











## Paragon City Times

Paragon City, Thursday, September 25, 2002

## VILLAINS VANDALIZE AT WILL SKY RAIDERS STRIKE AGAIN





























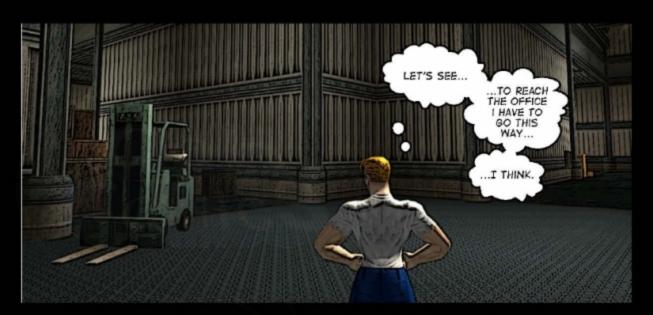


















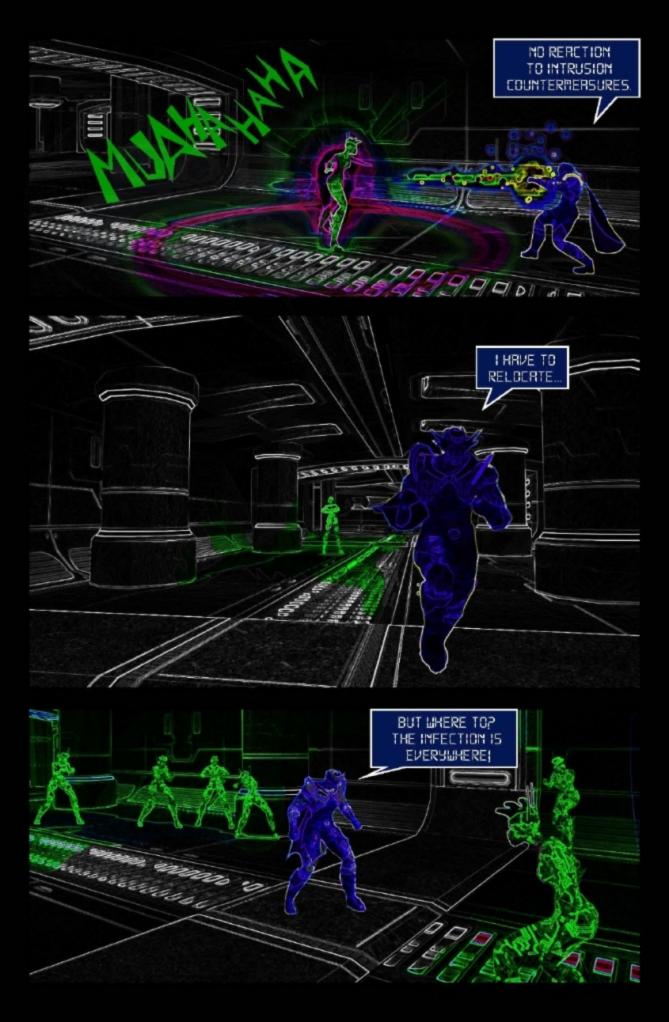
















































































# BIG EXTRA BIG EXTRA

#### HOW DID YOU CREATE THE COMIC AND WHAT TOOLS DID YOU USE?

-LEGOLOL

THE CREATION PROCESS CONSISTED OF SEVERAL STEPS. FIRST WE TALKED ABOUT THE COMIC ITSELF AND BRAINSTORMED SOME IDEAS ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN THE STORY. AFTER SOME INITIAL IDEAS WE TRIED TO OUTLINE THE PLOT WITH SOME KEYWORDS, GETTING THE SCENES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER. FROM THAT WE GOT A LIST OF PLACES AND CHARACTERS WE WOULD NEED. THIS WAS IMPORTANT AS WE WERE LIMITED BY THE SCENES OUR CHARACTERS COULD ACCESS IN CITY OF HEROES. HAVING TWO ACCOUNTS AND TWO PLAYERS, WE WERE ALSO LIMITED TO CONTROLLING A MAXIMUM OF TWO CHARACTERS AT ONCE. KEEPING THIS IN MIND WE DREW A STORYBOARD (WHICH YOU CAN SEE ON THE DOCUMENTARY CD). AFTERWARDS WE TOOK THE SCREENSHOTS IN-GAME AND EDITED THEM TO APPEAR MORE COMIC LIKE, USING IMAGE FILTERS IN PHOTOSHOP. FINALLY WE ASSEMBLED THE SCREENSHOTS IN COREL DRAW AND ADDED THINGS LIKE SPEECH BUBBLES AND TEXT.

