NZGDA

NEW ZEALAND
GAME DEVELOPERS
ASSOCIATION

NZGDA CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

10AM SATURDAY 19 MAY 2012
LEVEL 16, MEDIA DESIGN SCHOOL
92 ALBERT STREET, AUCKLAND

This programme may change and was last updated on 2 May

	LEVEL 16	LEVEL 14	LEVEL 17
9.00am	*REGISTRATION - Media Design School Foyer*		
10.00am		Welcome – *Mario Wynands*	
10.20am		Living The Dream and Enduring The Nightmare (It's Tough Being Indie) – *Alex Amstel*	
11.00am	15 years/9 lessons – *Mario Wynands*	Making More Awesomeness – *Ninja Kiwi Panel*	Autodesk Character Animation Made Easy
11.30am		Interactive Narrative – *Edwin Mcrae*	
12.00pm	Touch Happy HTML5 Games <3 Windows 8 – *Nigel Parker*	Getting your First Investor – *Mitch Olson*	Making Games with Gamefroot – *Dan Milward*
12.30pm	*LUNCH BREAK - Lunch not supplied*		
2.00pm	Staying Agile – *Gustav Seymore*	Servers for Indie Game Devs – *Thomas Middeldorp*	Making a BAFTA winning iPad game – *Druhin Mukherjee*
2.30pm	Designing for High Impact – *Jonathan Rogers*	Build a Business Not an App – *Tuyen Nguyen & Victoria Mackinlay*	Sometimes it's Fun to Hit Things With a Stick – *Eric Oloffson*
3.00pm	Metrics That Keep You Up At Night – *Nick Willis*	Inside Sparx – Serious Games – *Maru Nihoniho*	Decision Structures in Tech/Skill Trees – *Carl De Visser*
3.30pm	Better Living Through Games – *Tim Nixon*	Artists and Programmers: The Missing Link – *Antonio Lattanzio*	Building Believable Characters – *Mike Porter*
4.00pm	Powering Games with Amazon Web Services – *Adrian White*	Advergaming and Licensing – *Ben Dellaca*	WebGL for Fun and Profit – *Danu Abeysuriya*
4.30pm	Amazon Startup Pitch Session	*AFTERNOON TEA*	
5.00pm		How to Make Your Robot Unicorn Attack – *Jeff Olsen*	
5.30pm		NZGDA – *Stephen Knightly*	
5.45pm		Prizes and Announcements – *Frances Valintine*	
6.00pm	*DRINKS & NETWORKING - The Corporate Box, Ground Floor*		

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ALEX AMSEL
– KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Tuna

Alex Amsel is an award nominated video games developer, digital and social media consultant, and BAFTA member. An industry veteran of over a decade, he has worked across many interactive platforms, utilising both internationally renowned brands and innovative concepts.

Alex has worked with brands and titles as varied as Family Guy, Eufloria, Alien Hominid, Puzzler, and even the classic Asteroids. As well as producing over 70 video game projects, he's also worked with TV broadcasters and production companies in fields as varied as Twitter strategy (Big Brother/Channel 4 UK) to innovative real-time animation (CBBC's forthcoming Strange Hill High/Yoshimi & Katoi).

Living The Dream and Enduring The Nightmare (It's Tough Being Indie)

The dream for many video game developers is to make a living producing their own games. This talk compares and contrasts the stories of indie projects Eufloria and Cletus Clay, both games having input from Alex himself and New Zealand developer Anthony Flack. Although both games were nominated for IGF Awards in 2009 while still in development, their individual tales are very different.

Alex will discuss highs and lows of both projects, both of which are still active in their own way. At the end of the talk, Alex will also reveal some Eufloria HD iPad statistics.

Key Points:

• Developing your own game is 3.141... times as hard as you think.

• Finishing your game is only 0.785... times the battle.

• Stay healthy!

JEFF OLSON
– KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Adult Swim Games

Jeff Olsen is the Vice President of Adult Swim Digital and spearheaded the creation of Adult Swim Games. The last time he checked, Adult Swim Games had published more Top 100 Paid Apps than any major media company.

