GDC®

WALK TALL MY FRIENDS

Giving Life to AI-Buddies in FINAL FANTASY XV

Prasert "Sun" Prasertvithyakarn

FINAL FANTASY XV Lead Game Designer

Business Division 2

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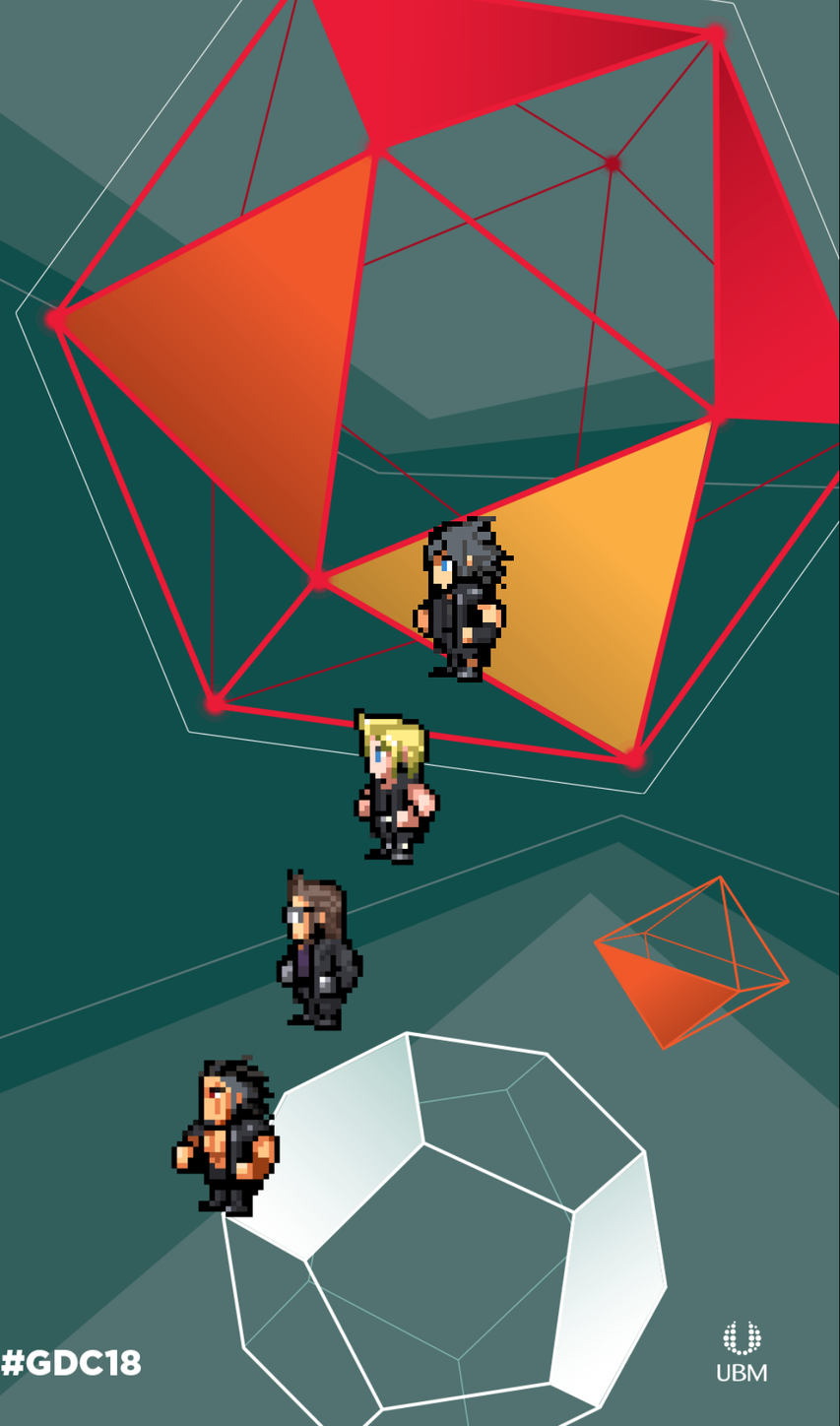
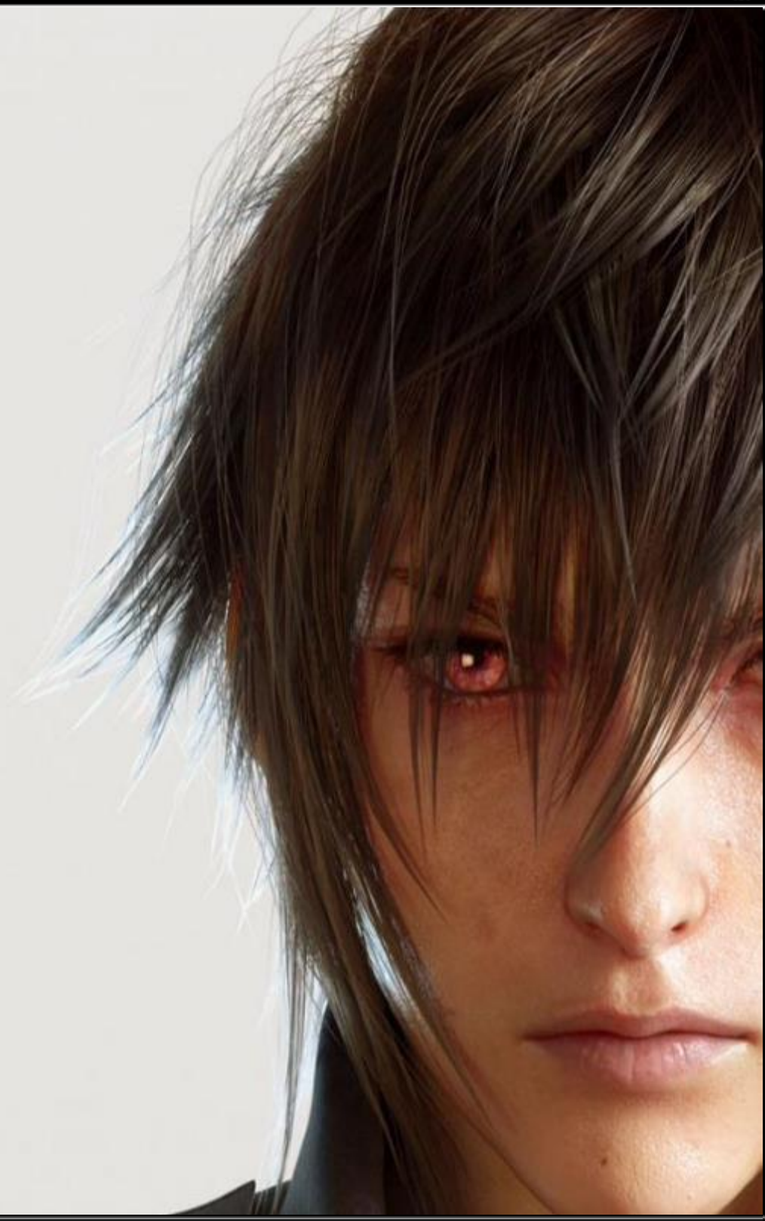


WHO IS IN CHARGE OF CHARACTER DESIGN?



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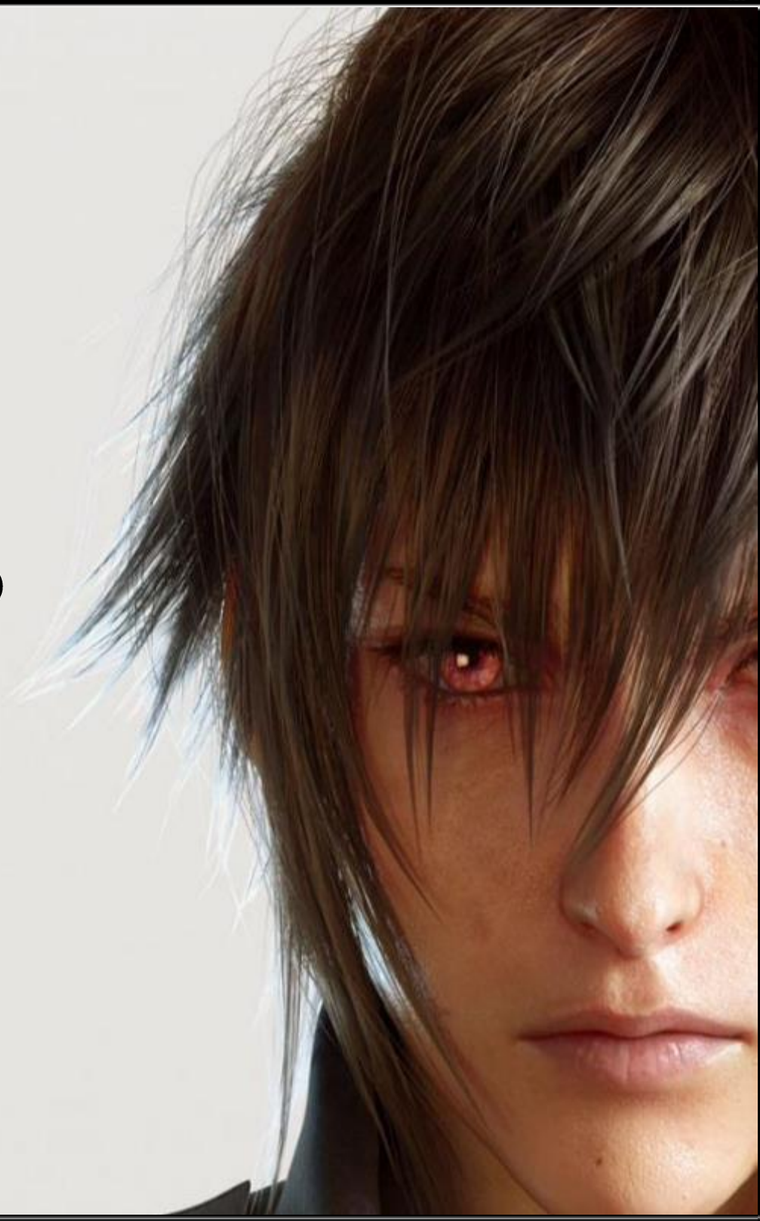
A character artist?

