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08

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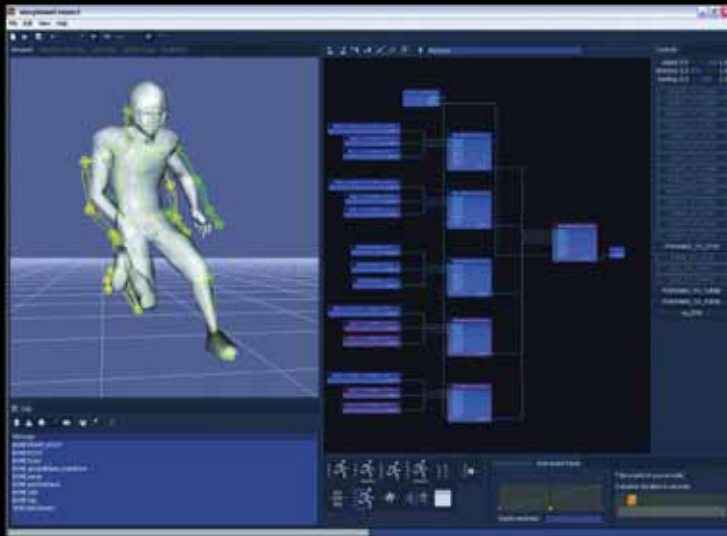
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morphemeTM

advanced animation system



morpheme is the industry's first graphically authorable animation engine. morpheme consists of morpheme:runtime: an advanced runtime animation engine for PLAYSTATION[®]3, Xbox 360TM, WiiTM and PC. morpheme:connect: a highly-customizable 3D authoring application.

morpheme gives animators and developers unprecedented control over the look and feel of their animations in-game: blends, transitions, compression, etc. can all be previewed and modified graphically in morpheme:connect and live on the target platform.

morpheme:runtime ships with full source code and integrates seamlessly with euphoria. NaturalMotion's Dynamic Motion Synthesis technology.

For more information, visit www.naturalmotion.com

blend tree

Advanced graphical tools for building complex blend trees. Real-time visualization of animation source contribution through node highlighting



blending

Graphical control of transition blending between states in the transition graph



multiple characters

Visualization of multiple runtime characters in morpheme:connect for easy authoring and analysis of character interaction



network

Advanced graphical tools for creating and visualizing transition networks through drag-and-drop



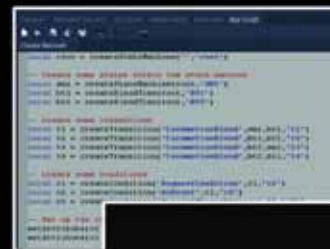
control parameters

Exposure of custom high-level controls for entire animation system. Real-time manipulation through sliders or game pad controller



scripting

Full Lua scripting for automating tasks, adding AI logic or polling game pads for real-time input



timeline

Graphical mark up of animation data to add one-shot and duration events, for highlighting footfalls, sound effects, etc.



node palette

Advanced blend notes (time-warp) for dragging and dropping into transition network. Fully customizable node types through C++ and scripting



animation browser

Easy browsing and selection (drag & drop) of source animation. Animation list is automatically updated to reflect changed source files (after editing in Maya)



transition requests

Exposure of custom transition messages. In-tool emulation of interaction between morpheme:runtime and game AI system





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develop

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STUDIOS, TOOLS, SERVICES AND COURSES

GOLD

98 > BYRONICMAN

Don't write off valuable feedback from your audience, warns Simon Byron

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ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"Disney, Viacom and Warner have built their strategies on exploiting new business models..."

Big Media gets into games, p16

**New
middleware:
Join the Q**

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**Power List:
Exclusive
studio ranking**

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Dreams:
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A mobile zeevolution?

Creativity restricted by mobile phone controls? One company with a new peripheral thinks it has the answer...

by Ed Fear

Ask a gamer why they don't play many mobile phone games, and they'll inevitably say that it's because of the controls. If the N-Gage has taught us anything, it's that in order to be successful a phone must be a phone first and foremost – and that means a layout not particularly conducive to gaming.

Massachusetts-based tech startup Zeemote thinks the solution isn't producing a phone that looks like a gamepad, but separating those components out into two devices – and the company is currently courting developers, with an SDK release at GDC ahead of the device's rollout later this year.

Asked how mobile developers could benefit by implementing support for the device, Zeemote CEO Beth Marcus is clear in the message: "Better sales, better visibility and enhanced gameplay. It attracts consumers who wouldn't necessarily play the game because they think that this 3D game couldn't possibly play well on their cellphone. But with a Zeemote, they immediately know that they'll get a gaming experience that they are used to."

Key in designing the SDK, says Marcus, was making sure that it didn't get in the way of



**"The real draw
of the Zeemote
is the switch
from digital to
analogue..."**

developers. "It's cognisant of developer concerns with getting product out that we make it as easy as possible for them to take this thing and go, without needing a lot of work. Developers have said that it only takes them an hour to implement."

Of course, she explains, an hour is the figure for implementing basic functionality. The real draw of the Zeemote, though, is the switch from digital button presses to analogue movement, and taking full advantage of that will take extra time. It's this analogue

movement that is critical to 3D gaming, and possibly the reason why the uptake of mobile 3D titles has been slower than anticipated.

The quick implementation time also means that developers can rapidly engineer support into older titles, which Zeemote is already doing with several of its partners. It also plans to launch zeemote.com, a one-stop portal for Zeemote owners that the company believes will drive extra revenue to the whole ecosystem as users share information on the latest

Zeemote-enabled titles, giving a second lease of life to older titles as well as effectively promoting newer ones.

And although Zeemote sees applications beyond gaming for the device, it's keen to stress that the emphasis is on game developers. "Right now the SDK is focused on game developers, it's crafted around their needs. We expect other stuff to happen after release, But our main goal is to get out of the way of people being creative and help them to succeed."

www.zeemote.com

WORLDVIEW GLOBAL NEWS > p08

Editorial

IP freely

At the time of writing, I've just received an email with the subject: 'Bad news for Britsoft...'. The message refers to a newsflash sent out from Developmag.com which broke the news of THQ's decision to 'clean house' in the IP and development stakes (*'THQ's development revamp hits full swing', January 23rd*).

A studio in California has been closed, some costly next-gen SKUs have been canned, two new new execs have been charged with upping product quality and, the point the sender was referring to, the death of British-born racing brands *Juiced* and *Stuntman*.

According to the publisher's investors note, the games had 'under performed' spurring it to choose 'not to pursue them'. In THQ's own words, they had lost the race, and were now focusing on dirving activity behind new, owned IP.

Saying this marks ill health for British development misses the point, however, because although devised in the UK (and *Stuntman* wasn't even developed here once Atari sold it off), the properties themselves were hugely Americanised, arguably to the extent that they had no real character.

This point is the real key to successful IP creation, I think. That is: original content made by talented, culturally-minded people that is relevant not just to the global industry but their local territory tends to succeed best, not copies of the latest fad from another clime. The industry agrees – a number of senior industry people, from Activision's Joerg Trouvain to Microsoft's Phil Spencer – have said similar things in these pages in recent months.

It's something worth bearing in mind when readers are over in San Francisco for GDC – don't settle for being dazzled by the stories of how *Smash Bros.* was made or what Spielberg's plans for games are: learn from them, let them inspire you. And – this is something THQ would probably now advise you to do as well – don't just copy them.



Michael French

michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Michael

Q broadens

London-based Qube says its new engine has cracked the "fundamental



by Michael French

The minds behind 3D API Reality Lab and Microsoft's Direct3D will start an assault on the middleware market at GDC with what they are calling 'the most powerful complete solution' for game development.

According to Qube Software CEO Servan Keondjian, his firm's new development framework Q is better suited to studio's needs than other game engines on the market, is more flexible and cheaper to licence.

Bold claims, but having been in R&D for some years – and drawing from Keondjian's previous experiences in tools development – Q certainly seems to have the capacity to follow through on its ambitions. And, says Keondjian, it can help address the development community's awkward relationship with middleware.

Q solves "a tangible problem in the games industry" he explains: "Most developers don't like middleware, not really – it's just something they have to use. You need it given the cost of

development. As far as I can see, there has never been a solution that really works."

He adds: "What we have done is solved the problem. We aren't about showing an amazing graphics demo to win people over – although we have got a great demo – it's about telling people we are really addressing the fundamentals of the flaws in middleware."

The answer has been to build a framework of reusable code: "We've written 80 per cent of the code you always need to write but don't want to, so you're free to devise your renderer or gameplay code – we don't supply the gameplay code or the renderer, because they are things which make a game unique," says Keondjian.

The firm's tools and technology program manager Jamie Fowlston, adds: "We've built something that people can customise for themselves in a major way. That means for us a middleware business our licensing costs are actually much lower. So it's not just saying that either our software or our customer service is flexible – it's both."

"Isn't that what studios really want – to cut costs, rather than maintain multiple licence deals for different engines on different projects?"

Servan Keondjian, Qube

tech horizons

flaws" of middleware and invites the industry to 'join the Q' at GDC



Qube hopes that its approach to game engines and middleware will help studios avoid the pitfalls intrinsic to investing in proprietary tools and also licensing established third-party solutions.

Says Keondjian: "When studios make an internal engine and start using it for different games or genres they're stuck, because that engine's strengths – and also its weaknesses – are intrinsic to that previous genre."

"The rational studio response to that is specialism, but that ends up trapping studios and seeing them

pigeonholed as 'a driving game studio'," adds Fowlston.

The two don't deny that other popular engines have their advantages, but strongly feel their approach – best described as having the potential to be the codebase backbone of a studio or its project, not the muscle – is a long-term solution.

Says Keondjian: "If a studio wants to make a first person shooter then yes, there is software out there that will answer that. But our thinking is studio-wide; we've created a framework of code that can be used across multiple titles they can reuse and customise and is

totally cross platform. Isn't that what studios really want – to cut costs, rather than maintaining multiple licence deals for different engines on different projects?"

Adds Fowlston: "Of course I know that's what a lot of engine suppliers say, but they do it by producing the source code for an already made game and ask you to fish through it – and what team wants to go through all that with a compiler?"

Big questions – and ones the firm thinks it will answer with the unveiling of Q at GDC this month.

www.qubesoft.com

Qube's EarthSim learning tool (pictured above) has dual purpose, acting as a convincing demonstration of Q's power

Kuju opens casual studio in San Fran

by Michael French

Britsoft studio network Kuju has announced it is to open a new studio in the USA.

Kuju America will be focused purely on games for the casual games sector, and is already working with Kuju stablemate Zoe Mode on a licence-based Wii title.

The studio will be headed by John Kavanagh.

Kuju exec Jonathan Newth commented: "The US, and San Francisco in particular, is a natural choice for our first non-UK studio. It's a hotbed of talent, home to many leading publishers and some of the leading US games press. We're delighted to have John on board, with his wealth of experience and contacts, to maximise the potential of the business in the area "

Newth added that the move was "an exciting and significant step for the Kuju group of studios".

In late 2006 the firm was acquired by German group Catalis and has since set about rebranding its stable of studios. Late in 2007 it opened a new studio to make kids' titles, and allowed another to start focusing on games made purely for digital distribution.

DATA BYTES

700

The amount of people Nintendo president Satoru Iwata and game producer Masahiro Sakurai say have worked on new Wii game *Smash Brothers Brawl*

Source: Nintendo

\$1bn

Value of sales knocked up by *Guitar Hero* in North America since its first release in 2005

Source: NPD/Activision

6m+

Number of Wii consoles sold in Europe

Source: Nintendo



DICE ROLLS PLAY4FREE STRATEGY

EA's DICE studio has unveiled a new title that will be distributed online, free to play and supported financially by in-game ads and microtransactions. Called *Battlefield Heroes* the game sports a new, cartoony look (pictured).

WorldView

Our regular round up of development stories from across the globe...

//comments



Nolan North, mocap artist in Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, causes an afternoon of fort building in the Develop office

"[My son] asked me 'Dad, what do you do?' And I said 'You know when you pretended the clubhouse was a pirate ship and you were jumping off it and stuff? That's what I do.'"



Guardian columnist and former game 'journalist' Charlie Brooker aims his ire on Nintendo's flagship granny magnet

"Have you played Brain Training? What a con. You learn nothing. You just get slightly better at specialised tasks. You might as well be operating a till – at least then you'd get paid."



David Edery, portfolio manager for Xbox Live Arcade, offers advice for better demos on his Game Tycoon blog

"I believe that many developers and publishers are making mistakes – on many platforms, not just Xbox Live Arcade – which if corrected could improve the sales of their games."



**GAMECOCK
MEDIA GROUP**

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Upstart publisher Gamecock has decided to move its games showcase EIEIO – the Expo for Interactive Entertainment, Independent and Original – to Austin to coincide with culture and technology event South by South West (SXSW).

The previously E3-tied event is billed as an antidote to the traditional corporate publisher event. The SXSW festival, which takes place in March, has had an increased focus on games in recent years as it acknowledges how entertainment and technology are overlapping in contemporary everyday life.

www.gamecock.com



BRIGHTON, UK

The dates for 2008's Develop conference have been set in stone, so be sure to leave July 29th to the 31st free in your diaries.

Key themes of this year's conference, which takes place at the Hilton Metropole in Brighton, are Capitalise (looking at how developers can take advantage of the current generation's cyclical peak), Specialise (examining cutting-edge technologies), Inspire (motivating, recruiting and rewarding staff) and Enjoy (celebrating the industry's creativity). Organiser Tandem Events has also put out a call for speakers. Previous years have featured such gaming luminaries as Peter Molyneux, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, Richard Garriot and Microsoft's Chris Satchell.

Those interested in speaking at the event should visit the URL below for more details. The deadline for submissions is March 1st, and talks should fit into one of the core tracks of design, production, coding, business, art, audio and world vision.

www.develop-conference.com

GLOBAL
REPORTS

US: MAJESCO'S INTERNALS

US publisher Majesco has revealed plans for its internal studio Majesco Games. The publisher aims to transfer much of its development internally instead of working with third parties, and is gunning for the studio to contribute 10 to 15 per cent of the publisher's output. It is expected that the studio will release between one and three titles in its first year.

www.majescogames.com

US: BIG HUGE DEAL

THQ has acquired Maryland-based developer Big Huge Games, the studio behind the *Rise of Nations* series and Xbox Live Arcade's *Catan*. THQ's executive VP of studios Jack Sorensen said that the developer, which is working on an RPG with *Elder Scrolls* series lead Ken Rolston, was acquired to plug holes in the publisher's line up.

www.bighugugames.com

CANADA: TUSK TUSK

Ontario will this month see the birth of Tusk, a new developer born from the ashes of DICE Canada. Despite its fledgling status, the studio is bullish about its plans, with head Armando Marini saying: "I don't plan on fighting for anyone's scraps – if we put a ton of effort into something, it has to be effort well placed."

www.tuskinteractive.com

CZECH: DOUBLE TAKE

European developer Illusion Softworks, whose back catalogue includes the *Hidden & Dangerous* series and *Mafia*, has been purchased by Take 2 and rebranded to 2K Czech. The studio's ownership of the IP that it had created was cited as the reason behind Take 2's purchase. Both of the developer's offices in Brno and Prague are currently hard at work on *Mafia 2*.

www.illusionsoftworks.com

US: EXPANSIVE EPIC

Game and middleware giant Epic is apparently planning to double the size of its headquarters following the \$1.57m acquisition of a new office. The company currently has a head count of 94 and plans to continue its growth, focusing particularly on increasing its game testing department. "We've pretty much run out of space here," said VP Mark Rein, "and it takes a lot of people to test a game properly."

www.epicgames.com



For global games development news as it breaks head to
WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

The European Commission has, after months of deliberation, officially announced the authorisation of the French aid scheme for games developers – but has decided to "minimise possible distortions of competition in the European market" by limiting eligible games to only those with a cultural element.

The scheme, according to the EU, will "enable video game manufacturers which are subject to taxation in France to deduct up to 20 per cent of the production costs of certain games," and has said that the scheme will run for four years.

However, "only video games that meet certain criteria will be eligible" with a "new, more detailed selection test makes it possible to ensure that only video games with cultural content may benefit from the aid."

The European Commission was concerned that the original selection criteria, passed by French politicians in January 2007, would be open to too much interpretation and could distort the market.

British developers expecting a similar deal here would be wise to not hold their breath, however, with a Department for Culture, Media and Sport representative saying that "We value our games industry greatly. However, what works for the French games industry might not work for the UK."

www.ec.europa.eu



SEOUL, KOREA

EA is to open a new studio in Seoul this year focused on creating online and pay to play titles.

According to Korean newspaper Chosun, EA is taking the move to 'secure talented Korean game developers to lay the foundation for a future advance into the Asian market'. The studio will reportedly be headed by Danny Isaac, previously of Bullfrog and EA Vancouver.

An EA source told the paper: "We plan to recruit dozens of workers to develop the *NBA Street* and *Battlefield* online games."

www.ea.com



TOKYO, JAPAN

It appears that near-domination of Japan isn't enough for Square Enix – in an interview published by *Develop's* sister magazine *MCV*, the company admitted to preparing a renewed push in the West this year, and has admitted that it would consider acquiring a European studio.

John Yamamoto, president and CEO of Square Enix's European and American operations said: "We're not currently in negotiations, but we want to continue growing and become one of the top global publishers, so acquisition is an option."

www.square-enix.com

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DEFY ALL CHALLENGES



DEVELOP DIARY

UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENT SPOTLIGHT



GDC 08

February 18th to 22nd

www.gdconf.com

Check out our preview starting on page 25

GameDevelopers
Conference



FEBRUARY 2008

DICE SUMMIT 2008

February 6th to 8th

Red Rock Casino & Resort, Las Vegas

www.dicesummit.org

CASUAL CONNECT EUROPE WEST

February 6th to 8th

Felix Meritis, Amsterdam, Holland

amsterdam.casualconnect.org

GDC 08

February 18th to 22nd

Moscone Centre, San Francisco, USA

www.gdconf.com

GAME CONNECTION AMERICA

February 18th to 22nd

Moscone Centre, San Francisco, USA

www.game-connection.com

MAY 2008

NORDIC GAME CONFERENCE

May 14th and 15th

Malmö, Sweden

www.nordicgame.com

JUNE 2008

GAMEHORIZON CONFERENCE

June 18th and 19th

Newcastle, UK

www.gamehorizon.net

JULY 2008

DEVELOP CONFERENCE

July 15th to 17th

Brighton, UK

www.developconference.com

DEVELOP INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

July 30th

Brighton, UK

www.developmag.com/develop-awards

XNA GAMEFEST

July 22nd and 23rd

Seattle, USA

www.xnagamefest.com

CASUAL CONNECT AMERICA

July 23rd to 25th

Seattle, USA

seattle.casualconnect.org

AUGUST 2008

SIGGRAPH

August 11th to 15th

Los Angeles, USA

www.siggraph.org

GAMES CONVENTION

August 20th to 24th

Leipzig, German

www.gc-germany.com

SEPTEMBER 2008

AUSTIN GDC

September 15th to 18th

Texas, USA

www.gdconf.com

OCTOBER 2008

TOKYO GAME SHOW

October 9th to 12th

Tokyo, Japan

tgs.cesa.org.jp/english/

FORWARD PLANNER

NEXT ISSUE: #81 MARCH 2008

- Audio tools
- **SPECIAL FOCUS:**
Career advice
and recruitment
- Product guide: haptic devices

Editorial Deadline: February 26th

Advertising Deadline: February 22nd

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For editorial call Michael French on: +44 (0)1992 535 646
or email him at michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

APRIL 2008

BUILD special feature

Asset management

Editorial Deadline: March 24th

Advertising Deadline: March 20th

MAY 2008

BUILD special feature

Networking

Editorial Deadline: April 22nd

Advertising Deadline: April 18th

JUNE 2008

BUILD special feature

Physics

Editorial Deadline: May 27th

Advertising Deadline: May 23rd

JULY 2008

BUILD special feature

Procedural content tools

Editorial Deadline: June 24th

Advertising Deadline: June 20th

AUGUST 2008

BUILD special feature

3D sculpting/modelling tools

Editorial Deadline: July 22nd

Advertising Deadline: July 18th

SEPTEMBER 2008

BUILD special feature

User interface tools

Editorial Deadline: August 26th

Advertising Deadline: August 22nd

OCTOBER 2008

BUILD special feature

Face/body graphics

Editorial Deadline: September 23rd

Advertising Deadline: September 19th

NOVEMBER 2008

BUILD special feature

Security

Editorial Deadline: October 28th

Advertising Deadline: October 24th



Dev Chart				ChartTrack	
1	1		NINTENDO Best Selling Game: Dr. Kawashima's Brain Training (DS)	 Highest New Entry	 Highest Climber
TM	LM		Studio	Best Selling Game	
2	4		EA CANADA	FIFA 08 (PS2, PS3, PSP, Xbox 360, Wii, PC)	
3	2		INFINITY WARD	Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (Xbox 360, PS3, PC, DS)	
4	3		UBISOFT MONTREAL	Assassin's Creed (Xbox 360, PS3)	
5	16		SEGA	Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (Wii)	
6	6		YUKE'S	WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2008 (PS2, Xbox 360, PS3, PC)	
7	7		REBELLION	The Simpsons Game (PS2, Wii, PSP)	
8	5		KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT	Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 (PS2, Xbox 360, PS3, PC)	
9	8		MAXIS	The Sims 2: Castaway (DS, PS2, PSP, Wii)	
10	9		A2M	High School Musical: Sing It! (PS2, Wii)	

Develop magazine Dev chart w/c 14th January 2008.

WOO-HOO!

What a great start to the year! We'd like to wish everyone at the Game Developers Conference similar success for 2008. We're looking forward to seeing you there.

In the meantime, if you're thinking of new challenges and direction, get in touch.

2008 promises to be our best year yet. We're moving to our new purpose-built studio in Oxford, we have incredibly exciting projects to be unveiled and to cap it all, we also offer free Doughnuts on occasion.

So, if you decide not to move and then see what we're doing, please don't slap your head and make that noise...

...it'll only hurt more.

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VARIABLE DECLARATIONS



by Owain Bennallack

Video games: the ultimate end to progress?

Usually the first column of the year is a time for looking ahead. But for a change, let's think beyond the prospects for PS3 or middleware.

Instead: What connects artificial babies, the Nobel prize-winning physicist Enrico Fermi, global warming, and *World of Warcraft*?

Let's start with the mock tots. A recent Channel 4 documentary, *My Fake Baby*, revealed these expensive dolls are bought by grieving, perfectionist or plain confused women as an alternative to the real thing. In a pram they're indistinguishable from real babies to passers-by, let alone their mothers/owners, who fit out nurseries for them.

Society gone mad is inevitably your first thought, however appealing a baby with an off switch. But playing *Devil's Advocate*, aren't the babies just an attenuated example of the shift to virtuality that we're all indulging? It's a bit rich for a gamer who shouts "I'm dead!" in frustration to argue otherwise.

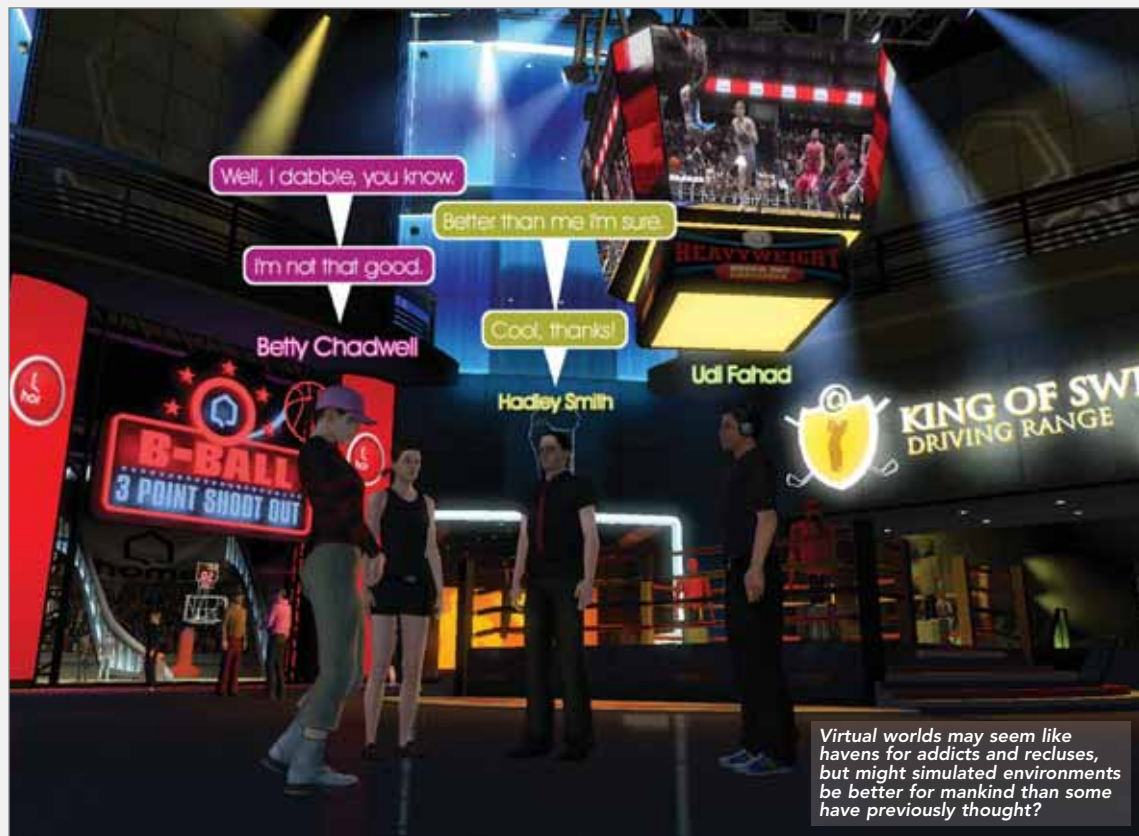
The Ancient Greeks were disdainful of stage actors faking it, yet today we happily consume vast quantities of mocked-up reality via screens. Elsewhere, therapists are working with engineers to create animatronic robots to befriend the elderly. If an old lady feels happier when her chumbot rolls its eyes, is that feeling less valid because her companion is a machine?

