

Gathering Your Party with Project Eternity

Josh Sawyer, Project Director, Obsidian Entertainment



What we're talkin' about



Transmitting a
thank you to
backers now...

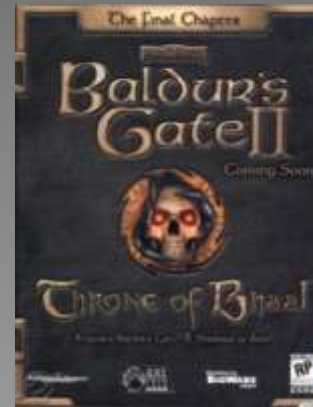
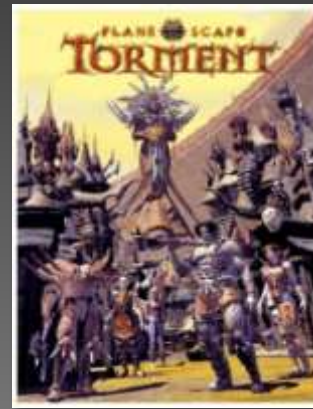
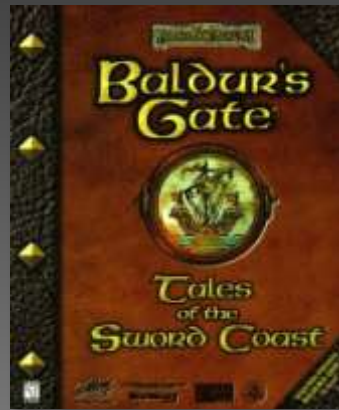
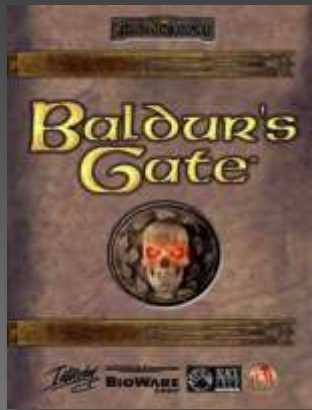
The zany challenges of making a Kickstarter-
funded late 90s-style fantasy PC CRPG in 2013.

What's Project Eternity?

An Isometric 2D+3D party-based fantasy RPG
for Windows, OS X, and Linux...

... using





Inspired by the Infinity Engine games
Developed ~2000 by BioWare and Black Isle Studios



Developed by Obsidian Entertainment in Irvine, CA
Home to many developers from Black Isle Studios



73,986

backers

\$3,986,929

pledged of \$1,100,000 goal

0

seconds to go



Kickstarter-funded: 74k backers, \$3.9m
Currently in production

Who am I?

- Josh Sawyer, Project Director and Lead Designer at Obsidian Entertainment.
- Started at Black Isle Studios in 1999.
- Obsidian Entertainment since 2005.
- Worked on several Dungeons & Dragons titles:
 - Icewind Dale, Heart of Winter, Trials of the Luremaster
 - Icewind Dale II
 - Neverwinter Nights 2

Project Eternity's Three Things

- Beautiful environments to explore (a lot of them).
- Party-based tactical combat – traditional “system feel”.
- Reactive story with great characters and mature themes.



