

BITE BY BYTE

*YOUR GUIDE TO ADVENTURE
MAKER*

HOLIDAY

ISSUE



Adventure
Maker

DECEMBER 2008

EDITOR'S 1ST PAGE

Ho, Ho, Ho!

Welcome to the Fifth Edition of Bite By Byte. This issue will get you in the Christmas spirit, with a big present: ShadowHunter's plug-in. This article will preview the tutorial and is an in-depth article. I have also have started a series of interesting reports for anyone that is interested in multiplayer role playing games (MMORPGs).

Christmas is coming. A huge recession is in the process. But we're free. So keep reading :D. And there's the day Obama becomes the new president of the United States Of America.



Hello Bite by Byte readers,

Let me start off by thanking Mercedes for the nice interview and Chickens1127 for his great initiative of creating an AdventureMaker fan magazine. I'm happy to introduce myself in a way that was not possible before and most of all I'm excited to provide a real scoop for all you "B.b.B-readers"... Let's call it an early X-mass surprise.

So, allow me to introduce myself in a few lines:

My real name is David and I'm born in Belgium, Europe in 1975 meaning I'm 33 years old. You probably know me better as ShadowHunter, a nickname I chose in the honor of one of the greatest adventure games of all time: "Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within."

My interest in adventure games started way back in 1993 with games like Kyrandia. After trying a few shooters I quickly realized adventure games are my cup of tea. During the "golden 5 years" from 1993 till 1998 we were spoiled with fantastic titles from studios as Sierra and Lucas Arts. Who doesn't remember Phantasmagoria, Gabriel Knight, Broken Sword, Kings Quest, Blade Runner or Tex Murphy?

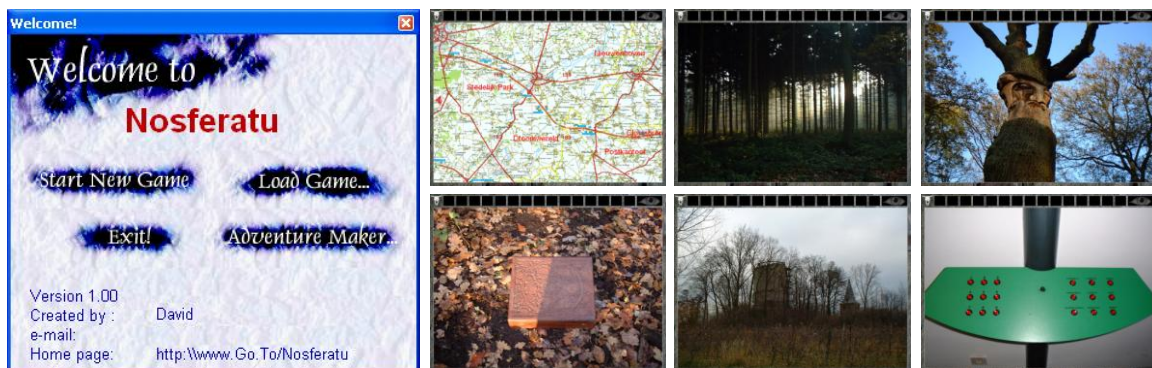
In the light of my love for mystery-horror adventure games I planned of making my own game. I had a great story, owned one of the first digital

cameras and had all the software installed to create the necessary resources. There was however one problem...

An engine... a real game engine suitable for making adventure games. After searching the internet for many weeks I stumbled upon program called AdventureMaker which seem to have all features in store to develop my game. Of course AdventureMaker was quite premature at the time... see the interview with GM in "Bite by Byte" edition 2.

After shooting thousands of stills, editing video clips with my old "486" and designing the interface my hard disk crashed and almost all my work was lost. This was immediately the end of my first and final attempt to make an adventure game.

I have included some screenshots that I was able to recover. The game was made with AdventureMaker 2.05 end December 1999. The game was to be a Phantasmagoria spinoff. The working title was "Nosferatu: Say your prayers"



Nonetheless this was not the end of game design for me... even though I found myself not to be much of an artist or game designer. It turned out I rather liked scripting and especially to add features that lack in AdventureMaker.

The result of 7 years work can be found on my website www.shadowhunter.co.uk. I'm practically proud of my "Tic-Tac-Death" game which is the first and so far the only A.I. script written for AdventureMaker.

If you didn't try it, I recommend you download it some time.

The last 2 years I have been keeping a low profile on the expanding AdventureMaker community because I was occupied with building a house together with my girlfriend Hilke.

But now, finally, my construction project is completed and I have once again some spare time for my favorite occupation: coding. To my pleasure I saw the AdventureMaker forums have become a vivid place inhabited with many, skilled and friendly fans of the genre with wonderful ideas and great initiatives.