A character 3D modeler?

A scenario writer?



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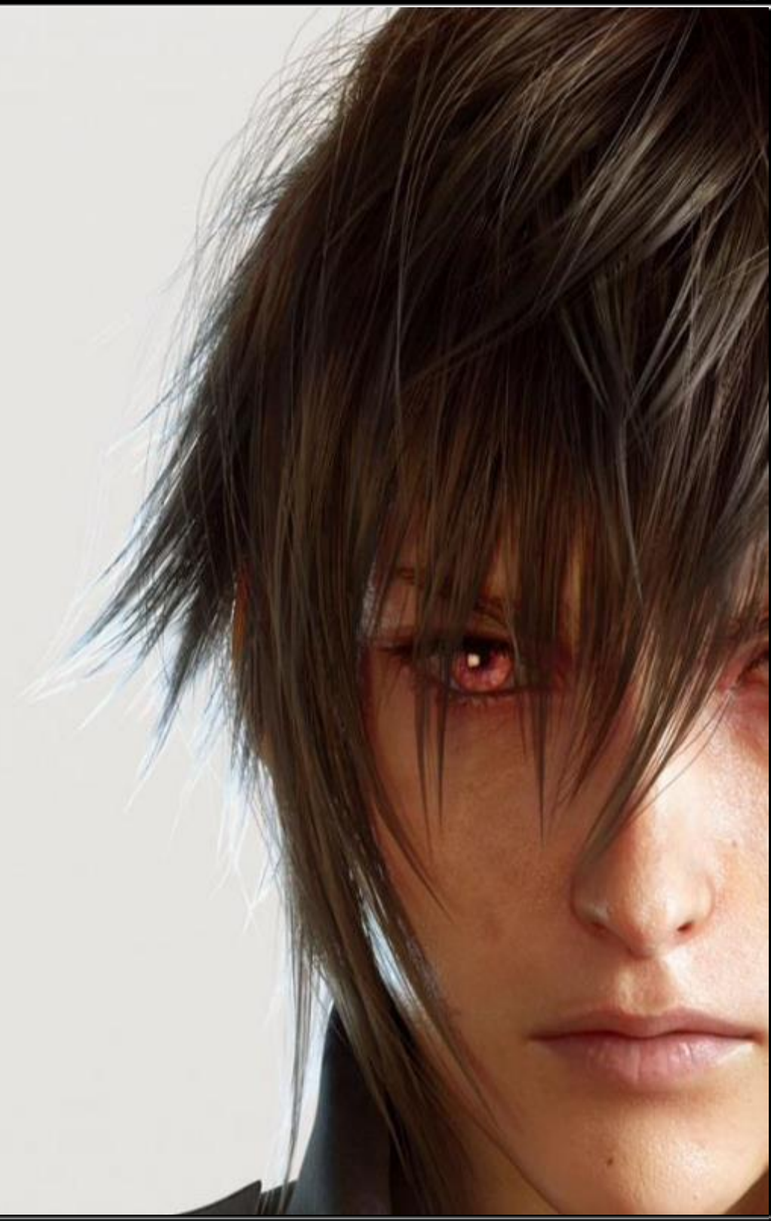
There are new other answers.



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How do you experience a character?

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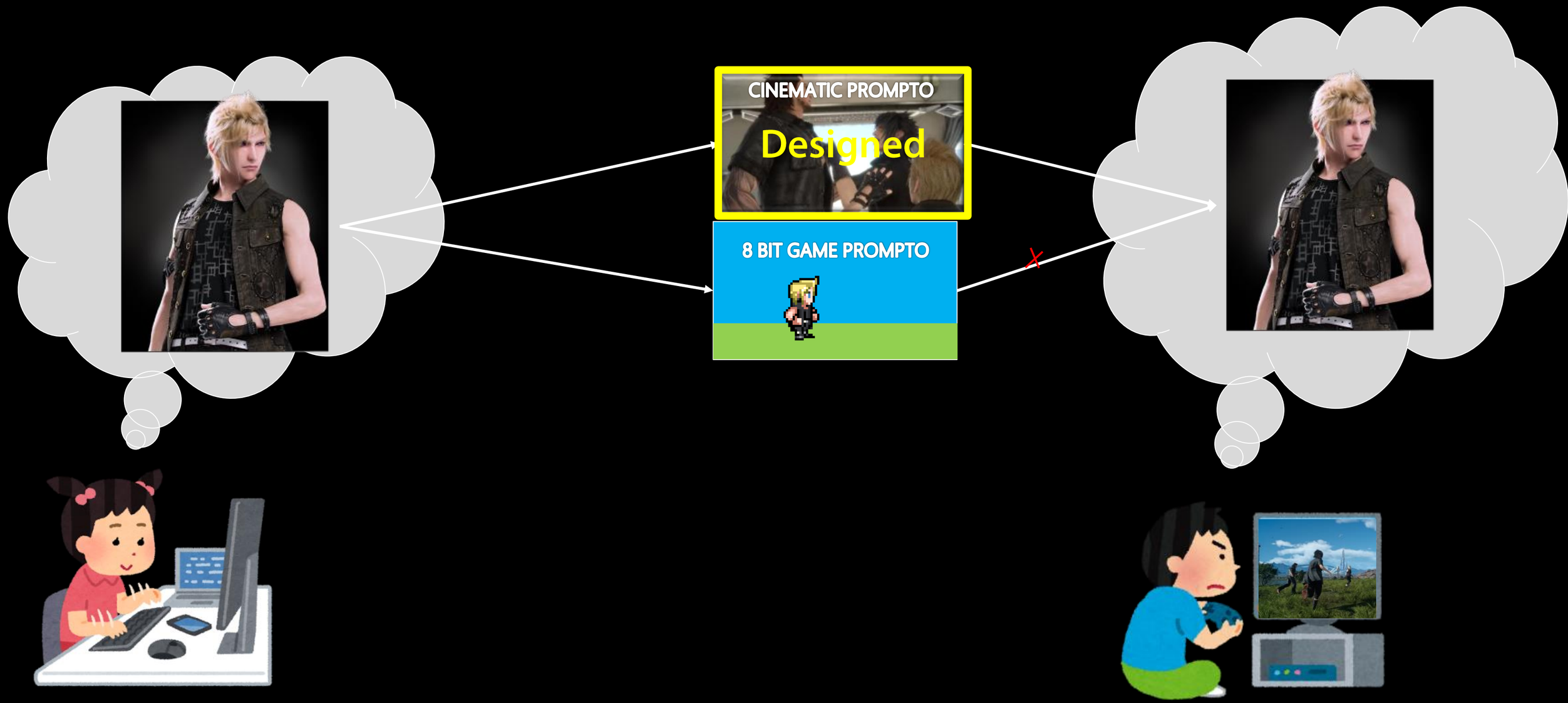
How do you experience a character?



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How do you experience a character?

CINEMATIC PROMPTO
Designed

COMBAT PROMPTO

WORLD MAP PROMPTO

PHOTO PROMPTO

MAIN MENU PROMPTO

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~~CHARACTER DESIGN~~

CHARACTER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

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CX

Character Experience

= An actual way the audience perceive character in media

CX design emphasizes that the way the audience can engage characters in game
has more depth and varieties than it used to be.
While we are blessed with more engaging storytelling approaches,
we are taking the risks of ruining all the experience caused by a poor design.

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Character Design

CINEMATIC PROMPTO

Designed

COMBAT PROMPTO

WORLD MAP PROMPTO

PHOTO PROMPTO

MAIN MENU PROMPTO

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Character Experience Design

CINEMATIC PROMPTO
Designed

COMBAT PROMPTO
Designed

WORLD MAP PROMPTO
Designed

PHOTO PROMPTO
Designed

MAIN MENU PROMPTO
Designed

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WALK TALL MY FRIENDS

Giving Life to AI-Buddies in FINAL FANTASY XV

SQUARE ENIX Business Division 2

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Prasert “Sun” Prasertvithyakarn

FINAL FANTASY XV Lead Game Designer

Business Division 2

SQUARE ENIX

Home country: Thailand
Graduated in music-related AI field.
Specialized in Emotional AI & Game Design

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PROMPTO's FACEBOOK

How A Buddy-AI Auto-snapshots your Adventure in FFXV

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WALK TALL MY FRIENDS

Giving Life to AI-Buddies in FINAL FANTASY XV

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Introduction to CX

CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

CX DESIGN BY AI: The 4 Hierarchy

FUNCTIONAL BELIEVABLE COMFORTABLE EMOTIONAL

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

CONCLUSION & TAKEAWAYS

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Introduction to CX

CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

CX DESIGN BY AI: The 4 Hierarchy

FUNCTIONAL BELIEVABLE COMFORTABLE EMOTIONAL

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

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CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

THE BEGINNING OF OUR JOURNEY

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CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY SERIES: FELLOWSHIP

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FINAL FANTASY XV
ファイナルファンタジーXV

FINAL FANTASY XV

■First FINAL FANTASY party without a female characters.

