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The Last Guardian



The Last Guardian is an action-adventure game developed by SIE Japan Studio and GenDesign. and published by Sony Interactive Entertainment for the PlayStation 4. Players control a boy who befriends a giant half-bird, half-mammal creature, Trico. The Last Guardian was released worldwide in December 2016.

Team Ico began developing The Last Guardian in 2007. It was designed and directed by Fumito Ueda, and shares stylistic, thematic, and gameplay elements with his previous games, Ico (2001) and Shadow of the Colossus (2005). He employed the "design through subtraction" approach he had used for his previous games, removing elements that did not contribute to the core theme of the connection between the boy and Trico.

Sony announced The Last Guardian at E3 2009 with a planned release in 2011 for the PlayStation 3. It suffered numerous delays; Ueda and other Team Ico members departed Sony, forming the studio GenDesign, and hardware difficulties moved the game to the PlayStation 4 in 2012, drawing speculation that the game would not see release. Ueda and GenDesign remained as creative consultants, with Ueda as director and Sony's Japan Studio handling technical development. The Last Guardian was reintroduced at E3 2015. Upon release, it received praise for its art direction, story, and depiction of Trico, though some criticized the gameplay.

Gameplay

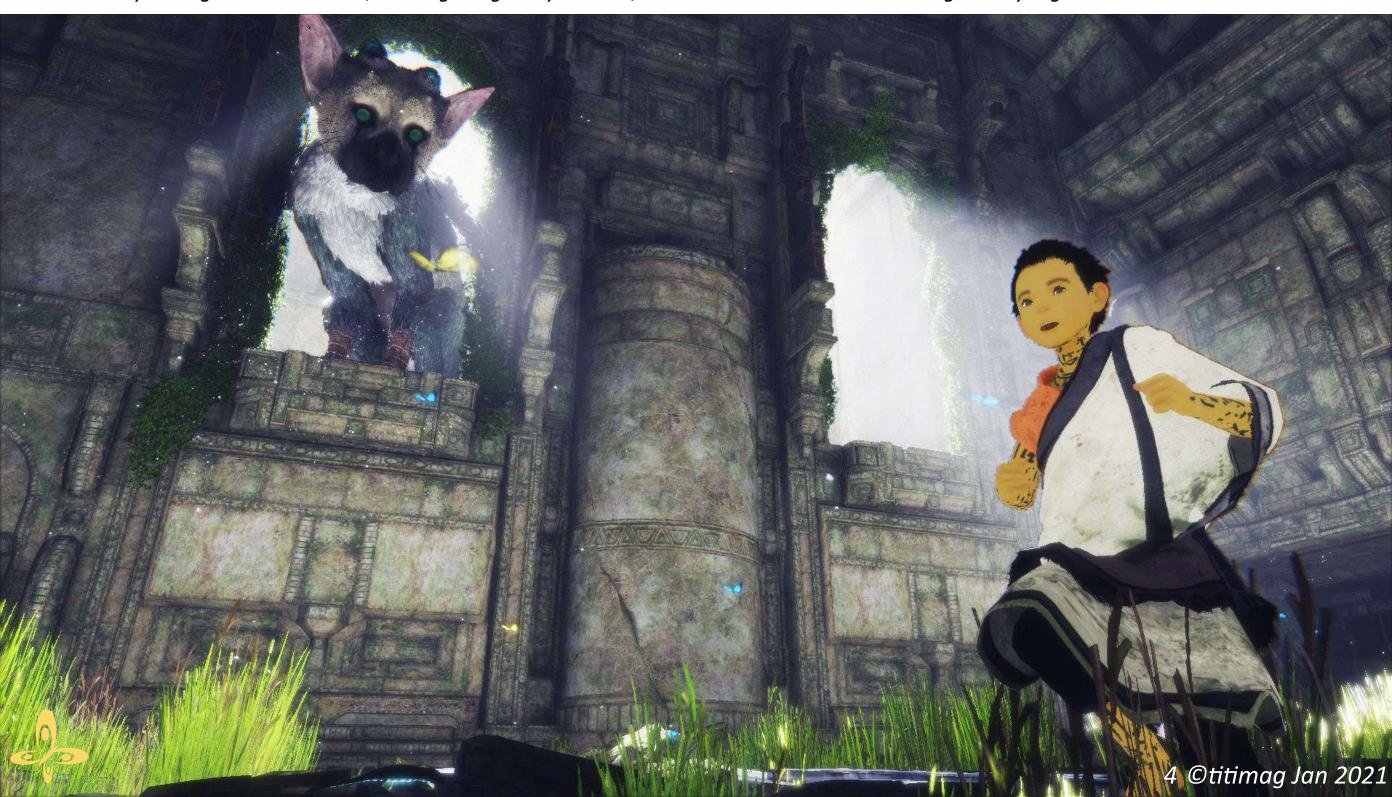
Like its predecessors Ico (2001) and Shadow of the Colossus (2005), The Last Guardian is a third-person game that combines action-adventure and puzzle elements. The player controls an unnamed boy who must cooperate with a half-bird-half-mammal creature, Trico, to solve puzzles and explore areas. The name of the creature, Trico (トリコ, Toriko), can be taken to mean "prisoner" (虜, toriko), "baby bird" (鳥の子, tori no ko), or a portmanteau of "bird" (鳥, tori) and "cat" (猫, neko).

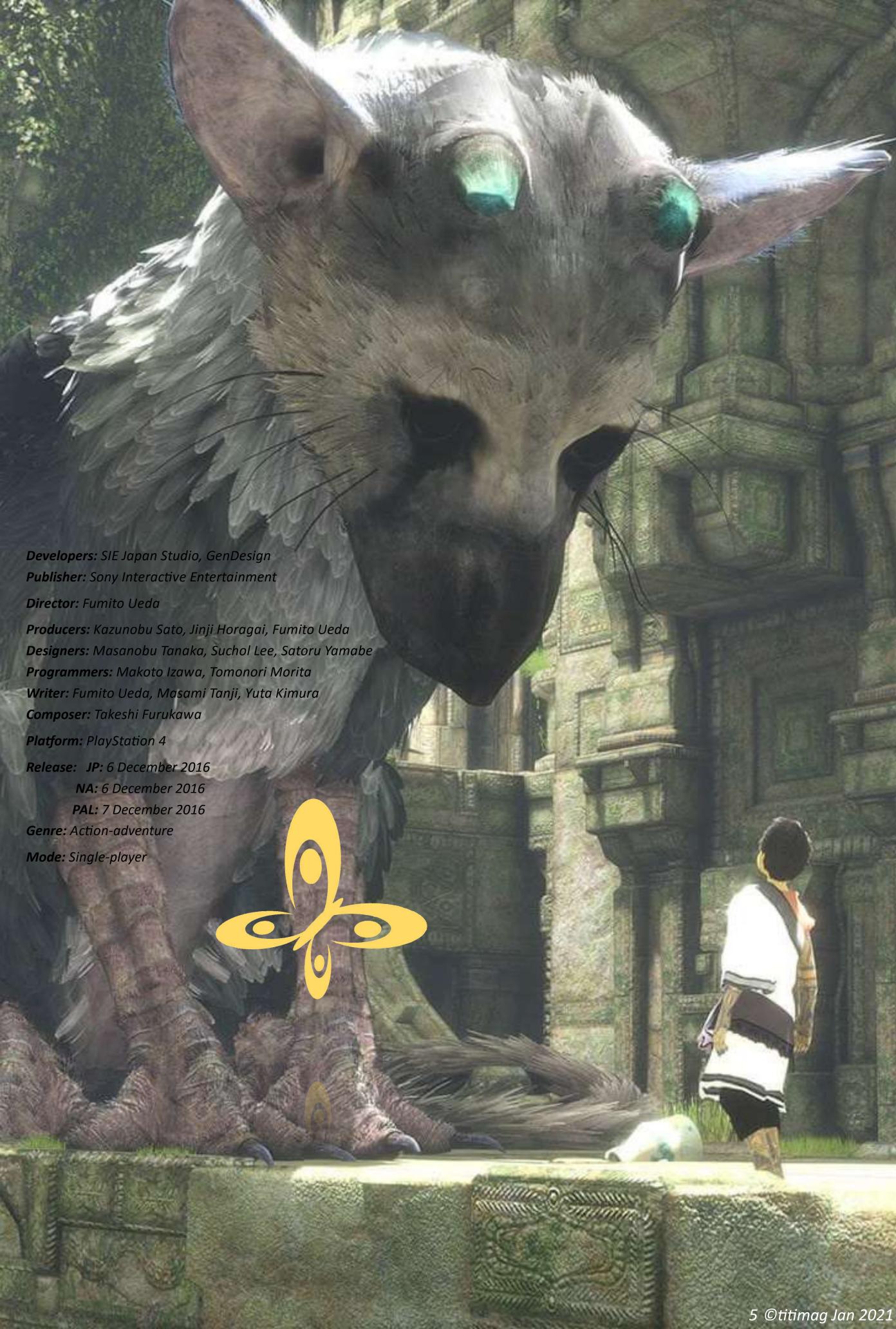
The boy can climb on structures, carry objects such as barrels, and operate mechanisms such as levers. Trico's size and agility allow it to reach areas that the boy cannot reach alone, and fight off guards who attempt to capture the boy. Conversely, certain obstacles, such as gates, or glass eyes that frighten Trico, prevent Trico from progressing, and must be removed by the boy. The boy must locate barrels to feed Trico when it is hungry, pet Trico to calm it after a battle, and remove spears thrown at Trico by enemies.

Though the player initially has little command over Trico, the boy learns to command Trico to leap onto ledges or head in a certain direction, among other actions. Although players are encouraged to train Trico to move in the right direction, new areas can be discovered by letting Trico wander independently. At various points, the boy wields a reflective mirror that summons lightning from Trico's tail, which can be used to break certain objects. The player is returned to the last checkpoint if the boy is captured by guards, or if he falls from too great a height. Multiple playthroughs unlock additional costumes based on previous Ueda games.

Plot

The player controls the boy, who must care for and work with the large creature, Trico, using its animal instincts to solve puzzles
The Last Guardian's story is framed as a flashback told by an older man (voiced by Hiroshi Shirokuma) recounting his experience as a boy.
The boy (voiced by Tatsuki Ishikawa) awakens in a ruined castle in a deep valley known as the Nest. He discovers an enormous, winged, cat-like creature called a Trico, chained and wounded. Though Trico is hostile, after the boy removes the spears from its body and feeds it, it begins to accept him. The boy unchains Trico and they explore the area, discovering a mirror-like shield that summons lightning like energy from Trico's tail. The pair make their way through the castle ruins, evading the ghostly soldiers, and Trico's broken horns and wings slowly regrow.





In a flashback, Trico flies to the boy's village and steals him from his dormitory. It flies back to the Nest, but is struck by lightning and chained up by the soldiers. In the present, Trico resuscitates the boy after a cave collapse. After fending off an attack from a second, armored creature, Trico and the boy enter a mysterious tower and discover a malevolent force, the "master of the valley", which manipulates creatures and soldiers. It summons several creatures of the same kind as Trico, which regurgitate stolen children into the tower and savage Trico, tearing off the end of its tail. The boy uses the mirror to summon energy from the severed tail segment and destroy the master of the valley, causing the creatures to plummet from the sky.

Wounded, Trico takes the boy, near-death, and flies to his village. When the terrified villagers attack him the boy instructs Trico to leave. Years later, the boy, now grown, discovers the shield and raises it to the sky, sending a beam of light to the Nest, where Trico resides.

Development

In his previous game, Shadow of the Colossus, director Fumito Ueda had intended to create an emotional interaction between Mono, the character that Wander wants to save, and the colossi that Wander must fight to save her. He was surprised and inspired to find players felt a stronger connection between Wander and his horse Agro. Ueda wanted to make the relationship between a human and a creature the central concept for his next game.

Ueda found that people were drawn to games with lifelike creatures, and felt The Last Guardian needed something similar to attract a broad audience. He wanted to create a virtual creature that behaved as realistically as possible, avoiding the unnatural behavior of other virtual animals. He based much of Trico's behavior on his childhood experiences growing up in a home full of animals. The final version of Trico is an amalgam of several creatures; the design was "deliberately unbalanced because looking strange was important", according to Ueda. The team wanted to avoid making the animal cute, and instead focused on realistic-looking behavior with "animal-like expressions". Trico's ears react with a cat-like "twitch" if they touch ceilings or other tall features, using the game's mesh-based collision detection. The team added the ability to summon lightning from Trico's tail to have players understand Trico's "force and ferocity". Ueda described Trico as "adolescent", allowing the developers to add humor through its actions. The team used programmed key frame animations instead of more common motion capture techniques, allowing them to capture subtleties that would be difficult using live animal subjects.

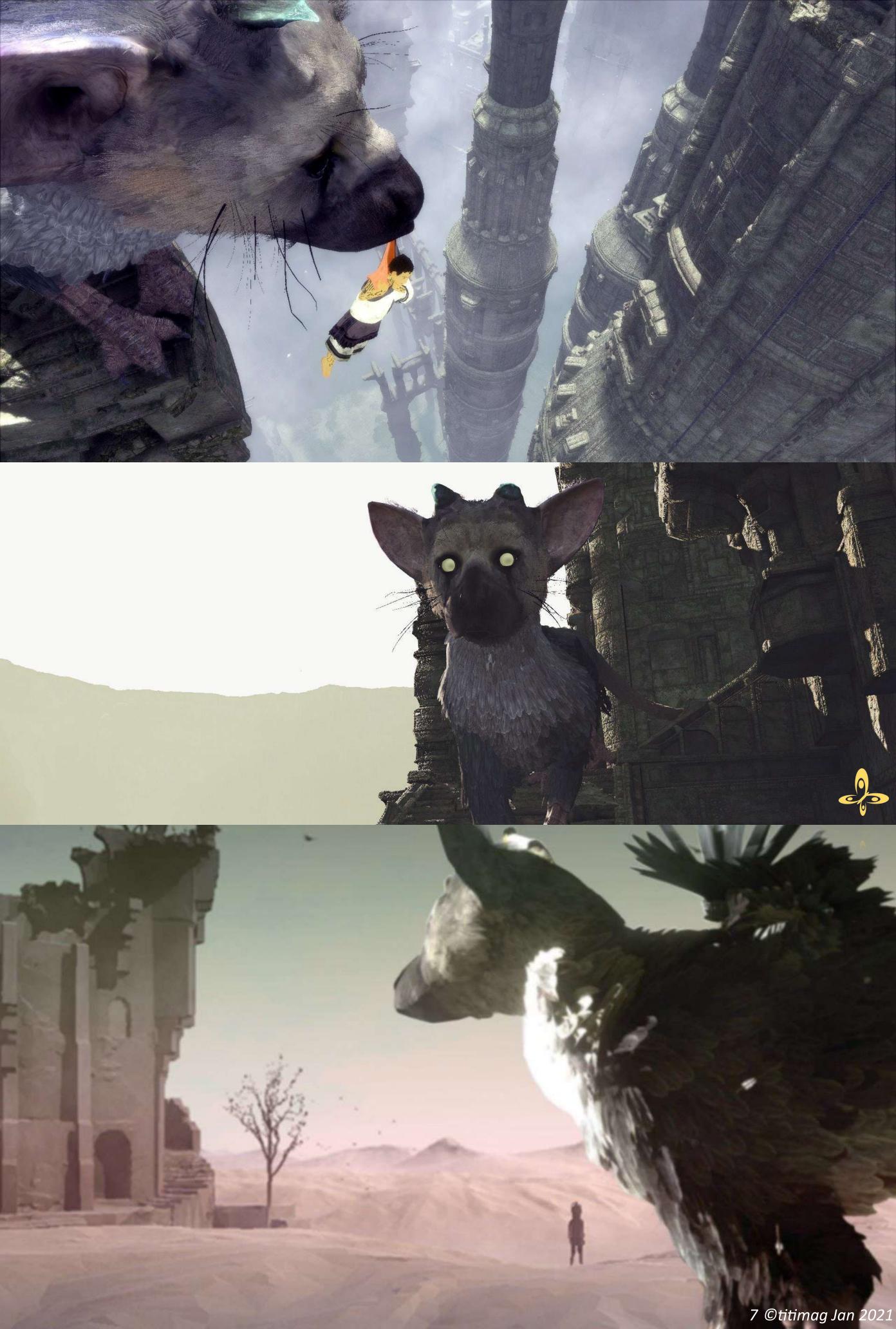
As Trico functions similarly to the colossi the player climbs in Shadow of the Colossus, journalists have described The Last Guardian as a combination of Ico and Shadow of the Colossus; Ueda stated there was "a bit of each of those [games] in there". He described the relationship between the boy, Trico, and the guards as a game of rock-paper-scissors that changes throughout the game; at times, the boy needs Trico to protect him, while at others the situation is reversed. Though Ico and Shadow of the Colossus have a similar changing connection between pairs of characters, Ueda said there was more "dynamic range" in The Last Guardian.

The Last Guardian is the first Team Ico game to use voice-over narration. As much of the game relies on non-verbal communication between the boy and Trico, Ueda felt the voice-over helped immerse the player in the mindset of the boy. It also provided a way to provide gameplay hints and other context to the player.

Whereas the team had designed the areas of previous games for the characters they had designed in advance, for The Last Guardian they made Trico as flexible as possible, allowing them to create levels and have Trico adapt to them. The size difference and interactions between the boy and Trico were informed by the limitations of the PlayStation; if the characters were of the same size, the team would have needed to determine the animation interactions for both, whereas Trico's size meant the boy's animations would not need to affect him much.

Although the boy is less detailed than Trico, he was animated via key frame animation. He places hands on nearby walls, and reaches to pet Trico without player interaction. Ueda felt these animations were necessary to help convince the player of the game world. The animation system uses layers of animation that mimic real-life physics, taking advantage of the greater processing power of the PlayStation 4. The team considered making the player character a girl, but felt it would not be realistic that a female character would have enough stamina to climb Trico.





To create the game's art and architecture, the team used the same "design through subtraction" method they had used to develop Ico and Shadow of the Colossus, removing elements they felt distracted from the core experience. Music is used sparingly to highlight key emotional moments, such as when Trico uses his tail to catch the boy as he falls from a collapsing platform. The game uses vertical space to emphasize the boy's small size.