All this stimulated me to continue making new software for AdventureMaker like updating HotSpot Magic...

Well enough of myself and my boring stories... let's get down to business...

Here it is: the introduction of my latest creation which I hope will once again change the way your future games will look.

Introduction:

Okay, let's take a look on what a successful adventure game needs... let me know if you disagree:

1. A good, interesting and original story which logically enfolds to a satisfying ending
2. Feel strongly related to the main character
3. No needless running around to span the playtime
4. Logical puzzles with sufficient clues
5. A good, intuitive interface and navigation
6. A perfect balanced atmosphere: graphics, music and animations

I cannot help you with the first 4 requirements but I'm sure willing to try helping you with the interface and atmosphere.

For the interfacing I already made: EZTalk, KeyGuard, HotSpot Magic and SubMaster. All of them are free tools that can be downloaded from my website.

But for enhancing the atmosphere there is only RainGenerator... which is of course not so much... after all it only plays a sequence of 8 gifs on the screen.

I strongly felt there was room for more visual enhancements and this with minimal efforts from the game designer.

The idea:

Bearing the previous in mind I started thinking...What visual enhancements are used in almost every commercial game designed by a professional studio?

Rain, snow... yes, fire, water, moving insects... again yes, smoke, fairy dust, noise, twinkling stars, lights... yes... all those things enhance the gaming experience but are incredibly hard to accomplish in AdventureMaker.

So there we have it... we might need a particle engine for AdventureMaker, one that can do all of the above and preferably even more!

Pre-requirements:

1. A game designer should design games, so minimize the need of writing code
2. The particle engine should be easy to use and easy to configure

3. The engine should be versatile, the limit should be the designer's imagination
4. The learning curve must be low, motivating the designer to use it
5. The software must be robust

The plug-in:

With all of those requirements in the back of my head I started coding somewhere in the beginning of October 2008, now a bit more than a month later I'm proud to present you "Particle+", the first particle engine for AdventureMaker.

Features:

The setup is rather special. "Particle+" works with images as particles, this has the benefit that you can use every shape, size and color you need.

You can use up to 4 images which are born and die in a life span you define. To top it off all 4 images can have a mask for real, transparency with 32 bit color rather than 256 colors when using a GIF-file.

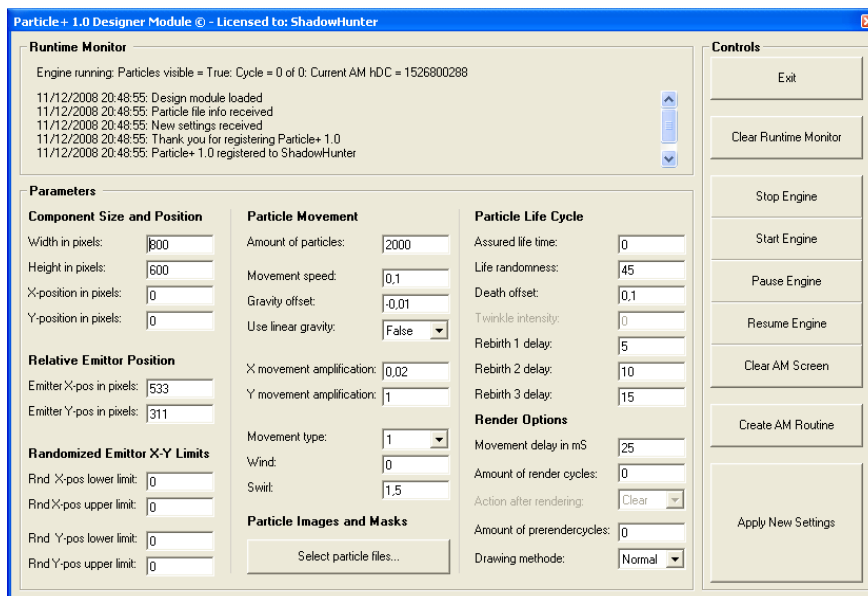
If have included 13 predefined movement types which can be used for water, snow, rain, fire or just to static display a transparent picture. All predefined movements can be further customized. I refer to the manual for an explanation of all movement types and options.

