y Yves Martin

What can I and my neighbor Jack do on a gorgeous spring sunday afternoon in Northern California ?

Far away from any form of electronic device (well...apart from our watches), we go bike-riding.

In order to avoid any hate-mail, I won't detail the warmth of the sun, or the beauty of the landscape while the rest of the Nation was battling lingering winter storms.

Back home - Jack immediately dives into a full tune-up of his bike. I have a lot of admiration for Jack who seems to be a natural-born mechanic. Neatly laid out on his bench were the bike sprockets, ready for a good clean-up.

Then, as if the full moon had risen in the bright sunlight, the WereGeek surfaced in all its ingeniosity and viciousness.

"Yves - does this remind you of something?"

"Well, I do remember getting some pretty bad grades in physics whenever sprockets were involved...of course, I've always been lousy at mechanics"

"Come on ! Didn't I read something recently about Apple's Game Sprockets ?"

"You mean the Game Software Development Kit!"

"Yeah...why do you ALWAYS have to reinvent the wheel? There's some really good stuff available from the other guys."

"OK - Jack, you asked for it...here goes:

The game sprockets is a set of individual application programming interfaces (API) that can be mixed and matched to suit the best needs of the developers.

Also, in time, more 'sprockets' can therefore be added.

They can be integrated seamlessly with all the other elements of the Macintosh operating system.

There is no current immediate benefit to the end-user...but once the developers take advantage of these. Believe me, the difference to any gamer will be substantial. Remember what I told you about RAVE ? Well, it is one of the six sprockets we just introduced"

"So, you're playing catch-up again?"

Why did Jack have to say that while smearing the sprockets in thick dark oil? Somehow, I didn't think any of this was innocent...

"Jack, there are six sprockets currently in the developer release V1.0:

The NetSprocket: which is an API for Internet connectivity and multi-player gaming.

The SoundSprocket is the 3D sound and sound manager API. Now just imagine you hear the sound coming from even behind you...

The SpeechSprocket is the speech recognition API. As you know the Macintosh is already well endowed in that area.

The InputSprocket is the digital joystick control and input device API. Now this one is easy to understand. This will greatly simplify the job for all the hardware vendors and subsequently for all the software developers.

The DrawSprocket is a multiple buffering and display control API. This is probably a bit technical, but it will enable developers to handle graphics much more easily.

And, finally, our old-known friend, RAVE."

With a glum look, Jack put the sprockets back in place on his bike and then turned to me.

"So, if I understand you correctly, Apple is, at last getting serious about game development?"

Sometimes, the Gods of mechanics achieve miracles even with a WereGeek.

"Jack - you are absolutely correct ! In fact much of what these APIs offer was there already - usually undocumented and difficult to implement. All of this is now officially part of the Macintosh Operating System suite of APIs and we should expect to see some great stuff coming before the end of this year"

A smile lit up Jack's face. Why, why did I believe seeing some pointed teeth then ?

"And, in the meantime...nothing?"

Too bad that Jack isn't allowed to see some of the software I know of...

In any case, after the blatant favoritism of last month towards LucasArts, I have to redeem myself and dig my grave a little more by favoring some other people.

Kudos to Interactive Magic - they've announced Apache for the Macintosh, this will certainly heat up the competitioon in the helicopter simulation arena.

A second round of applause for Blizzard software. They're promising Warcraft II for the Macintosh.

A vibrant Hurrah for Strategic Simulations Inc ! Something tells me that, by the time you read this column, their number one hit on "the other platform" will, at long last be available for the Macintosh. For all of you that have enjoyed "Allied General" - now's the time to check "the other side of the hill".

And, with all the activity being deployed at GT Interactive, Activision, 7th Level etc. it looks like Spring will be VERY hot for the Macintosh Games Market.

Kick some life into the "imminently dead Macintosh platform" (a pretty playful corpse to me) ! Go out and get hold of some of the just released titles.

If you are a game developer and want to get hold of the Game Sprockets - they are available for free via a download from the Web. Here are a few different addresses you can try:

   http://dev.info.apple.com/evangelism/games/games.html

   ftp://ftpdev.info.apple.com/Developer_Services/Games

   ftp://ftp.info.apple.com/Apple.Support.Area/Developer_Services/Games

(Note: this information is valid at the time of writing)

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