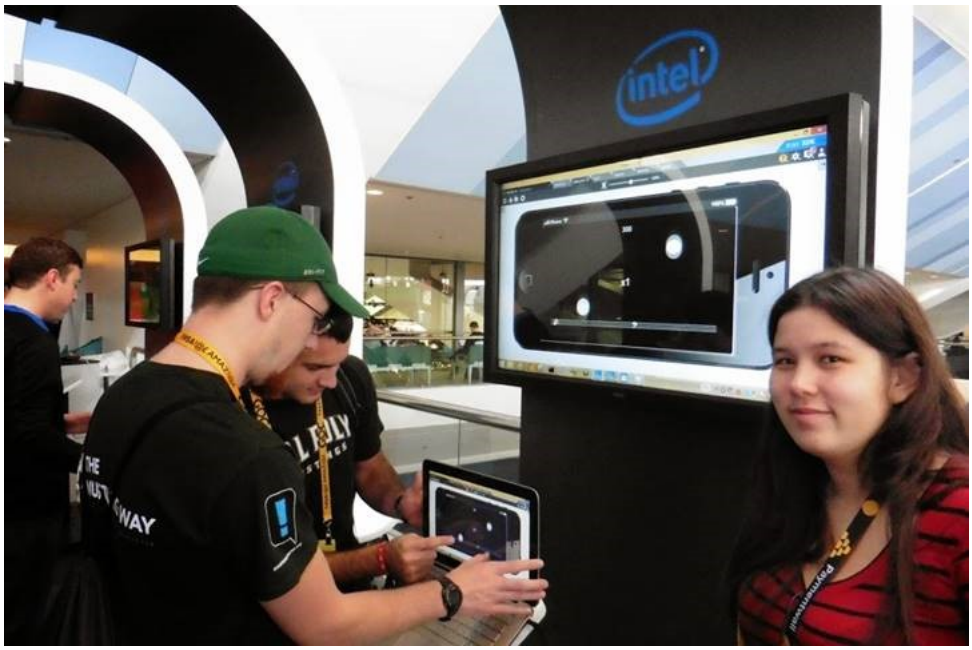
CalPoly Pre-GDC XDK Gamejam*

Submitted by Brad Hill (Intel) (https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/en-us/user/781024) on March 16, 2015

*Side note for the uninitiated: hackathon is an overarching term for any development 'jam session' – codefest refers to a software-creating subset of hackathons – gamejams are codefests where the projects are games.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/98/c8/1group.jpg)

In the narrow time frame of 24 hours, 37 students from CalPoly made some of the best games I've seen come out of a hackathon. Needing less guidance than most, these highly-motivated participants flexed their game dev muscles and learned new tools; using the Intel XDK they were able to play their games on mobile devices almost immediately as well as allowing us to demo their games at the Game Developer Conference just a few days later.



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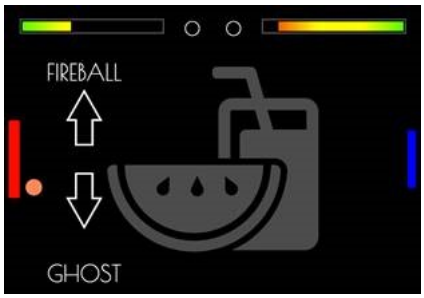
At most of our student hackathons we have a larger number of mentors, providing constant assistance and tutorials. The grasp of design concepts (such as proper scope for the duration, which many people have difficulty understanding) was a testament to the quality of the CalPoly Game Development club and the teaching of Foaad Khosmood, President of Global Game Jam (/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/C:/Users/rbhill/Desktop/globalgamejam.org) (and former Intel employee). This time, after

the initial talk about HTML5/Javascript game development using the XDK, the students got moving fast. The only Intel representatives aside from myself were Peter Morgan (who took most of the pictures) and Rakshith Krishnappa, XDK expert.