WE ALSO LEARNED ALOT ABOUT THE LAYOUT IN COMICS FROM BLAMBOT.COM. ADDITIONAL FONTS WERE AQUIRED FROM 1001FREEFONTS.COM.



ONE OF THE ORIGINAL SCREENSHOTS FOR THE LAST PANEL ON PAGE 11.

### WHAT TOOLS IN CITY OF HEROES DID YOU USE TO CREATE THE COMIC?

- SEPHIROTH

ONE OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF CITY OF HEROES, THE CHARACTER GENERATOR, WAS A BIG HELP IN CREATING THE COMIC. THE GENERATOR OFFERS SO MANY OPTIONS WE HAD NO PROBLEM CREATING THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS WE NEEDED, FROM THE EVIL SUIT WEARING BOSS TO THE COLORFUL COSTUMED HEROES.

ANOTHER FEATURE, THE SUPER GROUP BASES, MADE IT POSSIBLE TO CREATE ENVIRONMENTS THAT WE COULD CONTROL TO A CERTAIN DEGREE. FOR EXAMPLE WE USED THE BASES TO CREATE MR. BRADLEY'S AND MR. BURROUGH'S OFFICES.

SCENES WHERE CHARACTERS ARE FIGHTING EACH OTHER WERE MOSTLY REALIZED USING THE ARENA FEATURE WHERE CHARACTERS ARE ABLE TO FIGHT EACH OTHER IN A SEPARATE ENVIRONMENT. HAVING ONLY 2 CHARACTERS WE WERE LIMITED TO 4 MAPS IN ARENA MODE, BUT LUCKILY THERE WAS A TECH LAB ENVIRONMENT AVAILABLE WHICH SUITED OUR PLANS.

EVEN THOUGH THE SUPER GROUP BASE OFFERS A GOOD VARIETY OF POSSIBLE THEMES, WE HAD TO TAKE SOME IN-DOOR SCREENSHOTS USING THE MISSION ARCHITECT FEATURE. AFTER SETTING SOME VARIABLES, PLAYERS CAN CREATE THEIR OWN MISSIONS USING MOST OF THE GAME'S MAPS. WE USED THIS FEATURE TO TAKE SCREENSHOTS OF THE WAREHOUSE SCENE. THIS FEATURE HAS LOTS OF POTENTIAL FOR MACHINIMA AS PLAYERS CAN CONTROL MANY ELEMENTS OF THE GAME IN THIS WAY, LIKE CREATING THE VILLAINS THEY WILL FIGHT, USING THE CHARACTER GENERATOR. WE DID NOT MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF THIS FEATURE THOUGH, AS WE WANTED TO MAINTAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER OUR SCENES. SOMETHING THAT'S DIFFICULT WITH THE COMPUTER CONTROLLED VILLAINS IN THE MISSION ARCHITECT.



MR.B'S OFFICE, MIRRORED FOR DIFFERENT ANGLE AND LIGHTING

AND OF COURSE WE MADE GOOD USE OF THE CHARACTER ANIMATION SYSTEM USING THE COLORFUL COMBAT ANIMATIONS OR SOME OF THE PLENTIFUL EMOTES. THE FACT THE CHARACTERS HAVE NO FACIAL ANIMATION WAS PROBLEMATIC AT TIMES (THE GAME IS 5 YEARS OLD BY NOW) SO WE HAD TO PLAN OUR SCENES ACCORDING TO THIS LIMITATION.

THE COMIC WAS CREATED AS A TERM WORK FOR A COURSE AT UNIVERSITY KOBLENZ-LANDAU WE ATTENDED IN WINTER TERM 08/09. THE COURSE NAMED "KUNST UND NEUE MEDIEN: COMPUTERSPIELE UND KUNST" (ART AND NEW MEDIA: COMPUTER GAMES AND ART) FOCUSED ON THE RELATION BETWEEN COMPUTER/VIDEO GAMES AND ART. WE EXPLORED WHERE ART APPEARS IN GAMES, WHICH PARTS OF GAMES CAN BE SEEN AS ART AND HOW GAMES INFLUENCE ART AND ARTISTS. AMONG OTHER THINGS WE ALSO TALKED ABOUT MACHINIMA WHICH BASICALLY REVOLVES AROUND USING GAMES AS MEDIA FOR SELF CREATED STORIES AND MOVIES. WE QUITE LIKED THE IDEA OF TELLING A STORY USING A COMPUTER GAME AND STARTED TO LOOK AROUND WHAT KIND OF GAMES MIGHT BE SUITED FOR IT AND WHAT KIND OF STORY WE COULD TELL.

