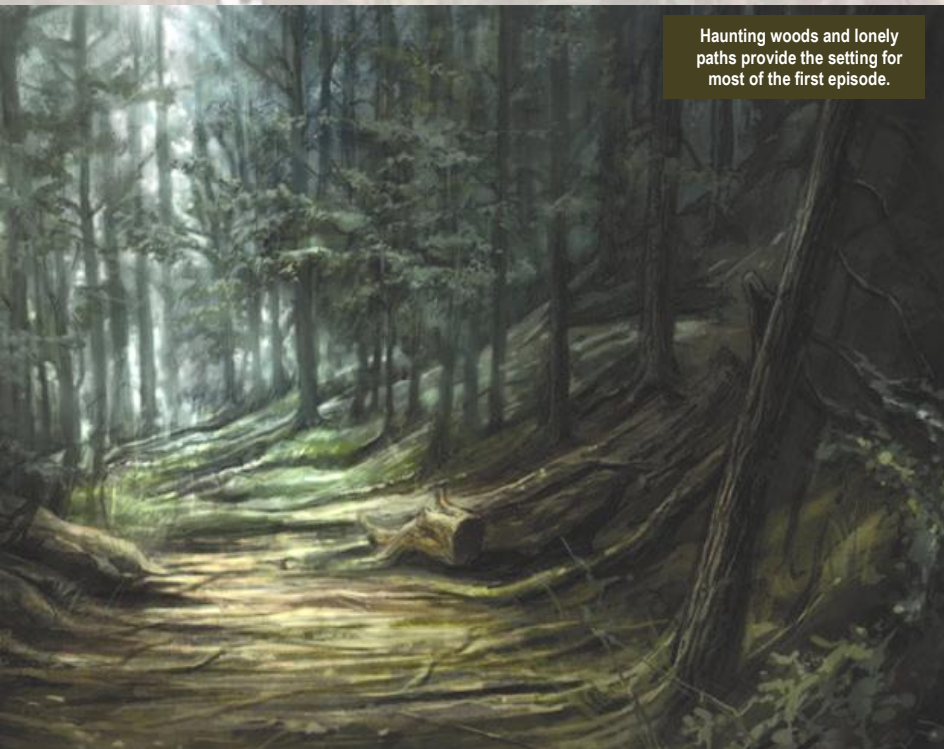
Aside from such moments, boss encounters are also being designed to be open ended as well as appropriately awe inspiring. "When a player sees a boss, he should go WOW, that's a boss, I better not get hit by him", says Raymond, explaining the general philosophy behind the boss designs. And while bosses should make most people flee in terror, another idea is to keep the fights as open as possible, such that players will not be forced to adopt certain strategies for specific bosses. Factor in the realistic physics of kJAPI, and the possibilities are nigh limitless. Players could use speed to get in a few strikes before dodging for cover, or they might use mind over matter in an attempt to fling objects at the boss.



Profile picture of the Ksatria office.  
Creepy moderators in Red go  
around spearing lazy workers.







Haunting woods and lonely paths provide the setting for most of the first episode.



Mind Blast

Animal Kinship

Sixth Sense

Mind Over Matter

**The Last Discipline**

## Discipline Master

Thus far, 4 out of 5 disciplines have been revealed. Mind Blast, Mind Over Matter, Animal Kinship and Sixth Sense. The latter two act mostly as story devices. Sixth Sense is akin to Force Seeing from the Jedi Knight games, pointing out helpful items in the environment for the player. Animal Kinship allows Lone Wolf to speak to animals, and in so doing open up new dialogue options. Mind Blast manifests in various forms of psychic attack, from stealth kills to area of effect blasts. Right now, it seems like the most useful skill is Mind Over Matter. Allowing telekinesis, it pretty much opens up a whole new side of the game, much like what the grav gun did for Half Life 2.





## Reality Check

Even though the team at Ksatria is passionate about their jobs, they are well aware of the realities of the industry. Hailing from the now defunct Precursor, Raymond points out that the perceived "perks" of a job in the gaming industry is probably the biggest criminal of failed gaming ventures. "A lot of people seem to have the notion that game development is easy, and cool" he bemoans, "and so, you end up with people who have no idea what game design is really like." Studio Head Steve Riding echoes this when he expresses his vision for the development team. "At the end of the day, we want to make a good game. That being said, people still like to get paid, but should you make a good game, this part takes care of itself".



