TECH STARTUP OF THE MONTH
PIXELTEK

Let's talk GAMING! Let's talk about the trend that's all hyped and blooming for the topmost place in the days ahead. Let's talk something about the gaming freaks, for the gaming freaks… by the gaming freaks – PIXELTEK GAMING SOLUTIONS.

Pixeltek – that started as an outsourcing 3D graphics company catering to the international video games industry is today among the topmost names of the gaming world.Over the past year, Pixeltek has used its expertise in the Gaming world to pivot into the fast growing industry of Virtual Reality development. With the onset of devices such as the Oculus Rift and Samsung Gear VR, Pixeltek has seized the opportunity to become a leading player in this field.

VITEK GOYEL: AND HIS JOURNEY THROUGH PIXELTEK

Founder Vitek Goyel was born in Mumbai, and educated in both the UK and USA. He formed Pixeltek on returning to India after completing his B.S. in Electronic Media, Arts and Communications from RPI in Troy, NY.

While he was still at RPI, Vitek's focus was mainly in Interactive arts, where he developed several unique interactive projects and installations. It was here that his love for interactive arts and media started. On returning to India, he decided to form Pixeltek to cater to the ever growing demand for high end 3D graphics for the gaming Industry. Since then, besides Pixeltek, Vitek has also played a key role in the US based company Phoenix Online Studios LLC where he is Vice President.

At Phoenix Online, Vitek has played a key role in production and is Executive Producer on several critically acclaimed games such as Cognition: An Erica Reed Thriller, Jane Jensen's Moebius, The Last Door, and most recently, the 20th anniversary remake of the cult classic Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers.

Apart from Gaming and VR, Vitek is also a professional musician and is the frontman and principal songwriter for Mumbai based alt-rock band Slow Down Clown. The band has toured several cities in India and their music is played regularly on Radio Channels such as Radio One, and their music videos air regularly on both VH1 and MTV Indies.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Pixeltek was founded in in 2004, and started out as an outsourcing company that catered solely to the global video games industry. Since then Pixeltek worked with several leading developers and publishers around the world, for AAA and Indie titles across multiple consoles and platforms.

Since its formation, Pixeltek has worked with several of the leading gaming companies in the world, and has provided 3D models for use in blockbuster titles such as Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines, Ghostbusters, Edge of Tomorrow, Godzilla, TimeShift, Gabriel Knight, Spellforce, and many more.

DEVELOPMENT: GAMING AND WHAT ELSE?

In the last year or so, Pixeltek has expanded to take on Virtual Reality development. Since VR development is similar in many ways to Game Development, Pixeltek had an early advantage in this field. The company is now pivoting from being solely an outsourcing company, to an all-encompassing digital/immersive media technology company. The roots are still firmly in the Gaming world, but it is further branching out into other streams of business and industries.

In the short span of a few months, Pixeltek has been able to land contracts with some of India's leading companies in the fields of Real Estate, Manufacturing and Hospitality, to create unique and immersive experiences that are used for sales and marketing tools for these companies.

In Real Estate, they are creating fully immersive 3D walkthroughs of properties that are still under construction, allowing potential customers to view the properties, amenities and interiors almost as they will be in real life. By doing so, customers feel more comfortable about making such purchases as they know what they are getting. The immersive factor is something missing from traditional 2D walkthroughs, and adds a whole new dimension that was never before experienced.

Similarly, for its Hospitality clients, they are able to recreate sprawling hill side retreats that showcase the natural beauty of the surroundings, while at the same time showcasing amenities, and more importantly, the hotel rooms themselves. Certain aspects, such as the size of the room, the size of the bathrooms, balconies, etc., are best viewed through a device such as the Oculus, as it gives the customer a much better sense of space and size. As one of their clients noted, it's almost as good as being there yourself.

For their Manufacturing clients, Pixeltek is showing a whole new way to show off a factory floor. Using unique voice over tours, a potential customer can get a complete audio visual tour of a factory, and at the same time learn about the processes and steps required in manufacturing the product. For certain industries dealing with sensitive environments, this tool is extremely beneficial as it places the user out of risk, and lets them view the interiors of a factory from the comfort of their own homes. This is indeed a game changer, and the uses for this kind of technology in the manufacturing space is limitless.

OCULUS RIFT AND WHAT'S NEXT?

