

BITE BY BYTE

***YOUR GUIDE TO ADVENTURE
MAKER***



NOVEMBER 2008

EDITOR'S PAGE 1

Extra! Extra! Read all 'bout it: Special Edition

Welcome to Bite By Byte's third edition! This issue is elongated- more articles and more fun. The magazine has come a long way- it started off as an 8 page magazine, and now it's twice that.

I've got some great articles and interviews for this issue. First we have an interview with GM-Support, then the Chrome Zone, and an interview with our Member of the Month, Jaked. We also have some great articles by Lyberodoggy.

Did you watch the World Series? Or do you follow hockey? Or European basketball? If you live in the US, have you watched this historical election? There's a lot of things happening right now in the world.

Programming #2

By Lyberodoggy

The variables are reference-names in positions of the computer's physical memory (RAM), where data such as text characters, strings and arrays are stored. In most languages, variables must be declared before used. The declaration of variables in VBS is as follows:

```
Dim variablename As Type*
```

*The "As Type" part of the declaration doesn't work in many versions of VBS...

Where Type is replaced by Integer for the integer, Double for double decimal precision, String for Text, Array for arrays etc. The declaration can be done without the As Type part or not at all. The declaration of the variable automatically gives procedure or program range depending on where it is declared, meaning that it can be accessed from this process and all called procedures. Saving a void value (greater than maximum allowed or wrong type) causes a run-time error. To initialize a variable assign a starting value to it (usually 0 for Integers and "" for Strings). To assign a value to a variable use the equality / assignment operator (=) as follows:

```
integervariable = 0  
stringvariable = ""
```

To assign the same value to many variables use the following code:

```
var1 = var2 = var3 = 0
```

The assignment operator works from right to left, which means that the first estimated expression is var3 = 0, then the var2 = var3 etc. Arrays can be tables of integers or characters. There are two types of arrays: the one-dimensional and two-dimensional. Declare your array as follows:

```
Dim MyArray (3)  
Dim MyArray2 (3,3)
```

The first array is one-dimensional and has four elements (subscripts). The elements are numbered from 0, so the array contains the positions 0, 1, 2, 3. The second array is two-dimensional and stores 4x4 subscripts. To assign a value to a subscript use the following code:

```
MyArray (0) = 5
```

Now the first subscript of MyArray stores the value 5.

Now try to create a variable, initialize it and display it using the following variation of MsgBox:

```
MsgBox variablename
```

In the next lesson: Operators and Comments

Jaked's Graphic Tip: Conforming Clothes

This is SPECIFICALLY FOR POSER USERS with versions 1-4.

Ever hate having those characters who you can customize to the full extent, but hate the fact they're NUDE? Fixing that is SO easy!

- 1.) Go to Characters-Male. Choose any.*
- 2.) Go to the Clothing-Male and choose muscle shirt. Then press the double checkmark, which indicates 2 figures on the screen.*
- 3.) Position muscle shirt perfectly to chest, back, neck... etc.*
- 4.) Now go to Figure Drop-Down Menu, and choose conform clothing. Voila!*

Featured Article: Interview with GM-Support

First of all, thank you very much for taking your time to answer a few questions.

Let me first ask you: When did you get the idea to develop Adventure Maker (AM), and what was your initial motivation to create this software?

I have always been fond of adventure games. The first adventures that I played were text-based adventure games running on the TI 99/4a, a cartridge-based home computer that was released in 1981. Then I played adventure games on an Intel 386, running at 33 Mhz, released in 1986. Myst, the best-selling game of all times until 2002, was released in 1993. I was very impressed by that game, and it certainly played a role in my desire to create Adventure Maker.

It was in 1997-1998, after playing many adventure games and watching my relatives play them too, that I got the idea to develop Adventure Maker. At that time there was no easy-to-use tool to create first-person adventure games like Myst, so I decided to create one. For me, it was the beginning of an amazing journey during which I had the chance to work with very talented game creators, to help them, to test their games, and to give birth to a community of users that has grown and that is now really exciting. I am truly thankful to all the people who supported Adventure Maker and the community during all those years.

What was your vision back at that time? For example, what was your target group of users, and what kind of games did you intend to be created with this software?

