



# Launch Day

magazine



SUNSET  
OVERDRIVE



# Sunset City

THIS WIDE-OPEN WORLD IS FULL OF ENDLESS  
POSSIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL FOR ADVENTURE

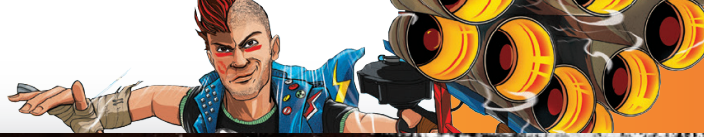
**A**round the offices of Insomniac Games, a term has been coined for the events that transpire in *Sunset Overdrive*: the “awesomepocalypse.”

Basing a game on a story that embraces and enjoys the fall of modern human society might be unusual, but “unusual” is key to what the team was going for in its first outing on the current generation of consoles. With so many dark, gritty tales of doom and gloom already out there, sometimes, what’s needed is some bright, cheery, colorful fun. In *Sunset Overdrive*, that colorful fun

comes from a neon-orange energy drink that turns its consumers into hulking, mutated freaks.

That moment of crisis gives the misfits of society — the nerds, the freaks, the forgotten, the ignored, the unremarkable — their time to shine. In *Sunset City*, it doesn’t matter who you were or what you did; it matters who you’ll become, and what you’ll do to try to make the future a better place.

This wide-open world is full of endless possibilities and potential for adventure. This launch guide will familiarize you with *Sunset Overdrive* and provide directions as you choose which roads to travel in this unfamiliar city.



SUNSET  
OVERDRIVE



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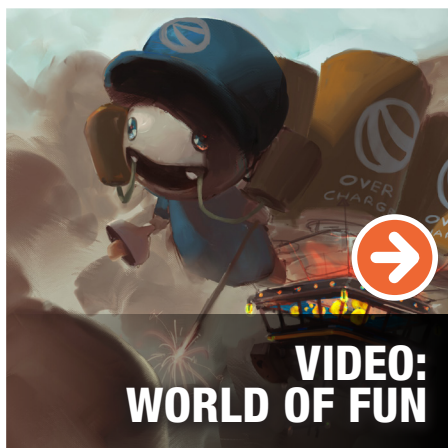
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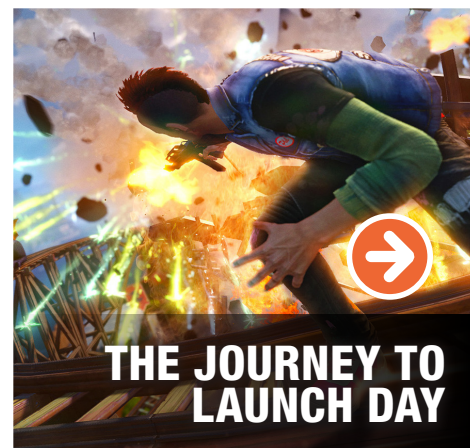
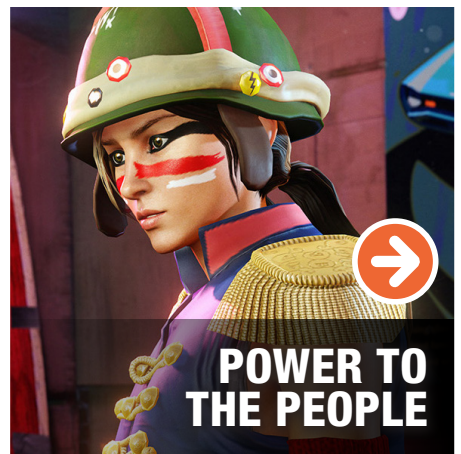
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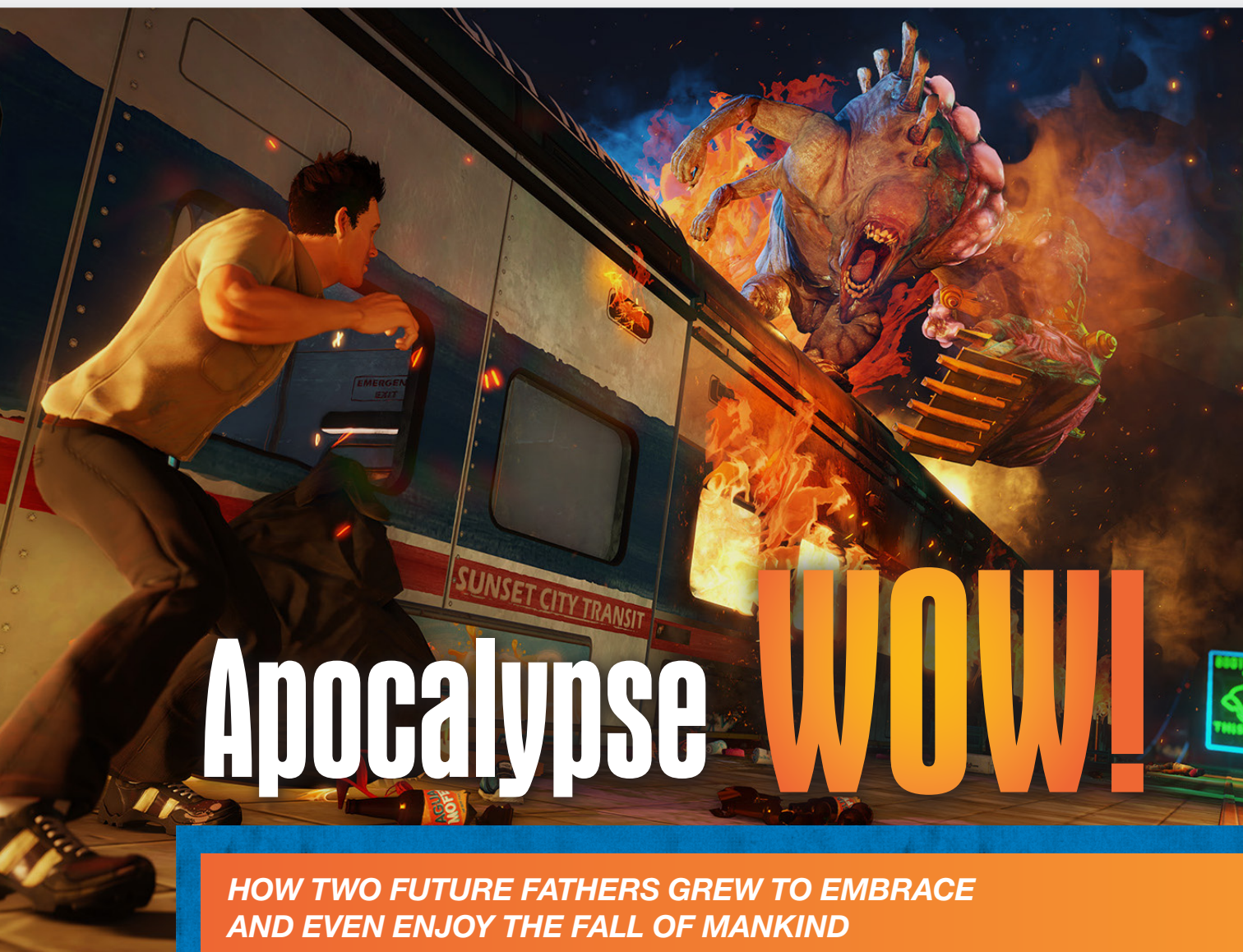


**10 SECRETS OF  
SUNSET OVERDRIVE**



Tap  to jump to page





# Apocalypse **WOW!**

**HOW TWO FUTURE FATHERS GREW TO EMBRACE AND EVEN ENJOY THE FALL OF MANKIND**

**P**roducing creative works such as art, books and video games is often compared to giving birth. In the case of *Sunset Overdrive*, however, the comparison was more than an analogy. The idea for the Xbox One exclusive was born during a lunch at which two men discussed the impending births of their children.