Games Made at the Jam

The games are all viewable, downloadable, and playable at http://users.csc.calpoly.edu/~foaad/IntelXDKJam/ (https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/http://users.csc.calpoly.edu/~foaad/IntelXDKJam/)



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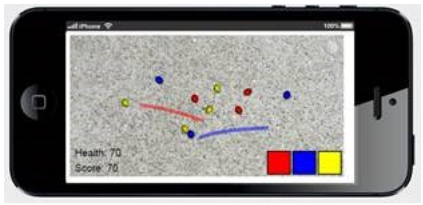
Juicy Pong

by Thomas Steinke, Elliot Fiske, & Tyler Mau

Juicy Pong is a game that takes the simple idea of Pong and makes it more fun than Fro-Yo.



(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/4f/69/4chalkblock.jpg)

Chalk Block

by Peter Godkin and Joel Anton

Prevent the bugs from reaching you by blocking their path with colored lines that match their colors!

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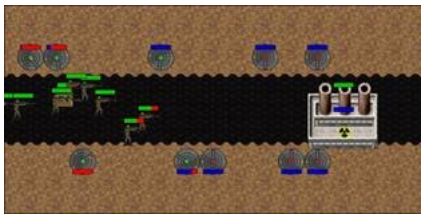
Buzzword Bingo

by Noah Negrey and Brian Quezada

Buzzword Bingo allows you to play bingo with the latest tech buzzwords, by creating your own boards that utilize buzzwords and even allowing you to take photos of the words you find.



(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/ad/6e/6power.jpg)

Power Towers

by Cody Kitchener

Get power to the towers or they will be able to protect you

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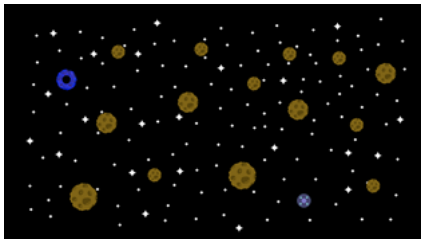
Meditation Bump

by Phyllis Douglas, Andrew Wang, Andrew Elliott, Paul Fallon

Bump away your worldly desires as you try and meditate!



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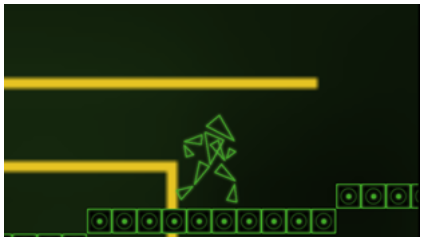
Survive the Hole Thing

by Sean Slater and Mitchell Miller

Move a black hole around to keep asteroids from hitting your broken down spaceship, but watch out, if to many asteroids hit the ship, then it is game over.

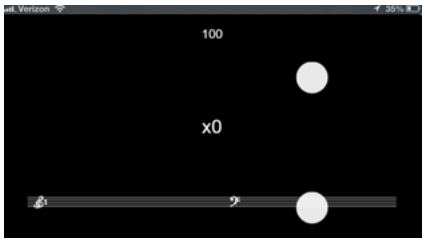


(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/ec/46/9bit.png)

Bit Jumper

by Sean Troehler and Kevin Nelson

A sentient program must keep jumping and jumping to escape the task manager.



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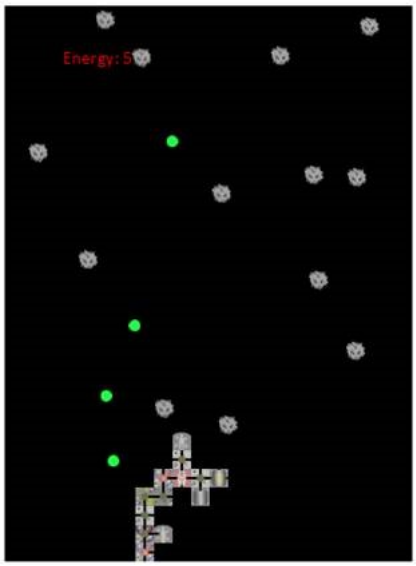
Rythm (intentional spelling)

by Alanna Buss and Kyle Piddington

A rhythm game that has notes on the left or right. Timing currently goes from Miss, Good, and Perfect.

