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Dragon's Dogma

Dragon's Dogma is an action role-playing hack and slash video game developed and published by Capcom for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2012. An enhanced version titled Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen was released for the game's original consoles in 2013, then later ported to Microsoft Windows in 2016, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One in 2017, and Nintendo Switch in 2019. Set in the high fantasy world of Gransys, the player takes on the role of a human protagonist dubbed the Arisen on a quest to defeat the dragon Grigori, a being said to herald the world's end, while uncovering a deeper conspiracy along the way.

The gameplay focuses on the Arisen—a customizable avatar—exploring Gransys completing quests and fighting monsters in real-time combat. The protagonist is accompanied by Pawns, characters who provide combat support and advice; the protagonist has one customized Pawn, and two additional Pawns either pre-set within the game or other customized Pawns shared by other players through an online lobby. Both standard combat and boss battles involve grappling with or climbing on enemies.

The design document for Dragon's Dogma was created by director Hideaki Itsuno in 2000 prior to working on Devil May Cry 2. Itsuno successfully pitched the project and production began in 2008. The 150-strong staff took inspiration from Western RPGs including The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion and Fable II. The music, led by Tadayoshi Makino and including contributions from Western composer Inon Zur, used on a full orchestra and focused on ambiance. Dark Arisen was designed to incorporate fan feedback and offer a complete experience for both old and new players.

The original version of Dragon's Dogma was praised by critics. Praise was given to the gameplay and the Pawn system, while the narrative was generally criticized as lacking. The Dark Arisen version was praised for its technical improvements and additional content. The original Dragon's Dogma sold over one million copies worldwide, and the different versions of Dark Arisen also met with positive sales. A Japan-exclusive massively multiplayer online role-playing game titled Dragon's Dogma Online released in 2015.

Gameplay

The player-created protagonist explores the open world environment of Gransys with their Pawn companions.

Dragon's Dogma is an action role-playing game set in an open world environment and played from a third-person perspective. The player is able to select between various vocations: Fighter, Strider, Mage, Warrior, Mystic Knight, Ranger, Assassin, Sorcerer and Magic Archer. Gender choice and appearance settings are also available. The vocation, or class system, changes gameplay and tactical options available to the player. For example, the Fighter has abilities that focus on hack and slash combat and the Strider is skilled at climbing large enemies. The game was designed to be playable even by those who are not skilled at action games.

One of the game's main innovations is the "pawn" system. While the player's party is exploring the world, the three party members who accompany the main character are controlled by artificial intelligence, but the player can issue orders to them, including "Go," "Help" and "Come." One of the party members is a non-playable character (NPC) and belongs to the main character's world, while the other two party members are NPCs borrowed from other players by connecting online or are locally generated by the game. The party members, referred to as pawns, can talk, seek the main character's help, and provide information about enemies. The player must work on strengthening the main character and the party members. The pawns are vocal, yelling out useful hints and strategies, which are often vitally important to surviving tough boss encounters and dungeons. The pawn system also features social networking features.





The game features a "grab" action, where the main character can grab or cling to enemies, objects, or NPCs. The player can use this feature for more advanced attacks. For example, the main character can either grab on to a griffin's legs and attack it directly, or climb up to reach its head for a more lethal blow. "In a lot of action games, with big enemies the tendency is just to have you hacking away at the shins. You don't get the full effect of fighting a giant boss," Hideaki Itsuno, the director of Dragon's Dogma, said. "With this game you can climb all over it. If it has a body part, you can attack it." The ability to climb enemies has drawn comparisons to Shadow of the Colossus.

The game's large open world environments have drawn comparisons to The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion. In addition to the large open world, Dragon's Dogma features a large city environment with over 200 non-player characters (NPCs) who move about according to their own schedules. The player is able to communicate with the residents in full voice. The game also features a persistent world with a dynamic weather system and day-night cycle.

The game's hack and slash combat elements have been compared to their own Devil May Cry series and Dark Souls. Some of the fantasy elements are reminiscent of Breath of Fire, and the combat and party systems have been compared to Monster Hunter.

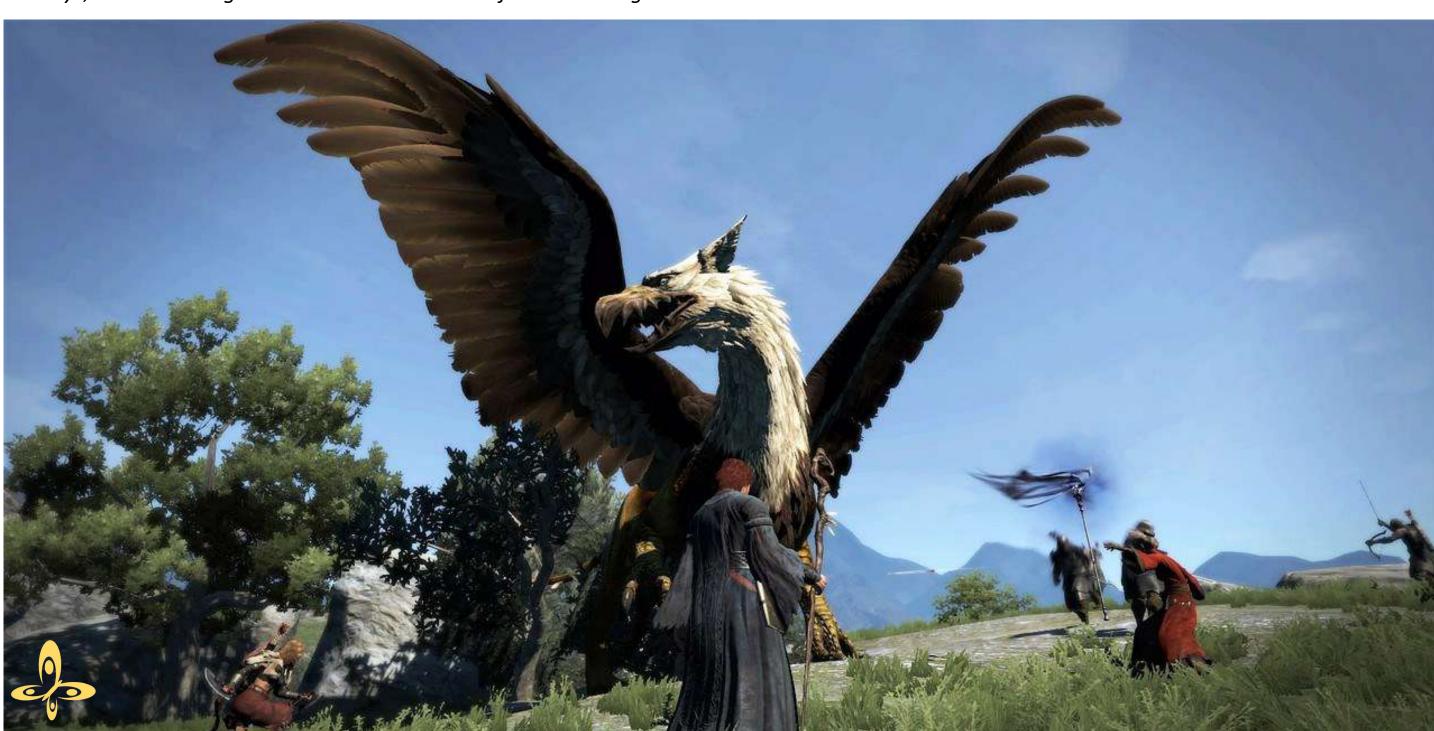
Multiplayer

Although Dragon's Dogma does not feature a direct multiplayer mode, the developers have revealed that players can compete online with asynchronous encounters called Events via Xbox Live or the PlayStation Network. One such event includes the 'Ur-Dragon' in which the effect of each party's attacks will be combined until the Ur-Dragon finally falls. Players that deal the fatal blow will receive the maximum reward, but all players can still obtain both common and rare items dropped by the Ur-Dragon when they inflict damage.

Synopsis

The game opens with a group led by a knight named Savan nearing the end of a quest to defeat the Dragon, a being which signals the end of days. An unknown time later in the present day Duchy of Gransys, the protagonist's village of Cassardis is attacked by the newly-arrived Dragon. When the protagonist attacks the Dragon, the Dragon takes his/her heart. The protagonist remains alive after this, marking him/her as the "Arisen", a figure destined to face the Dragon and stop the coming apocalypse; the Arisen is served by Pawns, human-like beings who live to fight the Dragon, and the Arisen creates a new Pawn shortly after beginning their quest. Heading to a nearby encampment, the protagonist defends an encampment of soldiers from a Hydra attack, taking one of its heads before driving it back; this is witnessed by Mercedes Marten, a soldier sent from a neighbouring nation to support Gransys's Duke Edmun Dragonsbane against the Dragon.

Mercedes helps the Arisen escort the Hydra head to the Duke's capital of Gran Soren; upon completing quests for the local Wyrm Hunter guild, the Arisen is granted an audience with the Duke, who has held the position for over a century without ageing after claiming victory against the Dragon. During his/her quest, the Arisen finds aid from a former Arisen dubbed the Dragonforged; investigates an underground tower dubbed the Everfall by the local Pawn guild; confronts Salvation, a nihilistic cult led by a man named Elysion which seeks the Dragon's victory; and learns of Mercedes's role as a token ally as other nations have come to fear Gransys becoming too powerful should the Duke defeat a second Dragon. The Arisen eventually confronts Elysion, who turns his followers into undead to kill the Arisen. The Arisen defeats them, but the Dragon arrives and kills Elysion. The Dragon challenges the Arisen to find him and stop the apocalypse. Confronting the Dragon, the Dragon offers the Arisen a choice; fight and kill it, or sacrifice their beloved—a character the Arisen has grown close to during the game—in exchange for replacing the Duke as ruler of Gransys, the same bargain the Duke took when he faced the Dragon.



Upon defeating the Dragon, the Arisen and all those connected to the Dragon—including the Duke and the Dragonforged—lose their immortality, and the Everfall becomes a bottomless pit which swallows part of Gran Soren. Returning to Gran Soren, the Arisen is attacked by the aged Duke and flees upon being accused of cursing him. While fleeing, the Arisen and their Pawns are swallowed by the Everfall. Passing into a higher plane after opening a portal within the Everfall, the Arisen faces the Seneschal, the being which sustains the world and the current form of the knight Savan. The Arisen is offered a choice; fight the Seneschal or return to Gransys and live a quiet life. Should the Arisen lose the fight with the Seneschal, they are reborn as the next Dragon. Besting the Seneschal results in the Arisen taking their place, unable to interact with the world below. The Arisen then kills themselves to break the cycle, falling back towards Gransys with their Pawn. The game ends with the Pawn awakening within the Arisen's body in their village to be met by their beloved.

