13 Screen It 2010/2011

Magic & others, Tue 12 Jun 2012

Prologue

 We had a small delay since issue #36, which was released on Easter 2010. That s why this episode of Screen It! covers some of the most important and best demos and intros of 2010 and 2011 and is the biggest review article till date! The reviews are sorted by time of demo release. The screenshots were taken from Pouet. We thank them.

 The concept of Screen It! is that the review is done from the perspective and opinion of a demoscene coder. This also counts for the rating from 1 to a maximum of 6 which can be given for graphics, music, effects, concept and overall. So which coders are doing the reviews this time around?

 One of the pioneers of Screen It!, KeyJ of KakiArts, is once again back for this episode. The first Screen It! article was published in Hugi #34, released way back in February 2008. Also Navis of Andromeda Software Developement and Lazarus of Nah-Kolor are back to air their views on some of the demos beneath. For this Screen It! there is a special guest appearance by Archee.

 Have a nice time reading!

 Magic

 Fairlight & CNCD   Agenda Circling Forth

KeyJ:
 There are few coders in the demoscene that experiment with alternative rendering techniques as much as Smash from Fairlight does. After he perfectioned his deferred polygon rendering technique in "Frameranger" last year, he went to a completely different approach: Building worlds out of particle systems. After "Blunderbuss", which was more or less just an experiment, "Agenda Circling Forth" is the first full-scale demo to rely on this technique. With its millions of particles, it sets an intense dark and solemn atmosphere. From

technical terms, the demo is absolutely mindblowing - Smash really deserved the special nVidia award he got for maximum abuse of GPUs, no doubt about that. This time, I'll even forgive that the demo requires hardware from the distant future to run smoothly.

From the artistic standpoint, the demo is exactly what we're used to from the Fairlight/CNCD combo: very good design, and by now they even figured out how to do it in a consistent theme. Some of the scenes are a bit dull (the animal that bursts into flames), but others more than make up for that (the runners). The music, though, isn't fully my cup of tea, but I must admit that it perfectly fits the mood of the demo. Too bad that most of the soundtrack is sampled from an old commercial record from the 70s.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 5/6

Navis:

In Agenda Circling Forth, Fairlight & CNCD explore a fairly straightforward concept: a demo that consists of very few, almost static scenes that are rendered using a highly sophisticated and innovative "dissolving particle" engine. What makes this demo stand out from the crowd is that it creates and holds the tension up to the last minute without the need for explosive fireworks seen in other productions: it is reserved in just about the right amount. Audience love this demo for its techniques but also for its style: artistically, the use of surprising palettes, the complex 3D models and the fitting music add to truly unique, amongst the realms of the demoscene, experience.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 6/6

United Force & Digital Dynamite   Wir sind Einstein

Navis:

This production feels like a beefed-up version of its cousin demo 'The Golden Path' where everything is bigger and better, minus the originality factor, of course. It is still as enjoyable as the original: a caliedoscopic trip through various different constructions that seem to be the creation of a very sick mind. In the end, it achieves to entertain the audience with its humor and catchy music and easily sets a good candidate for 'which demo would you introduce a demoscene virgin to' competition.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 3/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 4/6

KeyJ:
 I never met Slyspy (at least not knowingly), but he must be a totally mad person   in a good kind of way. "Wir sind Einstein" is an indescribably crazy and colorful trip through ... well, honestly, I don't know. Anyway, it's really entertaining, unlike his previous demo "The Golden Path", which was based on a single good idea but was ruined by atrocious design along the way. In "Wir sind Einstein", it's the other way round: I can't really see a point, theme or structure, but it's fun as hell anyway. The music is also very simple, but funny and fitting. All things considered, this will certainly not be one of my favorite demos, but it sure was fun to watch at the compo.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 3/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 3/6

