UNITYFOCUS

Unity free-for-all

Yeah, you heard us right – Unity is now free. **Thomas Grové**, marketing manager for Unity Technologies, takes us through what else is new in Unity 2.6…

PRICE: Unity – Free
Unity Pro – $1500
WEB: www.unity3d.com

INSIDE UNITY 2.6

UNITY TECHNOLOGIES HAS JUST released Unity 2.6, a major update to our integrated game engine and development tool.

The biggest change? The base version of Unity is now free – now anyone can create interactive content with a best of breed tool without any financial barrier.

In addition to this stunning announcement, Unity 2.6 includes 134 new features and improvements.

This release adds support for external version control to Unity Pro – now you can use Subversion, Perforce, Bazaar or any other VCS out there. Full integration with Visual Studio has also been added – Unity can automatically sync a VS project to your source code so that all of your scripts are in your solution and IntelliSense is configured for you.

> *In addition to 134 new features and improvements, the base version of Unity is now free – now anyone can create content with a best of breed tool.*

Major streaming and loading features and optimisations that were implemented for games like Cartoon Network's *FusionFall* MMO and the recently released *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Online* have also been fully integrated into Unity 2.6. Chief among these features is support for prioritised background loading of new scenes and assets, while using minimal CPU and memory resources.

Other notable features include graphical improvements, such as screen space ambient occlusion, and a powerful built-in search feature for your project – simply type the name of the file in the Project window and see the live-updated results.

Check out the release notes at Unity3d.com to see the entire list of new features and improvements.

PRO TIP: pressing Ctrl-F (*or Command-F on a Mac*) when the Hierarchy window is selected will reveal a hierarchy search pane.

SPOTLIGHT: ANIMATION EDITOR

With Unity 2.6 you can animate any property using the state-of-the-art integrated animation editor. You can animate objects, materials, lights, script values, the whole enchilada. Refined tangent handling gives you full control. Want to tweak your game code to match animations? No problem – simply call a script from a keyframe from within your animations so that everything syncs perfectly.

SPOTLIGHT: PERFORMANCE PROFILER

You not only want to make great games, you want screaming performance. The new profiler makes it easy to see where your are spending resources, what scripts are running, and where the graphic bottlenecks lie. The profiler shows a frame-based overview, and a hierarchical CPU profiler, giving you the big picture and the ability to drill down to see the details.

Q&A WITH UNITY'S SAMANTHA KALMAN, SENIOR QA SPECIALIST

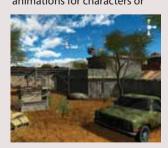**What new feature in Unity 2.6 are you most excited about?**
I'm most excited about the new webplayer caching feature. This was already used in a pre-release form by *FusionFall* and enables hundreds of players to jump into the game quickly after only one initial, automatic caching procedure.

How do you think existing users will benefit from this release?
Companies that purchase this feature will be able to store large amounts of data on the end-user's machine. So if I have a game that uses two gigabytes of model, texture, and audio data, I can stream that in intelligently on the player's first play and avoid any wait times for players to play my games ever again. This combined with the existing power of the Unity engine allows for games that are grand in scope, playability, and content all within a web browser. This has just never been done before.

Are there any features or improvements introduced in Unity 2.6 that you feel are likely to win over new users?
I'm hoping that the new Animation View, which is a powerful curve editor, will make it easy for those who are not artists or don't have access to a 3D package that they like, to be able to create interesting animations for characters or

anything else. Then they can tweak it to ship it in the final product, or use it as a prototype until an artist can come onboard. Either way it just adds to 'what you can do inside Unity' and brings us one step closer to being the only game development tool that anybody needs.

There are a lot of new features in Unity 2.6 — why not save some of these features for version 3.0?
We just really love our customers and we have this history of giving away much more than we 'should'. Mac OSX users have received this benefit since Unity 1.1 and now Windows users can experience that Unity spirit of 'bang for your buck' with plenty of updates and new features in each major version.

What are some of the workflow improvements that you think makes life easier or people more productive?
As well as support for the latest version of Autodesk's FBX plugin, we have a 2.0 version of the asset server product, and we've completely replaced the audio engine so your existing sounds will sound nicer than ever. And if this still isn't enough, we have improved messaging for common workflow scenarios to help prevent the user from making mistakes before they make them.