2003

Will you take the blue pill or will you take the red pill? Waiting for the Metaverse or something like it

Zyda, Michael

Does the MetaVerse start now?

Michael Zyda, The MOVES Institute (Moderator)
Robert Gehorsam, There Inc.
Philip Rosedale, Linden Lab
Mark Mine & Joe Shochet, Disney IG

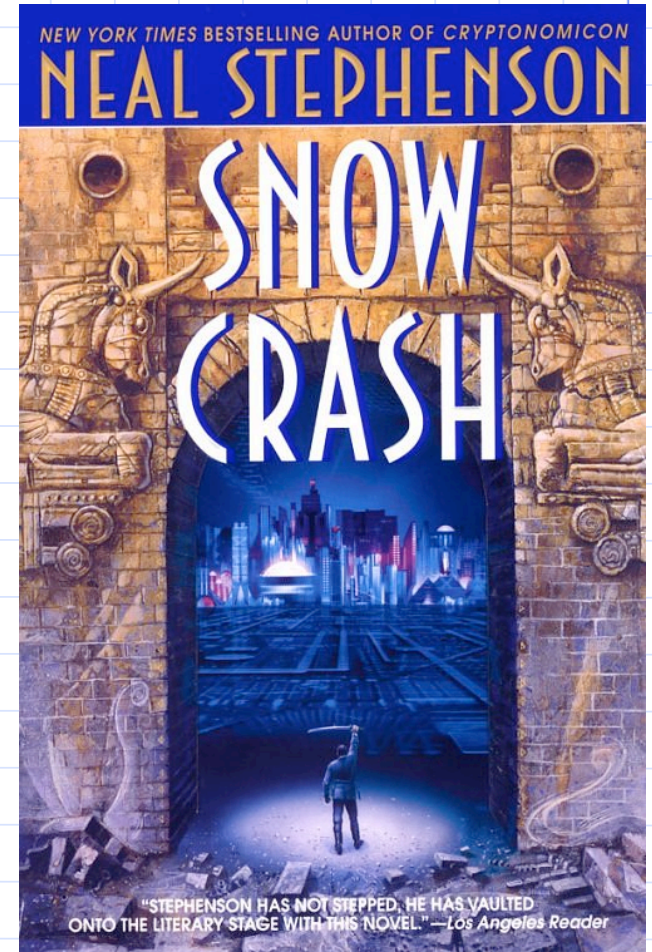**Will you take the blue pill or will you take the red pill?**

