

WorldView

Our monthly digest of the past month's global games news...

DEALS

Spanish studio **Zed Games** has licensed **Trinigy's** Vision Engine for the development of its online PC game *Planet 51*.

Italian software firm **Milestone** has been signed by **Black Bean Games** to develop the first of three brand new racing games based on the World Rally Championships.

Blitz Game Studios has signed up to help publish the PC version of UK micro-studio **Binary Tweed's** XBLA Indie Games title *Clover*.

Disney Interactive has signed up **Charles Cecil's Revolution Software** for design work on the game based on Robert Zemeckis' new movie of *The Christmas Carol*.

NaturalMotion has licensed its animation tech to South Korean MMO specialist **WeMade**.

NaturalMotion has also sealed a 'far-reaching' deal with **Codemasters** who will use the firm's animation engines in future titles.

Animation group **Mixamo** has struck a deal that will offer its lanned motions to **Autodesk** 3ds Max users.

Chinese developer **Radiance** has adopted **Emergent's** Lightspeed engine.



UNITY IS FREE

Engine firm Unity has abolished the low-end licensing fee for its engine – effectively making the technology free for all.

Although the Pro licence will still exist at \$1,500 (and presumably be the fee of choice for big companies using the tech, such as EA), Unity expects this 'freemium' engine to attract an even wider base of new developers and independents.

"Now anyone can create interactive content with a best of breed tool without any financial barrier," the firm said, writing for *Develop* in a new regular feature about its technology (see page 68).

The new pricing comes into effect with version 2.6 of the engine and was announced at the firm's yearly conference, Unite, which took place last month in San Francisco.

We'll be offering a full report from Unite next month.

www.unity3d.com



UNITED KINGDOM/UNITED STATES \$250M PURCHASE FOR PLAYFISH?

This one is unconfirmed as we go to press, but publish and be damned: rumours are swirling that EA has made a bid to buy social networking firm Playfish.

The deal has been valued at \$250m – but that's a steal when you take into account the fact that the company's three most popular Facebook games, *Pet Society*, *Restaurant City* and *Country Story*, attracted more than 32 million players this past August alone.

Playfish currently has offices in London, Beijing, Norway and a recently opened studio in San Francisco.

www.playfish.com

IRELAND POPCAP PLOTS EXPANSION (PART ONE)

It looks like PopCap is planning to develop new IP for mobile games platforms at its studio in Ireland.

According to a job posting on the *Develop* site, the firm is looking for a senior mobile designer at its Dublin-based studio.

Specifically, the firm – famous for hits like *Bejewelled*, *Peggle* and *Plants vs Zombies*, all of which were developed in Seattle – is looking for "an experienced game designer tasked with working with a small, professional development team, looking for the challenge of adapting existing titles and creating brand spin offs, with the ability of moving the

studio to original IP development on a variety of handheld, mobile and social platforms".

www.popcap.com

UNITED STATES POPCAP PLOTS EXPANSION (PART TWO)

Meanwhile, PopCap Games has also secured an investment of \$22.5 million.

The round of funding is the first in PopCap's ten-year history, and was led by late-stage investment firm VC Meritech Capital Partners.

"We're excited to have additional working capital that lets us be more aggressive with our expansion into social media and reaching new geographies," commented David Roberts, CEO of PopCap.

"We've been pursued by investment firms for many years and have resisted taking outside capital, but we liked Meritech's style and believe there's a tremendous opportunity to grow and evolve our business at a time when many other video game firms are retrenching."

www.popcap.com

UNITED STATES HALO TRIO GO SOLO

Three former Bungie employees have formed a new independent outfit, Moonshot Games.

Having been heavily involved in one of the most lucrative and big-budget game series in history – *Halo*, if you needed reminding – the Moonshot founders have made a wholesale

reversal to their game design philosophy, now pledging to build small downloadable titles on a modest budget.

"The Moonshot team firmly believes that the stars need not be limited to multi-million-dollar projects supported by armies of ground crew," read a statement from the new studio.

The developer has opened two offices within the US.

The studio's Seattle headquarters will be led by managing director Michel Bastien, who himself once acted as production lead of *Halo 2* and *Halo 3*. Moonshot's Boston office, meanwhile, will be headed up by Damián Isla, who worked on *Halo* games as AI and gameplay engineer lead.

www.moonshotgames.com

UNITED STATES DIGITAL DOMAIN FOUNDS FLORIDA GAMES TEAM

Digital Domain, the Hollywood effects house co-chaired by *Transformers* director Michael Bay, is to open a fully fledged games production studio.

Based in Florida, the new team will be founded using some \$80 million in investments – a mix of money from its own coffers and public funding. \$50m came from its new parent firm Wyndcrest Holdings, \$10m from local property development agencies, plus a \$20m grant from the state of Florida's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development.