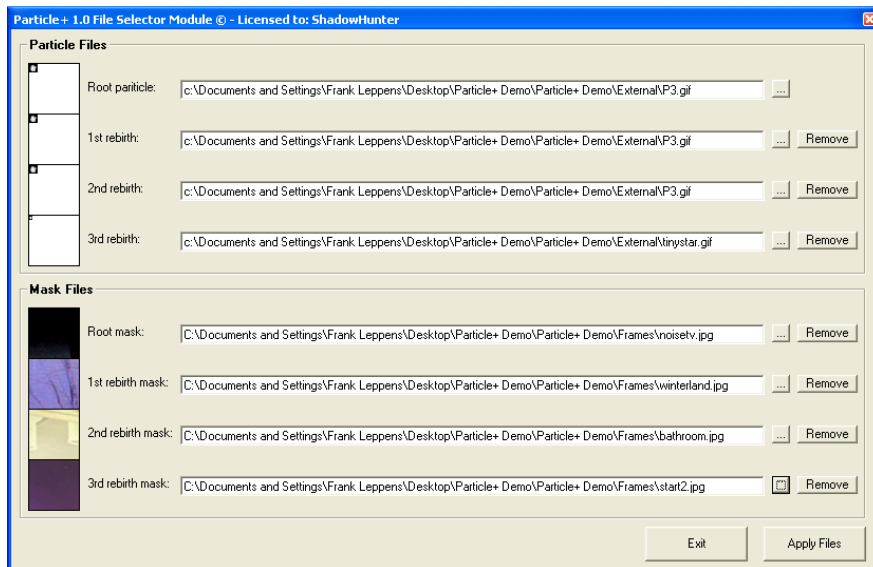
And of course there are tons and tons of settings possible, I just list a few:

- Gravity
- Particle speed
- Lifespan
- Wind
- Swirl
- Twinkle
- Randomness parameters
- Delays
- Cycle counters
- Pre-rendering
- Freeze or clear of particles
- And much more...

You might think all this require huge scripts and careful coding? Wrong... I have included a special designer module with real-time preview in AdventureMaker.

The designer module allows you to use a GUI to load image files, adjust parameters and control the engine. It also has a runtime monitor and log book.





Once you have the effect just right you click the “Create AM routine” button and all necessary scripting is copied to the clipboard. Next you copy it in the VBS routine of AdventureMaker and you’re ready to go. Easy peasy, no?

But wait, it gets even better. Remember the “Lantern” plug-in? It required a timed event on every frame to refresh the background each 10 mS?

“Particle+” can refresh the AdventureMaker screen itself, this means not only less coding, less resources but also perfect synchronized refresh rates. Together with the included double buffer approach this means a smooth and flicker free animation.

“Particle+” offers full scripting support of all properties and methods for the more experienced users. You can, for example dynamically make a fire bigger after throwing wood from the inventory on that fire.

You can even use events that are raised by “Particle+” when a certain amount of animation cycles have been passed to further bring your project to life.

When you explore “Particle+” you will discover a myriad of possibilities to use this plug-in. You will find new ways of making realistic effects as your experience grows.

The plug-in does not use DirectX so there are almost no system limitations.

I already used “Particle+” to successfully accomplish effects like:

- Snow
- Rain
- Fire
- Smoke
- Water
- Noise on a TV
- Twinkling stars
- Insects
- Train window with moving landscape
- Old film effect with dust
- Smooth scrolling credits
- 32bit color transparent images
- Earthquake
- X-Mas lights in a tree
- Opening of a magic portal
- A balloon flying away

Below you can already see a few screenshots from the "Particle+" demo which you can exclusively download as Bite by Byte reader.



I really hope you will like this plug-in as it was a tremendous task to develop it but I enjoyed every second of it and I hope you will do too.

The actual plug-in and the source code of the demo project will be made available shortly.

But for now: feel free to download the compiled demo (8.26 Mb) and watch the images of this article come to life:

http://rapidshare.com/files/172197153/Particle_Demo.zip

Feel free to "PM" me with any question you have. I'll be more than happy to support you in any way I can.

Enjoy the holidays and let me already wish you a successful 2009.

With best regards,

ShAdOwHuNtEr

THE MMORPG FILES:

REAL WORLD TRADING

BY CHICKENS1127

Welcome to the MMORPG files. The MMORPG files will be a series on massive multiplayer online role playing games.

This report will be on real world trading. Real world trading is when players sell in-game currency for real world money. Many games are making steps to stop this crime.

Many games state that “all in-game property and material on servers is property of Blah Inc.” But many players run programs that repeat money making processes to make millions of in-game currency. Then they will sell that money on-line for \$5-10 usually per a million.

Many game companies run programs that prevent use of such programs. Many games also run scripts that detect if there has been no mouse activity.

Jagex Ltd. has started a group of staff to track down real world traders. They have taken 800 billion gold pieces out of the RuneScape™ economy and by early next year they will hope to remove 8 trillion gold pieces, worth \$40-50 million USD.

Thank you for reading the first part of this series.

