

# XNA Game Studio Express UK Launch



## Why an XNA launch?

I'm guessing that XNA needs little introduction – it's proven to be a massive hit with faculty and students alike. Early discussions with Nick Burton (Rare Studios) and Dave Mitchell (Xbox US) led us to examine how we could leverage XNA to help...

- Broaden and deepen our relationships with faculty
- Increase buzz in the student and academic community
- Ride the wave of good feeling around XNA
- Drive curriculum wins in core technologies

## Who was it aimed at?

- **Lecturers** - computer science lecturers and department heads
- **Students** - [MSPs](#), [Student Reps](#) and, well, students at large
- **Enthusiasts** - need no introduction

## What did we do?

### Launch Day - 13 December



We were lucky enough to have Chris Satchell - GM of Xbox Developer Division - deliver our keynote, and share his vision of how the XNA tools and technology, Content and Community will combine in the coming years to deliver a unique "YouTube for games". Key phrase to remember – "this is just the beginning". Also over from the US was Mitch Walker - XNA Program Manager - who toured us through the technology and capabilities of the system.

Following technical presentations from Rare and Hull University, the closing keynote was delivered by [Peter Molyneux](#) - MD Lionhead Studios. Peter really fired up the students, talking through his history in the industry, how the creative process works, and how XNA can draw technology and ideas together.

## Exhibition

We've been working with five UK Universities (Belfast, Bradford, Derby, Hull, and Nottingham) around the worldwide launch of XNA, and here they had the chance to show off what they've been doing with games and undergraduates. The UK academic team were out in full force, showing off Project Hoshimi and dealing with the 90 minute queue of Imagine Cup candidates who want to join in. Kudos guys.

In addition, we had a whole host of Xboxes with everything from Viva Piniata to Gears of War there for "testing".

Finally, staff from Rare and Lionhead were around to discuss careers, technology and games with the students and academics alike.



## Hands on labs - 11, 12 and 14 December

Three one-day sessions held in conjunction with Rare allowed academics to spend time getting familiar with XNA. Each delegate brought their own laptop, and was able to use an Xbox dev kit to test out deployment and remote debugging - remember the first workshop was held before the launch of XNA, so I think we were offering a unique experience!

Also attending each workshop were a number of games developers from Rare, who were on hand to help with XNA, and also discuss working in the games industry with academics. The Rare helpers had spent the previous five days creating some unique content and games for the workshop, and these provided the basis for the experimentation and fun that followed.



## Outcomes

**Over 200 attendees** made for a busy event and interesting Q&A sessions. Academics rated the event 7.4 and Students 7.8 (out of a possible 9.0) - a great result for this normally conservative audience.

We hosted 8 press at event (very uncommon for an event held outside London, we thought 5 was an ambitious goal) and Chris, Andy, Peter, and Rob gave **23 interviews** throughout the day. Immediate press coverage was brilliant (see below),

and the monthly enthusiast magazines will give this some real mileage. Also covering the event was the UK's very own roving enthusiast evangelist - Paul Foster! Regular visitors to [www.on10.net](http://www.on10.net) will know that we've hit the [front page!](#)

Of the **54 academics** attending, **48** intend to implement XNA in their curriculum, and we're going to find the next few months busy, with **38** follow-ups requested.

## Feedback

'First of all let me thank you for an excellent event last Wednesday. This has helped to highlight the interest around for jobs in this industry . . . we are currently part way through the validation of a Foundation Degree in Computer Game Design . . . which I feel would benefit extremely by the inclusion of XNA.'

**David Sneddon - Senior Computing Tutor, Blackpool and the Fylde College**

'I seldom fill in response forms because I think they are of little value . . . If you want my response it was a thoroughly worthwhile day and I benefited a lot in stimulation . . . I now see more clearly how I am going to use XNA in my teaching.'

**Peter Blanchfield - Nottingham University**

'Thanks for the XNA events last week, they were very helpful. I was hoping that we could . . meet . . . to discuss the use of XNA within both our games degrees. . We are considering making some fairly large changes to the syllabus to accommodate XNA . . . '

**Steve Harris - Suffolk University**

## What now?

As we said - this is just the beginning.

My feeling throughout the event is that there's a real need to try and pull the games industry and academia together - both need to do a better job of articulating their needs, and understanding how each other work. We're planning an industry / academia forum, to meet in January.

For the New Year, we're going to launch an XNA Academic Community Site - for Academics and Students. This will have the remit of providing a common ground for discussion and sharing of both code and ideas.

