

# DEAD SPACE™

HOW WE LAUNCHED A NEW IP AT EA





DEAD SPACE



# OUTLINE

## Greenlighting a new IP at EA

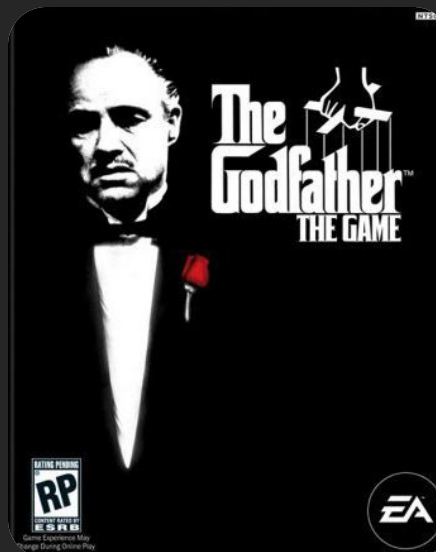
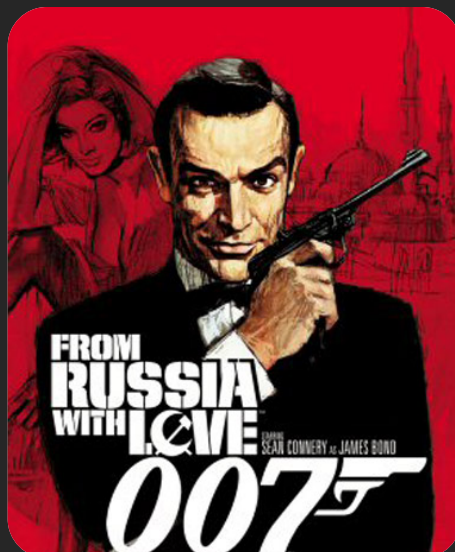
- Studio starting point
- Getting gameplay right
- Making Scary
- Guerillas
- Life on a string: Demo's and slices
- Greenlight



# IT IS JAN 2006

## DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT

Studio habits soaked in licensed IP



DEAD SPACE





# IT IS JAN 2006

## DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT

Last new IP from EARS was "Road Rash"



1991

A large, light blue double-headed arrow is positioned below the year '1991', pointing both left and right.

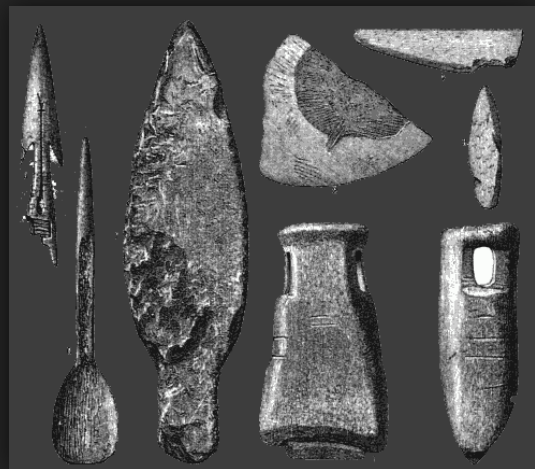
DEAD SPACE



# IT IS JAN 2006

## DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT

Almost no engine to work with



Stone Knives



Bearskins



Us





# IT IS JAN 2006

## DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT



We Have "Rancid Moon" for our Starting Point

It's his idea



# ISHIMURA FARMS

DEAD SPACE



**IT IS JAN 2006**  
**DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT**

**We are not greenlit**

**You are here**







# IT IS JAN 2006

## DEAD SPACE STARTING POINT

EA was eager, if not confident, about getting into new IP

- Glen pitched his idea for Dead Space to the EA Execs at the time.
- It didn't suck.
- He got to hand-pick a small, highly senior team.
- He was budgeted for 3 months. Bring back some fire. Or die.
- We're off!



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

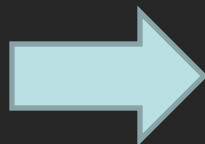
## INNOVATION

Don't reinvent literally everything

There's not enough time.

Or money.

Engineers and Designers when told  
their "new IP" will not invent  
water, dirt or the wheel.



This is upsetting to some people



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Start with a template

Published games will do. RE4 anyone?

They're like a giant present with a bow on it:

- Answered questions
- Tuning wisdom
- Man-years of feature iteration and polish







# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Fearlessly use standardization

If too much is new, people

People need familiarity to

There is a "just right" amount





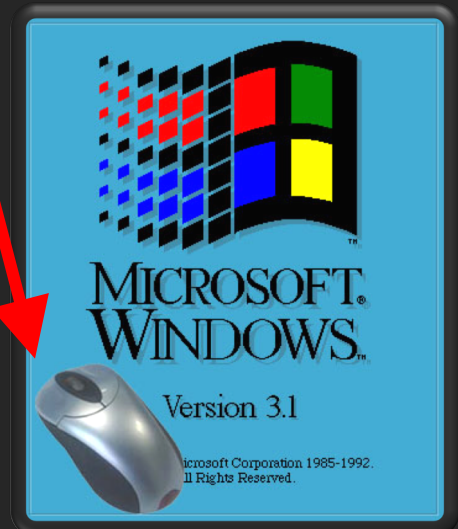
# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Fearlessly use standardized features

Yesterdays Innovation → Today's standard

```
:~\Users>ping google.com -t  
Pinging google.com [64.233.167.99] with 32 bytes of data:  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=363ms TTL=240  
Request timed out.  
Request timed out.  
Request timed out.  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=363ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=363ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=350ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=362ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=352ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=349ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=360ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=337ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=347ms TTL=240  
Reply from 64.233.167.99: bytes=32 time=361ms TTL=240  
Request timed out.
```



Stay current or → You = Fail



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Fearlessly use standardized features

