"Jamming on the Job"
Episode 16: Video Game Designer

[PBS KIDS music]

PBS KIDS Announcer: From your friends at PBS KIDS.

[a tour bus zooming down the open road]

Andrés: Vamos amigos, it's time to go.

Christina: Get ready BoomBox, we have a show.

[Music: Jamming on the Job theme song]

Christina, Andrés, and BoomBox: (singing)
Jamming on the Job
Ja, Jamming
Jamming on the Job
Wooh Ooh

I'm Christina,
Y yo soy Andrés
And we play music
All over the states

We jam and learn
With people who
Work in jobs
They love to do!

If we get stuck
Or something goes wrong

An expert helps us
And we write a song!

[BoomBox beats]
Hey…Go BoomBox…¡Vamos!

Jamming on the Job
Ja, Jamming
Jamming on the Job
Wooh Ooh

[Birds chirping, dogs barking, kids playing in the park]

Christina: ¡Hola, Jam Fam!

Andrés: Hola, hello and howdy y'all! Today we're enjoying a beautiful day at a park in Austin, Texas!

BoomBox: HOWDY, Y'ALL!

Christina: Jam Fam, we're here for a special reason! It's the "Spirit of the City Jamboree!"

Andrés: It's a contest for musicians!

Christina: Yep! The contest asked musicians to write a song that celebrates the city of Austin and its people. Everyone performs their songs at a concert, and then the audience votes for the song they like best!

Andrés: Sometimes, a contest can be just what we need to take our usual creative process and do something new, fresh, and different with it. In other words, really "shake it up!"

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP! HEY, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Andrés: That's right BoomBox! ¡Muy bien! We wanted to really get a feel for what Austin is like before writing our song, so we've been wandering the city all morning, looking for inspiration!

Christina: And now we've got some great melodies to play with.

[guitar strumming, tambourine shaking]

Christina: (singing) La la la la la la la

BoomBox: (singing) LA LA LA LA LA LA LA

Christina: (singing) La la la la la la la

BoomBox: (singing) LA LA LA LA LA LA LA

Andrés: (laughs) And I think we're on the right track.

Jada: Excuse me? Hey there! I was working on my laptop over there and I couldn't help but overhear y'all.

[dog barking]

Andrés: Hey! ¡Hola, perrito! Woof woof! ¿Cómo te llamas?

Jada: This is Sprinkles.

[Sprinkles barking]

Christina: Sprinkles! Oh, what a cute name for such a cute dog! That's right! You are a cute little doggy, Sprinkles! Oh yeah! (laughs) Oh, wait, I'm sorry… what's your name?

Jada: Me? I'm Jada.

Andrés: Hola, Jada. My name's Andrés. This is Christina…

Christina: ¡Hola!

Andrés: And this is BoomBox, our magical music machine!

BoomBox: ¡HOLA, HOLA, HOLA!

Christina: We're also here with the Jam Fam, the listeners of our podcast.

Jada: So nice to meet everyone! I just came over to say you sound amazing! Do you perform anywhere?

Andrés: Aw, muchas gracias! We perform everywhere, on all kinds of instruments! Guitar! [strum] Clarinet! [toot] Tambourine! [shake]

Christina: Actually, we're performing tonight at the "Spirit of the City Jamboree." Uh, you should come check it out!

Jada: You're part of the Jamboree? [Christina: Mm-hmm!] I didn't know you made music on computers, too. I'm so impressed!

[record scratch]

Andrés: Ah?

Christina: Wait, what? On computers?

Andrés: ¿Qué quieres decir con eso?

Jada: Sure, that's part of the contest rules! [Christina: Huh…] I can show you on my phone, uh, one second… [phone dings]... see, here on their website, towards the bottom of the page?

Christina: Uh, okay…um…(reading) "Important note for Jamboree participants: Austin has become home to many companies that make computers and other types of technology."

Andrés: (reading) "Because Austin is a 'City of Tech,' all music for the Jamboree must be entirely written and recorded on a computer. Singing is permitted, but –"

Christina and Andrés: – "NO LIVE INSTRUMENTS."

