Issue 16 - April 2004

The Game Creators Newsletter Issue 16 - click for a larger cover image

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Intro

This month we're announcing no less than 3 new products, all immediately available from our site. There is also an interview with our new TGC developer Dave Milton. Thanks to your feedback from the last issue we had a big stack of FPS Creator questions and this issue we've answered as many of them as space allows. There are new games, new DBPro DLLs and some exciting news about Driving Test Success Practical. Read on...

TGC Survey

This month see's the start of a regular survey that TGC are holding. We want your feedback and opinions on our products and have created an on-line survey for you to fill out. It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes of your time and if you enter your email address at the end you will be placed into a prize draw to win a free copy of FPS Creator upon its release later this year.

You can take part in the survey here: http://root.thegamecreators.com/phpQ/fillsurvey.php?sid=2

SkyMATTER Released

You've set the scene, all of your objects are in place, your 3D game world moves around smoothly, but somehow the sky just looks too... plain. Enter SkyMATTER, a collection of professionally produced high-resolution textures designed specifically for mapping onto a skybox, bringing your games alive in the process.

Each skybox face texture is 512 x 512 pixels in size and supplied in 24-bit BMP format. Ideal for use in virtually all game engines. You are not limited to skyboxes, the textures provided can also be applied to cube and spherical mapping.

Three SkyMATTER packs are available to buy on-line and there is a free example texture set and tutorial to download from the new SkyMATTER web site: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2135

gile[s] Released

Some of you may have been using the excellent lightmapping application gile[s] already - but The Game Creators are now pleased to announce that we are reselling gile[s] directly and will be bundling it with our other popular titles in the near future.

For those of you who have never heard of gile[s] before, it is a global illumination / radiosity lightmapper, capable of rendering high resolution lightmaps fast and efficiently. gile[s] features an easy to use editor, that allows you to place models and lights without fuss. Unlike most lightmappers gile[s] handles models of arbitrary complexity keeping smoothing groups intact. With gile[s] you can even paint directly to the lightmap, and mix and match vertex lighting and lightmaps as you please. gile[s] lights up your worlds.

With support for the DarkBASIC Professional DBO object format (amongst others) you can purchase gile[s] online from it's new web site: http://www.thegamecreators.com

ExGen Released

Create Special Effects for your Games with ExGen!

Explosions and Special Effects. They look good but making animated effects for games isn't as easy as it could be. ExGen is designed to fulfill all the special effects art requirements for your video games.

Wrapped in an intuitive interface, the powerful ExGen system allows you to create a wide variety of effects which can then be exported as image/s or an AVI animation file for instant use in your games. Texture objects with an explosion animation, or rising smoke, pulsating lights, lazer beams or anything else you can create.

The resulting animation files can be used with DarkBASIC or DarkBASIC Professional and you can purchase ExGen on-line from the ExGen web site: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2155

3D Math Primer for Graphics and Game Development

Book Overview by Mike Johnson / TGC

3D Math Primer for Graphics and Game Development provides informatiom about fundamental 3D concepts. A good understanding of this can help to write more efficient programs and solve problems easier.

3D Math Primer for Graphics and Game Developm

The book starts off by explaining all about coordinate systems. To begin with the 1D coordinate system is explained and then the early sections move onto explaining 2D and then finally 3D coordinates. As with all chapters in the book a set of exercises are provided so you can test yourself and make sure you understand the material.

The second chapter of the book explains about the coordinate systems used in 3D programming. From this you learn about world, object, camera and intertial space. Learning about this will help you to understand how and why certain things work in 3D.

Moving on in the book there's several chapters on vectors. They explain what vectors are and how they are used. Vector operations are covered such as the dot product and cross product. All of this knowledge can be applied to certain scenarios in 3D programming to help solve certain problems.

After the coverage of vectors the book has several chapters on matrices and transformations. These chapters explain what matrices are and how they work. There's information on rotation, scaling translations, projections and a whole host of other areas. Another chapter in the book explains about geometric primitives. Here you can learn about some very useful techniques such as how to set up bounding boxes, see how to get the distance from a point to a plane, compute the area of a triangle and more.