■First FINAL FANTASY party without a newly joined member.

ADVERSITY? or OPPORTUNITY?

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FINAL FANTASY XV
ファイナルファンタジーXV

OMG, this is a chance for a brand new CX!

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What kind of brotherhood we are looking for?

Cool on the outside: Silly stuffs, fun stuffs, party!... Anything!

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What kind of brotherhood we are looking for?

Cool on the outside: Silly stuffs, fun stuffs, party!... Anythi
Cool on the inside: Strong bonds, trust, dedication.

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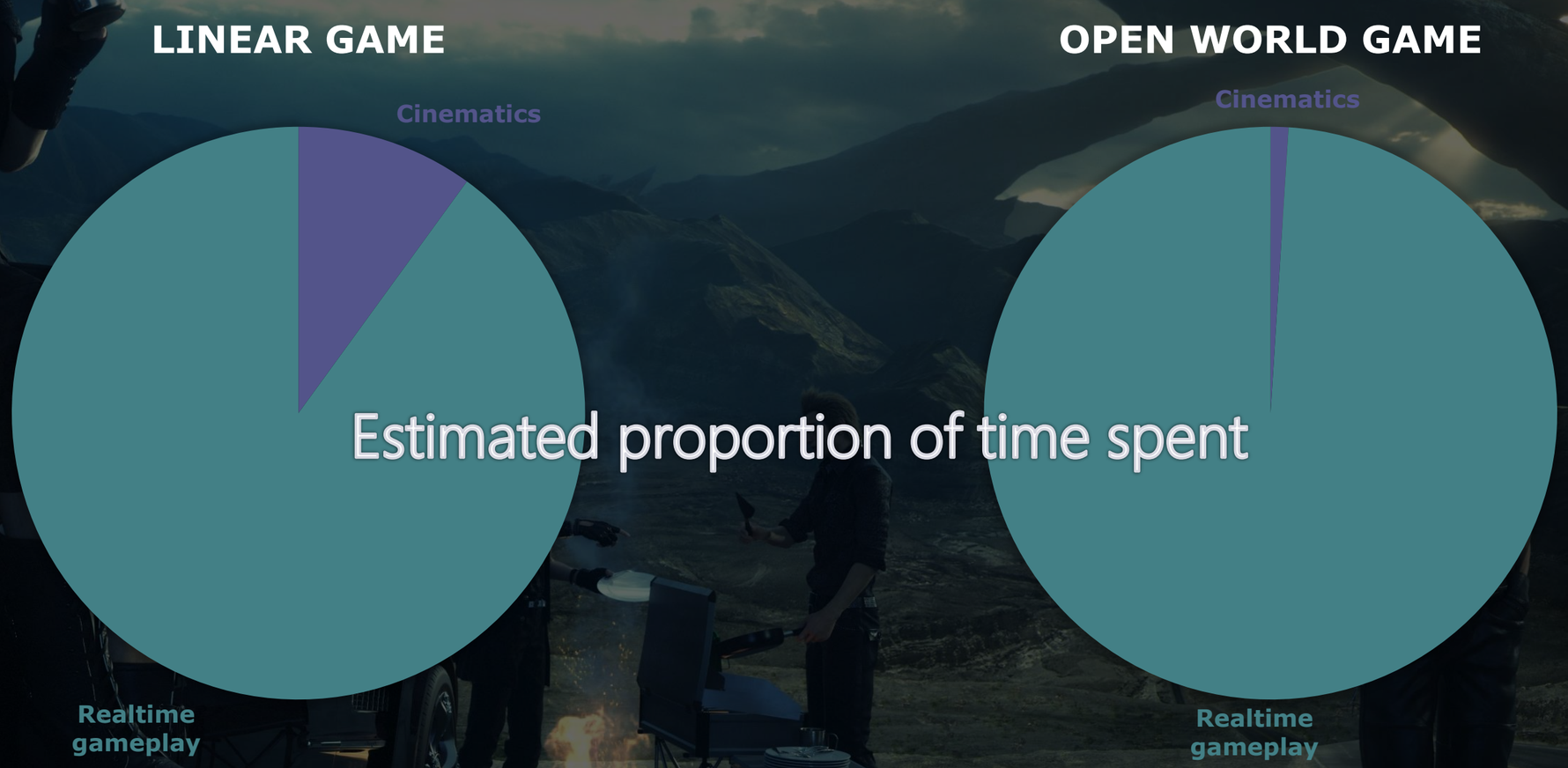
NO, NOT BY CINEMATICS!



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Cinematics

Real Time Level Event!

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Our First Test:

Just try to having them moving together with the player character

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SENSE OF BELONGING

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Our Second Test:

Do we really need an event? How do we define event?

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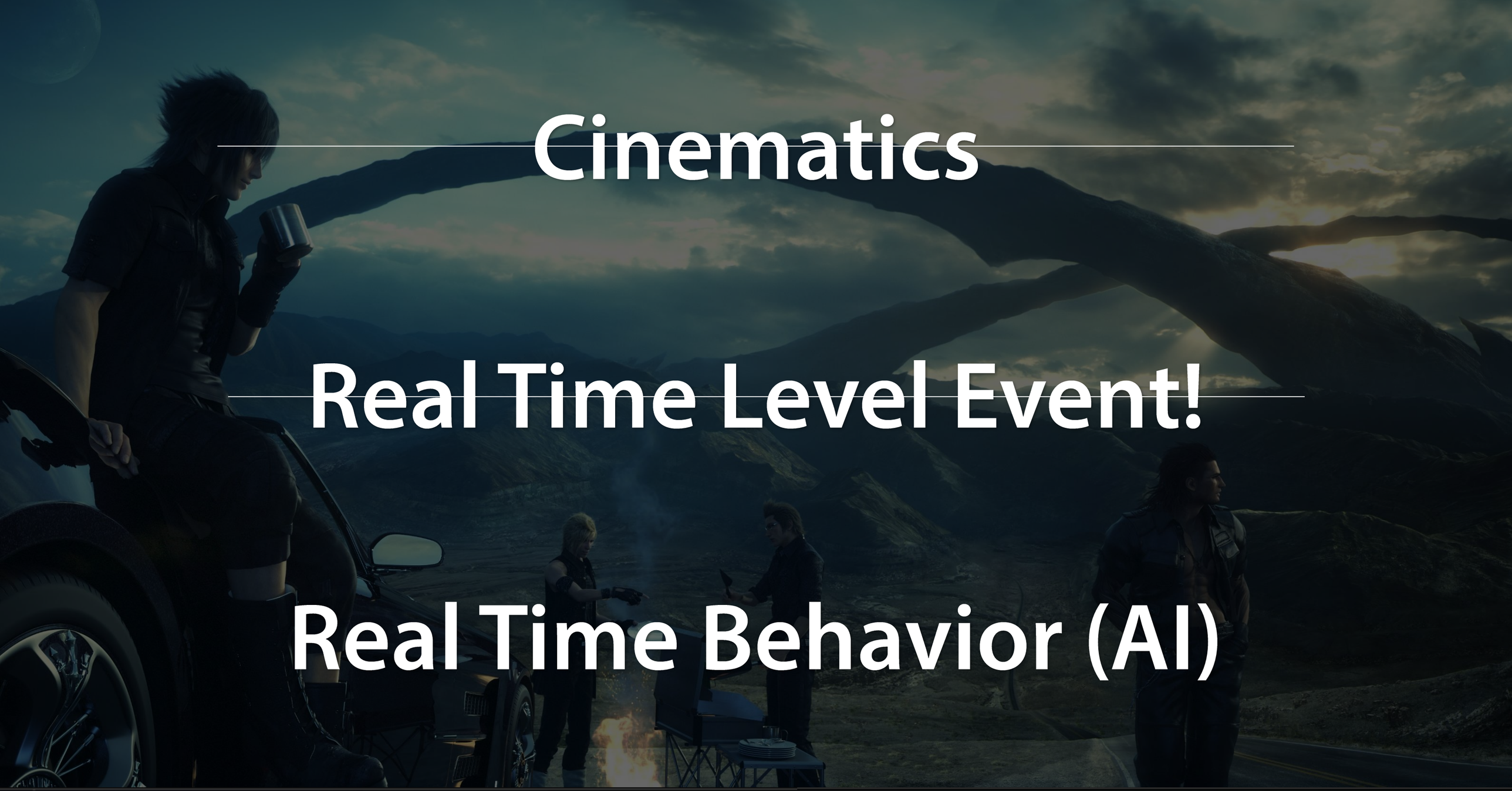

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THE ART OF NOT SAYING IT OUT LOUD

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" A NARRATIVE CAN BE ESTABLISHED
THROUGH WHAT IS LEFT UNSAID
RATHER THAN WHAT IS EXPLICITLY STATED "