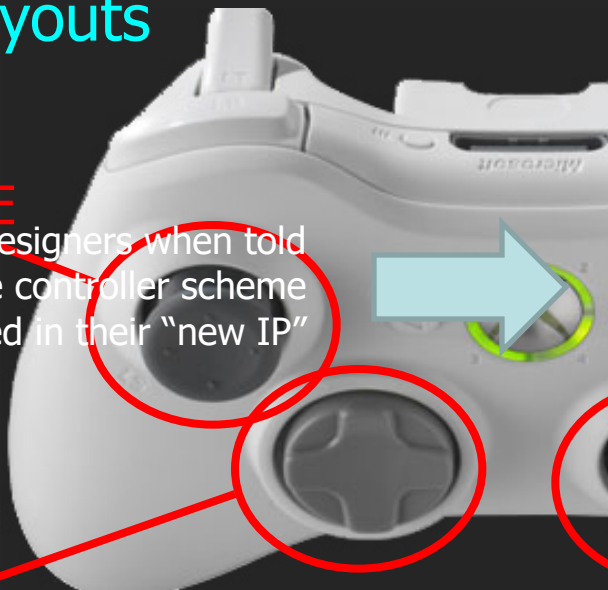
### Controller layouts

**MOVE**

Engineers and Designers when told their one infallible controller scheme will not be used in their "new IP"



**EQUIPMENT SELECT**







# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## PLASMA CUTTER

DMG CAP SPD

DMG CAP

DMG REL CAP

REL CAP

CAP

DMG

This will up... by 2 pts.

DAMAGE 10Pts.

CAPACITY 10Pts.

RELOAD 1Pts.

SPEED 1Pts.

NODES

0

NAVIGATE EXIT





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Then get some distance

Pick and own significant differentiating features

Or, as some would call it....“Innovate”



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Count innovations on one hand

Pursue state-of-the-art, flawless execution





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Define your competitive advantage(s)