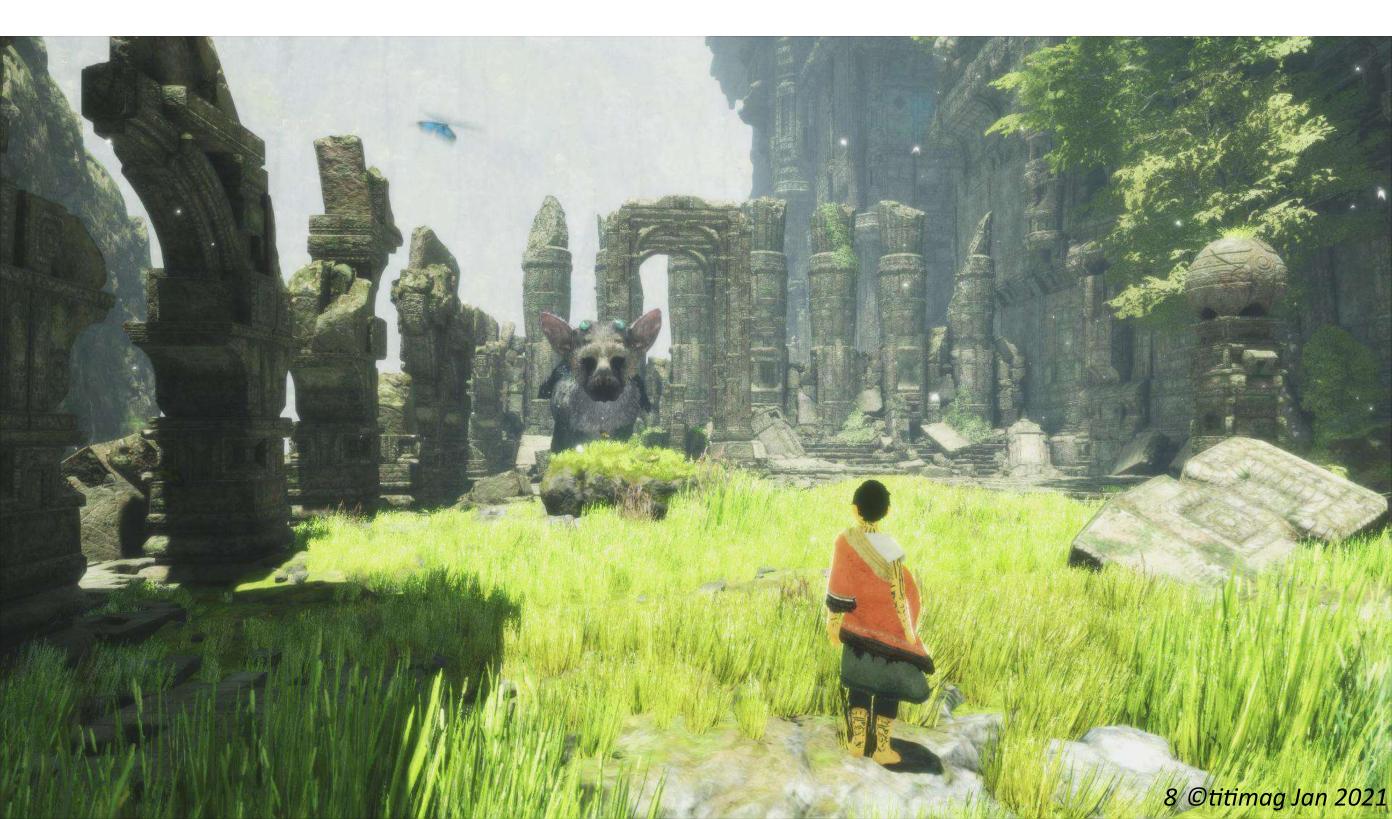
The Last Guardian game engine builds on the team's previous development of AI processing from Ico and transformative collisions from Shadow of the Colossus. It is the first Team Ico game to use a full physics engine, Havok. According to Ueda, the effect of wind was modeled separately for each of Trico's feathers. Yasuhide Kobayashi, vice president of Japan Studio, stated that the title The Last Guardian was chosen to appeal to the larger demographic markets in the United States and Europe for the PlayStation 3, hoping to avoid the cultural problems in title and artwork blamed for Ico's low sales in western countries.

In August 2019 interview Fumito Ueda mentioned that Trico they were creating on PlayStation 3 actually had more motion patterns than the PlayStation 4 version did, but they were unable to transfer everything due to transition time issues.

Technical development

With initial ideas for The Last Guardian envisioned by Ueda since around 2005 after completing Shadow of the Colossus, the game was in active development since 2007, a year after the release of the PlayStation 3. The working title was Project Trico, revealed to the public due to a leaked video posted at PlayStation Lifestyle in 2008 that showed the current "Target Render" of the game at that time. Ueda had long considered the development time for Ico and Shadow of the Colossus, and had anticipated being able "to create something good in a short period of time" with The Last Guardian at the onset. By 2009, the development team had completed enough of the game for it to be showcased during the E3 2009, using an improved render of the same set pieces previously seen in the Target Render and later provided a short vertical slice of the game to the press for the Game Developers Conference in early March 2011. Ueda had considered including this demo on the then-upcoming remastered The Ico & Shadow of the Colossus Collection, though it was ultimately not included.

Behind the scenes, the development of The Last Guardian was considered slow by Shuhei Yoshida, the president of Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide. Yoshida explained that the vision for The Last Guardian was based on a video prepared by Ueda to demonstrate the concepts and style of the game, a process Ueda had used for Ico, and Sony wanted to stay true to that vision. Team Ico, which is a small studio compared to other Sony studios in Japan or other Western developers, were struggling with achieving Ueda's vision for the game on the PlayStation 3 hardware. In 2015 Yoshida revealed that the previous 2009 trailer was "specced up", running at a much lower frame rate on the PlayStation 3 and sped up for the presentation. Around 2011, Sony brought in many of their core development teams such as Santa Monica Studios to review the code and try to improve the performance. In 2012, with Sony preparing to announce the PlayStation 4 and still recognizing the sluggish development of the PlayStation 3 version of the game, it was decided to change the target platform to the PlayStation 4 so that Ueda's concept could be fully realized. Ueda stated that this choice was primarily Sony's decision, speculating that the PlayStation 3 version of the game at this point would still have been sufficient to convey his concept. Following the target platform switch, Ueda and other members of Team Ico were not as involved with the process, as other teams worked to take the highly customized PlayStation 3 code to adapt it to the PlayStation 4; this included the help of PlayStation 4 lead architect Mark Cerny. With the reintroduction of the game at the E3 2015, Yoshida explained that the game engine is now fully running at speed on the PlayStation 4 and that the remainder of the development lies with the game designers to complete.



Development was hampered by Ueda's departure from Sony in December 2011. With Sony's decision to delay the release of the game early that year, Ueda and other Sony and Team Ico employees opted to leave Sony. Ueda stated in 2013 interview that his departure from Sony was due to feeling "a sense of crisis within myself about a lot of things" on news of the delay. Some of those that departed Sony went on to other projects. For example, executive producer Yoshifusa Hayama joined Bossa Studios to work on social/mobile games, while two Team Ico artists joined an indie startup studio Friends & Foes to develop their first game, Vane, which has been compared visually to The Last Guardian. Ueda and other former Team Ico members, including Jinji Horagai, the lead programmer from Ico and Shadow of the Colossus, created a new studio, GenDesign. In founding the studio, they were faced with a choice, according to Ueda: "Do we try to create something new, or do we keep going, providing support on The Last Guardian?" GenDesign opted to commit themselves to helping Sony complete The Last Guardian through contract and working alongside Sony's internal studio, Japan Studio. Under this arrangement, GenDesign developed the creative content for the game, such as character design and animation and level design, which was then put into place via Japan Studio, with Ueda maintaining oversight on the completed project.

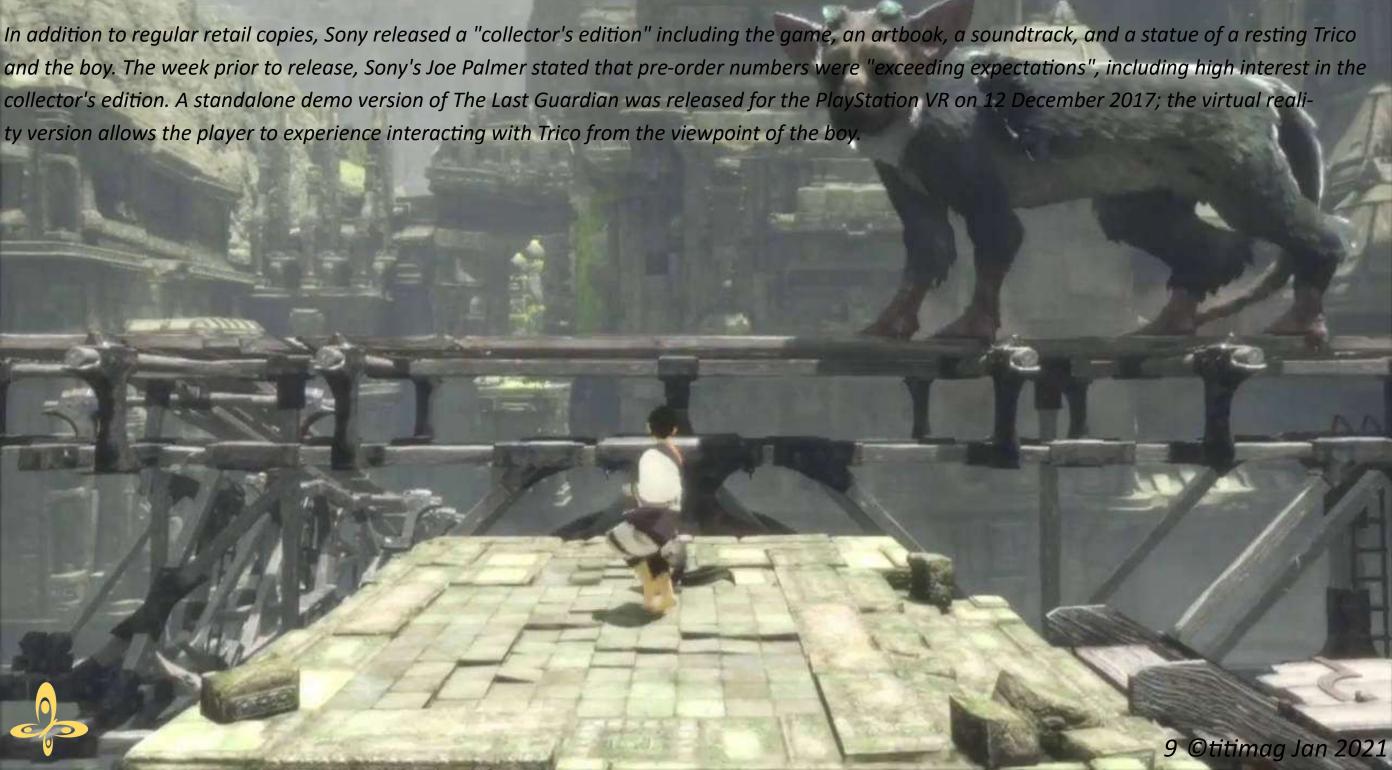
Ueda stated that the final game, as of June 2016, still represents the initial vision he had for The Last Guardian at its onset. The transition from the PlayStation 3 to 4 only improved how the game looked, but did not change how it played. Ueda stressed it was important during the extended development cycle to keep the question "what kind of game do I want to play?" at the forefront, and to remember that the game needed to be targeted at players experiencing the game for the first time rather than developers that had played it through over and over. Digital Foundry, in comparing the game from its initial Target Render from 2008, the 2009 trailer, the 2015 trailer, and the final game, found very few changes in the game's structure and nature, while observing several improvements and changes made to the rendering systems.

Release

Shawn Layden formally reintroduced The Last Guardian at the beginning of Sony's E3 2015 conference. Sony affirmed that that game was now slated for release on the PlayStation 4 with a 2016 release date. Sony also assured fans that Ueda still remained a main developer of the game despite his prior departure from Sony. According to Chris Plante of Polygon, the gameplay presented shows the same gameplay from previous demos, where the young boy and the large creature work together to solve various platforming puzzles. The presentation at E3 2015 was based on the milestone of the game being fully playable, affirmed by selected members of the press, though Yoshida stated they did not do a live gameplay demo as the artificial intelligence behavior of the animal creature could be sporadic and impact the demonstration. Ueda said that the fundamentals of the gameplay had not changed from the original PlayStation 3 version to the PlayStation 4, only that with the more-powerful PlayStation 4, they were able to put more detail into the characters and the environment.

Though the game demo was not playable at the 2015 Tokyo Game Show, part of Sony's display for the game including a full-screen version of Trico that would respond in real time to the actions of the attendees as captured by a PlayStation Move camera. Yoshida stated that they had not shown much additional footage of the game since the E3 2015 announcement as they believed that The Last Guardian is story-heavy and feared showing too much beyond that the game does exist and is playable.

The Last Guardian was announced for a 25 October 2016 release in Japan and North America during Sony's presentation at E3 2016 in June, and was available in a playable form to attendees. In an interview with Kotaku during E3 2016, Ueda commented that the game was fully complete, and the only work remaining was fine-tuning visuals and cut-scenes. A short delay was announced in September 2016, pushing the title back to early December 2016 release, as the developers needed more time to fix bugs that had come up during the final production of the game, according to Yoshida. By 21 October 2016, development of The Last Guardian concluded and the game was submitted for manufacturing. A patch enabled high dynamic range and added 4k resolution support for the PlayStation 4 Pro system.





Spider-Man: Miles Morales



Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales is a 2020 action-adventure game developed by Insomniac Games and published by Sony Interactive Entertain-ment for the PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5. Based on the Marvel Comics superhero Miles Morales, it is the second game in the Marvel's Spider-Man (2018). The game was announced at the PlayStation 5 reveal event in June 2020 and was released for the PlayStation 4 and as a launch title for the PlayStation 5 in November 2020. It received generally favorable reviews from critics.

Gameplay

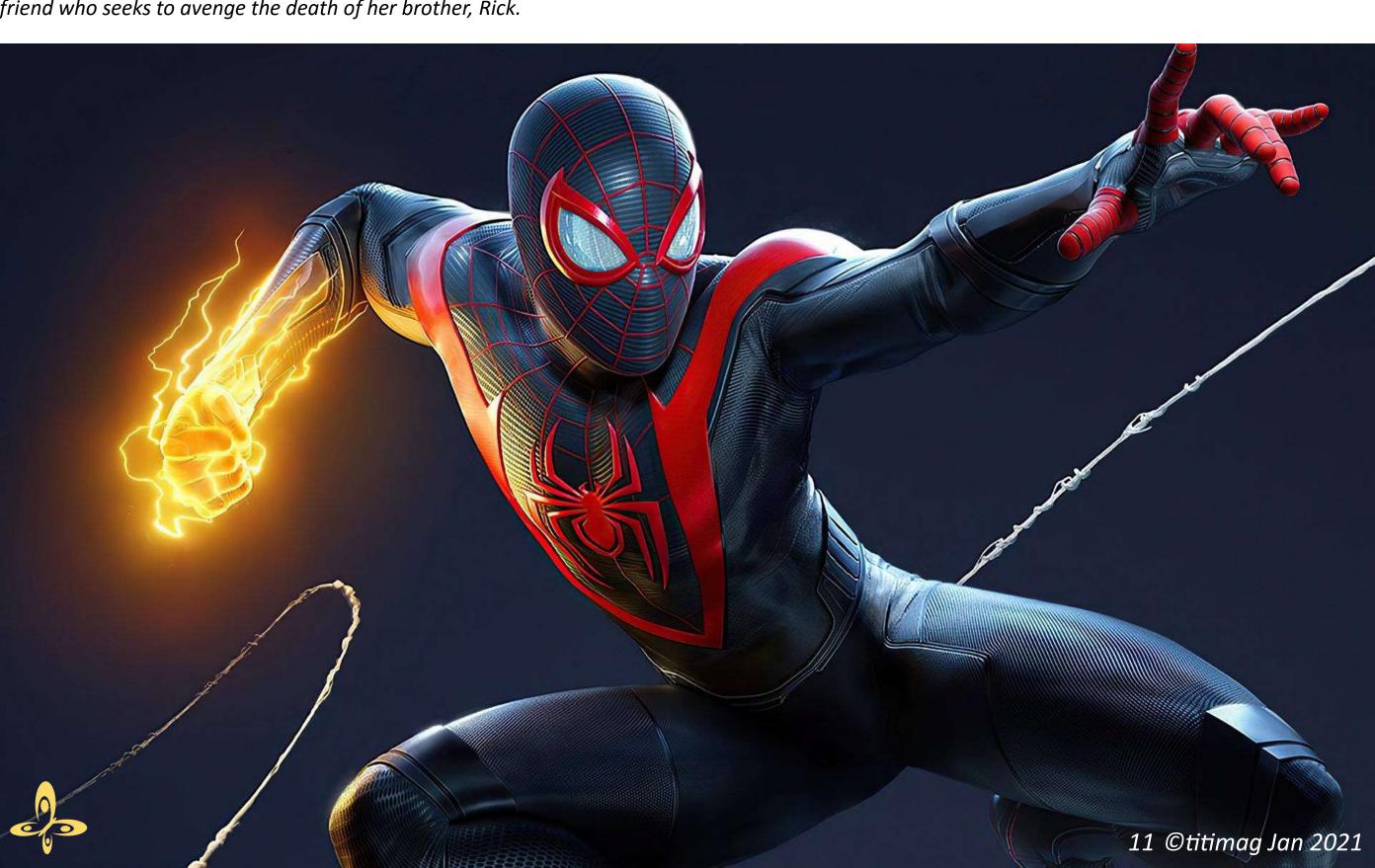
The game shares most of its environment and core gameplay with its predecessor. Miles Morales begins with the ability to use webs to swing, attack enemies and crawl and run on walls. At key points in the storyline, he gains additional abilities, including Venom Blast (the ability to incapacitate his enemies with bio-electricity, and charge or drain electronics), Camouflage (temporary invisibility), and Mega Venom Blast (the ability to attack multiple nearby enemies with his venom blast). Other moves, such as Venom Dash, Venom Jump, can be unlocked through a skill tree. Miles also has access to his own unique gadgets: Remote Mines that can attach to enemies or electrical panels, a device that can summon holographic fighters to help him in combat, and Gravity Wells that can trap multiple enemies and make them easier to hit.

Synopsis

Characters and setting

The narrative continues from where Marvel's Spider-Man and its downloadable content The City that Never Sleeps left off, during which Miles Morales was bitten by a genetically-enhanced spider and gained powers similar to Peter Parker's. A year after the first game's conclusion, Morales has trained under Parker, moved from Brooklyn to Harlem, and has fully integrated himself into the role of a Spider-Man, though he is still gaining experience and doubts whether he can live up to Parker's legacy. After Parker leaves to join his girlfriend, Daily Bugle reporter Mary Jane Watson, abroad as her photographer to cover the ongoing civil war in Symkaria, Miles is left as New York's sole webslinger. Now, he must balance supporting his mother Rio Morales' campaign for City Council and defending both his new home in Harlem and the rest of New York City from a gang war between the Roxxon Energy Corporation and a high-tech criminal army called the "Underground", led by the Tinkerer. Before he leaves, Parker tells Morales that he has to be like his late father Jefferson Davis and walk on the path to becoming a hero for New York.

