

new

MODEL ARMY

MIKE SALMOND TALKS TO THE INDUSTRY VETERAN TRIP HAWKINS, ABOUT HIS COMPANY, 3DO, AND ITS ASSAULT ON THE BIG LEAGUE

The 3DO Company, founded by Trip Hawkins, in 1991, is becoming more and more of a big league player in the videogame world, which is not surprising seeing as Trip Hawkins also started Electronic Arts in 1982 (after a stint at Apple Computer in 1978 as one of its first marketing managers). Under Trip, EA rose to become one of the largest game production companies in the world. He's applying the same business acumen to 3DO.

Trip Hawkins is seen as quite an innovator within the games industry. Trip has been often quoted as the man behind the now widespread use of such terms as "producer" and "affiliated label" and was the first to publicly promote and give prominent credit to the creative talent behind the games. As a part of his series of innovations Hawkins also initiated the use of celebrities in the development and promotion of video games. His credits as a game designer include the first celebrity game, Doctor J and Larry Bird Go One on One, John Madden Football, Army Men, BattleTanx and High Heat Baseball. So it is with the acclaimed games such

as the Might and Magic and Army Men series that Trip Hawkins has built up the company of 3DO. It has literally doubled in size in the last three years as their game production level increases. The goal of 3DO, (according to Michael Mendheim, the creative director for Army Men) is to "Create tight, family based (or 'casual gamer') products with intelligent character development built around strong storylines, and plots" coupled with the rather unique (for the games industry) concept of delivering products on time.

3D MAX and 3DO

3DO has a large contingent of 3D Studio MAX users. MAX was chosen as a modeling tool for a variety of reasons. Art and Design director Amber Long says the biggest advantage is that MAX is affordable and also that it has a huge international user base. "We use 3D Studio MAX almost exclusively for in-game art as well as cinematics (pre-rendered cut scenes or plot introductions scenes). We primarily use 3D Studio MAX along with PhotoShop and Debabalizer (for the 2d work). However, we offer our art staff the flexibility to use whatever tools they feel most comfortable with." Having been in the games industry for about eight years

Amber points out that MAX does have its strengths and weaknesses, like any tool but that, "We find with 3D Studio MAX, we get the most bang for the buck."

MAX was an obvious choice for 3DO on the whole, because instead of training artists and modelers with acquired skills on a new product, it made sense to adapt MAX to the world of gaming. Amber admits that other applications may be more "robust, flexible or impressive", but that when it comes down to getting the job done, "3D Studio MAX offers the greatest (range)."

To minimize the strain on its employees 3DO have always been on the look out for anything