Farbrausch   Rove

Navis:
 Ah, such demos of epic proportions don't come around too often; the reason being that they require so much effort to put together and very few people are committed to such extent. Farbrausch is one of these groups that will produce the odd epic, once or twice during a decade, usually with mesmerizing results. Their latest megademo is blast: it has tons of work in modeling, animation, music and code, and seen as a collection of parts it is amongst the best demos of that decade. However, I believe that the sum doesn't work all that well. Maybe it is because of the lack of a purpose, of the almost static progression, the repetition of some scenes and the quiet finale. Nevertheless, the atmospheric, delicately arranged first minute will leave you in awe.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

KeyJ:
 Every three or four years, demo designer/director fiver2 and his comrades from Farbrausch create a demo that raises the bar and blows everything else away. After "the product" in 2000, "the popular demo" in 2003 and "debris" in 2007 it was time for the next killer

demo from the legendary group. Released at Breakpoint 2010, "rove" is set in a strange alien world with some quite bizarre creatures, reminding me of Arthur C. Clarke's sci-fi novels for some reason.

It's really hard to rate this demo. Technically and graphically, it's just perfect. "Rove" has the cleanest, smoothest graphics I've ever seen in a demo, there are some very interesting effects in it and it even runs at decent frame rates. The music is also nice and soothing without being too cheesy. There's even a bit of melancholic crowdpleasing at the end. The only thing that's not perfect is the unrealistic bird animation. You see, every ingredient for a killer demo is present in "rove". But still, it doesn't fully capture my heart. It's a beautiful trip, but somehow it just feels empty. What does it want to say, where does it go? I can't tell. This demo is a must-see, but I'm afraid it might be forgotten soon.

Graphics: 6/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

ASD   Happiness is around the bend

KeyJ:
Prior to the release of his new demo, Navis raised the expectations to almost unreasonable levels by creating a blog exclusively to report about the development process. Despite this, I guess that nobody was really disappointed when the demo was finally shown at Assembly 2010. "Happiness is around the bend" is a masterpiece, no less than its predecessors "Lifeforce" and "Iconoclast". The style is typical for ASD: Beautiful graphics, interesting effects, a seemingly arbitrary, dream-like composition of scenes with amazingly smooth transitions and a progressive rock soundtrack. But unlike the two previous blockbuster demos from the group, "Happiness is around the bend" isn't perfect: The SSAO looks weird in some places, some materials look very cheap and a few parts of the music are almost unbearable. On the other hand, this demo features the most impressive geometry morphing effect ever and contains so many beautiful scenes that it will become a classic for sure.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 2/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 5/6

Lazarus:
The Lifeforce saga continues: we are once again invited into a world full of flying fishes, Escher's stairs and other strange symbols.

The whole journey through Navis' visions lasts around 8 minutes. All scenes are well executed and includes effects like water, SSAO, particles and other ones. Morphing vehicles look especially nice. Leviathan and aMusic composed the soundtrack to fit the visuals, so it often changes - choosing progressive metal as a music style here was a good decision. Obviously, a lot of work went into this demo. All the small details, transitions and syncing required much time and patience. This is how ASD created another epic production. Instant classic!

Graphics: 6/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 6/6

Fairlight & CNCD   Ceasefire

KeyJ:
With "Agenda Circling Forth", Fairlight and CNCD demonstrated that it's perfectly feasible to do whole demos with just a particle system, albeit a very advanced one. In "Ceasefire", the two groups further refined the concept and took it to the next level. This time, there's a considerable amount of static geometry - or rather static particle emitters, because just as in "Agenda Circling Forth", everything is moving and vibrating. Set in a well-designed urban environment, "Ceasefire" blows up buildings and floods subway stations in the most beautiful manner. The music is also as unconventional as the rendering technique. FLT and CNCD reactivated the former demoscene musician Hunz to deliver a melancholic yet groovy track that fits very well with the visuals.

Long story short, "Ceasefire" is an awesome demo. I just hope that Smash doesn't keep the particle style forever and continues to innovate - I'd love to see what a combination of traditional polygon rendering and a particle system might be able to show in the future ...