One of the later chapters goes into detail on how 3D graphics work starting off with an explanation of the pipeline and moving onto areas like coordinate spaces, lighting and fog, buffers, texture mapping, transformations, culling and more. This isn't linked into any particular API and as such is very useful for understanding the theory behind how 3D graphics work. In the last chapter a brief introduction to visibility determination is provided including BSP and portals.

It's worth pointing out that the code examples are written in C++. While this is the case the text covers all the material so you can apply the concepts to another language like DarkBASIC Professional. This book is well worth considering and sits on the book shelves of a number of TGC staff!

You can buy the book from Amazon by clicking here.

Newton Physics in DBPro

Hot from the forums: The Newton Physics SDK has been made to work with DarkBASIC Professional by forum member Walaber. Although not yet a wrapper for the DLL, an example EXE with source code has been published.

You can obtain the latest Newton DLL from its website: http://www.physicsengine.com and view the forum thread which includes the EXE and source code here: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=forum_view&t=30123&b=5

Coming soon: WW2 Media Pack

Coming Soon: The World War II Media Pack contains all the models and textures you need to fill your WWII or other-themed game with art. The package includes approximately 20 weapon models, 8 vehicles, 100+ textures, 10 buildings and plenty more. All artwork is held to the highest standards of quality to ensure a professional look for your game.

Click here for full version (800x600)

More information will be published in a future newsletter, until now you can click on the screen shot for a higher resolution version.

Roomwar Source Code Released

The DarkBASIC Professional source code to the Alienware Competition winning entry - Roomwar - has been released by the author. Although he warns that it isn't very clean or commented it is still relatively easy to follow what is happening. Just by reading over the code you may pick up a few new tips. It requires that you have the superb Nuclear Glory Collision DLL installed.

We have placed a copy of the source code onto our file server here:
http://files.thegamecreators.com/newsletter/roomwar_source.zip (16 KB)

Interview with Dave Milton (Ravey!)

Dave Milton is a professional developer working for The Game Creators on a secret new project, we took some time out this month to interview him about his programming past and future. Over to you Dave...

I'm Dave Milton, age 30, living in Hertfordshire 20 miles north of London. I've been programming since I was seven years old and my first computer was a Sinclair ZX81 that I saved-up for and ordered from a catalogue. I eventually moved on to the 8-bit Dragon32 and then onto the greatest machine of all time - the Commodore 64 - which I programmed on for years and knew like the back of my hand. When the 16 bit era arrived I took the natural step onwards and upwards, moving to the Commodore Amiga (owning 8 different Amigas in total!) before finally settling on the PC when the Amiga "died" (although there are many out there who will say it is still very much alive).

Ravey or could it be Spike

What was the first game that really "Got You", that made you stop and think "Wow!" sucking up hours of your youth?

In the arcades it was **Galaxian**. I spent hours just looking at others play it being far too scared to play it myself. When I finally struck up the courage to play it myself I lasted a not-so impressive 20 seconds before being blown into oblivion.

On home computers the first game to really get me excited and totally hooked was **Manic Miner** on the C64. The whole game was bursting with life, baddies moving around animating all over the place. I found it quite daunting at first but ended up sat infront of the '64 until 4am every night until I completed it (I hope my parents don't read this).

The most jaw dropping experience following the "early years" has to be **Shadow of the Beast** on the Amiga. I remember standing outside our local electronics store with my friends staring at the rolling demo with all those layers of parallax scrolling and amazing graphics.

You said you started programming aged 7, what was you first real program?

The Commodore 64 is when I decided I just had to write a game. I had written many demos on previous machines but I felt the urge to write a complete game. I started learning machine code and after a few months of beating my head on the wall it suddenly all made sense. I wrote a game called "Blaster" which was a sideways scrolling shoot 'em up similar to R-Type (without being anywhere close to it of course). I had dozens of sprites on the screen (C64 was limited to 8 hardware sprites but with some trickery you could have lots more), hardware scrolling, and the most awful music you could imagine. I was really proud of my achievement but also learnt an important lesson which I still remember to this day: **It is VERY easy to start a game, but VERY hard to finish one.**

Did you move into programming on the PC immediately from the Amiga, or was there a period of time before tools like DarkBASIC/Blitz became available?