YINTING HE, 2018

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BUDDY SYSTEM & AI

A TEAM EXCLUSIVELY FOR CX

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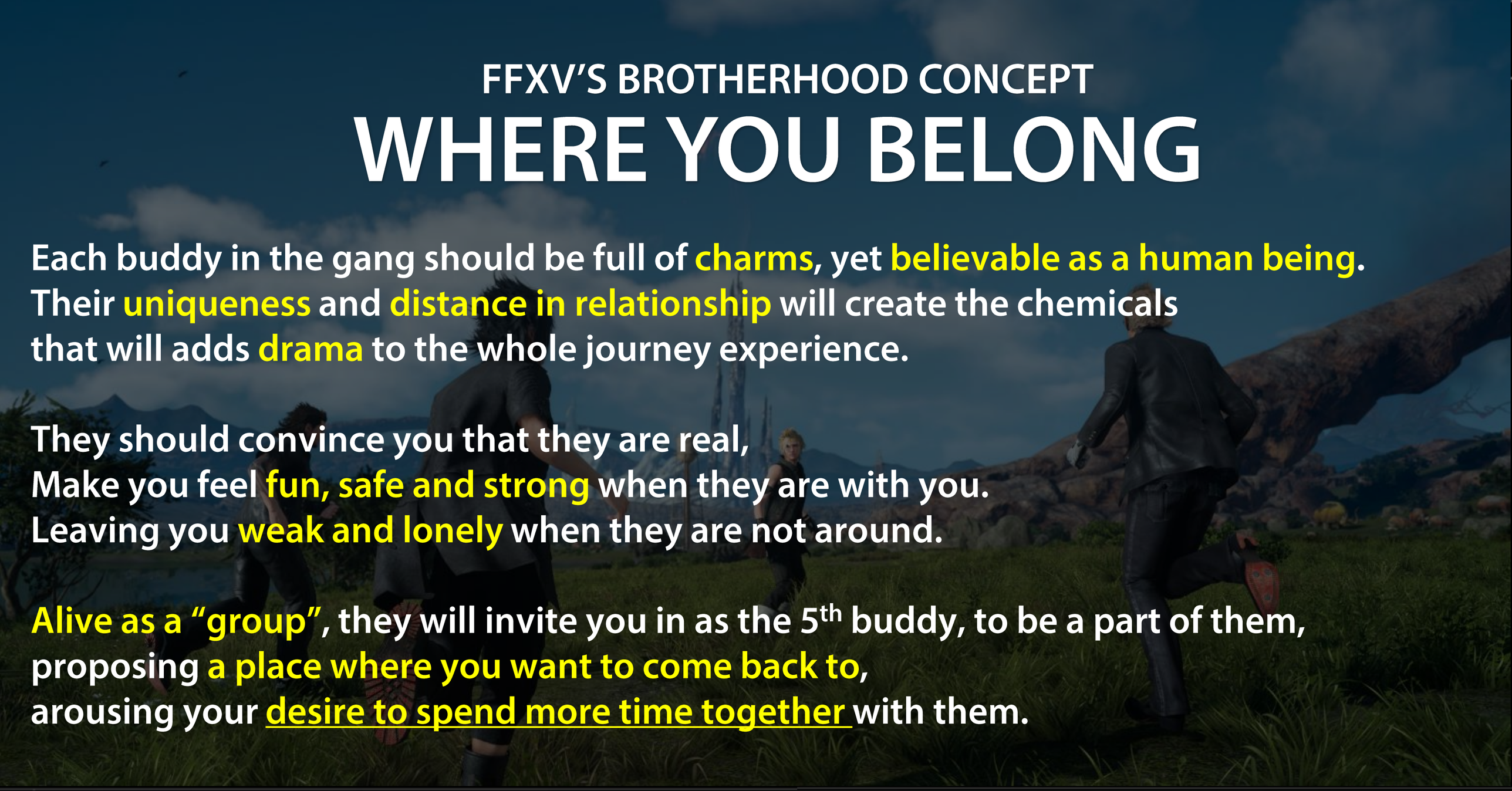

FFXV'S BROTHERHOOD CONCEPT

WHERE YOU BELONG

Each buddy in the gang should be full of charms, yet believable as a human being.
Their uniqueness and distance in relationship will create the chemicals
that will adds drama to the whole journey experience.

They should convince you that they are real,
Make you feel fun, safe and strong when they are with you.
Leaving you weak and lonely when they are not around.

Alive as a "group", they will invite you in as the 5th buddy, to be a part of them,
proposing a place where you want to come back to,
arousing your desire to spend more time together with them.

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THE PROCESS OF CX DESIGN

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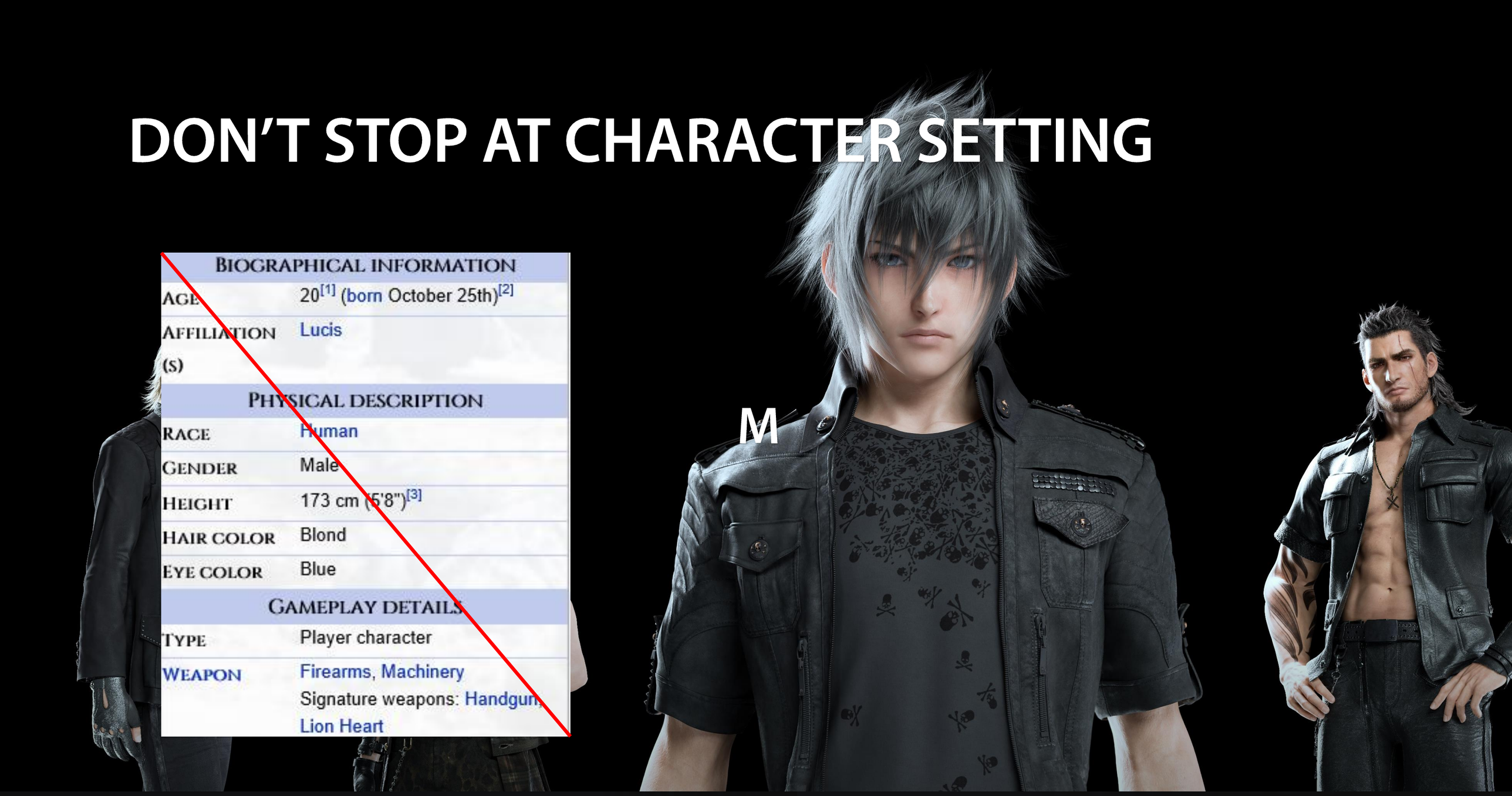
DON’T STOP AT CHARACTER SETTING

Biographical information	
Age	20[1] (born October 25th)[2]
Affiliation(s)	Lucis
Physical description	
Race	Human
Gender	Male
Height	173 cm (5'8")[3]
Hair color	Blond
Eye color	Blue
Gameplay details	
Type	Player character
Weapon	Firearms, Machinery Signature weapons: Handgun, Lion Heart



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CHARM DESIGN

CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE REASONS WHY THE PLAYERS ARE GOING TO LIKE YOUR CHARACTERS?

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OUR CHARM DESIGN TECHNIC

STEREOTYPE + 2

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CHARM DESIGN by 3 Keywords

(Stereotype + 2)

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Charm Design (Prompto)

FINAL FANTASY XV
ファイナルファンタジーXV

Wrong Keyword Lists

- A Happy go lucky
- A Playboy
- A Goof

At firstglance

Charm Keyword 1 :WYSIWYG

A Mood Maker

- Cute
- A Puppy
- Photogenic
- Hardworking
- Friendly
- Extrovert

A couple of hours with him

Charm Keyword 2 : A gap

A Geek/ an OTAKU

- A Machinery Geek
- A Camera Geek
- A Game Otaku
- Dexterous
- Anime Otaku
- A City boy

When you think you know him

Charm Keyword 3 :Deep down

Concealing & Sentimental

- Introvert
- Emotional Sensitive
- Obesophobia
- Escapist
- Lacks confident
- A thinker
- Anxious
- Secret keeping

Congratulations!
You've learned the true Prompto
Now you're his BFF

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CHANGE KEYWORDS into FEATURES

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Charm Design (Prompto)

FINAL FANTASY XV
ファイナルファンタジーXV

Wrong Keyword Lists

- A Happy go lucky
- A Playboy
- A Goof

At firstglance

Charm Keyword 1 :WYSIWYG

A Mood Maker

Running and jumping around in the combat.
Sings a victory fanfare times to times
Show his affection to chocobo every time he can
Selfies a lot and ask everyone to do it
Secretly do training times to times.

