Artist Spotlight Weekly:
Sebastien Benard

"Keep it clean and simple"

I've been making games since I was 7 or 8 years old, thanks to my big brother who, one day, taught me how to use ST Basic. After a few years, I switched to Omikron basic, then Turbo Pascal, C, and later, Flash. I'm now using Haxe to build WebGL things.

I worked at Motion Twin, a cooperative company for about 18 years, and I was the lead on Dead Cells. I left the company in late 2019.

I participated to lots of game jams (mostly Ludum Dare) since ~2010.

I'm now a full-time indie dev :)

After leaving Twin Motion, Benard started creating his own mini 2D Side Scrollers. These games follow Benard's philosophy of "keep it clean and simple." While these games are very short and simple, they are still creatively addicting. It's powerful because these game give just as much joy as a more detailed and difficult RPG, Roguelike, or Roguevania styled game.

*Sidescrollers: A video game in which the gameplay action is viewed from the side angle, and when the playable character moves left or right, the screen scrolls back and forth with the character

*RPG: stands for Role-Playing-Game, a game in which the paly plays the role of a character

*Rogue/Rougevania: A style of RPG where the character wonders through procedurally generated levels. Roguelike has turn based combat where Roguevania is base of of the free movement Castlevania Styled combat
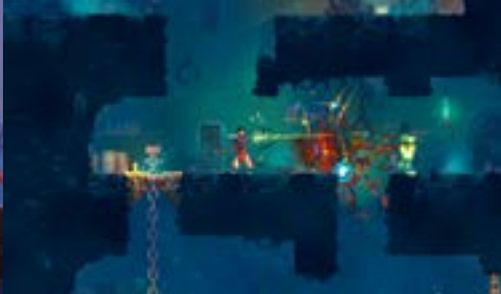
Released in August of 2018 by video game developer Twin Motion, the Roguelike, Roguevania, fast paced RPG "Dead Cells" took the gaming community by storm. The design and artistic teams were lead by Benard and some consider it his crowning Jewel. As the winner of "Best Action Game" at The Game Awards 2018, and the winner for "Best Indie Game" at the 2018 Golden Joystick Awards "Dead Cells" quickly became one of the hottest games on the market. One of the reason's the game did so well is due to the beautiful in-game imagery that follows Benard's philosophy of "Keep it clean and simple." While appearing to be pixelated like a picture blown up to much, the simple and imperfect art style of the game provides beautiful visuals that are both simple and clean. The use of this philosophy and the perfect execution of it helped "Dead Cells", a simple 2D Side Scroller become arguably become more popular than some of the big name full 3D styled First Person Shooters like Halo, Call of Duty, Assassin's Creed, and many others.

While one cannot deny that the graphics and visuals in 3D First Person Shooters are both gorgeous and incredibly realistic there is a down fall in that it sometime makes the player focus on the background visuals more than the task at hand. In some games like Walking Simulators where the game's focus is on the visuals having super high quality graphics is key but this is not the case for action based games. Benard's philosophy on video game art is gives the idea that while it is necessary it shouldn't take away from the game. In games like Halo that where the story line takes place on foreign worlds it is important to capture the uniqueness of those world but in someways the visuals do too much. In a game like Dead Cells the graphic art and game design is meant to help support the game by purely being in the background, and it is not till the player stops and actually looks at the background for them to truly appreciate the detail hidden inside it.

