thegamecreators
Newsletter - Issue 98 - March 2011

# Editorial - March 2011

As Oscar weekend comes to a close, many more artists and creative genius' walk away with their heads held high and their statuettes weighing them down. With budgets running into millions of dollars, we can only admire from afar their works and wonder just where all the money is spent. Meanwhile, we return to our own development studios (whether they be the bedroom, office or loft conversion) and - pound for pound - create our own works worthy of recognition alongside the Oscar winners.

Earth Space Fleet and SoulHunter are two of our featured games this month. Created by a handful of people they are great works of genius and we hope you'll download and enjoy them both, as well as reading about the journey that brought them to fruition. We have news on tools for the development process, including the much anticipated AGK, and the start of a three part series on making level editors. Join us on the virtual red carpet where you can meet the worthy stars of our world of Indie Game Development, and enjoy your read.

Until Next Time,

Steve Vink

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## Free Your Apps With the App Game Kit

The questions regarding AGK are coming thick and fast. Some of these are easy to answer and we'll do just that in this article. Additionally some questions help us to assess what our community are looking forward to seeing featured, and we can answer those questions too. Check the forum thread for the initial Q&As, this article covers new questions asked recently by TGC forum members;

**Eclipse and API lib? I'm already using that workflow for IOS. Eclipse is pretty bulky. Why use a bulky/redundant IDE?**

- We are making special attention to this, and stripping Eclipse down to the bare essentials

**If you add text commands, will they support antialiasing?**

- We are using bitmap fonts for the built-in text, so you can choose a resolution that suits

**I assume there will be a built in tile-, layer-, animation- and lightning system, like in the 2D plugin Kit (or something similar)?**

- Our focus primarily is a solid and fast foundation. We are adding features which elevate it from being just another wrapper, but we're keeping those dark for the moment.

**And, I also hope there will still be a significant amount of 3D commands?**

- There will be no 3D commands in the first release. Our aim is a really solid 2D kit to begin with. We may be exposing some nice 3D-esk features like shaders and UV manipulation, but only as far as quads.

**I asked if the AGK will use the OpenGL ES system for its rendering?**

- Yes we are using OpenGL ES on devices where OpenGL is not available, but you are protected from this distinction by the language.

**Is it just me or does the tier 1 runtime app that loads other apps sound like it's against Apple's TOS?**

- It's a grey area and we have some strategies to overcome this barrier. For those with a Mac, you will always have the option of compiling natively to comply fully with Apple rules.

**Bytecode, fine, but why not allow us to distribute ourselves similar to how DBC was done?**

- You can, anyone with a Mac can compile their Tier 1 apps natively for publication on the App Store. We plan to offer a service to publish apps for those users who do not have access to an Apple Mac.

**Why not offer pre-processing commands where we can have our cake and eat it too?**

- You can. There will be a command in AGK which tells you which device you are running on, just in-case you want to re-arrange your screen, make buttons smaller or present specific themes.

**Will it be possible to embed and access external .dll files and AS3 .api files?**

- There are no plans to support third party external plugins or modules in Tier 1. Naturally Tier 2 will allow any number of linkages as it's plain old C++.

**Any TGC splash screens or watermarks?**

- No plans to add anything like that. If you pay for AGK, you should not have to display our logos all over your work.

**Why couldn't I sell games made from Tier 1 without going through TGC?**

- You can, many platforms are not as restrictive as Apple, allowing you to compile your Tier 1 app and distribute it right away. To distribute your own Tier 1 apps on Apple, you will need a Mac to perform the final certificate based compile.

**What kinds of support will there be for internationalization and localization? Would we be building this kind of support ourselves or will there be something built into AGK for multiple languages?**

- Great question. We have been focusing more on speed and universal stability at the moment, with localisation being left to the app author for the moment. There are a number of competing solutions which make localisation a snap, though we have yet to choose one. One simplified solution we have identified is that the app can be exported with the text data separated out, so you can localise without re-compiling the app. We'll explore this more during the public betas.

**I would like to see the ability for us to distribute our works freely. In other words if I want to make some games for free and I don't want to go through TGC, I should be able to do that?**

- Yes you can do that in Tier 1 and 2. See answers above.

**Why not support OGG instead of MP3? Doesn't MP3 have licensing issues?**

- Only device and OS vendors need worry about licensing MP3. End users are permitted to produce and digest MP3 content on suitably licensed devices. We have not ruled out OGG, which has certain advantages over MP3.

**What's the point of making AGK compile to byte-code in the first place? You could just convert to C++ and compile it yourselves?**

- The choice is about ease versus speed. Tier 1 byte-code is designed to run on every device we ultimately support. If this becomes ten platforms, it means the programmer only has to code and test on one device, knowing they don't have to buy, build and set-up the nine other platforms to make their app cross-platform. Tier 2 is for those who prefer to compile for each platform personally, ensuring the fastest performance and widest support for device specific features.

**Have you guys at TGC done any research into existing languages geared towards games?**

- TGC have been developing and publishing game creation tools for over eleven years, and its employees have been using game making tools ten years before that. We have a natural interest in this field and always keep an eye on the horizon to see what our contemporaries are up to. To date, we've not found anything that has convinced us to switch to a third party development tool. As the number of game capable platforms explode, AGK is something we needed in-house, and we're pleased to be able to share this cool technology with you soon.