When the first version of Adventure Maker was launched in 1998, the program was exclusively dedicated to the creation of first-person games like Myst.

To illustrate this concept, here is a quote from the 1999's version of the Adventure Maker website: "In a few mouse clicks you can create interactive paths in the most strange places. [...] generate wonderful adventure games, the quality of which will grow with your experience, reaching eventually the beauty of games as Myst or Riven."

The very first game that I can remember of, created with Adventure Maker 1, dates back to 1998. It was made with photographs taken with a digital camera inside a house in Singapore. The goal was to find the family members who were hiding themselves in the wardrobe, in the garden, and in other places of the house.

Then, still in 1998, the first two real adventure games were released. They were titled "The House on the Hill" and "Zambardi Mystery". Surprisingly, those two old games are still available for download from the "Tim's Freeware Graphics Adventure Games" page. They were made with the version 1.04 Adventure Maker, one of the very first versions ever released.

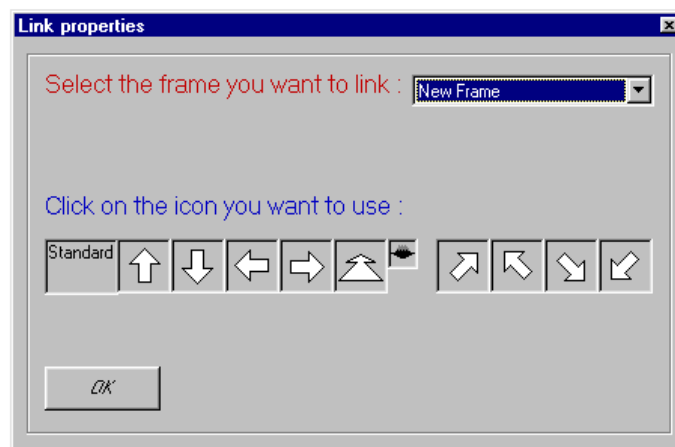
Many other adventure games were released in the next years. Some people even created applications that were not adventure games. The first one was "Time Zones USA", a tool for helping kids learn about U.S. time zones, released in May 2000 by TCB Entertainment. Other applications include a privately-released tool for teaching employees how to repair broken elevators...

Due to such releases, Adventure Maker slowly evolved from a platform solely dedicated to adventure games into a platform dedicated to both adventure games and point-and-click multimedia software. For example, in August 2000, the version 2.06 of Adventure Maker introduced the ability to customize the text messages, allowing people to replace sentences like "Start New Game" with just "Start" (cf. the "Text" tab of the "Project Properties"). The Adventure Maker website also evolved to reflect the evolution, describing Adventure Maker as a tool for creating both "games and multimedia software". In 2003, the description also included "educational software, presentations, and interactive tours".

As many users know, a lot of new features have been added to AM during the past years. What do you personally consider the major steps in the development of AM?

The very first version of Adventure Maker was released in 1998. At that time, the only things that you could do with the program were to import pictures, to create hotspots to move from a picture to another, and to generate a self-extracting installation package to distribute the created game.

The "Hotspot Properties" window only contained two fields: one field to select the destination picture, and another field to select the cursor appearance among a list of hard-coded cursors.



Screenshot of Adventure Maker v1.05 beta

In 1999, the version 2.0 of Adventure Maker provided support for sounds, videos, items, text messages, timers and boolean variables (now called "integer variables"). However, at that time, those features were still very limited: you could only play one sound at a time, text messages were limited to a single line, videos could only play full-screen, variables conditions could not be combined, etc. Those limitations were fixed in the subsequent 2.x versions, which also introduced many other features, such as the ability to combine items (v2.04), to duplicate frames, to customize the game menu (v2.05), to run the game from CD, to create games in other languages (v2.06), to view the frames as thumbnails (v2.7), and many more.

In 2002, the version 3.0 of Adventure Maker introduced the support for VBScript, allowing the game creators to expand the possibilities of Adventure Maker by writing custom code. The versions 3.x introduced many other features, such as the ability to organize the frames into folders, to display frame transitions, to "Set Resume Locations", etc. Other new features included the Rippling Water Effect, an improved Debug menu (v3.2), the "Runtime Frames Merging" (v3.3), etc.