Drew Murray and Marcus Smith were working on Insomniac Games' *Resistance 3* when, during lunch in Los Angeles, they began talking about how their lives would change and the new responsibilities they'd be carrying on their shoulders when they became fathers.

"You start to think about the nesting instinct, and what a horrible world this is to bring children into and all of that fun stuff,"

Smith, *Sunset Overdrive*'s creative director, says with a laugh. "Out of panic came this vision of Drew collecting water jugs and things like that to survive."

Jokes about scavenging for supplies to keep a family safe and satisfied led, naturally, to hypothetical stories of post-apocalyptic survival. And, as is the case for many who work in this industry, Smith and Murray began turning those ideas into mental mock-ups of a video game. Both say that bleak, dark, harsh, and hopeless stories such as the novel *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson inspired them.

"We were thinking a lot more about traditional end times, because I think, at the time, especially Drew was really into preparing for such things," Smith says of *Sunset Overdrive*'s director.



Of course, they first had to finish *Resistance 3*, the final chapter of Insomniac's saga of an alternate-timeline Earth in which mankind fights for survival against an alien army. That game shares many themes with the duo's dream project, and its development — as well as years of dealing with the heavy topics it touched upon — shaped what would become *Sunset Overdrive*.

"After a while, it was clear that we didn't want to go down that avenue anymore, partially because there are so many zombie apocalypses out there [in gaming], but also because *Resistance 3* was really depressing; It took a lot out of us," Smith acknowledges, as Murray nods in agreement. "Personally, it took a lot out of me, and the idea of starting a new franchise going in that direction again was just too much for us."

## TURNING TRAGEDY INTO (STYLISH) TRIUMPH

The resurrection and restructuring of the ideas that were born over that long-ago lunch came thanks to a rather innocent event: the passing around of a music video at the Insomniac offices. That

## Going Off (and On) the Rails

*Sunset Overdrive's* larger-than-life world and storyline puts players in a variety of crazy situations, such as battling *Mad Max*-esque survivors while running along a roller coaster.

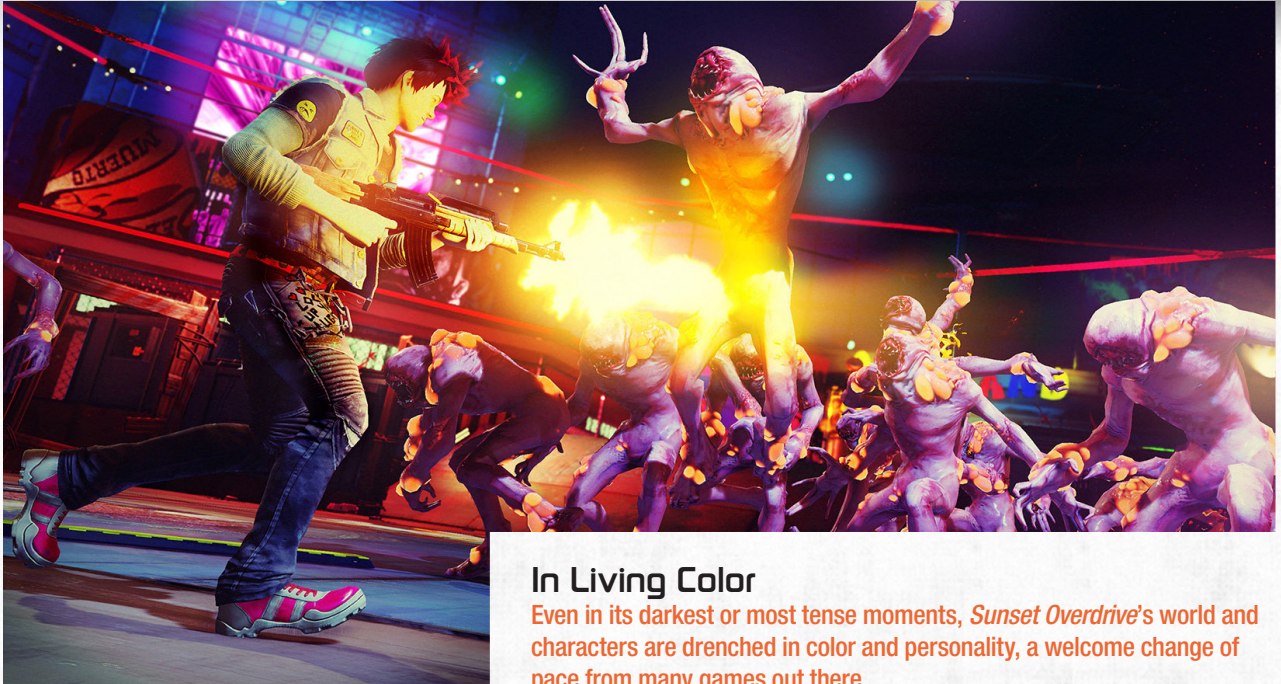
video? *On Melancholy Hill*, by the virtual, animated band The Gorillaz.

"When it came out, somebody sent the video around the office, and it was like, wouldn't it be awesome to play a game that looks like this? And Marcus was like, wouldn't it be awesome to make a game that looks like this?" Murray recalls. "So we starting talking about, what if instead of doing the dark apocalyptic thing we were originally talking about, which probably would have ended up like the Insomniac version of *DayZ* or something, what if went with that art style?"

Pondering that radical shift in visual inspiration compelled the men to consider a wide variety of other gameplay options. What would it really mean to have the apocalypse happen — and what if it wasn't necessarily a bad thing? What would people do once they were suddenly allowed to do anything they wanted to? Could humans handle self-government in a more positive, creative way?

**PRESS START**





### In Living Color

Even in its darkest or most tense moments, *Sunset Overdrive's* world and characters are drenched in color and personality, a welcome change of pace from many games out there.

"That idea of having more freedom and everything really drove us to asking what if it isn't the end times, but a beginning, where suddenly you can do all of these things that you aren't allowed to do now?" Smith says.

