

Issue 15 - March 2004

 The Game Creators Newsletter Issue 15 - click for a larger cover image

Intro

Traditionally the editorial section of a magazine is where the editor gives you a brief synopsis about what this issue is going to contain, covering each main feature and directing you accordingly. This issue all I'm going to say is - read it all! There is so much going on at the moment that rather than spend your time being teased about what is to come, just start scrolling and digging in. The FPS Creator piece last month was such a hit that we've bought it back again (with brand new content obviously!) and we'll try to do so every issue until launch, but if you missed out you we're archiving the reports on the (very temporary) web site www.fpscreator.com.

EZRotate

Since the release of DarkBASIC in 1999 a lot of people have been somewhat confused by the rotation commands, often assuming they were "bugged" when the simple truth is that DB does, and always has, used Euler rotation and quite frankly it takes a bit of getting used to! To address this a brand new DarkBASIC Professional plug-in has been released and made available for free download by Ron Erickson.

It features: Global Rotations (i.e. the way most people expect them to operate), Local Rotation, Set-up your rotations using Euler angles or a rotation matrix and the results can be returned by Euler angle or rotation matrix.

Before we tell you where to grab this fine plug-in from we would like to draw your attention to the fact that Ron has now made this available for free, but is open to donations (via PayPal). If you're going to download and use the plug-in then consider donating something, just click the button on his web site.

Download the EZRotate plugin and demo from: <http://www.ericksonline.com>

Tricks of the Windows Game Programming Gurus

Book Overview by Mike Johnson / TGC

The full title of this book is "Tricks of the Windows Game Programming Gurus: Fundamentals of 2d and 3d Game Programming" and it covers pretty much everything you would need to know for 2D game programming. To begin with there's a chapter on background information. The basics of how a game works is covered and you'll get to see the tools that are used to develop 2D games. After this the book moves onto Windows programming. A basic overview is provided that shows you how to set up windows, use resources like menus, utilise GDI and more.

In part 2 of the book DirectDraw is introduced. This is where things really start going. After learning what's involved with DirectDraw and how to set it up you'll get onto displaying graphics on the screen. To begin with this starts off with plotting pixels but as you progress in the book you'll learn how to load bitmaps and use them as sprites.

There are also chapters on how to use the keyboard, joysticks and force feedback effects. Along with this you find coverage of DirectMusic and DirectSound so you can use wave and midi files within your games.

Other areas of the book explain topics such as optimization, path finding, data structures, physics modelling and a lot of information on maths. Plenty of examples and source code are provided with each section. At the end of the book you get to see how a full 2D game is made and how everything works together. Finally the CDs contain lots of extra information on Direct3D, DirectPlay and other related topics.

You can buy the book from Amazon by [clicking here](#).

FPS Creator Insider



Welcome to **FPS Creator Insider**, our new regular column bringing you the low-down on the forthcoming title FPS Creator (FPSC). This month we are going to focus specifically on one area of FPSC - the Segment Editor. FPSC is a suite of tools which will allow you to create first person shooter style action games quickly and easily, as you might imagine this includes a tool to allow you to build levels (maps). You do this by painting "objects" onto the map, which could be a room or a stairwell. The Segment Editor can be thought of as the tool that builds the building blocks.

Working almost like a miniature modeller, the Segment Editor allows you to bring in meshes where you can then texture them, apply FX or create new meshes using the CSG tools on offer. All of the 2D file formats that DarkBASIC Professional support can be loaded by the Segment Editor as well as X object files. As well as simply applying a texture to a segment, the tool will intelligently load and apply any other associated textures that might be required. Textures that come with (or support) normals maps for example will be automatically detected for you. For example we took a Brick texture, a normals map for it that created a few decedent indents and chips in the wall and combined them with a "dirty brick" FX file to create our final segment. The FX shader providing a moss-like covering over the final surface. Hundreds of textures will be provided upon release.

The CSG tools will allow you to create new segments quickly by either combining meshes, or punching holes through them using other objects. You could load a wall segment and use a door primitive to punch a doorway through the wall and save it out as a brand new segment, ready for painting into your maps. The Segment Editor will not support direct polygon manipulation tools (i.e the kind you would find in a full 3D modelling package), but new objects can be created via this method.

Designed to be as simple and intuitive to use as possible, the Segment Editor will offer you access to the raw building blocks of an FPSC map. After loading a segment you can drag it to the left by simply clicking and dragging the mouse left. Rotate the segment by 90 degrees and click and drag left and it will still move to the left of the screen, so the orientation is not as fixed or rigid as a true 3D modeller would require it to be. Pressing the TAB key while in the Segment Editor will switch to a game-preview mode, where your segment is automatically light mapped and displayed using the same render engine as the final game. You can zoom and rotate around it in this view.

Segments also have visibility information associated with them. This allows you to define a wall as a "North facing wall" for example. So when it comes to using it in the Map Editor, the editor knows the default orientation and how to stitch that segment together with other segments around it.