How to Teach Your Robot Unicorn to Attack – Growing Small Games Into Multi-Platform Hits

Adult Swim has published a string of hit casual games by pursuing an unusual strategy — ignoring the valuable IP created by its TV network, and nurturing off-the-wall concepts from small, independent developers. Find out how they develop innovative game concepts like Robot Unicorn Attack, Amateur Surgeon, Monsters Ate My Condo, and Five Minutes to Kill (Yourself), and build them into profitable multi-platform franchises.

DANUSHKA ABEYSURIYA

Rush Digital

Danushka Abeysuriya is Founder and Lead Engineer at Rush Digital Interactive Limited, which he established in early 2009 with the goal of creating game engine technology for smart phones. Danu is a graduate of the University of Auckland's School of Engineering and has a passion for computer graphics, automobiles, and all things "game engine."

WebGL for fun and profit

A light introduction to WebGL, and some discussion about the future of browser based gaming.

Key Points:

• How to go about your first WebGL project

• How WebGL fits into the future of browser gaming

• Challenges in porting to WebGL

DAVID ZWIERZCHACZEWSKI

Autodesk

David Zwierzchaczewski is one of the newest addition to Autodesk, he comes from over 12 years of experience in the Film, TV and games industry's. Some of the most recent games David has worked on are Dark Siders II, Civilization V, Saints Row the Third, and L.A. Noire. He has also run a company called 5th World Media who specialized in mobile and casual games. David's history is in animation and he brings many years of experience as a character animator, working with key frame animation and motion capture.

Character Animation Made Easy

I will run through setting up a character in 3DS Max, in MAYA and show the interoperability between all of Autodesks animation tools. I will also talk about the middle ware products Autodesk offers (now called Gameware) and how these can stream line your work flow.

CARL DE VISSER

Grinding Gear Games

Carl de Visser plays and designs games. The is the co-designer of the boardgame Endeavor (awarded Tric-Trac d'Argent, Spiel des Jahres Recommended). Currently he works for Grinding Gear Games doing game design and balance on the Action RPG Path of Exile.

Decision Structures in Tech/Skill Trees

When Hiro returns to the village, it has been destroyed. His dying grandfather gives him a sword and a skill tree. This talk looks at the structure and design of skill (and technology) trees through one example.

Key Points:

• The forms of technology and skill trees that appear in various games

• How to structure a tree to present real and meaningful choices

ANTONIO LATTANZIO

GameLoft

My name is Antonio Lattanzio and I started to produce videogames at the age of 10 on Commodore 64. At the age of 14 I had the first game completed for AtariST and Amiga (unpublished) and was presented to different publishers. So I have made other prototypes of different arcade games until I signed a contract with a publisher to develop a game on PC when I was 18. The first game was completed and published in 1997 for PC/MS-DOS and after that I started to work as a professional developer. I worked in different companies in Italy, and then I moved to Australia working for several years in Auran Games and Krome Studios. Because I had an 'old school' experience I had the opportunity in Krome to work on the emulation code of some classic Konami games like Gyruss, Jackal, Ye ar Kung Fu for the Microsoft project Game Room on XBLA. Then after the company went down I had to move back in Europe where I joined Avalanche Studios as Engine / Tools programmer. Now I moved here in Gameloft NZ to work on mobile games as I believe that the market is growing on the mobile games development and that sadly the console market will continue to shrink. There's a big change in progress and we have to be ready for the future of the game development.

Artists and Programmers: The Missing Link

Yes, we need to learn from mistakes and bad development decisions. The most important thing in a company are the resources so it's the people itself. It doesn't matter if we have Juniors or Seniors or if we hire the most expensive programmers, designers and artists of the world. I will tell you why you will fail anyway so please listen and get ready to fail.

Key Points:

• Take time to talk with designers, artists and other programmers. Use their software and tools!

• Why is this taking too long to get it running on the device? Let's check how to speed up the process!

• Timeout: EPIC FAIL! (oops, you did it again!)

