

The Rare Essentials

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Situated miles from anywhere in a converted farmhouse in deepest Warwickshire, Rare don't need to publicise themselves. Nintendo do that for them. Their own games do that for them. Rare also don't give interviews. Or, at least, they didn't until now...

The Rare Essentials

Rare: GoldenEye 007

Gathering together all nine members of the *GoldenEye* team, N64 discovered how the world's greatest game came into being...

N64: So, how did Rare end up developing *GoldenEye*?

Rare: Well, I guess it was a kind of joint decision, between Rare and Nintendo, to take on the licence, although I think originally we approached Nintendo with the idea. It was actually quite an unusual decision, especially for them, to take on this sort of licence.

N64: Were you fans of the film already?

Rare: Yes. But some of us prefer the new one.

N64: And what of Pierce Brosnan? The best Bond yet?

Rare: Definitely. Although, Sean Connery was good.

N64: Was *GoldenEye* always going to be a first-person shoot-'em up?

Rare: We did have other ideas but, after about two weeks, we had pretty

much decided on it being a first-person shoot-'em-up. There were some other ideas but they were never really pursued any further.

N64: You've said before that *Quake* and *Virtua Cop* were influences on the game?

Rare: Um, well, it was *Doom* rather than *Quake*. We looked at *Quake* about three-quarters of the way into development, when we had a test version up and running. But *Quake* failed to impress us enough to change *GoldenEye*. We're all avid gamers but none of us found that the *Quake* idea had any sort of longevity. Unlike a Bond game, which people would want to be playing a long time after its release. In truth, we looked at all the first-person shoot-'em-ups. When *Turok* came out, we played that and we liked it but never thought there was anything sufficient enough in it to warrant us changing *GoldenEye*. We've pretty much stuck to our original plan of doing it the way we

wanted and not taking elements from other games.

N64: Was it a bit nerve-racking working with a Bond licence?

Rare: Yeah, it was a bit of a responsibility, but I don't think it ever weighed us down too much. I think it was more the fact that this was our first game. That was harder.

N64: So, none of the team had worked on a game before?

Rare: No. Except Graeme and Grant, because they're both musicians. Grant did *Donkey Kong Land* on the Game Boy and Graeme did *Blast Corps*, and they've also done *Diddy*

Kong Racing and *Killer Instinct*. Martin has also worked on the *Killer Instinct* coin-op.

N64: Blimey. What was it like composing your music around the Bond score?



Rare: It was good, but after a while we got really sick of it because there're only about three chords in it and you can only do so much with that. But, you know, it was good fun and, especially for a game like this, the music's really, really important.





△ Tim with his hire car. A sensible driver, and no mistake. (Except for that accident on the dual carriageway in Tamworth.)



△ Martin Hollis, Mark Edmonds and, in the foreground, Dave Doak. (Of Dr. Doak fame, see?)

▽ The full, nine-strong GoldenEye team. Absolutely ecstatic with their special N64 certificate. Just look at their faces! Especially that one in the bottom right, there.



N64: A particular favourite in the N64 office is the zoom on the Sniper Rifle. How did you make that possible when games like Turok have to mist everything up so close in?

Rare: We programmed it the right way! No, really, we managed to draw more things than Turok did, that's for sure. We simply misted things up further away.

N64: It's that simple, is it?

Rare: Well, it can be. You don't need to mist everything up so close in. The machine allows you to draw things further away. You've just got to apply it.

N64: The attention to detail is phenomenal, especially the way in which bullet holes are left in the walls and you can shoot out glass panels and security cameras. Were they considerations from the start or added in at the end?

Rare: Well, everyone had a wish list of what they wanted put into the game and we were quite fortunate in that, we did most of it. The most disappointing thing in first-person shooting games is the fact that, when you fire off vast amounts of ammunition, nothing around you gets damaged at all. So, we always wanted to make sure that we went that extra step further and allowed the player to do that damage.

N64: It's like total immersion...

Rare: Exactly. Every little thing you see in the game makes it more

believable. You're not running around cardboard box rooms anymore. But, it's actually quite surprising at how immersed people thought they were, because we knew what we wanted to include and we really only got half of it in. As far as we were concerned, it was kind of half-immersion. Almost there, but not quite.

N64: How did you manage to maintain such an authentic level design?

Rare: Well, we went down to the film set about six or seven times and they gave us full access to all the designs, model shots and all the plans, and we just took along a camera and photographed just about everything we saw. When we brought it back, we had all the GoldenEye material we needed. We also had the blueprints as well from the actual sets they were building, so we could base our plans on the sets. We just took the blueprints as a basis and let the levels in the game grow out from them.

N64: So, how come Bond doesn't run?

Rare: He does. He runs with the analogue stick. He runs all the time, in fact, but it's just not at a silly pace. If you look around you, you'll see

that he's actually running at a realistic speed. The point is, when you're playing a game like Doom, where you run about three or four times as fast as you really should be, you're running all the time and making no use of the walk function. The walk just becomes academic. So, what's the point in having it in the first place? We just wanted to make the movement of the character more realistic.

N64: What are the GoldenEye team's favourite levels, then?

Rare: The Control because it's such a large level and there's so much going on. And the second Bunker level. It's probably where the Stealth works best. You know, you can really go for it. Tear through in 43 seconds.

N64: How was it that you came to chose Jaws and Baron Samedi in the secret levels? Were you only allowed access to certain Bond villains?

