

The new slot scenario

Some of the leading online casino slot developers spoke to *INTERGAMINGi* about their latest products and what makes them tick



COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR BIGGEST ONLINE CASINO HIT OF RECENT TIMES?

In the past 18 months our most popular game has been Lightning Horseman. This game has been commercially successful in multiple markets, from the UK, Nordics, New Jersey and, quite recently, in Canada's Quebec province. It is a respinning static jackpot game in which six lightning bolts both trigger the bonus and are held to start it.

Respins are reset to three each time another lightning bolt is spun up. Should the player achieve a full screen (15 lightning bolts), then an additional Flippin' bonus occurs, giving the player another flip of all 15 bolts to reveal prizes all over again - doubling their chances at a static jackpot.

WHAT WERE THE KEY GOALS IN ITS DEVELOPMENT?

We had been involved with the development of respin games since the mid 1990s, from Aristocrat's Sweethearts2 in Australia, through to Lightning Box's Super Happy Fortune Cat in US land-based and Stellar Jackpots-Serengeti Lions in Europe online.

The last of those is an example of a jackpot game paired with a respin game for the first time, although jackpots were not directly winnable from the respins themselves. When Lightning Link came along and made the jackpot possible directly from the respins, we saw that as another way of evolving our mechanic. Pairing with the Flippin' retrigger was another bit of magic.

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS THAT HAVE ULTIMATELY MADE IT STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD?

I think its theme was a perfect match with the mechanic. The spooky headless horseman graphics made it stand out and not only give it a high trial rate and promotional boost over Halloween, but also made it memorable for players. Using our Lightning Bolt logo as the key chase symbol was also complementary. Lastly the Flippin' retrigger gives this game a distinctive advantage over other respinning jackpot games

IN TERMS OF PLAYER APPEAL, HAS IT BEEN THE CASE THAT SOME OF YOUR CASINO TITLES HAVE FAR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS?

Well yes, of course, I think this is always the case. Recently we launched a game called Blown Away, which has remained in Sky's top 10 for its first three weeks (and is still there at time of writing). It is a funny cartoon style game. Generally speaking, this style is not as popular in the UK, so they are not the first to be promoted. With that in mind, it has performed extremely well, way above all expectations.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE STYLISH GRAPHICS, ANIMATION AND SOUND AND CAN THESE FACTORS EVER MAKE UP FOR FLAWED MECHANICS?

Important, but not more important than the game mechanic. They must be good enough to convey to the player what they are looking for in this particular game - and they must do that simply and quickly. But they are part of a whole story that explains the mechanic and could never replace them.

WHAT DO PLAYERS WANT FROM SLOTS: BIG JACKPOTS OR REGULAR

WINS? HOW DOES THIS VARY GEOGRAPHICALLY?

Slot players are representative of a broad and diverse range of society. To give you an example, some horse racing punters always go for the favourites, some like the really long odds and some are in between.

It's the same with slots. There is no set criteria for a payout schedule. I don't believe that this varies geographically. In the same way I mentioned the horses, the variety of odds available has a generic appeal worldwide.

WHICH BONUS/GAMIFICATION FEATURES HAVE PROVEN PARTICULARLY POPULAR FOR YOUR PLAYERS AND WHY?

Hold and respins, as mentioned, have been popular in titles such as Serengeti Diamonds, Super Happy Fortune Cat and Stellar Jackpots-Serengeti Lions. We have had immense success with our space themed Stellar Jackpots range, with five releases to date. The Lightning Respins range has two games to date, with more to follow. Why are these popular with players? Well, that is part of the black magic behind games, I guess.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR PROGRESSIVE JACKPOTS IN SLOTS?

That requires a bit of crystal ball stuff. I could tell you what we are up to but that is a bit too far off just yet.

HOW IS MOBILE AND TABLET GAMING DRIVING INNOVATION?

Firstly, it forces designers to be more creative with how they fit ALL of what they want to do in a game. That distills it down to the most important essence of the game to make sure it plays well for players when roaming around and loading times are acceptable.

Then developers are designing for mobile first, in particular portrait mode, so how that impacts a game mechanic is first and foremost in considering any new innovation.



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There is not only one specific big hit in recent times; however, our Hot Fruits series, which consist of seven games, has been enjoying great success within the past few months.

WHAT WERE THE KEY GOALS IN ITS DEVELOPMENT?

To deliver pure gaming. It is important to us that our games are self-explanatory and easy to play. When designing our games, we focus on providing the player with a fun, easy-to-understand and engaging game that is equipped with interesting and extensively tested land-based proved mathematics.

IN TERMS OF PLAYER APPEAL, HAS IT BEEN THE CASE THAT SOME OF YOUR CASINO TITLES HAVE FAR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS?

Yes, our Book of Aztec, which is an older game but still ranking as one of the top five games in most of our jurisdictions. We did not expect it to enjoy such continuous and extended success.