y Jeff Eaton

Bop into Mac gaming groups on the 'Net, and there's a new adventure you're SURE to hear about — Marathon Infinity, the crown jewel in Bungie Software's Marathon series. An amazing collection of maps and puzzles, most agree it brings the Marathon experience to a new level. The company behind the Infinity scenario is none other than Double-Aught software, a promising startup whose founders are old hands in the Mac world.

Double-Aught began life as the brainchild of Greg Kirpatrick, the son of what he calls "a nice bourgeois family." With a technology-savvy father, Greg spent his early years surrounded by the latest in computing technology — the "latest" at that time being a state-of-the-art Apple IIe with 96k of RAM. According to Greg, he and friend Chris Giesel spent much of their time plugging away at Ultima and Wizardry on that venerable old machine.

Soon, the Kirpatrick family acquired a Mac 128 and Greg was hooked. He eventually saved up for his own Mac Plus, earning money with summer landscaping jobs. A few years later, he would graduate to a Mac IIsi, the classic progression of Mac addiction. Greg's ideas for Double Aught were brewing even then, he says. "I wanted to start my own company making D&D modules. Thank God that didn't happen, but I've had the idea for Double Aught for quite a long time." Die-hard Marathon fans will recognize the original name for his company as one of Marathon II's more difficult levels — Nuke and Pave, Inc.

It was in his second year of college at the University of Chicago that Greg met Jason Jones, then writing the game Minotaur.

"I went to school wanting to major in Physics," says Kirpatrick, "but Physics 131 cured me of that. I took off a semester and took a class at Boston University... when I went back to the University of Chicago, I decided to major in Geology. Jason Jones lived on the same floor as me, and we became friends... I helped to beta-test Minotaur with Jason Jones — and all the guys on the first floor of our dorm. From there, I used to chit-chat with Jason about Pathways, and I was one of the beta-testers for that as well."

"As chance would have it," says Greg, "Jason said to me: 'Greg, if there's going to be a story in Marathon, you're going to write it.' To make a long story short, I took him up on the offer

and spent the next 2 years working on Marathon, M2 and Marathon Infinity."

"The Infinity project was originally the 20/10 pack for Marathon 1, put on hold for awhile. I decided that it was perfect for the launching of Double Aught — it would give us something to do and it might even pay the bills... I had to do something, I couldn't live in Chicago anymore. (What can I say? I like hills and trees, I don't care that corn is twelve for a dozen in Chicago' - as someone once astutely pointed out to me.)"

But who to fill out Double-Aught's ranks? Enter Randy Reddig. The artist and programmer encountered his first Apple in the principal's office in second grade, "I wasn't behaving," he says, "and after a long conversation about how I was to change my ways, he showed me the school's first Apple II. Hooked I was, you could say." The transition to the Mac came eventually, and Reddig dove into the world of programming.

The two crossed paths a few years ago, after Randy began work on Pfhactory, a masterpiece map for Bungie's Marathon. Randy, already an accomplished programmer and artist, had designed and written Troubled Souls, a "gothic puzzle action game," assisted in the production of numerous other games, and was working for an east-coast web design firm. His design for Pfhactory was, indeed, one of the first maps that could truly be called *art.* Modeled on a hub-like space station, Pfhactory's complex architecture and intricate design tested the limits of the engine.

According to Greg, "I called up Randy from where he was working for the CIA as a deep undercover agent infiltrating the local coffee shop... Remember when the government shut down? That was because they had to pay Randy for all the work he'd done." Fortunately for the nation's economy, Randy accepted Greg's offer to join Double-Aught and assist in the creation of Marathon Infinity. Soon, Greg's childhood friend Chris Giesel, ace programmer Chris Bergmann, and designers David Longo and Colin Kawakami had joined the team as well.

"We started in February," says Greg, "and the project was supposed to take on a few months. As the grendels would have it, the project was delayed. Eventually, we all ended up in asylums talking to ourselves. Randy actually did all the geometry for 'A Converted Church in Venice Italy' while in a straight jacket, screaming at the nurse for munster cheese sandwiches and ginseng tea. Myself, I didn't do any work on Infinity. I just cracked the whip over Randy and Chris."

The entire team, says Randy, functioned as a cooperative force during the project, meshing well. "No part of the game is solely the domain of one person. Each of us is a writer, an artist, an architect and a programmer. Probably the biggest thing we had to deal with was getting Greg to work on Infinity rather than crushing some peon in Warcraft and Escape Velocity. *Some* of us here at Double Aught are glad we didn't invest in a Playstation..."

All worked out for the best, though, and Marathon Infinity is on shelves, drawing rave reviews. What does the Double-Aught team have up its sleeves next? "Remember that part of Independence Day where the ships come and blow up all the cities?" asks Greg. "We're pretty much settled on that. Big ships, world domination, and lots of cool computers." The other rogues at Double-Aught were tight-lipped as well, but the same message was relayed by all involved: they're working on something cool and a
demo should be out soon.