

This interview was originally published on Teilzeithelden, a german internet-magazine for roleplaying games and related areas.

Source URL: <http://www.teilzeithelden.de/2015/12/08/interview-tenebrae-noctis-justin-achilli-ueber-princes-gambit-deutsche-autobahnen-und-familiaere-events/>

Interview: Roger Lewin

Translation to German: Alexander Jaensch, Sebastian Meusel



Teilzeithelden: Please introduce yourself to our German readers. Who are you and what exactly is/was your task/position in the world of darkness?

Justin: was the developer for Vampire: The Masquerade and designer/ developer for Vampire: The Requiem, and one of the organizers behind the V20 project and the Open Development initiative. I consulted on the Activision Bloodlines and Redemption titles as the manager of the Vampire brand and was also designer on the World of Darkness MMO for several years. Before the CCP/ White Wolf merger, I managed the editing and development departments in charge of games design. I also developed Vampire: The Dark Ages and Werewolf: The Wild West, and contributed to a host of other White Wolf titles, in the World of Darkness and otherwise.

Teilzeithelden: How do you feel after all these years – now that the world of darkness has been relaunched and fans all over the world are happy about it?

Justin: It's great to see the World of Darkness revitalized, with an opportunity to reach new players around the world, as well as continuing to satisfy long-time players' desires. Martin Ericsson was on the Storytelling team for the World of Darkness MMO and is a veteran of the LARP medium and the Vampire brand, so it's in good hands with him in the creative director's role. For players, it's exciting to see community engagement as the priority of the Paradox acquisition. The first thing Paradox did was make itself available to players, and work with Ulisses Spiele to arrange Tenebrae Noctis, to give players a chance to meet them and learn about their intentions firsthand.

Teilzeithelden: What is your role now in the development of the world of darkness?

Justin: I left White Wolf/ CCP in 2011 and have worked on the World of Darkness in a freelance capacity since then. I developed the first several of the V20-era supplements with Onyx Path, and now focus on specialty titles, like Prince's Gambit, which is designed to be a "light" roleplaying game of hidden loyalties. It's intended to serve as an introduction to Vampire's World of Darkness for new players, but also to function as a "short RPG" that will satisfy veteran WoD players with its hidden loyalty and betrayal gameplay.

Teilzeithelden: Do you have personal game design projects? Please let us know about them.

Justin: Most of my recent attention has been on the separate topics of Virtual Reality and social deduction games. Prince's Gambit definitely falls into the social deduction category, which is perfect for Vampire, and Tenebrae Noctis guests will be able to play it before it heads into production. I'll also be sharing some of the motivational psychology (another of my personal interests) behind the design methodology at Tenebrae Noctis.

Teilzeithelden: What expectations do you have of the Tenebrae Noctis?

Justin: Some of the appeal of Tenebrae Noctis to me is its intimate size. Everyone in attendance will have unprecedented access to the game's creators, developers, publishers, and more. At huge conventions, there's too much going on for players to be able to spend much "face time" with the people who make the games they enjoy. An event like Tenebrae Noctis is a perfect venue for players to have much more access to those creators.

Teilzeithelden: How do you feel about something similar to a European grand masquerade?

Justin: I think it's a great idea. The supernatural world of Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, etc. is part of a WORLD of Darkness, at it makes sense for events like the Grand Masquerade to be accessible to players around the world. The Grand Masquerade had a number of worldwide attendees, but having these events more available to players without the ability to travel globally would be a huge boon to the community, and can actually help players expand their peer groups with one another.

Teilzeithelden: Were you in Germany before? What do you like most about our country?

Justin: I've been to Germany a handful of times, from attending the Essen Spiele to visiting game development conferences. One of my favorite parts of Germany I recall from a visit to Dusseldorf: the altbier. Having an altbier feels like participating in a local, cultural thing that's actually observed by the locals and not some tourist nonsense.

Teilzeithelden: Name three things that are mostly typical to Germany.

Justin: On any given day, a German wakes up and listens to Kraftwerk before traveling at infinite speed on the autobahn. At the end of the day, Germans all relax by playing parlor games about 15th-century agriculture.

Teilzeithelden: Are there differences between German and American fans? If yes, in what way?

Justin: It's anecdotal, but the most vivid example of German players I have is that they seem to enjoy a blend of action-heavy LARPs with their social and intrigue LARPs. I recall having a conversation (10+ years ago, to be fair) in which the individual was talking about a Dark Ages LARP that involved actual armor-and-zweihander combats mixed in with the conspiracies of vampire society. That was very different to me, given my background in more narrative LARPs and tabletop games.

Teilzeithelden: Will you play in the live action role-play or in some pen & paper sessions at the event?

Justin: My schedule at the event is pretty densely packed with programming, mostly in terms of participating in panel presentations and demonstrations. I'll be hosting a few sneak-peeks of Prince's Gambit, which is like a concentrated dose of Camarilla-Sabbat duplicity. It's like a four-hour roleplaying experience condensed into about 40 minutes ;)

Teilzeithelden: Do you want to tell us something in the end for the fans?

Justin: The entire reason that the World of Darkness is still vital today — the whole reason that an Icelandic company bought it and wanted to make a MMO about it, and the whole reason a Swedish company bought the IP from that Icelandic company and wants to keep making games about it — is because the players still love it and want more from it. The community is the World of Darkness' strongest asset. So long as you are out there and active and vocal in wanting to have more experiences in the World of Darkness, someone will find a way to make that happen. And from what we've seen, it will be people who are similarly as excited about that world as you.