THE PORTUGUESE DEMOSCENE HISTORY

BY PS OF TPOLM

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BEHIND THE SCENE

The Portuguese demoscene, as most Portuguese technology, is a fluke of chance. For many years, Portugal held last place among Europe's nations in iliteracy per capita and emigration. Certified higher education for new technologies and arts has only been institutionalized within the last 10 years. Even large volume capitalist markets, such as the videogame industry, are still in their infancy in Portugal. It has only been six years, at most, since serious full time jobs became available in the business. In fact Portugal is a country that mostly imports and consumes technology (2.5 cellphones per person on average) instead of developing and exporting it.

PORTUGAL IS A COUNTRY THAT MOSTLY IMPORTS AND CONSUMES TECHNOLOGY

So it's no wonder that the demoscene in Portugal was mostly an import from Portuguese emigrants living in France and the computer related magazines imported from England and Spain. In fact our biggest technological contribution was pro-ducing cheap labour for English-owned factories of the ZX Sin-clair Spectrum family of machines. While kids in Central and Northern Europe were playing with their Commodores and Ataris during the late eighties, in Portugal we were consuming Spectrum magnetic tapes.

THE BIRTH OF THE PORTUGUESE DEMOSCENE

The first known demo made by a Portuguese demoscener was released for the Atari ST in 1990 by Paulo Simões. 15 years later he's still active doing some small sprite record intros and such. It is rumoured that Paulo lived in France during his first scene years. Another recent discovery in the Portuguese Atari scene is Chuck of Dune. He is of Portuguese nationality but resides in France and is also still actively coding for the Atari. Another oldschool scener who started his scene career in France but later moved back to Portugal and is still active to date is EviL, of Scoopex, and many other groups.

The demoscene in Portugal started on PC with a small core of people who got together through Bulletin Board Systems, Reckless Life BBS and Infinity BBS run by the infamous Captain Hook. The scene thrived through the nineties with the uprising of IRC and the two issues of the diskmag, Infinity, put together by Garfield, VAngel and Spellcaster if my memory serves me correctly. The first documented demoscene event in Portugal was organized in 1996 and was called the Virtual Music Con-test. It was just a simple tracking competition. Groups formed around this time were Radioactive Design (RD) with Garfield,

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Bitcoder, Shaka, the Darkness Unknown Force (DUF) with Brain-power, Data Disrupter, and Noise Bleeder. In retrospect DUF brewed most of the active Portuguese scene of the last dec-ade despite having released little more then a short demo called Simple, and a couple of BBS intros for Black Town and Harakiri. They later changed their name to the Digital Artists Wired Nation (Dawn3), which would later morph into the group currently called The Digital Artists (TDA).

At this time, I was going by the nickname of Psychic Symphony, and had a classmate and neighbour who was better known as Brainpower. He was kind enough to help me with some hardware problems and swap some disks with the latest games and 64k intros. Eventually a turbopascal compiler, some diskmags, and Impulse Tracker 3 made it into my collection, and that would later convince me to take on coding.

SWITCHING TO CREATION FROM CONSUMATION

This was about the time that we all entered universities and discovered a myriad of other things to do with our lives. So while Noise Bleeder moved to Holland to join a dance and music school of arts, and Brainpower and Data Disrupter signed up for some Computer Science, I ingressed in Civil Engineering. Also attending Civil Engineering was a similarly fashionable computer nerd friend of mine by the name of Iceball, who had a talent for drawing and so, together with him, we formed our very own demogroup called Label, and we set off to finish last at Wired 98 in Belgium. I guess reading about Dawn3's adventures participating at The Party 97, and watching some of the latest productions freshly leeched from the Hornet archive on the fast internet connection at the university, all played a strong inspirational part.

Curiously enough, while studying at the university, I got to meet an Amiga guy who claimed to have made some music for a German demogroup called Suburban. As it turns out he wasn't lying. His name was Mindwalker, and he did the soundtrack for a couple of demos called Dreams of Destiny (5th at Mekka Symposium 98) and The Iceberg (2nd at Evoke 98), some of the first 32bpp demos on PC as I recall. There was an Amiga users group active in Portugal around this time. They organized some sporadic "get-together-dinners". One such event which could marginally be considered a mini-demoparty of sorts was called Mira Amiga and occured at least once in 1998 and again in 1999.

