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Webcomic and video game

*Interview of **Mathieu Seddas** by Pierre Marie Soncarrieu, Romain Mallet and Marie-Charlotte Guillou from Radio G!, on the occasion of the ImaJn'ère festival. Interview broadcasted May 17th 2016 then archived on* http://www.radio-g.fr
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Mathieu Seddas (back view) in the studio

Romain
… We managed to corner Mathieu Seddas! So, you're an illustrator…

Pierre Marie
Many strings to your bow, even. Graphic designer, mainly, and do you specialize in other things as well?

Mathieu
I try to diversify. I'm a self-entrepreneur, mainly doing graphics and design. Then by passion I do illustration and concept art for video games. I train myself in a lot of areas, Internet too. Webdesign, code, etc.

Pierre Marie
Let's start at the beginning. What's your curriculum, how did you end up in the drawing industry?

Mathieu
I used to draw as a little kid, at eight years old. Then when I reached ten, I completely stopped. I started Archeological Studies. It was completely unrelated. When I reached the first year of master degree, I specialized in Palaeolithic and there was a lot of object drawing to do. By the way, I saw a book passed from hand to hand in your radio station, I had a look at it...

Pierre Marie
Dimension Préhistoire. (laughs) You can buy this one. I advise you to read it. The anthologist will be there at the con, you will have the opportunity to talk.

Mathieu
So in this Archeology specialty, I had to draw archeological items. And then I decided to find a non-traditional technique, not a pencil technique. I started to look at things on Internet, I discovered digital artists who used a graphic tablet with a stylus. I wondered "What if I did something more artistic than pencil?", if only for the roughly histo drafts (even if Palaeolithic is before the historical timeframe) and step by step I experimented. A lot of creators inspired me, such as Craig Mullins, a digital impressionist artist, he worked a lot with Spielberg for example... I trained in digital painting on the spot. When I finished second year of master degree, they asked for an advanced career plan. I started my thesis and realized it wasn't really what I wanted to do; I packed my things and rushed into illustration. That's a field where I can get some fulfillment!

Pierre Marie
So no artistic academic background whatsoever?

Mathieu
Not really. My parents do art, actually, my mother does a lot of impressionist work, my father painted a little, too. I don't think it had any influence – wait, what am I saying, of course it influenced me, even if I said no. I grew up in this impressionist environment. At the beginning, I was doing this kind of pictures, and progressively, I headed more towards concept art, with Asian inspirations.

Pierre Marie
Miyazaki, this kind of things. It's the reason why you almost never do black and white, isn't it?

Mathieu
True, I don't do black and white pictures, even if I tend to "blacken" my shadows. I'm more into a traditional painting approach. Turning my work in black and white wouldn't work, it's really my colors which do the trick. I don't use pencil either. Generally I rush directly into painting without using other kinds of drawing. Kinda like a sculpture feeling.

Pierre Marie
That's the process you're gonna show everyone, since during the con, you will do live demonstrations of your digital painting.

"You have to work in zooms, to scale up portions of the picture. You have to work on very big files, and to think about the possibility it may end up printed, too."

Mathieu
Yeah, I will make a few landscapes in speedpainting. It's part of digital painting. You use a stylus. Obviously it's a little different from traditional painting but the tenets are the same, the idea is to paint "without cheating", without using photographies or anything like that. Brushwork, etc.

Pierre Marie
Less expensive than traditional, too.

Mathieu
That's also why I do things like that. Paper, pens, it piles up too quickly.

Pierre Marie
But isn't the graphic tablet kinda an investment already?

Mathieu
Mine is really tiny, it's 66 USD. Some tablets cost 2000 USD, but in my case, the idea was to learn with the basic hardware.

Pierre Marie
But when you say yours is "really tiny"... What's the size?

Mathieu
Well, like, it's tiny like this…

Pierre Marie
(laughs)

Romain
Hey, when you're on radio, it doesn't work so well, to show with your gestures! (laughs)

Mathieu
(laughs) Something like 20x30 cm.

