

Pro Gam3r Magazine Interview
FINAL VERSION

PG3 (Pro Gam3r Magazine) – Congratulations on your Sierra sponsorship of the 2007 CPL World Tour. What does this mean to the CPL?

Angel – Thank you. I think the real significance of this new partnership is the impact it can have on the future of professional videogaming. First a bit of historical perspective, e-sports is a phenomenon that developed outside of the gaming industry's traditional cartel. In fact, my first conversations in 1997 with game publishers about the CPL concept were mostly met with cold skepticism and even a bit of ridicule. Now fast-forward ten years and we have a large number of tournaments worldwide, and a larger number of gamers wanting to compete in professional tournaments. So it's not too surprising that a mega game publisher like Sierra Entertainment (a division of Vivendi) has entered the esports industry by sponsoring the CPL's \$500,000 World Tour for two of their top games (FEAR and World in Conflict).

I'm sure that upon release the number of units sold of World in Conflict will be followed by other publishers, and if the game is as successful as it truly deserves to be, we may see other game publishers allocate large budgets to tournaments for their games. Therefore, this relationship between CPL and Sierra Entertainment could ignite a new trend that will significantly benefit the entire industry.

PG3 - What does this entail for the future for CPL and Sierra after this season?

Angel – We really believe that World in Conflict can make a huge contribution to esports and we have indicated to Sierra that we would like to hold tournaments for the game through 2008. I guess that if we do our job this year we could have a possibility to do something even larger next year. The people at Sierra Entertainment are excited about the 2007 CPL World Tour, and we have weekly meetings with them to make sure that everything is running at top speed. In the ten years since the CPL was launched, I can honestly say that Sierra is by far the coolest company we've partnered with, and they understand the huge potential of our market segment very well.

PG3 - Will new Sierra games be considered for tournament play in the future for CPL?

Angel – New games are being considered; in fact Sierra Entertainment have already mentioned a few new games to us, but like I said we really believe in the future potential of World in Conflict.

Recently, another publisher has asked us to beta test a new game that we think also has potential for e-sports.

PG3 - What can we expect from the tournaments this year?

Angel – Most likely a growing number of participants at the World Tour stops, as the community of pro-gamers realize that the selected games have more potential than they originally thought.

Also I expect the World Tour Finals to have some exciting matches and to have an international following. We were initially planning to hold the Finals in New York City, but now we are seriously considering holding our World Tour Finals in Europe.

PG3 - Why was FEAR 360 picked over the “free” FEAR MP on PC? IS it because the setup with a 360 and TV is much easier then having a pc with monitors, hardware, installation of hardware and software and server?

Angel – We selected FEAR for the Xbox 360, primarily because FEAR multiplayer for the PC had a couple of nagging bugs that concerned us and could have created some annoying issues for us on our World Tour. Furthermore, we believe that it was time to diversify the CPL’s focus by adopting console games, which could help attract new gamers to the sport. Also from an entertainment perspective hosting one tournament game on PC (World in Conflict) and the other on the Xbox 360 (FEAR) help create a powerful visual contrast and a more expansive talent pool of participants.

PG3 - Speaking of servers, do you think you can persuade Sierra to set a tournament example by being the first competitive console game to have a dedicated server for tournaments? It is an Achilles heel of console tournaments and is a step back from the earliest of professional gaming events.

Angel – Great idea but not sure how feasible it would be to re-tool a game for that purpose. We can certainly discuss it with Sierra Entertainment. Thanks!

PG3 - There are very few playing FEAR so far in these tournaments. One reason could be the recent release of the 360 version in a country such as Italy. But the DreamHack tournament also has few participants. Why do you think this is? Do you think this will increase as more tournaments happen?

Angel – Two main reasons:

1. Historically gamers that compete in one-versus-one tournaments prefer PC based games.

2. Some gamers think that they prove a point by being resistant to change.

A clear exception to that last point was, Johnathan “Fatal1ty” Wendel, which competed on every game the league hosted, without ever expressing discontent or dismay. No wonder he is where he is today

PG3 - World in Conflict: Very promising game. Do you feel the decision of using this game before it was released was a wise move and why?

Angel – Everyone at the CPL understood from day one that World in Conflict is not only promising for e-sports, but could eventually give Counter-Strike some serious competition in community size.

Last week we saw some new tools that Massive Entertainment is developing for our tournaments that will further enhance this game’s competitive appeal. Overall, I think that World in Conflict will attract tens of thousands of gamers and could rival anything we have seen in RTS and FPS games thus far.

We definitely think that using the game before it was released is a benefit to the entire community of gamers, because we have the opportunity to share information with the developers and help shape the game before it is finalized and released. All publishers should follow Sierra’s lead on this.

