

Hi, I am Erwan le Breton, Might and Magic Creative Director at Ubisoft.

Hi, I am Julien Pirou, I am the lead designer and writer on the adventure pack *Pirates of the Savage Sea*, you might know me as Marzhin also in the Communities.

I am Alexis, I'm a producer on Heroes VI, (unintelligible). You know me on the forum as [Alexis Ubisoft](#), which is very original.

I am Stephan Winter, managing director at Limbic entertainment, we are currently working on the adventure pack and the ongoing support on Heroes VI.

Hello, I am Gary Paulini, I'm the producer of Might and Magic titles, made by external companies. Maybe you know me on the forums as [Budd](#).

Hi, I'm Pascaline Lavedrine, I'm an associate producer assistant on Clash of Heroes.

So I'll start with the two top ones, which are the biggies, and just ask you: When are you going to understand that making the game "always online" is a sure way to piss off your customers?

The original vision was really to say the classic Heroes experience can be played offline, which was, at the time when we were discussing it, something that Ubisoft was not promoting. Constant connection was something that was required from the games, including the PC games, but we were (the team at that time) fighting to have an offline experience that was similar to Heroes V, Heroes III etc. The added layers that we felt were interesting online rewards were mostly centred around the Dynasty principle and the Conflux. It's two different things, the Dynasty is really the persistent reward you get by playing Heroes over and over again, so you get the weapons, you get to unlock the heroes, that you can play multiplayer, you get the traits – those things are added to the Heroes experience. They were not part of any previous Heroes games, so we felt it was something cool to give to the players who would be connected and the incentive would be that those rewards would be interesting in multiplayer. So we said multiplayer – online connection – it's a natural fit, so it works well together. The other thing we wanted was the Conflux, which was basically a list of services for the Community: tools to chat and exchange, share maps, have leader boards to measure your rankings in multiplayer, facilitate matching for multiplayer, that was part of the Conflux that we said is naturally online as well. That's where we feel we have a lot of shortcomings. The quality of the online service that Ubisoft have provided for the game since its release is not at the level of expectation we had when we were working on the game and on these designs – and they were not counting the failures to register online or to simply launch the game etc. But even the quality putting players together and helping them compare their scores or play multiplayer is not yet to the level of what we wish it would be for a game like Heroes. So for us it's still an important dimension, this online dimension – we want to keep it for the future Heroes games. The thing that is positive is that Ubisoft as a whole, as a company, is learning how to do online services better. Each new game makes it easier for the guys working on it, so for instance the games we've shown today – Duel of Champions and others (the ones I cannot speak about), they will definitely be online, but they will have dedicated teams to support them. So hopefully, they will be good online experiences. For the future of Heroes, yeah, we hope that a couple of months from now, online will be great, working all the time and a lot of services attached to it.

By releasing the game poorly balanced and having lots of bugs, and having very slow patching after the release, do you guys understand how angry that made your fans and that you have some work to improve on your image?

We understood that, the game was reasonably unfinished and pushed (unintelligible). Now we had this transition between Black Hole and Limbic, obviously it took time, because we had to take over, all the code and assets, and learn how to make the game better. Why we want – let's say (unintelligible) Heroes VI and fix some bugs – you know, the one we talked about (unintelligible) basically you have to redesign a large part of the game. Now we are more focused on trying to at least put, you know, patch where needed, to polish, to fix some stuff – yes, we understood that the Community was very angry about part of them, we still feel that the game has potential. We try at least to expand it to its fullest, even if the game is not perfect and will never be perfect. But it would be interesting to make sure that all the work we have done so far, to put the engine on (unintelligible). Now I think we are at the step where we can start to improve stuff that needs to be improved. Not redesign the game but to improve some parts, like balancing, eradicate some bugs, or fixing/improving the map editor.

No single game developer will tell you “I am happy to release a game that is bugged, unbalanced and poorly finished – not enough polish.” In the end of development of Heroes VI, the project had really inflated a lot, and there were hard decisions to be made on the Black Hole side and Ubisoft side, with a closer producer attached to the project. A closer producer is someone who tries to release the game in as good a state as possible given the means, so the time and the budget, and he worked very closely with Black Hole. Those of you who played the beta were there in the first ranks to see what was going on. They really did their best to work on balance and polish and debug. In the end the game was released in a state that I think nobody can say was 100 % satisfying, and support was not as fast and good as expected just because we had this issue with Black Hole of continuing the support and working on further extensions ... and we could not reach an agreement with them in terms of the scope, budget and collaboration. We relied on Limbic who were already working on the game – on the multiplayer feature and the online features. So yes, it took time. It's why today is a good day for us, this Might and Magic day, 'cause it's really when we can announce this big patch – 1.5, with a lot of things that we really wanted to launch one month after the release. Like the town screens, the rebalance of the game, the offline/online saves etc. and it's their work that made it possible. And it's also the first time we can announce additional contents. It would have been stupid for us to work on additional contents before the game was at least slightly spread out or rebalanced ...

We'll be coming back with the DLC so on ...

Yeah, so that's one thing I think today we feel a little more confident saying “yeah, we're working on that, but from day one we realized it was very important and the Community was justly – rightly – pissed off”. The last thing I want to say is that we have one guy dedicated to working on the balance of the game, with whatever tools he has available, he is in direct contact with the guys from the VIP forum, he's watching the regular forums as well and working with Limbic on that, so he's really taking all kinds of feedback into account and he's trying to adjust numbers, basically, to try to rebalance the game. Again, without touching the fundamentals, like the skill system or the hardcode. At least he's doing important work.