On the Amiga I spent the majority of my programming time with Assembler (Devpac for anyone that remembers), so I jumped straight into programming on the PC with Borlands Turbo Assembler. It was very different from the Amiga but I managed to write a few demos using VGA graphics in all its 320x200 glory. Following that I become a beta tester for a new games technology on the PC from Microsoft - DirectX (following their earlier attempts with WinG). I started programming DirectX using Delphi and C (all 2D in those days).

I carried on with 2D until a DirectX6 beta popped through my door and tempted me to try it. It was very long winded and strange at first but I managed some "OK" demos. I went back to 2D after my fling with Direct3D and did start to miss the days of Amos/Blitz where I could write a game in a couple of days. After what seemed like eternity, I was reading PC Format one day and noticed Blitz had been released. I rushed out that day and bought it. I didn't even realise just how alive the "bedroom coders" was becoming again. I had to wait a while before seeing anything using 3D technology appeared but once it did I was hooked.

What games have you developed that readers may have heard of?

The most famous game I have written with Blitz is Binman (3D) which follows the exploits of "Stan the Binman" as he runs around collecting and emptying bins while avoiding traffic, crazy pedestrians, Lawn mowers with minds of their own, dogs that don't take kindly to people coming into their garden etc. Binman has been out a couple of years now and is still selling in Game stores (I actually went in and bought one on the day it was released and placed it on the mantle piece above my fire). My first game was Skateboard Crazy (2D) which I will always have a soft spot for as it was my first commercial game on the shelves and also very retro in its looks and play. Root was my last Blitz project before turning to the dark side (I don't have to pay George Lucus for using that phrase do I?)

Skateboard Crazy | Binman | Binman | Binman

The million dollar question our readers will want to know is - with all the commercial success with Blitz behind you - why did you make the move into the DarkBASIC world?

I used Blitz for about 3 years and was very happy with it. After about six months with Blitz I starting hearing about DarkBASIC. I was in the middle of writing games so I never really looked into it then. As time went on I kept hearing more and more, downloaded a few demos and it started gaining my interest. I have always been keen on new technology and I looked at the DarkBASIC (now TGC) site and was amazed to read how DarkBASIC Professional supported the latest technologies including the hottest thing on the block - Pixel and Vertex shaders.

I play lots of games and longed to be able to produce the visual effects they displayed. DarkBasic Professional promised to do this, I was sceptical at how well it would live up to its claims but I went and bought a copy anyway. I played around with it for just 2 days before being convinced it was the way I should go. In one evening I had a castle scene with bump mapped walls that reacted to the light moving around it. I was amazed at how accessible the new technologies were within DarkBASIC Professional. Shortly after deciding to use DBPro in future, it was upgraded from DX8 to DX9 which was even better for me. I have been using DBPro now for 7 months and have enjoyed every moment of it, everything I want to achieve is possible and any look I wish to conjure up can be done - with minimal fuss. I love writing games and I love utilising the latest technologies that are available (that's why buy those nice 3D cards after all!) DBPro allows me to do this without ripping my hair out looking at C/++ code.

I have found DBPro to be very stable, have more features than you can shake a stick at, and a great online community. I remember coding on my Amiga with nothing more than the hardware reference manual, no internet, no help - we don't appreciate how easy we have these days (I hope I am not starting to sound old).

I like the fact that TGC are commited to bringing DBPro users the latest in technologies that we see in the AAA games, I am also impressed how they offer everything you could possibly need to make a game on their site, add to that a great community and it really is too good to turn away.

There is a definite animosity between the BB and DB communities, having come from one to the other (and no doubt been scorned because of it), can you understand the reasoning behind this?