**DEAD SPACE** → in the **FUTURE**, in **SPACE**

## HOLOGRAMS

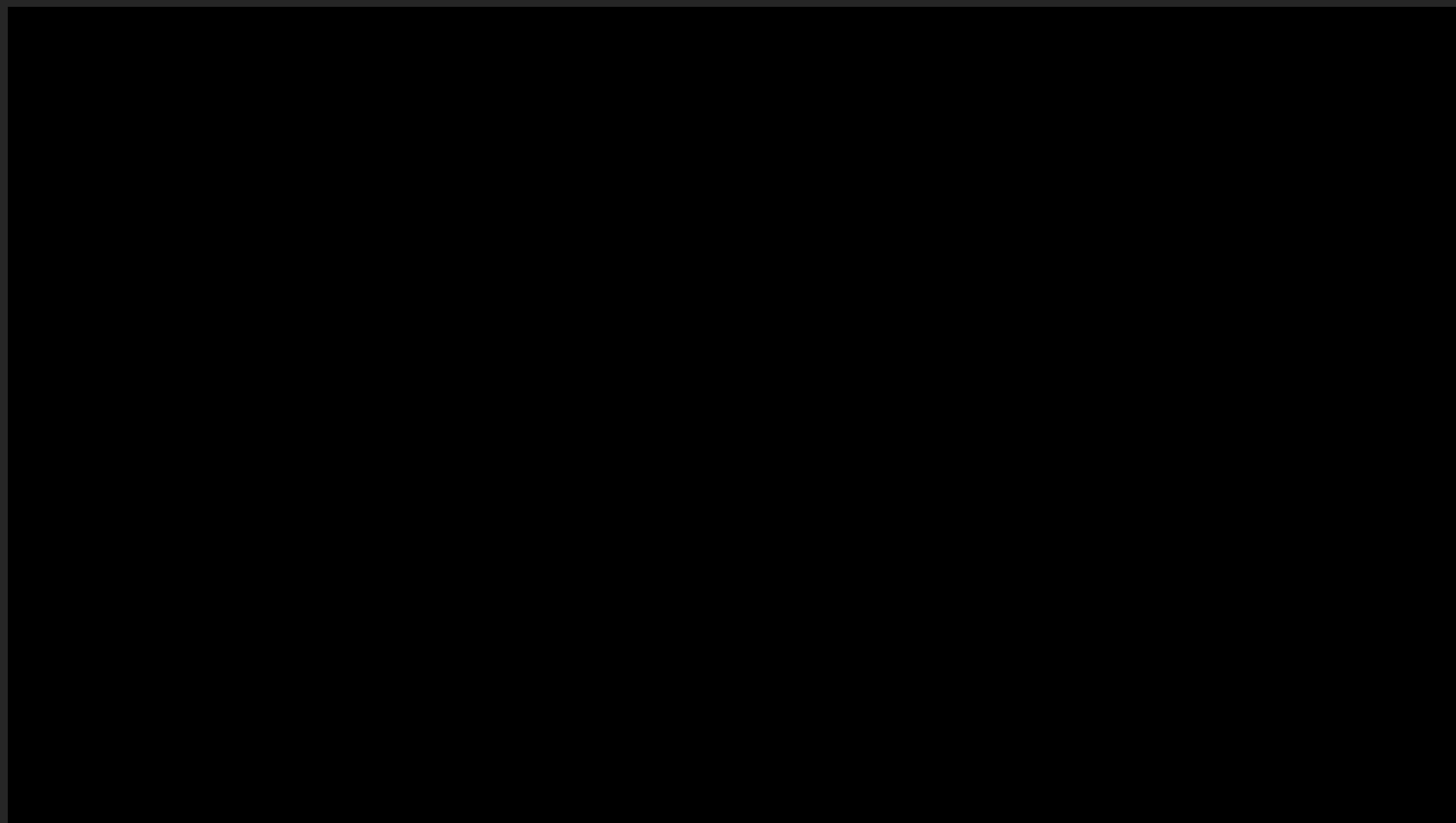




# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

**HOLOGRAMS** → In-world HUD → “HUD-less” Interface



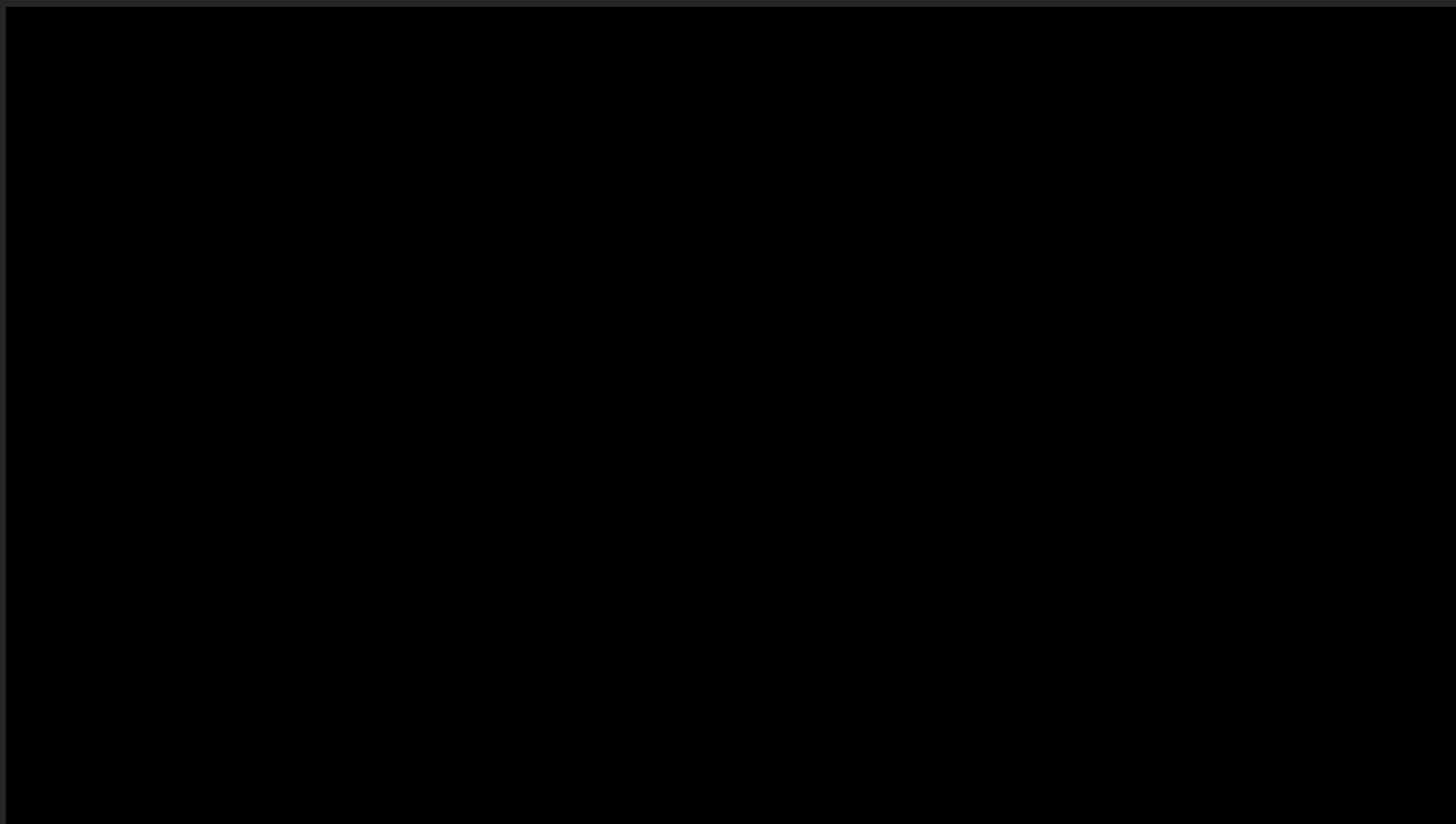




# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Future + Mining Tools = **Weapons**