The list, actually, on the topics we would like to improve is long. The backlog ... some of the backlog topics contain hundreds of things we would like to do. The good news for everyone is, there is a backlog, and there is a clear picture of the topics, issues, features we want to address. The bad news is first, probably we can't have all of it, and it would take some time. On the list currently, and I hope everyone notices, we are really trying hard to achieve it and keep it up that way: that we will, in the duration of 4-6 weeks, provide Ubisoft with new patches, basically new versions. And we're taking step by step. We've made progress, we've made good progress, even some stuff is easier now for us, which is nice, so we can in the future even speed up a little, and actually, probably end of July we are going to sit down with Ubisoft and some of the key guys and figure out what else could we put some priority on. Just some buzz words – the map editor is obviously one of the big buzz words here, something we want to improve, Community wants to have it improved, Ubisoft want to have it improved, so that's pretty much in common. This is what is going on right now, and yes, the backlog is very very long.

Now we're going to get to some of the forum dwellers and what they would like to ask you, and the first question is from KingImp: Do you not realize how badly you have turned off the majority of long-time *Heroes* fans by charging an exorbitant amount for this DLC when you haven't even proved you can properly fix this broken game first?

We really wanted to wait until we had done some support, patching and free new features before we proposed to the Community additional content that they should pay for, so that's why we have this 1.5 patch with the town screens, with balance, with the offline/online saves; all the multiplayer maps that will be in the adventure pack will be given free to the Community, and if they want to create some maps or do some multiplayer maps (unintelligible) multiplayer maps. So, fixing the game is really the number one priority before we start selling new content. That being said, €10 for an adventure pack feels a lot. In terms of industry standard, for the number of hours of gameplay it's the average. So it's a reasonable price, but it's also the first time we do that for a *Heroes* game. This is the first time we sell something like this adventure pack, so it will be a bit of an experiment for Ubisoft as a whole. So our business teams are confident that this price is reasonable. Then there'll try out the temperature of the water. And as we discussed also in Poland, during the same fan day that we're having here in Paris, it is important to know that there is what we call the silent community in *Heroes*. A lot of people are buying the game, but they're not active on the forums, on the Facebook page, on the Community sites etc. So we have some knowledge about them, but they're really like the silent mass. And it's highly possible that some will buy this expansion (*sic!*) pack for €10 and love it, maybe a lot of people will do it, and so Ubisoft will be happy. And then people will feel like it's really outrageous and too expensive, well, the usual life cycle of any kind of product related to the video games, after a while, the prices drop, so they should just be a little bit more patient.

How about giving us this DLC for free, especially for the people who buy the game before release?

We have a group of approximately 15 people working on the game and creating the adventure pack content. So I think, from our perspective, (unintelligible) fans on the team, it's a great move that the towns screens are going in with the patches, it's a great move that "ongoingly", something is going to happen, and we can understand that on the other side, there needs to be contents created that needs to be sold to prove actually that we can even go further with the project. So um ... to answer this question: I really believe that you get a nice final gameplay experience value out of this. And I

just hope you give it a chance, you try the adventure pack, yes, then we can discuss “is there something we could do”, whatever, but give it a chance, I think it is important to say.

One thing that needs to be added is that the patch 1.5 actually includes the new multiplayer maps for free, so basically, the adventure pack – what you pay for – is the new heroes, the new story, that kind of stuff, but the multiplayer maps will be added for everyone. Even those who don't buy the adventure pack at all.

Are you guys planning to simplify the map editor?

When we were working on Heroes VI, I actually already had this big list of stuff to improve on the map editor, and unfortunately, because (as Erwan was saying earlier) the end of development was ... what is was ... improvements to the map editor had to be put aside in favour of finishing the game. So, fortunately, this list has now been passed to Limbic and it's now part of their backlog, so Stephan can ...

One thing to know about the map editor is important to have in mind: the map editor is a very powerful tool. Even as it is now, it contains basically everything you need for content creation or really a lot of content creation. So it's a mighty, mighty tool. The main issue, or the challenge right now, is that we see a huge gap between those people who are willing to spend really a lot, lot of their spare time in creating maps, and then they suffer for the little things that are not working as they would like them to work. And on the other hand we have people that might want to try out the map editor and obviously get kind of frustrated quite easily. So what we will do first is, or hopefully do first, is we address issues and improvements from the people who are already investing and spending time ... so we have to support the fans that dedicate time, dedicate effort and are really into it, and yes, the map editor will be one of the topics in the next few months. ... If you are using editors and if you are used to editors, then you have some expectations of how editors should work. So I'm not talking about ...

Pleasing? Rewarding and pleasing?

I think rewarding, pleasing and you are creating something creative.

But is that pleasing, then?

Yeah, pleasing is OK. ...

Are we ever going to get the free DLC with the Academy faction that Black Hole promised back during the beta?

Actually, I didn't know that Black Hole promised a free DLC with Academy faction, so this is new for me. But I know there is a ...

We don't accept the premise of the question?

I have no recollection of that, so ...

We don't remember this.

I know that when the game was launched, there had been a miscommunication because we had this event in France with the producer of Heroes VI being asked by a French fan “what were the plans for the future, would we be adding new faction”, and he said, basically the answer in French was this: “we’d like to add two factions, maybe in DLCs”. That was his quote. And in the evening, the French fan posted everywhere on all the English forums: “they have promised two factions in a free DLC” ... which is not exactly what was said. So, as you all know, many things have happened since then, with Black Hole and so on, so I guess the plans we had back then have been a bit changed.

Used to be that when we clicked on a destination point for our hero to travel, you'd know how many turns it would take to get there. Is there plans to get that feature back?

It's very nice to get the same question in two days in two locations, so it seems an important one. I don't know yet. But I can promise that we take back the question to the team, ask the team about this and let you know.