**Is it possible to use the "easy" tier1 commands in tier2? Or are you restricted to the c++ ish code?**

- Yes you can. In order for you to self-publish a Tier 1 app, you will need a Mac, the iOS SDK and a special build of the Tier 1 interpreter which will allow you to take your Tier 1 app and compile it as a native binary for the App Store. C++ knowledge is not required.

**Do you publish all the games we ask you to publish (if they work) or do you publish only the good ones?**

- Good question. We have over two years' experience specifically in publishing mobile apps to various stores, and have learned a thing or two about what makes a good app. Given the cost TGC would incur incubating the app and getting it ready for cross-platform sale, we'd only choose apps that reach a certain standard. Apps that don't quite make the grade will be given support on how they can be improved. Accepted apps will enjoy cross promotion within our extensive catalogue of apps and constant monitoring to ensure they remain compatible as devices evolve.

**I own all of these platforms already, so if you need a beta tester with a multitude of devices and who has been with DB since the very beginning, I'd be happy to oblige?**

- Great to hear we have a small army of brutal testers. As soon as we're confident, we will announce a public beta of AGK in our monthly newsletter. Not quite there yet!

**When selling games using Tier 1 will the end user have to first download a player? Does this apply to all supported platforms?**

- Not at all, when you compile your app in Tier 1 the player is included. When you sell your app on the store, the interpreter is part of the final package and no separate Player is required. All devices will operate this way.

**Will Tier 1 games be sold through a player app? I assume we can't sell them through an Appstore directly.**

- Selling through a player is prohibited on most mobile stores, and so we are not using this approach. You can sell your app directly through an App Store by building a package that includes the player along with your app code, media and other files.

**Since you receive money from every sale of Tier 1 games I assume it will be cheaper to get a Tier 1 license then a Tier 2 license? Will there also be an upgrade price for those who want Tier 2 later?**

- Yes to both questions. Tier 1 is the affordable and easy game making solution, whereas Tier 2 provides additional benefits of device specific support and a C++ environment.

**You have support for MP3s, do we need some kind of license to sell games with MP3 music?**

- Not at all, only device and OS manufacturers need to buy such an encode/decode license. As the app uses the native MP3 support of the device, and not an internal decoder, no fee is due.

**How hard would it be to make the run-time app (used in tier 1) into a browser plug-in?**

- We are treating browsers as another future platform for us to support. We continue to look at the evolving browser technologies with interest, especially those that promise native performance from the host system.

**If I wanted to take advantage of the user's GPS location, would I need a Tier 2 licence or are these features supported within Tier 1?**

- A. You would need a Tier 2 license, and you would need to learn the platform specific SDK that provides that GPS information.

**So, when will we be able to pre-order it and for those of us who do pre-order it will we have to wait until it is officially released to get it or will we be able to get our hands on a beta copy (or pre-release candidate) to start experimenting with?**

- We are not planning to take pre-orders at this time, and warming to the idea of a community discount applied to an early adopter version of AGK. As you would be helping us test the product, you would be automatically given a full price license on completion under this scheme. There will also be a public beta to some degree so you can play around with the tool kit and get a feel for the technology.

**Is Kindle going to be one of the targeted platforms?**

- No, Kindle will not be supported for some time. Our primary target are popular mobile and desktop devices that are capable of playing fast games and apps.

**When/If the Android platform is supported - how would I take advantage of the Google maps feature? Would I need a T-2 licence for this?**

- Yes you would need the Tier 2 product, which allows per-device support of specific features not present in the core engine, such as GPS, Maps, Calendar and other features.

