Laura's Happy Adventures
Interview with Kim Belanger & Catherine Roy - Project Managers

Q: What did you, the development team, do to reacquaint yourselves with the PLAYMOBIL® characters?

The first step was to return to the world of toys! It was amazing for us to see how much detail was contained in each plastic universe and we used that as a resource to develop the story! The next stage occurred when we received 6 complete collections of the PLAYMOBIL® toys and simply played with them. We assembled the collections and created different scenes and used these to try and understand how kids perceive the PLAYMOBIL® universe.

Q: Did you have a hard time imagining these stiff characters as animated, moving beings?

After spending time with the toys, we came to the conclusion that for most children, the PLAYMOBIL® toys *are* animated, like human beings. In their imagination, the toys are alive! This is part of the reason that we chose to move their arms and legs in the games.

We also noticed how excited children became when they watched the PLAYMOBIL® characters move freely in a 3D environment! We were very careful, though, to keep the original PLAYMOBIL® look in everything we designed. Therefore, even if the characters move, run or jump, they come back to a PLAYMOBIL® pose as soon as they stop moving.

Q: Please describe *Laura's Happy Adventures*. What is the basic plotline?

The game allows players to enter the enchanted world of PLAYMOBIL® with Laura as she discovers a mysterious diamond and is swept away on a series of adventures! Featuring over 20 hours of entertaining gameplay, *Laura's Happy Adventures* has been designed to capture players' imagination and challenge their creativity in a dynamic fashion.

Q: What are the basic differences between the original version and the Pentium® III optimized version?

We have taken what is already a graphically outstanding game used the increased processing power of the Pentium® III engine to enrich the game even further – pushing it to a whole new level in PC gaming. Some of the end user benefits of using the Pentium® III engine can be summarized as follows:

1. More detailed and richer looking characters and levels through a substantial increase in the polygon count.
2. Improved shadow effects that will reflect the characters actual position.
3. Increase in the number of lighting sources creating more dynamic lighting effects.
4. Improved AI in the characters and the addition of new characters.
5. Addition of mirror effects creating reflections.
6. Improved surface appearance with the addition of multi-texture effects.

Q: Do you think children will notice these differences?

I do. Children are a lot more observant than we sometimes give them credit for! In *Laura's Happy Adventures* the most noticeable difference for children will probably be the addition of over 23 characters that they can interact with in the village and garden. This optimization

aspect alone brings a lot more life into the game, adds more interaction, and enriches a game that was already complete in terms of scenario, gameplay, graphical richness and beauty.

The moving shadow is another aspect that makes the game more dynamic. It has created a sense of realism that you will rarely find in games, let alone children's games. When players play the game now they will notice a realistic shadow effect that respects the shape of their body and follows their every move.

Q: How did you handle the adaptation of the original version into the Pentium® III optimized version?

We started with a real-time 3D game of superior quality and worked closely with Intel to create a game that is fun, interesting and user-friendly! We are among the first to make a game with these features for the children's market. With the Pentium® III versions of *Laura's Happy Adventures* we have gone one step further in providing high-tech quality for children.

We can divide our optimization work into 2 sections: the engine and the data. Where the engine was concerned, we studied the new PIII instructions and we rewrote our code in such a way as to benefit from these instructions.

Where the data was concerned, we have added new characters and new elements to the scenery, and we remodeled the existing characters and the 3D elements in order to make the game as realistic as possible. For instance in the garden alone we have integrated over 50 new betterflies to add more movement to the scenery. Another interesting feature is that it is now possible for players to change the clothing of Laura and personalize her look to suit their personal taste.

Q: How long did it take?

The optimization process began in October of 1998 and is expected to take between 6 and 8 months in total. We started off slowly and learned as much as possible about developing for this new technology. We did not want to rush the process in order to be certain about how far we could go with the game using the new family of processors; this way, we can avoid making mistakes and be sure not to repeat the same things 3 or 4 times.

Q: Why was the decision make to develop for the Pentium® III?

The general Ubi Soft development strategy is to deliver top quality products and to be at the cutting edge of the technology. Developing products for the PIII was a great opportunity for us to continue in this tradition. We strongly believe that *Laura's Happy Adventures* is one of the first in what is sure to be a wide range of Pentium® III optimized titles as the industry pushes forward and more families get high-end computers equipment.