



FRONT ★09 LINE AWARDS

GAME DEVELOPER MAGAZINE'S MISSION FOR OVER FIFTEEN YEARS HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE GAME CREATORS WITH INFORMATION, NEWS, AND articles that pertain directly to them. The Front Line Awards are an official way of recognizing one specific aspect of the industry: the tools that developers need to do their jobs.

Each year, we look at the lineup of new products and new releases of important tools in the categories of game engines, books, art tools, middleware, audio tools, and programming/production tools. The resulting Front Line Award winners represent the most innovative, user-friendly, and useful products from behind the scenes of the world's best video games. In addition to the Front Line Award winners we also want to pay special tribute with our Hall of Fame Award to a product that has made a lasting impact on the game industry year after year (and which was not eligible to win in its specific category as a result).

Nominations for this year's Front Line Awards were open to all new software products and new versions of software products related to game development released between September 1, 2008 and August 31, 2009. In determining the winners of the 2009 awards we went through a multistep process. Open nominations were held in October, and from that list we consulted with our advisory board to narrow down the results to five entries in each category. We then handed the finalists over to you, the readers of *Game Developer*, via an invitational online survey in November, so that you could have a voice in picking the recipients of the Front Line Awards. After tabulating the survey responses we are proud to present the winners along with commentary by developers from throughout the game industry. A special thanks goes out to everyone who contributed to this year's Front Line Awards and congratulations to all the finalists and winners.

—Jeffrey Fleming

★ MIDDLEWARE ★

Volition Inc's RED FACTION: GUERRILLA.



HAVOK PHYSICS

HAVOK ★ WWW.HAVOK.COM

Simply put, RED FACTION: GUERRILLA would have been stillborn in the concept phase without Havok. What started out as a designer's pipedream became a living, breathing, crumbling, and violently exploding reality thanks to the power and flexibility that Havok brought to the table. But it is not the extensive, constantly evolving code base and feature set that won it this award for the second year in a row; it is the top-notch support that comes along with it.

That is not to say that

the engine itself is less than impressive, far from it. Havok Physics' strength and stability allowed us to build a custom destruction engine on top of its base that can handle everything from a simple wooden crate to an eight-story skyscraper without missing a beat. The extensive documentation provides a wealth of knowledge about fine-tuning all the knobs and switches to keep the frame rate steady even when the sky is literally falling. Its cross platform support meant that what took years to develop

on the Xbox 360 only took weeks to port over to the PS3 with full SPU support for our destruction engine.

The real reason Havok deserves this award is its stellar support staff. Even if the documentation is perfect there will always be issues that crop up that require human interaction. Whether you find a bug in low-level code or are trying to figure out the best way to accomplish a given task, help is only a short email away. On the off-chance that there is a bug in internal code they are

happy to deliver a custom build for you. Not in the next release or patch—now. And now is the best time to have what you need.

A key factor is that each product is assigned a caseworker that gets to know you and your game. You don't have to waste time on each new ticket bringing a new guy up to speed on the structure of your game before diving in to the problem at hand. It may not sound important now, but when you are moments from shipping there is no better feeling than knowing you

have the ability to call up a friend on the inside who knows exactly what is going on. Whether it is through email, on the phone, or on-site, the Havok support engineers are a pleasure to work with.

So thank you Havok, for letting us stand on your broad shoulders and build amazing games that were the stuff of dreams a few short years ago. Keep doing what you do so well and we will keep finding ways to use Physics to make those dreams come true.

—Eric Arnold, Volition, Inc.

MIDDLEWARE FINALISTS

- ★ NaturalMotion morpheme 2.0
- ★ Scaleform Gfx 3.0
- ★ Havok Behavior 6.6.0
- ★ Interactive Data Visualization SpeedTree 5.0