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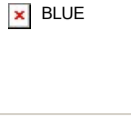
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Intro

This month sees the arrival of our biggest programming competition ever. Build a game featuring our 3D Alien character and you could win yourself a complete Alienware Aurora system. We first released details of the competition with the launch of our new web site but this issue we bring you a definitive rules list and entry guidelines. For DarkBASIC Professional August brings the release of Upgrade 5. We've been following the reports of the two public betas closely and a huge amount of changes and enhancements have gone into the final version. In other news this month we've details of some new plugins for DarkBASIC Professional, new screen shots from DarkMATTER 2, a handful of hot game reviews and more.

Turning DarkBASIC Professional BLUE

One of the features of DarkBASIC Professional is the ease with which you can extend the language even further by simply dropping DLLs into a compiler directory. You then get access to all of the new commands that the DLL provides. This has lead rise to a range of DLLs (also known as Third Party Plugins) being made available by aspiring developers. BLUE by Robert Knight is one such DLL that gives you programs over 140 new commands to create and control Graphical User Interface elements. Using BLUE you can call up standard Windows controls such as a File Selector, Colour picker, Font and Message dialogs. It's also easy to add Buttons, Labels, Edit boxes, Textareas, Panels, Tabs, Checkboxes and lots more. BLUE costs only \$12 (£7.50) and is available from <http://blue.robert-knight.net/>



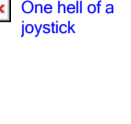
Using BASS with DarkBASIC Professional

BASS is a highly regarded Sound System in use in many commercial games. It provides developers with powerful yet easy to use sample, stream (MP3, MP2, MP1, OGG, WAV), MOD music (XM, IT, S3M, MOD, MTM, UMX), MO3 music (MP3/OGG compressed MODs), audio CD, and recording functions. BASS also allows 3D positioning of samples, streams and MOD musics, and supports EAX (Environmental Audio eXtensions). Until now if you wanted to use the BASS Sound System you would have to figure out the function calls for yourself. Thanks to Nicholas Kingsley you can now get a DLL for DarkBASIC Professional that makes all of this a breeze. Using BASS you could create a VU-meter / Spectrum Analyser effect that worked on music streaming from an Internet site or use OGG files in your games. Use of the BASS Sound System is free for non-commercial titles and Nicks plugin can be found here: <http://www.nicknildram.co.uk/Plug-Ins/plugin-ins.html> where you'll also find many other high quality plugins.



The Best Joystick Ever?!

DarkBASIC developer Mark Judd is being sponsored by Blokart to create a land sailing simulator which he's building in DarkBASIC. For those that don't know a "Blokart" looks almost like a wind surfing board on wheels that you race via simple steering and huge sails. Not content with allowing the player to use the keyboard to control the virtual version of this vehicle however, Mark also rigged up a real Blokart to his DarkBASIC game and made the two work together! Click on the photograph for a better idea just what this entails. Admittedly it's not for everyone's living room, but it's great to see DarkBASIC being put to inventive use like this. You may also be interested to know that the Virtual Blokart game and the interface will be on show and available for use at the Edinburgh 'Funfest' event held this weekend. Users will be able to sail a Virtual Blokart within the main event hall, the game images being projected onto a large screen behind the Blokart stand. Mark has been developing the game for a number of months now and we have an exclusive interview with him in a forthcoming newsletter.



7.5 Million Hits Can't Be Wrong

After many months of hard work the brand new Game Creators web site went live on August 20th. The new site replaced every single "old" site, added a stack of new content that was previously missing and gave the whole company image the overhaul it required. The vast majority of responses to the new-look site were ones of congratulations, with the graphical and feature updates being warmly welcomed. Traffic to the TGC servers more than trippled after the launch and we racked up healthy 7.5 million hits in less than 7 days and it's still going strong.

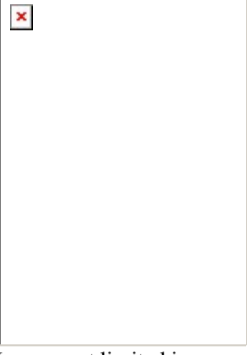
Competition Time



8 days ago we announced our brand new programming competition. The first prize of which is a stunning Alienware Aurora PC worth over \$2100. A lot of speculation and rumours have been floating around the forums since then all trying to guess what the competition would entail. Well we're now glad to present you the final rules and required downloads for this competition.

The Competition

We needed to come up with a suitably "alien" theme for this competition given the superb prize on offer from our sponsors Alienware. We put our thoughts together, our 3D artist Simon put polygons together and we came up with the following as the "theme" of the competition:



"You must create the best, most playable game possible featuring the 3D alien model we have created. You are not limited in game-type in any way. For example the alien could be the star of a racing game, a shoot-em-up, a puzzle game or an FPS. The genere of the game is entirely up to you. It also doesn't have to be "sci-fi" in nature, but the alien character should be made to fit in as best as possible with the rest of the game surroundings."