On top of several returning characters from the previous game, such as the supervillain Rhino and anti-Spider-Man podcaster J. Jonah Jameson, there are several new supporting cast members. This includes Ganke Lee, Miles' best friend from Brooklyn Visions Academy and his tech support as Spider-Man; Aaron Davis, Miles' uncle who operates as a mercenary known as the Prowler; Danika Hart, a teenager who hosts a pro-Spider-Man podcast known as "The Danikast" and often clashes with Jameson; Simon Krieger, the head of Roxxon's R&D department; and Phin Mason, Miles' childhood friend who saeks to gyange the death of her brother. Pick







Plot

More than a year after the "Devil's Breath Crisis" and the Maggia's gang war, Miles Morales (Nadji Jeter) is now being mentored by Peter Parker (Yuri Lowenthal) and continues to help keep New York safe while honoring the memory of his late father Jefferson Davis (Russell Richardson). After they stop Rhino (Fred Tatasciore) from escaping police custody and leave him in the custody of Roxxon R&D Director Simon Krieger (Troy Baker), Peter entrusts Miles with protecting New York City for him while he helps his girlfriend Mary Jane Watson with her assignment in Symkaria.

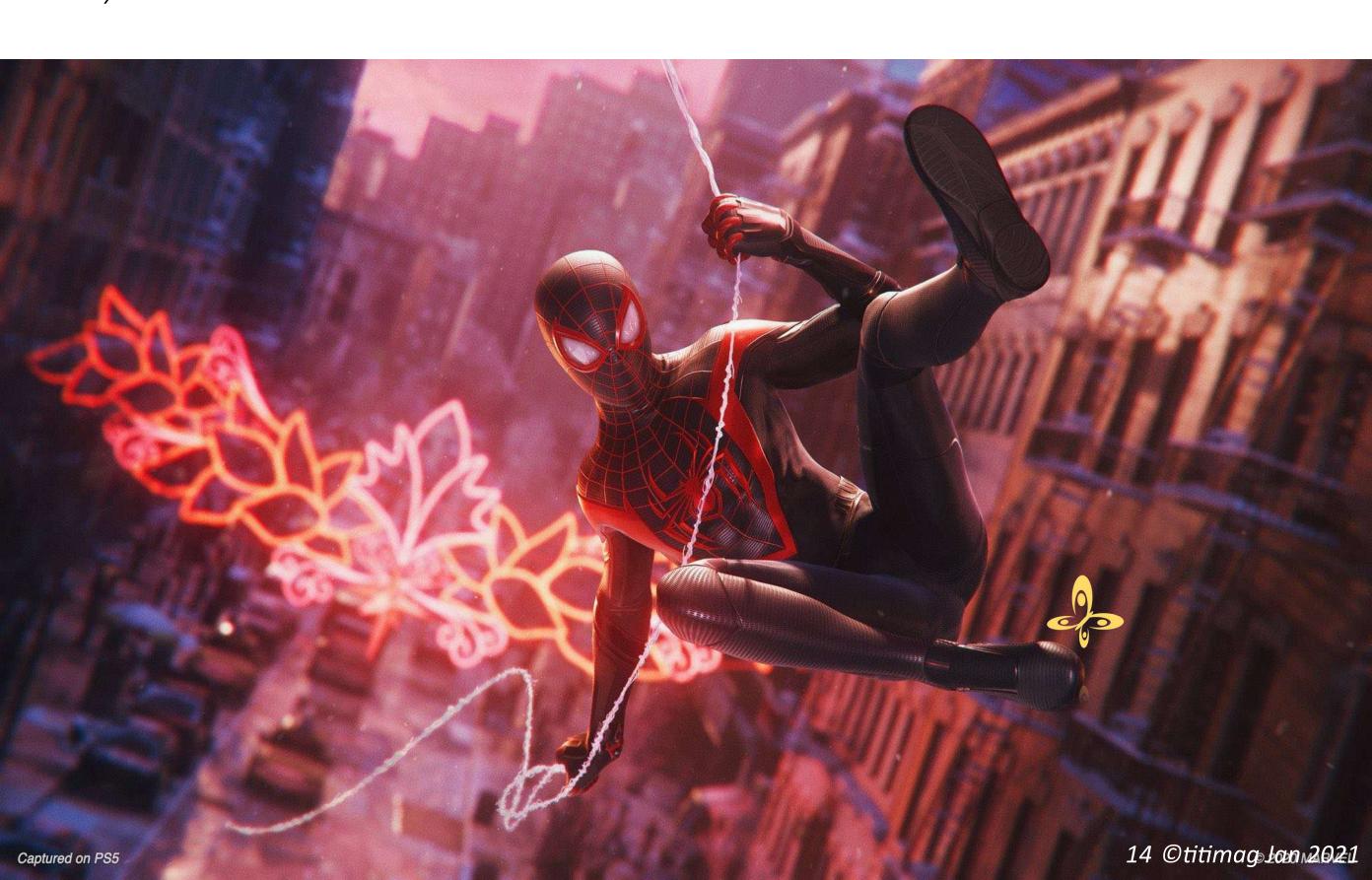
Miles returns home to celebrate Christmas with his mother Rio (Jacqueline Piñol) and best friends Ganke Lee (Griffin Puatu) and Phin Mason (Jasmin Savoy Brown). The next day, Miles attends one of Rio's campaign rallies, which is interrupted by the Underground, a high-tech terrorist group with a vendetta against Roxxon. During his first conflict with the two groups, Miles learns that Phin is secretly the "Tinkerer", the masked leader of the Underground who plans to avenge the death of her late brother Rick (Todd Williams), who died from radiation poisoning while working on Roxxon's experimental new power source, Nuform. He and Phin tried to sabotage the project, but Krieger intercepted them and had Rick killed. With assistance from his estranged and overprotective uncle Aaron Davis (Ike Amadi), who deduces his identity and later reveals himself as the Prowler, Miles learns that Phin plans to ruin the company by destroying the newly-built Roxxon Plaza with Nuform to highlight the energy source's disastrous side-effects, which Krieger had been covering up.

After betraying Phin's trust in order to gather information on the Underground, Miles is eventually forced to tell her that he is Spider-Man, souring their friendship. Rio also learns Miles's identity, but supports her son. Miles tries to reconcile with Phin, but Roxxon abducts them with the aid of an enhanced Rhino. Miles and Phin escape, but he learns that Aaron has been spying on him for Roxxon and that Krieger modified the plaza's Nuform reactor to destroy Harlem if Phin's plan succeeds. Rhino taunts Phin about Rick's death and she attempts to kill him. When Miles intervenes, Phin knocks him out. On his way to stop her, Miles is captured by Aaron, who locks him in an underground cell out of fear that he will get killed like his father. Miles fights his way out, telling his uncle he cannot turn his back on people when they need him.

As both the Underground and Roxxon fight on the streets and Phin executes her plan, an inspired Aaron helps Rio evacuate Harlem while Miles confronts and defeats Phin before the Nuform reactor goes critical. Miles attempts to absorb the Nuform energy to negate the blast, but is unable to contain it. Seeing that the energy is going to kill Miles unless he releases it, a remorseful Phin flies him to a safe distance above the city, sacrificing herself in the process. Miles plummets to the ground and his identity is revealed to a small number of Harlem citizens he helped as Spider-Man, though they promise to keep his secret.

Four weeks later, Roxxon has been dealt numerous lawsuits and Krieger has been arrested following Aaron turning himself in and testifying against them in exchange for a reduced prison sentence. Peter returns from Symkaria and praises Miles for his growth and heroism before they head off to fight crime together.

In a mid-credits scene, former mayor Norman Osborn (Mark Rolston) demands his terminally ill son Harry be released from stasis, despite warnings from a reluctant Dr. Curt Connors of Harry's unstable condition. In an after-credits scene, Miles leaves an award he won with Phin atop Trinity Church in her memory.





Development

Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales was developed by Insomniac Games and published by Sony Interactive Entertainment for the PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5. Sony vice president Simon Rutter told The Telegraph that the game is "an expansion and an enhancement to the previous game". However, Insomniac later called the project a standalone game, stating that it is "the next adventure in the Marvel's Spider-Man universe". It is smaller in size and scope than Spider-Man, and has been compared to Uncharted: The Lost Legacy, a game which served as a standalone expansion that was smaller in size and scope than a mainline Uncharted title.

The game features "a new story, with new set-pieces, fresh villains, and unique quests". For the PlayStation 5 version, the game takes advantage of the console's increased processing power, dedicated ray-tracing hardware, custom solid-state drive storage, Tempest Engine and DualSense controller to support features such as advanced haptic feedback, real-time ray tracing effects, 3D spatial audio and reduced loading times. The PlayStation 5 version of Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales supports high dynamic range and an optional "performance mode" that allows the game to run at 4K resolution and 60 frames per second.

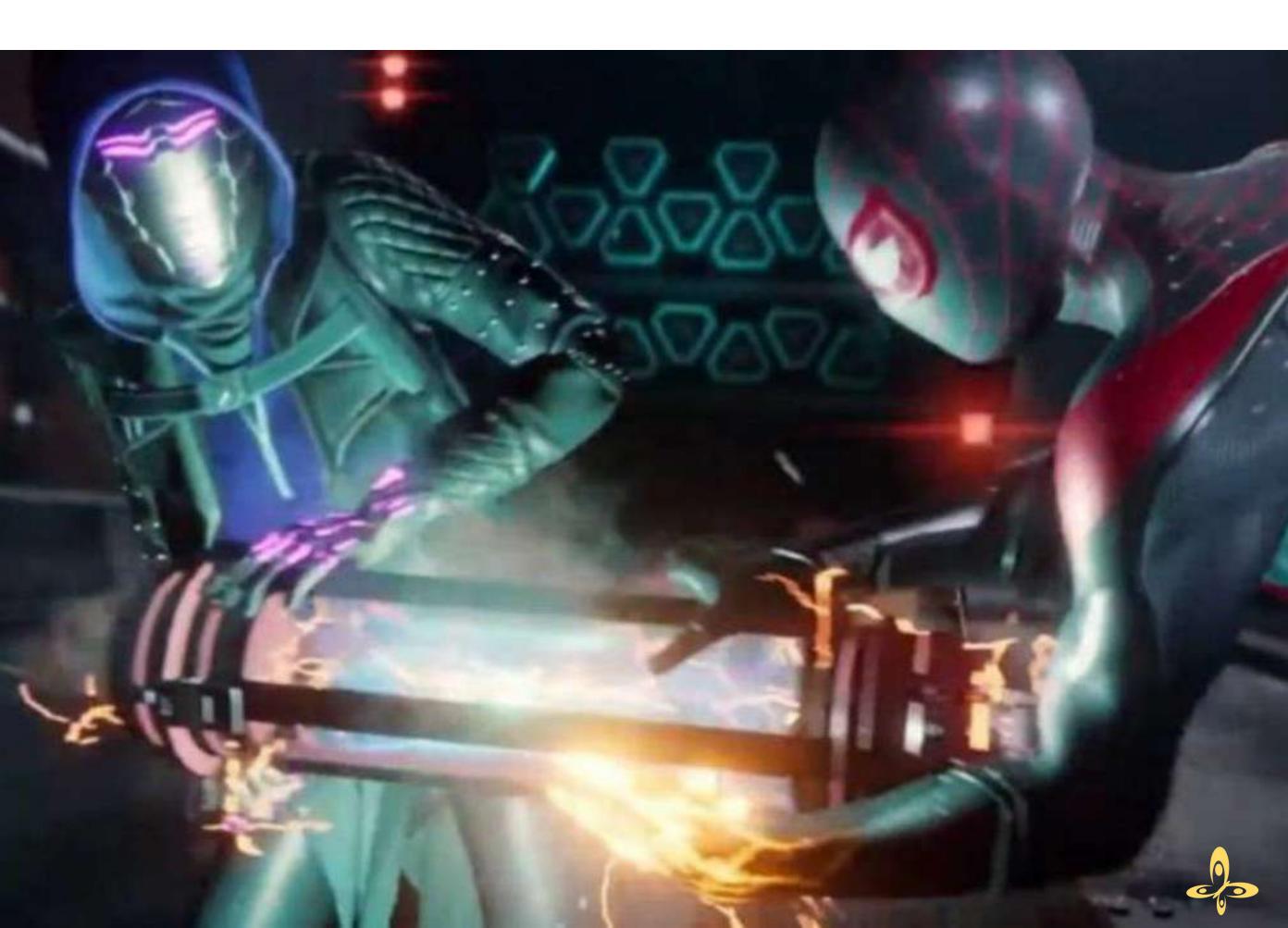
On October 9, 2020, Insomniac Games announced via Twitter that the game had "gone gold", meaning that physical copies of the game were ready to be produced, with any further development being patched into the game through software updates.

Music

John Paesano returned to compose the musical score for Spider-Man: Miles Morales after composing 2018's Spider-Man. Unlike the 2018 game's music which was more orchestral-based, Miles Morales' soundtrack mixes orchestral themes with hip hop music. Jaden Smith created and composed the song "I'm Ready" for the game.

Release

The game was announced on June 11, 2020 at the PlayStation 5 reveal event as a launch title. It released worldwide on November 12, 2020 for PlayStation 4, with the PlayStation 5 version also releasing in North America and Oceania on that date; a week later, it released worldwide for the PlayStation 5. The game is available in numerous editions. The standard edition includes only the base game and is available for both consoles, with the PlayStation 4 version supporting a free upgrade to the PlayStation 5 version. The Ultimate Edition is available for the PlayStation 5, bundling together the base game and Spider-Man: Remastered. Launch variants of all editions were available in North America, and these variants feature instant access to the following; the T.R.A.C.K. suit and Miles' suit from the 2018 animated film Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, three extra skill points and a Gravity Well Gadget. International retailers delivered this content separately as a redeemable code. All of these bonus items are available throughout the course of the game to those who did not receive the pre-order bonuses.





Limbo



Limbo is a puzzle-platform video game developed by independent studio Playdead. The game was released in July 2010 on Xbox Live Arcade, and has since been ported to several other systems, including the PlayStation 3, Linux and Microsoft Windows. Limbo is a 2D side-scroller, incorporating a physics system that governs environmental objects and the player character. The player guides an unnamed boy through dangerous environments and traps as he searches for his sister. The developer built the game's puzzles expecting the player to fail before finding the correct solution. Playdead called the style of play "trial and death", and used gruesome imagery for the boy's deaths to steer the player from unworkable solutions.

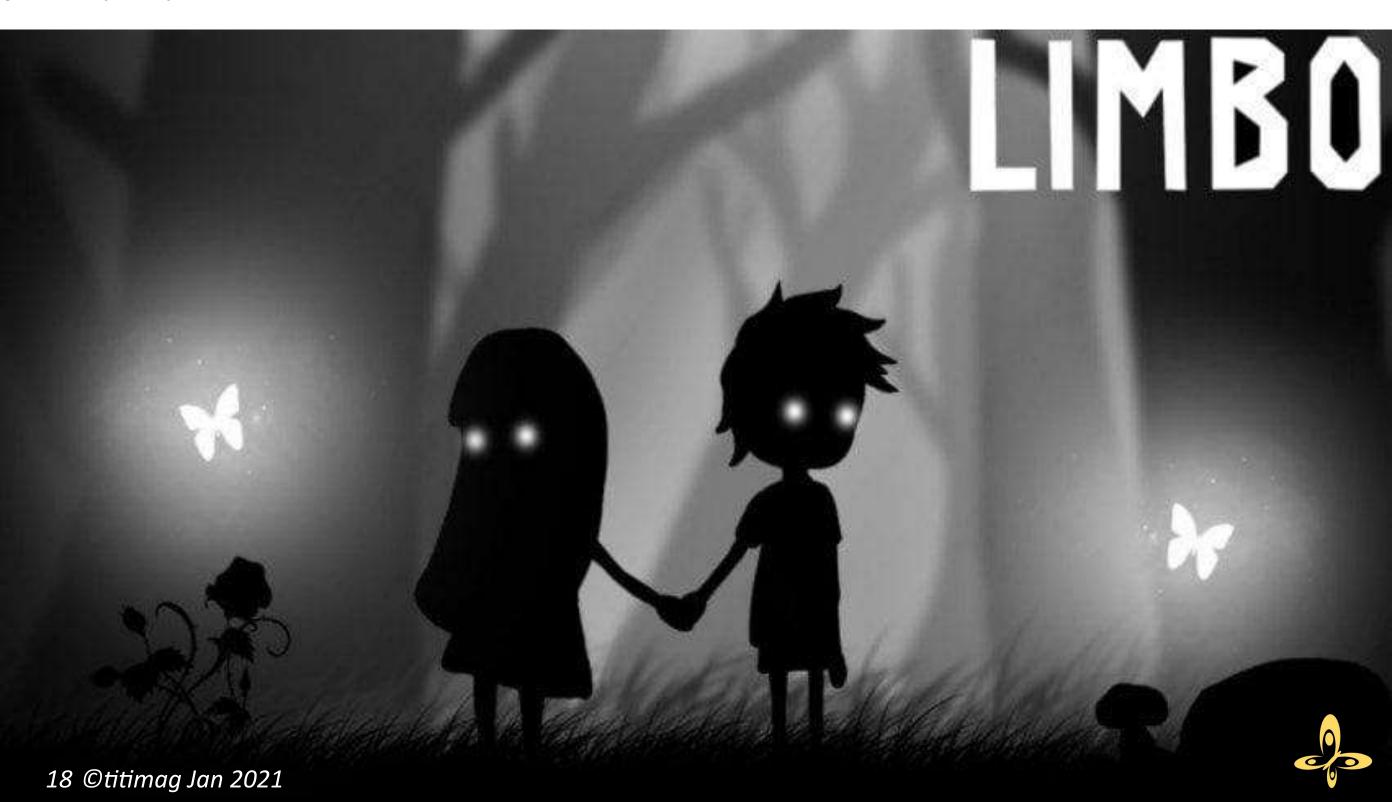
The game is presented in black-and-white tones, using lighting, film grain effects and minimal ambient sounds to create an eerie atmosphere often associated with the horror genre. Journalists praised the dark presentation, describing the work as comparable to film noir and German Expressionism. Based on its aesthetics, reviewers classified Limbo as an example of video games as an art form. Limbo received positive reviews, but its minimal story polarised critics; some critics found the open-ended work to have deeper meaning that tied well with the game's mechanics, while others believed the lack of significant plot and abrupt ending detracted from the game. A common point of criticism from reviewers was that the high cost of the game relative to its short length might deter players from purchasing the title, but some reviews proposed that Limbo had an ideal length. The game has been listed among the greatest games of all time.

