# ›THE DEMOSCENE AND MODERN GAMES‹

BY BOBIC OF 4SCENERS AND GHANDY OF MOODS PLATEAU

They're supposed to be modern. They're eye-catchers. We're talking about games. The explosion of graphics in games is getting bigger and bigger. Games such as Crysis, Mafia 2, Far Cry 2, or the Nintendo DS title Nanostray 2, play in their own league on their respective platform. Responsible for their visually impressive appearance, are people of the Demoscene. Those people have talent, a good grasp of design and visuals, as well as the required expert knowledge. With this article, ZINE introduces you to developers of PC, hand-held, and mobile games. I'd like to thank Petr "Raist" Stastny, Guillaume "Guille" Werle, Keops/Equinox, Antonio Vargas and of course Paul Bragiel (Paragon 5) for their support.

CRYTEK

Internet: www.crytek.com

Nobody else than Mr. Demopaja himself is working in a leading technical role at German development studio Crytek. Its most recent game, Crysis, can be regarded as one of the technically most
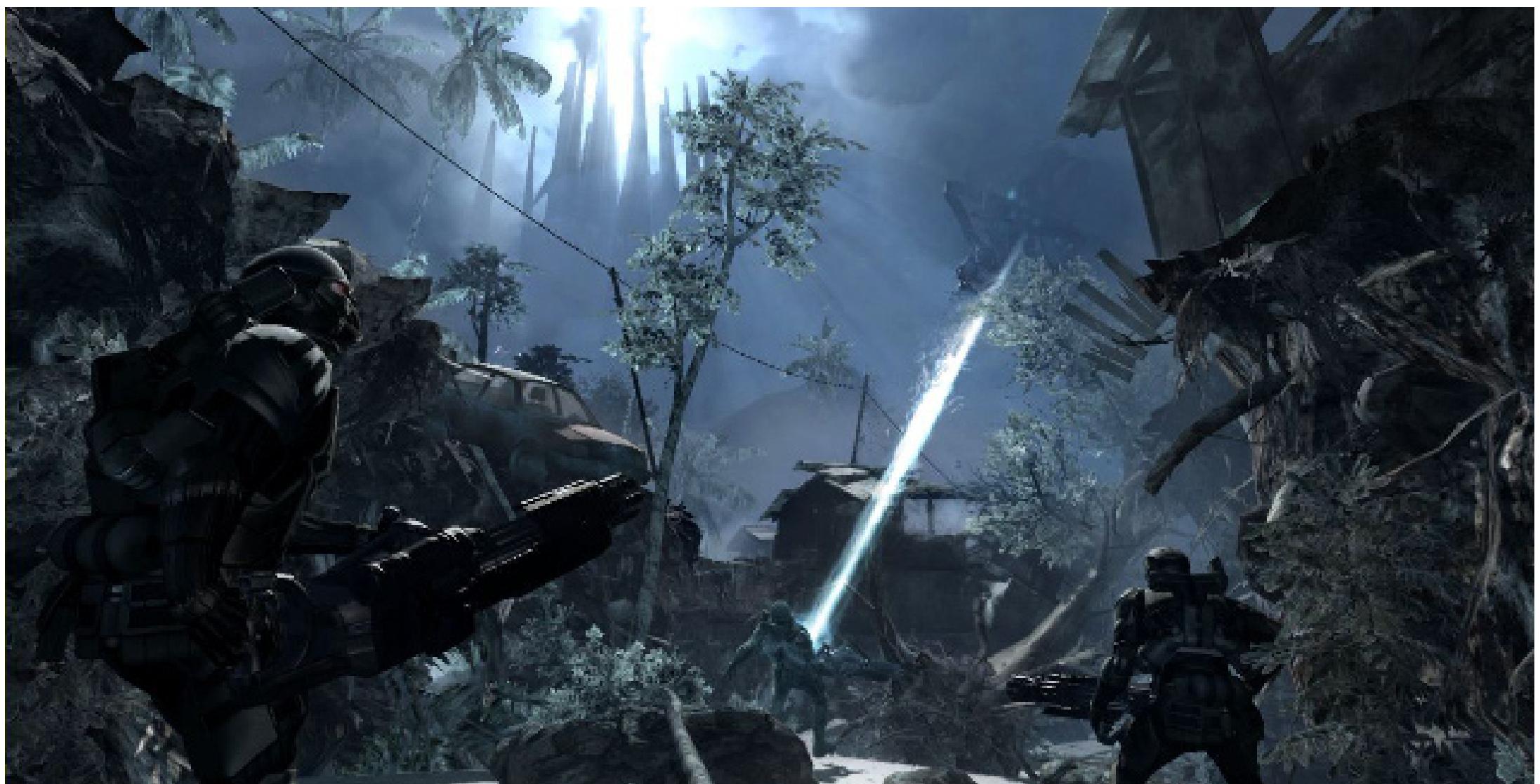
Crysis by Crytek and EA