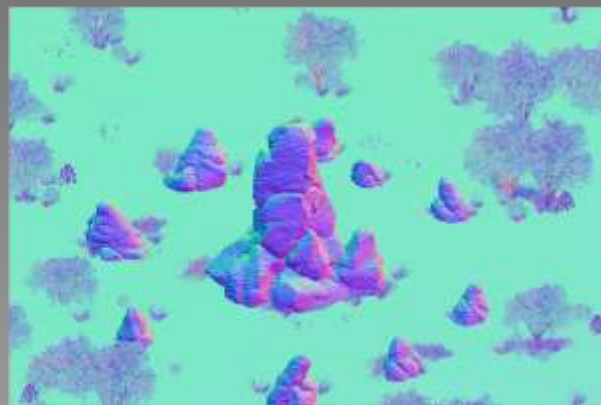
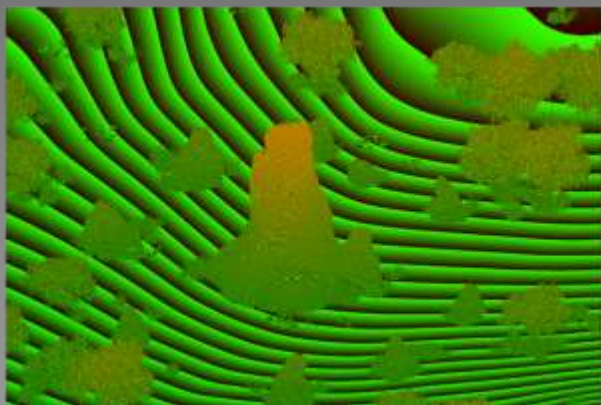
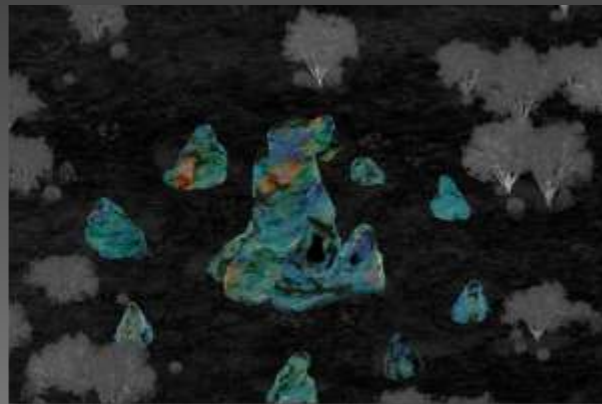
Making 2D/3D Environments in AD 2013



It ain't easy bein' HD.



Resolutions upwards of 13440 x 7560...



... x5 (Final, Diffuse, Specular, Depth, Normal)

HD Solutions

- Half-res diffuse, spec, and normal
- DXT compression
- Unity's compressed asset bundles
- Streaming 512 x 512 tiles for fast loading

