



STATE OF DECAY 2

UNDEAD DISPATCH

May 2023



5

Year Anniversary
Edition

DEVELOPER INSIGHT
CHARACTER LORE
ACTIVITIES
TACOS
AND MORE

SERIES X|S

XBOX
GAME PASS



EPIC
GAMES

UNDEAD
LABS

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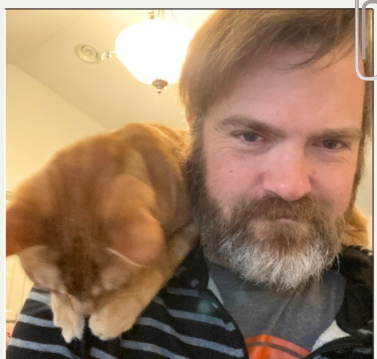
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Working at **UNDEAD**

LABS

By Nathan Turner,
Technical Artist



Nathan with one of his cats, Watson

“

I have loved joining the Lab and being given a chance to playtest, as a new SOD developer, the predecessor to my new job here. Getting into a game that has history is always difficult but BECAUSE this game is a service there is ample time to see the current game, see how the fans respond to the game and have direct impact on how the newest features are received. The State of Decay 2 team is such a vital part of my feeling of welcoming in joining the lab, going out of their way to help me get going, and truly listening to feedback during Long Term Playtests.

”

Building the Missions System

By Dru Staltman,
Principal Software Engineer

We set out to make a pretty interesting mission system that needed to be super flexible for players. Missions needed to work on every map and be able to work in ways that also allowed communities to move from base to base. It was a really fun and engaging challenge to make a



system that would not only move with the player, but allow missions to be created to adapt to every time a base would change. It was a lot of time, effort, and constant change to get the mission system in place to allow designers to create stories where they wouldn't necessarily know what a player's community and base looked like at any time.

My Inside Xbox Experience

By Dacey Willoughby,
Senior Producer

Working on SoD2 had a lot of really fun moments with a really great team. When we were shipping and ramping up our marketing and press efforts, we had a lot of interesting promotions and events. Further down the line, when we released the Choose Your Own Apocalypse update,

I was able to participate by going on an episode of Inside Xbox to promote it. I have done demos at PAX and E3, but this was my first big recorded public appearance, and I was really excited to share the work that we had done with our fans.

After I arrived at the studio and had my hair and makeup done, I sat in the green room with a couple members of the publishing team and Wonder Russell, our Marketing leader extraordinaire. I sat there reading my speaking points over, and over, and over, trying to cement them into my brain so I could make a perfect delivery. To help calm my nerves and give me a little more confidence, Wonder took me down the halls, showing me how to stomp, stretch, and walk off my nerves. It was goofy, it was silly, and I didn't care that people watched as they hurriedly walked by because it was EFFECTIVE. Hopefully it entertained them on their way to their next order of business.



On the set, there was a big, pristine Xbox logo on the floor that you have to take care not to step on. The lights were warm and the space was quiet even though the filming crew was hard at work. I took my seat and spoke briefly with the host, then it was time to roll. I did two takes, the first one being better than the second, and it was a wrap, over in a flash! I got to head home with amazing hair and makeup, feeling accomplished not only personally but for representing our team and the game, with an amazing experience under my belt.

The Escape Room

By Dacey Willoughby, Senior Producer

When we were shipping SoD2, one of the promotional events we were doing for an episode of Inside Xbox was an escape room experience.

A couple of us had the opportunity to go do a practice run with the crew to test wardrobe and flow. With my "I want to do all the things" energy, I volunteered with extra gusto to participate. We weren't told much about it because it's supposed to be a puzzle, so we didn't really have a lot of information outside of location and time.



Inside Xbox's State of Decay 2 Escape Room Trailer

The shoot was at a small abandoned hospital. A real one. We went into the wardrobe room and picked out the clothes we'd wear, I excitedly picked out a sick camo jacket. Then we stepped into what I'll call the preparation room. This is when my fight or flight instinct kicked in. I don't know what I expected, but I will tell you they did an excellent job decking the rooms out as if lots of people died horrible, bloody deaths in them. I was pointed to an old wheelchair, "take a seat here please." I stood still for a second, questioning my choice to come, and then slowly sat down. Then came the blindfold and the arm straps, and I was wheeled into the starting area. It was dark, I was immobile, and all I heard was the director say "Shhhhhhhhh," and everything was silent....."Find your way out of the starting area."