A couple of hours with him

Charm Keyword 2 : A gap

A Geek/ an OTAKU

Using machine and guns in battle.
Links everything along the journey to game.
Always whine about outdoor life, camping getting dirty.
Always having his camera by his side.

When you think you know him

Charm Keyword 3 :Deep down

Concealing & Sentimental

Afraid of eating late (an gain weight)
Sometimes just standing and staring at the sky alone.
In times of trouble takes leadership
Conceals his worries that he are not worth travelling along
Conceals his birth and his past.

Congratulations!
You've learned the true Prompto.
Now you're his BFF

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FIND CHANNELS to ACTUALIZE FEATURES

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Charm Design (Prompto)

FINAL FANTASY XV
ファイナルファンタジーXV

Charm Keyword 1 :WYSIWYG

A Mood Maker

A couple of hours with him

Charm Keyword 2 : A gap

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When you think you know him

Charm Keyword 3 :Deep down

Concealing & Sentimental

Running and jumping around in the combat.
Sings a victory fanfare times to times
Show his affection to chocobo every time he can
Selfies a lot and ask everyone to do it
Secretly do training times to times.

Using machine and guns in battle.
Links everything along the journey to game.
Play games whenever he has a chance
Always whine about outdoor life, camping getting dirty.
Always having his camera by his side.

Afraid of eating late (an gain weight)
Sometimes just standing and staring at the sky alone.
In times of trouble takes leadership
Conceals his worries that he are not worth travelling along with.
Conceals his birth and his past.

Photo system
& Photo AI

Camp System
& Camp Scene

Real time
combat

Real time
Non combat

Cinematics

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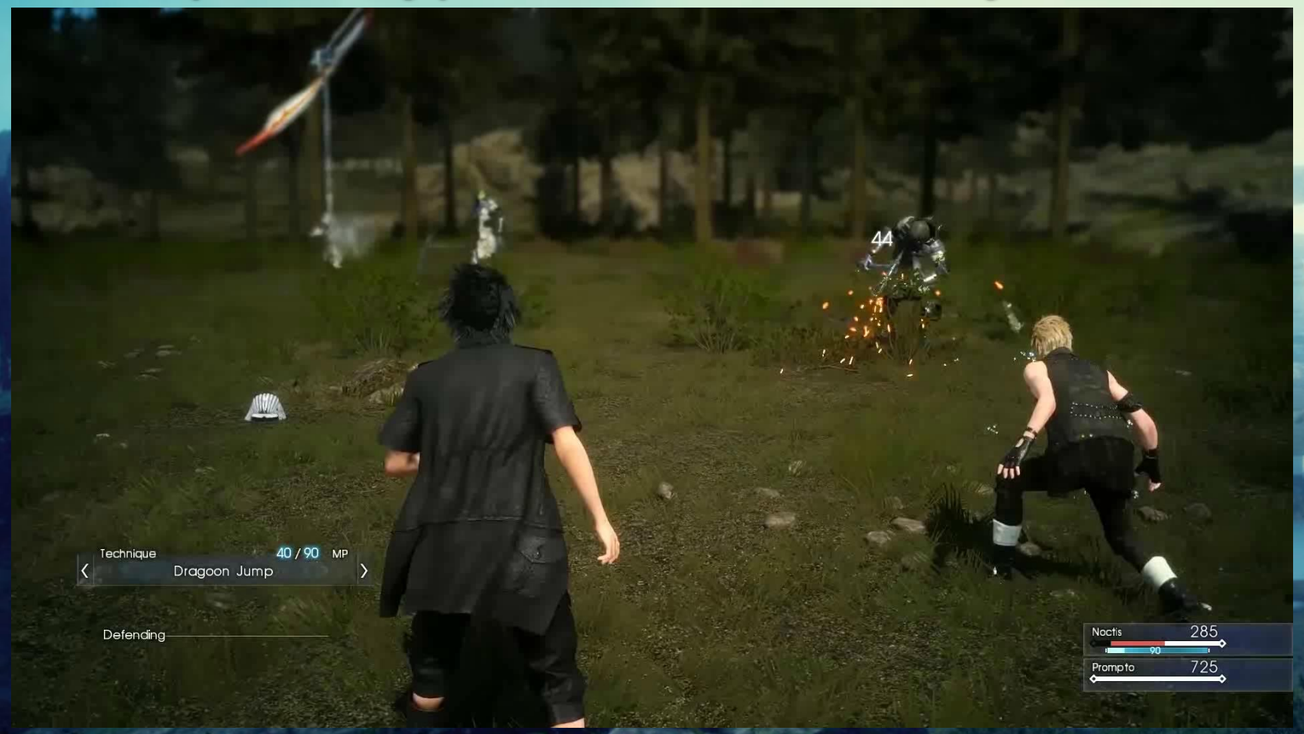
Let the AI tell you the story

Prompto is hyper-active and lively!



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Introduction to CX

CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

CX DESIGN BY AI: The 4 Hierarchy

FUNCTIONAL | BELIEVABLE | COMFORTABLE | EMOTIONAL

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

CONCLUSION & TAKEAWAYS

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CX DESIGN BY AI

4 Hierarchy of properties for engaging buddy-AI

4 HIERARCHY OF PROPERTIES FOR ENGAGING BUDDY-AI

4. ARE THEY EMOTIONAL?

3. ARE THEY COMFORTABLE ?

2. ARE THEY BELIEVABLE ?

1. ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL ?

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1. ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL ?

4 Hierarchy of properties for engaging buddy-AI

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FUNCTIONAL VALUE vs EMOTIONAL VALUE

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You mean to make the buddy-AI strong?

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WISELY VISUALIZE THEIR FUNCTIONAL VALUE

Make a Good Use of Game Design Approach

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WISELY VISUALIZE THEIR FUNCTIONAL VALUE

Make a Good Use of Game Design Approach

Link them to a system/ feature.
Or create a new system for them!

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2. ARE THEY BELIEVABLE ?

4 Hierarchy of properties for engaging buddy-AI

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DO NOT INTERRUPT THE MAGIC SHOW

Never Ever Allow Any Chances to Remind the Players They're Just a Doll

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C'MON IT'S JUST A GAME CHARACTER

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DO NOT INTERRUPT THE MAGIC SHOW

Never Ever Allow Any Chances to Remind the Players They're Just a Doll

Wrong: We have no costs for implementation

Right: How would a real human react?

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DO NOT OPTIMIZE ANIMATIONS

USELESS ANIMATIONS ARE VALUABLE WHEN PLAYED AT THE RIGHT TIME

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ARTIFICIAL USELESSNESS

Focus More on the Approach, Not Only the Outcome

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THE LINK WITH THE WORLD

Use character to express the world. Use the world to create character.

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20 SECONDS ANIMATION

A New Approach to Smooth Character Animation

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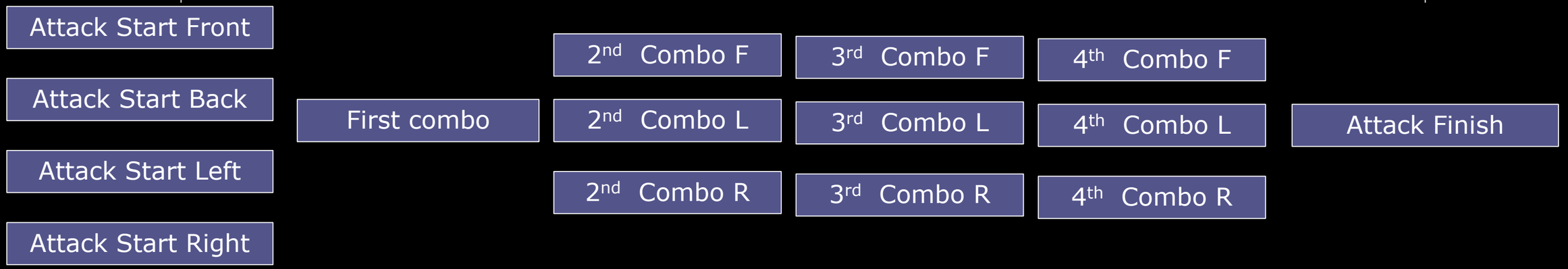
20 SECONDS ANIMATION

A New Approach to Smooth Character Animation

A Classic approach

unsmooth animation



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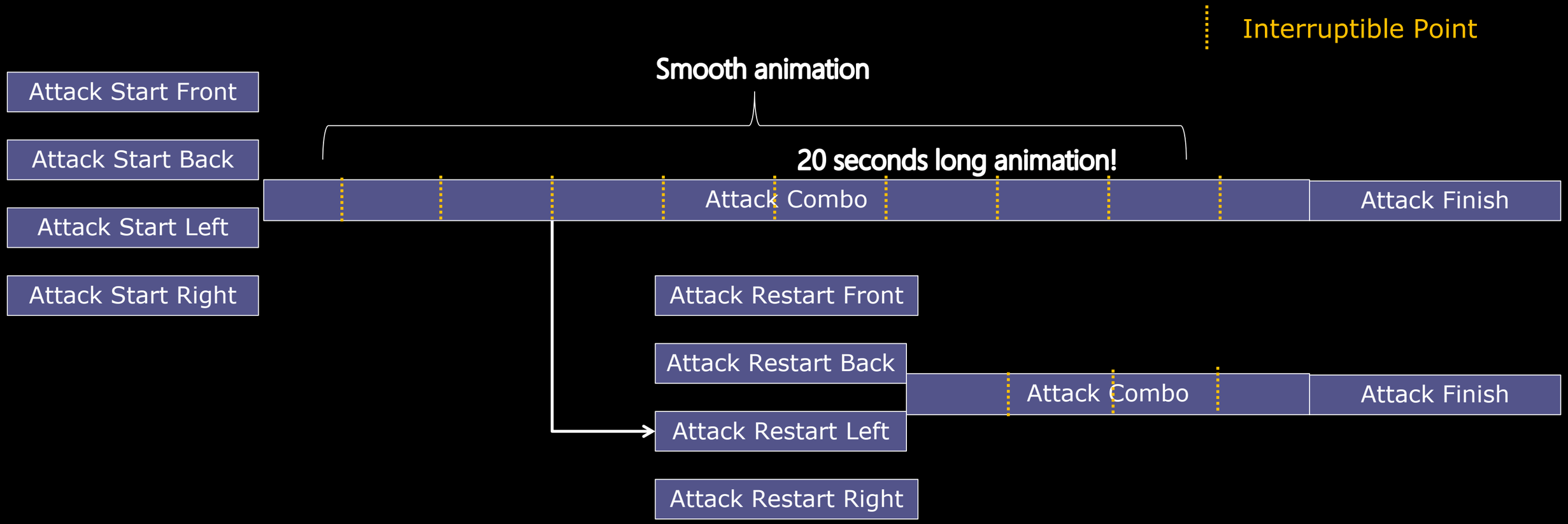
20 SECONDS ANIMATION