impressive games of the recent years. Mikko "Memon" Mononen, founder of Demoscene group Moppi Productions and developer of the legendary Demopaja Demotool, is a programmer at Crytek, located in Frankfurt, Germany. He expanded the company-owned CryEngine with spectacular effects. Memon is regarded as one of the most creative heads in the Demoscene, which he proved to be a valid statement with productions such as "IX", the Assembly 04 invitation, or the demo Gerbera. He achieved immortality with his

demo construction kit Demopaja, which has been used by dozens of people, who realised their own creations with this tool. Demopaja is deemed to be the most favourite demo-tool by many, noticeably ahead of Werkkzeug by Farbrausch. But there's another highly skilled scener in the ranks of Crytek. Graphics artist Xenusion of the group Plastic, an exceptionally gifted graphician, participated in demos such as 195/95 and Final Audition. He's been working on the fascinating world of Crysis as a concept artist.

ILLUSION SOFTWORKS & PTERODON

Internet: www.illusionsoftworks.com / www.pterodon.com

Ever since Games Convention 2007 the name of the Czech developer Illusion Softworks has been known throughout the industry. At the exhibition in Leipzig, they finally announced the production of "Mafia 2", one of the most eagerly awaited sequels in the history of computer games. In 2002 the predecessor set new standards in storytelling. It was brilliant with its open world and a

Mafia 2 by Illusion Softworks

fully detailed, animated town in the style of the nineteen-thirties. The man in charge for the first part of Mafia was the graphician Daniel Vavra, better known by his pseudonym Hellboy. He made a name of himself with Broncs demos such as "Secret Ultra Dry" and "Miss Sporty (in retro)". Antonin "Woid" Hildebrand from the

demo group Marshals also joined the company. He's been one of the coders of Moppi's Demopaja and expanded a lot of its functions. Almost all of the Marshals releases have been coded by him, like Meteor (2004) or Demopunk (2001). His field of responsibility included the development and expansion of the in-house technology. Better known in Amiga or Atari circles has been the musician Philip "Pip" Oscadal, who, among other things, collaborated on "Vietcong" and "Flying Heroes". Both games have been developed in cooperation with Illusion Softworks. Petr "Fob" Strefek took care of the artwork. Stepan "Dement" Hrbek optimized the illumination. His Lightsprint Technology puts each object in perspective, in real-time of course.

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Internet: www.ubisoft.com

The gigantic Ubisoft Studio in Montreal offers working space for more than 1200 people who work on prospective blockbuster games. Ubisoft is responsible for hit games like "Assassin's Creed", "Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell", and "Far Cry 2". In such a

huge company it's not really surprising that the one or the other scener is part of the game. Some of the employees have decades worth of practical experience in the Amiga, Atari, and PC Demoscene. Keops of Equinox, and of the recently formed group Orb, is working on the impressive looking visual effects in Far Cry 2. Before that, he participated in the game equivalent of the movie Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And even before that, he worked

Far Cry 2 by Ubisoft

for Electronic Arts, where he was part of the development team working on Army of Two. Beside Keops you can also meet Tenshu of Cocoon in Montreal, the man who was responsible for the morbid scenes and pictures in PC demos like "Shad" 1 and 2, or "Raw Confessions". Quite a number of former Amiga sceners also work in far-away Canada. Jamie and MajorX of Skarla, Suny (Bomb) or Offa from The Black Lotus. Furthermore Zeb of Melon Dezign,

Wiss of Syn[RJ], and Danny Oros of Frost/ACME, found their new home there. No Recess of the group Concense worked for some years at Ubisoft, but he has left the company since.