Pixeltek plans to expand its VR services into other sectors such as Healthcare, Education, and even Gaming, something the company already has plenty of experience with!

The Oculus itself has not yet launched a consumer version, which is slated for a Q1 2016 release, but Pixeltek has already hit the ground running so that when the consumer version is released, they will have already delivered on several high profile projects.

THE TEAM

At present, Pixeltek has a team size of 25 full time employees, and the team is consistently expanding. The management hopes to hit a team size of around 35 by the end of the year.

E: Gaming industry is a booming one in India today. Where do you see Pixeltek 5 years from now as far as gaming industry in concerned?

V: Pixeltek has been working closely with several of the leading game developers internationally over the past few years. So, I expect that in the next 5 years, we will continue the relationships we have, and develop new ones along the way. We also have a few projects up our sleeve that we hope to launch in the coming months. As far as VR goes, that is a space I am most excited about and I feel we will see the most development over the next 5 years. VR as a technology is poised to change the world, and we hope to be at the forefront of that change.

E: How is Pixeltek different from its contemporaries?

V: We've managed to stick around in an industry that sees companies open and shut down so rapidly. One of the reasons we were able to do that is by making sure we focus on 'Quality' rather than 'Quantity' – from the kind of team members we hire to the types of projects we take on. On converting the text format to audio there is intelligence built in to learn pronunciation of names and new words. For video, of course there are a lot of complex methodologies ranging from – image recognition, identifying images that match license criteria and then stitching them in sync with the story.

E: Tell us how Pixeltek is associated with Oculus Rift.

V: We started developing with the Oculus Rift ever since the first version (DK1). Since it launched, we have been fortunate enough to work with some of India's leading companies in the fields of Entertainment, Real Estate, Hospitality and Manufacturing. We ensure we are developing for the latest hardware available, and have delivered on projects that use the Oculus Rift DK2, as well as mobile VR devices such as Samsung Gear VR and Google Cardboard.

E: What are the future prospects of virtual reality in India?

V: I personally feel that the prospect for VR in India is quite limitless. I like to believe the only limitation is your imagination. I have shown VR demos to people from all walks of life in different industries, and it's really amazing to see the expression on their faces when they first try it. Once the novelty factor wears off, then the real interesting part starts – people's minds begin to race thinking about all the unique possibilities this technology allows, and we get some really interesting ideas floating around.

E: On the same note, in India, which are the areas and genres you feel VR is going to show up first?

V: I think the first space we'll see this, and we're already beginning to see it, is in the 'Real Estate' space. Making Virtual Reality show flats and apartments is something that many people are keen to start developing. We're already working with clients in this space, and look forward to the first launches which will happen very soon.

Another field where this technology is already being used is 'Entertainment' – malls, theme parks, etc., are starting to use VR for rides and creating unique and thrilling experiences. We have also developed some VR experiences for a leading Mumbai based entertainment hub.

E: And we guess you are a gaming freak yourself…aren't you?

V: *Smiles*. Yes, I think you have to love gaming to be in this Industry for so long! I started playing games back in the 80's with the Nintendo (then known as the Samurai). I was quite the gaming addict back then, and now I try to play whenever I get free time. Unfortunately due to my hectic work schedule, I only manage to sneak in a couple of hours each week.

E: No prize for guessing that you are a techie guy. What are your favourite gadgets?

V: Yes, I am a bit of a tech junkie, so I do love playing around with new gadgets and devices. I do lean a bit towards Apple since I've been using their computers for almost 20 years now. So I love playing with the latest i-Toys. I also enjoy using Android devices like the Samsung Note 4, which we've had to use for the Gear VR headset. I'm an old school gamer - so I love playing retro games on my PC, and I'm a big fan of point and click adventure games, which are mostly PC and Tablet based.

That being said, as much as I love all my devices from tabs to smartwatches, I also enjoy the time when I can turn everything off and settle with a good book and some good music.

E: Social networking to you is….

V: …the ultimate personal broadcast tool. You get to transmit your thoughts across the globe in real time, get feedback, and really feel your finger on the pulse of the world around you. Social Media in many ways is quite similar to Virtual Reality, in that you're taken out of the physical space but you are still in control. It's no surprise then, that Facebook bought out Oculus Rift for over $2 billion! The future of VR and the future of Social Media seem to be intertwined, and I for one am extremely excited about the prospects!