

# Las Cruces studio plans release of PlayStation 4 game

**LAS CRUCES** >> An independent Las Cruces game studio, 8 Red Pixels, is striving to put New Mexico on the map for game development as it gears up to release its first video game on PlayStation 4 in May.

The 14-person company started about three years ago when Michael Brown, a former video game and animation instructor at Doña Ana Community College, gathered students, young professionals and game enthusiasts to create a family-friendly arcade-style dodge ball game. They describe "Dodge Wars: Battle for Mt. Olympus" as the spiritual successor of the classic "Super Dodge Ball" released for Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in 1988. The company's version takes place in ancient Greece and focuses on fast-paced three-on-three game play with interactive arenas and supercharged moves.

Most big-name game development companies are located in places like Austin, Texas, Seattle and Silicon Valley. New Mexico is virtually nonexistent in the field, but Brown said his team hopes to change this.

"We essentially want to create this nice game culture to show that New Mexico has got the talent to do it and to hopefully get more indies to start up," said Brown, 8 Red Pixels CEO and creative director. "Right now, when people graduate from UNM or when they graduate from DACC or NMSU, they leave because there's no place for them to work here — and they are high-paying jobs, so we would like to keep that in New Mexico."

Dodge Wars made its debut in 2012 at the El Paso Comic Con, aiming to appeal a wide range of ages and skill levels.

"A lot of games have a lot of violence and stuff like that, but we didn't want to do something like that for our first game," Brown said. "We wanted to do something really fun that anyone could just pick up and play, so we decided to make a dodge ball game with the Gods and the Titans as children fighting for control of Mount Olympus."

## **Las Cruces pioneer**

The team chose to create the game for the PS4 because it is the newest hardware out in the gaming world.

"We've been working on the game long enough and we've got really nice graphics, so we wanted to hit the next generation running," he said, "and that could really make a name for the company as well to come out on the next-gen systems. Sony's incredibly supportive of independent developers."

In order for "Dodge Wars" to get to the eve of an official launch, each team member has had to dedicate an enormous amount of time and effort.

"It's been a real big challenge," said chief operations officer Aaron Léaton, 25. "None of us knew what we were getting into when we first started. We had to basically be pioneers in Las Cruces because we don't have the education we need for a lot of the stuff we need to do for game design."

"We've poured our heart and soul into getting this game off the ground and the experience so far has just been rewarding," code engineer Niky Léaton, 26, said. "We've enjoyed meeting together and having good times."

## **You can help**

Now that "Dodge Wars" has gone through the approval process and is close to finish, Brown said the team has launched a Kickstarter page to raise money to get the last development kits and obtain a multiplatform license. The team is asking the community to spread the word about the game in the hopes that more people will make a donation. The company is trying to raise \$50,000 before they submit their final builds in March.

"We're trying to do something that nobody else has really ever tried, which is to make a fully functioning game studio focusing on the PS4 and the Xbox One and making these

high-powered experiences right here in Las Cruces," Brown said, "and we need (the community's) help right now to get the last bit of funding we need to finish this."

If that can succeed with "Dodge Wars," the team hopes to create other games, including games for other platforms like Xbox One and the Wii.

"After this game is released, we've already kind of planned to start another project, which is going to be kind of a giant sci-fi game with some really cool stories and more of a story-focused game," Brown said.

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### **Pay to play**

**What:** 8 Red Pixel's "Dodge Wars: Battle for Mt. Olympus"

**How to help:** Visit [kickstarter.com](http://kickstarter.com) and type "Dodge Wars" into the search projects box. People who donate can receive rewards based on the amount they pledge. Pledges start at \$5 and go up to \$10,000 and are being accepted through Feb. 10. The goal is \$50,000 and the entire amount must be funded for the Kickstarter campaign to go forward.

**More info:** To learn more about the company and the game, go to [8redpixels.com](http://8redpixels.com)