I guess it is human nature but it all seems very unnecessary to me. I have an ATI card and most of my mates have nVidia - but they don't show any animosity towards me (not for the ATI card anyway). People choose different products for different reasons - if we didn't then we would all be driving around in the same colour, same model car. We all have different needs, likes and dislikes. Some people have DB, some have BB and some happily use both - who is wrong? Nobody. It would be nice if both communities could realise they have exactly the same goals - to make great games on the PC. The fact they use different languages to do it should not matter. I like DBPro for my own reasons, reasons that are important to me. They cannot be wrong because they are MY reasons. If everyone appreciated this there wouldn't be any animosity. I guess this is a problem the whole world faces on many issues, it's a shame though isn't it?

Although you cannot tell us about the main project you are developing since you joined TGC, what else do you have in the pipeline?

I think one area where DBPro is light on is tutorials and information relating to actually making a game from start to finish. As I said earlier it is very easy to start a game but very hard to finish. The last 20% of all games takes longer than the first 80%. TGC have identified this area of need for programmers and so I am in the later stages of finishing a package that will give people the knowledge and experience to write their own games.

Diode

First Person Shooters are very much the games people want to write due to being immense fun to play. The project I am working on is split into two sections. A level creator which enables you to create very big levels VERY easily. To give an example of its ease of use, to create two rooms, one higher than the other connected by a slope you would first select the style of room (floor textures, wall style and texture and height) and simply click and drag out a room, let go and its created. You would then move the view above the created room, drag out and create another room, click on "slope" and drag a box out any size you like between the two rooms and the slope is automatically created joining the too rooms up. You can then add lights by two simple clicks and you have your two rooms. I detest spending weeks making levels so I wanted to make it as simple as possible but still have the ability to do things the hard way for purists. You produce the whole level within the editor including level geometry, add in detail meshes to populate the level, lighting (all lighting is dynamic so you can have pulsating and flickering lights for example), set up enemy locations and scripts, add in doors (are the doors locked? etc and where are the keys) .... you get the idea :) There is a lot packed into the editor and I could ramble on about it for days but I hope that gives enough to gain peoples interest.

When you buy the package you will get the editor and the full game, but more importantly you get the source code to the game. I found when I first started coding that the best way to learn is to play around and alter existing code to see the effect it has. The code will be fully commented but more importantly users will be able to log-on to a section of the TGC web site to receive not only updates and additions, but also tutorials and insights into different sections of the game, for example a tutorial explaining the enemy AI system, the collision system etc.

Rave Ed WIP | Rave Ed WIP

It may all sound too complex for a beginner but it really is aimed to cover users of all levels. This project will give users a full game that they can play about with, add to or rip apart to use routines elsewhere. All the code is very modular so you will be able to for example "plug" the dynamic lighting system into any of your projects.

Rave Ed WIP | Rave Ed WIP

Just to wrap things up - what game have you played most recently that totally impressed you?

UT2004 - amazing looking and what a joy to play! (especially on instagib mode)

And which game are you most looking forward to?

Doom3 is going to be something special, but I also saw a video of the Unreal3 engine a few days back that blew me away (1 million polys in a level!)

Finally - which DB/DBPro created game do you admire the most?

I was really impressed with the Alienware competition entries. It really showed off what a talented community is out there. The Cow Abductor game really impressed me and made me smile - I love seeing games that are a bit different.

Cover Game: DUO

Created with DarkBASIC Professional DUO is an old-school style 2D blaster that is just too addictive for words! if any of you remember the psychedellic Jeff Minter/Llamasoft classics like Tempest 2000, GridRunner or Photon Storm, then you will have some idea of what to expect. The premise is simple - blow the living hell out of everything!