**"FOR ALL THE PROMISES OF NEW INNOVATIVE GAME PLAY THOUGH, MOST ENCOURAGING IS THAT ALL THIS IS HAPPENING IN SINGAPORE."**



Using texture mapping, kjAPI grafts high res skins onto low poly count models.

LONE WOLF



game play though, most encouraging is that all this is happening in Singapore. As it turns out, the little red dot turned out to be the most common sense choice to set up a studio in. With a large English speaking talent pool as well as a mix of both western and eastern gaming influences, Singapore was ideal. Plus, for all those work union types that might bemoan the general anglo-phelia of hiring westerners from UK and France to work on this project, Steve points out that recruiting more local talent is certainly in the plans. "In the future we would want to hire more local talent since this is simply far more sustainable. Soon, we'd want to move away from hiring super expensive westerners."

Leaving Ksatria, even I, a self professed cynic of all things local, will have to concede this just a little, this round. They might not yet be on the level that Bungie is, but Ksatria Gameworks is certainly a hopeful sign for things to come for local game development. Plus if anything else, watching a childhood past time evolve into a full fledged video game certainly makes Lone Wolf all the more appealing – not to mention that tantalizing promise of melee combat done right. Whether Lone Wolf lives up to all these expectations remains yet to be seen, but you can be certain that a lot of coffee is going into it.

Dude, this armour is chaffing on my delicate half rotten genitals.



## Psygnosis On

While very new to Singapore, having been here for only a few weeks, Steve Riding is by no means foreign to the gaming industry. Hailing originally from the British studio Psygnosis, Steve brings to the team over 25 years of industry experience. When he first began working in the industry, it was not uncommon for development teams to merely consist of one person. Since then, Steve has gone one to witness the rise and proliferation of gaming industries both in the UK as well as in the US.



Psygnosis studios itself is credited with many firsts in gaming history. Possibly the first FMV cut-scene appeared in the 1989 title, Obliterator. Psygnosis slowly evolved into games publisher with titles produced either fully or partially in-house, spawning companies the likes of Reflections and Traveller's Tales in the process. Maintaining a consistently high quality of art work and visual identity is something which Psygnosis is famous for, despite the fact that it is now already defunct.







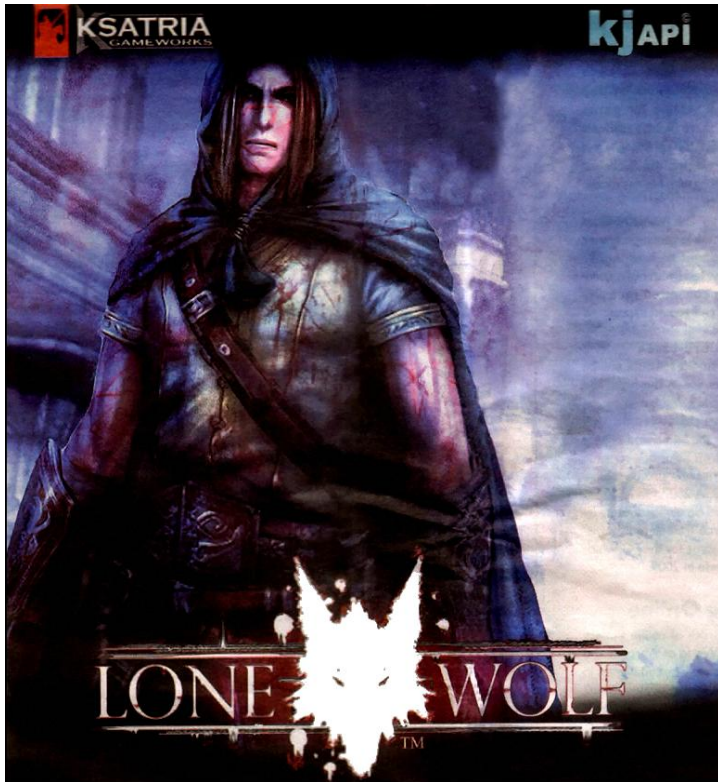


PHOTO: KSATRIA

Local game developer Ksatria Gameworks will showcase its new game Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark at the convention.



