



The fire behind the
firepower.

Midway Games brings the cinematic experience of a John Woo film to the gaming world, with the help of AMD processors.

When Midway Games set out to develop a cinematic video game that would offer players an exciting and unique gaming experience, they knew it would take more than standard technology to enable such a feat. Taking advantage of AMD's powerful technology, Midway created "John Woo Presents Stranglehold," an exciting third-person action game that plays like the gamer is the star of a John Woo film.

A 'Mortal' Beginning

There was a time when video games were just that. Video games. No movie franchises. No related soundtracks. No famous actor voice-overs or characters. Obviously today, all of this has changed, and many would argue that one of the pioneering companies to drive this collaboration between Hollywood and the world of gaming was

Midway Games and the launch of the Mortal Kombat franchise in 1992. Aside from selling more than 20 million units worldwide and becoming a movie and television series, Mortal Kombat revolutionized what a video game could be and offered players an entirely new gaming experience.

AMD
The future is fusion

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— Mark Caldwell, executive producer of PC Games, Midway Games

Given the company’s propensity for taking gaming to a new level and its history of creating games that have a Hollywood connection, it was no surprise that in 2004, Midway began looking for an opportunity to create a video game that looked and played like the gamer was part of a film.

Enter John Woo

At the same time Midway was looking to create a cinematic video game, film director John Woo was looking to branch into the world of gaming. At the E3 conference the two parties met and the idea of “John Woo Presents Stranglehold” was born.

From the outset, both Midway and Woo wanted to create a sequel to Woo’s film *Hard-Boiled*, which centers around tough cop and all-around rebel, Inspector ‘Tequila’ Yuen, played by actor Chow Yun Fat (who also voices the character in the game) as he takes on Hong Kong’s most brutal mobsters. Ensuring that the video game character was true to his film persona of a dual gun toting, ruthless cop vigilante, Midway decided to create a game where anything is possible and the player has the power to literally destroy everything in sight, from a can of soda on a table, to a support column holding a building up, to most importantly, Tequila’s enemies.

In addition to keeping the character consistent and replicating Woo’s film style in the game, Midway wanted the player to have a visually compelling experience. This meant a lot of very detailed and life-like action-per-frame to give the impression that the player is watching a movie – a movie where he or she is both the director and the star.

To do this, Midway had to rethink how it would design Stranglehold and the technology it would use.

“We wanted to create a video game that was a John Woo movie you could be in control of, with the style that Woo is infamous for – lots of stunts, lots of crazy gun play and destruction that is dramatic and cinematically styled,” said Brian Eddy, executive director at Midway. “To achieve the level of mind blowing destruction and detail we wanted players to experience, we had to start on the ground floor and engineer a platform that could handle the development of this multithreaded, computationally intensive design environment – which is why we turned to AMD and at the time, it’s newly acquired graphics arm, ATI.”





Massive-D Meets the PC

With the understanding that the development of Stranglehold would require technology that wasn't available in the market at the time of development, Midway decided that it would build a cross-platform system based on the Unreal 3 Engine platform with the help of AMD. The new system would be the development foundation for Stranglehold and future games in the Midway pipeline.

The Unreal 3 Engine, which is the third generation of the Unreal Engine, is a widely used game developing platform by Epic Games. It was created in 1998 to give game developers an easy platform and complete tool suite to create and program the most visually intensive, interactive and exciting computer and console games on the market. The Midway development team took apart the Unreal 3 Engine platform, made heavy modifications to the system and ran the platform on AMD processors and graphics cards to create a powerful development environment for Stranglehold.

One of the most significant modifications to the platform is a technology called Massive Destruction, or Massive-D, which is a set of physics that allows players to destroy practically every object in a given level. "Massive-D is what gives players the ability to interact with the 'scene' and enables them to create a truly chaotic and destructive environment, if they choose," said Eddy. "It's what really helped set Stranglehold apart and deliver the John Woo film experience we were after."

As Massive-D is extremely computationally intensive, it was important for Midway to offload as much of the multithreading to the graphics processor during development which is where AMD's graphic technology – specifically the ATI Radeon™ X1900 and X1950 graphics processors – were instrumental. "Without the help of AMD, developing a game like Stranglehold for the PC, or any console for that matter, would have been much more expensive and time consuming," said Mark Caldwell, executive producer of PC Games at Midway Games. "AMD's engineers worked closely with our programmers to help us achieve the best hardware optimization possible. From my perspective, it was really nice to see AMD approach this project as a technology partner and work with us to deliver a truly exciting game."

The Ultimate Game and the Ultimate PC

Beyond developing Stranglehold on a platform that leveraged AMD Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) and utilized AMD Opteron™ processors, Midway also optimized Stranglehold on AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 Dual-Core processor-based desktop computers.

“AMD offers one of the best performing chipsets on the market today and a lot of serious gamers – the ones that want to get the most out of their gaming platform – seem to have computers with AMD graphics cards and processors. So optimizing Stranglehold to deliver the most seamless gaming experience possible on AMD Athlon processors and ATI Radeon™ GPUs just made sense,” said Caldwell.

“In general, PCs are often a more powerful system than traditional gaming consoles. With a higher resolution, the ability to use a mouse and the additional GPU/CPU power available for optimizations, the player is often provided with a better overall gaming experience, which is something we wanted to take advantage of,” continued Caldwell.

In addition to accolades by John Woo fans and gamers alike, the game has received positive reviews from critics. In fact, Game Industry News gave Stranglehold a score of 4.5 out of 5 and Strategy Informer awarded it an 8.7 out of 10. Stranglehold’s ability to give the player the opportunity to experience what it is like to be part of a John Woo film is significant. “Midway has managed to capture the essence of a Woo film,” wrote Hilary Goldstein of IGN.com in his review of the game.

Stranglehold’s success isn’t solely based on the praise of players and reviewers, it is also reflected in the number of games sold – already over a million worldwide and counting.

“In the end, we are looking to give the player the ultimate gaming experience – we want every player to feel like they are Tequila in one of Woo’s films,” said Eddy. “When we hear from people who consider themselves to be John Woo fanatics and they absolutely love the game, we know we delivered a game that is worthy of the Midway Games brand.”

For more information about Midway Games visit:
www.midway.com.

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