Raveys Comments: I really liked this game; it has a nice polished feel to it and is great fun. The presentation is slick, from the begining menus to the 3d grid that follows your "ship" around. The action is fast paced with the right level of panic instilled on the player. Duo reminds me of the best elements from a number of games - Breakout (or Arkanoid), Asteroids, Galaxian and the frantic powerup chasing of Xenon II. Speaking of Xenon II the music pumped out a decent beat that reminded me also of Xenon II. The game consists of a number of options, my favorite being blasting through levels of baddies bouncing around all over the screen (breakout) whilst you blast them into smaller pieces (Asteroids) whilst moving your ship along the bottom of the screen (Galaxian). Every time you destroy all remnants of a baddie a power up drops which you find yourself risking life and limb to catch before it falls away into space. My only niggle is that there is not an option to change resolution (you can change depth but the process may confuse novices). If you like fast and furious action with a kicking beat - Duo is definately for you.

Mikes Comments: The idea in DUO is that you have to shoot any objects that appear on screen. When you shoot one it splits off into smaller objects and you carry on blasting them until there's none left. It's a simple concept but not as easy as you might think. It's all very well presented and from the start you get to choose which game mode to play. Once in the game the controls are very simple. You move the player around with the mouse and shoot with the left click button. Then basically you have to shoot everything that comes at you. After a short while playing I was soon hooked in and it was certainly a challenge. There's all sorts going on when in the game Â– loads of enemies to contend with and things like power ups to collect. The gameplay is very fast and you have to be quick to keep up with what's going on. A very good game and well worth trying out.

Developers Binary Zoo (http://www.binaryzoo.com) have really pulled out the stops on this one and everything flies around the screen with blistering speed. There are 3 different game styles included: Challenge - which features 100 levels of action, Time Attack - Which is you vs. the clock (and a truckload of baddies!) and Survivor - Never the same game twice. You can even set the game to play your own MP3 files if the excellent music gets too much for you :)

As one forum member put it after playing DUO - "No matter if it was 2D or 3D. A Good Game is a Good Game - no matter what!" - and this a *very* good game.

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

FPS Creator Insider

Last month in **FPS Creator Insider** we asked you to send in any specific questions you had and we would attempt to answer them. Well our mailbox was swamped! There certainly appears to be a significant amount of interest in what FPSC will bring to the development table, so here we go with the first 20 questions we received:

Q: How much will FPS Creator cost and when will it be available to buy?
A: You won't believe how many times we were asked this question! The answer is simply this: We have an anticipated release date of Autumn 2004. The pricing is not yet confirmed and we will be holding a Survey in the next issue of the newsletter to gauge your expectations on this subject - so your feedback will directly influence the final price. More details next issue.

Q: Will FPSC allow you to change the camera view? (i.e. to make a third person game)
A: No. It is called FIRST Person Shooter Creator for a reason :) Obviously you will be able to see your opponents/self in multi-player games, but you will not be able to alter the camera to a view that isn't FPS.

Q: Will segments have attributes attached to them like hitsound?
A: Absolutely yes! Each mesh has its own sound for shooting, walking, etc and other attributes such as the scorch effect and how fast the player will walk over it - so you can simulate mud, ice, gravel, grass and other terrain types.

Q: Is FPSC going to be compatible with DarkBASIC Classic?
A: FPSC is a seperate stand-alone product and does not need to be used with any other language. However the "Save Source" option that will be present in some of the FPSC Editors will only save code compatible with DarkBASIC Professional. DarkBASIC Classic uses a totally different technology and will not be supported, sorry.

Q: Will those people who bought DB/DBPro get anything useful out of FPSC?
A: FPSC is a way to build high-quality FPS genre games VERY quickly. You will not need any programming abilities to do so (although they will help when it comes to customise the game scripts). We are building export functions into some of the FPSC editors to allow DBPro owners to benefit from the product in a different way - but you must understand that FPSC is not going to save out the entire source code to your whole FPS game. Certain editors will save certain elements: i.e. the map editor will save out the map + source code to allow you to load and run around the map with full collision. Enemies, etc are then up to you to add.

Q: Are any types of turret or vehicle functions included?
A: Yes you can have turrets - i.e. gun placements a player can mount. The turrets could even be on rails. We are not however including fully driveable vehicles in the first release ala UT2004/Halo.