### Lone Wolf: Flight From The Dark

First-person action adventure title based on a bestselling gamebook by game designer and author Joe Dever. The gamebook has sold over 9 million copies so far, making it one of the most successful in its genre. A key feature of —the sophisticated first-person combat systems. (*Ksatria*)

## Riding High on the Asian Gaming Wave

**TAN EE SZE** reports what developers, agencies, and trade officials hope to achieve in this mammoth gathering.

Games convention Asia could not be held here, for the region, at a better time.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Asian games market is projected to grow to US\$23 billion (S\$35 billion) by 2009, while the wireless market in Asia expects more than 230 million mobile gamers to spend over US\$5 billion a year by 2009.

Mr Allan Simonsen, co-founder of games development studio Boomzap and Singapore coordinator of the International Game Developers Association, said Singapore is a natural choice for people wanting to market into Asia.

"It's central, well-connected, and has a lot of support from the Government to push something like this through," he said.

Some 200 companies from around the globe are expected to converge at GCA 2007, which is the Asian debut of Games Convention, one of the largest digital interactive gaming exhibitions in the world.

As to be expected, there will be a strong showing from the home team. Games developer Ksatria Gameworks wants to use the event to show its next generation game Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark.

"We hope that this will create the first wave of excitement for this much anticipated game," said Mr Andrew Lam, associate producer.

Look out for 2m-high works of art created by the team based on characters from the world of Lone Wolf.



▶▶ KSATRIA GAMEWORKS

# Taking flight from the dark

**LEUNG WAI-LEN** makes a solo journey to check out the Lone Wolf game by Ksatria Gameworks.

You are the last survivor of the ancient and powerful order of the Kai. When the Darklords attack the Kai Monastery and slaughter all the friends and family you have known, it becomes your mission to inform the King of the Kai's destruction, recover the order's lost teachings, and destroy the Darklords.

That is the premise of the Lone Wolf: Flight From The Dark. It is a first-person action title on the PC that plays much like shooting games Halo and Doom.

Except this time, the only thing you'll be shooting are arrows and spells. The rest of your arsenal will consist of medieval weapons such as swords and of course, your fists.

Over the course of the game, you can choose to develop five disciplines, such as sixth sense, weapons skills and animal kinship.

The story follows the first half of the Lone Wolf series of books closely. The game progresses linearly, but depending on which skills you develop, there are different ways of going through the game's

missions, said Lone Wolf game designer Raymond Toh, 28.

Series creator Joe Dev-er spends about half his time in Singapore to advise and over-

see development, having given his blessings to the visuals the Singapore team had developed, said Mr Toh.

If all goes well, the game will be in stores worldwide in August 2008. Ksatria's head of studio, Mr Steve

Riding, 47, said that the company is also looking at a major electronic distribution platform which will allow buyers to download the game instead.

Currently, the game is in the pre-produc-

tion stage, with ideas being planned and conceptualised.

For now, the team has created a playable demo, a raw concept of what the Lone Wolf game will offer, said associate producer Andrew Lam, 33.

Set in the Kai Monastery at the time of the Darklords' attack, it will demonstrate all the combat elements of Lone Wolf, as well as its ragdoll physics system, in which characters will react realistically when hit in combat.

But the final product will look vastly different, after elements such as its fighting and mood get tweaked, said Mr Lam. The playable demo can be tried at Games Convention Asia at Suntec City from Sept 7 to 9. There, Ksatria will look for publishers to fund and publish the game.

For now, the company gets by on investors' money, combined with government grants.

Originally a French studio, Ksatria decided to relocate to Singapore after it was approached by tin Indonesian investor, Mr Setiady Sungkono, said Mr Riding. Mr Riding declined to reveal production costs, save that it is about the cost of equipment and salaries of about 30 people for two years.