Another source of inspiration for the new ideas that were brewing came from what started it all: children. By this point, both Smith and Murray had daughters, and as 5-year-olds are often wont to do, they lived in a world not of rules, but of imagination. *Sunset Overdrive* needed to capture that passion and zest for life that children so often seem to have, when even the smallest of things can feel like great adventures.

"Living in that kind of world is so much more enjoyable," Smith reminisces fondly. "You know, just going to the grocery store is an exciting thing for them."

### THE STORM BEFORE THE CALM

Still, *Sunset Overdrive's* future was far from guaranteed. As Smith and Murray prepared to present their ideas to the rest of the team at Insomniac, including its founder and CEO, Ted Price, one of them suddenly felt very uncertain of their plans.

"Right before we were going to pitch it internally, I came in one day, and was



like, 'Maybe this is a giant mistake. It's a huge mistake,'" Murray explains. "I had watched some Interpol music video the night before, and I then visualized this whole other game, and Marcus were like, 'Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh.' And then, at the end of the meeting, he was like, 'Let's think about it for a minute.' And I came back the next day, and was like, 'I'm so sorry, I think I had a moment of panic of, are we going to pitch this, and they're going to say yes, and we're just going to crash-land Insomniac Games?'"

To come to his senses, Murray told himself that virtually any studio could make a dark, gritty post-apocalyptic game, whereas the colorful, fun, irreverent adventure the men cooked up would be a hard sell for most developers.

# PRESS START



## Now You're Playing with Power

Even though you'll be facing off against menacing hordes of mutants, *Sunset Overdrive* is all about having fun and feeling powerful, no matter what weapon you're wielding.

So, the two took their ideas to the staff. Those elements they had worried most about — the visual style, the attitude, the flair, the child-like wonder for everything in the world — won over their coworkers.

"When Marcus and Drew first presented the game to all of us at Insomniac, it was really surprising for me because their presentation was something that wasn't necessarily about gameplay mechanics, but instead about style and tone," Price remembers. "They brought in a lot of influences from music,

SUNSET  
OVERDRIVE

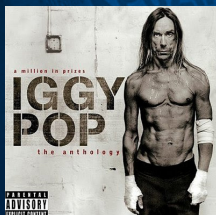
## The Influences

Here are some of the many things that inspired the Insomniac team as they developed *Sunset Overdrive*.



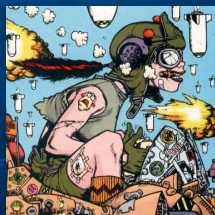
### I AM LEGEND

Not just the book, but the lighter moments of Will Smith's movie, both inspired the team.



### IGGY POP

An early photo used to pitch the game showed the punk icon's energy and irreverence.



### JAMIE HEWLETT

His one-of-a-kind flair for art and style shows in everything from *Tank Girl* to the Gorillaz.



### BURNING MAN

The yearly event in Nevada exemplifies how people create their own mini societies.



### THE SHIBUYA DISTRICT

Among other Asian influences were the looming, tightly-packed buildings of one of Tokyo's best-known districts.



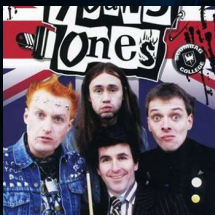
culture, movies, TV shows, and presented something that, for us, was sort of a step in a new direction from a character and story perspective [compared to what Insomniac has done in previous games]."

And, so, Insomniac Games stepped onto a path different than any it had walked in its nearly 20-year history. The nervousness Smith and Murray felt inside as *Sunset Overdrive* was approved for development wasn't unlike that which they had felt in the days before their daughters were born. Much like becoming fathers, however, they knew that while working on the game would bring them many days of fear, uncertainty, and doubt, it would also be an exciting, compelling, and rewarding experience unlike any other.



### Fizzie Takes the Stage

Gaming's next big star just might be Fizzie, Fizzco's mascot that shows up as everything from giant balloons in the sky to cos-playing corporate shills who help usher in the Overcharge apocalypse.



### THE YOUNG ONES

This British comedy illustrates the sharp, absurd humor the team was striving for.



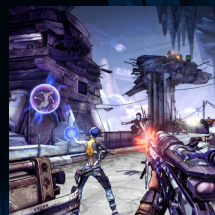
### MAD MAX

The cult classic about a post-apocalyptic world inspired one of the game's antagonist factions, the Scabs.



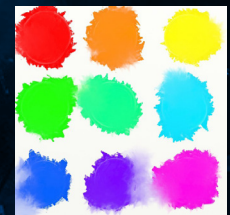
### JEAN PAUL GAULTIER

Fashion, including the work of this French haute couture designer, greatly influenced the project.



### BORDERLANDS GAMES

Gearbox's series shows how to successfully mix open-world gameplay with satire and silliness.



### PAINT, PAINT, PAINT

Color and the idea of coloring outside the lines were important themes visually and thematically.

# MEET THE TEAM



TED PRICE

JACINDA CHEW

JON PAQUETTE

# Collaboration Nation®

**SUNSET OVERDRIVE FOUND ITS GROOVE, THANKS TO THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE INSOMNIAC GAMES TEAM**

Photography by Brinson+Banks

**W**hile *Sunset Overdrive* started as the brainchild of its creative director Marcus Smith and game director Drew Murray, moving a video game from concept to completion requires far more than two people.

To illustrate what they wanted the game to be, Smith and Murray hosted group movie nights to watch influential films, and shared with other developers the music and artwork they felt captured the attitude they wanted *Sunset Overdrive* to convey. This experience allowed their Insomniac Games colleagues to shape what the

game would become, rather than just writing code, modeling characters, or producing sound effects.

"One of the movies that we watched was this early 80's movie called *The Stuff*. It was really bad," lead writer Jon Paquette remembers. "It was about this stuff this company found in some abandoned mine somewhere, and then they decided to package it and sell it to people. It has some parallels to our story, with Fizzco selling a product to people that's kind of dangerous and which does things to them. That was fun as a team — watching movies like that — to get inspiration and laugh at the same time."



Smith and Murray also pushed their co-workers to make suggestions for the game and gave those co-workers a chance to prove their ideas would enhance the game, even when the creators didn't see how they would work.

"I think the whole game developed way more organically than any other game I've worked on," Murray says. "It was very much a situation where, if someone had an idea, and they could get it into the game in a day or two, then let's just take a look at it and see."

## ESCAPING SUBURBIA

That collaborative effort created one of *Sunset Overdrive's* signature features and one of Murray's favorite parts of the game: Allowing players to easily move from building to building without touching the ground.

"I can still spend hours just moving through the city and feeling awesome doing that; [it] was not part of the original game at all," Murray says. "Even though we were talking about doing this more stylized game, the movement was still super, super grounded at first."

Designer Cameron Christian pushed the idea of traversing Sunset City, asking,

## Embracing the End Days

*Sunset Overdrive* is at its best in moments like these, where your character grinds head-first into scenes of chaotic excitement in order to reclaim your city.

"Can I just try putting in grinding on telephone wires?" And we were like, 'Well, you can do it, but we're not going to say yes to it,' Murray says.