The title was the third-highest selling game on the Xbox Live Arcade service in 2010, generating around \$7.5 million in revenue. The title won several awards from industry groups after its release, and was named as one of the top games for 2010 by several publications. Playdead's next title, Inside, was released in 2016, and revisited many of the same themes presented in Limbo.

Gameplay

The player controls the boy throughout the game. As is typical of most two-dimensional platform games, the boy can run left or right, jump, climb onto short ledges or up and down ladders and ropes, and push or pull objects. Limbo is presented through dark, greyscale graphics and with minimalist ambient sounds, creating an eerie, haunting environment. The dark visuals also serve to conceal numerous lethal surprises, including such environmental and physical hazards as deadly bear traps on the forest floor, or lethal monsters hiding in the shadows. Among the hazards are glowing worms, which attach themselves to the boy's head and force him to travel in only one direction until they are killed.

The game's second half features mechanical puzzles and traps using machinery, electromagnets, and gravity. Many of these traps are not apparent until triggered, often killing the boy. The player is able to restart at the last encountered checkpoint, with no limits placed on how many times this can occur. Some traps can be avoided and used later in the game; one bear trap is used to clamp onto an animal's carcass, hung from the end of a rope, tearing the carcass off the rope and allowing the branch and rope to retract upwards and allow the boy to climb onto a ledge otherwise out of reach. As the player will likely encounter numerous deaths before they solve each puzzle and complete the game, the developers call Limbo a "trial and death" game. Some deaths are animated with images of the boy's dismemberment or beheading, although an optional gore filter on some platforms blacks out the screen instead of showing these deaths. Game achievements (optional in-game goals) include finding hidden insect eggs and completing the game with five or fewer deaths.





Genre: Puzzle, platform **Mode:** Single-player

Playdeads

| M | B | O

Plot

The primary character in Limbo is a nameless boy, who awakens in the middle of a forest on the "edge of hell" (the game's title is taken from the Latin limbus, meaning "edge"), where he encounters a giant spider who tries to kill him. After using a trap to cut off the sharp points on half of the spider's legs, it retreats further into the forest, and the boy is allowed to pass. However, he is later caught in webs and spun into a cocoon. After breaking free from the threads that attached him to the roof, he is forced to hop, and eventually gets them off. Later, while seeking his missing sister, he encounters only a few human characters who either attack him, run away, or are dead/dying. At one point during his journey, he encounters a female character, who he thinks might be his sister, but is prevented from reaching her. The forest eventually gives way to a crumbling city environment. On completion of the final puzzle, the boy is thrown through a pane of glass and back into the forest. After he wakes up and recovers from the pain and shock, he walks a short distance until he again encounters a girl, who, upon his approach, stands up, startled. At this point, the screen cuts to black, abruptly ending the game.

Development

According to Playdead co-founder Dino Patti and lead designer Jeppe Carlsen, Playdead's game director, Arnt Jensen, conceived

Limbo around 2004. At that time, as a concept artist at IO Interactive, Jensen became dissatisfied with the increasingly corporate nature of the company. He had sketched a "mood image" of a "secret place" to get ideas, and the result, similar to the backgrounds of the final game, inspired Jensen to expand on it.[6] Jensen initially tried on his own to program the game in Visual Basic around 2004, but found he needed more help and proceeded to create an art style trailer by 2006. He had only intended to use the trailer as a means to recruit a programmer to help him, but the video attracted substantial interest in the project from across the Internet, eventually leading him to meet with Patti, who was also dissatisfied with his job. Their collaboration led to the founding of Playdead. Although Patti helped in the first few months with programming, he realized that the project was much larger than the two of them could handle, and Patti developed the business around the game's expanded development.

Initial development was funded personally by Jensen and Patti along with Danish government grants, including funding from the Nordic Game Program, while large investors were sought later in the development cycle. Jensen and Patti did not want to commit to major publishers, preferring to retain full creative control in developing the title. Jensen originally planned to release Limbo as a free Microsoft Windows title, but by this point, Jensen and Patti decided to make the game a retail title.

Playdead chose to ignore outside advice from investors and critics during development, such as to add multiplayer play and adjustable difficulty levels, and to extend the game's length. According to Patti, Playdead felt these changes would break the integrity of Jensen's original vision. Patti also felt that the investors "tried to control the company with no usable knowledge or respect", citing that after Microsoft raised concerns about the death of the boy, "one of the investors suggested we make him appear older by giving him a moustache." Numerous iterations of the game took place during a 2 1/2-year development cycle, including changes Jensen had demanded to polish the title, some elements being added two months prior to the game's release. Patti stated that they "trashed 70%" of the content they had developed, due to it not fitting in well with the context of the game. The core development team size was about 8 developers, expanding to 16 at various stages with freelancers. Playdead developed the design tools for Limbo in Visual Studio; Patti commented they would likely seek third-party applications for their next project given the challenges in creating their own technology. Patti later revealed they had opted to use the Unity engine for their next project, citing the development of their custom engine for Limbo as a "double product, doing both engine and game", and that their Limbo engine is limited to monochromatic visuals.





Limbo was released on 21 July 2010 on the Xbox Live Arcade service, as the first title in the yearly "Summer of Arcade" promotion. Although the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) had listed entries for Limbo for the PlayStation 3 and Microsoft Windows platforms, Playdead confirmed that this was a mistake on ESRB's part, and that they had no plans for the game on these systems. Patti later clarified that they had planned on Windows and PlayStation 3 versions alongside the Xbox 360 version initially, but after reviewing their options, decided to go with Xbox 360 exclusivity, in part that "Microsoft provided us with an excellent opportunity, which included a lot of support for the title which in the end would mean a better visibility for Limbo". According to producer Mads Wibroe, part of their decision not to release for the Windows platform was to avoid issues with software piracy, something they could control on the Xbox 360. Patti stated that staying exclusive with the Xbox platform was an assurance that they would be able to recoup their investment in the game's development. Sony Computer Entertainment executive Pete Smith stated later that while they had tried to vie with Microsoft for exclusivity for Limbo, Playdead refused to relinquish its intellectual property to Sony as part of the deal.[29] Patti affirmed that Limbo would not be released for another console, but that their next game, already in development as of October 2010, may see wider release.

However, in June 2011, users found that a trailer for Limbo appeared on the Steam software service, which video game publications such as PC Gamer took as a preliminary sign that a Microsoft Windows version would be released. Similarly, a possible PlayStation 3 version was projected based on the title appearing on the Korea Media Rating Board in June 2011. On 30 June 2011, Playdead announced their ports of the game to the PlayStation 3 via the PlayStation Network, and to Microsoft Windows via Steam, later set for 19 July and 2 August 2011, respectively. Patti clarified that their change of mind from their earlier Xbox 360-exclusive approach was because "we want as many people to play our games as possible". The release was set for nearly a year after the original availability of the Xbox 360 version, after the expiration of the Xbox 360 exclusivity rights for the game. Both the PlayStation 3 and Windows versions of the game have additional secret content, according to Patti; it is unknown if this content will be added in a patch to the Xbox 360 version. Playdead has since published a Mac OS X version of the game through the Mac App Store in December 2011, fulfilling their promise to release the title before the end of 2011; though they had wanted to also release the Mac Steam version by then, this version was ultimately delayed to mid January 2012. A Linux version of the game, based on a Wine-encapsulated package prepared by CodeWeavers, premiered in the Humble Indie Bundle V charitable sales event in May 2012. A native port for Linux was later released on 19 June 2014, with porter Ryan C. Gordon bringing over the Wwise audio middleware that previously prevented a native port from being possible. The PlayStation Vita version of the game was developed by Playdead with assistance from the UK studio Double Eleven, and was released in June 2013. The Vita version does not use the handheld's touchpad features; Patti stated that they "didn't feel it would suit Limbo at all" and wanted to provide the "original experience" of the game to Vita players. The Vita version has Cross-play support with the PlayStation 3 version, allowing the user to buy the game once to play on either platform. The iOS version of the game was announced shortly before its release in July 2013, and was designed to optimize the game for use on the touchscreen devices.

In April 2011, an Xbox 360 retail distribution of Limbo alongside other indie games Trials HD and 'Splosion Man was released. Playdead began selling a "Special Edition" physical copy of Limbo for Microsoft Windows and Mac OS X, which included art cards, the game's soundtrack, and anaglyph stereoscopic glasses that work with a special version of the game to simulate three dimensions. The title was later ported to the Xbox One console and released in December 2014, with early adopters of the console getting the title for free; Microsoft's Phil Spencer called the title a "must have played" game that affected their decision to give the game to the majority of early adopters. The Xbox 360 version was added to the Xbox One backwards compatibility lists in November 2016. A PlayStation 4 version of the game was released in February 2015.

In September 2017, 505 Games published Limbo along with Playdead's following title, Inside, as dual-game retail package for Xbox One and PlayStation 4. A version of Limbo is scheduled to be released on the Nintendo Switch on June 28, 2018.





Story, art and music direction

From the game's inception, Jensen set out three goals for the final Limbo product. The first goal was to create a specific mood and art style. Jensen wanted to create an aesthetic for the game without resorting to highly detailed three-dimensional models, and instead directed the art towards a minimalistic style to allow the development to focus its attention on the gameplay. Jensen's second goal was to only require two additional controls—jumping and grabbing—outside of the normal left-and-right movement controls, to keep the game easy to play. Finally, the finished game was to present no tutorial text to the player, requiring players to learn the game's mechanics on their own. The game was purposely developed to avoid revealing details of its content; the only tagline the company provided was, "Uncertain of his sister's fate, a boy enters Limbo." This was chosen so that players could interpret the game's meaning for themselves.

Some aspects of Limbo bore out from Jensen's own past, such as the forest areas that were similar to forests around the farm where he grew up, and the spider coming from Jensen's arachnophobia. Jensen drew inspiration from film genres, including works of film noir, to set the art style of the game; the team's graphic artist, Morten Bramsen, is credited with recreating that art style. Much of the game's flow was storyboarded very early in development, such as the boy's encounters with spiders and mind-controlling worms, as well as the overall transition from a forest to a city, then to an abstract environment. As development progressed, some of the original ideas became too difficult for the small team to complete. The storyline also changed; originally, the spider sequences were to be present near the end of the game, but were later moved to the first part. In retrospect, Jensen was aware that the first half of the game contained more scripted events and encounters, while the second half of the game was lonelier and puzzle-heavy; Jensen attributed this to his lack of oversight during the latter stages of development. Jensen purposely left the game with an open ending though with a specific interpretation only he knew, though noted after the game's release that some players, posting in forum boards, had suggested resolutions that were "scary close" to his ideas.

Soundtrack

The game's audio was created by Martin Stig Andersen, a graduate from the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus. Andersen's specialisation was in acousmatic music, non-traditional music created from generated sounds that have no apparent visual source. He was drawn to work with Jensen on the game after seeing the initial trailer, having been drawn in by the expressions of the boy character; Andersen compared the early visuals to his acousmatic music: "you have something recognizable and realistic, but at the same time it's abstract". Andersen sought to create acousmatic music exclusively incorporating the sound effects of the game's environments. Two examples he pointed to was the use of electricity noises while in the presence of a ruined neon "HOTEL" sign, and silencing the wind sound as the spider approached the boy in the forest. Andersen avoided the use of easily recognizable sounds, distorting them when needed as to allow players to interpret the sounds' meanings for themselves. Andersen constructed most of the game's sounds through a number of "grains" instead of longer sound loops, allowing him to adjust the playback to give better feedback to the player without sounding repetitious; one example he cites was the use of separate sounds for the boy's toe and heel when they make contact with the ground, giving a more realistic sound for movement. Many reviews for the game stated that there was no music in Limbo, but Andersen countered that his sound arrangements helped to evoke emotions; the acousmatic music was intended to leave room for interpretation by the player in the same manner as the game's art and story. Andersen noted that this helps with immersion within the game by making no attempt to control the emotional tone; "if [the players are] scared it will probably make them more scared when there's no music to take them by the hand and tell them how to feel". Due to fans' requests, Playdead released the game's soundtrack on iTunes Store on 11 July 2011.

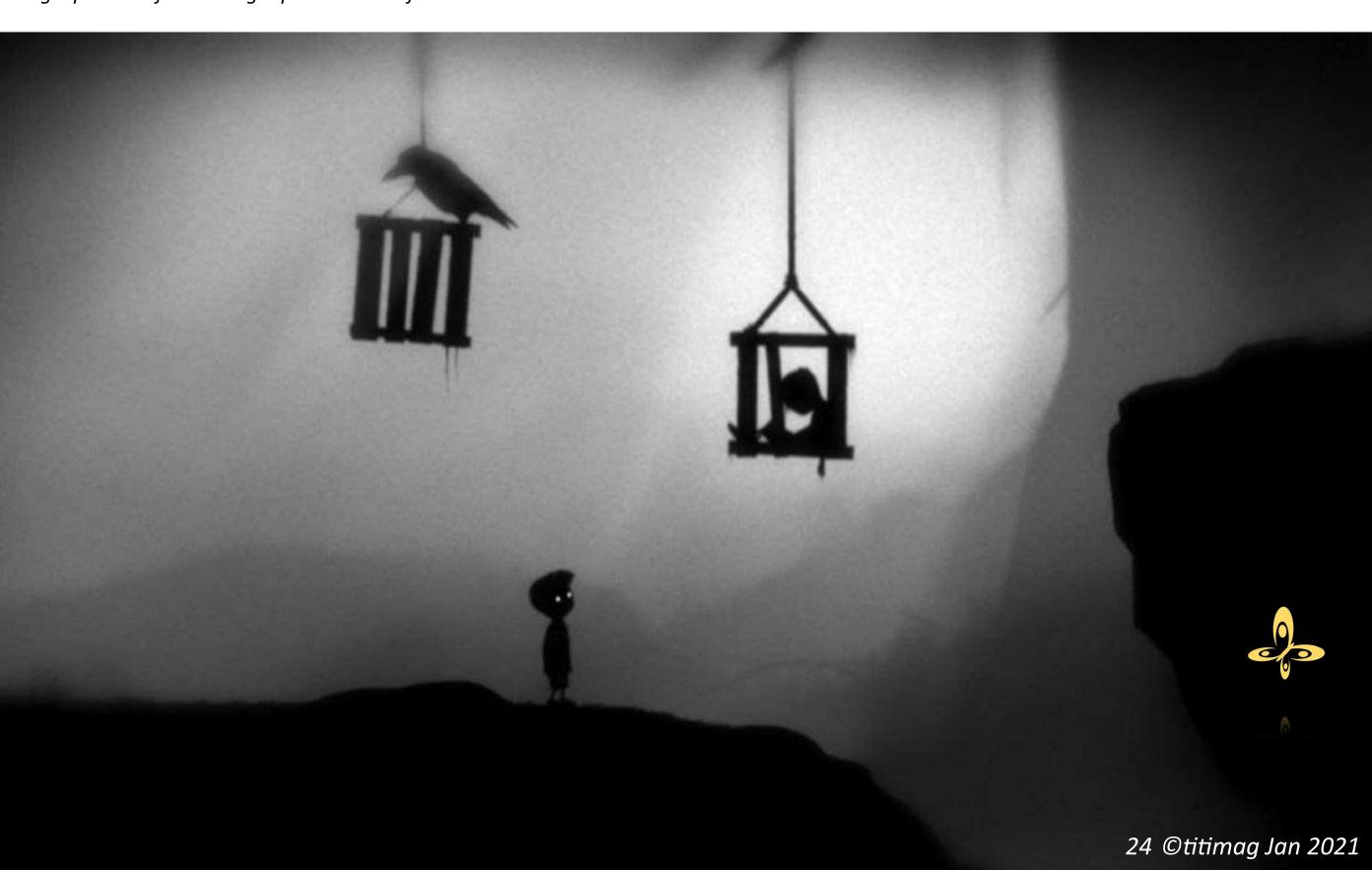


Gameplay direction

The gameplay was the second element created for the game, following the graphics created by Jensen. The gameplay was created and refined using rudimentary graphic elements to establish the types of puzzles they wanted to have, but aware of how these elements would be presented to the player in the released version. Limbo was designed to avoid the pitfalls of major titles, where the same gameplay mechanic is used repeatedly. Carlsen, initially brought aboard as a programmer for the custom game engine, became the lead designer after Playdead found him to be capable at creating puzzles. Carlsen stated that the puzzles within Limbo were designed to "[keep] you guessing all the way through". Jensen also wanted to make the puzzles feel like a natural part of the environment, and to avoid the feeling that the player was simply moving from puzzle to puzzle through the course of the game. Carlsen identified examples of puzzles from other games that he wanted to avoid. He wanted to avoid simple puzzles that gave the player little satisfaction in its solution, such as a puzzle in Uncharted 2: Among Thieves that involved simply moving a sun-lit mirror to specific points in a room. In contrast, Carlsen wanted to avoid making the puzzle so complex with many separate parts that the player would resort to trial-and-error and eventually come out with the solution without thinking about why the solution worked; Carlsen used an example of a puzzle from the 2008 Prince of Persia game that had seven different mechanics that he never bothered to figure out himself. Carlsen designed Limbo's puzzles to fall between these limits, demonstrating one puzzle that only has three elements: a switch panel, an electrified floor, and a chain; the goal—to use the chain to cross the electrified floor—is immediately obvious to the player, and then tasks the player to determine the right combination of moves and timing to complete it safely. They often had to strip away elements to make the puzzles more enjoyable and easier to figure out. The decision to provide little information to the player was an initial challenge in creating the game. From their initial pool of about 150 playtesters, several would have no idea of how to solve certain puzzles. To improve this, they created scenarios before troublesome spots that highlighted the appropriate actions; for example, when they found players did not think about pulling a boat onto shore to use as a platform to reach a higher ledge, they presented the player with a box-pulling puzzle earlier to demonstrate the pulling mechanics.

The team developed the game's puzzles by first assuming the player was "their own worst enemy", and made puzzles as devious as possible, but then scaled back their difficulty or added visual and audible aids as if the player was a friend. One example given by Carlsen is a puzzle involving a spider early in the game; the solution requires pushing a bear trap to snare the spider's legs in it. Early designs of this puzzle had the bear trap on the same screen as the spider, and Playdead found playtesters focused too much on the trap. The developers altered the puzzle to put the trap in a tree in an earlier off-screen section when facing the spider; the spider's actions would eventually cause this trap to drop to the ground and become a weapon against the spider. Carlsen stated that this arrangement created a situation where the player felt helpless when initially presented with the deadly spider, but then assisted the player through an audible cue when the trap had dropped, enabling the player to discover the solution.

