

ENGINE HEAT



RETROSPECT

A Look Back At 10 Years NASCAR Heat

What is this all about ?

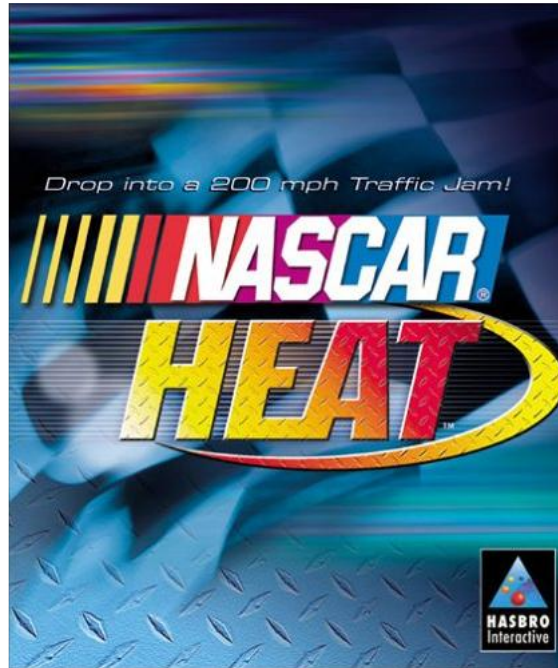
In summer 2010 some long-time Heat contributors noticed that soon their beloved sim would have been released 10 years ago already... sigh... and that this maybe should be worth a celebration. 10 years would be about 150 years in software making, and there's only pretty few games reaching such an age and still have a community behind.

Blaxman was first to voice the idea of celebrating that anniversary, and being a man of putting things to motion, he initiated the "Heat Festival" online racing weekend and published reminiscence videos on his BlaxmanYoutube Channel.

That made us recall the old idea of having an NHeat ezine, that had surfaced in the hot ModSquad forum discussion after Magnus Tellbom's infamous article in that 2007 issue of Autosimsport ezine about NHeat's supposed decline. That NHeat ezine had never made it past a draft cover - but we thought it would be nice to take up the idea and create a single issue for NHeat's 10th anniversary celebration.

And this is what you just look at:

A single NASCAR Heat ezine issue about the sim's past, present and perhaps future, rounded up by interviews of some of today's Heat main contributors



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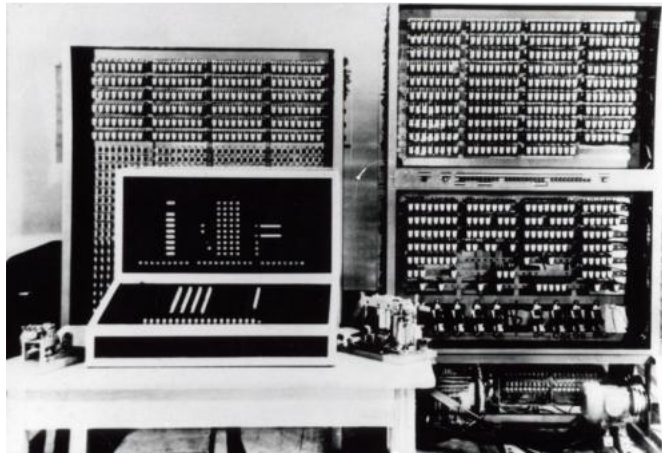


The story so far

Ancestors...

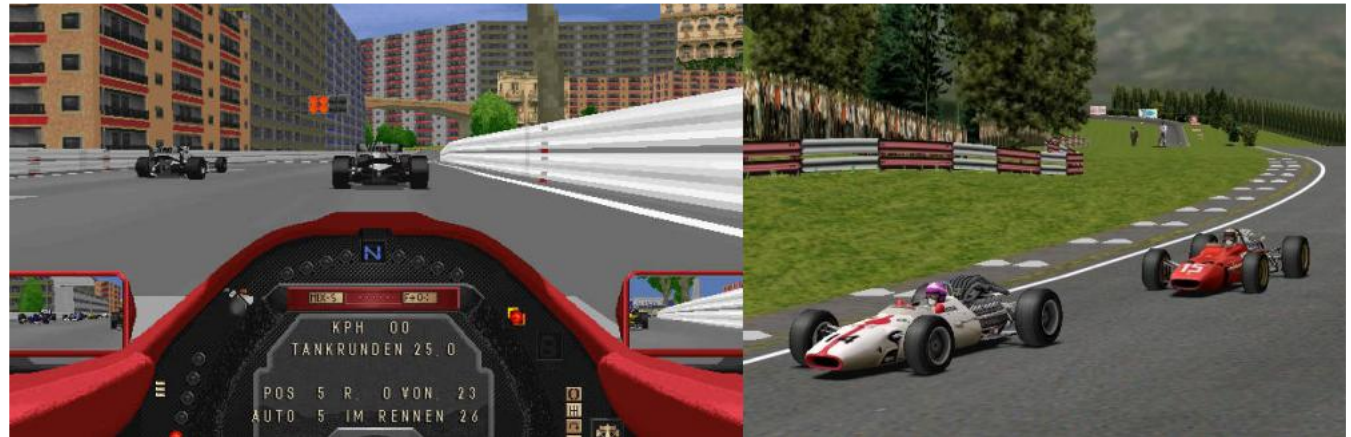
In the beginning there was.... **PONG**.

Ok, probably right since Konrad Zuse first had had that idea of how make some kind of electronic brain, or at least since when the first working computers had entered labs, there had been people trying to waste time by playing with these machines. But it's PONG, developed 1972 by Nolan Bushnell, that is considered to be the first real video game. Gaming by slotcards obviously didn't count in.



Zuse Z3 computer. You'd have a hard time to find out how to do any gaming with that machine

2 years later on the first racing game surfaced already, **Night Driver**, indicating that driving fast, even only virtually, is fun to a lot of people. It took another 22 years until Geoff Crammond's **Grand Prix** series began turning racing games into simulations in 1996. Another 2 years later on Dave Kaemmer checked out how much simulation people really would stand. His **Grand Prix Legends** was the first true hardcore racing simulation game. Actually it was that much hardcore,



Grand Prix 2 (left) already offered adjustable garage options, but it's physics lacked dynamic. **Grand Prix Legends** (right) had all dynamics you could wish for. Perhaps even a little too much - not few people considered it's cars too hard to drive. Others drive up to today

that according to a statement from F1-champion Jackie Stewart the cars in real life had been easier to drive than those in GPL. Perhaps the main reason GPL wasn't a big seller on the market.

So it wasn't much of a surprise that the next big milestone rather was a step back, in terms of "simulation". **Sportscar GT**, 1999 released by ISI/EA, wasn't anywhere close to being a hardcore sim like GPL, but nonetheless provided a pretty good and somewhat realistic feel for the simulated GT sportscars. Main reason for SCGT to become very popular was its open architecture, that allowed for easy adding of cars and tracks – which was something new and opened the road to user-added content. Users happily accepted the offer and started to explore how to paint cars and do 3D modeling and add the results to the game. Literally hundreds of tracks and thousands of cars have been added to SCGT on the next years. Quite of lot of modders that are still active today on various platforms have started modding with SCGT

So in 2000, there was an active community of simracers and modders, eagerly awaiting the next step forward in simracing. And having some defined expectations about what they would like to get: A true racing simulation, yet adjustable to the driver's skills. At best having a lot of great and popular content right from start. A userfriendly modding platform. Great AI for offline racing. Great netgaming qualities for online racing. Not much to ask for in total...

But first symptoms of splitting up in the simracing community did show. It wasn't anything obvious like online- vs offline or openwheel vs. sportscar, but simply "my sim" vs. "your sim", and "my sim" being the only true sim. Developers like Dave Kammer/Papyrus, Geoff Crammond and ISI were started to being regarded as some kind of high priests of incompatible simracing religions by not just only a few simdrivers.