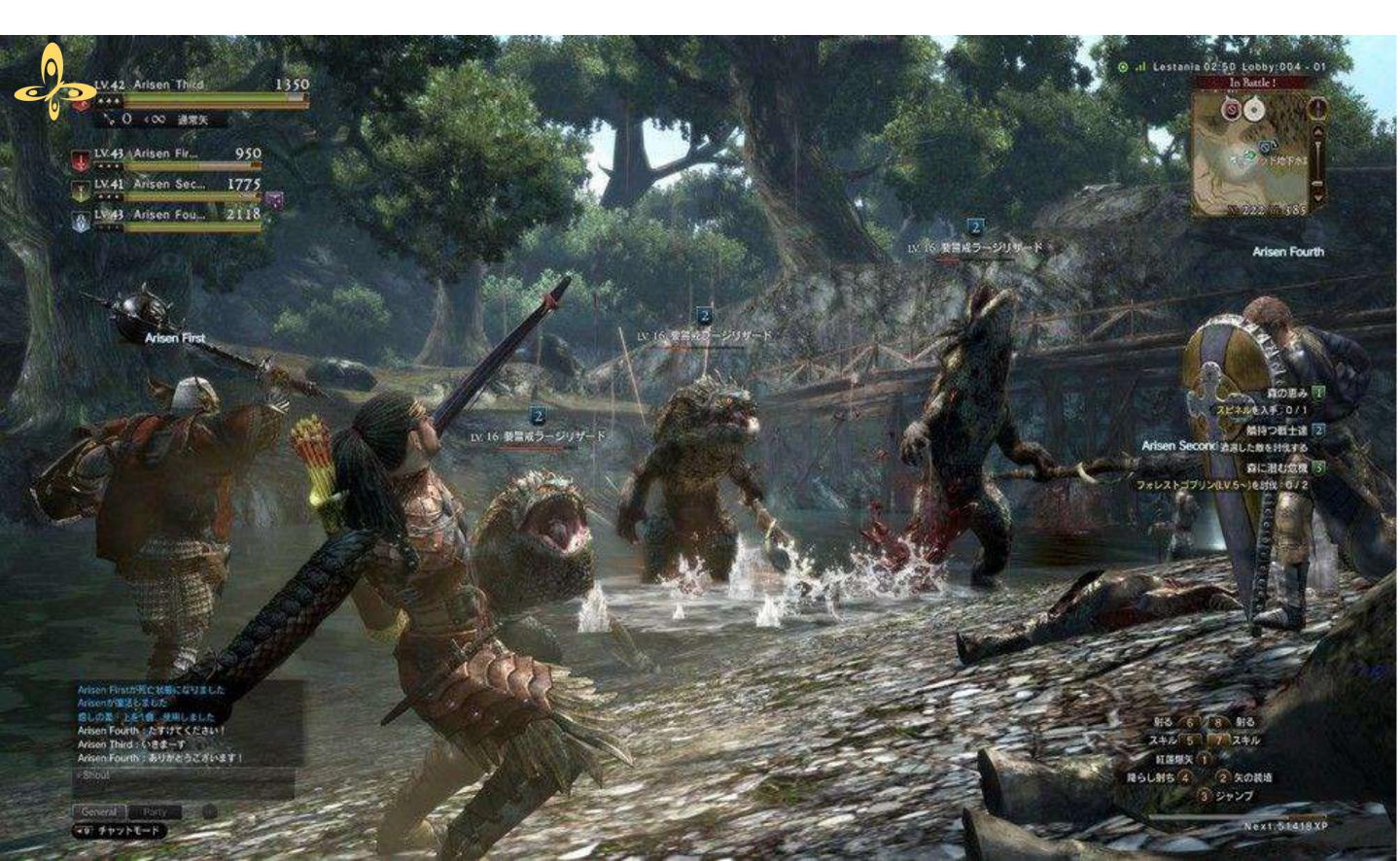
Production

Development and release

The concept for Dragon's Dogma was created by Hideaki Itsuno. He created the initial concepts of an RPG title and the Pawn system in 2000, before he was brought on board the staff of Devil May Cry 2. Itsuno had a chance to pitch the project in 2008 following the completion of Devil May Cry 4. With internal discussions going on about Capcom's next large-scale project, the company had asked for a concept which could potentially sell one million copies. Dragon's Dogma was one of seven pitches given by Itsuno. The main concept was an RPG based primarily about single-player but with casual multiplayer elements similar to watching a bulletin board system. The Pawn system and its Western RPG-styled formed part of the pitch. Itsuno's decision to pitch the project was due to the advances in gaming hardware, which had become powerful enough to properly realize the game.

At the time Dragon's Dogma was pitched, social mobile games with features similar to the Pawn system had yet to take off in Japan, and it was before the popularity of hardcore action RPGs such as Demon's Souls and Dark Souls. It was also the first time an open world had been proposed for a Capcom title. Due to these factors, there was initial resistance and scepticism from Capcom executives. Capcom eventually approved the project after Itsuni scaled down his initial proposal to fit within projected budget and development resources. Development of the game lasted three years including early concept development, with the 150-strong staff being mostly carried over from Devil May Cry 4. Including external staff, the development team was over 200 people. As with other large-scale Capcom projects, the development team was divided into units with specific tasks, allowing production to be streamlined without compromising the project as a whole.

The public reveal of Dragon's Dogma was planned for the 2010 Tokyo Game Show alongside DmC: Devil May Cry, but the visual quality of the title at the time was thought lacking and so the announcement was delayed. The game was eventually revealed in April 2011 at a special event by Capcom. Initially scheduled for "early 2012", Capcom delayed the release date by several months. A game demo was released on April 24, 2012 in Japan and North America, and April 25 in Europe. The demo offered access to the character creation system and two classes to use in two boss encounters from the main game. Characters created in the demo could be imported into the full game. Dragon's Dogma was released on May 22 in North America, May 24 in Japan and Australia, and May 25 in Europe. All versions came with a one-time download code to access a demo of Resident Evil 6. Following the game's release, multiple downloadable content (DLC) packs were released, ranging from cosmetic items to new quests.





Scenario and art design

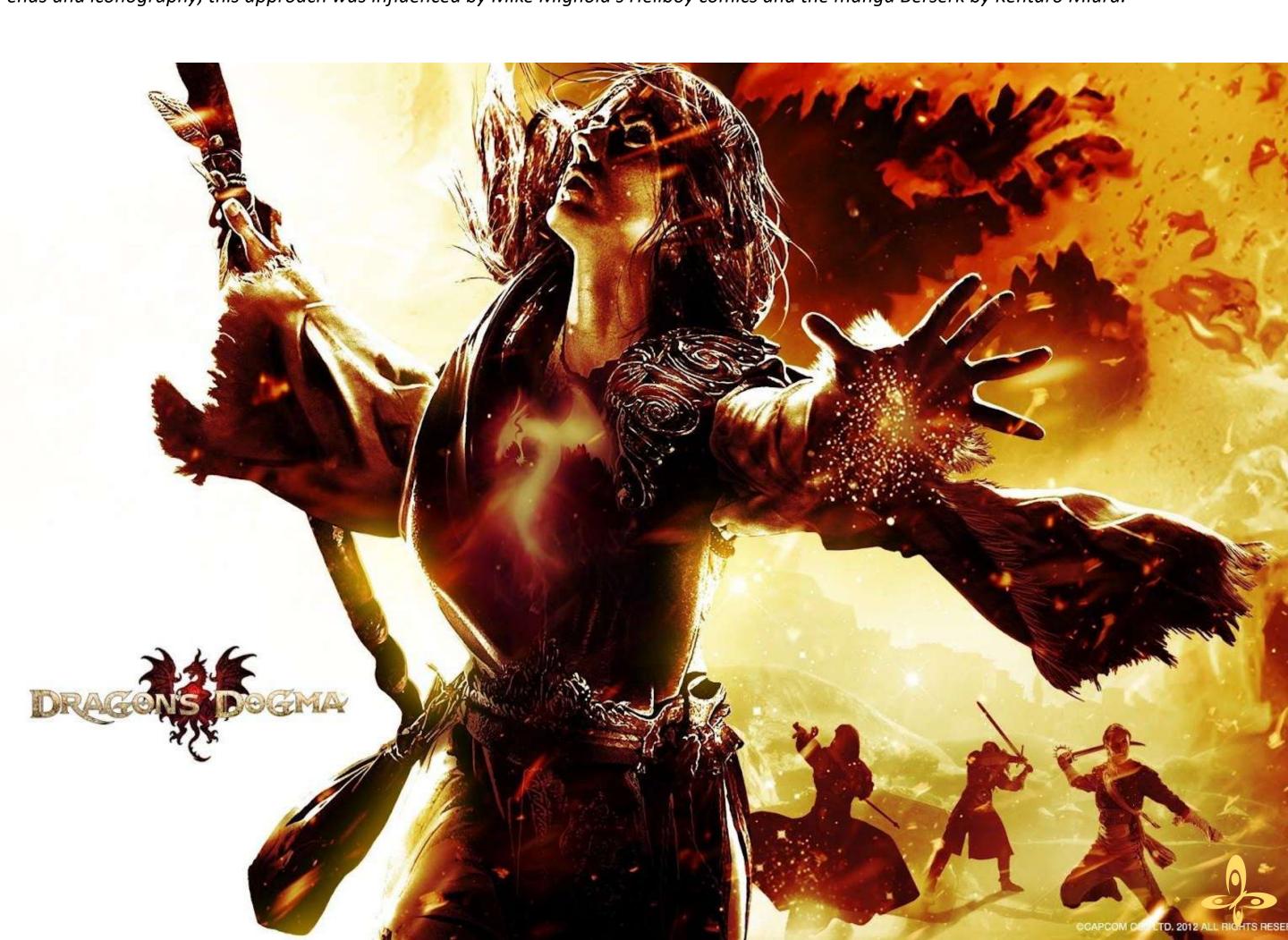
The scenario and script were written by Haruo Murata. Brought on board the project during development, he was favorably impressed by an early demo of a Cyclops battle. He was in charge of writing the main scenario and dialogue interactions, with his main aim being to create a setting which would react to playing actions in a "natural" way. The world design and basic scenario were created by Makoto Ikehara, a veteran of the Breath of Fire series. He was not involved in the later parts of production, but he was able to bring knowledge of both fantasy settings and role-playing mechanics to the team. Another contributor to the scenario was Bingo Morihashi, who had previously worked on the scripts on the Devil May Cry series since Devil May Cry 2 and BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger. Itsuno cited multiple inspirations for the world of Dragon's Dogma, including The Lord of the Rings, Dungeons & Dragons and The Neverending Story. To research the setting, the team made several trips to Europe to research its scenery and architecture. The game's title evoked both the Dragon's key role and how the Dragon taught the protagonist—and by extension the player—about the world.

The art directors were Daigo Ikeno and Makoto Tanaka. Ikeno was an established Capcom artist noted for his work on the Street Fighter series,

Devil May Cry 3 and the first two Onimusha titles. Ikeno designed the Dragon himself, aiming for a classic high fantasy look and "cool" aesthetic.

The final design emulated the "simple yet powerful" dragons of folklore, but with the main aim being to make the fantastical creature as realistic as possible. The characters were designed by Toru Kanaseki; monster designs were handled by Yoshinori Matsushita and Yumei Nagaki; weapon and armor designs were created by Kaoru Araki and Tomihiko Osumi; and background and concept art was designed by Kenichi Suzuki and Western artist Craig Mullins. During the initial design phases, several concepts were created but had to be discarded due to either design changes or a lack of development time and resources to include them. Tanaka described the world as a "an orthodox sort of high fantasy open world" similar to those used in Hollywood movies so players would immediately understand it.

The characters' clothing was inspired by the clothing used in Medieval society. The clothing designs of Cassardis and Gran Soren were designed to contrast each other; the people of Cassardis had a lot of exposed skin and a blue color theme, while those in Gran Soren covered up more and used orange. While much of the final game used Medieval clothing designs, many of Kanaseki's early designs drew from Ancient Greek and Roman designs. As the key colour of the game was red, Kanaseki designed the default Arisen character designs to look good with flaming red hair. He also gave the Arisen a simple hairstyle. Mercedes was designed to appear capable of defending herself while maintaining her femininity. The monastic design of Elysion was designed to both serve as the model for Salvation cultist clothing and remain modest so as not to overshadow the character himself. The Duke was designed to show his growing mental strain, and his cloak—which incorporated dragon designs symbolizing his reputation—took a long time to complete. The monsters were created based on their representations in folklore and fairytales. Rather than making the original designs more fantastical, they were made more realistic. The art team tried not to stray too far from traditional imagery grounded in ancient legends and iconography; this approach was influenced by Mike Mignola's Hellboy comics and the manga Berserk by Kentaro Miura.



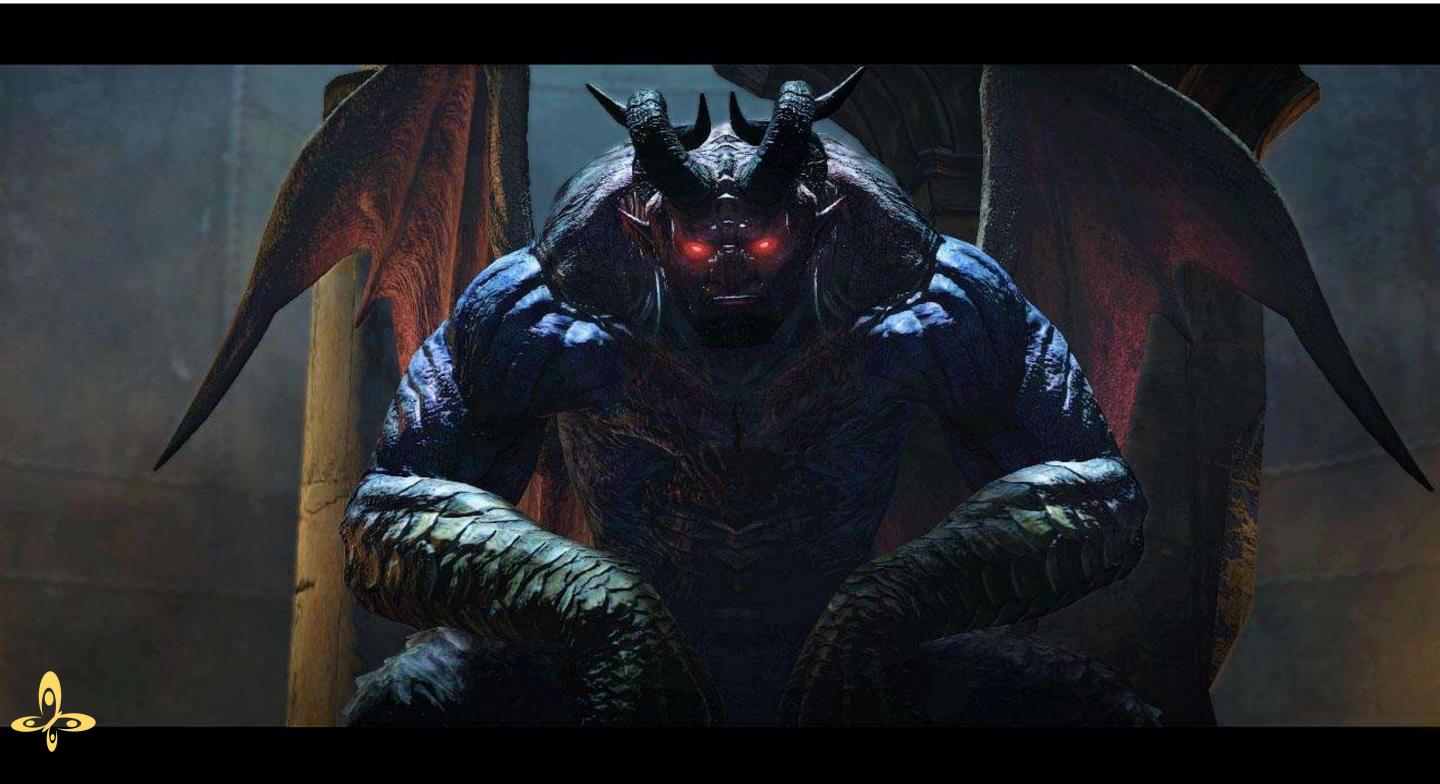
Design

The aim for the developers was, rather than using Japanese role-playing traditions, to emulate Western RPGs including Fallout 3, The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion and Fable II. Itsuno's original version of the game was substantially larger than the final game, including the whole of Gransys, a dungeon related to the game's lore, and the game world's moon. While utilising RPG elements, Dragon's Dogma was primarily focused on action gameplay as Capcom's staff were experienced with action games. Itsune described the game as their attempt to create a defining RPG experience similar to The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. The control layout was carried over from Capcom's other action titles such as Devil May Cry. Many of the action elements were carried over and how characters fought with enemies was also drawn from that series. The game's open world was the largest world ever created for a Capcom title.

