1998

On Friday, March 20, Eidos Interactive gave legions of Lara Croft fans a very nice thank you in the form of four free add-on levels for the original game. Called Tomb Raider Gold, these never-before-seen levels were designed by Phil Campbell, producer and designer for a number of Eidos titles. The new levels are split into two sections: Unfinished Business and The Shadow of the Cat. Unfinished Business consists of two expert levels chronicling Lara’s dramatic return to Atlantis, where she must destroy a hidden alien hatchery. The Shadow of the Cat levels take players back to the City of Khamoon to embark on an all-new adventure. The Adrenaline Vault was able to catch up with a busy Campbell and get his insight into the Tomb Raider Gold design process and all things Lara Croft.

**AVault:**

Thank you for taking time to speak with us. How long have you been involved with the world of Tomb Raider?

**Philip Campbell:**

I have been doing Tomb Raider-related work since March of last year. I was not involved with the original game at all. When Jeremy and Adrian Smith saw my work on another Eidos project, they asked me if I would like to design some expert levels. I worked at Core in England for a couple months creating concepts for a number of possible levels. Subsequently, I designed and built the two Unfinished Business levels. Later, I designed the Shadow of the Cat levels with the help of Rebecca Shearin, a senior artist here at Eidos.

**AVault:**

What other game development experience do you have?

**Philip Campbell:**

I started work at Domark in San Mateo a few years ago. Before that, I had been an architect for 15 years. Initially, I was art director on a couple of projects, and now I am handling producer and designer roles on a number of projects. Currently, I am working on Vermin with Kronos Digital and Omikron with Quantic Dream. I guess I am the office handyman! I try to get involved in all design related projects, ranging from external development to Tomb Raider publications, comics, and merchandising.

**AVault:**

Where does your work take you?

**Philip Campbell:**

Technically, I am a senior producer and designer working for Eidos USA and based in San Francisco. However, my current schedule has me spending six weeks in Paris working on Omikron and two weeks in Los Angeles working on Vermin. In Paris, I just completed the recording and motion capture sessions, and am currently concentrating on level designs. Although I work for the publisher, I supplement the Omikron design team. On Vermin, Tom Marx and I form a production team, helping the external developers with design issues. We have been very involved with this project from the beginning and are trying to break down the traditional concept of publisher and developer relationships by working closely with the team on all aspects of the game. Back in the U.S., I am currently designing a marketing, packaging, and website campaign for Omikron with the marketing department, and working on another Tomb Raider product.

**AVault:**

Working on another Tomb Raider product? Do tell!

**Philip Campbell:**

[to the sounds of his hands being tied by public relations] Soon! Very soon!

**AVault:**

Why is Eidos publishing Tomb Raider again, this time with extra levels?

**Philip Campbell:**

Tomb Raider Gold is an added value product. The four new levels, extra goodies, and the low price make it a great deal. There are probably a lot of new converts to Tomb Raider following Tomb Raider 2, and we wanted to make it easy for them to pick up the rest of the story.

**AVault:**

It is rumored the Unfinished Business levels are for expert players only. What special challenges confront players in these levels?

**Philip Campbell:**

The two levels that detail Lara’s return to Atlantis are meant to follow directly from the end of the original game; therefore, we had to make sure the difficulty was as high, or higher, than the preceding levels. I do not think they are that difficult, but the player who really wants a test should play them before the Shadow of the Cat levels to limit the number of pickups and weapons.

**AVault:**

You do realize cruelty in game design is a punishable crime.

**Philip Campbell:**

I do not think we are being cruel! Devious, yes. Even sneaky. Hard, but fair. I think the levels reward careful play. No enemies materialize from thin air, nor are there random deaths, except for that one situation….

**AVault:**

Do the new levels concentrate on adventure-style puzzles, similar to the King Midas brain-buster from the original, or are they more focused on action, like the sequel?