A somewhat awkward childhood

NASCAR Heat was released in the United States on August 28th 2000, published by Hasbro Interactive and developed by Monster Games (MGI). MGI was a new player on the racing simulation game market, started by Ex-Papyrus founder Rich Garcia. They had published Viper Racing in 1998 before and used this for base of developing NASCAR Heat. According to reviews (<http://pc.ign.com/articles/164/164101p1.html>) it was a big step towards the right direction, and Heat instantly became popular among NASCAR simracing enthusiasts.

Though the MGI developers at some time had been forced to rush up and cut down development time, and thus had messed up some of the initial great concept for Heat, the result nonetheless had most of what the simracing community was looking for, at great quality, and thus the potential to be popular with the whole simracing world. Future prospects were looking bright for Heat for the next years. Theoretically at least...

Heat was about NASCAR oval racing, which is very popular in the U.S. but close to nonexistent in most of the rest of the world. Consequently, NASCAR Heat never was published as a PC game in Europe and most other places outside America. So Heat's release went unnoticed by a big part of the simracing community.

The second problem was that though Heat is great for modding, there's special tools required to add any content. Back then those tools were not available to everybody, but only in the hands of very few people. Additionally, these people were very ambitious and challenging each others, not the least by hiding information. So in 2001, when modders were looking for the next generation of racing simulations, they got the feeling Heat mostly offered locked doors – and moved on, ignoring Heat.

Main sites in the beginnings of Heat were High Compression and Race Day Downloads. There was a lot of friction between these 2 sites, due to the members of both sites wanting to outclass the other ones and regarding themselves as elitists. High Compression were the first to have any NASCAR Heat tools to work with; Kevin Combs made the 3D Max3 MOD plugin which allowed folks to make new car models and add them into the game. In June 2001 Craftsman Trucks was the first mod to be published, by High Compression. Only little later the Legends car mod was released by John Bodin and Thomas Heinemann, who also added IRL Heat and CART Heat.

Race Day Downloads had the first addon track for Heat when they released Pocono, which had been a part of the beta tests, but was removed before the game came out due to licensing issues. They were also the first ones to come up with new sounds for the cars, new spotters, new music and other addons.

OnlineRacing.cc was the place where dirt drivers gathered in the early days and the Dirt Heat mod was the first dirt based oval mod to be released. Andy Garton and UK Dirt were making a dirt/asphalt mod of their own around the same time. Dirt Heat was about running clockwise, UK Dirt's BriSCA Heat mod about running counter-clockwise and both paved and dirt ovals. When the BriSCA Heat mod was released, both OnlineRacing.cc and UKDirt each got their own communities. After Heat got the "zippy" patch, Speedy created the first mod to use a working suspension, the UMP Modifieds. With this new patch, also came about a reworked version of Dirt Heat which became known as the UDTRA latemodel mod, which was always evolving and ended up with a version 3.0.



An ambitious youth

The potential Heat had those days shows by considering the number of mods that have been released when even handing out infos and required tools had been done only very restrictively. Other early oldies but still goodies is the 1950's Pickup mod created by Big Ben, F1V2 by Tazmaniac and the DTM94 by Thomas Heinemann.

When first mods had opened the road towards non-oval oriented racing, there was need for additional road racing tracks. The original game had come with two RC tracks only, Watkins Glen and Sears Point.

One of the most active modders and pioneers on Heat RC tracks was for sure Lucky, who wasn't just first, but added a stunning number of tracks to Heat, not the least in support for the league he ran in 2002-2004. Lucky even still found time to release several mods, like the F40 mod.

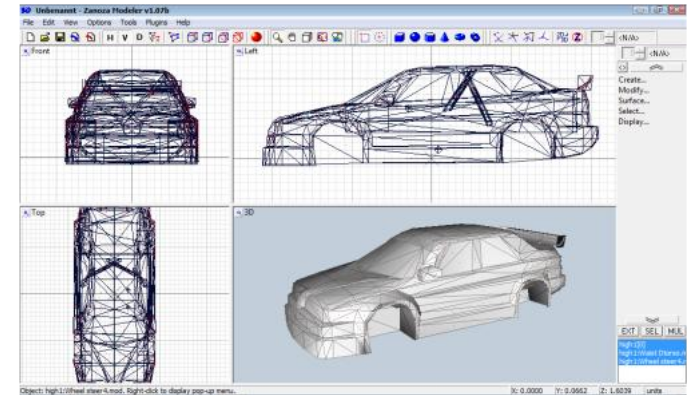
With more mods and tracks being added to Heat, more simracers took notice about about it – and eventually joined. A very popular platform for online racing was the Internet Race Finder (IRF) tool; an

easy way to find an open server and join for instant racing. Heat offered superior netcode in times when most people only ran dial-up lines, ISDN or low bandwidth DSL. So there was no lack of participants in Heat instant online races.



To iron out some flaws in the game and to add features requested by popular demand, MGI published updates up to 1.50 for Heat. Several active online racing leagues were running Heat, both oval and RC. And along with new simdrivers joining, new people like Raybee and TheMask got interested in modding Heat. And other than those in the very early days, the new ones didn't care to be part of some elitist circle. They were rather interested in learning how to mod and in exploring the depths of Heat.

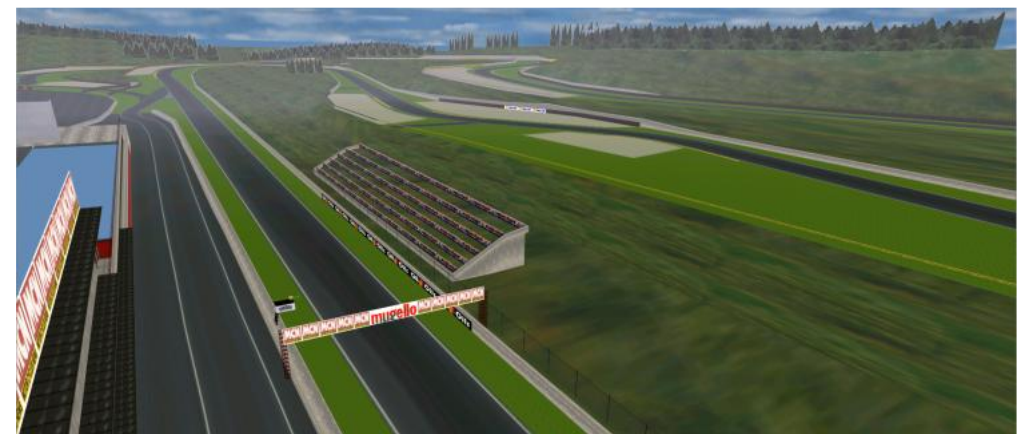
The ModSquad and Texas Speed Racing opened their doors; The free 3D modeling tool zmodeler got Heat import and export filters, so modders didn't need to have a copy of 3dsmax to start with anymore.



The early “elitist” modders were already moving towards the next most recent sims, to stay on top of the crowd. With Heat, things started to settle somewhat down



Cayuga by **Splashman** in 2003. Splashman can probably be considered the most productive oval track contributor for Heat and was another pioneer



Mugello by **Lucky** in 2003. Lucky has added more than 40 tracks to Heat in 2002-2004

Settling down

At about 2003 and by usual game lifespan, Heat had come to age.

For a game at least. Other, more recent racing simulation games were competing for the audience and most of these had a better start into life than Heat had. Heat had never been a major place in simracing, now it was slowly becoming a niche. Those who had come to love Heat still ran it and contributed to the community, those who were rather looking for always the next new sim were moving on, as did those who only would stay where the crowd was.

This was about the time when it turned out whether Heat was soon to be history or long-living by support from a dedicated community. One major aspect on this was the fact there still was no racing simulation game out there providing better netcode than Heat. This resulted in a steady, though small flow of fresh blood of simdrivers like S.C.O.R.E. who only now found out about Heat by checking for a superior online racing platform that provided a variety of mods.