The world's design was intended to promote both realism and fantasy; game designer Makoto Tanaka compared the wished-for atmosphere to someone walking through the African savana and encountering its wildlife, but with fantasy beasts replacing real-world animals. The team gradually worked through the rules of the game world, which were all based on the real world as far as possible. According to Kobayashi, the game's scale and style—which were like nothing produced by Capcom up to that point—caused multiple problems for the development team. There were several times when Kobayashi felt like giving up due to the problems that came up. Due to the world's scale, the development team had to get used to multiple new sound management techniques, creating a new audio program to manage sound over in-game distances. A difficult sound to create were bell chimes, which were included due to their importance to Medieval European life when sounding for events. The sounds were recorded using a real bell at a Hollywood studio. Recording the bell chimes was troublesome, as the structure the bells were suspended in nearly collapsed. To help create monster noises, the sound team used the sounds of trained animals from Hollywood which were trained for roles in production.

The game used the 2.x version of Capcom's proprietary MT Framework game engine, which had previously been used in several Capcom games including Lost Planet: Extreme Condition and Devil May Cry 4. According to the programmer Taro Yahagi, who was in charge of work for the engine, Dragon's Dogma was the most difficult project as MT Framework required a large number of adjustments. Previous MT Framework titles had been stage-based action titles, so transitioning to an open world was a drastic change and required the creation of a dedicated "World Offset" function which shifted the world based on player position so environmental data could be updated. The team could not increase the number of data points to solve the issue of rendering environments as this would have been beyond the available hardware. Another new addition was "deferred lighting", an advanced lighting engine which could maintain realistic lighting during the game's day-night cycle in the open world, in addition to environmental effects such as characters getting wet. The retail version of the game also incorporated an advanced anti-aliasing filter. Character actions, including combat actions such as grappling, where created using a combination of motion capture and inverse kinematics. Physics was controlled using a specially-created in-house physics engine. The physical interaction between large monsters and characters climbing on them using a combination of physics and motion-based algorithms similar to early water animation techniques. These designs were intended to work on the contrasting hardware of the PS3 and 360.

The game was developed for the PlayStation 3 (PS3) and Xbox 360 (360) consoles. The choice of PS3 and 360 was chosen due to both the team's experience with the platforms and their large international install base. According to producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi, the team's previous experience creating Devil May Cry 4 helped with development as they both carried over technology and had familiarity with the planned platforms. The online functionality for the PS3 and 360 were respectively co-developed and supported by Sony Computer Entertainment and the Japanese branch of Microsoft. Their cooperation enabled Capcom to reduce running costs for the online functions to nearly nothing. The limited scope of online elements was a compromise which both fulfilled with gameplay goals of the team while avoiding many of the problems of full multiplayer.





Localization

The localization was led by Erin Ellis. When creating the dialogue, Ellis's team wanted to create a similar feeling to the writing of George R. R. Martin and J. R. R. Tolkien due to the dramatic style of the game's narrative. The team decided to use semi-archaic English words in dialogue such as "thou" and "aught", resulting in the team needing to keep themselves from going too far or adding in incongruous words that clashed with the archaic style. Rather than using conventional spell names such as "Fire" and "Ice", the team found old English words such as "Halidom" and "Ingle". In contrast to many Japanese games—which were translated from Japanese to English and then into other languages—Dragon's Dogma was localized in six languages at once due to the development team still working on the game during the localization process. This meant that the team were able to minimize trimming the dialogue down and eliminating improbably abbreviations. According to Makino, the team hired 82 voice actors; the recording took place in North America between two studios over fifteen weeks, with two audio directors supervising the process. The team used different accents to indicate people being from different regions of the world, promoting a sense of realism. The Pawn voices were difficult due to the variety of physical customization. The team ultimately chose twelve voice actors to record lines at different pitches. The game ultimately featured 20 hours of voiced dialogue, coming to 42,000 lines of dialogue for all characters. As English was the primary language for all versions, lip syncing was not an issue. Needing to handle the different pieces of the localization within the strict time limit was a new experience for both Ellis and the Capcom staff.

Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen

An expanded version of the game titled Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen began development in 2012 for the game's original platforms. The game included additional content including an extra dungeon dubbed Bitterblack Isle, with additional weapons and armor exclusive to that area, and full Japanese voice acting. Producer Minae Matsukawa and director Kento Kinoshita had both worked on the original Dragon's Dogma. Kobayashi acted as executive producer. Dark Arisen was Kinoshita's debut as a director. The game came about due to community feedback about the original game, with Bitterblack Isle being designed as a lore-based end-game dungeon with powerful enemies. There was also a wish to create a "complete" version of the game. Dark Arisen released in Japan on April 25, 2013 as both standard and limited editions. In Western territories, the game released on April 23 in North America and Australia, and April 26 in Europe. Save data from Dragon's Dogma can be transferred into Dark Arisen.

A Microsoft Windows version of Dark Arisen was planned from an early stage, with the main aim being to take advantage of the Windows platform's greater technical specifications compared to the PS3 and 360, in addition to expanding the game's player base. The port was developed with QLOC. The team's main aim was to optimise the game for the Windows platform, rather than improving or expanding on current assets. The Windows version of Dark Arisen was released worldwide on January 15, 2016. It eventually released in Japan on October 5, 2017. Dark Arisen was later released for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One on October 3 in the West and October 5 in Japan. Dark Arisen was later released for the Nintendo Switch on April 23, 2019 in Europe and North America, and April 25, 2019 in Japan.

Music

The music director for Dragon's Dogma was Tadayoshi Makino, who had previously worked on Monster Hunter Tri. Maniko initially began planning the musical elements of the game in 2009, when the game world's design was still in a state of flux. Makino was initially pulled in two different directions by Itsuno and Kobayashi; while both wanted to make an impression outside standard fantasy music expectations, Itsuno wanted to use jazz while Kobayashi wanted to use hard rock similar to Queen and Kiss. By contrast, Makino wanted to use a full orchestra and ethnic elements, which resulted in the score having far more variety than anyone expected. Makino's team created samples, matched them against prototype promotional videos, then consulted sound staff at Capcom to blend the ethnic, orchestral and rock elements. The first completed track, the game's main theme, was favorably received by Kobayashi and Makino used the fusion of elements for the entire score. When creating his plan for the music, Makino decided to move away from the typical harsh-sounding action soundtracks Capcom games were known for, which used many high and low-pitched notes. Instead, Makino chose a softer sound for Dragon's Dogma. His aim was to not make the music too assertive, allowing it to blend in with the natural world of the game.



Makino brought on three other composers to work on the soundtrack. They were Rei Kondoh, a composer who had worked on Ōkami and the Sengoku Basara; Inon Zur, a Western composer noted for his work on the Dragon Age series who was brought on board to make the soundtrack an international collaboration; and Masayoshi Ishi, whose work included the Sengoku Basara series and The Excitement of Haruhi Suzumiya. Ishi was involved from an early stage, when the musical direction of the project was still being decided upon. Kondoh was brought in due to her work on previous Capcom titles. Zur's methods of working were entirely new to the otherwise-Japanese composers, something which the team thought would benefit the production. Makino acted as general supervisor due to his knowledge of the game's story. During the composing stage, Kondoh and Zur were described by Makino as bouncing opinions off each other when creating the soundtrack when creating tracks for individual situations. The composition went smoothly for the team, with each member stimulating the other. Vocals for the main theme "Eternal Return" were provided by Aubrey Ashburn, a frequent collaborator with Zur. Ashburn was brought on board after the theme was written and recorded using a substitute vocal track. During recording, she had instructions via a livestream from the production team.

The music was recorded in Bulgaria by the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra; the recording, which took place at the Bulgarian National Radio Studio, included roughly 130 musicians and choir. A European orchestra was chosen as Makino wanted a distinctive sound different from the typical Hollywood-styled orchestral sound. The recording was supervised by Thomas Böcker and his company Merregnon Studios, who were brought aboard the project by Harmonics International based on their previous collaborations on Symphonic Fantasies concerts. Rock elements included in some tracks were recorded in Japan by guitarist Tenyu Nakamura and drummer Tatsuya Suzuki. As much music as possible was recorded live rather than using synthesized instruments. The game's theme song was "Into Free -Dangan-", written and performed by Japanese rock duo B'z. The song was an English cover version of B'z's 1998 single "Samayoeru Aoi Dangan". The lyrics were written by Koshi Inaba and Shane Gaalaas, while the music was created by Tak Matsumoto.

For Dark Arisen, Makino returned to compose new tracks for the game's new dungeon alongside Kondoh and Zur; the new work, mainly focused on the new dungeon, covered 24 tracks. In contrast to Dragon's Dogma, the added music for Dark Arisen made heavy use of synthesized music. Despite moving away from the style of the main game, Makino wanted to ensure the new music remained thematically in tune with the rest of the soundtrack. The new vocal theme for Dark Arisen, "Coils of Light", was composed by Makino and performed by Japanese singer Raychell. When first contacted about the project, Raychell was already familiar with Dragon's Dogma and daunted by the prospect of providing a new theme song. The lyrics were written by Raychell to convey the game's world, in addition to the dark atmosphere of the new dungeon. Makino created "Coils of Light" using the core melody of "Eternal Return", tying into the original soundtrack. The English version of "Coils of Light" was sung by William Montgomery.

The official soundtrack album for Dragon's Dogma was released on May 23, 2012. Featuring 66 tracks across two CDs, the album was published by the music label of Square Enix. A shorter album was released by Sumthing Else Music Works as a physical and digital release on November 11. "Into Free -Dangan-" was released as a digital single on iTunes on April 4, 2012. The two-CD album for Dark Arisen released on April 24, 2013. The first disc contained the new music, while the second included a selection from the main soundtrack and tracks that could not be released on the original album. The Japanese version of "Coils of Light" was not included on the album. At Kobayashi's suggestion, Makino collaborated with Square Enix's Tsuyoshi Sekito, who had composed music for multiple Square Enix titles and performed as part of The Black Mages; Sekito performed guitar for some of the album's arranged tracks. "Coils of Light" was released as part of Raychell's album L 🛽 R on April 24. A compilation album titled Dragom's Dogma 5th Anniversary Best, featuring tracks from across the Dragon's Dogma series up to that point, was released on December 20, 2017 through Capcom's music label.





Minecraft Dungeons

Minecraft Dungeons is a dungeon crawler video game developed by Mojang Studios and Double Eleven and published by Xbox Game Studios. It is a spin-off of the sandbox video game Minecraft and was released for Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Windows, and Xbox One on May 26, 2020. The game received mixed reviews; many deemed the game fun and charming, with praise for its visuals and music. However, its simple gameplay and use of procedural generation were met with a more mixed reception, with its short story and lack of depth criticized.

Gameplay

Unlike Minecraft, Minecraft Dungeons doesn't feature an open world, nor mining or building. Instead, it is a hack and slash-styled dungeon crawler, rendered from an isometric perspective. Players explore procedurally generated and hand crafted dungeons filled with randomly-generated monsters and also deal with traps, puzzles, bosses and finding treasure. There is no class system; players can use any weapon or armor they wish. The game includes a four-player local and online multiplayer.

Synopsis

Minecraft Dungeons is set in the same fictional world as Minecraft, known as the "Overworld", consisting of rough 3D objects—mainly cubes and fluids, and commonly called "blocks"—representing various materials, and inhabited by both peaceful and hostile mobs. Unlike Minecraft, the game features a linear, story-driven campaign, and cutscenes.

The opening cutscene tells the story of an Illager named Archie, who was driven away by his people. While searching for a new home, he was forced to leave every village he found due to Villagers not allowing him to live with them. One day, Archie stumbled upon a powerful artifact known as the "Orb of Dominance", which granted him magic powers, but also corrupted him. Now known as the "Arch-Illager", he sought vengeance on all those who wronged him, and subjugated numerous villages with his new army. Players assume the role of heroes who embark on a quest to defeat the Arch-Illager, while liberating villages, fighting monsters, and completing various quests to pass on to the next level. Ultimately, the players face the Arch-Illager in his castle, destroying the Orb of Dominance in the process, which frees Archie from its influence. While he is afraid of them at first, the players instead befriend him, showing him that there are also kind people in the Overworld. As the players and Archie depart, the Orb is shown to be rebuilding itself.