Christian's rough prototype for skating through the sky on those lines of communication did get a "yes," however. The idea caught other team members' interest, and work began on refining how grinding would work. Unfortunately, it wasn't long before these new concepts for moving players around the world ran into a huge stumbling block: The world itself had never been designed to accommodate such movement. For players to grind across Sunset City would require changing how the city was designed and built, but studio art director Jacinda Chew says that wasn't as big of a deal as it might sound because designers already had been through a long process of reworking the world's design.

"The funny thing about our city is that we've probably rebuilt it around 11 times



**TOUCH  
FOR PHOTO  
GALLERY**

# MEET THE TEAM



**TOUCH  
FOR VIDEO**

## TED PRICE

FOUNDER / CEO

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A staunch advocate for the gaming industry, Ted Price in 1994 founded Insomniac Games, an independent development studio that always strives to bring creativity and imagination to all its projects. "Growing up, I always

enjoyed the creative process, and being at Insomniac means being surrounded by people who have amazing ideas coming together and creating amazing games," Price says. "This is a place where you can come and be creative."



“Sunset Overdrive was absolutely a creative risk in that it does a lot of things very differently.”

— TED PRICE, INSOMNIAC GAMES FOUNDER/CEO

in greybox form,” Chew says. “The very first time we built the city in greybox, we always joke that it looked like Burbank, California; it looked like suburbia. Because there’s no vehicles, we knew that it’d have to be a little smaller, and what does a small American city look like? It looks like what we see when we look out the window. And as we were playing on that, we found that not only does this look

visually boring — because I don’t want to play in a suburb — but it’s also no fun at all.”

That realization had already led to some rethinking of how Sunset City’s buildings were designed and positioned; when the traversal idea became a permanent fixture of *Sunset Overdrive*, they were modified again to accommodate gameplay. While telephone wires supported higher-elevation

### It’s a Trap!

Guns and other weaponry won’t be your only tools to fight Overcharge-fueled creatures. You’ll be able to set up a wide variety of traps that can take out an entire group of enemies at once.



# MEET THE TEAM



**TOUCH  
FOR VIDEO**

## JACINDA CHEW

### STUDIO ART DIRECTOR

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In her nearly 10 years at Insomniac Games, Jacinda Chew has contributed her artistic talents to numerous games. For *Sunset Overdrive*, she reveled in the chance to put her studio's trademark twist on a tale of the apocalypse. "From the get-go, we knew

we wanted it to be a fun, irreverent kind of place, and then that's kind of how the art style came to be. We made things super colorful — that was completely intentional, because we wanted you to feel happy when you played."



## Death from Above

*Sunset Overdrive's* traversal system isn't just for moving around Sunset City, as you can use objects such as overhead wires to attack foes from more strategic angles.

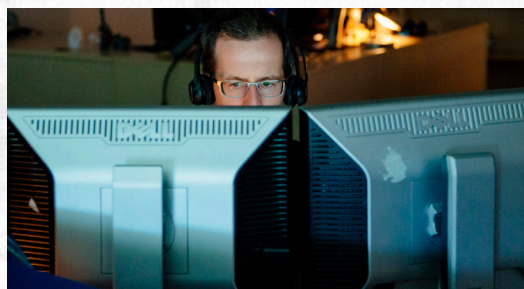


grinding, something similar was needed closer to the ground. To find an answer, Chew and the team looked East.

"Luckily, if you go to different countries, like Hong Kong or Japan, they actually do have railings along the sidewalks, right? So we borrowed from that, and just went to town with [the idea]. That's one of the advantages to having a lot of concept artists who are very international, and then a lot of us who kind of keep tabs on what's going on in the world — we're able to borrow many things from other countries and just sort of plop them into the game and make it all kind of make sense," Chew says.

## IF IT AIN'T BROKE ...

Since *Insomniac's* first release, the PlayStation first-person shooter *Disruptor*,



# MEET THE TEAM



**TOUCH  
FOR VIDEO**

## JON PAQUETTE

### LEAD WRITER

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After working for DreamWorks Interactive and EA, Jon Paquette came to Insomniac Games in 2008, when he helped pen *Resistance 3*. One of his favorite parts of working on *Sunset Overdrive* was the freedom it allowed. "When we didn't have

a cast of characters that we had, or canon or fiction that we had to adhere to, we could make stuff up — and, really, that's what writers do," Paquette says. "Our job is to make stuff up, so we had a lot of fun with trying different things."



## A Sweet Escape

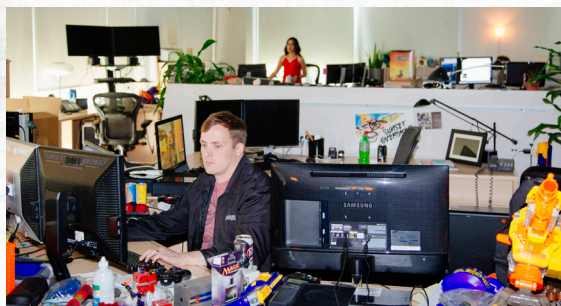
The orange energy drink Overcharge may have turned humanity into disgusting creatures, but it can also do good by distracting foes while your character makes a quick escape.



the studio has been known for its wide array of unique, imaginative firearms and gadgets. Smith and Murray initially had a strong drive to get away from that legacy.

"This is not going to be a game about crazy weapons, it's going to be a game about other things," Smith recalls saying in the early days of *Sunset Overdrive's* development. Murray jumps in, adding, "People are going to write about Insomniac and say something other than, 'They did their crazy weapons again!'"

The rest of the team — including Insomniac's CEO Ted Price — supported the duo's stance. At the time, it seemed like a daring decision to go against one of the studio's trademark pieces of game



# MEET THE TEAM



## MARCUS SMITH

### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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After joining Insomniac Games in 2005, Marcus Smith had a hand in all three *Resistance* titles, until moving onto the more colorful and cheery world of *Sunset City*. "Any publisher or developer would think it sounds totally in the realm of dark, gritty games,"

Smith says of the original ideas that led to the creation of the game. "But if we ever wanted to do a game anything like [what we've done in] *Sunset Overdrive*, it seemed like Insomniac was the only place that it was ever going to happen."



design, but Price says uncertainty comes with any game.

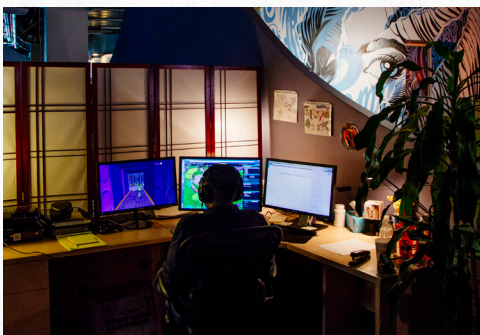
"Whenever we create a new IP, it's a creative risk," he says. "We never know what audiences are going to think of our unique Insomniac-esque vision of a game, and *Sunset Overdrive* was absolutely a creative risk in that it does a lot of things very differently."