Ksatria uses its own next-generation games engine, Kjapi, which means it did not have to spend millions licensing high-end games engines like the Unreal and Havok engines.

Mr Lam said Ksatria has the license to produce a few more Lone Wolf games, but plans to develop other original franchises, too.

A PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 version not out of the question.

After all, he said, "Nobody gets bored of making money."



PHOTO KSATRIA GAMEWORKS

The Giaks are goblin-like creatures who do the Darklords' bidding. In the demo, they form the bulk of the attackers of the Kai monastery.

*Lianhe Zaobao Life, September 8 2007*

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封面故事 Cover Story

## 本地电玩游戏

### Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark

根据90年代畅销游戏书籍改编的第一人称探险 (First Person Adventure) 游戏。玩家扮演屠魔英雄, 展开传统魔幻故事常见的正邪之争。

玩家能够拿起多种兵器杀魔; 不同的鼠标按钮组合让角色发挥不同招式, 不是一味的slash and hack游戏。

试玩的是demo版本, 尽管影像素质还在草创阶段, 也未加入音乐, 不过从游戏的深沉气氛和布局来看, 应该会受到 "Lone Wolf" 粉丝的欢迎。公司Ksatria估计这个游戏将在明年底面市。

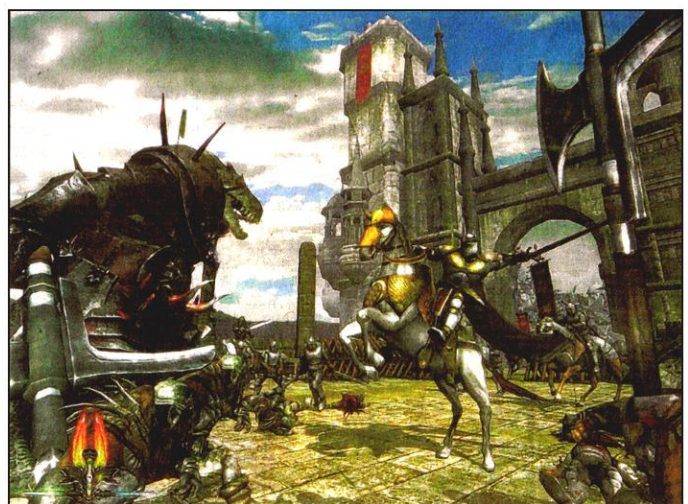
[This is a First Person Adventure game based on the bestselling 90s gamebook series. The player will role-play as a demon-slaying hero, who takes part in a mythical struggle between good and evil.

Players are able to use many types of weapons in the game; Different combinations of the mouse buttons will allow the use of special techniques. Hence this is not your usual Hack and Slash game.

This is only a playable demo. Many of the game features are still in development stage, and there is no music score for the game yet. However, looking at the atmosphere and the game dynamics, this game will be welcomed by fans of "Lone Wolf".

Ksatria Gameworks estimates that the game will be released in end 2008.]\*

》文接封面



Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark

\* Special thanks to Markus Tan Sien Hwong for the translation.



## GCA Floor Tour: The Other Hall, Ksatria Gameworks

(Events, Local, Game Development, Games Convention Asia 2007)

by **emoboy** on Saturday, 8th September 2007 @ 11:08:13 AM



Between snippets of school, arriving late at press conferences and reading homework in cabs, I've come to realize one very important thing about GCA. All the cool stuff is in The Other Hall. Which honestly has all the logic of whole meal bread (okay there is some reason to this madness, but it's a small small amount). At any rate though, the bare fact of the matter is that unless you're willing to part with \$50, then you're unfortunately missing two of the best booths in the entire show (no, there's no legendary Rock Band booth, but these come pretty close). For the first one, hit the jump.

Remember our print coverage of Lone Wolf in GameAxis unwired? Well given that most of you are shameless free-loaders (I kid, I kid), here's some information to jolt your memory. Ksatria is a local gaming studio making a Game. I use upper case simply since that is what they really are doing – not some cheap collection of animations (coughmaplestorycough), and certainly not taking the standard route of “porting” games over here and earning lots of moolah. Nope, Ksatria is making a game. A bona fide PC romp under the title of Lone Wolf – the very same Lone Wolf of the old “adventure books” fame. And I think a huge distinction between a real gaming studio and people just jumping on the bandwagon to earn our money is just having the balls to do something “totally audacious dude!”