In the Jungle Awakens expansion pack, it is revealed a shard of the Orb went into a jungle, corrupting the nearby land and creating a monstrosity known as the "Jungle Abomination", which the player(s) must defeat. Then in the Creeping Winter expansion pack, another shard of the Orb went to an island and corrupted a local wraith. The wraith then covered the island in a snowstorm, and the player(s) must go and defeat the wraith. In the Howling Peaks expansion pack, a third shard from the Orb traveled to a mountainous region and corrupted a squall golem, turning it into a "Tempest Golem", and the player(s) must destroy it.







Development

Dungeons is developed by Mojang Studios for Xbox One, Windows 10, PlayStation 4, and Nintendo Switch using Unreal Engine 4. Console ports are being done by Double Eleven.

With the continued success of the original Minecraft, Mojang thought about other possible games that could bring something new to the Minecraft universe. Experimenting with different ideas, the game was originally meant to be a single-player dungeon crawl game, inspired by The Legend of Zelda series, for the Nintendo 3DS. However, as the game began to take shape, these elements were changed or removed. For example, after adding in multiplayer features, the development team realized that these changes made the game more fun. According to game director Måns Olsen, the game was inspired by Diablo and Torchlight, as well as co-operative first-person shooter games like Warhammer: End Times – Vermintide and Left 4 Dead.

One of the primary challenges the development team faced was figuring out how to adapt the gameplay of dungeon crawl games like Diablo into the world of Minecraft. Since Minecraft characters did not have any special innate abilities, Mojang had to think of alternatives to things such as character class that would normally be found in games of that genre. Their solution was to focus on creating weapons and armor that the player could make more powerful through enchantments, allowing the player to explore their creativity through customization.

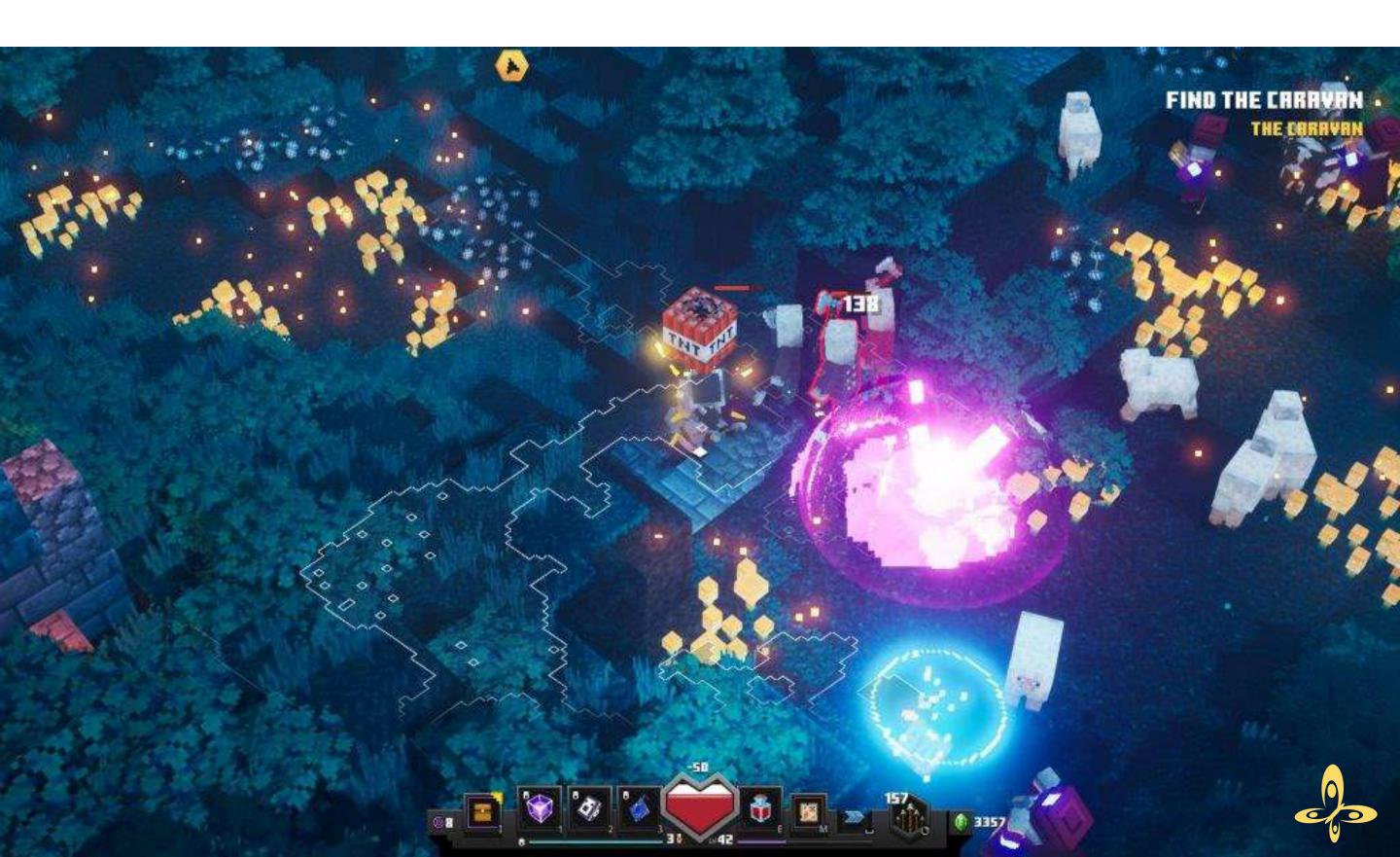
In addition, Mojang wanted to streamline the traditional dungeon crawl game experience into something more accessible. Olsen remarked that other games in the genre "are approachable to some degree, but they're typically games with very deep, interconnected systems", and that they wanted to make getting into Minecraft Dungeons "super easy" yet "instantly familiar". The decision to not allow building or crafting, a staple of the original Minecraft, was also made in order to focus on the core dungeon-crawling experience. To give more experienced players a challenge, the team added options to change the game's difficulty, which would reward players with better equipment and new secret content for playing on harder difficulties.

Minecraft Dungeons was first announced on September 28, 2018 during the Minecon live streaming event. A video showcasing gameplay was released during E3 2019.

Release

Minecraft Dungeons was released on May 26, 2020, after being delayed from its original April release date due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The closed beta for the game ran for a month from March 25 to April 24, 2020.

On July 1, 2020, a downloadable content (DLC) pack for the game, Jungle Awakens, was released. The update included new weapons, items, and artifacts. Two further ones, Creeping Winter and Howling Peaks, were released by the end of 2020. A fourth DLC, Flames of the Nether was released on February 24, 2021.







Salt and Sanctuary

Salt and Sanctuary is a 2D action role-playing video game developed and published by Ska Studios. The game was released on March 15, 2016 for the PlayStation 4, with later releases for Microsoft Windows, macOS, Linux, PlayStation Vita, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch. It is heavily inspired by the Souls series by Japanese developer FromSoftware. The game received positive reception from critics, who praised its graphical style and game-play.

Gameplay

The game features 2D hand drawn visuals, as well as gameplay mechanics similar to the Souls series. There are 600 items players may use, and the several weapon categories have special move sets including air attacks. Players can wield two handed weapons for additional power, and shields to defend and parry. Magic and ranged attacks can also be performed. The game implements RPG concepts such as origins, classes and stat development, as well as an extensive skill tree providing hundreds of combinations. The game also provides a local multiplayer option for co-operative and versus play, and asynchronous features such as messages that may be interchanged between players.

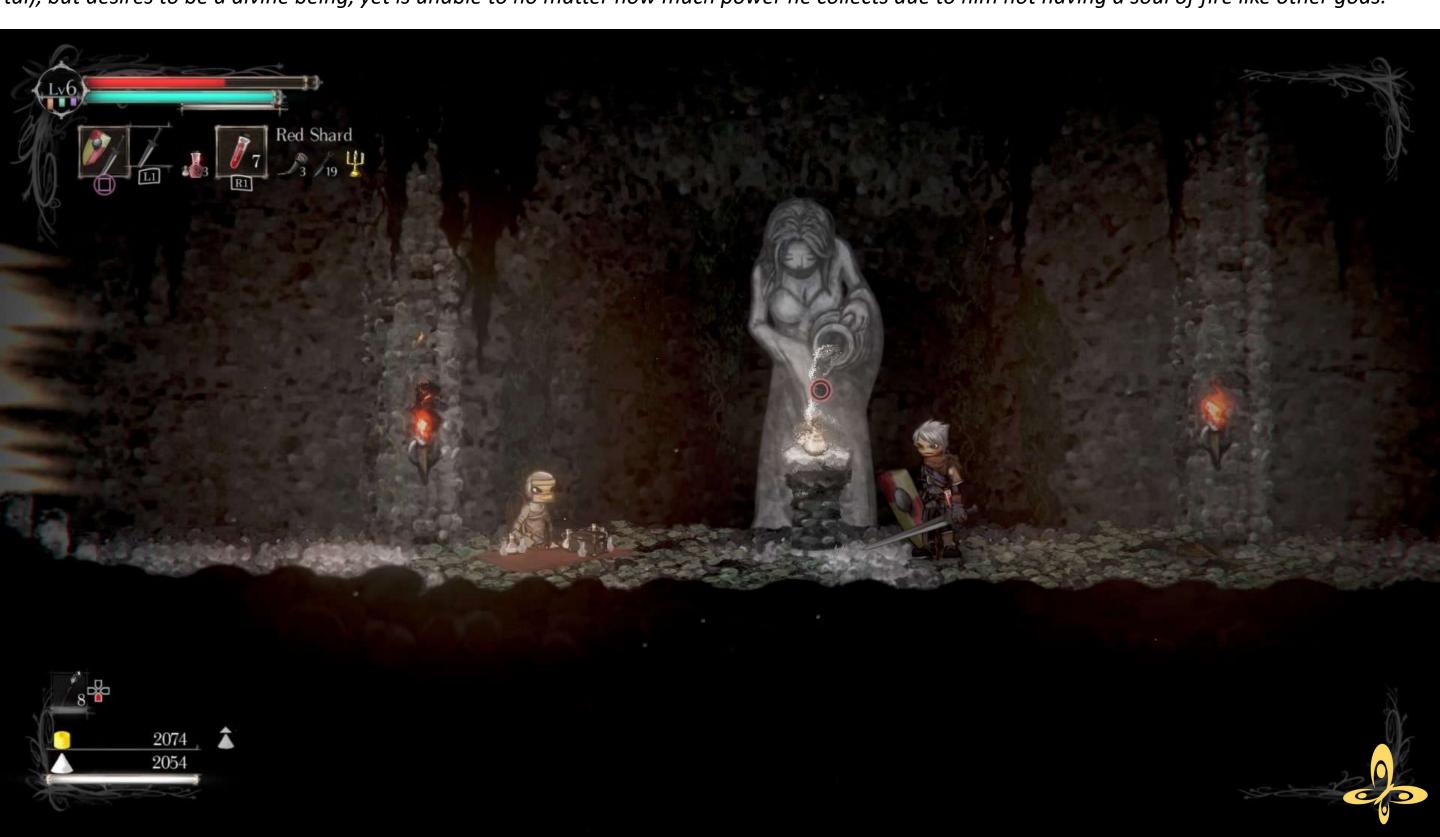
Plot

The game begins with the player stowed away in a ship that is also carrying a princess from an unnamed country who is to be married to an opposing country's king in order to avert war. However, a group of marauders attack the ship, murdering its crew. If the player kills all the marauders and escapes to the deck, they are then set upon by a giant "Kraekan" (a corruption of kraken) of the sea resembling Cthulhu. Whether or not they are able to defeat the marauders and the powerful kraeken, the ship is wrecked, sending them drifting to shore on a mysterious island.