MMOGs are notorious for players running down their real-life to extend their virtual existence. Having lost six months to a text-based MUD in the early '90s, I understand only too well the appeal.

Is it a bad thing? The non-initiated might simply label a *World of Warcraft* addiction as desperately sad, but others contend it's only a worry when it intrudes on your social, family, or professional life.

Could we go further and say virtual existence is something to aspire to? In an MMOG, your life is superficially far more exciting, and even death isn't the end.

A virtual reality is still a crude place compared to real-life, and the third-person perspective that dominates the MMOG genre is hardly a first-person life substitute.



Virtual worlds may seem like havens for addicts and recluses, but might simulated environments be better for mankind than some have previously thought?

"Game developers have spent 30 years learning how to build not today's fantasies, but tomorrow's realities..."

But Moore's Law indicates we'll eventually have the power to create virtual experiences indistinguishable from real ones (or perhaps we'll learn how to hotwire our brains to not notice the difference). Then, virtual versus real becomes a philosophical distinction.

There's even a suggestion that one way to curb global warming is to spend more time virtually, rather than burning fossil fuels to get around. Anyone familiar with

Google's electricity bill might scoff, but it's a cute notion – embracing the virtual world to save the real one.

What is certain is that digital realities will make further in-roads into our everyday activity. Several years ago I wrote that the designer of Mario could create a more intuitive banking interface, say, than a conventional software engineer. Yet the emergence since then of Serious Games, most digital interfaces are still based on the paradigm of paper and pencil rather than platform games.

I still believe game developers – or the lessons of games design – will enable more change. Quite possibly, game developers have spent 30 years learning how to build not today's fantasies but tomorrow's realities. If you're thinking that'll sound good on your CV, be warned you might also be responsible for the fall of humanity.

Remember Fermi, my final connection? He famously asked where the aliens were, as the maths and the theory of evolution suggests plenty of other species should have

evolved and visited us by now. Yet after decades of looking, we've found nothing.

The Fermi paradox has various proposed solutions, with the idea that any race that can achieve space travel will also obliterate itself with nuclear weapons a particularly gloomy one. But I recently read another, advanced by an American evolutionary psychologist named Geoffrey Miller.

"Basically, I don't think aliens blow themselves up; they just get addicted to computer games," writes Miller. "They forget to send radio signals or colonise space because they're too busy with runaway consumerism and virtual-reality narcissism. They don't need Sentinels to enslave them in a Matrix; they do it themselves just as we are doing today."

Miller points out it's much easier to conquer space in a simulation. Far from heading to the stars, sufficiently advanced societies boldly go into a 24/7 MMOG, eventually going extinct.

Just wait until the *Daily Mail* hears about this...

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at MCV and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the *Develop* conference advisory board.

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS



by Nick Gibson

Theeey'rre Back! Big Media's latest games foray

At E3 last year, Disney Interactive Studio head Graham Hopper declared that games represented the "future of entertainment" for his company. A remarkable statement from a company with such extensive entertainment interests (ESPN, Pixar, Miramax), and one backed up by hard cash. Disney has already committed to grow annual development spend at its DIS division alone from \$175m expected this year to \$350m by 2012 and the separate Disney Internet Group spent a potential \$700m last year to add Club Penguin to its already sizeable list of network gaming assets.

However, they are not alone.

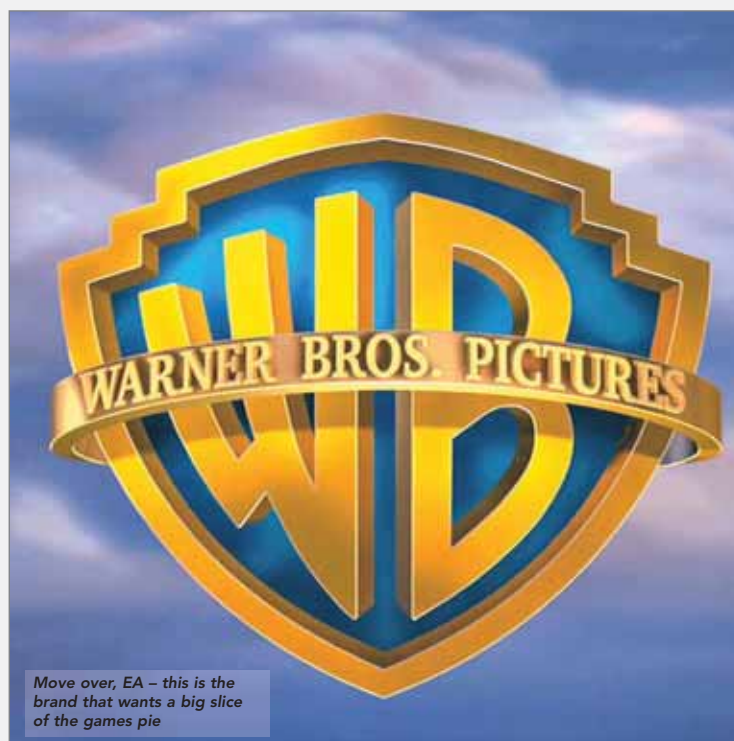
Both Viacom (MTV, Nickelodeon, DreamWorks, Paramount) and Time Warner (Warner Bros, New Line Cinema, AOL, Cartoon Network, DC Comics) have been staging their own assaults on the games market over the last few years and followed Disney's E3 lead by throwing out equally big numbers to quantify their voracious intent.

Viacom, through its MTV Networks division, has spent over \$650m acquiring 5 games businesses and last year announced it was going to spend a further \$500m on its existing games initiatives in the next two years alone.

Not to be outdone, Time Warner stated its goal to grow its WBIE games division into "a \$1bn business" by 2012 and promptly spent a nine figure sum acquiring Traveller's Tales/TT Games.

This round of competitive statement-making was in part designed to impress a sceptical games industry that has witnessed so many failed market entry attempts by non-games media businesses. Their historic inability or unwillingness to understand the games industry frequently led to the application of TV/movie production and business logic to their games efforts which ultimately prevented even some of the world's most IP-rich media companies from achieving much lasting games market success.

So, with such a vast amount of their capital being channelled into games, could these media giants possibly fail again and how will their



"Whilst traditional publishers have focused on retail, Disney, Viacom and Warner have built their strategies on exploiting new business models..."

strategies impact the rest of the market?

Since the companies' last major games market sortie in the mid 90s, the games market has almost quadrupled in size, diversifying to access new demographic frontiers and open up myriad new market opportunities. Whilst most traditional games publishers have remained focused on their core retail-based games competencies, Disney, Viacom and, to a lesser extent, Time Warner have listened to consumers and built their games strategies on reaching these new audiences and exploiting these new business models. Premium download sites, subscription services, virtual currencies and microtransactions, MMOGs and virtual worlds are already generating not only massive online communities for them but also rapidly accelerating revenues.

The three companies are also pursuing the console games market and with noticeably greater caution, acquiring, hiring and integrating experienced third party resource sensibly and, it would appear, showing a willingness to learn. Crucially, all three appear intent on not rushing along the value chain, choosing instead to undertake

incrementally greater levels of risk step by step.

Disney, for example, having spent three years gaining experience of handheld development and publishing, has only recently begun a concerted move into the full console games business.

With a more patient attitude and such a diversified portfolio of games interests, these companies appear to be positioning themselves more intelligently than in previous efforts. Just as Microsoft's \$375m splurge on Rare served, in part, to demonstrate long-term intent to a doubting industry, we believe these media giants are similarly signalling their intent to stay for good. Whilst growing pains may be felt, individual projects fail and the companies' games investment focus be rebalanced, we cannot see any of the companies wholly backing out of the sector this time.

In fact, we believe that all three companies may well end up as full PC and console games publishers competing directly with the largest of the current players in all major markets. Both Disney and WBIE have already voiced plans to reduce their use of licensing and increasingly handle major IP in-house. This will be a momentarily disruptive move that will not only diminish some of the largest publishers' currently substantial licensing revenue streams but potentially transplant it straight to their partner-turned-competitors. We believe that many of these publishers have sensed the change in the licensing climate, undoubtedly contributing to the noticeable increase in their original IP investment.

For independent developers this all augurs well. Not only is original IP being forced back on the publisher menu but the arrival of three financially stable, IP-rich new publishers with relatively limited in-house development resource (compared with the incumbents) and a proclivity for spending premiums to acquire partners also opens numerous doors of opportunity. As does, in stark contrast to most incumbents, the media giants' huge appetite for online gaming and their willingness to target non-core audiences and trial alternative business models.

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DESIGN DOC



by The Alpenwolf

Reinventing the Art

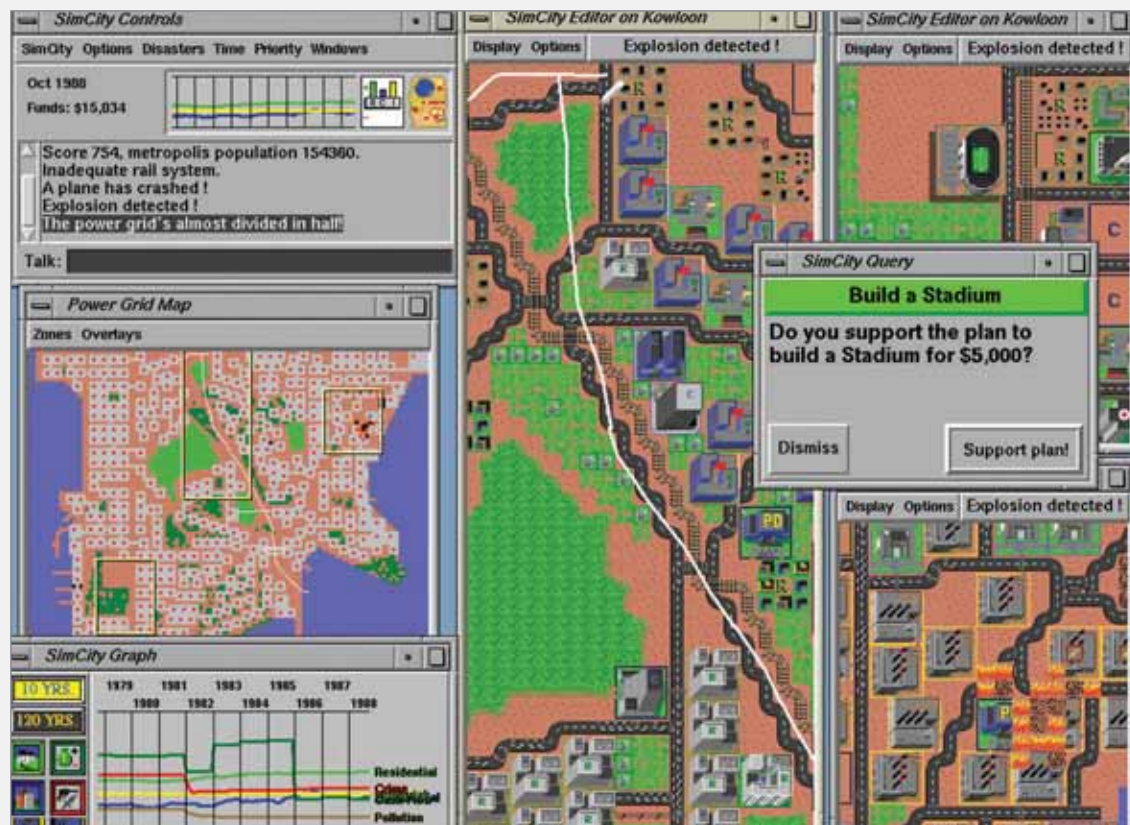
Last month, Electronic Arts took the unusual, although not unprecedented, step of permitting the release of the source code of Maxis's landmark simulation game *SimCity* to the public under the GNU Public License version 3. This is not the first time that game code has been released into the wild, but it is one of the first times that source code from a hit game that was not developed by the notorious maverick John Carmack has escaped the confines of the development house.

Now, it's far too soon to say if anyone will actually do anything interesting with the code, which is named *Micropolis* due to the need to protect EA's trademarks. But even if a programmer or two manage to come up with something brilliant, it is unlikely that even a creative spin based on a genuinely great game is going to generate much attention due to that which is now the great bane of the game development industry.

To put it in a nutshell, the problem is art. Game art, to be specific, the amount and the expense of it required in games today.

Although my game-playing dates back to the Apple II, *Akalabeth*, *Swashbuckler* and the original *Castle Wolfenstein*, I didn't actually start designing my own games until the MCGA days. There were two options then: 320x200, 256-color resolution or 640x480 with 16 colors. Like most would-be developers, my friend and I began by copying a game that we quite liked that we thought we could do a little better, in our case, *Warlords* from SSG. Our game was going to be called *MythWars*, wherein the player was a god from one of the various pantheons, which determined the various army types available.

With such low resolution and a 2D environment, the tiles were so small that two non-artists were perfectly capable of creating what were, at the time, very professional looking graphics. The rolling hills gave way to majestic, snow-covered mountains and the various monstrous infantrymen and cavalries really looked quite good against the backgrounds. For those who can remember those primitive days, it actually looked prettier than *Warlords* or QQP games like *Conquered Kingdoms*. Nowadays, of



course, it looks crude beyond belief, something a child would be embarrassed to put on Facebook.

"The cost of generating art assets creates genuine design problems..."

We never finished *MythWars*, as completing college and then leaping right into the exciting new horizon of 2.5D technology turned out to be a permanent distraction. We tried a few different approaches, especially with video capture, but we quickly learned that our art skills had reached their limits and 2.5D required hiring real artists from the local art school. The budget for our first game was only \$125,000, which paid for the two full-time artists who worked on it. These days, that wouldn't cover the cost of the graphics used on a single game level.

The problem is that while games are visually incredible these days, they often aren't actually any more fun to play. Consider *Guitar Hero*, for example. While it's got very realistic graphics, they're really not very important to the game; the player primarily derives his enjoyment from rocking out with something that feels like a real guitar in his hands. It's the interface that's key, not the visuals, and if you think about it, all games really are, at root, are amusement interfaces.

And art isn't only less fundamentally relevant to games than one might think, but its cost actually creates genuine design problems that are completely unrelated to the art itself. Because budgets are so massive these days, more people have to sign off on every project and there's greater financial pressure on games to appeal to the widest possible market. This is not the way to stimulate creativity and design brilliance, but rather imitation and design mediocrity. This isn't anyone's fault, it's just the natural evolution of the industry. If it weren't for the fact that a few of the industry's most

innovative minds also happen to be some of its most vastly successful ones, we might all be reduced to developing clones of the latest clones of the previous clones.

Is there a way out of this artistic bottleneck? It seems hard to imagine, since no one wants worse graphics and I don't know very many talented artists who are inclined to work for nothing. Perhaps EA's release of 'Micropolis' may hint at the way, after all, an awful lot of game art is pretty similar to the art used in other games. What if instead of releasing game code, developers were to release their old textures and models into an online pool from which everyone could draw as needed, thus reducing the need to draw yet another space laser or oak tree? Obviously, there would still be a need for new art, but at least everyone wouldn't be constantly paying to reinvent the dying monster animation.

No doubt there are a million and one reasons why an Internet Art Pool could never come to pass, but in the unlikely event it does, I have some nice 32x32 mountains in case anyone needs them.

DESIGN DOC Q&A



by The Alpenwolf

Our design expert chats with Rare's Nick Burton...

Nick Burton is a senior software engineer at RARE and the development team leader on Rare's first Xbox Live Arcade title, *Jetpac Refuelled*.

You're a programmer with a specialty in graphics, but it was clear from your presentation at Develop in Brighton that you have an interest in game design. What sort of game would you design if you had the opportunity?

Oh my word... it would probably be retro, because as you probably guessed from *Jetpac*, I'm a bit of a retro-head. I've always been involved with action-adventure games, way back when I was programming *StarFox* and that was great, but I really love shoot-em-ups. I don't mean *Halo*-style shooters either, but the real twitch gaming like *Robotron*, *Defender*...

Berzerk.

Yeah, that kind of game. One of my favorite games was *Tempest 2000*.

What's your opinion on the gameplay of today's games versus the gameplay of the retro games you so admire?

I think they occupy a different sort of experiences. I enjoy the five minutes or so of play you get from games like *Jetpac*. But I also really love games like *The Orange Box*, for instance, things that you can really dive into. They're just very different experiences, one that I can pick up and have five minutes of adrenaline pump without having to worry about a narrative, and the other one when I have more spare time, I can get deeper into the story and I can go and play *Mass Effect* or something like that.

It seems to me that there's been a move from games that put you into the zone versus a game that's about an experience.

They're completely different things. I still like the in-zone gaming but I don't think one can play one of those games for more than twenty minutes or half an hour because it becomes very tiring. So, if you're going to play longer than that, you're going to want to look at something that's more about narrative than feeling.

Do you have any future plans for Xbox Live Arcade titles or was it more of a one-off?

Xbox Live Arcade is great, really fun



to develop for and we have loads of ideas so you can be sure we will be doing more.

"It's always good for experienced developers to try work on smaller titles..."

What are some of the differences between working on a big title like *StarFox Adventures* and a smaller one like *Jetpac Refuelled*?

One of the big things from a development point of view is with a game like *StarFox* or *Kameo*, you obviously have a much more focused job. With something like *Jetpac*, where you've only got three or four people working on it, you're going to find that you've got to do more, you've got to do things that you may not want to do or that you're not as good at. You have to develop a wider portfolio. One thing I always say is that it's good for experienced developers to work on smaller games, like Live Arcade or even mobile games, because you've got to think about the whole game engine, you've got to think about the game design, you've got to think about the graphics, the audio... you can't just do one thing and get deep inside that. You've got to be more multi-disciplined when you're working on a smaller project.

Your presentation at Develop was impressively meticulous. And yet, your conclusion at the end of it was that meticulous design documents are not necessarily the way to go about preparing a development project. How do you reconcile that dichotomy?

I think the statement is true for something like *Jetpac*, that's all about that adrenaline-fueled, quick, reaction gameplay. I don't think it's true for something like *Kameo* or *StarFox*. If you're talking about a big game, you've got to have a design document because the world you are trying to create is so vast and so detailed, whereas something like *Jetpac* relies on that second-to-second drive and action-reaction aspect of the game. I believe the only way you get that is to come up with an initial concept, then constantly refine it, tweaking and tweaking and tweaking over and over again for many weeks.

If you've got to map the document at each stage, that will just slow you down. The shorter the time between tweaks and refining those tweaks, the shorter the iterative cycle, the better the gameplay will be. If you've got to maintain a design document within that scope, it only detracts. But if you were to do something size and scope of *Kameo* without a design document, that would be utter madness.

What's your opinion of the Nintendo development platform versus the Xbox

development platform?

The GameCube and the N64 were both very elegantly designed. The GameCube especially. I've never worked on the Wii although I've been told by friends in the industry that it's quite similar to the GameCube. I have a lot of respect for Nintendo from a hardware design point of view.

The Microsoft consoles are put together more like a PC, but I find the development tools that come with them far superior to anything I've seen for any other platform, not just Nintendo. They're absolutely fantastic, especially from a graphic developer's point of view. They're just incredible and they really speed up the development cycle.

Obviously the platforms are evolving and getting better for every manufacturer, but Microsoft's Xbox 360 tools... I've never seen anything like them, they are very, very good. The Xbox 360 is phenomenally powerful and nice and easy to develop for which lets me do pretty much what I want, about ninety-nine percent of the time. There's that one or two per cent spent wrestling, but back a few years ago on older consoles that wasn't the case, there was a whole lot of wrestling.

If you did another retro title, what would it be?

Looking back through Rare's back catalog, Ultimate's back catalog, I would personally like to make *Lunar Jetman*. Mainly because I've done *Jetpac* and I already have an idea for the title.

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THE DEALS

PATH TO POPULARITY

French pathfinding middleware firm PathEngine has grabbed another two licensees – Korean studio Aeonsoft and Germany's Deck13 Interactive, which will be utilising the tech for a forthcoming PC and Xbox 360 title.

www.pathengine.com

CCP'S STEAMY BUSINESS

Icelandic developer CCP has signed a deal with Valve to sell its MMO *EVE Online* via Steam, the first massively multiplayer title to launch on Valve's digital distribution network.

www.eve-online.com

DEALOGY

Brothers in Arms developer Gearbox has pledged \$50,000 to The Guildhall at SMU to support new students entering the programme as well as providing mentoring during their studies.

guildhall.smu.edu

DEALOGY

Kuju's new Guildford studio Nik Nak has signed a deal to develop two games based on the 'Ology series of books. *Dragonology* and *Wizardology* will be published by Codemasters for the Wii.

www.kuju.com

WII LITTLE GABITASOFT

Merscom and Gabitasoft have signed a co-development and publishing deal for Gabitasoft's online console titles, including WiiWare and Xbox Live Arcade. "Gabitasoft is a fantastic developer and will help us bring additional great content to both platforms," said Dimitri Kirin, account exec for Merscom.

www.gabitasoft.com

BROTHERS IN AMBX

Ubisoft and Philips have teamed up to bring amBX support to future Ubisoft titles, including *Brothers in Arms Hell's Highway* and *Far Cry 2*. The original *Far Cry* will also be patched to enable the ambient light, and sound tech.

www.pathengine.com

PHYSX-ICAL TRAUMA

NaturalMotion's *Backbreaker* will use Ageia's PhysX physics engine. "By utilizing PhysX as part of our euphoria engine, *Backbreaker* players will never make the same tackle twice," said NaturalMotion CEO Torsten Reil.

www.naturalmotion.com

DEVELOPER CHART

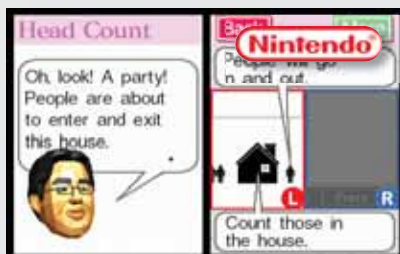
JANUARY 2008

1



LAST MONTH 1

NINTENDO



BEST SELLING GAME:
Dr Kawashima's Brain Training



Is there no end to Nintendo's dominance over our chart? No end for the foreseeable future, anyway – and even when the giant is toppled by a plucky upstart, it's not long before Touch Generations' unstoppable appeal whips it back up to the top spot. It's all Patrick Stewart's fault.

DS

2



LAST MONTH 4

EA CANADA



BEST SELLING GAME:
FIFA 08



It's little surprise that EA Canada finds itself in our top five, its latest faithful version of England's beloved Beautiful Game keeping the developer bobbing near the top even months after its release. Witness the *Madden* effect in action, just without the girly shoulder pads.

PS2, PS3, PSP, XB360, WII, PC

3



LAST MONTH 2

INFINITY WARD



BEST SELLING GAME:
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



Activision's decision to hand development of the *Call of Duty* franchise back to Infinity Ward has clearly paid off, single-handedly keeping the studio in the top five with a far longer sales tail than Bungie's bright-burner *Halo 3*. But will Infinity Ward be back on board for *Call of Duty 5*?

XB360, PS3, PC

4



LAST MONTH 3

UBISOFT (MONTREAL)



BEST SELLING GAME:
Assassin's Creed



If there were any doubts for an *Assassin's Creed* sequel, they must surely be quashed now. Officially 2007's best performing new IP, Ubisoft Montreal's intricately spun chronicles of Altair and his descendent continue to do the developer proud in the UK marketplace.

XB360, PS3

5



LAST MONTH 16

SEGA



BEST SELLING GAME:
Mario & Sonic At The Olympic Games



Famed videogames mascots from two of gaming's most unrealistic franchises. The very real 2008 Beijing Olympics. It shouldn't work, but apparently it does – propelling Sega 11 places up the chart despite the DS version's continued absence.

WII

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

CHART KEY

NEW NEW ENTRY

INDEPENDENT

NO MOVE

UP

DOWN

6	→	Yuke's	PS2, PS3, XB360, Wii, PSP, DS
LAST MONTH 6		WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2008	
7	→	Rebellion	PS2, Wii, PSP
LAST MONTH 7		The Simpsons Game	
8	↓	Konami Digital Ent.	PS2, XB360, PS3, PC
LAST MONTH 5		Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	
9	↓	Maxis	DS, PS2, PSP, Wii
LAST MONTH 8		The Sims 2: Castaway	
10	↓	A2M	PS2, Wii
LAST MONTH 9		High School Musical: Sing It!	
11	↔	Traveller's Tales	Wii, DS, XB360, PS3
LAST MONTH 12		Lego Star Wars: Complete Saga	
12	↔	Hudson	Wii
LAST MONTH 22		Mario Party 8	
13	↓	Amaze Entertainment	DS
LAST MONTH 11		The Simpsons Game	
14	↔	IO Interactive	XB360, PS3, PC
LAST MONTH 26		Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	
15	↓	EA Redwood Shores	DS, Wii
LAST MONTH 10		MySims	
16	↔	Neversoft	XB360, PS3, Wii
LAST MONTH 18		Guitar Hero III: Legends Of Rock	
17	↔	Ubisoft (France)	Wii, DS
LAST MONTH 21		Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	
18	↓	London Studio	PS2
LAST MONTH 16		Singstar R&B	
19	↔	Capcom	Wii
LAST MONTH 54		Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles	
20	↔	Namco	DS
LAST MONTH 40		Sight Training	

Chart Comment

While *Call of Duty 4* may have been the top selling game at Christmas in the UK, it's Nintendo that takes our top developer crown this month, still carried by the huge success of its two *Brain Training* titles and other wide-appeal titles such as *Wii Play* and *Super Mario Galaxy*.

That's not to say that Infinity Ward hasn't accomplished great things, however: the studio comes in at number three in our chart, dropping only a single place since November which, given that it only has one title out compared to Nintendo's huge array, is a remarkable achievement.