Benard's philosophy can also be applied to the overall style and genre of the game. While it is incredible to see how technology has progressed to give us such advanced game plays, it is important to see how 2D games like Dead Cells can be not only more fun but more in-depth and attention capturing than the 3D First-Person-Shooters because they use less technology. This brings life to the philosophy of less is more.
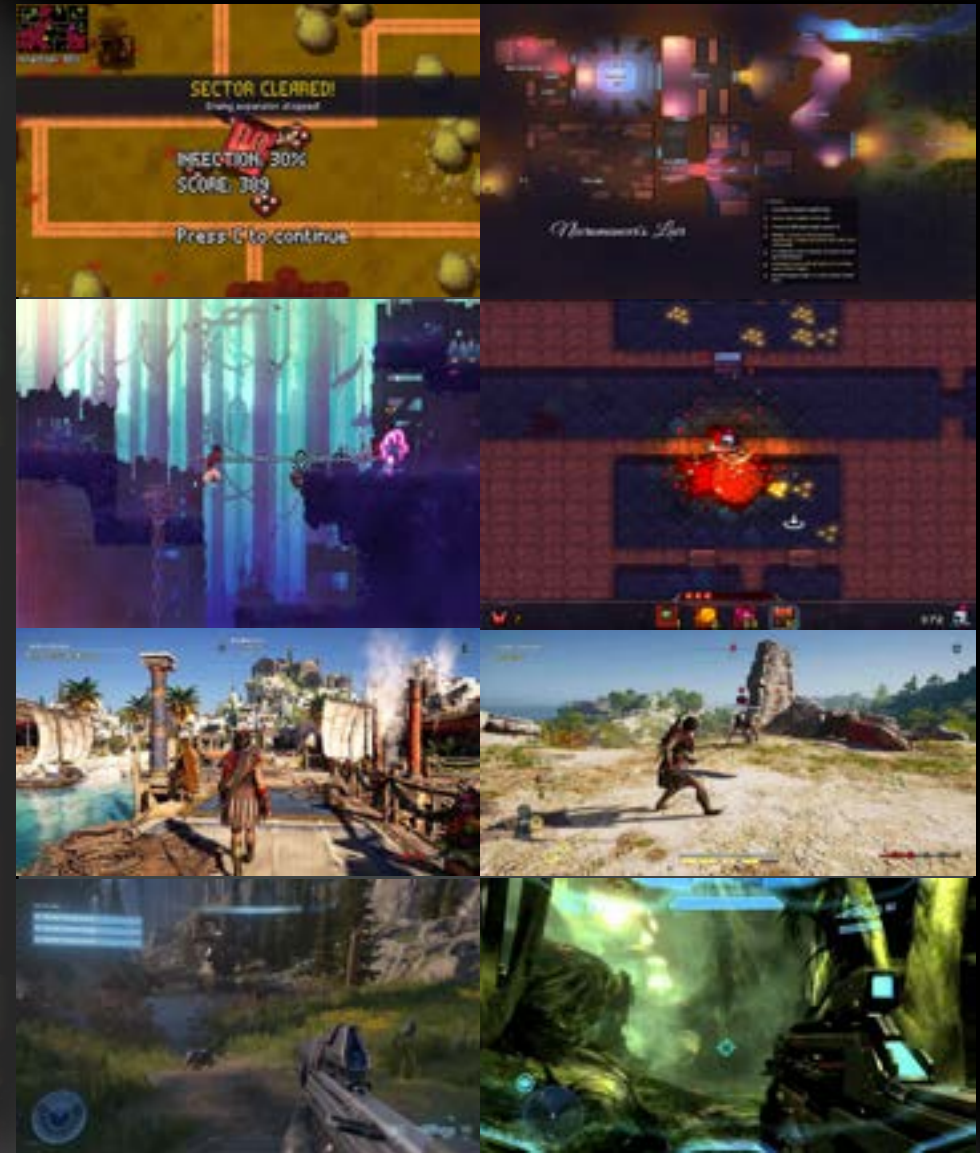
Part of Benard's mission since leaving Motion Twin has been to support and help develope as many Indie games as possible. While helping others Benard has been apart of a group of Indie game developers that came to get there to create two program to help anyone with an idea get a game developed. They are RPG Map Editor 2 which is a table top RPG map creater and LDtk which is a map editor for a Side Scroller, RPG like Dead Cells that Benard made by reflecting on his experiences creating Dead Cells. While RPG Map Editor is free to use LDtk is a "pay-what-you-want" program, menaing that if you can donate to support the application it is much appreciated but the mission is to provide these progams for free to help give everyone the power to create their own Indie games.