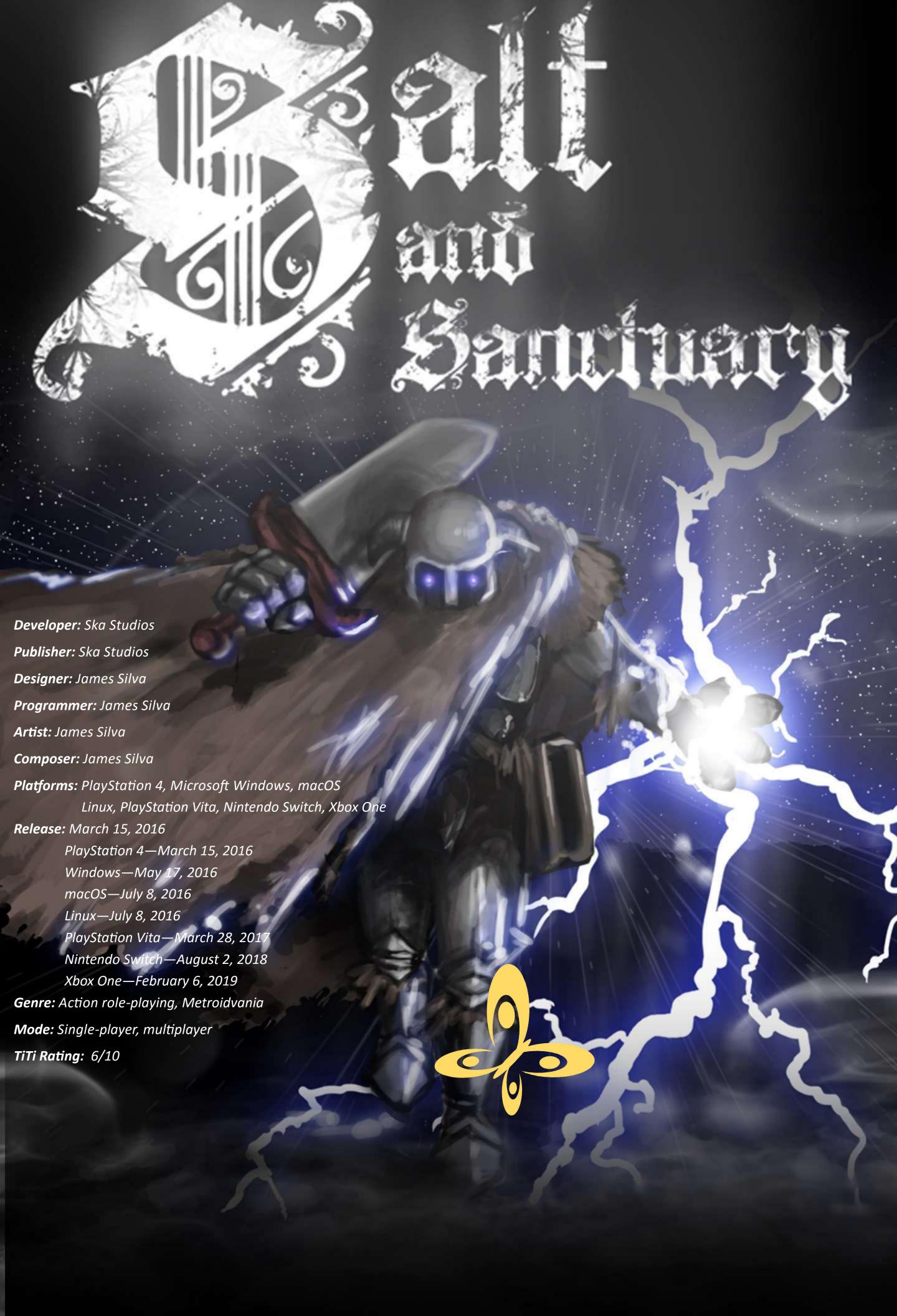
There, the player meets a strange old man who gives them an icon of one of three creeds the player says they are a member of, helping them in their quest to find the lost princess. The player places this icon in the first Sanctuary and then continues exploring the island, gathering salt in order to gain power, as in this universe, humans are known as Saltborn and are ostensibly largely composed of it. There, it is possible to meet several NPC's with side-stories, an unnamed Knight, Thief, and Sorcerer. The player also meets a highly sinister talking Scarecrow that threatens that they will perish.

In the process of conversing with these NPCs throughout the journey, they come to realize that the island is made up of copies of dangerous locations from the various continents of the world, and that some kind of power "collected" them. The player realizes that the Scarecrow is the avatar of a being known as the Nameless God, and also that the princess they were searching for may not have even been royalty, but rather a slave that was to be sacrificed to the Nameless God in exchange for ending the current war, as has been done many times in the past. An optional boss fight also reveals that the Nameless God has killed the current gods of the world, known as the Three, by trapping them in special coffins and receiving and answering prayers meant for them, as gods require worship to survive.

Finally, the main character meets the old man for the final time, and he reveals that he was once Jaret, a great king who once ruled the island and agreed to be the servant of the Nameless God in exchange for power. The Nameless God is an incredibly powerful being who is Saltborn (i.e. mortal), but desires to be a divine being, yet is unable to no matter how much power he collects due to him not having a soul of fire like other gods.







The player travels to the Nameless God's castle and defeats him, finding a well with which they are able to escape from the island and presumably end the cycle of war that the Nameless God perpetuated. Alternatively, they can choose to pick up the Nameless God's helmet and gain his full power, but be trapped on the island.

Development

The game was first announced in an open letter from the developer to the PlayStation Blog on August 28, 2014. The game was released for the PlayStation 4 worldwide on March 15, 2016, and for Microsoft Windows on May 17, 2016. The game also released on PlayStation Vita on March 28, 2017. A Nintendo Switch port, handled by BlitWorks, was released worldwide on August 2, 2018 via the Nintendo eShop, with a physical retail released on December 11, 2018 under the title Salt and Sanctuary: Drowned Tome Edition.

The initial idea behind the game was conceived as a fusion of the combat of the Souls series with the studio's previ-

ous Dishwasher series. The Castlevania series, particularly Symphony of the Night and the later Nintendo DS installments (which are noted for their free-roaming exploration-based design), also served as inspiration for the gameplay The tech demo received a large amount of positive feedback, so the developers decided to continue with that idea.

The game took about two and a half years to develop, though the underlying systems were created before development started in earnest. The original game as designed was much more complex, but some cuts had to be made due to the small size of the development team.





Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord

Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord is a strategy action role-playing video game developed by Turkish company TaleWorlds Entertainment. It is a prequel to Mount & Blade: Warband, a stand-alone expansion for the 2008 game Mount & Blade. Bannerlord takes place 210 years before its predecessor, with a setting inspired by the Migration Period. Bannerlord was announced in 2012. A Steam page for the game was created in late 2016; the following year, TaleWorlds began releasing weekly developer diaries detailing elements of the game. An early access version of the game was released on March 30, 2020 and quickly became the largest launch of the year on Steam, achieving more than 200,000 concurrent players. A version for unspecified consoles is planned

Gameplay

Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord is a strategy/action role-playing game. The fundamental gameplay premise is the same as previous entries in the series: the player builds up a party of soldiers and performs quests on an overhead campaign map, with battles being played out on battlefields that allow the player to personally engage in combat alongside their troops. Bannerlord, however, includes significant improvements to numerous elements of gameplay.

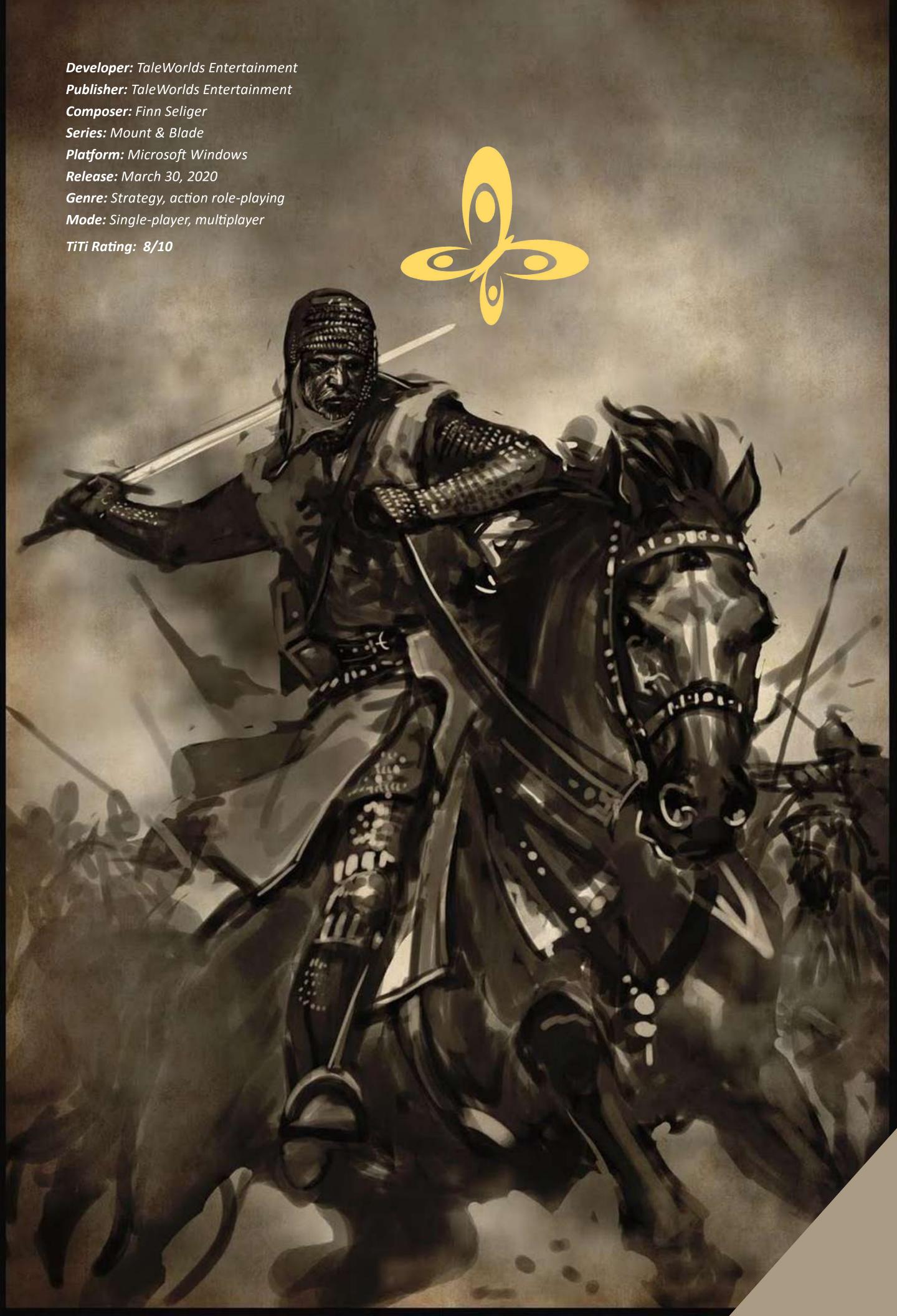
Sieges in Bannerlord are intended to be more strategic than they were in Warband. The player may construct a variety of different siege engines and strategically position them before the battle begins in order to target certain sections of the enemy fortifications. On the overhead campaign map, the player can choose to bombard the walls, possibly creating breaches that can be used once the battle begins. To discourage prolonged bombardments on the battle map, only the merlons, gatehouses, and siege engines are destructible during the actual battle. The design of the defending castles and cities is intended to be biased in favor of the defenders; for example, murder holes are often located at key chokepoints, allowing the defenders to slaughter large numbers of the attackers before they can breach the gates.

Bannerlord features numerous improvements to the relationships between characters. The player is able to use a more advanced dialogue system to try to persuade non-player characters to do things that they want. While conversing with a character, the player needs to fill up a progress bar by successfully pushing their arguments; if the bar is filled, the character will give in to the player. If the character does not give in to charm alone, the player can employ the game's bartering system to try to bribe the character; this system is also used for regular transactions between the player and merchants. If the player repeatedly fails to persuade the character, a deal may become impossible and the relationship between them may be negatively affected. The persuasion system can also be used to court and marry characters. While Warband allowed characters to marry, the player may also have children with their spouse in Bannerlord. If the player character dies, one of their children can inherit their soldiers and fiefs and become the new player character.

Bannerlord, like Warband, has a multiplayer component that allows players to engage in combat with each other across a variety of maps and gamemodes. As in Warband, the multiplayer of Bannerlord is restricted to battles and is separate from the campaign, although the developers have expressed interest in adding multiplayer to the campaign through post-release downloadable content. Bannerlord utilizes a class system that allows players to choose what type of soldier they want to play as. Classes are divided into three categories: infantry, ranged, and cavalry. Each class has positive and negative elements that are influenced by the positive and negative elements of their faction in general. Players select classes using a point system, which replaces the money system of Warband.







Story

Setting

Mount & Blade II: Bannerlord takes place on the fictional continent of Calradia, 210 years before Mount & Blade: Warband, during the decline of the Calradic Empire and the formation of the predecessors of the factions that appear in Warband. The downfall of the Calradic Empire is analogous to the fall of the Roman Empire during the Migration Period and the formation of the Middle Eastern, North African, and European realms of the Early Middle Ages. The armour, clothes, weapons, and architecture of each faction are inspired by their real-world counterparts from 600 to 1100 A.D.

Factions

Bannerlord includes eight major factions or kingdoms, each composed of several clans and competing minor factions with their own goals. The Calradic Empire, based on Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, once owned a massive amount of Calradia, but has since been weakened by invasions from other peoples and the onset of a three-way civil war. The Northern Calradic faction believes that the senate should choose the emperor, the Southern Calradic faction believes that the widow of the most recent emperor should become the empress, and the Western Calradic faction believes that the military should choose the emperor. The Calradic factions all use a balance of heavy cavalry (including cataphracts), spear-men, and archers. The Vlandians are a feudal people that specialize in heavy cavalry; they are based on western European medieval kingdoms, particularly the Normans. The Sturgians, located in the northern forests, specialize in infantry and are primarily inspired by the Rus'. The Aserai of the southern desert are adept at both cavalry and infantry tactics and are based on the pre-Islamic Arabs. The Khuzaits, a nomadic people who inhabit the eastern steppe and specialize in mounted archery, are based upon the Pannonian Avars, Göktürks, Kipchaks, Khazars and Mongols. The Battanians inhabit the central woodlands of Calradia and are based on the Celts; they specialize in ambushes and guerilla warfare.