## Programming in AGK

We've been taking feedback for some time now in the forums, regarding the format and syntax of the language. Rather than explain the intricacies of coding an AGK application, here's a basic but full demo, that will illustrate just how easy it will be to create game apps in AGK;

```
img=LoadImage ( "backdrop.png", 0 )
Sprite ( 1, img, 0.0, 0.0 )
img=LoadImage ( "sprite.png", 0 )
DeviceWide# = 240 : DeviceHigh# = 360 : AspectRatio#=(DeviceWide#/DeviceHigh#)
gridx#=100.0/7.0
gridy#=gridx#*AspectRatio#
dim sprx(500) as float
dim spry(500) as float
dim sprfall(500) as integer
for s=1 to 300
  Sprite ( 100+s, img, -100.0, -100.0 )
  SetSpriteSize ( 100+s, gridx#, gridy# )
next s
gameloop=1
gamerestart=1
while gameloop=1
  rem Reset
  if gamerestart=1
```

```
  gamerestart=0
  gamespeed=12
  rowpos=0
  rowindex=1
  rowqty=3
  lastrowqty=3
  rowdir=1
  rowtimer=0
  rowobjoffset=1
  rowobjoffsetindex=0
  gameblockfall=0
  for s=1 to 500
    sprfall(s)=0
  next s
endif
rem Control
if gameblockfall=0
  if GetTouchPressed()=0 then click=0
  if GetTouchPressed()=1
    if click=0
      inc rowindex
      tshiftpos=0
      if rowindex=2
        rowqty=3
      else
        if lastrowpos>rowpos
          deduct=lastrowpos-rowpos
          rowqty=rowqty-deduct
          for trim=0 to deduct-1
            sprfall(100+rowobjoffset+trim)=1
          next trim
          tshiftpos=deduct
        else
          if lastrowpos<rowpos
            deduct=rowpos-lastrowpos
            deduct=deduct-(lastrowqty-rowqty)
            if deduct>0
              rowqty=rowqty-deduct
              for trim=0 to deduct-1
                sprfall(100+rowobjoffset+((lastrowqty-1)-trim))=1
              next trim
            endif
          endif
        endif
        if rowqty<=0
          gameblockfall=1
          rowobjoffsetindex=rowobjoffset
        endif
      endif
      lastrowpos=rowpos+tshiftpos
      lastrowqty=rowqty
      rowobjoffset=rowobjoffset+3
      gamespeed=gamespeed-1
      rowpos=-1
      rowdir=1
      click=1
    endif
  endif
  rem Logic
  inc rowtimer
  if rowtimer>gamespeed
    if rowdir=1 then rowpos=rowpos+1
    if rowdir=2 then rowpos=rowpos-1
    rowtimer=0
  endif
```

```
    if rowpos>5 then rowdir=2
    if rowpos<-1 then rowdir=1
    rem Row Qty
    for rq=0 to rowqty-1
      sprx(100+rowobjoffset+rq)=(rowpos+rq)*gridx#
      spry(100+rowobjoffset+rq)=100.0-(rowindex*gridy#)
      SetSpritePosition ( 100+rowobjoffset+rq, (rowpos+rq)*gridx#, 100.0-(rowindex*gridy#) )
    next rq
    for rq=0 to rowobjoffset+rowqty
      if sprfall(100+1+rq)=1
        spry(100+1+rq)=spry(100+1+rq)+1.0
        SetSpritePosition ( 100+1+rq, sprx(100+1+rq), spry(100+1+rq) )
      endif
    next rq
  else
    rem block fall to start again
    if rowobjoffsetindex>0
      inc rowtimer
      if rowtimer>5
        rowobjoffsetindex=rowobjoffsetindex-1
        rowtimer=0
      endif
    else
      inc rowtimer
      if rowtimer>50
        gameblockfall=0
        gamerestart=1
        rowtimer=0
      endif
    endif
    for rq=rowobjoffsetindex to rowobjoffset+rowqty
      spry(100+1+rq)=spry(100+1+rq)+1.0
      SetSpritePosition ( 100+1+rq, sprx(100+1+rq), spry(100+1+rq) )
    next rq
  endif
  Sync()
endwhile
end
```

## What is AGK?

App Game Kit (AGK) primary aim is to take away the pain of cross-platform development and let you focus on what matters, your games! Using powerful and simple to learn commands like LoadImage, Sprite, and PlaySound, developers can quickly code their games and have them running on multiple devices in no time. Games can be made to scale to different screen sizes, so you'll be sure your game will work on any size of device.

*Development of apps across different platforms is complex and time consuming. The Game Creators will be releasing the App Game Kit in early 2011 to provide a truly frictionless cross platform solution.*

At launch AGK will support iOS, Samsung Bada and Windows, allowing developers to deploy games instantly for the Apple App Store, Samsung Apps and Intel's AppUp store.

Later in 2011 Phase 2 will see extra platforms added, including Android, Windows Mobile 7, Blackberry and MeeGo. No changes to the games will be required, just select a new platform and the games can be deployed to these devices.

The Game Creators' CEO, Lee Bamber said "*AGK is a tool we needed at TGC, it's already saving us time and money developing new apps. We're sure other developers will find it invaluable and it's also easy for hobbyist and indie developers to get started making games.*"

## Main Features

- Write once, deploy everywhere architecture

- Powerful and easy to use commands
- Fast 2D game engine native to each platform
- Screen resolution independent
- Built-in physics for the best in game dynamics
- Input device agnostic
- Extensive on-line documentation
- Free to try

**With AGK**, you can be assured that the ByteCode will be as efficient as we can make it for you.

Thanks to the feedback from the poll and AGK thread, we have shown you a sneak peek at actual AGK code currently compiling and producing executables for Windows and iOS. We'll show another example here, and then delve a little deeper for those who want to see just how it breaks down into bytecode:

```
type usertype
  spr as integer
  img as integer
  x as float
  y as float
endtype
var1 as usertype
var1.spr = 1
var1.img = 2
var1.x = 25.0
var1.y = 50.0
LoadImage(var1.spr,"sprite.png")
Sprite(var1.spr,var1.img,var1.x,var1.y)
c=0
while c=0
  c=GetTouchPress()
  Print(var1.spr)
  Sleep(1)
  Sync()
endwhile
end
```