Luckily for me this was not an actual hostage situation, and it was pretty easy to get out of the bindings and blindfold. Once my cell mate and I were out, we worked through escaping the first area and joined another duo to solve the rest of the rooms. From zombie actors banging on walls to mixing some kind of strange plague cure and drinking it, I relished the opportunity to be a part of such a fun, unique experience.



Dacey (left) at the beginning of the Escape Room



Designing Providence Ridge

By Chris Vanderleest, Senior World Designer

When I was approached to head up a new map, there were only three mandates:

- Take place in the Pacific Northwest
- Accommodate the 'new player starter area' planned for the Juggernaut Edition
- Reuse assets as much as possible, for both budget and speed.

Aside from that, we were free to design the map however we wished! I sat down and started sketching out a map on paper, drawing from the areas I knew here in the Pacific Northwest. Places like Issaquah, North Bend, and Snoqualmie, where mountains and hiking trails quickly give way to lowlands, rivers, and farms.

To usher in new players and help them learn the ropes, we wanted a small area that was somewhat separate from the rest of the map. I also wanted a strong feeling of verticality, so I combined these two ideas by placing the starter area on top of a mountain. I wanted the player to have a microcosm of the world and its systems in a self-contained area, where they could get up to speed before venturing down the mountain and out into the wider world. This simple starting point really helped inform the design and flow of the rest of the map.

I heavily relied on the expertise of the team to steer us toward good choices and away from things that would be

DESIGNING PROVIDENCE RIDGE CONTINUED...

controversial or too similar to what we had done before. We wanted this to be exciting for returning players as well as new ones.

The design process was very organic and came about from the team generating ideas and going back and forth in these meetings. We talked about themes for the map, things that felt new, or very Pacific Northwest. Things like the new under-construction neighborhood, which thematically felt right and lent itself well to a warehouse base nearby. This perfectly segued into the idea of the lumber mill in the map, which would have provided the wood for the construction, while also suggesting a strong clearcut-forest theme for another section of the map. That mill even became our biggest base on the map.

One of my absolute favorite things about Providence Ridge is the Shaggy Jack mascot present throughout the map. This idea of a Sasquatch lumberjack wearing a flannel shirt came up as sort of a joke during one team meeting, but once I heard it I couldn't let it go. I wanted this to be a unifying element throughout the map. We developed the statue we have at the start of the map, our Shaggy Jack coffee stands, and even evidence of a group of people driven mad by the zombie apocalypse who started a cult worshipping Shaggy Jack. I had a lot of fun with the environmental storytelling that went on with that



(including the hidden Shaggy Jack altar with a unique melee weapon).

Beyond Shaggy Jack, the "Sawdust Days" parade in downtown Prescott was a great piece of visual storytelling that Doug Juno put together. And the secret waterfall cave! I had to have one! The homages and easter eggs that we hid all over the map were definitely a highlight. Fun Fact: the Red Balloon you find by the sewer pipe, which is an 'IT' reference, was made by putting an apple texture onto a sphere to make the balloon!

At the end of the day I wanted a map that players could have fun exploring, finding new and interesting things to make them smile or laugh, despite the horrific scenarios they dealt with. To that end, I am exceedingly proud of what the team was able to accomplish. We ended up getting so many more new and unique things into the map than I ever thought possible, and I am very happy with how it turned out.



In my role at Undead Labs, accessibility is not only one of my top priorities but is also one of my biggest passions. And I'm not alone! Throughout the studio, we have a growing community of accessibility advocates – as well as a dedicated studio Accessibility Champion – who help push us to make things better for our players.

Over the last several years, with the support of the team at Xbox, we've worked hard to evolve our approach to accessibility as a studio by creating a culture that prioritizes inclusive design and puts accessibility first. Gone are the days of treating accessibility as a polish pass, an afterthought, or merely a checklist of requirements.

Working to make our games accessible to everyone means we're not only creating a more inclusive gaming community but we're also investing in the powerful and positive impact that video games can have on people's lives. At the end of the day, we make games for people to enjoy, shouldn't we want as many people as possible to enjoy them?? Hell yes!

Vicki Ebberts
Head of Player Experience



ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS

Since launching State of Decay 2 in May 2018, we've worked to make accessibility improvements that allow as many people as possible to enjoy the world we've created. We remain dedicated to listening to our players' feedback on making State of Decay 2 a more playable and inclusive experience, and we look forward to continuing to add to our list of accessibility options as we release new updates!

State of Decay 2: Juggernaut Edition Accessibility Options

Gameplay

- Adjustable difficulty can be set to 'Green', 'Standard', 'Dread', 'Nightmare', or 'Lethal', and can be adjusted separately each for 'Action', 'Community', and 'Maps'
- Adjustable aim assist, allowing the character to automatically lock on to the nearest enemy, can be set to 'None', 'Normal', or 'Maximum'

ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS CONTINUED...

