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Magic, Sun 26 Dec 2010

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Interactive cross questioning about Pouet, his demoscene addiction, his new studies and much much more!

Interviewed by Magic of Nah-Kolor, photos by Optimus

Magic:
When we started with this interview you just moved to London, you are trying to settle yourself there. What will the UK demo scene have in store for you what Greece doesn't have?

Optimus:
Unfortunately Sundown took place a week before I arrived here and it's the only UK demoparty I know. Maybe I will have the opportunity to meet some sceners in London soon. I am not sure if there is something else here I can benefit from concerning the demoscene. If I was for example in Germany it would be quite easy to visit various demoparties by taking the train. Maybe some cheap flights to European demoparties? I am not even sure I will have the time, money or will to visit any demoparties this year because of my studies. Maybe after the first semester.

Magic:
Oh by the way, why did you move to the UK?

Optimus:
The easy answer is that I moved here for studies with also

looking in the future to find a good job here. Well, the hardest answer is when I keep asking myself about my motives. Well, it still is studying at a good university on a subject I am familiar with and love (the MSc is Computer Graphics, Imaging and Vision at UCL) and also seeking for a better future in the job market (compared with some boring and low paying IT jobs I was working back in Greece). But for me it's also a transition state. Sometimes I even think it as a substitute for the demoscene, instead of making demos I will be studying graphics and having a relevant job, things that have to do with my former hobby but not related to the demoscene community. Like a transition of my former hobby into something new, getting away from the things that made me sad and keeping only the

knowledge and experience I got from it. This settlement is also an opportunity to live in a foreign country and plan my future here. Even though I keep asking myself where the hell I am going now? What do I want from life?

Magic:
What things that made you sad are you getting away from?

Optimus:
Maybe it's just me. It's not a matter of the community. I have a strange past back there. But that's just me. I could just forget it and be creative and enjoy it but somehow I can't enjoy it. I can enjoy trying out some code or optimizing some bits but the pressure to need to connect all together in a demo so that the community can appreciate it becomes unbearable. And I seem to be getting sadder with things others don't care about and just ridicule myself as long as I keep trying being active in the scene. But apart from the sadness there is still a little glance of happiness on the thought of releasing something, although it's not enough. I also have to get away from the Pouet thing, it's ok to comment on a prod but I don't want to repeat the cycle of opening senseless threads and arguing with others who tell you to stfu. In a nutshell, it's not something specific, but with all the old negative experiences having to do with me and the scene and it doesn't make me happier to see myself repeating this cycle. I need a change. Not from being creative but from the old obsession having to release something to make myself happier and not getting there.

Magic:
Are you planning to meet up with Navis? After all he moved from Greece to the UK to.

Optimus:
I think Navis is living in Oxford. Maybe I could pay him a visit one day. The sceners I was thinking I'd like to meet are London based if I am not mistaken, such as Shockwave and rc88 and maybe others.

Magic:
Coincidentially, some days after I asked you the question about meeting up with Navis, I read on Pouet that you had your first scene meeting in the UK last night. Please report!

Optimus:
Yes, it was very nice to meet some sceners again. There were Navis, Smash, Gloom, Nuclear, Hikiko, Spuddy, some guy whose nick I don't remember but who works for nvidia in UK and maybe someone I missed. I tasted some great Belgian strawberry beer and then we went to eat Chinese (at least half of the people). We discussed about the future of the demoscene and I was persuaded that solo2

is not a single person.

Magic:

So what was the outcome of this discussion? What is the future of the demoscene according to last night?

Optimus:

The demoscene Pouet statistics department have analyzed some data from Pouet and found out some interesting demotrends (actually I would like to try various things if I knew some php and had access to the database of pouet like gloom has as a gloperator I guess . The trends said that demo productions are decreasing and 4ks (the more coder specific beloved stuff) are increasing (hey, good for my liking of the coder demoscene stuff) while the number of demo productions is decreasing per year. Also, comments (or positve ones?) are decreasing while trolling is increasing (expectum?). I had that curiosity actually, to make demoscene statistics on several various things on Pouet and see the trends. Where is it going. Where is the community going. Of course in my opinion it is stronger than in the past. But where is it going?