Size Scope matters.



So we need a lot of areas...



Probably not this many, but still...

???

... a lot of areas.



Solutions for Scope

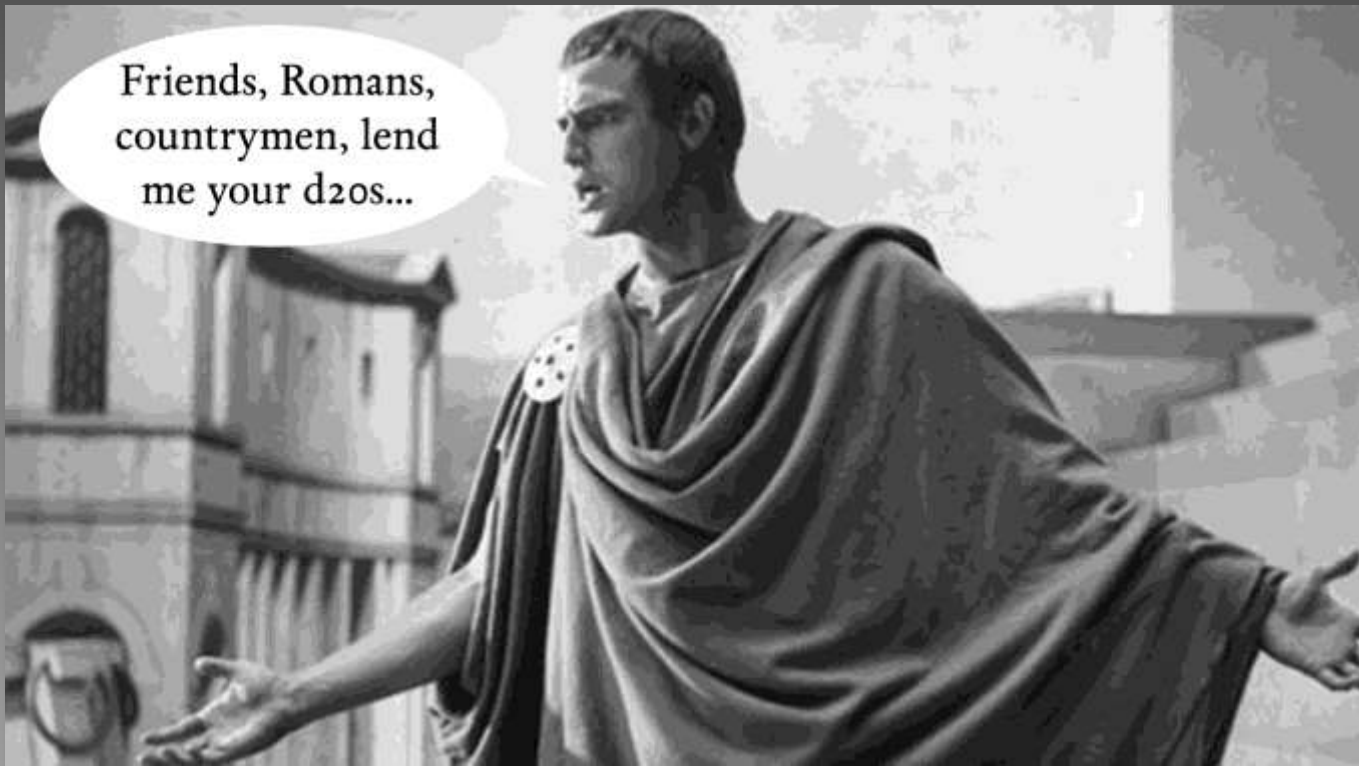
- *A lot* of planning – Standardized 3D blockouts before 2D.
- Careful about “truly” unique assets.
- Wilderness areas: the greatest.
- Outsourcing asset creation for levels.
- Smart material and rendering guidelines.