A New Approach to Smooth Character Animation



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20 SECONDS ANIMATION

A New Approach to Smooth Character Animation

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3. ARE THEY COMFORTABLE ?

4 Hierarchy of properties for engaging buddy-AI

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EMOTIONAL VALUE vs FUNCTIONAL VALUE

The Reason We Have Friends

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KEEP THE RIGHT DISTANCE

ENSURE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL COMFORTABILITY

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WALKING TOGETHER

Invest in Sense of Belonging

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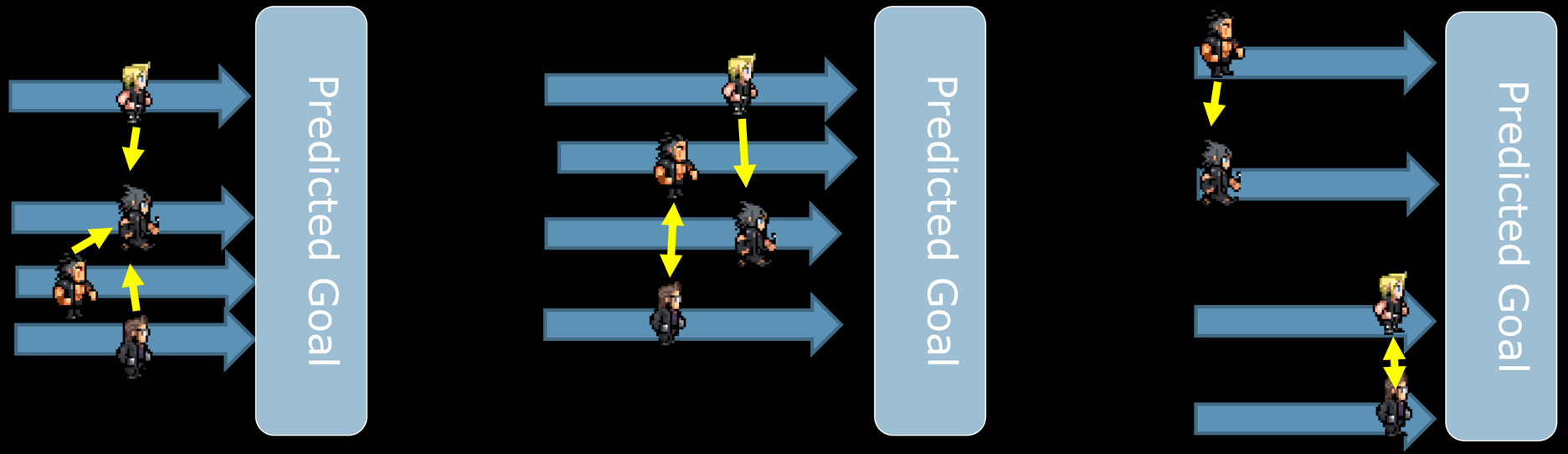
WALKING TOGETHER

Invest in Sense of Belonging



Who I want to be with

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CONSCIOUSNESS SIMULATION

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

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MAKE SURE THE PLAYER IS SEEN

MAKE SURE THE PLAYER IS CARED

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INVEST IN VOICE

WORDS SPEAK LOUDER THAN ACTIONS

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INVEST IN VOICE

Words Speak Louder than Action

Make them noisy

Say what human should say:
Greeting/ Gratitude/ Apologize

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EVER PLAYED AN RPG AT YOUR FRIEND'S ?

Utilizing Experience Synchronization & Information Sharing

Synchronize experience

Share information

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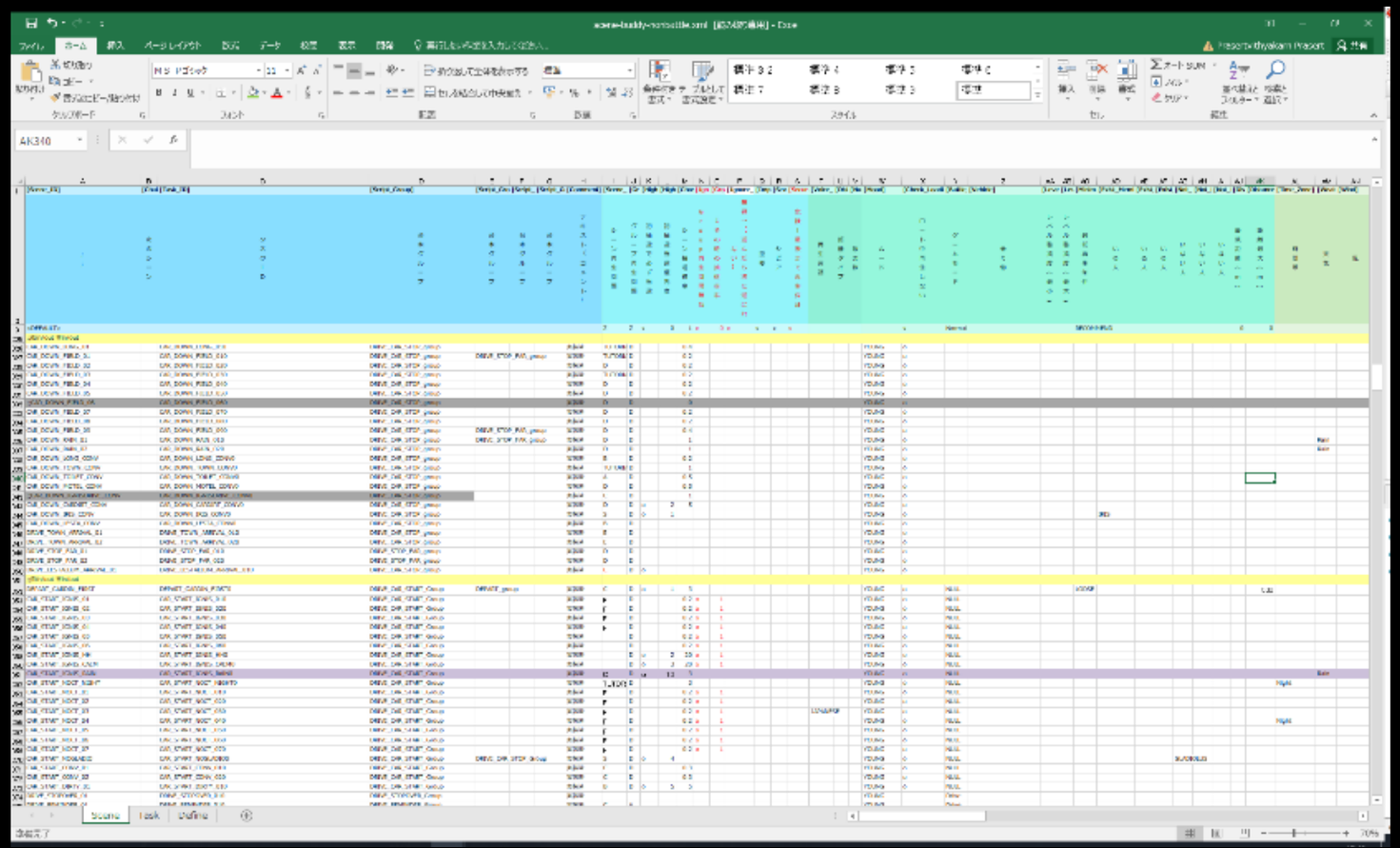
INTRODUCTION TO "DI-PHONE"

Choosing the Right Conversation to Play



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INTRODUCTION TO "DI-PHONE"

Balancing Conversation Amount

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PEOPLE WILL TALK ANY TIME ANYWAY

Don’t Let the Animation Constraints Prevent You From Playing the Conversation

While standing

While walking

Same conversation results in different animation in different situation. It won’t stop the player from playing the game.