Also riding high in our chart is Ubisoft Montreal, only dropping a single place from November thanks to continued strong sales of *Assassin's Creed*, while Sega jumps 11 places to fifth position on the back of the popularity of Mario/Sonic crossover *Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games*.

Interestingly this month's chart shows no new entries in the top twenty, suggesting that those developers faring well in the past few months are those that clean up at Christmas too, rather than any new contenders appearing at the last minute.

Highest climber of the month is Capcom, which slides into the chart at number 19, it's 35-place bungee backed by the success of anticipated Wii shooter *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles*. Other notable climbers include Kane &

"Those developers faring well in the past few months are those that clean up at Christmas too..."

Lynch devs IO Interactive and Nintendo stablemates Hudson, which continues to benefit from strong *Mario Party 8* sales.

Finally, independent developers A2M and Amaze both manage to roughly maintain their position in the chart thanks to the power of the *High School Musical* and *Simpsons* mega-franchises. I imagine it'll be another month of jubilous "What team? Wildcats!" chants in the A2M offices this month, unless making a licensed game doesn't automatically mean you live it. No, no – what a preposterous thought.



Ed Fear

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The Keynotes

GDC MOBILE #1

The Future of Mobile Games

Speaker: Michel Guillemot (CEO & President, Gameloft)
Monday, February 18th

GDC MOBILE #2

Play with anybody everywhere – context, the new paradigm for game play

Speaker: Anssi Vanjoki (Executive Vice President, Markets, Nokia)
Tuesday, February 19th

INDEPENDENT GAMES SUMMIT KEYNOTE ROUNDTABLE

Scattershots of Play - The Potential of Indie Games

Speakers: Kellee Santiago (ThatGameCompany), Jon Mak (Queasy Games), Pekko Koskinen (LudoCraft)
Monday, February 18th, 10:00AM - 11:00AM

CASUAL GAMES SUMMIT KEYNOTE #1

The Promise of Casual Games

Speaker: John Welch (PlayFirst)
Monday, February 18th, 12:00AM - 12:30PM

CASUAL GAMES SUMMIT KEYNOTE #2

The Changing Face of Casual Games

Speaker: Chris Early (Microsoft Casual Games)
Tuesday, February 19th, 10:05AM - 10:35AM

MAIN CONFERENCE KEYNOTE #1

A Future Wide Open: Unleashing the Creative Community

Speaker: John Schappert (Corporate Vice President Live, Software and Services, Microsoft)
Wednesday, February 20th, 10:30AM - 11:30AM

MAIN CONFERENCE KEYNOTE #2

The Next 20 Years of Gaming

Speaker: Ray Kurzweil (inventor & futurist)
Thursday, February 21st, 10:30AM - 11:30AM

Going Down to California?

If so, then these are the pages for you – a comprehensive summary of what's planned for this year's GDC...

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE 08

When: February 18th to 22nd

Where: Moscone Centre, San Francisco, California, USA

Web: www.gdconf.com

AT A GLANCE SCHEDULE...

MONDAY: February 18th	TUESDAY: February 19th	WEDNESDAY: February 20th	THURSDAY: February 21st	FRIDAY: February 22nd
GDC Mobile				
Serious Games Summit				
Casual Games Summit				
Indie Games Summit				
		GDC: Main sessions, lectures and keynotes		
			GDC Expo	
	Game Connection America			
		Indie Games Pavillion		

Staff picks

Not got much time in your schedule? Then we've picked the nine sessions you shouldn't miss...



Storytelling in BioShock: Empowering Players to Care about Your Stupid Story

Speaker: Kenneth Levine (President/Creative Director, 2KBoston/Irrational)
Date/Time: Wednesday, February 20th, 9:00am - 10:00am
Location (room): Room 135, North Hall
Track: Game Design
Experience Level: Intermediate



Looking Back at Lost Odyssey - The Challenge of Cross Cultural Development

Speaker: Ray Nakazato (President, FeelPlus)
Date/Time: Thursday, February 21st, 2:30pm — 3:30pm
Location (room): Room 132/133, North Hall
Track: Game Design
Experience Level: All



Creating Spielberg's Boom Blox

Speaker: Louis Castle (VP of Creative Development at EALA, Electronic Arts)
Date/Time: Thursday, February 21st, 4:00pm — 5:00pm
Location (room): Room 135, North Hall
Track: Game Design
Secondary Track: Production
Experience Level: All



My First MMO

Speaker: Dave Jones (Realtime Worlds)
Date/Time: Thursday, February 21st, 5:30pm - 6:30pm
Location (room): Room 135, North Hall
Track: Game Design
Experience Level: All



The Technology of Final Fantasy

Speaker: Taku Murata (General Manager, Technical Research Divi, Square Enix)
Date/Time: Friday, February 22nd, 12:00pm - 1:00pm
Location (room): Room 135, North Hall
Track: Programming
Experience Level: All



A Portal Post-Mortem: Integrating Writing and Design

Speaker: Kim Swift (Valve), Erik Wolpaw (Writer, Valve)
Date/Time: Friday, February 22nd, 4:00pm - 5:00pm
Location (room): Room 2014/2016, West Hall
Track: Game Design
Experience Level: All



Creating a Character in Drake's Fortune

Speaker: Christian Gyrling (AI and Animation Programmer, Naughty Dog Inc.)
Date/Time: Friday, February 22nd, 9:00am - 10:00am
Location (room): Room 2001/2003, West Hall
Track: Programming
Secondary Track: Visual Arts
Experience Level: Advanced



Development – Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Speaker: Masahiro Sakurai (Designer and Director, Sora)
Date/Time: Friday, February 22nd, 10:30am - 11:30am
Location (room): Room 135, North Hall
Track: Game Design
Experience Level: All



Sam and Max – Episodic Content Creation

Speaker: Julian Kwasneski (Audio Director, Bay Area Sound), Jared Emerson-Johnson
Date/Time: Wednesday, February 20, 9:00am - 10:00am
Location (room): Room 3004, West Hall
Track: Production
Secondary Track: Audio
Experience Level: Intermediate

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GREATBRITISHGAMES

Grand Theft Auto

In the first of a new monthly series of articles profiling, celebrating and analysing some of the best and biggest British-made IPs, **Rick Gibson** and **Nick Gibson** examine the megahit that is Grand Theft Auto...



GTA – THE STATS



NUMBER OF ITERATIONS: 6 games plus 2 expansion packs for Grand Theft Auto (GTA) 1

ESTIMATED TOTAL UNIT SALES: 65 million

TIMELINE: 1997: GTA (630,000+ units)
 1999: GTA 2 (1m+ units)
 2001: GTA 3 (12m+ units)
 2002: GTA Vice City (15m+ units)
 2004: GTA San Andreas (20m+ units)
 2005: GTA Liberty City Stories (8m+ units)
 2006: GTA Vice City Stories (3m+ units)

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

1988: DMA Design founded by Dave Jones
1991: Lemmings published by Psygnosis (eventually selling over 10m copies)
1997: DMA bought by Gremlin for £4.2m (long-term GTA rights had already been pre-sold by DMA)
1997: GTA released by Take 2 (North America in June 1998), ASC Games (Asia), BMG Interactive (Europe)
1998: DMA's *Body Harvest* released on Nintendo 64, Take 2 acquires GTA publishing rights from BMG Interactive
1999: Gremlin bought by Infogrames for £24m, who sold DMA to Take 2 for the nominal sum of £1 and the assumption of \$12.3m in debt. DMA was subsequently integrated into Rockstar Games, becoming Rockstar North

2002: Sony secures 3-year console exclusivity for the GTA series (terms undisclosed). This was later amended and terminated, allowing Take 2 to release it on Xbox
2004: GTA *San Andreas* becomes the best selling game ever in the US (12m units sold)
2005: *Develop* indicates Rockstar North generated £71m in sales in the UK alone in 2004
2006: Microsoft secures exclusive downloadable content for GTA IV

Creator(s): Dave Jones (GTA 1) and team.

GAME INCEPTION AND GROWTH

Grand Theft Auto's roots are relatively humble.

Nintendo had asked DMA Design to join its "Dream team" of independent developers to create launch titles for its new N64 platform. The result was *Body Harvest*, a top-down 2D game involving driving and aliens harvesting human organs that was originally intended as a launch title but delayed until nearly three years after the platform's launch. Eventually published in 1998 by DMA's new owners Gremlin, it did so badly that the company had to announce a profit warning and start assessing its strategic options. Mid-development cycle, DMA harvested the driving gameplay mechanics for a quick interim game, *Grand Theft Auto*, which took the top-down 2D engine and made a crucial switch of gameplay from the cops' perspective to that of the robber.

Despite budget production values, relatively primitive graphics (even for the time) and a lukewarm critical reception, *GTA* was a commercial success in its first two iterations selling over 630,000 (*GTA*) and 1m units (*GTA 2*). The game's violence and perceived immorality immediately caused uproar in the conservative press in Europe and North America. Players enjoyed wide freedom of movement in large cities with endless activities including a range of linear missions, assassinations, robbing banks, driving taxis, shooting strangers, jacking cars and entering a wide variety of buildings. Before the advent of third person perspective 3D in *GTA3*, the

◀ violence was fairly cartoon-like and viewed from a top-down 2D perspective. However, as the game progressed into 3D, the humour became more subtle and the violence more graphic, with deliberate echoes of gang violence found in America's big cities.

The arrival of 3D and GTA's launch on PlayStation 2 brought huge global success, resulting in 2002 in a 3-year exclusive deal with Sony. Production values rose sky high as well-known actors were involved in playing characters, 3D perspectives and compelling narratives yanked players deeper into the game, and the gameplay widened to include even more activities including pimping hookers and fighting fires. Increasingly sophisticated, the series began deliberately conjuring memories of bygone days such as *Vice City's* 1980s Miami theme, and *San Andreas'* 1990s Los Angeles gang theme. The studio added humorous "those were the days" features which both lauded and satirised US culture including radio stations, commercials, popular music and a dysfunctional urban environment. The inclusion of a deeply buried set of sex scenes in *San Andreas* caused Take 2 much negative publicity, but, while this story was beyond the publisher's control, the company has generally encouraged that kind of publicity and looks set to benefit from the eagerly anticipated release of *GTA IV* on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.

"Marketers have used outraged parents, politicians and the right wing press as brand vehicles to target the young male demographic..."

COMPANY INCEPTION AND GROWTH

DMA Design was formed in 1988 in Dundee by Dave Jones. The studio had some early successes with games such as *Blood Money* and *Menace*, before producing the blockbuster *Lemmings* in 1991. The *Lemmings* series of puzzle games became an enduring world-wide phenomenon with over 10m unit sales. DMA had signed the *Lemmings* rights to long-term publishing partner Psygnosis (later acquired by Sony). DMA Design was itself acquired by Gremlin for £4.2m in 1997, subsumed into a combined development/publishing company with over 300 staff. The publishing rights to GTA were already under contract to BMG at the time of the acquisition and were subsequently sold on to Take 2 Interactive in 1998 but the development talent, technology IP and potential royalty flow from GTA were Gremlin's.

Gremlin listed on the London Stock Exchange in 1997 shortly after the DMA acquisition but lasted 20 months before poor performance of key titles, in particular *Body Harvest*, forced a sale to Infogrames for £24m, a lower valuation than its IPO value. The acquisition in part revealed a management team lacking in the experience and capital to play on a world stage increasingly dominated by larger global publishers.

In a complex rights deal, Take 2 acquired DMA from Infogrames for a nominal sum of £1 (but also assumed some \$12.3m in company debt), incorporating it into its Rockstar Studios.

The team grew rapidly under Take 2, as the company invested heavily in the development of GTA's first iteration on PlayStation 2 (*GTA 3*). More recently, Rockstar Leeds was established (by acquiring Mobius Entertainment for \$4.6m) as a new studio to develop PSP versions of GTA.

ANALYSIS

The GTA franchise is an example of a game that grew gradually from modest, local roots to achieve global renown, dominate the charts upon every release and become one of the most valuable games IPs ever created. The kernel of the game – driving around a completely navigable environment committing crimes – has not changed substantially since inception. This remained true even when the game took the leap from limited top-down 2D graphics to full 3D environments. GTA did become more refined, even subtle at times, tapping into an extremely British undercurrent of humour and cultural commentary.

Much of GTA's success can be credited to Take 2's faith in DMA, its recognition of GTA's potential and its understanding of the drivers of its success. GTA's consistent success also relies on the publisher's marketing savvy. Marketers have used outraged parents, politicians and the right wing press as brand vehicles as much as normal marketing channels to target the young male demographic. Publicist Max Clifford helped ensure that the media was saturated with and outraged in its coverage of the first game, an approach which has persisted.

Not all the publicity has produced positive results – Take 2 endured product recalls and management upheaval following revelations about hidden sex scenes within *San Andreas*.

Take 2 has become the target of numerous campaign groups including the conservative Christian lobby in the US, and the similarly provocative *Bully* and *Manhunt* games have been banned in multiple territories, either by governments or retailers. The company has suffered significant share price instability following financial underperformance and, most recently, the delayed *GTA IV* launch. In parallel, shareholders managed to oust various board members, including CEO Paul Eibeler.

GTA 3 was also ground-breaking in being one of the first world-class games built with third party middleware – Criterion's RenderWare – rather than the originating studio's technology. This obviated the need for Rockstar North to spend years and millions of pounds researching and developing its own 3D technology and allowed it to focus on maximising the quality of the game's content and gameplay. *GTA 3's* use of RenderWare proved pivotal for Criterion and inspired a surge of interest in middleware.

Given the number of companies that, at one stage, owned DMA Design or the publishing rights to the GTA IP, Take 2's acquisition of the publishing rights in 1998 from BMG Interactive (for an undisclosed but probably low sum) and then DMA Design in 1999 for just £1 must represent two of the greatest deals in games

industry history. From the release of the first GTA title in 1997 until the end of October 2007, the GTA IP generated \$2.1bn in net revenues for Take 2. At its height, the IP generated \$458m (38% of net revenue) in a single financial year (2005) and it remains a significant cash cow for Take 2.

GTA IV looks set to continue this trend, appearing to retain the quality of gameplay, cutting edge production values, new delivery mechanisms (such as exclusive downloadable content on Xbox 360), and strong marketing.

Take 2 Financial Year	% of Take 2 Revenues	GTA Revenues (\$m)
2007	13.1%	128.6
2006	22.4%	232.5
2005	38.1%	458.2
2004	34.3%	386.8
2003	40.5%	418.6
2002	40.7%	323.1
2001	7.4%	33.4
2000	3.0%	10.9
1999	18.7%	57.0
1998	7.7%	14.7

Although the delay caused Take 2 problems on Wall Street, it benefits from reaching a larger installed base on current generation console platforms. Despite this, the installed base will not have reached the level attained by PS2 at *San Andreas'* launch and so few analysts are forecasting unit sales to exceed even *Vice City* levels – although revenues could reach record heights due to the greater average sales price.



KEY POINTS

- Take 2 was shrewd in first acquiring the publishing rights to several iterations, then acquiring the entire share capital of DMA Design for just £1 (plus \$12m in debt). DMA Design/Rockstar North and the GTA series have generated over \$2bn in net revenues for Take 2.
- Take 2 has consistently marketed GTA to maximise controversy, generating scandalised headlines and raising the games' appeal for its target market – young males.
- *GTA 3* was one of the first blockbuster games to utilise middleware (Criterion's RenderWare), which kept costs down and allowed designers to focus on gameplay not technology.

This profile is taken from Games Investor Consulting's Playing for Keeps report for UKTI, BERR and TIGA, which investigated the current and future states of the UK games industry with a focus on the creation of new games intellectual property, globalisation and the ability of companies to start up or invest in the UK. You can read the report at www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk



Games Investor Consulting is a specialist games industry consultancy founded in 2003 to provide independent games research and corporate finance consulting to the games industry and financial community. Headed by Rick Gibson and Nick Gibson, GIC is one of the industry's most trusted sources for market intelligence, has generated a number of industry-standard reports and has consulted on games strategy and research for numerous games and media companies as well as trade and governmental bodies.

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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

"If a book or film had been banned there would be outcry..."

Fighting against industry criticism, p51

**The industry's
25 'game
changers'**

p34



**Gamecock on
setting up a
UK roost**

p43



**Disney's
minigame
mania**

p47

A collage of four images related to the Wii. Top left: A hand holding a Wii remote with blue motion arrows indicating movement. Top right: A hand holding a Wii remote in front of a TV screen showing a game. Bottom left: A hand holding a Wii remote with a 'BUZZ!!' comic-style sound effect. Bottom right: A hand holding a Wii remote with musical notes floating around it.

Wii Wary?

Don't be. WiiWare could save game development, p43

Meet the Ga



me Changers

After much deliberation, Develop staffers **Michael French, Jon Jordan** and **Ed Fear** name the 25 people reshaping the games development business as we know it...

It seemed at the time – and still is – a fairly simple question. Who are the 25 people making modern games development what it is? Or – who has produced the games, built the companies, chosen the strategies or introduced the innovations that everyone has watched, praised and will undoubtedly envy?

Back and forth emails (some of them heated) amongst the *Develop* staff argued for those we thought should – and shouldn't – make the grade. We scrutinised each sector of the games industry, from casual games to mobile, publishers and format holders, plus those pioneering in online.

Before the list in full, however, a few pointers on our methodology. One rule early on was that conspicuousness didn't guarantee entry. Sales figures and review scores count over column inches. And for further evidence we were looking both forwards and backwards – pinpointing the key events from the last year, from the release of a game through to the sale or merger of a company, that should have the biggest impact in the years to come.

"The list of names here pinpoints those who are helping positively shape the development industry, be that in a business or design sense..."

'Continued dynamicism' was one phrase used during our heated discussions, which very much sums this list up perfectly – these are the people whose ideas, plans and business skills are keeping the global games development business in shape and spurring it on.

Yes, there are some wildcards in here – some surprises or a few people who are perhaps sometimes overlooked in favour of their more outspoken bosses. But there's also some people you would expect, as well. We've even – gasp – widened the list to include a few from 'the other side'; publishing. Specifically those publisher bosses who, like it or not, are dictating (or at least have been ready to greenlight) direction for their development troops.

Ultimately we think we've got the right list of names here which, although always subjective, has pinpointed those who are helping to positively shape the industry – and have made a big impression in the past 12 months.

If you think we've missed anyone out, drop the editor a line at Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk

01

Satoru Iwata
Nintendo



Iwata's hand in Nintendo's renaissance is significant. The DS and Wii have been phenomenal hits, but the initial surprise on their unveiling was all part of his careful plan to disrupt the norms of the games industry. It was a lesson he learnt during his days as a coder for Nintendo subsidiary HAL, where he and his colleagues would deliberately aim to make that which Miyamoto would not in order to keep their games fresh. This approach works: the

devices he launched as president have reached out to new audiences and spurred an industry-wide thumbs up of the casual set, encouraging developers to make more physically demanding and lower cost experiences. His next target is getting more development talent supporting Nintendo: the imminent unveiling of download service WiiWare should help bridge the gaps between the casuals and the hardcore developers.

02

Samantha Ryan
Warner Bros



As head of Warner Brothers Games (full title: senior vice president, development and production, Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment) Samantha Ryan may well have the best and also the hardest senior management job in game development. As part for Warner, she's amidst the media firm's billion-dollar assault on the games industry – but she's also the one who has to legitimise it in the eyes of spectators. She's already

promised a smarter use of owned IP and selective growth of new IP. While some help might come from the recently-acquired TT Games/Traveller's Tales and its LEGO licence, all eyes are on Ryan, the WB Games production team she has recently established, and Seattle-based WB-owned studio Monolith which she also oversees, to deliver. Upcoming shooter *Project Origin*, developed by Monolith, should be the first step.

03

Jim Greer
Kongregate



Greer founded and is CEO of Kongregate.com, an online portal for Flash games that is driven by community features and encourages developers to upload their own creations. The site has helped give joint focus to both the user-generated games content and Flash development scenes, turning people like Paul Preece (developer of favourite *Desktop Tower Defense*) into stars amongst those in the know and also targeting a mass of games players. Lessons learnt in

17 years making online games for big industry names – Greer worked on *Ultima 7 & 8* (Origin), *NetStorm: Islands at War* (Activision), was in charge of web games at Shockwave.com in 2000 and moved to Electronic Arts in 2001 as technical director of pogo – have helped build a destination on the web that really does reward developers with profits from innovative short session games that players love to play.

04

Kim Swift
Valve



Back when the first person dreamt up the idea of a gaming degree, the rapid snapping up of Swift and her fellow student team mates must have been exactly what they'd envisioned. That *Portal*, the game she would then go on to commandeer, would be widely regarded as the freshest, funniest and overall best game of 2007 – a year unprecedented for gaming experiences – would have exceeded even their imaginations. Swift is proof

that gaming academia can be relevant and an asset to the industry, and a one-fingered salute to those studios reticent to hire graduates. The way Swift managed *Portal* into become a smart melding of both an excellent gameplay mechanic and great writing (supplied by scribe Erik Wolpaw) and advocating a shorter playtime, make her work much admired and undoubtedly closely watched. And it's only her first 'proper' game.

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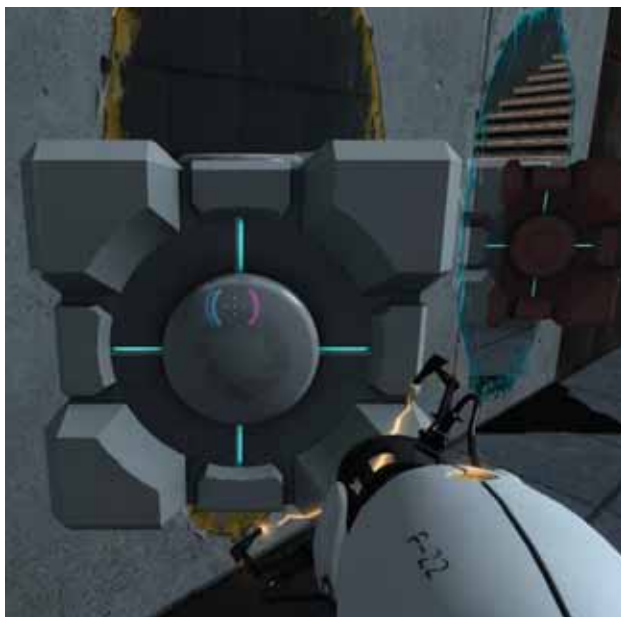


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Portal has made a star of lead designer Kim Swift (4) and been another great title for Steam, overseen by Jason Holtman (7)

05

Hironobu Sakaguchi Mistwalker



Creating *Final Fantasy* – one of the most popular franchises of all time – might be enough reason for his inclusion in this list, but it's what he did after that interests us the most. Sakaguchi's Mistwalker is the pinnacle of the oft-championed Hollywood model, steering the creation of multiple large-scale triple-A titles each year by

maintaining the core creative team in-house and outsourcing the development to a single studio. Releasing several games a year keeps Sakaguchi at the forefront of the Japanese gaming media – something Microsoft clearly recognised when it employed Sakaguchi as the spearhead of their Japanese offensive.

06

Avni Yerli Crytek



There are plenty of brother-based game companies, but few of them can have experienced the remarkable rise of Avni, Faruk and Cevat Yerli. Although Crytek was founded in 1999 its debut title *Far Cry* wasn't released until 2004. These were the hard, learning years. Since then the combination of highly regarded *Crysis*, released

via EA, plus the Frankfurt relocation and growth of Crytek's German HQ, establishment of Kiev and Budapest-based sister studios and the commercial launch of middleware CryENGINE 2 demonstrates the financial nous of ex-engineer Avni, in terms of providing a solid commercial foundation for the company's future.

07

Jason Holtman Valve



The progress of Valve's digital distribution platform Steam in the past year has been overwhelming, with almost every major publisher using the independent developer's service to sell games online. Holtman's hand in this is not to be underestimated – he works with outside teams chasing Steam distribution. He also

helps those looking to licence Valve's Source engine. The former lawyer has helped turn Steam into an attractive business complement, and a continued perfect fit for any business, whether they are a huge multinational publisher or a small independent developer. That's hugely impressive.

08

Torsten Reil NaturalMotion



With an academic background in evolutionary and adaptive systems, Torsten Reil's sure-footed development of NaturalMotion, the company of which he was a co-founder, now CEO, and its underlying technology, marks one of the success stories of UK middleware. Its first product Enderphin was used by dozens of film

special effect studios, as well as game developers, to provide realistic-looking animation. But it's Euphoria, a runtime animation component that's been used in *GTA IV* and new *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* games, that highlights the company's potential. Development of its own game, *Backbreaker*, shows wider ambitions.

09

Robert Kotick Activision Blizzard



When you've been in control of a company for 16 years and delivered 16 years of revenue growth, you could be forgiven for being self-satisfied. Add in moves such as the \$100 million *Guitar Hero* acquisition – something expected to generate over \$360 million this year – and most execs would be smug. But Activision's

position in second place behind EA encouraged Bobby Kotick to pull off the industry's most watched and ambitious deal, the merger between Activision and Blizzard. It's a measure of his standing as a financially astute operator that he remains at the helm of combined \$18.9 billion behemoth, despite Activision's minority stake.

10

Michael Morhaime Blizzard



Sixteen years is a long time to continually run a games company. But perhaps what's most impressive about Michael Morhaime's focus on high quality games that are only ever released when they are deemed ready, is the fact Blizzard has been a fully-owned studio since 1994. Its 'By gamers, for gamers' approach has

been fully vindicated, however. And as well as multi-million selling successes such as *World of Warcraft*, *Diablo* and *Starcraft*, the merger of Vivendi and Activision has redefined Blizzard as the world's most valuable single development unit, and Morhaime himself as one of the most powerful figures in the industry.

