

›NVIDIA AND THE DEMOSCENE: NVSCENE REVEALED◀

BY GLOOM OF EXCESS

A few weeks ago, NVIDIA announced that they would be hosting a gigantic event — NVISION 08 — in San Jose at the end of August. At first, not many people paid attention to this until it was pointed out that there was special mention of “the demoscene” on the NVISION website. As with most things in this world, this had a perfectly good explanation. ZINE sat down with Temis Nunez, Lead Producer at NVIDIA, to talk about it. Not only did he have a lot to say about it, but he could also fill ZINE in on some really juicy bit of exclusive news as well.

ZINE: Could you give us a little bit of background info on NVIDIA's interest in the demoscene?

TN: Many folks at NVIDIA are obviously fans of the demoscene already, but somehow, over the last couple of years demos lost visibility among the staff working on the less technical aspects of the company, where a lot of the interaction with the outside hap-

pens. One day, having a conversation about artistic and creative people working on the PC, I mentioned “Debris” by Farbrausch as something that made a very deep impression on me (it is a piece that does an incredible job of conveying what it is that makes demos great in general, even to people who have little to no contact with the scene).

It turned out that very few people had actually seen it, which surprised me, and so I started showing it to anyone with a few minutes to spare. A few other things happened around that time that justified an outreach trip to Assembly 07, from which I came back showing ASD's “Lifeforce” among other things, which helped to make it clear to a few people that we needed to pay more attention to the scene.

ZINE: You mentioned Assembly 2007, could you give us a little more insight as to what happened there?

TN: Me and a few of our people went there (including a very dedicated colleague from our Helsinki office, who had volunteered at Assembly many a time over the years). Since NVIDIA was a sponsor of Assembly, we supported the oldschool area/outreach booth and I used that opportunity to visit the party and spend some time in that area. We knew already then that we wanted to do something demoscene related at NVISION, but we didn't quite

know what. We also wanted to learn of new ways to increase the exposure of the existing NVArt to demosceners.

As a representative from headquarters, I would spend that time at Assembly to meet sceners. My colleague introduced me to a bunch of very cool sceners — Truck, Gargaj, Abyss, some guys from MFX, Steeler, Gloom and many more. Saying that everyone was very nice would be an understatement.



Temis Nunez of NVIDIA

I talked a lot with Steeler during the party (hello Boozembly) about some of the things we were looking to do and it was clear that there was a strong mutual interest in working together, so we agreed to talk more after the party. When I came back to California, we started communicating on a regular basis, and after

a while, I got wind of the trip you guys were planning and that is when things were fast-tracked on our end.

ZINE: What really happened when the outreach team visited NVIDIA? It seems the guys couldn't talk much about that.

TN: Well — when Steeler mentioned that he and two other sceners were coming to San Francisco as part of a demoscene outreach (all this outreaching, it's really funny how it goes both ways) I instantly insisted that they should come to NVIDIA at least once during the trip. I then learned that two guys were Gloom and Gargaj, which was awesome because I had met both of them at Assembly and I knew were certifiably cool guys and that they could put on a good show.

I then turned around and arranged to have some of our key people to come and see their introductory demoscene presentation, followed by a Q&A session. That day, the Q&A turned into a really great discussion about NVIDIA and the demoscene which was briefly interrupted by an actual earthquake, which made it all the more memorable. The discussion was interesting enough that I asked the guys to come back again before they left the US so we could discuss with them a few plans we were working on, which had a lot to do with NVISION and NVScene.

ZINE: Now we are getting to the juicy stuff — what is NVISION and why does it matter to the demoscene?

TN: Hehe, well — NVISION is an event where people working in the world of visual computing will come to meet and share. When I say “visual computing” it is what we at NVIDIA refer to as the new way we interact today with PCs in all their different flavors. This basically covers everyone from professionals working in research, computation, engineering, visual effects, game development, etc., to enthusiasts doing creative work on PCs such as demosceners and 3D artists. It also includes gamers pushing their PC's graphic performance for gaming.

“HARDWARE IS A BIG PART OF OUR SUPPORT PACKAGE”

We see a common thread between all of these areas and want to provide a platform where all these different people can interact and learn from each other's experiences and insights.

Now, the great thing about NVISION for the demoscene is NVScene. It is the area of NVISION that gathers what we call Creative Enthusiasts — people being creative in digital mediums

for the sake of creative expression itself. This clearly includes demoscene as a prime member, as well as machinima, 3D artists, animators, people creating game mods and more.