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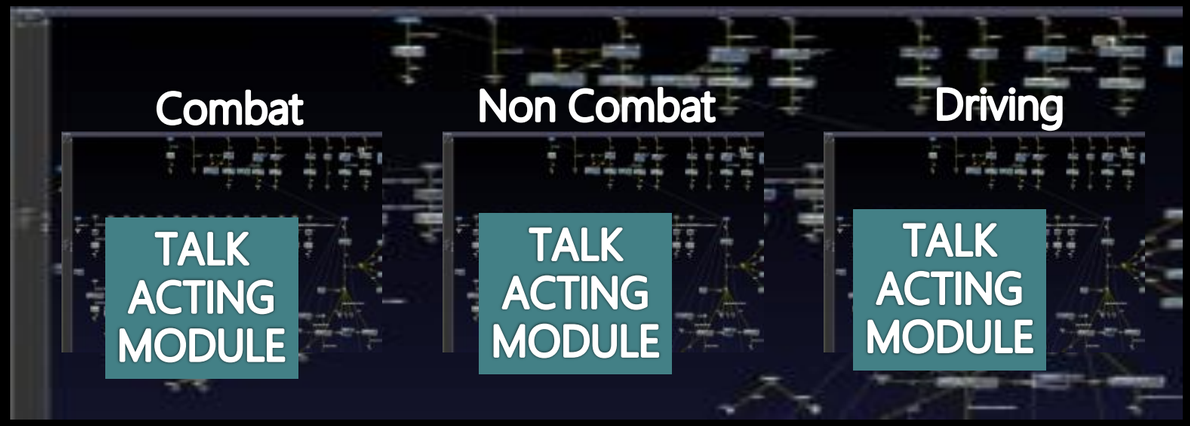
PEOPLE WILL TALK ANY TIME ANYWAY

Don’t Let the Animation Constraints Prevent You From Playing the Conversation

Normal MODE



WAIT-MODE

LEAD-MODE

GO_TO-MODE

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EVER PLAYED AN MMORPG WITHOUT A KEYBOARD?

Utilizing Non-Verbal Communication

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4. ARE THEY EMOTIONAL ?

4 Hierarchy of properties for engaging buddy-AI

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QUALITY TIME

Create an Emotional Pulse

A scene where Prompto confess what inside his mind to Noctis.

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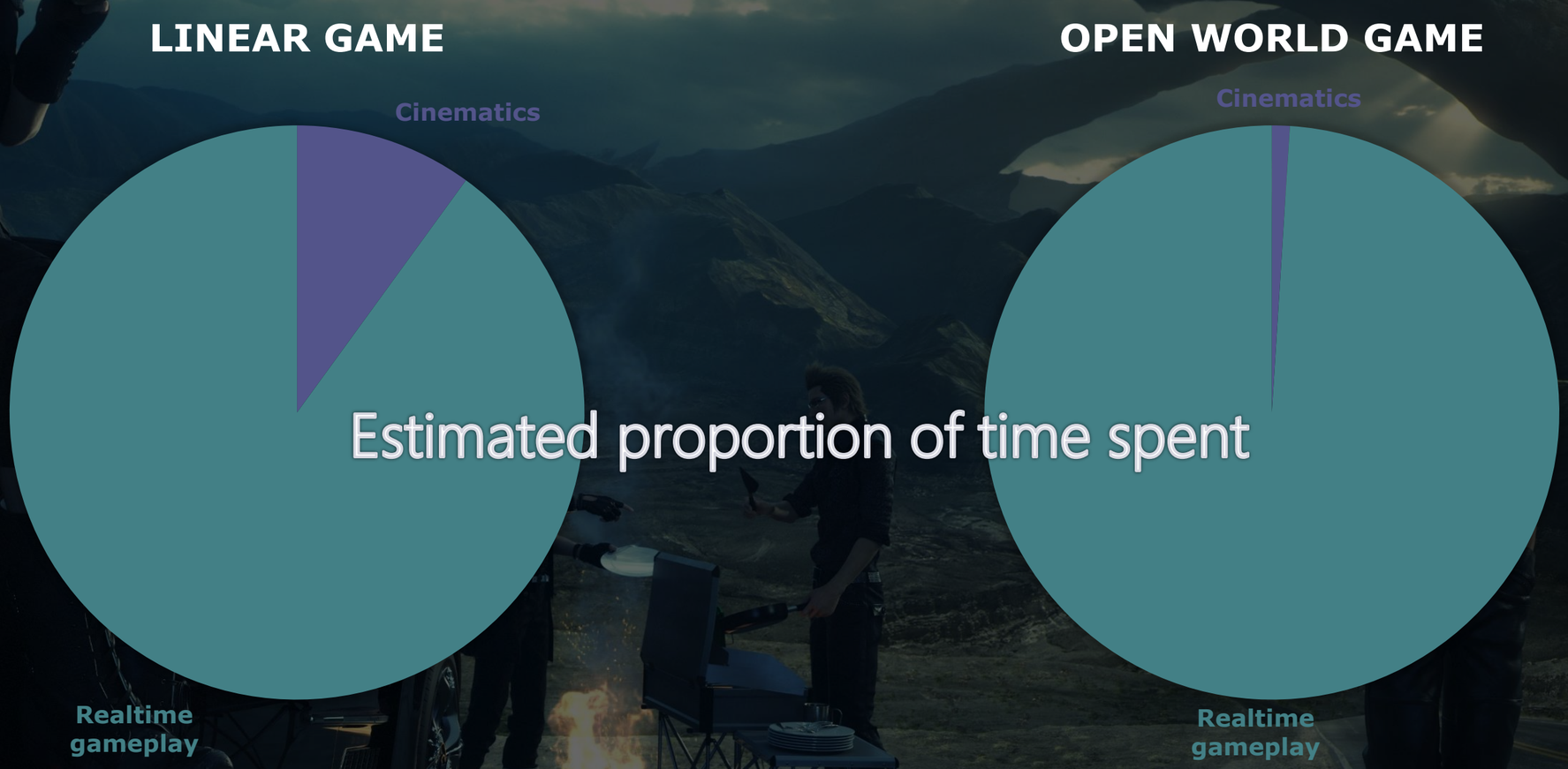
YOU MEAN, LOTSA CINEMATICS & REAL TIME EVENTS?



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SHOW THE PLAYER THEY ARE LIVING CREATURES

EXPOSE THEIR WEAKNESS AND EMOTIONS

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SHOW THE PLAYER THEY ARE LIVING CREATURES

EXPOSE THEIR WEAKNESS AND EMOTIONS

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MAKE A CHANGE

MAKE THE PLAYERS FEEL THEY GAINED SOMETHING/ LOST SOMETHING

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MAKE A CHANGE

MAKE THE PLAYERS FEEL THEY GAINED SOMETHING/ LOST SOMETHING

TEEN PHASE

PRE-ADULT PHASE

ADULT PHASE

Talk a lot.
Talk silly.

Argue.
Do not talk.

Talk less.
They know what others wants without talking

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TEEN PHASE

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PRE-ADULT PHASE

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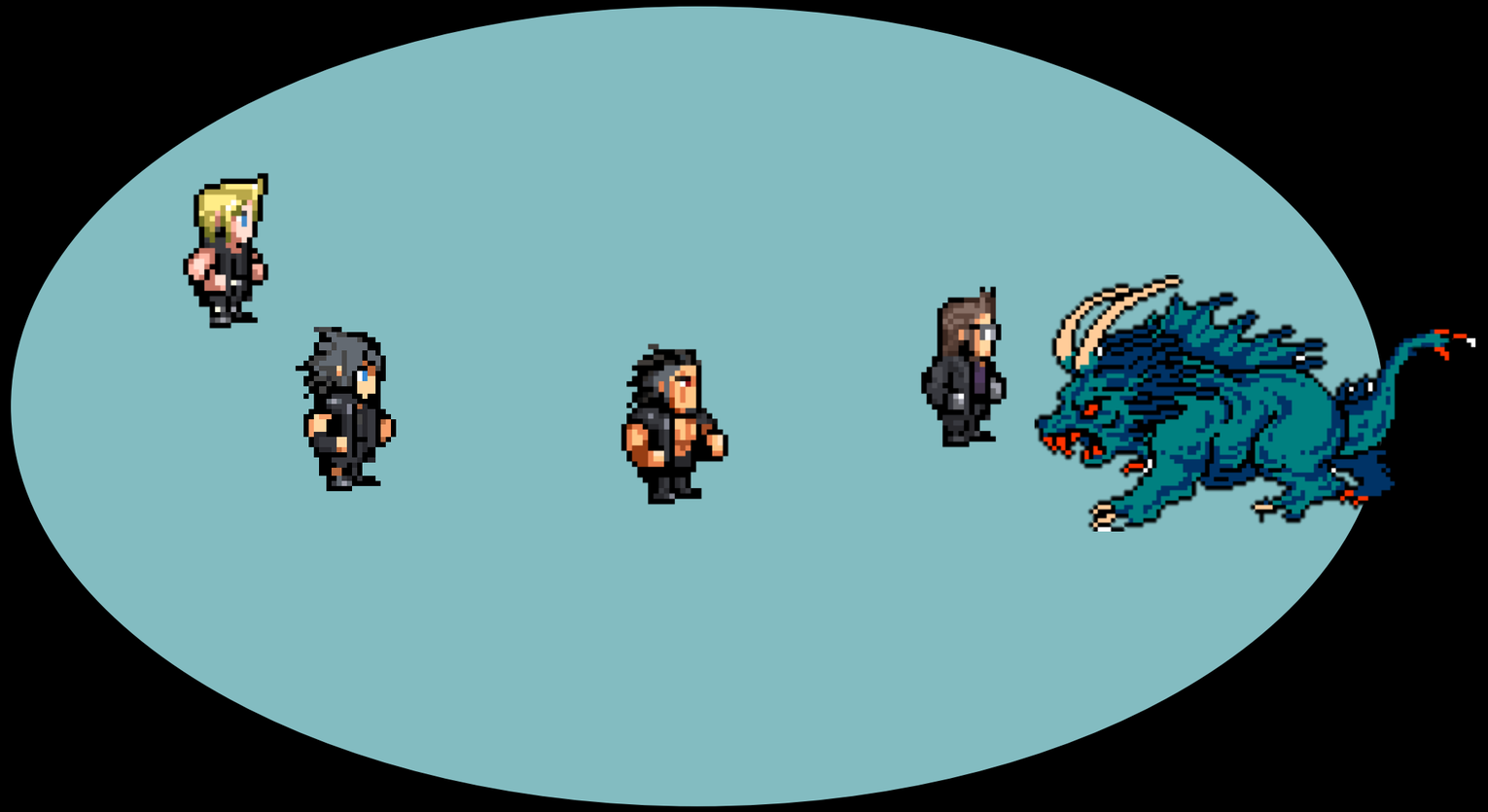
ADULT PHASE



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MAKE A CHANGE

MAKE THE PLAYERS FEEL THEY GAINED SOMETHING/ LOST SOMETHING

TEEN PHASE

PRE-ADULT PHASE

ADULT PHASE

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4 HIERARCHY OF PROPERTIES FOR ENGAGING BUDDY-AI

4. ARE THEY EMOTIONAL?

3. ARE THEY COMFORTABLE ?

2. ARE THEY BELIEVABLE ?

1. ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL ?

