

The Making of ... Goldeneye 007

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THE MAKING OF...

Every month, we'll be revisiting classic N64 games with the people who made them. This month, the secretive geniuses at Rare reveal the inside story behind their stunning Bond blaster.

GENTLY DOES IT

GoldenEye perfected, if not invented, a new way of playing first-person shooters – 'stealthing'. By handing you specific mission objectives rather than asking you to pump bullets into everything in sight, and requiring you to creep around to avoid detection – shooting out security cameras and popping guards in the back of the skull – Rare created a uniquely tense and involving take on the traditional shooter. "It portrayed the odds against one man in a slightly more realistic manner," they explain. "Players who wanted to approach games in a stealthy way were given a proper outlet for the first time."



THE MAKING OF... GOLDENEYE



In rooms crowded with computers and furniture, it was possible to create chain reactions of gorgeous explosions.



A truly gigantic bit of scenery. And it moved, too.



The initial idea for *GoldenEye* came from Nintendo themselves. After being awarded the license to create a videogame version of the upcoming Bond flick, they told Rare what they wanted – a SNES platformer in the style of *Donkey Kong Country*.

Thankfully, Rare's project leader refused, telling Nintendo he'd prefer to work on the new, cutting-edge N64. *GoldenEye 007* as a fully 3D, fully first-person blaster was born – but it'd be some time before the game's team of nine programmers, all first-time game coders, settled on the mix of stealth, shooting and secrets that'd go on to sell over eight million copies worldwide.

Birth of Bond

"When we started, we wanted to create a kind of cross between *Virtua Cop* and *Doom*," recalls *GoldenEye*'s designer who, like all Rare employees, prefers to remain anonymous. "But as we also wanted to release the game close to the launch of the N64, we chose to do an on-rails shooter, as it would take us less time. So, we had the camera moving on a preprogrammed path through the level, and you'd use the analogue stick to aim and shoot."

Before long, though, Rare were programming guards to move around of their own accord, and allowing the player to guide 007 anywhere they liked.

"You felt more involved, because

WHY GOLDENEYE WAS A CLASSIC

Authentic levels. Like the GoldenEye room itself. "Access to the actual film set meant we could photograph the correct textures for the relevant levels. So creating realistic-looking levels was as difficult as pointing a camera at a wall."

Intelligent guards. Who'd run away, activate alarms, and hear you from afar. "Sometimes, they seemed to be really thinking for themselves," the team recall. "You'd be playing and they'd catch you out with something really intelligent. You'd think, we didn't program them to do that."

Realistic guns. Most of the weapons were modelled on existing guns, with firing rates and sounds designed to match their real-life counterparts. The only difference were the names. Rare coders count the M16, the grenade launcher and "the big shiny automatic pistols you get off the Archive's KGB guys" as their faves.

Destructible scenery. From exploding barrels to falling monitors. "The physics for this part of the game were really very simple. And they were very, very fudged. I'd say fudges were a big part of the game, purely to create a better experience for the player."

MAGIC MOMENT: THE INTRO

"This took ages to do," recalls a couple of the team. "Everything you see needed tweaking to get the timing right. I'm sure there were times when the animation system went mad for a few hours and you saw randomly flailing arms and legs instead of a walking Bond. We also captured some out-take animations for a laugh, but we never put them in - things like Bond tripping over or doing a funny walk."



YE 007

you actually had the choice of where to go and what to do. It felt more like you were actually there. The on-rails stuff survived for a while - we even talked

possible, allowing the player to immerse themselves in the movie experience and be Bond. That required two things - recognisable movie environments, and

"No-one had tried to create ultra-realistic environments before," says the game's designer, "simply because they hadn't had enough reason to.

gone for levels that were easier for us to do. GoldenEye may not have been so good. The film environments forced us along certain lines - and ensured we had a decent amount of variation in the levels."

"We started out doing an on-rails shooter, so the camera had a preprogrammed path..."

about having it as an extra mode - but then it quietly slipped away."

Play the film

Rare's mission was now clear - recreate GoldenEye the film as faithfully as

realistic James Bond-esque play.

For the former, Rare received a steady supply of design blueprints, photos, and even scripts from the film set, which helped give game locations an unprecedented 'real-life' feel.

GoldenEye was the perfect opportunity, and I'd hate to think of the lengths you'd have to go to repeat the effort if there wasn't a film being made at the time - location trips to St. Petersburg, Cuba, Arecibo, and so on."

Squeezing everything in proved problematic. The gigantic satellite dish of the Cradle, in particular, began life running at a snail's pace, before clever coding (and ditching the level's floor) helped speed it up.

"There were plenty of problems," Rare go on to explain. "But if we'd

Fun with guns

For the second main GoldenEye element - proper Bond-style missions - Rare were careful to pick objectives that played well, but wouldn't conflict with the movie plot or James' way of tackling problems. Stealth played a huge part - but shooting was still key.

"Our first shooting demo was a bit of a laugh," admits the designer. "The effect of a bullet hit was not a million

THE MAKING OF...

MAGIC MOMENT: PROTECTING NATALYA

"This is a great set-piece," admits the development team. Great, certainly – but also the trickiest thing in the world. As a fragile Miss Simonova industriously tapped away at a computer keyboard in the middle of the GoldenEye room, intent on averting disaster, your job was to wipe out the scores of guards pouring in from six different doors, every one gunning for the girl at the console.

"Why was it so hard? To make it a challenge, naturally. If a game doesn't challenge you then there's something wrong somewhere."