Christina: What? So that means no guitar, no clarinet…

Andrés: …and no tambourine! ¡Ay!

Jada: Oh no…

BoomBox: UH-OH! OH NO, OH NO, OH NO!

Christina: We've never made a song on a computer before.

Andrés: We make all of our music on live instruments.

Christina: (sighs) I guess we have to drop out of the Jamboree. I don't think we have a choice, Andrés.

Andrés: Tienes razón. I'll call them and tell them we're not coming. Lo siento, BoomBox.

BoomBox: WE'RE NOT COMING!

Jada: Now hold it just one second! Y'all are such great musicians! It'd be a downright shame if you weren't in the Jamboree.

Christina: Aww thanks, Jada, but… where would we even begin?

Andrés: Writing music on a computer? For us, that's just a little…

Jada: …weird?

Christina: Well yeah, "weird" is a good word for it.

Andrés: Sí… ¡raro!

Jada: Well, y'all are in the right place for that. [Andrés: Huh?] Something we like to say around here is "Keep Austin Weird," which is another way of saying that we enjoy being able to take something ordinary and "shake it up!"

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP! HEY, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Andrés: Maybe we're giving up too quickly, Christina.

Christina: Maybe trying to write a song on a computer – instead of our usual instruments – is how we could "shake it up!"

BoomBox: … HEY! SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Andrés: ¡Sí, BoomBox! And we can still use our voices like always, and we've still got BoomBox!

BoomBox: YES, YOU'VE GOT BOOMBOX.

Christina: Yeah! Uh, one slight problem though… We don't even have a computer with us!

Jada: Hmmm. Y'know, I might be able to help you with that.

Christina: Huh…?

Jada: I'm a video game designer! And I've been working on a new game that's all about making music.

Christina: Oh, and you think your game can show us how to write a song on a computer?

Jada: I think it can! Whaddya say? Care to give it a shot?

Christina: ¡Claro que sí!

Jada: My office is just a short walk in that direction.

Andrés: Wooh! Lead the way, Jada… ¡Vamos, BoomBox! ¡Vamos, Jam Fam! ¡Vamos, Sprinkles!

[Sprinkles barking, music, footsteps, city traffic, doors opening and closing]

Jada: (sighs) Welcome to the offices of T-Rex Games!

[Sprinkles barking]

Christina: Wow, Jam Fam! I've never seen a business office like this before! (gasps) There's a big open room full of couches… and beanbag chairs?

Andrés: Hey! And there's also a basketball hoop hanging over that door… and I think that's a room full of TVs and different video game machines!

[beeps, boops, employees cheering in distance]

Christina: BoomBox, we have to capture those sounds for later! Could you please record them?

BoomBox: RECORDING! [remix of video game sounds] RECORDING COMPLETE!

Andrés: ¡Muy bien, BoomBox!

Jada: And right around the corner, here's my desk! Sprinkles knows what that means… [Sprinkles barking] It's treat time! (laughing)

Jada: Here ya go, doggo! [Sprinkles eating]

Christina: What are those people over there doing at the tables? Is it some kind of art class?

Jada: Ah, you mean the group making sculptures out of clay? That team is hard at work on a brand-new game for next year. Hey team!

[coworkers saying hello, Sprinkles panting]

Andrés: Wait! You're making a video game out of clay?!

Jada: (laughs) No, Andrés! But that game's going to have some monster characters in it, and they need to figure out what those monsters will look like.

Christina: Oh! So all of those people over there are designing monsters for the game?

Jada: Not exactly. [Christina: Oh.] Some of those people are programmers, and there's also a script director, and a creative art director. [Christina: Oh!] Lucas, who's standing up there? [Christina: Uh-huh.] He's an expert in 3-D modeling, so he's the one who decides what the monsters look like.

Andrés: Huh! Then why are they all making sculptures?

Jada: Well, we like to share our different skills with each other. [Christina: Oh!] It teaches us new ways to think creatively and help us each get out of our "comfort zone."