THOMAS MIDDELDORP

Grinding Gear Games

Thomas has a Bachelor of Science (Computer Science and Biological Science) from the University of Auckland, and has been pulling apart computers and putting linux on them for about 12 years. Prior to working for Grinding Gear Games, Thomas worked as a systems administrator for a mobile communications company, and as a back end developer for a digital advertising company specializing in display networks. He currently works as GGG's systems administrator, managing both their local development servers and the live game servers they host around the world.

Getting Started With Game Servers

Almost all modern games require servers, not just online ones. You require a server for hosting online high scores/achievements, the games website/forums, selling/distributing the game or content, or any number of other possibilities. Keeping your servers online is top priority, as downtime results in unhappy customers and lost revenue. There are several ways to help maximize uptime - Set up monitoring systems so you know when your servers aren't happy, and why. Use server management tools so you can easily maintain multiple servers, or roll out new/replacement servers quickly. Employ good security practices to ensure your servers stay safe. I will discuss several tools and methods to help with each of the above.

Key Points:

• Almost all games require servers.

• High uptime is vital for any server.

• There are tools to monitor and manage servers, as well as management/security practices, that will help to ensure your servers stay online

DRUHIN MUKHERJEE

Media Design School – Game Programming Lecturer

Druhin is a very recent arrival to New Zealand. Over the years he has worked with companies including BBC, Tag Games, Dynamo Games, ARc Interactive, Rockstar North and LFG .He was the given the Microsoft Developer award as a programmer. Recently he was awarded a BAFTA award for the game Sculpty along with his team-mates at Team Tickle.

The BAFTA dream

5 students decided to make a game when the Ipad was just released . They entered a competition with their idea and 2 years later , they were rewarded with the BAFTA .This talk takes you through the process of making Sculpty with no finance, no industry backing, and minimal mentoring.

Key Points:

• you don't need to an experienced professional to dream big.

• the hurdles faced in making Sculpty and how we overcame with our limited resources.

• Innovative gameplay mechanics still rules.

DAN MILWARD

Instinct

Dan Milward is an entrepreneur based in Wellington. His company Instinct contributes to a number of non-profit and Open Source projects, most notably the world famous WordPress e-Commerce Plugin and Gamefroot a new social network where anybody can make, play and share games for the web and for iPhone.

Making games that don't suck with Gamefroot

Dan is going to take attendees on a tour through the Gamefroot website and show people how to use online tools to make games. By the end of the presentation everybody in the room will be able to make their own platform game and show it off to their friends.

Throughout this process attendees will get understanding of the different areas of game development that we feel are vitally important to the success of a game; we'll be looking at storypoints, level design, character / enemies placement, and in-game items, all of which need to be present and done thoughtfully to make a game a good game. And we'll even explore how you can monetize your game.

Key Points:

• You don't need to be a programmer to make a game!

MARU NIHONIHO

Metia Interactive

Maru Nihoniho established game studio Metia Interactive in 2003. Metia Interactive is based in Auckland, develops across multiple platforms and is licensed to develop for PlayStation Portable, PlayStation 3 and iOs. Maru's professional experience includes managing development teams, producing and designing games both 1st and 3rd party across multiple platforms and consulting on game design and development.

Why so serious? Inside a Serious Game.

A serious game is a game designed for a primary purpose other than pure entertainment and includes problem solving, motivation, promotion of learning using game-based techniques. This talk goes behind the development scenes of the Sparx game and explains some of the differences between developing a commercial and serious title.

Key Points:

• Serious games more than entertainment

• Delivery of lessons through gaming

• Wrapping game design around real world issues

MIKE PORTER

Media Design School – Programme Leader – Bachelor of Creative Technologies (Game Art)

Mike started his game career back in 1995 in Lewisville, Texas. Over the last 15 years, he has worked in several different companies both in Texas and in Seattle, including work for Sierra and Microsoft Games Studios. He has created 3D artwork, level design on various games, for various platforms including Dreamcast, PS2, PC and Xbox 360. His roles included Art Lead, Environment Art Lead, Vehicle Art Lead and Level Design Lead. Mike was even lucky enough to work with the great people at Bungie for a short period to help ship Halo 3.

Building Believable Characters

Understand how to fully flesh out game characters that will take your story forward. How a character looks is central to the participants experience as it extends to how we 'feel' about the character, and what is our emotional response.