You can also define the Blueprint Symbol to be used by a Segment. When you are in the Map Editor and you zoom far out of the map, it switches into a blue print view mode where each element is represented by a different blue print image (i.e. stairs, walls, floors, etc). You can assign this blueprint image in the Segment Editor itself.

We aim to provide over 1000 different segments at launch covering all the typical FPS set-pieces such as gantries, sewers, rusty industrial places, science labs and more. But with the Segment Editor and a decent 3D modeller you will be able to expand on this quickly and easily.

Next Time...
We are going to open a small "Questions and Answers" section for the next FPSC Insider - so if you have any questions you would like to ask then please [drop us a line](#) with the words "FPSC Question" in the subject title of your email. We will select the best questions and answer them in the next FPSC Insider. Until then... stay frosty.

Visual Basic DLLs in DarkBASIC / Professional

Another free plug-in released recently for DarkBASIC Professional allows you to access Visual Basic DLLs from within your DarkBASIC games and applications. There are versions for DBPro and DB and it has even been tested successfully with .NET DLLs.

You can find the recent Forum thread and a download link here: <http://www.thegamecreators.com/>

If you do test it out, why not leave some feedback for its author, empty?

DTSP accolades continue to pour in

Driving Test Success PRACTICAL, a 3D driving instruction program created totally in DarkBASIC Classic by The Game Creators is continuing to sell well and receive numerous awards and high ratings.

Auto Express magazine (issue 787) thought of Driving Test Success PRACTICAL in a group-test of all driving test related software and books: "The only CD-ROM here that fully covers the process of actually driving a car. Extensive material includes driving an on-screen virtual car and many in-vehicle clips of real-life instruction. Printed fact sheets are useful, too, and it's our Recommended choice." 4 out of 4 stars.

Computer Active (issue 158) awarded DTSP a "Buy It" award and a 5 out of 5 star rating, exclaiming "While videos and simulations are no replacement for driving experience, we were genuinely impressed with this title."


DTSP also continues to ride high in the sales charts. In WHSmiths it sits comfortably at Number 3 in their total software sales chart (for all of their stores), while in the total UK software sales charts as published in MCV it is a new entry at number 8. To give you a sense of perspective, that's above "The Sims: On Holiday". So it just goes to show that if you have the aptitude and the skills, a very commercially successful product can be created with DarkBASIC.

Find out more about Driving Test Success PRACTICAL here: <http://www.thegamecreators.com/>

Alienware Winner

If you've been following community events at all this year, you'll know that we recently finished a massive competition in which you could win an [Alienware PC](#). We received many great entries, but only one could be the final winner and details of this were published back in issue 13. This issue we bring you a photo of the winner sporting a fetching Alienware t-shirt and nestling comfortably under his desk is the Alienware PC he won, glowing happily and running the winning game RoomWar. Click the photo for the full version and congratulations again to all of the entrants and winners.

Cover Game: Firewall

 Front Cover Game: Firewall by Xander Moser, Bolt Software

Firewall is a new real time strategy game from Bolt Software. The viruses have invaded your computer, and the only thing stopping the viruses' total domination of your computer is you. You are the Firewall. Use your computer's resources to battle against the viruses with Posters, Hackers, and Wreckers.

Build Bases and Drones to power your robots, protect your robots, and annihilate virus robots. Stunning special effects including 360 views of mass explosions and smoking debris keep the action going. You must use everything you can to keep the viruses from taking control of your computer.

Download from: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2000

DBPro Diagnostics

Forum user Bulleyes has released a new set of diagnostics tools for DarkBASIC Professional. They are a set of functions that allow you to output diagnostic and debug information to a variety of destinations including a console window, a log file or a message box. The download is free from the following URL:

<http://www.badnose.com/dbpro/DiagnosticTools.zip>

Thrust Engine

Paul from Apex Now sent us details of his new game, currently in beta testing, that is far more than you'd first expect. The game allows for future modification by other users because of a unique scripting system. Every aspect of the game such as entity interaction and behaviour, level components such as platforms, gun emplacements etc and game logic are controlled via scripts. The scripting system is extremely easy to learn, allowing for a small learning curve for new developers.

Screen shots and a test machine demo version can be downloaded from: <http://www.apexnow.co.uk>

DBPTIME DLL

A new plug-in for DarkBASIC Professional has been released by David Tattersall and it adds extensive new time and date related features and commands.

Included are commands to get seconds, hours, minutes, day of the year / month, daylight savings time and a PHP-style format() command, which returns a date string formatted according to the given format string.

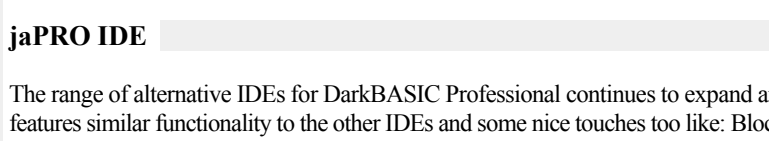
You can download it from: http://www.davidthattersall.me.uk/db/downloads/DBPTIME_100_RELEASE.zip

jaPRO IDE

The range of alternative IDEs for DarkBASIC Professional continues to expand and jaPRO IDE is another in the collection. It features similar functionality to the other IDEs and some nice touches too like: Block Indentation / Commenting, Automatic folding of comments, functions, select, case and repeat blocks as well as user-defined folding.

