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Vancouver developer scores a hit with Babylonian Twins puzzle game

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A newly released game created by a Vancouver developer has rocketed to the Top 20 list for its category on Apple's app store.

The instant success of Babylonian Twins marks the culmination of a long journey that started in Baghdad back in the 1990s when Iraqi-born Rabah Shihab created a graphics-rich puzzle game for the Commodore Amiga computer.

Economic sanctions and other difficulties made it difficult to get the game published. It was 2008 when an Amiga demo was released. The game had remained unseen until 2007 when Shihab's younger brother posted videos on YouTube that sparked interest and the call from the Amiga community for the demo.

"I built the game when I was in Baghdad and because I couldn't publish it, it remained on my hard drive for 16 years," said Shihab. "In 2007, my younger brother put videos of the game on YouTube. It started a thread and soon everyone was talking about it. This became very popular so we said, 'Let's get it out, people like it.' "

Encouraged by the interest, Shihab reassembled the team that had worked on the game -- meeting virtually, since everyone was by now living around the world, with the graphic designer in Australia and the musician for the game working in the United States as a medical doctor.

In 2008, Shihab released a demo version of the game but it was news of the impending arrival of the iPad that determined the platform the full game would be released on.

"We were supposed to publish it on other platforms and then the iPad came along and it was an opportunity for us," said Shihab.

"We've been working on it for the past eight months."

Just released last week in Apple's app store, Babylonian Twins quickly climbed to the top of the popularity ratings -- being named among the top 20 puzzle games in the app store after the first day it was released.

The game follows the story of the twin princes of Babylon, Nasir and Blasir, who are protecting the city from an evil sorcerer. Players switch between the twins, who each have their own special strengths, to overcome obstacles in the game, which has more than a dozen levels.

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Read Gillian Shaw's blog at www.vancouversun.com/digitallife

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BabylonianTwi nscreator

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