TIM NIXON

Runaway Games

For the last 7 years Tim has specialized in the design and production of games inspired by the real world. From training simulations to online virtual retail spaces and interactive documentaries, his passion has been the creation of games that improve our lives and understanding of the world. In his current role at Runaway (the games division of documentary film making company NHNZ), he creatively directs games inspired by the natural world in partnership with brands like National Geographic and the World Wildlife Fund. Runaway's games for Facebook and iPhone have been played by over a million people, each telling a unique story about a natural wonder.

www.runawayplay.com

Better Living through Games

We traditionally see games as a way to leave the real world behind, but to confine them to a purely escapist medium would betray their potential to make the world a better place. From training simulations, to "gamification" and even the appearance of history within blockbuster console

titles, we're seeing games become more relevant to everyday people by coupling themselves with facts, insights, and lessons that effect our life outside of the game. This talk will review the development of this practice and give some practical takeaways by covering:

Key Points:

• Why connecting with the real world gives your game substance

• The range of ways your game can connect with the real world, from full simulation through to faint historical reference

• 2 case studies illustrating Runaway's factual design process

TUYEN NGUYEN

Google AdMob

Tuyen focuses on publisher acquisition and development strategy for the global mobile market. She also has 6 years of advertising experience, working with Fortune 500 Tech B2B companies. Mostly, she is dreaming of her next meal: QueenoftheBuzza.blogspot.com.

Build a Business, Not an App

Build a business on mobile – whether you've just launched your first app or are looking for additional tips as you grow your portfolio. Travel through the App Galaxy to learn how to get your app discovered through promotion, earn enough money to quit your day job, measure your success, and evaluate your current flight path to ensure you're headed in the right direction.

VICTORIA MACKINLAY

Google AdMob

As Mobile Monetisation Lead AUNZ, Victoria has been at Google for almost six years assisting online advertisers and creators of content to grow their businesses online. Originally from Glasgow, Victoria worked in various markets in Europe before moving to Australasia three years ago. Her mission is to help online publishers and app developers grow and retain their audiences and make money from their content.

Build a Business, Not an App

Build a business on mobile – whether you've just launched your first app or are looking for additional tips as you grow your portfolio. Travel through the App Galaxy to learn how to get your app discovered through promotion, earn enough money to quit your day job, measure your success, and evaluate your current flight path to ensure you're headed in the right direction.

ERIK OLOFSSON

Grinding Gear Games

Erik is an Industrial Design graduate from Sweden who has been involved in various design related projects including an arcade machine, a clothing label, level design for first person shooters and texture/concept art for other purposes. In 2005 he authored and published the book "Design Sketching", which is used as a textbook in many universities around the world. He is the Art Director at Grinding Gear Games.

Sometimes it is fun to just hit something with a stick

This presentation covers strategies for creating visceral and satisfying combat in an action game. I will go over the things that we learned while developing Path of Exile and cover approaches we plan to use to improve our combat even further.

Key Points:

• Animation - making hits feel good is all about the lead up to the hit

• Sound - sound is very important for making a strong connection

• Effects - blood and the aftermath of an attack

MITCH OLSON

Smallworlds, Gamedojo

Mitch is an experienced entrepreneur with a background in the design, development & commercialisation of digital products to large consumer markets. He is the co-founder of SmallWorlds, New Zealand's largest social gaming company with over 7 million registered players

worldwide. SmallWorlds' investors include The Disney Corporation & Sam Morgan. Prior to creating SmallWorlds, he co-founded Outsmart Studios - an award-winning internet application design studio that established a reputation as one of the top 3 Rich Internet Application development studios in the world.

Getting your first investor

Key Points:

• Why Business Plans are Over The Top and what the short cut is

• What do investors want

• What are the key questions on their mind that you need to answer

NIGEL PARKER

Microsoft

Nigel Parker (http://about.me/nigelparker) is a technical evangelist working for Microsoft New Zealand. Nigel lives by three guiding principles curiosity, creativity and fun. He has always had an interest in technology and development. Since a very young age he has taken things apart to see how they work, the first game he developed was in BASIC on his VIC 20 in the easy 1980's. He believes that technology should complement and not be a hindrance to human interaction.