ZINE: So NVScene is a demoparty taking place at a larger event, is that it?

TN: Yes. NVScene will take place at the same time as NVISION, and it will have proper democompos as well: Combined demo and 4K intro, which we feel is a good combination for a first-time event. The compo-plans were worked out with the help of a core team of European sceners to make sure the rules are familiar and interesting.

The main goals of NVScene are to support the sceners and to bring the demoscene together with a US audience in a way that hasn't been done before. As you know, even though there are some demo parties in the US, they are few and far between. The same can be said for active demosceners in general — we want to change that.

ZINE: Since the scene is largely based in Europe, how are you going to attract sceners from overseas to participate in this compo?

TN: Now this is where it gets cool — we will providing help to sceners who need it in the form of hardware and other support. In exchange we would simply like to see European sceners submit entries to the NVScene compos. Simple as that.

ZINE: Participating sceners can get hardware?

TN: Not only hardware, developer status as well (TBA), but yes; hardware is a big part of our support-package. There will be an application form at nvision.scene.org where demogroups will be able to sign up to submit an entry to the compo. Based on the application forms we will be awarding a limited number of NVScene demobox kits to each group. A demobox kit will consist of a standard set of components that will provide the base specs we will use to run all demos at the event.

The box is given for sceners to keep for themselves as long as they submit a compo entry for the event, and they do not need to commit to travel to the party itself. As for the specifics, we are still working them out, but at the time of writing, the demo-box kit consists of an NVIDIA GeForce 8800GT, a NVIDIA 680i motherboard, an Intel Core 2 Duo CPU, and 2 GBs of RAM. All you need to provide is a harddrive, a power-supply and a case and then you have a complete computer, fit to play even the heaviest demos (and games) around.

Additionally, we are working out a few other perks as I said, such as granting developer status at the NVIDIA developer portal and a few other things we're working on that we hope to solidify over the next few weeks. I can't really commit to it right now, but what I can say that since some sceners might feel strange competing at a demoparty in a different continent, we might be able to surprise some lucky few. Just keep watching nvision.scene.org for news and updates as well as the sign-up form!

ZINE: For an outsider, it might seem strange why a corporate entity such as NVIDIA would invest so much in something as narrow as the demoscene — why do you do that?

TN: The reasons why the demoscene matters to NVIDIA are many, ranging from the obvious to the profound. On a basic level, demos that exploit the real time processing power of a GPU to create beautiful visuals are great examples of what our technology brings to the table, so to speak.

On a more philosophical level (bear with me for a minute) we see our company in a very special place in the industry, as our CEO Jensen Huang likes to say: "We are the intersection of art and technology" - in other words; amazing artistic endeavors made possible by the best technology on the planet. From that perspective, demos are a perfect expression of that intersection: artis-

tic vision and technical cleverness coming together to create a new form of creative expression. Basically — the essence of the demoscene.

"I WOULD MAKE MY FRIENDS SIT DOWN IN FRONT OF MY AMIGA AND JUST SHOW THEM DEMOS"

At a personal level it goes back to my childhood really. When I was a kid I started on the Apple II and C64, and I remember keeping some really bad games just because they had really cool cracktros, and I kind of started collecting them.

A few years later I made the move to Amiga where I got my start in 3D, and of course followed the scene throughout those years (and even through my jump to the PC years later). I always wondered why games didn't look more like demos back then, which I always thought had a fundamentally superior aesthetic than 99% of the games out there.

I would make all my friends sit down in front on my Amiga and just show them demos and cracktros for hours, pointing out the skills required to make that stuff happen on a computer. I turned most

of them into fans too. Later I tried programming and sucked at it, which probably helped me develop a very deep admiration for the skills involved in demomaking, not only in coding but in art and music as well. The whole package, so to speak.

I distinctly remember the times I first saw some of my favourite demos ever - "State of the Art", "Second Reality", "Dope", "Variform", "Deepness in the Sky", "Planet Risk", "The Popular Demo", and many more whose names I can't remember.

What can I say; I am a life-long fan of the scene.

ZINE: Thanks for sharing all of this with us, quite an exclusive reveal!

TN: No problem — spreading the word and all that, haha. I hope to see as many of you as possible at NVScene next August. I will be there, and I can't wait to talk to as many sceners as possible!

(Ed.note: a few people have already started signalling their interest in going to NVISION at www.demoparty.net/nvision2008 — and you should too!)



NVIDIA headquarters in Santa Clara, California.