As you can see variables, types and control structures are identical to DBP, whilst all commands have had their spaces removed and brackets are now mandatory. The compiler is case insensitive and if you look closer we have made a few small changes and additions to suit the new environment you will be entering. Touch Press instead of Mouse Click. The image number now preceeds the filename in Load Image to align with other commands that use this arrangement. And for those worried about interpreter performance, here is the byte code:

```
10 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_USERDATATYPE_USERDATATYPE,@var1,0
11 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_INTEGER_VALUE_INTEGER,@var1,1
12 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_INTEGER_VALUE_INTEGER,@var1{+4},2
13 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_FLOAT_VALUE_FLOAT,@var1{+8},25.0
14 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_FLOAT_VALUE_FLOAT,@var1{+12},50.0
15 : AGKI_LOADIMAGE_INTEGER_STRING,@var1,$$1
16 : AGKI_SPRITE_INTEGER_INTEGER_FLOAT_FLOAT,@var1,@var1{+4},@var1{+8},@var1{+12}
17 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_INTEGER_VALUE_INTEGER,@c,0
18 : AGKI_EQUAL_VARIABLE_INTEGER_VALUE_INTEGER,@c,0
18 : AGKI_JUMPIFFALSE,$label1[24]
19 : AGKI_GETTOUCHPRESS_INTEGER,@$L0
19 : AGKI_ASSIGNVAR_VARIABLE_INTEGER_VARIABLE_INTEGER,@c,@$L0
20 : AGKI_PRINTL_INTEGER,@var1
21 : AGKI_SLEEPL_INTEGER,1
22 : AGKI_SYNC
22 : AGKI_DIRECTJUMP,$label0[18]
```

We are still optimizing the byte code output and replacing key performance areas with ASM code for the best performance under X86 architecture (with ARM code to follow). We have also started performace profiling on the various devices and have been encouraged by the cycles we can get for typical 60fps games and applications. The team are really excited about AGK and are eager to start the public beta test as soon as possible. Watch this space!

## Apps Update - "Gooey Fun For All!"

Welcome to the world of The Blobs. Disaster strikes when an asteroid crashes down and sends each member of the family to the four corners of their cute little world. Help Brother Blob in his search for his lost family by travelling through six different terrains, from the heavily wooded "Secret Forest" to the harsh conditions of "Metal Defence".

Move Brother Blob by tilting the world around and sliding Brother Blob towards the exits in each level. His fluid like body can squeeze through tight gaps and he can even split into separate pieces. Blob moves in a very unique way, can you master the skills necessary to guide him in his mission?

Here's a taste of what's in store;

- 120 Levels across six different zones
- Unique meta-ball physics used to animate Blob
- Pick up bonus stars in each level
- Avoid spikes, holes, trap doors and firing cannons.
- Resist blowing fans
- Spin around in roundabouts
- Flick switches to open doors
- Unlock exits by solving sequence puzzles
- Push past crumbling rocks and bounce off bumpers
- Destroy robots and teleport through portals
- Zip past electrified areas and avoid shooting turrets

Can you save all the Blobs and bring sanity back to their little world? Watch out in the App Store for the imminent release, and of course we'll let you know in the forums and the newsletter how to get hold of it.

## iDare is back On Top

One of The Game Creators first ever games for the iPhone and iPod Touch - iDare - is back in the UK top 10 for the third time, hitting number 2 in recent weeks. Why not join over 4 million other users and download it now from the App Store.

iDare Deluxe tests your finger dexterity to the max. In this fully featured version of the 'Five Finger Fillet' game you can impress your family and friends with your acccurate touch skills.

The full range of game modes include:

- **Career mode** - show that you have what it takes to be the best and tap through the gradually increasing levels.
- **Quick play** - just try and beat the high score.
- **Endurance** - how long can you hold out without making more than three mistakes?
- **Time trial** - you have 60 seconds to build up your best score

Available on the iPhone App Store

- **Ninja** - only for the most nimble of fingers. No mistakes allowed here!

## Smack It! gets a Monkey-Styled Facelift

The Game Creators are publishing an update to Smack It! - our FREE to play Wack-a-mole game for the iPhone. The new version features

- new Monkey level
- Open Feint high score support
- iOS4 support

Smack It is an exciting, fast paced game where your reactions are tested to the max. Brace yourself and get your fingers ready for some high speed action.

The idea is simple - watch out for critters entering the level and then smack them as hard as you can. As time passes the game speeds up so get ready to react ultra fast and bash those critters.

Along with the new Monkey level, Smack It contains six more levels of gameplay featuring these levels:

- Cute Meerkats
- Hillside with moles
- Clouds of Heaven with angels
- Martian level with aliens
- Ice world with penguins
- Fire and brimstone level with devils

Available on the iPhone App Store

Check out the full details on our website.

## DarkBASIC Professional News

twitter

Everything you need to know about both DarkBASIC Professional and FPS Creator development can now be found via Lee Bamber's Tweets. You'll get to hear about every bug fix and feature as it's implemented!

Start following Lee now to get the latest news about your favourite development tools as it happens.

## Earth Space Fleet

This new game by Ermes is a huge space sim. It features:

- 120+ different ships
- 60+ missions
- Unlockable ships
- Unlockable missions
- Tutorials
- Italian and English translations.

The game includes 3 tutorial missions to help you familiarise yourself with the controls. Once you've completed these, you'll be ready to start assembling your fleet and commence your fight for the freedom of Earth! As well as mouse and keyboard control, gamepad control has also been integrated.

"One of the hard things to establish for a Space Sim game is a good Spacesphere", says Ermes, "with nebulae, stars and planets. It was hard to find some nice, high resolution and seamless nebulae graphics, and especially without stars. In the end, I used four main nebulae images plus four sections from existing nebulae which I gathered from internet sources, mixing these images into 8 different spacescapes.

