



# ALIEN SYNDROME

**Title:** Ailen Syndrome  
**Developer:** Totally Games  
**Format:** Wii, PSP  
**Genre:** Action RPG  
**Release date:** Sep 7<sup>th</sup> 2007

Jeff Kung, Senior Designer, Totally Games

Adding fresh, new ideas to a genre that's been around as long as RPGs has been a tall order and a huge challenge for us at Totally Games. A lot of subtle ideas were used to replace old tried and true ways of structuring RPGs though. One of them was the use of the S.C.A.R.A.B. (Sentient Combat and Recycling Assembly Bot). In space, there are no towns or vendors to occasionally stop into on your journeys. Instead of having towns to buy and sell items from, the player has a little robot companion that follows her wherever she goes. When the player picks up items she doesn't want, she can recycle the item back for energy resource units. These units can later be used to molecularly fabricate items, provided the SCARAB has a particular item's molecular blue print to do so. In essence, the SCARAB is a travelling vendor that the player can access at any time in her adventures.

You have melee weapons in space? Yes! And it's fun! We have a class that uses primarily the melee staff weapon and it's on par with the effectiveness of all the other ranged weapons. Many of us here at Totally Games have a pet peeve about unbalanced weapon usage in RPGs, especially action RPGs. In some games, the ranged weapons are way better to use over any melee weapons while others the opposite is true. Our melee and ranged weapon balance in Alien Syndrome is fantastic.

Let's look at the melee system. We have a rich combo system that rewards the player with more and more damage and flash as combo chains are linked successfully in gameplay. As the player levels up, more combos will be unlocked. But right from the get go, the player has access to a finishing move that

not only kills the monster but also gives back some health to the player, thereby rewarding the player for getting up close and personal with the Alien Syndrome.

The ranged weapons all have their gameplay pros and cons. For example, the fire tree is all about flaming goodness, damage over time, and killing multiple enemies at once. Its downfall, it consumes a lot of ammo. But the one thing that all the weapon trees have in common is their special FX. We put in a lot of time and effort in designing and making FX that pop and reward the player with beautiful art. And the great thing is, each player character can spec into a couple different weapons trees so the variety in any one given play through is phenomenal.

And what's a Wii game without mini-games that totally utilise the Wiimote and Nunchuck! In one mini-game, a weapon can be dropped from a boss monster that's just been defeated. This kind of weapon is always an über weapon with crazy stats. But all the stats are locked, until the player can unlock them through a maze mini game that reconnects all the circuits in the weapon to make it operational. Furthermore, this weapon will be a weapon that the player has not spec'd into. So in addition to the cool weapons she already has in her inventory, she now has an über weapon that she never spec'd into but can use until she out-levels its usefulness.