Andrés: Comfort zone? [Jada: Yep!] Is that like a room full of couches or something?

Jada: (laughs) Well, it's more a way of thinking. Being in a comfort zone is when things feel easy because you're not being challenged that much.

Christina: I see… so a comfort zone for us would be writing music on live instruments, instead of computers.

Jada: Now you're getting it! And when you get out of your comfort zone, it's your chance to get truly creative… to shake it up!

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP! HEY, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Jada: That's also why we have so many other things to enjoy here, like the arcade, the fitness room, the soft-serve ice cream machine… Hmm?

Andrés: Wait, you have soft-serve here? [Jada: Uh-huh!] ¡Qué oficina más increíble!

Jada: You bet! You never know what's going to inspire you or help you do something that feels difficult. Now follow me.

[music, Sprinkles barking and panting, footsteps]

Christina: Jada, can I ask: How did you get into designing video games in the first place?

Jada: Actually, I never meant to! [Andrés: Huh!] When I was growing up I wanted to have all different types of jobs… one day I'd want to be an astronaut, the next day I'd want to be a firefighter, and the next day I'd want to be a chef in a fancy restaurant.

Christina: Really?

Jada: Yeah. I'll tell you the one thing that never changed, though: I just loved playing games! Hopscotch, four-square, checkers, you name it, I was in. [Andrés: Huh.] For me the best part of board games or playground games was that you could make up new rules and play your own version. Like instead of tag, my friends and I came up with "Turtle Tag." [Christina: Huh.] It was like regular tag, except when you got tagged, you had to move in slow motion until someone who wasn't "it" tagged you back to normal.

Andrés: (laughs) That must have been fun!

Jada: Oh, yeah. I also used to take different pieces from board games we had in our house, or random things like bottle-caps lying around, and put them together into new board games for my brothers and me to play.

Christina: Aww! (laughs) So you started by designing NOT-video games.

Jada: Right! Then when I went to college, one of my teachers encouraged me to learn more about computer programming. And I hadn't even thought about using computers before, so it was a new way for me to think about creating games… another chance to "shake it up!"

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP! HEY, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Jada: And you know what's cool? [Andrés: Yes?] Remember all those jobs I used to dream about? [Christina: Oh! Uh-huh, uh-huh.] In this job, I've designed video games where players got to be astronauts, and firefighters, and chefs in fancy restaurants!

Christina: Really? Oh wow!

Andrés: Awesome!

[door opening, entering quiet room]

Jada: Here we are: the testing studio. This is where we invite people to try out our new games to see if there are things we can change or improve.

Andrés: Do you have to test your games a lot?

Jada: Definitely! Making a video game is like lots of other creative projects: You keep trying new ideas, getting inspiration from different people and places, and when something's not working, it's time to "shake it up!"

[video game music]

Jada: So this computer game that I've been designing is called "Dee-Dee's Melodies." Why don't you pick up that game controller there, Christina? It's connected to the computer.

Christina: Ooh, fun! Ok… [buttons being pressed] Whoa, there are a lot of colorful buttons on this controller, Jam Fam!

Jada: You bet! Press the silver button in the center. That starts the game.

Christina: Okay!

[music, video game dragon screeching and flapping its wings]

Andrés: ¡Mira! There's a purple dragon on the screen now. That must be Dee-Dee!

Jada: That's Dee-Dee indeed! Now, Christina… [Christina: Uh-huh…] do you see the colored circles on the bottom part of the screen?

Christina: Oh yeah! Dee-Dee is dancing on top of them! And they're the same colors as the buttons on this controller!

Jada: Right! So try pressing the controller buttons in the same order as the color of the circles you see.

[Christina presses buttons as corresponding musical notes play. Sprinkles barks.]

Christina: Okay, I get it! The controller buttons make the sounds of musical notes inside the game. Mm-hmm… Each color is a different note! Let's see, um…

[Christina presses a button and a musical note plays as she names each color.]

Christina: Red. Blue. Green. And gold.

[Music, Dee-Dee screeching]

Andrés: And look, Dee-Dee is dancing and flapping her little dragon wings!

