y otra entrevista a Kieran Brigden
Publicado por sertorio67 - 02 Dic 2008 21:22

WP: Who has the honor to speak with us? State your name, rank, and occupation!

Kieran Brigden, studio communications manager for Creative Assembly.

WP: Empire Total War marks the first time that the Total War series has had really intricate naval battles. Why have them now?

KB: Well, it's a combination of factors. One, we've wanted to do it for a while but the technology was ready now. Two, it's the period that's right for it. When you add naval battles to the game, you have to do it when it's interesting, enjoyable, and fun. The 18th century was the absolute height of cool naval warfare. You had this global arms race across the world's oceans, bigger and bigger ships, more and more cannons, specialized naval abilities for long-range ships and short-range boarding crews. It was a really cool and interesting period in which to add the naval combat to make it a very real and integral feature for Empire. From that perspective, it was the choice of the period.

WP: What kind of challenge was it keeping the same general control set for naval battles and land battles when the modeling of the battles is incredibly different?

KB: That's a very good question. Basically, in terms of the user interface and the way it works, we know that naval battles are new to even our most established, hardcore fans because we've never done it before. So to give them an entirely different interface and another way of doing things would be kind of like throwing them into the deep end all over again. It also means that the game is that much more accessible by keeping it common. It means you have to work on the mechanics and the input layer very, very in-depth. You look at it and go, "How can we represent this in the same kind of fashion - the drag and drop of units, the boxing select, the cards of units, the clicking of their flags and stuff like that - how do we then add the layer of naval gameplay, which is boarding actions, using anchors, different shot types, positioning sail and wind, and you kind of add those layers into the game.

One of the things that really helps us do that is we have a very complex and very realistic physics model beneath the surface of the game, which doesn't require the player to have a whole ton of new options but does mean things behave the way they should. That physics and weather model is common across the land battles and the naval element, so the way you handle that in terms of the UI in the game is also similar and common. When you add those kinds of factors together, plus a bit of our rather intelligent design as magic, you get that cool thing across the two.

WP: What about learning how ship battles really work? Did you watch a lot of movies, read a lot of books? What kind of research went into making sure you were doing it right?

KB: Good question, very good question. To give you an example, our guys have read a lot. We've got historians on staff, we've got people who know a great deal about naval warfare and naval battles. That's just stage one, the books, ok? We've got people who go out to real war reenactments, much like we're doing today, this afternoon, going out and firing cannons on these ships and stuff.

Thirdly, and to give you an idea of accuracy and how important it is for us to be accurate, we actually went to the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich in the United Kingdom, which keeps the schematics for how these massive 18th century wooden vessels were built. These are the blueprints, the plans, OK? We took scans of those plans and built in polygons what they built in wood, literally from the ground up. So we took their blueprints and built on them in beams and curves what they did with wood, right? And then we filled those beams and curves with true physics - imagine like, air pockets or balloons, right? - so that means the boat sits on the water correctly, it's the right size and scale, it's the right type of material, it's the right movement. That kind of emergent kind of complexity comes from getting all those factors individually right. Then you've got a boat that sits on the ocean, bobs up and down, it's the right size, the right shape, its physics behave realistically and you are true to life, and that is certainly how far we've gone in terms of making sure this is accurate and dead-on.

WP: Having an intricate physics model, you're modeling fire, you're modeling a lot of things. What kind of hardware is this going to take?

KB: In terms of hardware, the first thing, whenever we create a Total War game, we've got a lot of fans who've been with us since Shogun, and they're not exactly the kind of people who have Deep Blue, Cray-style PCs that are able to run everything at super full-spec amazing. So we make everything scalable. There are a lot of options in the game, much like many PC games - turn this off, turn this on - so you can get a good experience no matter what.

Second, we work with a lot of hardware partners to make sure that whatever combination of things you've got - this graphics card, that CPU - you get a decent experience out of the game.

And finally, like I say, we're always working, and it's a matter of professionalism, in order to make sure that it has as low overhead as possible for what it's doing. Of course, it's very true to say and honest and open to say that the better your PC, the better your experience. There's no way you can get around that, but at the same time, we make sure that it's a scalable thing so it's not asking for the world just to get the game to execute.

It's not a case where - because there are some people who will only play the campaign map. The graphically intense naval battles and land battles, some people will just skip all of that. They'll auto-resolve everything, and they'll only ever play the campaign so they need the experience too, just like the people who are absolutely hardcore and want everything on to play these massive-scale land battles.

WP: About the ships, you said that there are 12 factions in the game, so I'm assuming there are 12 navies that are playable. Do each of the navies have their own unique, do they share the same ships? And what about pirates and other non-playable factions? Do they have their own unique ships, or is it all shared?

KB: There are a number of ships which are common across certain regional powers, so for example, as you'd expect, European powers shared a number of different ship types. They had a standard ship of the line, which they built in certain Ratings - you have Sixth, Fifth, Fourth, Third, Second and First. The ships scaled based on their hull size, their crew and their guns, and that was true. It's historically accurate. Those ships are mirrored across different European powers.