Particularly notable was the release of the version 3.4 of Adventure Maker, in 2003, which introduced a whole new user interface look, which is still used in the current version of Adventure Maker. That version

also introduced the tools "Music Maker", "Creative Painter", "Gradient Filler", and "Lights Effects", and added support for dialogues, looping videos, third-party ActiveX components, and more.

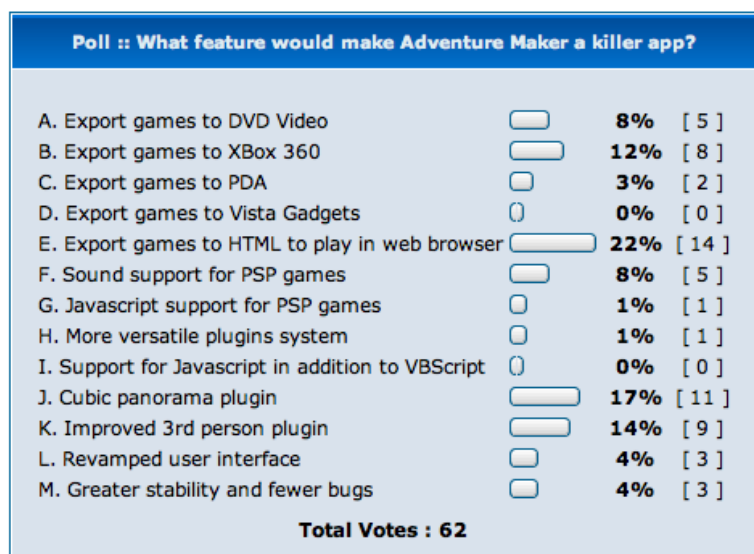
Another major step in the development of Adventure Maker was the release, in 2004, of the version 3.5, which finally introduced the ability to create plugins. Included in the package was the new Third Person Plugin, which allowed creating third-person adventure games.

The other major steps were the release of the 360-Degree Panorama Plugin in 2005, the ability to create games for the PlayStation Portable in 2005-2006, the ability to export to the iPhone and iPod Touch in 2007, and the release of the Cubic Panorama Plugin, in 2008.

You receive more and more requests for future updates of AM. These solicitations diverge a lot, and concern different features. How difficult is it for you to decide what improvements or features you are going to add to a next version of AM?

The decision of what features to implement has always been determined by the feedback given by the Adventure Maker users.

A good example to illustrate this concept is the poll posted on the forums in late 2006, when people could vote for the features that they needed the most.



Results of the late-2006 poll (screenshot made on October 28, 2008)

The most requested new feature was the ability to export games to HTML. That feature has been partially implemented in version 4.4, a few months later (cf. "Create HTML" command under the project menu). The second most requested feature was the ability to create cubic panoramas. That feature has also been implemented (cf. Cubic Panorama Plugin). The third most requested feature was an improved Third Person Plugin. A new version of the plugin has been recently released.

The AM Forums has an active community. What do you like most about it?

Since the very beginning, the Adventure Maker community has been very active, and it has been composed by very nice and talented people who have always been willing to help.

In 1999 there was no forum on the Adventure Maker website, but there was a guestbook, and many people posted very kind and constructive comments.

The first discussion board opened in September 2000, powered by CoolBoard.

For an unknown reason, CoolBoard discontinued their services on June 29, 2001, and therefore the Adventure Maker Discussion Board was soon replaced by another board, powered by xsorbit4. On June 29, 2002, the latter was replaced by new phpBB-powered forums, hosted by an Adventure Maker user.

The Adventure Maker website then moved to its own domain at AdventureMaker.com in 2002, and the first self-hosted phpBB forums opened on June 6, 2003. In 2005, the forums had already more than 300 members and 6,000 articles. In late 2005, new forums were installed, and the posts were reset. Since that date, the forums have never been reset. In late 2006, the forums had 5,000 articles. In late 2007, the forums had 8,000 articles. The number of posts grew exponentially in 2008, exceeding 15,000 posts in October 2008.

The creativity, patience, passion, and altruism of the forum members really makes the forums a nice place to be.

How important is the forum community to you?

The forum community is very important for the development of Adventure Maker. First of all, it is a great source of feedback. New versions of Adventure Maker are usually released on the forums several months before they are released on the website. Not only do people post bug reports and suggestions, they also discuss the features thoroughly, allowing to get a better understanding of how the features should be improved. This results in new versions of Adventure Maker that better correspond to the needs of the game creators.