Development

In September 2012, TaleWorlds Entertainment announced that the game was in development and released a teaser trailer for it.

The game's graphics have been significantly improved from its predecessor, Mount & Blade: Warband, having better shading and higher detail models. The character animations are created utilizing motion capture technology and the facial animations were updated to improve upon the portrayal of emotions.

In March 2016, about 40 minutes of gameplay were shown at the PC Gamer Weekender event. In October of that year, TaleWorlds made a Banner-lord Steam page.

In June 2017, 13 minutes of gameplay were shown at E3 2017. That same year, TaleWorlds began releasing developer diaries on a weekly basis. These diaries give information about different aspects of the game. Previously, diaries had only been released a few times a year. At Gamescom 2018, TaleWorlds presented a playable demo of the game and released a new trailer.

In a developer diary in 2019, TaleWorlds confirmed that they intend to have a closed beta for Bannerlord at some point in the future. However, no information about when the beta might take place was given.

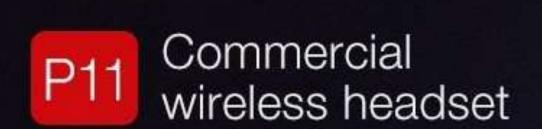
On August 20, 2019, TaleWorlds published a trailer announcing plans for the release of an early access version of the game in March 2020.











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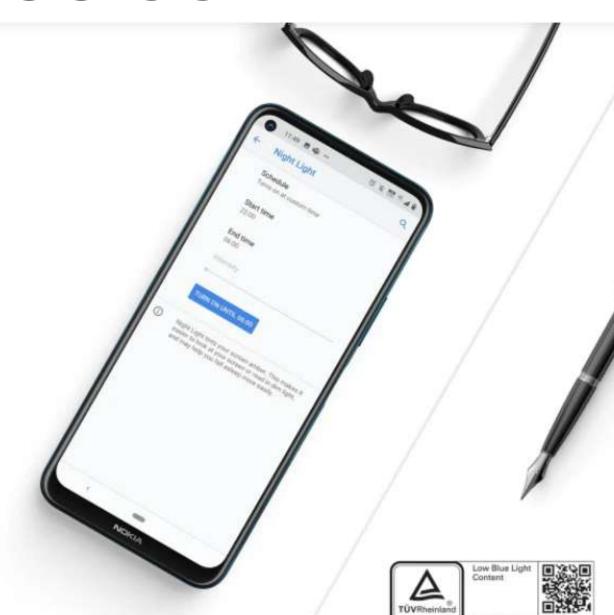


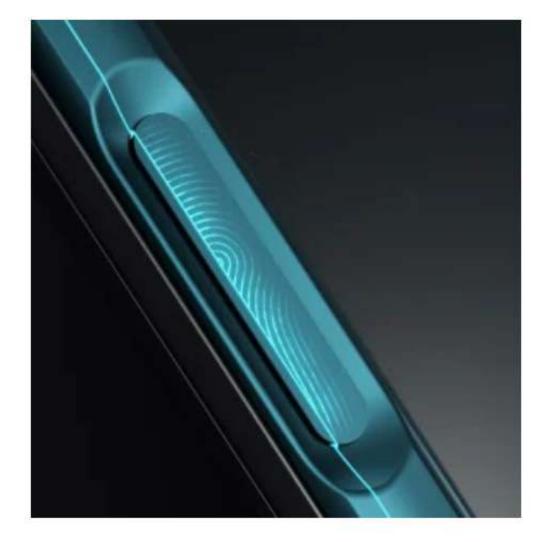
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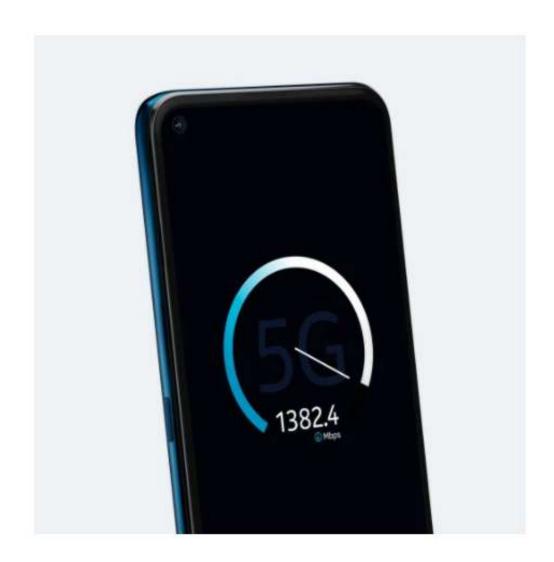
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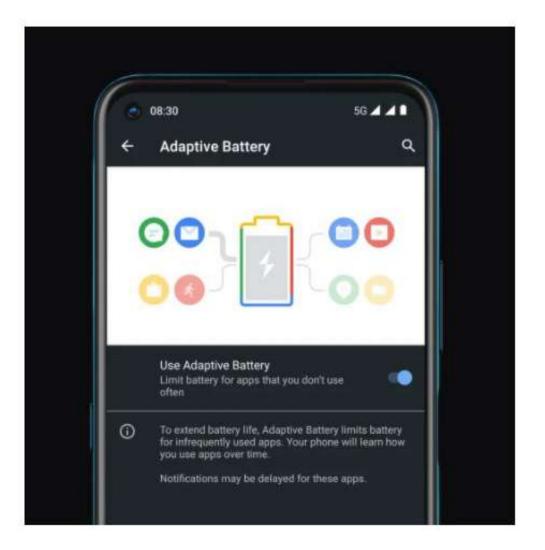




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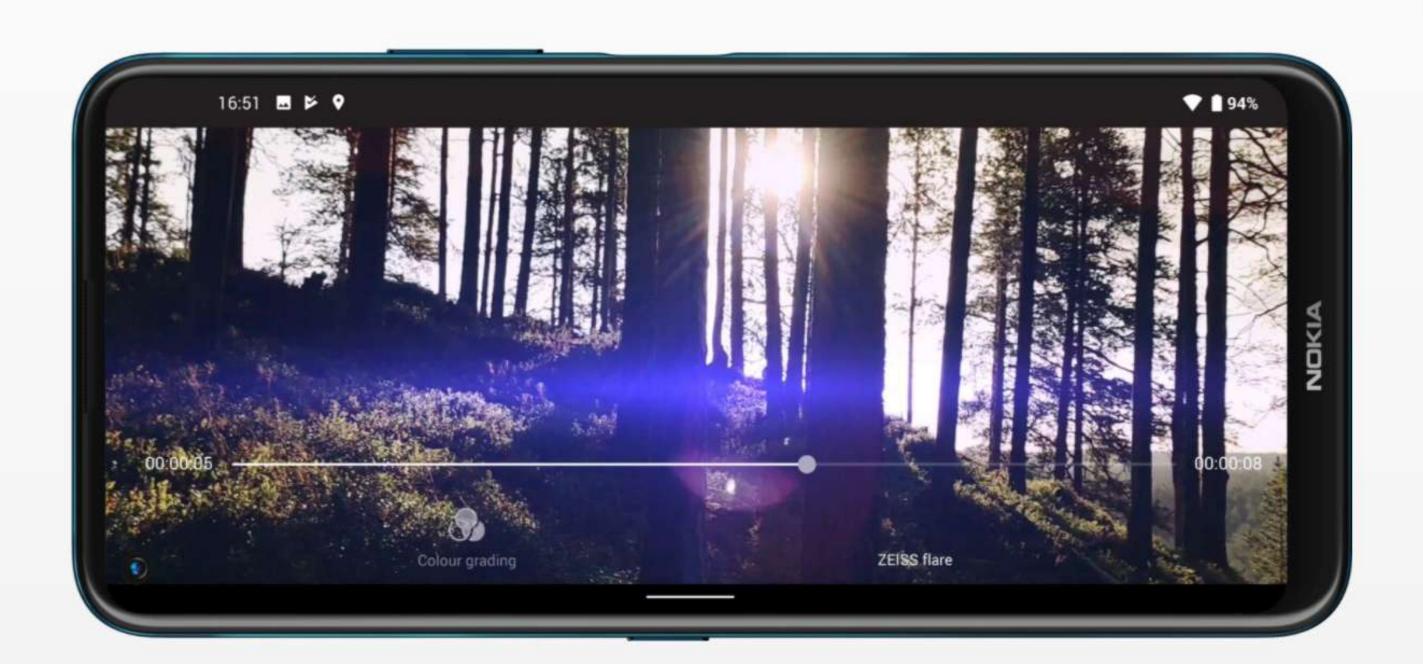
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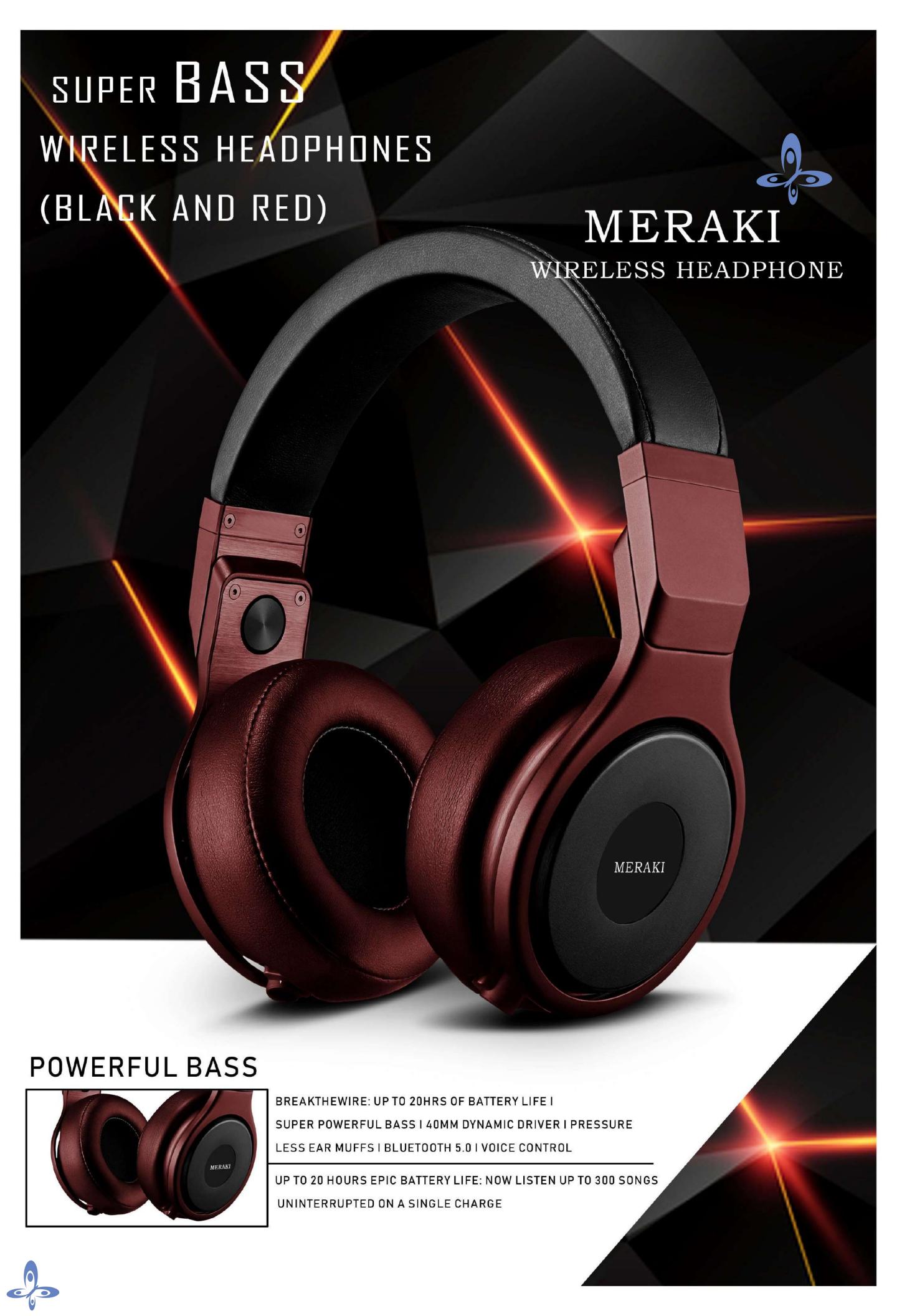
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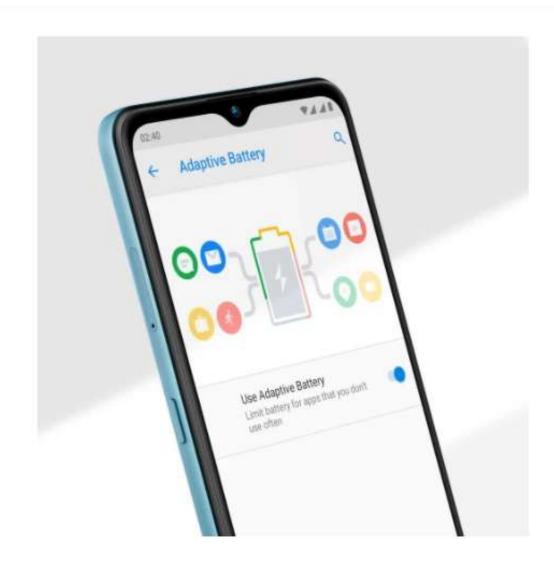


