

# Report of Selected GDC Europe 2010 Seminars

**11:20-12:10, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of August: G. Lott**

## **Video Games vs. Movies: Fight**

In this discussion panel, the differences and similarities, advantages and disadvantages between video games and movies were discussed by Jan Klose (of Deck 13 GmbH) and Phillip Stennert (director of Jerry Cotton, Cyrill Boss & Neues vom Wixxer). Moderated by Gunnar Lott, the discussion dealt primarily with the success of different techniques to carry out a narrative adventure. Also considered was the relationship between games and movies and how much should or can they adopt each other's characteristics. It was established that movies and games have certain similarities that are used to provoke audience interest. For instance, both movies and games usually follow the trials and tribulations of a main hero or they tell the story of a particular event. This session aimed to inspire, not teach. Listening to the two young, yet well-respected professionals who represent two volatile media offered attendees much food for thought.

**13:10-14:00, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of August: D.Cage**

## **Heavy Rain: How Far are you prepared to go to develop an Original Product?**

As one of the most ambitious and innovative game hits, Heavy Rain has been turning heads, both for its daring challenge to the gaming status quo and for its commercial success. This epic project was driven by the creative vision of one man, David Cage. From the initial pitch to publishers to the ideas behind the key concepts, developing a project with 200 people in four different time zones, evangelizing press for two years, facing a Babylonian production while trying to keep creative control, David Cage persevered and created an interactive story driven mature gameplay experience. Cage provided the audience with a detailed post-mortem on the hurdles he and his team had to overcome to produce a game such as Heavy Rain. Critical to the successful completing of Heavy Rain, according to Cage, was the unwavering trust of his colleagues that he knew what he was doing. Without this trust in his creative vision, the project would not have come out the way it had. Cage also presented his eight golden rules that enabled him to create Heavy Rain:

- Vision is king, a coherent vision is essential
- Be clear and precise about what you want to do
- Be consistent
- Stick to what you believe in
- Plan everything, but leave space

- Be creative, but stay organised
- Tools, tools, tools (very important in such a content based game like HR)
- It is an enlightened dictatorship as opposed to a democracy (its ok to take opinions on board, but don't let them change your vision!)

Cage is now looking forward to exploring the undiscovered possibilities that the interactive entertainment medium has to offer.

**14:20-15:10, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of August: P. Óskarsson**

**Player Councils in MMOs: Useful Tools or Waste of Time?**

In MMORPGs the usage of 'player councils' is becoming more apparent and more widespread. In this session, Mr Oskarsson used his knowledge of social science to explain and justify the growing phenomenon of player councils in games. Using a comparative methodology, Mr Oskarsson pointed out flaws that were inherent in some systems, namely their lack of a sufficient democratic representation and the ineffectiveness of many of the representative organs. Oskarsson states that Democracy needs to be included in the makeup of online societies, however current implementations are flawed. Power users customise their game expectations and power structures form of their own accord in MMO communities. In EVE online, CCP takes player councils very seriously because it is aware that the success or failure of its online world depends on the satisfaction of its community.

**15:30-16:20, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of August: W. Spector**

**What Video games can learn from Other Media... What We Can't... and What We Shouldn't.**

Warren Spector delivered a keynote speech at GDCE talking about the way in which the electronic entertainment medium is constantly being compared to other mediums, such as radio, television, books and movies. Most commonly, were described as being like movies (or television or theatre or radio) and many game developers harbour secret (or not so secret) aspirations to make movies. Film directors act as video game creative directors. Writers from screenwriters to novelists to comic book scribes are hired to write our space operas, our fantasy epics or out world war two dramas. Techniques borrowed from film and television bring computer game characters to life and visual effects development and audio design from film, television and radio are utilized to take computer games to new heights of believability and appeal. However, Spector was keen to draw a clear distinction between electronic interactive entertainment and other forms of entertainment. Moreover, game developers should be dedicated to inventing new forms of storytelling and interaction, constantly pushing the envelope as to what is

possible within the gaming medium. He also used to opportunity to give a sneak peak into his latest Micky Mouse project.

**16:45-17:35, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> of August: *D. Daglow***

### **10 ways to get the Best Video Game from Your Movie**

Video games offer movie developers a great opportunity to expand on the success of major motion pictures. They can build characterisation and build on pre- or post-stories, as well as offering a way to increase revenues. However, many games that are developed in parallel with movies for a simultaneous release date have proven to be great disappointments. In this seminar, Don Daglow uses his expertise to illustrate how we can learn from previous mistakes and partner with game developers to create great titles. After all, as Daglow points out, it is often better to have no game than a bad game. With his ten key factors, Daglow sets out a seemingly rational, yet often overlooked, collection of basic rules which are designed to maximise the reward collaboration between industries.

Daglow's ten factors are as follows:

1. Will this movie make a good game?
2. What kind of game do we want?
3. Is there sufficient development time?
4. Do we really need a film tie in?
5. Do we want extra revenue or do we want to expand the franchise?
6. Accept that game developers and filmmakers rely on each other as creative forces in complex crafts.
7. Know how to get usable film assets to developers as quickly as possible.
8. Have a system for clear, fast quality approvals on submissions.
9. Be aware of the difference between games and films.
10. Communicate with each other!

Keeping these ten factors in mind, filmmakers will be better able to implement a game tie-in of their film IP that is worthwhile and rewarding.