One animator was dedicated full-time during three years of the game's development to work out the boy's animations, including animations that showed anticipation on the player's actions or events in the game, such as reaching out for a cart handle as the player moved the boy near it. Jensen felt this was important as the character was always at the center of the player's screen, and the most important element to watch. Playdead included gruesome death sequences to highlight incorrect solutions and discourage players from repeating their mistakes. While they expected players to run the boy into numerous deaths while trying solutions, Carlsen stated that their goal was to ensure death wasn't a penalty in the game, and made the death animations entertaining to keep the player interested. Carlsen noted several early puzzles were too complex for the game, but they would end up using a portion of these larger puzzles in the final release.





Inside



Inside (stylized as INSIDE) is a puzzle-platformer adventure game developed and published by Playdead in 2016 for PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Microsoft Windows. The game was released for iOS in December 2017 and Nintendo Switch in June 2018. A macOS version was released in June 2020. The player controls a boy in a dystopic world, solving environmental puzzles and avoiding death. It is the successor to Playdead's 2010 game Limbo, and features similar 2.5D game-play.

Playdead began work on Inside shortly after the release of Limbo, using Limbo's custom game engine. The team switched to Unity to simplify development, adding their own rendering routines, later released as open source, to create a signature look. The game was partially funded by a grant from the Danish Film Institute. Inside premiered at Microsoft's E3 2014 conference, with a planned release in 2015, but was delayed to 2016. Inside was released to critical acclaim. Critics noted it as an improvement over Limbo, praising its art direction, atmosphere and game-play, but criticizing aspects of its difficulty. The game was nominated for numerous accolades, including game of the year, and won several independent and technical achievements. Much like Limbo, Inside went on to be considered one of the greatest video games of all time.

Gameplay

Inside is a puzzle platformer. The player character is an unnamed boy who explores a surreal and mostly monochromatic environment presented as a 2.5D platform game. The game is dark, with color used sparingly to highlight both the player and certain parts of the environment. The game is also mostly silent, with the exception of occasional musical cues, the boy's vocals, dogs barking, equipment and sound effects. The player controls the boy who walks, runs, swims, climbs, and uses objects to overcome obstacles and progress in the game. The boy gains the ability to control bodies to complete certain puzzles, a mechanic that IGN's Marty Sliva compared to a similar mechanic in The Swapper. At various points in the game, the player may discover hidden rooms containing glowing orbs. If all the orbs are deactivated during a playthrough, the player unlocks the game's alternate ending.

The boy can die in various ways, such as being shot with a tranquilizer dart, mauled by dogs, ensnared by security machines, blown apart by shockwaves, or drowned. As in the predecessor game Limbo, these deaths are presented realistically and are often graphic. If the character dies, the game continues from the most recent checkpoint.

Plot

A boy slides down a rocky incline. While running through a forest, he encounters masked guards with flashlights, as well as vehicles with mounted spotlights, and fierce guard dogs. He escapes the guards, then crosses a road where a block has been set up with more vehicles and guards, to a farm where parasitic worms cause pigs to run rampant. The boy uses the farm animals and equipment to escape to a seemingly-abandoned city where lines of zombie-like people are moved through mind control. Beyond the city is a large factory of flooded rooms, a shock wave atrium, and a laboratory environment where scientists perform underwater experiments on bodies.







Developer: Playdead

Publisher: Playdead

Director: Arnt Jensen

Producers: Arnt Jensen, Dino Patti

Composers: Martin Stig Andersen, Søs Gunver Ryberg

Engine: Unity

Platforms: Xbox One, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4

Nintendo Switch, iOS, macOS

Release: Xbox One—June 29, 2016

Microsoft Windows—July 7, 2016

PlayStation 4—August 23, 2016

i**OS**—December 15, 2017

Nintendo Switch—June 28, 2018

macOS—June 23, 2020

Genre: Puzzle-platformer, adventure

Mode: Single-player



While traversing these areas, the boy uses a mind-control helmet to control lifeless grey bodies, who seem to be made to work for the organization controlling the vans and dogs. The boy eventually comes across an underwater siren-like creature that attaches a device to him, allowing him to breathe underwater.

Continuing through the office and laboratories, the boy sees scientists observing a large spherical chamber. The boy enters the chamber and discovers a large blob-like creature, the Huddle, made of humanoid limbs connected to four control rods. After disconnecting the rods, the boy is pulled into the Huddle.

The Huddle escapes confinement, crashing through offices, killing some of the scientists in its path. The scientists trap the Huddle in another tank, but the Huddle escapes again and breaks through a wooden wall. It rolls down a forest hill and comes to a stop at a grassy coastline bathed in light.

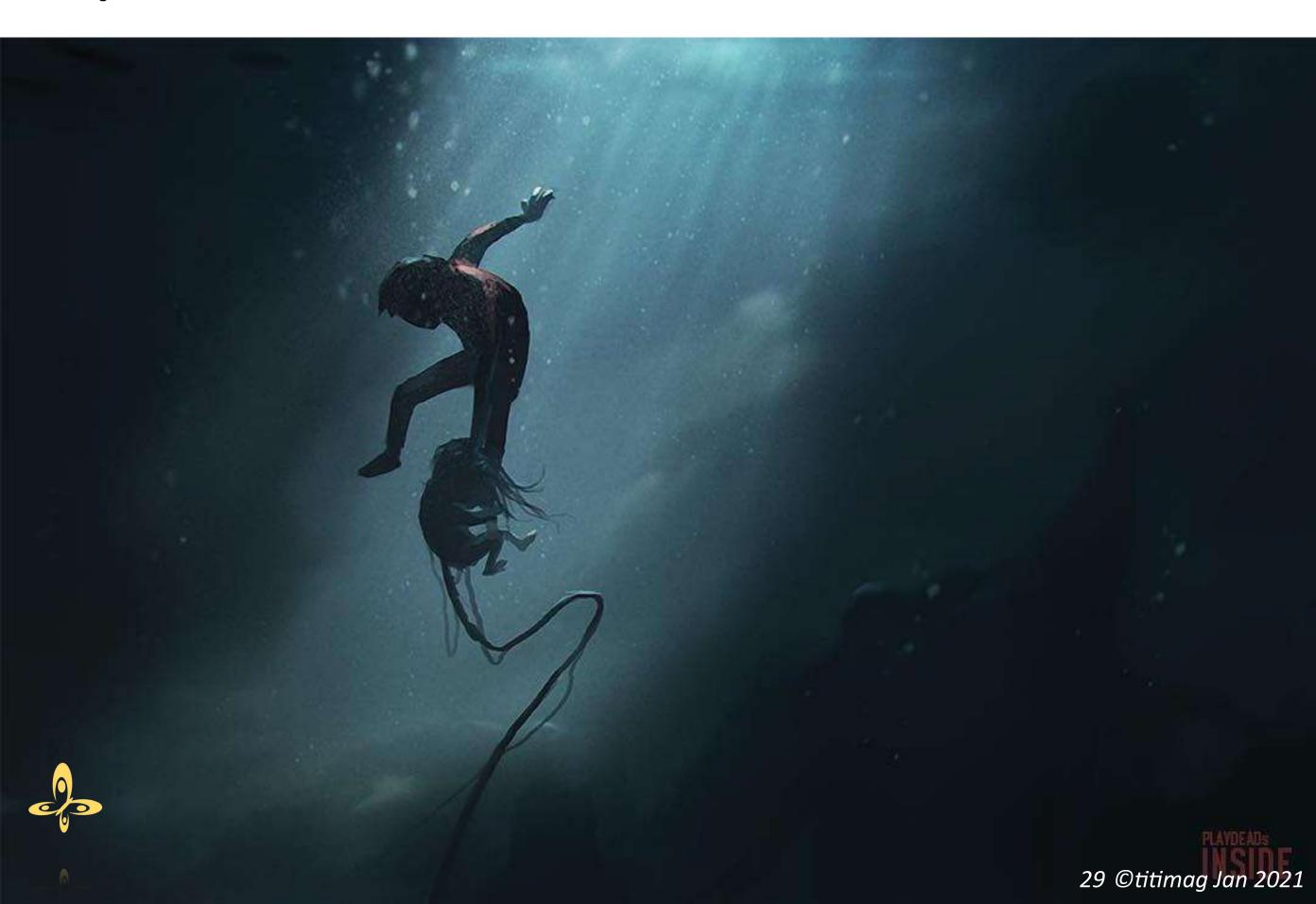
Alternate ending

If the player deactivated the hidden light orbs in the various bunkers, the boy returns to one of the bunkers and gains access to a new area. He reaches an area that includes a bank of computers and one of the mind-control helmets, powered by a nearby socket. The boy pulls the plug from the socket, upon which the character takes the same stance as the zombies, and the game ends moments later.

Theories

Journalists and players have offered several different theories about the game's main ending (the freeing of the Huddle) and the alternative ending. One theory speculates that the boy is controlled by the Huddle throughout most of the game, leading him to help free the Huddle from containment. As described by Jeffrey Matulef of Eurogamer, the game impresses that the Huddle has a magnetic-like draw that leads the boy to endanger himself and unquestioningly enter the tank where the Huddle is kept so as to free it. Players speculated on the theory that taking the alternate ending is working contrary to the Huddle's goal, and the act of unplugging the computers is to release the Huddle's control on the boy. A similar theory has the boy being controlled by one or more of the scientists, evidenced by how some of the scientists appear to aid the Huddle in escaping the facility. In this theory, the scientists put the boy through many dangers to gain strength and intelligence, so that these qualities can be absorbed by the Huddle when the boy frees it, improving the creature in a desirable manner for these scientists.

A more metafiction interpretation of the game from its alternate ending, and considered the most popular among players, is based on the notion of player agency. Matulef summarizes this theory as "the boy is being controlled by a renegade force represented by the player". The act of pulling the plug in the final area is similar to the concept of The Matrix, as described by PC Gamer's Tim Clark. Matulef explains that the location of the alternate ending is only known to the player with knowledge of the main ending and not to the Huddle or the scientists. With knowledge of the game's true ending, achieving the alternate ending is to reach a conclusion to the game that "ostensibly puts an end to the boy, the blob, and any inhumane experiments being conducted".





Development

Playdead released the monochromatic Limbo in July 2010, which was critically praised and sold over one million units. Within a few months of its release, Playdead began development on their second game under the working title "Project 2". As a spiritual successor to Limbo, Inside reclaimed assets from Limbo's development. Playdead said that the two games were similar, though Inside is more "crazy", "weird", and 3D. The Danish Film Institute provided one million dollars in funding towards the game.

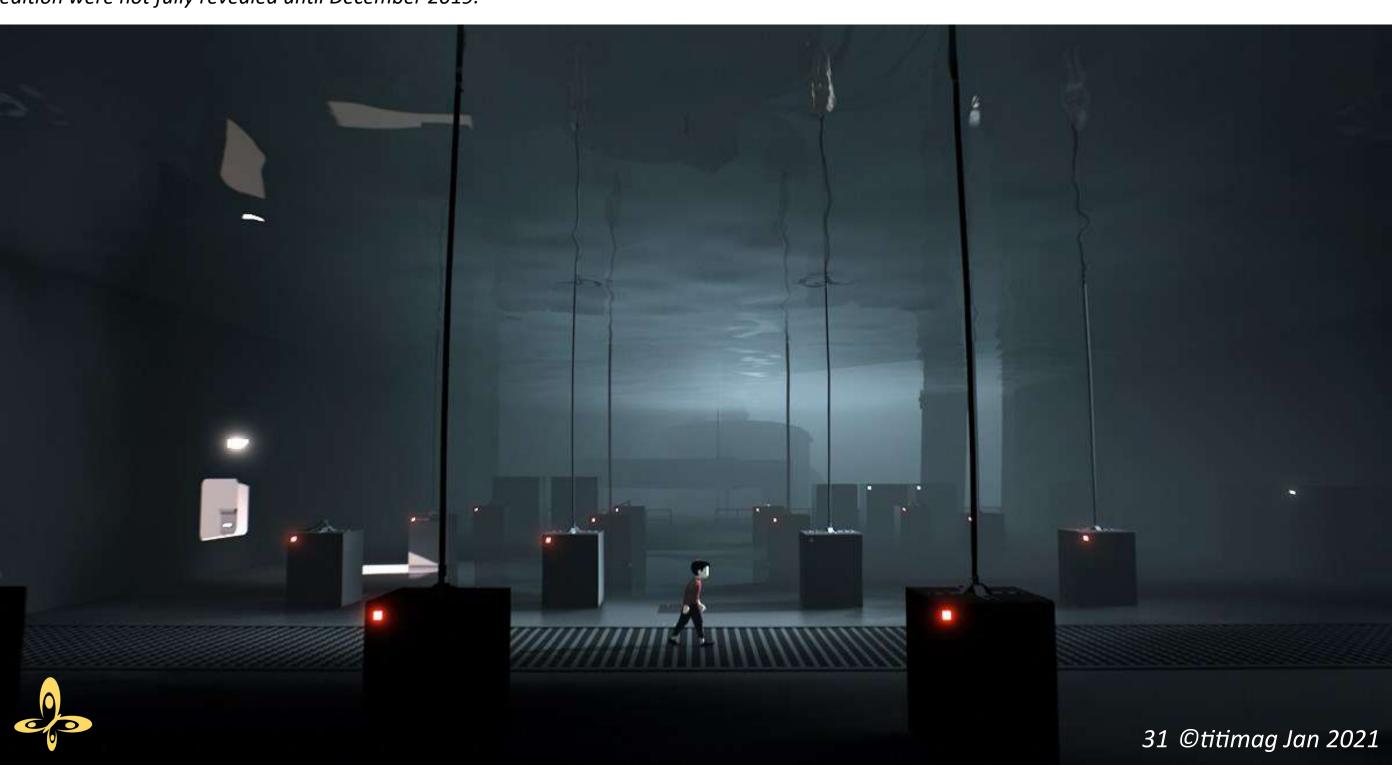
While Playdead had built a custom game engine for Limbo, they chose Unity to reduce their workload. The developers created a temporal antialiasing filter for the engine, entitled "temporal reprojection", to create a signature look for Inside. In March 2016, Playdead released the source code under an open source license.

The Huddle, the amalgam of body parts that the player controls at the end of the game, had been an idea for the game since 2010, when animator Andreas Normand Grøntved had been brought aboard Playdead to do preliminary animations for it based on a drawing by artist Morten Bramsen. Bramsen's drawing of the Huddle served to guide much of the visual nature and art style for the rest of the game. To animate it, Grøntved took inspiration of the motion of Nago the demon form of the boar god from Princess Mononoke, the squishiness of the main character of the game Gish, and human behavior during crowd surfing. Grøntved developed initial animations using what he called the Huddle Potato that simplified the geometries to demonstrate how the being would move and interact with the environment. Whereas most of the other game animations were based on a combination of pre-set skeletal movements along with the physics engine, the Huddle had to be animated nearly entirely by a custom physics model developed by Thomas Krog, and implemented by Lasse Jon Fulgsang Pedersen, Søren Trautner Madsen, and Mikkel Bøgeskov Svendsen. This model uses a 26-body simulation of the core of the Huddle, driven by a network of impulses based on the direction of the player and the local environment, which allowed the Huddle to reconfigure itself as it needed in certain situations, such as fitting into tight spaces. They then added six arms and six legs with some pre-set animations that would also help to drive the impulse in the main body simulation. The skin of the huddle was a mix of art styles borrowed from the sculptures of John Isaacs, and the art of Jenny Saville and Rembrandt. The vocals and bodysounds were performed by the renowned Danish-Austrian performance group SIGNA.

Microsoft announced Inside during its E3 2014 press conference. Prior to this, the game had been planned for release on non-Microsoft platforms, including the PlayStation 3 and OS X. Playdead had purposely waited four years so as to give little time between the announce event and the launch. IGN's Ryan McCaffrey wrote that the announcement was a sign of Microsoft's commitment to indie game development and said it was his biggest surprise of the year. The developer later delayed the game from its expected early 2015 release for further refinement of the game, but provided no expected launch window. A playable demo was prepared for an August 2015 Microsoft event before PAX Prime. With the delay, Playdead only planned for initial release on the Xbox One and Microsoft Windows, but had expressed interest in other consoles in the future.

Playdead announced Inside's release dates during E3 2016, and as a limited-time promotion, let players download Limbo for free in advance of the title's release. Inside was released for Xbox One on 29 June 2016, and for Windows via Steam on 7 July. Ports for other platforms followed: the PlayStation 4 version was released on 23 August, the iOS version on December 15, 2017, and the Nintendo Switch version on June 28, 2018 alongside the release of Limbo. 505 Games published Inside and Limbo as a dual-game retail package for Xbox One and PlayStation 4, which was released in September 2017.

Playdead partnered with iam8bit and Abyss Creations (the manufacturers of RealDoll) to create a special release edition of the game for the PlayStation 4 which includes a silicone recreation of the Huddle, along with additional art. Though revealed and sold in 2018, the contents of the special edition were not fully revealed until December 2019.





Dead Cells



Dead Cells is a roguelike action platformer video game inspired by Metroidvania-style games, developed and published by Motion Twin. Following about a year in early access, Dead Cells was released for Linux, macOS, Microsoft Windows, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One on August 7, 2018. A mobile port for iOS was released on August 28, 2019 and an Android port was released on June 3, 2020.

In the game, the player takes the role of a slime-like creature that takes control of a corpse in a dungeon, through which they must fight their way out. The player gains various weapons, treasure and other tools through exploration of the procedurally-generated levels to fight undead creatures within it. At times, the player gains "cells", a type of in-game currency that can be used to purchase permanent upgrades or unlock items. Dead Cells uses a permadeath system, causing the player to lose all cells and other currencies or items upon each instance of death. Motion Twin was inspired by The Binding of Isaac in developing the game.

