

Esophers limited

The first 3D game developers of Bangladesh

Remember the first time you heard about Dhaka Racing- the first 3D game of Bangladesh? It felt like touching a milestone, which no one so far had reached! For those of you who are still in the dark, here's a literary view of the game: bored of the regular NFS games? Here's a special treat for you, Sheraton and Ramna Park Area, Chandrima Garden, Zia International Airport Runway and the special Sylhet track. Dhaka Racing also has 8 different vehicles to choose from, interestingly three of which are Rickshaw, Van and CNG Baby Taxi. Ahh! The essence of deshi tracks! Dash right on to the airport with a CNG Cruising through the Sangsad Bhaban area! According to eSophers, "Dhaka Racing was developed not as a commercial product but as a test platform to exercise our programming and 3D modeling skills. Now, after getting such a huge response from the computer world, we planned to present Bangladesh a product that will be comparable at the international level." Good job indeed eSophers! Starting out with two brainiacs, they reached a team of 5 geniuses while creating Dhaka Racing. Well, we here at RS, got the chance to have a tête-à-tête with one of the masterminds behind the game, Mr. Ashik.

RS: Is it available in the common markets? We haven't noticed it in the market recently however.

Ashik: Well, no it is not available in the market. After we failed to stop the piracy of the demo version (although it turned out to be a benefit for us), we thought it should only be available through Internet dealings. You can easily order Dhaka Racing online. We have already sold around 4000 packages. It costs about 200 Tk per game. However, it is still present in the market but in a pirated form. So after the demo piracy we decided to protect the game. Unless the buyer calls us and asks us for the authorisation code, they cannot play it.

RS: How difficult was it to create Dhaka Racing?

Ashik: It was very difficult initially, since it wasn't possible for our parents to fully support

us, moreover when we didn't know the game response of the players. Adnan and me soon found out that there were hardly any books on game programming available in town. While there would be a whole team of programmers developing different sections of the game, all we had as a sponsor, was our passion for this work. There were the expenses of downloading programming software; moreover, we had our studios at that time. After all that, the media gave us a boost, and soon we were awarded the best Software of Bangladesh. On hearing of about us, the President himself wished to meet us to congratulate us. So yes it was a big boost for us.

RS: Any difficulties while shooting for the road scenes?

Ashik: Well, yes! There is no exact road map of Dhaka (which gives us the exact measurements of the Road distances), so we had to go to Manik Mia Avenue, to actually measure the road by counting each step we move in a road. We took several pictures, and all this measuring caught the suspicious eyes of the police, who stopped us and asked us what we were doing. It took some time for us to explain to him that we were shooting for a game. Back then the common people did not quite know what a game was. Haha! He probably thought we were going to bomb the place, by the look on his face! We were also mistaken for journalists while we were shooting Manik Mia Avenue during the National Election Day, and consequently were forcibly sweet-treated at the local camp!

RS: We have noticed in your eSophers website, that you are working on a new game called Bangladesh 71. Please tell us about it.

Ashik: Well, Bangladesh 71 is a different kind of game related mainly to the 1971 Liberation war. At first when we created Dhaka Racing, we used a commercial game development program, since we didn't know what the public response would be like. So in Bangladesh 71, we used the Game Engine, which requires a lot of programming. So after a year and a half, we have finally finished the main

Game Engine, and now you can easily download the demo from our website. There are four levels in the game, of which level one is available as a demo online. Now, we are awaiting a good sponsor, after we get the sponsorship, we would release the full version in the market. As far as Dhaka Racing was concerned, we did not have any sponsorship, so we are yet to find one for Bangladesh 71. True that we had a huge response on Dhaka Racing, which cost around 200Tk, but in case of Bangladesh 71, we would definitely sell it for a higher price, around 500Tk, because of the difficulty of the programming and the amount of expertise needed. It is a reasonable cost, since abroad, an authentic game costs around 40- 50 dollars, which amounts 2000Tk or more. So we are not launching, the game just as yet.

RS: Please tell us about your other works.

Ashik: Our current project is mainly a promotion of the Gold Leaf cigarette. British American Tobacco Company has already started the event, where all the smokers (mainly outside main city), can play a game and win prizes. Mainly, the whole set-up was firstly in a bus, where we set up computers, and an online game. We programmed the whole game and have thought about rearranging the event, so in the second part, we put up projectors and there were six split-screen projections. In this case we didn't need the computers.

RS: Last time you mentioned the prospects of selling the game abroad. Have you gone that far?

Ashik: No we couldn't market the game abroad. We wanted to enter the foreign market, but since we all got busy with other works, we couldn't market it the way we should have.

RS: Have you thought about the prospects of setting up a particular gaming course in Bangladesh?

Ashik: Yes we have thought about it. Basically at first, none of the professors knew much about game programming. So what we did at that time, we went to buy books on the programming codes in Nilkhet, but they didn't

have the required books. Later on when Dhaka Racing became successful, you can now actually find books in Nilkhet dedicated solely to gaming. As far as I know there is a course in Dhaka University, where they teach the Game programming language. It was there in North South University as credits, and now it also touched DU. So yes, Bangladesh has come pretty far! We have a plan to create game studio. We would like to collaborate jointly with the Big Game companies of similar profile as PS4 developers. They can actually work with us and reduce the game development cost to more than half, if they make a branch here.

RS: Anything else you want to add?