However, you also have very, very different and very specific ship types based on the certain factions that you play. So you may find, for example, playing as an Eastern faction, you have a very distinct ship design based on different tactics, and I'm thinking here, for example, of ships like xebecs, which are unique to Eastern factions. They're very low in the water, very quick, they look like today's Olympic sailing yachts, and their job is to board, and their job is to get their crews on board very, very quickly. From that perspective, there are individual ships.

Then you add the layer of research on the top. You won't automatically have access to every ship that's available to your faction in the game; you've got to research those things in the technology tree. So when you get to the cooler, excellent long-range ships like we saw today in the rocket ship or, for example, the steam ship, those things are only available if you get right to the end of your naval tech tree. So they won't be common across all factions. You won't see every faction using all those things. Only if you've invested in your navy and done the research will you get those abilities.

WP: Whether fighting with the navy or fighting with land troops, how does ensuring that your troops survive help you progress in the game? What kind of veteran status do they have?

KB: Obviously, as your troops fight, as they win more and more battles, they become more and more competent and gain chevrons, so you'll see there's a little flag beneath their nation flag which tells you the unit's rank. The more battles he wins, the more experience he has, the better he gets. Now that depends on you as a general. If you're very foolhardy and just throw your guys into melee, they'll just get munched up by the enemy war machine, you're not going to see many of them the next day.

However, if you're very, very prudent and you know how to move your forces around a map, maximize your fields of fire and then finally close in for the kill when the enemy's been sufficiently weakened, you'll probably see a lot of those troops begin to fight the next day. That means, of course, that you'll begin to get really better in status armies marching across the map. The additional thing to mention here is that with the tech tree, you can research new drills and new formations, etc., for your troops, new abilities, and those are automatically rolled out across your entire army. So imagine you're researching a new firing drill, for example, and you've got guys fighting for you for 25 years, they'll automatically get access to that, along with being veterans, so they'll become very, very hardy opponents for any opposition you find.

WP: You've changed how the AI works for Total War. Can you explain that a little bit?

KB: Yeah. That's a massive overhaul. We scrapped the AI system and wrote it again from the start. We used to use what was called a state-based AI approach, which is very much like a chess game. It does A, then B, then C. Now we're using a system of goal-oriented action planning, or GOAP, which basically means that the AI is constantly looking at the status of forces on the battlefield, which of course, is resources, and it's got a list of jobs. Like, imagine you've got a list of post-its on your desk, and this is the number one thing I've got to do today, and this is the second. It moves those things around based on what's happening. So let's say its general is safely at the back of its army, right? And you're fighting very well and suddenly you outflank him. You come right around from the back, and there's a real chance that its general is in danger. The post-it note that says "Protected the general" goes from seventh to first, and then it looks at its resources and goes, "I've got artillery crews, I've got cavalry, I've got infantry. How do I achieve that objective now?" So what that means is you get a lot more dynamic backward and forward gameplay with the AI reacting to the things you're doing in real time, rather than going "I've got to do A, then I've got to do B," and if you interrupt it anywhere in that cycle, it doesn't get to the next step. Now, it's constantly looking at what its priorities should be to achieve its objectives and basing its movements and its actions around that exact thing.

WP: So it's more like fighting a real human.

KB: Really. Yeah, yeah. Much, much more so. In some cases, more difficult. Fighting dumb people is easier than fighting the AI, from some perspectives.

WP: Is there anything about the game that we haven't talked about that you wanted to add?

KB: Obviously we mentioned a little bit about The Road to Independence today, which is a brand new, standalone campaign mode, separate to the grand campaign. It's narrative-driven, story-driven, which we hope will bring new people into the game and also satisfy our older fans with the new experience. In addition, I think I'd like to mention that it's the biggest campaign we've ever done. You're covering three massive theatres, we've got the most detailed and largest map we've ever had, and finally, but we're

now giving away the farm, we're adding multiplayer modes and doing a lot there, which our established fans have asked us for, for quite a while. So hopefully it'll certainly our most ambitious, hopefully it'll be our most successful title to date.

Empire: Total War has already been secretly in development at The Creative Assembly's Horsham studio for over a year and is priming its forces for a release in Feb. 2009.

http://www.worthplaying.com/article.php?sid=57916

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Re: y otra entrevista a Kieran Brigden

Publicado por CeltíberoGil - 03 Dic 2008 14:16

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Creo que es la que puse yo en últimas noticias no aporta muchas novedades...

Lo que más están comentando últimamente son las batallas navales que según parecen van a se bastante entretenidas. Veremos si al final nos hacemos marineros de agua dulce...

Una cosa que me inquieta un poco es que ponen como fecha de lanzamiento Febrero de 2009 sin especificar el día como en otros lugares espero que sea porque en EEUU lo lanzan el día 3 y en Europa el 6, y no signifique un posible retraso.

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Re: y otra entrevista a Kieran Brigden

Publicado por CeltiberoThormes - 03 Dic 2008 19:17

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Ya puestos a esperar, no vendrá de unos dias creo yo...

Prefiero que se retrase un mes incluso si eso sirve para sacar un juego en condiciones y con los menos bugs posibles.

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