- Game can be paused in single-player mode (pause is unavailable in multiplayer)

Audio

- Volume controls can be adjusted for Music, Voice, and SFX audio
- Adjustable audio output can be set to Surround, Stereo, Headphones or TV

Visual

- Subtitles for spoken content can be set to On or Off
- Subtitle text size can be scaled to 50%, 75%, 100%, 125%, or 150%
- Gamma levels can be adjusted to increase or decrease in-game brightness, and is available prior to game start
- Field of view can be adjusted between 40% and 100%
- Motion blur can be set to Off, Low, or High
- 'Reduce auto-camera movement' can be set to On or Off
- HUD UI visibility can be set to On or Off
- In-World Objective Icon visibility can be set to On or Off
- UI prompts for Finisher Moves on zombies can be set to On or Off
- Mini-map visibility can be set to On or Off
- Mini-map rotation lock can be set to On or Off
- Tooltip visibility can be set to On or Off

- Notifications can be set to On or Off

Input

- Input remapping for keyboard & mouse, and most controller buttons*
- Controller vibration can be set to On or Off
- 'Auto Camera Tracking on Foot' can be set to On or Off
- 'Auto Camera Tracking in Vehicle' can be set to On or Off
- 'Use camera to target interactions' can be set to 'Never', 'Always', or 'Only when using mouse'
- 'Aim on Movement Stick' can be set to On or Off
- 'Rapid Button Tap' can be replaced with 'Hold Button Down'
- 'Hold to Aim' can be replaced with 'Aim Toggle'
- 'Remember Aim Zoom Level' can be set to On or Off
- Reduce Auto Camera Movement can be set to On or Off
- Adjustable sensitivity for camera movement and weapon aiming for controller joystick and mouse
- Ability to invert camera X and Y axes for controller joystick and mouse
- Ability to swap left and right controller joystick functionality



*For Xbox controllers: the right stick, 'view', and 'menu' buttons are not remappable. To move your character while also aiming a weapon, a mouse or controller joystick stick is required – this cannot be done with a keyboard only.

IN-GAME BRANDS

The State of Decay universe is full of businesses from the "before times", each with its own backstory, and a few urban legends. It's impossible to pick favorites, but here are just a few the team at Undead Labs feels extra warm and fuzzy about.



There are other gas stations in the State of Decay universe, but none stand taller than Bronto Gas, with Spiroil a distant but tenacious second. Bronto Gas stock has suffered in the past due to poor manufacturing controls: on occasion snacks and other inappropriate items have been found inside their fuel cans.

An incredibly successful Tennessee BBQ chain! So beloved that they even launched a board game about BBQ competition that found its way into almost every home. Based on a real-life fan and huge BBQ enthusiast who is very sadly no longer with us, but whose legacy lives on! Another one of our fans made us a fully lit, metal version of this sign. It is displayed with pride at our studio.



The best known and most successful regional fast food brand in the world of SoD. A love letter to the culinary gifts bestowed upon the Earth by the cow and hog. Pays low wages, uses sub-par, agricultural grade meats, and has a very powerful lobby that protects the corporate parent company from any repercussion due to food poisoning and employment practices. Not a part of the Westen Allied Companies, it has engaged some of Westen's more discreet union-busting private services on no less than 7 recorded occasions.

You can tell they have good pie before you even walk through the door.



WAFFLE DEPOT

A national chain known for inexpensive breakfast items that are available 24 hours. The stores are famous for remaining open during disasters and extreme weather, often being the only place that people can find hot food. The staff is tough and can often be found fistfighting those patrons who get out of hand.

The largest chain of convenience stores in the country that identifies itself with all the huge number of immigrant Scottish in the US and Canada. You can still get microwaveable haggis in most stores and the company sponsors annual Highland games in every city large enough to draw a crowd.



If it's good enough for that happy, well-fed donkey, it's good enough for the rest of us.

Just a good ol' fashioned pub that many people think is haunted (seriously).



We take our branding seriously! Nothing is too small to brand and it helps define the world of State Of Decay as well as make it feel more lived-in.

WHO IS THE BOUNTY BROKER?

By Geoffrey Card, Lead Systems Designer

RED TALON BROADCAST, INTERCEPTED 19 JULY VIA ENCRYPTED RADIO, VOICE OF KELLY ELDRIDGE

This is a priority message to all Red Talon contractors on the frontier. Keep an eye out for a fancy old Boss Hogg impersonator with a van full of guns, and when you find him, give me a call.