Nigel has 15 years of experience working with creative New Zealand developers, start-ups, game developers, top websites and media companies to implement cutting edge web, video and app solutions. He's motivated by big ideas and smart unconventional execution and challenges himself and others to fail fast and drive forward innovation.

Nigel graduated from the University of Auckland with a degree in technology and philosophy. He has an entrepreneurial background having co-founded two New Zealand technology companies. He took some risks and broke some new ground during the first ".com" bubble and was one of the few that despite losing money didn't lose heart for the unrealized potential of the tech industry.

"I don't see our future as a simple extension of our past I instead see it as a challenge that requires thoughtful intention."

Touch Happy HTML5 Games <3 Windows 8

With the launch of Windows 8 and the new Windows Store game developers can create touch first, full screen native apps running HTML5. Learn how to do it and why the launch of Windows 8 will line the pockets of those game developers who take the first mover advantage.

Key Points:

• The release Windows 8 and the new Windows Store will give the HTML5 game market a real boost

• If you have already built a HTML5 game, getting it ready for Windows 8 is easy to do

• If you get your app ready now you can take the first mover advantage to get your game published

JONATHAN ROGERS

Grinding Gear Games

Jonathan is the Technical Director of Grinding Gear Games. Having graduated Auckland University with a degree in Computer Science and Mathematics in 2006, he went on to co-found the company and work on their first game, Path of Exile. As well as leading a team of five other programmers, Jonathan created the games graphics engine, server backend, networking and many of the core gameplay systems.

Designing for High Impact Gameplay

Some of the most memorable moments we can create in games are when decisions or events significantly change the way the game is played. If we make sure our games have these impactful moments, players will be telling stories about them for years to come. In this talk I will cover strategies for adding impact to player decisions and go over common mistakes that designers make for content or balance reasons that kill high impact gameplay.

Key Points:

- Things you find and decisions you make should have big effects.

- Don't kill impact in the name of balance. Find another way.

- Less is often more. Don't sacrifice impact for more content.

GUSTAV SEYMORE

GameLoft

I started in the games industry over 6 years ago in South Africa and was co-founder and Creative Director of Avonstorm Gaming where we mostly did adver games, flash games, training games, simulations etc as well as develop our own IP. I am currently Principle Producer of Gameloft Auckland where I oversee 2 licensed projects as well as the production processes for the studio.

Staying Agile down the Waterfall with ScrumQuest

A short look at how to stay Agile when a publisher or client is old school and agile adverse. I aim to highlight some ideas on how to satisfy the publishers need to see waterfall planning, and translating your agile plan to the publisher and team. I will finish off with some ideas on Gamifing your production and making scrum fun with what I coin as ScrumQuest(c).

Key Points:

- Agile development in a non agile environment

- Understanding the publisher and protecting the Team

- ScrumQuest (c) – having fun with scrum

NICK WILLIS

SmallWorlds

Nick has 17 years experience in the IT industry with last 7 years running entrepreneurial start-ups. Nick joined online gaming company OutSmart in June 2011 as the Chief Executive and with his Ph.D. in theoretical physics he has been instrumental in strengthening the analytical foundation of decision making in SmallWorld.com, a virtual world with over 7M registered members around the world. Prior to OutSmart Nick founded high-tech startup ECKey.com

What numbers are keeping you up at night?

Find out what numbers what numbers are being used to drive one of the leading teenage virtual worlds. The relationships between different levels of tracking and analysis from total revenue, viral lifetime value, retention and individual interactions will be presented. These are the key analytical drivers within SmallWorlds that get being used to drive the game development and marketing decisions. The insights that we have gained and the mistakes we have made will be shared for all to learn from.

Key Points:

- How and when to use viral lifetime value (kLTV) and when not to.

- Different levels of tracking and their different contributions

- Unless you know why don't trust your numbers.