Christina: Dee-Dee's pointing to a speaker button. Let me tap it.

[Christina pushes a button and a short melody plays.]

Christina: Oh, huh… Maybe I can try to press the colored buttons that match the colors on the screen, to make the melody we just heard?

Jada: Sure, try it!

[Christina pushes a button for each corresponding note of the melody. Dee-Dee screeches]

Andrés: Dee-Dee's dancing again! ¡Aprendiste muy rápido, Christina! [Sprinkles barks] You figured it out right away!

Jada: Easy, right?

Christina: Yeah, and fun! I just played a melody in a video game! (laughs)

Jada: And a video game is played on a computer, which means…

Christina: (gasp) I just made music on a computer!

BoomBox: MADE MUSIC ON A COMPUTER!

Andrés: ¡Lo hiciste!

Jada: You sure did! Congratulations! I designed Dee-Dee's Melodies to teach very young players how to use computers to make music.

Christina: Hmmm. Hey Andrés! I think I know what our song could be about!

Andrés: Wait, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

Christina: Uh-huh!

Andrés: We could write a song –

Christina: – that celebrates the video game designers of Austin!

Andrés: ¡Excelente idea! Jada, would it be all right if we wrote a song about you for the Jamboree tonight?

Jada: Are y'all kidding? That'd be awesome!

Christina: (laughs) Hey Jam Fam, it sounds like we've got a job to jam on!

BoomBox: WE'VE GOT A JOB TO JAM ON! WE'VE GOT A JOB, WE'VE GOT A JOB… JAM!

Andrés: Well, we learned we CAN make music on a computer with Dee-Dee's Melodies… But how could we use a computer to create our own brand new song?

Jada: That's my favorite part of Dee-Dee's Melodies! Allow me to introduce you to Creative Mode.

Andrés: Huh?

[Jada pushes a button and a different melody plays]

Jada: So when you're in the game, you can use Creative Mode to write and record your own music!

Christina: Interesting… Jam Fam, on the left side of the screen it looks like there's a blank piece of paper with lines across it… Oh! Just like people use to write music on!

Andrés: And there's Dee-Dee in the corner of the screen waving at us! Hi, Dee-Dee! [Dee-Dee screeches] Hey Christina, what happens if you tap the colored buttons on the controller now?

Christina: Vamos a ver...

[Christina pushes buttons with corresponding musical notes]

Andrés: Cool! The notes you played showed up on the part of the screen that was blank! And look, now there's a "play" button on the screen! Tap it!

[Christina pushes a button and her new melody plays]

Christina: Oh! So we CAN use this computer program to create our own new melodies!

Andrés: Some of the symbols on the screen look like live musical instruments. Do they change the music to sound like that instrument?

Jada: Here, Andrés, why don't you play around and find out?

[Andrés laughs and pushes buttons with corresponding piano sounds.]

Andrés: (gasps) ¡Un piano!

Christina: Ooh, try that one, the one that looks like a violin!

[Andrés pushes buttons with corresponding violin sounds.]

Andrés: ¡Sí, funciona!

Christina: Wait, what does that one do?

Andrés: Hm?

[Andrés pushes buttons with corresponding cat meow sounds. Christina and Andrés laugh.]

Christina: How many different sounds can it make?!

Jada: Bunches!

Andrés: We have so many sounds to play with, Christina!

Jada: Yup! There are a lot of different ways for you to write your song and then shake it up!

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP! HEY, SHAKE IT UP, SHAKE IT UP!

Jada: I'll leave you three to get creative. And if it feels hard, feel free to step out and grab a snack, play a different game, or come see me and play with Sprinkles! Sometimes even taking a break from your creativity can be a way to "shake it up!"

BoomBox: SHAKE IT UP! SHAKE IT UP!

Jada: I love it when BoomBox does that, don't you, Sprinkles? [Sprinkles barks] Come on, let's go.

[door opening and closing]

Christina: Andrés, BoomBox… let's start jamming!

BOOMBOX: LET'S START, LET'S START JAMMING. LET'S JAM! AH!

