Interview: Transport Tycoon's Chris Sawyer talks mobile

👤 John Gaudiosi   ⊘ May 13, 2014

Back in the heyday of PC gaming, Chris Sawyer created numerous memorable franchises. He is the mastermind behind the classic *Transport Tycoon* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon* franchises, among other titles in the 1990s like *Birds of Prey*, *Goal!,* and *Frontier: Elite II*. Over the years, Sawyer watched as new technology like NVIDIA Tegra 4 opened up unique opportunities for classic PC games to be resurrected for a mainstream mobile audience.

We caught up with Sawyer to talk about his first foray into mobile with *Transport Tycoon* in this exclusive interview.

GameCrate: How are you enhancing the PC game for the mobile audience with new content?

Chris: We've added scenarios to give players more gameplay and to play in different ways, like playing the real-world maps, but with no competitors. We also commissioned John Broomhall to completely re-arrange and re-record the original *Transport Tycoon* music for this update. John created the music for the original *Transport Tycoon* game back in 1994, at which time I believe it was the most music ever incorporated into a PC game.

GC: How did the gaming habits of mobile gamers impact the development of *Transport Tycoon* **for mobile?**

C: This is something which has been a bit of a challenge, as there was a perception that mobile gamers only want to play simple and quick games. And in no way did we want to "dumb down" *Transport Tycoon*. We felt the game is what it is; a large, complex, and detailed strategy game. We wanted to bring the whole experience to mobile games, not just a simplified version. The market for this kind of mobile game will only grow as time goes on and people see the benefits of playing detailed strategy games on mobile or tablets instead of on a desktops or consoles. The touch screen interface really suits games like this, and being able to play wherever you are is a big advantage.

GC: What are your thoughts on how quickly the mobile games space is evolving?

C: It's difficult to know for sure how it will evolve, but I think we'll see more variety in styles of game and different marketing models.

GC: What are your thoughts on NVIDIA Tegra K1 (announced at CES) and how the bridge is closing between PC/console and mobile devices?

C: It's an interesting development, very powerful and could perhaps bring us soon to the point where one device is able to handle all your PC computing and mobile needs.

GC: What do you think of the NVIDIA Shield device?

C: It is another interesting way to try to bring more functionality to a single device.

GC: In particular, what have tablets opened up for game developers like yourself?

C: Modern tablets have opened the door to bringing classic "PC style" strategy games to a completely new audience. The latest devices have enough power and memory to handle these vast games without reducing the depth and detail and have the advantages of portability and a touch screen interface.

GC: What do you feel about *Transport Tycoon* **has stood the test of time?**

C: I feel it's a classic game with classic gameplay and it's very exciting to see it being brought back to life on mobile and tablets. People still talk about (and play) the original PC game after all these years, so we must have done something right in the original game design. We've tried to bring the exact same game design to mobile and tablet devices.

GC: What impact could renewed interest in this franchise through mobile have on its future?

C: It's still early days yet, but there are many possibilities depending on how successful the game is over the coming months.

GC: What opportunities do you see with your other "Tycoon" games in the mobile space?

C: I think there are some great opportunities. The mobile platform really suits in-depth detailed strategy games like the "Tycoon" games. I expect we'll see many more of this style of game coming to mobile after the success of *Transport Tycoon*. Recently, Atari has brought its interpretation of *RollerCoaster Tycoon* to mobile and I'm sure they and other companies will be watching the success of both games with interest.