



# Roundtable: Building a Successful Sequel Slot

By Stoyan Todorov Published July 28, 2021 Est. 12 minutes



"Creating a sequel to a successful slot means starting from scratch"

"One of the key considerations when creating a successful sequel is the target player demographic"

"How far can we take this interesting concept and add new mechanics, while still having a recognizable product?"

Sequels within the entertainment industry are a sure-fire way to generate hype and drive interest back into an existing brand. The success of a follow-up is never guaranteed, but slot

Developers normally have a talent for new design concepts that resonate with existing

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So what exactly goes into developing a sequel slot? We asked some of the industry's biggest game studios for their insight into the process and to find out which sequel title they are currently working on.

- *Jo Purvis, Director of Key Accounts and Marketing UK at Blueprint Gaming*
- *Amit Samji, Senior Game Producer at Push Gaming*
- *Mark Claxton, Head of Games at iSoftBet*
- *Steven Cross, Director of Games Development and Operations at Greentube*
- *Mario Benito, CCO at R Franco Digital*

**Q: How do you identify which of your existing slot releases earns a sequel? Is it purely driven by operator/player demand or is there a desire from within to improve the gameplay?**

**Jo Purvis (JP):** It's an interesting question. If you have a successful game, player demand is always a consideration and there seems to have been a bit of a resurgence in direct sequels over the last 12 months. You only have to look at an operator's homepage and how they are always trying new ways to stand out from the crowd to appreciate how much of an appetite for sequels there can be. From an outsider's view, it might look as if we have been releasing sequels for a while. In reality, we have traditionally steered away from direct follow-ups. We have focused more on giving a slightly different offering to the player by utilizing proven mechanics such as our Jackpot King progressive pot system, Megaways™, or our latest creation Prize Lines™. That's not to say we aren't constantly asked about them. Some games feel like they are better suited to being a one-off, whereas others lend themselves more naturally to a sequel.

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sequel will work – did we do all we could with the original? Is there scope in the gameplay of the first game to take it further into a sequel? We take pride in the games we produce and we don't release sequels simply for the sake of it, so it has to be right – and this is how we approach development.

With our recent release, *Jammin Jars 2*, it was such an approach that eventually became the Giga Jar feature to really get the ball rolling with something new. We played around with the early concept – one which added wilds in the game – in one of our regular development meetings and the more it took shape, the more it became apparent that it would be a great fit for Jammin' Jars' style of play – and after further internal discussions, it was decided to create a sequel around it – and so Jammin' Jars 2 was born.

**Steven Cross (SC):** Naturally, there is always a demand from within to improve the gameplay of our games. However, we are a data-driven company, so we look closely at performance KPIs across our markets to ensure that we focus effort on creating sequels for only the highest-performing titles. We also pay close attention to player and operator feedback to ensure that any sequel we create is the best it can possibly be.

**Mark Claxton (MC):** It is a little bit of everything. Firstly, sequels generally come from the success of original games and how much players enjoy them, and how positive the results have been for operators. Ultimately, it comes down to whether it has been a success for us. Some games naturally lend themselves better to sequels such as *Hot Spin*, where we've just launched the third in the series.

This is one of our original games. The second version was made into a Deluxe version which propelled the game into 'newer' times where players seek even bigger win potential, so we

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*Spin Megaways™*, which is a natural evolution after combining this iconic mechanic with our own unique iSoftbet features.

**Mario Benito (MB):** It is our mission at R Franco to constantly work to improve the quality of our slots provision. An integral part of that vision is our review process, where our slots department works daily to look across our entire portfolio to work out which games are achieving the high standards we set for ourselves.

It follows that if we are happy with a game – and if our customers are similarly satisfied, finding that it has resonated with players – then we can try to improve the experience by releasing a sequel. Often, we find that there is a certain element within even the most popular games that we can see has to room for improvement, for the benefit of both operators and players.

**Q: What is the key consideration to ensure a sequel is successful and does not hinder the appeal of the original title?**

**AS:** That can be an important consideration, especially if the original game is still a strong favorite among players. With Jammin' Jars 2, there was a degree of pressure on us to ensure that the first one wouldn't get forgotten while balancing that with neither game being replaced by the other.

We wanted to make certain that fans of the original – which is still very much played today – didn't feel as though it wasn't worth playing anymore. We're confident that both games offer something different while keeping the same mechanics and logic to gameplay. That after all should be the essence of a true sequel.

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theme. It's one thing changing the math, but sounds, characters, graphics, and even something as simple as symbols, distance themselves from the original game, and you risk losing that original appeal.

It's important to be careful to maintain a graphical look and feel that ensures players recognize what they're playing. Our players are very much at the heart of all we do, so keeping them engaged is key. By playing on their curiosity, taking a game or a theme that has been a fan favorite, and seeing how we can expand it into new, exciting areas is something that drives us to create unforgettable experiences.

This is our approach to all our game creation, inspiring that curiosity and maintaining our commitment to delivering amazing games, but ensuring it remains true to itself is vital when creating a sequel.

