

UNITY FOCUS

Inside the Unity Web Player

In the first of a regular series of articles, Unity's **Thomas Grové** walks us through what's new in the Unity community...



PRICE: \$200 for Unity Indie licence
\$1500 for Unity Pro licence

WEB: www.unity3d.com



Unity has often been touted as the most powerful game engine this side of a million dollars. And while it's the leader in middleware for the iPhone and a superb development platform for stand alone PC and Mac games and for consoles like Nintendo's Wii, it has been receiving a lot of attention for its web player. The plug-in has a smaller download size than Flash and, at the time of writing, has already been installed on more than 15 million computers.

“The Unity web plug-in is smaller than Flash and is installed on more than 15 million computers.”

A major attraction to using Unity is the ability to author console-quality 2D and 3D games for the Web. Unity's attractive price point was a major factor in seeing early adoption by indie developers, who have been prolific, but more recently Unity has seen an increase in adoption for use with major brands by major development studios.

SPOTLIGHT: TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR ONLINE

Release Date: TBD, currently in beta
Developer: EA Tiburon
tigerwoodsonline.ea.com

In a recent post on the *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Online* blog, live producer Greg Rinaldi said that Unity allowed them to “create a version of *Tiger* for the web that will have the same level of quality as the console versions, while also providing us with the ability to stream the game to you instead of having to install it from a disc or download a huge file. It takes under a minute to get into the game on any computer.

“I can assure you that in spite of the fact that *Tiger Online* is streamed, the technology we are using allows us to deliver some very high-quality visuals. We have fully-realised 3D courses and characters with visuals that rival console games. You're not going to be playing on pictures of golf courses, your character will actually be on the course and you'll be able to see every hill, tree and structure in the environment. This is a true *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* experience.”

SPOTLIGHT: LEGO STAR WARS: QUEST FOR R2-D2

Release Date: May 2009, ongoing
Developer: Three Melons
starwars.lego.com

LEGO Star Wars: Quest for R2-D2 developer Three Melons is no stranger to Unity. The company has been using it since 2007 to drive a number of projects. They turned to Unity once again to meet the needs of LEGO: “The LEGO Group never compromises when it comes to the quality of what is offered to our consumers worldwide,” said Sten Lysdahl Sorensen, internet content manager at LEGO.

“Unity allows for a unique visual 3D experience that portrays our models and mini-figures in a way that gives kids a premium free online game. We firmly believe that the Unity engine and the skilled work by Three Melons is taking advergaming to a new level and thereby supporting our products in the best possible way.”

Q&A DIEGO RUIZ, LEAD ENGINEER AT THREE MELONS



What influences your decision as to which technology to use for a given project?

First of all, we evaluate which is the appropriate technology for making the game that we have in mind. Almost always, this technology is Unity. With Unity we can make both 3D games and even 2D games, powered with 3D effects and some cool camera movements.

What are the relative merits or strengths of Unity compared to Flash, your internal tools, or in general?

We appreciate a lot the productivity that Unity offers to us, how quickly it allows us to move from the idea to the working prototype. You code it and just press play to try it, no more wasted time compiling C++ code. Another key feature is the web deployment, with an amazing compression rate, that fits perfectly

into Three Melons' distribution strategy. Some more important features for us are: the excellent editor (with PhysX integrated), the possibility of using C# as a programming language, and the possibility to add new features to the editor via editor scripts.

How else are you using Unity?

Currently we have many iPhone projects in progress. It's amazing for us to use the same technology for desktops and for iPhone and iPod Touch with almost all the key features present. Unity is an excellent tool and we know that Unity Technologies is working hard to make it even better. Some time ago, Three Melons had more Flash developers than Unity developers, now we have exactly the same number of programmers in each team. With many Unity projects that are about to start we are really excited about the future of this tool.