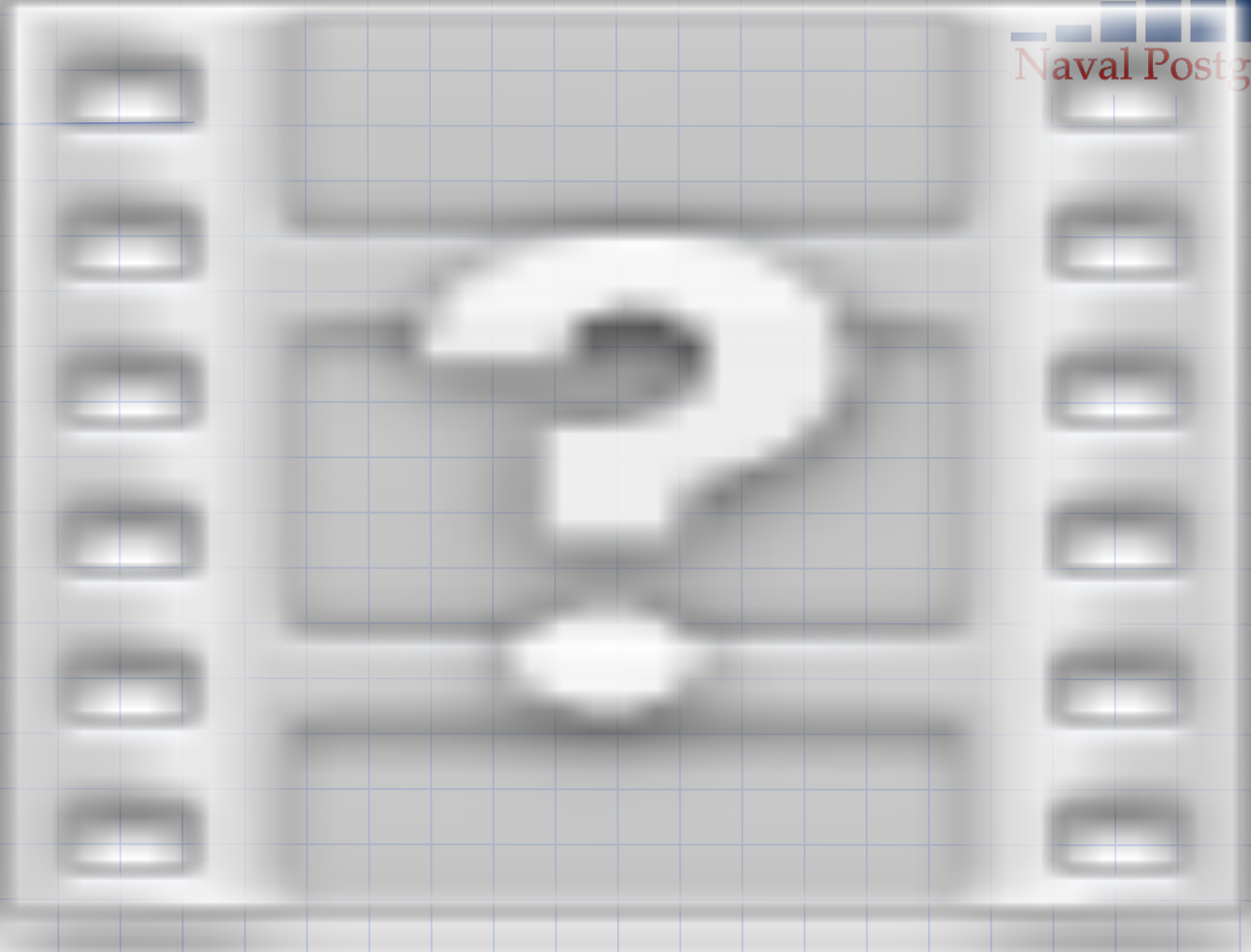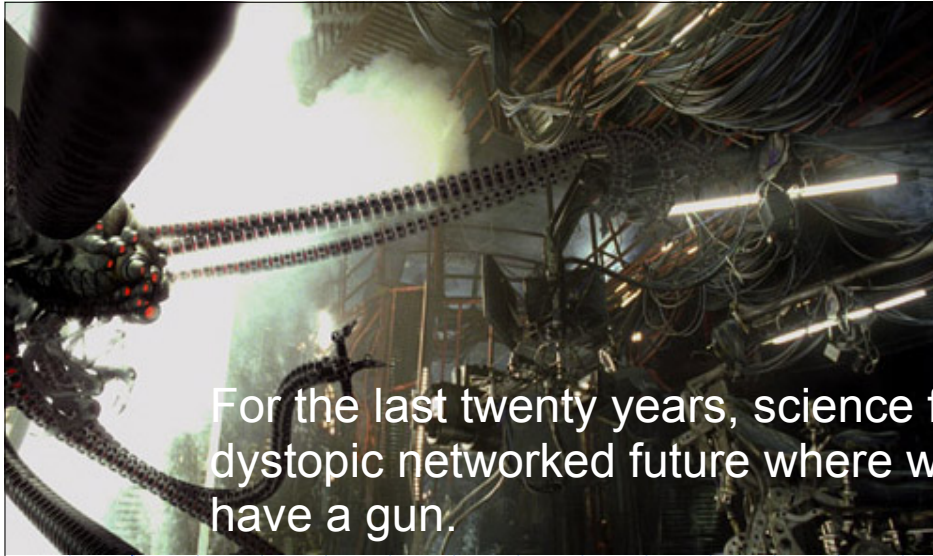**Waiting for the Metaverse or something like it ...**

