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Subject: Interview with Tom Spencer-Smith, Multiplayer Programmer - Westwood on Renegade

Posted by [brookesxx](#) on Sun, 10 Mar 2024 08:57:05 GMT

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Hi all, rediscovered Ren last October having been part of the TheKOSs2 clan. Read up on the great people that developed Renegade and contacted Tom Spencer-Smith multiplayer programmer at Westwood. He was gracious enough to answer a few questions. I could have asked so many but thankful to him for sparing a few moments. Thanks to Tom and all those that produced such a great game enjoyed to this very day, some 22 years later.

1. How did you get the opportunity to work on C&C Renegade and what was your role on the title?

I had joined Westwood a few years prior as lead programmer on a small, somewhat experimental game called Sole Survivor (SS). When that shipped, I joined the Renegade team as the multiplayer programmer.

2. Were you familiar with the C&C world beforehand? What were the aims and thoughts behind developing the game into a FPS?

I'd played and loved Westwood games before joining the studio - most notably Dune, Lands of Lore, and C&C. Going 3D with Renegade was an exciting idea, but multiplayer got very little design attention until we started tinkering with "C&C mode" and realized it had potential. The following months were the most enjoyable part of the project for many of us.

3. From my research, it looks like development started in 1999 and the game was released in 2003. The game took a number of years to be developed and released. What were some of the reasons for this time and the development journey?

It was a new type of game for Westwood, so we all had to adapt to doing something different - design, art, and code. We didn't use a commercial engine. Most of the effort was on single-player iterations. EA was also exerting a lot of pressure and influence, which made for a lot of churn/stress/moving goalposts.

4. Reading developer stories it sounded like it was played a lot internally. How was the game received internally prior to release? What were the hopes and expectations for the game?

We struggled to get a truly enjoyable single-player, but I was happy with the end result. We did play multiplayer quite a lot internally, and that was the most fun and enthusiastic part of the development, but that was a small fraction of the total development period. Nobody expected Renegade to be a huge hit. We just hoped it would do OK.

5. What is your favourite side? NOD or GDI? What is your favourite vehicle and character? What was your favourite multiplayer map?

I identify more with GDI, the forces of good - haha.

I have a huge commercial billboard featuring Havoc stashed away somewhere. I begged Louis

Castle to split the costs with me. He just bought it outright for me.

For maps, there were far too few unfortunately.

6. Do you have any favourite memories or anecdotes from your time working on C&C Renegade and/or at WestWood?

Robin Williams visited the studio one time -- Louis knew him. Wandering around the corridors, cracking jokes, making up funny names for some design aspect someone asked him about.

I remember specific games of C&C, SS, Renegade that I played. Once time, I had a bet with some SS players that a team of Nod bikes would beat a team of mammoths. We trounced them. But mostly, Westwood was just a fun place to be, great people, going out to lunch with the guys every day. We all had a nice life in Vegas.

I always felt privileged to be at Westwood.

7. Looking back how do you feel about the game now? Did you know before I reached out to you that the game still has an active playerbase and enjoyed by many (22nd Anniversary)? When was the last time you played the game?

Renegade had something special, it was quite unique, but its potential was largely unrealized. I'm not surprised it endures. I only stopped playing it because I wanted to spend all those hours developing rather than playing.

8. Anything that was not asked that you wanted to share with the community about C&C Renegade?

The most fun part of dev for me is iterative multiplayer development with a beta community. I've done that a few times in my career and it is by far the most fun and rewarding aspect of gamedev for me.

We were always grateful to the fans for everything they contribute.

9. Anything you would like to share on what you are doing now to advertise or signpost?

Since Westwood days I have been a contractor/consultant, mostly for EA, working on many franchises (FIFA, NFS, Apex, etc). Between contracts I usually tinker with my own projects, hoping to one day recapture that iterative multiplayer community experience with an indie game of my own. At present I am focused on gaining expertise with Unreal Engine.

Thanks once again to Tom for those fascinating insights into Renegade history, cheers brookesxx

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