[transitional music. Crowd cheering]

Andrés: ¡Hola, everyone! It's great to be here in Austin!

Christina: Hi everybody! (laughs) Tonight we are stepping out of our comfort zone and doing something we've never actually done before: sharing a song that we wrote on a computer!

[crowd cheering]

Andrés: Uh-huh! And we wouldn't have been able to do it without someone we met right here in Austin! Our new friend Jada, the video game designer! Shout if you're here, Jada!

[crowd cheering]

Jada: Woo-hoo-hoo!

Andrés: So video game designers of Austin…

Christina and Andrés: … this one's for you!

Christina, Andrés, and Boombox: (singing)
I wanna get creative, I wanna get my wheels turning
I wanna try different things, because that's when I'm learning
I'm a video game designer… Oh yeah that's me!
Always ready for a change, a new possibility

Let's shake it up!

When I'm stuck doing things
The same old way – That's when we shake it up!
I can think of a new game
That we can play – Yeah I can make it up!

Make it up, make it up
Shake it up, shake it up

Your imagination… wake it up!

La la la la la la la
La la la la la la la

This life is a puzzle
Use your imagination like a muscle
You work hard and you hustle
And you'll take it to another level – you'll see!

Come play a game with me
Sing another melody
Put it all together with a beat, like:
[BoomBox breakdown]
Good job, that's it!

When I'm stuck doing things
The same old way – That's when we shake it up!
I can think of a new game
That we can play – Yeah I can make it up!

Make it up, make it up
Shake it up, shake it up

Your imagination… wake it up!

La la la la la la la
La la la la la la la

When I'm stuck doing things
The same old way – That's when we shake it up!
I can think of a new game
That we can play – Yeah I can make it up!

Make it up, make it up
Shake it up, shake it up

Your imagination… wake it up!

La la la la la la

When you're stuck doing things
The same old way – That's when we shake it up!
You can think of a new game
That we can play – Yeah I can make it up!

Shake it up!
Wake it up!
Shake it up!
Wake it up!
Shake it up!

Wake it up!
Shake it up!

[crowd cheering]

Christina: ¡Muchas gracias!

[transitional music]

Christina: (sighs) What an amazing evening! Jam Fam, we didn't win the contest, but I am so glad we were able to perform.

Andrés: And we got to hear so many other wonderful songs tonight!

Christina: We also learned a creative new way to write music: on a computer! I'm looking forward to the next time we get a chance to shake it up!

BoomBox: SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE IT UP!

Andrés: Jam Fam, how can you shake it up today?

[Sprinkles barking, footsteps]

Jada: Oh, there you are! [Christina: Oh, hi!] I wanted to say thank you, so I bought us all some ice cream… [Christina gasps] with sprinkles!

[Sprinkles barks, everyone laughs]

Christina: Not you, Sprinkles! (laughs) Thank you so much!

Andrés: Finally my soft-serve.

Christina: (laughs) Hey BoomBox, why don't you get creative with the credits? It's time to end the episode!

Andrés: Catch y'all next time on "Jamming on the Job!"

Christina, Andrés, and BoomBox: (singing)
Jamming on the Job
Ja, Jamming
Jamming on the Job
Wooh Ooh

BoomBox / Pierce Freelon: (singing and rapping)
Jamming on the Job is hosted by Christina Sanabria and Andrés Salguero
Plus me Pierce Freelon I play BoooomBox
Together we wrote these songs to teach you 'bout new jobs
We hope that you sing along
Erikka J played Jada the Video Game Designer
Bilal Dardai was this episode's writer
Mixed by Terence Bernardo
Sound Editor Aaron Keane
And produced by Isaac Klein and Daniel Rinaldi
Executive Produced by David Huppert - that's the team yeah
Working with PBS and PRX has been a dream yeah
If your curious about jobs you could have
Visit PBS KIDS or wherever you listen to podcasts

Christina: Jamming on the Job is made possible by a Ready To Learn grant…

Andrés: …from the U.S. Department of Education through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Christina and Andrés: ¡Hasta pronto!

[music ends]