SHIN'EN

Internet: www.shinen.com

Munich is not only home of the world famous Hofbräuhaus, there's also the principal office of Shin'en. The team consisting of prehistoric sceners like Manfred "Pink" Linzner and Bernhard "Bartman" Wodok was established long ago as a development studio for handheld games that are exceedingly impressive, technically. While the team started out on the Game Boy Color, the company later developed for the Game Boy Advance, and now for the Nintendo DS. Action titles like Nanostray 1 and 2 can be considered as milestones in the company's history. Furthermore, Iridion 3D and Iridion 2 on the Game Boy Advance are considered some of best titles, from a technical point of view, on the platform. They consistently have a go with licenced games like Garfield's Nightmare or Die Biene Maja. Their quality can also give competitors a run for their money, particularly since licensed games on handheld platforms have the reputation of not always being of highest quality. Luckily, Shin'en's approach is a lot better. It's interesting that the team originally started out by creating a few small games for the Commodore Amiga. Games such as "A-Type", or both "Rise of the Rabbits" games, have been sold at various demo parties. They

were of high entertainment value, and still are. At that time they used the name Abyss and they can be considered an institution in the Amiga Demoscene. They have created tons of releases, such as Extralife (1998), Wildlife (1998), Drugstore (1995), or their "Diznee Land" series, only to name a few. The most important product may be the development of the AHX music engine. With this self-made music tool, Pink could put an emphasis on his distinctive music style. AHX does also exist for the GBA and Nintendo DS. It has been enhanced constantly and licensed by various other game manufacturers. Likewise, Martin "Dexter" Wodok, Florian "Wintermute" Freisleder and Martin "Fade1" Sauter are working at Shin'en. Fade1 has in former times been a member of the groups Lego and TRSI. Recently, they were signed up as a licenced developer for the Nintendo Wii. It should be interesting to see what the guys come up with on that platform.

MR. GOODLIVING

Internet: www.mrgoodliving.fi

One of the hot spots for mobile games is Helsinki, Finland. At Mr. Goodliving, an affiliated company of RealNetworks Inc. you can find the whole 'crème de la crème' of the Finnish Demoscene. Niko Leskinen (Uncle-X) and Mikko Lehtinen (Scoopr) of MFX; Antti Ritta (Adam/DCS); Sampo Rauduskoski (Dole/CNCD); Mikko Uromo (Muumi/TPOLM); and Mr. Scene.org Awards, Matti Palo-

suo, a.k.a. Melwyn! The last mentioned is an exceptionally gifted musician. The role of technical director at Mr. Goodliving is assigned to Markus Pasula, better known as Droid, who took an active part in countless demos done by Haujobb or MFX. Together, they show the world how fun and well-engineered mobile gaming can be. Even though the portfolio does not only include clas-

> ## "MR.GOODLIVING SHOWS THE WORLD HOW FUN AND WELL-ENGINEERED MOBILE GAMING CAN BE."

sic brain teasers such as "Luxor 2", "7 Wonders", or "Stones of Khufu", but also sundry licensed titles like the game "South Park 10" and different editions of the quiz classic "Trivial Pursuit". Particularly retro fans will get their money's worth from games of Mr. Goodliving, like for example the Summer- or Winter Games of the Playman series, "World Soccer", or various pinball simulations. Their charming pixel graphics remind one a lot of the good old Amiga and the C64 era. With the "Risk" clone "Dicewars", Melwyn lately released a freeware game for the Nintendo DS.