New Rules, New World, Old Feels



AD&D and Forgotten Realms art by Keith Parkinson, Larry Elmore, and Jeff Easley

Praising AD&D while moving past it.



Classic RPG system feel with variable, *fun* difficulty?

Difficulty: More than just numbers



Difficulty: Also more than just combat

Combat Options:

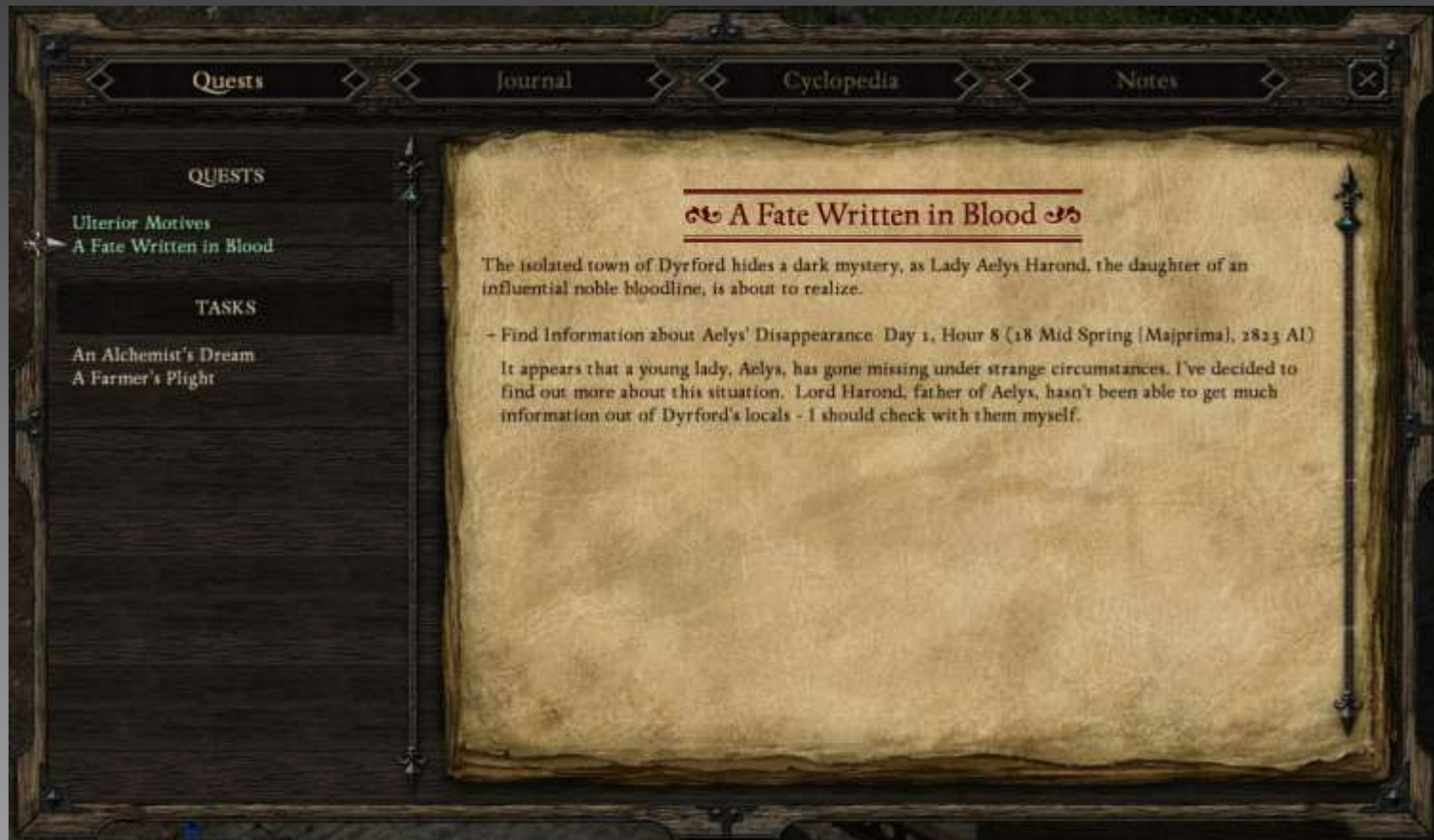
- Tactical difficulty (types of enemies)
- Game modes (Trial of Iron, Path of the Damned, Expert)
- Death vs. Maiming
- Area of Effect Highlighting
- Brief vs. Verbose system feedback
- Defense and Accuracy tooltips
- Auto-Pause criteria
- and more...

Non-Combat Options:

- Displaying unqualified conversation interactions
- Showing skill check thresholds
- Displaying earned reputation modifiers
- Quest objectives: explicit or implicit goals
- and more...

The touch, the feel... of classic AD&D CRPGs.





Solid, skeuomorphic GUIs

Traditional Storytelling, Updated



Okay, enough already.
You get +2 on your next
Perform check.

Eternity is written for readers.



