

B.C. students launch video game about music scene

Class project allows gamers to virtually scout and sign bands to indie label

By Canadian University Press

LANGLEY (CUP) – Label: Rise of Band was one group project that could not be thrown together in the wee hours of the morning it was due.

Since summer 2007, Trinity Western University professors Kevin Schut and Alma Barranco-Mendoza have been working with students from a range of disciplines to conceptualize and create Label: Rise of Band, a turn-based strategy computer game.

The game allows players, who are heads of an independent music label, to scout and sign bands to reclaim the city's music scene from The Corporation, which dictates the industry.

Launched on June 26, the game is available for free download at www.labelriseofband.com.

During the launch, each of the 24 Trinity Western students who produced the game received a certificate in game development foun-

dations.

For the students, however, the project was about more than earning credits – it was an opportunity to gain a realistic perspective on the challenges and opportunities within the larger, corporate setting of visual game development.

Winston Ewert, a fourth-year computer sciences major who acted as the head of the programming team, says he was able to use his programming skills in a setting not previously offered in any of his other classes.

“It was fun to work on a project of that scope,” he said.

Schut praised called the product a “massive achievement” and “really over-the-top good,” particularly when considering that no one on the team had undertaken a project like it before.

Although the completed product exceeded many of the group's initial expectations, there is consensus that Label: Rise of Band can be improved.

“I think the quality of the program is superior to what

‘Mays’

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an evil force which transforms him into a ravenous werewolf. In his humanoid state fellow bandmembers notice Mays' peculiar behaviour but remain defenceless as a Hyde-like alter ego emerges anathematizing his comrades.

The final scene leaves room for an inevitable sequel but you can view this cinematic gem on the Matt

Mays and El Torpedo website or Youtube.

This wasn't Mays' first foray into the world of film A Dartmouth Werewolf in Dover was a project compiled out of pure enjoyment and no intentions yet was featured recently at the Atlantic Film Festival in Halifax.

Although the film didn't garner any rewards Patil

muses the band “Hopes to do more things like it” as they “use the internet to show off cheesily charming acting skills.” This Mays and El Torpedo original may be the last you see of the band for awhile as they vacate the east coast for their first headlining American tour but keep an eye and ear out for their subsequent single Building A Boat.



Matt Mays plays at his September concert at the Wave. Cadre Photo

we had expected in the beginning,” said Barranco-Mendoza.

“It has a good infrastructure, but the [artificial intelligence] is not particularly challenging.”

This fall, Barranco-Mendoza's artificial intelligence class will be working to improve the balance of the game so the artificial opponents offer gamers fair, but more challenging, play.

Barranco-Mendoza and Schut are also each working with students through directed studies to implement new features and explore the possibilities for e-commerce.

Following these modifications, the group plans to market an updated version of the game.

Due to the success of this pilot project there are plans to offer the course every other year.

While students may not be thinking ahead to the courses they will take in the 2009-10 school year, Schut recognizes the importance of creating excitement early on: “We need people to be interested in this.”

And, like Ewert, students do not have to play computer games to find an opportunity like this appealing.

“I'm not much of a gamer,” he said.