11

Chris Doran Geomerics



The commercialisation of academic smarts has historically proved remarkably difficult, especially into the games industry. So, considering his background as a researcher in astrophysics at Cambridge University, Chris Doran perhaps seemed an unlikely figure to kickstart one of the most exciting UK middleware companies. But

two years on, he's developed ideas into products, raised over £2 million in funding, bought in industry veterans including ex-Sony boss Chris Derring, and is now ready to launch real-time lighting solution Enlighten at GDC. And that's only the start. The company has plenty of other areas to investigate. Watch this space.

12

Rod Cousins Codemasters



There's not much Rod Cousins hasn't seen during his 26 years of management toil. From heading Activision's international presence in the '80s to the rise and fall of Acclaim, he's experienced both the good and the bad. Still, the high octane ride of guiding the once globally-unambitious family-run Codemasters

toward its forthcoming IPO has demonstrated that the old silver fox can pull off new tricks. Cousins has overseen growth into MMOG and casual markets, establishing a North American presence, plus approved a £40 million investment supporting bold internal initiatives such as new engine EGO.

13

Ray Muzyka
BioWare

It's almost impossible to separate the two-headed management team of BioWare but if forced, Ray Muzyka takes it by a nose. As well as his development role, he deals with the finance and operations side of the business, which provides a textbook example of how to take a small start-up to global success. Of course, the

focus has always been the quality of the games, but under Muzyka's guidance, the BioWare name itself became a powerful brand too, resulting in the Pandemic and Electronic Arts deals. And, as if to underline his smarts, he's gained an MBA and won the Celebrity Poker Tournament at DICE.

14

John Carmack
id

To anyone who's played genre (and some would say era) defining games such as *Doom* and *Quake*, Carmack's influence on gaming hardly needs introduction, having been one of the few people on the very front lines of the technological revolutions. While id's tech leadership may have recently been challenged by Epic's *Unreal*

Engine 3, id are fighting back with *Tech 5*, driven by Carmack's visions of future technology – an almost self fulfilling prophecy, given how he helps to shape the technology itself. It's also his love of low-specced machines that partly lead to the opening of id's new mobile studio overseen by his wife, Katherine Anna Kang.



LEGO Batman (above) will be a headline game for both WB's assault on games and developer Traveller's Tales

15

Jesse Sutton
Majesco

Turning round a failing publisher doesn't gain you many plaudits, particularly if you were president during the troubled days. But despite some rocky moments, the restructuring plan of Majesco's Jesse Sutton means he has plenty to be proud of. Since he took over the role of CEO in summer 2006, when the company was

haemorrhaging cash with losses of over \$70 million, he's steadied the ship and dealt with shareholder lawsuits and Nasdaq non-compliance. And proof can be seen in the way Majesco has ridden the wave of DS and Wii success, as well as opportunities provided by digital distribution such as Steam.

16

Sarah Chudley
Bizarre Creations

There comes a time, even in the most independently-minded developer's life, when you think about selling out. And not always in a derogatory sense – a well-timed transfer of ownership for cash and medium term stability is smart business. So it was after 13 years of fiercely-guarded self-determination, that Bizarre

Creations' commercial director Sarah Chudley handled the company's acquisition by Activision. A process no doubt smoothed as she's married to MD Martyn Chudley, the deal was nevertheless remarkable as much for being a negotiation from a position of strength as it was a surprise to the rest of the industry.

17

Mark Rein
Epic Games

There's can be little argument that Mark Rein is one of the most opinionated players in the games industry. But don't let his populist style confuse you with a lack of insight. Thanks to Epic's position at the crossroads of game and technology, he's also very well informed, and that's what makes him powerful. For,

as well as working with the console manufacturers, he knows what many publishers and developers are up to having seen behind the curtains when selling them tools. Throw in the Unreal Integrated Partners Program, which is now a major channel for middleware vendors, and there's little outside his sphere of influence.

18

Ian Hetherington
Realtime Worlds

With a CV spanning Imagine Software to MD positions at Psygnosis and Sony and executive roles at Evolution Studios and sister studio Bigbig (and not forgetting middleware company Digimask), Ian Hetherington is one of UK gaming's longest-serving eminence grise. He now probably spends more time on fast cars than gaming,

especially since assisting with the sale of Evolution and Bigbig Studios to Sony in autumn 2007, but he remains involved at ambitious Scottish developer Realtime World. And having raised \$31 million of funding in late 2006, it's preparing for the release of anticipated GTA-meets-MMOG *All Points Bulletin* sometime this year.

19

Howard Tomlinson
Astraware

Unless you're into PDA and smartphone games you probably won't have heard of Howard Tomlinson, although if you've ever spoken to the jovial and bearded CEO you don't forget him in a hurry. Having set up developer Astraware in 2000 to make games for Palm PDAs, he's steadily grown the company into the big fish

in a small pond, adding support for new devices as well as signing licensing and OEM deals. Involved in development, including versions of *Bejeweled* (including the iPod one), and publishing and reselling across 100 countries, it's a measure of his success that Astraware has just been bought by US concern Handmark.

20

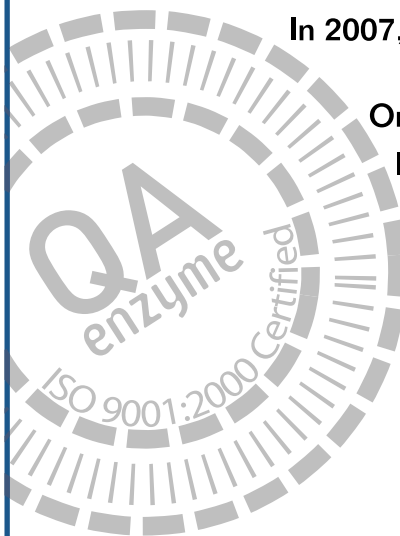
Jonathan Smith
TT Games

The description 'the nicest man in the industry' could be considered a backhanded putdown, but, temperament aside, as Jonathan Smith's track record proves, he's also one of the smartest. From early involvement on Codemasters' *Operation: Flashpoint* to his key work putting together the *LEGO Star Wars* deal, he's

managed to combine commercial success with high quality games. What's often forgotten when considering the impact of *LEGO Star Wars* is his input into features like co-operative gaming, and the titles' English humour. With *LEGO Batman* and *Indiana Jones* in the works, it's no wonder Warners Bros. paid top dollar for TT Games.



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BETA | THE GAME CHANGERS

Harmonix's Rock Band isn't just a testament to their strength as a studio, but has also produce an enviable downloadable content model



21

Christine Burgess-Quémard
Ubisoft



While Ubisoft's continued expansion and success of its product slate can be attributed to a variety of people across the firm, including CEO Yves Guillemot, it is Burgess-Quémard who driving the success of the firm's development teams as worldwide president of studios.

She joined Ubisoft in 1987, opening its first USA office and then moved to head the UK business unit. This and a stint as the publisher's International Sales Director has given her a global view that's clearly being utilised. In the past two years she has overseen Ubisoft's tactical territorial growth,

tapping into key areas such as the UK, Eastern Europe, China, Japan and North Africa via new studios and acquisitions.

22

Alex Rigopoulos
Harmonix



An MIT graduate, Rigopoulos and fellow classmate Eran Egozy teamed up in 1995 to mix business with their pleasure (music) and technical skills. The studio's early cult hits *Frequency* and *Amplitude* were really just the sound of the orchestra warming up. His studio's next salvo, *Guitar Hero*

was then the opening act, creating for eventual owner Activision (which acquired GH publisher Red Octane) a \$1bn franchise. Selling out to MTV at the breakthrough act point was a shrewd move. Milking the new management's music industry contacts and forging a distribution deal with EA has

demonstrated a huge stroke of smart independent studio business thinking and an enviable DLC model.

23

John Riccitiello
Electronic Arts



John Riccitiello isn't just the man that helped turn EA into the colossus of industry that it is today, he's also the man who is embarking on modernising it. Returning to the post of CEO last year he initiated a still-in-progress restructure, which splits the company into labels based on the games they make and

hopefully shortens the distance between developers and audience. Rivals are keenly watching as the firm tones up its organisation, with one or two offices closed and new IP sped into production at others. EA DICE's Play4Free Battlefield Heroes is the latest example of tackling a new business model.

EA could well be a different beast – more agile, creating more relevant games – once Riccitiello is done tweaking it.



Jim Greer's Kongregate has become a key destination on the web for user-made games content

24

Graham Hopper
Disney



Another of the big media firms making a serious play for the games pie, Disney has a war chest of some \$350m ready to splat on games in the coming years – and Hopper is the man spending it via a repeatedly stated strategy to balance a portfolio of new IPs and games based on Disney

brands. Hopper and his staff are no doubt seeking the games version of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, a title that can perhaps beget a variety of or cross-media activity around it, and it will be when they find it (or create it) that the rest of the industry will sit up and pay attention. Key acquisitions –

UK-based Black Rock (formerly Climax Racing) and Warren Spector's Junction Point – prove the talent is on his side.

25

Dan Connors
Telltale Games



Former LucasArts veteran Connors co-founded Telltale in 2004 – and the timing was almost perfect. Newly emerging online distribution services, such as Turner's Gametap, were just finding their feet, but needed exclusive content. Enter Telltale's desire to create

episodic adventures in the ilk of those its exec team cut their teeth on at Lucas. After testing the model with a PC adventure title based on comic book *Bone*, it was Connors and co. rescuing the *Sam and Max* IP from their former employers which proved the masterstroke. With the series now on its

second season, Telltale is still the only studio to have realised the often talked about but hardly achieved episodic model.

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Image courtesy of Ubisoft

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'Cocky funny

After a bold debut in 2007, new publisher Gamecock – founded by former Gathering of Developer bosses and boasting better deals for developers – has powered up its strategy, expanding into the UK and Europe and hunting for new IPs to publish. **Michael French** spoke to CEO Mike Wilson...

Gamecock has been in business for a year now – looking back, how well do you think things have gone, and how has that lead to the founding of the European base?

We've spent the last year putting together the machinery of the operation, picking the right people. We've also got our first game out – *Dementia* for the DS – which was on time and came following the start of a successful relationship with Nintendo.

We actually weren't planning to set up a UK office this soon – we never even got that far with Gathering – but a lot of it had to do with Sarah [Seaby] and Graeme [Struthers] (see *'The Euro Roost'*) becoming available. Having them on board meant we can very quickly become a publisher in the UK, get our titles out, and really push out the message of what Gamecock is all about to the community here.

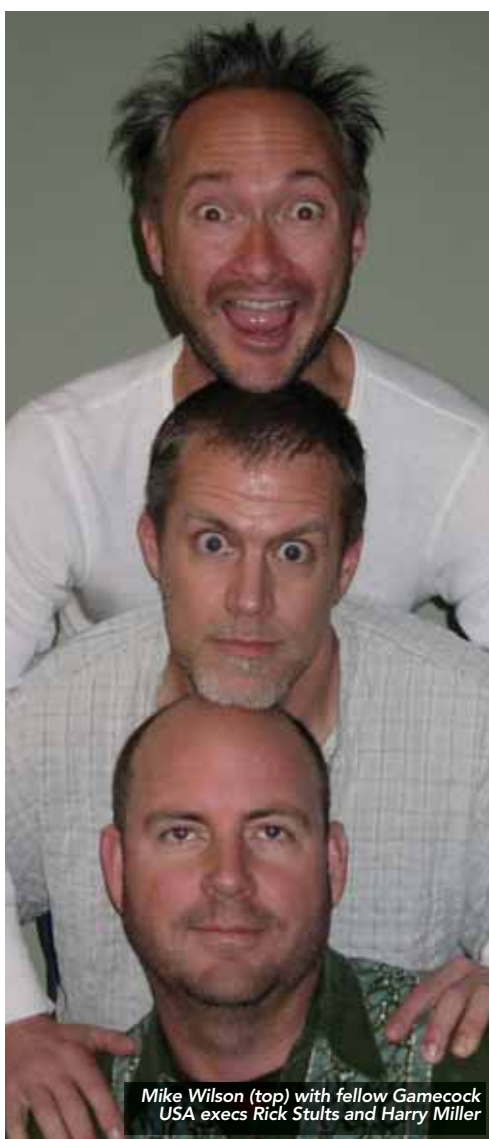
And what is the Gamecock ethos?

We're based on the idea that the industry will evolve to recognise the talent in the industry, that it is an entertainment industry. And that those entertainers should get the attention, own their properties and put up front as the main brand so that consumers can form a relationship with their favourite artists. I don't think it's realistic to expect a gamer to form a relationship with a publishing

"I don't think it's realistic to expect a gamer to form a relationship with a publishing brand..."

brand. With some very rare exceptions, it just doesn't happen. I never think 'Oh, I love Universal Pictures or Random House'. Because developers, especially those who make a particular kind of game, they can have a real relationship with their audience. I was lucky enough to start my career at id and they were one of the first teams to really try that; so when the developer moves from one publisher to another there is no real difference in the experience to consumers.

I think our relationship with Firefly is a really strong demonstration of that approach at work and a good illustration of the philosophy in action.



Mike Wilson (top) with fellow Gamecock USA execs Rick Stults and Harry Miller

Firefly did a lot of work creating *Stronghold* when working with Gathering, and because of the way we worked they owned the IP and were the main brand. It's worked – it's a million selling franchise, and at Gathering we never sought to control them, and here they are, back working with us again. It's proof positive.

That's very contradictory to a lot of developer-publisher relationships, especially from the

THE EURO ROOST

Gamecock's expansion into Europe has necessitated the opening of a London premises (for fulfilling the requirements to be an officially licenced console game publisher), and the appointing of local execs to drive forward its activity in the region.

However, Gamecock never planned to open a UK office so quickly – until former Take 2 cohorts Graeme Struthers and Sarah Seaby became available, that is. At Take 2, they had worked with Gamecock founders Mike Wilson and Harry Miller when their Gathering of Developers outfit was part of the business. But that's as far as they are all allowing history to repeat itself.

According to Seaby, responsible for marketing, the contrast between working for the publishing-orientated Take 2 and the developer-focused Gamecock is stark.

"Other publishers are very dictatorial..."

She says: "The approach is so different – other publishers are very dictatorial about what you need to do in terms of marketing and when it has to be done. It's not like that at all for Gamecock. Now we're asking the developer – what do you want to do? What is your game about? How can we promote that?"

And the extra change is now incorporating developers into the marketing process – and not just in the sense that they get final sign off. Adds Seaby: "We won't be promoting ourselves, Gamecock – it's all about the developer – that's solely what we're about."

Struthers adds that the Gamecock strategy is also changing developer-publisher relations.

"I worked in the development side of publishing for years and I've ended up hating it," he says, adding: "Not because I hate games but because in that environment developers are always faced with a situation where the producer is just some guy who has played *Assassin's Creed* and he says 'Oh, please put some climbing mechanics in your WW2 FPS.'"

"Publishers often just sit down with a developer but by the end of a conversation have told them to make a different game to the one they originally wanted to make. Whereas with us, we come in and if we like a game we'll publish it. Simple."

GAMECOCK'S GAMES

The publisher has signed deals with a number of independents from around the world for new IP...



Dementium: The Ward (DS)

Developer: Renegade Kid
Country of Origin: USA



Sabotage (PC)

Developer: Replay Studios
Country of Origin: Germany



Legendary: The Box

Developer: Spark Unlimited
Country of Origin: USA
(co-published with Atari)



Insecticide (DS/PC)

Developer: Crackpot Entertainment
Country of Origin: USA



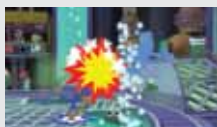
Dungeon Hero (PC/360)

Developer: Firefly
Country of Origin: UK



Pirates vs. Ninjas Dodgeball (360)

Developer: Blazing Lizards
Country of Origin: USA



Hail to the Chimp (PS3/360)

Developer: Wideload Games
Country of Origin: USA



Mushroom Men (DS/Wii)

Developer: Red Fly
Country of Origin: USA



Unannounced title

Developer: Croteam
Country of Origin: Croatia



Stronghold Crusader Extreme (PC)

Developer: Firefly
Country of Origin: UK



Section 8

Developer: TimeGate Studios
Country of Origin: USA



point of view of a publisher. Was that intentional?

Most of our competitors think that we are fools not to own these properties. But it's the relationship what counts, not the ownership. Long-term I think that's how the industry will evolve. The powers that be in publishing right now will of course fight that change kicking and screaming, but it's going to happen because as viable channels for new IP appear – such as Gamecock, but not just us – eventually the big boys will have no choice because the talent will migrate to the path of least resistance.

Some of them have accepted it before, but only once or twice – I'm thinking about Valve and EA for instance – and it's something only the big studios can fight for...

Well our philosophy has been to give a chance to those smaller teams as well. Harry [Miller, co-founder of Gamecock] and I both come from development and it makes sense to have this responsibility to the industry and give that good deal to anyone we want to work with. We give that same deal to anyone we want to work with and not have the contract fight – we'll believe in them enough to give them the same deal that all our developers get.

IP ownership aside, in what other ways are the deals you offer to studios better than those offered by other publishers?

We offer better royalty rates and we also allow them to sign off on all the marketing.

That's actually a key part because we don't want to get into a situation where a developer feels a game wasn't marketed enough and also we feel that if a developer has made the game, they're going to know the audience well and know how the game needs to be sold or presented – or at least that their opinion is as relevant as ours. So they get last sign off on everything. The strange thing is, when you give that gift, they trust your input more and will ask for the publisher's marketing expertise.

Ultimately, it's about checking our egos at the door and knowing that the developers are smart enough to actually know something too.

Gamecock is currently known in the industry for a few antics or stunts – chicken suits, calling out other publishers as predictable – will you be following that disruptive approach when it comes to actually promoting games?

Well, everything we've got is original IP and independently produced. One of the key things that's different about us compared to other independent publishers is that we're only getting into something when we have the wherewithal to do it. And we're prepared to spend money on all the things other big publishers do, be that giant billboards or broadcast campaigns. But it's original – we already have an advantage in that sense. So we'll do whatever we can do to get the name of the games out there over and over again.

And Gamecock's done a lot of talking about itself – that seems to vie with the suggestion you'll be promoting the

developers...

The first year has been an awful lot of noise about Gamecock, but that's because we didn't have a game to put out! So there will be a natural transition point to where we're only talking about the games and the developers – before we were just explaining to the world what Gamecock was about, what our philosophy was, and that we wanted to have fun.

I think that noise has helped teach a lot of people what we are about. And now we'll move on from that – we'll soon be making sure it's the developers stood here talking about their companies and their games, none of this 'producer putting on a dull rehearsed or autopilot demo' stuff that goes on. And in future I'll be doing less and less interviews to let them take centre stage. Don't get me wrong – we're still gonna have a good time because we have to remind ourselves and each other that this is a fun industry to work in as well.

So as well as getting distribution in place in the UK are you also looking to sign new studios?

Yes, but we don't have to do much looking as people are often approaching us – the word is out there that we're doing good deals for developers. That said, we're not looking to publish 50 titles a year; 2008's portfolio is pretty much full. There's just one more game I want to sign which could be out later this year and that would take us to around 10 games signed for 2008. And we've already got some key titles, some cornerstone titles for us, signed for 2009. But we're still open to approaches.

And you've got the money to support your ambitions?

Yes. Making that clear is something Harry and I are keen to reiterate – we didn't enjoy the experience at Gathering where sometimes we had to claw together money to make sure people got paid. Because at the end of the day, we can offer the developer a great contract but they've got to actually get paid as well. Most developers have learnt the hard way that whatever the smiling men in suits say it is what is in the contract that counts at the end of the day.

You're trying to crack a lot of the bigger UK studios, but many of them are reliant on the work for hire model. If you're courting developers for new ideas how will you balance that with the way many studios here expect to do business?

Well my thinking is that there is enough of that business out there – if a studio wants to work on a safe sequel or licence, that's fine. Firefly for instance is doing both, working on an original title that they wanted to make [Dungeon Hero] but also a sequel to a franchise they own.

Strangely, a lot of developers have come to us thinking that we might have some licence that we want turned into a game – but we really don't. We'd like to tell the development community that is not the case, and that's no way to go about dealing with a publisher.
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Mickey and minigames

Late last year, Disney's UK studio Black Rock downed tools on its scheduled projects for one week, instead setting about an ambitious team-building exercise that asked the staff to build minigames in a seriously protracted five-day development cycle. Here we offer two unique perspectives on the week: **Jeremy Moore** offers a diary from each day as his team set about work on their game while studio head **Tony Beckwith** tells us what impact the exercise had...

DIARY

MONDAY

It's Monday morning and I arrive at the office feeling apprehensive.

The plan for the coming week is that the entire studio will divide into small teams and that each team will design and create a game. For one week we're forgetting about multi-million dollar budgets, two year development periods, 100 person teams, scheduling and production cycles, QA and focus groups. The safety net formed by all these things is being removed. What will remain is simply the act of creating something that's fun to play.

The 17 teams are announced at 9am. Groups form around the noticeboard to see who will be working with who. Teams are of five to six and have been selected so that most people will work with colleagues who they haven't worked with closely before. All teams are supposed to contain at least one coder, artist and designer. Except my team. We seem to be missing a designer. But we do have three coders if you include our tech director who hasn't actually done any coding for the last three years.

By lunchtime we have made home in our designated team area, and wrestled with the difficult but essential task of choosing a team name. That leaves us four days to come up with a game before presentation time on Friday afternoon. After discussing ideas we agree to base our game loosely on the *Screwball Scramble* toys where a ball is guided around an obstacle course. We coders get to work creating a prototype in which balls can be rolled around on a surface model. Everyone else works on assets for the prototype and fleshing out the basic game ideas. Progress is reasonably fast and we leave the office on time with that warm start of project feeling where everything still seems possible.

TUESDAY

Last night's warm feeling wears off pretty rapidly through the morning.

The game is evolving in a number of contradictory directions, all of which have flaws. I'm beginning to wish that we had a designer on the team who could focus on and develop the game direction. Although the working prototype is progressing well, when we look at it before lunch there doesn't seem to be any element of fun to build game-play upon.

Desperation starts to creep into our discussions. We only have three days left. Do we scrap



Teams were free to come up with any idea they wanted on any platform – one even built a peripheral (above) complete with spit-powered input mechanism (left)

"A series of good workable ideas follow and by the end of the day, with a fleshed out game design and working prototype, we're now in full production..."

everything and start again from scratch? Or push on with what may be a dead end idea? I don't feel any better when I see that the team next to us have an early but already fun prototype of their game running.

But then after lunch something clicks, and we can see possibilities emerging in our prototype. We drop some of the complexity, keep the mechanics of rolling balls on a surface and add elements from classic puzzle games like Tetris. A series of good workable ideas follow and by the end of the day, with a fleshed out game design and working prototype, we're now in full production.

WEDNESDAY

While the coders get down to writing the gameplay logic, fine tuning the physics and adding support for audio, everyone else considers the art treatment. We rapidly move through several themes from retro toy influences and a Frankenstein's laboratory before

ending up with a concept inspired by old medical diagrams found on the internet. Bizarrely our game scenario now involves "rolling neuron balls on the surface of a brain". It's weird, but we like it.

Meanwhile other teams' ideas are even more left-field. At least one team has spent the first few days creating a custom controller from a wooden box, a crank handle and a bulb horn. What's crazier is that it works and fits their gameplay perfectly.

THURSDAY

Crunch time has arrived. Everyone is working at full speed on their tasks. We're working without schedules and project planning but any task dependencies at this stage are a problem. The finalized HUD design and artwork aren't ready until the afternoon which means that I need to work late to add in the code support for them. That's OK, most of us need to work late anyway as there seems to be a 101 things still to do.

An artist on our team turns out to also be an experienced sound designer, and adds sound effects that are suitably twisted to match the rest of the game's eccentric, (and now slightly nauseating) look and feel.

FRIDAY

Friday morning comes as a succession of deadlines. Alpha at 11am, beta at midday, gold master at 1pm and in the shops (well, being presented to the studio) an hour later.

Final art assets are dropped in and bugs are ironed out. I find myself wrestling with a single rendering bug for over an hour and feel real relief when it's fixed with no time to spare. Other bugs receive nasty hacks to cover them up, and frankly any memory leaks can be "patched later" (i.e. forgotten).

It wouldn't be a final build without an artist begging to change just one more thing, but at 12:59 I ignore the artist's pleas and hit build for the final time. We all look at the final version with a mixture of pride and confusion. 'It's good, but what on earth is it?' sums up the general team feeling.

That afternoon is spent with each team presenting their finished game to the rest of the studio. The atmosphere is fantastic and each presentation is met with cheers and laughter. The overall quality of the games is astonishing, and generally everyone seems to be on a high from the buzz of their own week's work and from seeing all the other incredible, inventive game presentations.

SATURDAY

So now that the week's work is over and most people have spent a long night in the pub to consider it, what did I get from the week?

Well it showed that I work for a company that isn't afraid to take a risk on organising an event that turned out to be both worthwhile and inspiring. It also showed that I work alongside some extremely talented people, but then I pretty much knew that already.

What was surprising is that working on a game for one week turned out to be so similar to working on a game for two years. We encountered in microcosm the same cycle of pre-production/production/crunch, the same tensions over issues in game design, the same issues in working as a team and managing our work flow. And finally we all felt a similar feeling of pride and relief when the game was finally out of the door.



Jeremy Moore is lead programmer in the central technology group at Disney's Black Rock studio

www.blackrockstudio.com

Q&A: MINIBOSS



Develop talks to Black Rock chief Tony Beckwith to find out more about Disney's 'Minigame Week'...

Where did the idea for 'minigame week' come from?

It was an idea that came from inside the studio, but there's a similar practice at Pixar, where people make mini movies as a team-building exercise. So we thought it would be great to spend some time making minigames. We realised that we'd really need a whole week if we were going to set people the task of making one game quickly and we had to get permission from the top, though, as it's a bold move.

And the Disney bosses didn't mind you all downing tools for a week?

Not at all – they were really supportive. Disney always says innovation is at the heart of the company and they knew that this kind of thing can keep people creative.

How was the idea put into practice?