From what I hear, this joker has an endless supply of guns and gadgets that he hands out willy-nilly to any idiot who tells him a story about all the zeds they've killed. Personally, I believe these toys would be better off in the hands of professionals like yours truly.

If you happen to get into a scuffle with him, do me a favor and bring me one of his hats.

Sasquatch out.

.....

NETWORK BROADCAST, INTERCEPTED 27 AUGUST VIA STANDARD RADIO, VOICE OF SYDNEY CLEMENT

The story I heard about the Bounty Broker is, he made all his money as an oil man, and then built himself a compound full of gear and supplies. Now he's a philanthropist, motivating the people to fight back against the zombies, and giving his prizes to the folks who do it best.

But don't you believe everything you hear. No man can run an operation like that on his own. He must have an organization. And what organization would give away an arsenal like that?

I bet if you take apart one of those tricked-out guns, you'll find a tracking device. One that traces right back to Project Osiris. They're using our own greed against us, and soon, we'll all be back under the government's control.

Just watch and wait, you'll see I'm right. And as always, keep the faith.

.....

ENCRYPTED BROADCAST, INTERCEPTED 8 NOVEMBER VIA RECOVERED ECHO LAB DEVICE, VOICE OF ISABELLA REYES

Doctor Hoffmann, I might be the one who cracked the code that brought CLEO down to Earth, but this Cash Beaumont guy is kicking my ass. I've been following his movements all over the place, and nothing he's doing makes any sense.

Unless. Maybe it isn't about the goodies he's giving out. Maybe that's a distraction.

People have to prove they killed all those zombies, right? That means they're probably bringing him body parts. Trophies, samples, whatever. I heard sometimes he specifically asks for arms and legs.

So he comes out here in this van full of guns, and then he goes home with a van full of zombie bits. You're thinking what I'm thinking, right?

Giant. Zombie. Frankenstein.



FLASH FICTION WINNER

We challenged our community to create a State of Decay-Themed short story in under 200 words. Our Discord community voted and here is the winner.

Danger & Oliver (Chip)

By Discord User KO

"So why did your parents give you Danger as a middle name?" Oliver broke the silence in the car.

"Named after my grandfather. My dad wanted it as my first name, but my mom insisted on it being the middle," Danger replied, keeping his eyes on the road.

"Jet Danger Dawson," Oliver said with an exaggerated singsong voice punctuated with a snort.

"Alright, Olivier," Danger replied, accentuating the French pronunciation. Oliver's face scrunched up.

"Dammit, you've been talking to Gomez!" Oliver growled. "It's OLIVER. Not OLIVIER!" He full-on punched Danger on the shoulder.

"Ow! What the hell?!" Danger turned his eyes from the road to glare at his friend. However, Oliver wasn't looking at him, but the road with panicked eyes.

"BLOATER!"

Danger turned his attention back to the road in an instant, swerving to the left. Time seemed to slow down as the car just missed the bloater... that was wearing a hockey mask?

"It has a hockey mask!" Oliver confirmed as he turned and looked through the rear windshield.

"I bet it was those damn Zombie Hunters. They're crazy enough to do that." Danger glanced at the rearview mirror. Oliver growled.

"Freaks!"



BRANT'S FAMOUS TACOS

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH AUTHENTIC TACOS FROM PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING

Essential Shopping List:

1 Pound Ground Beef
1 Pound Ground Pork
1 Pound Chorizo (Ground)
Tortillas

Alternate/extended shopping list:

1 Round or container of cotija cheese
(Mash it up into rough powder)

1 Package crimini Mushrooms
(replaces either the pork or beef)

1 of the many taco seasonings available
(I prefer the wet ones)

