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39 - An Exercise in Microhistory - Simulaatio 5

Preacher, Sun 26 Aug 2007

An Exercise in Microhistory - Simulaatio 5

by Preacher of Brainstorm and Traction

Microhistory is a rather new term in sociology and history. It is the discipline, accepted in the Sixties or so, of studying the history of a single "smaller" entity, such as a person a village or some inanimate object, instead of the larger "big picture" that's dominated the study of history throughout the ages. I think this is the first party report I'm writing for a diskmag and since I always found the things other than the actual party much more interesting (because to be honest, most demoparties are rather similar with people getting drunk, and everyone can watch the compos entries and whine about unfair results at home), I decided to try writing this report in a bit different way.

A bad start

The party weekend really didn't start out that well. I was tired from the start, and on Friday I had a horrible day at work (even more work than usual crammed into even less time, since I was to leave early and we had a deadline. We ended up missing the alpha), after which I was to meet my future father-in-law for the first time (despite the fact that I've lived with my girlfriend for almost two years, go figure), after which I was to get the car, pick up the rest of the people, and then head towards Varkaus.

After a small delay, which included me not getting the car in time and ending up having dinner with a very nervous to-be-father-in-law (even more nervous than me!) instead of just popping up to say hello, we were off. In addition to me, the passengers in the car were Rale, Shadez and Serialthrill. The trip was pretty uneventful, with Shadez and Serialthrill drinking beer, playing some Worms games on Rale's DS and lots of really loud demos on really bad laptop speakers. It seemed to take ages though, and I already have in my mind an evil vision for a dynamic demo: four-hour long generated car trip. It will be shown at Icons'08 democompo, so be there! (yes, we will organize Icons'08, stay tuned!).

Arriving at the partyplace

Since we left a bit before eight from Helsinki, we arrived pretty late (after midnight) to the partyplace. Most people were quite drunk, and apparently some had surrendered to the forces of the booze already. The minute we arrived at the partyplace and people unloaded, I already found myself in the taxi-duty, taking people to a bar. I also took the opportunity for some sightseeing at night in Varkaus, and I have to say that it's the most dead city I've ever seen. I drove for like fifteen minutes in the center, and there was absolutely no one. Not even one brave soul. I returned to the partyplace.



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Because it became apparent pretty soon that being sober at a demoparty while everyone else is shitfaced is not that much fun, I started drinking beer even though I'd decided that maybe I should stay sober this time around, as I experienced one of my worst hangovers at Simulaatio'06. I was supposed to bring the said beer to someone, but since that person had already passed out, I ended up drinking it myself. After hanging around with various people for a while and witnessing one of the poor souls I had taken to the bar literally being lifted unconscious out from a car into the asphalt after having passed out in a bar and broken his new glasses, and then carried inside, I decided to get some rest. Since the sleeping area downstairs was rather noisy and the corridor full of vomit, I opted for sleeping in the grand stand. This was a bad move, since I could hardly get any sleep even with earplugs, mostly due to some lamer asshole jumping in the grandstand around sleeping people. Apparently there are people who never get past the schoolyard bullying thing, even in the scene. Sad. This kind of ruined my party mood.

Anyway, after three hours or so of constantly interrupted sleep and a slight hangover, I decide to get up and do something useful. And what is the first thing I see when I raise my head above the rows of seats? You're correct. It's the police. Apparently it's not allowed or even legal to spend your hangover lying on the grass in Varkaus, and the police have nothing better to do than harass tired people in the morning. After threats like "if you won't get rid of those people, we will", the police leave and poor people either go to the beach, or come back inside. My hangover, luckily, is relatively mild, but coffee and cold water still taste quite wonderful. As they say: "If I knew how good water could taste, I wouldn't have drunk anything else last night". Maybe next time..

Since I don't own a laptop and there was extra space in the car, I brought my desktop computer with me. Unfortunately I forgot the extension cord, and since there were no extra plugs, I ended up buying one, along with network cable (the supermarket was selling five(!) different kinds of twisted pair cables, but zero standard ones.. what gives? I needed to scan Varkaus around a bit to find an electronics shop) and some food supplies. The famous KGB grill near the partyplace is famous for a reason, and if I was a biker or a trucker I would love the place, but being the slightly geeky semi-vegetarian (= vegetarian except when there's currywurst available), I decided to opt for sandwiches from the supermarket instead.