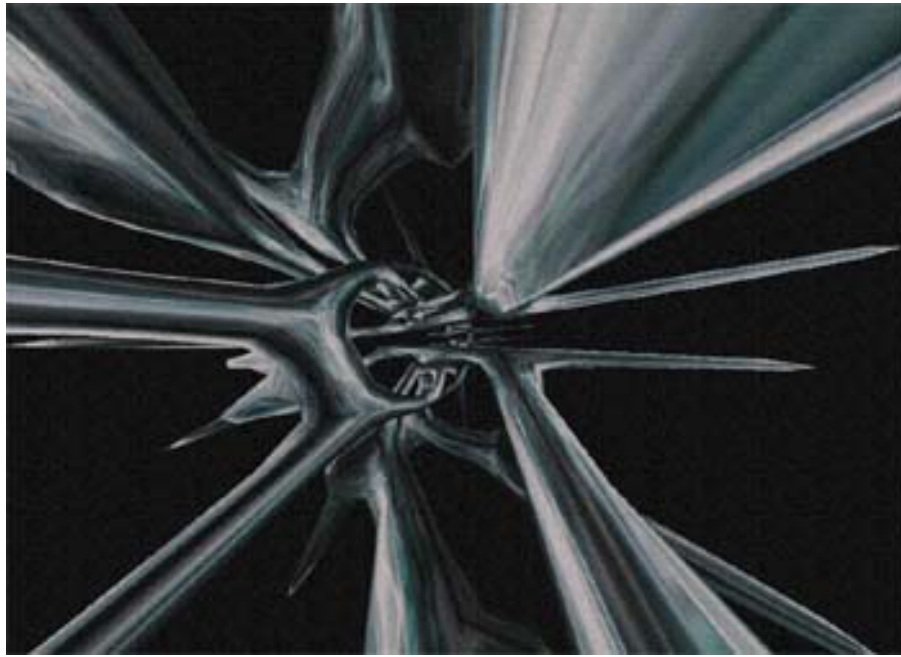## THE FIRST DOCUMENTED DEMOSCENE EVENT IN PORTUGAL WAS ORGANIZED IN 1996

In the PC scene, Brainpower carried on his work delivering productions for The Gathering, with music by Distance of Orange two years in a row. I decided to form a weekly newsletter about the demoscene titled DemoJournal and a new review mag called Sunray. At this point in time there were no actual demoparties in Portugal. There was one scheduled to happen in Azores called Simple 97 but it never took place if my memory serves me right. Through coder channels on IRC, a few virtual competitions were organized. One was called OverSeas,

aimed at cross-Atlantic participation, and another was named Reboot and was for Portuguese sceners only.

"Sin(x)" by Dawn3, 3rd in The Gathering 1998 pc 64k intro competition

Other groups and lonegunner coders were also active at the end of the millenium. Extasy, for example, did a great intro with a cow eating some brown grass, a feat being that the coder was in fact color blind. A college drop-out coder by the name of Cremax in Madeira was active with his own group called Nothing, doing some demos with his friends WaWa and NNY. A few guys from the city of Pombal: Dextrose and Garlick were also active doing tracked music and organizing some chiptune competitions. A few guys in Lisbon called Fozi, Ninjabear and Lightstrike were making their first steps in coding graphics under the groupname Airbag. 8 years later, these three coders are now working on triple-A titles in the games industry.
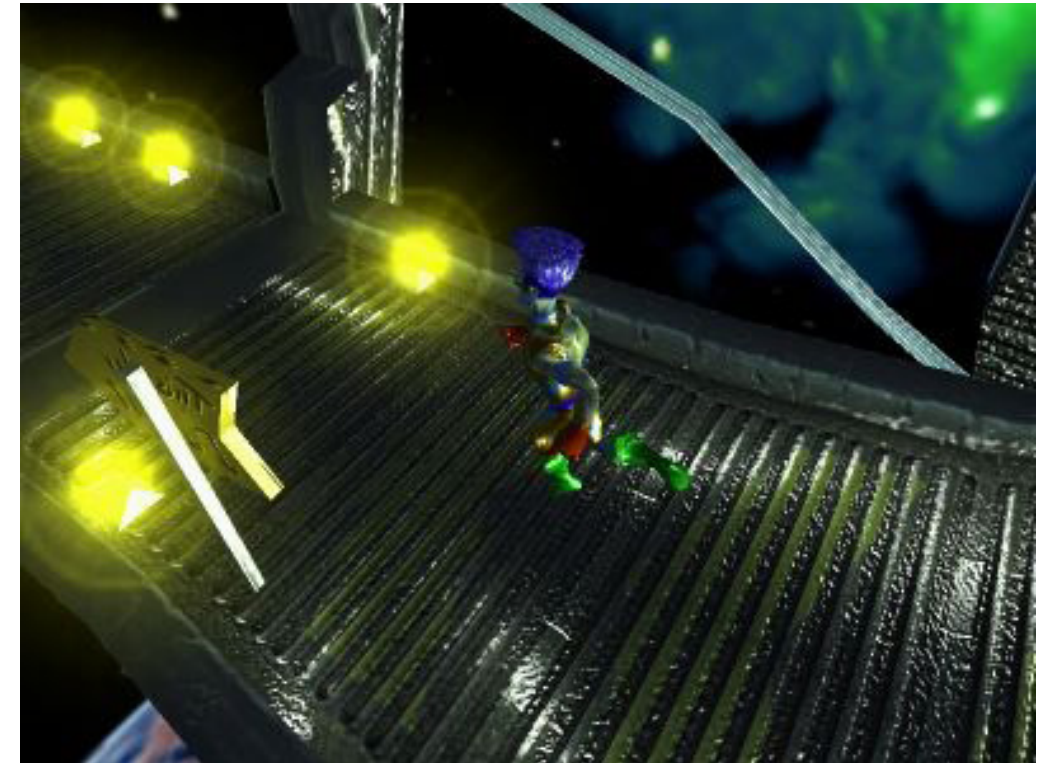
"Discipulo" by Nothing, 2nd in the inércia Demoparty 2003 pc demo competition