Right image: Lemans for Heat by **TheMask**, released in 2004

And with infos about how to mod Heat slowly spreading, modders could add in experimental features, like the digital tachometer by Team Players, or their Sportbike mod. The game engine allowed for making mods that could match those of newer sims like F1-2k2 or NR2k3. Modders just had to find out how to do it. And there was modders sufficiently dedicated to Heat to make it stay modern at all times

Still in 2003 Joe Sepy and Jay Blade released Vintage Trans Am mod, a great hit in the Road Racing community and still very popular to this day. Early contributors like Lucky, BigBen or Punko started making tutorials about specific aspects of modding Heat. In early 2004 TheMask released first version of ModLauncher and started working on LeMans track, biggest track ever in Heat – and thus exceeding the AI line length limit and the texture counter limit.



The next generation

In 2004 more early contributors like Team Players dropped off; Lucky ended his league and closed down his site. Lifetime of IRF seemed to have come to an end too, most of the time there was no noticeable IRF activity whatsoever anymore. Online racing almost entirely turned into organized league or event racing; S.C.O.R.E. online racing site started its first regular Heat RC series and quickly advanced to being the major Heat RC online racing place, while NHRL was the same for oval racing.

By request and effort of TheModSquad, Heat Update 1.80 and Nascar Heat Essentials was released, which is a package of files that allows to run NASCAR Heat mods and add-on tracks, as well as Carsets – legally for free. Along with Dave Broske's (MGI) continuous support over the years this was probably the most important step to make Heat stay alive. The original game couldn't be found in stores anymore and even only occasionally on ebay; with Heat Essentials the game was now easier available than ever before, only without its original content



NASCAR Heat Essentials Package: the game engine for free to run any kind of mods. Comes along with ModLauncher



Formula Renault 2000 (above) and WGTC (right) mods by RJR



Texas Speed Racing based RJR was probably the most productive Heat modders in 2004/5. There was no less than half a dozen RC mods released by Goresh, Rickb99 and Spin_doctor, with WGTC and Formula Renault 2000 mod the most popular RC mods in 2005 amongst it. Inspired by example, some S.C.O.R.E. members started into modding Heat as well, as did other future main contributors like Blaxman, Choleric and Smoke

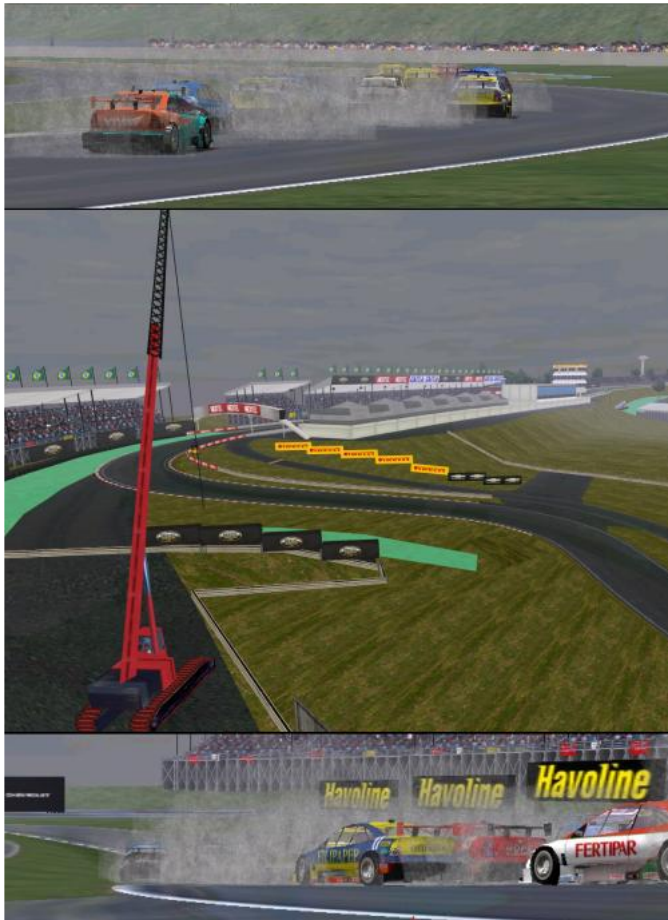
It was a most productive era for motivated modders to explore new ways how to improve Heat. After having released LeMans and Mod Launcher 2, TheMask jumped for the next challenge: Nordschleife track for Heat.



Nordschleife for NASCAR Heat by TheMask - this track violates more than just one of Heat's game engine limits

The next generation

But TheMask even had more on his plate: he also developed WinrestoolsWizard, a collection of and GUI to almost all Heat editing tools. He made UI Control Center & LYT Editor too, taking up recent findings about how to tweak Heat's UI and Heat's screen resolutions beyond the defaults. S.C.O.R.E. owner Magnus Tellbom started digging into the depth of Heat AI. Blaxman published first Texviewer tool and later on the first ever wet track for Heat



Interlagos Wet by **Blaxman**, based on TheMask's Interlags track release

But though there seemed to be a good base of capable modders again, most worked on their own projects only. TheMask tried to rally active Heat modders to join in a major and big modding project, to prove to the simracing world what quality mods Heat is capable of. Didn't work out, but least some S.C.O.R.E. based modders took up working on a big scale project, a Sportscar GT tribute mod.

That quickly turned again into only some individual's work for the biggest part, but it caused some great sideeffects. While working on this mod, Choleric made some interesting findings on advanced hidden Heat garage options, that he and Sucahyo started exploring. Tester feedback on the mod's physics ended up in a complete overhaul of common knowledge about Heat's physics engine and later on in a Heat physics tutorial

In 2006 Magnus Tellbom started writing articles in Autosimsport eZine about Heat, in order to keep interest going and draw new folks in. Furthermore he added a NASCAR Heat article to Wikipedia, putting in a lot of valuable information. Unfortunately Wikipedia sorted Heat to console video game category, which is maintained by zealots, who immediately devastated Magnus' writings. Later on other people have taken up the challenge to add content to that Wikipedia article, but none has ever managed to pass the wikitaliban.



Team Westside's Nextel mods have been popular up to date mods in oval racing



TheMask developed several tools for editing and configuring Heat. like the WinrestoolsWizard

The big bang

The formerly supposed large community project, now Choleric's Sportscar GTS mod, was released in mid of 2007 and turned out to be big step forward in modding Heat. It was the first mod with an entirely redesigned UI, yet unseen garage options and being based on the revised physics concept. But it seemed all to have been a waste of effort – just when released, the remaining main Heat RC community place S.C.O.R.E. dropped all Heat related online racing activities. Most of the productive modders of the previous era like TheMask and RJR were gone by start of 2007 too. Another era seemed to have come to an end, but this time in a blow

Since spring of 2007 S.C.O.R.E. had suffered from some major conflict. From dwindling numbers of show ups in Heat RC online races and lack of forum activity Magnus Tellbom had assumed Heat to have come to its end of lifetime, and thus this being the time for S.C.O.R.E. to move on. Others rather suspected the way of running a community to play the main part in how much activity there was. Or rather lacked to be. This ended with S.C.O.R.E. indeed moving away from Heat – and quickly fading to total irrelevance as a community site.

Some months later on Magnus Tellbom published in Autosimspport an article some called the attempt of a public burial of Heat – and which caused a major uproar and some hot discussions, the most extended one at The Mod Squad forum.

Rallied by Magnus' article and a follow-up rant in next Autosimspport issue, even people showed up at The Mod Squad that had been nonactive for a long time. Magnus' reasoning was challenged big time, and finally this ended in him getting banned from some forums and the suggestions about making a specific

Heat eZine.

That suggestion was taken up, but never made it past a draft cover. Only article ever written and later on published standalone was a Sportscar GTS mod review by DaveO in 2008

HEAT The Final Chapter ...

continued



So much, though, has been done during the past eight years. The first really important mod that came must have been DTM 94/95. I think this was the mod that proved road-course racing could be done with this sim, and if memory serves me right, it was even used for TPTCC for at least one season. Not long after its release, the International Sports Car Heat mod

picked up the road-course flag. It was a beautiful mod with some of the best sports cars ever made, like the Nissan Skyline, and the McLaren F1 GTR, and so on. Simply a stunning mod. On the oval side, there have been even more releases, and there are now hundreds of tracks, both dirt and paved; so many mods that it will set your head spinning.

