Web-based multiplayer game developer leverages Adobe® Gaming technologies to deliver rich, immersive 3D experiences to over a million players worldwide.

The goal of Maid Marian Entertainment Inc. is clear: Bring the same immersive 3D experience of retail, boxed massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) to the web browser. The company is dedicated to transforming the way massive multiplayer games are delivered. Games like Sherwood Dungeon and Marian’s World, which bring together an online community of like-minded players, are milestones in the journey. The Vancouver-based developer of next-generation, web-based multiplayer games uses Adobe Gaming technologies to create vivid games for players eager to interact with and challenge players near and far.

Sherwood Dungeon is Maid Marian’s most popular MMORPG, where players from around the world plunge into 3D worlds delivered to their web browsers. Independent game developer and Maid Marian Entertainment CEO and Founder Gene Endrody launched the game eight years ago using Adobe Shockwave® and releases frequent updates to keep the game fresh and retain users. Recently Sherwood Dungeon made the transition from Shockwave to Adobe Gaming technologies, including Adobe Flash Professional, for ongoing game development and upgrades.

“When we first developed the game, Adobe Shockwave was more than capable of meeting our needs,” says Endrody. “But when Adobe added hardware-accelerated support for 3D graphics within Adobe Flash Player, combined with its 98% desktop browser penetration rate, the progression to Flash technology made perfect sense. Adobe has shown that it takes care of its developers by providing a migration path to modern technology to help increase the reach of games and apps and deliver a richer experience.”
The transition from Shockwave to Flash Player has been a smooth one for Endrody. "As a Shockwave 3D developer, I was relieved to learn that most features operated similarly in Adobe Flash Professional when combined with Flare3D, and functions and properties were in predictable locations," he says. "My concerns about animation and animation blending were quickly alleviated when Shockwave code ported easily. I wholeheartedly recommend Adobe Flash Professional and Flare3D for developers with Shockwave 3D experience."

The decision to go with Flash technology and Flare3D was not taken lightly, however. "Sherwood Dungeon is a long-running game so it was important to choose a robust platform that would grow with us and help us remain current and viable. Shockwave has been extremely reliable. Flash technology, Flare3D, and Adobe ActionScript® 3 offer a similarly stable platform to continue to evolve Sherwood Dungeon in the coming years."

Defending one's honor

One of the world’s most popular 3D browser-based MMORPGs, Sherwood Dungeon is enjoyed by up to 3,000 social gamers simultaneously and more than one million unique players globally each month, which is attributed in part to the widespread use of Flash Player. "The ubiquity of Adobe Flash Player means that Sherwood Dungeon players no longer need to install a plug-in or register to play the game," notes Endrody. "Additionally, our audience can now grow exponentially since many potential distribution partners have game portals that only support Flash technology."

The free-to-play game is supported by the sale of virtual pets and mounts. Imagine a pet dragon, horse, or wolf that you can summon to ride, fight beside you, or even transform yourself into. Sherwood Dungeon is also supported by ads, generating more than six million ad impressions monthly. In addition to the game’s growing popularity and profitability, Sherwood Dungeon and Endrody are making waves in the online gaming industry. Sherwood Dungeon is the winner of New Media BC’s PopVox 2007 awards for Best Game and Best of British Columbia and currently enjoys a five-star rating in the Google Chrome Web Store.

The growing community of Sherwood Dungeon players can engage in avatar-based chat while exploring the game’s ten persistent, enchanting, treacherous online islands. After crossing the bridge into Sherwood Castle, players are happy to see Lady Marrian, who stands ready to offer special weapons, shields, and helmets for quests completed in the dungeons below or to begin the Prophecy of Bane quest series. Combating monsters in hundreds of dungeon levels filled with intense danger isn’t easy. Sherwood Dungeon action combat requires skill, timing, patience, and forethought.
Digital arts mastery

In his never-ending development of Sherwood Dungeon, Endrody uses Adobe Gaming technologies to captivate and grow his online gaming audience. Endrody is well-versed in blending art and technology to entertain and even instruct. As former department head at the Center for Digital Imaging and Sound, now called the Art Institute of Vancouver, Endrody designed the Digital Arts Masters Program and was awarded an Honorary Diploma by the faculty in 1998. He also worked as an instructor and program head in the British Columbia Institute of Technology’s New Media Centre of Excellence, where he helped design the Digital Animation Program.

Today, Endrody uses Adobe Gaming technologies for everything from digital animation and real-time physics simulation to dynamic time-of-day lighting. Adobe Flash Professional exposes Endrody to many next-generation 3D graphic features. The Stage3D APIs in Adobe Flash Player and Adobe AIR offer a fully hardware-accelerated architecture that brings high impact visuals across Sherwood Dungeon player desktop browsers. Endrody uses the open source editor Flash Develop along with the Adobe Flex® SDK, which allows developers to compile ActionScript projects via the command line or the IDE of their choice. He uses Adobe Premiere Elements to create marketing materials from the game including a demo reel and video.

Revolutionizing casual and hardcore gaming

Endrody uses Flare3D and Stage3D extensively in game development. “Flare3D provides an excellent, high-performance 3D engine that helps me manage 3D assets and rich Stage3D functionality at a higher level,” he says. Endrody takes advantage of the Flare3D art pipeline and integration with 3D modeling software. He also appreciates the ability to switch between per-vertex and sampled lighting modes at runtime for targeting players with older graphics cards.

The most important Flare3D feature to Endrody is raw 3D rendering performance, particularly for skinned characters. “In an MMO there are often many monsters and avatars that need to be displayed simultaneously,” he says. “Flare3D can render large numbers of skinned characters on the GPU, which is crucial for Sherwood Dungeon.”

More than anything, Endrody is excited about new possibilities. “Marrying the ubiquity of the Adobe Flash Player with the GPU-accelerated graphics of Stage3D elevates the potential of browser-based games. This is basically what we’ve always been trying to do with Sherwood Dungeon: take on the big publishers with something small, independent, and disruptive.”

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Maid Marian Entertainment Inc.
The enticing visuals offered by Stage3D are reaching more and more desktop browsers and social gamers. “Through Facebook and other game portals, Adobe Flash technology has revolutionized casual gaming, helping to migrate audiences to the web and becoming the de-facto standard for social gaming,” says Endrody. “With Stage3D, Flash Player offers the potential of revolutionizing hardcore gaming in exactly the same way.”

Looking ahead, Endrody envisions using Adobe AIR to release Sherwood Dungeon on iOS and Android™ devices by using largely the same code base. Although Maid Marian Entertainment primarily develops browser-based games for PC and Mac computers, ActionScript 3 offers Endrody access to the mobile device market without having to start from scratch.

For more information
www.adobe.com/go/gaming