THE AZTEC LEVEL

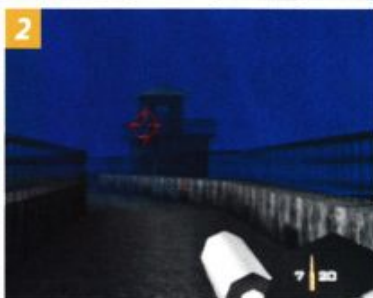


The secret Aztec stage only became available after beating all 20 main levels on Secret Agent – and was arguably better than every one of them, with beautiful scenery, rock-hard battles, and a terrifying run-in with Jaws. "It was one of the last levels to be done," says the lead programmer, "and I think that explains why it was so good. We really wanted to make sure the bonus levels really were a reward, and the artists and level designers were at the peak of their performance."

SNIPER SPORTS



The rifle itself wouldn't have made it into the game without a single pesky artist. "He kept bothering me about it," says the Lead Programmer. "Do a sniper rifle! Do a sniper rifle!" he'd say. So I did."



The guard towers were placed in the distance to encourage use of the rifle. Creating the zoom effect didn't seem tricky – the camera simply moved forward and the N64 dealt with the rest...



...but jerkiness proved a problem as more and more objects zoomed into view. "We fixed that," says the designer, "by trading off parts of the background for detail on the closer-up characters."



At maximum zoom, the sights bobbed and swayed in a perfect recreation of 'sniper's wobble'. By choosing your moment carefully, you'd have one dead guard far in the distance. Supremely satisfying.



MULTIPLAYER

GoldenEye's split-screen four-player shootout – the first of its kind – was one of the last additions to the game, and very nearly didn't make it in as Rare's final deadline loomed. So how did such a hastily-programmed feature become one of videogaming's greatest multiplayer games? "We just made it," Rare say humbly. "Sparse backgrounds to keep the frame rate up, looping map layouts to maintain the flow, a handful of dead-ends for people to exploit, a few of the main game levels that didn't chug with a few weapons firing, and away you go." As GoldenEye's lead programmer modestly puts it, "It turned out pretty well."

miles away from someone shaking a ketchup bottle onto the inside of the television screen. Following that, we decided to keep the blood low-key – Bond films are not noted for multiple eviscerations or lots of violent deaths." Nintendo asked for versions with red, green, orange and bright blue blood – and after seeing how truly awful the others looked, accepted Rare's use of small amounts of red blood.

To aid the game's flow, Rare were able to add set-pieces that weren't in the film. As a result, real movie moments (such as bungeeing from Arkangelsk's

dam) sat side by side with brilliant tasks from Rare's own brains, including the tense hostage rescue on the frigate.

The Final Stretch

As the levels and action were polished, Rare began truly harnessing the power of the N64, and were able to implement items on their collective wishlist – bullet holes in walls, destructible barrels and boxes and also guards who reacted differently depending on where they were shot.

Only around half of those ideas made it into the game – but they were

what helped the game touch true greatness, and give GoldenEye instant critical and commercial success when it was released in August 1997 in the US. In the UK, it sold out nationwide by December, as N64 owners made it their Christmas present of choice. Now, it's second only to Super Mario 64 in terms of N64 sales.

"It does make me smile when I try to think about the actual number of people who've played GoldenEye or even just seen it," says the lead programmer. "Hopefully, they've had some enjoyment from it." **NGC**



LEVEL TOUR: THE FACILITY

GoldenEye really came to life in its second stage, as Bond was dropped into the vents above a toilet in a Russian facility.

MAGIC MOMENT: MESSING WITH GLIARDS

"My favourite moment," says GoldenEye's designer, "has to be messing with the cheat options to give myself tons of remote mines and explosives, waiting in the centre of the three catwalks on Cradle, then blowing up the Janus special forces guys and watching them flying overhead. I appreciate that this might be a little specific, but after spending so long making a game you start to look for a little bit more in it..."



1 Dropping into the bags and catching a couple of guards 'on the job' was most GoldenEye players' favourite moment - but not Rare's. "I guess I'm put off because the movement around the edge of the drop caused a lot of problems," the lead programmer says. "It was always 'sticky'."



3 "You'll need this decoder to open the bottling room door. Good luck, 007." Face-mapping technology - relatively new at the time - allowed Rare to scan in their own faces and use them on the game's characters. All the guards and civilians are Rare programmers, and Dr Doak here shares his likeness with the real life Dr David Doak, GoldenEye's director.



5 After decades of blocky explosions, GoldenEye brought realistic kabooms to console gaming with minimal effort. "Those big bangs were a case of trying to make the shapes of the explosions look somewhere between believable and interesting", remembers the game's designer.



2 A revelation - you could shoot guards' hats off! "Once we had a hat-wearing guard," reveals the designer, "someone wanted to shoot it off. So, being the obliging people that we are..." Shooting guns out of guards' hands was also planned, but caused AI problems. Rare later pulled it off in Perfect Dark.



4 Creep up behind a guard and you'd see him yawn and adjust his ties. "The guards had clenched fists and couldn't use their fingers," recalls the lead programmer. "So some animations that we wanted just wouldn't work - such as combing back their hair or scratching their chins."



6 Not a lookalike - it really is Sean Bean, after Nintendo arranged with Icon, the GoldenEye movie people, to scan in the real actor's face. Rare were keen to include the older Bonds such as Connery and Moore, too, but this proved too expensive and complicated to arrange.

BETA VERSION

Not everything Rare planned for GoldenEye actually went into the game. Real gun names were ditched on legal grounds, some mission objectives were dumped, and the infamous 'All Bonds' cheat - which allowed you to play as Connery, Moore and Dalton in multiplayer - didn't make it. But somewhere in Rare HQ lies a 'beta' cart, which contains all those missing features, and more. Want to play it? Er, you can't.