So ... *NASCAR Heat* is all washed-up ... and yet, looking at it, as I have done for so many years, I cannot, for the life of me, figure out why ... When did the numbers that would give the sim a 'critical mass' dwindle to nothing? Why did it always remain such a peripheral sim? Why didn't the modders pick up on it? Where are the online racers to drive the mods? Why, why, where? ... I mean, it is just as easy to mod for as *Sportscar GT* (I even did a mod-and-a-half myself), and that sim was incredibly popular. More than that, though, *Heat* enjoys a tremendous netcode to rival—and maybe even surpass—modern sims like *Live For Speed*, and *rFactor*. It can cope with all kinds of racing, and that includes motorcycles, and powerboats, not just road-courses and ovals. It doesn't suffer from any of the restrictions seen in *Sportscar GT*, and *NASCAR Racing 2003*.

So what did it lack? It lacked, as I said earlier, enough interest from the sim-racing community: Buried, as it was, in the glory days of sim-racing, when big developers were creating very big products, *Heat* was a niche product in a niche market. It lacked people back in March 2006, when I wrote my first *NASCAR Heat* article for *AUTOSIMSPORT*, and since then it has sadly gotten worse.

Well ... I can go on and on about this forever, but fact remains ... we have come to an end of an era, and there is no longer enough to justify the continued presence of this column in these pages. I'll still be here writing about other stuff that I find interesting, of course, and should anything new happen in the world of *Heat*, you can be assured I will cover it ... but this, alas, is a sad farewell to *NASCAR Heat*.

And so, without getting too emotional about it—because I already am—all that is left to say is thank you—to the readers, but also to those that have loved and enjoyed *Heat* as much as I ... and goodbye!

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AUTOSIMSPORT www.autosimspport.net

Volume 3 Number 6

Second page of Magnus Tellbom's Heat obituary in Autosimspport in 2007. He later on justified it on his site's readme that it had in no way called Heat being a dead sim. That readme and the ASS article can still be found at www.scoreracing.de

Inspired by some posts in that recent hot discussion, Choleric published the Heat Modding Tutorial, covering everything about the nuts and bolts of creating a Mod for Nascar Heat. Furthermore he extended SPEEDSIMS.NET to take up the now vacant role of the Heat RC community place.

Life goes on, as does Heat

Funny enough, Magnus Tellbom's supposed major blow to the NASCAR Heat community seemed to spark new activities. The public discussions got new people interested, check out the sim and stay. It made contributors reconsider the use of advertising and put additional effort into promoting mod releases and league races. Online races got raising numbers of participants again. Remaining modders took up the challenge to make their mods be able to compete with other platforms.

Smoke was digging into how to replace the common penalty traps on Heat RC tracks by making the driver run into more natural problems in case of running wide or shortcutting. Smoke started adding slippery and sticky areas to the tracks. With Birmingham, he additionally replaced the usual way to add skies to tracks by the skydome feature, this way adding a much improved feeling of cloud movement to the environment.



Grand Valley East for Heat by Smoke, released in 2010

Blaxman extended his Platinum modding platform concept to Platinum G2 to shorten development time for creating mods from several months to mere weeks; the new G2 structure now allowed new mods to be released without the need of doing a full UI and working on many other resource files that conventional mods use. The result was a steady flow of amazing quality mods by Blaxman since then. For advertising and documenting mods, leagues and races, he started the Blaxman TV Youtube Video Channel where there's now a lot of Heat related video stuff to be found.

Dusterlag took up the idea of developing an advanced version of IRF, that Burnout and TheMask had started on in 2005 but never finished. In 2008 he released the initial version of his brandnew webbased racefinder tool called Heatfinder. Along with the release, Dusterlag started running public dedicated Heat servers.

By suggestion of Burnout, in early 2010 work on Shelby Can-Am mod was started at SPEEDSIMS.NET, with the aim to have the most detailed and accurate RC mod as there has ever been in Heat. The real life car's developer and drivers were consultants on this mod – that had last happened with Team Players Formula Ford mod in Heat's earlier days. In September 2010, Shelby Can-Am mod was released

NASCAR Heat is still alive and kicking – and it has come a long way

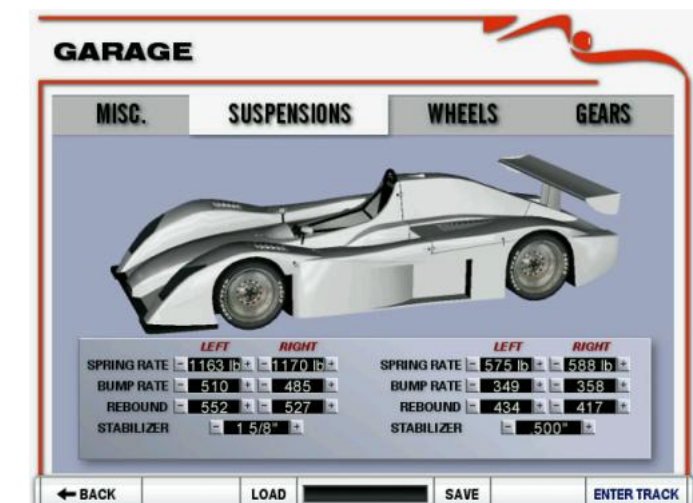
Shelby Can-Am mod by Speedsims. Like SCGTS, another mod with a fully redesigned User Interface.



Blaxman's Platinum G2 mod platform. He has added an amazing number and variety of mods to this platform since it's release. Including IRL cars, COT, Brazilian Stockcars, Daytona Prototypes,



Heatfinder Webtool by Dusterlag, released in 2008



BOWTIE

„The beta program could have been a little more organized“

Bowtie has been beta tester for the original game and was the #1 driver at IRF in Heat's early days



How did you become a beta tester for the original game? Did you know someone in the development team?

I met Dan McJilton (dmac43) while racing Nascar 3 online. I painted some cars, haulers and things for him. He told me that he was part of a development team for Hasbro and they were working on a new 'revolutionary' racing sim. I asked if I could help....he said yes.

As a beta tester, did you have specific tasks or they just let you play it randomly?

Well, actually, the other testers were a couple months ahead of me, so I came in on Beta3. That's the version of the game I have on disc. I raced some races with them....in my opinion, the beta program could have been a little more organized...but, as you probably already know, there were changes being made at that time...

Do you know of any other person from the development team who raced online after the game was out (like you did, for example)?

Nope...Dan was the only guy I was in contact with after the release.

Actually, without going into it very far, Dan left Hasbro just as the Monster games/MGI 'takeover' and went to work for another developer...he still races N2K3...I ran into him a few times on a couple different sites.

What do you think on how long the game is 'on the road'? Did you expect it would last that long?

I knew HEAT was going to be around for a while. But the division came with Nascar 4 being released. All of a sudden it was either 'us' or 'them'....I was into trying to edit 3dobjects for HEAT at the time, and trying to avoid the conflictit's good to see all of the stuff you guys have done to keep the sim running!

After the game was released where did you do your online racing?

I raced mainly on IRF. I held the #1 points spot for a long time...LOL...until Rusty_T_Bass finally knocked me off....remember him? I also had a great time racing against Miss_Winston, but could never out run her! I raced in a couple different leagues, but they didn't last very long.

What was your most memorable race online?

For the most memorable race....well, that would be hard to decide because I was HOOKED! I hosted most of the races I was in on IRF and they were all great!