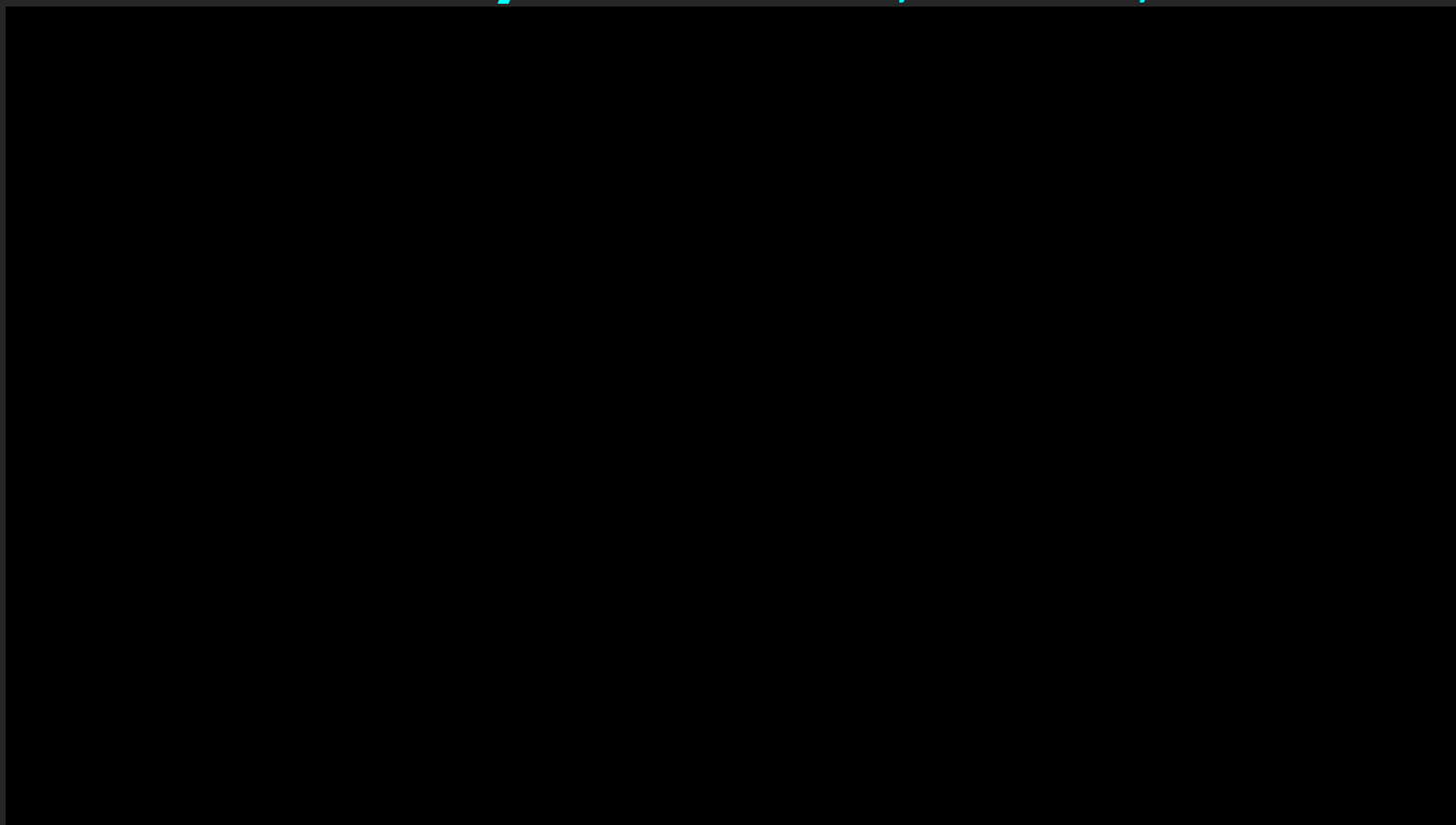




# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

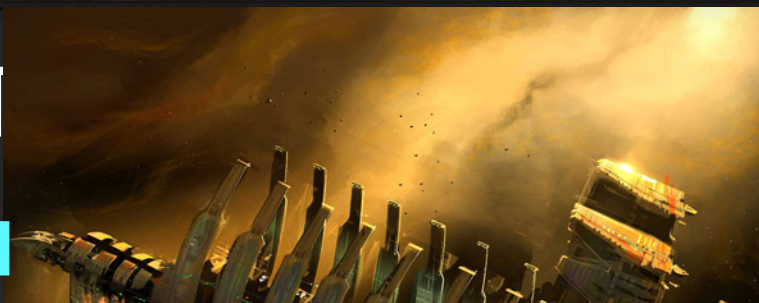
## INNOVATION

Space: **Zero-Gravity** → Movement, Combat, Puzzles





GET  
INNOVATION



RIGHT



2008



DEAD SPACE





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## INNOVATION

Zombie Lore: Head Shot → **DISMEMBERMENT**

**BEFORE**



**SHOOT HERE!**







# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## TRUST BUT VERIFY

How do you know these decisions will pay off?

**PROTOTYPE**

**FOCUS TEST**



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## PROTOTYPING

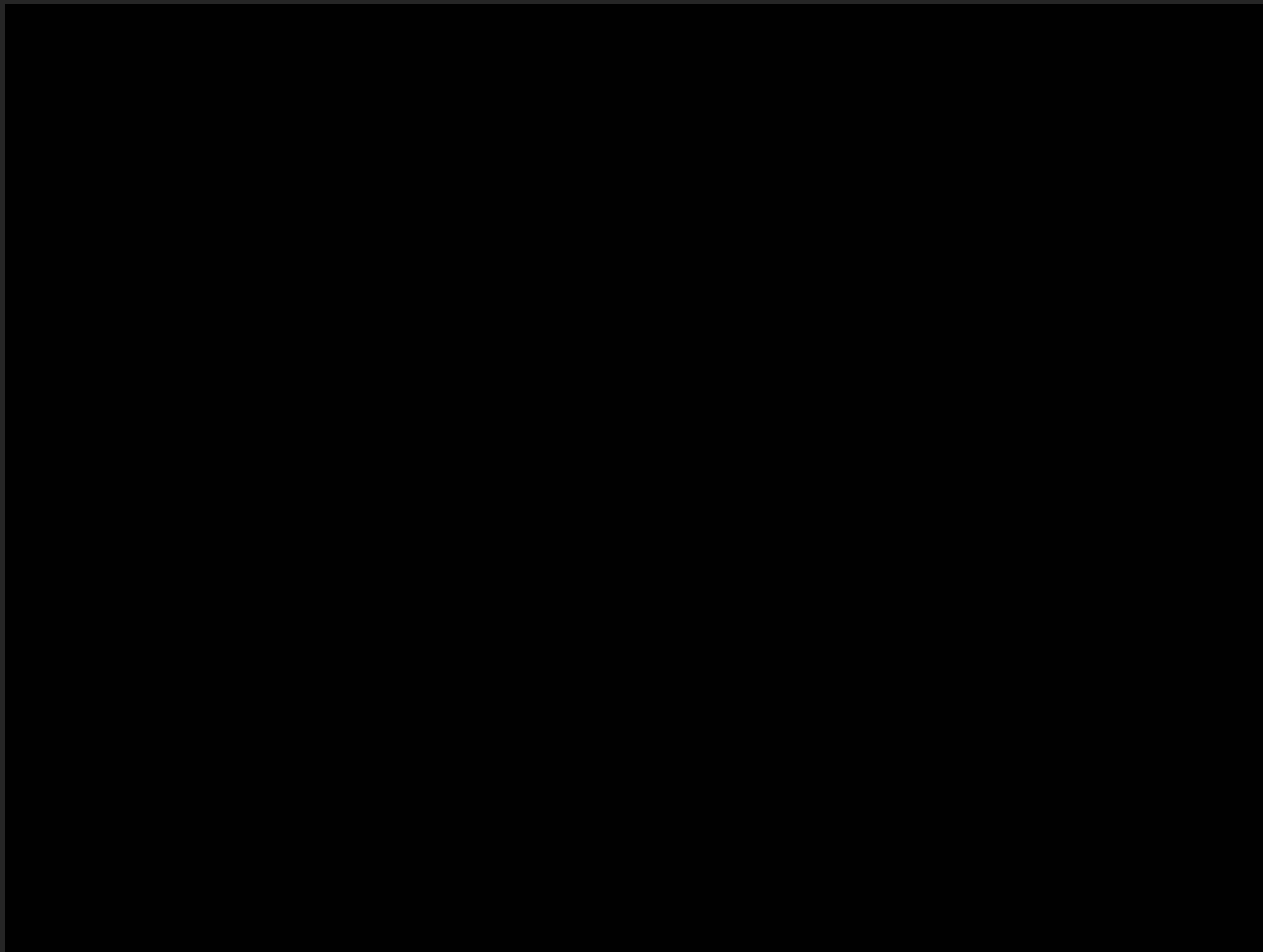
Our single biggest “Ah HA!”

Build things immediately

- Get pixels on the screen
- Assemble teams functionally towards this
- Use whatever engine is “lying around”. We did. Literally.



# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT







# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## PROTOTYPING

Our single biggest “Ah HA!”

Build things immediately

- Get pixels on the screen
- Assemble teams functionally towards this
- Use whatever engine is “lying around”. We did. Literally.
- Answers come from trying, not (just) thinking

“Plans” are worthless. “Planning” is priceless

Complete reversal from previous cultures





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## FOCUS TESTING

Oh my God! Look! A surprising result!

- **Our Controls are too sluggish for current expectations**
- **3 times in a row**

## WHAT DO WE DO?!

- Ignore it
- Want flaccidly to do something about it and then ultimately not
- Obey it

Choose correctly. Surpass your template.

**EP + Belief = Results**





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT



So I'll use this one instead





# GETTING GAMEPLAY RIGHT

## POLISH



- Everyone knows it
- Few do it
- Accounts for real metacritic points
- We scheduled time for polish. And didn't cut it later.

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

POLISH > FEATURES





# MAKING SCARY ELEMENT

## Action Adventure FPS: Gears 2

- Hit fantasy
- Kill
- Be
- St
- Not necessarily scary

## Su

- R ext
- U
- Ju
- O circ
- V



real



# MAKING SCARY

## SEGMENTING HORROR

### Boo

- Cheap, easy to do
- Wears out instantly

### Dread

- Requires more design, planning and talent
- Requires training player on audio / visual cues
- Wears well. Cues more effective with use
- Offers large opportunities for misdirection

### White-knuckle survival

- Immediate, visceral experience
- Threat of death very present while fighting
- Creates apprehension



# MAKING SCARY

## HORROR

### BELIEVABILITY

- Deep personal association
- Relatable events, settings
- Familiar reality
- Their pain = yours

## SCI-FI

### FANTASY

- Awe and wonder
- Incredible events, settings
- Skewed, stretched reality
- May be you, may be not.





# MAKING SCARY

**HORROR**

**SCI-FI**

**RECONCILED**

**BELIEVABILITY**

**SCIENCE**

- Deep personal association
  - Hard Science futurism only
- Relatable events, settings
  - Background Canvas
- Familiar reality
  - Believable reality