Art by Don Maitz



Interaction
with,
expression
to, and
feedback
from
characters
you care
about



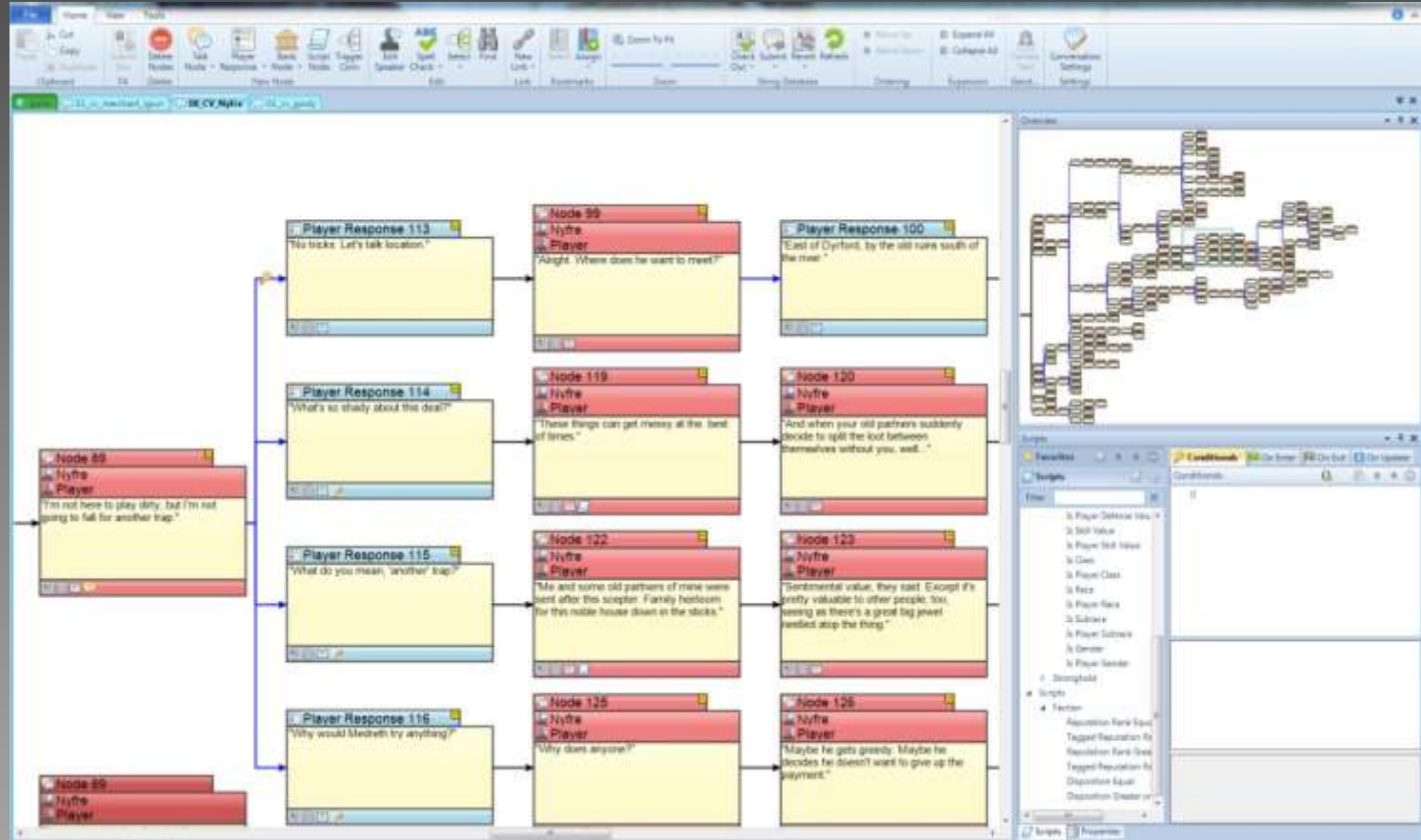
Scripted interactions: illustrations + text + your imagination

The calm pool here is fed by rivulets from a waterfall that steadily flows down the cliff face. Though shallow, the water appears to be deep enough to conceal bottom-feeding fish that occasionally dart out for morsels of food. Behind the waterfall, a flooded tunnel flows off into the darkness...

1. Dive in and confidently swim down the tunnel. [Athletics]
2. Use your natural endurance to pull yourself along the entire length of the tunnel wall. [Constitution]
3. Poke around the pool with a stick.
4. Wait for a few hours to see what happens.
5. Leave.



Our choices are your choices... so who benefits?





A Challenge Yet To Solve:
Dynamism is Tricky, Part II:
Return of the Curse of Scooby-Doo

Potential 2D/3D Rendering Solutions

- Level-specific environment maps.
- Little to no reliance on ambient lighting for objects.
- Use of light probes to simulate lighting.
- Shadow map sampling.
- Point light-generated dynamic shadow solution.

Conclusion

- Project Eternity is only possible because of our backers.
- We owe them an experience that recaptures the Zeitgeist of late 90s D&D-style FRPGs.
- The “real feels”: authenticity guides our choices.



Thanks



- Our backers!
- Dimitri Berman
- Hector Espinoza and the Environment Krewe
- Brandon Adler and Adam Brennecke
- Everyone on the Project Eternity team

Project updates: <http://eternity.obsidian.net>

E-mail: jsawyer@obsidian.net

Twitter: @jesawyer