SIRIUS GAMES

The brand Sirius Games probably won't be too too familiar to most, as it has only existed for a short time. Before, they worked under the name Media Mobsters and made their first appearance with the gangster spectacle "Gangland". At the moment, they're hard at work on "Escape From Paradise City", the unofficial successor to Gangland. The first screenshots look promising, and the popular mixture between a role-playing game and a simulation will probably get a lot of gamers excited. The members of the demo group Loonies have their decisive share of the outcome. Members Psycho (Henrik Münther), Booster (Heine Gundersen), and Farfar (Mogens Overbeck), all play a part in that game title. Loonies were present in the Amiga scene for many years and have elated with demos such as Multiverse, Cybercinematastic, or the spectacular 4k intros "Ikanim" and "Rapo Diablo". Meanwhile, they've switched to the PC and released one of the best 4k intros with "Candystall", which was made in cooperation with the group Pittsburgh Stallers. With Benitoite and Fallty they've already delivered some chic 4k productions. But Loonies is not the only group with a presence at Sirius Games. Michael "Jar" Rasmussen and Lasse "Gaia" Nielsen of Alien Prophets are working there as well as Andreas "Dental" Ammitzboll and Mikael "Heks" Garde Nielsen of Mangoo.

MONTE CRISTO

At the Parisian developer Monte Cristo, we meet Guillaume Werle, alias Guille of Cocoon. The programmer responsible for the diabolic Shad demos, Raw Confessions, and the cute "Glon 243" is filling the position of the lead graphic programmer. He's in the driver's seat for all aspects of the 3D engine and the correspond-

> **"AT PARISIAN DEVELOPER MONTE CRISTO, WE MEET GUILLE OF COCOON."**

ing tools. Some time ago he worked on the action-role-playing game Silverfall, which caught attention with its comic-like visuals. It received fair scores and an add-on is on the way. Before that, he worked on the city simulation City Life, the real-time strategy games "Fire Department" 1 through 3, and on Medieval Lords. Before starting his career at Monte Cristo he worked for one year at Infogrames (today, Atari) on a Tintin game for the Playstation, as well as working for PAM Development for two years on Ronaldo V-Football.

CAULDRON SOFTWARE

Both in ZX Spectrum circles as well as in the PC scene, the demogroup 3SC is quite well-known. Baze, Hvge and Beetle have been active in the Demoscene since 1994; at that time only for the 8-bit Sinclair computers. Starting in 1998 they ventured on to the PC and specialized in 256-byte productions. The most popular intro of theirs is called Tube and shows three raytraced tunnels, including transparent textures; an amazing achievement considering the size. With this they won Syndeecate 2001. They were able to reproduce their success with the mini intros "Radiosa" and "Lander", before that party was no longer organized. The three of them are now working at Cauldron Software. The company mainly popped up on the games media radar when it got the assignment from Blue Byte to develop "Battle Isle IV". In technical aspects it shone, but it wasn't as playable as one of the great predecessors. When they specialized in the development of shooters, they became more successful.

Chaser was the first title that fully played to the team's strengths. It succeeded in merging impressive graphics with great level design. Fantasy slice-'em-up "Conan" was the logical evolution of their plan to set a foot in the door of action games. Probably the company's best known title is "Knights of the Temple 2". Cauldron took development studio Starbreeze's original game and built

on it. You control a crusader and fight your way through various quests. Particularly the graphics engine was very advanced for its time. Recent projects such as "Gene Troopers" and "Civil War: A Nation Divided" didn't get much media attention.

DIGITAL CHOCOLATE / SUMEA

Internet: www.digitalchocolate.com / www.sumea.com

Awards for "Best Game Developer 2006" and "Game of the Year 2006" with "Tornado Mania" at IGN.com sounds like a few guys mean business. Digital Chocolate does indeed mean business. They belong to the top-shots of the mobile games industry and follow their

