

JAKE MANION

GAME DIRECTOR & SENIOR PRODUCER

C O N T A C T

jakemanion@gmail.com
Kenya: +254 (0) 700 897 682
UK: +44 (0) 7989 974 741
Portfolio: www.jakemanion.com
 [linkedin.com/in/jakemanion](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jakemanion)

A W A R D S

2015: Children's **BAFTA** nomination for Interactive Original for *Escargot Escape Artistes* mobile video game.

2015: **TIGA** winner for *Best Game With A Purpose (Large Studio)* for *Shaun the Sheep: Sustainable Shaun*.

2013: Children's **BAFTA** nomination for Best Multiplatform for *Shaun the Sheep: Championsheeps* game suite.

2012: **Royal Television Society** award for Companion Content, Aardman & BBC Natural History Unit, for *Andy's Wild Adventures* game suite.

R E C O G N I T I O N

2019-2020: Mobile AR F2P title *Wildeverse* released, with 4+ ratings since launch.

2017: Produced and directed a successful Kickstarter campaign, which is now a released game.

2015-2016: *Escargot Escape Artistes*: #1 mobile game in Kids, with consistent 4+ ratings since launch.

2014: Featured games industry 'Genius' on CBBC's *Appsolute Genius* TV show, as judge and mentor.

E X P E R I E N C E

GROUP CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Pan Africa Gaming Group (PAGG) / Africa / 2022 to present

PAGG is a network of nine games studios across Africa, formed in order to attract better opportunities and funding than any could do individually. As Group Creative Director I provide industry experience, production oversight and executive creative direction tailored to each studio's varying needs, on games spanning several platforms and genres.

LEAD PRODUCER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Usiku Games / Nairobi Kenya / 2021 to present

Usiku Games is one of the largest studios in sub-Saharan Africa, with three core threads to the business: **1)** A web games portal for African players, designed to improve their financial resilience through cash contributions to their personal social security, health and education funds. **2)** Work-for-hire studio focused on games for good, typically working with prominent partners (inc. Disney, GIZ, African Union, FCDO, Johnson & Johnson) **3)** Running Africa's first co-working space dedicated to the games industry – the Nairobi Game Development Centre.

At Usiku I apply my skills, knowledge and experience across company leadership, product development, and hands-on production. I'm principal designer and lead producer, directing and mentoring everyone in the team - from artists to developers to junior producers. I identify and nurture new talent and enable our individuals to achieve levels of quality rarely seen in the African industry. At Usiku I have established the studio's production processes, introduced player-centric and market research-driven decision making, and instilled a supportive culture of friendship.

HEAD OF PRODUCT

Internet of Elephants / Nairobi Kenya / 2017 to 2021

Founded by Nat Geo & TED Fellow Gautam Shah, Internet of Elephants is a small games studio uniquely conceived benefit the planet's wildlife. Whilst leading the studio's design & production, I also built and nurtured the in-house dev team, brought the studio firmly into the established games industry, and maintained partnerships with external conservation organisations large and small, as well as with big brands such as Nat Geo and Adidas. Projects I led at IoE include the Unity-featured location-based mobile AR game (*Wildeverse*) and several rich data visualisations.

CREATIVE, PRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONSULTANT, GAMES

Nairobi Kenya / 2016 to 2017

Consulting across Africa with several studios offering advice, workshops and strategy, as well as hands-on direction and production of digital products and games. These include Leti Arts as their interim Chief Creative Officer, Shujaaz Inc (formerly Well Told Story) and Qene Technologies.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Aardman Animations (<http://www.aardman.com>) / Bristol UK / 2010 to 2016

Academy Award-winning Aardman Animations is one of the world's most respected creative studios. I was trusted to direct games based on their most valuable IPs, and responsible for a rolling slate of games based on their own IP (including *Shaun the Sheep*, *Wallace & Gromit* and *Timmy Time*) and external IP (including *The Gruffalo*, *The Hobbit*, and *Something Special*).

I applied the studio's passion for innovation and charm to a wide variety of interactive content, entertaining millions of players and attracting many awards as a result. I'm proud to have been instrumental in bringing Aardman's biggest game release yet to the studio; the moving *11-11 Memories Retold*, co-produced with [DigixArt](#) and published by [Bandai Namco](#). [Credit](#).

SENIOR PRODUCER / FULL-STACK & FLASH GAME DEVELOPER

Jaywing (<http://jaywing.com/>) / Bristol UK / 2006 to 2010

Jaywing - formerly HyperlaunchDMG - specialised in game-based marketing for youth and entertainment properties. I was a Flash game and full-stack web developer, and rapidly progressed to senior producer, while also handling as much hands-on development as I could fit in.

