

Tips for Future Machinima Students

Hammer

- Learn the keyboard shortcuts to make working in Hammer more efficient. There is a complete list of shortcuts on the Valve Developer Wiki: http://developer.valvesoftware.com/wiki/Hammer_Hotkey_Reference
- When compiling maps with complicated brushwork, the compile tools need to work extra hard to break up the level around oddly shaped brushes. To make compile times a lot faster, use `func_detail` for brushes that do not form the outer shell of the map. There are example maps in the SDK that illustrate how to use them.
- The Valve Map Extractor (`vmex`) can be a powerful tool for learning how to make maps, but one should never add on or modify the extracted map unless the original author of the map grants permission to do so. Whether claimed or not, the original author has the copyright for his work and it would be difficult to establish fair use in such a situation. Also, a decompiled map becomes exponentially more difficult to work with than an original map and is much more likely to leak or cause other serious visual problems.

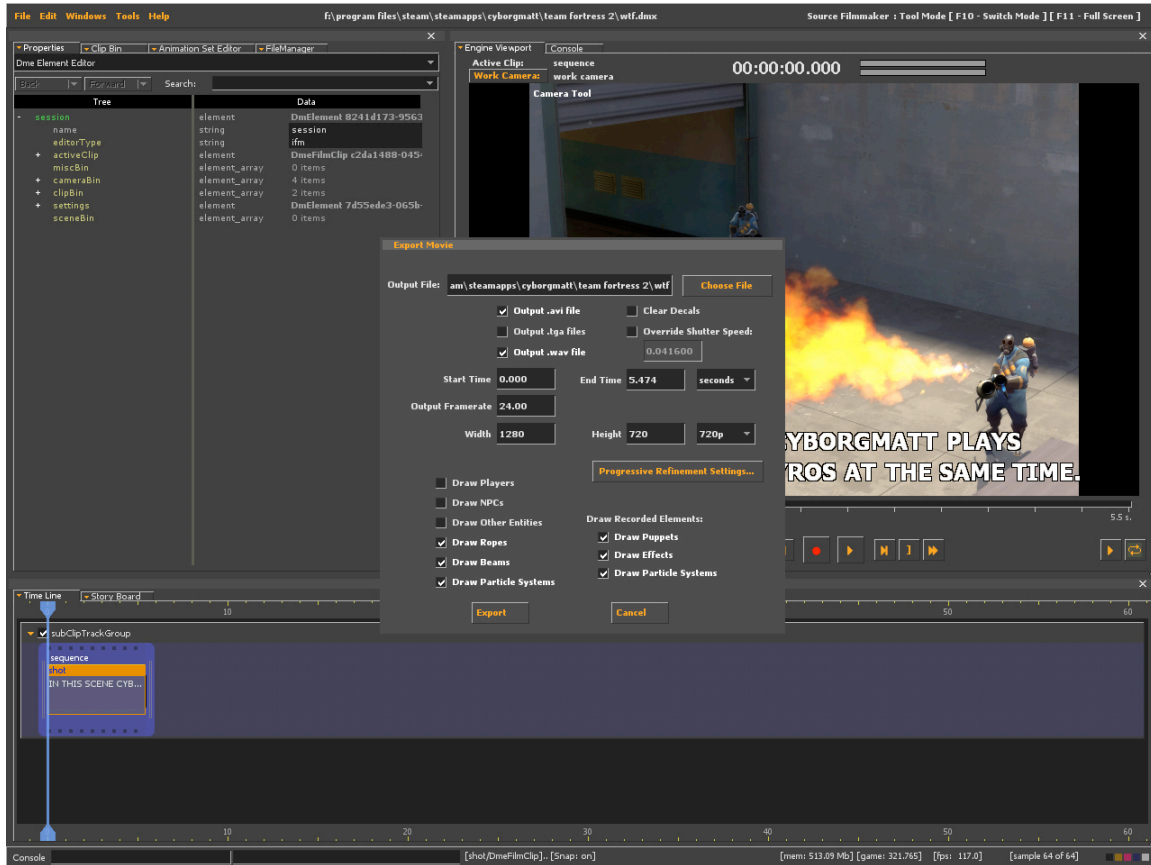
Face Poser

- Phoneme extraction does not work under Vista. This has not been resolved even in the most recent version of the SDK.
- Channels are extremely useful for grouping similar events together, such as speech or gestures. There is no excuse for not using them.
- The ramp tool is difficult to get used to, but can give a user fine-grained control over just about any event in the timeline – especially gestures and facial flex animations.
- If using the Orange Box version of the tools, the scenes built in Face Poser will not play in the game until they are included in `scenes.list`. This file must be rebuilt whenever a change is made to any scene in the game. The tool will prompt to rebuild this when exiting if changes are detected, or it can be forced from the File menu.
- Garry's Mod is compatible with scenes built in both the Episode One and Orange Box versions of the tools. It also has access to assets from all Source engine games (*Counter-Strike: Source*, *Team Fortress 2*, *Portal*, etc.).

Miscellaneous

- Valve has built several tools in-house for creating machinima, none of which have been officially released. One of these, the Source Film Maker, was accidentally released in source code form with the release of *Team Fortress 2* (the source code has since been removed). Among other things, this tool provides a timeline editor (similar to that found in Face Poser)

and allows precise control of cameras and actions in the game. Valve has expressed desire to release these tools to the public at some point, but it would be nice if they could give machinima students a test drive. It could have incredible results if placed in the proper hands.



Disclaimer: this screenshot is from an anonymous Internet source.