"From within DarkBASIC Professional, I then added around 2,000 stars using a random placement method, and finally textured the Spacesphere. One important design issue is to ensure you leave the North and South pole clear of graphics."

"Making the spaceship media was very challenging, with 122 different spaceships to account for. Only diffuse textures were used to make the game faster to develop. If an updated version were to be released, it would allow time to introduce maps and shaders to the spacecraft design."

"It was essential to create an editor to produce the mission-led gameplay. It allows me to place ships, assign waypoints, select skill level, and set the conditions to accomplish the missions. The editor can also be used to configure the nebulae and the planets to display."

"The final touches in Earth Space Fleet include a good storyline, a well considered atmosphere including the background music, and of course some tutorial missions help players to understand the game mechanics."

"The main piece of advice I would give to other developers is to ensure the playability and difficulty level is well balanced. Don't forget that if the game is balanced on your own ability, after playing it for many hours during develpment, it will be unplayable for your audience! So let your friends play and listen to what they have to say about your game."

Download Earth Space Fleet here now.

## JewelBeat - Free Music, Free Sound Effects

JewelBeat provide FREE music tracks & sound effects for any production - games, advertising, education, video, photos, YouTube and more. These royalty free instrumental music tracks can be looped seamlessly & repeated to create a longer background music tracks for your projects. Check out the sample below, and visit their website for more tracks and full details of how the material can be used.

## SoulHunter Makes another Appearance

Over three years ago, SoulHunter made his first appearance in the newsletter. After many more years of development and refinement, he's back. Jarl Larsson updates us on the time that has passed in between.

Since the last demo which was released in 2008, most of the work has involved making the final boss fights, cutscenes, a multiplayer deathmatch mode, and of course cleaning up and rewriting

old code. One of the hardest things with working on a project for so long by yourself (I began working on SoulHunter way back in 2005) is that you actually learn so much along the way, and you have to deal with the old code that you wrote over five years ago.

I often get the question why I'm still using DarkBasic Classic to develop this game; stubbornness or laziness, I don't know. I do know however, that had I switched to DBPro or C++ while the project still was small, I would still have to rewrite the engine a gazillion times, since back then I could hardly even pronounce the word 'polymorphism'. Many of the features and special effects in SoulHunter are very DarkBasic Classic-specific. Nowadays many of the effects could be done faster and better with custom shaders. I'd recommend to people reading this that they should learn how to make shaders, you can make so much crazy and fun stuff with them.

There are two features of the game that are worth highlighting:

- Target system. SoulHunter has a targeting system that works like the one in the 3D Zelda games, where you can cycle through the targets. What you have to do here is essentially store the positions of each of the enemies, sorted in the order of their distance to the player. You then have the ability to turn the player to face the closest enemy and switch to the next one in the list each time the target-button is pressed.
- Sword trail effect. This is pretty simple too, once you understand the technique. Start by creating a storage system to store the global top and bottom positions of the sword. This needs to be an array that stores the history of these positions. The longer the array, the higher the resolution of the trail. Now you can use these positions to update the vertices in a plain and produce great motion effects very easily.

The long running thread which dates from 2005 to the present day can be found here. In addition, SoulHunter was released in its Alpha Stage as we went to press. Full details can be found here.

## Daniel Foreman's Tutorials

Daniel has a range of tutorials in video format to speed up your DarkBASIC Professional learning curve, and allow you more time to focus on your game. This month we're featuring his publication on Sidescrolling Star Fields which can also be found on Daniel's website.

Daniel has 3 full volumes of tutorials on DVD, available from the Amazon store. The DarkPRINCIPLES DVD Multidisk set is also now out on Amazon, saving you 20% on the whole collection.

## Dark Game Studio Bonanza

Special offer while stocks last: Dark Game Studio, Dark Physics, Dark Lights, Dark AI and Extends for an incredibly low price of $49.99. **Save over $170!**

Creating your own PC games is now easier than ever with this special compilation of game making tools:

- **DarkBASIC Professional**
- **DarkBASIC Classic**
- **DarkGDK**
- **Dark Edit**
- **DarkMATTER**
- **DarkVOICES**
- **DarkSHADER**
- **Game Creator Store**
- **FPS Creator FREE**
- **Tree Magik**
- **Plant Life**
- **Cartography Shop**
- **Dark Physics**
- **Dark Lights**
- **Dark AI**
- **Extends**
- **Demo Games**
- **Physics Demos**

## Order Now

**Save over $170 on this special deal.** Be sure to check out the screen shots and the online videos. You can of course order safely and securely online, for delivery via postal mail.

FPS Creator - DarkBASIC - 2000 Store Points

## DarkBASIC Professional is Just the Tool for Levelling Up

Richard Rosenthal works at Mommy's Best Games, developing games for the Xbox and the Xbox Live Marketplace. Over the coming months, Richard will be sharing his experiences of using DarkBASIC Professional as an accessible and rapid way to create level editors for games.