CHRIS WILSON

Grinding Gear Games

Chris graduated from the University of Auckland in 2004, gaining Bachelor of Science (Computer Science, with First Class Honours) and Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) degrees. His work in the field of software security provided the financial liquidity required to cofound and invest in Grinding Gear Games. Since 2006, the company has scaled up to 18 fulltime developers and is very close to entering the Open Beta of its online action RPG, Path of Exile. Chris acts as the Managing Director of Grinding Gear Games and is the Path of Exile's Producer and Lead Designer.

How Variance Affects the Balance of Games

Many aspects of games involve random occurrences. Although the magnitude and probability of these events can be averaged to an expected value, it's easy to overlook the effect that their variance has on the game. In some cases, variance needs to be mitigated to ensure a consistent player experience. In others, players can become addicted to the infrequent rewards yielded by high-variance activities. Careful understanding of the consequences of these choices can allow a game designer a great degree of control over how players play and perceive their games.

Key Points:

• High variance can create unpredictable play experiences for players.

• Lack of variance creates a situation where you're unable to establish effective variable-ratio Skinner Boxes.

• Different competing titles in the same genres can sometimes intentionally target different levels of variance to achieve their business goals.

MARIO WYNANDS

Sidhe

Mario Wynands is the Managing Director and co-founder of Sidhe, New Zealand's largest game development studio. In his 15 years at the company, he has run studio operations, managed numerous games and overseen the creation of many successful titles including Shatter, GripShift, and Speed Racer. Wynands also introduced the company's PikPok label which has released multiple hits for iOS and Android including Flick Kick Football and Monsters Ate My Condo. Wynands is a graduate of Victoria University in Wellington with degrees in business management and computer science, and has studied at MIT Sloan.

15 years, 9 lessons

After 15 years in the game development business, covering all manner of platforms, projects, and business relationships, Sidhe has had much opportunity to learn about the good, the bad, and the weird of the industry. As it turns out, there is more to being successful in the industry than just making great games. Sharing war stories, anecdotes, and more importantly the lessons themselves, Mario will explore 5 simple industry "truths" they have uncovered and will speak to the practises and processes built in response that enable the ongoing success of the studio.

Key Points:

• Broad scope

• 5 lessons about running a studio

• Principles and tools to consider and apply

BENJAMIN DELLACA

CerebralFix

CEO and Co-founder of CerebralFix, Ben is chiefly responsible for setting the company vision. Ben has been involved in retail and production all his life, his background includes working with Stickmen Studios and the family business 'Postie Plus Group Ltd'. CerebralFix at just two years young and has been fortunate enough to work with household entertainment brands like Transformers and Wheel of Fortune. While this takes a team to win and deliver, Ben is very much at the forefront of it all.

Kiwi's dealing with big brands and licenses

The highs, lows and how to's of making casual games for properties like Madagascar 3. How small kiwi indie studios can go about creating relationships with world class license holders such as Disney, GSN and the BBC.

Key Points:

• First contact and the importance of traveling.

• How to exploit the Kiwi advantage.

• Stand by your convictions, sell your truth.

• Own your mistakes, share them too.

ADRIAN WHITE

Amazon Web Services

Adrian works with companies around Australia and New Zealand helping them understand the set of services offered by AWS, how to design highly available and scalable architectures and how to take advantage of the opportunities offered by elastic services in the AWS cloud. He has been working in the I.T. industry in web application development, content management and media for over 10 years.

He hacks on compilers, operating systems and application frameworks for fun.

Powering Games with Amazon Web Services

• Beating the spike with elastic capacity and highly scalable infrastructure

• Agility and speed to market

• You focus on the game, we focus on the infrastructure

BLOONS TD5

How to put a lot of eggs in one basket and make it work

Bloons TD5 is Ninja Kiwi's biggest and most successful title to date. Launched in December 2011 the game has already had more than 30 Million plays and has driven more than a million signups to Ninja Kiwi's new user registration system. Combining daily challenges and weekly content updates, Bloons TD5 signals a new direction in Flash Game development.

A four person panel discussion answering your questions about the development process of the hit flash game "Bloons TD5" with:

Josh Catt - Lead Developer

Tosh Baird - Systems Designer and Database Admin

Scott Walker - Ninja Kiwi Partner and Head of Production

Stephen Harris - Ninja Kiwi Co-Founder and Lead Game Designer