You can get more details and a free download from: <http://www.angelfire.com/space2/galactix/IDE.html>

Model Viewer



xtom has released a new version of his free 3D model/object viewer. It's software for previewing models in DBPro without having to write test code. The slick Windows interface uses the BEVERLY GUI plugin to full effect and the program itself features:

Animation controls
Limb Controls
Load .DBO .X .3DS .MDL .MD2 and .BSP
Single or Multi Views
Appearance Controls (ghost / transparency)
Load Textures
Straight Forward Controls (rotate/zoom)

You can Download the 1.5MB RAR file from: <http://teamxtc.dbspot.com/files/3DB%20Object%20Viewer.rar>
(If you cannot unpack RAR files, get hold of WinRAR)

The Basics of DBPro


Joseph Thomson recently kicked out a document into the DBPro community called "The Basics of DBPro" which features no less than 45 pages worth of explanations and details covering superb "newbie" topics such as: Outputting Text, Shapes, Variables, User Input, Arithmetic Operators, Boolean Operators, Relations, Loops, Select/Case, Arrays (including Multi-Dimensional), Data Statements, Keyboard/Mouse Input, Sub-routines, Functions and Strings.

This great read has already received some good public feedback and you can download the file for yourself and print it out for an instant but comprehensive reference guide.

Download The Basics of DBPro as a zipped RTF document from: http://files.thegamecreators.com/newsletter/dbpro_basics_rtf.zip (39KB)

EXTRA: Not wanting to take away from the great work that Joseph has done, you can never have TOO many tutorials and it is with this in mind we wanted to bring the following site to your attention: <http://curvedparticle.dbspot.com/DBTutorial.htm> - on here you will find DarkBASIC tutorials covering various topics to your using: [ScanCodes](#) [Spot](#) [DBTutoring](#) [and](#) [others](#)

Showcase Game: Grunt

 This is an FPS game. Well I have no doubts that Cliff says in the readme file that it's going to be a high quality and really he's a texture artist by trade. Well I have to admit, it shows! The quality of the graphics is really high. The title page, the textures, the weapons and the models are all great. But what is the game like? Well it's quite small in that there are not very many rooms to explore, but you can still see how with a bit more effort this could evolve into a really decent title. You can run down some atmospherically lit corridors, wasting the aliens as you go. The aliens die noisily, falling into a satisfying blob of mess and leave behind ammo or medi kits which can be used with the shift key. Oh and it took us a while to figure out, but to get through the doors, hold down the middle mouse button (scroll wheel) as you run towards them.

Download from: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2000

Cartography Shop 4.1 Released


A brand new version of Cartography Shop will be made available for download on **March the 23rd**. This is release 4.1 and it includes numerous updates and enhancements including:

- Export Half-Life .map, with proper texturing (thanks to Dmitry). A new Q3A exporter will be out soon.
- Export .b3d
- Added visibility groups
- Re-implementation of carve and hollow
- Any texture in the "common" directory is not lightmapped
- Improved spinner routine
- Fixed perspective view problem on Intel and some other cards
- Used old method of vertex mode (objects can be selected)
- Improved render view settings
- Vertex positions now rounded to integers (fixes mesh degradation)
- Removed backspace/delete hotkey

You will be able to re-enter the 4.1 Upgrade (the recent Cartography Shop web site at any point after March 23rd. Please note that you will be able to re-enter the serial number (obtained when you purchased Cartography Shop) when you install the 4.1 Upgrade.

For those of you new to Cartography Shop, it is a world building and light-mapping product. Full details, examples and screen shots can be found here: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2101

Showcase Game: WordTris

 From the title of this game you can probably deduce that it's going to involve falling blocks that spell out words - and you'd be absolutely right! What you might not however be prepared for, is the pure addictiveness of this title. You start off with a selection of letters on your grid and more of them start to fall, slowly at first, from the top and it is your job to place them as best you can into the grid. Make a word (or two) and the blocks vanish. Keep on going until the screen fills up, ala the Tetris we all know and love.

WordTris accepts any of over 30,000 words that are 3-8 characters long. You will get credit for EVERY instance of words-within-words. For example, if you spell CRAMPS, you will get credit for CRAMPS, CRAMP, CRAM, RAMP, RAMPS, AMP, and AMPS! Add to this an on-line high score table, a few configuration options to control the backdrops and the game, and you have a frighteningly addictive free game in your possession :)

Download from: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2000

This Months Winners

We've plucked one lucky subscriber to our newsletter and for you a completely free copy of DarkBASIC Professional is yours for the asking. The winner is monkey_thief@?????.com - just email us and a free copy of DarkBASIC Professional is yours.

Outro

Come back again next month for more of the same news, reviews and updates from the TGC community. Got something you want thousands of people to read about in the next issue? Then get in touch! Email me: rich@thegamecreators.com or use our [Feedback form](#).

Famous Last Words: "I stand right underneath the Fire Giant and point my wand straight up!"
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