**Their pain = yours**

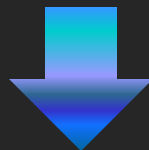






# MAKING SCARY

IMMERSION



BELIEVABILITY



SCARY





# MAKING SCARY

## IMMERSION



DEAD SPACE



# MAKING SCARY

## IMMERSION



**“Hard Science”**

**No Magic**





# MAKING SCARY







# MAKING SCARY

## IMMERSION

### HUD-less Interface

Health Bar worn on back

Stasis meter worn on back

Ammo counter = hologram

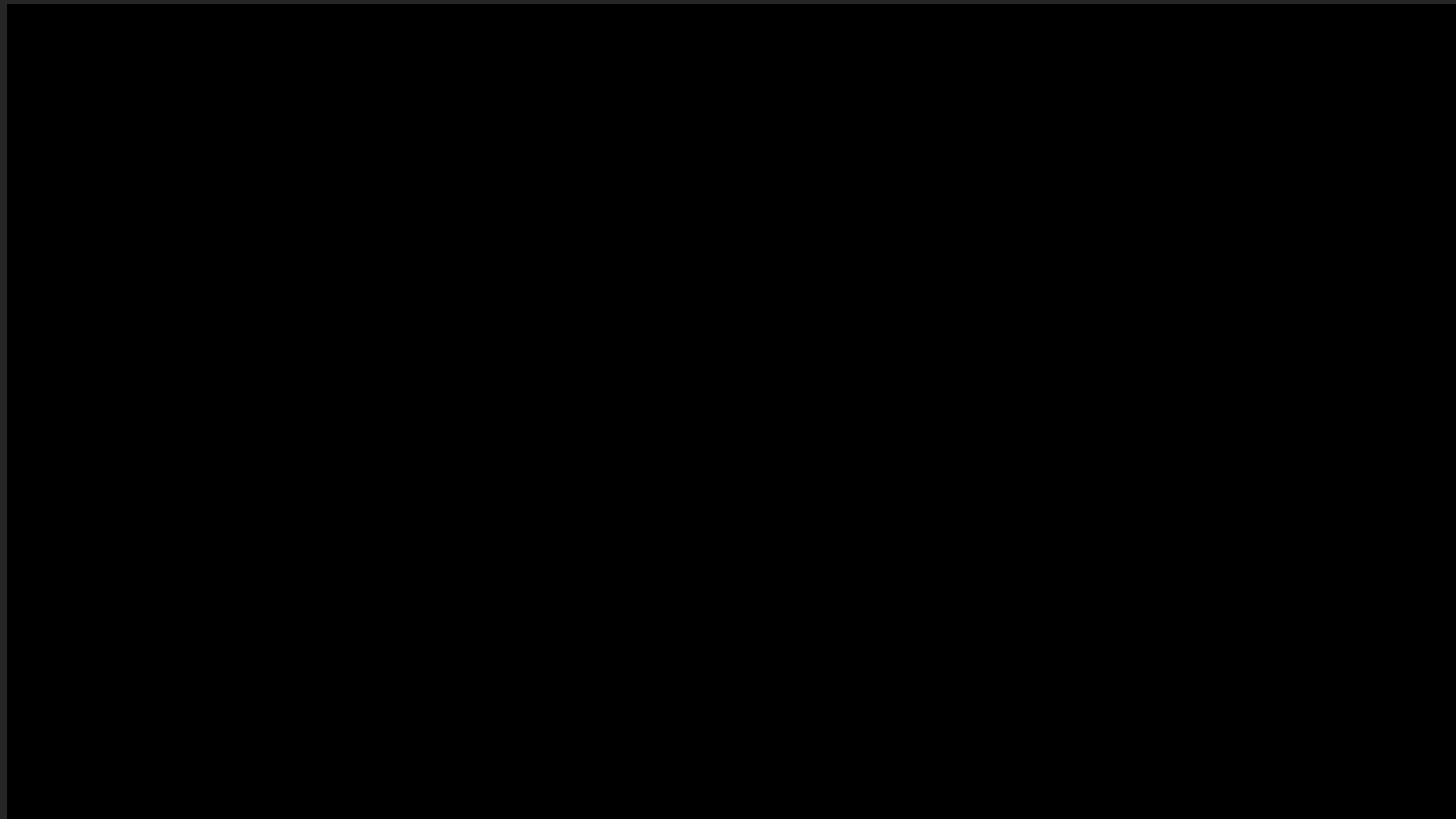
Air timer = hologram

Door switches = holograms

Video logs = real time, real space



# MAKING SCARY





# MAKING SCARY





# MAKING SCARY



DEAD SPACE





# MAKING SCARY



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# MAKING SCARY





# MAKING SCARY

## Key tactics with Audio

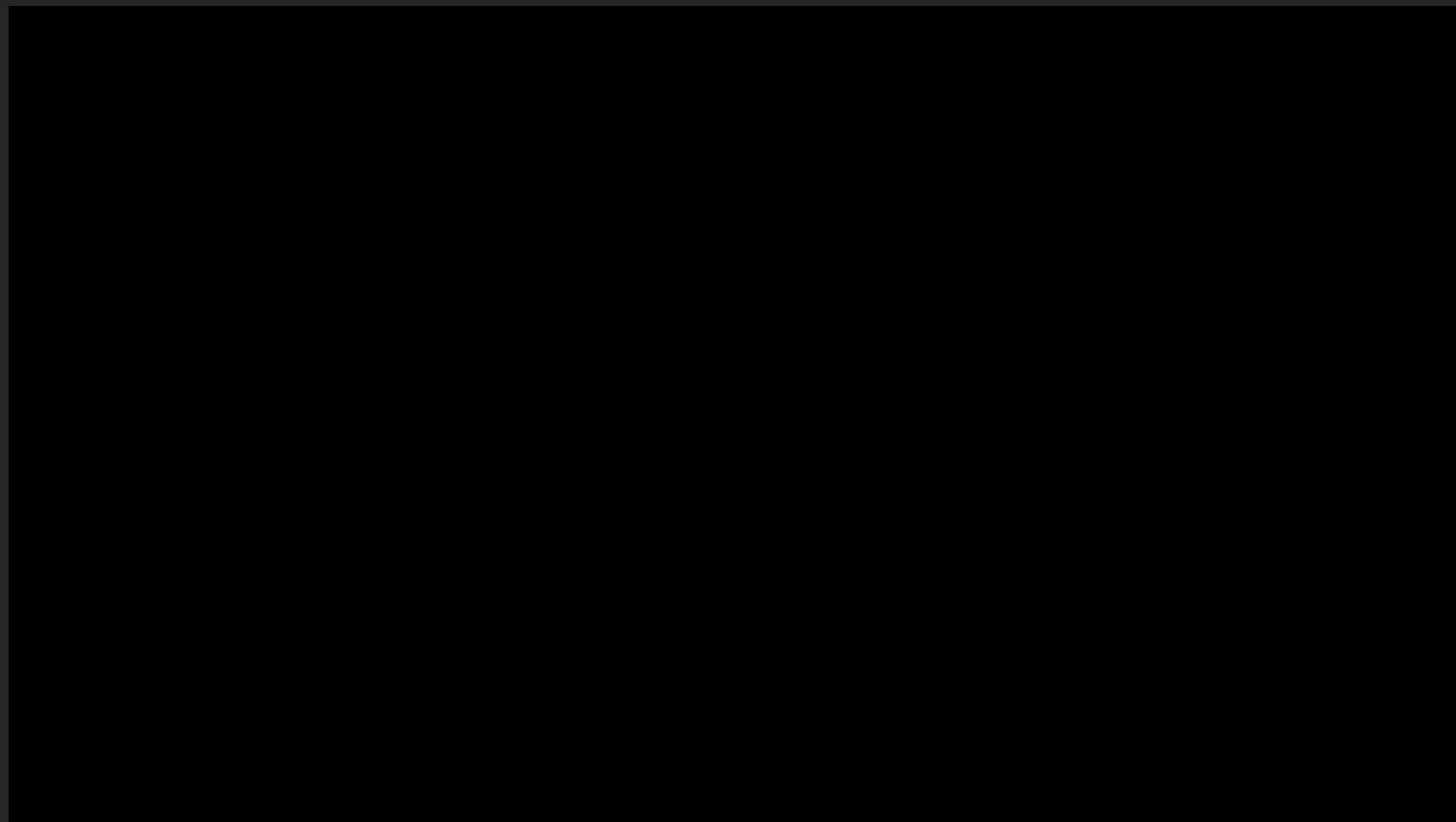
- Intermittent Fear Emitters (unpredictability)
- Positional “real-world” ambient sounds were contrasted with swirling “in-your-head” sounds
- Dynamic contrast: e.g., small defines large, soft creates loud
- Pensive soundscape: creaking ship, indeterminate banging hull sounds, clattering tools somewhere in the darkness, echoing dying crewmembers