Pierre Marie
So it's like… A US Letter roughly, this kind of size?

Mathieu
Tinieeeer. The zone you're gonna use to draw is a lot tinier.

Pierre Marie
But some of your stuff is huge landscapes… Do you zoom in? And then you scroll?

Mathieu
I zoom a lot. The problem when you're working on a tiny graphic tablet is little lines will unfold more randomly at the larger size, so you have to work in zooms, to scale up portions of the picture. You have to work on very big files, and to think about the possibility it may end up printed, too. I used to not care, because exhibitions weren't my gig, but since you told me about ImaJn'ère (when we talked together on Internet, Pierre Marie) I realized it was an opportunity to start working on wider format, for the purpose of printing.

Pierre Marie
Since you don't do exhibitions and you tell us there are no printings, where can we find all of your illustrations?

Mathieu
There's a lot of platforms displaying my work on the Web. Let's just talk about my site, the URL is simply **mathieuseddas.fr**.

Pierre Marie
Got it. And do you have projects these days?

Mathieu
I'm currently on a video game project with a friend, **Raphael Lafarge**, who's a writer originally, who writes dark fantasy and horror stories. These days they are more in an "indie" mindset, they started a crazy project, they are creating an entire universe. They began doing a webcomic with video game parts, **Pantagrame**. The video game parts are 2D. And this time, the project would be to create a big 3D game. I'm working in a team, there's Raphael Lafarge who's writing the screenplay and encouraging the staff, and another one, the artistic director, who's orienting me, they are called **Laurier Richard** (comic book author and illustrator). We are a little three people team. We mostly finished a level, maybe we will present it at Paris Japan Expo.

Pierre Marie
And what's the setting for all of this?

Mathieu

The *Pantagrame* universe, a world created by Raphael Lafarge. The game will tell the story of a pretty wicked character from the *Pantagrame* universe.

Pierre Marie

The bad guys are always the best ones. (laughs)

Mathieu

(laughs) Yeah, you got it. It's some kind of prequel, it'll help us understand why this hero became a bad guy. It's quite interesting. I'm mainly on concept art, to create environments, to make the universe tangible, and then to see how it can be adapted in 3D. The conversion is always a little complicated between what you see on a concept art and the way it'll be modeled, the way it will come to life.

Pierre Marie

And then you will try to sell it to a video game studio?

Mathieu

We think more about a kind of kickstarter.

Pierre Marie

Oh, Ulule, this kind of stuff?

Mathieu

Yeah, we thought it's better to create an exchange with the fanbase, around the fanbase, to be supported by a community. This project will not be completed quickly. For now, we're working on a watchable demo, maybe a more elaborated demo.

Pierre Marie

For this video game, since you do all of the graphics part, did you work from specific inspirations or video game references? Or did you let your imagination do all of the work, are those creations YOURS only?

Mathieu

Well, first, we work in the universe created by Raphael Lafarge…

Pierre Marie

So they had visuals?

"I'm mainly on concept art, to create environments, to make the universe tangible, and then to see how it can be adapted in 3D."

Mathieu
Raphael had some visual ideas when it comes to the levels. Then there's Laurier Richard's graphic charter. And finally there are my creations, when I try to enrich various aspects of the setting. You see I am more specialized in landscapes, nature, architecture. I almost never work on the characters. Laurier does all of the character design.

Pierre Marie
But I stalked you a little, on the Web, to see the kind of stuff you were doing... Sometimes you draw characters. I think I saw pharaohs?

Mathieu
Well I did some characters but it's not really my area, and it takes a lot of time for me to do any character draft. I didn't find my rhythm with character design yet. When I speedpaint, I'm way more efficient with landscapes, I'm more intuitive with landscapes than with characters.

Pierre Marie
So you're not about to do any manga?

Mathieu
No way. (laughs) Character design means very meticulous work, with very precise visual codes. And about manga, well, I was indeed influenced by them, and video games, and

also literature. I'm basically a fan of science-fiction: everything by Philip K. Dick, Isaac Asimov, Dan Simmons, this kind of authors. Even the French authors such as Alain Damasio, for example, I love this kind of universe. Fantasy doesn't float my boat as much, even if I work on fantasy very often, visually speaking. I'm more into anticipation.