Around summer of 2000, whilst I decided to stop Demojournal to focus more on coding and schoolwork, the scener formely known as Data Disrupter / DUF had the idea of organizing a demoscene LAN-meeting in Portugal. This event was called KEP, and looking back it served as an embryo for what was to become the first ever Portuguese demoparty: inércia Demoparty2001. inércia was organized every year from then on. Still, unmentioned sceners like KammutierSpule, Lostsoul, Hybrid-2k, XKPE, Luis-sk8, Attack, Kazuya, among a few others who were not part of the inércia organizing team, helped tremendously in turning the four KEP and six inércia Demoparties into memorable events.

Affording to attend foreign demoparties was somewhat difficult for university students in the Portuguese scene at this point

in time. The RD and DUF guys had been to The Party 97 and Assembly 98. I had been to Wired 98 and Arf!Party 99. So demoparties happening in Portugal were definitely welcome. With some spamming announcements through the years, we even managed to get a few foreign attendees present, like Mat!/Ozone, some of the organizers of Arroutada Party in Spain, and none other than Rob/Aardbei himself. The same group in charge of organizing inércia Demoparty also put together a bustrip to Mekka & Symposium 2002 which took a total of 8 Portuguese sceners to Germany on a long distance driving adventure across 5 countries. With a pit stop in Rotterdam to pick up a recently "unretired" demoscener by the name of Jeenio, previously known as Noise Bleeder of DUF, now an unknown member of Limp Ninja.

Actively releasing at the early inércia Demoparties was the new group True Dimensions. In the meantime EviL started noticing the demoscene was active in Portugal and delivered some releases under the demogroups Crude and later GlenZ. KammutierSpule and some others formed the new group United Virtual Artists which unfortunatly didn't last very long. Filami and Jae686 started Volumetric Illusions. Around that time I got sacked from Calodox after doing a few releases with them and joined TPOLM and the scene.org staff, taking the oportunity to also start my own demogroup Minimalartifact, and the netlabel Enoughrecords with a recent friend who also happened to be the only Portuguese member of Razor 1911.

"Homo-Machus In Space" by True Dimensions, released at inércia Demoparty 2002

TOURING EUROPEAN PARTIES

During this time semi-regular meetings, named Boozetuga, would take place to watch demos and drink a few beers, ocasionally even do some work on a collaborative track or drawing. In one of these meetings, in 2005, a few of us decided to embark on a summer tour of demoparties in a car together for a month, planning to visit Demozone (.nl), Assembly (.fi), Scene Event (.dk), Buenzli (.ch) and Evoke (.de). And so we did. During the trip we took the opportunity to create a revolutionary new demogroup known as team TMI. Only Jeenio and I seemed to go through the summer demo tour plan till the very end, but it was fun nonetheless, and arriving home we had in-