Rare: No, no. We were allowed access to everyone in the Bond films except Jack Wade. He was the only one we weren't allowed. Oh, and the previous Bonds. Really, it was just a case of picking the most interesting, colourful villains. We just thought no game's complete without a witch doctor. And, of course, it largely depended on who we had photographs of.

N64: Is it right the multiplayer game was something of a last minute addition?

Rare: Well, last months, yes. The

game took two-and-a-half years and the multiplayer was put in with about six months to go. But, it was always going in. We were always going to put it in. It was just a question of when we could get round to it.

N64: Were you concerned about having four players on the screen at the same time? Because no one had ever really tried it before.

Rare: Yeah. But, we were most concerned that it might not be much fun. It was sort of untested waters especially as all first-person multiplayer games had been networked up until then. But, it wasn't really about the split-screen thing. It was more about how much we had going on. So, we just kept changing things and altering things until we got it right. We literally spent hours and hours and hours and hours playing the multiplayer levels from the one-player game and finding out what was fun and what wasn't. And then, once we knew, we built some of the special levels.

N64: Why is it that levels like the Bunker can be played in three-player but not four?

Rare: Basically, because some of the levels weren't designed to be played as multiplayer. We went through all the backgrounds, playing them and seeing if they could run at a speed that was acceptable. Some of the levels we didn't include were interesting but they just couldn't handle all the action. The Dam, in multiplayer, was a lot of fun. We had



△ Duncan Botwood and Stephen Ellis having just been asked about what they're working on next.

that running for quite a while but it was just too slow.

N64: Were Nintendo ever concerned GoldenEye might be a bit too violent?

Rare: Yeah, there were quite a few concerns, but we never had to compromise. In the end, we were happy and they were too. And they were even happier when it got a Teen Rating.

N64: How does the relationship with Nintendo work?

Rare: Well, if we're lucky, they might want to take a look at a version every six months. Towards the end, there are phone calls every day, once you get to quality control. And then we send it off to them for testing.

N64: How long did the whole project take?

Rare: A long time. Certainly two-and-a-half years.

N64: Do you still play it in the office?

Rare: The Banjo-Kazooie lot play it every lunch time. Every lunch time, every single day.

N64: Obviously you must have realised you had an exceptional game, but did you expect the reaction you got from GoldenEye?

Rare: We didn't know it was exceptional. Like we said, our wish list was much longer so, the game

was looking good, but there was much more we could have done to it. It could have gone either way, really. It could have disappeared, or it could have done very well. We wondered whether Bond would appeal to everybody. In the end, it did. But, we can never experience it like someone who's just gone out and bought it, because we're with it all the way through. Luckily, we had some good word-of-mouth publicity and, at the end of the day, that did the trick. People were interested in the game because of what their mate said about it, you know? Actually, it was very nice when we got the first feedback from the testers in America, because we'd sent it over to them towards the end, and they'd sent back comments, and everybody just seemed to be over-the-moon about it. So, we guessed we must have been doing something right.

N64: Anything, looking back, you wish you could have changed, or added?

Rare: No. We've no regrets. Although, the tank would have been good in multiplayer. Perhaps we could have put more lighting in the game and other little things but, generally, we're very happy. And there seems to be on-going bug reports from GoldenEye stretching to about ten pages now. Most of them aren't even bugs, they're just things you can do in the game. It's all about interactivity again.

Rare: Rare

Like an undetected silo (erm, in the Midlands), Rare's Twycross hideout is perfectly low-key for a company doused in MI5-style secrecy...

N64: This setting seems to suit the Rare ethos well. It's not exactly easy to find, is it?

Rare: No, it's not easy to find. But, after a while, you just come straight here and it all feels very normal. It's funny being out in the middle of nowhere, but it definitely works for the games. And it's an excellent company to work for. There can't be another developer that would be better to work for.

N64: And things have really taken off in the past four or five years. Were any of you aware of the company you were about to start work for?

Rare: Well, it depends on who's been here the longest, really. Five years ago, Donkey Kong Country was only half finished. At that stage, we weren't world class! Some of us were big Spectrum people and we all knew about

Ultimate but, even when Donkey Kong Country was finished, the profile of the company was still quite low. We weren't too aware what Rare were doing but we knew the history, so it was fine coming in.



△ We're not saying that Rare isn't easy to find but it's currently being used by the government to conduct experiments on aliens.

Rare: GoldenEye Team Project #2

So, what next for the multi-talented team that pieced together GoldenEye? Another Bond game? An original title? Let's see...

N64: So, what's next? Can you tell us?

Rare: No.

N64: What nothing at all?

Rare: No.

N64: Not even a little bit?

Rare: No.

N64: Right. So, nothing, then?

Rare: No.

N64: Magic. Ta.

happen, due to the fact that MGM Interactive (an entertainment extension of celluloid giants MGM) has just been set-up and has handed the licence to PlayStation developer Black Ops who'll duff it all up. Hopefully.

So, that definitely means no Bond game for Rare. Or, does it? Mmm, well, we'll admit, we're not completely up on the legal complications of the matter, but we'd struggle to see how they could do it. What we do know though, is the GoldenEye team are using the same engine for their next project and that, this past month, 'Happy' Howard Lincoln, Big Cheese at Nintendo of America, sort-of-confirmed that the Rare team would be creating their own character and levels and slipping them snugly into a souped-up GoldenEye engine. Watch this space. In about two-and-a-half years time.

WHAT WE THINK!

Well, we already know that Tomorrow Never Dies isn't going to