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 6/6

Lazarus:
Another production coded by Smash (after "Agenda Circling Forth"), that contains massive amounts of particles. At the first sight this production looks like it is based on just one effect, but in fact it contains several other ones like water, fire, hair and raytracing. As these are not so trivial, the demo requires a powerful graphics card. Lucky owners of a proper hardware will be able to see scenes with

water, buildings and other objects made entirely of particles; some of them will even explode. Oh, and there is a phoenix too. The visuals are distorted by various post-process effects making the screen look like a broken video stream, but they are a bit too agressive.

The soundtrack is in a class by itself. Excellent climatic music with vocals in Radiohead style was created by Hunz. In fact, the entire demo could be a music video for this track. A must-see production.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 6/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 5/6

Finally Inside - Still

Navis:
This is, probably, the best demo from the "we are all under surveillance" line of demos from Still, the widely respected "thinking man's" demogroup. It works very well: it is focused (running time is less than 4 minutes), the camera effects work well with the detailed environment, the colourscheme is polished and the music adds to the excitement of the situation. The end result may actually confuse viewers into thinking they are watching a production from outside the demoscene.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 5/6

KeyJ:
Still is undoubtedly one of the most stylish demogroups: Every large demo from them has a distinctive topic and executes that with impeccable design. Their main demo of 2010, Finally Inside, is a remix of an older 2009 demo called Outside that deals with the topic of Orwellian surveillance. Driven by Drumhead's dark and energetic drum'n'bass soundtrack, it shows a gritty and restless flyby of the ruins of a civilization with lots of motion blur and post-processing effects. The modelling is very nice (I particularly like the somewhat disturbing statue on the church-like building) and the technical execution is flawless. What the demo really makes stand out, though, is the movie-like parts at the beginning, mid and end of the demo that ultimately (and deservedly) made it win the best direction scene.org award.

Graphics: 4/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 4/6

Lazarus:
 The world presented in this demo looks quite dark; we see scenes straight from Orwell's "1984" with a lot of cameras and portraits of political leaders on the walls. Everything was under control of a surveillance system, but something went wrong: the system is overloaded and cannot be restarted. The demo may look as another fly-by at the first glance, but definitely it is not. A lot of work has been put in synchronisation and camera editing. All scenes contain a large dose of post-processing through which the image is distorted. Perhaps some of the objects are a bit too low-poly, but on the other hand we can enjoy a decent framerate. The scenes with the flying red ribbons and particles are especially well-made, and the energetic drum'n'bass music fits here perfectly. "Finally Inside" is a very solid, well-made production.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 5/6

Quite & Orange   cdak

KeyJ:
 Raymarching on distance fields is the most-used effect in 4k intros in the last two years. I'd actually say "overused" as well, because most raymarching intros look more or less the same. "cdak", however, dares to be different. It is still based on the same technology, but with some clever postprocessing, it manages to create a completely different visual style. So there we are, flying into a strange blueish structure that looks alien and technical. What exactly it might be is left to everyone's own imagination   I think about a space ship, for example.

 The music isn't anything to write home about; in fact, it's not even real music, but just some atmospheric sound effects. However, in context with the visuals, that makes perfect sense: The intro would actually have suffered under a generic 160-bpm-in-your-face-demoscene-dubstep tune, I guess

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 5/6

Archee:

When I first saw Cdak, I had no idea how it was made. The simple method was explained in a pouet thread, which ruined the myth. Cdak has brought the most out of distance field ray marching. The music has not much melody, but great sample generators, and fits the visuals well, and creates an atmosphere which helped this product to get such high popularity. The maker's intension wasn't to create realistic images, but an abstract one. The white fog looks like the end of a tunnel, but it never ends, post effects create the cartoonish edges.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 5/6

Kewlers   MF Real

KeyJ:

Particles are all the rage lately since Smash showed the world that jaw-dropping demos can be made with nothing but a few million points. The recently resurrected Kewlers obviously wanted to play around with particle systems, too, and "MF Real" is the result. It's basically a single-effect demo: high-quality static meshes, rendered as particles, twisted and deformed, a cube map in the background and finally a good pinch of postprocessing. Stir well, and you already have everything that constitutes this demo in the technical sense. But there's more to it: There's the typical Kewlers attitude, a cool (albeit a little repetitive and boring) soundtrack and seriously fast pacing. Someone on Pouet said that "MF Real" is basically like a Shitfaced Clowns demo on PC, and I think that summarizes it well and no, this is not meant as criticism.

