Twitter Thread by Dan Ginsburg



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The announcement of a new Perfect Dark has reminded me of a good story from my time at ATI. It was 2005 and I was in the 3D Application Research Group. The team which included @shaderwrangler @ChrisOat @mirror2mask @pixelmaven was working on the "Ruby: The Assassin" demo for

the launch of the ATI X1800. The ATI X1800 was significantly delayed (that's a great story too about a crazy hardware bug, but someone else who knows the details better should tell that one) and Microsoft was about to show the Xbox 360 for the first time at E3 2005. They were

planning to show Perfect Dark Zero, but apparently it was delayed. ATI had made the Xenos GPU for the X360 and Microsoft got wind of the new Ruby demo. It was a female character who vaguely resembled Joanna Dark so they asked us if we could port our demo to run on the Xbox 360

in time for E3. If memory serves, E3 was about three weeks away, which was insane. Our managers told us MS were offering each of us on the team $5,000 each if we were able to pull it off. This was a rare kind of incentive to get for us and I was really excited.

Anyway, we got pre-release dev kits which were actually Mac Pros with Radeon 9600 I believe. The first thing we had to do was get it all to build and run. The hard part there was dealing with PPC/endianess issues, but fortunately we had a lot of experience with that from porting

our engine to OSX (before the x86 transition). I was responsible for porting our shader/materialsystem. I vaguely recall having to do some hacks to chunk up draws that had too many triangles due to some limit on the

dev kits. Mostly it wasn't too bad, MS tools were already excellent at this point. We finally got a real Xbox 360 dev kit which was mounted on a plastic board which Dave Gosselin (our team lead) had in his cube. The thing that stands out most (aside from the

fear that it might stop working and then we were screwed because we were told so few of these were in existence - the number I recall was two?) was seeing Xbox 360 PIX for the first time. We had our own GPU tools and we'd never seen anything so powerful.

Most of the port details are now a blur, but we managed to get it running and running fast. I believe @cal3d got on a plane for E3 2005 with the demo. We heard about a rickety setup at the booth and the risk that if the hardware didn't work there was no backup.

But it did work - the demo was shown and we were all super proud. It was really a fun project. I wish I remembered more of the tech details, it's all a blur now, maybe some others can fill in some details.

Oh, right, and here's the demo: https://t.co/LuIKcDvsik