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Intro

We seem to be enjoying somewhat of a heatwave here in England at the moment and the gorgeous weather is certainly making it challenging to sit inside in front of a computer. But we do it because we love our work and if the contents of this packed newsletter is anything to go by - we're not the only ones!

TGC Survey - Win FPS Creator

Your feedback from last months survey was fantastic and the responses have already lead to us planning out a brand new range of items. There was an overwhelming call for "more tutorials" and "a decent book about DBPro" - so that is exactly what we're focusing on.

Advanced Terrain

There is a very good reason for featuring a gorgeous landscape shot on the front cover of this months issue. It is because what you see are the results of our work on a new Terrain Plug-in for DarkBASIC Professional.

Creating a terrain is a fairly simple process.

To begin with you must first create a heightmap that will be used to represent the terrain. From there you can load this into DB Pro using the new commands. The process is started by calling "make object terrain" and passing in the ID of the object.

Instead of creating one large mesh the terrain is split up into a grid of meshes - this is where the split value comes in.

When setting the terrain texture you can pass in an image ID for a base image and a detail image. While it's also possible to use "texture object" for this the command specifically for terrain changes the texturing to create a result better suited for terrain.

Once all of the properties of the terrain have been set a call to "build terrain" will finalise everything and create the terrain and it will then be displayed on screen.

Terrain Plus

The terrain plus expansion pack comes with a whole host of features that allow you to take terrain much further. Level of detail (LOD) commands are provided with the Terrain Plus expansion pack and these can be used to reduce the amount of polygons being drawn.

Creating textures for the terrain can be achieved using the texture generation commands.

Imagine the camera directly in front of a large hill. We know that we can't see behind this hill yet the terrain behind will still be drawn. This is a situation we want to avoid as we're drawing polygons that can't be seen.

Details about Terrain and other new plug-ins will be announced shortly.

gameSpace Service Pack 1

Caligari is pleased to announce the release of Service Patch 1 for gameSpace1.5!

This patch addresses several issues including: Problems when moving or gluing items within the Scene Editor fixed. Problems with the Anti-Alias for sprites fixed. Viewpoint and Shockwave support fixed.

To download, please visit the gameSpace updates page - you will need your username and password so be sure to have them ready!

gameSpace Video Tutorials

Caligari are now offering two downloadable video courses to aid in the use of gameSpace. The Polygonal modeling course shows you the most fundamental of modeling techniques, as it takes you through how to edit vertices, edges and faces so you can shape your object with the precise control required for games, where poly count is critical!

The KFE Animation course will then introduces you to animation in gameSpace, including how to use the KeyFrame Editor to edit the animation sequences which will bring your creations to life!

Sample chapters can be viewed at: http://www.caligari.com/products/trueSpace/bs5/Courses/polygon.asp

The full videos can be purchased on-line at: https://forms.caligari.com/tscmktoffer.asp?code=GSCRS01

gameSpace for Free!

Our final piece of gameSpace news this month is the most exciting - Caligari have produced a special Light version of gameSpace which you can download completely free of charge.

You can work on models using all the modeling and animation tools from gameSpace, and save models of up to 650 polygons so that you do not have to do everything in one go.

There are no removed modeling or animation tools, and no time limit - you can use gameSpace Light for as long as you choose!

DirectX 9 Graphics Programmers Guide

Book Review by Mike Johnson / TGC

This book covers everything you need to know about programmable shaders when using DirectX 9.

To begin with there's an introduction to vertex shaders explaining what they are and how to use them within D3DX. This is all useful background information. From here the book moves into more detail explaining all about the vertex shader virtual machine, layout of shaders, registers and all of the instructions you will need to know.

Following on from the chapters on vertex shaders are two chapters on pixel shaders which follow a similar format with explanations and examples. Part two of the book covers high level shader language (HLSL).

In part three of the book effect files are introduced. This section of the book will be particularly useful to those who want to implement shaders in DB Pro as shaders written in HLSL and placed in effect files can be used in DB Pro.

While this book is more aimed at developers wanting to use the DirectX 9 SDK and C++ it may prove to be useful for those wanting to write their own shaders for use in DB Pro.

You can buy the book from Amazon by clicking here.

3D Canvas 6.5 Released

Amabilis has released a significant update to their top budget-3D package, Canvas 3D. Version 6.5 (which is a free upgrade to all registered users) boasts the following enhancements:

- Enhanced Boolean Operations - Boolean operations now produce fewer faces and points.
Renderer Improvements - The 3D Canvas renderer now displays multi-layered translucency and transparency.
Improved Divide Operation - The Divide operation has a new option to allow for horizontal and vertical divisions.
Enhanced Crease Operation - The Crease operation now creates faces that have collinear edges.
New Repair Geometry Operation - The new Repair Geometry operation corrects problems with model geometry such as collinear edges and concave facets.
New Merge Triangles Operation - Automatically merges triangles where the resulting faces are planar and convex.
Reduced Memory Usage - Memory usage is reduced for scenes with large numbers of layers.