WE QUICKLY CAME TO MMORPGS BECAUSE THE CHARACTERS WE PLAYED ALREADY HAD SOME HISTORY OF THEIR OWN, AS MOST OF THEM WERE CREATED ON ROLEPLAYING SERVERS. CITY OF HEROES HAD THE MOST UNIQUE VARIETY OF CHARACTERS AND OFFERED MANY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS AND CHARACTER ANIMATIONS WHICH LEND ITSELF FOR THE MACHINIMA PART.

WE THEN SETTLED ON ONE OF THE CHARACTERS WHO WOULD STAR IN OUR PROJECT AND WENT ON TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE COULD CREATE THE MACHINIMA. WHILE MOST OF THE CHARACTERS IN CITY OF HEROES HAVE SOME KIND OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HOW THEY ACQUIRED THEIR POWERS AND BECAME SUPER HEROES, NONE OF THAT IS ACTED OUT INGAME. THE CHARACTERS START OUT SUPER POWERED AND READY FOR ACTION, WHICH OF COURSE MAKES FOR MORE INTERESTING GAMEPLAY, BUT LEAVES SOME IMPORTANT PART OF THE CHARACTER OUT OF THE GAME. SO WE DECIDED TO FOCUS ON THE PART OF THE CHARACTER, WHICH PRECEDED HIS IN-GAME TIME, HIS STORY OF ORIGIN.

WHEN WE THOUGHT ABOUT THE WAY WE WANTED TO TELL THE STORY (MOVIE VS. SOMETHING ELSE) WE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR A COMIC. INSPIRED BY SOME COMICS OTHER PLAYERS CREATED FOR THEIR CHARACTERS WE REALIZED IT WOULD BE QUITE FUN PLAYING AROUND WITH THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF LAYOUT CHALLENGES THAT OCCUR WHEN CREATING A COMIC. ANOTHER PART WE LIKED ABOUT THE COMIC IDEA WAS ITS PRECURSOR NATURE. IN THE SAME WAY THE ORIGIN STORY WE WANTED TO CREATE, PREDATES THE CITY OF HEROES CHARACTER, COMICS AND COMIC CULTURE WERE THE MOTIVATION FOR CITY OF HEROES ITSELF.

#### HOW MANY SCREENSHOTS DID YOU TAKE?

-ALIENMASTER

WE TOOK ABOUT 2061 SCREENSHOTS WHICH EQUALS ABOUT 3.6 GB OF DATA.

## IS IT TRUE THAT CREATING MACHINIMA IS QUITE SIMILAR TO MAKING A MOVIE?

- SHADOWFURRY

YES, THERE ARE ACTUALLY QUITE A FEW SIMILARITIES, EVEN THOUGH WE DID NOT CREATE A MACHINIMA MOVIE. THE CREATION PROCESS IS QUITE SIMILAR. WE CREATED A STORYBOARD, CREATED THE CHARACTERS AND DISCUSSED THEIR OUTFITS AND HAIR-DO, BUILT SCENES TO SHOOT THE SCREENSHOTS IN AND EVEN HAD TO TAKE CARE OF THE LIGHTING IN OUR SHOTS. AND JUST LIKE IN REAL LIFE WE HAD TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE WALKING INTO OUR SETS, WHEN WE WAITED FOR JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT TO TAKE THE PICTURE. BUT WE WERE NOT ONLY DIRECTORS OF OUR OWN MACHINIMA PROJECT BUT ACTORS AS WELL. WHEN TAKING SCREENSHOTS WE ALSO HAD TO ACT USING OUR CHARACTERS, TRIGGERING THE EMOTES AND WATCHING THINGS LIKE CAMERA DISTANCE AND SO ON.

#### DID YOU RUN INTO ANY PROBLEMS WHILE YOU MADE THE COMIC?

- ALLUCART

APART FROM THE ODD PLAYER RUNNING INTO OUR CAREFULLY SELECTED OUTDOOR SCENES?

