Game Developer Diary – Part Six

"The 'Feature Creep' of Bloodshot Fight Clubs"

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We're literally a few days from getting our release candidate ready and pushing the build into the certification process for both PS3 and 360. Many of us on the team have been pulling some long hours since September of last year – and we're ready to wrap it up. Even though we're still dealing with numerous last-minute issues, we find ourselves starting to reflect on how we got to where we are today on the project; what went well, what went poorly, and what we promise ourselves that we won't do to ourselves – yet again.

One such issue that we dealt with, as any team has dealt with, is called 'feature creep'. This is that feature or set of features that come up during development that just sounds so cool that we can't imagine shipping without it. Feature creep can also be the ultimate schedule killer – a gallon of gas poured on an already raging fire out of control – but it can also be that emergent feature that cements a product's success and even the excitement the team needs to keep together for that final push to get the game out the door.

We had such a feature creep with the 'Bloodshot Fight Clubs' in *Condemned 2*. Our game designer created a demo 'fight club' for SEGA PR purposes so they could load up enemies and weapons from a list for demoing purposes last June. It worked out really well. Both the game designer and SEGA got very excited about the Fight Club concept. It was messaged as 'using a section of the current levels allowing a player to grab an enemy or two and some weapons and allowing players to practice.' Seemed simple enough… but it then quickly grew in June and July to not only a Practice Arena but to also include five different environments with five unique challenges, and a slew of unique UI work that was needed to pull it off. It all seemed simple and straightforward enough that the payoff was worth the risk – plus, people were really enjoying them. I always kept the Fight Clubs on the CUT list in case we ran into issues with the schedule – just in case.

We hit our Alpha with the five unique Bloodshot Fight Clubs in place. The game designer created the subset environments and did all the wiring himself. This took some of his time away from the core combat experience and the single player experience but probably only a few days at most. In addition, one of our multiplayer Level Designers found some 'free' time to go through the Fight Club levels, where he spent time heavily

improving performance, fixing bugs and tweaking the environments into shippable states.

The Fight Clubs are as follows:
1. **Practice** – a general purpose practice arena that lets you try various weapons, enemies, combos, attack chains and so forth.
2. **Riot Control** – You can only used ranged weapons for this fight club as you try to protect the police below as long as possible.
3. **Smoke 'Em** – This one is my personal favorite. Your goal is to kill three enemies as quickly as possible.
4. **Deadly Day Care** – You've got to blow up 100 of these little toys, er...uh, 'dolls' as quickly as possible.
5. **Streets of Rage** – You need to keep yourself and 5 guards alive while killing as many thieves and vandals as possible.
6. **Lockdown** – This one is my second favorite. You're locked in a demented-looking cage and you need to kill as many enemies as possible in 5 minutes.

So here we are, running a few weeks later than originally planned. We were originally going to be on the store shelves in late February but now we are currently scheduled for end of March. In the course of a multi-year schedule, being about 3 weeks late is probably considered *early* by most developers working on quality titles in the industry. Was it worth it? Was it worth taking on the 'feature creep' of the Bloodshot Fight Clubs? I let you be the judge when we get *Condemned 2* on the store shelves next month.