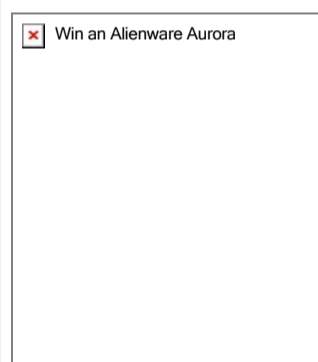
The Prizes

First Place Prize: Alienware Aurora (AMD Athlon XP Processor 3000+, 512MB DDR SDRAM PC-3200, 120GB Seagate Barracuda 8MB Cache, NVIDIA GeForce FX 5600 Ultra 128MB, Creative Soundblaster Audigy 2), a copy of DarkBASIC Professional, Cartography Shop 3, 3D Canvas Pro and Texture Maker. **Second and Third Prizes:** DarkBASIC Professional, Cartography Shop 3, 3D Canvas Pro and Texture Maker. **Fourth to Tenth Place Prizes:** DarkBASIC Professional.

How will we Judge entries?

Your game will be judged according to the following criteria. They are in order of importance: (1) The use of the Alien character (2) Overall game play (3) Presentation quality including graphics, music and sound effects. To clarify, by "use of the Alien character" we mean that the Alien should play a vital role in your game. He cannot just "appear" at the start never to be seen again. The Alien should be the central character / adversary in one way or another. We will be looking for constructive use of the Alien. For example just having him watch the pieces fall in a Tetris game would not be considered as innovative as having him racing a UFO around a landscape. Be imaginative.

We judge game-play on a number of factors: (1) How "fun" is the game to play (2) How "easy" is the game to start playing and understand (3) How responsive is the game. By "easy" and "responsive" we mean for example: "Did we struggle with the controls so badly that the game was just rendered unplayable or was control so smooth that we blasted around with ease?" Or was the game so hard that it wasn't a fair challenge (or so easy that it finished within minutes). Your game should be well balanced and sufficiently long enough as to be fun to play. Finally we will be looking at the quality of presentation. Not how well the graphics are drawn, but how well they are used in the game. Do they move about smoothly, do they fade on nicely and are they presented in an imaginative way? Do the sound effects fit in with the overall game style? These sort of things are paramount to the success of your entry.



The Rules

Please pay careful attention to the rules, they are definitive and will not be altered under any circumstances or for any reason.

1. The game must be created in any version of either DarkBASIC or DarkBASIC Professional.
2. The game must feature the supplied 3D Alien model in a significant way.
3. The title page of your game must include the supplied Alienware logo "Play it on Alienware".
4. The final submitted file must be 15 MB (15,360 KB) in size or less.
5. Your game can be compressed in any way you see fit (ZIP, RAR, ARJ, etc).
6. Your game must execute immediately. Do not use an "installer" package in any way shape or form.
7. You must submit a compiled game, we will not accept source code. No EXE, no entry.
8. All media used in your game must be copyright free or used with written permission.
9. You are allowed to use media from any TGC product (DarkMATTER, The 3D Gamemaker, etc).
10. You can submit a game either individually or as part of a team. If you win, only one prize will be awarded regardless of the number of team members.
11. You cannot submit a game that relies on the Internet or a LAN in order to play it (i.e. a multi player networked game).
12. The entire game must be possible to be played via a standard PC keyboard and mouse set-up. Joystick support is encouraged, but keyboard and mouse support must always be present.
13. By entering you grant exclusive automatic rights to The Game Creators and Alienware to use your game in whatever promotional manner they see fit, on whatever media they wish (print, digital, audio, televisual, etc).
14. You will retain full copyright over the game and any media you create exclusively for it.
15. You are allowed to add or change as many frames of animation of the supplied Alien model as you wish.
16. You are allowed to change the mesh and texture of the Alien model as you see fit, but remember it must stay extremely recognisable.
17. You are allowed to create as many additional models (Alien or otherwise) as you need.
18. Both DarkBASIC and DarkBASIC Professional games will be judged next to each other, we will not split them into two categories. The best game will win on game play, not on technology used.
19. The closing date for the competition is December 31st 2003 at 13:00 GMT.
20. You may submit your game at any stage before the closing date.
21. You may submit as many games into the competition as you wish. Each game must adhere to all of these rules.
22. We cannot test your game for you. Post it onto the Forums for people to check out or send it to friends in order to have it play-tested.
23. The PC the entries will be run on is a Pentium 4 3.0 GHz, 512 MB RAM, Soundblaster Audigy, GeForceFX 5900 video card and DirectX 9.0b. Make sure your game doesn't run so fast it's unplayable on this specification PC! Get friends to test it first.
24. You can re-submit a game as many times as you like up until the closing date of the competition in the case of bug fixes / last minute enhancements.
25. Details on how to submit your game will be included in Newsletter Issue 9, due out at the end of September.
26. No element of the Alienware Aurora PC can be changed or customised. If you win it, sell your existing PC and buy your own upgrades for it! :)
27. No cash alternative is available to any prize on offer.
28. The competition is open to developers world wide.
29. No purchase is necessary. You do not need to own DarkBASIC or DarkBASIC Professional in order to enter, you can submit a game created with the Trial versions of these products.
30. The Judges decision is final.