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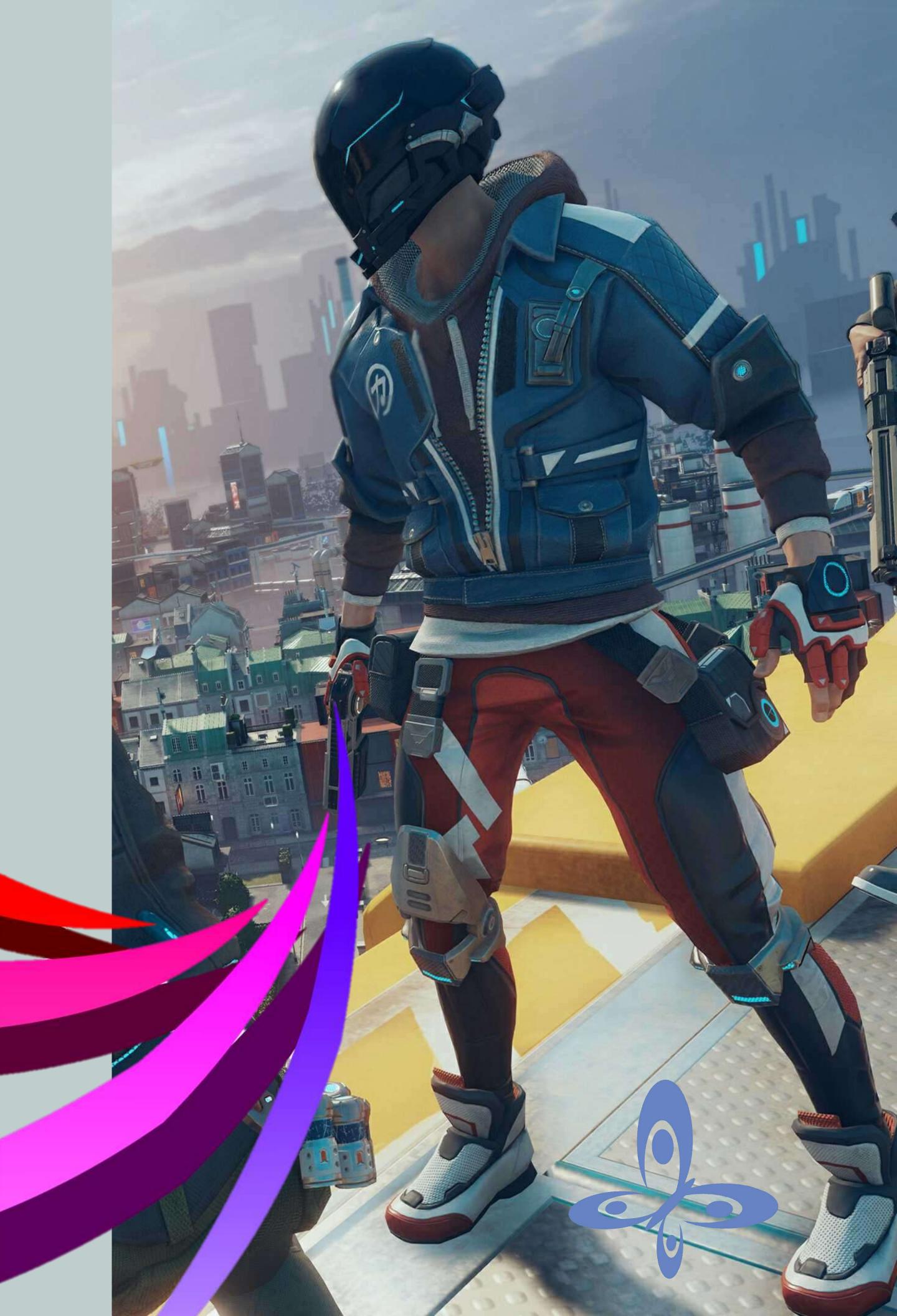
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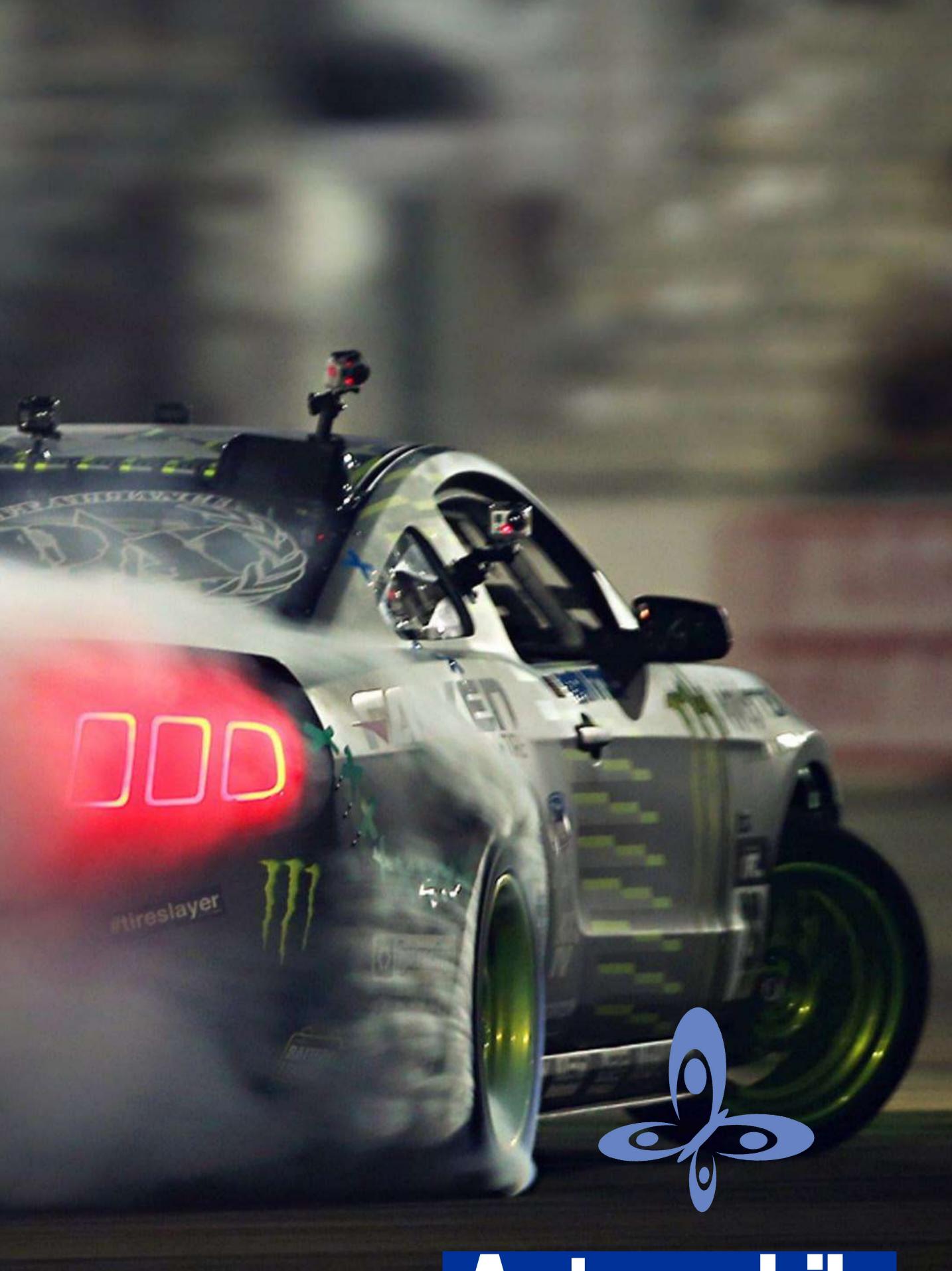




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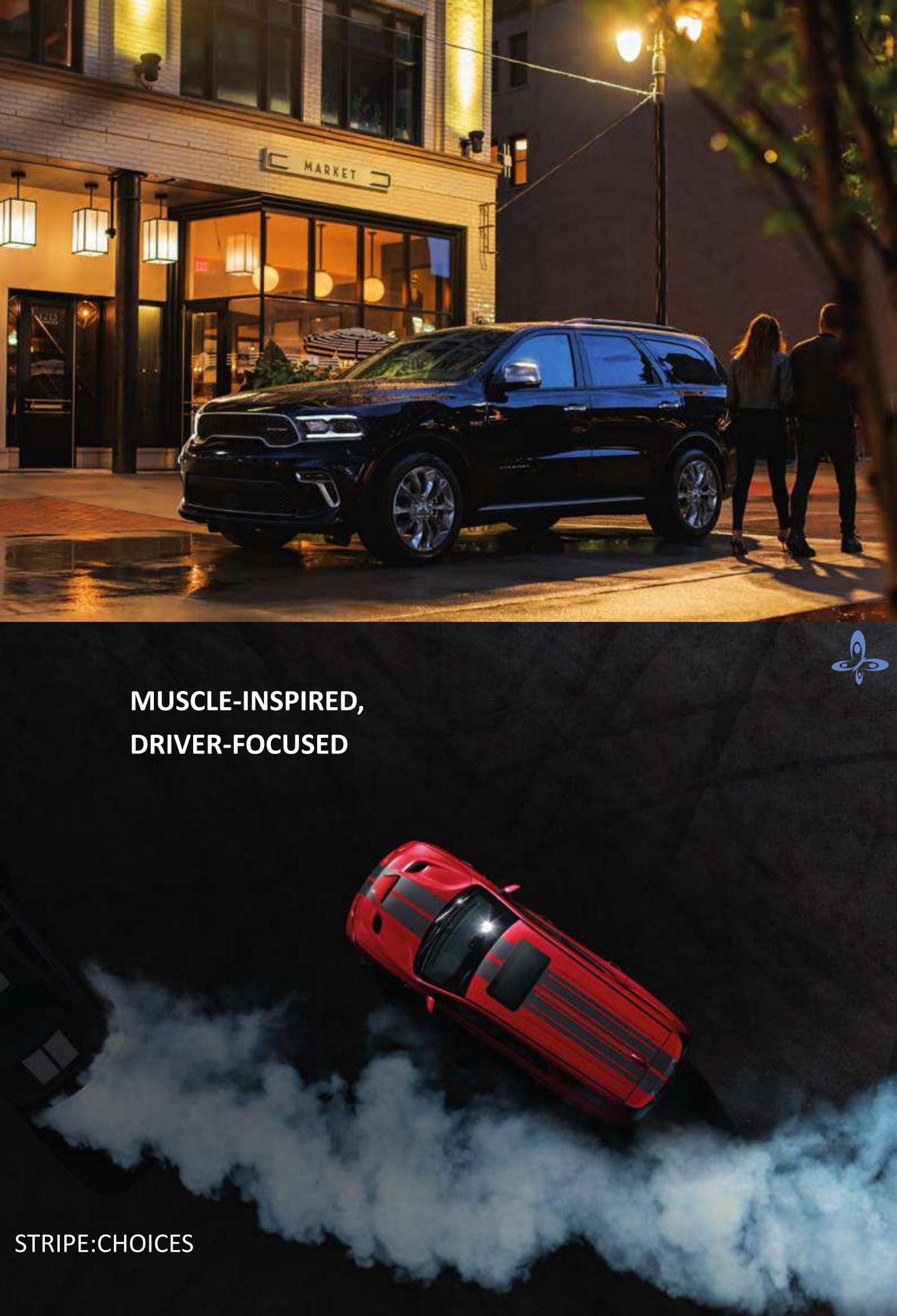