Tornado Mania by Digital Chocolate

credo to create original, unique games which are tailor-made for mobile phones. Sumea currently is the development studio of Digital Chocolate and is located in Helsinki, Finland. Even the company name Sumea already shows how deep the roots of the company are in the Demoscene. The wining demo of Assembly 1996 of the group Virtual Dreams / Fairlight was named Sumea, created

by Jaco and Alien. The demo was released for the Commodore Amiga. Years later, the guys started writing Java applets and created some first games. By now, Sumea has grown steadily. Martti "Preacher" Nurmikari and Rale of Traction are making their living with the company. Preacher's innovative style has an impact on the company's games too. With his demos "Fairytale" and "Fascination II" he continues to amaze with new effects and succeeds in portraying minimalism as an impressive style for demos. Due to that, we're hardly surprised that Sumea's games have scored seven IGN Awards. The game that Preacher worked on, named Tornado Mania, is the only mobile game to ever score 10 out of 10 points on IGN and is only the 4th game in the history of IGN to ever get 10 points at all. It thereby ranks right up there with games such as "Zelda" and "Perfect Dark". Additional awards have been given to Digital Chocolate games such as "Mafia Wars Yakuza", "Nightclub Empire", and "Tower Bloxx".

GEXTECH

Internet: www.gextech.com

Now, Gextech is a bit of an exotic studio in this list. That's why the British company, with subsidiaries in London, Barcelona, and Malaga, is active in a totally different area of games: lottery. At first the studio developed games of chance and casino games for mobile phones. Now they're taking the next step and conquering the Internet. It took six years to develop Fantastic League, a

virtual football game which picks up the general idea of a lottery. A certain amount of money is put on a team, a certain result, top scorers and so on, like you might know from various betting offices. Fantastic League then calculates the results based on bets, ratios, and other statistics. The match then airs via interactive TV and the Internet, as a summary. The presentation is very good, being quite on par with FIFA or Pro Evolution Soccer games by EA and Konami. You can then have the results sent to your phone. But where's the connection with the Demoscene? Well, at Gextech there are a number of well-known sceners such as Zaac of Mankind, Solarc of Haujobb, Wisefox of Alien, and the Network gang with Leunam, Nork, and Xele. They all make their contribution so Gextech can reach new markets and carry the lottery thought to the virtual arena.

INTROVERSION SOFTWARE

Internet: www.introversion.co.uk

When browsing through the history and games of Introversion Software, one might come across a man, about whom we've reported earlier in this article: Stepan "Dement" Hrbek. Dement was active in various groups, such as Broncs, MovSD, and Downtown, before he developed his Lightsprint technology and joined the independent games studio Introversion. The company is known for innovative concepts and stylish visuals. As an example, "Darwinia", which appears like a big playground of the Demoscene

Darwinia by Introversion

and which employs elements of real-time strategy games and the retro movement. The most successful game in their history is the strategy game "Defcon" which was released in September 2006. Stepan's task at Introversion is porting the games to other platforms such as the Xbox 360. Other than that, he codes various visual effects and shaders. Even during his active time in the scene, he had a keen interest in creating a decent style. Demos such as "Miss Sporty (in retro)" and "Realtime Radiosity 2", as well as MovSD's productions Pinokijo are further proof of that. Technically still impressive are both of his 256-byte productions "Bump Is Possible" (1999) and "Anapurna" (2001).

PYRO STUDIOS

Internet: www.pyrostudios.com

To wrap this article in style, we travel south to Pyro Studios, located in Madrid, the heart of Spain. At this studio, Javier Arevalo (Jare/Iguana), Ismael Raya (Phornee/Goblins), Mateo Pascual (Evelred/Darkness), Unai Landa (Zhorlack/What), and Ruben Ramos (Baktery/Chanka) are reigning supreme. These guys have been responsible for a whole batch of demo classics coming from Spain, such as Heartquake (1994), El Ocaso del Payaso (1995), Despair (1996) or Chanka of Time (2000). Their current project is still under wraps but the company history mostly shines with the million-selling Commandos series. It was both beautiful and difficult, but it was a major success worldwide. Other titles include Praetorians and Imperial Glory, two strategy games.

"PYRO STUDIOS' CURRENT PROJECT IS STILL UNDER WRAPS."

This list of studios is by no means complete, and lacks studios such as Remedy, IO Interactive, Electronic Arts, Circle Studio, and many more which we might report about on some other occasion. In all of those, well known Demosceners are continually striving to push the limits even further.

Commandos Behind Enemy Lines by Pyro Studios