And if the worthiness of a game were to be judge purely by testicular fortitude, Lone Wolf is just about as audacious as they come. Taking the vastly popular Lone Wolf adventure book series written by Joe Denver, you play as Lone Wolf, last of the Kai. The first installment of the series takes place in the first book, right after a surprise attack

on the Kai monastery has devastated the order, killing nearly every member. Your job is to escape and warn the king of the impending invasion – unfortunately there's just the minor problem of the horde of mindless minions in your way.

Therein lies the most technically impressive aspect of the game – since the universe of Lone Wolf is extremely melee centric, the game is grounded firmly in melee combat. There aren't even flashy spells, since Lone Wolf utilizes only Kai disciplines (mental powers such as sixth sense) and not the conventional fireballs and lightning bolts. Hence while there IS a bow and arrow, a good portion of your fighting is going to be done with swords, axes, fists, and even your legs. Right about now, any astute gamer probably has warning lights flashing all over given the *utterly absurd* combat systems of Oblivion and Dark Messiah of Might and Magic – but thanks to an amazingly dexterous world engine, melee fighting is actually fun.

I can safely say this because the folks at Ksatria actually have a workable demo running, so I got a chance to goof off as Lone Wolf. It's rather short, but really manages to flesh out some of the “WOW” factors in the game. I started with just my fists, and some baddies in front of me. The first reaction was to walk up and spam the left click button. This is moderately effective, until I discover that the right click controls your right punches so alternating left and right creates a nice one-two combo. String a whole bunch together, and Lone Wolf will finish an entire string by a kick, at which point the whole screen tilts backwards, just like how a real person's vision would change when he's kicking something.





Raymond: Game Designer, Visionary, Coffee Fanatic. (Behind that table is actually a huge coffee pot)

In fact, there's a lot of this "real vision" elements in the game. Punches sends your screen tilting left and right, and even the stairs creates a slightly jerky up down motion just as someone would experience climbing real stairs. The point of this is to really bind the player into the physical experience, making each hit, each slice all the more realistic. Speaking of weapons, the next wave of evil cronies was met with my sword, bow and axes. The sword is pretty standard, although it can be combo'ed with punches from you free hand. Likewise, dual axes can be wielded and the same, almost independent amphi-dexterity is applied. The cool thing to note about all these weapons is that damage is all localized, and those with dead aim for the neck and head will be rewarded with very satisfying decapitations.

Moving along, I walked up a flight of stairs (more jerky camera views, and this time it's actually a good thing) and marveled in the mean while at the lush interiors. Considering that the last time I saw the game, nearly everything was still in unshaded textures, the sheer detail of the Kai Monastery from the banners to stain glass windows is astounding. Visual beauty however, paled in comparison to the real OMG moment of the demo. At the top floor, Lone Wolf is presented by a chasm with enemies on the other side. Lone Wolf himself isn't able to jump over, but this doesn't stop the goons on the other side to *jump over*. And according to the game's designer, Raymond, you can actually do the following – 1) Slow time with sixth sense, 2) use

the bow and arrow to hit the lead monster mid-leap, and 3) dash forward, *use the falling corpse as an intermediary platform*, and jump to safety on the other side. While I didn't manage to really pull that off, just hearing that it was possible made me all warm and tingly.

Picking up my jaw, we then moved down a short flight of outdoor stairs, the last bit of the demo. Here, it was shown that looking in a particular direction while executing certain melee attacks will result in different attacks. Looking down [said flight of stairs], for example, unleashes an upper cut, that also spins your game view around. Sadly, while the last ZOMG! was coming from my lips, that was basically it for the demo.

