

THE RAIL SIMULATOR NEWSLETTER

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

....and a happy New Year! So we draw a close to the year, but the development of Rail Simulator isn't over yet – but we are getting closer! A time to reflect on the year's activities and what have we accomplished to date? Well, Rail Simulator has managed to engage in its first public outings and featured at several games and simming events. We've been at the Leipzig Games Convention, Brussels Simware, Gameplay Holland, the Swedish celebration of 150 years of railways, the Barstow Rail & Craft Festival in the US and the Farnham and District Model show, Model World Brighton and the Scottish Train Show in the UK. We'd like to thank the various people who helped us at each of those shows – from EA and Microsoft who do it as their job, through to the UKTrainSim Live Team, 3D Train Stuff and Mats Abramson who all do it from the love of railways – without them none of those presentations would have been possible.

What have we shown you so far? All the major trains and the makings of their 3D models have been shared with the community, plus a few Inside Cab views, to give a taste of things to come. We've still got a few more to come next year. The first official screenshots went public at the Leipzig Games convention, and also for the first time video has been made available to download on our official website www.railsimulator.com Technical information has been given out in several articles relating to the World Editor tools and again video streamed across the internet to help illustrate the finer details of these powerful systems.

We have opened a North American forum and more news from across the Atlantic is sure to follow, with an announcement of our North American distribution partner expected early next year. Finally, registration to our website has now been implemented and grows every day! We plan to release an upgrade to the website next spring which will offer a host of new features.

Sabrina

CONTENT TEAM UPDATE!

The team behind Rail Simulator consists of numerous sub-teams; not only do we have coders and artists – but we have a dedicated Content team too. The Content (or designers) of Rail Simulator are responsible for creating the virtual world that the core routes reside in – and to do this they use the artists' 3D objects and the coders' heavy duty Tool kit. They stipulate the design of the gameplay, they were involved in all the research, and from that they build the levels down to some of the finest detail seen.

The Content team Lead is Andrew Jamison, he's been on this production from the concept and does a sterling job controlling the team schedule, monitoring progress, reviewing work done, maintaining quality and allocating tasks to each team member on a daily basis (and helps write/proof read articles :) AJ).

The team does change in size throughout the production of Rail Simulator, and whilst the biggest size (of 9) has now been and gone, the team is still a fair size at 6 people strong.

So what are they doing right now? Well as you can imagine, building the routes consists of a very large number of tasks – and right now they're working early mornings, late nights and even the odd weekend as part of the schedule to get them finished.

We can update you on tasks currently being worked on. In preparation for scenario creation the final critical tasks are being applied to the routes this week. These consist of the placement of fuel and freight loading points, portal placement (used in scenarios – we'll explain in a later article!) and ensuring that the track properties are exactly right. This last task is extremely important and although easily done with the very good feedback the tools provide, it is still a time consuming job for the team. Due to various reasons, the main one being the short length of the route, the Bath to Templecombe (Somerset and Dorset route) is the closest route to completion. Other than applying the final polish, route creation is complete so Scenario creation on this route is underway.

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CONTENT TEAM UPDATE!

Two of the most experienced members of the team are finishing the Scenario Critical tasks for all routes whilst the remaining members of the team apply the finishing touches on the remaining three routes which include; the placement of mileposts and speed signs, signal gantry placement to the modern routes, overhead wire gantry placement for the electrified routes, sound and animated objects placement is due to begin imminently too which will complete bringing the routes to life.

Of course all these tasks then have to be reviewed, checked and rechecked! As the team nears the end of route building we turn our attention to tweaking and polishing the routes. This will not properly start until the Alpha phase of the development of Rail Simulator – but for now some members of the team just can't help themselves from improving on little bits here and there!

This is but a snap shot of the Content Teams tasks - as you can imagine the team are working on other areas to ensure the routes are as good as they possibly can be for the end users (you!). For example a large task that still remains to be done is assigning detail levels to every asset in the game. This will allow the performance of the game to be adjusted so the game will run, and still look great, on as wide a range of PC's as possible. We want this game to look great across as wide a range of PCs as practical and we are doing all we can to ensure just that.

Scenario Creation across all routes will begin, in earnest, in the New Year. This is something the team are really looking forward to as creating these scenarios on the routes they have spent the last 6 months building will allow them to show off their work. The core game play being, debated, built and tweaked with the stunning back drops and built in interactive components will really spur the team on and put the cream on top of some great work.

So there's a lot more work for the Content Team to complete – but saying that – there's an awful lot of work that they have completed! It just can't be shown or publicised as Content work does not come as wholly completed objects such as the art team would produce. This team was one of the first around at the beginning of Rail Simulator – and they'll also be the one of the last, as they're so integral to the whole production and not just the development – so a round of applause for the content builders!

DUTCH GAMES SHOW!

On November 24th - 26th the Dutch Games Show was held in the Jaarbeurs district in Utrecht, and amongst the big names were the Dutch Train Sim community. On their stand they demonstrated Microsoft Train Simulator, Trainz 2006 and of course the eagerly awaited Dutch exclusive demo of Kuju's new Rail Simulator.



Rail Simulator is due for release in spring 2007, but already visitors could get a great image of how the development was coming along and what the possibilities were. In total 70.000 visitors paid a visit to the Train Simulator stand, many of the die-hard fans were curious about Rail Simulator and couldn't wait to get to the stand on the first day!



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DUTCH GAMES SHOW!



In general, people were impressed by the programme's graphical possibilities and very enthusiastic about the new features, like the working turntable, and the passengers boarding and leaving the train!



The Dutch community are biding their time before Rail Simulator hits the shops, knowing it will be worth the wait, and look back on a very successful demonstration!



NEXT MONTH & next year!

January will require our team to jump straight back into work and getting Rail Simulator nearer to the stage where we can start final testing. More news articles will follow on the website and the Demo build will take a few more roadtrips to give the train sim fans and public a chance to play before release.

2007 will be a big year for Rail Simulator, exciting times ahead!