Magic:

About Solo2 is he the new Shanethewolf dog?

Optimus:

He said that solo2 was appearing from different IPs from different parties. Ok. If I want to believe that Solo2 is one person, I'll have to think that he is some kind of hax0r (ugh!) changing his IP to look like he is at different positions on planet: Why? BECAUSE he is a fuckin paranoid!!! A person thinking that he is stalked by illegal telepathy is a fucking paranoid. Serious stuff, not fun. Mental thing disorder. So it COULD be possible. Maybe I just want to think that this person exists. Gloom said it seems he posts from 50 IPs from different world locations and of course it's not possible that he teleports or something. Your conclusions here...

Magic:

Some of our readers might know you from your blog. From what other things could we know you?

Optimus:

Few people know me from my blog. Most of them know me from Pouet. Some might know me also from the little things I have produced. I have mostly produced good things in the Amstrad CPC, Quickbasic and Gamepark scenes. I know some people who know me in these three communities just because of the demos, without even being aware of my Pouet blabbing. Those are also the communities I feel I have released good stuff

for. I have also made some mediocre stuff on PC and maybe minor things for other platforms (C64 but I wish I would be active). But if it wasn't for my Pouet activity I doubt I would ever be in an interview.

Magic:
You have released quite some productions under your pseudonym Optimus. Have you also released some productions under the name of a group? If yes which ones; if the answer is no, why not?

Optimus:
Ok. Sometimes I release stuff and decide to submit them under a group label (even if most of the times it's just me working on the main thing). Some other times I submit it with my nick as a group on Pouet. That happened when someone submitted my production on Pouet and added me as a group. I don't agree with single persons added as groups in the pouet database but I couldn't do anything and decided to keep it so that I have an overview of some of my old stuff when clicking on the group name optimus (although I have some optimus demology list in pouet lists already).

To return back to your question, technically I am a member of these groups (in chronological order): Dirty Minds, Nasty Bugs, Anubis, Mindlapse, Binary Bros, Reversed Engineers. But don't be scared. Ok, Dirty Minds is the one and only CPC group (We had some enthusiastic crazy people recently like Voxfreax and started working on something that looks good and I wish I will not scrap this project), Anubis the C64 group (I wish I could also find a timewindow to do a new C64 demo that won't suck but there is no need to beg for that all the time), Nasty Bugs is an old Greek PC group, we are really inactive if not retired, Mindlapse is a newer Greek PC group that simply rules and we won't release anything till we are sure that it rules (how can you ever be active with such a ruling rule? , Binary Bros is an international PC group I recently joined because someone liked that I am trying stuff with shaders but curently I don't know if anyone works on something, Reverse Engineers is another Greek group with Sybex as graphician/musician and he just wanted a coder to start a new demo or something. So it's just Binary Bros and Reverse Engineers where someone could expect a demo where I might be involved. And of course Dirty Minds (because we have to finish that demo!). And I hope Anubis too. Mindlapse just rules by rule so there is no need to proove anything by making a new demo

Magic:
What are your thoughts on yourself aka Optimus from the demoscene?

Optimus:
That's the hard question. First of all I think I am in a transition state concerning the demoscene. But that would be a lie. It would probably be an predictable lie to say something is changing or that I am moving away from the scene because I know in the near future I will be doing the next demo and writing the next thread of sorrows on Pouet. Whatever the matter, it's been ten years since I got involved. You look back and see your young self and today I am reaching 30. My programming abilities have improved, I learned a

lot of stuff (and this demo experience will make my studies and job career easier too). But there is something that has only slightly (if not at all) changed concerning me and the demoscene. It's the same sad connection, the same disappointment, the same mediocrity. I wanted to be something but I couldn't. It won't change the fact if I join a group with talented artists. I guess those talented people that do the very best demos don't care whether they will climb the charts or become famous, they just love being creative and work endlessly with good feelings. I don't say that I am all about glory and fame, sometimes I'd prefer to be infamous (and they will say I am lying because they think I am an attention whore or something), there are times I like the programming creativity and enjoy making something that looks good but it needs so much fucking dedication to do some of the good demos. When the motivation is missing it's hard to find a good reason to stick yourself in a chair and work hard on something that is not your job and you are not getting anything good from it. And that motivation is decreasing by age.

