Tips for demomakers

Coding a demo, drawing a work of art or composing mood altering music all requires artistic creativity.

To aid the creative minds of the scene, we would like to propose a few ideas for all you demomaking people out there.

A Story to tell

Running the demo

Bigscreen considerations

A story to tell

In 1998 an unknown group called hybris/NEMESIS entered a demo for the WiLD Demo competition and won...
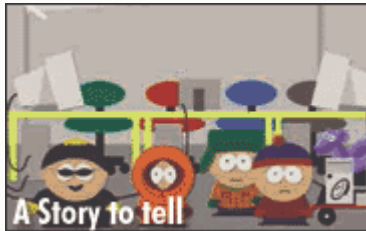
Nobody had heard of the group before, the demo didn't feature fancy coding, it didn't have smooth running 3D graphics - and on top of that, all speaking done in the demo was done in Danish. But what was it, that made hybris/NEMESIS a winning team? - It was the story, the sound, the cutting and the fact that the demo was fun to watch.

Making a demo is pretty much like making a movie or a commercial. Within a given number of minutes, you have to deliver an audio/visual experience that will move the audience. Back in the *old days*, all you needed was a handful of stunning new routines, some nice pictures and a groovy soundtrack. But that doesn't cut it anymore.

To make a winning demo, let's break down the ingredients:

- A story to tell
- The cutting edge
- SoundFX
- Having a laugh

A story to tell
Although demo makers joined forces in demo groups, they weren't allways that good at working together on demos. That resulted in demos built up of effect after effect, perhaps interrupted once in a while by a graphics piece and of course a piece of music which often ran totally independent of the actual demo. In short, nothing fit together: The music wasn't timed to the visuals, there were no soundeffects, no consistency, and no story.

To keep the attention of the audience, you need to tell a story. And you need to tell a good story. One that will keep the attention of the audience fixed on the screen. A good example of this is the *South Party* demo from 1999. For this demo, a quite detailed script was made, and this aided the demogroup in making it exciting and compelling to the audience. If you want a bit of inspiration, the manuscript can be found online here.

The Cutting edge
Fact: People bore easily...

You can write the coolest 3D engine, the most complex scroller and even the best

most complex scroller and even the best
compression engine. It would still be
worthless if the audience get's bored
watching the demo.

In comes the cutting aspect. To keep a
demo interesting to watch, you need to
know when to cut to the next scene. It's
just like in the movies, you don't want to
watch the timer count down from 60 to 0
seconds before the bomb goes off. It's
too boring. No, you want to see the
timer, then the action hero, then the
timer, then the hero trying to defuse the
bomb, then back to a close up of the
bomb and then... *phew... gotta catch my
breath again...*

It's all about keeping the pace up.
Knowing when to cut to the next scene,
maybe even cutting a bit premature to
keep the audience wanting more. Tease
the audience - it works.

SoundFX
Have you ever tried to watch a movie
with the sound turned off? - Suddenly,
even the most action packed movie
seems dull and boring. The audio part of
a movie or a demo actually plays a big
part. It can build up an emotional state,
it can surprise you, and it can even make
you laugh.

There's soundFX and there's music, and
both play an important part. Instead of
just playing a piece of music, try to let
the music follow the visual part. Rise and
fall as the action speed up or slows
down. Be loud or low. Great examples of
using music are horror movies. Through
the music you can actually make people
belive that something horrible lies around
the corner, without ever showing it
visually.

And if you combine the music with
soundFX, then you can really get a
powerful mixture. There is no need to
point out how little effect an explosion
without a big loud bang has. But also the
small soundfx, such as footsteeps,
breathing or the sound of a jetfighter
flying overhead can really make a
difference to a demo.

Having a laugh
There is no cheaper trick in the book
than making people laugh. Humour has
allways been an effective way of
entertaining the audience. And often
even the smallest things make the
audience smile, like in the demo *Rofly*
from 1996, where the main character (a
flying chopper like fellow) stops in the
middle of a chase because of a red
stoplight.

Self irony is also a powerful tool. Imagine
panning across this beautiful female
body. Perfect thighs, perfect bun, perfect
breasts and NO head... - well what can
you expect from a computer generated
character :-)

Think about it
Whether you follow these suggestions or
not, I hope it was interesting reading to
you. If you feel that something is
incorrect or that something should be

added or removed, please let me know
at theparty@theparty.dk