Gameplay

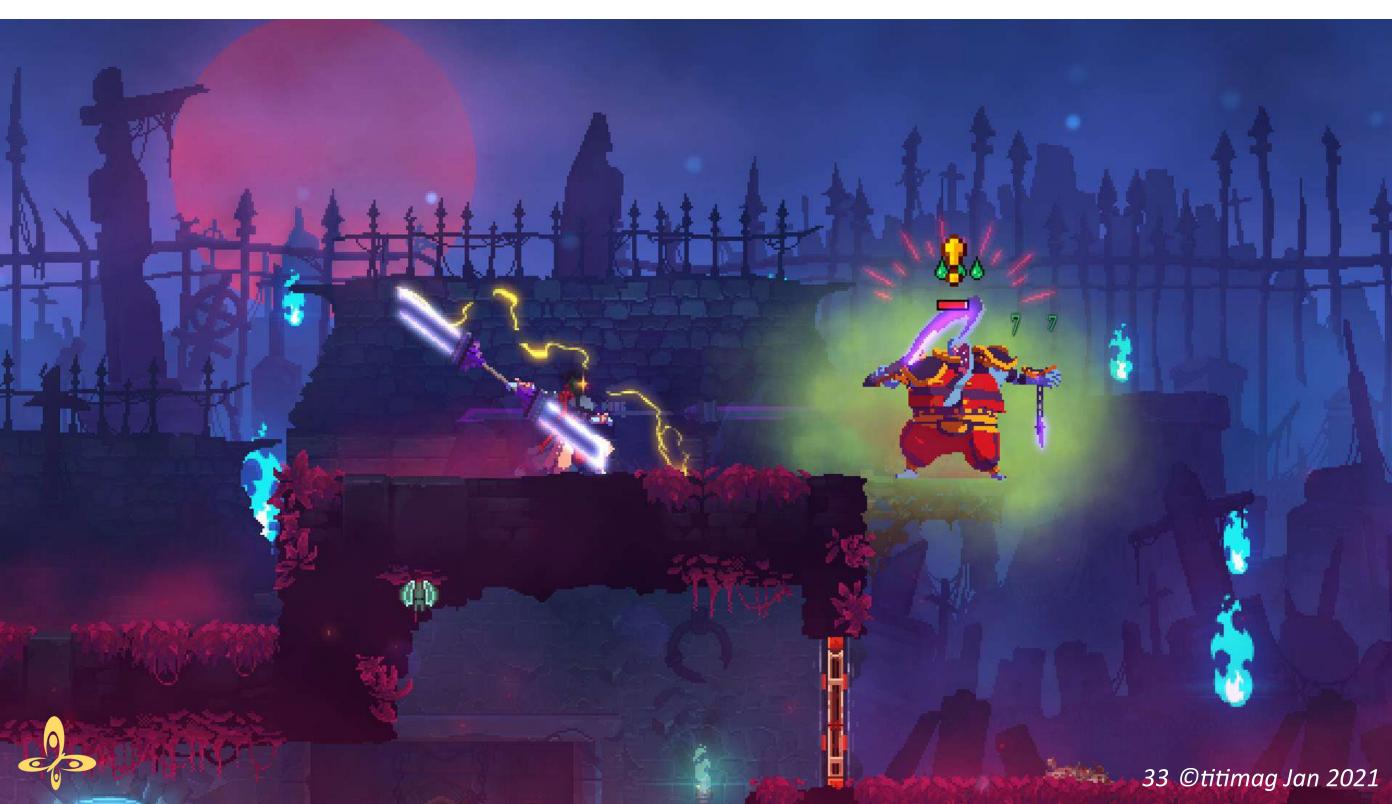
Dead Cells is described as a "roguevania", a combination of procedurally-generated roguelike games and action-exploration-based Metroidvania games. The player controls a mass of cells that occupy and control the body of a deceased prisoner at the start of each game. As they explore a series of dungeons and fight the creatures within, they collect weapons, skins, abilities, power-ups, and money. Enemies will sometimes drop cells when defeated, which can be used to obtain permanent power-ups such as additional health potions or items that can be bought or found in later runs. These cells can only be spent at the end of a dungeon section, though players can choose not to spend them; if a player dies before then, they lose all collected cells.

Each level is procedurally generated by merging of predesigned sections in a random configuration along with random placement of enemies and items. The game's combat is compared to the Souls series, with difficult enemies with certain behaviors the player can learn, and where frequent player-character death is a fundamental part of the game. At intervals throughout the game, the player must defeat boss enemies known as "Keepers". There are six Keepers in the game—The Concierge, Conjunctivius, The Time Keeper, The Giant, The Hand of the King, and The Collector.

The game includes Twitch integration, allowing viewers, via the stream's chat, to influence the game, such as voting for which upgrade paths the player should take.

Plot

The plot of Dead Cells is minimalistic, only giving bits of information to the player, as the player character is selectively mute, and lore is fed gradually from area descriptions and background details. Taking place on an unnamed island, the player character is the Prisoner, a greenish blob of an unknown substance capable of possessing executed bodies in the depths of the island. While the "head" of the Prisoner is immortal, the bodies it possesses are not, and dying will force it to slink back to the Prison Quarters.





Story

The Prisoner awakens in the depths of the Island's prison, next to a giant skeleton with a spear inside of it, a character named "The Giant". A soldier implies that the Prisoner has been trying to escape for an unspecified period of time. As the Prisoner works their way out of the Prison Quarters, they navigate the Island, and it is revealed that the Island was once a mighty kingdom, until a plague known as "The Malaise" swept through, reducing most of its citizens to mindless zombies or monstrous husks. The Kingdom's Alchemist worked tirelessly to find a cure, but mysteriously disappeared as the King became reclusive. As the kingdom fell, the remaining citizens began to rebel against the King, only to either die by infection, seclusion, or by their own hands.

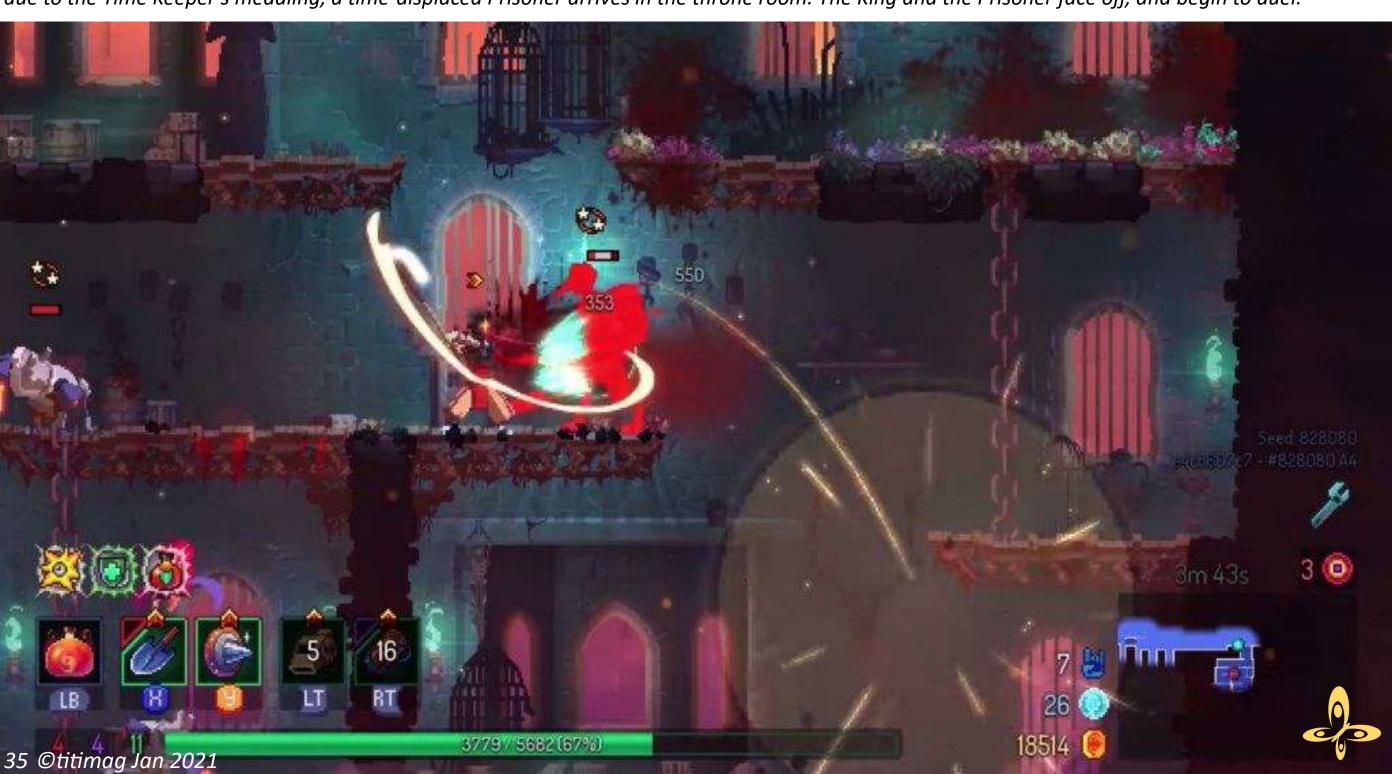
The Prisoner encounters and fights several entities as they travel across the island: The Concierge, who was once the prison's guard Castaing, before his infection and subsequent transformation into a hulking monster; Conjunctivius, a nameless, faceless bloated corpse that was transformed into a grotesque tentacled Beholder-like monster; and The Time Keeper, a woman with some mastery over time, who continuously resets time each day to prevent her own infection. They also encounter The Collector, a hooded figure who trades items to the Prisoner in exchange for Cells, which drop from defeated enemies and are implied to be a sort of essence of life; and The Blacksmith and his apprentices, who upgrade the Prisoner's weapons and arsenal.

Eventually, the Prisoner reaches the castle's throne room, and faces off against the Hand of the King, while the King sits seemingly comatose upon his throne. The Prisoner defeats the Hand of the King, takes his weapon, and uses it to kill the King. The King's body violently explodes, destroying the Prisoner's host body and resetting the game, though giving the Prisoner the ability to act outside of a host body while still possessing the body. As the Prisoner's head returns to the quarters to find a new corpse to possess, it remarks on how even though the king has died, nothing has changed.

Rise of the Giant

The Rise of the Giant downloadable content adds additional content, including new endings. The Prisoner gains access to a new area of the Island, The Cavern, which houses the titanic undead skeletal Giant, who acts as the boss for the area. Upon defeat, The Giant reveals that the Prisoner is actually the King himself, his soul split from his body by consequence of his and the Alchemist's experiments. As the Prisoner continues, The Time Keeper begins actively altering the timeline to prevent her own death. After defeating the Hand of the King again, if the player has all five Boss Cells (modifiers which make the game substantially more difficult, earned by beating the game on each difficulty) active, they are able to gain access to the Astrolab and the Observatory. There, the Prisoner can find the Collector, who is implied to be the King's Alchemist. The Collector reveals that he has been collecting cells to create a Panacea, to cure the Malaise once and for all. The Collector however, upon drinking the Panacea, goes mad with power and attempts to kill the Prisoner to reset the game so they will bring him more cells. While fighting the Collector, the Prisoner drinks some of the Panacea, which, upon the Collector's death, causes the Prisoner's host body to evaporate, resetting the game once more.

This time however, the Time Keeper fully resets the timeline. This allows the Prisoner, upon reaching the throne room and defeating the Hand of the King, to possess the King, getting his original body back. However, the body is infected with the Malaise, and so to prevent his own decay, he continues to the Observatory to face the Collector again. This time, upon the Collector's defeat, the Panacea cures the King and binds his body and soul once more. The King returns to his throne, where he remarks over a glass of wine that he was honestly having more fun crawling around the sewers, when, due to the Time Keeper's meddling, a time-displaced Prisoner arrives in the throne room. The King and the Prisoner face off, and begin to duel.



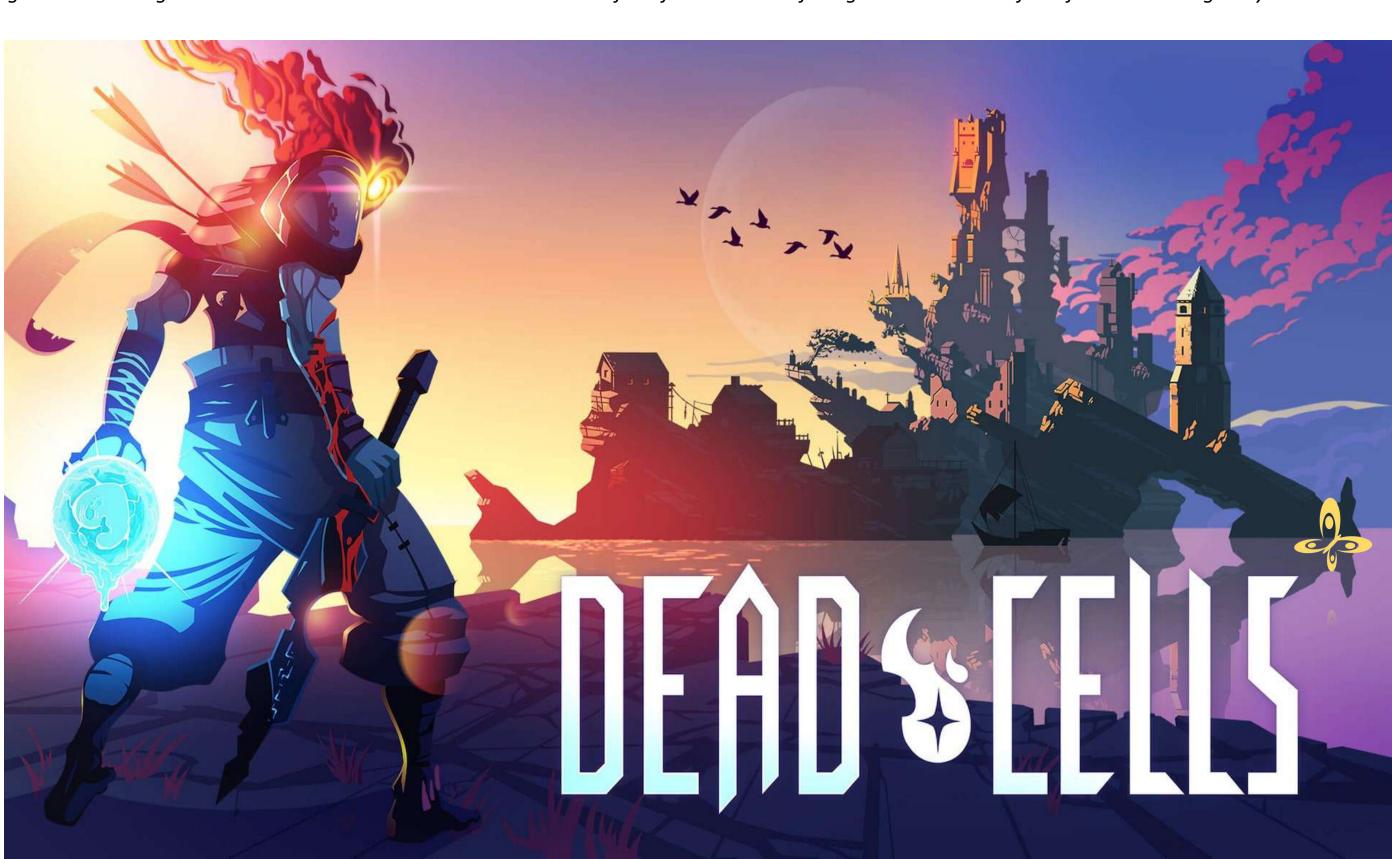
Development

Dead Cells's developer Motion Twin had been developing games for the browser and mobile gaming market since 2001. The studio found that competition in the mobile market required more investment to make viable games, and decided to switch focus to develop what they considered their "passion project", a game that was "something hardcore, ultra-niche, with pixel art and ridiculous difficulty" that they knew would be a potential risk in terms of interested players.

Initially, Motion Twin had set out to make a follow-up to their browser game Die2Nite, which was a cooperative tower defense game for up to forty players released in 2008; for most of the game, players would work together to form defenses around a town, and then during a night phase, wait to see if their town survived waves of attacks by zombies. They wanted to have the sequel improved by allowing players to take actions and fight during the night phase, implementing free to play mechanics. While this version worked well with large number of players, Motion Twin found it was not very exciting for single players. In 2014, they stripped down the game to basically a single-player experience between preparation and combat, and took it to an event called the Big Indie Pitch, where the idea came in second place. Inspired by this, they decided to strip away the game's preparation phase and focus it as a combat-based game. The process of figuring out how to keep and work from these combat elements took about a year up through the end of 2015.

To tighten the gameplay, Motion Twin took inspiration of the Engineer class from Team Fortress 2, where the use of turrets and other buildable items helps to strengthen the character's abilities, and took Dead Cells into an action platformer where the player used weapons along with a variety of skills (including some elements they had developed for the tower defense approach). They did not want players to get used to having a single weapon/skill combination that they used indefinitely, and arranged the roguelike elements as to require the player to try out new combinations of weapons and skills as they progressed in a given run to defeat newer foes, and keeping what items they would get in a random manner every time they started a new game. Motion Twin's producer, Steve Filby, said that The Binding of Isaac was a significant influence, as there, the way the game proceeds "is entirely based on the choice of items that you get. That's the fun of the game." To give the player enough options, the developers crafted about 50 different weapons, avoiding having too much duplication in how each weapon worked so that there would be unique gameplay possibilities with each. The team used an iterative process in gameplay and graphics and art so that each of these weapons also exhibited unique animations or behavior so that the player would get a sense of a tactile response and the special nature of each weapon.

Motion Twin opted to use Steam's Early access approach to both gauge interest and to get real-time feedback from players on game features and the balance from procedural generation. They feared the stigma around indie games at the time, fueled by industry speculation of an "indiepocalypse" where too many indie games would have caused a collapse of the games market around 2015, but which never occurred. They did not want to release too early within early access, and made sure the first version available, while only about 30 to 40% complete, had tight combat and gameplay controls that players would appreciate. This allowed to address balance issues, as the developer did not want to punish players for a specific style of play, and used the feedback to address this. This allowed them to make sure that regular combat encounters should be short, and that maneuvering within the game's levels itself was not a challenge to the player. Motion Twin planned for the game to spend about a year in early access before its full release, during which time the content was fleshed out and incorporated much of the player feedback on both bug reports and feature suggestions into the game. Lead designer Sébastien Bénard estimated that 40 to 50% of the features in the final game were drawn from feedback during early access.