# MAKING SCARY

**Sound as a character**







# MAKING SCARY

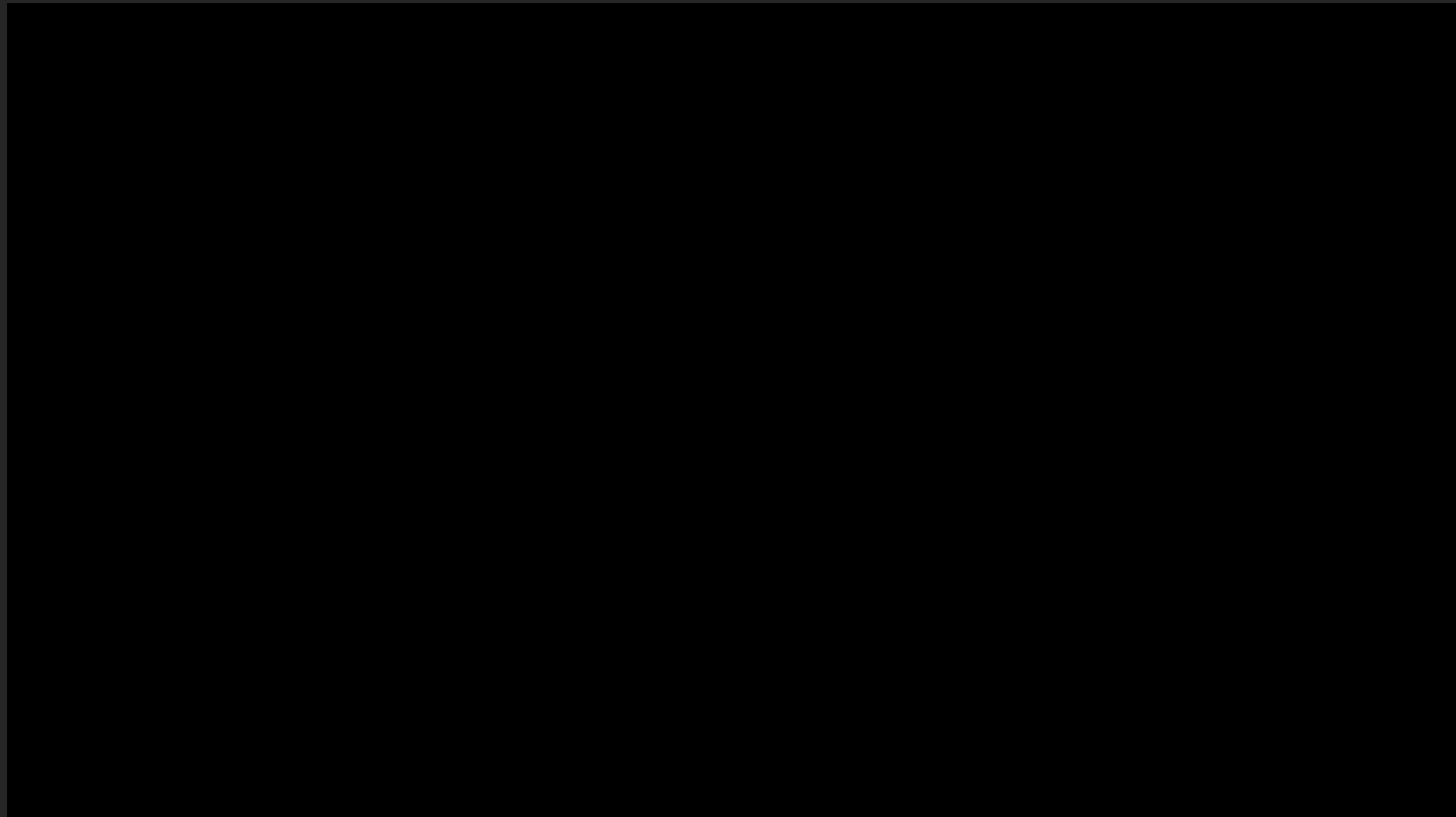
## Iteration

## Focus

This sequence took the whole team's focus for several weeks.



# MAKING SCARY





# MAKING SCARY

**Scary does not demo or focus test well**

**Go with your gut**

We got scare-blind quickly.

Didn't realize how scary final game would be perceived.



# MAKING SCARY

## GLEN AND THE FALLING FRACKING BODY

Glen was obsessed with the idea of a body falling out of the ceiling.

Every meeting, for 2 ½ years: **“What if.....a BODY....fell out!?”**

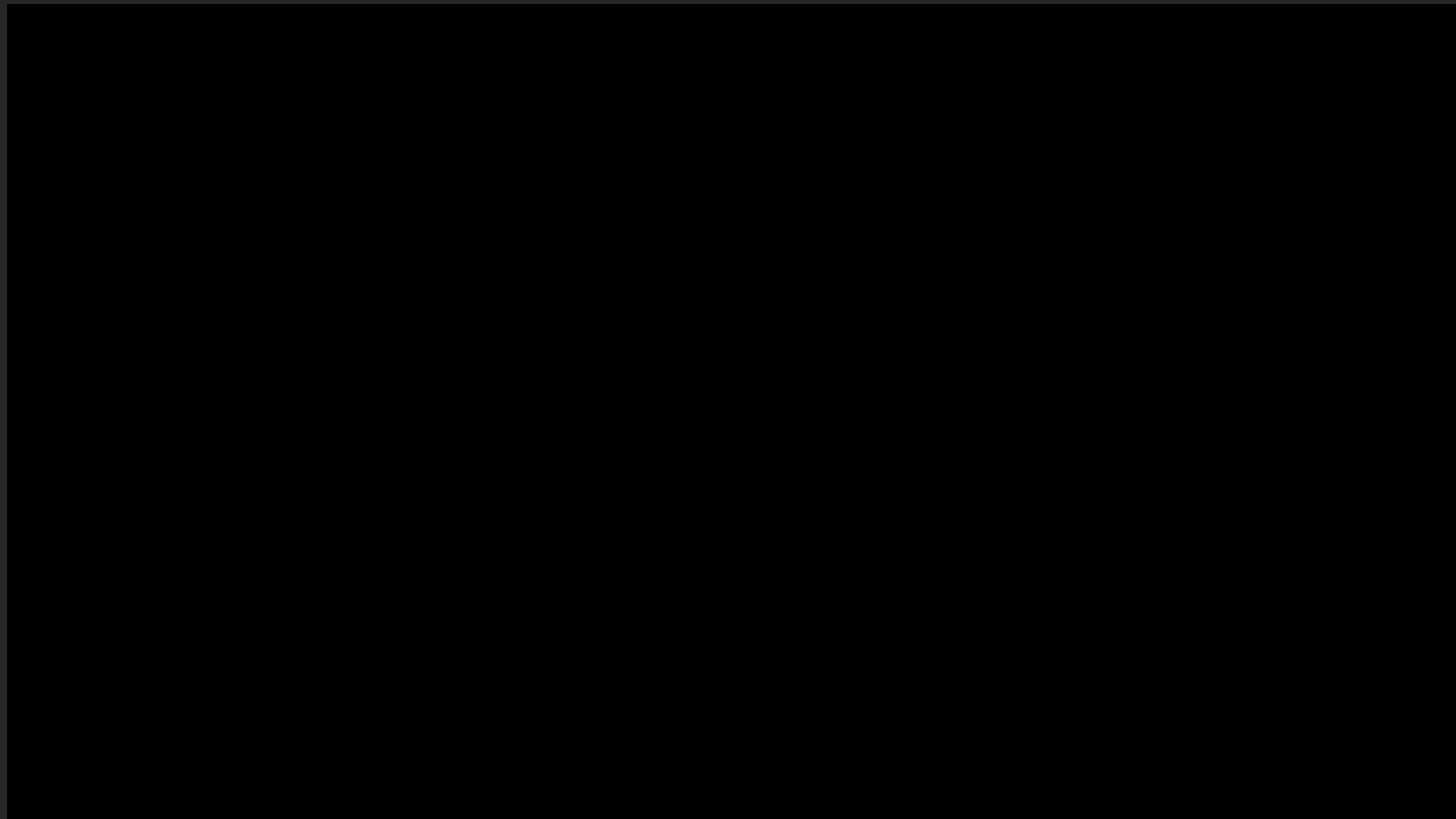
It was not scary. It was funny.