### The Explosionade Level Editor

**by Richard Rosenthal**

I started working at Mommy's Best Games roughly a month before the *Explosionade* project began. When *Explosionade* was started, it was created from a previously used game engine from a shoot em' up, *Shoot 1UP*. Because the locations of the enemies/obstacles in *Shoot 1UP* are determined by the computer/timing rather than actual location, there was no level editor for use with the engine, and enemies had to be hard coded into the game using C# method calls for every single one, averaging round 200 characters per call, with upwards of 40 different things in a simple level. Due to time constraints, there were no plans to develop a level editor. Being "lazy," I didn't want to hard code every little piece of wall, or lay it out on graph paper, and instead I developed a level editor in DarkBASIC Professional.

I had done this numerous times in the past, for 3D and 2D games, as well as some more abstract content editors, and was able to draw on this experience and produce a level editor literally over night (and even managed to sneak in some shut-eye). The original editor was able to place pieces with left click, delete them with right click, and scroll through the different pieces using the shift and control keys. Arrow keys moved the viewport in their respective directions, while plus/minus keys zoomed in and out. Saving, loading, exporting, and starting a new level were controlled by the F1-F4 keys and consisted of simple text prompts. Not at all user friendly, but it got the job done. We used this to develop over 50 levels which were pared down to the 40 final levels, well beyond the original scope of the project. The level editor built in DarkBASIC Professional became an invaluable tool in creating the final version of the game.

After the original release on Xbox Live Indie Games, we began working on a much-expanded PC release, with plans to release the editor to users so they could design, upload and share their own levels, in addition to lots of new enemies and new developer levels. This required a complete transformation of the level editor, from an internal technical tool to a user-friendly End User product.

### Do We Need a Level Editor?

A level editor is a tool. If it is not going to save you more time and effort than it took to create it, then don't bother creating it! That being said, don't just assume that it is not going to be worth your time on a small project; even the simplest of level editors can greatly improve the robustness of your designs. It is important to remember that creating a game is both a creative and technical exercise. For perspective, consider that creating 20 well thought out levels is much more important that just mechanically producing 20 levels.

*Next issue, Richard will lay out the requirements of a level editor, the different parts and the ways in which these can influence your approach.*

## Introducing The AppUp DBP Developers Group

**by Steven Holding**

The AppUp DBP Developers Group was an idea I had back in November just after the Intel AppUp competition finished. I was trying to polish my games up after the rush to get them submitted on time and I didn't have a Netbook yet to test them on. There were a few people willing to help Beta test on the AppUp Developer forum but I thought it would be nice to have a community of people from The Game Creators forums who could Beta test Apps as well as share their insights and experience in getting games published on AppUp.

I started the forum thread, asking if anyone else was interested in joining a 'Group' and got a good early response. Since then more and more people have expressed an interest in being a part of the group, whether they are an experienced AppUp developer (of which there are a few) or as a newcomer learning the ins and outs of getting their Apps through the validation process.

I think it's fair to say that if you are considering making a game (or 'App') for sale or for free then the AppUp DBP Developers Group is a good place to ask questions on publishing your game/s, building installers or even just to try out your game to see how it runs on a Netbook!

> *"If you have a bunch of half finished games (like I do) or even just one idea, come and see what we can do to help you get your game AppUp ready!"*

There are a few things you need to know but it's actually fairly simple to get a game past validation. We are learning all the time from each other and willing to help anyone who wants to get a game published. So if you have a bunch of half finished games (like I do) or even just one idea, come and see what we can do to help you get your game AppUp ready!

Here is a current list of contributers to the AppUp DBP Developers Group:

- baxslash
- Van B
- darkcoder
- The Slayer
- thenerd
- Juney
- MMM
- Iceman
- Neco
- Zeus
- DVader
- Alfa x
- matty Halewood
- darkvee
- BillR
- Kamakazi
- Alquerian
- DarkByNight

...and a current list of games published or otherwise by the above members:

**baxslash**

- The Last Stand - Intel Competition winner - Published
- The Last Stand Demo - Published
- Search-Lite - Intel Competition winner Published
- Search-Lite Demo - Published
- LeapFrog - A Peg solitaire game - Published
- LeapFrog Demo - Published
- Soma - Intel Competition entry - Published
- Backlash-Ninja Training -A 2.5D platform game - Beta Testing
- Backlash-Ninja Training-Demo - Beta Testing

**Van B**

- Netboku - A Sudoku game for Netbooks - Published

**darkcoder**

- Astrodude - Intel Competition winner - Published

**The Slayer**

- Brixoid - Intel Competition entry - Awaiting validation

**MMM**

- Super Static Party - A quirky but really fun free App - Published

**darkvee**

- Colors - A hidden object game for all ages -  Awaiting validation

**DarkByNight**

- Shadowcast - A Fantasy text adventure - Beta testing

**Juney**

- Alien SuDiceThru-Xtreme  (Sudoku based puzzle game)- Published
- FlagSuDiceThru (Similarly Sudoku based game)- In development
- LogicMaster - In development

As reported a few months ago, there are many new opportunities for independent developers to publish their work through the Intel AppUp Store. The Game Creators have provided you with the tools and the knowledge you need to get your game AppUp-ready. With DarkBASIC Professional and DarkGDK, you already have the tools to create quality content.