Q: Can you make 3rd person camera games like Tomb Raider?
A: No. FPS games only. Although it might not sound like much work to make the camera switch to a 3rd person view, you have to understand that 3rd person games have a totally different game dynamic. In Tomb Raider you are jumping, crawling, ducking, edging around corners, etc. These are not traditional FPS actions and as such will not be included in the first release.

Q: Is it possible to have the AI's responding to sound as in the Thief games?
A: Yes. Entities can respond to a variety of events including sounds and other triggers such as being shot. Each entity will come with a set of standard behaviours from the first release.

Q: Will we be able to customise weapon and explosion effects?
A: Yes. You can control the damage, the range of the damage, the knock-back rate, the visual (fire, smoke, steam, etc), the shader used for the explosion/weapon and the debris - does the debris have trials, the falloff rate, the volume, etc.

Q: Can you make it so that when you encounter another character they could say something to you?
A: Yes . You can create an AI script that controls the conversation and it can play either WAV files or Text files.

Q: Could you make a Virtual environment? Allowing the user to wander around and explore?
A: Yes - just don't give the player any weapons :) You can customise all elements of it - i.e. you could create an "interactive 3D tour" if you so wished and make it not look like a game at all.

Q: Will FPSC use DBPro for its script files?
A: No, it has its own scripting engine/language. A fully built-in state engine.

Q: Does FPSC create shooters only, or can you use it for any kind of game?
A: As the title suggests, it is for shooters primarily. However that does not mean you couldn't create an FPS style adventure game (items to collect, puzzles to solve, people to talk to, etc). But keep in mind the main aim is to shoot stuff!

Q: Is FPSC a mixture of DarkBASIC and The 3D Gamemaker?
A: Actually yes - that is a quite close comparison if you take the power of DarkBASIC Professional and the ease of use of 3D Gamemaker into consideration. However you must remember that T3DGM was created many years ago and technology has come a long way since then. FPSC games are far beyond anything T3DGM could ever dream of making.

Q: When placing enemies are they going to be placed in blocks?
A: No - you have PPP - Pixel Perfect Positioning!

Q: Will FPSC be able to create cut-scenes?
A: Not directly, no. You can script a conversation between characters and you will be able to insert MPEG/AVI files into the game flow, but you will not be able to "zoom the camera out" and make the player interact in that way. It is something we will incorporate into a future update.

Q: Can you create an on-line game for just 2 players?
A: Yes. You can create a co-operative on-line game. The game will scale the difficulty automatically based on the number of players participating.

Q: What copyright issues will there be?
A: You will be able to save EXE files without any restriction providing those EXE files are given away freely (i.e. are freeware). You can put them on websites for download, you just cannot charge for them. A License fee scheme will be introduced for commercial application of FPSC titles, much like we have for The 3D Gamemaker. The License fee will cover the use of our media and code. Anyone who is familiar with similar game engines will realise this is common practise in the software industry. FPSC will be affordable and fun for everyone, but if you want to make money from a final game you'll need a license.

Q: Can you build outside environments?
A: In the sense of Far Cry or EverQuest? No - but outdoor environments and terrains are very high on our list of features for FPSC V2. The first release of FPSC will give you some capability for outside areas (i.e. running from one building, through say a court-yard and into another) however.

Q: To what degree can the characters be customised?
A: You can control the properties of entities (characters) in your game including: the size of the entity, the textures used, the behaviour scripts, the sounds, the physics and various other elements. There will be NO facial animation support (so no lip-syncing). You will be able to import your own models created in an external 3D application such as Milkshape or 3DS Max providing they are in the .X or .DBO formats. No other 3D format will be supported. Automatic rotation/scaling support is included for external models that appear upside down or back to front in your games!

Next Time...
Next issue we will focus more on the AI scripting abilities of FPS Creator, however as the Q&A session has proven to be so popular we welcome any further questions you may have. Please send them to: fpsc@thegamecreators.com and we will answer select ones each issue from now until launch.