And so, work rolled along with the assumption that the game would feature weapons of a more conventional nature. Unfortunately — or, perhaps fortunately — Smith and Murray's push for giving *Sunset Overdrive* a healthy dose of rock 'n' roll attitude would end their stance against wacky weaponry.

"We had been talking about the rock 'n' roll end times just as a way for people

"I think the whole game developed way more organically than any other game I've worked on."

— **MARCUS SMITH,**  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, SUNSET OVERDRIVE



**TOUCH  
FOR PHOTO  
GALLERY**

# MEET THE TEAM



## DREW MURRAY

### GAME DIRECTOR

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Drew Murray served as a designer on the *Resistance* trilogy and on *Ratchet/0t* and *Clank Future: Tools of Destruction* after he joined the Insomniac team in the summer of 2005. "We've talked about *Sunset Overdrive*

sort of being a game for those people who grew up on Insomniac games who are adults now, and who want some of that old-school Insomniac flavor and feel — just grown up some," Murray says.



“[Sunset Overdrive’s development] was very much a situation where, if someone had an idea, and they could get it into the game in a day or two, then let’s just take a look at it and see.”

— **DREW MURRAY, GAME DIRECTOR, SUNSET OVERDRIVE**

to think about a fun apocalypse, and a lot of people went and took that really literally,” Murray says. “That’s actually kind of where the whole gun thing went. One of the designers was like, ‘I want to make a gun that shoots records, because it’s



rock ‘n’ roll!’ And we thought it was such a terrible idea.”

However, as they had done with Christian’s suggestion of grinding telephone wires, they let the designer take a day or two to come up with a playable example of the vinyl-launching device — all while swearing that it’d never actually make it into the final game.

“We tried it, and then it was like, ‘Damn it. It totally makes sense and it totally works,’” Murray says. A few weeks later, all the real-world weapons were gone — and the team set out to think up a more inventive selection of weapons for players to use in their war against the Overcharge-fueled monsters that roam *Sunset Overdrive*’s streets.





## Power to the People

**IN SUNSET OVERDRIVE, PLAYERS CAN CRAFT THEIR OWN MAIN CHARACTERS — ANY WAY THEY WANT**

**S**unset Overdrive's development team decided the game's attitude, style and offerings, as most developers do. But they left one of the game's biggest elements completely in the hands of its players: determining who the main character is.

While the popularity of custom characters is growing, creating and implementing them is risky. When a developer doesn't have final say over who the main character is, it's tough to write a story.

Sunset Overdrive's lead writer Jon Paquette says it's easier to write for a known character. "Originally, we had like six different characters with six different voices that you could choose from, and we decided to bring that down to where you can choose male or female, but [they are]

completely customizable," he says.

Despite that additional challenge, as well as the extra time needed to develop more character types, outfits, and the like, game director Drew Murray and creative director Marcus Smith insisted on letting players personalize their avatars.

"There were several reasons that we were pushing for it, but for me, I think it's important to have ownership," Smith says. "The more abstract we leave the character, the more the player is going to be able to own that."

"I think the easiest way to present yourself or experiment with who you are in games is through customization — and a lot of that was why we didn't just go with straightforward blue jeans and different T-shirts and stuff," Murray adds.



### Never Skip Leg Day

We don't mean to embarrass him, but man, even during the apocalypse, Skeletor has really been taking care of his legs.

Such ownership is important in a game that values rebellion and individuality, in a story that lets players be the heroes they've always wanted to be. Having custom characters also made sense for the gameplay.

"Another thing is, we knew we wanted to make a game that had multiplayer, and the last thing we wanted to do was have a bunch of the same characters running around," Smith says. "So, right away, it was like, let's not have a lead character, let's have a character that you embody, that you can play as, as much as humanly possible."

### AND FASHION FOR ALL

In *Sunset Overdrive*, customization goes beyond choosing gender, race and maybe your character's hairstyle, however. Every clothing option in the game can be used by any character a player creates — no matter their gender or weight.

"I didn't want to have like women's clothes and men's clothes, or certain things that will fit on certain body types, or whatever. It was very important to me that everything worked on everybody, because that's kind of the way it works in real life — but I don't think that's the way it's presented in video games very often," Murray says. Cutting off half the clothing choices due to a character's gender tells players that they can be creative and expressive and imaginative — but only to a certain point.

Murray himself experimented with an endless number of male characters and characterization options, he says.

"I found a skirt every time," he says.

"Because it looks great," Smith chimes in.

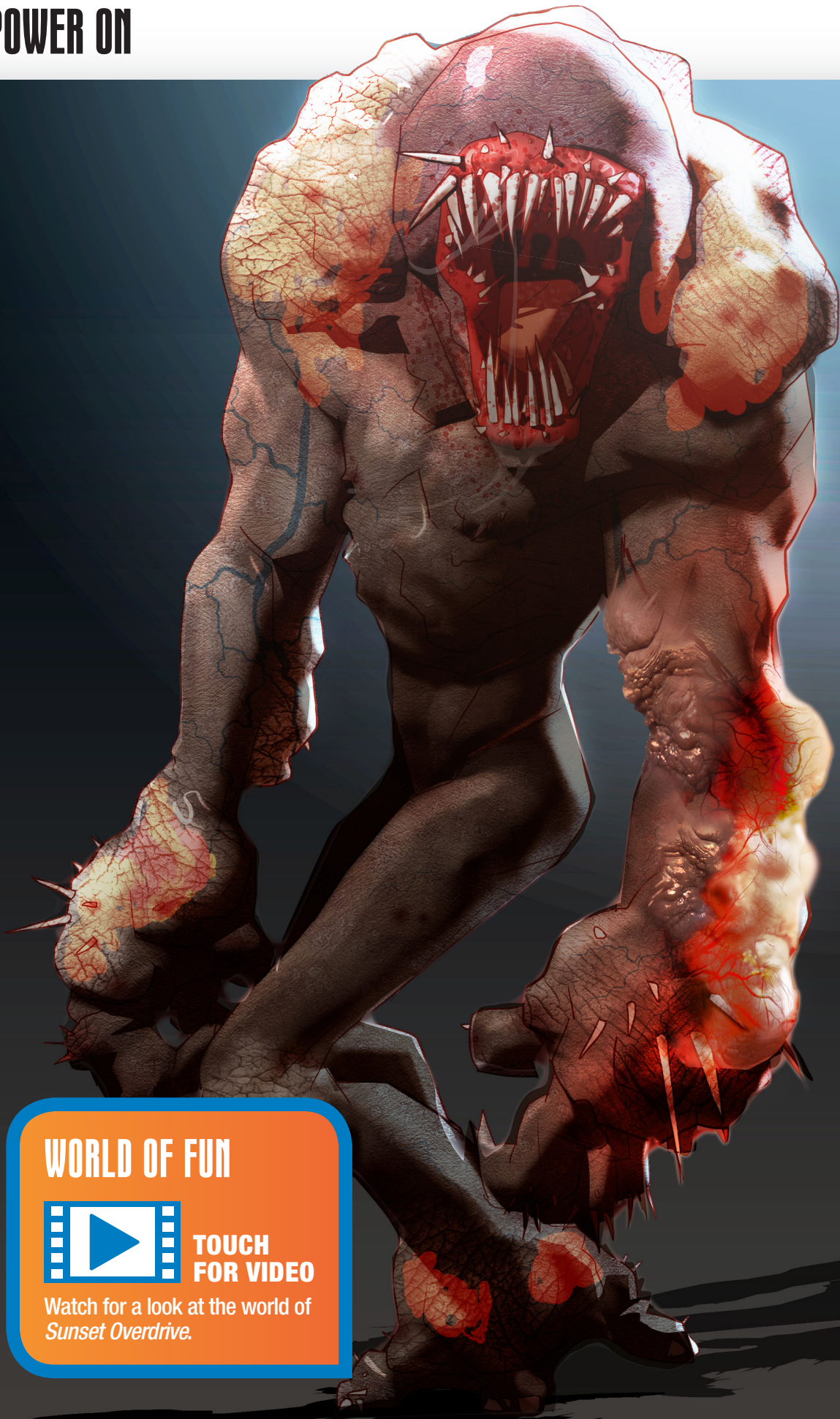
"It looks awesome," Murray replies.