Graphics: 4/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

Navis:

This production reminds us that Kewlers are capable of making highly polished demos even if they are clearly not trying too much, either because they don't have time (now that we are all dads and all that) or because they want to keep a good idea for a bigger party. So here we have the basic 'camera spins around objects' idea in an urban environment, with some glittering organic objects morphing into one another. That is basically it, but the pace, the quality of the morphing effect and the soundtrack raises the bar for such a simple concept to the Kewlers level we all love.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

Farbrausch   fr-063: Magellan

Navis:

Magellan is a demo that should please everyone: it has a fairly catchy tune, the game-like effects (cloth simulation, some impressive fractals) are brilliantly done, and there is also the bonus of a space-themed scenario to glue everything together. In true Farbrausch style the colours are hand-picked from the full visible spectrum and they match fairly well, something which is rare for non-abstract demos. The ending comes too soon and it never feels to last over 3 minutes, which is, in principle, a good thing.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 3/6

KeyJ:

If someone asked me about typical qualities of Farbrausch demos, I'd say it's cleanness, pixel-perfectness and, yes, sterility. This is also true for "Magellan", a classic effects show demo whose scenes are loosely tied together by a story involving an exploration spaceship. Most of the effects are of the "look, we have a multithreaded physics engine" variety, but two scenes really stand out from the rest: The greetings are made of extremely lovely looking clouds, which isn't a new effect per se, but it's really nicely implemented. The most jaw-dropping scene is the flight into a Mandelbulb at the end of the demo, though. With nice lighting and volumetric fog effects, the fractal looks really like an asteroid with bizarre surface structures.

All things told, "Magellan" reminds me a lot of "rove": good technology, clean rendering, nice effects, good soundtrack (though I must admit that Magellan's music is a bit bland), but somehow it's lacking some kind of spirit that makes the demo really come alive.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 4/6

Panda Cube   PC-05: Flux

Lazarus:

Every release from Panda Cube is better than the previous one. With their 5th production called "Flux" they have won the demo compo at Revision 2011. Let's see if their form continues to grow. The demo consists of 4 effects synced to a nice trance track which does its job pretty well. The first effect is the longest one and shows mostly bumping hexagon tiles; it looks pretty nice, but unfortunately watching it for almost 2.5 minutes might be a bit boring. In the greetings part, we've got a couple of robot arms holding screens with groups names; very well modelled and animated scene. After a short pass through the tunnel, there's the final (and my favourite) part: a black-orange city in a "Tron" style. This demo shows that members of the group have a high level of skill and with each release they're better, but unfortunately, something is still missing. There's no story or message in this demo; it would be nice if the next production pushed the envelope in this area.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

KeyJ:

Panda Cube is a pretty unknown group that produces a decent mid-class demo every year for Breakpoint or Revision and that's it. This year, however, they managed to win the demo competition   and I hope that no one takes offense when I say that this was mainly due to lack of competition. Mind you, "Flux" is no way a bad demo, it's just not your typical compowinner. The first scene (which takes far too long in my opinion) is one of the ever-so-popular "lots of vertically moving hexagonal columns" effects with some glowing wormlike flying creatures mixed in. The last scene is an interesting futuristic cityscape, but unfortunately nothing happens in this scene at all; it seems the developers ran out of time before finishing it.

But now that we have the not-so-good aspects of this demo behind us, let me say that the scenes in the middle part of the demo are really great. They feature a nicely modelled industrial indoor setting that could be straight from a game (or a Cocoon demo, for that matter). I really like this graphical style and I'd really love to see more of this in other demos, but it seems that most groups don't have good enough modellers. Panda Cube however has, and this is what saved the demo for me.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 2/6 Concept: 2/6 Overall: 3/6

Brain Control   Pandora

KeyJ:
 For many years, Brain Control were the productivity kings in the 64k category: From 2003 to 2007, they churned out up to 4(!) intros per year. I always felt that quality suffered from this high quantity, but after a two-year pause, this issue might have been solved, one might think.

