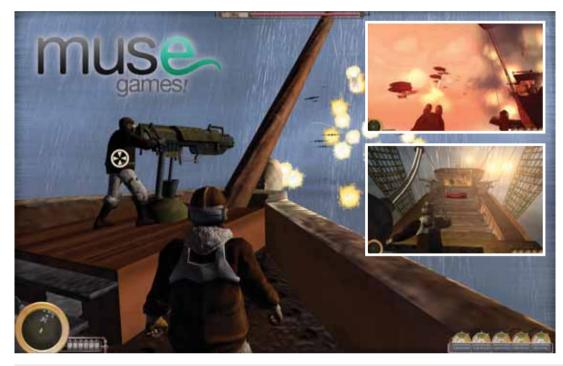# UNITYFOCUS

Unity Content Helps Launch SteamPlay

In the wake of the release of the Mac version of Steam, **Thomas Grové** talks to
Muse Games about its experience of the distribution platform…

When Valve's popular Steam distribution platform was finally released for Mac last month, several Unity games were featured as 'SteamPlay' launch titles; games which you can buy on Steam and then download for either Mac or PC, or both. Those titles included *Max and the Magic Marker*, *Bob Came in Pieces*, and *Guns of Icarus*. Although Steam is for distributing downloadable titles, each of these title's developers has leveraged Unity's cross platform publishing – and the Unity Web Player – to bring increased exposure to their games.

- Game title: Guns of Icarus
- Development time: Five Months
- Team size: Four People
- Distribution: Available on Steam (Mac and PC), MuseGames.com, Facebook, and Shockwave

www.musegames.com

INTERVIEW: AUSTIN LANE AND BRIAN KEHRER, CO-FOUNDERS OF MUSE GAMES

Is Muse Games a developer or a portal?
Both. We believe completely in the future of high-quality gaming in the browser, and MuseGames.com is our attempt to realise that future. That said, we feel it's our duty to set the bar through our own games. In the end, people are looking to play great games, and if they're no good it's irrelevant what the rest of the experience is.

How long has Muse Games been using Unity?
Muse has only existed for about 16 months, but the core team has been using Unity since 2006.

What was the process of getting Guns of Icarus onto Steam like? Did you have to do any technical integrations? Any loops that you had to jump through with Valve?
Really easy actually. We just showed them the game and what people thought about it and they said yes.

There has been no loop jumping whatsoever and we've really enjoyed working with them. Technically though, yes, there are implementation details. We had to build a compatibility layer between the C++ of Steam and the C# of Unity – and that took some time. If anyone's interested, we're going to figure out how to offer this solution along with our other API tools to developers, sometime this summer.

What's your favourite aspect of using Unity?
Ease of prototyping and multiple deployment is by far Unity's killer feature. However, equally important to the easy-to-use tool set and API is the ability to dig deeper into the program and interact with the application on a much lower level. We find that Unity does exactly what we want 90 per cent of the time – out of the box. When we need to go deeper or change fundamental behavior, Unity doesn't get in the way or slow us down.

Have you extended Unity's editor in any way?
We've frequently used the editor scripts to add small features or to integrate better with our art pipeline; this includes things like exporting arbitrary textures to files, or changing the default mesh import settings. But there have been a couple of larger extensions, as well. The first is our build scripts, which have to build multiple versions of the same game for different distributors with different integration requirements, feature restrictions, and so forth.

We've also added game-specific extensions to turn the Unity editor into something like a level editor, using custom assets and editor tabs, that can integrate new scenes with our game code without a programmer needing to set anything up.

Have you used any other technologies like Flash or Unreal? How do they compare?
Not really. Flash is a strange solution because it wasn't originally designed for game development. It's been co-opted because of its plug-in penetration, while Unity was built from the beginning to make powerful, modern games.

If we want to change the future of gaming on the web, we need to look to the future of gaming on the web. We don't think Flash is the future.

Unreal is a great, powerful tool like Unity. Just look at the level of games being made with it. But it can't handle the web and cross-platform development we are focusing on, and quite frankly, the licensing terms are really expensive for an indie like us.

It's no secret we favour Unity for these reasons and more.

Do you have any tips on how to get exposure for your game or how to reach new audiences?
Make an original game, and polish it. Gamers, despite their cynicism, are the most engaged and adventurous audience around. If you make something good, they will give you a chance. I'm not sure why so many people choose to clone games they've seen countless times before. Don't sell yourself short. Pretend you're building the next franchise. If you only had one chance to make a game ever, even if it's just in your spare time (actually, especially if it's in your spare time), what game would you make? Make that game. That will go miles further than any marketing you can do. Also, good trailers are really worth it – chances are high the trailer is where the potential player will be making a go or no-go decision.

Anything else about Unity that you'd like to share?
Unity makes a lot of what we do possible – rapid prototyping and development, 3D on the web, cross-platform deployment. But Unity alone, cannot change the end consumer's mind. It's up to us developers to show people what the tool is capable of. Content sells the platform, and it's going to take all of us to change the face of online gaming.