Voice of the PPL

ArianeSoft
The power to create

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INFORMATION

Do you have a product created in PPL that you want to share with the community?

Drop me an Private message on the FORUM - I'd love to hear from you! Or you can eMail me at: mike.halliday@dsl.pipex.com

Submission deadlines:

20th of each month for next edition

When you have finished with this magazine, please recycle it.

A word or two from our Editor

Well, its half way through the year already …

How quick has that gone by? What will the next 6 months bring?

Well for a start we are getting closer to PPL V2.0 being released, and this month I have another few titbits of information on it for you, courtesy of Alain and Arianesoft.

Also for the next 5 months or so there will be the progressing Terrain tutorial by Nick-Nack - Hopefully this will be one of our best tutorial sets we have had since the inception of the newsletter.

As always, we are on the look out for user comments to be included in this section of the newsletter. If you have anything you want to say about PPL or development then we would love to hear from you.

PPL Release Dates

The following versions of PPL have been released in the last 6 months

Date	PPL Version	Date	PPL Version
30/11/07	1.40	07/03/08	1.51
20/12/07	1.41	Soon	1.52
24/12/07	1.42		
29/12/07	1.50		

Current PPL Community User count

At the time of writing (Middle of June), the current PPL registered user count in the community forum is;

The magic 1000 mark has been met - Well done Arianesoft!

Interesting PPL Development #1

The point and click engine has taken a step forward. It now has the potential to read all the screen, location and character data from an SQLlite V3 database.

Using SQL means that we have the potential for thousands of locations, objects and characters. Originally I had the locations stored in a text file, but this became messy when locations overlapped on different levels.

Progress has been slow on this project as I am also looking into the BOOK writing that I mentioned a few newsletters back.

If anyone has any ideas to add to this project, or they want to be actively involved in it, please PM me and we can discuss ideas.

Point Of Light has already expressed an interest in this, so it looks like it may have been a good idea to try it!

Mike.

Interesting PPL Development #2

Not so much a PPL development, but an aide to PPL development I think.

I have recently, from that most famous online auction, purchased an IGO stowaway blue tooth keyboard and mouse for my smart phone and PDA. All I can say is that PPL development on the device has been brought into the 21st century.

How much easier will it be to develop using PPL on the device whilst away from home? I will find out soon when I take a short break for some R & R.

I now have everything I need on the PPC to develop and write direct to an SD card.

So my mobile development kit consists of;

1 x HP Ipaq 2200 with 2GB SDCard
1 x CF wireless card
1 x IGO blue tooth keyboard
1 x IGO blue tooth mouse
1 x PPL Pro (on the device)
1 x travel case with all my development notes, program listings and anything else I might need.

Who needs a PC?

I will include a picture of my mobile development kit in the next issue.

Tutorial

This months tutorial has been submitted by NickNack. It is part 1 of 5, and boy are we in for a treat.

Remember the old classic WORMS™ on the 16 bit home computers of the late 80s and early 90s?
Well they used destructible terrain generation techniques.

Presented here in the next 5 parts is a technique on how to re-create the basic concept using PPL.

As always, please follow this tutorial by loading the .PPL file in the archive that comes with this newsletter to better understand the principles being explained.

WORMS™ - the classic 2D game with a simple concept, but an addictive quality that has never quite been matched. - Until now (maybe).

NickNack's terrain generation idea presented here will hopefully help you understand how this sort of game can be created and allow you to make your own variations.

Here we go;

1. Set screen size to 480 x 320
2. Load in the textures
3. Draw the landscape
4. Draw the sky

Breakdown;

1. InitGameAPIEx(h$, &GameProc, width$, height$, false, 5, 60); [Width and Height set to 480 and 320]

1. Create a new surface of size 480 x 320
   Load in the sprite to be used as the terrain, in this case 'stone.bmp'
   Set the target surface to the terrain surface
   Draw the sprite to the whole of the terrain surface
   Set the target surface back to the screen buffer
   Delete the sprite from memory (as it is now on the surface)
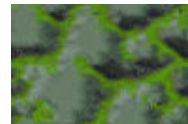
3. Create another new surface
   Fill the surface with a solid colour
   Place random black blobs near the bottom of the ground
   Make sure there are no holes in the ground
   Create blobs in the sky area
   Set the colour mask to black
   Overlay the terrain surface with the background pink surface
   Set the colour mask to pink
   Transfer the new surface to a sprite for later use

4. Create another surface for the sky
   For the sky we create horizontal blue lines to make it look like a nice day

So now we have created the screen area for the game, the textures look good, the sky looks good and its all random so all levels will be different.