**Philip Campbell:**

Both, although there may be a slight emphasis on action. The nature of the Atlantean foes makes them very tough enemies. On the other hand, the first Unfinished Business level is like a puzzle box. You must have an understanding of where rooms are in relation to one another. The Shadow of the Cat levels are more focused on mystery and mysterious puzzles. The player can get cat visions, and some objects transform. I loosely based a series of room puzzles on the Nine Lives of the Cat, an Egyptian hierarchy of gods. For instance, there is the Sun God room, where everything looks like it has been bleached out by the intense rays.

**AVault:**

Describe the conceptual development of these levels. Did you do any special research, and run into any unique design problems? I imagine you drew upon your experience as an architect.

**Philip Campbell:**

The Unfinished Business levels are based around a tight architectural construct. There are a lot of transparencies highlighting the connections between the various spaces. I imagined a giant underground hatchery, built out of the synthesis of a crumbling ancient architecture and a horrific kind of gunk. This is why you will find some very organic areas growing out of some fairly formal sets of rooms. Of course, everything is built upon the fiery red lava, and I wanted the lava to be constantly bubbling and popping throughout the levels. I worked around a lot of concepts I felt constituted good level design, such as foreshadowing events, allowing the player overall tactical views before a confrontation, building up the intensity as the action progresses, all the time considering dramatic camera angles and dramatically designed spaces. I did the Shadow of the Cat levels because I loved the Egyptian look in the original game, and wanted to add to the mythology of Khamoon. I did do a bit of research into Egyptian lore and culture, but mostly I imagined huge outside spaces, vast expanses of desert, and gigantic pyramids.

**AVault:**

Describe the actual dynamics of constructing the levels.

**Philip Campbell:**

The editor was a joy to work with. Rather than feeling like I was building models, plane by plane, vector by vector, I felt as though I was sculpting space, taking a solid block of matter and carving out an environment. Designing Tomb Raider levels involves a lot of late nights, on-the-spot testing, and subsequent tweaking and rebuilding. One of the great advantages of the editor is you can test as you go along.

**AVault:**

How easy was it to pick up the editing tools?

**Philip Campbell:**

The tools are geared to results, and I think part of the success of the original game is due to the quality of the level editor. It is very simple to build, test, and revise. The original did have some limitations, but these tended to focus the design rather than hinder it. Of course, my challenge was to build levels with the same high quality as the original, and I hope players find the maps challenging, compelling, and enjoyable.

**AVault:**

Do you think the editing tools could be mastered by the Internet community? What are the chances of them being freely released?

**Philip Campbell:**

Anyone with a creative eye could build playable levels, and I hope you will soon have a chance to do just that.

**AVault:**

You mentioned working with Rebecca Shearin on the Shadow of the Cat levels. Is there new art in Tomb Raider Gold?

**Philip Campbell:**

Rebecca and I came up with some concept designs the Shadow of the Cat levels, and she made some great new textures, many of which have a feline flavor. We had to stick very closely with the original textures for the Atlantean levels for continuity’s sake, but I had a free hand as far as structures and constructs were concerned. For the Egyptian areas, I started out with pretty much the same texture set as the original, then gradually introduced new material as the mystery progressed. We were also aiming for more dramatic outside spaces than the original, so the levels ended up being pretty huge.

**AVault:**

What is your take on the Lara Croft phenomenon? Do you feel there have been any missteps along the way?

**Philip Campbell:**

Of course not! The whole Lara Croft and Tomb Raider franchise is the current preoccupation of many talented people at Eidos and Core. Everything is carefully geared to respond to our audience’s wishes, and each step is meticulously planned. With a movie deal now in the works, it is critical for us to generate a quality script. Eidos makes sure experts are employed to deal with every conceivable expansion area for the franchise.

**AVault:**

Where do you see the franchise going?

**Philip Campbell:**

Tomb Raider is both a series and a franchise, and has potential to develop in many directions. The movie is an exciting opportunity, and as long as people want Lara Croft games, we will continue making them.

**AVault:**

Describe Vermin and Omikron, as you are able.

**Philip Campbell:**

Briefly, Vermin is an exciting 3D arcade action game, and Omikron is a real-time action and adventure title. Both look to be potentially great games, and we will be releasing more details as they develop. Certainly, they will both be featured at the Electronic Entertainment Expo this year, alongside our many other titles.