We split the studio into 17 teams consisting of six to eight people each and mixing people up with those they hadn't worked with before – different departments, different floor. We made sure sure that we had two coders, two artists on each team and that the other slots were filled with designers, admin people, directors, our recruiter. And then everyone stopped their duties for one week and were set about making minigames. The Monday morning was fairly chaotic as everyone had to move desks, but everyone had got through that quickly. Afterwards everyone went off site, to the pub, Starbucks, to work on their idea, and got stuck into it from the afternoon.

How did you make sure the teams completed their ideas?

I told all the teams that on the Friday they had to be done through Alpha by 10am, Beta at midday and gold master 1pm ready for a 15 minute presentation to the rest of the company after lunch. We gave out awards, but there was no winner as such because it was a collaborative event and designed to get people thinking creatively as groups rather than compete.

What did you learn from the week?

A lot of companies do teambuilding events, that isn't new – they're great for making people bond – but this is much more relevant to our work and industry than sending everyone out into the middle of the woods.

Plus, a lot of the staff ended up

working with people they hadn't worked with before. We're almost 120 people in size now, and for many there might be people across the office or on another floor they'd never speak to. After the minigame week, friendships and bonds have been made and you've got people talking and sharing ideas.

It's also helped us find leaders we didn't know existed before. Each team had to choose a team leader – but directors and managers weren't allowed to take those roles, the leaders had to be those who don't usually get to lead. So from that we've found some leadership talent that's bubbled up through the process.

And it also reinvigorated people creatively. Change is as good as a rest as they say – and people plugging away at big things like AI systems or physics models were allowed the opportunity to take their mind off it, guilt free, for a week, and just apply their skills to something else.

Were any of the ideas that came out of it usable at all – perhaps you could polish them and release them on Xbox Live Arcade or something?

That was never a goal – we told people not to try and make a game they had always been planning to make or what have you, because it's all about fun and there didn't need to be a commercial output.

That said, we sent all the ideas through to the other studios in the company and there is one Disney project being worked on which contains lots of minigames so who knows one or two might be a good fit for that and get through. Plus, we're looking at hiding a few of the games in our upcoming projects as Easter Eggs or unlockables.

In a bigger sense across all the studios they all know about minigame week now, and they're evaluating the possibility of doing it, too.

It took a week out of the studio's schedule – will you do it again?

Absolutely. We are thinking of making it an annual event for the studio.

Would you recommend that other studios, not just those at Disney, try this kind of exercise?

Definitely – it really was fun and helped us, and you see similar projects such as Dare to be Digital following a similar template and they've encouraged plenty of creativity.

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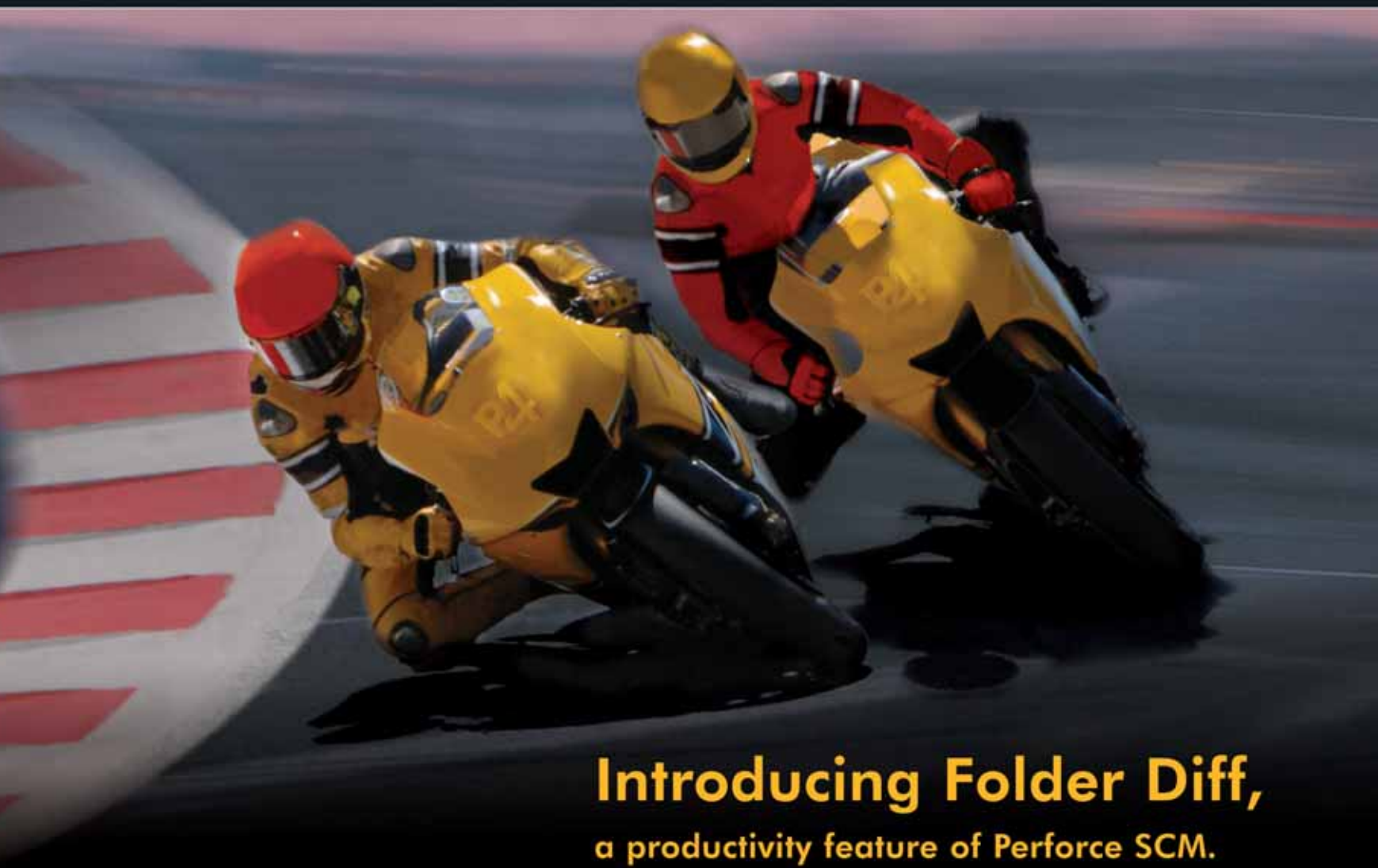
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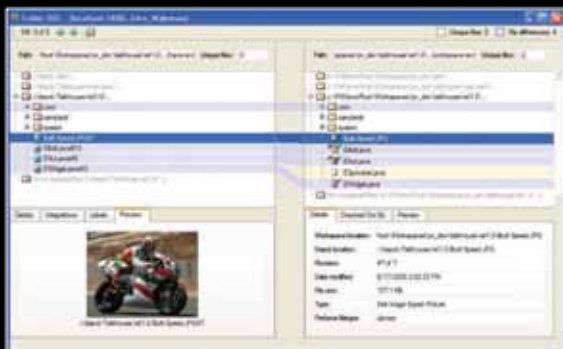
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FIGHTING BACK

Enough is enough, says **Vincent Scheurer** – the games industry put up with a lot of attacks on its creative power in 2007, this year it's time to strike back...

2007 was a great year for the video games industry, with record sales, increasing market share, and some fantastic games. But 2007 also had a darker side.

DRUG DEALERS

The year began with the aftermath of Boris Johnson's article in the *Daily Telegraph*, in which he compared video games to hard drugs and accused video games of causing childhood illiteracy. That Johnson should say something daft is not in itself surprising, although comparing game developers and publishers to drug pushers in a national newspaper is astonishingly offensive even by his own dismal standards. But the lack of reaction from the Conservative party leadership, and indeed from within the games industry, was far more troubling. When Johnson was mildly rude to the people of Liverpool, the Conservative leadership sent him packing to Liverpool to apologise in person. But when he attacked one of the UK's most successful creative industries in an ill-

informed rant wholly lacking in substance, reason or evidence, nobody said anything.

MORAL VACUUM

Michael Grade, the executive chairman of ITV, also got in on the act in 2007. Even though ITV was (and remains) mired in the premium rate phone-in scandal, in which thousands of ordinary viewers have been ripped off on an unprecedented scale, he still had the nerve to suggest that video games exist in a "moral vacuum" when compared with TV drama. Apparently, TV has "a stronger moral standpoint because it [can] contextualise video content within the framework of a dramatic narrative." Which games can't, apparently.

BAN THESE EVIL GAMES

Unfortunately, the Johnson article and the Grade comment were merely preludes to the much more serious business of *Manhunt 2*. As everyone knows, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) banned *Manhunt 2* from

sale in the UK in October. Rockstar, the game's publishers, successfully appealed the ban in November, but the BBFC is challenging this decision in the High Court.

It is worth analysing the BBFC's reasoning and procedures in some greater detail. Like the Johnson and Grade episodes, they tell us something about the present state of the games industry and about the political and regulatory climate in which it operates.

Firstly, it is important to recall that *Manhunt 2* is not, in itself, unlawful under UK criminal laws or consumer protection laws (of which there are plenty). These laws apply to video games as much as they apply to films and written works. If a video game is obscene or incites criminal behaviour, then those who publish or distribute it can be convicted and even imprisoned. *Manhunt 2* does not breach any of these laws.

Instead, *Manhunt 2* was banned under a separate legal structure, which only applies to films and games, because three people at the BBFC (who are not regular video game players)

think that publishing *Manhunt 2* in the UK “would involve a range of unjustifiable harm risks, to both adults and minors.” Sadly, they neglected to tell us quite how this is so. Instead, the BBFC’s very limited public statements on this matter cited vague concepts such as “unremitting bleakness and callousness of tone”, “little alleviation and distancing” and “casual sadism” to justify the astonishing decision to actually ban a video game in the UK.

This is interesting, because bleakness and acts of violence or sadism feature in many celebrated creative works, from Shakespeare to Dickens to Anne Enright (whose “bleak, depressing and uncomfortable” novel *The Gathering*, which features suicide and sexual abuse, won the Man Booker Prize in 2007). Nobody sensible would suggest today that books or plays which do not breach the criminal law should actually be banned because they are bleak or violent, or feature sadistic acts.

I asked the BBFC for further details of its reasoning, and for the evidence of harm on which the decision was made, but the BBFC refused to provide this. So I sat through the whole of the appeal in November in order to better understand the reasons for banning *Manhunt 2*. The BBFC was forced to justify its reasoning as part of the appeal process, and its reasons were torn to shreds by Rockstar’s QC. We now know that the BBFC relied on the following aspects of *Manhunt 2* in order to justify banning it:

- The major mechanics of the game are stealth and violence.
- The game is violent, and some of the NPCs are violent.
- The game is realistic.
- The “puzzle element” is limited.
- The game features “everyday weapons” rather than fantastical weapons like magic wands.
- The victims are human beings, not aliens, dalesks or griffins.
- There is not enough humour.
- There is not enough “moral dilemma.”

Many, if not all, of these criticisms also apply to many other 18-rated games which have been cleared for sale. That they should be cited against *Manhunt 2* simply demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the decision-making process.

Worse, some of the criticisms were simply absurd. For instance, the player of *Manhunt 2* is not rewarded with extra points, or any other advantage, for achieving a more “graphic” execution. So the BBFC cited this as an additional reason for banning the game.

Bearing in mind that *Manhunt 2* is a stealth horror adult video game set in the real world, it simply beggars belief that anyone should seriously require the inclusion of humour, magic wands, dalesks or griffins in order for the game to be acceptable. It will be clear to any gamer that the BBFC, a body set up to censor films, simply does not understand video games, as no-one who plays games could suggest that a stealth horror title set in the real world should include

these features. They are akin to requiring Harry Potter to fly comically through a torture scene in *Hostel 2* in order to lighten the tone.

As to whether these features cause harm or not, the BBFC claims that it does not need to show conclusive evidence of harm caused by playing video games. According to the BBFC, as long as its staff think that a video game (even if it is an 18 rated game) “may” cause some “harm” to children or adults, then that is enough to justify banning it. Again, this reasoning could be applied to almost any violent game.

KID’S STUFF

If that weren’t bad enough, many of the BBFC’s arguments during the appeal hearing in November focused on the perceived risks which

“If a book or film had been banned in these circumstances, there would have been an outcry...”

this adult game might pose to children. These arguments betrayed an assumption that we see time and again outside the games industry: that all games, unlike films, are really just for children. Even if a game is rated 18, in reality it will only be played by children or, at best, infantile adults, because real grown-ups simply don’t play games. This is the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from any comparison of *Manhunt 2* with the truly violent and sadistic films which the BBFC has allowed to be sold in the UK.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

Some commentators in the games industry have said that the *Manhunt 2* issue is just about *Manhunt 2*. This is simply wrong. *Manhunt 2* has turned the spotlight onto the process by which all games are subject to censorship in the UK, and this is fundamentally important to the industry as a whole.

We now know that video games can be banned even when they do not breach any of the extensive criminal and consumer protection laws we have in the UK. They are banned under an arbitrary system which refuses to provide the public with full reasons for its decisions. When those reasons are dragged out during an appeal, they turn out to be risible. The decision to ban is justified by a perceived risk of harm to children, even though the game would receive an 18 certificate and there is no credible evidence that games of any type cause harm to anyone.

Those comparing *Manhunt 2* with violent films will see that the BBFC is prepared to ban games which are clearly far tamer than the films which are sold in high street shops. The very existence of this secretive, arbitrary system in what is ostensibly a free country is an insult and an

offence both to the video games industry and to gamers. And as long as the video games industry allows itself to remain subject to this outdated and paternalistic system of censorship, it will remain a second class creative industry in the eyes of the broader public.

IS IT ABOUT CHILDREN?

Let no one say that this is about protecting children. Our society already permits adults to do things which we know are dangerous or even lethal to adults and children alike, such as consuming alcohol, driving cars or smoking cigarettes. Nobody (I hope) is seriously suggesting that playing *Manhunt 2* is as dangerous to a child as drinking whisky or driving daddy’s Porsche; and alcohol and car keys are easily accessible to any enterprising child. We don’t ban alcohol because it is dangerous to children – we just restrict its sale to adults. The rules of acceptable conduct for adults are not set by reference to children.

WHERE WAS THE RESPONSE?

The real unanswered question, though, is why the games industry has kept so quiet in the face of this direct assault. Remember, this is not about whether a game should be rated 18 or not – a game has actually been banned in the UK. If a book or a film or an artistic work had been banned in these circumstances there would have been an outcry, and rightly so. But most sections of the games industry have been strangely silent, or worse. ELSPA, which represents games publishers in the UK, went as far as to say that the decision demonstrates that “we have a games rating system in the UK that is effective ... [and] works well”. I cannot see how this can be true.

2008

I hope that 2008 will see the games industry break more sales and market share records, as it did in 2007. But, even more, I hope that in 2008 the games industry will stand up to the bullies and the ignorant in the press and elsewhere, and defend itself properly.

The games industry is one of the great UK success stories and it has nothing to be embarrassed or coy about. The Byron Review will report in March and I am sure that its findings and recommendations will be sensible and rational. Then perhaps we will have an open debate about video games, where the industry will actually stand its ground, rather than just keep its head down. Hopefully we will even start to question why anyone needs special powers to ban games which are not unlawful.

Whatever happens, if the industry does not fight back in 2008, the critics won’t go away. Instead, games will be seen as an easy target on which to deflect even more of society’s ills.



Vincent Scheurer is a lawyer specialising in games contracts. He is the author of the video games section of the *Entertainment Law Handbook*, published by the Law Society, and runs his own business, Sarassin LLP, representing companies in the video games industry. www.sarassin.net



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Ready to Ware?

If not, then you should be, says **Jesse Lowther**, founder of Medaverse - a studio working on a launch title for the new Nintendo download platform – because WiiWare could help change development significantly...

WiiWare's long term potential may very well shape the future of gaming. That's a bold statement, so allow me to elaborate.

WiiWare makes it possible to create games with very little financial risk and offer them to a relatively large audience. For that reason alone, I expect (and hope) that WiiWare will become the proving ground for new ideas which can then be expanded upon into retail.

A good example of this is *Geometry Wars*, a game which started as a mini-game in *Project Gotham Racing 2* but has since gone on to incredible success via retail and digital distribution alike. The likelihood of a publisher bringing the first iteration of the game to retail is nil, citing its lack of graphical prowess as the primary reason the game wouldn't have a chance.

Admittedly, this isn't anything Iwata-san hasn't said in the past (with his example of how *Tetris* wouldn't get a publisher in this day and age), but I think that WiiWare will also be the beginning of something we've never seen before. WiiWare will be a scenario in which developers can attempt to further reach out to casual and non-gamers, mainly because WiiWare offers very little risk, making bizarre, experimental games a possibility – and from this experimentation, the market can continue to be expanded.

The gaming industry is only just beginning to understand what works when it comes to reaching these casual audiences. Not to say that the recent efforts haven't yielded



"WiiWare offers very little risk, making bizarre, experimental games a possibility..."

incredible results, but when you compare the gaming industry to the movie industry, there's still a predictably long journey ahead.

Movies and games both have fan followings, critics on standby to analyse and tear them to shreds and they're both readily capable of communicating messages and ideas to the audience/players. The only key difference is that gaming is an interactive form of media and a relatively new medium when compared to film. Games are still grossly misunderstood by parents and misjudged by a media that

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thrives upon controversy. I've seen far, far more grotesque violence in movies than I ever have in games and yet every news report of teen-related violence is immediately followed with assumptions that said teen is mimicking behaviour learned in video games. It doesn't matter that many millions of kids probably learned to help people in need from playing *The Legend of Zelda* or learned the value of friendship from playing *Final Fantasy*: games are still the scapegoat whenever someone below the age of 20 perpetrates violence.

The situation can only improve, though, and I see WiiWare as another board in the bridge to true mainstream acceptance for gaming. I see gaming one day standing shoulder to shoulder with movies in terms of both sales and respect as an artistic medium. However, that sort of acceptance will only come from much trial and error in finding out what the casual audience accepts and eventually comes to love (and believe me when I say that Medaverse has many ideas in this area).

In that sense, WiiWare is the movie industry equivalent of greenlighting a thousand independent films, and that kind of momentum will only serve to bring more non-gamers in to see what the gaming world has to offer. Nintendo has done the hard part in making a console so different and unique that it separates itself from the previous archetypes of console gaming.

With news stories about the Wii being enjoyed by seniors in nursing homes as well as recovering patients as a means of physical therapy, it's becoming harder for the media to

"WiiWare is the movie industry equivalent of greenlighting a thousand independent films..."



Square Enix's *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Little King and the Promised Land* shows that WiiWare titles can range from cheaper innovative games to full-blown experiences

stick the "ultra-violent murder simulation" label on gaming for the first time in over a decade. The Wii control scheme has removed a great deal of the stigma, making gaming more approachable to everyone.

The next step is to continue with that momentum by finding out what else these new gamers want and I think WiiWare will be a colossal asset in that regard.

To conclude, it's my hope that Nintendo has put its foot in the doorway to gaming becoming accepted as a medium on par with movies and film, and Medaverse hopes to be along for that journey.

www.medaverse.com

*Jesse Lowther is co-founder of Medaverse Studios, which was opened in 2002 as a fansite for gaming and media news but has evolved as the team moved into game development. The studio's first game, *Gravitronix*, is out later this year on WiiWare.*

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Touch, yourself

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The show goes on

SAN FRANCISCO IN FEBRUARY; better than San Jose in March? Well, compared to the weather in the UK at this time of year, we're not complaining. You can't help but get a little reflective as the years of GDCing roll on though. Like the personal markers of birthdays and anniversaries, the conference provides an annual opportunity to consider the state of games industry. Not in the sense of dollars and cents, millions of boxes or downloads, but, should such a thing exist, its inner well-being.

What is certain is complexity levels have rocketed. It wasn't that long ago that you could quietly sit in the back of a technical presentation and have a rough idea of what was going on. Now such talks make you feel like someone who learnt how to program using cardboard input cards.

At least there's solace to be taken from those positively antediluvian characters, who despite having lived centuries in developer-years, continue to impart information and perform for the audience. From less well-known stalwarts such as Steve Meretzky, Paul Schuytema, Ernest Adams and Don Daglow to the likes of Peter Molyneux and Louis Castle, they help provide the roots network that holds the whole thing together. And if nothing else, you'll probably bump into someone you've haven't seen in years, who will no doubt confuse you with someone else.

When it comes to middleware and tools though, the move to San Francisco seems to have encouraged a much broader spectrum of companies to attend the expo. I've counted over 100 with some sort of core gaming product to sell. Whatever else it will be, then, GDC 08 is definitely going to be busy.



Jon Jordan

jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk



< ART >

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

Building on its success ProFX product, Allegorithmic expands into Substance...

FEW COMPANIES ARE LOOKING forward to GDC more than French procedural graphics specialist Allegorithmic. Having completed a first round of funding, it's going to make its presence felt with sizeable booth, not to mention a shiny *Unreal Tournament 3* mod/tech demo. But what's getting CEO Sébastien Deguy really enthused is the opportunity to show of the company's new product, Substance.

"Last year, we had a technology. This year, we're presenting the new generation of tool," he says of the difference between procedural texture package ProFX and the completely rewritten Substance. "Substance offers all the benefits of ProFX, such as small texture file sizes, but we've added a feature which allows you to continuously stream textures into your game."

It's a significant addition to the toolkit. Up to this point, ProFX gained traction in the MMOG and XBLA / downloadable game market because of its impressive compression capabilities. Some clients bought it purely because of the cost savings it could generate by enabling them to ship on a DVD-5 rather than a DVD-9.

Substance's streaming features will appeal much more widely however. "The limitation on streaming data from a DVD to memory is a key restriction," argues Deguy. "Some developers are already onto their third generation of Xbox 360 games but the amount of memory and the streaming speed of the DVD hasn't changed."

To that degree, a neat touch is that the engine doesn't impact on graphics as it works on a CPU core (or SPU). So as well as enabling you to increase the resolution of textures

Substance



Price: TBA

Company: Allegorithmic

Contact: +33 4 73 34 70 80

and/or free up bandwidth to stream audio, models or animation, the technology also scales almost linearly if, for whatever reason, you wanted to use more SPUs.

In terms of authoring process, Substance uses the same wavelets-based technology as ProFX, so you can handcraft procedural textures as you would normal textures. "This isn't a click-and-pray product," Deguy laughs. Integration with 3ds Max, Maya and XSI is on the cards, as well as various shader authoring packages.

And, as if to underline the buoyant nature of the whole procedural art tools market, Deguy is happy to talk commerce too. "We've signed more contracts in the past four months than in the past four years," he says. "I think people really understand that we can help them."

www.allegorithmic.com

Beast



Price: Available on request

Company: Illuminate Labs

Contact: +46 31 704 94 33

www.illuminate-labs.com

Lighting is becoming the defining quality issue for triple-A games so it makes sense that Illuminate Labs, the company behind the Turtle renderer, has decided to integrate its Beast platform-independent baking solution into the Unreal 3 Engine. Beast uses global illumination techniques including photon mapping and radiance caching, as well as image-based lighting and raytraced shadows to generate light maps and shadow maps. Custom passes encompassing ambient occlusion and radiosity normal maps amongst other can also be added into the process. Other options include the ability to script your own baking using Lua.

Antics V3 BasePack



Price: Free

Company: Antics Technologies

Contact: +44 1223 471 222

www.antics3d.com

Cambridge-based animation specialist Antics has released a free version of its pre-visualisation and machinima package Antics. Antics V3 BasePack is based around a drag-and-drop interface which quickly lets you set up scenes using characters and props, clicking on them to get them to interact via the intelligence animation system. A camera system, which links into a real-time integrated editor, enables you to output AVIs and MOVs. Additional props, characters, sets, textures, sounds, poses and animations are available via the online content library, while the advanced £295 version of Antics includes a 3ds Max plug-in for import/export.



< CODING >

PERFORCE IS WITH YOU

Enabling integration with defect tracking software is the new feature for Perforce 2007.3...

PERFORCE DOESN'T SEE IT as a problem per se, but the release schedule for its software configuration management software is seldom headlined by big bang announcements. Or as Dave Robertson, director of European operations, puts it, "Given the nature of our product, we have to make sure we build stable features on top of stable features."

Indeed, with such high profile companies as Google (8,000 seats) building their products and services using Perforce, new versions are generally a case of less is more. However, with at least two releases scheduled per year, there are always some tricks to be added, alongside the performance and stability improvements.

In the case of 2007.3, the main one is the addition of the Perforce Defect Tracking Gateway, a bridging SDK for working with defect trackers. This will ensure that any defect tracker you want to use can kept in sync with Perforce via a visual configuration editor, which enables the mapping of fields between the two systems. The editor includes the ability to map data sets contained in multi-value listboxes by pointing and clicking.

"We're making sure we play nicely with the new breed of tools that are out there,"

Perforce 2007.3



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Robertson comments.

As for the future direction of releases, he comments the size of game projects means the larger publishers are really pushing the performance of the Perforce server, ensuring it will be key focus for 2008's work.

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Alienbrain 8.1



Price: Free upgrade, new from £295
Company: Softimage
Contact: +44 175 365 5999
www.softimage.com

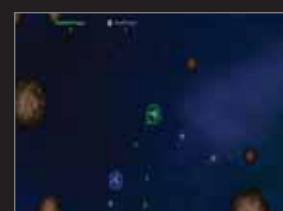
Asset management tools need to keep up to date with new computing – and so it is that Alienbrain 8.1 offers support for Windows Vista and Mac OS X Leopard, not to mention XSI 6.5, the 2008 versions of 3ds Max and Maya, and Microsoft Visual Studio.

Integrated previewing for DirectX files is added, while other

improvements include a faster file bucketing system and a more flexible system for labelling branches with respect to meta-data.

Easing the administration of project groups, a slow connection remote mode and a server to manage licenses across multiple Alienbrain servers fill out the release.