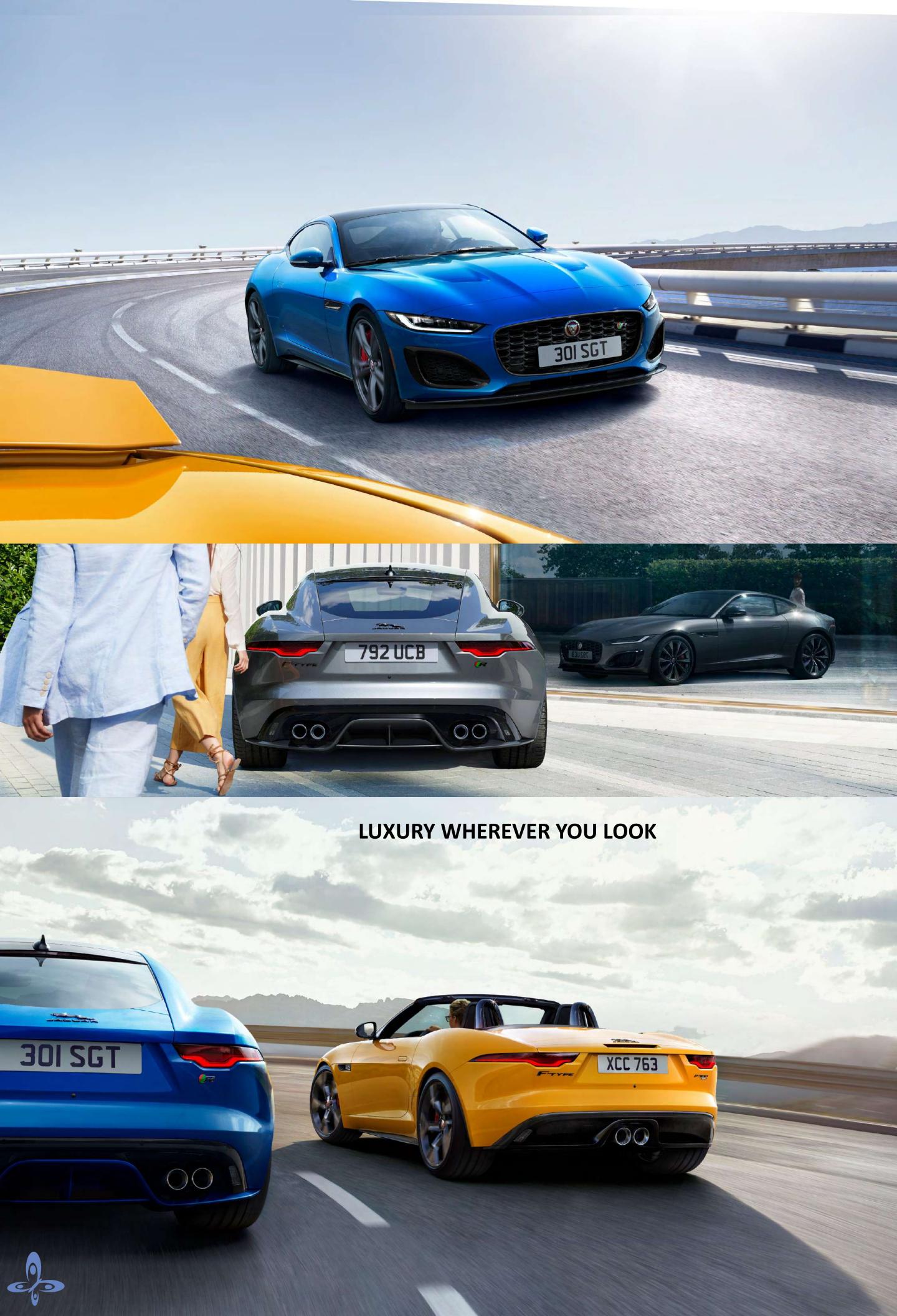














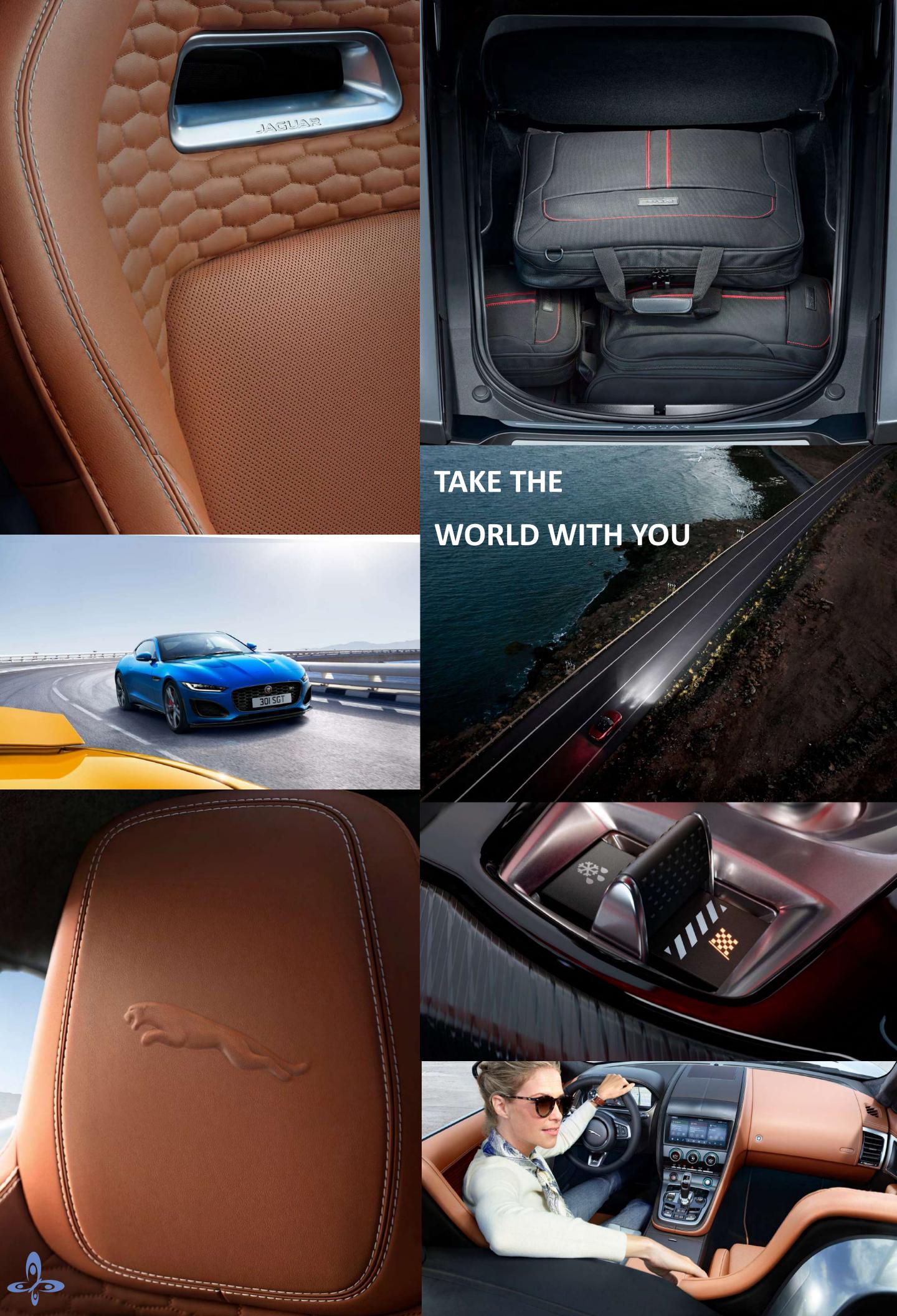


HEART, MEET MOUTH



























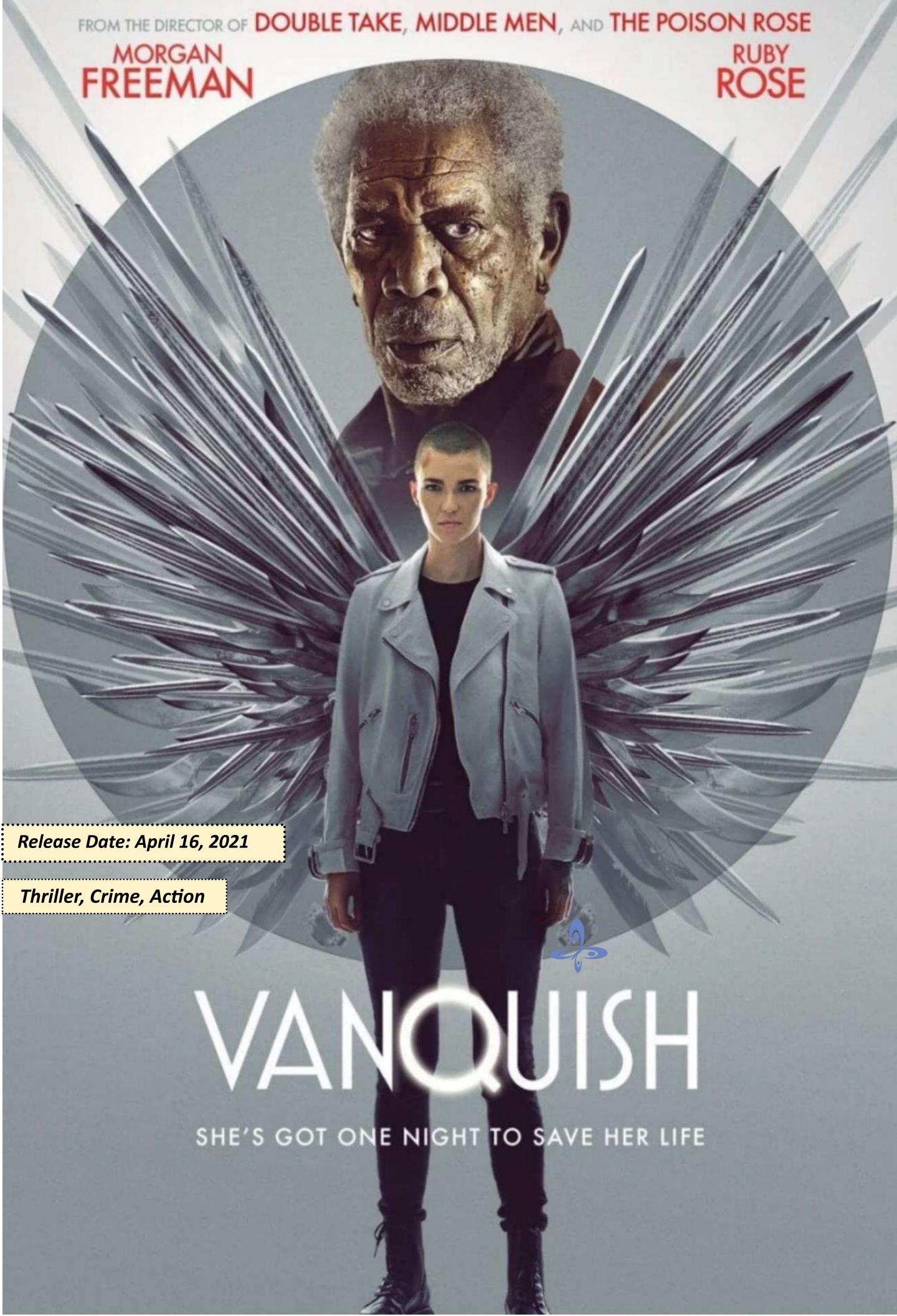






















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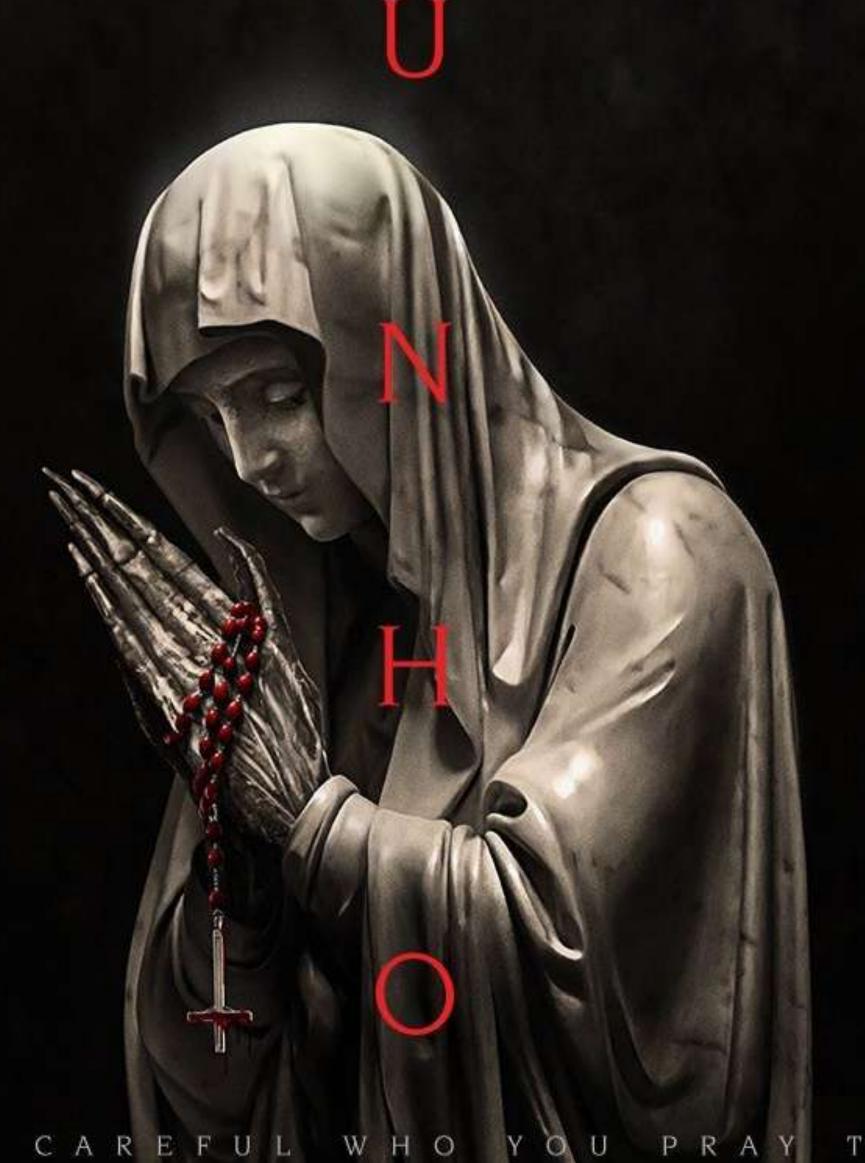
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