**9:00-9:50, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August: *R. Poulsen***

### **Art Direction in the YouTube Era**

The team at IO interactive used an unusual art style in the making of their game, Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days. The art style was based on their experience with gritty, low resolution and blurry videos found on YouTube. To this end, taking the visual noise and optical inaccuracies which plague most you tube clips and reproducing

them in a video game proved to be quite a challenge. The IO team actually spent time in Hong Kong (where the game is set) filming with low quality cameras the environment, the people and the ambience. Of particular interest in recreating the you tube effect was to replicate the way in which a camera follows a target in such situations. Thus, the boys from IO spent a lot of time running around various supermarkets, parks and sidewalks to obtain raw data on which to base their art style. As you can see from the result, their effort was worthwhile and Kane & Lynch 2 achieved a unique and believable real world look that few games have been able to provide.

**14:20-15:10, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August: E. Flannum**

### **Designing Guild Wars 2 Dynamic Events**

In this in-depth presentation, Guild Wars 2 lead designer Eric Flannum and lead content designer Colin Johanson outlined how the core content of games in the MMORPG genre has evolved over time. The presentation started with a background review of the ancestry of MMO content. Starting from fairly humble beginnings, the MMO experience has been evolving at a fairly constant rate. However, with Guildwars 2, the team at ArenaNet will be pushing player interaction to new levels. Using a powerful dynamic, fluid quest engine, players will be able to influence world events through the course of their exploration of the game world. The difficulty here is breaking the conditioning that gamers have learned over the course of their MMO lifetimes, namely they are always looking for the question mark NPC for quests. Thus, the dynamic system reproduces old methods to ensure that no player is left out of the content experience. The key to the system is inclusion (you should never be disappointed to see another player), transparency (the quests occur without being triggered by the player) and persistence (the events may play out even in the absence of any player avatars). This revolutionary system is an effort to make questing more enjoyable, rewarding, socially interactive and compelling. From what was shown during the presentation, it is my opinion that they will achieve all of these things and make a considerable contribution to the future standard of MMO gaming.

**15:30-16:20, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August: H. Hulst**

### **Bottled Storm: Game Development Guerrilla style**

During his presentation, Herman Hulst provided an inside look at Guerrillas processes and practices in establishing the Killzone franchise. Starting with little resources, Herman and his colleagues managed to convince Sony that they developer could develop AAA titles for the Sony platform. By using a crude video demo (not even a software prototype, more like a concept reminiscent of the imperial invasion on the planet Hoth), Guerrilla managed to strike a chord with the team at

Sony and they decided to support the small Dutch studio. Admittedly, Guerrilla were not experienced in developing for the PlayStation, but through close cooperation with Sony, as well a large amount of trial and error, Guerrilla successfully shipped Killzone, a commercial success. So impressed with Killzone for the PS2, Sony contacted Guerrilla to make a PSP version of the game which was also a commercial success. Seeing the talent and passion at Guerrilla, Sony made a request that they make a flagship title for their new platform, the PS3. The result: Killzone 2, a powerful, engaging and cutting edge first person shooter. More recently, Guerrilla has been working on the next version of Killzone and continues to enjoy the support and confidence of their partners at Sony. The example of Guerrilla illustrates that given enough talent and drive; independent studios can continue to produce commercially and critically successful games. Hulst is adamant that from humble beginnings, Guerrilla has been able to mature creatively, technologically and organisationally. For these reasons Hulst feels that Guerrilla has a bright future and looks forward to continued partnership with Sony.

**16:45-17:35, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August: C. Coutier**

### **A Challenging Production: Heavy Rain**

The task of developing an original and innovative game such as Heavy Rain, brought many challenges to the production management. In this session, C. Coutier explored the particular difficulties that he encountered as lead producer of the Heavy Rain project. As mentioned above, Coutier pointed out the difficulties associated with rely on the creative vision of one person, namely David Cage. The difficulty here was that due to the innovative nature of the project, all creative design was placed in the hands of Cage, in a dictatorial situation. Thus, the production team had to learn to trust Cage's judgement and creative impulses. Also a challenge in the production of Heavy Rain was the studios decision to rely on outsourcing. Due to the massive, narrative game world, the creation of all the locations and settings involved a massive amount of time consuming work. In order to speed up production and keep on schedule, it was decided to have third party developers create many of the environments found in the game. Key here was clear communication and efficient instruction. Without these two factors, the act of outsourcing would have most likely created more work than it saved. Lastly, Coutier discussed the importance of having powerful, versatile and easy to use tools so that the team could concentrate on producing the final product and implementing Cage's vision, rather than mucking about sorting out how to work productively. In short, while Heavy Rain was an extraordinarily challenging project, it has also turned out to be highly rewarding and the entire production team is proud of the final product.

**17:45-18:35, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August: M. Behrmann**

**European Technology Support for Game Development**

This session was aimed at game developers, who are interested in participating in EU funded collaborative research projects. The opportunities to receive research and development funding through programs like Framework Seven were presented by Dr. Behrmann and his panellists. Game developers from Europe can participate in these programs and finance parts of the technology, but unfortunately few actually are aware of the possibilities. It is little known, but game developers are ideally situated to be eligible for European subsidies, as they are content driven small medium enterprises *par excellence*. The session also spent time highlighting upcoming work programs which are likely to be of interest to European game developers.

In the first part of the session, the role of NEM initiative and thematic aspects of the Framework Seven program relevant for game developers was explained. Here, Dr Halid Hrasnica, explained what the Networked and Electronic Media Initiative actually is all about. Essentially, it is a combined effort of many IT firms to coordinate and network the next generation of computational products, in order to make network technologies transparently integrated into everyday life. It covers Portable and interoperable networking, Multi-content communications, Adaptive content delivery, e-Government, e-Health, e-Learning, e-Gaming, e-Friends, e-Fun, Interactive entertainment and Digital cinema. The second part of the session illustrated examples of game related research projects which are currently ongoing from a networked media perspective. Fred Hasson discussed the CNG Project, Martin May talked about the NaDa Project and Jonathan Freeman introduced the Games@Large project.