I remember when I was doing all those demoscene websites with 150kb of text and coding harder stuff for my age when I started, looking at some things I did and saying that I will never do this again. Websites about the Greek demoscene, the cpc scene, the other scenes. I have years to update my websites and I am totally bored to do so. Of course the scene is not just websites but I just want to say that I look back and I can't easily motivate myself to do the stuff I did then. Also, it seems the same to me. Doing the same mediocre demos. Sometimes it wouldn't even have much of a meaning to work harder and do a better demo. To prove what? Maybe I have already proven that. So I want to say that some of the old motivations (that youth obsession, to become famous or leet (even though leetness scares me), some people left that obsession behind. But not entirely me? Now I am thinking about it, it's the same motivation as with "hackers", you know, the new breed I hate. Why glamorous or scary nicknames? Why kick ass? They say it's an aftereffect of puberty...) are something I want to leave behind because they are not working anymore and are confusing me. I could only find an interest in trying some graphics algorithms or trying to optimize shit but connecting all together into a demo? I don't know. For two months I didn't want to think about demos. But when I have seen some new ones the inspiration came back. I didn't settle down on coding something yet but you know... that fucking thing moves in cycles! You can't escape the demoscene...

Something interesting though. I have two friends who were in the demoscene or other communities and they seem to totally have left that thing behind. One says he wants to do the other things in life. Having a job, making enough money and getting out with girls. Which is ok and I think I am moving towards that direction too. But those friends have totally left that behind it seems. I don't seem to be disconnected yet, I don't sometimes want to leave it behind. For one thing. I can't imagine my life just with those three things. Job, money, girls. I need the other one, the one that got me into it. To do something greater than these. Maybe fame is not a good word, maybe I had glory in my mind. To do something good and feel it's good and it's above the regular things. This is why I can't disconnect and just do the regular things and nothing else. I need that fourth point. Maybe it will not be demos, maybe it will be something more crazy like those eccentric people looking for UFOs or anything. I want a fucking wicked hobby!!! (Not a hobby as something to pass time, but something that defines you and becomes part of you.)

Needless to say, regardless all this confusing monologue, I think I will be in the demoscene from time to time (fucking cycle and need for something more than the regular) but maybe just not as active as in the past. I even joined two PC groups (Binary Bros and Reversed Engineers) so nothing is sure. And there is a new CPC demo I started working with Voxfreax, being in a 30% state, which when I look it how well it starts I say it's a pity to never finish this. But my studies will play an important role in my inactivity. I don't want to fuck my studies because of my demo obsession.

Magic:
You are demo scene addicted?

Optimus:
Oh yes! As I said, I am addicted to the idea that I have to release something in order to be active or be appreciated or feel like I am doing something in my life. I wish I could be less cryptic with

that. It's like the thing the psychologists say about puberty (I don't know if it exists or if it is a lie, but one psychologist told me my scene obsession is normal, it's the force in puberty, I don't remember the word, anyway...), for others it was being rebellous or chasing girls, for me it was a need to do something greater. That's ok till now, I just feel that that force has remained till my current age, I mean the motives in the past were ok but now they are obsolete, although I haven't got away from that. I mean, for 9 years every day I woke up the first things that passed through my mind were "I have to do that demo! I have to finish it before the deadline. I must do something important in my computer..." instead of thinking of that girl that liked me, planning out my day or just relaxing. If your neural nerves play the same music each day then it becomes a habit. So now, even if the puberty motivation faded away, I wake up and I get that feeling. From one side it's not bad. I don't believe obsession alone is good or bad, some crazy scientists, programmers or writers were ten times more obsessive than me. It's just if you can handle it. And lately I feel like I can't. Although I can't leave the "make something slightly important" game. I will play with it from a distance. If I can't handle it I will forget it. If I can, I'll get obsessive and hopefully creative for few hours till I forget it again. This is how I think I will play the game from now on and it might mean less scene activity from my side. Time will tell...