2

Snowcrash, Chapter 1

The Deliverator belongs to an elite order, a hallowed subcategory. He's got esprit up to here. Right now, he is preparing to carry out his third mission of the night. His uniform is black as activated charcoal, filtering the very light out of the air. A bullet will bounce off its arachnofiber weave like a wren hitting a patio door, but excess perspiration wafts through it like a breeze through a freshly napalmed forest. where his body has bony extremities, the suit has sintered armogel: feels like gritty jello, protects like a stack of telephone books.

When they gave him the job, they gave him a gun ..."

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *CRYPTONOMICON*

NEAL STEPHENSON

SNOW CRASH

"STEPHENSON HAS NOT STEPPED, HE HAS VAULTED ONTO THE LITERARY STAGE WITH THIS NOVEL." —*Los Angeles Reader*

Panel Purpose

For the last twenty years, science fiction authors have envisioned a dystopic networked future where we are all jacked in and where we all have a gun.

With science fiction authors having accurately predicted the advent of the first-person shooter online videogame, the question then about the Metaverse is, is that all there is?

In this panel, we bring together speakers and demos on new technologies and entertainments for our online future.

Will Web-3D become pervasive or die like VRML?

Is it the time to turn the Internet to a fully 3D and interactive communications medium?

With this panel, we explore these and other issues and see some pretty cool demos as well!

Timeline

83 - SIMNET Start

84 - SGI Flight

84 - Neuromancer

85 - SGI DogFight

86 - SIMNET First Demo

86 - NPS FOG-M

87 - NPS VEH first Net-VE at NPS

Timeline continued

88 - NPS MPS-1

90 - NPSNET-1

90 - SIMNET to Army

91 - BrickNet

92 - DIVE

93 - NPSNET-Stealth hooked to SIMNET

93 - Doom on Internet

Timeline continued

94 - VRML starts - co-opts Inventor

94 - Snow Crash

94 - Ender's Game

94 - SGI highest point

96 - Nintendo 64

97 - NRC - Modeling & Simulation - Linking Entertainment & Defense

Timeline continued

97 - 3D graphics hardware becomes commodity but not ubiquitious

99 - The Matrix

00 - Playstation 2

01 - XBox

02 - America's Army - games for strategic messaging

03 - XBox & Playstation 2 networked

03 - The Matrix Reloaded

9

The New Millennium: Dystopias and Utopias in Virtual Worlds

Robert Gehorsam - Vice President,

Strategic Initiatives, There Inc.

The metaverse torch has been carried over the past few decades by a decidedly visionary -- and inspiring -- group of technologists, designers, artists and writers.

And the vision has been profound, dark and often disturbing. In the 1990's, efforts at open-ended metaverses floundered, while Everquest, Ultima Online and Lineage at least established the commercial viability of genre-driven online games.

Now, a convergence of cultural and technological trends suggests that a certain critical mass has finally formed. The next generation of MMP games and metaverses all attempt to go beyond niche markets, and the one profound thing they all have in common is a commitment to providing the inhabitants of these worlds with the power to build their own realities and self-organize their societies.

Does this empowerment suggest that the weather forecast on The Street is sunny and warm? Or is every metaverse a mirror of human behavior as it was, is and will be? In this talk and demo, we'll look at how There has approached the challenges of nurturing an online society.