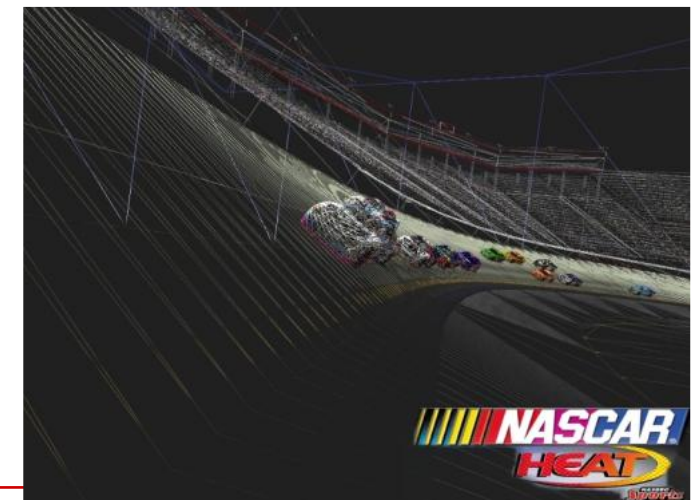


What is your favorite track?

I think Texas was, and still is my favorite mile and a half track. I like flat tracks mainly, though. New Hampshire, Phoenix and Martinsville were my strong points....

What did take you to record that awesome lap guitar version of Nascar HEAT Theme on the Heat festival video? The original tune is really nice but your version is fantastic!

hehe....I recorded the HEAT song with my default computer mic and my 1976 Fender acoustic guitar. I was recovering from surgery and radiation therapy then.....couldn't do much else...hehe



Raybee

„Things will get better the longer you spend on them“

Raybee is one of The Mod Squad's founders and maintainers. He's author of several Heat mods and been consultant and tester on even more.

When did you first get into Nascar Heat?

It was right around the same time it came out back in 2000. I had bought both NASCAR 4 from Papyrus and NASCAR Heat at the same time. I had been playing NASCAR 3 from Papyrus at the time, and figured NASCAR 4 would be even better. Boy, was I wrong. I found that I actually liked Heat better than any of the other Papyrus games I had played... so I stuck with Heat. I still love it to this day.

What game was your first sim that you raced ?

NASCAR 2 by Papyrus, then I moved to NASCAR 1999 and NASCAR 3, then I tried NASCAR 4 and finally went to Heat and have stayed here since, although I did venture out and do some things with some NR2003 track makers.

What are some of your most memorabilia races?

I ran a full 200 lap race at Caraway in Heat with a 24 car field and my own AI setup. There were some good battles with lap cars, but the final top 5 were all on the lead lap, and I won by only 1.2 seconds. Long race, but very enjoyable pulling out the win.

What are your favorite tracks?

Short tracks. I'm into any of the smaller tracks, but my favorites are some of the local tracks near me, like Bowman Gray, Caraway, Ace and North Wilkesboro.

How did you get started in modding?

I actually started modding when I got together with Publicnme01 and the Pro Street Heat mod came to light.



He had helped me to get started, and I had helped him to test, when it appeared no one else would step up and help him. So I volunteered, and Pro Street Heat was born.

What was your first creation in Nascar Heat?

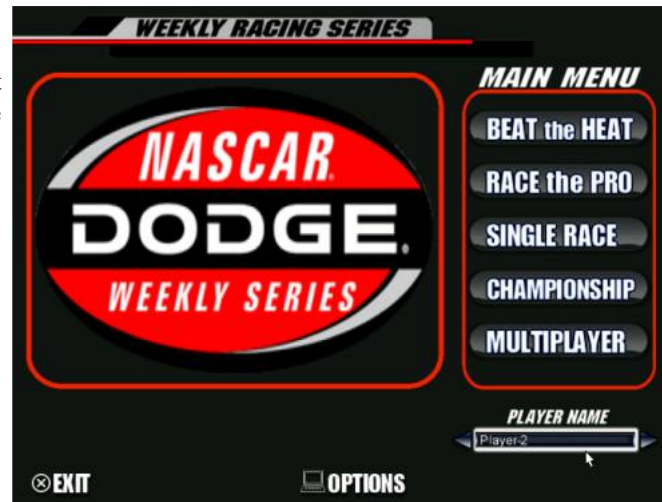
That would probably be the mod Sofa747 and myself made, when we made the VW Heat mod together, with some great help from Punko of Team Players on teaching us about working taillights and working interiors. The first full blown mod I made with screens and all would be the Weekly Racing Series (WRS) mod.

What is it that keeps you motivated to mod?

I tend to jump around a lot, so I don't ever get burnt out on one thing... but if I had to choose one thing, I would have to say that I am motivated to be creative, so that is what helps keep me going.

Where do you get all your inspiration from?

I'm mostly inspired by creativity and wanting to see things I like in this game. Mauro (Blaxman) has really stepped up a lot lately and made some enjoyable mods that we know



RAYBEE

folks have wanted to play in Heat. So I am glad we have someone like him to pick up where some of us old-timers of Heat have left off.

What have you enjoyed working on the most?

Actually, I've really enjoyed working on anything I've been a part of. I used to really enjoy helping Splashman on his tracks that he made, especially the short tracks, since those are my favorites.

When will you be releasing your Modified Mod?

That is hard to say. I don't have the time to work on stuff that I used to have, and haven't actually messed with the modifieds in several months now. Maybe one of these days everyone will get to play it.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to people learning to mod/track making?

Patience and practice. Take things slow, and learn as you go. You will find out that rushing through something just to "get it out there" will result in a half-done creation. So take your time, learn from your mistakes, and do the best you can. Things will get better the longer you spend on them.

Is there anyone you would like to thank for getting you into modding, and teaching you the ways?

Lots of folks to thank over the years. I'd probably start with Publicne01, John Hughes, Tyler Brunkhorst, Sofa747, Splashman, Tazmaniac, Punko, DRT_54, TWChad, Blaxman and the list goes on and on. All those guys really got me going, and have provided help, tools, advice...etc.

What are your plans for in the future projects?

I still have some tricks up my sleeve. I don't want to give away too much, but Blaxman and I have some stuff going on that are long-term projects that involves some old-school NASCAR stuff and new NASCAR stuff both.

When did you open the doors to The Mod Squad?

I believe that was sometime around 2004. We had a private forum before that, and it was mostly for modders and track makers to have a private place to talk without all the distractions like "when's it coming out?" or "can you make this mod or track?" type stuff.

Can you give us some history of The Mod Squad?

Sometime around 2004, a few of us who were a part of a private forum decided to open up a public forum and website. Those involved in opening The Mod Squad were Tazmaniac, Sofa747, TheMask, Splashman and myself. We had some good success and have kept growing. A few of those guys have left for real life things going on, but we've expanded to add TWChad as our webmaster and Blaxman and FFSBudman as moderators for the site. We hope to keep on keeping on in the future.



What do you see in the future for The Mod Squad?

While our heart lies with Heat, of course, eventually we'd like to see something come along that we could support to add into the site as another option for our friends. We opened up sections of the forums for both Viper Racing and NR2003, and they've had some topics and folks come in from those games, but not nearly enough to say we've had success with those games. I messed around with helping to make some NR2003 tracks with some old friends that are now playing NR2003, but the politics within that whole community just turned me off from it all, and I left it and came back to Heat. This is where my friends are, and where we have a really good community without all the politics now.



NR2k3 mod by Raybee, Tazmaniac & Splashman

SMOKE

„Lucky made me promise that I would do at least more than just 1 track“

Today Smoke is Heat's main RC track author, with a score of close to 30 track releases over the years. His most recent release is Grand Valley East

When did you first get into Nascar Heat?

In late 2000, not long after it came out. Bought it on a whim to take a quick look at what Papyrus competitors were offering, I had currently been racing GPL for a few years at the time. Liked the feel of Heat, found IRF, joined Lucky's League, and still here today, on an extended "quick look". ;D

Have you ever raced Heat online?

For Heat, when purchasing not long after release, I found IRF and started hanging out there in some pickup races. Ran into Lucky and signed up for his League running Cup cars on ovals. I was the only one consistently with Lucky and all his Leagues from early 2000 through late 2004, I believe, when Lucky ended his Leagues. I was much more interested in road courses and that also was Lucky's interest. League tracks were eventually all roadies. We ran all different mods over the years: Cup, Trucks, Lemans, Featherlite, DTM, Ferrari F40, OSRC, Ferrari 333SP, etc.