Personalizing your character is one of the most powerful ways in which *Sunset Overdrive* allows players to express who

**"Nobody will make anything that offends me — and even if it is offensive, I'll probably find it really funny."**

— **JACINDA CHEW, STUDIO ART DIRECTOR**

# POWER ON



**WORLD OF FUN**



**TOUCH  
FOR VIDEO**

Watch for a look at the world of  
*Sunset Overdrive*.

that character is, without the need for dialog trees or other complex systems, Murray says.

"Do some things sometimes look a bit wonky? Yes, because if you put a giant guy in a little bikini, it's going to look weird," studio art director Jacinda Chew says with a laugh. "But I think that's part of the charm of it as well. So, why not? That's kind of one of our mantras."

## STATIC-FREE, ER STATS-FREE, CLOTHING

To reinforce players' ability to dress their characters as they want, Murray insisted that clothing items not have stats.

"It took a lot of convincing of a lot of people, a lot of arguments about how we disassociated the clothing from any sort of gameplay stats," Murray recalls. "I don't remember the number of meetings I had with designers where every one of them were like, 'Please let us put stats on the clothing so that the people will want them!' I thought we could figure out something else that players would want to min and max [stats for], but I don't want people wearing the Robin Hood hat because it's going to give you +2 agility."

The lack of stats doesn't worry Chew, though. Working on those vanity options has been one of her favorite parts of *Sunset Overdrive's* development. She believes that players



will use even the craziest or simplest of offerings, simply because people want to express themselves and stand apart from others, she says.

"You get to pick, and I get to enjoy it, because I don't have to listen to what anyone else says. I get to listen to what the player says, and I get to watch them populate the world with basically my creations," Chew says. "And it's great, because it means you get to design endless numbers of avatars instead of just one, one that you're afraid you didn't get quite right, or which wasn't pure to your vision. But for

**"We knew we wanted to make a game that had multiplayer, and the last thing we wanted to do was have a bunch of the same characters running around."**

**— MARCUS SMITH, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, SUNSET OVERDRIVE**





## It's Your World — Save It!

We're not exactly sure what style this particular character is going for, but we do know one thing: She's working hard on her "Kickin' Butt, Takin' Names, and Savin' the World" merit badge.



“I get to listen to what the player says, and I get to watch them populate the world with basically my creations.”

— JACINDA CHEW,  
STUDIO ART DIRECTOR

me, I feel like all of the characters that are in the game are going to be true to my vision, and that’s really cool.”

Since players have so many crazy customization choices, does Chew think any obnoxious, uncoordinated or just plain weird combinations would drive her crazy?

“Nobody will make anything that offends me — and even if it is offensive, I’ll probably find it really funny,” she says between laughs.

That, really, is a sentiment all the team members seem to share: *Sunset Overdrive* is as much about what the players do with it as it is what the developers have put into it. On the streets of Sunset City, you can become whomever and whatever you want to be — and the men and women of Insomniac want you to make the most of that promise.



POWER ON



# 10 SECRETS OF Sunset Overdrive

**T**he over-the-top, totally punk-rock shooter *Sunset Overdrive* wears its influences on its sleeve, be it the movie *The Warriors*, the TV show *The Young Ones*, or the music of The Clash. According to Insomniac president/CEO Ted Price, game director Drew Murray, creative director Marcus Smith, lead writer Jon Paquette, and senior designer Cameron Christian, however, developers kept plenty of fun stuff close to the vest.

By Paul Semel



## 01 JUKE BOX HERO

As mentioned in the intro, *Sunset Overdrive* was inspired by many things, including the song "Lost in the Supermarket" by The Clash, which may seem obvious, given the game's punk rock aesthetics. As Murray explains, though, it runs deeper than that. "We actually had the pre-production team pitch mission ideas based on songs," he says, adding, "Aside from The Clash's contribution, they also created missions based on 'I Don't Wanna Go to the Party' by The Riverdales, The Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again,' and 'Destroy Everything You Touch' by Ladytron."



## 03 ESCAPE TO PLASTIC BEACH

Aside from movies, TV, and music, the look of *Sunset Overdrive* also came from a number of different artists, including I Love Dust, Julien "Leroy Vanilla" Renoult, and Vasili Zoren. But the original look was inspired by a sort-of fictional cartoon rock band with a thing for old actors. "When we started," Smith explains, "our characters looked like they were straight out of a Gorillaz video, both proportionately and the fact that they didn't have pupils. But while Gorillaz was a great starting point, we ultimately decided to make sure we were making something that was our own."

## 02 CLEAR THE CACHE

The thing about taking inspiration from movies and TV shows as well as music is that it might get you into trouble with your company's H.R. department. Well, if you admit it in an interview with a nationally distributed video game magazine, that is. "You'll find some interesting things if you look at the search history on my computer," Paquette admits, "including lots and lots of pictures of cheerleaders. You know, for research."



# POWER ON



## 04 BLACK HOLE SUN

Of course, the problem with a game taking inspiration from a movie, TV, and music is that if those things were themselves inspired by games, you run the risk of destroying the space/time continuum. But clearly the Insomniac doesn't care about reality. "We would have movie nights," Christian says, "and one night we watched *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, and soon after we were prototyping fourth-wall breaking text fx in. It's kind of a funny circle since the movie itself was inspired by games." Yeah, it's real funny ... until someone loses a universe.

## 05 SURFIN' MS HEV

We know you get very excited when you hear about a new game you really want to play. And so do the people at Insomniac ... even when it's their own. As Price recalls, "One of my favorite moments during our initial pitch to Microsoft was when Drew jumped up on a chair and 'table surfed' to provide an example of traversal."

## 06 THE BLOODY SYSTEM

Thanks to such games as *Ratchet & Clank* and *Resistance*, the people at Insomniac are known for creating sadistically creative weapons for their games. Murray admits that doing so sometimes requires research. "When we were coming up with ideas for the weapons and traps in *Sunset Overdrive*, the designers took a field trip to a local hardware store and came up with ideas for makeshift instruments of destruction based on what they saw there," he says.