Release

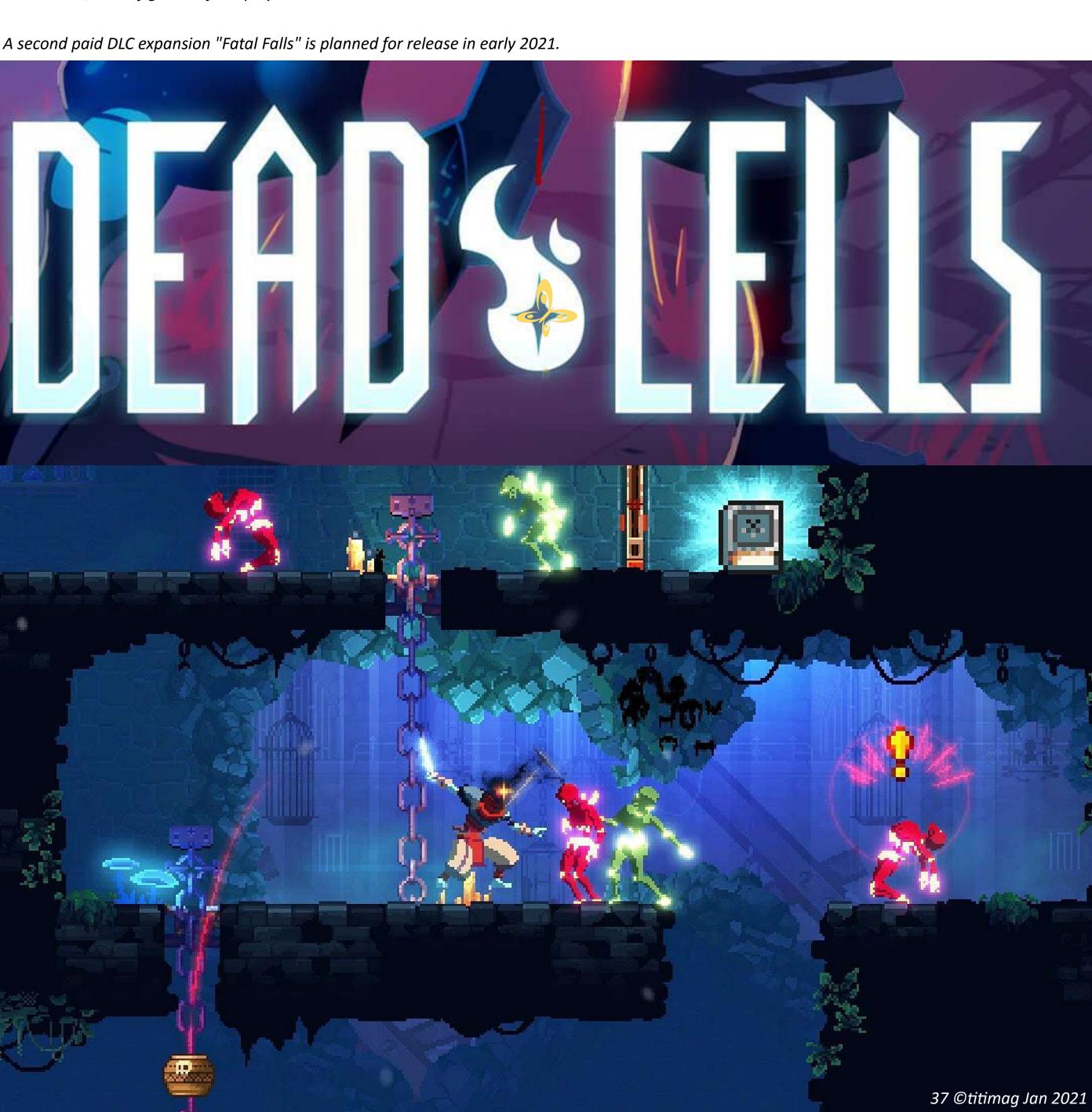
The early access period was launched on May 10, 2017 with support for Microsoft Windows, and released macOS and Linux versions in early access on June 26, 2018. In November 2017 the game was released on GOG.com as part of their drive to provide an alternate way to purchase games that are in development. In January 2018, Motion Twin stated they are planning on console development for the Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One, with a planned release in August 2018 to correspond with the Windows' version leaving early access. Motion Twin does not anticipate creating a sequel, and instead focused on adding a robust modding system for the personal computer versions to allow players to expand the game following release. The studio considered developing downloadable content for Dead Cells and other ways to expand the existing game.

Dead Cells was fully released on August 7, 2018 for computers and consoles. Retail editions were released in August 2018.

Motion Twin released a free downloadable content update to the game called "Rise of the Giant" in mid-2019. The developers announced plans to port the title to mobile devices running iOS and Android, modifying the game's interface to support touch controls as well as remote controllers. The iOS version was released on August 28, 2019, the Android version released on June 3, 2020.

Around January 2019, Motion Twin wanted to start work on their next title while still developing Dead Cells. While they expanded with more developers, Motion Twin wanted to keep its small eight to ten person size to stay a viable cooperative, and instead created a new studio under them called Evil Empire to take over Dead Cells development.

The game's first paid downloadable content, "The Bad Seed", was released on February 11, 2020 adding two new biomes, Arboretum and Swamp, as well a boss for early game content. New content includes weapons, enemies and game mechanics. On the same day, a new physical package for the game, the "Prisoner's Edition" was announced for PlayStation 4 and Nintendo Switch, which in addition to the game and DLC, includes the soundtrack, an art book, and a figurine of the player-character.



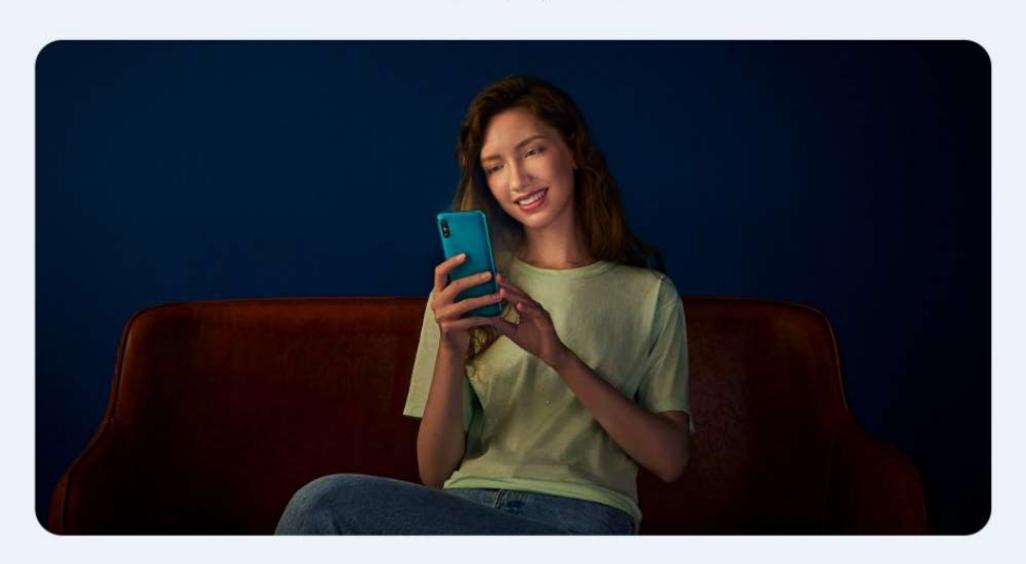






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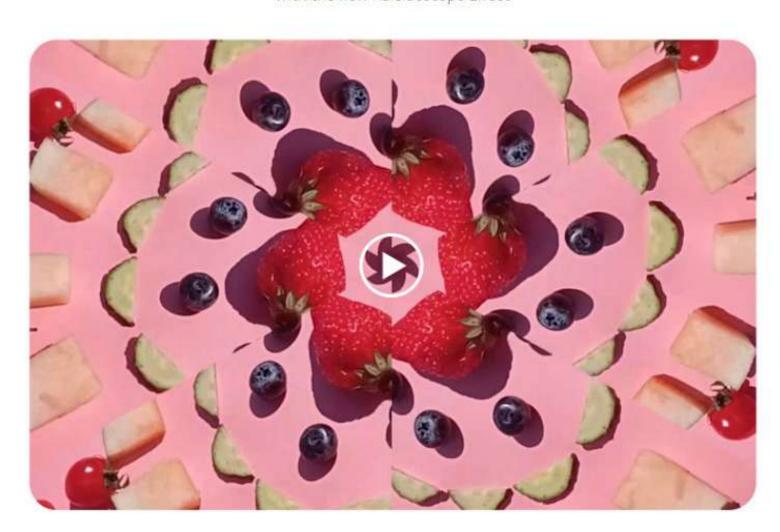
Al Rear Camera

Make memories last with the 13MP AI Camera, capturing your favorite moments in vivid color



Put a spin on reality

Shake things up and impress your friends by making cool videos with the new Kaleidoscope Effect









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168 hours



38 hours



of Videos

19 hours



of Gaming

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The large display allows you to fully immerse yourself in the virtual world.



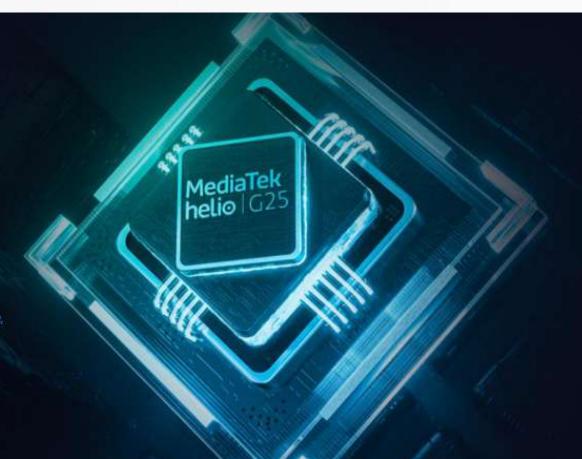


Increased Processing Power

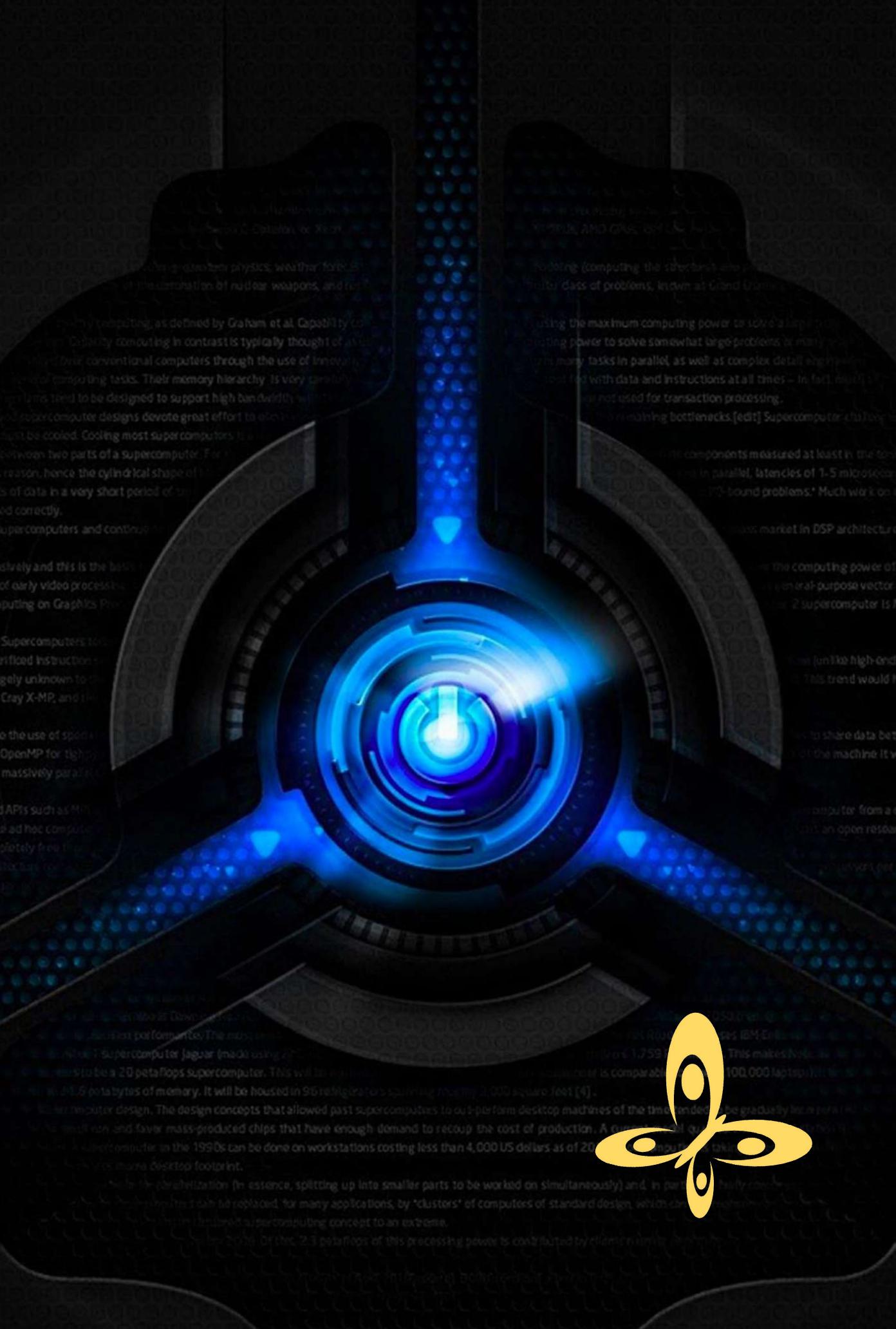
The MediaTek Helio G25 processor provides reliable performance, ensuring a lag-free experience.

HyperEngine

The HyperEngine game technology offers a more fluid and responsive gaming experience, with reliable connections and true-to-life visuals.









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Capture the full extent of your beauty



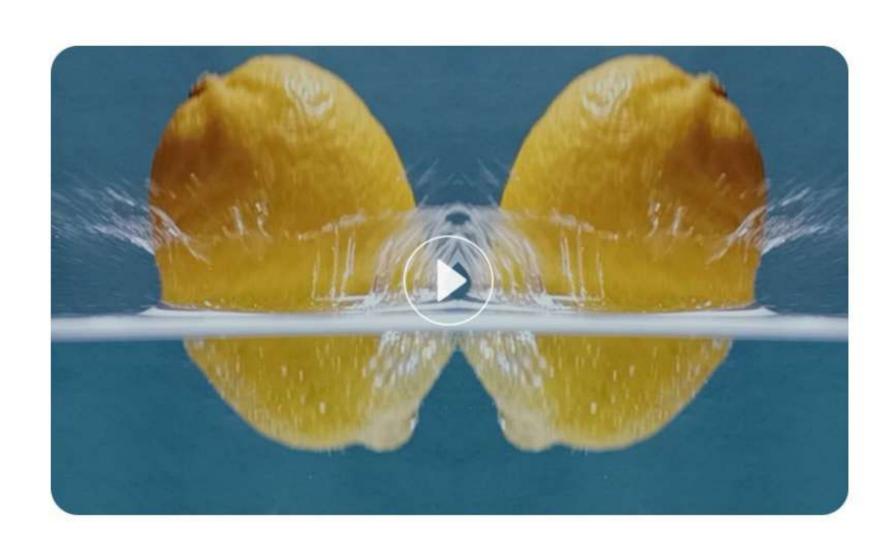
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Put a spin on reality

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Battery longevity increased by 25% compared to the market standard

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Market standard



MASSIVE 5000mAh BATTERY

With 27 days of standby-battery time, this battery provides power that lasts



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of Calls
32 hours



of Gaming

10 hours



of Videos

21 hours*

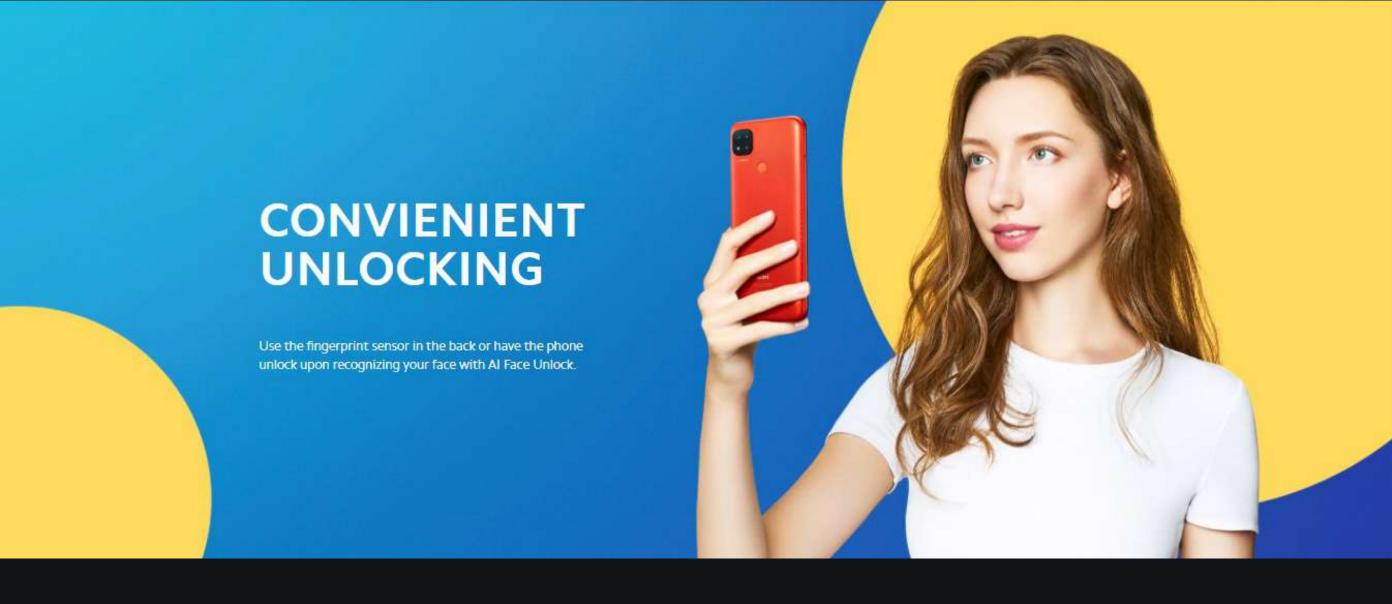
MORE POWER FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT

The MediaTek Helio G35 processor provides reliable performance, ensuring a lag-free experience.



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NEW POLISHED LOOK

The back features a textured design that prevents fingerprints so that the device can retain its pristine look at all times.