 Except that it wasn't.

 Again, my usual disclaimer applies: I'm ranting on a high level here, because there's nothing really bad about "Pandora". But unfortunately, it doesn't stand out from the other Brain Control intros either: A lot of work obviously went into the detailed industrial setting with tubes and stuff, all of which is rendered in good quality. It does have a story, too. But it's lacking in direction, pacing and, most of all: polish! There are some things that just look unfinished or random. The music doesn't cut it either   I don't know if it's a technical limitation of the Tunefish synthesizer or the artist, but the tunes of the Brain Control intros all sound similar and uninspired to me.

 Graphics: 3/6 Music: 2/6 Effects: 2/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 2/6

Navis:
 I remember watching zoom3 by AND on the projector screen at Assembly 2003 and feeling blown away by the scope and sharpness of the visuals. 8 years later I watch Pandora by Brain control (a poor man's zoom3) and realize how much things have changes over time. No more I would be surprised by factories, pipes, drills, frantic camera work and electropop. But for what it is, it is not bad, it was clearly done with love and affection... just 8 years too late.

 Graphics: 3/6 Music: 2/6 Effects: 2/6 Concept: 2/6 Overall: 2/6

PlayPsyCo   We Crave Sustenance

KeyJ:

I've been following the progress of PlayPsyCo for some years now: ever since they stepped into ASD terrain with "Revolver" in 2007, they're one of my favorite groups. In the recent years, they really ascended into the top tier of demo groups and also found their own stylistic niche, which can best be described with the words "dark", "gritty" and "glitchy". In this sense, "We Crave Sustenance" is clearly the next development step after last year's "PhoN". Some parts seem to be heavily inspired by MFX's "Ballet Dancer" and Fairlight's "Frameranger", but it's rather citations than flat-out copies.

What really makes the demo special isn't the graphics though (they are rock-solid, modern, but not as technologically interesting as Fairlight's, for example). No, it's the soundtrack. And I picked this word very consciously: It's not just "music", it a bona fide soundtrack that drives the demo and is driven by the demo as well. It's a perfect symbiosis of visuals and sound that not only uses the usual "slow scene = quiet part, fast scene = dubstep" formula, but goes far beyond that. It's not just sound effects mixed into the music either, it's rather that every event in the demo is accompanied by a fitting cue in the soundtrack. Long story short, this demo is a perfect example of how audio and visuals can work together.

Graphics: 4/6 Music: 6/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 5/6

Navis:

If Pandora is 8 years too late, We Crave Sustenance is about 6 or 7, feeling way too derivative to be taken seriously as a contestant for a best demo of the year award. Personally I don't enjoy the story, the selection of colors and the timing of some effects. But on the technical side it works very well, the rendering of big, chunky triangles is done without significant effort and there are tons of particles and post-processing effects to keep your graphics card working hard. If that's what you want from a demo then you won't be disappointed. Music and modeling are also in par with the best out there.

Graphics: 3/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 3/6 Concept: 2/6 Overall: 3/6

CNCD & Fairlight   Numb Res

Navis:

Numb Res doesn't seem to try too hard and this is the brilliant thing about it. While it packs a killer effect, combined with a truly great piece of tune, it gives the impression to the viewer that it is just another performance from Fairlight + CNCD that doesn't take itself too seriously. It is so effortless that, in principle, one could spawn 3-4 killer mega demos from the core material in here; yet that won't happen, and that's great as it would spoil it in the long run.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 6/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 5/6

KeyJ:

Remember how I said in the "Ceasefire" review that I wanted to see "a combination of traditional polygon rendering and a particle system" in the future? Well, the future has arrived at The Gathering 2011, it seems, because CNCD/Fairlight's newest masterpiece does exactly that. In the central scene, we see a very high resolution marching cubes algorithm running on the GPU, tesselating water particles into solid geometry in realtime. At least, that's what a coder sees   others may just see a very cool physics-based effect here, but I think that should be cool enough too

That said, in my personal opinion, that coder porn is not the coolest part of the demo. To me, it's the (long) introduction and end scenes that thematize so-called number stations. These are rendered using Smash's awesome particle technology, consist of many million particles, and so on, but you know what? That doesn't matter. What makes these scenes so insanely great is not the technology, but the atmospheric mood. This is also due to the very smooth and soothing soundtrack that is a great change from the typical demoscene drum&bass stuff.