XNA Game Studio 2.0



Price: Free
Company: Microsoft
Contact: +44 870 60 10 100
creators.xna.com

With over 750,000 downloads of the community-focused XNA Game Studio Express, Microsoft is making sure it keeps its edge sharp with the Game Studio 2.0 release.

The big new feature is multiplayer between PC and Xbox 360 via Microsoft's Live services over the internet or LAN. It support the non-

Express version of Visual Studio 2005 for the first time, the Content Pipeline has been overhauled allowing for much more flexible processing of specific assets, and better administration in terms of folder and setting specific DLLs. It contains a migration wizard too, so original projects can be made compatible with the new version.



< AUDIO >

WELL ORDERED

Soundminer's latest audio management package keeps everything in its rightful place...

BEING ORGANISED IS AN important attribute in most walks of life, but it's particularly vital when it comes to keeping your audio assests at the tips of your fingers. Well known for its eponymous Soundminer Mac-based asset management package, which as well as offering search, management and security features provides a playback and conversion engine, Soundminer (the company) has now released an entry-level product, Miniminer.

Based on the current Soundminer v4 release, Miniminer is targeted at Mac users (OS X 10.4.x or 10.5.x), providing a light version of the search engine and database, as well as the ability to drag-and-drop files from the system into any support digital audio workstation including Pro Tools. It then automatically sends referenced transfers to the target application.

Miniminer supports two separate databases, one optimised for sound effects and one for music and can read the metadata standards supported by the Soundminer engine. iTunes library and playlists can also be easily imported and Miniminer features the same advanced waveform display found in the v4 products, allowing a user to edit and copy out edits

Soundminer v4 / Miniminer



Price: Soundminer v4 \$599, Miniminer \$199
Company: Soundminer
Contact: info@soundminer.com

without destroying the original file. You can upgrade the package to get the features only supported by the higher-end applications, which include metadata modification and embedding, rewire and batch conversion features and specific transferring between applications.

www.soundminer.com

Revolver



Price: \$999
Company: Blastwave FX
Contact: info@blastwavefx.com
www.blastwavefx.com

Recorded at the Detroit Chop Shop, the latest library from Blastwave FX is Revolver, something the company claims is the world's first 5.1 surround sound production elements library. Produced at 24-bit/96kHz and are delivered as 24-bit/ 48kHz broadcast wav files, Revolver is an all-in-one collection of 1,000 5.1 surround sound

imaging elements, compositions, drones and trailers that weighs in at 18 GB across 6 DVDs.

The files are named intuitively and boast descriptive category structure and rich embedded metadata, providing quick browsing, search and retrieval in sound library management systems.

AudioTools AWE v1.3



Price: Client \$395, server \$2,495
Company: Minnetonka
Contact: info@minnetonkaaudio.com
www.minnetonkaaudio.com

A new point release of Minnetonka Audio's automated audio workflow engine has been made available. As well as improved performance and stability enhancements, new features include the likes of background MP3 creation and support for Sound Designer II. AudioTools AWE enables you to automate batch processing in

terms of format conversion, plug-in processing, encoding, and processing through external I/O devices thanks to its workflow engine and the ability to create processing chains, and hot folders, which apply a workflow to any files placed in them. There's also a fail-safe recovery which makes it easy to avoid, identify and correct problems.

KEYRELEASE

Enter the light

The time for reflection is past as Geomerics prepares launch of real-time lighting solution Enlighten...



Jules Davis, CTO,
Geomerics

WHEN IT COMES to making money from middleware, you don't have to be a genius. In fact, sometimes that doesn't help at all. For Geomerics, this is annoying because the Cambridge-based company is stacked with IQ. It has a 10-strong academic consultancy team on tap, including the likes of UCL graphics researcher Jan Kautz and emeritus professor David Hestenes, the very man who kicked off the re-emergence of geometric algebra, the form of mathematics on which the company's smarts are based.

Sadly, the real trick to making money out of middleware is being

"Developers just want better lighting..."

able to provide a product that solves a problem faced by lots of game developers. That, and being able to sell the technology at an acceptable price, as well as ensuring it can be easily integrated into existing workflows and building a sustainable

company to provide support, updates and develop new products.

This is the reason that as it prepares real-time lighting product Enlighten for a GDC launch, Geomerics has its academics on tap in universities, not writing SDK code and answering the phones. Still, there are three PhDs within the dozen or so staff whose office, coincidentally, is downstairs in the same complex that houses top developers Sony Cambridge and Ninja Theory.

"We've recruited from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure we can always find a fresh perspective. This is the delivery team. We focus on applications and making products that work," explains CTO Jules Davis, who was previously Kuju's technical director.

Together with Davis, ex-academic-turned-COO Chris Doran and CEO Gary Lewis make up Geomerics' frontline management team. "The thing with middleware is plenty of interesting technologies emerge but they are often more expensive than what's already being used in terms of time or cost," Lewis muses. "We need to make sure we can demonstrate that Enlighten is better, faster and cheaper. If we hit all of those, we'll have a business."

Davis's take on the technology is no less ambitious. "We believe Enlighten can transform the way artists interact with in-game lighting," he states. "We'll be able to provide the ability to instantly control the mood and atmosphere of lighting, but it's not just a case of saying, 'It makes your game look better'. It's going to be more efficient in terms of time and money too."

Combining with this into what the company hopes will be a perfect storm of acceptability is the fact that despite the clever science behind Enlighten, the integration process is relatively simple. "It's not some sort of monolithic engine," Davis explains. "It's a small, modular API that's scalable and flexible so developers have control over the quality of their output and the performance overhead."

When it comes to day-to-day usage, Enlighten is designed to be used as an artist-focused tool. "It enables you to iterate your materials and lighting in real-time, which makes an enormous difference in terms of how quickly you can come up with something stunning and unique," Davis points out.

When it comes to what Enlighten actually does, it's best explained as being a real-time solution for global illumination, or more specifically, the diffuse interreflections that occur when light reflects from an uneven surface that scatters rays in all directions.

Davies simplifies it further. "Developers just want better lighting," he says. "It's one of the main issues why games on nextgen hardware aren't really nextgen yet. We take all the mess of special lighting cases and the fudges and fixes people are currently using, and provide a single, stable and robust solution, as well as saving on budget and providing a fast authoring turnaround. We're doing in real-time what you'd expect to take two hours to render offline. And, when it comes to middleware adoption, we're looking to raise the bar for everyone."

Now pulling that off really would be genius.

PRODUCT: Enlighten
COMPANY: Geomerics
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: +44 1223 450170
W: www.geomerics.com



Top: While Enlighten can be used to model the realistic behaviour of lights (as shown), you can also use it to generate unrealistic results

Middle: The Enlighten demo shows the technology can handle subtle shadows as well as strong area lighting effects

Bottom: Striking illumination effects can be authored with ease, dramatically enhancing the impact of environments.

The thinking inside the box

Enlighten consists of four components. The core SDK consists of a pre-compute library and a runtime engine. The pre-compute step processes the game's geometry and outputs such data in a form accepted by the runtime. The runtime's inputs are the geometry data and the default lightmaps. It outputs the Enlighten lightmaps and volumetric samples, and runs on supported platforms' CPUs, whether that be a PlayStation 3 SPU, and Xbox 360 core or a PC thread. The second element is the utility library. This is the source code that Geomerics has used to create its demo. It comes with detailed instructions and documentation to enable developers to integrate it within their pipeline. Next up is the framework code. Including standard components such as maths libraries and mesh renderers, this is designed to run the Enlighten demo. Jules Davis compares it to the sample code provided with DirectX – it's designed to let you play around but if you ship a game using it, you're lazy. The final piece is the Enlighten demo itself. Rough and ready, it's been designed so an artist can load assets in and get an idea about how Enlighten works straight out of the box.



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CHARACTER ANIMATION

Striking the right pose

Character animation pipeline tools aren't the most glamorous but the volume requirement of games means they're becoming indispensable, says **Jon Jordan**...

As with most areas of game development, the character animation sector is becoming ever more complex.

You have the big integrated solutions such as Autodesk Maya and Softimage XSI, while tricky branches off the family line such as Havok's Behavior and Natural Motion's endorphin and euphoria offer more specialist possibilities (as covered in the overview article in Develop 79).

Then you have the utility packages as covered below. These could be considered the mundane toolboxes of the animators' trade. They tend to be highly functional, including various elements such as a runtime plus SDK support, maybe a dedicated authoring environment, probably

some exporters and data interchange gubbins. Scripting support comes as standard.

What's becoming clear is that authoring great animations isn't the problem (at least that's something that no middleware or tool will automatically give you) – the problem is ensuring your carefully crafted animation actually play in-game as you want them to.

You can see such prosaic thinking in action by looking at the particular take-up of such tools by MMOG developers. They know the meaning of the word workflow and hence embrace anything that eases tweaking and retargeting. And wherever MMOGs go, so, eventually, does the rest of the industry.

NATURAL MOTION

TECHNOLOGY

Morpheme 1.2

CLIENTS

BioWare Austin, Firefly Studios, IO Interactive

PLATFORMS

PC, Playstation 3, Wii, Xbox 360

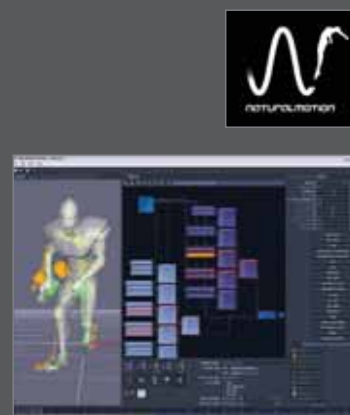
INTEGRATION WITH

euphoria, Lua

PRICE

Available on request

CONTACT +44 1865 250 575,
contact@naturalmotion.com



Morpheme's a pipeline tool

www.naturalmotion.com

While NaturalMotion's other products (euphoria, endorphin and even game project Backbreaker) get most of the hype, the company's Morpheme animation pipeline tool is well worth some attention. Including a runtime engine for

customisable blend techniques, hierarchical animation state machine and IK support, as well as an integrated authoring environment, it provides you with a flexible environment to author and test game animations using joypads.

AUTODESK

TECHNOLOGY

MotionBuilder 7.5 Extension 2

CLIENTS

Codemasters, EA, Epic, High Moon, Midway, Sony Pictures, Ubisoft

PLATFORMS

Mac OS X, Windows

INTEGRATION WITH

3ds Max, Alienbrain, FBX, Maya, Python, SourceSafe

PRICE

From £2,270

CONTACT

+44-207 851 8000



MotionBuilder is Autodesk's animation tool

www.autodesk.com

Known for its ability when it comes to dealing with high volume motion capture data, the non-linear animation editing system, which also handles keyframe data, is integrated with the real-time, full body HumanIK manipulation rig

providing users with automated character setup features. MotionBuilder also enables strong pipeline functionality thanks to being the native application for the interchange data format FBX.

MYSTIC GAME DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY

EMotion FX 3.6

CLIENTS

Kuju, Mythic, People Can Fly, SimBin, SOE, Tilted Mill, Ubisoft, Webzen

PLATFORMS

PC, PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox360

INTEGRATION WITH

3ds Max, Maya, PhysX

PRICE

Available upon request

CONTACT

+31 78 676 7131



EMotion FX uses PhysX for ragdolls

www.mysticgd.com

A real-time character animation SDK, EMotion FX includes features such full body skeletal, facial and lipsyncing animation, as well as inverse kinematics and level of detail functionality. It uses PhysX to provide ragdolls.

Another major feature is real-time motion retargeting enabling you to use the same motion independent of a character's skeleton and mesh configurations, saving both authoring time and runtime memory.

SOFTIMAGE

TECHNOLOGY

Character Animation Technology 3

CLIENTS

Available on request

PLATFORMS

Windows

INTEGRATION WITH

3ds Max

PRICE

\$995, upgrade \$295

CONTACT

+01 514 845 1636,
sales@softimage.com

SOFTIMAGE



CAT is a 3ds Max plug-in

www.softimage.com

Strange as it may seem, despite Softimage's purchase of the company behind 3ds Max plug-in CAT, the non-linear procedural character animation tool still only works with Autodesk's modeller. It provides easy rigging, animation

layering and motion capture features for complex characters, while the latest version provides integrated muscle simulation, CATMuscle; a fully scaleable solution for solving skin and tendon deformation problems.

RAD GAME TOOLS

TECHNOLOGY

Granny 2.7.0.30

CLIENTS

Atari, Big Huge Games, EA, Ensemble, Sega, SOE, Turbine

PLATFORMS

Mac OS X, PS3, PSP, Win, Wii, Xbox 360

INTEGRATION WITH

3ds Max, Maya

PRICE

\$15,000 per console title, \$12,500 for PC

CONTACT

+01 425 893 4300,
sales3@radgametools.com



Granny does animation and maps

www.radgametools.com

Granny 3D is labelled as an animation toolkit, but it provides a suite of different elements. The key one is a modular and customisable runtime animation system, providing animation modification, playback, blending and inverse kinematics.

Other features however include the ability to deform skeletal meshes, generate normal and texture maps, and compress animation and graphics formats as well as act as a pipeline exporter for various 3D art tools.

Technology Strike Teams



by David Jefferies

Black Rock Studio

LAST TIME I WROTE about our experiences at Black Rock Studio trying to foster a culture of innovation and our attempts to give people the time and space to innovate. One of our initiatives was to set up Technology Strike Teams where we give a couple of programmers and a couple of artists a blank canvas to create whatever they wish in three weeks. The only guidance given is that it must be relevant to the arcade racing game that we're working on.

The reasoning behind the Technology Strike Teams is that people work better when they are working on their own ideas rather than being dictated what to do. Also, in stark contrast to a 70 person team, the small teams are flexible and can change direction quickly if an idea isn't working out.

So, the three weeks is up – how did they get on?

One of the teams developed fluid dynamics algorithms for simulating the behaviour of large volumes of smoke in an enclosed area. In the simulator you can 'pour' smoke into a modeled courtyard and watch it swirl and ripple around the streets and buildings. The effect looked great and we're definitely going to invest the time necessary to bring the code up from demo quality to production quality. It also got the designers thinking of totally new gameplay ideas including wondering if we could use the technique for simulating large volumes of water in the game.

"The Technology Strike Teams have been a real success. They enjoyed being given the freedom to investigate their own ideas, and the games have benefited from an injection of fresh ideas..."

The other team developed a sandbox level with a car and some objects to experiment with different physical forces. They simulated magnetism, wind, propelled liquids and elasticity and created an obstacle course (based a bit on the kids game *Screwball Scramble* that they bought on eBay) where they experimented with different ideas. The designers loved being to experiment with applying different forces to the vehicles and it got them thinking about how these forces can be utilised in the game.

We think the Technology Strike Teams have been a real success. The teams enjoyed being given the freedom to investigate their own ideas and the games have benefited from an injection of fresh ideas.

Where are we taking this next? We're going to carry on doing the Technology Strike Teams at regular intervals in the future but we are also thinking of targeting some areas in our game engine where we want to be bleeding edge. For instance, the research community has made a lot of advances in illumination models recently and so we're going to put together a strike team to investigate how we can use those advances to improve our lighting solution.

And, in case you were wondering, *Screwball Scramble* is a lot shoddier than you remember as a kid.

www.blackrockstudio.com

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www.kynogon.com

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"It adds a whole different sensation to the game."

amBX

"I liked how the lights change with the environment... it made it a lot of fun!"

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"It gets you zoned in."

"Once you experience it, you understand it."

"It really does grab hold of the gamer and throw them into the environment."

This is what amBX end-users are saying and with a growing licensee list of Developers and Publishers including Ubisoft, THQ, Codemasters, Gearbox and Gas Powered Games, you too can get involved and create amBX games.

Experience more with amBX at the Game Developers Conference, North Hall booth 5528.

PHILIPS

www.ambx.com

Art of the process

The increasing demands on artists means that, in turn, those demands have to be passed on to their tools. **Develop** takes a look at the key modelling and 3D sculpting applications on the market to highlight the features that might just save the day...

EVERYDAY tools – the ones you use most during your day-to-day work – are rarely a glamorous thing. No matter how creative, nobody's going to find anything interesting about the producer's copy of Microsoft Project or Excel, and no amount of thinking outside of the box will make the programmers' trusty IDE look like anything other than multicoloured brackets and braces.

While it may be the same for artists, though, to non-artists even everyday art tools can have a certain allure, like some sort of magical three-dimensional maker of pretty things.

Still, games development isn't part of the fashion industry, and so glamour must always take a second place to functionality – and given the demands of contemporary development, glamour be damned – but for those who crave some glitz in their occupation, the rise in use of 3D sculpting applications and the 'digital clay' metaphor for those all-important normal maps helps keep a small sprinkle of magic dust over the whole process.

We've rounded up three of the best everyday art tools and three sculpting applications to give an at-a-glance view to each program's new features.



Autodesk 3D Studio Max 2008



The flagship product from computer visual juggernauts Autodesk has a long history of being used in the industry, and continues to focus its new improvements and features on the games industry.

The 2008 edition, launched at Siggraph, focuses on improving the

user experience when handling large 3D datasets and rendering large complex scenes. New viewport technology and quicker ways to manipulate polygons and asset structures have been added, and a new Scene Explorer enables artists to quickly navigate large 3D sets and filter out unimportant data in an intuitive hierarchical view. Also key to the latest version are the new review toolset and mental ray improvements, coupled with a dynamic scene detail system that will always

attempt to display at a specified frame rate.

Of usage to tool programmers will be the new MAXScript ProEditor, which brings with it invaluable features such as multiple levels of undo, syntax highlighting, ability to fold away sections of code and support for regular expressions in search terms.

Rounding off the new features, the app's biped system has been enhanced to allow users to create bipedal structures anywhere on a rig.

www.autodesk.com

Autodesk Maya 2008



Autodesk's all-singing all-dancing 'other' 3D content studio, which the company describes as an integrated 3D modelling, animation and rendering solution, continues to grow from strength to strength.

The latest version has had considerable work done on reliability, and has been designed for multi-core workstations, with a faster modelling system for rapid creation, manipulation and placement of polygon models. While the product is

designed for anyone working in making 3D assets, a lot of the changes have been implemented with developers in mind – the tool now allows shaders to be written in HLSL for quick previews of your game's shader effects in-app.

Released recently, Maya 2008 Extension 1 brings advanced skin and muscle animation – acquired by Autodesk from Comet Digital – using skin sculpting and deformation tools with varied weighting options.

www.autodesk.com

FOR DEVELOPERS IN CHARGE - NOT IN CRISIS



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Qube Software

www.qubesoft.com

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"I received a Game Republic scholarship in 2005 and did my project with Team17."

After completing my project I graduated with a distinction from the MSc in Games Programming at Hull and was offered a job with Team 17. Since then I have worked on numerous projects and prototypes including the Xbox 360 Live Arcade version of Worms. The scholarship I received from the Screen Yorkshire gave me the opportunity to work with people from the industry and lead to my project and subsequent job with Team 17.

The scholarship scheme is a great way to get an edge in a competitive industry."

Jason Egginton - Scholarship Student 2005

How to Apply

Scholarships are available for the following three masters courses, each having a different specialism, but all having a proven track record in educating game developers.

University of Bradford

MSc in AI for Games
www.inf.brad.ac.uk/courses/pg



University of Hull

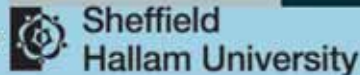
MSc Games Programming
www.msccgames.com



THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Sheffield Hallam University

MSc Entertainment Software Development
www.shu.ac.uk/games



SHARPENS YOUR THINKING



Image courtesy of Team17



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www.geomerics.com



Game Developers
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08

Softimage XSI



Although it might be the underdog when compared to the almost ubiquitous popularity of Autodesk's double-pronged line up, XSI continues to garner support in the industry with high-profile customers such as Nintendo, Lionhead, Valve, Capcom and NCSoft. Indeed, XSI creators Softimage proudly claim that most of their new features have been developed in conjunction with its games customers.

Its subdivision surface modeller is based around the belief that editing a subdivided mesh should be the same as modelling with polygons. All polygon

mesh editing tools can be used on subdivided meshes, and the gigapolygon core at the heart of XSI means that doing so is as speedy as working on regular meshes.

Integrated XSI hair and fur and Syflex Cloth bring complex features to the table as standard, and the GATOR property transfer system and MOTOR motion transferrer allow artists to quickly copy properties and even full rigs and animations to other objects, significantly reducing the creation time for similar-behaving assets such as crowds.

www.softimage.com

Silo 2.0



Silo is a low-cost, high-functionality subdivision surface modelling programme that allows users to sculpt both organic, high-polygon models and precise, hard-edged objects in an intuitive brush-based environment.

The recent 2.0 upgrade has added high resolution displacement painting to the toolbox, operating seamlessly with traditional modelling techniques on both the subdivided object and base mesh. Also on the geometry side, artists can now reconstruct new topography on top of existing model data – such as data obtained by scans or

from other sources – using the new topography tool. Also new to version 2.0 is support for UV unwrapping, with user-defined seams and vertex pinning.

Boasting a fully customisable low-key interface, Silo has gained popularity within the artist community, securing recommendations from senior artists at Ubisoft and Epic. Developer Neversoft argues that the low price point and high compatibility with other 3D software places the modeller able to integrate smoothly with any existing pipeline.

www.nevercenter.com

ZBrush 3.1



There's few 3D artists who haven't heard of ZBrush, one of the first applications around to apply traditional sculpting techniques to the area of 3D model creation.

Now up to version 3.1, the software has seen significant upgrades since its introduction, including normal-map exporter ZMapper, heaps of new sculpting tools and multi-resolution mesh editing, which allows artists to edit mesh displacements on a detail level and have the changes applied to other mesh detail levels.

A big feature of the program is ZAppLink, which allows ZBrush to

interface effectively with applications such as Illustrator, Painter and Photoshop to not only boost ZBrush's texturing capabilities, but also use Photoshop's tools and capabilities to create things like stencils and masks for use in ZBrush.

It's this deep integration with existing specialised (and industry-leading) tools and the advance displacement and normal map generation and raycasting which, together with its altogether reasonable price, has put ZBrush right in the heart of the game industry.

www.pixologic.com

Autodesk Mudbox



Mudbox, recently acquired by Autodesk, is another brush-based sculpting application. What Autodesk champions as the differential between the other programs mentioned here is the app's usage of the layer paradigm that has become de-facto in 2D image manipulation. Things such as different detail passes can be stored on multiple layers, which can then be combined with masks and other familiar layer procedures.

On the sculpting side, Mudbox features several advanced features such as image stamps, which can quickly stamp detail into a mesh; stencils, where detail

can be rubbed into a mesh within a particular stencil; and the ability to use curves as railings to precisely control the application of brush strokes.

In addition, Mudbox can subdivide only specific areas of meshes, empowering users with lower-specced machines to still add as much detail in the areas they require without having to subdivide the entire mesh.

Naturally, Mudbox also has the all-important support for texture baking, with normal and displacement baking between arbitrary meshes.

www.autodesk.com



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Qube Software

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A new generation of middleware
from the creators of Direct3D



HKS To Revolutionise Architectural Visualisation With Unreal Engine 3



Powerhouse architecture firm HKS is using Unreal Engine 3 for projects like the new \$1 billion Dallas Cowboys stadium.

HKS Architects, ranked among the nation's top three architectural firms, has signed a licensing agreement with Epic that will change the landscape of architectural design through its adoption of Unreal Engine 3.

HKS ARCHengine, powered by UE3 technology, creates functional 3D visualisations of architectural space complete with moving figures, operational elevators and running escalators.

"This next-generation game technology incorporates real-time shadows, lighting and people into our architectural projects," said Pat Carmichael, manager, advanced technologies, HKS. "When designing a stadium, the client – meaning a life-like version of the client and their families – is able to walk into a stadium, order and eat a hot dog, and interact as they watch a baseball game."

"HKS is the first architectural firm to apply Unreal Engine 3 technology to its designs," said Ralph Hawkins, president and CEO of HKS. "We are pleased to offer our clients the sophisticated tools contained in this unique program, which allows us to powerfully portray our designs through its versatility and strength."

"HKS's clients, which include the Dallas Cowboys and W Hotels developer Gatehouse Development, are taking them up on the new technology at a cost that ranges from \$65,000 to \$150,000 per project."

When Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones was ready to select the site of his owner's suite, HKS ARCHengine allowed him to decide by offering a 3D look at each and every view and vista at the new \$1 billion Dallas Cowboys stadium.

Before spending \$1 million on a condo unit, potential buyers at the W Dallas Victory Hotel and Residences were given a full tour of the building – from the 30-story glass balcony views of the Ghostbar to the picturesque city views from each and every unit.

"HKS ARCHengine offers clients a higher level of graphic photorealism, communicating multiple design concepts rapidly and cost effectively," said Chris Roberts, senior developer, HKS.

"It renders 30 frames per second instead of one per hour – that's 3,000 times faster than traditional animation methods. This makes it a first (and only) in the architectural industry."

RED MILE PICKS UE3 FOR SIN CITY GAME

Red Mile Entertainment has licensed Unreal Engine 3 for the production of its upcoming *Sin City* game based on Frank Miller's popular graphic novels.

"The Unreal Engine is one of the most technically advanced engines on the market and is a perfect fit for our *Sin City* video games," said Glenn Wong, president and chief operating officer of Red Mile. "The engine has powered several of the best-selling games of all time, and I am very glad we have the opportunity to arm our developers with such a world-class product."

The design, scriptwriting and story generation of *Sin City* will be overseen by Flint Dille, who has previously won awards for stories he produced for *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* and *Dead to Rights*.

Illuminate Labs Joins IPP

Illuminate Labs, creator of next-gen rendering and lighting technology, has joined Epic's prestigious Integrated Partners Program (IPP). Per the partnership, Illuminate Labs has incorporated its Beast global illumination system into Unreal Engine 3, and the lighting technology is immediately available to any publishers or developers that license UE3.

