

Click Convention

UK User Click Convention 2003 User Report

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Hey fellow people. This is my version of events for the Click Convention 2003, so if anything is incorrect, then my apologies.

Let me open up the report by writing about my car journey down to Bourne End (where the convention was held). I remember thinking, as we drove down, that about this time last year we were in a car accident, and that I jinxed it by saying 'I have a funny feeling we're not going to make it there in time'. *This* year, I kept my mouth shut, and henceforth the journey down was uneventful.

So my father and I arrived at the Watermill Hotel, at about 11.20am. Thinking I was early, I thought we could go to the bar and grab a quick drink. As soon as I stepped through the doors though, there was a group of guys giving me odd looks, and you know how in Eastenders when an unpopular character walks through the doors of the Queen Vic, and the pub falls silent? It felt *exactly* like that. So my Dad thought it best to leave me with the pack of wolves, and cleared off. Nice one, I thought. So I got myself a drink, and then this little chap with a red baseball cap went to the bar. Instantly, I thought this must be Aku. I assume that Aku thought I was Circy. Hey, he said to me, You must be Circy. I confirmed that I was who I was, and we had a quick chat, exchanging pleasantries, talking about the journey down, that kind of thing.

Then Sarah arrived, as nice as ever, and handed me a badge and pen, to which I pondered what I should write. Eventually I settled for Chris Street. Later on though, I would add CIRCY, in big, bold letters. Rivetting stuff, this, isn't it?

Sarah took me around the main lobby of the hotel, introducing me to various people. Burkey, Chris Lightfoot (who Sarah seemed to enjoy calling Mr Text Blitter XD), Geoff and June, Jeff Vance, and some other klikkers... FireMonkey was WAAY younger than I thought he would be. So Jeff made some room for me to sit, and we all chatted. Last years car crash was seemingly the first question on everyones mind. No car crashes this year, Circy?, times infinity.

All of a sudden, I felt his breath on my neck, and a husky voice. I turned round to see Mark Pay (Esquire) standing behind me, so we shook hands, and I made room for him to sit. We seemed to hit it off very well, we were chatting about all sorts of things... and I still think he's a really nice guy. Then Andi arrived, denim clad. Most people instantly recognised him (quite possibly from Odi's disturbing hi, guyyys video XD), and the three of us pretty much hung out as a group for the rest of the day. Weeflapadoinkadoo!

Are you bored with this article yet? I haven't even started! So about 1pm-ish, we all went to the main convention room. This year, there weren't extra rooms for private demonstrations (that sounds pretty dodgy actually), but there were four computers at the back for breakout sessions, during the numerous breaks we were given. Anyway, Francois kicked things off with MMF 2, showing an interface and how it worked. According to Francois, MMF 2 had just been completed, which resulted in a cheer from the 50 or so members at the convention. Then he admitted he was lying. A very cruel joke indeed!

So, MMF 2. It's more powerful than MMF 1.5, obviously, but the interface resembles something more like The Games Factory. You can open up many applications in one window, rather than having little windows for each individual application. The interface has been completely rewritten, and there'll be a layer system, mainly for things like parallax scrolling (instead of the Background system object). Active objects can now go behind backdrops, so you could make foreground objects easily, which would take less memory. Francois spent about 5-10 minutes just showing the interface, before a mammoth question and answer session. Things that transpired after the session. There will be three versions of MMF 2. A Lite version, called The Games Factory: MMF 2, which is very limited, no extentions can be used, but you could sell the games with the logo included. It's also very cheap. Then there's MMF 2: Standard, which you can sell games with, as long as you have a logo inserted, and the Pro version, which you can probably guess how it works.

There were some pretty stupid questions too. Would MMF 2 have surround sound capabilities, for example, is a very newbie quality question. I then remembered that I myself had asked that question! I cannot remember why either... And when would MMF 2 be released? When its finished, Francois said. So during the first half of 2004.

Break time! Some games were being demonstrated at the back. I didn't play any of them, but they looked pretty interesting. An epileptic inducing...thing was shown, as was a Star Wars-esque game. Andi, Mark and myself went downstairs, and outside, standing over the large pond that was there. By the time we got back, we were late for Jeff Vance's presentation, and interrupted it.

Did you know that Mr Vance once had hair? This shocking revelation stunned the whole of the room! It was even more interesting than the fact that Jeff used to be in a pop band (which split up in 1990). The purpose of this presentation was to demonstrate MMF's multimedia abilities, with Enhanced CDs. Enhanced CDs are basically CDs like pop singles, which come with PC stuff like band information, website addresses and videos. Jeff demonstrated that this could be done with MMF, and what he showed looked great. Shame about the music though, it reminded me of a cat pulling its claws down a chalkboard. I'm surprised the band lasted as long as they did!