Speaking of Ferrari F40's, I have a friend who is good friends with Roland Linder, who has been all over the world with his full race F40 as a owner/driver. In 2003, Roland and his club rented the PPIR (Pikes Peak International Raceway) facility and I was invited along for the day and some rides with Roland.

What game was your first sim that you raced online?

Online, I think was GPL by Papyrus. I ran a lot over there



with David Harrison who runs Blackhole Motorsports. David was fast and consistent, was always picking his brain for tips. As somewhat of newbie there I joined a vroc online race and was amazed to find all the GPL biggies there, I parked and just watched the race, it was at Spa: David Noonan, Alison Hine, Doug Arnao, and some of the Papy boys. Was amazing to watch the consistent laps they could run in that sim, side by side. For me, just staying on the track with GPL could be a chore.

I started racing sims, in general, with IndyCar by Papy back in 93, requiring a 386 DX-25, 4MB ram, MS-DOS 3.3 or later, VGA, and 15MB disk space. I still have that box, pulled it to get specs. Bought a Thrustmaster T1 wheel to go along with that and was hooked. :) I owned every Papy sim after that.

How did you get started in Track Building?

I had been in Lucky's Leagues for almost 3 years, and we had become close friends. He was cranking out new tracks all the time, I matter of factly asked how he could possibly build those tracks. I had no clue how that could be done, never involved in any modeling prior. Lucky asked how serious I was, was it just a casual interest or actually building tracks. I indicated I had a real interest, he made me promise if he developed tutorials that I would do at least more than just 1 track. I remember that phone conversation, I agreed, and that is how his track making tutorials were developed. He spent a huge amount of time doing those with detailed doc and supporting screenshots in the Fall of 2003.

What was your first creation in Nascar Heat?

Buenos Aires, a GP500 conversion. At the time there were 2 tracks left from GP500 that had not been converted to Heat, Buenos Aires and Phillip Island. Lucky had done the initial steps on those 2 tracks, and gave me Buenos Aires, and Phillip Island to

SMOKE

Rick, another close friend. For people that have been around for awhile remember "rickb99", another great contributor to Heat and all around great guy. It ended up Rick was tied up on other things and didn't have time to look at that. I got the Buenos 3DS and tutorials from Lucky, started playing around, and released it in Dec 2003. Started looking around for another track to do, and been playing ever since. :)

What is it that keeps you motivated to create tracks?

Good question, not really sure, possibly some sort of addiction I guess. :) There is some real satisfaction in taking a track that is totally foreign to Heat, going through the time consuming process of getting it ingame, making additions/changes/etc to try to improve it, and then seeing a final product as a result in the sim. Every track seems to have something different, some new issue or challenge, and working through that to a releasable version is the motivation.

What are your favorite tracks?

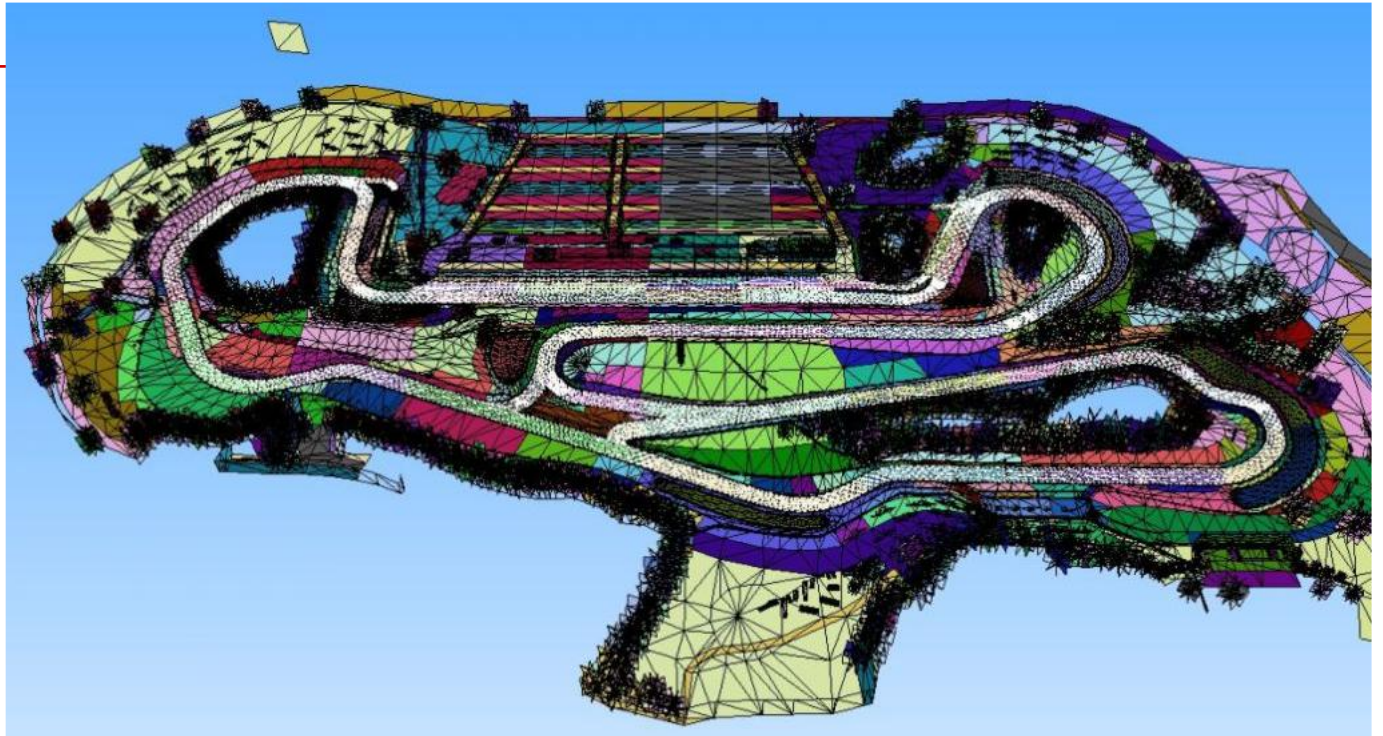
Birmingham is at the top. ;D I like the layout of that track, the flow, the elevation changes, and blind turns. Just feels right. That was also my first track with the skydome, no penalty traps, rougher/slicker grass, and deep/sticky sand for more realism. I felt that was a real step forward for a Heat track.

Others are Zolder2, SanMarino2, Mo_I_Rana, Pace Park.

What have you enjoyed working on the most?

Probably a couple of the older tracks where I got to work with drivers of those tracks.

Riverside with Rick "rickb99". Rick requested this track and wanted all 3 layouts, CanAm, Club, and the Nascar layouts. He knew how he wanted it done, and we had countless discussions and changes until it was how he wanted. The Club and Nascar sections were scratch built and integrating those sections into the original version were time consuming. I don't know how many versions I had on



Birmingham track for Heat in 3D editing topview.



Birmingham track for Heat in cockpit view. Screenshot on the right shows Smoke's innovative skydome feature, that gives that amazing feeling of running under a moving clouds

SMOKE

that corner at the top of the hill where the fork to the Club section intersects, but getting that right and the way Rick wanted it to feel, were more than I can recall. :)

Blackhawk Farms: I believe this is not a very popular track given the way the Cheater Traps were done. That track, Traps, etc were all done to spec for Keith Carter and Dave Hopple for their Heat F2000 Mod League. They are the SCCA Formula Continental guys over at apexspeed.com and used Heat in their off season, Blackhawk Farms being their home track. I mistakenly asked if they had any picture details of the track and they sent me hundreds of photos, incar videos, realtime race data, satellite imagery, etc. I knew this would not be a normal project when receiving that package. :) That track was basically totally rebuilt, they would re-test and provide huge lists of changes wanted, down to them debating if a corner should have a half degree more or less banking to it. When completed, I told them I would never work with them again on a track. :) Couple of great guys, we had a blast with that one.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to people learning to create tracks?

Go through all the tutorials available and allocate a lot of time!

