Games and more: developed in Saxony-Anhalt

07.06.2018

The developers of tomorrow gather in the Harz

God of War, Far Cry or FIFA 18 – the variety of PC and console games is enormous. The creators of tomorrow, who transform their ideas into inspiring concepts and animations, come from Saxony-Anhalt. At Harz University of Applied Sciences in Wernigerode, a competence centre for a variety of media and game concepts is developing. And it will be there to experience at the ADD ON conference, which is taking place for the second time on 16 and 17 June. A developer conference organised by the students which stands out in the German games industry with top-class speakers.

The ADD ON conference in Wernigerode has been conceived as a Game Developer Network. Held successfully for the first time as an annual project as part of the degree course in 2017, this year's conference is purely voluntary. "We think the format is so cool and it offers us great opportunities, so we've decided to stay tuned", says Johanna Daher, student and team leader, explaining her commitment. And her commitment is being rewarded.

The list of speakers impresses again this year: David Wessman, who has worked on the Star Wars: X-Wing series at Lucas Arts, is expectes as a guest. Or Dr. Mata Haggis, who was involved in well-known titles like "Burnout Paradise" and "Aliens Vs. Predator". Tim Schwartmann (aka Tim Latka) and Lukas Schmandt (aka Idealz) of the eSports-Team of Bundesliga Club FC Schalke 04 are among the world's best FIFA players and are true stars of the scene. Also Ubisoft Blue Byte is back with a speaker and as a sponsor. Supporters include Nintendo and Harz Escape from Wernigerode. New partners are the Braunschweig Virtual Lounge, the publisher 2tainment and the startup Gamebook.io from Saxony-Anhalt.

At Open Pitches, developers receive feedback on their game ideas from the experts. The "Post Mortem" format gives students the opportunity to present the projects they have completed. In addition to the practically-oriented presentations, there are games corners for trying out the games developed in Wernigerode, an after-show party and plenty of time for personal discussions. For information, tickets and the programme, visit addon.hs-harz.de.

"With the conference, we are creating an important link to the practical level," says Dominik Wilhelm, Professor of Media Informatics, Applied Game Concepts and Applied Games, highlighting the significance of the event. "As an alternative to international conferences, we are bringing the experts to the Harz region and therefore creating an effective personal networking platform for the students, interested visitors, developers and companies."

The personal dimension is also the special attribute of the masters degree in "Media and Game Design" in Wernigerode. The students – of whom there are currently around 80 – form real teams with the professors, working closely together on a project-related basis, much like the reality in a studio or an agency. The contents to be conveyed are aligned as individually as possible to the interests of the students and the current developments on the market. In terms of content, the areas of Game & Interaction, Web & Crossmedia, Film & Audio and Software & Data enable individual specialisations according to the students' abilities and preferences.

From the idea to the implementation – award-winning projects

To allow them to implement their concepts in full, the necessary technology is available to the students in Wernigerode around the clock. A professional film studio, a recording studio with a speech booth and a motion capture lab turn ideas into digital reality. On the master's degree programme, teams of five to eight individuals, consisting of media designers, computer scientists, sociologists, biologists, journalists and geologists develop their projects. The games industry, which until a few years ago was a genuine "lateral entrant" industry, benefits from this diversity of experience. The varying previous knowledge of the master students also ensures a very lively and practical project development in Wernigerode. Project management and production are as much a part of the teamwork as the technical realisation.

That this approach works is demonstrated by this year's German Computer Game Prize. The "nGlow" project by students from Harz University of Applied Sciences achieved third place in the "Young Talent Award Concept" Category. "This is a reward and an incentive at the same time – and in the fourth year of the degree programme", enthuses Wilhelm, discussing the performance of his team.

Sector-spanning developments from Wernigerode

Media and game concepts are used in a range of different industries. "Serious games", which convey education and skills through playful methods on an interactive and vivid basis, are in particularly high demand. A current project at Harz University of Applied Sciences is addressing the topic of sustainability. In cooperation with business psychologists and environmental technology, an interactive smartphone game has been developed which focuses on the topic of water. As an imaginary prototype, an interactive nature adventure trail has been created in the nearby Brocken region. On a game basis, users get to learn how changes in the ecosystem have a long-term effect. In the form of a combination between virtual worlds and stationary experiences at an authentic place, the concept can be adapted to further topics and locations. "In terms of the practical implementation, we are still looking for sponsors to support this model project," explains Wilhelm.

Regarding the internationalisation, Wilhelm is using his contacts to Japan, where he worked in game development for several years. In cooperation with the Tokyo University of Technology, the "Distributed Game Development" course has been launched. As a result, two teams have developed two games relating to the German-Japanese relationship in the form of a collaborative inter-cultural project. They are to be presented at the Tokyo Game Show.

For more information about the bachelor's degree programme in Media Informatics as well as the master's degree programme in Media and Game Design, visit www.hs-harz.de/studium.

07.06.2018

Add page

🐦 in ✉ ⓖ   📄 🖨