Back at the partyplace, I hooked up the computer and went into the asocial mode. Rale had started working on the Jumalauta intro ("remake" of Remorse from Icons, with some minor tweaking and new samples in the xm), which ended up winning the compo, and I coded a niceish effect out of boredom, which will be used in some future Traction demo. Lines and glow, of course. After that I took a nap (the second best way to kill a hangover, and the best if you want to drive a car the next day), IRCed a while and prepared for the compos.

Let the games begin

The competitions weren't exactly spectacular. The best thing about the short wild competition was that the wilds were actually short. Some, like the one about a girl hiding from someone seemed out of place, and the others were just either inside jokes or generally tired and/or old hat. The compo was won by wamma's entry which included shitload of beer bottles being thrown on the floor. Weehee. The intro compo was hardly better. Rale won the compo with the aforementioned Jumalauta entry, and the rest of the intros were not any better, considering what kind of crap won. Same thing with the demos, except that the Ananasmurska demo (which as of writing, two months after party, hasn't been released), contained huge amounts of work and should in my opinion have won. After the



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compo I crawled to sleep, so that I could drive safely all the way back home without falling asleep at the wheel.

On the second night, being now a bit wiser, I opted for the sleeping area. And, unlike sleeping areas on most parties, it was actually pretty dark and quiet, and I managed to catch a good ten hours of sleep. Probably a good thing considering the drive home, as the others weren't quite in the condition to drive. The night was pretty eventless, unless you consider the one moment when I woke up to the guy sleeping next taking my hand and caressing it softly. I hope I didn't disturb whatever nice dream he was having by my rather sudden movement away from him.

The morning was dull and quiet, and everyone seemed just wanting to get back home. I pity the guys that were supposed to go on the bus, as the ride back wasn't really a nice experience last year, and this year there was an accident on the highway and they had to wait an extra hour in the bus, while the sun was giving its best to make them feel like it was the summer already. Good thing we left a bit early and passed the place before the accident.

We set off after the prizegiving, mostly in a cheerful mood. Rale had won a 250 gigabyte external hard drive, as well as an iPod nano, which are probably the best prizes anyone of us has ever gotten from a demoparty. We stopped for a kebab in Mikkeli (which is claimed to be the best kebab place in Finland.. a gross overstatement, but after a day of eating barely nothing, it sure tasted good), and then headed straight to Helsinki, stopping twice on the way. The only notable thing on the way back was when we stopped for a toilet break.. in the booth next to me someone made probably the most massive puking sound I've ever heard, and then exclaimed "vitun demopartyt, vittu", which I'm sure most of you can understand, but for the linguistically challenged, it would translate to something like "fucking demoparties, fuck". I don't know who it was, but props to him nevertheless. The whole stall was shaking when he did his thing...

All in all, the trip was mostly fun, but I've been to parties that I've enjoyed more. It's not the fault of the organizers though, as they did a good job on many things (even sold beer even though the party was organized at a school). I just wasn't on a very good mood from the start, and my mood didn't really improve along the way. I hope this is not a sign of getting old, grumpy and unproductive, like so many others before me. Time will tell.

Summary

Ups: + The party was cool, and I had more fun than last year, even despite my grumpy mood. + Driving was a lot less painful and a lot more fun than I expected. + Sleeping area. + The prizes that were a lot better than at Assembly. + Look around you. I may have a rotten sense of humor, but it's the best thing since Monty Python. Just look around you.

Downs: - The f***ing entrance ticket button thingy. I don't know if just mine was defective, or if they all were like that, but it kept falling off and at one point I woke up to a delightful stinging pain on my nipple.

- Myself. Going to a demoparty without much enthusiasm (especially if you're not that social a person) isn't necessarily the best idea in the world. Parties can be boring too. - The cassette lamer asshole who kept me awake. Get a real hobby.



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