10

Leave Your Body at the Door … and Enter Your Second Life

Philip Rosedale - Founder & CEO, Linden Lab

The Metaverse, the Matrix, Cyberspace. For years we have read about wonderful and fantastical online spaces which co-existed alongside "real life". But until very recently these spaces remained the stuff of science fiction, and attempts to bring them to life were either uninteresting or aimed at a very narrow audience. Now, however, the age of low-latency broadband, the availability of inexpensive CPU power, and the advent of graphics acceleration has brought us to the point where it's no longer such a remote possibility to dream of living a second life in a virtual world.

Enter Second Life and discover a totally dynamic, 3D world whose residents are engaged in the addictive, creative, and entertaining 'game' of building a shared reality. We'll explore what it means to create a new identity in a deeply self-expressive world, and debunk some of the myths about why something like this hasn't happened before. Is it a game? You decide.

Building a Massively Multi-Player Game for the Masses: Disney's Toontown Online

Mark R. Mine & Joe Shochet - Walt Disney IG

Disney's Toontown Online is the first massively multi-player online game designed for children ages seven and older. Filled with safe, friendly, and colorful environments, Toontown has a clean interface and simplified game mechanics that are perfect for younger children. Toontown, however, is not just for kids; adults enjoy Toontown's many humorous and nostalgic elements and addictive game play. In this talk we will discuss some of the challenges of building an MMP for kids and will present an overview of some of the lessons learned.

In particular we will focus on ways of incorporating kid-friendly socialization into an MMP. Toontown Online was designed and created by Disney's VR Studio, formerly part of Walt Disney Imagineering Research and Development, now part of the Walt Disney Internet Group.

3D and A Buck Will Buy You a Cup of Coffee

JC Herz - Author (Joystick Nation)

The metaverse was a literary parlor trick that technologists all over the world fell for. Like any good magician, Neal Stephenson directed your attention one place ("Ladies and Gentlemen! Witness, the amazing technology! The photo/haptically realistic fully rendered 3D world!) while the real action was somewhere else. Techologists believed that the magic was in the rendering of the world, and spent years and millions of dollars getting the world to look right.

And when the curtain was pulled off fully roamable 3D "avatar worlds," there was no magic. It was, in fact, more tedious and less interesting than Instant Messenger. Why? Because what technologists failed to realized, while constructing these pixel palaces, was that what made Snow Crash interesting was not the fully 3D world rendered by the most amazing computational device in the world (the reader's brain), it was the fact that everything that happened in that world was dramatic, and the characters were all interesting - because there was a skilled novelist pulling the strings, making the events dramatic, and the characters interesting.

In "avatar worlds," there is no underlying dynamic that makes events dramatic and people, well, people, particularly strangers, can be pretty boring if their interaction is limited to chat in a social void.

3D and A Buck Will Buy You a Cup of Coffee

Massively multiplayer games, on the other hand, are compelling. Why? Because they are designed to a) furnish some intrinsic drama, via the conflict that is inherent in game play and b) they build enough social imperative into the experience so that characters have to bond (whether that bond is cooperative or competitive), in the interest of survival and in-game success, and therefore become interesting to each other. The experience has bones and muscle, not just a pretty skin.

Ultimately, the broad cultural success or failure of alternative realities is determined by their capacity to deliver on a social and narrative level. Am I part of a larger story in a more dramatic world where I get to do things I couldn't do in the real life (computer chat, we can do on our desktops)?

And, do I get to matter in that world, to other people? If there are no compelling affordances for that, then no amount of visual stimulation will hold a large number of people in place for any significant length of time. Social architecture and interaction design trump eye candy. Web logs are, for millions of people, in every respect, a more satisfying experience than "the metaverse," because blogs are an order of magnitude more *socially* realistic and robust than the current crop of 3D romper rooms (and I say this as an ardent fan of said romper rooms). Blogger is brilliant piece of social software - 3D worlds need to be as well, if they're going to be interesting to more than a handful of dedicated geeks.

Questions?

In closing

The MOVES Institute
Naval Postgraduate School

http://movesinstitute.org

MOVES OPEN HOUSE

5 - 7 AUGUST 2003