**MB:** In movies, sequels are often a continuation of what has gone before. It is the extension of a story, perhaps to a new landscape as a setting, but with similar themes running through it. From our perspective, though, creating a sequel to a successful slot means starting from scratch. It is a case of building from the ground up in order to provide players with a recognizable but wholly different proposition.

For example, in TIME LAB II – Olympic Games we see Dr. Random returning from the original TIME LAB game to present the adventures. This time, though, the new game is based on a new math model and comes with completely new functionalities. It is a completely different title, wrapped in familiar packaging and with something new designed to appeal to fans of the original.

**JP:** I think the key to a great sequel, no matter the industry, is making sure the key elements

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successful in the first place. It's about offering something familiar but giving players a reason and desire to play the follow-up version.

While not necessarily a sequel, a recent and great example of this is Fishin' Frenzy: The Big Catch. The core element of the game is the fish and how the game delivers the scatter wins during the feature. They give a very particular gaming experience that resonates with a wide range of slot players. If we deviated too far from that it would lose appeal to the very player we're looking to target. From there, we looked at the game elements and what ways we could keep those key components whilst appealing to existing and also new players.

**SC:** One of the key considerations when creating a successful sequel is the target player demographic. Sometimes, it is simply that you have invented an awesome game-mechanic and maths model and you wish to offer this mechanic to a slightly different demographic or market. In this case, keeping the game close to the original, but providing a different theme, often proves hugely successful. Other times, the sequel is about evolving the game and taking players to another level. In these cases, it is important not to deviate too far away from what the players loved in the original, but to give them something more. These enhancements can range dramatically, including everything from enhanced game mechanics to changes in the maths profile, making the game more volatile. We have seen many different enhancements work, but the key ingredient to any sequel's success is to stay true to the original brand in which players trust.

**Q:** Which recent or upcoming sequel slot has your company been working on? How does the gameplay differ from the original?

**IP:** In addition to Fishin' Frenzy: The Big Catch, we've just launched Luck O' The Irish.

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pays reels so it's clear that players who connect with the game are after simple and quick-fire wins. We added a Money Spins sub-feature to the game, which is designed to give direct cash prizes without drawing out the game for too long as that's not what the slot is about.

Also, we're working on The Goonies Return, which again retains the classic feel of the original and hugely successful title we first launched back in 2018, but with twists to each of the game modifiers as well as all-new bonus rounds. We're also adding a new win exchange where if the player achieves a win above a certain amount, they can collect or try and win one of the six bonus rounds. We're looking forward to sharing more details on The Goonies™ sequel very soon!

**SC:** The Diamond Link series has been a huge success for Greentube and Diamond Link: Mighty Emperor is no exception. This is the fourth title in the series, so we decided to dive even deeper into the game mechanics in order to really bring this next level to the series. The defining feature of the Diamond Link games is the Diamond Link Hold N Spin Feature which boasts four progressive jackpots, two of which are linked. Mighty Emperor steps it to another level by awarding the player four increasingly lucrative features which live within this main Hold N Spin feature. This, coupled with a few hidden gems and the ever-proven Asian theme, is showing great early results with players.

**AS:** Jammin' Jars 2 retains much of the charm that made the original such a hit but has more features that offer even more excitement. It's easy to make a sequel but making it great is the real test and we believe we've done that.

The base game is progressive, there's a Fruit Blast feature, Instant Prizes, and of course the Giga Jar feature! There's a host of other changes too, such as the increase in a maximum

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There's certainly more action in Jammin' Jars 2 and the gameplay takes excitement to levels even further. We designed it so that a player has to really concentrate on it, that then drives the engagement – you really need to focus on what is going on – players won't be able to leave the game running in the background and this, we feel, makes for an all-round better gaming experience.

**MB:** Whisper it quietly, but we are currently working on a new sequel to one of our best-performing slots. We are expecting it to be released before the end of 2021, although we can't share any more details than that at this stage of production.

Similarly, to TIME LAB, in this sequel, we are utilizing a narrative that is both familiar to and popular with players. In this case, as well as giving a new polish to the graphics and animations, we have also worked on a new math model and new mechanics for a game we firmly believe is destined to be a big hit.

**MC:** *Hot Spin Megaways™* is our latest sequel slot. We've kept the hot spin wheel in the game, so every time you spin there's a chance the Hot Wheel appears, which can offer a range of modifiers and bonuses. Trying to combine our modifiers with Megaways™ offered several challenges with balancing the math with so many payout options, but you get all the fun of the original with the extra layer and excitement of Megaways™.

Not only does it push the boundaries of the Hot Spin series, but it also pushed us to new heights to see what we could achieve. Our drive to inspire curiosity isn't just limited to players but also ourselves – how far can we take this interesting concept and add new mechanics, while still having a recognizable product?

We feel it really elevates it to the next level, and we're delighted with the finished product.

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### Stoyan Todorov, Co-editor

Stoyan holds over 8 years of esports and gambling writing experience under his belt and is specifically knowledgeable about developments within the online scene. He is a great asset to the GamblingNews.com team with his niche expertise and continual focus on providing our readers with articles that have a unique spin which differentiates us from the rest.



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