The community is also very important because it helps the users to get answers to their questions. The questions range from how to use Adventure Maker, to how to make images and sounds, as well as how to publish the created games, etc. People help each other, and this really gives confidence to those who decide to start such a big project as the creation of an adventure game. This results in more games released for everybody to enjoy.

The forums also encourage the creation of new plugins, which people can announce on "The Plugins Corner".

The new sub-forums that have been created in the last few years also show how the forums are important to the Adventure Maker project: "Post Your Own Tutorials" was created in 2005, "Games Hints and Walkthroughs" was created in 2006, "Music", "Storylines", "Vaporware Games", and "AM Magazine" were created in 2008.

The forums also provide the opportunity for the members to show off their creations, including artwork, music, and, most importantly, games. The game creators can get feedback from other members, and this is very useful because it encourages them to work on their games and to improve them. It also encourages people to visit the forums on a regular basis, because they can often find something new to read, to look at, to listen to, or to play with.

And finally a last question: What are your personal visions about AM for the next years?

The stats have shown that Adventure Maker is still a popular product: the number of visitors of the Adventure Maker website keeps growing, and so does the number of downloads. The number of forum posts has more than doubled in a year, and it seems that more and more people are using the program.

The Cubic Panorama Plugin, which was released only a few months ago, will certainly boost the creation of immersive adventure games, and I expect more and more games that use the plugin to be released in the next years.

The development of Adventure Maker will continue, and major new features will be implemented in the next years.

MEMBER OF THE MONTH: JAKED

BB: Why did you join the forums?

J: I was interested in adventure game creation for a long time. So I downloaded AM, and joined the forums.

BB: What is your biggest achievement on the forums?

J: E-Reality, definitely.

BB: Do you have any upcoming games?

**J: Jaked's Death Shadow (Alpha Stage)
House (Just Finishing Touches)
Unnamed Project (-?- Stage)
Mystery Behind It (-?- Stage)**

BB: What's your opinion on member of the month ending?

J: When there's more people, it should be continued.

BB: Any last words?

J: yes. If and when MoTM returns and is up for grabs, ZW for MoTM! Also, people who join, POST AT LEAST ONCE! There are at least 100 people who do not post AT ALL!

Election 2008



Do you live in the United States or have you heard about the epic presidential election? If you have not, here is how it played out. America has two political parties- the Democrats, and the Republicans, both have different views. The democrat candidate was Barrack Obama, the first African-American candidate, and John McCain, also a senator, who served in the Vietnam War. The polls all predicted Obama to win, and when it came to Election Day, he clinched the job just after 11 P.M, with 270

electoral votes. He ended up with around 350! Congrats Obama!

Review: Stickshooting spree

Stickshooting spree is an average casual game, created by the AM's community member known as toadfrogs. It's made using The Game Maker and is actually more of an arcade shooter. The graphics may not be great and it can be a real pain to beat the opponents but the game is in general quite addictive. I found myself playing for hours, which I figured by looking at the game's time system.

One thing that takes points away from the game's score is the background grid which moves continuously and kinda dazzles me to death.

The sound is over the par and adds to the total. Another element I liked is the usage of WASD to actually move the player instead of staying still fixed in the center of the screen.

It's not something innovative, but it's a very good try and shows that its creator has some potential. lifebars, scoring system are parameters that showcase a programmers abilities.

As for the scoring system I just mentioned, I got a negative feeling from it. I think it could be better. For example it could compare the shots fired with the ones that hit the target instead of the kills.

Comparing spent bullets to kills leads to small scores and almost unfair results.

Score out of 10

Graphics:5

Sound:9

Gameplay:9
Storyline/Innovation:5
Sum:7

Conclusion: Addictive!

Member of the Year

Because the Member of the Month has been put on hold, Bite By Byte will be having a total contest, Member of the YEAR. Next edition, we will have write-ups on some of the candidates. It will also give a website that will allow you to vote for a candidate. Look for information in the next edition!

Index/ Credits

Thanks to all the writers! If your article was forgotten, please send chickens1127 a PM. If your article did not meet the deadline.

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