ércia Demoparty2005 being held which, despite some conflicts, for some, turned out to be one of the best inércia's ever. It was also the birthplace of many new things. On one hand a new demogroup called Alien
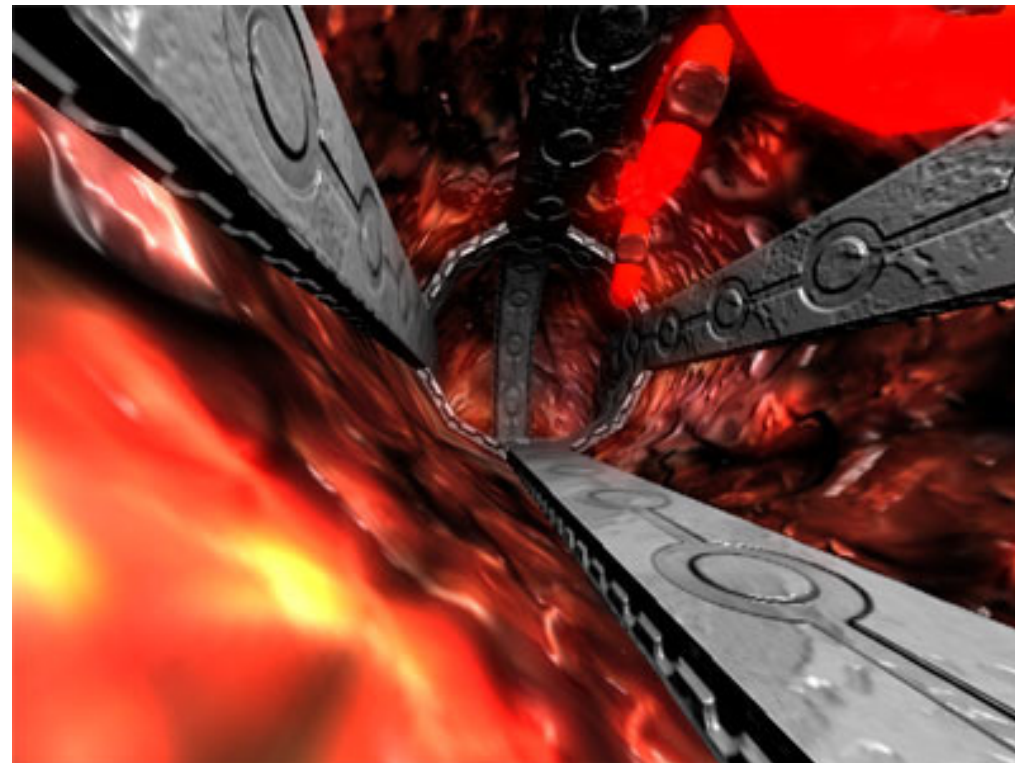
IN ONE OF THESE MEETINGS IN 2005 A FEW OF US DECIDED TO EMBARK ON A SUMMER TOUR OF DEMOPARTIES

Dream released its first productions. On the other hand we had the release of a demo by The Digital Artists called Barn, which as I might have mentioned before, ended up as a nominee and very close winner for the Scene. org Awards under the "Best Concept" category.
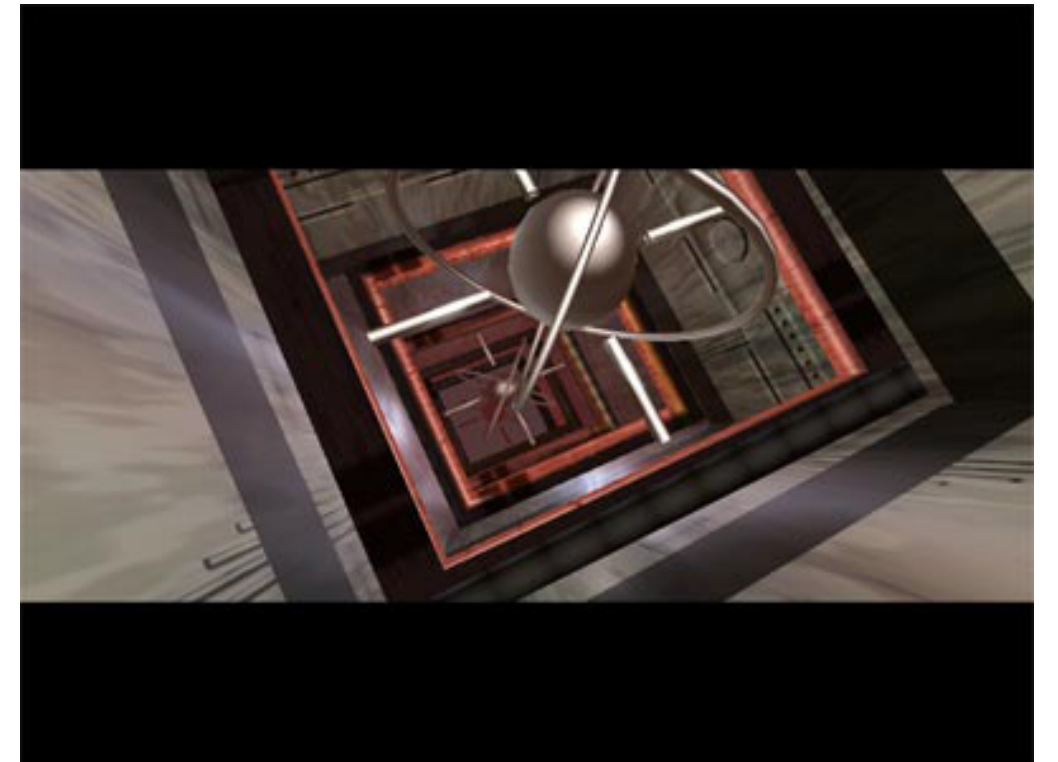