Magic:
So no visiting Breakpoint 2010 and competing in some competitions like you did at Breakpoint 2009?

Optimus:
Visiting demoparties is ok from the point of motivation. I can do that occasionally and it's a good way to find some people and see the good, friendly side of the scene. The hard thing is to focus with dedication on making a good demo. Also I didn't make any plans visiting Breakpoint for 2010, neither did I plan to do a demo for its competition. It will depend on my studies plan and money. I can't say for now.

Magic:
You write a lot on the Pouet BBS, even personal stuff... Why? And why don't you write some of it on your blog?

Optimus:

I also write a lot, lot, lot of stuff in my blog(s) too. And then I return back to Pouet. I had another period where I moved away from Pouet. And then returned back. And the universe is still in place. And I haven't had my outbreak yet. Will it be the last? Anyways, one reason is that the audience is different. My blog is not very known. I rarely get replies. And people need to read my tons of text (which are usually bigger than the things I write in Pouet because I am in a fucking blog) and rarely reply with something that sometimes is not very interesting or maybe I don't get what I need. I will tell you one thing. If it's ever proven that somehow I seek for attention as they do say, then it is unconscious. Because it all needs to this. I need that audience. But then I don't like it. What the hell is going on with me?

But to answer your question, I write tons more stuff in my blog than Pouet... And in Pouet the writing is spontaneous. I may write something small and stupid or something bigger without thinking it. In the blog, because I am aware that I am writing more important thoughts in a blog, I tend to need to write more carefully. And it takes more time and it doesn't give me the spontanity of writing what I think during that time and the weird replies... (Now I am thinking it. Why am I not joining Twitter? I think I heard somewhere it's for writting small stuff.)

Magic:
At the moment you are at the 7th spot of top of the glops at Pouet. What can you tell us about reaching this achievement?

Optimus:
Too many comments on prods, some submissions and other stuff. Maybe I should get higher by submitting prods. Things are funny on Pouet. Someone (I think crosbow) made a page which counted various things - oneliner posts per user like most posts, average size and many other things and the top ten (or fifty?) people on that. And guess what? I was first with difference. I wasn't even aware all these years that my post numbers were 3X more than the second person! Another funny thing, someone did a keyword cloud on the oneliner posts and there was a big enough OPTIMUS in it. Keywords like "demo", "demos", "demomaking", "coding" and more relevant stuff were generally smaller. Wicked! I mean, I knew I was obsessed on Pouet but I didn't know that in stats I would make such a difference. Although wasting my time on a website is nothing that I could boast about

Magic:
Wade of Alcatraz stated in this issue of Hugi: 'If you have lots of friends on Pouet or you get drunk with the moderators at parties, your prods will receive plenty of thumbs up.' What are your thoughts on the Pouet BBS, the flaming and trolling which is going on and Wade's statement?

Optimus:
Look, voting is more or less biased. The same way I notice that demos from famous groups or sceners who go to a lot of parties get biased thumbs up, almost the same way (of course with less numbers of thumbs) it also happens with newbie releases where the rule

is: "A newbie. We must support. Thumbs up for first! Go on!" As for the flaming and stuff. It's different when you meet the people at a demoparty. At Pouet it's kiddy stuff. Something one should not take seriously although you can't always not be affected by some of the comments.

Magic:
By the way, some time has gone by since we started with this interview. Getting comfortable already in the UK?

Optimus:
The weather was good, until... yesterday. It's also the time I

have some strange bad luck which won't affect my regular life (only my nerves) yet it was too wtf for being a coincidence (although technically it is).