Beast integration in UE3 enables artists to seamlessly add global illumination to development environments using the renowned Unreal Editor. Beast is also a fully platform-independent baker that utilizes the open-standard FBX file format, which allows users to easily add extremely complex baking functionality to 3D asset creation tools. UE3 licensees can instantly start taking advantage of Beast's features that are new to the engine, which include global Illumination baking, skylights from HDR images and baked soft shadows with transparency.

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Mark Rein is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.

"Audiomotion Studios is the obvious choice because their excellent track record in the industry speaks volumes. The service is always prompt, professional and the quality of the motion capture really is second to none." Julian Widdows, Development Director, Swordfish Studios

"Quite simply if you need people you can trust and who know what they are talking about then go to Audiomotion." Jan-Bart van Beek
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"Audiomotion have proven to be a first class partner throughout the development of B-Boy at FreeStyleGames. They're not only passionate and experienced at what they do, they provide a level of service beyond the call of duty." Chris Lee, Commercial Director,
FreestyleGames

Audiomotion have always provided us with the highest quality of service; they never fail to impress us with their professionalism and depth of knowledge. Jason Tassell, Senior Animator, Volatile Games

HEARDABOUT

Burnout Paradise

John Broomhall gets a crash course in audio from Criterion...



According to the game's audio director Stephen Root, *Burnout Paradise* is no incremental point-five makeover, but a radical new open-world extravaganza which not only harnesses, but realises the power of PS3. Continuing the eulogy, he adds: "Forget menu-driven game set-ups and traditional race-game starts. Think seamless environments offering a help-yourself delicatessen of stunts, races, road rage, burning route events and apparently impromptu car-specific challenges. Spin your wheels at the lights and you'll be offered any one of an array of events."

You get the idea. So did this fresh approach extend to the audio?

Says Root: "Absolutely! There's been a major leap in our audio technology with all kinds of bespoke DSP for real-time filtering and EQ, and some serious attention-to-detail in both engine and crash sound treatments. We've had a guy looking at engine performance graphs and stats for more than three years. He came straight off his PhD to figure out how you could really replicate car engine behaviour under various 'load' conditions. One significant result of this R&D is that, in addition to conventional engine loops, we can deploy a recording of the entire power range of a car from idle to top revs and manipulate it at run-time to match the player driving input.

"Of course we do have the luxury of some creative freedom given our cars are fictional. We can combine the exhaust from a Ferrari with the engine of a Maserati if it sounds great! When you hear a 'muscle car' with that big Mustang-style sound – the ridiculously

throaty growl as you floor the pedal to the metal and it roars – it has to be dramatic and satisfying, angry and impactful – creating the 'heavy metal' of car engines was our mantra.

"All that said, our cars certainly sound authentic – including the ancillary details like coughs, splutters and backfires. Cross-referencing with the telemetry of various real-world vehicles helped us get a credible blipping of the throttle and optimal gear change up with believable throttle fluctuation and 'clunk'.

Embarking on the 18-month

"The audio team was conscious of high expectations..."

development, the audio team was ever-conscious of high expectations for their 'next-gen' impact and crash sounds – especially with fans apparently calling *Burnout* 'The Crashing Game'. Adds Root: "We worked very closely with the physics programmers on the technical side whilst on the creative side, we kept Hollywood movie blockbusters like *Mission Impossible III*, *Transformers* and *Bad Boys II* in mind as sound quality benchmarks. Of course, variation is a major issue too – you need lots of it given the player spends the whole game crashing, so we divided each car structure into front or top-down bonnet, trunk, roof, panels, doors, front windscreen, rear window and so on – with all components tagged as to material type to be



reflected in turn by individual sound detail. This granularity means you can have a head-on collision with or without lights smashing, with or without the windscreen blowing out etc. There are multiple banks to cope with the largest fatal impact down to the smallest scrape – metal, glass, twisting and bending – it's all there.

"Imagine crashes where you're flipping over and barrel-rolling – smack, smack, smack. There's a lot of physics data flying around and you could potentially be playing dozens of sounds. That's why we've developed a preferential system which sifts the data, only allowing playback of the most interesting audio 'calls'. In simple terms, this means the most exciting sounds are emphasised."

Root readily acknowledges how difficult it can be to achieve a good overall mix of car sound, music and dialogue but points out some straightforward rules which make for an smoother overall aural experience. He explains: "First of all, when you're just 'free-burning' there's no music by

FORMATS: PlayStation 3 & Xbox 360

DEVELOPER: EA Criterion

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

AUDIO TEAM: Stephen Root (audio director, speech/localisation, original music), Chris Hegstrom (lead sound designer), Steve Emney (senior sound designer/ mix director), Zsolt Marx (technical sound designer), Lewis James (sound designer), Joanna Orland (sound designer), James Kneen (speech/localisation), Steve Emney (original music), Chris Sweetman (original music), Nick Laviers (early concept audio direction), Lewis Griffin and Steve Emney (early audio pre-visualisations), John Twigg (lead audio programmer), James Warren (audio programmer), James Smith (audio programmer), Peter Bliss (speech programmer), Davis Steptoe (additional audio programming)

THE NUMBERS:

Audio code/data: 23 Mb

Sound effects: 3600 files

Dialogue: 800 lines

Licensed music: Approx 40 licensed tracks plus featured track 'Paradise City' by Guns N' Roses.

Original music: Full length original theme, plus all original music from previous *Burnout* games.

default (though the player can switch it on if they wish), just the sound of the environment and other cars; but let's say you do accept a race challenge at the lights, then music starts – and it's a big lift – an emotional step-change.

"We also do some simple but very effective music treatments such as filter sweeping the music and taking out the rest of the audio altogether when you do a huge jump. Meanwhile, when you crash, we remove the music altogether to focus on the collision sound – but it's all customisable by the player.

"Overall I'm most pleased with the integration of the sounds – how they work with the rest of the game-play and mesh so well with the design and physics. The audio has significantly helped create a gaming experience that is really, really good fun."



John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
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Never Say Die

Havok's **Jeff Yates** says you can breath life into interactive game characters with the company's new Behavior tool...

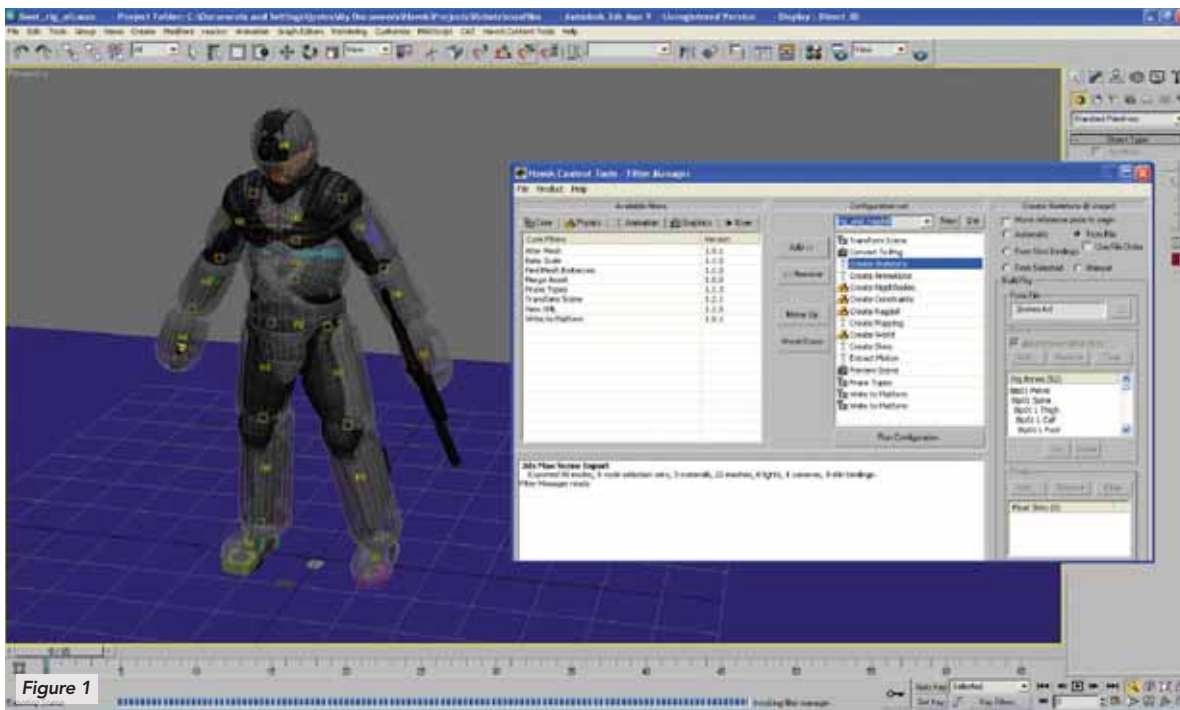


Figure 1

The big challenges in creating cutting-edge game characters are not just the potential complexity of the assets that comprise them, but also the need to meld these assets seamlessly with new technologies that provide procedural animation and physical simulation; and to enable this process with a tool an efficient pipeline that does not stifle creativity or extensibility. Often creative flow can be lost in an array of functional, but disparate tools and processes that can kill iteration and experimentation.

The good news is that commercial game technology is evolving to include both run-time and tool-time technology in integrated, but extensible pipelines. We think Havok Behavior is one of those efforts as it provides WYSIWYG results for artists and tech leads working on cutting edge game characters.

It also takes full advantage of Havok Content Tools – plug-ins and exporters that support all major releases of Maya, 3ds Max and XSI – to accelerate run-time generation of character assets for use with all Havok products. And it exposes the power and functionality of more established technologies from Havok Physics and Havok Animation.

But how would you use Havok Behavior in a real production environment? This guide shows you how.

SETTING UP YOUR CHARACTER EXPORT PIPELINE

Havok Content Tools (see fig 1) export and filter character assets directly from all major modeling and animation tools, to give you a better sense of how things will look very early in the process. They also provide directly support for native scripting languages in each modeling package, so you can incorporate Havok export directly in batch asset processing schemes. Perhaps most importantly, Havok Animation compression technology, found in the Havok Content Tools, provides comprehensive compression features and motion extraction analysis – all crucial features used directly by Havok Behavior.

Once you have all of your character assets prepared and exported using Havok Content Tools – animations, skeleton, rig, mesh, attachments, and rag-doll, as well as terrain and physical objects – you are ready to roll with Havok Behavior.

CONFIGURING A PROJECT IN THE

HAVOK BEHAVIOR TOOL

Start in HBT by creating a project that will identify the location of raw character assets which were created using the Havok Content Tools described above. You can load Havok-exported terrain and physical objects as well, to test out character behaviors more thoroughly. With each HBT project, you'll also want to identify triangle winding conventions (clockwise/counter clockwise), and axis handedness settings (right or left) that will be used in your game. Since your art tool of choice and the game engine

may not match, you will want to use both the Havok Content Creation Tool filters and Havok Behavior Tool's display options to visualise everything the way the game will (see Figure 2).

Creating Characters

Characters in HBT are comprised of references to a rig (the skeletal structure), a set of deformable skins (the mesh and textures), a list of interchangeable mesh attachments (e.g. guns, helmets, armor), a ragdoll (the physics objects that represent its mass), a behavior (a state machine and blend nodes, etc. that give it motion – to be created with HBT), its raw animations (the 100's of animation files or 'clips' that generally live as 'leaves' in a behavior's state machine), and an animation set (a subset of animations that can be swapped in a run-time for different characters who use the same behavior). You can create as many characters as you like in a single project and share these kinds of assets between them (see Figure 3).

CREATING BEHAVIORS

Behavior creation is the chief purpose of HBT. A basic behavior is comprised of states that each contain a simple animation clip, which references a raw animation file.

Transitions between states represent the time-limited blending that occurs when a specific event is raised to cause a state transition. Havok Behavior hosts a range of transition effects, conditional logic, and timing controls.

A simple walk/run behavior would look like the example given in figure 4.

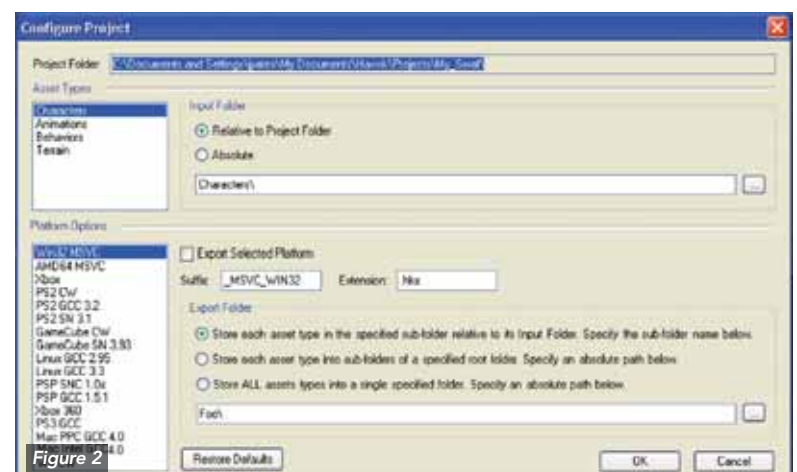


Figure 2



Figure 3

HIERARCHY AND RANDOMISATION

In Havok Behavior, you can create any number of states you need, along with transitions that allow you to jump easily between any states and any level. You can also create states that are themselves 'mini' state machines, so that jumping to a state which is itself a state machine takes the character into a structured 'sub world' of other behaviors.

Hierarchical organisation, in fact, is the real key to driving power and creativity (not to mention fun) out of a tool like HBT. You can achieve flexible behavioral controls that invoke a notion

with anything: clips with clips, blends with other blends, other state machines, etc. A powerful pattern is to create a parametric blend, which, for a major variable (like speed) chooses the nearest two clips to blend between (say from walk backwards, to idle, to walk, to run, and to sprint). The blend node takes care of synchronising and weighting velocities of all blends automatically, based on information stored in each clip (see Figure 5).

BLENDING STATE MACHINES

Behavior's blend node can also be used to manage continuous blending of

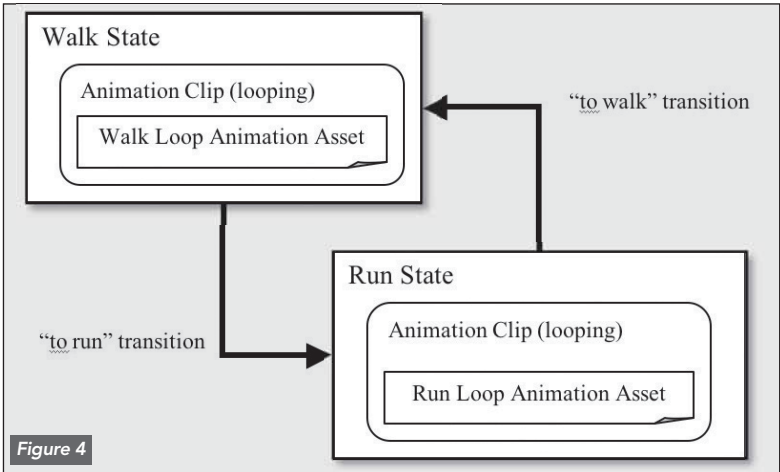


Figure 4

of 'AI' by using hierarchical structure in this way. Also, randomisation and alarm timers that raise transition events go a long way to giving characters a sense of emergent personality.

CRAFTING A BLENDED 'MOTION' STATE

Havok Behavior's blend nodes are really a work horse and can blend anything

upper and lower body bone weights – each controlled by a separate state machine, bound together by a blend. This "layered blend" technique can be combined with parametric blending, and applied at any level of granularity – for example, a blend of 3 state machines: lower body, upper body and face bones. Each state machine can have its own event list

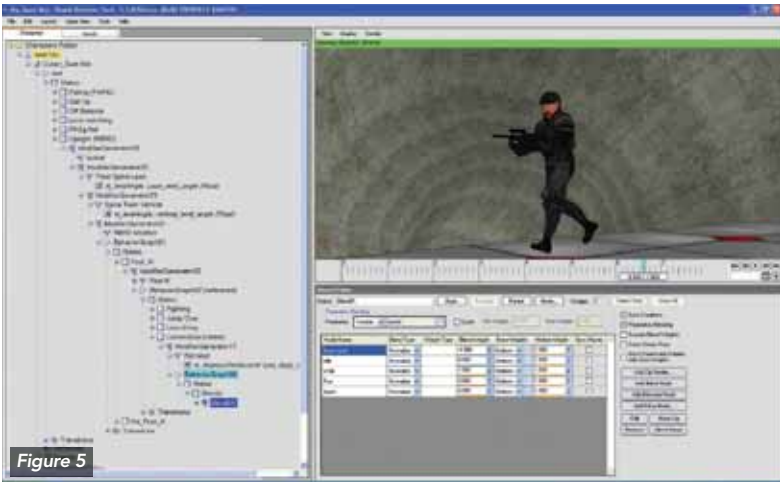


Figure 5

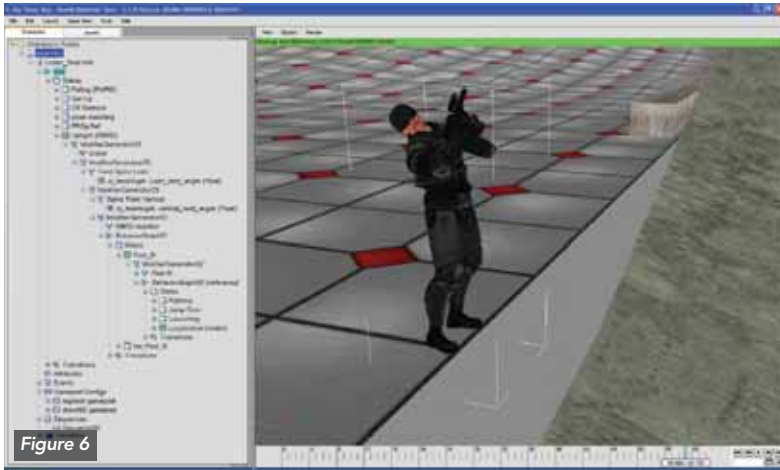


Figure 6

and change states independently.

ADDING PROCEDURAL ANIMATION

It's easy to think that the traditional state machine approach is 'old school' and synonymous with the necessity for thousands of animation assets. But with a clear understanding of the potential of blending, and more generally of a data flow or 'node graph' that can process animation poses in real time – what you really have is a totally general motion synthesising graph that lives inside states. This is really the best of both worlds.

Take something as simple as a walk straight loop. You can very easily extend that by placing a rotate modifier on top of the walk clip (inside the walk state) and bind the turn parameter to an input variable, and suddenly you have a basic walk that can move the character around.

Now if you apply that rotate modifier to a multi-layer parametric blend scenario as described above, you have a much more convincing result. Add a foot-IK modifier to adjust both the feet and the pelvis height based on uneven terrain exported from the Havok Content Tools, and now you can navigate a wide class of terrains with a behavior that needs no more than 4 unique animations – and yet it can be expanded or reused across characters via animation sets (see Figure 6).

Mirroring operators also allow you to re-use directional animations easily, saving production time and run-time memory requirements.

Finally, with procedural modifiers like Look-At and Twist to enable a character to look at key targets at key times, to twist along its vertical spine, or 'lean' by twisting along its lateral axis, and you have procedural upper-body controls for targeting and gun effects – all controlled by variables that can be driven easily by AI at a higher level.

One of the new capabilities found in Havok Behavior, and a direction that hints at the future for in-game animation, is the ability to navigate a character from its relative position in the world to a specific target location and orientation. This is the proverbial 'last mile' of animation that gets a character to its desired location – vs. exploring the world in a relative motion fashion.

Havok Behavior supports all of these procedural modifier types, and more. And since you can add your own custom run-time procedural modifiers that snap into the Behavior SDK and Tool, there's plenty of room for proprietary innovation.

BLENDING IN PHYSICS

The *coup de grâce* for Havok Behavior is to bring physics into the authoring process for character behaviors. Though rag-dolls are often considered lifeless bags of bones, the prospect of blending in animation poses changes that dramatically. As a tool, HBT does this for characters by leveraging the node graph and nested behaviors described above. By placing ragdoll controller nodes above standard animation clips, animations can go from



Figure 7

driving a character's absolute pose, to informing the physics 'desired pose' for a character in a physics world. By transitioning in and out of these physical controllers via states, Havok Behavior achieves total integration and variability between physics, animation, and procedural controls (see Figure 7).

Havok Behavior exposes all of this possibility, and in no small way relies on Havok Physics and Animation to power the underlying concepts laid out here. www.havok.com

A sponsored session on Havok Behavior will be conducted at GDC08. 'Never Say Die: Breathing Life Into Game Characters with Havok Behavior' takes place on Thursday, February 21st at 12pm in room 3016.



Jeff Yates is responsible for product definition and implementation of new product strategies at Havok. Jeff has over 15 years of 3D commercial software development experience building tools for games, video and film.

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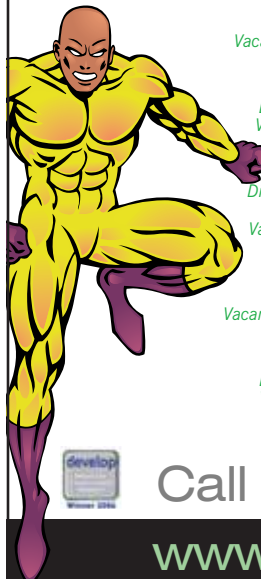
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iPhone Development

What's black and chrome, 135 grams light and arguably the coolest gadget around? **Ed Fear** gets to grips with development on Apple's latest mini marvel, the iPhone...

Okay, so opinions might be divided on the iPhone as a communications device, but it's only a blind man's victim that couldn't appreciate the visual and tactile charm of Apple's latest marvel. While the high cost and extortionate monthly contract may have hidden this tech from all but the richest, the identically-specced iPod Touch has brought that technology to a much wider audience.

Knowing that, it's tempting to start thinking how games could make use of some of those high-end features, like the multi-touch screen and surprisingly accurate accelerometer. The first hurdle threatening to derail your thought train is that, at the moment, the iPhone/iPod Touch are both closed platforms. Although Apple has finally turned around on its stance, promising an SDK this month, at the time of writing nobody knows exactly what form that will take, and exactly how open the company will be on letting third parties have access to iTunes distribution (our guess: not very).

Although we can't answer those questions here, we can look at a current alternative: the unofficial SDK developed by a group of clever hackers. But unlike the image an unofficial SDK may conjure up – messy, undocumented, reverse-engineered code – this SDK is cobbled together from Apple headers and is likely to be similar to whatever does eventually find itself released as official.

What follows is a whistle-stop introduction to getting your first app running on an iPhone. Unfortunately, due to space concerns, we'll have to delegate many of the steps to walkthroughs available on the Internet, but you'll at least have a clear path to getting some custom code on the platform, as well as a host of pointers on where to go from here.

First of all, we'll assume you have a 'jailbroken' iPhone (or iPod Touch – we'll use the word iPhone hereafter to refer to both), running firmware 1.1.2. If you've not done this yet, there's countless guides out there on the internet, so a quick Google will reveal several good places to start.

The next step is getting the toolchain set up. Precompiled binaries are available for both Windows and Mac (see [links 1 and 2 respectively](#)) to hugely reduce the setup time. Mac

users can use Apple's Xcode IDE to develop with, whilst Windows users will have to rely on GNU make and Cygwin.

AN OBJECTIVE-C PRIMER

Just to make matters a little more difficult, Apple's programming language of choice is the niche C object-orientated spin off Objective-C. To give a full treatise of the language here is beyond the scope of the article, but any OO-accustomed programmer can quickly get up to speed by observing the following notes.

At its core, objective C is a weakly typed language – all object references are actually of the built-in type `id`, regardless of what object they're pointing to. As such, you could actually create all of your objects as `ids`, but it's preferable to use the C-style syntax depicted below for two reasons: firstly, explicitly stating the type increases code clarity, and secondly, doing so allows the compiler to check for errors at build-time.

```
id aCar
id aBoat

// is technically the same
// as, but less clear than:

MyCar* aCar;
MyBoat* aBoat;
```

Classes are defined in header files (with extension `.h`) and implemented in `.m` files.

```
// example.h - a simple class

@interface MyClass
{
    // put instance variables here
    int value;
}

// - denotes an object method
// (non-static)
- (int) doSomething: (int) val;

// + denotes a class method
// (static)
+ (void) doSomethingElse;
@end

// example.m

@implementation MyClass
```



```
- (int) doSomething: (int) val
{
    return value * passedValue;
}

// etc...

@end
```

Objective C is based on the paradigm of passing messages to objects instead of calling their methods or accessing their data. So, supposing we had an initialised instance of `MyClass` called `obj`, we'd invoke the `doSomething` method by writing

```
[obj doSomething: 4];
```

Parameters can be named to enhance code readability (with the exception of the first parameter, the label for which is often embedded into the method name), such as the following hypothetical example:

```
[mathHelper pythagorasWithBase:3
side:4];
```

Objects are created by allocating them, which initialises all instance variables to their default value. As such, classes often provide an `init` method that acts similar to a C++ constructor:

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```
MyBetterClass* better =
[[MyBetterClass alloc] init];
```

The above example shows a main point about Objective-C: that messages can be (and often are) nested. In the example, the result of the `[MyBetterClass alloc]` call is the `id` of the allocated object, which is then used as the object on which the `init` method will be called.

Finally, Apple's SDKs include their own string object, `NSString`, and all of the frameworks use it. A feature built into the language enables you to quickly turn a string literal into an `NSString` object with the `@` character, which you'll need to use often with the framework functions, as in the following example:

```
[textLabel setText: @"This is a
text label"];
```

Objective-C's syntax may appear confusing at first, but it's important to remember that as a pure subset of C there's largely familiar territory hidden under all that new punctuation. The above pointers should give enough information to make most Objective-C code readable, and any remaining gaps should be more than ably filled by Apple's comprehensive Objective-C documentation (see [link 3](#)).

HELLO, WORLD!

Now that we've got some Objective-C skills under our belts, the next step is to examine and compile a Hello World example and get it running on the machine. Erica Sadun's simple Hello World app (see [link 4](#)) is a great place to start – it's largely self-explanatory and cleanly written. Simply copy the

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```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<!DOCTYPE plist PUBLIC "-//Apple Computer//DTD PLIST 1.0//EN"
"http://www.apple.com/DTDs/PropertyList-1.0.dtd">
<plist version="1.0">
<dict>
<key>CFBundleDevelopmentRegion</key>
<string>English</string>
<key>CFBundleExecutable</key>
<string>SampleApp</string>
<key>CFBundleIdentifier</key>
<string>com.sample.helloworld</string>
<key>CFBundleInfoDictionaryVersion</key>
<string>6.0</string>
<key>CFBundlePackageType</key>
<string>APPL</string>
<key>CFBundleSignature</key>
<string>????</string>
<key>CFBundleVersion</key>
<string>1.0</string>
</dict>
</plist>
```

text into the four named files and run make at your OSX/Cygwin terminal prompt (although HTML formatting will turn the tabs in the makefile to spaces, so replace any tabs to ensure that the make process works correctly).