"Barn" by The Digital Artists, winner of the inércia Demoparty 2005 demo competition

Excursions to Spanish demoparties were somewhat common around this time, mostly organized by me, with some other people alternating seats in the cars. We visited BCNParty in Barcelona for most of its editions. We also were present at the invite-only Playboy Mansion Party in Madrid, organized by the Spanish group Stravaganza. Similarly we attended the only edition of BGParty in Seville, organized by Network or at the last edition of the IFParty in Valencia. And of course some of the previous editions of the legendary Euskal Encounter in Bilbao.

"Bbeat" by JFK, winner of the inércia Demoparty 2004 pc demo competition

With the death of the inércia organizing team in 2006 after the flop of associating with APROJE for the GAMES2006, most of the active scene took the opportunity to re-arrange itself. The

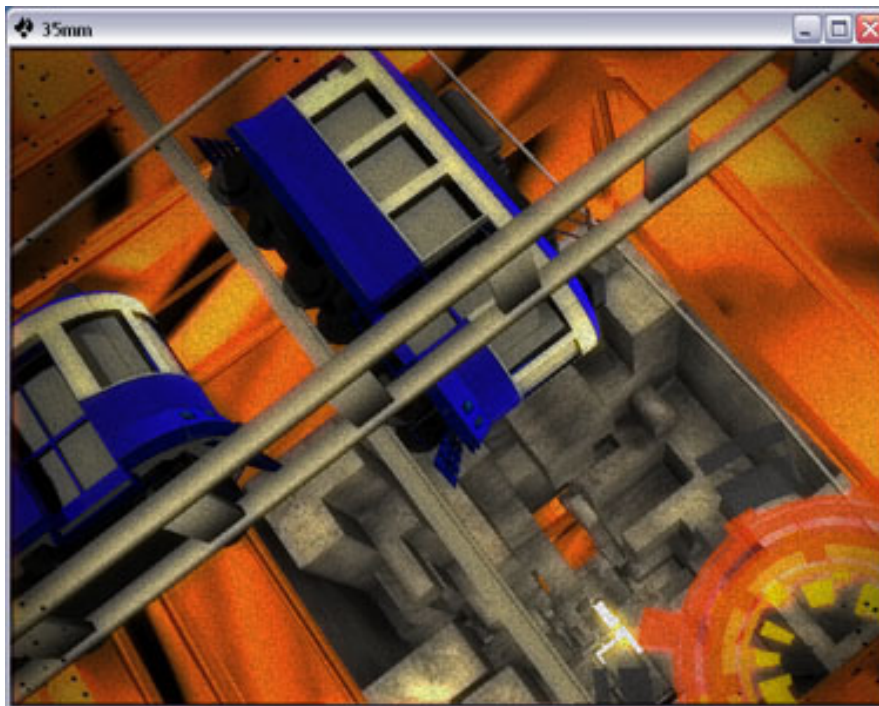*"FR-045: Life After" by Farbrausch, 11th in the Breakpoint 2005 pc demo competition*

Glenz 4k intro making days were somewhat put on hold. A new demoparty called Breeze was then announced. Phoenix of RAWW and Garfield of RD were resurrected from sleep. Around

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the same time, I became Visualice's soundtrack whore, leading to a series of demos killing the good name of Farbrausch, first with fr-045: Life After, then with fr-055: 828, fr-056: Gravity of

the Moon and fr-058: Desintegrates. In between, there were a few collaborations with reknown Serbian legends Kosmoplovci and the Russian Spectrum scene enthusiasts Cyberpunks Unity.

2008 came with the promise of a better tomorrow by the hands of a new demogroup called Napalm Core. They were the result of the organization of a parallel demoscene competition at digital animation festival animatu in Beja 15-19 October, and a new edition of inércia Demoparty 3-5 October.

"35mm" by Napalm Core, 17th in the Breakpoint 2008 demo competition