PG3 - When will it be released in stores for the general public and how can we get access to view this new game in action before then?

Angel – World in Conflict will be released in a few months and right now we are hosting a Beta Test that has about three thousand participants. The comments we have received from the Beta Test have been overwhelmingly positive.

PG3 - On that same subject, what is CPL planning this year and the future in regards to spectators and public coverage? If I am stuck in the States and wanna watch Vincenzo “booms” D’Aurelio win CPL Sweden in FEAR, how can I do so? What about World in Conflict and spectators: is there going to be online coverage of this game anywhere?

Angel – We should be able to offer streaming coverage commencing with the USA Stop, which will take place during Labor Day weekend at the Anatole Hotel in Dallas, Texas. We have several camera crews at DreamHack filming the matches and will make them available for download.

PG3 - This is a very “new” year in gaming; new leagues, new games, new direction. Do you feel that these new leagues and tours are all allies in the growth of gaming?

Angel – It's a new year for a lot of leagues, but for us it's our ten year anniversary! Personally, I'm excited about all of the tournament activity that has sprung up lately. To me it seems a bit surreal that just ten years ago it was difficult to convince people that esports was a massive and permanent new trend and not just a passing fad.

PG3 - Do you feel that any of these companies is out solely for their own personal gain?

Angel – At the very core of capitalism is the principle that companies should seek to benefit themselves by creating industries that can benefit others. So even if your statement was true for some companies, it would not be entirely bad for the industry.

PG3 - With the exception of WSVG and ESWC using Quake 4, 1v1 FPS games for PC seem to be on the tail end of tournament life. Do you believe this to be true? If so, why is that? If you do not think it to be true, then why did the CPL not choose one, nor any other league new or old?

Angel – I think the trend to move away from PC 1v1 FPS games is primarily fueled by the fact that there are no new PC-based FPS games that really work on all cylinders for competition tournaments. This is a vacuum that we hope to fill with Severity.

PG3 - Didn't 1v1 FPS games for the PC get gaming where it is today?

Angel – One-versus-one FPS was where it all started, and although I'm a huge fan and supporter of one-versus-one tournaments, it was the five-versus-five format of Counter-Strike that really drove the growth of the CPL for years.

PG3 - Severity: what is the status of this game? Many believe it is John Romero's new project when this is not the case. Please explain his involvement in the project.

Angel - John Romero is an advisor on the project, but he's not developing the game. We just announced that a new Dallas-based studio named "Escalation Studios" will be developing Severity and that a publisher should be announced shortly. We should have more news for the community at our CPL Summer Championships.

PG3 - What faith do you have in this game and what kind of gameplay can we expect?

Angel – I have absolute faith in Severity, because it will benefit from our ten years of experience and know-how, also because the people developing the

game are all gamers that understand competitive gameplay and still listen attentively to the community of gamers to gain perspective.

The gameplay will be hardcore with some visual representations that we have never seen in a game of this type before. I am convinced that Severity will exceed the community's expectations, and that's a high standard to set and to meet.

PG3 - Will it be multiple platform? If so, will people of different platforms be able to play against one another? Also if so, will the home versions support mouse and keyboard controlling?

Angel – Yes, Severity will be released on multiple platforms. Yes, gamers will be able to compete against each across multiple platforms. Yes, keyboard and mouse will be supported.

PG3 - Can we expect Severity to be a primary game for the CPL in the future? What if the game is sub-par and has very little support? Or, what if it fantastic, yet the community just doesn't like it? I am not trying to naysay anything regarding this project, I can't wait really. I do, however, understand how these gamers act when a new 1v1 fps game comes to threaten their dearly beloved (list favorite game here). So, what steps are being taken to prevent this would be the real question?

Angel – The CPL will definitely support Severity with a series of large tournaments. I'll leave doubts to the doubters, as no matter what we do they will always be there with their contrasting comments.

PG3 - As a gamer, it is very hard to be for gaming when the leagues choose games that I do not agree with. This seems to be a very constant and consistent dilemma of gamers around the world. What would you suggest them to do about this problem? Will the gaming community ever be happy?

Angel – I would say follow on "Fatal1ty's" steps and if some organization is paying you to play a game... be flexible and have fun with it.

PG3 - What does gaming need more then anything right now as a whole?

Angel – More visionaries that can see beyond the obvious and can help lead the way in innovation to develop new forms of interactive entertainment.

PG3 - Finally, what is Angel Munoz and the CPL doing for gaming this year? (Overall)

Angel – We are hosting the \$500,000 CPL World Tour, and we are soon re-tooling CAL for a brand new online experience.

Also we are helping launch an awesome new energy drink called “CyberShotsz” formulated specifically for gamers, which we think will take the gaming community by storm.

There’s more, but those are the highlights.