Of course, the follow-ups will keep us busy for the next couple of months - and while we have some re-planning to do in light of the demand, we are going to be providing some seeding funding - in the shape of hardware and software - that will allow academics to explore and proselytise XNA in their departments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'A', 'S', and 'W' in a cursive, stylized font.

Andy Sithers - UK Academic team

## **Press coverage to date**

### **BBC**

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/6176023.stm>

### **Bit-Tech UK**

[http://www.bit-tech.net/news/2006/12/13/Microsoft\\_takes\\_steps\\_to\\_official\\_X360\\_homebrew/](http://www.bit-tech.net/news/2006/12/13/Microsoft_takes_steps_to_official_X360_homebrew/)

### **Pocket Lint**

<http://www.pocket-lint.co.uk/news/news.phtml/5859/6883/microsoft-xna-game-studio-express.phtml>

### **Spong**

<http://news.spong.com/article/11317?cb=116>

### **Reg Hardware**

[http://www.reghardware.co.uk/2006/12/12/ms\\_ships\\_xna\\_xbox\\_coding\\_kit/](http://www.reghardware.co.uk/2006/12/12/ms_ships_xna_xbox_coding_kit/)

### **Virgin.net UK**

[http://gamesnews.virgin.net/Virgin/Lifestyle/Games/virginGamesNewsDetail/0,13470,1769667\\_technology,00html](http://gamesnews.virgin.net/Virgin/Lifestyle/Games/virginGamesNewsDetail/0,13470,1769667_technology,00html)

### **CNET UK**

<http://news.cnet.co.uk/gamesgear/0,39029682,49285989,00.htm>

### **Digit**

<http://www.digitmag.co.uk/news/index.cfm?NewsID=6793>

### **Eurogamer, UK**

[http://www.eurogamer.net/article.php?article\\_id=70922](http://www.eurogamer.net/article.php?article_id=70922)

### **Hexus Gaming UK**

<http://gaming.hexus.net/content/item.php?item=7430>

### **GamesIndustry.biz UK**

[http://www.gamesindustry.biz/content\\_page.php?aid=21697](http://www.gamesindustry.biz/content_page.php?aid=21697)

[http://www.gamesindustry.biz/content\\_page.php?aid=21633](http://www.gamesindustry.biz/content_page.php?aid=21633)

### **Pro-g UK**

<http://www.pro-g.co.uk/news/13-12-2006-4288.html?commentpage=1>

### **Tech Digest UK**

[http://techdigest.tv/2006/12/microsoft\\_launc\\_1.html](http://techdigest.tv/2006/12/microsoft_launc_1.html)

### **NMA**

<http://www.nma.co.uk/Articles/30739/Microsoft+launches+Game+Studio+software.html>

Media Outlet	Correspondent	Pre-event Coverage	Post-event Coverage
BBC	Jane Wakefield		<a href="#">DIY developers to make Xbox games</a>
Develop	Jon Jordon	<a href="#">Lift off for XNA Game Studio Express and Creators Club</a>	Feature currently being composed, due for print in February issue (on sale end of January)
Edge	Christian Donolan	<a href="#">The Live Life</a>	Spread in news section due in next issue, on sale 18 <sup>th</sup> January
Eurogamer / GamesIndustry.biz	Oliver Walsh	<a href="#">XNA launches fully</a> <a href="#">Microsoft releases XNA Game Studio Express</a>	<a href="#">XNA to be YouTube for games</a> <a href="#">XNA Express will start YouTube for games, says Microsoft's Satchell</a> <a href="#">Today's developers are "lucky bastards", says Lionhead boss</a>
Gamespot	Emma Boyes	<a href="#">Microsoft releases XNA Studio Express</a>	<a href="#">Q&amp;A: Microsoft's Chris Satchell on XNA Express</a>
Games <sup>TM</sup>	Matt Handrahan		Opening spread in news section, to appear in issue 53, on sale 22 <sup>nd</sup> February
PC Gamer	Adam Oxford		2 part feature being composed, on sale either end of January or end of February
Reg Developer / Personal Computer World / ITWriting blog	Tim Anderson	<a href="#">Hands on: Create a game with XNA</a>	<a href="#">Installing XNA Game Studio Express on Vista</a> <a href="#">XNA up and running</a> <a href="#">XNA, Xbox 360 and the decline of computer science</a> Feature will be appearing in PCW in new year, unsure about Reg Developer
xbox 360	Gillen McAllister	<a href="#">MS to spark 'next' next-gen?</a>	Article gone to print