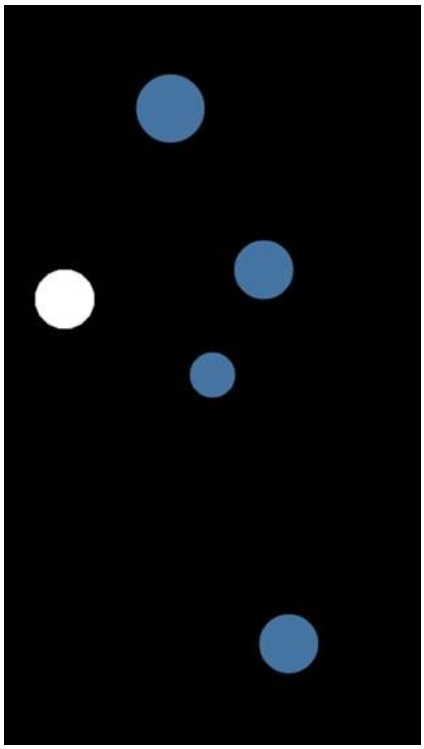


(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/fd/c2/11space.jpg)

Space Hults

by Ethan Nakashima, Simon Vurens, Andrew Acosta

Hurriedly throw your spaceship together and survive the asteroid field as long as possible!



(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/43/bf/12ship.jpg)

Ship!

by Cameron Olson and Daniel Kauffman

Fling asteroids to destroy a nimble spaceship

Below is the first-hand account of Intel's Peter Morgan, photographer of the event.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/c5/2b/13intro.jpg)

Cal Poly Computer Science student games featured in the Intel area at GDC.

By Peter Morgan, Intel Corporation

Intel Corporation sponsored a two day student game hackathon February 27 and 28 at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, California. The challenge at hand was to develop a working computer game in just twenty-four hours. This game jam was hosted by Cal Poly Game Development Club (CPGD) and supervised by club Advisors/professor Foaad Khosmood. Participants developed their games in JavaScript using The Intel Cross Platform Design Kit (XDK). Professor Khosmood said, "The students spend about eighty percent of the development time in the XDK. They know to create a small portion of code and then use the XDK to test it before investing more time. The XDK allows them to create applications testing it all the way through the development process to know that the application will work properly across multiple device form factors once completed.

Brad Hill of Intel Corporation's Developer Relations Division was the guest of honor managing the event and mentoring the students along with Professor Khosmood.

It all started Friday night in the Advanced Technology Lab presentation room where seventy-five male and female upper division computer science students gather to hear Professor Khosmood welcome the group and introduce Brad Hill of Intel Corporation. Brad then demonstrates the creation of a simple game in real time. Brad showed how easy it is to program in JAVA creating an entire game live in about ten minutes and porting it to a multitude of platforms instantly using Intel's XDK. Then he posted the finished game to a site where students could access the program. He displayed a QR code on the presentation screen and the students scanned the code and downloaded the demo game right to their phones in real time.

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Next it was time for the thirty-three game jam participating students to pitch their game concepts to the audience in search of team members to join in their game development. Each participant gave a brief overview of their concept for a game and explained what talent and skills their team need from interested potential members. Ideas ranged from fighting space ships to pong on steroids, to a meditating person swatting away corrupting distractions. After the pitches the students began to talk to one another to find the right team to join up with like a scene from American Idol Hollywood Week.


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By this time it was 7PM and I'm thinking my day is drawing to a close. Not for these young game developer Padawans. It's time for the groups to head to room 242 Of the Cal Poly Computer Science Department Building to carb up on pizza and prep for their twenty-four hour quest with every caffeine drink known to mankind. The night ends as we adjourned just after nine o'clock.

Day two started bright and early at Saturday morning. The teams were now well established and roles and responsibilities were dividing up allowing team members to work-within their individual areas of interest and expertise across coding, graphics creation and music composition. The musician developers were easy to identify as they lugged in large music keyboards that would interface with the development laptops as the teams staked out their territories in the classroom. They coded with relentless focus for hours. I was amazed at how well they all worked together. They all seemed open to input from others and focused on the task at hand. Unlike Hollywood week there was no drama here.

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After a short break for lunch and we enter the long haul of six hours of intense coding as they work to meet the deadline of completing a complete game by tonight. The level of collaboration remained impressive. Nonmusical students giving input on what they think the menu music should be like and how it could contrast with the game background music. Never did I hear one say, “That’s my area”. Or, “I don’t like that idea”. It is impressive how open these coders are to their teammates inputs. The spirit in the room is one of excitement, determination and cooperation.