(Cont…)

Continued ...

Now the screen has been created we can get on with the in game interaction with the landscape.

NickNack has achieved this using the WM_LBUTTONDOWN event;

WM_LBUTTONDOWN:
    /* For more fun and adrenalin, shake your monitor and make gurgling sounds while clicking ;) */
    explosion(wparam$,lparam$,60);

The explosion function does the following;

Remove the terrain surface colour mask
Set the terrain surface to be the render target
Draw a pink circle/ellipse at the mouse pointer position
Set the screen buffer back to be the render target
Change the colour mask for the pink circle
Recalculate pixel check marks for collision accuracy

And result in the following on screen;
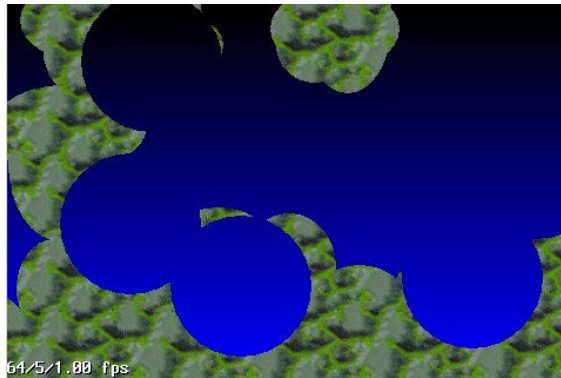
So without much code (Check the included .ppl file) we have background, texture and circular explosions. Brilliant.

Next month .. Part 2 of 5 - Keep watching.

PPL V2.0

As usual, Alain has been more than generous and imparted some information about the forth coming V2 of PPL., so here for your edification is a run down of what will be in PPL V2.0

PCL - PPL Control Library

This is a new library that enables you to build custom components/controls in the same way as you can in Delphi or VB, using OO syntax.

Reuse components in PPL V2 is easy as the example below shows;

```
MyLabel1.Caption = "Hello World";
MyLabel1.Left = 10;
```

Swirl - GFX control library

Using PPL Control Library in the GameAPI is easy with SWIRL. It gives you the ability to write games even faster and easier. A new VME (Visual Map Editor) will be included to allow you to create game maps visually then edit the code -

Example:

```
MySprite1.MoveTo(10, 20);
MySprite1.Alpha = 150;
if (MySprite1.Left > 0)
  MySprite1.Surface = MySurface1$;
end;
```

Orion - SQLite PCL Library

Orion is an update to the included SQLite functionality within PPL its just easier. It will allow single-to-multi relationships, filtering, searching, creating and deleting etc.

According to Alain, it is reminiscent of the Borland Database Engine.

```
d$ = new PDataBase;
d.Filename = "c:\\test.db";

t$ = d.OpenTable("Customers");
while (not t.eof)
  Writeln(f.FieldByName("No").AsString + "=" + t.FieldByName("Name").AsString);
  p$ = t.FieldByName("ZipCode");
  ShowMessage(p.AsString);
  t.Next;
end;
t.Close;

d.Free
```

Everything has been 'methodised' to make it easier to use. All the complex SQL syntax has been encapsulated into an easy to use 'end user' function library.

Alain has also indicated that PPL V2.0 will include a grid component that will allow easier table browsing and record display.

As with PPL v1.x, PPL V2.0 will be constantly improved to increase speed, stability and features once it has been released into the wild.

Finally (drum roll please)

PPL will have a new logo;

I don't know what your thoughts are on the logo, but I like it. Its to the point and uncluttered. NICE.

So plenty more to look forward to in the next version of PPL. - If its half as good as PPL V1.x then we are in for a treat!

Many thanks Alain for sharing this information with us.

As soon as I have a release date for PPL V2.0 I will include it in a newsletter.

Next month we have part 2 of NickNack's Landscape tutorial, so keep an eagle eye out for that.

Also I have a tutorial on FMOD - I have a new version of FMOD.PPL that now includes recording functions, so the tutorial will be based on audio monitoring and recording a sample into memory.

There will be a picture of my development kit and a brief update on my experiences of using PPL while on the road.

And …

Anything else I can think of including….

Join me next month for another edition of Voice of the PPL to catch up on the further developments of the PPL community and development scene.

Regards

Mike & the Arianesoft Team