Who does Shinji Mikami, creator of the Resident Evil series, fear? Well, according to an interview with Mikami in 2009 it is none other than one Tokuro Fujiwara. Mr Fujiwara is the creator of the "Ghost and Goblins" franchise and producer of several Mega Man games.

He was a graduate from the Osaka Designers’ College and was recruited by Capcom as a designer. Together with a colleague, he left Konami to start working for Capcom. After working at Capcom for thirteen years, he left the company to form his own studio, Whoopee Camp, which the first and only contribution to the gaming world was the two "Tomba" games, after which they went bankrupt.

This is a unfortunate turn of events, since the Tomba games show some real creativity in combining RPG-aspects to what is at its core a rather basic platforming game. The player takes control of the titular Tomba, a wild child arguably based on Kijimunas, small wood sprites with wild hair and a playful streak. They live in trees and are excellent fishermen, facts which are referenced in the opening cutscene of the first game and the first level of the second game. The name was changed to Tombi in European countries, probably because "Tomba" is Italian for "grave", which would change the feel of the game somewhat.

Tomba lives “on a certain continent which for some reason has never been marked on any map”. In the beginning of the game, Tomba´s golden bracelet gets stolen by a tribe of humanoid pigs called "The Evil Swine". Since the bracelet is the only remaining memory of his grandfather, who had raised him from birth, Tomba sets out to hunt down the tribe of pigs and get back what is his.

Fairly early into the adventure, Tomba learns that the reason the pigs collects gold is that it fuels their magic, and that their seven leaders have cast a curse over each of the lands of the continent. The only way to break a curse is to find the hidden pig bag which is hidden in each of the cursed lands and use it to capture the evil pig. At its most basic, the player enter a cursed area, find the evil pig bag, find the portal to the evil pig’s lair and capture it, thereby freeing the area from its curse and opening up new parts of the game.

As far as excuse plots go, this is somewhat humorous and quite unique, as far as standard RPG plots go.

In a way, the game may seem tedious, just searching platforming levels for the bag and then the portal. This portal can be hidden anywhere in the game world, not just in the cursed area itself. The game is comprised of the usual platforming levels, which can be navigated using both the background and the foreground of the levels itself. There are also several villages were the action is seen from above. These areas are mainly story-based, and no evil pig portal can be found in them.

The big difference between this game and other RPG/platform hybrids lies in the event system. These are missions of various difficulties that appear by either running into something strange on the levels themselves or getting them directly from NPCs. The events themselves ranges from the obvious “save seven dwarfs” to the more esoteric “Where did that barrel I put in the river go?”. Sometimes, the players only have the name of the event itself as a clue. Mostly clearing an event gives some kind of item or new quest, but some of them such as the aforementioned barrel are seemingly simply there to taunt players seeking everything the game has to offer.

Clearing these events, even if they give no other reward, yield Adventure Points which can be used to open AP-boxes which in turn new items. These items are everything from clothes that raise the player's stats to weapons. Very few of them are straight upgrades, rather offering a different way to play the game. In the end, the clothes and weapon the player has from the beginning offer up the most utility, unless the levels or an event forces the player to use a certain item, which happens a few times. The best weapon is a combination of the default Black Star and the grappling hook, allowing the player to do damage to enemies and swing on ceilings and walls. The Adventure points can also be used to have the player's fortune told by two fortune-tellers, but the only thing it is good for is getting extremely vague clues on which areas contains Pig bags, which is obvious anyway since those areas are cursed.

Some events are just weird, like the guard standing on top of the stormy mountains. He can only say the word "funga" and does not allow anyone to pass. In the jungle area, more like him are encountered, but as enemies this time. In the jungle something called a funga-drum is found in a random chest. Give the guard the drum and he moves, giving the player access to his treasure of...molasses? Nothing about any of this is explained, but at least the molasses is used for a potion a witch in the first town is making. The event with the guard is not necessary to complete the game, but since the witch gives the player one of the best weapons in the game, the aforementioned grapplejack, the player will probably complete it anyway.

The witch returns in the second game, this time with a somewhat more comprehensible fetch quest. However, the reward is inadequate this time around, merely being protection against ice and fire attacks instead of the greatest weapon in the game.

There is also a really weird quest involving a thief’s treasure. The player talks to him, and he says his treasure is in this chest behind him. He then immediately says he lost it and leaves. The player opens the chest, finds his treasure and the event is completed, mere seconds after it started. Naturally, the treasure is used for absolutely nothing whatsoever.

