



As games and game design become increasingly influential in other design disciplines, we called on area/code and the team behind the B.U.G. to create a game addressing architecture, culture, and design.

PLAY

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“What, we wondered, would it mean to design a game that takes 25 years to play?”

Slow Games and the Quest for Play Everlasting

Birthdays have long been associated with games, and there is no dearth of excitement when the two are mentioned in the same breath. So when we were invited to produce a game marking the 25th year of *Metropolis*, we jumped at the chance. After some fits and starts and lots of in-betweens, we arrived at a crazy idea that led to the design of the four games presented in the pages that follow. What, we wondered, would it mean to design a game that takes 25 years to play?

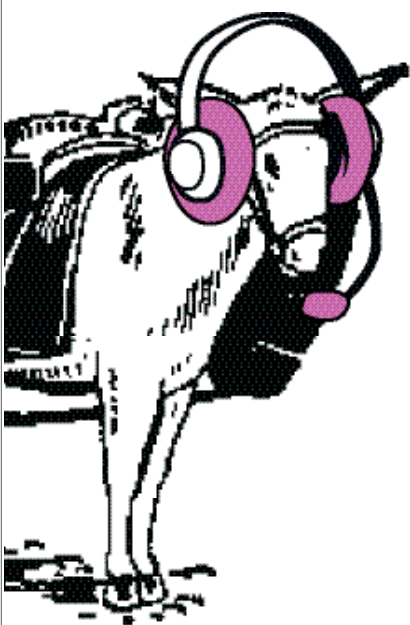
Games are usually designed to be transitory. They provide us with a couple of hours (or maybe a couple of weeks) of fun and then they're over. Architecture, in contrast, is often pitched in the language of longevity: buildings, because of their physicality, are designed to last. We wondered how we could make a designed experience, like a game, last a long time. How could we transform the normally transitory and ephemeral nature of games into something that endured? Taking a cue from Willy Wonka and his everlasting gobstoppers, we came up with the concept of slow games, games designed to last a quarter of a century in a single play.

As dynamic systems, all games deal with time, but very few games deal with it in exactly the same way. Some games delimit it through the use of timed sessions of play, as in basketball or hockey. Other games might designate a number of play sessions, like innings in baseball, which don't so much limit time as give a general frame of reference for how long a game might take. Then there are games like chess: do you play a game of chess in one afternoon over tea or over the course of several months? With slow games, time is manipulated in such a way as to simply slow down their play. In some ways, we can think of contemporary online games like World of Warcraft as slow games; years from now people will still be in that game, in the same way that there are players still in systems like LambdaMOO.

One effect of slow games is that they become measuring sticks of the passage of life. When you choose to make a move in **Cross Currents**, pull out **Forget Me**, scan the UPC symbol from **Skew**, or attempt to send **The Last Fax**, you will probably be reminded of the last move you made in the game, what you were doing, who you were with, and what you did with your time between moves. And like the game Assassin, slow games are designed to be part of your everyday life: they can be played while doing other stuff. Or, if you are really strapped for time, simply sit down one day, at the end of each year, crack open a snack, and make your move.

Slow games are games to be savored, their play doled out a little bit at a time. We'll be playing them and hope you'll join us and play them too. All we are asking from you is 25 years of your time.

continued on page 158





SLOW GAMES continued from page 156

PLAY

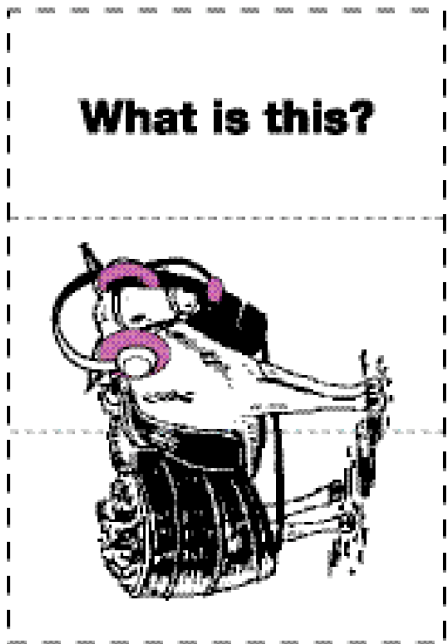
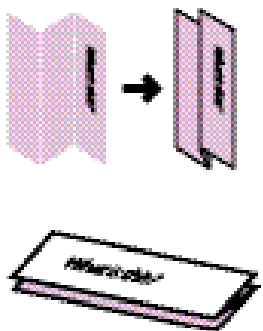


SKEW

The bar code above is valid but refers to a product from a company that doesn't yet exist. In the next few years it will be assigned to a commercial product. Win by creating that product or by being the first to spot the item and scan it in a store.