The people I meet are great, the lessons have just started and are interesting and not hard (even though we are just in the introductory steps), the life with my new laptop alone in my room is fine, the metro is overcrowded, the museums are great, the places are nice. In about a month I will get more inside things and maybe things get busy too.

Magic:
Coincidence? What are you talking about here?

Optimus:
Oh, I don't know why I got out of subject here, actually I do know but sometimes I can't control it. Anyways, just a series of events, we were going to the British Museum and just before the entrance some garbage particle stuck into my eye and I couldn't enjoy the trip so I left. I mean, just exactly!!! And then an ipod mini I just bought stopped working and I also thought Podfather would run in this generation because it was monochrome but no it says that it won't. And the ipod inexplicably stopped working (I thing because it was went on the rain). Also I missed a metro for a second and the next one came 20 minutes later. Also, at night the Internet stopped functioning in the student house. Can you believe it? The Internet? This was the tip of the iceberg. I couldn't even twit about my god damn day

Magic:
Thanks for this cozy chat! Air your last words in this interview before you have driven away completely from the demoscene!

Optimus:

I just had a revelation. The revelation is older. I sometimes have it and then forget it. I just had it again. One example is my obsession with the confusion and false ethics of the term 'hackers' and someone told me that the manifesto is from 1986 (which I knew but I didn't realized how stupidly obsessed I am getting sometimes).

So the thing is, we have those flames and fights in the demoscene. People like me were taking it serious. Maybe others did it for fun or only half so. We waste brain energy fighting for specific ideas like if the size of the demos is too big today or whether software rendering sucks or not. I don't blame people for that, I used to do that too and now it has shifted from my side onto other obsessions with ideas on other domains. Demoscene is creativity I said, everyone is free (of course) to make a demo in whatever platform he/she wishes. Of course every is free to criticize too. So I thought about this and moved away from arguing with people about the demo standards. But obsession is in everything. I am obsessed with individuality, anti-normality, anti-"pseudohacking" and knowing things in deeper levels than the ones necessary for simple living. It's hard for me to think I could just drive a normal life without having something to fight. But fighting for something is an obsession too... Nationalism? I never understood it. Don't those people have a life? Politics. I stopped caring. Maybe good, maybe bad (those two words, I try to avoid them though).

What I want to say. The demoscene was for me a strange interesting game which I took very seriously. Maybe sometimes I still do. Not anymore with criticising other people's style of demomaking (you can do a demo in Flash, I don't care) but with the last hope of being a better, more creative scener who does a very good demo or something. Which is a thing that I decided to stop caring about anymore. I won't prove anything more to anyone if I struggle to make a really good demo. I know I can do it. I just don't need to. I will more strongly insist on coding a demo if it's only proven to be fun and doesn't bring back the false obsession that leads to negative feelings and epic fails.

Someone in my blog said somewhere "We are the hobbyists who take their hobby seriously". This truly reminded myself in my youth when being active in the scene was a matter of life and death. Sometimes I wish I could get in the same trip but this time being able to handle it better. It's not bad. I still don't accept it. Maybe I don't accept that I lost. But I also don't accept bashing away the dreams. It's just that you have to be able to handle such kind of obsession. There are people who worked like maniacs and brought their dreams to reality and then there is the majority of the minority of special individuals that we never hear about. Knowing that Tesla was a workaholic dreamer or Einstein showed(?) signs of autism doesn't mean that all of us who work hard and obsessively will not fail or that all autistic will be famous science people. It's just that these example are the only ones that are heard. I wanted to say though to the people of my obsessive kind that it's worth trying no matter if the most possible thing that might happen to you is to fail or burn. Why people don't like dreams? Fear, I guess..

My last sentence to the scene is that this won't be my last sentence for sure. I will keep being around but most probably as a zombie, an undead, a ghost that is about to live this world but is stuck between two worlds because there is still something he never got and probably won't in the future too. How can it be my last sentence? Won't I log in Pouet tomorrow? I probably will...

Links related to this interview

Optimus' blog

Demos made by Optimus

Magic & Optimus