The game has a life system, but the game is fairly easy and the player is able to stack up on about twenty extra lives at the end of the game. The player can also save whenever they wish to, by going to the signpost at the entrance of each area, making the life system unnecessary. The sequel wisely does away with this system altogether.

The game is very open, allowing the player to explore the areas freely although some are closed until a certain evil pig has been defeated or a certain event cleared. Normally, these required events are fairly easy to figure out, with plenty of hints from NPCs and the environment themselves. The game of offers no tutorial, although it really isn´t needed. The only form of help arrives early in the game when the player needs to get rid of some fog covering a forest. The game says to find something windy and to the player's surprise, a farmer living in a nearby village mentions having recently ordered a portable tornado from a mail-order survivor kit. Open the mailbox and the fog blows away. And with that, the player can continue on with the game.

The game is quite charming with several fun NPCs, a good example being the line of increasingly old men, from the hundred year old man who tells Tomba about the evil pigs all the way up to A million year old man, who lives very near to the entrance to the pig tribes main base. The levels are quite aesthetic too, with everything from the basic lava cave all the way to cities dedicated to technology, located in a jungle, to one floating on a lake of what is obviously wine. A drink for grown-ups, the game calls it.

The music and sense of humor is rather enjoyable, especially the theme of the evil pig boss fights. How to learn the language of the dwarfs? The game shows the player how, by biting the Dwarf's skulls. It is consistent, too, bite the enemies and absorb their powers. Killing enemies without biting wields no experience. It is not violent in any way, and the dwarfs are totally okay with it afterwards. The map is quite large, but a helpful warp-system is in place. By using something called charity wings, Tomba can warp to any area previously visited. After solving a certain sequence of events the player will obtain a dog that flies with its giant ears. The dog is swiftly named Baron by Tomba and follows him for the rest of the game. By using Baron, the player can warp to any previously visited location for free, without using charity wings. Much is made of Tomba´s ridiculous hair and shorts, and apparently he stores all his items, even living things, in his belly and throws them up on command. The music and sound-effects range all the way from funny and upbeat to low key and mysterious, and it does a good job at giving the player a sense of wonder and willingness to explore the game world. In the final area there is a small room where the defeated evil pigs are turned to stone and placed on pedestals. It is quite creepy actually, and the room contains the last event before the end of the game. This event is quite difficult for newer players, even though the game provides a somewhat indecipherable clue.

The first Tomba game has a few animated cutscenes, some of them quite striking, such as a giant tower in the shape of a flower rises up from the ground. This tower was probably also meant to be a dungeon or something similar originally, considering it has got original music but just consists of a single room.

A problem with this game is that it is unfinished in some aspects. This is not an issue that gets in the way of playing, but if the player deigns to look in the event log of the game, there is a large gap which hints at cut content. There is also what looks like a village on the world map that cannot be entered. Still, the game is quite long but it is both frustrating and confusing seeing cut content being openly shown in the game like that.

There is also a rather weird experience system in place; defeat enemies of different types and the player gains a level. When the player gets to level ten, they can collect one of three hidden crystals which give them elemental powers. However, the player is unlikely to get higher than level four or so when the game is completed and the powers themselves are so limited that there is no reason whatsoever to grind enough to get them. Unfortunately, collecting them constitutes the solution to three events. There is however an event that gives the player fish food which can be put in random ponds to lure out a fish that levels them up automatically, saving a lot of grinding.

No other developer has tried to emulate this system, unfortunately. The graphics are very lovely and quite detailed, with several layers of background and lot of character to the enemies and Tomba himself. Sadly, the NPCs are a bit stale with a grand total of two animation sprites (mouth open, mouth closed). The games sold poorly, mostly from not being marketed enough, sending Whoopie Camp into bankruptcy. However, it did appear on the official PlayStation magazines demo disc. Tomba is best experienced as a somewhat kooky platformer with a slightly tedious system of fighting bosses. But beyond these small flaws, this game is very well worth it!

The sequel, subtitled the evil swine returns, improves on a few important points but is ultimately not as good as the first game. The most striking feature of this game is the new look of the graphics. The pixelated look from the first game has been replaced with 3D polygon models, and to be frank it has aged terribly. The game also has voice-acting, which is pretty amateurish. Particularly Charles the monkey and one of the evil pigs, who are just obnoxious to listen to. Ah, yes Charles. In the original game he was a mischievous character that thought Tomba some neat tricks. In this game he is nothing but a simpleton that needs to be rescued several times. A good example is early in the game where the players find him starving. However, he will not accept regular bananas or any other food, he only wants baked bananas. The obvious clues would be that Charles would eat any kind of food, but instead, he desires baked bananas.  Okay, so it is a throwback to the first game where Charles wanted banana juice instead of regular bananas, but at least his life wasn’t in mortal peril then.