Is there anyone you would like to thank for getting you into track building, and teaching you the ways?

Obviously, Lucky! He developed the tutorials for me and always made time to answer any questions when I was starting out. Ended up when one of us called over the years, we talked about everything except track making, just have no words for the friendship that developed there.

Rickb99, he did many of the menus, track testing, feedback, etc, and track release announcements on many of my earlier tracks. I had some great league races also with Rick. We developed a real friendship outside of sim racing, Rick was always interested in the personal side of things first and is one of the good guys, that seem harder and harder to come

by these days.

Oleg: when I got further into track making and had a difficult issue, he always took the time to understand the details and answer a question in detail, not just a solution but the supporting framework behind it. Oleg had an amazing grasp of everything related to the Heat internals, not just the track side of it. I never was able to follow all the information he provided, but always enough to get me through the current issue.

What are your plans for in the future projects?

Not sure, I just kind of wing it. When completing a track I look at what other ones I might have started or look around for another project. I like to look for flow in a road course, I like a good flow to one.



*Another goodie, released by Smoke in 2010: **Chatham**. At release time, it was one of the last SCGT tracks, that had not made it to Heat. The screenie gives a good look at the amazing skydome too*

CHOLERIX

„In Heat, I was first merely stumbling along“

Cholerix is founder of SPEEDSIMS.NET and one of it's maintainers. He is author several mods and of Heat Online Modding Tutorial.

When did you start on simracing ?

In 2000 with Sportscar GT by ISI. A friend of mine had successfully convinced me that some invest in patience and effort on learning how to drive in SCGT would pay off in a lot of fun. Even more so if I'd get a wheel for steering. So I did – and he was right.

How long have you been racing online?

In spring 2003, on good old SPEEDSIMS.COM forum which was perhaps the most popular simracing community site at that era, some user by the name of AceKing asked me if I'd be interested in joining an online racing series at a site called S.C.O.R.E.. Two weeks later on my first ever online race was SCGTS ingame GT3 cars at Mallory Park track .

What are some of your most memorabilia races?

That first race at Mallory Park 2003 for sure, because it was the first. I well remember an epic battle with Oldnslow with GroupC at Zandvoort in 2006 for example. 2005 HMC races at Limerock and Sardinian Park was even 5 cars close fighting full distance up to almost final turn for the win.

What are your favorite tracks?

Oulton Park and Nordschleife for landscape beauty, nasty blind turns, bumps and great flow
Hungaroring, Sardinian Park and Melbourne for having the best S-turns out there

When did you first get into Nascar Heat?



I was member at S.C.O.R.E. online racing site when it's maintainer Magnus Tellbom was checking what sim to run in 2004. We did some Heat test races with DTM94 mod. Heat's online code proved to be far superior to what S.C.O.R.E. had been used to in 2003, so S.C.O.R.E. moved over. Me included. But I was first skeptical about the sim. There was rather few mods available for Heat that looked interesting for running an online RC series. Additionally it was a problem to get a copy of Heat at all, as it had never been published for PC in Europe.

That first DTM races showed that Heat's physics engine obviously was way more sim than SCGT had ever been, so most of us had to learn how to properly setup a car for a race. With SCGT, this had been rather easy. With Heat, I was merely stumbling along first.

How did you get started in modding?

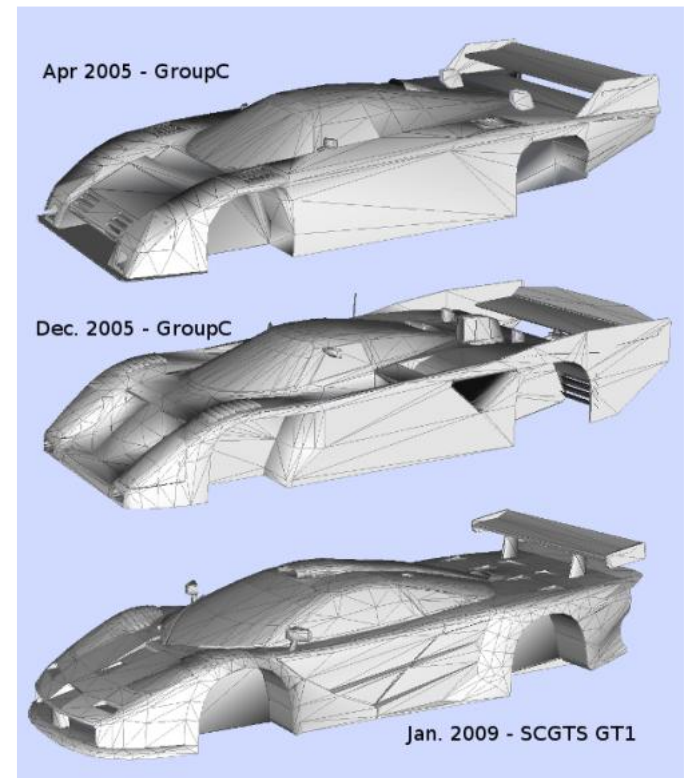
I wanted to run some really fast sportscars in the game. The only such mods available for Heat at that time was Lemans2 and GTP, but both in my opinion were out of date. We even had to cancel a Lemans2 series in 2004 when the cars proved to be too unbalanced for online competition.

When Magnus started working on the STCC mod in 2004, I realized that modding might be no rocket science and might be the way to go to get what cars I wanted to run in Heat, and that was Group C cars. Initially I had planned only to convert cars from SCGT to Heat, since I lacked any 3D modeling skills. I ended up with modeling all cars from scratch. And it became even „worse“ when I realized that doing physics wasn't just about putting in some numbers, but about *understanding* the game's physics engine.

What was your first creation in Nascar Heat?

My first ever creation was some car paints for the DTM94 mod in 2004. My first scratch-made 3D model was the GroupC mod's Ford Probe in the same year. I had started on

trying to convert a „Ford“ from SCGT, but found out that the model was just a rather badly tweaked Porsche, that only very remotely resembled the real Ford. Trying to improve that one into something more Ford turned out to be extremely frustrating, so I gave up, and started new from scratch. Was considerable more fun.



Progress at work: while Cholerix' first 3D model (top) was rather low-poly, on follow-up cars detail depth was notably increased

CHOLERIX

What have you enjoyed working on the most?

The GroupC Porsche was the first car ever where I had a strong feeling about having got the 3D modeling right, and it's been one of my alltime favorites too. So even though I guess all the SCGTS and Shelby mod car modeling was much superior, watching the Porsche 962 model come to its virtual existence was an unique experience.

What keeps you motivated to mod?

The creative part of modding – 3D editing and car painting – is plain fun to me if it's about cars that I love. Apart from cockpits, that is. Making cockpits usually is the part I really struggle with and that I have to kick myself to get on the task. Usually publishing some early WIP screenies and the resulting feedback keeps the motivation going even on the less fun parts of making a mod – which is apart from cockpits all the testing and getting countless tiny details right.



Porsche 911 GT2 cockpit in Sportscar GT mod - quite detailed work by Cholerix, who claims to hate making cockpits

Where do you get your inspiration from?

Actually I'm more a technical guy, much less the creative, inspired type. Doing race reports for example was first

Magnus Tellbom's idea, just as it was him who got me the idea to do car paints or try to do some modding. It was even his idea to have a modding tutorial, though he had never published his findings on Heat AI. The Shelby mod was Burnout's idea; doing race event banners has been common practice at other places already before I did the first myself

What are your plans for in the future projects?

First aim is to finish the SCGTS GT1 cars. 2nd is learn how to put tracks to Heat, and while doing so, get to understand the process, to extend the modding tutorial to track making. But that will probably take a little longer...



Sportscar GTS GT1 cars preview screenshot - according to these model's author we'll see them enter Heat next

Is there any advice you'd like to give to people learning to mod?

Don't let the 3D modeling scare you off. It needs some time to get used to working in 3D, but it's worth it. Modding ain't rocket science. It just requires patience. A lot of.

Is there anyone you would like to thank for getting you into modding, and teaching you the ways?