THE PATCH CONTAINING THE MISSION ARCHITECT FEATURE WAS DEPLOYED AROUND THE TIME WE MADE THE COMIC. THE MISSION ARCHITECT HELPED WITH SOME SCENES, BUT WE HAD TO DEAL WITH SEVERAL SERVER DOWNTIMES. AS WE WERE PLAYING ON US BASED SERVERS, THE DOWNTIMES WERE USUALLY RIGHT IN THE AFTERNOON, WHICH OFTEN CUT INTO OUR PLANS.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WE HAD TO DEAL WITH, WHILE TAKING THE SCREENSHOT WAS THE IN-GAME



LIGHTING. WHILE THE IN-DOOR LIGHTING WAS MOSTLY CONSTANT, THE OUT-DOOR DAY/NIGHT CYCLE IS ON A 1 HOUR TIMER WITH ONLY A FEW MOMENTS OF EVENING OR MORNING LIGHT. WE HAD TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL TO GET THE RIGHT TIME IN EACH SCREENSHOT AS MOST OF THE SCENES WERE NOT COMPLETED IN ONE VIRTUAL EVENING.

EXAMPLES FOR THIS ARE ON PAGE 2, PANEL 2 AND 3 (THE MOVING SHADOW OF THE TREE, SHOWING THAT IT'S LATER IN THE MORNING WHEN BOB ENTERS THE BUILDING) OR ON PAGES 6 AND 7.

#### SOME OF THE NAMES SOUND FAMILIAR.

- ALIENHUNTER

THERE ARE SOME REFERENCES TO THE MOVIE TRON IN THE COMIC. (BRADLEY'S NAME FOR EXAMPLE) TRON'S STORY HAS QUITE A FEW SIMILARITIES TO OUR COMIC AND IT SURELY SERVED US AS INSPIRATION. IN TRON A PROGRAMMER GETS SUCKED INTO THE VIRTUAL INTERIOR OF A COMPUTER, IN OUR COMIC A PROGRAM ESCAPES FROM THE VIRTUAL WORLD.

#### WHAT IS ON THE BONUS CD?

- DARKSHADOW

ON THE BONUS CD YOU WILL FIND THE STORYBOARD AND THE SLIDES FOR THE PRESENTATIONS WE GAVE IN THE COURSE.

#### ON WHAT SERVER DOES SENTINEL PATROL?

- SLEMMY

SENTINEL CAN BE FOUND ON THE VIRTUE SERVER OF CITY OF HEROES.

## WHAT WAS THE IDEA FOR SENTINEL'S COSTUME? - NINJANINJA

SENTINEL'S COSTUME WAS INSPIRED BY CHARACTERS IN ADVERTISEMENTS FOR SECURITY SOFTWARE, LIKE ANTIVIRUS PROGRAMS ETC. THESE VALIANT DEFENDERS OF SYSTEM SECURITY ARE USED TO GIVE A FACE TO THE OTHERWISE QUITE DULL SOFTWARE, BUT THEY ALSO MAKE FOR INTERESTING SUPER HEROES:).

## WHAT IS THE IDEA BEHIND SENTINEL'S STORY? - SIR GANKSALOT

SENTINEL'S STORY IS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF GLOBAL SURVEILLANCE AND FAILING DATA PRIVACY. WHILE A POWERFUL TOOL TO FIGHT CRIME, THE SENTINEL SYSTEM CAN BE ABUSED TO HARM INNOCENTS AND COLLECT PRIVATE INFORMATION ABOUT THEM, LIKE PSI LORD TRIES TO DO. BOB TRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE ETHICS CODE TO PREVENT THIS KIND OF ABUSE AS HE REALIZES WHAT DANGERS THE TECHNOLOGY COULD BRING. BUT HE IS ALONE IN THIS STRUGGLE AS THE OTHER HEROES AND THE REST OF PARAGON'S INHABITANTS ARE UNAWARE OF THE INVISIBLE THREAT. WHEN HE FAILS TO CHANGE SENTINEL'S CODE IN TIME AND MERGES WITH HIM, HE SUDDENLY FINDS HIMSELF ABLE TO ACCESS ALL THE INFORMATION THAT ARE AT SENTINEL'S DISPOSAL. HE HAS BECOME A MANIFEST BIG BROTHER AND SENTINEL'S LIVING CONSCIENCE. SO BOB HAS TO FACE AN OLD HERO WISDOM "WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY" AS HE IS ONLY HUMAN AND CAN MAKE WRONG DECISIONS, POSSIBLY ABUSING SENTINEL'S POWER AS WELL.