Plus many more. You can purchase 3D Canvas Pro on-line or download a free trial from our web site at: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=3dview_product&id=2093

DBPro .NET Library Plugin

DBP_NETLIB is a plugin for DarkBASIC Professional that provides over 40 useful functions written in Visual Basic .NET for use directly within your DarkBASIC Professional programs. It requires the .NET Framework 1.1 (a free download) and the functions include Type Conversion, DirectX functions, Date and Time functions, String functions, File functions and a set of General functions such as directory dialogs, message boxes and more.

Download for free from: http://www.mod2software.com/dbp/dbp.htm

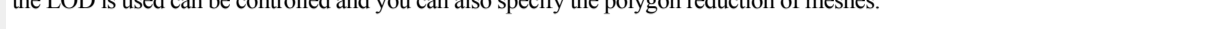
Super Sprite Pack

A new Super Sprite Pack is available to buy from Black Rogue Software. These sprites have been lovingly crafted and wouldn't look out of place in any decent 2D game. There are 826 separate images in total and the various packs on offer include MIDI files, FX, bitmapped fonts, source code (for a viewer) and an animation processor.

For more details visit: http://www.blackrogue.com/page4.html

Cover Game: Blastroids

Created by Grant Clark with DarkBASIC Classic, Blastroids is as you may have already guessed, an asteroids styled game. This one is just that little bit special however. Take a look at the screen shots below and then read the reviews from the TGC staff.



Raveys Review:

"Blastroids is a game many will be shocked to learn Blastroids is derived from a very old (and dearly loved) arcade game called Asteroids. The objective is simple - stay alive as long as you can (which I guess is most people's object in real life!).

"Blastroids is presented in a very slick manner, from the twitching "Press Space Bar" music to the subtle spimming of the planet in the background. The presentation gives you that feeling that someone has put a lot of care and attention into every aspect of the game.

"Blastroids is a remake of Asteroids. The gameplay is essentially the same as the original. You can move the ship around with some simple controls and from there you have to destroy all of the asteroids. There's all sorts going on when you get in the game and it starts to get fairly frantic as you progress through the levels although to begin with there's only a few asteroids to get rid of and it won't take long to get past the first few levels - after that it starts to get much harder."

"Graphically the game looks great. There's loads of animations in there and the explosion effects when you blow up an asteroid are excellent. The presentation is good and what is good and things are laid out clearly. Overall would give it 7 / 10. Good game to play but could do with some more variation. Looking forward to seeing what will be in the final release as it's very promising."

Download from: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=3view_product&id=2000

FPS Creator Insider

From the 17th of May to the 19th we had a TGC company meeting in the sunny north of England. For pretty much the whole of the 2nd day our lead developer Lee Bambar demonstrated the latest version of FPS Creator for the whole team.

He first played with the Map Editor, showing how you can click together entire rooms intelligently. By selecting a wall segment and literally painting onto the grid the walls all locked together correctly, even when moving in different directions.

Switching into game mode the level flickered into life. The lights cast an eerie glow down onto the scene and the gun reflected it with a green tinge. As he walked down the corridor the colours blended seamlessly and the 3D positional sound of distant footsteps could be heard. It was the enemy character he had placed. A quick flick through the weapon inventory selected the should-mounted rocket launcher, primed and ready for action.

Now was a perfect time to strike - Lee rolled a number of grenades into the area and they all exploded sending the enemy and boxes flying across the map. Rushing around the corner he fired off a couple of rockets finishing the job as they exploded with a glorious "boom" leaving a giant scorch mark on the floor where the enemy had been.

Although still only in its first incarnation, the AI in FPS Creator is already very good. The enemies can be assigned to waypoint paths and will traverse them, scanning the room cautiously. They can also plot new paths directly to the player last known location and jump from a status of "clim" to "alert". Using a special debug mode we were able to see the waypoints being plotted in real-time as the enemy stalked the room and that is what we've got to show you this month in these exclusive screen shots.

Next Time... There is still much work to be done on FPS Creator and we are determined to not release until we are happy it is a killer title, but from what we saw demonstrated this is getting closer with every day. Next time we will return to the Question and Answers session - so if you have any not previously asked, please send them to: fpc@thegamecreators.com.

DTSP Car Winner and Awards

Several issues ago we announced details that the publishers of Driving Test Success PRACTICAL and WH Smiths were giving away a brand-new Vauxhall Corsa car. Well 35,000 entries later and the lucky winner was selected.

Nick Storey, South West Area Manager, WHSmith presented 19 year old Amy Davies of Feniton with the keys to the brand new Vauxhall Corsa she won in a competition run by the retailer and Focus Multimedia. The competition, which promoted Focus Multimedia's Driving Test Success PC CD-Rom Budget Price. That's higher than Sonic 3D, Lemmings for Windows, Theme Park World, Sim City 3000 and Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2.

You may wonder why we keep going on about Driving Test Success PRACTICAL in this newsletter. Well apart from the fact that we (The Game Creators) made it - it was created entirely in DarkBASIC Classic. It just goes to show that an award-winning package capable of topping the software charts and selling thousands upon thousands of copies is totally possible with DarkBASIC.