Ashik: Erm... right now our company has also embarked on its first international joint venture assignment by teaming up with Sonolite, an Indian software company to develop Kolkata Racing. The game would include 5 tracks: Victoria Memorial, Rabindra Sarovar, Eden Garden, Nicco Park, and Race Course Tracks. The Calcutta market is quite a good one and we hope to make it commercially available there if every prospect looks good. We are also working on creating mobile games and are collaborating with the phone dealers now. We are also working on a video game with a game company and hopefully the mobile game would have a nice prospect. Lastly, the eSophers team likes to thank all those who worked with us and helped us to propel us to where we are now. Thanks also go to the thousands who bought our game and enjoyed it.

RS: Thanks Mr. Ashik!

As for Dhaka Racing, the pioneers of the gaming industry in our country have, evidently made their mark. We hope that eSophers will continue to make us proud and introduce new gaming technology in Bangladesh, and we would like to wish it the very best in life. As for our readers, be sure to check out the Bangladesh-71 demo version. You can download it from www.dhakaracing.com. Till the next game...ciao!

By Shamma Raghiv

Rocklink



THERE is an unwritten rule that any show in which the host wears a hoodie, black sunglasses and stands in a classic reclining slant and says,

"YO people, welcome to Bangla-Link ROCK LINK- the coolest place for metal in town, I am Miraz, yo welcome"

is heading for absolute disaster. However rules always have exceptions and this is the one. Yes, ROCK LINK- the first ever show dedicated entirely to underground metal bands.

Rock link, hosted by Miraz of Miles, Shumon of Aurthoin and Arafat of Watson Brothers is shown weekly in ATN Bangla at obscure time such as 12:30 a.m Thursday (Why in the world do they do that?). The show covers everything and anything that is happening in the underground music scenes, from band interviews or rather band presentations to rock news. Unlike the normal boring interviews, in Rock Link, the band presents themselves in classic VH1 style- sitting

in a sofa in an empty room and basically talking about who they are. While this is cool if you really want to know about underground bands, the best part of the show is obviously the music videos. Most of the videos are of underground bands. You would expect them to be really well... 'khet'. Actually they are pretty cool and professionally done. Last Thursday I saw Nemesis and Jatishor's vids and although I am not a great fan of their music, I liked what I saw, and this meant I also kinda liked their song. You know the old drill Good Video=Good Song.

The other highlights of the show are the underground metal news, read out (or rather said out) by Watson Brother's drummer Arafat. News section consists of talking about new albums, upcoming albums, potential albums and blah blah blah. However, the show is not limited to this only. In one episode you are taken to Singapore to visit the famous Davis Guitar Shop, where Shumon Bhai was supposed to buy a base guitar. It does sound a bit pointless, but the guitar shop was so awesome! (Oh and if you don't know what the Davis Guitar Shop is, ask any of your local guitar freaks)

Over all the show cannot be called very informative- if you think band news is anything but informative, but it's a fun show. The producers tried to make the show look real cool, with the presenters talking in cool language, and lots of yo's. Sure it gets on your nerves a bit, they way they talk and under your breath you are forced to say- 'wannabe'...but is there any other underground shows in Bangladesh? Nope. And if you cut out the cool parts and hear with the excessive jabbering about some dude stealing Arafat's car, or whether John, Black's vocalist had dandruff on his hair or not, this is a good show. Enjoyable. Musical. Yeah a bit short of only 20 minutes- but the music and videos makes up for it. SO, YO YO YO Watch Rock Link.

By Reggie

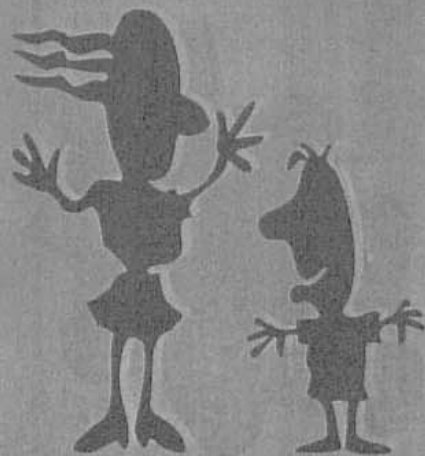
Teen central
Craving popularity

'SHE is so popular! What I wouldn't do to be in her place.' Even if pride prevents a regular teen from really voicing out such a statement, it's always there at the back of her head. Its good, even great to set goals for yourself, to be 'inspired' by another to do better or achieve something, but the problem here is that the 'qualities' which make one popular among teens are very rarely qualities.

This 'she' might be a popularity icon, for her looks, the number of boyfriends she has (or had, or has the potential of having in future), the number of piercing she has, the number of colours that she has dyed her hair during the 13 years of her life. Yes these traits are all rather astounding, but not exactly in a good way. So it is rather pathetic that another follows up in this girl's footsteps just to get where she is, to have other people know her, to be popular. But then again if it works and the 'wannabe' person reaches her goal, then she is 'successful', or is she?

The problem here basically lies in the core of this 'teen society'. Our priorities, opinions, judgments have all become rather shrouded by things which don't really matter.

We envy them without truly identifying their qualities, we imitate them knowing not what it is that we are imitating. We only know 'why', because 'her' life is a probably a guideline reaching the glory of popularity. In the process we lose ourselves in the quagmire of confusion, messed up decisions, the race for things that have no meaning or significance.



It is important to know exactly what it is that we want for ourselves and what we are willing to sacrifice to get that. Being up to date with your studies and extra curriculum might brand you as a goody-two-shoe, but it might do great things for your future. Selfless acts that help others will probably go unnoticed but it will definitely make you feel good about yourself. So we have to differentiate between which seem to matter and those that really do and take our decisions accordingly, about what to become who to idolize and what qualities, real qualities we should aspire for. If every individual takes their own decisions to preserve their originality maybe the definition of popularity as we know it today will change for the better.

By Midnight Maiden