Okay why isn't this at the public booth? We can haz logic please? Realistically though I guess that Ksatria sort of needs the business contacts more than adoring fan boys right now, so business booth it is. I even threw them the idea of linking up with Razor to develop a "feedback mouse" so that you get all the vibrating goodness that console players get. This would be great given the highly tactile nature of combat in Lone Wolf. All in all, the game is seriously shaping up to be something quite amazing. Everyone who passed by the booth, left with a distinct impression that perhaps they just saw the Next Big Thing. And who knows – give or take another year, this might just pin Singapore firmly on the map.



## Lone Wolf in Lion City

*Drawn by lower business costs and a safe working environment, British fantasy-writer-turned-game-designer Joe Dever, known for his Lone Wolf series of gamebooks, tells of how he is pleasantly surprised by Singapore's advanced digital communications systems and innovative policies to promote the digital media industry.*

**what Lone Wolf will look like in the computer game.**



JOE Dever is very much like his creation – *Lone Wolf*. In his award-winning series of gamebooks, *Lone Wolf* is the sole survivor of an attack. Dever is also the sole survivor – of a declining fiction genre.

After Dever put out his last

*Lone Wolf* gamebook in 1998, he turned to computer role playing games (RPG) – which have been experiencing phenomenal growth – as a means of resurrecting *Lone Wolf*. And the place he chose to do it was fittingly, the Lion City – Singapore.

*"Singapore has excellent infrastructure and a very advanced digital communications network, yet it has much lower comparable business and living costs than Europe or the United States."*

-Joe Dever

"Singapore has excellent infrastructure and a very advanced digital communications network, yet it has much lower comparable business and living costs than Europe or the United States," he said.

Since last year, Dever has been working with Ksatria Gameworks, a games studio based in Singapore, to transform *Lone Wolf* into a computer RPG. "The current project is the first part of a two-part adventure. We plan to continue with production on the second part once the first is completed," he said.

Joe Dever





*Lone Wolf in Lion City*

Already, fans of the *Lone Wolf* gamebooks are showing "huge interest". Members from *Lone Wolf* fan websites are eagerly waiting for the release of the computer game and are in constant contact with Dever to get updated on developments.

As the media icon for Singapore Media Fusion's "I made it in Singapore" campaign, Dever has had no second thoughts about coming to Singapore. He enthused: "I have no hesitation in recommending Singapore as a wonderful base of operations for a games development company. It has excellent infrastructure, low cost, low tax base, advanced telecoms and broadband. You've got a perfect 'incubator' environment for any games company, large or small."

In his *Lone Wolf* series of gamebooks, the title character – *Lone Wolf* – is gathering wood outside the monastery when it is attacked and thus becomes the "last of the Kai". But for the computer game, Dever has changed this scenario.

He revealed: "For the computer game, I've chosen to place *Lone Wolf* inside the monastery at the time of the attack.

"As in the book, the player takes on the role of *Lone Wolf*. Now the player must take part in the doomed defence of the monastery, while fulfilling a sub-quest that will warn the King of his country (Sommerlund) that Darklord Zagarna's invasion has begun. If the player completes the sub-quest then he will be able to escape the monastery and, as per the original book, he will be the sole survivor."



The battle at Alema Bridge

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## In Good Company : Flight Takes Off

*The much-anticipated computer role-playing game, Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark, took off in a big way during the recent Games Convention Asia. In the first of our new series on up-and-coming Singapore media firms, we speak to Ksatria Gameworks, the team behind the game, about their own flight – to success.*