Definitely ! Punko from Team Players for having been a



Sportscar GT mod by Cholerix: The mod was first ever to have a completely redesigned User Interface. It was intended to resemble the Sportscar GT game by ISI, Cholerix had to make use of every editing trick Heat game engine allows for to get it done

patient consultant on Heat physics when I did GroupC mod. Oleg and later on Suchayo for opening my eyes to dig deeper into Heat's game engine. 2fnlow and Blaxman for great ideas how to work around some of Heat's limitations. Ron Jones for having given great constructive feedback especially on SCGTS physics that made me revise my understanding of how Heat's physics work.

As of right now I'm starting to pester Smoke to get into track making, I'll already thank him for being a patient tutor in the coming time ;))

Can you give us some history of Speedsims?

In 2003 I had put up some result pages for S.C.O.R.E. races Magnus had missed. When he later on dropped from his own series in second half, I took over maintenance and publishing results at my private place CHOLERIX.NET

CHOLERIX

In some kind of partnership in 2004 I provided race reports for S.C.O.R.E.'s Heat DTM series. For easier publishing, I hosted these reports again at CHOLERIX.NET. It only became a site on its own when in 2004 I started a series with Lemans2 mod and used the site to maintain it.

I extended the site to become SPEEDSIMS.NET on the release of GroupC mod. From there on, the site wasn't just a S.C.O.R.E. spinoff anymore, but rather some co-existing partner site, that was making use of the same (S.C.O.R.E.) forum. We shared the same audience anyway, so both sites did profited from that partnership

In 2007 S.C.O.R.E. turned first entirely LFS/rF and later on shipwrecked on the attempt to become bigger, so with the SCGTS mod just been released, I could either have accepted to have done all the work for naught or try making SPEEDSIMS.NET the new main Heat RC place, with

SCGTS mod being the starting point. At the aftermath of Magnus' dubious AUTOSIMSPORT article about Heat's supposed death, probably not the best condition to start with.

But it worked out much better than I had dared to hope. In comparison to 2006/7, we soon had increasing average numbers in almost every series that was maintained via SPEEDSIMS.NET site. My buddy DaveO joined in running the place in 2009 after racing with us since end of 2007, so now we can both focus on modding and running online series at the same time.

What do you see in the future for Speedsims?

I'd like SPEEDSIMS to stay a friendly niche simracing community place, that offers a good point to start into simracing and perhaps stay. And a wellknown distribution place for nice Heat tracks and mods, not just our own.

Everybody who's interested to setup and maintain a racing series or distribute his mod/track is welcome to do so at SPEEDSIMS; only prerequisite is some at least basic quality. People that come here to race should associate some certain quality with the "brand"

SPEEDSIMS' main topic is and will stay NASCAR Heat RC mods and online racing, but we're open to other sims as well, just as we already have run the occasional LFS series in recent years.



Cholerix' most recent release: **Shelby Can-Am** mod. Reality check: real life race action (left) vs mod screenshot (right), showing the same #10 car in the game. The mod physics have been tested and approved by the real car's drivers

BLAXMAN

„We didnt care for standards, we just tried whatever crossed our minds!“

Blaxman is one of THE MOD SQUAD's maintainers and author of both RC and Oval mods. He not the least created the G2 Platinum mod platform to ease up the publishing of mods

When did you first get into Nascar Heat?

Back in 2004, when a friend of mine gave me the CD of an "old Nascar game" he had laying useless at home. Instantly, at the first play, I became a fan of the game.

How long have you been racing online?

Curiously, I got into racing online just one year ago (will complete one year at October 17). The sim was Nascar Heat. Grand-Am mod (for Platinum G2) a special event held at SPEEDSIMS.NET.

How did you get started in modding?

At the end of 2004 I started to get interested for the game and mod structures. I managed to get all those DOS tools they used at the time in order to crack mod files open and rebuild them with my own updated stuff for personal use.

What was your first creation in Nascar Heat?



My first creation released to the public was a single file. It was a drivers.stp file (the one who has the drivers mugshots in it) released at Black Hole Motorsport on March of 2005. But my first significant release was the Texviewer-BX, mod/tool useful to see the .tex files Heat uses (which remains undecoded till now, that's the only way to visualize these kind in Heat files).

Can you tell us what's the story behind the G2 Platinum mod platform ?

I started to think on a non-standard type of mod by the middle of 2006, right after I released the first version of the Stock Car Brasil mod, which is my only "almost" conventional-type mod. I was bugged by the amount of features Mod Laucher-2 offers, and so got the idea of trying to make some use of these awesome features on my future projects

With the COT Advanced mod the carset swapper feature was used for the first time in order to transform the mod from winged COT's to spoiler cars Nascar used on 2007

season. The COT Platinum mod put the concept one step further, and got "submods" such like Nationwide and ARCA

The COT Platinum proved to be a quite successful concept, judging by download numbers. I refined it a bit more in 2009, fixing some small issues and turning it into a kind of "open source" modding platform.

The new G2 structure now allows new mods to be released without the need of doing a full UI and working on many other resource files conventional mods use. Common components are available in the base files while the addons simply need to carry on whats to provide their own unique characteristics - tire models, textures, spotter and engine sfx, etc. This structure shortened the development times for mods from months to mere weeks.



BLAXMAN

What is it that keeps you motivated to mod?

Most of the time is about challenges and pleasure to see people having fun with something I'm involved with. The challenge of making something never done before, the challenge of helping to keep an old sim community alive, etc.....

What have you enjoyed working on the most?

It's hard to tell only one. I use to enjoy every second of anything I do. Working with TheMask in the wet version of Interlagos was an incredible experience, specially because it was a work made to be included on my first ever mod. There was me, a rookie, working together with the "Master of Heat".... and he was liking my ideas and humbly giving me full support on everything I asked to be tried!

That was awersome because I found we shared the same way of trying 'crazy' things. We didnt care for standards, we just tried whatever crossed our minds! At the end, he beta tested the mod for me and we released the first wet track ever made for Heat as a partnership.

Is there any advice you'd like to give to people learning to mod?

Oh yeah, get an extra load of patience ! Be patient with the hundred of trial and error attempts you will face. Be patient with Heat limitations (dealing with it is a big part of the fun), be patient with people who not always will like (or understand) your concepts. Be patient with people who not always will give you constructive suggestions or opinions. Most people are not aware on how much work is needed to put a mod together..... so, it's natural a few of them sound a little ungrateful sometimes. Take it easy!

Where do you get all your inspiration from?

From lot of things. My desire to see certain cars or racing series available for Heat, the desire of pushing the game boundaries, the desire of finding new ways to do things some believed impossible....etc.

Is there anyone you would like to thank for getting you into modding, and teaching you the ways?

Yes, there's a great group of gentlemen who are responsible for what I've have learned so far and for the fact I'm still improving my skills on modding:

- Oleg "TheMask" for the inspiration, the awesome tools, tracks and teaching.
- Goresh for the Z-mod lessons.
- Raybee for the advisory, researching, coaching, beta testing and everything else he have done for me all this time. Lucky for granting me the rights of updating his tracks.
- Smoke for granting me the license of editing his tracks.
- 2fnlow for providing the base models for my very first Stock Car Brasil mod (2006).
- Gonk24 and TWChad for providing the models and templates since the first edition of the COT and

Platinum series mods.

- Sucahyo for the remarkable tracks and tools (made on demand) for a lot of complicated tasks.
- Cholerix for the various researches and tutorials
- DaveO (Mr. Anonymous) for the partnership, testing, counseling and other stuff...

What are your plans for in the future projects?

I have a whole lot of plans. The most obvious are the 2011 edition of Cup and NW mods (for G2), the release of the repaved version of Daytona_SP and a complete set of new AI lines for the offline racers delight. There's also plans of creating my own G2 online league, depending on technical conditions and spare time availability.

There's at least two more mods planned but I'm not sure I'll be able to release them due other commitments or even because there licensing process is still pending.



Stockcar Brazil (above) and GrandAm (left) mods by Blaxman