It also shipped. That was funny too.





# MAKING SCARY





# GUERILLA EARS

## **AGGRESSIVE, obnoxious, Internal PR Campaign**

- Posters at other game's press events
- Showed live code & concept art at every chance

## **Treated game like it was already greenlit**

- Built momentum towards shipping, not greenlighting
- Scheduled long term



# GUERILLA EARS

## IP3

Hey, you can't cancel this!

There's a Comic! And a Movie! And a Suit!

Comic



Movie



Concept Book



Suit





# LIFE ON A STRING

## Demos and Slices

### **Demo's were a way of life**

- Forcing functions
- "Show it or get canceled" mentality
- Rarely spun out
- Very little throw-away code

First one took about 3 months

"Stay of execution" every 6 months

Final stretch was a "Vertical Slice"





# LIFE ON A STRING

## Demos and Slices

### Vertical Slice

*A completely polished bite-size serving of the whole game.*

Proves product quality beyond doubt.  
Your own present with a bow on top!  
Forces early answers:



- Content pipelines, visual bar, audio, metagame, pickups, UI/HUD, mission structure, tuning pass

### Exponential accelerator

- 18 months for 1 level. 10 months for the other 11.



# GREENLIGHT

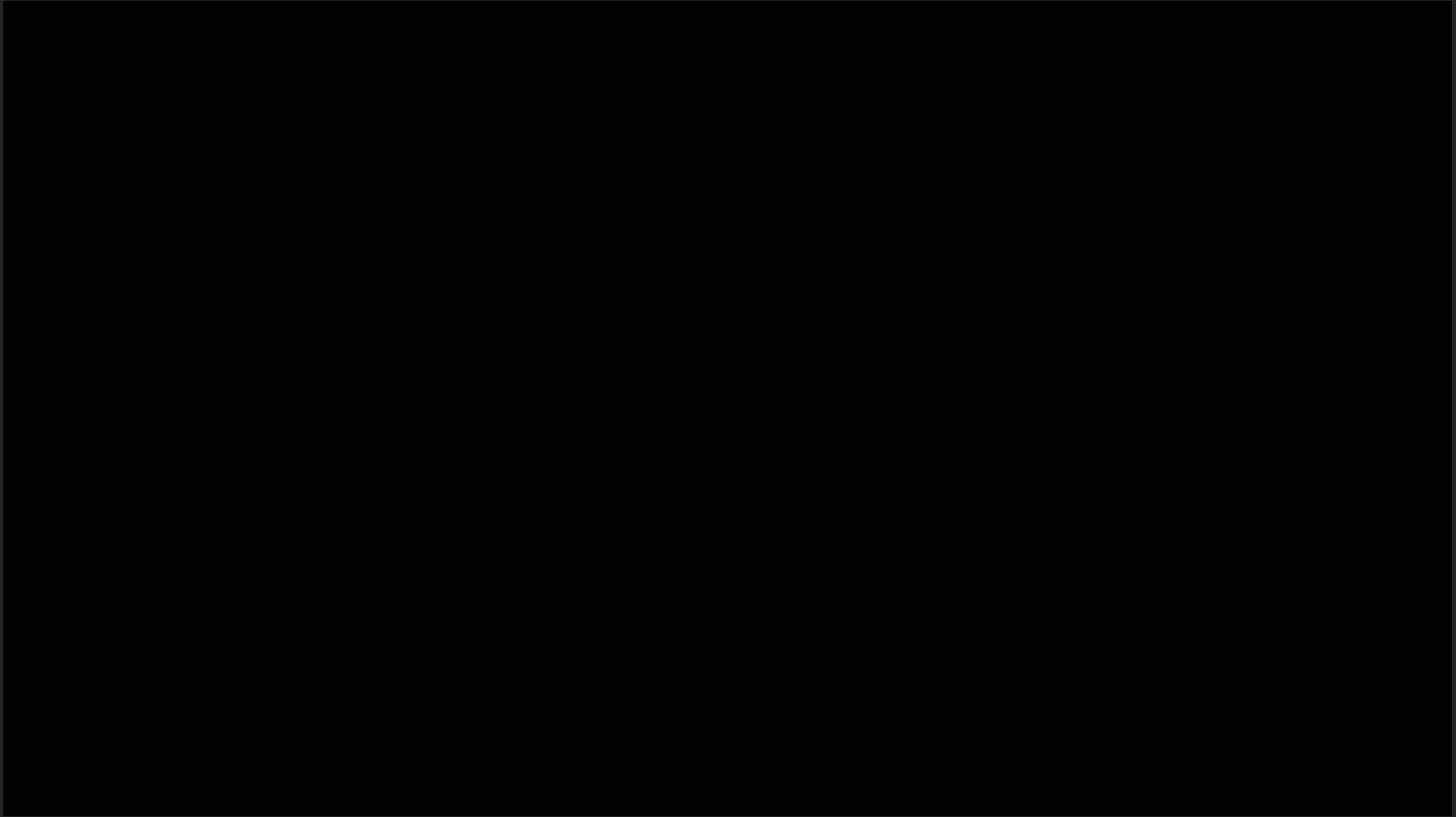
DEAD SPACE was Greenlit in April 2007, after 1.5 years of development, based on the strength of our **Vertical Slice**.

**You are here**



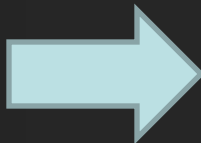


# GREENLIGHT





# Grown men cry







# Q & A