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THE TOP OF THE HEIRACHY

"Comfortable" is the Identity of FINAL FANTASY XV'S AI-Buddy

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Introduction to CX

CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

CX DESIGN BY AI: The 4 Hierarchy

FUNCTIONAL BELIEVABLE COMFORTABLE EMOTIONAL

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

CONCLUSION & TAKEAWAYS

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OTHER CX DESIGN POSSIBILITIES

Why We Didn't Do What We Didn't Do

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WHY DIDN'T WE HAVE A FRIENDSHIP POINT?

Because Instead of Treating Them As Friends, The Player Would Treat Them As A Tool To Complete the Game

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WHY DIDN'T WE HAVE A CHAT BUTTON?

Because Instead of Treating Them As Friends, The Player Would Feel That Talking To Them Is a Task

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WHY DIDN'T WE HAVE A LEARNING AI?

Because Instead of Treating Them As Friends, The Player Would Treat Them As AI!

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DON'T LET SYSTEMS RUIN YOUR CX

WHAT WORKS FOR OTHER GAMES MIGHT NOT WORKS FOR YOU

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Introduction to CX

CX DESIGN FOR FINAL FANTASY XV

CX DESIGN BY AI: The 4 Hierarchy

FUNCTIONAL BELIEVABLE COMFORTABLE EMOTIONAL

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

CONCLUSION & TAKEAWAYS

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CONCLUSIONS & TAKEAWAYS

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THEY WALKED TALL

They Gives Life to FINAL FANTASY XV

A review for FINAL FANTASY XV WINDOWS EDITION on Steam

https://steamcommunity.com/id/lunarshards/recommended/637650/

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4 HIERARCHY OF PROPERTIES FOR ENGAGING BUDDY-AI

4. ARE THEY EMOTIONAL?

- EXPOSURE
- CHANGE

3. ARE THEY COMFORTABLE ?

- DISTANCE
- VOICE

2. ARE THEY BELIEVABLE ?

- MAGIC
- ANIMATION

1. ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL ?

- VISUALIZATION

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GET YOUR TEAM TO CARE ABOUT CX

EARN CONCERN & COOPERATION

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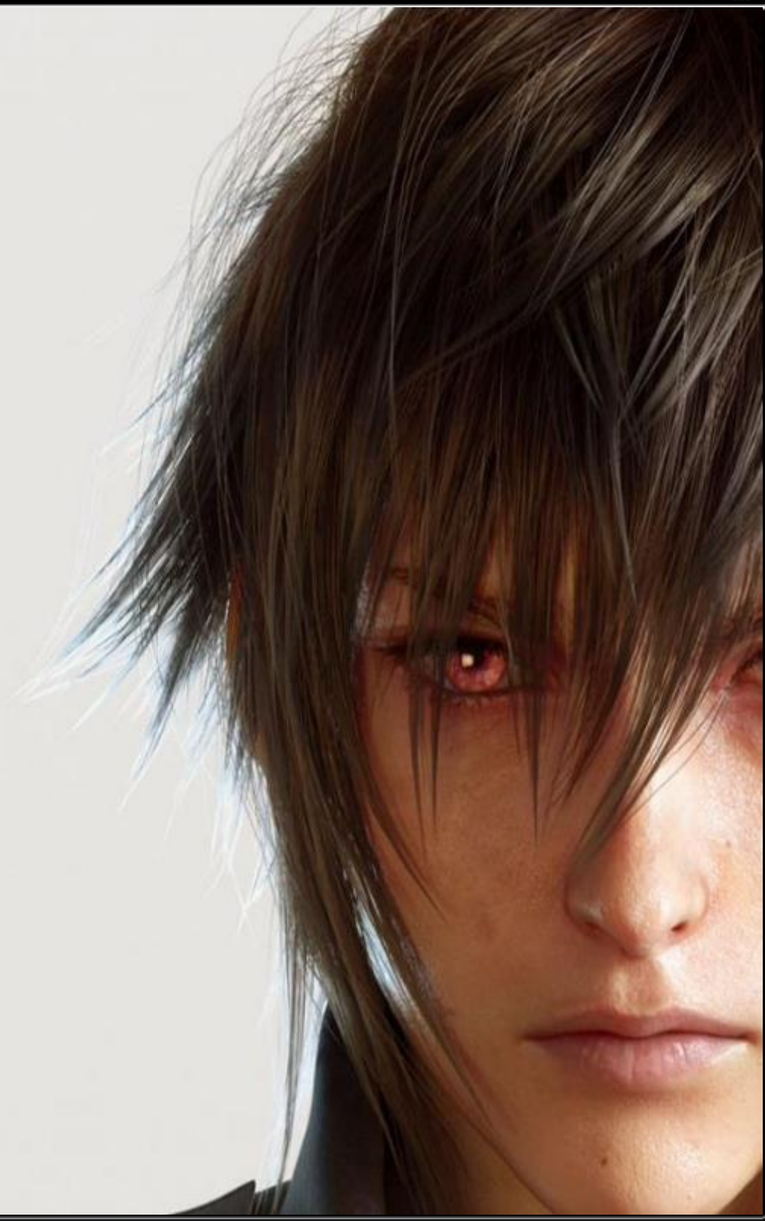
WHO IS IN CHARGE OF CHARACTER DESIGN?



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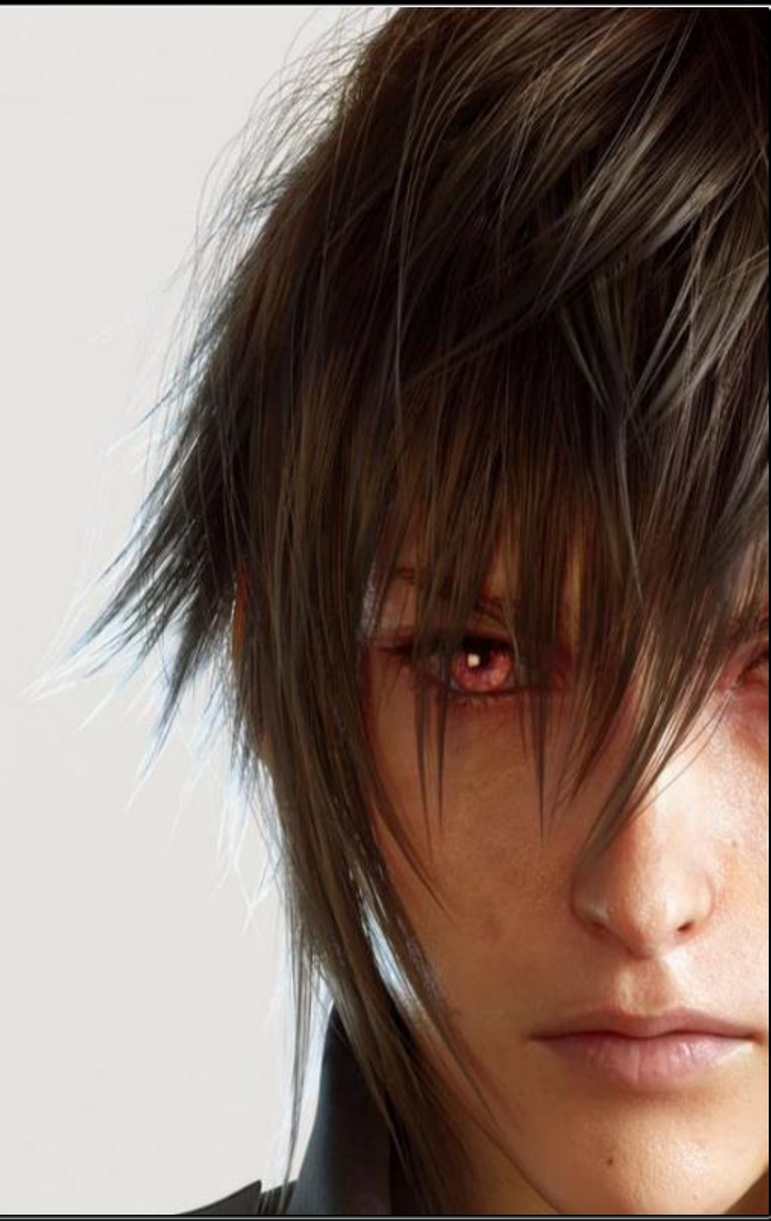
YOU!



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OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

WE'RE WORKING ON AN UNSEEN AI

We are looking for engineers & AI designers…

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SuntimentalMood

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