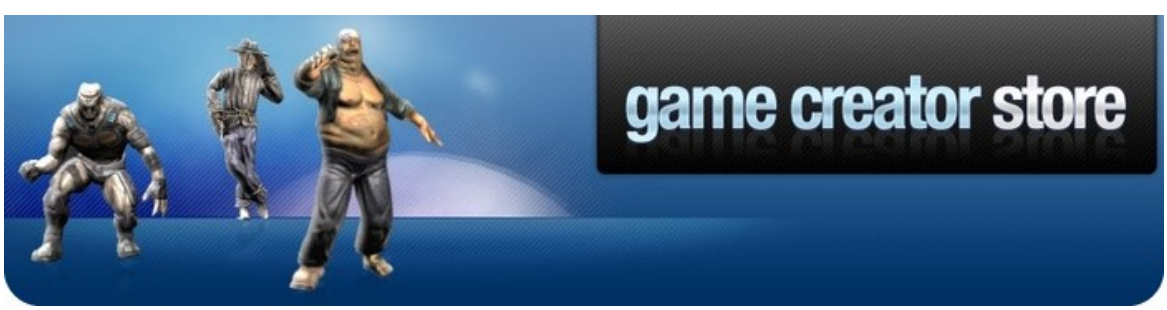
Keyboard Jam by GrumpyJedi, takes the learning process of typing and turns it into a fun game. It utilises the popular rhythm game format and combines upbeat music, visual cues and scoring to keep the player entertained. Whether you need to learn to type for work, emails, forums, letter writing or maybe even writing a book, Keyboard Jam can help you achieve that goal.

You can get the full details of this game on the Absurdly Logical website, where you will also find the link to the AppUp store and download.

## Get Involved

If you're new to the AppUp store you can read up about the developer web site here - Intel's AppUp Developer site and you can download the AppUp store for netbooks here at the AppUp Centre. If you have an application that fits the criteria for a successful Netbook publication, then don't hesitate to get in touch.

## The Game Creator Store - Updates and New Additions




## New Store Additions

### Warehouse

An old service building or warehouse with an abandoned look from the 70's

The building is a hybrid meaning you are able to go into the structure without reloading and can be modified for performance reasons by adding or subtracting parts.

Comes with 4096x4096 textures, diffuse, normal, and specular maps.

### Fish

These fish are designed for background activity.They eat and swim around just as they would in nature. If the player comes into proximity,they get frightened and swim away.

### 2-Handed Sword

A big medieval-style sword weapon with armoured hands. Includes VWEAP and pickup weapon entity. Compatible with hand skins from FPSC model packs 9-10 for the hand portion under the armour. The armour has it's own map for easy modification.

Includes multiple attack animations, simple and compound block animations. Includes gunspec settings for AirMod 0.6 mods. Includes animations and gunspec settings for compatability with Ply's Mod asymmetric dual wielding and compound blocking.

All of the above models are available to purchase and download through the inbuilt Game Creator Store in FPS Creator and DBPro, and also using the standalone store for other game-making tools.

## Pick up free Store Points

The Game Creators have teamed up with the leading providers of virtual currency; perform a few simple tasks and top up your Store points. As well as being able to take up exciting offers and receiving potentially thousands of points, there are a host of other tasks to earn rewards. Watch a movie trailer, rate search results, answer questions, tag photos or choose from a host of activities that will ultimately earn you any of the high quality models and resources to make your game shine.

Open the Store, through FPS Creator, DBPro or the standalone version. Log in to your account and select the *Buy Points* option. Below the regular payment options you'll find links to gWallet, Offerpal, DoubleDing and TrialPay. You'll immediately find yourself in amongst the tasks and offers available, and can start earning immediately by watching a movie trailer or two!

## Upload Your Assets to The Game Creator Store

Did you know you can sell your models, segments, music and sky boxes in the Game Creator Store? We already have dozens of artists selling their media, and we welcome anyone with the talent to provide our community with quality assets to do the same. If you are interested in becoming a store seller, please contact Janet, our Store Administrator directly.

## 3D Modeling Competition - A Small Time 3D Compo

**By David Gervais, BiggAdd and MikeS**

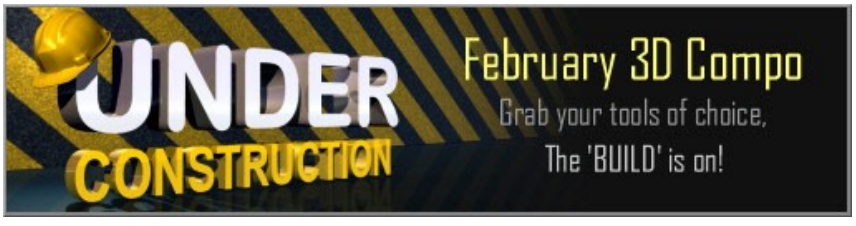
It's time to think small in a big way, this month we want you to make something small, and the kicker is, you need to add something to your render/scene that will give us a sense of scale showing just how small your model is.

This competition will run through to March 25th 2011 and here are the rules:

1) This time the compo will be all about the Beauty Shot and how you can make a model and show us a true sense of scale. This compo should also help you learn that getting the scale right makes all the difference when trying to set up a scene.

2) A beauty shot/render must be posted in the compo thread to qualify.

3)Have fun!




