

# Media

## Rupert Loman

Devoted gamer Rupert Loman took a chance on an idea eight years ago and has never looked back. **Johanna Payton** meets the laid-back founder of family business Eurogamer Network

**R**upert Loman, from Brighton, is the founder of Eurogamer Network. The site, an editorial website and social network for gamers, has developed into one of the most important Europe-based websites focused on gaming.

### How did your passion for gaming turn into Eurogamer Network?

My dad, Paul, ran his own software company from home when I was growing up, so the house was full of computers. We were the first kids locally to get internet access. My older brother Nick and I became hardcore gamers and got into online gaming. When we were teenagers, most websites for gamers were US-based and we wanted to make our own website for European gamers. When we started Eurogamer, it was just a hobby, a simple website reviewing games. By the time I'd finished my A-levels, I realised it had huge potential as a business. Instead of going to university, I decided to take a gap year and see how far I could develop it. The website became more successful and we began to attract interest from advertisers who saw it as an opportunity to reach a new market. With some money coming in, I decided to stick with the business and am now in my sixth gap year!

### Were you shocked when the company took off?

When we started the website we couldn't have predicted where we would be eight years later. There was no business plan in place. It was just me, Nick and some friends of ours, writing the equivalent of what, today, would be a blog about gaming. Nick's role was always on the technical side and I was passionate about online gaming culture, enjoying the business and media side as the site grew. It was an ongoing learning process for me. Eurogamer expanded organically and we kept our costs low by working from home and communicating online. We decided at an early stage not to seek investment and have expanded cautiously. In October 2007, we moved into our new, Brighton-based HQ which will house 21 full time staff including an editorial, sales, admin and



In the past 12 months we've launched German and French editions of our site

technical support team. It is a big commitment but I'm confident and don't feel daunted by what has happened to the company, particularly as it remains a family business. We have a great team and I have the full support of my family. Although Nick is now a doctor, he is still a director of the company, as are my mum and dad.

### What does the future hold for Eurogamer Network?

When we came up with the name Eurogamer, we didn't realise it would serve us as well as it has. It encapsulates the direction we're heading in. While most of our competitors are mainly focusing on the USA, we are committed to building a strong European gaming network. In the past

12 months we've launched German and French editions of the site and are about to add Spain and Italy to our portfolio. We also produce a TV show which goes online every fortnight, and run Games-Industry.biz, for people who work in the video games industry. In 2006 we launched our first live event: a career fair for those who want to find a job working with games. We've already established a strong social network focused on gaming. I'm still just as passionate about games, but don't get as much time to play as I'd like to any more. I keep up to date by reading Eurogamer reviews. The challenge now is to develop the company while protecting our unique company culture.

*Chair of Media judges: Ed Bartlett, co-founder of in-game advertising network IGA Worldwide*



## HEADING FOR THE TOP



**Paulina Bozek, game director and executive producer, SingStar Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE)**

Bozek started her career in games at Ubisoft Entertainment. She joined SCEE London Studio in 2003 as producer of SingStar, the music party game for PlayStation2. Since its release in May 2004, SingStar has sold over 10m units and helped to popularise video games for mainstream audiences. Bozek is now focused on pushing the boundaries of interactive entertainment with SingStar for PlayStation3, with online community features.

**Justin Keeling, Fox Interactive Media, IGN European general manager, London**

After successfully launching and selling his first technology company, Keeling worked in Tokyo as a technology editor and consultant for Japanese investment banks. He then moved to LA to help launch G4, 'the MTV for video games', which now has 55 million US viewers. In 2006, he was recruited by IGN and now sits on the senior management team for Fox Interactive Media UK. He manages IGN Entertainment brands including IGN.com,

RottenTomatoes.com and Direct2Drive.co.uk. Next, Keeling is rolling out a men's advice portal at AskMen.com.

**Niall McKinney, founder and main shareholder, utalkmarketing.com**

McKinney was a marketing director for IPC Media, before launching Nuts magazine. He then became the publishing director of Loaded, before joining lastminute.com Europe as chief marketing officer. In January 2007, after hearing marketers complain about trade press quality for many years, he founded utalkmarketing.com to create 'the next generation of trade press brands'. In September, utalk recorded over 85,000 unique users and the company has achieved first round funding.

**Russell Middleton and Lindsay Middleton, co-founders, Wehanghere.com**

After graduating from Cambridge in engineering, Russell helped set up online organic meat company, Well Hung Meat, and established a successful speed-dating business. Lindsay studied economics at UCL before embarking on a successful career in fund management. Having watched the development of MySpace and Facebook, the brother and sister duo came up with the idea for WeHangHere.com over a

pub lunch, with the idea of bringing together people who share favourite pubs, restaurants, bars or clubs.

**Karen Pearson, director, radio producer and audio consultant, Karen P Productions, London**

Pearson was one of the youngest producers at BBC Radio 1 on Gilles Peterson's Worldwide show. She left in 2005 to apply her broadcasting skills to brands, establishing a production company geared up for 21st-century audio. She set up an internet radio station for Red Bull Music Academy in 2005, and one for the Roundhouse in Camden, north London, the following year. She recently signed Japanese radio station J Wave to her roster of clients, which also includes Fabric, the BBC, Red Bull and The Big Chill festival.

**Sharon Richey, founder and managing director, BEcause Experiential Marketing, London**

Sharon Richey is an entrepreneur who set up her first business in South Africa, before establishing marketing agency BEcause Experiential Marketing in

2003, specialising in live experiences, such as road shows, where 'brands interact with consumers'. In 2005, Richey was named one of the UK's top 50 'Young Gun' entrepreneurs by Growing Business Magazine. She believes experiential marketing is the future, as consumers 'want to be engaged by personalised communication, rather than being "talked at" by advertisers'.

**Cameron Roach, drama producer, Tiger Aspect Productions, London**

In the last five years Roach has produced over 50 hours of prime-time television, including Life on Mars, Footballers' Wives and Casualty. He was invited to join Tiger Aspect Productions in April 2007 by head of drama, Greg Brenman. He is working with a number of writers on drama series ideas, with the aim of producing successful returning drama series brands for UK channels and overseas. Roach is also a committee member of Television and Young People, the charitable arm of the Media Guardian Edinburgh International TV Festival.

**Katharine Roseveare, agency director, Intelligent Marketing, London**

After graduating with first-class honours in

English and diving straight into a marketing career, Roseveare co-founded Intelligent Marketing. With over 30 clients, including Diageo, HSBC, Lufthansa and Woolworths, Intelligent Marketing's 40-strong team achieved a £2.5m turnover last year. Katharine, who has completed the Chartered Institute of Marketing postgraduate diploma since establishing the agency, is responsible for client strategies and campaign implementation, and for the operational running of the business. She is a Women in Business Startups Award-winner, and featured in Management Today's poll of successful young businesswomen.

**Joanna Shields, president, Bebo**

Shields has held key senior management positions in technology and internet companies, including vice-president, international, for RealNetworks, where she launched the company's mobile business unit, and CEO of Veon. In January 2007, after working as managing director for Google Europe, Russia, Middle East and Africa, she joined online social network Bebo, which has over 10.9 million unique users in the UK. Shields is responsible for all commercial aspects of the business as well as developing Bebo globally.



Top: SingStar, the music party game for Playstation 2. Left: Life on Mars, one of Cameron Roach's TV series