After this presentation, it was the return of the very menacing Francois. This time, it was a demonstration of Install Creator 2. It featured many new things, including the ability to edit the text for the installer, and position it, and the images. Neato. But I was looking forward to the next break, and eventually it came. I put Mr Stumps Dentures on one of the computers at the back of the room, and it drew a pretty big crowd. However, the one player mode was abominably slow, and thus was unplayable (although I've heard reports that Shen managed to get it working after disabling the music on the second day, which I didn't attend). The Split Screen Mode, however, worked great, and there were a lot of people around, seemingly eager to try it out. Zone Runners 1&2, I also added, and a few people played these as well. The break ended.

The illustrious Jason Darby took his turn for one of his presentations. He basically told a story of how he purchased a digital camera, and began snapping up everything in sight. Including brick walls. Yes... Jason is in the process of creating a CD, full to the brim of textures, photos and graphics. It's a great idea, and while it probably wouldn't be effective in games, it would be used well in a multimedia program, I would have thought. There were some CDs featuring a few examples of his works. They were all photographed very well. Now Jasons waiting for a visit from the police, for photographing innocent victims houses

A convention wouldn't be a convention without the cretinous Dr Ian! He demonstrated his love for Indiana Jones by showing a demo of Indy throwing balls and flags. It was pretty much a technical demonstration of Jamagics capabilities, and you could do stuff like change the tempo of the music (something which the good doctor is very proficient at (just look at Meltdown, the demo he showed at the last convention!)) and the gravity, and friction. Very technical stuff, and very clever too.

Project Myqu was the next presentation on the list, featuring a guy calling himself Mequa. It was a three year project, and, from what I gathered, was an AMOS compiler. The presentation itself was very good, and some of the demonstrations were neato, such as being able to change the angle of the screen, but this was far too technical for me. I didn't really have a clue what this guy was talking about, but it looked sweet

The return of Jason Darby took place, as he showed his second presentation. This time, a crossword game. It had to be re-written in MMF about five or six times, and featured hundreds of edit objects, but you could print them out or play them as games. What Jason showed was a level editor, a crossword creator. I cannot wait for this to be finished, its a true testament to MMFs power.

Paul Boland showed a game which he began shortly before last years convention - The Caretaker. It's apparently based on a board game, and the whole thing made in Jamagic. The board itself was 2-D, in a birds eye view. Paul stated that he tried to make a 3D board, but it looked very bland and dull. There was a video presentation of the game, and it looks very dark, moody and atmospheric. Paul also showed a promotional video of another game, and he believes its a brand new genre. We may not agree with him on that, but the video he showed for this, although clever, didn't really give anything away. Just some odd characters talking to each other. Reminded me of the awful CITV childrens program Reboot, actually.

Breaktime loomed, and I got Jason to try out the one player version of Mr Stumps on the main computer, just to see if it worked. It did, so that was great.

Andy H, from Ovine by Design, was up next, in a slight change to the schedule. He demonstrated a paint application, created using Jamagic (thanks for the reminder Jason), and it looked very cool indeed. Andy stated that ideas were taken from many paint programs, such as Deluxe Paint for the Amiga and Photoshop. He also added that

he had his own ideas for the program.

Then it came down to me. I grabbed Aku and he demonstrated the one player version of Mr Stumps Dentures while I was mumbling away. One particularly embarrassing moment came about when Aku got the player stuck in the wall, and he gradually floated to the top. In the meantime, I was twittering away about parallax scrolling, and the storyline behind the games name. After Jason helped me out with the ALT and F4 keys (something else had to be pressed in order to activate those - a dodgy keyboard!), Aku and I showed the two player mode. Aku killed himself, and made me the winner! Yay. I asked if there were any questions; three people asked me some, and then I wrapped it up. Quite the disaster, that was.

Jason Darby then showed how to make music with Dance E-Jay 5. To be honest, I didn't really see the point of this, but E-Jay looks good anyway. Might buy it.

Earlier on, during one of the breaks, Alfies Ziggle game was played, as a competition. I think Dr Ian won that. And then that was pretty much the entire day done. Some of us went to the pub for dinner, Sarah brought me a pint, I had far too much food, while Dr Ian was looking at his, as if he had scraped something off his shoe. The convention was great, it was well organised. It's just a shame that its in Paris next year...

Convention Highlights: iPublish - I forget who made it, but its probably as good as some commercial website designer programs. It was brilliant. Francois spoke to me! In person! This is like being spoken to by Tony Blair. Well, not quite, as all Francois asked me was "going to the pub?" Meeting Chris Lightfoot...he had the biggest beard for one so young! And Sarah asking me to help organise transport for next year's convention... heh, I'm probably the most *disorganised* person on the planet...