## 07 SURF CITY

While Insomniac designers have been making games for 20 years, even they sometimes make mistakes — often with hilarious results. “A few weeks ago, the water plane across the city in the game got raised a few meters, which resulted in it being flooded,” Murray says. “Which was really cool if you were just messing around, but not if you were trying to play the game.”



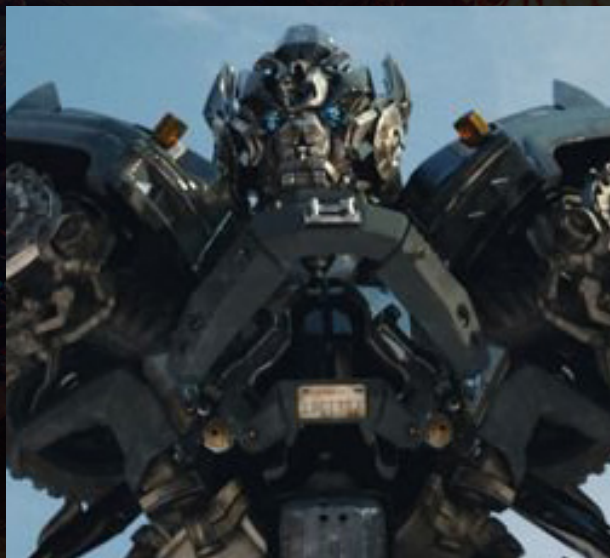
## 08 EXTENDED EMPIRE

As you know, the outbreak of monsters in *Sunset Overdrive* is caused by an energy drink called OverCharge Delirium XT. To promote the game, Insomniac actually made some. But they didn't hand them out just to friends, coworkers, and thirsty journalists. “We actually sent one to TheReportOfTheWeek, who reviews energy drinks online,” Paquette says. “He gave it an 8.5 out of 10.”



## 09 DROP DEAD DIVA

One of the voice actors in *Sunset Overdrive* is Jess Harnell, who's also the voice of Ironhide in the *Transformers* movies and Wakko Warner in *Animaniacs*. And, apparently, someone who loves to lie down. “Whenever someone asks Jess if they can get him anything when he's recording, he always says, ‘How about a hammock?’,” Paquette explains. “So finally our engineer Serge brought him a hammock. Jess recorded about a dozen lines while lying in it.”



## 10 A FAMILY AFFAIR

Finally, there's this fun little tidbit: “There's an Easter Egg in the game with a secret three-piece outfit based on my daughter Ainsley's clothes that's ununlockable,” Murray says, “but I'm not telling how to do it.” Challenge ... accepted.



# Patient HERO

**THE TEAM AT INSOMNIAC HOPES THEIR ENERGY-DRINK-FUELED PLAGUE INFECTS YOU WITH FUN**

**S**ince that day years ago when two men discussed their fears of fatherhood over lunch, it's been a long, hard road for everyone at Insomniac Games. Even for a studio with 20 years of experience under its belt, *Sunset Overdrive* has been a daring, groundbreaking project, one that's tasked the team members to expand their reach in terms of gameplay, artistic style, character expression, and storytelling that many of them have never done before. It's also been an incredibly personal journey for those men and women, as they've shaped the game's

core ideas and inserted pieces of themselves into even the smallest of its elements.

And yet, talking to the team on the eve of its release, there's not one person who doesn't still talk about *Sunset Overdrive* without a gleam in their eyes and a smile on their face. Yes, game development is hard — but, obviously, it's also hugely rewarding. It's not every day that people get to work on something that legitimately tries to break new ground, and the men and women of Insomniac fully understand and appreciate the chance that they've been given.

"It's been an amazing experience," says Jacinda Chew, studio art director. "I feel like this is one of the few games out there that references current culture. If I'm working on a cowboy game or a sci-fi game, you're pretty much like, oh it's laser guns and robots, or, I've gotta wear a cowboy hat. Or if I'm working on a game like *Grand Theft Auto*, now I'm a gangster or a thug — you have to work within this slice of society that you yourself don't occupy. For the most part, you probably aren't that thing. But there's something cool about working on a game that's culturally relevant and that reflects our world, in terms of things where I might actually wear the clothes, or maybe it's artwork and graffiti that I would really appreciate in real life. Or, we'll make jokes — there's a lot of jokes in the game that reference either other games, reference culture, or things like that — so I feel like it's very now, it's very relevant."

*Sunset Overdrive's* lead writer Jon Paquette agrees that it's been great getting the chance to work on a



### Survival of the Weirdest

As players aren't the only humans to survive the Overcharge plague, you'll meet a wide array of over-the-top characters who will help — or hurt — your chances of survival.



### Boom Goes the Dynamite

Throughout *Sunset Overdrive*, the team inserted unique touches that really add to the overall personality and cartoon feel of the game.



# LAUNCH DAY



## Two's a Party, Three's a Chaos Squad

A major part of *Sunset Overdrive* is Chaos Squad, where players band together to fight off hordes of the game's most threatening terrors.

game that's more directly connected to our normal, everyday world — though his reasons for that might be a tad more personal.

"I see myself as a misfit, you know. I'm a nerd," he admits with a smile. "I know nowadays, it's kind of cool to be a nerd, but when I was growing up and spending all of my allowance plus future allowances in the arcade, you know, it wasn't that cool. There's a lot of people like me nowadays that play games to live vicariously, to fulfill a fantasy. Hopefully, we have a fantasy that people will enjoy."

## JUDGMENT DAY

Not surprisingly, the conversation once again returns to the topic of children. Releasing a game to market is similar in many ways to sending your son or daughter off into the world. No matter how long you've nurtured them and how much work you've put into preparing them for what awaits out

there, you still worry if the world will embrace or reject them once they've left the safety of their homes.

"Releasing a game and asking players to participate in our world is nerve-racking for us," Ted Price, founder and CEO of Insomniac Games, says. "We have a general idea of what people might say, but until people really get their hands on it and start playing through the game and experiencing it firsthand, we just never know what their reaction is going to be."

While no one at Insomniac can see the future, they know what they'd like to happen once players around the world finally get their hands on the game.

"One of my hopes for the very first couple of days of *Sunset Overdrive*'s existence in the world is that people begin to play the game and realize that what we've done is changed the way shooters can work," Price says. "We've all been playing shooters for the last decade or more, and we got very used to a specific set of mechanics when we're in combat. With *Sunset Overdrive*, we're really turning things upside down, and we are trying to get players out and moving



SUNSET  
OVERDRIVE



## INSIDE INSOMNIAC



**TOUCH  
FOR VIDEO**

Watch a behind-the-scenes  
tour of Insomniac Games.

# LAUNCH DAY



“The more abstract we leave the character, the more the player is going to be able to own that.”

— MARCUS SMITH, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

going [into] combat. A lot of the basic mechanics — and the systems working behind the scenes — help to enable players to enjoy what we think is a much more active type of combat in the game.”

