

Editorial

The 3DO Company is up to something.

On August 11, 1995 I was fortunate enough to be included in a group of editors and reviewers for a one day event at The 3DO Company. In a few short hours, the members of our small group of industry snoopers were shown several new games as well as a few we had seen and were still waiting for--Killing Time was on the tour with a new delivery date of October.

The 3DO team members did their best to make sure that everyone in the group got to see the new products in development and ask questions of the developers. Aside from some of the long awaited titles such as BladeForce, we were also shown new hot products such as Decathlon, an action sport title due in the first Quarter of 1996.

What was interesting about this particular tour was the proximity of the developers. We were able to ask each team questions about the game from the ground up. This also allowed the developers to see where our thoughts were and even ask us what we would like to see developed in the game.

The team working on Decathlon were extremely proud of the high level of graphics they had been able to incorporate in the game. They had used a motion capture technique with actual athletes to get a level of realism that went beyond what we had previously known. I believe they were even more proud of the fact that this game, which can be played in four languages, will be available in time for next year's Olympic games.

By noon, the 3DO people had moved us through the hands of each of the development teams and we had seen a great deal of the new titles coming from Studio 3DO and their partners for this holiday season. However, everything that we had seen was being done on the original 3DO system. We still had not seen anything on the newer M2 product.

What this demonstrated to me was that while we are all clamoring for the latest M2 release, many developers are still breaking ground with the original 3DO configuration. During our tour, we met at least three different development teams that had created their own 3D graphics engine for their 3DO titles. This means there are at least three different ways for developers to utilize the 3DO system for 3D graphics. In fact, there are probably more since we were only interviewing the teams currently at 3DO headquarters.

M2

The news of M2 was both exciting and disappointing. While the development schedule of M2 is currently on track, The 3DO Company has decided to withhold the release of M2 until there is sufficient software to utilize it. More than one 3DO employee told us that they had learned their lesson, not only from the 3DO platform's initial release, but also from watching the disastrous results of Sega's launch of the 32X.

Late in the afternoon, our group was assembled and spirited to the engineering labs that were developing the final stages of M2. One interesting stop was a demonstration of the way M2 has been improved over the last six months. While the specifications have remained the same, the engineers have been able to reduce the size of the circuitry by at least half. Not only will this make the new M2 more efficient than the older version, it will also make it more cost effective.

There were demonstrations of M2's video ability as well as a quick over the shoulder look at the MPEG sound capabilities of the new unit. Needless to say, the small band of industry critics were more than a little impressed.

Company Meeting

The tour ended with a chance to sit in on the Friday night company meeting led by Trip Hawkins. Apparently every Friday, the entire company meets after five in the center of the main building to hear what has been accomplished over the past week. Awards are given to deserving employees and notice is made of news events that promoted 3DO. What mainly came across about this corporate coming together was that The 3DO Company has remained a team of very talented people who are held together for one goal--to better the 3DO platform.

Needless to say, I was impressed. The 3DO Company has matched their competitor's efforts with more product, better design, and a company filled with people to make it happen. This day brought that message home to the writers who will be reviewing everyone's new games this season. I believe it will make a difference.



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