

EUTECHNYX - DEPENDING ON INDEPENDENCE

Darren Jobling has just gotten off a call from a courting venture capital guy – it's the third this month and they all seem to go about the same way. "We tell them we're of course always interested in investment in the company, but we're not really looking to cash out," says the 42 year old co-owner of Eutechnyx, "and that's just not what they tend to be looking for, so we generally just end it there."

Brian Jobling – CEO/owner, founder of the company 21 years ago and brother of Darren – isn't bothered. "I think independence is the life blood of the company," he says, his voice reflecting a sort of quiet intensity, "we get to choose which products we develop and which we don't, whereas if we were owned by a large corporation, we'd be making what the marketing department thought would be best for the company. And it's really hard to get the same kind of buzz about what you're doing when that's the case."

Eutechnyx is nothing if not equally varied and buzzing with its project roster at the moment. There's the just-released arcade style driving game *Ferrari Challenge* (System 3/Activision Blizzard), *Ride to Hell*, a character-based stomp through late-60's biker gangs (Deep Silver/Koch Media), and an MMO, about which the Joblings remain fairly tight-lipped but the whole company is clearly excited. There's also a new character-driven game in the pre-production stage, with the newly-appointed Director of North America, Todd Eckert, (producer of the award-winning film *Control*) eliciting the services of friends from years in the film industry to give it stylistic edge and film-level detail.

Eutechnyx is also opening its first studio in the US – a decision linked to passion more than anything else. "There are some incredibly talented people over here producing some great games," explains Brian. "With our technology and their passion for gaming, I think we have the perfect combination to produce some of the best games ever, while getting more deeply involved in the US market, which remains the most important in the world."

For several years Eutechnyx was positioned as purely a driving game developer, which isn't a terrible thing when the result is Sony selecting the company to create the first industry-only demo showing off the PS3's capabilities for the Tokyo Game Show. That was in 2006. But Eutechnyx is much more about pushing the possibilities of what independent games can be in general. While the company is the only independent developer capable of developing multiple format next gen racing games, Todd is particularly excited about *Ride to Hell* and the upcoming original IP work.

"The approach Eutechnyx has taken towards vehicle physics is a pretty good indication of what you can expect from everything else we're doing," he explains. "The guys dedicated themselves to making the most realistic cars in the world – and

I think they achieved that goal. Even if you're not an auto nut you're captivated by the sheer elegance of the design and unbeatable level of detail. When you take the same quality approach with characters, which is where we are right now, you're into industry-changing possibilities and that's really why I'm here."

Augmenting the driving reputation of Eutechnyx' games to include deep character development is not without some risk. The comfort zone of creating games in one specific genre – a proven genre at that – has allowed the company to excel and its reputation to grow in a truly global sense. But as Brian explains, taking risks is exactly what Eutechnyx is about.

"With the character game we are developing, we already knew we could produce the driving elements of that product, so it means that when we actually do our product planning we focus our efforts in technology on the things that are high risk. Motion capture and facial animation are incredibly high risk in this, as well as the fight scenes, because it's something that Eutechnyx wasn't known for before. So what it meant is we were able to spend all our pre-production time on these high risk elements knowing full well that if another developer had tried to do exactly the same thing they would have ended up with the driving, the vehicle dynamics and the AI being high risk. We've already got that so we were able to focus on elements that were solely new technology to Eutechnyx and hopefully, because there are no legacy products in the past that we've modified, it means that we're basically able to use the latest technology and go for the latest look on all the new features we put in."

If Eutechnyx wasn't independently owned and managed, it would likely be impossible for the company to be embracing as many business opportunities as it currently is. But for this company, the process is equal parts response and definition of where the industry is headed.

"I definitely think it feels like we've been working 20 years to get to this point," says Darren, "because the options that exist for an independent game development company at this stage are almost limitless. There's new access to finance, various distribution methods – if you wanted to you could take the games direct to the public at this point. I think basically the market for content creators is going to go crazy."

Brian agrees. "At the end of the day it's going to be the customer who decides what's important, and with online mass market games we'll be going directly to the customer and the they will tell us what they like and what they don't like and that to us is the ultimate focus group test. It means that you'll be able to get live feedback from the people who are playing the game – that's what it's going to be for the next 5 to 6 years."

Whether the future brings a brave new online reality, continues in the console vein or, as is most likely, embodies a combination of both, Eutechnyx will be at the forefront of technological development, trying to do things that haven't been done

before. It's what keeps the process of developing games fun and fresh, which is the main reason the more than 200 people around the world who work for the company do what they do.