DTSP Hits Number 1

Last month we reported that Driving Test Success PRACTICAL was riding high in the UK software charts at Number 3. Well this month we're pleased to announce that it has risen beyond even that and now sits proudly in the Number 1 slot in all WHSmiths stored country-wide. To throw a little perspective on this - the number 2 slot was occupied by Deux Ex: Invisible War.

DTSP

Click for high resolution version

Driving Test Success PRACTICAL was created entirely in DarkBASIC Classic and is a fully interactive 3D driving instructor title. It just goes to show that an award-winning package capable of topping the software charts is totally possible with DarkBASIC.

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

Retro Gamer Magazine

Now and again we like to bring magazines to your attention that we think may be of interest to you. This month we feature the excellent new Retro Gamer Magazine by Live Publishing. This is a professionally produced full-colour magazine available from all good newsagents, and as the title suggests it is focused entirely on Retro Gaming. Unlike other similar "retro one-offs", the staff behind Retro Gamer obviously know what they are talking about! and each issue features a good range of interviews, articles and classic advertisements. It is the UK's first regular retro magazine, published bi-monthly and makes for fascinating reading for those who remember the "good old days" and to those who don't. Incidently - yours truly supplied all of the Atari ST games for the cover CD in Issue 3 :)

More information can be found on the Retro Gamer magazine web site: http://www.livepublishing.co.uk/retro/

New DBDN Pricing

DBDN is a web site, custom built and configured especially for DarkBASIC users that wish to take part in the future of Dark Basic developments. It's the only place for you to get pre-release access to DarkBASIC Professional Upgrades and other TGC products.

We have dropped the membership price to DBDN significantly and it now starts at only $15 for 3 months membership. Each day you get to read Lee and Mikes development diaries, download betas of new releases and participate in the private forums.

More information can be found here: http://www.thegamecreators.com/

Acoders.com Competition

The Game Creators are one of the sponsors of the new Acoders competition. Details follow:

Acoders would like to welcome you to our first indie game making competition in which, thanks to our sponsors, we are able to bring you some fantastic prizes. Programmers ranging from a single person garage hobbyist to a team of freeware developers are welcome to enter. Our goal is to promote indie game developers and the products they use. Your entries will potentially be downloaded and played by thousands of people and this combined with the opportunity to win some exciting prizes, should make for an excellent competition.

For a full list of prizes and to register, visit the Acoders site: http://www.acoders.com/acsite/competition_index.php

International PHP Magazine

What has PHP got to do with The Game Creators? Well, absolutely nothing really except it is the core language that we use on all of our web sites. Even so there would have to be a very special reason to warrent mentioning a PHP magazine in this newsletter. The reason is that the cover article of the April 04 printed edition was written by myself, Richard Davey. The article, entitled "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" shows you how to tell if the PHP script you have downloaded from the Internet is going to totally mess-up your site, or enhance it. There are a list of real-world examples and various techniques for determining the quality of PHP scripts.

You can read more about International PHP Magazine here: http://www.php-mag.net

Space Corps 2 Classic Edition Preview

Screen shots cannot show all of the special effects that the game uses, and hardly do justice to the visuals in the game - however click on the thumbnails below to see a preview of this title in all its glory :) Space Corps is a series of games Banshee Studios have been producing for around 15 years, this version features ship and some weapon graphics from the original Amiga version.

This version is a 2D playing field space ship combat game with over 90 ships, multiple weapons and a lot of special effects using 3D techniques. It is intended to be the battle engine for a simplified galaxy conquest style game. The player will control a ship during the battles.

Battle can be fought with up to 50 ships a side although this requires a fast processor. The graphics card requirements are very low despite the many special effects.

More details on this game as and when they become available!

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 ????@digitaldreams.?????.co.uk - just email us and a free copy of DarkBASIC Professional is yours.

Outro

It has been another busy month, with some great new releases and games to test out. Next issue we will hopefully be covering the launch of DarkBASIC Professional Electronic - a new download-only version of our best-selling programming language, at a great discounted price. We also have three new commercial plugins on the horizon, so stay tuned! 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: "Geez... that guy looks mad now. Can I un-cast that fireball?"

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