Pierre Marie
We're close to the end of the interview and as usual, we're going to do the Proust Questionnaire. Right?

Mathieu
Ha?!

Pierre Marie
We will ask you questions and you will have to answer, and mainly to explain.

Mathieu Seddas
???

Romain
He doesn't seem aware of the Questionnaire.

Pierre Marie
Of course he's not. If he was, it wouldn't be funny.

Marie-Charlotte
It's a surprise!

Pierre Marie
That's the ImaJn'ère tradition. If you had to be a spaceship… What kind of spaceship would you like to pilot? Or to incarnate?

Mathieu
So many possibilities… I wouldn't think about a single ship, though. Let me tell you about *Ender's Game*, when humanity must face a creature who can control its entire population. It's a swarm-creature, really, or at least I remember it like that. I think I'd like to be this kind of entity.

Pierre Marie
To have a hivemind, to be the queen of the hive? That's a weird kink! (laughs) I liked the book a lot, the movie kinda made me angry.

Mathieu
Yeah, me too. (laughs)

Pierre Marie
If you had to have painted a famous painting? (Authors always hate this question, because we're asking you to put yourself in another artist's shoes.)

Mathieu
I admire so many artists… I'd tend to talk about the 19th century impressionists, but I also like a lot of digital artists, I'm trying to catch up on them. Craig Mullins is my main inspiration. Loads of people try to imitate him. I'd like to make one of his masterpieces.

Pierre Marie
In his shoes. You would have put the painting in a gallery, it would have sold for ten millions. (laughs)

Mathieu
These days he lives in Hawaii, he's working on video games. (laughs) He doesn't have to worry too much about his career.

Pierre Marie
If you had to be a video game hero?

Mathieu
Umm… The video games I like are mostly RPG, so mainly *Final Fantasy*. Or *Metal Gear*, *Silent Hill*. Very specific settings, each one is unique. I think I'd like to be in a *Final Fantasy*. They have rich universe with a lot of characters and an emphasis on travels. I'd like to be one of these characters. Zidane in *Final Fantasy IX*.

Pierre Marie
Generally people prefer *VII*, but yeah, the world of *IX* is -

Mathieu
I started with *VII* and it's one of my favorite ones, but when it comes to design and the kind of world I'd like to live in, it would rather be *Final Fantasy IX*. Let's face it, the setting of *VII* isn't a complete heaven.

Pierre Marie
Well, it's a dystopia. (laughs) And final question, did you play Pokemon? In the golden age of childhood? Yeah, I know, it was a long time ago –

Mathieu
I saw my cousins playing that for hours on Gameboy, never tried it.

Pierre Marie
(outraged, desperate sigh)

Mathieu
But I saw the anime! So, well, I don't know any Pokemon – I'm not even sure I really know the names.

Romain
Pierre Marie will correct you if you are wrong.

Pierre Marie
I can list the 350 first ones if you're into that.

Marie-Charlotte
Don't talk shit about my Pikachu.

Pierre Marie
Come on, Pikachu is the worst. Well, too bad... Mathieu, if you had to be a famous woman?

Mathieu
Complicated. A lady who invented, discovered something. I'm thinking about archeologists I was lucky enough to meet during college.

Pierre Marie
That's not a very easy job. And why an archeologist woman?

Mathieu
The job is the important thing here. But the question seems to be about "If I was a woman". It's related to gender, and if you ask me, my model could be a man or a woman, there is no difference, as long as the personality is interesting and pertinent.

Pierre Marie
Quite intellectual. Well, thank you Mathieu, it was really a pleasure!

Mathieu
For me as well.

Pierre Marie
So we'll be seeing you at the ImaJn'ère Festival…

Romain
Indeed, where Mathieu will hold a booth and do great signed drawings.

Pierre Marie
Next weekend at the Curnonsky halls.