

# Robsy's MSX Workshop

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## Introduction to MSXdev'05

Welcome to the third edition of MSXdev, the game development contest for first generation MSX computers. On one hand, after the success of MSXdev'04 -indeed was a 8 KB mini-game competition- several contestants mentioned that the requirements were too restrictive and demanding. On the other, the deadline was set only six months after the announce of the competition, therefore time was also a factor to be considered. This has forced the rules to be slightly changed for this edition, as it will be explained in more detail above.

Surprisingly enough, there were fifteen entries to the competition plus an extra off-contest entry, so sixteen brand new games were released freely. Besides that, the quality level of the games was astonishing and some of them featured state-of-the-art programming techniques never used before in a first-generation MSX game. The final results of MSXdev'04 are shown in <http://www.robsy.net/result04.htm>, where all games can be downloaded.

For this edition, the rules will be more flexible and somehow similar to the original MSXdev'03 edition. The sponsorship system has also changed to let the sponsors decide what deserves to be rewarded and how. These and other details will be discussed deeply in next sections.

## Game requirements

As in the previous editions of MSXdev, the selected format is the MSX ROM file. Cartridges have been the most successful media format for first generation MSX computers, and most of the best games ever produced were published in this format. Nowadays, this format is also interesting because it can be easily loaded into real MSX computers, using a Flash cartridge, a ROM loader or a ROM converter, and it can also be used directly on emulators.

Of course, it is all about developing new games for first generation MSX computers, hence the games should be in compliance with the MSX standard definition. About this topic, it is strongly suggested to read what the official ASCII documentation states, that can be downloaded from <http://www.robsy.net/msxtech.pdf>.

All the games should be 100% compatible with the minimum MSX configuration, that is defined as follows in the referred "MSX Technical Data Book":

- CPU: Zilog Z80 running at 3.58 Mhz
- VDP: TMS9918/TMS9928 or compatible video processor
- PSG: AY-3-8912 or compatible sound chip
- Cassette interface: 1200/2400 baud
- RAM: 16 KB located in page 3 (C000h-FFFFh)
- VRAM: 16 KB

Therefore the games will be tested and evaluated using this configuration. Other compatibility tests will be performed in different configurations, including MSX, MSX2, MSX2+ and Turbo-R computers. The games should work perfectly in any MSX-compliant machine. If a game does not run properly in all MSX generations, its score will be penalised in accordance to the importance of the detected issues.

In addition, it is also allowed to make use of other additional MSX hardware or facilities included in newer generations, such as SCC, SCC+, MSX-Music, MSX-Audio or Moonsound music, or V9938, V9958 or GFX9000 graphics, Z80H, R800, disk drive, etcetera, but these will be considered as an addition. Thus, for the contest purposes, only the minimum configuration will be taken into account by the jury. To clarify this point, if a game has poor PSG melodies although excellent FM sound, only the PSG melodies will be considered.

About the size of the games, only non-mapped ROMs will be accepted. This means that the size of the games could be either 8 KB, 16 KB or 32 KB (standard sizes). Exceptionally, 48 KB ROMs will be accepted if they are fully compatible with all the MSX models<sup>1</sup> and a suitable loading system is provided.

These ROM files can be developed using any programming language. There are no requirements here, but of course assembler is strongly recommended. Other compiled and/or interpreted languages are perfectly admissible. MSX BASIC can be used as well, and directly converted into a MSX ROM using this ready-made tool: <http://www.robsy.net/basicrom.exe>.

Although original games will be preferred, non-original concept games will be also accepted. This includes conversions from arcades and/or other console or computer systems, as well as adaptations of already existent games. However, recompiled games are not acceptable. Already released games or hacked games will not be accepted either. In case of doubt, the jury is entitled to ask for proofs, such as the source code of the game. Any suspicious game would be disqualified if the jury decides so. It should be remarked that only complete games will be accepted: beta-versions, demos or "to be finished" games will not be included in the contest.

Besides this, all the games should be accompanied by the required game instructions written in english and a high-resolution cartridge full-colour sticker.

## **Deadline and other important dates**

The time line is set as follows:

- 19<sup>th</sup> January 2005: MSXdev'05 rules published
- 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005: registration opened both for contestants and sponsors

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<sup>1</sup> 48 KB means that the MSX BIOS is not used and this is a potential compatibility risk.

- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005: list of members of the general jury published
- 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005: game submission deadline
- 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005: MSXdev'05 results published

## Jury selection process

The members of the jury will be selected from the MSX community attending to their MSX-related skills, MSX commitment and reliability. If you are interested in becoming a jury, do not hesitate to e-mail your brief MSX resume to this address: [msxdev@robsy.net](mailto:msxdev@robsy.net)

The final list of members will be communicated at the given date. Their final decision about the MSXdev'05 games will be accepted without reserves by all the contestants. In case of doubt, the jury is free to interpret these rules.

