

Lightning Fish Games

FOUNDED IN 2008 by industry veterans Simon Prytherch, Mike Montgomery and David Hunt, Lightning Fish specialises in creating motion-tracking technology titles aimed at the ever-expanding family gaming demographic.

What makes the Oxfordshire-based studio interesting is its impressive use of video content – a formula already mimicked by Ubisoft's *Just Dance*.

Lightning Fish's first game, the *NewU*

Fitness First was a statement of intent in what has fast become a crowded genre – but the upcoming sequel (which will no doubt make use of *Natal* and *Move*) will help cement its position as one of the UK's brightest independent studios.

And in championing the fitness and wellbeing genre, Lightning Fish has proven that a true indie can play rival to Nintendo and its hugely popular *Wii Fit* IP.



“ **The Xbox Indie Games Creator Community – which vets games pre-release – is what really shows how Microsoft has delivered on Live's promise.** ”

Xbox Live Indie Games

THE XBOX LIVE Indie Games service, which now plays host to over 1,000 titles, has afforded fledgling developers the opportunity to see their work appear on the most popular online console service alongside a wealth of big budget triple-A releases.

The channel provides a platform for games created using Microsoft's XNA toolset and managed runtime environment. In time it has helped

teams and individuals from all walks – including those outside of games development, even journalists – the opportunity to create games sold to real consumers for MS Points.

Sure, there are doubts about an 'indie ghetto' on the console and the usefulness of XNA, but it's the value of the Creator Community – which tests, reviews and vets games pre-release – that finally shows how Microsoft has delivered on Live's promise.


 XBOX LIVE
indie games

nDreams

BEING A START-UP company in games business can be a daunting thing. Established studios look down from on high in a market that can all too often lean favourably towards the instantly familiar. Around here you need to carve your name fast, and you need to carve it well.

nDreams has been showing very little fear since its founding in 2006. Developing and publishing where others fear to tread, the company is breaking ground in digital distribution and unexploited markets.

Founded by former SCI/Eidos creative director Patrick O'Lunaigh with a remit of focussing first and

foremost on digital gaming, the firm is currently best known for the world-first, genre-bending single-player alternative reality game for Playstation Home titled *Xi*. Over five million Home users have visited the *Xi* spaces so far.

But that's not all, it is launching Facebook games like *Spirit of Adventure* – billed as the 'first social networking soap opera' – and is even collaborating with Reebok and F1 star Lewis Hamilton on an ARG.

In an industry known for being at cutting edge of entertainment and its consumption, it is good to know that someone has their sights set firmly on the future.


 nDREAMS

EA Partners

NATURAL LAW DICTATES that complex systems are successful ones. EA gets this, and EA partners was born out of it.

An in-house co-publishing arm that distributes titles developed by third-party developers, it is helping independent studios who would otherwise be a rival to EA and its biggest franchises. Oh, and it's bringing in a pretty penny for EA in the process.

Crytek's *Crysis*, Valve's *Orange Box*, Epic Games' *Bulletstorm*. All these titles are co-published under the EA partners label. Recently, Insomniac Games also declared that it will be breaking away from their PS3-focused past to develop a multi-platform title via EAP as well.



EA Partners will also be publishing titles with the recently-founded Respawn

Entertainment, formed infamously by ex-Infinity Ward heads Vince Zampella and Jason West.

By condoning IP retention, independence, stable relationships and allowing studios to have a say in the marketing and publishing strategy behind their games, EAP's set-up is now being copied by the likes of Activision and THQ. But it's too late for them: the balance of power between publishers and developers has already shifted towards the latter, driven by the very deals EAP encourages.

Gaikai

CLOUD BASED GAMES that can be embed into any website, blog or browser and played from a single server farm? Sounds too good to be true. Nevertheless Dave Perry, the man behind upcoming streaming tech Gaikai, knows the industry, knows the technology and demoed *Modern Warfare*, *World of Warcraft*, *EVE*, *Spore*, *Mario Kart 64* and *Adobe Photoshop* all running in a simple Flash player to prove it.

Gaikai has already procured massive investment from big venture capital firms and tech investors like Benchmark Capital.

The proof will come in time, of course. And while the potential for cloud services to revolutionise gaming is as massive as the potential for it to fail, it is only with risky ventures that the greatest advancements are made. Which makes an ambitious firm like Gaikai one to closely watch.


 # GAIKAI