Sour Cream

Your choice of salsa

Cilantro

Mexican pickled veggies

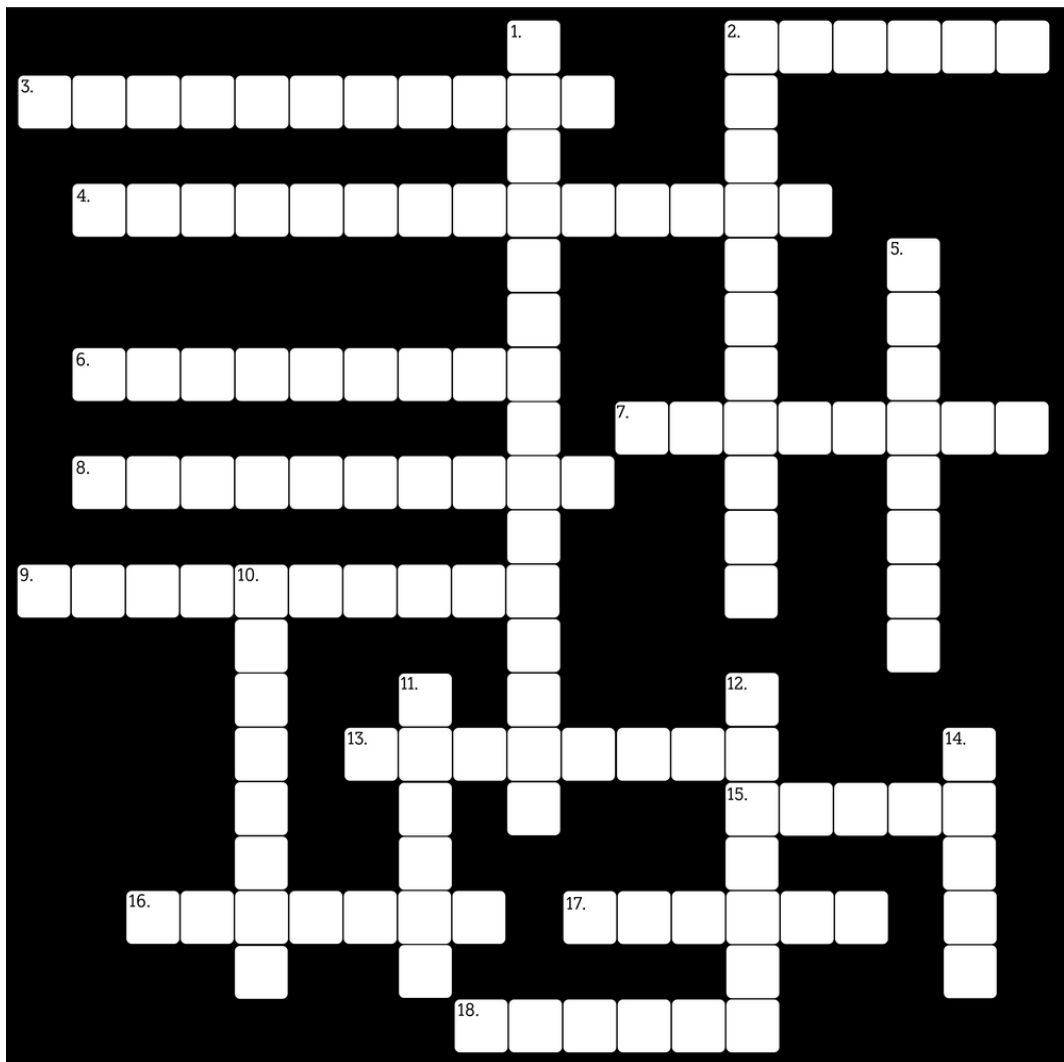
Mexican Sodas - Coke, Jarritos, Squirt, etc.

Cooking: 1 Big Pan with cover

Combine all meats in a large, lightly oiled pan over medium heat stirring often until mixed well and browned. Reduce heat to low, cover and low simmer (if you are using mushrooms in place of one of the meats, add your cut and rinsed mushrooms now). Check often to make sure there is still some liquid besides oil in the mix, add 1/3 cup water or stock periodically as liquid level goes down.

You can cook this all day or in 30 minutes. It will be ready after the water-based liquids are mostly evaporated. Do not drain oil from meat, that is where the flavor is. if you think there is too much oil, use a tablespoon to take some out but not too much, you want to be able to toss the pan and cover the meat with the oils.

Spoon meat directly into facehole, onto tortillas, add preferred toppings, enjoy and notice your troubles recede into the background for a short time. I hope you like my version of the world's best food. - Brant



Across

- 2. vanilla zombie type
- 3. the main antagonist
- 4. largest map in State of Decay 2
- 6. currently used to buy and sell goods
- 7. a stealth weapon
- 8. a dark folk hero
- 9. a radio host
- 13. vehicle with the most storage
- 15. a group of screamers
- 16. an exploding zombie
- 17. "I said ___, not lobotomy. I can see why that might confuse you."

18. a resource that keeps your survivors productive

Down

- 1. the most vertical map
- 2. facility mod that provides water to your base
- 5. siege mode in the game
- 10. a paramilitary group that plays a role in the game's story
- 11. this makes food
- 12. locations for the trading with others
- 14. a difficulty setting

THANK YOU!

*We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to
the State Of Decay community!*



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