So here it finally is: The Fairlight demo that impresses me most with design instead of technology. Mission accomplished, I'd say.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 6/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 6/6

Kewlers   Fermion

Navis:

Super smooth visuals and the ever likeable music from kewlers construct this "retro" rave demo that feels fresh and exciting in 2011,

just as older demos (Infloresence) do. There is nothing, technically, that hasn't been done before but this time Kewlers seem to have spend the extra time fine-tuning the details: the camera movements are tighter, the synch more controlled, the effects are running very fast on low-end machines. For everyone wishing they would improve upon Variform and We cell (and I certainly belong to this category, sorry!) this is a step in the right direction.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 4/6 Concept: 3/6 Overall: 4/6

KeyJ:
The Assembly 2011 demo by Kewlers was born with a great deal of understatement in its genes: On Twitter, Curly Brace posted multiple messages that warned people not to expect too much from the upcoming demo. However, these warnings turned out to be unfounded: "Fermion" is a very good demo and far from the disappointment that was announced beforehand.

Technically, it's an improved version of Kewlers' particle engine, and while still not close to Fairlight's in terms of technical merits, it's already very nice to look at. My absolute favorite is the title scene, where the group and demo name are used as as emitters for 3D particle flames that look like liquid gold. If that description sounds too complex for you, I can perfecly understand that and advise you to have a look at the demo in my opinion, this scene alone makes the demo a must-see. Unfortunately, the rest of the demo is, for the most part, not quite as good and feels a bit random. There's also a one-minute segment that reminds me of the Breakpoint 2005 invitation in every way: Flashing symbols and similar music using the same samples even. The last scene, however, is again very great. Overall, this demo will certainly not appear in any all-time top list, but nevertheless I'd say it's well worth watching at least once.

Graphics: 4/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 5/6 Concept: 4/6 Overall: 4/6

ASD Spin

KeyJ:
Do you remember the ASD demo "Rupture"? Shame on you if you don't, because it is a masterpiece in which the viewer goes on a journey by cycle, train, boat and helicopter to escape a world falling apart, rendered mostly as wireframes in bluish hues.

At first sight, "Spin" can be seen as a direct successor to Rupture in that it also shows a long journey of the protagonist who morphs into various forms including cars, planes, tigers and a rhino, except that it's mostly orange this time. But such a superficial statement doesn't do "Spin" justice. While it may be true that the same basic concept applies to both demos, they are in fact very different. For example, Spin's rendering technique is completely different: 3D models serve only a coarse blueprint for the visuals in the demo. Everything we see is either done by tracing the contours of the objects in 2D or by particle rendering. While Navis' particle engine doesn't look as sophisticated as Curly Brace's, let alone Smash's, the 2D effects are absolutely top-notch. Most of the object morphing is in fact done in 2D, and the traced lines are in fact smooth b ézier curves.

However, as with most ASD demos, the technology does not play the main role in the demo   it's the visual impression, the driving EBM soundtrack and the overall mood that carries the viewer away.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 5/6

Lazarus:
A demo that Haruki Murakami would probably enjoy, so let's talk about running a bit...