As it is logic, jury members cannot present games to the contest. If there is any conflict of interests between a jury member and a participant, that member will not be allowed to give her o his opinion on that game or games.

## Final prize

For this edition, the MSXdev'05 organisation has only set one prize: a superb **Panasonic FS-A1 ST Turbo-R computer**. There is no minimum number condition this time: the coder of the best game of MSXdev'05 will receive this prize, no matter how many contestants join the competition.

This prize could be improved or complemented by other individuals or groups using the MSXdev'05 sponsorship system, described in the next section.

## Sponsorship

In previous editions generous sponsors donated money and MSX-related items to engross the prize list, creating a prize pool. This system was not practical and the organisation of the contest was not able to manage it adequately. That is why a new system has been conceived.

Open-sponsorship means that anyone could create a sub-contest inside MSXdev'05 or improve the prize list freely. Besides that, the sponsor can track his donations by establishing a new category and/or setting the judge for it. It might sound a bit confusing, so a sponsor file example would help.

**Sponsor:** Eduardo Robsy Petrus – *Karoshi Corporation* (Spain)

**E-mail:** [eduardo@robsy.net](mailto:eduardo@robsy.net)

**Prize:** MSX original cartridge set including Nemesis, Nemesis 2, Nemesis 3 and Salamander by Konami.

**Description:** prize set for the best MSXdev'05 shooter

**Decision:** will be taken according to a future poll at <http://www.hispamsx.org>

In this example, the sponsor has decided that he wants to reward the best shooter of the contest because he specially likes shoot'em-ups. So he has set a prize, a description and how the decision will be made.

It should be pointed out that the MSXdev'05 organisation is in no way responsible of the donations within the open-sponsorship system. Every sponsor should send the announced prize to the winner according to the descriptions and decision process.

Please note that a sponsor could be a contestant as well, but in that particular case the sponsor is not allowed to make the decision himself. He should select a judge or define a convenient decision system.

## Registering a project

In order to participate in MSXdev'05 first you must register your project. Registering is as easy as sending an e-mail to [msxdev@robsy.net](mailto:msxdev@robsy.net) including the following information:

- Name of the project/game
- Game genre
- Name of the group/individuals involved
- Contact e-mail

It will be included in the project list in the next update. By doing so, the group or individuals that own the project are explicitly accepting MSXdev'05 rules. These include the following:

- Submit the finished game, instructions and sticker before the end of the deadline.
- Follow the game requirements described in this document.
- State in the instructions the freeware status of any game participating in MSXdev contest. Any freeware license can be used, as long as the full game can be freely obtained by the users.
- Do not redistribute neither unfinished or finished versions of the game before the end of the contest. Finished versions will be distributed only from the MSXdev'05 official web pages. Beta versions used for debugging and testing purposes are allowed, but they should be only distributed to beta-testers.
- All participants will accept the final decision of the jury.

## MSXdev'05 information and updates

All information regarding MSXdev'05 will be published in the official site, **Robsy's MSX Workshop**, that can be reached at <http://www.robsy.net>. There the whole list of contestants as well as the sponsors and jury members will be permanently updated. The result of the contest will be published there as well as any incidences or events related to MSXdev'05.

## Where to start

You are not an experienced MSX programmer but you want to join the contest? That is great! Internet offers you a large set of technical information, guidance and tools in order to learn and actually develop new MSX games. Following there is a short list of some available resources:

- <http://www.msx.org> – MSX Resource Centre: probably the most important meeting point of the MSX community. Advice can be both requested and found at its fora.
- <http://www.msxposse.com> – MSX Posse: alternative MSX forum. Perhaps not so active as the previous one, but with some real MSX gurus.
- <http://map.tni.nl> – MSX Assembly Page: as its name suggests, this page is fully devoted to MSX development in assembly language.
- <http://www.hansotten.com> – Hans Otten's pages: the most extensive collection of technical documents, programming examples and tools available.
- <http://www.robsy.net> – Robsy's MSX Workshop: contains some useful documents, tools and examples, as well as all the MSXdev contest history.

- <ftp://nic.funet.fi> – Funet: anonymous login to access the most comprehensive collection of MSX materials on-line.
- [msx@stack.nl](mailto:msx@stack.nl) – MSX international mailing list: every single MSX user worldwide reads it regularly. Questions and answers are continuously generated.
- [hispsmsx@yahogroups.com](mailto:hispsmsx@yahogroups.com) – Spanish MSX mailing list: the most active mailing list in the MSX community. Spanish is the official language, but English can exceptionally be used as well.
- <http://www.hispamsx.org> – HispaMSX webpage: this page supports the mailing list and includes its own forum.
- **#msxdev** – IRC channel: this provides real-time conversation with MSX developers and experienced programmers. A must for any newbie, because they will be able to give detailed advice in any kind of issues.

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