Truly a web game, Monster Madness is unveiled

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(Phys.org) —The director of Nom Nom Games, a subsidiary of Trendy Entertainment, has converted the Monster Madness game to the Web using technologies pioneered by Mozilla. Jeremy Stieglitz, Development Director and CTO for Trendy Entertainment, made it quite clear in a video that he regards the move as significant, in that this is a brave new world of direct access to a plugin-free commercial game, using asm.js and Emscripten. The latter is an open source optimizing compiler for LLVM applications that generates pure JavaScript to run directly on the

Web.

The shooter role-playing game needs only the web browser to get going. You are not asked to sign up for anything. "We take our existing game and compile it into a format that the browser is able to run. There is no barrier to entry. Anyone can just go to the website and start playing," he said.

Stieglitz pointed to the significance not only for game enthusiasts but for game developers. "To be able to reach consumers directly like that is a real game-changer. Previously, to get a high end game in the browser, you had to create a custom plugin and that is a tough proposition technically and for the game developer to do that, and also for the consumer, because they have to install something and they do not necessarily know what it is going to do to their machine."

With asm.js there is nothing to install; the browser already has the JavaScript functionality built in and the performance, he added, is nearly as good as native code. (Asm.js which has been a research project at Mozilla, is described as a low-level, extraordinarily optimizable subset of JavaScript.) In a Mozilla blog posting on Thursday, Martin Best, game platform strategist, said, "Thanks to the Mozilla pioneered asm.js, it is now feasible to run code compiled from languages such as C and C++ on the Web, in a way that is compatible with all modern browsers." The asm.js, he added, provides developers with a large range of options in which languages they can use, while preserving performance and portability and ease of deployment of the Web.

Meanwhile, Stieglitz on Thursday commented on the experience of making the game browser-available, in a posting on Mozilla Hacks (Robert Nyman is technical evangelist for Mozilla and editor of Mozilla Hacks). "When our engineering teams at Trendy Entertainment & Nom Nom Games decided on the strategy of developing one of our new

Unreal Engine 3 games —Monster Madness Online— as a cross-platform title, we knew that a frictionless multiplayer web browser version would be central to this experience."

To pull this off, they determined that rewriting the game engine from the ground-up was out of the question. They sought a solution where they could port their existing code in an efficient way into a format usable in the browser. The Emscripten compiler and asm.js proved to be the best solution and "when combined with a set of other new-ish Web API's, enabled the browser to become a fully featured platform for instant high-end 3D gaming. This just took a little trial and error to figure out exactly how we'd piece it together."

The game launch steps into a brave new world. "We Trendy game engineers are primarily old-school C++ programmers, so it was something of a revelation that Emscripten could compile our existing application (built on Epic Game's Unreal Engine 3) into asm.js optimized JavaScript with little to no changes."

The official release of Monster Madness has not yet happened; the release is set for May, but an "early alpha version" was released online Thursday. Access is possible by going to the Monster Madness website using either Mozilla's Firefox , Google Chrome or Opera. This is a "technical demo" where one can play the preview of the game instantly.

"We at Trendy," he said, "envision a day when anybody can play any game no matter where they are or what device they happen to have, without friction or gateways or middlemen. With the right combination of these cutting-edge web technologies, that day can be today. We hope other enterprising game developers will join us in reaching players directly through the [web](#), which thanks to Emscripten & asm.js, may well become the most powerful and far-reaching '[game](#) console' of all!"

More information: developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript
github.com/kripken/emscripten/wiki
hacks.mozilla.org/2013/12/mons … web-with-emscripten/

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