For the entire afternoon the room is mostly quiet except for discussions between teammates. You can see the intense concentration on their faces as they program, test and adjust their code. Work continues and the hours pass as the musicians craft their music and the artist create their characters and environments, and the coders make them all come to life and interact. Later in the afternoon the atmosphere begins to change and lighten up as bits of their games begin to come to life. You begin to hear an occasional sound effect reminiscent of vintage games like "Centipede" or "Asteroids" or chirping sounds and music, all that will come elements of the games. Faces begin to light up with smiles and laughter as test runs begin and these future software professionals see the first glimpse of characters and movement coming to life in the worlds they have created.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/50/2d/19headset.jpg)

As I watched them work so diligently I thought about earlier in the day when I was trying to find the room in the morning. I asked a random student on campus if she could direct me to the Computer Science Building. Her face lit up with a smile and she said "That's my building. I’ll take you there". I ask her grade and she replied "I’m a senior". I asked if she did an internship and she answered with a smile and pride written all over her face as she told me she spent the summer at Apple, and that she has a job waiting for her after graduation. Professor Khosmood told me this is the norm for Cal Poly students. He then went on to tell me average starting salaries which I won’t tell you but let me just say “Well done Cal Poly”. I told him not many people get to go through life knowing daily that they have so tangibly, positively influenced and affected lives of others. Four years in the Cal Poly Computer Science department appears to have a measurable return on investment. But there's more to it than money and employment at play here. The smiles on the faces of these competitors as each element and component of their games perform as they intended and created, shows pride, accomplishment and self-esteem.

Suddenly the mood changes within one team as a bug is discovered or a function doesn't perform as projected. One team member verbalizes the problem they have discovered. Another member asks a clarifying question, then another suggests a possible solution. No blame. No panic. No drama. A short time later all is well and they are back on track. The entire day and process has been one of harmonious interaction and collaboration. The entire process seems to be free of egos, emotions and arrogance. Is there no limit to what we can learn from our kids?

As we enter than final two hour mark the silence is occasionally interrupted by smatterings of music, sound effects and laughter and cheers as the sounds of humorous alien, spaceship and motion sound effects come to life. As they begin to “test”, or should I say “play” their near completed games, shouting is common as they score points and high five each other as the games literally come to life.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20150418142548/https://software.intel.com/sites/default/files/managed/96/f2/20laughing.jpg)

As the time comes to an end there is a slight sense of urgency to finish the apps to ready them for presentation to the team, but the teams are surprisingly calm. I am more stressed about finishing this article and photos than the students seem to be about finishing their games. They never appeared to doubt they will finish on time and the games will perform as they should.

Time's up. Everyone stops working. The intense twenty four hours from concept to a working game is done. After a dinner break it's time for the unveiling. Each team introduces their team and presents their games. They laugh and cheer for each other's games as we all watch as these games are played for the first time. I am stunned by how complete the games are. These aren't stick figures with rudimentary animation. What was just an idea last night is now a completed operational game. And because the young developers worked using Intel's XDK, the apps were created, ported and tested to work on multiple device form-factors including smart phones and tablets. Only thing left to do now is put them on an app store. And believe me, these games are good enough to sell. I may have just witnessed the creation of the next "Angry Birds". Upon completion of the presentations the participants vote on their favorite "developer's choice" award. But at this hackathon everybody is a winner. All ten apps will be feature in the Intel exhibit at the Game Developer Conference in Moscone Center in San Francisco just the following week. As part of the event sponsorship Intel is sponsoring one lucky team member from each team to make the trip to attend GDC. What a great opportunity for these young game developers to experience the world's largest forum of game developers. Within a year they will all leave Cal Poly and America's happiest City, San Luis Obispo and head in to the real world. Most likely many of them will end up in the real world of Silicon Valley. And they'll hit the valley with a running head start. Today the annual Billionaire's Club list came out. Snapchat's Evan Spiegel, just twenty-four years old ranked as one of the world's youngest billionaires. As I listened to the reading of the list on my car radio I had to wonder if one of these future software professionals is destined for that list.

- END -

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