The effects in this demo are based mainly on a post-processing, which detects the edges of objects and gives a feeling of a hand-drawn animation (it somehow brings to mind video for the hit from the 80's "Take On Me" by A-HA). But that's not all. Navis also coded a very nice particles effects; the one where they flow past the invisible body of a running man is really excellent. Too bad, that the music is not the strongest point of this production. The vocals are a bit annoying but, on the other hand, fans of the EBM style should be happy. That doesn't change the fact that once again ASD delivered another outstanding demo.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 5/6

Fairlight & Alcatraz   Uncovering Static

KeyJ:
Since the great 4k boom started a few years ago, I was always wondering how a 64k intro done with 4k technology could look like. If

http://www.bitfellas.org/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.2287

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we have the technology to crunch a few minutes of detailed graphics with good-quality sound into 4k, shouldn't it be possible to pack jaw-dropping graphics and bombastic sound into 64k? After a long time, the question was answered at Assembly 2011, and given the group names you might have already guessed what that answer is. If not, then suffice to say it's a three-letter word. Written in all-caps. With a bunch of exclamation marks right after it.

So, what do we have here? It's an intro based on distance field raymarching using (an improved version of) 4klang for music. So far, so boring. However, "Uncovering Static" takes both technologies to new heights: The visuals don't look like raymarching at all, because Smash carefully avoided the typical glossy look and instead went for diffuse surfaces that look like a good deal of dust has accumulated over them. The geometry also doesn't look like that from typical 4k intros at all   I can just guess that in one way or another, real models are used to control the distance field generation.

The 4klang (or rather 64klang?   synthesizer also doesn't sound like it used to, because physical modelling of string instruments has been added and used to great effect by Reed. The soundtrack is a good blend of classical and electronical music styles, and even though some instruments still sound a little artificial, it's still an immense technological achievement.

The intro is not purely about technology though, it's also a good demo from an artistic point of view. Again, somebody beat me to phrase the perfect summary, which is "Inception in 64k". A city is created out of nowhere, gaining more and more detail (up to a hell of a lot of detail at its peak), but then it's altered and smashed (no pun intended) again.

If I'd have to name a bad thing about this demo, I'd say it's that it demotivates other people even more from making 64k intros, as they will be compared to "Panic Room" or "Uncovering Static", which is a level that can't be reached by most mortal beings. Except Smash, of course.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 5/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 5/6 Overall: 6/6

Navis:
A truly mindblowing intro (it is 64k) where the visuals seems to be produced by a cross-over between traditional rendering of geometry and raytracing. Watch it in high resolution, if you can, to show your friends the core essence of demos: making things in a vastly different way, just because you can. Uncovering Static gets top marks in the aesthetics department too: great colours, a moody soundtrack (remember this is a real-time synthesized track playing there) and the well timed pauses create a unique experience, a cherished demoscene treasure.

Graphics: 5/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 6/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 6/6

Still   Beta

KeyJ:

 The title "Beta" in Stills new demo is no coincidence: The demo was indeed meant as a mere test for their new Tooll 2 engine. But it would not be Still if they didn't make an awesome demo with it anyway

 "Beta" is a very different demo. It does not have fancy 3D graphics. In fact it doesn't have any 3D graphics at all. It doesn't adhere to a consistent color scheme, but no one can rightfully complain about "coder colors" either. Many scenes are static, and those who are not only have subtle animation. The soundtrack is very generic, too. So why on earth would anyone like such a demo?

 The answer is: because it has style. And it has a clean concept: "Beta" is a tribute to Victor Vasarely, one of the most characteristic representatives of "Op Art", an artistic style dealing mostly with abstract shapes that most of us demosceners tend to like. The demo includes free interpretations of roughly two dozen of his works and makes them alive by adding the aforementioned subtle amount of animation to it. The net result is a demo that is fascinating for everyone who likes Vasarelys works and possible quite boring to everyone else. I belong to the former category though, so my thumb clearly points upward.

 Graphics: 3/6 Music: 3/6 Effects: 2/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 4/6

Navis:

 "Damn you still" - says me and another 20 sceners   You came into the night and stole my idea of working op art into a demo".
Done to perfection, this production will stay with you for quite a while, as it is fresh, it is educational, it is a class act.

 Graphics: 3/6 Music: 4/6 Effects: 3/6 Concept: 6/6 Overall: 4/6