Frozen text Photoshop tutorial in 8 steps

Step 1: Open Photoshop and start a new project. Select the Text tool and write your text.

I will use this for the tutorial



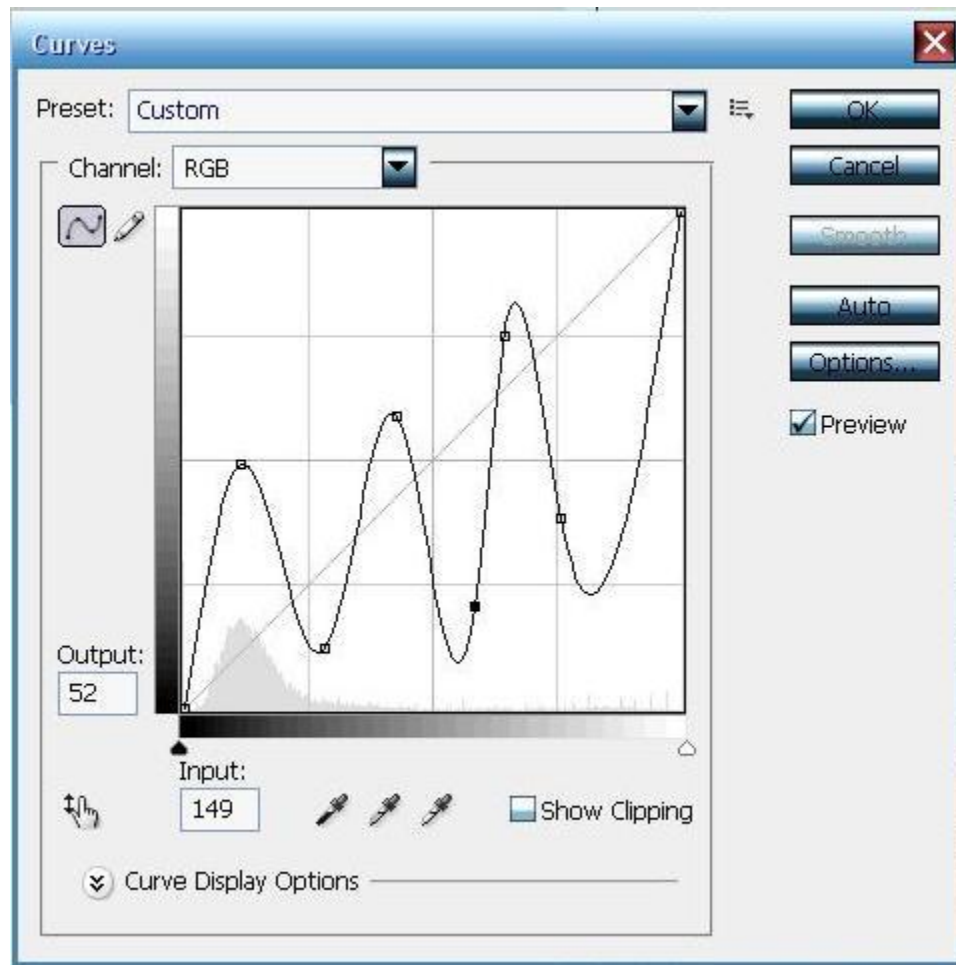
Step 2: Right-click and the text layer (right down corner) and click "Rasterize layer". Right-click again and now click on "Flatten Image".

Step 3: Use the Magic Wand tool to select the white background. Go to Filter>Pixelate>Crystalize. Set the Cell size to 10 and click OK. Right-click on the selected area and click on "Select inverse".

Step 4: Go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise. Add 30% of Gaussian noise. Then go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set the amount to 1 or 2 pixels.

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Step 5: This is the most difficult step. Go to



Image>Adjustments>Curves and make the curves look like this

then deselect the image (just click until the magic wand tool is used no more) and go to Image>Adjustments>Invert.

Step 6: Go to Image>Image rotation>90 CW. Then apply one or two wind filters. Filter>Stylize>Wind. After that go to Image>Image rotation>90 CCW.

You should have something like this



Step 7: Now to add some color. Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Play with the Hue and the Saturation levels until you find a color that looks like ice to your eye (make sure the “colorize” box is checked).

My result

(Hue: 196, Saturation: 70, Lightness: 0)



Step 8: Select the Brush tool and right-click on the image. Click on the arrow on the upper right corner and select the "Assorted brushes". Pick one star-like brush and add some to your image. This will give you a sparkle effect.

That's my final image



NOTES: E-Reality 2 is postponed.

I NEED MORE ARTICLES FROM PEOPLE!

Thank you for reading.