FINAL REFLECTION

Your name: Dean Loades (n4481232)

Project name: Shardup Hunt (previously Ghost Captor (previously Ghost Scanner))

What was your main role?

In the Shardup Hunt my primary role would probably be best described as the Lead Artist. I was responsible for the development of the code and assets supporting the creatures in the game. Thus the conversion from a 2D concept to an animated 3D creature was my primary role. This involved the 3D modeling and animation of the creature. It also involved working out a way to export the data out of Maya and into the program, which turning out to be one of the biggest hurdles. I was also responsible for the code that presents the creature and controls his behaviour in the 3D environment. In addition to the 3D component I was also behind the 2D art of the game, such as the scanner effect that is overlaid over the camera output, and the integration of sound into the project. That said, being a team of only two people meant that roles were very flexible and both team members were familiar with most of the project.

What opportunities did you see that this project could provide you?

The project provided a most welcome opportunity to stretch my wings in the area of game development. As a student of the so-called “Games Course” at QUT I always relish the chance to do games related work. Any work at all in the area of 3D or graphics, or in the area of games systems and logic programming, I consider to be valuable experience. Working on this project was particularly good because the nature of the game was so interesting and unusual. Being able to work in such an unexplored avenue of the genre I think was a valuable opportunity and I believe the experience of having made it will be a useful one. It will also be something interesting to show potential employers.

The potential for collaboration on the project with a research organization from a different country is very attractive as it would be a great chance to “extend our horizons” so to speak.

Apart from the chance to create a game, the Project obviously provided a huge opportunity with regard to the scale and exposure of the Scoot Game. Having the chance to develop such a creative work and then have it displayed and marketed to a public audience so strongly is an opportunity that is very seldom found. Many projects at University I find, receive very little exposure or credit before they disappear. The opportunities that could result from having a work such as this displayed to the public are impossible to fathom.

What did you learn about your practice (processes and methods) while collaborating on SCOOT?

Working on the Scoot project, like a couple of other recent projects, has been hugely encouraging in terms of my personal practice. I feel my skills and understanding in various aspects of software development and design have reached a stage where I am able to take on complete projects such as Shardup Hunt, and not only complete the project, but produce a result that pleases me, and hopefully will please the audience for which it is intended. Developing native software, such as this project is a very complicated task. The tasks of creating the game logic, as well as creating and integrating the art assets are a big challenge. In this case it was also further complicated by the required integration of an unfamiliar technology, the ARToolKit. So, have taken on such a challenge and come out with a result that we are happy with is a big boost to my confidence as far as personal practice is concerned.

At the same time however, we learned that there is always room for improvement of one’s design process. I believe the underlying structure of the game could have been better designed. In the excitement of coming up with the concept and the general gameplay, I think we might have benefited from a little more time on the design of the program itself. We might even be accused of one of cardinal sins of software development methodology, that is, not throwing away the throwaway prototype. Although I think this accusation may be a bit extreme as there were many areas of code that were done well. Also, in our defense is the fact that we were a very small team working to complete a project in a very constrained timeframe. In any case, I regard the current project as a prototype, and believe that we will have it a lot more polished before it is presented to the world at the Scoot Event in Melbourne.

How did the SCOOT team assist you with the development of your work?

The Scoot team was excellent in giving us feedback and shaping our ideas, particularly with regards to the overall Scoot aesthetic. The workshops were great for getting our ideas into shape. The team also helped a lot in terms of organizing and getting to us the art assets that we required. At the same time we were given plenty of freedom to work on the project unobstructed and this was a big bonus.

Do you have any desire to work in the games industry?

Yes, working in the games industry has always been a goal of mine. Also. with recent developments, it is seeming like a far more reachable goal than it once was.

If so, what kind of games?

My primary focus has always been towards the mainstream gaming industry, with not a lot more definition than that. However just recently my attention has been brought to the area of mobile games, specifically the Nintendo DS system. The attraction of mobile games is that they are produced on a much smaller budget than the behemoth PC and next generation consoles. Typically modern games are produced with huge teams and I believe this would detract from the work experience. An individual has very little impact on the direction of the game. On the other hand, mobile games can be produced with a team of nine or ten, allowing for a lot more influence on the game and also a much wider range of input. In addition the much shorter development lifespan of around half a year as opposed to four or five years would make working in this area a lot more interesting and fulfilling. Finally, the unusual input methods of the DS system make it unique amongst consoles. I believe it offers a lot of potential for the development of very interesting games.

What do you find interesting about the potentials of Location Based Game Design? (or limits?)

I find the biggest attraction of Location Based games is the fact that they are so new and underdeveloped as a concept. This allows for a lot of creative freedom in designing the games. Since so little work has been done in the area, it is very difficult to know what types of interaction will be well received by the audience. As a result the field is very open to experimentation with new and different forms of media and interaction, such that used in Shardup Hunt. I believe this could make for some very interesting work.

Another advantage is the opportunity to reach a potentially wide target audience. There are no strong preconception’s in the public mind with regards to what kind of people are “meant” to play such a game, so in theory the game is open to be enjoyed by anyone.

My biggest perceived limitation is that fact that they are so transient. The production of a game requires a lot of organization and administration, and so can only last for a limited time, after which there is only the memories of those who were lucky enough to be able to play. This is not entirely a bad thing as it offers unique experiences to everyone, however I like the idea that my hard work will always be floating around somewhere on a cartridge or hard drive and can be experienced by anyone at any time.