FLASH GAME DEVELOPER & PRODUCER

Cylix eLearning (<http://www.cylix.co.uk/>) / Bristol UK / 2002 to 2006

Cylix are creators of highly interactive and accessible educational games. As a fresh graduate I started life there as a Flash game developer, and left as their lead producer.

EVENTS & PUBLICATIONS

I have contributed to several events and publications across gaming and the environment, typically on how the two sectors can work together:

- Unity for Humanity Summit
- Games for Good (Space Ape)
- Pocket Gamer Connects: *AR Futures*
- Fak'ugezi Festival: *Person of Play*
- The 4th UN Environment Assembly
- UNESCO & Tencent's *Open Digital Library on Traditional Games*
- Leaders' Quest: Workshopping with prominent leaders in tech
- Scientific American: *XR in Aid of Conservation*

EDUCATION

- BA Hons Graphic Design (2:1) @ UWE, Bristol, UK, 2002
- National Dip. Art & Design @ Exeter College, 1999

INTERESTS

I've been making games since I was 10 and still love to code. I develop my own games as passion projects, and I'm currently working on a 3D stealth exposé of British colonial atrocities in Kenya, which explores the 1950's Mau Mau uprising from the surprisingly rare perspective of a normal young Kenyan as she navigates colonial rule.

Music is also a huge aspect of my life; I'm a multi-instrumentalist and have been playing saxophone for almost 30 years, and performing & recording with various amateur bands and orchestras for the last 20 years.

TOOLS

Experienced with Jira, Google Suite, MS Office, Trello, Notion, Adobe CC, Unity, Unreal, Git, Figma, Miro & more

REFERENCES

All references available on request

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

I'm an experienced game director and producer who has been active in the industry for over 20 years. In 2016 I left a dream role as a game director at Aardman Animations for a 'now-or-never' opportunity to move to Kenya and develop the African games ecosystem, where I am now an industry leader and Group Creative Director for several game studios across the continent. Here I've been able to navigate the games business in an extremely challenging environment, build some great teams, and enable them to deliver to a standard hitherto unseen in the region.

Throughout my career I've worked in several studios and with high-profile partners (inc. Disney, BBC, Ubisoft, Nintendo, National Geographic, Adidas & Cartoon Network), typically leading small teams of up to 25 people. I'm adaptable and versatile with a broad range of cross-disciplinary knowledge and experience, enabling me to take on a valuable blend of c-level responsibilities, project leadership, and hands-on production:

- **C-Level:**
 - Executive creative direction & production for 9 startup studios across Africa
 - Investor / publisher relations, pitch development and delivery
 - Talent discovery, management & development across all production disciplines
 - Business, financial and product strategy
- **Product leadership & design:**
 - Project leadership, management & direction throughout product lifecycles
 - Establishing and managing production plans and budgets
 - Risk assessment and mitigation
 - Pitch development and delivery for internal and work-for-hire products
 - Player, market and product research
 - Client / funder relationships and management
 - Game design, inc. developing & maintaining Game Design Documents
 - Visual identity and art direction
 - UX, wireframing and functional specifications
 - Rapid game prototyping on paper, Miro and digital (Unity / PICO-8 / Proto.io)
 - Game metrics design and analysis
 - Commissioning and managing external studios, contractors and QA teams
- **Hands-on production:**
 - Running Agile teams across several concurrent productions
 - Project management using other traditional methods (i.e. Waterfall)
 - Hands-on level design, gameplay implementation and balancing
 - Internal QA and playtesting

My approach to production is driven by open communication, collaboration, iterative design and player-centric thinking - all with a healthy dose of innovation and humour throughout. I speak the languages of product, design, engineering, art, finance, strategy and senior management, and get everyone communicating well together. When directing I love adding value to all disciplines in a team and enabling people - whatever their specialism - to channel and elevate their talent towards the project and long-term studio vision.

I've personally shipped over 70 titles, primarily on web and mobile, spanning a variety of casual genres and styles. In addition to my lifelong love of video games, I have a well-honed ability to get under the skin of new and diverse subject matters and IP, I can understand unfamiliar processes, pipelines and tech very quickly, and I have a solid appreciation of visual arts and trends.

I've written for science journals, spoken at games and science conferences, led game jams, mentored students & professionals alike, and I have been featured in several publications across gaming, nature, tech and science. My goal continues to be to delight players with great games, and make a positive impact wherever I can.