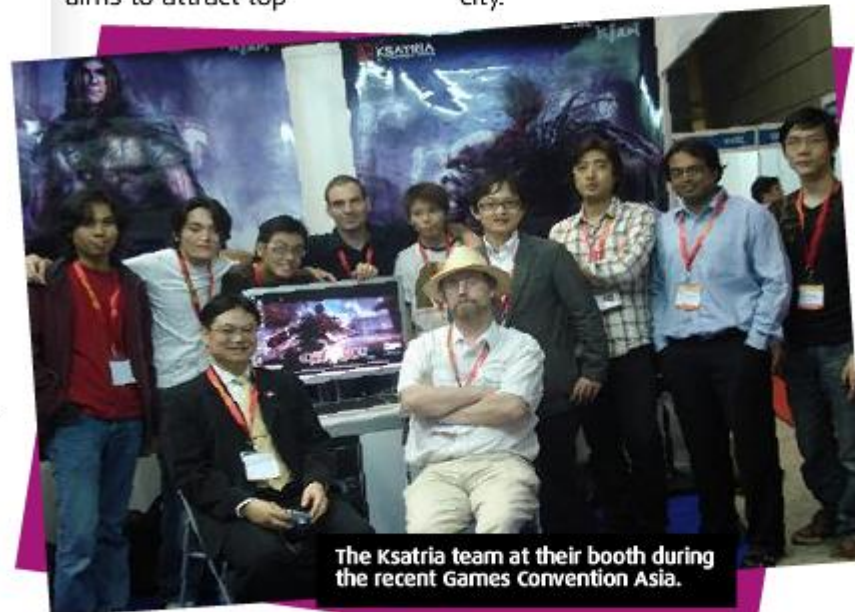
THEY'RE young, taking the gaming world by storm and – lest you forget – Singaporean.

Say hello to the dynamic team behind Ksatria Gameworks – an up-and-coming local gaming firm that made a splash at the recent Games Convention Asia 2007 with their flagship project, *Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark*.

Founded by Indonesian businessman Setiady Sungkono in 2005, Ksatria Gameworks has the exclusive rights to develop games based on bestselling author Joe Dever's internationally popular *Lone Wolf* series. In fact, Dever himself is working as the lead designer for the project.

Dever is also a talent attracted under the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) International Media Manpower Programme (IMMP). IMMP aims to attract top

international media talents to boost the capability of local media talent and enterprises and Singapore's reputation as a global media city.



The Ksatria team at their booth during the recent Games Convention Asia.

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in Good Company : Flight Takes Off

The story of *Lone Wolf* is set in the fictional world of Magnamund, where the protagonist Lone Wolf – the last standing member of his caste of warrior monks known as Kai lords – battles evil forces for control. The

books were written in the second person and recount Lone Wolf's adventures as if the reader were the main character – an experience the Ksatria team aimed to recreate in the game as well.



Surprisingly, some investors and publishers said they have been following us for some time. It's heartening to know people have been looking at us before we were ready.

- Mr Andrew Lam, associate producer, Ksatria Gameworks



"In order to execute this, we developed a 3D game engine called kjAPI. With this new technology, we are able to give gamers an intense, close-combat experience," said Mr Andrew Lam, associate producer at Ksatria.

"So now, gamers can completely immerse themselves into the character. They will indeed believe they are Lone Wolf – the sole survivor of the Kai."

With the successful showcase of the *Lone Wolf* game demo at Games Convention Asia under their belt, Ksatria has been attracting much attention from investors and publishers alike.

"Surprisingly, some of the parties mentioned they have been following us for some time. It's heartening to know people have been looking at us before we were ready," said Mr Lam.

Ksatria Gameworks now has a two-pronged action plan – to negotiate a publishing deal for the Lone Wolf game and promote kjAPI as the 3D game engine of choice for Asian game studios. As for the future, the Singaporean firm has its hands full.

"Our game isn't a standalone one. *Lone Wolf: Flight from the Dark* merely spans half a book out of Dever's series of 28 books," said Mr Lam. "So, as you can imagine, we'll need more than a decade to finish converting the series."

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FLIGHT FROM THE DARK

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## ***GameAxis Unwired #41 (January 2007):***

Replaced ‘game books’ with ‘gamebooks’, ‘readers’ with ‘reader’s’, ‘page and’ with ‘page, and’, all occurrences of ‘Livingston’ with ‘Livingstone’, ‘character and’ with ‘character, and’, and ‘first person’ with ‘first-person’.

## ***Straits Times: Riding High on the Asian Gaming Wave:***

Replaced ‘Ksatria gameworks’ with ‘Ksatria

Gameworks’, and ‘well-connected and’ with ‘well-connected, and’.

## ***Straits Times: GCA:***

Replaced ‘game book’ with ‘gamebook’.

## ***Straits Times: Taking flight from the Dark:***

Replaced ‘Kai monastery’ with ‘Kai Monastery’.



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17 June 2009

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