Once the build has finished, you'll be left with a SampleApp compiled file. The only step remaining is to bundle this application and deploy it to the device. Mac users should have little problem doing the bundle with Xcode, but Windows users will need to do so by hand. The first step is to make a directory on your dev machine called [AppName].app, so SampleApp.app in this instance, and copy your binary into the folder alongside a 57x57 PNG called icon.png for the app's icon, and optionally a 320x460 PNG called default.png that'll be displayed while your app loads.

The last part of the bundling process to add an XML file called Info.plist that tells the OS a little about your application (note the capital I - very important). Above is a sample Info.plist that'll work for our Hello World example.

The only two items you'll need to vary on that list are CFBundleExecutable, which should always point to your binary's name, and CFBundleIdentifier, which can be whatever you'd like. Once you've done this, you're ready to copy the whole folder over to your iPhone's applications directory, which is usually ~/Applications/ unless you've moved

it. To copy the file over, download the BSD Subsystem and OpenSSH packages from the Installer app that was placed on your iPhone when you jailbroke it. Then use an SSH program to connect to the device, using the iPhone's IP address (found in the Settings menu), username 'root' and password 'alpine' (by default).

The final step is to change the permissions on the compiled file to make it an executable - you can either do this via SSH or on the iPhone itself using MobileFinder. After this, your app should show up in the main menu - if it doesn't, try resetting the device or using the 'respring' function of SysInfo, which can be obtained from the Installer.

And that's it! If there's been any problems, the lack of a debugger may render finding the problem difficult, but there are two courses of action. First, detailed crash information can be found in the ~/var/logs/CrashReporter folder, and secondly, you can use



NSLog() to print debug messages that will show up if you run the program from an SSH prompt.

From here, I'd recommend checking out some of the open-source games hosted at Google Code such as FiveDice (see link 5) for sprite-displaying code, and don't forget that the iPhone runs OpenGL ES v1.1. Initial experiments showed that OpenGL didn't play very well with the UIKit, but the community has made a UIGLView class (see link 6) that makes using OpenGL as simple as subclassing the provided class for your view object and overriding the drawRect method. Armed with that, you should be ready for some coding.

www.developmag.com

Ed Fear is Develop's staff writer and resident technological tinkerer. His first iPhone app, a work-in-progress port of the Japanese flash card program JFC, can be found at ifc.googlecode.com. Both he and Develop take no responsibility should any damage come to your computer or device by following these instructions.

LINKS

- [1] snipurl.com/iphone_toolwin
- [2] snipurl.com/iphone_toolmac
- [3] snipurl.com/apple_objectivec
- [4] snipurl.com/iphone_helloworld
- [5] 5dice.googlecode.com
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Other useful links:

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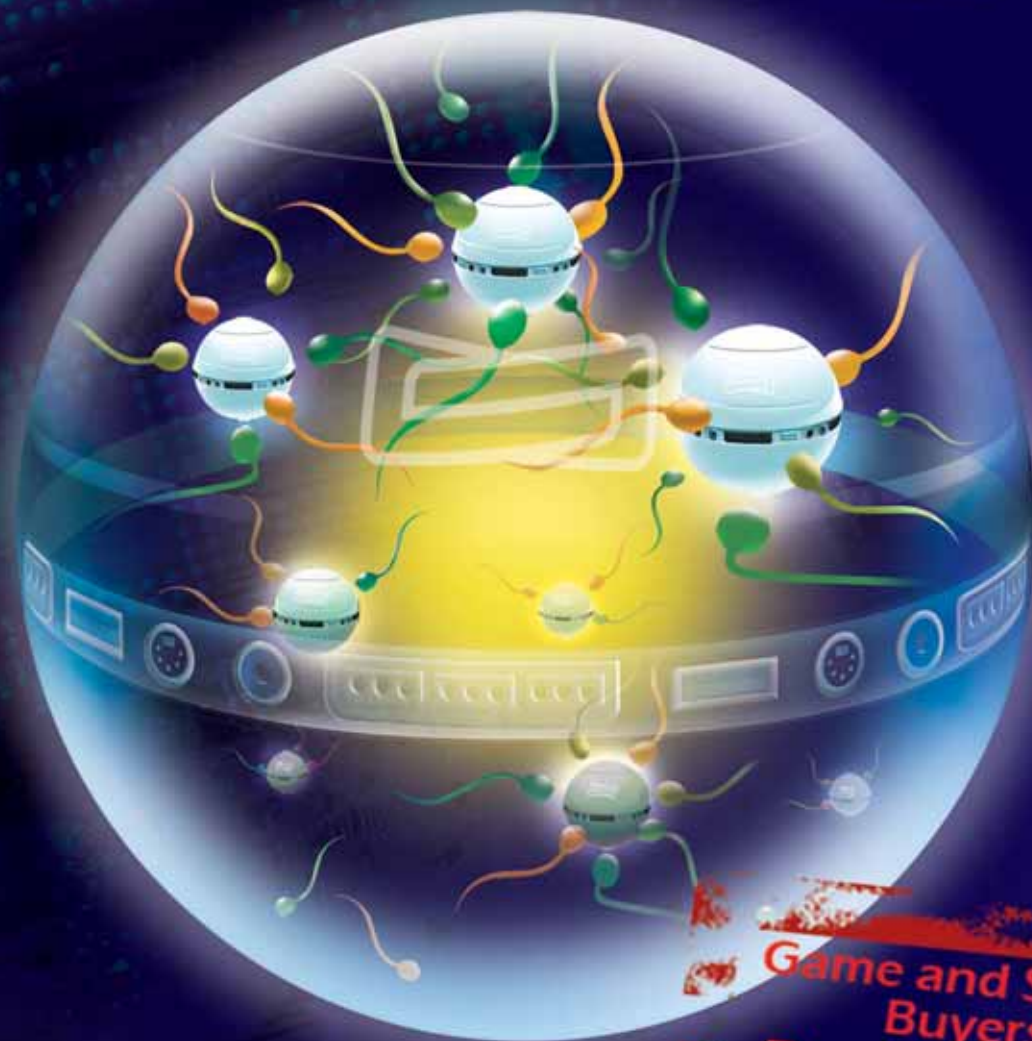
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SERVICES: Side spins out game writers' agency

p100



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Studio News

Games development's movers and shakers.
This month: Pivotal adds six new faces...



Julian Glover



Adam Lusby



Linus Lindberg



Mark Bonaccorso



Nick Phillips



Barnaby Zoeller

Continuing their recruitment ramp-up, **Pivotal** have welcomed six new staff into their fold.

Julian Glover (top row, left) joins the company from Media Molecule, where he was working on *LittleBigPlanet*, as senior designer. He previously followed the Guilford trail, having worked at EA, Bullfrog and then Lionhead.

Amongst the new inductees are two fresh-faced graduates, Adam Lusby (top row, middle) and Linus Lidberg (top row, right), who will be taking up the roles of associate designer and associate character artist respectively.

Mark Bonaccorso (bottom row, left), previously a freelance animator, also joins the studio as associate animator, while the art team is further bolstered by Nicholas Phillips (bottom row, centre), a character artist previously with Climax and Sony London. Last, but certainly not least, Barnaby Zoeller (bottom row, right) joins the company as designer, having previously worked on *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* at Rebellion, as well as stints as a freelance writer.

www.pivotalgames.com

Caspar Field has this month joined Brighton-based quiz specialists **Relentless** as senior producer for the *Buzz!* series.

With over a decade of industry experience and thirty years of gaming under his belt, Caspar Field has enjoyed games and the business as a consumer, journalist, publisher and developer.

Having started his career at *Edge* magazine, Caspar went on to launch Dreamcast title *DC-UK* for Future Publishing before shifting into a producer role at Argonaut games. Most recently a publishing producer for Eidos, Caspar has just returned from a year living in China where he apparently consumed 'enough tofu to last a lifetime.'

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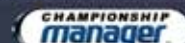
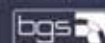
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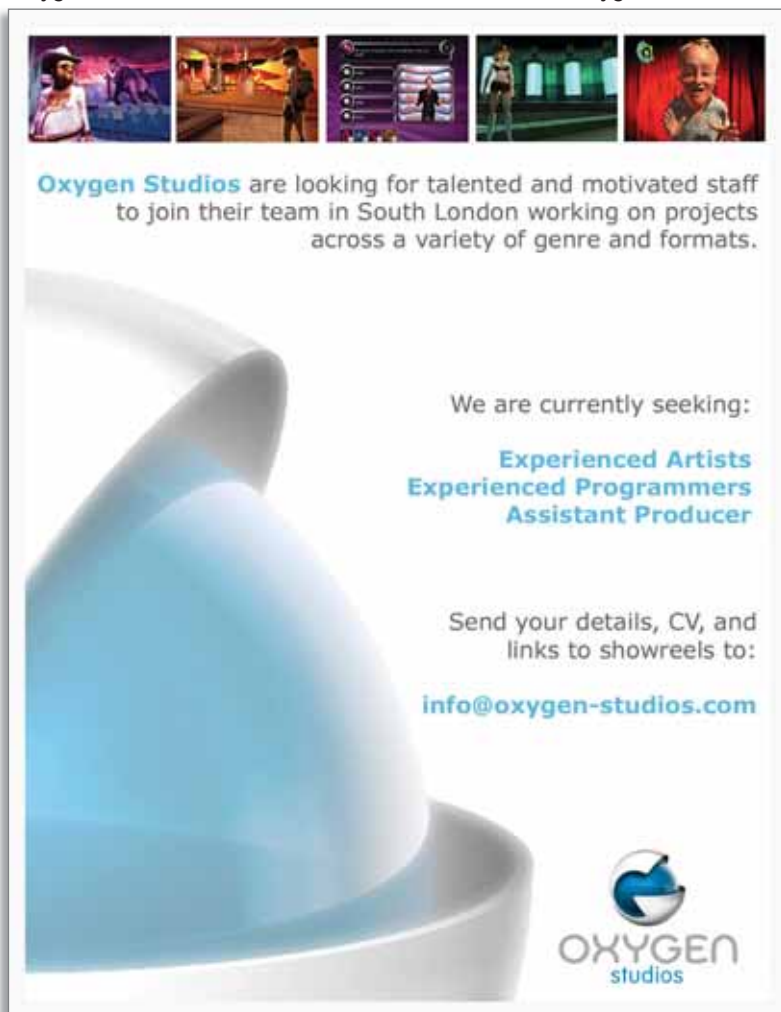
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Tools News

Havok at awards ceremony

Physics middleware manufacturer Havok has been awarded a National Academy of Television, Arts & Sciences Award at a ceremony in Las Vegas.

The company, now owned by Intel, was honoured for its work in the games and film industries, where it has been applied to movies such as *Kingdom of Heaven*, *Troy* and *The Matrix*. The firm won the Develop Award for best tools provider in 2007.

"This award shows just how far Havok has traveled since its inception as an incubation project at Trinity College in 1998. I am proud to accept this award on behalf of the entire team at Havok whose ongoing creativity and dedication has made our physics the global market leader in such a short space of time," said David O'Meara, MD of Havok.

www.havok.com



SEGA ENTERS TOOL MARKET

Sega is currently test-marketing a new tool to match facial expressions to vocal performance data.

The Magical V Engine works with CG programs to analyse the timings of vowels in performance data, to which it matches movements for the mouth, eyes and eyebrows.

The tool also analyses the vocal performance to extract data on the emotional delivery, able to discern happiness, anger, surprise and sadness and mix them together to create advanced expressions.

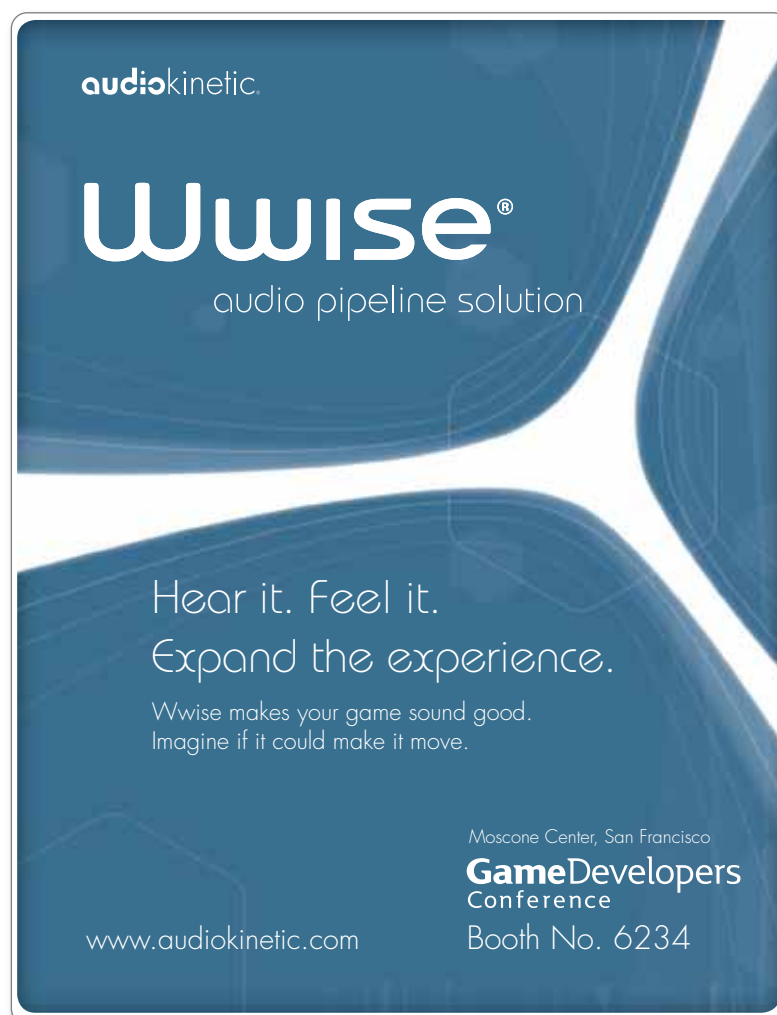
Sega's internal testing estimates that the tool automates 70 to 80 per cent of the task of animating facial expressions, and believes the tool can increase efficiency nearly 100-fold.

The software will be available for 207,900 yen (approximately £915), with a special discount cutting the price to 155,400 yen (approx. £684) until March.

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Tool Spotlight

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Services News

Side spins out Sidelines

A new agency representing games writers and scriptwriters has launched in the UK.

Called Sidelines, the company has been spun out of Side UK, which specialises in audio recording for games, and aims to "provide a high quality service to publishers and developers at all stages of script development, including concept evolution, environment filling, storylining, characterization and dialogue tuning."

Sidelines' writers have worked on games including including: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *Rogue Trooper*, *Primal*, *Fable* and *Killzone*.

Andy Emery, Side MD, commented: "We have created this agency in response to the clear demand for higher quality game scripts and our awareness of a number of talented and experienced writers without game industry representation."

The new outfit is headed up by Sini Downing (above).

www.sideuk.com



ENZYME EXPANDS

Quebec-based game testing company Enzyme Testing Labs has expanded its premises, adding a 4,000 square foot property to its QA empire.

The new building, dubbed the 'Enzyme Expansion Pack' takes the firm's business space up to 19,000 square feet. It features five new fully-equipped testing rooms, an ultra modern customer communication facility and new amenities for testers, including a cafeteria and games room. Most importantly, the facility has space to host 100 more testing and technical staff, who should prove invaluable to Enzyme's ambitions to serve the games industry.

"At Enzyme we have seen global demand increase for our services from existing and new clients alike. Our focus on quality and customer satisfaction has been our growth engine and we felt the time was right to expand our facilities in order to meet the demand from our customers," commented Enzyme's president and chief executive officer, Yan Cyr.

www.enzyme.org

SHIN'EN TO OFFER WIIWARE SERVICE

More momentum is building behind Nintendo's WiiWare platform amongst third party studios: Germany's Shin'en studio is extending its audio outsourcing offer to those making games for the downloadable games platform.

Shin'en offers an audio outsourcing offer and also provides middleware for game audio – and is now providing its services to those making WiiWare titles.

Specifically, the studio plans to support those making games for the service who have limited resources.

"We are happy to extend our audio services to the Wii Ware platform. This shows again our position as leading audio outsourcing company for Nintendo systems," said Manfred Linzner, project manager at Shin'en.

www.shinen.com



CATALIS ACQUIRES GAMEINSTINCT

The parent company of QA company Testronic Labs game development firm Kuju has grown its base via the acquisition of American testing firm GameInstinct.

Based in Seattle, GameInstinct offers outsourced quality assurance services including consultancy, pre-certification, hardware and software testing, and staff placement to the games industry. Partners have included Big Fish Games, Activision, Oberon Media and Nintendo.

In a statement announcing the acquisition, Catalis said the buy, and its new company's North American foothold was "an excellent starting point for Catalis' expansion in the US-markets."

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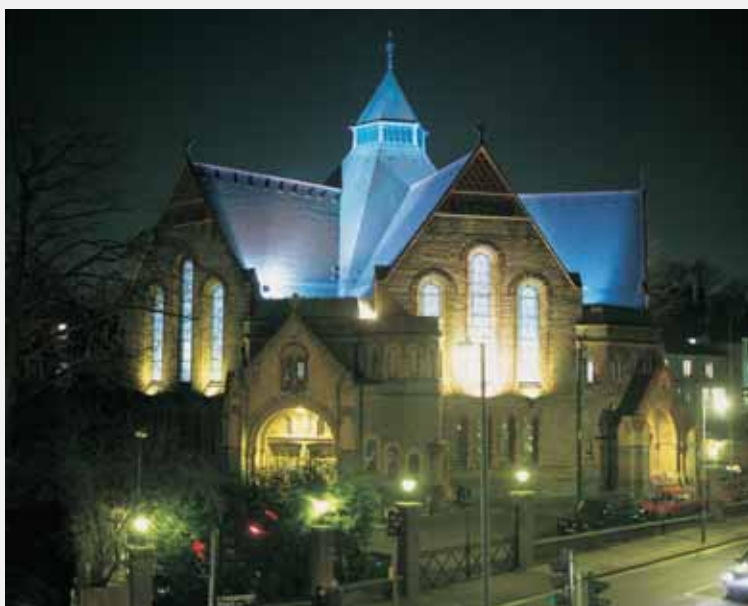
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Key Personnel:

Garry Williams (sales and marketing), Sally Drury (production manager), Pip Norton (sound designer & mixer), Paul Langwade (sound designer & mixer)

Current clients/projects:

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, B-Boy, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, The Club, Destroy all Humans, Battlestations Midway, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.



Founded in 1969 by legendary Beatles producer Sir George Martin, Air Studios has a huge history of participation in all popular media, from music to film and now games. Air's previous project roster reads like a pop music 'who's who', featuring Paul McCartney, Robbie Williams, Coldplay, George Michael, U2 and Madonna on the music side, and huge blockbusters such as The Da Vinci Code, Batman Begins and Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire lighting up the studio's film resume.

It's this vast experience in music, audio post production and sound design that the studio carries over to the games industry, specialising on bringing all elements together to provide a complete audio package for any project. All aspects – demo sound effects, dialogues, music and even full orchestral scores can be realised in a single location.

Increasingly important in the green-lighting of game projects is an impressive demo or cinematic, and to satisfy this Air offers a prototype service to complement the small scope and budget of spec demos. Guide dialogs can be created, and sound effects and music can be quickly applied from libraries to enhance the impact of the demo.

The studio offers a full range of dialogue services, from casting to recording, with individual booths and large crowd spaces catered for. A massive sound library featuring over 50,000 sound effects can be utilised, or effects can be created via location recording or the foley stage in the studio, with pre-encoding and mixing for surround sound files also available.

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Training News

Abertay forms links with Turkish university

Abertay University has inked a deal with the Izmir University of Economics, a Turkish educational institution, to link Abertay's masters degrees in games technology with a two-year masters degree at IUE.

Students on the IUE's masters programme will spend a semester at IUE, before going to Abertay for two semesters, followed by a finishing period back at IUE. The first group of 20 students will arrive at Abertay in 2009, with plans to increase the number of students to 50 within five years.

"We are delighted to have secured this new partnership with IUE. It is part of a network of links we are building up around the world, and the IUE link joins similar successful links we already have with universities in China and Canada," said Professor Lachlan MacKinnon, head of the School of Computing and Creative Technologies. "We are all looking forward to welcoming the first students onto our courses, and I am sure they will find the Abertay experience a very valuable and significant component of their learning journeys."

www.abertay.ac.uk

AUTODESK DEVELOPER CONFERENCE

Autodesk has revealed dates and the class line-up for its annual Developer Conference.

Taking place in Scottsdale, Arizona from May 5th – 7th, the conference consists of three days of classes aimed at programmers, technical directors and users of Max and Maya users who know C++.

Games industry-related conference highlights include Vicarious Vision's Shea McCombs, who will talk about .NET tool integration with 3DS Max, and a talk on real-time cloth simulation by Miguel Escudero, founder of game middleware developer Kino Dynamics.

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"Studying the MSc Games Programming course opened up a whole new world for me that I wasn't even aware existed. It provided the opportunity to look at some of the most advanced games programming techniques in use in the games industry, topics that were not even considered at undergraduate level, and was a lot of fun too!"

Daniel Bradburn 2004 MSc

This Master's programme aims to equip students with all the necessary skills to become active practitioners in the development of Computer Games

The Department of Computer Science at the University of Hull has been offering MSc and PhD level games-related education since 1996. Graduates are working at some of the world's most prestigious game development companies.

"I've always dreamt of making games. After my Bachelor's, I contacted many companies, but I didn't manage to land a job. I decided to enrol in Hull's MSc program. The program provided a great environment to refine my skills and produce great demos. After the course, I found a job right away. Personally, I don't believe I would have gotten a job in the industry if it wasn't for my experiences in Hull."

Originally from Morocco Yacine grew up in the US and did his undergraduate degree in Canada. He enrolled on the MSc in 2004 and was offered a next generation programming job before he had finished the course.

HOW TO APPLY

For application form, further information or enquiries please contact:

Mrs Helen El-Sharkawy
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THE BYRONIC MAN

If anyone can handle criticism, **Simon Byron** can...

"Just wanted to say 'Merry Christmas' to all. It's great to see that so many people have downloaded the demo and are enjoying it. But there do seem to be a lot of misconceptions floating around so I thought I'd try and answer some of them."

So began Criterion's Christmas greetings to fans who'd taken the time to download and play the *Burnout Paradise* demo. As far as well-meaning sentiments go, it's as genuine as a wife-beater burning 'I love you' onto the breasts of his spouse.

The problem, it seems, is that some people on the internet had decided to offer feedback on the demo version of the developer's latest racer. Fools.

You see, according to Criterion – and it turns out they're making the game and you're not so shut up – it's impossible to offer a genuinely representative slice of *Burnout Paradise* in a downloadable demo. So anyone who thinks that the final boxed game will be like the trial version they released really is a fucking idiot.

You can see why the public would be confused. It's a bit like being asked to judge a book by its cover, having read a selection of pages recommended to you by the author.

"According to Criterion, anyone who thinks that the final boxed game will be like the demo is a fucking idiot..."



And then being told off by the same author for judging it.

I didn't realise demos had started coming with non-disclosure agreements. Coming next: developers ringing people up and then having a go at them for answering.

The public's madness didn't stop there. It seemed people on the internet were also stupidly comparing the demo version of *Burnout Paradise* to other racers they'd played. Utterly ludicrous, as something the blog clearly points out: "For everyone constantly comparing the game to other games rather than see the game for what it is – all I can say is that this game isn't those games."

Got that? Good.

Criterion's festive greetings continued by having a pop at the public (who can't spell), GameCube owners (for enjoying *Burnout 2*), and other developers who didn't write tips on their loading screens, before explaining that everyone at Criterion was really proud of the game (not, I guess, that game). The blog also instructed readers to make up their own mind about the *Burnout Paradise*, rather than being influenced by words on the Internet.

This message was conveyed through words on the Internet.

This blog was an altogether strange affair. Dealing directly with our consumers is a tricky business. In my professional role as a PR 'person', I offer two trains of thought: either be really, really nice to your critics, or stay off the Internet all together.

When I started out in magazines back in the dark days before the internet – we wanked over chiselled stone tablets, which were primitive, but wipe-clean – our readers could only interact with us my old-fashioned letters. And if they were hostile or critical, I simply used to bin them with a smug grin.

Nowadays, we need to accept that everyone has a voice. And if we don't like that voice, we need to remember that they're just a handful of hardcore gamers, who have limitless toys to throw out of the pram, and plenty of time to do so. When they're not playing our games, they're sitting on the internet.

Love them or leave them, so the saying goes. Because using the sort of argument parents do with persistent toddlers – "look, it's because I say so, okay?" – really isn't the way to behave. Otherwise you end up literally hating those who loved you the most. Just ask Jeff Minter.

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