The Downloads

You can download the Alienware Competition Media Pack. It contains the 3D Alien model, textures and the Alienware Logo required on the title page of your game. You can also optionally download a small Technology Demo created by Lee Bamber showcasing the animations of the Alien model (include source code). Finally, you can download a special 90-day Trial Version of DarkBASIC Professional created exclusively to run for the duration of this competition.

- 1 - [Alienware Media Pack](#) (1.09 MB)
- 2 - [Alienware Demo](#) (3.41 MB)
- 3 - [Alienware DarkBASIC Professional Trial Version](#) (10.3 MB)

Good luck!

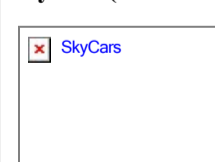
DarkMATTER 2

We are putting the finishing touches to DarkMATTER 2 - the sequel to our successful 3D model and texture collection. The new package will soon be available for download and includes a wide range of objects covering: Planes, Cars, Tanks, Props, Sci-fi / Space, Weapons, Characters and Creatures. The new models are nearly all fully animated using bone-based animation and a professionally produced.



The package comes with a model viewer (written in DarkBASIC Professional, complete with full source code) which shows how to load and use the objects in your own games. Full information will be available on the DarkMATTER web site shortly: http://www.thegamecreators.com/?m=view_product&id=2104

Skycars (DarkBASIC)

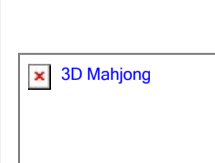


SkyCars is a game of interesting genre: a platform obstacle course / racing game set in exotic areas of the universe. The idea is based on that of Bluemoon's game, SkyRoads, but has many new additions that the original did not. SkyCars is a full 3d remake, more than complete with obstacles, asteroids, hyperspace warps, rings, jump pads, explosive mines, and different vehicles with distinct traits - to name a few features. The game is both addicting and tedious (in a good way!) - it will provide many hours of exciting gameplay. Click the screen shot to view the Showcase entry where you can also download the game.

DarkBASIC Professional Upgrade 5

Upgrade 5 for DarkBASIC Professional is the latest in the constantly evolving range of enhancements and fixes for the popular games development language. New with this Upgrade include a large range of commands dedicated to creating and using pixel and vertex shader effects as well as new object display properties that allow you to control values such as ambience, diffusion, specularly and more. Also included are core fixes and a move to DirectX 9.0 for enhanced speed and display quality. Grab the free Upgrade here: <http://www.thegamecreators.com/>

3D Mahjong (DarkBASIC Professional)



3D Mahjong transforms the ancient game of solitaire and explodes it onto your desktop in stunning real-3D detail. From the photorealistic digitally scanned artwork, real-time 3DFX and dynamic lighting to the tranquil multi-layered audio, Mahjong Solitaire unleashes a whole new dimension in the ancient art of Solitaire. With 20 Original and Classic layouts to play through and Billions of unique games to challenge you, a Classic & Kids tile sets, SuperHint, Multiple Undo, and much more 3D Mahjong is fun for novices and masters alike. Tile to 3D mahjong is the introduction of Elevated Layouts. Featuring spanning bridges and multiple layers that will require you to think in all 3 dimensions. ...You have been warned. The Ancients await your arrival. Click the screen shot to view the Showcase entry where you can also download the game.

Cartography Shop 3.02

Also released this month was 3.02 of Cartography Shop, the world building package. This upgrade fixed a serious problem with 3.01 where the exported X objects failed to render correctly and the registration number could be lost upon rebooting. If you already have 3.01 installed then simply email support@thegamecreators.com to obtain the download location for 3.02.

This Months Winner

As we didn't have room this month for a 20 Line Winner we're going to feature two in the next issue. So get coding and get creative! However as usual 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 bob??@???world.com - just email us and request your copy.

Outro

Here we are at the end of another months newsletter. What an awesome month it has been! Millions of hits to our web site, thousands of downloads of the awesome new showcase games and demos, a great review of DarkBASIC Professional in Game Developer magazine (4/5 rating! More next month), a stunning new competition and a new Upgrade to play with. Pretty awesome stuff :) But as always - please [tell us](#) what you're up to and we'll feature it in a future issue. Until then, get coding!