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

RagDoll Ahoy!

The hottest buzzword in PC games today is "RagDoll" - meaning the ability to blow away an opponent and watch as they fall and tumble around the map in an accurate and realistic manner -! This month sees the release of a new demo for DarkBASIC Professional that showcases impressive ragdoll support so you don't have to start messing with the complex physics involved.

Released by Wolf this demonstration is great fun to just sit and play with, never mind showing off just what is possible. Join in the action here and try it for yourself: http://developer.thegamecreators.com/?m=forum_view&t=30311&b=5

Operation: Invasion Evasion V2

Lots of you will probably remember this fun little game from the Alienware Competition where it came a healthy 5th place. Well author Andrew Vanbeck has updated it to include a bunch of new features he didn't have time to cram into the original.

There are several improvements and gameplay tweaks, probably the most important being the inclusion of WASD screen scrolling - makes things much more fun, that and the map make for an easier game, so now the camera has to stay close to a dude, no more surveying the whole level before making a move :)

You can download this new version of the game from here: http://files.thegamecreators.com/showcase/alienware/IE_V2.zip (16MB)

Limefly Contest #1

Limefly is a web site offering collections of textures and other media for games. They are having a contest where you have to produce the best technical demo you can using any of their free media. Various prizes up for grabs including free web hosting and more. There are not many days of the competition left however, the end date being June 4th - but if you've got some spare time then why not give it a shot?

Full details can be found here: http://www.limefly.net/html/modules.php?name=Forums&file=viewtopic&t=31

Swedish Make a Game Contest

If you speak Swedish then this competition might interest you. Swedish Television are running a competition where you can win a Playstation 2 and copies of This is Football every week. All you have to do is create a fun game. Full details (in Swedish of course) are available here: http://svt.se/svt/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=13108

Snowball Fight Beta

There is something about this game that I just really love - but I'm not sure entirely what. It could be the super-slick presentation, the cute and effective graphics or the fact it just feels so darn weird having a snowball fight in the middle of summer?! But that is what this game is all about - try and avoid the AI and get flung! Whatever the reason - this great game is well worth downloading.

Programmer Walaber has done a terrific job and the current version features 2 levels to play in, 2 characters to select from, 6 different power-ups, 1 or 2 player modes, customisable screen controls, great special effects and more.

View the current forum thread about Snowball Fight by clicking here, why not test it and leave your comments so it can be improved further? You can visit the Snowball Fight web site here: http://walaber.dbspot.com/sbf/

X-Quad Editor

Our Gaelic DarkBASIC friend Frederic has been busy! The X-Quad Editor is an editor that will help you create games easier and faster which includes both an editor (and source code) with all the usual features available from a map/level editor. Those features include:

- Map sizes support 128x128 tiles large
Each tile can support: 1 object + 1 item + 1 ground (lights and 3D sound aren't linked to tiles)
Light positioning, color, range, halo, effects (like flames, flags, waves) are available
3D sound positioning and parameters available (volume, repeat, delays, waves)
Objects can be walls, doors, platforms and special ones
Items can be: keys, switches, bonuses, weapons
Switches activate a chosen tile when player is on it
Bonuses available: Extra points, extra time, extra life, HP bonus, invulnerable, invisibility, extra speed, extra jump
Weapons: 8 global weapons that can be FULLY customized (type of projectiles, speed, shot rate, and more) + 2 extra bonuses: Extra power and Extra Ammo
Ground can be: Normal, Sliding, Teleport for doors, platforms, music change, footstep and more ...
Support for ambient sounds that can be used for outer opening (objects), bonus taking, bonus and others...
Music support to allow music in-game and music can be changed depending on where the player is in the map...
4 kind of views available: FPS view (First person shooter), REAR view (like Tomb Raider), TOP View (like Alien Breed), FIX CAMERA View (like Resident Evil)
Players can be fully customized (3D object used, animations, jump height, player sizes, kind of HP)
Map visual: support for FOG (range, color), ambient light, skybox, real-time skybox (real-time world speed can be changed), water
Support multiple camera setting for games like Resident Evil (many cameras can be positioned in the map and oriented to give special ambient)
Object and item properties allow users to see real time changes (sizes, effects, properties)
Support for scripts for futures entities

Here are some screen shots of the X-Quad Editor and a game:

- Free View
Multi-Cam
Visual Properties
Jumping Room
Night Falls
Raining
Sun goes down

Frederic has a few bugs to iron out and then it'll be fully translated to English and released. The objective of the project is to provide a full and independent game production program for RPG, FPS and other kinds of game from one single package. Having tested out a demo version of a game created with X-Quad I can state quite definitely that this has real promise - the real-time weather/sky effects were gorgeous and everything ran smoothly.

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 ???p00@prawnworks.??? - just email us and a free copy of DarkBASIC Professional is yours.

Outro

Got something you want thousands of people to read about in the next issue? Then get in touch! Email me: fpc@thegamecreators.com or use our Feedback form.