Paquette says he wants players to “have a lot of memorable moments, things that they didn’t expect to happen,” when they first play *Sunset Overdrive*. “I hope that they laugh out loud a lot. I hope that they talk to their friends about the moments that they had, the things that just happened because it’s an open-world game,” he says. “One person will have an experience that’s much different than another person. And I hope they remember the characters, and feel like they went on a journey that they want to take again and again.”

## HAS SUNSET’S SUN SET?

It’s usually taboo to ask game developers before their current project is released: What about the next one? For years, their focus and energy has been put into reaching that final day of development, and as the game prepares to hit store shelves, their main concern is hoping for a successful launch before taking some much-needed time off.





## Too Much of a Bad Thing

*Sunset Overdrive's* enemy designs were crafted after designers spent time wondering what would happen to humans if they drank copious amounts of the game's fictional energy drink, *Overcharge*.

Still, it's hard not to ask about the future of *Sunset Overdrive*. Given how unique and different creating the game has been for the entire team at Insomniac — and how much of themselves they've put into it — one wonders if they're already coming up with ideas for a potential sequel.

"I think every developer will tell you that when they make a game, and put all their creative energy into coming up with a world, a story, and everything that surrounds those elements. The intent is to create a franchise, a series of games that players make their own, and feel connected to," Price says. "So certainly our goal is to continue the *Sunset Overdrive* story, but what we're most excited about is seeing players' reactions, and seeing what they themselves decide to be in the game — because this really is a game where you can be who you want to be."

Sequel or not, what's important to remember is that *Sunset Overdrive* exists because Insomniac was able to do something beyond just making a continuation of an already-existing property — a fact that creative director Marcus Smith hopes isn't forgotten.

"Historically, video games have been all about [being] different," he points out. "Reading *The First Quarter* [by Steven Kent], a book that was talking about video games and coin-ops and everything, it was always, if you were making a new game and it was anything like games that have come out before, they wouldn't even green-light it. So historically, we're used to new and different and all of those things. I think the sequel thing is a relatively new phenomena in video games, and I applaud the fact that we're getting to the point where we can branch out a little bit more."

## CAPTAIN AHAB

Shooting harpoons with bottles of sweet orange goodness taped to them, you won't be hunting any white whales with this weapon — unless, of course, they too have been mutated by the nasty side effects of Overcharge.



## TNTEDDY

TNTeddy's origin, it's said, came from a designer who sent out an email that contained two images — a teddy bear and a pack of dynamite — with a plus sign between them.

# Tools of the Trade

*Sunset Overdrive's* wildest weaponry

**Y**ou won't survive the infestation of Sunset City for long without a trusty gun or two at your side. Here's a look at some of the crazy ideas and concept art the men and women at Insomniac came up with.

## ROMAN CANDLE

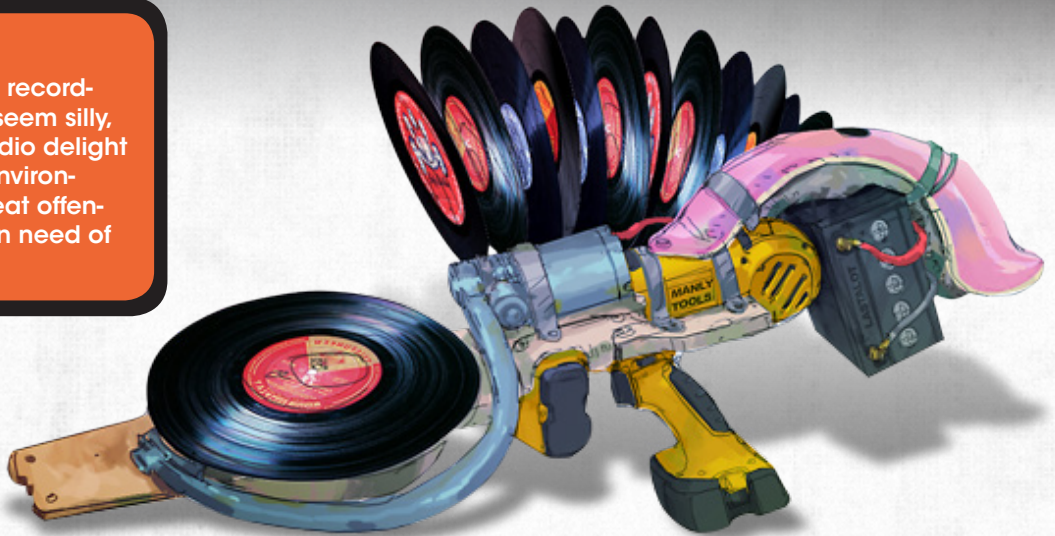
Traditionally, Americans shoot off fireworks to celebrate our nation's birth; now, you can aim fireworks at multiple targets, setting those targets ablaze with a touch of flair.





## HIGH FIDELITY

While the thought of a record-launching gun might seem silly, those vinyl discs of audio delight ricochet around the environment to give you a great offensive tool when you're in need of some crowd control.



## TURRET COPTER

While this "set-it-and-forget-it" weapon's final form sports helicopter blades, the Turret Copter's original design found a more low-tech way to keep the guns in place as they blast away at threats.



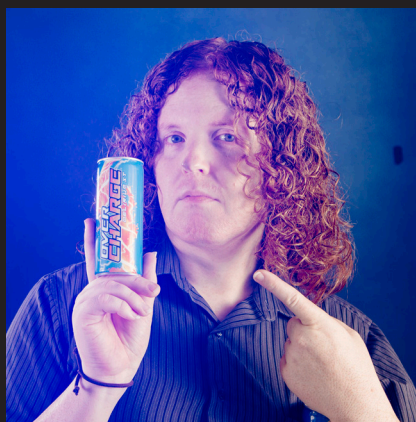


## ERIC L. PATTERSON

### AUTHOR

While **ERIC L. PATTERSON** was originally attracted to *Sunset Overdrive* because he thought it looked like a spiritual successor to the Sega classic *Jet Set Radio*, he found Insomniac Games' first current-gen project to be far more than that. He is, however, still confused as to why dressing up a character in bunny ears, Elvis sunglasses, a Viking coat, a pink tutu, and combat boots would be in any way bizarre — that's pretty much his daily wear.

When not roaming the streets of Sunset City, he fulfills a variety of roles for EGM and Walmart GameCenter. After starting his own gaming-focused fanzine in junior high, Patter-



son has been active in the world of video game media for a huge chunk of his life, working for publications such as GameFan, Play, and Animerica. In his spare time, he conducts numerous podcasting projects; contributes to panels at various events concerning diversity issues within the gaming community; dabbles in elements of graphic, interior, and fashion design; and has an ever-

growing collection of Nintendo DS games that is already far too large.

Originally from Nebraska, Patterson resides in sunny Los Angeles, California, with his wife and good-luck black cat, Jiji, when not visiting his second home of Osaka, Japan.



SUNSET  
OVERDRIVE



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