FORGET ME

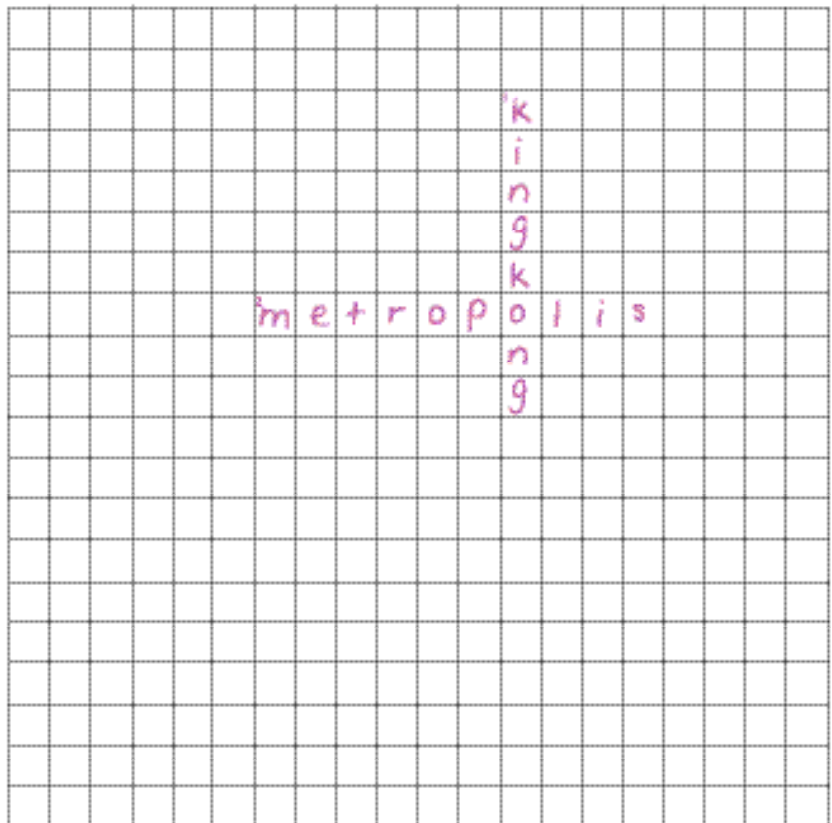
Cut out the rectangle at right and fold it as shown so that the image is hidden. Place it in a spot where you will come across it later. When you look at the folded paper and cannot remember the image inside, you win.



Forget the image to win

CROSS CURRENTS

Below is a list of clues, one for each year. Sometime during that year answer the corresponding clue by placing a word into the grid. Each new word must connect to a previously existing one. Number the first letter of every clue to keep track of what you answered when. Once you have filled in the last answer in 2029, you win.



Enter one word each year

- 2005 Remake
- 2014 Religious leader
- 2023 Building
- 2006 Anniversary
- 2015 Dance craze
- 2024 Fetish
- 2007 Pop song
- 2016 Vacation spot
- 2025 Vehicle
- 2008 Politician
- 2017 Protein sequence
- 2026 Font
- 2009 Disaster
- 2018 Diet
- 2027 Water source
- 2010 Slang
- 2019 Baby name
- 2028 Game
- 2011 Wonder drug
- 2020 Athlete
- 2029 Surprise
- 2012 Astronomical event
- 2021 Fad
-
- 2013 Gadget
- 2022 Data format
-



SLOW GAMES continued from page 158

PLAY

The Last Fax

TO:

FROM:

DATE:

The Last Fax is a game designed to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Metropolis.

How to play: Tear this page out of the magazine or make a copy of it. Fax it to someone. If this is the last fax ever sent by anyone, you win.

Total number of pages (including this one): 1

Please do not respond.