Last month we asked you to grab your tools of choice, show us what comes to mind around the theme of *Under Construction*, whether it be tools, buildings, bridges, machinery, clothes, or anything else you could concoct within the theme. We had a great response, with 15 individual entrants submitting 18 entries. Unfortunately we need to draw your attention to the requirements of the entries; models and textures must be supplied, as outlined again below. We hope those of you that supplied promising snapshots of your work come back next month with the files we need to include you in the judging process. We hope to provide a simplified method for confirming your entries are acceptable in the near future.

- For 3D Best Model, a model is ***required*** for judging. (attach it to your final entry post.)
- For 3D Best Texture, a texture map (UV or Seamless) is ***required*** for judging. (attach it to your final entry post.)
- For 3D Champion both a model and texture are ***required*** for judging. (attach them to your final entry post.)

Here are the winners, selected from the compliant entries:

**3D Master**:

Motran (Construction Crane)

This is an excellent model, which loaded easily for judging including the textures, and showed lots of fine detail. Great Entry!

**3D Best Model**:

Gamer X (Steam Roller)

This is another nicely detailed model. The textures were included but the judges were unable to load the model with the textures applied. Consequently this is awarded under the Best Model category.

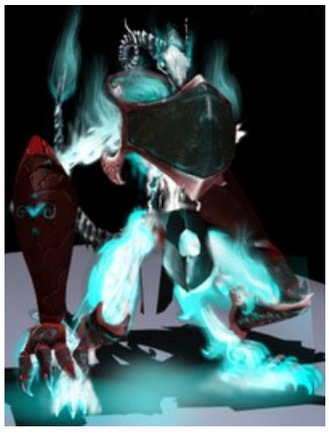
**3D Best Texture**:

Mazz426 (Monolith)

An excellent job on the texturing which included normal maps.

### How the 3D Modeling Competitions Work

The accolades for the winners are retained until the next competition winners, and are as follows:



***3DMaster - Champion*** awarded to the overall winner in the competition, an entry which displays both modeling and texturing excellence.

***3DMaster - Best Model*** awarded to the runner up who demonstrates the finest modeling skills in the competition.

***3DMaster - Best Texture*** awarded to the runner up who demonstrates texturing wizardry in the competition.

The awards will cling to your Avatar until the results of the following competition are announced. So to keep your award, you must defend your honour in battle once again!

## From the Forums

The Community Rules and Information thread is the most comprehensive guide to the FPSC forums you will need. It has been compiled over many weeks by KeithC. It covers 17 categories from forum Rules to finding the perfect FPSC Mod for your project.

This issue we highlight the section on Tutorials, which you'll find in the thread.

Tutorials are an important factor in development of any kind. As such, many developers rely on 3rd-party "tutors" to share the wisdom they have gained over a period of time. If you have the ability (and know-how) to put into words and images, various aspects of game development using FPSCreator, help out the FPSC Community, by adding your Tutorial to the new ***Tutorial***

***Compendium***

Just follow the criteria listed below to gain admittance for your Tutorial:

1.) The Tutorial MUST be hosted on a *TGC Thread*. You may link to your site in the tutorial; but the entire tutorial must remain on the TGC Forum thread.

2.) Include your name (forum name is fine).

3.) Try to include as many pictures as you need to illustrate your point(s). Images MUST be hot-linked (viewable in the thread, without clicking a link or the attachment button). Max image size is 800x600 (can be linked to a larger image).

4.) You should describe what *category* your tutorial covers (ie., modeling, pipeline, texturing, scripting, sound fx, lighting, etc.).

5.) Do your best to "estimate" the difficulty of the tutorial, and label it as: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced.

The following is a *suggested* layout format for your Tutorial:

- Tutorial Name
- Author Name
- Difficulty Level
- Introduction
- Main Body
- Outro

All submissions must be created, *before* contacting KeithC via email. All Tutorials must be finished before they can be included in the Compendium. *ALL TUTORIALS MUST BE MAINTAINED!* Failure to do so will result in your link in the Compendium being dropped. You will also need to specify which category is best suited to your tutorial:

- General FPSCreator
- Level Design in FPSCreator
- Media Creation for FPSCreator
- Animating for FPSCreator
- Scripting for FPSCreator
- Sound Design for FPSCreator

Finally but just as importantly, official FPSCreator Tutorials can be found **here**.

### Random 3D Dungeons

Enderleit has posted full source code for a program that generates a random dungeon and lets you run around in a 3D lit & textured environment. You need Sparky's Collision DLL to compile it, or you can just run the compiled version.

### AppUp DBP Developers Group

Baxslash has started this group for the growing number of people who are developing games for AppUp. It's a chance to pool resources and experiences, and beta test applications. If you're interested in AppUp development, then start here!

## Monthly Newsletter Winner - $100 voucher up for grabs every month!

Find us on Facebook

Join over 3,200 TGC fans on Facebook for the chance to win a $100 gift voucher each month. Simply add yourself as a TGC Fan using the "Like" button and then actively participate in the discussions at least once a month. We'll pick a random winner from all who input into the TGC Facebook discussions. The voucher can be spent on any of the products on our site. Sign up now, and good luck!

"You know you've entered new territory when you realise that your outfit cost more than your film"

*Jessica Yu, Oscar Winner*

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