On the upside, the events have become a bit more self-explanatory and varied, including quite a variety of minigames such as a mine-cart ride, a giant chicken washing minigame and mouse riding game. There are also no more events that can be lost forever and require the players to start over to get them, which is very welcome.

This game is a bit darker in tone than the last one. The evil pig ghost, who was quite lame in the last game (not actually being able to summon any ghosts) is now a rotting pig-zombie managing to summon quite scary and not to mention invincible ghosts. At the end of the game there are also actual horror-elements, to which the details will go unknown. The replacement for the four old men from the last game, Kainen is quite mysterious and is hinted to have dark powers of his own, but this is never elaborated upon. Presumably they were saving it for a sequel which we sadly never got to see.

The AP-boxes do not any longer contain individual items, but rather gold pig snouts which are all used for a single quest late in the game. A thing like that ruins the sense of surprise and diminishes the fun of the game greatly. The event system itself works exactly like in the last game, although most of the more obscure type of quest is gone, which is good since they really didn´t contribute all that much to the game.

The story of this game concerns Tomba being visited by a fairy called Zippo, urging Tomba to help his hitherto unseen girlfriend Tabby from the evil pigs. Zippo helps Tomba out by giving him clues and generally point out what to do in every single situation.

The problem with characters like that is that they really aren´t needed, the suck all the fun out of figuring things out for yourself and are insulting to the intelligence of the player. Doubly worse is if they are introduced as an old-friend and the player is simply supposed to buy that Tomba has known them all his life, although they were never mentioned before.

One might also argue that a kidnapped girlfriend is a parody of an excuse plot just like the golden armlet was in the last game, but it does feel uncomfortable seeing a female degraded to the state of an object in this fashion. It does not help that it is implied in the ending cutscene that Tomba and all her (male) friends appreciate her mostly for her cooking.

A good thing Whoopee camp added to the sequel is the very welcome opportunity to move between the levels without using a charity wing or Baron using an underground mine which is opened up as soon as a certain evil pig is defeated. It is a bit cumbersome though, as the mine is quite a labyrinth and looks the same everywhere.

Another thing the sequel does better is menu organization. The items the players acquire is marked depending on what they are for, they can read descriptions and what has been said about them. The sequel does away with the map from the first game, which isn´t really needed since the game is so linear. The games location is also a bit stranger, there is the usual fire mountain right next to frozen tundra but also a circus hedged in between a hunted forest and a mysterious water temple which no one can enter. Who do these people perform to?

If the last game was left unfinished gameplay-wise, this game is very much unfinished story wise and it is a great shame that the publishers could not make a third game to explain some of them. Seriously, Kainen is pretty intriguing. He feels a bit out place but is very interesting.

The second game also introduces a benevolent tribe of pigs that stands in opposition to the evil pig, which feels strangely nuanced for a game like this. They are encountered in the aforementioned circus town and wield magic that is somehow tied to oak trees.

There is quite a bit of nice world building in the second game with three (or are there more?) magical towers. They are quite hard to find and requires helping adventurers to give the players clues about the towers, finding two parts of a spell for each tower and then chanting in front of the hidden entrance. Inside is a very hard level that gives the player a reward for completing it. The atmosphere in these towers are pretty great, especially the music which is both tense and mysterious, almost a bit oppressive. The good tribe of pigs is also indicated to be connected to these towers. These towers are probably what the flower tower in the original Tomba was meant to be like.

Lastly, a really inspired idea is to import the save data from the first Tomba, which unlocks a couple of events and characters from the first game. It is nothing special, but makes the game a little longer and is required for 100% completion. The events are longer and quite a bit harder, especially the search for the three hidden towers and the special weapons found therein. If nothing else, it is quite funny to see the pixelated characters from the first game return in jagged polygon-o-vision.

The second game is a lot more linear than the first, with areas opened up one after another. This is both a bad and a good thing, depending on the player's preferences. A good way to play this game is to simply go through the areas, follow the story until the player reaches to the end. Then, explore each area again, getting the sidequests and finding the portals to the evil pigs realm. Ultimately, the second game has lots of things going for it but it is not as good as the first game.