Interview with N-Fusion Interactive

Joe Parisi

When the original Deus Ex was launched on PC in 2000, it was a pinnacle of choice in game design. Stealth, subterfuge, all-out assault; the gamer could tackle the challenges presented in almost any way they wished. Fast-forward to 2011, and Deus Ex: Human Revolution maintained that design philosophy, bringing the much-loved Deus Ex experience to a new generation of PC and console gamers, with high-definition visuals, and an incredibly immersive soundscape.

Deus Ex: The Fall had a big mandate: To bring the authentic Deus Ex experience intact to mobile devices, maintaining the top-quality graphics and cinematic audio experience created in the console game. Using Wwise as a technology backbone, and some great sound design skills, N-Fusion Interactive met and surpassed that goal. We talked with Joe Parisi, Audio Director and Producer on Deus Ex: The Fall, about using Wwise to tackle their audio design challenges head-on.

Background

Can you give us a bit of your background before you started working on this game?

Joe Parisi: I went to school at Berklee College of Music in Boston and received a dual major in Music Production & Engineering and Music Business. As college neared its end, I found myself spending all my free time either gaming or reading about games instead of scouring Billboard or the like. I made the decision to try and break into games and do some freelance work with local musicians I landed an internship at N-Fusion Interactive. Six months later I was hired and worked my way up to being the Audio Director and also a Producer. I’ve been here for almost 5 years now.

Is Deus Ex: The Fall a mobile port or adaptation of Deus Ex: Human Revolution?

Deus Ex: The Fall is a completely new entry into the legendary Deus Ex franchise for mobile devices that takes place during the six months that Human Revolution’s main character Adam Jensen is hospitalized. It follows Ben Saxon, a former member of the Tyrants (antagonists from Human Revolution) on his journey for revenge, justice, or both against his former mercenary group!
The game aims to take the high quality gaming experience set forth in DX:HR for consoles and PC and bring it to the mobile platform. We’ve taken great care to make sure we respect the franchise and the quality bar set by the most recent game developed by Eidos Montreal. Wanting to reach that quality bar was one of the reasons we chose to go with Wwise.

Production

**Why did you decide to use Wwise?**

When developing mobile games, audio seems to be severely sacrificed in order to improve performance and this was something I wasn’t willing to do with a franchise as respected as Deus Ex. Besides using Wwise in the past and being familiar with the engine so I could jump right in, the main reason we chose Wwise was so that we could get that AAA game audio and workflow without sacrificing performance. Wwise’s ability to quickly iterate on audio without having to go through the whole pipeline again, independent of programmers, and its awesome profiling abilities are what really sell it for us.

**Can you talk about performance and stability of Wwise for iOS?**

Wwise performance was outstanding! Wwise has been as stable as we could hope for. We’ve had no issues with crashing or instability at all. When we needed to reduce settings for lower end devices without affecting higher end devices we were able to do so before lunch! Very straightforward and easy.

You had previous experiences with Wwise on the main consoles for other titles, how did find the experience of using Wwise on iOS?

We’ve found the experience of using Wwise on iOS to be basically identical to consoles, which was really desirable. It’s just another platform, no special conditions (that we ran into), and that’s what we were looking for. If it worked in the editor, it worked on an iPad!

**Can you talk of your experience with the support from Audiokinetic?**

Support might be our favorite aspect of using Wwise and working with Audiokinetic. Responses have been unnaturally prompt and our contacts seem genuinely interested in helping us solve the few problems we’ve had. They’ve been knowledgeable and patient. We can’t say enough about Audiokinetic support!
Now that game developers need high quality production values to stand out in the handheld market, can you comment on Wwise as a catalyst in achieving this?

Well, we are hoping to raise the bar for mobile gaming, and Wwise has been integral to achieving that. The mobile market’s budgets and timelines are drastically low compared to console and PC and in order to reach the quality we were shooting for without sucking up valuable resources and time, Wwise was essential in letting me take the audio as far as I have been able to.

Any favourite Wwise features you’d like to mention?

My favorite feature by far is the profiler. Whenever there is a problem, the profiler is there to tell me where the issue is. I even use it to debug non-audio issues for other co-workers, it’s that awesome.

Anything you’d like to add?

Wwise makes my job awesome and I look forward to being able to use it on future projects.

Joe Parisi
N-FUSION INTERACTIVE
Audio Director/Producer

Sound Design

What audio challenges did the iOS platform bring to your sound design vision?

Limited Streaming! Limited voices! Limited everything! Using Wwise’s music system I was able to recreate the interactive music system from Human Revolution while only using one stream for the vast majority of gameplay. Using the priority and distance systems, I could really fill these huge scenes with detailed locational audio while only using a few physical voices and sending the rest virtual. SoundBanks are easy to manage making memory optimization a breeze. The most important part of all this, is that it worked the first time and took me barely any time to implement with little to no programmer support. (I like having control! :-) )