Making Of... Blast Corps

Article scanné dans le magazine NGC Magazine n°65 (Mars 2002)

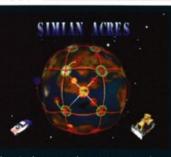
Sujet de l'article : Blast Corps

Scans réalisés par les membres du site Nintendo64EVER, usage exclusivement destiné aux autres membres du site. Toute reproduction, partielle ou complète, ainsi que la diffusion de ce fichier est interdite. Les magazines originaux sont la propriété intellectuelle exclusive de leurs éditeurs respectifs, les scans regroupés dans ce fichier ont un but uniquement documentatif et informatif, aucune exploitation commerciale ne peut en être faite.



OPEN SESAME

The game's 50-plus areas open up in an unusual manner. Rather than have a set progression from one to the next, Blast Corps' designers opted for a system whereby different 'nodes' of the map are unlocked via discovering hidden 'communication points' or earning gold medals. It allows you to make significant progress without running into too many 'brick walls' – spikes in the difficulty level that might



in the difficulty level that might otherwise have seen the game consigned to the back of the cartridge drawer. ne of the most commonly held truisms is that the simplest ideas are often the best. So when Rare co-founder Chris Stamper set his designers and code monkeys the task of producing a game based around an ingenious twist on that most modest of pleasures – smashing things to tiny pieces on a grand scale – the company had to be on to another winner.

"If you knock down buildings it will be fun," suggested Stamper, sowing the seeds for what became arguably Rare's most original and offbeat N64 title. A small team was assembled to work on fleshing out this basic concept into a game worthy of a software house that had, prior to becoming Britain's most revered developer with the release of GoldenEye, made its name with such huge hits as Donkey Kong Country, Killer Instinct and the seminal Battletoads.

School building

"We had some very talented artists and engineers who were straight out of college," reveals a member of the original seven-strong Blast Corps team. "I think the combination of their enthusiasm and recently honed skills enabled us to produce some pretty interesting and unique work.

"At the time it was actually the largest team any of us had worked in, so it required a greater degree of coordination than we were used to. Since

90 NE ISSUE SE



MAGIC MOMENT

This giant flying robot. a firm favourite of the Blast Corps team, is one of the easiest vehicles to use, and by far the most destructive. With the ability to smash entire tower blocks in a single attack, there's no point in using any other vehicle if J-Bomb is available hence the machine's rarity. If J-Bomb had been used as often as many players wished, the game would likely much of its challenge and excitement.



then, team sizes have increased dramatically, but the Blast Corps team was still small enough to allow for individual members to make a very obvious contribution, and also meant

If the carrier so much as touched an obstacle then it would trigger an apocalyptic explosion. After the carrier's path was cleared, players were able to return to level the rest of the buildings

"We simply wanted a game where you knocked down a load of buildings."

we stayed focused on the core elements of the game."

The most important of those core elements was the missile carrier which players had to protect by demolishing the many buildings that littered its path.

in the cities they were formerly supposed to be 'saving' from destruction. It was, admits Rare, a "completely idiotic" concept, but one that formed the heart of an exceptionally compelling game.

Vandal hearts

"The basic premise never changed throughout the project," says our *Blast Corps* insider. "We simply wanted a game where you knocked down a load of buildings. Everything really developed around this, and all the other elements were introduced to diversify the gameplay."

It was a fully formed game from a very early stage in its development, with a 'completeness' matched, among the N64's early releases, only by Nintendo's in-house work. The confident young team was never troubled by the bugbears that were encountered by many other first-wave N64 coders – such as the numerous ongoing revisions to the machine's pre-

release hardware: "Things like that tend to be fairly superficial."

The only thing the team had any bother with, however insignificant, was the N64's radically different controller, with the analogue stick that was soon to become a standard feature on PlayStation and all subsequent console pads. "To be honest, we kind of missed the point of it at the start," admits a team member. "It wasn't until we played Super Mario 64 that we saw the stick's potential." The designers quickly added an option to use analogue acceleration as well as the standard analogue steering.

Design demolition

Having toyed with the idea of making

MARCH 2002 NC 91

THE MAKING OF...

NEAR-MISS

Having the missile carrier as a kind of mobile time limit is the game's master stroke. It means you're often forced to work within a few feet of the advancing truck, circling around it in a very fast, skittishly handling vehicle, and cutting directly across its path in order to scenery at the very last moment. Any minor prangs to the carrier (no doubt due to a sweaty analogue stick) severely as if it had crashed into a building - ie the unstable missiles will explode, everyone will die, and you will have failed



THE NAME GAME

amiliar name among N64 layers, although several





OYSTER HARBOUR



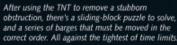




The level opens with a quick spot of long-range shooting, followed by a frantic dash for the Ramdozer vehicle, which must be used to shunt rates of explosive onto a crane



looking for something a little more cerebral





If there's a sequel, perhaps we'll see less of this type of challenge. Feedback suggested that most people preferred the mindless violence-based levels – which was, after all, the game's original concept.

the carrier complete a more circuitous path around the levels, the team settled for concentrating the action in a narrow, straight line through the centre

of each map. This way

the player would be forced to flatten specific buildings, and the gameplay could be very tightly focused. Although the levels are generally quite large, with many branching areas to find, the game was designed to be explored at a more leisurely pace once the serious business of saving the carrier was completed.

With Blast Corps' basic mechanics in place almost from the beginning, the developers were able to add whatever their imaginations could conjure up. The huge range of vehicles is the most obvious indication of the time and freedom that Rare had, but it wasn't

simply a case of dropping every tiny idea into the game. Rare's quality control meant that things such as giant robotic mantis and scorpion craft were dropped in favour of less spectacular, but more challenging, vehicles like the notorious Backlash truck - a dumpster with a very difficult sliding attack that didn't find favour with every Blast Corps player.

"Backlash was the vehicle that required the most skill to use," counters a team member, in defence of his creation. "Its attack was based on th powerslide in Super Mario Kart. I guess

\$865600







The game's plot (devised by Rare's The game's plot (devised by Rare's website manager and 'father' of mascot Mr Pants) is tenuous, to say the very least – a team of elite demolition experts clearing a path for a missile truck that can't slow down and must drive through the world's most densely populated areas. Hmmm. But it could have been worse. "One of the ideas we nearly went with was that the driver of the nuclear carrier had a precariously balanced glass of Ribena in his cab and he didn't want to spill it over his new beige interior," says Rare. "Maybe we'll save that for the sequel..."

some people just couldn't be bothered to learn how to use it properly and consequently found it a bit frustrating."

Despite not achieving the kind of sales it deserved, Blast Corps stands out as one of the N64's more impressive titles. Released shortly after the machine's March 1997 UK launch, but with the kind of design innovation and technical expertise that very few coders outside Nintendo ever came close to equalling, it was the game that established Rare as the company few N64 fans (or magazines) could stop talking about. NCC

92 NG ISSUE

BLAST CORPS