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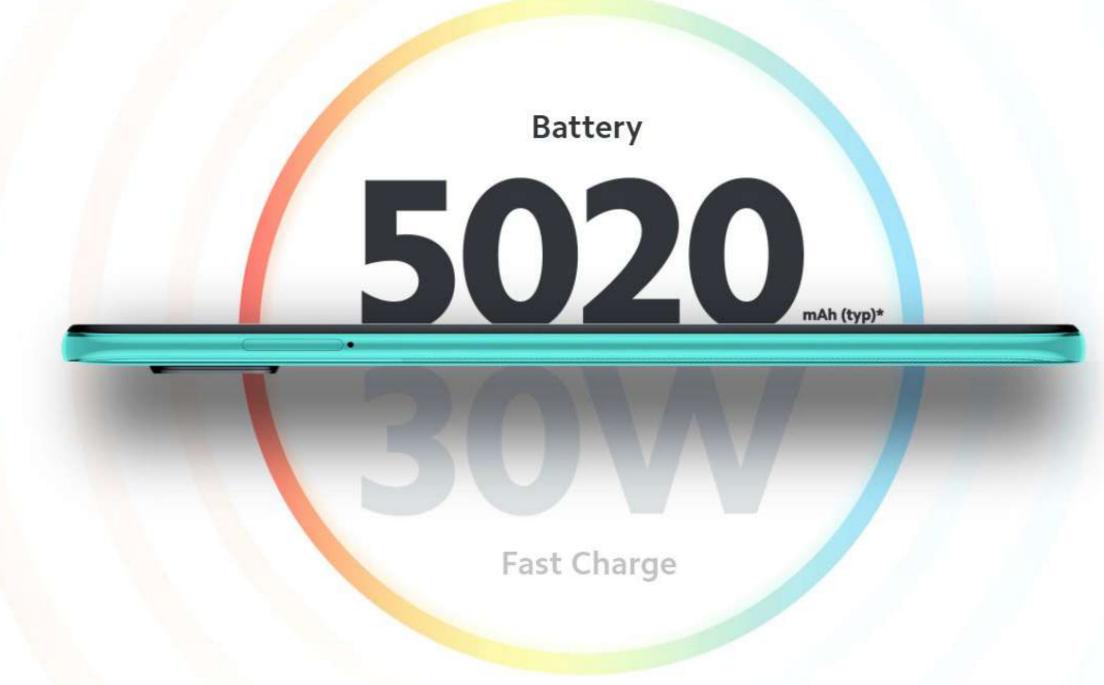
















Redmi Note 9 Pro

Presenting the new design of the Redmi Note series

Symmetrical design front and back with DotDisplay



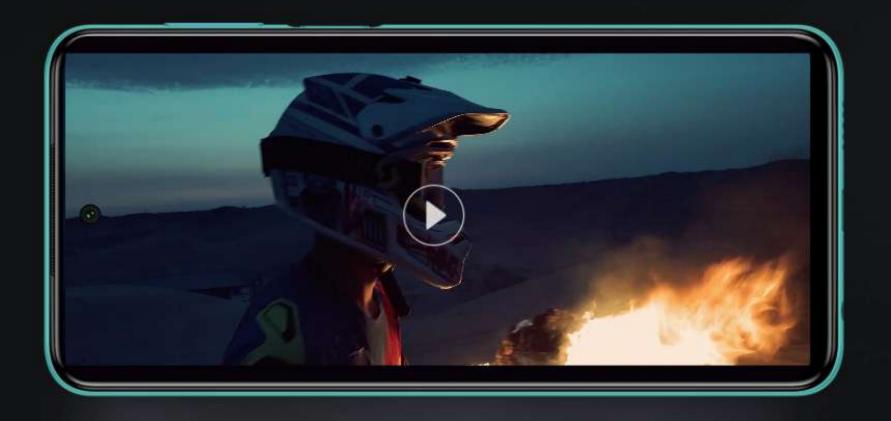
Side-mounted Fingerprint Sensor

The side fingerprint makes your unlocking extremely fast, and there is no need to worry about leaving fingerprints on the screen and back shell to affect the appearance of the phone. All for your perfect unlocking experience.



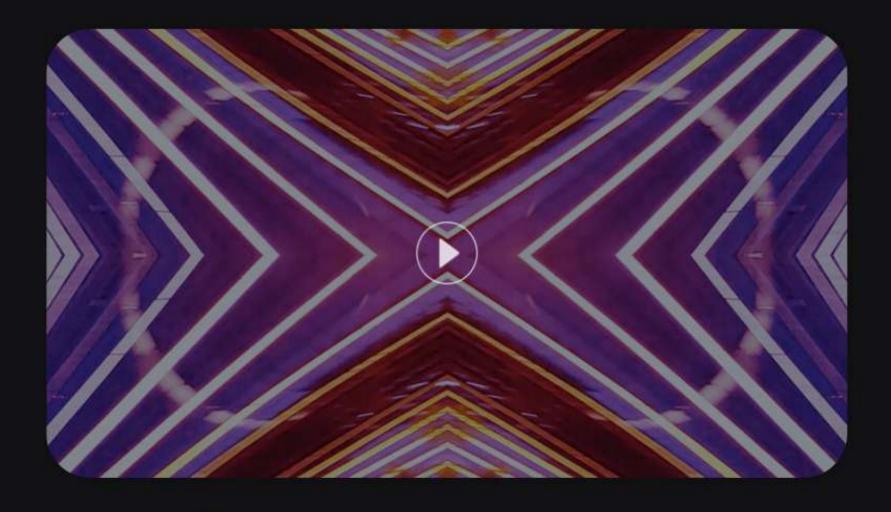
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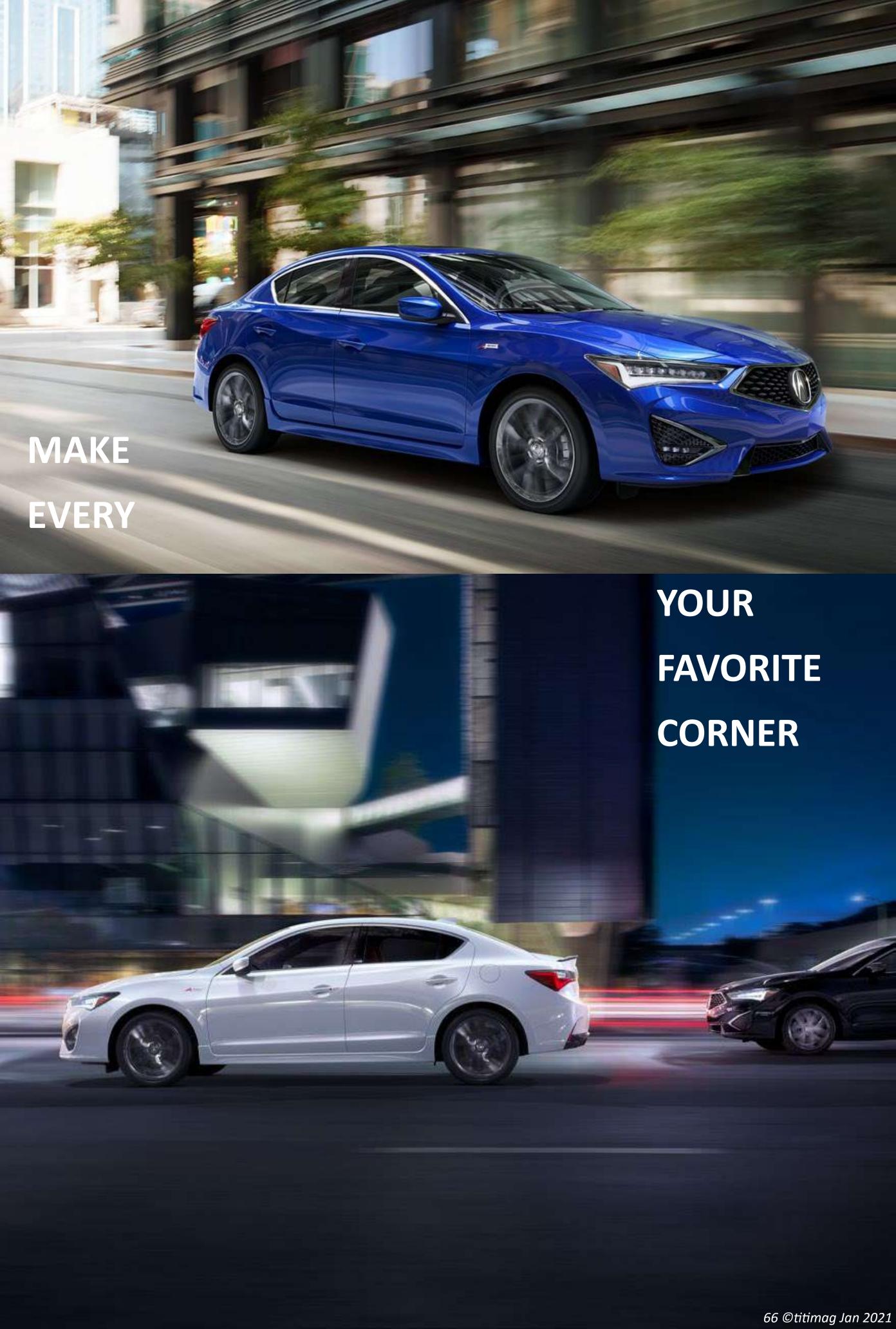












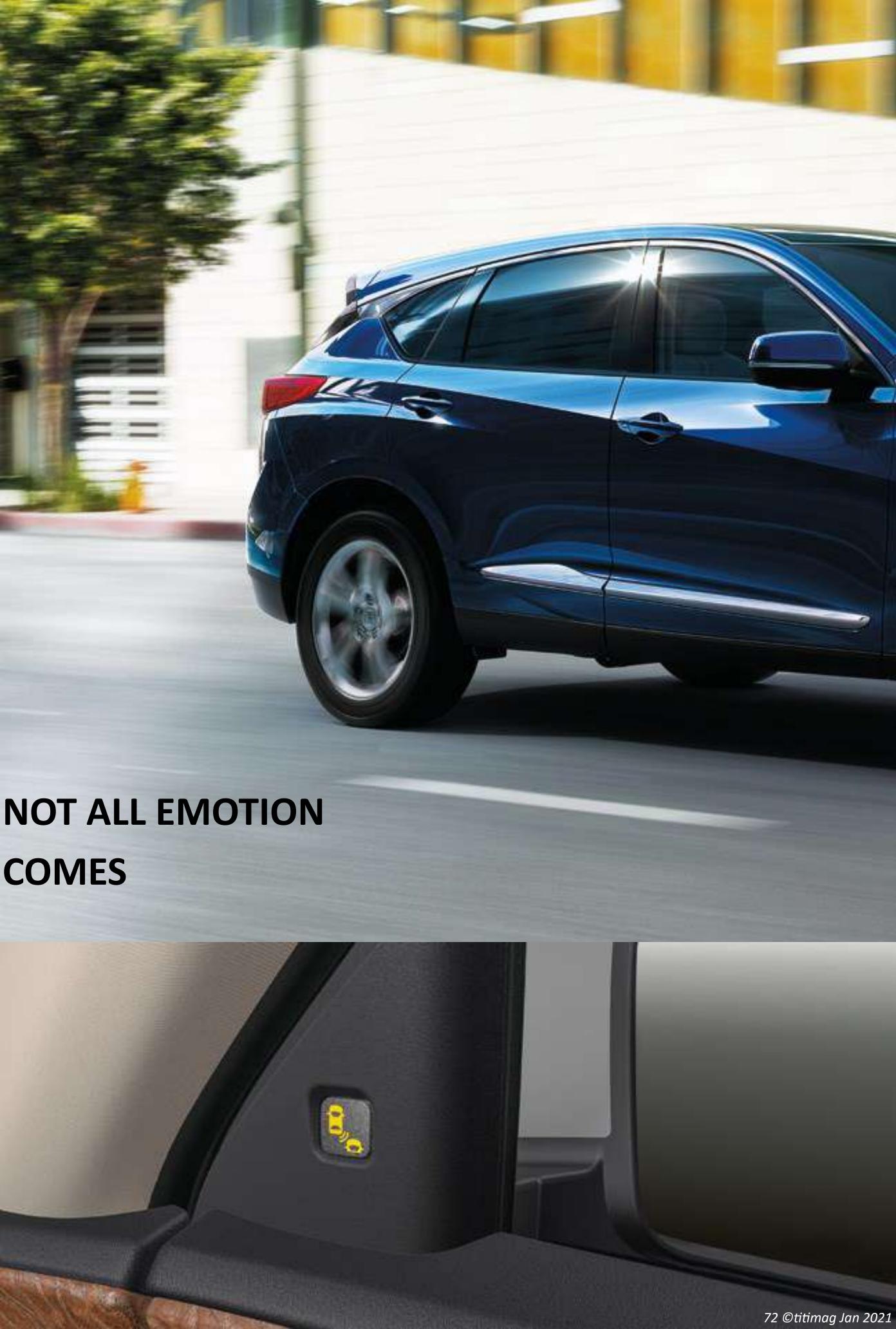
























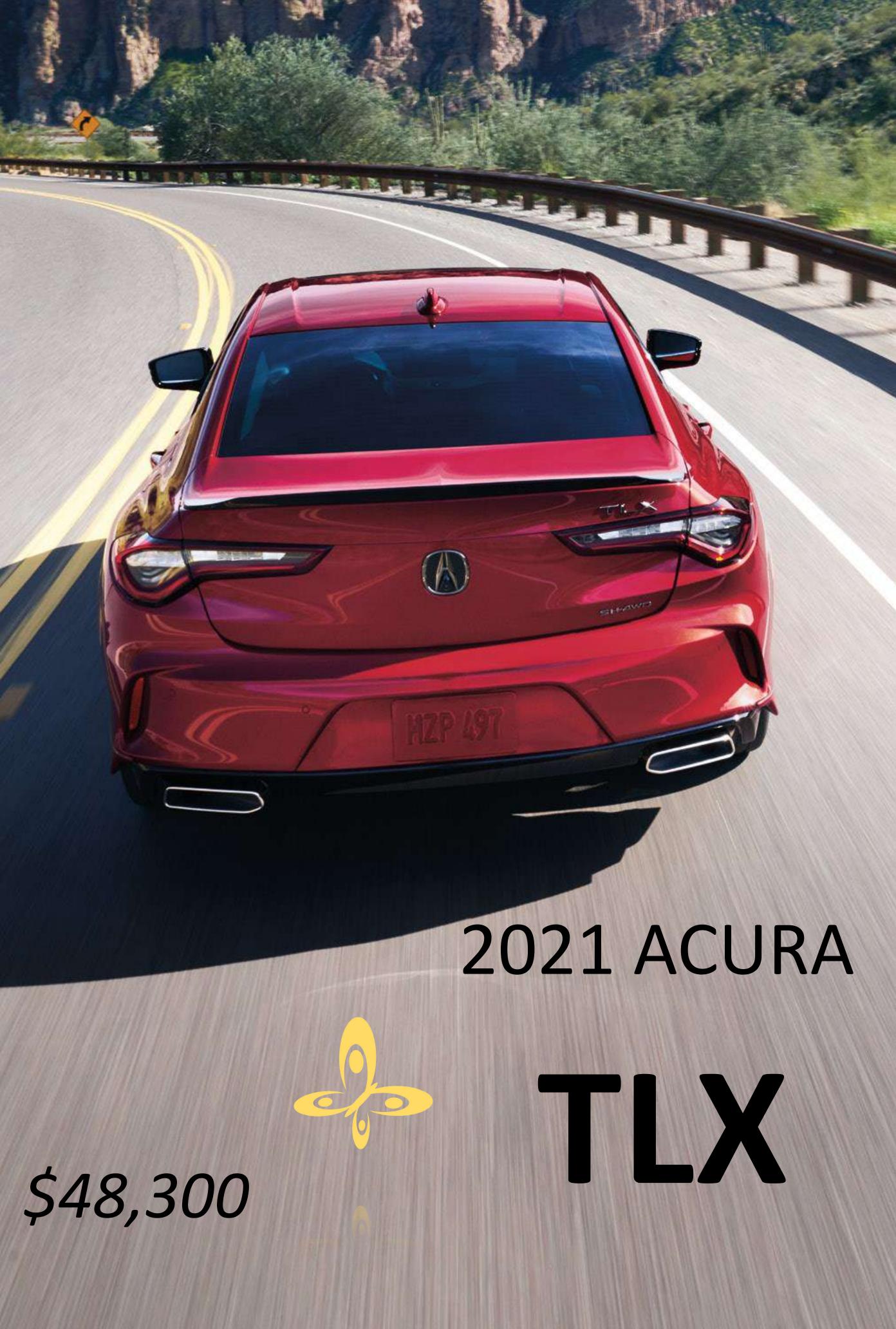












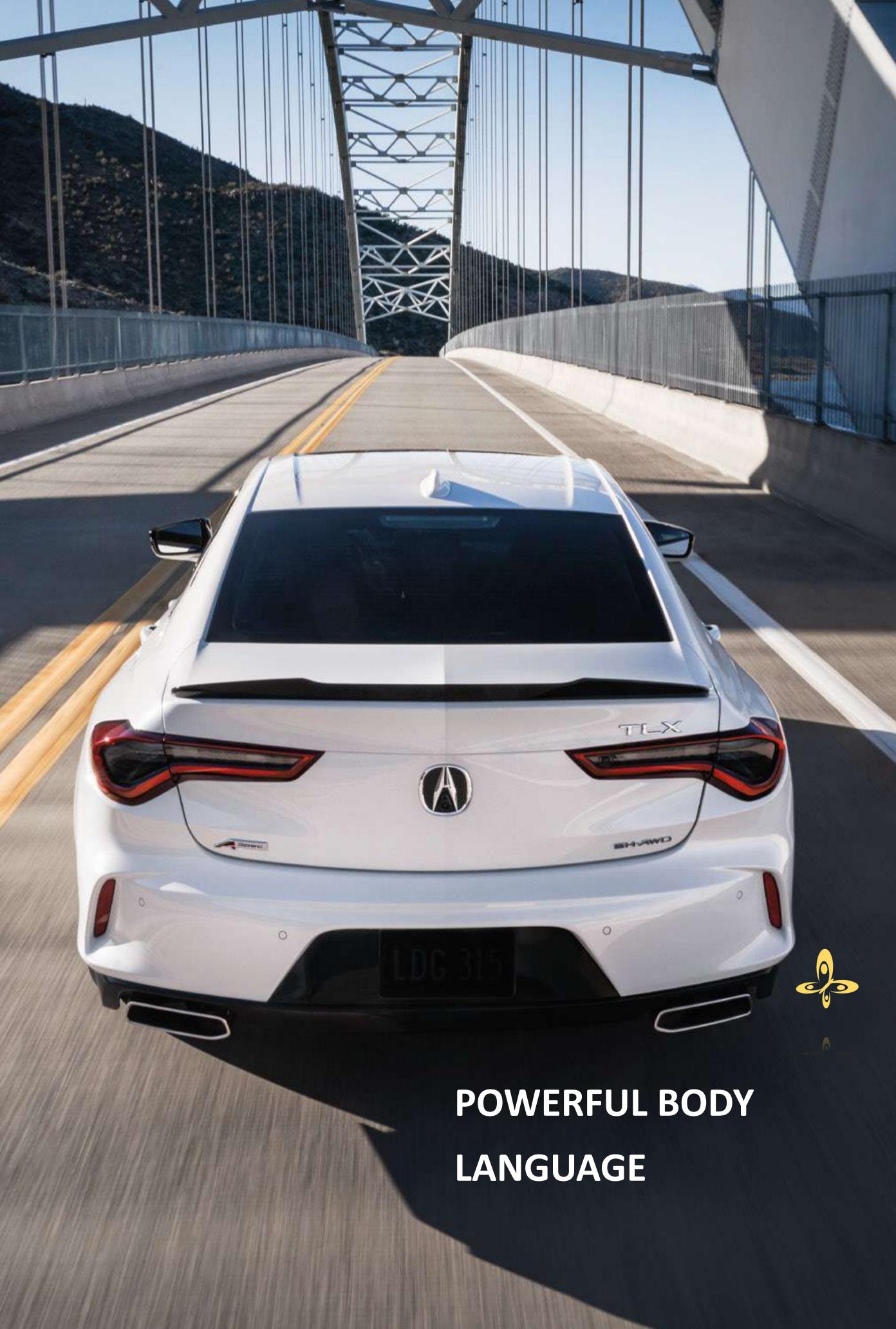










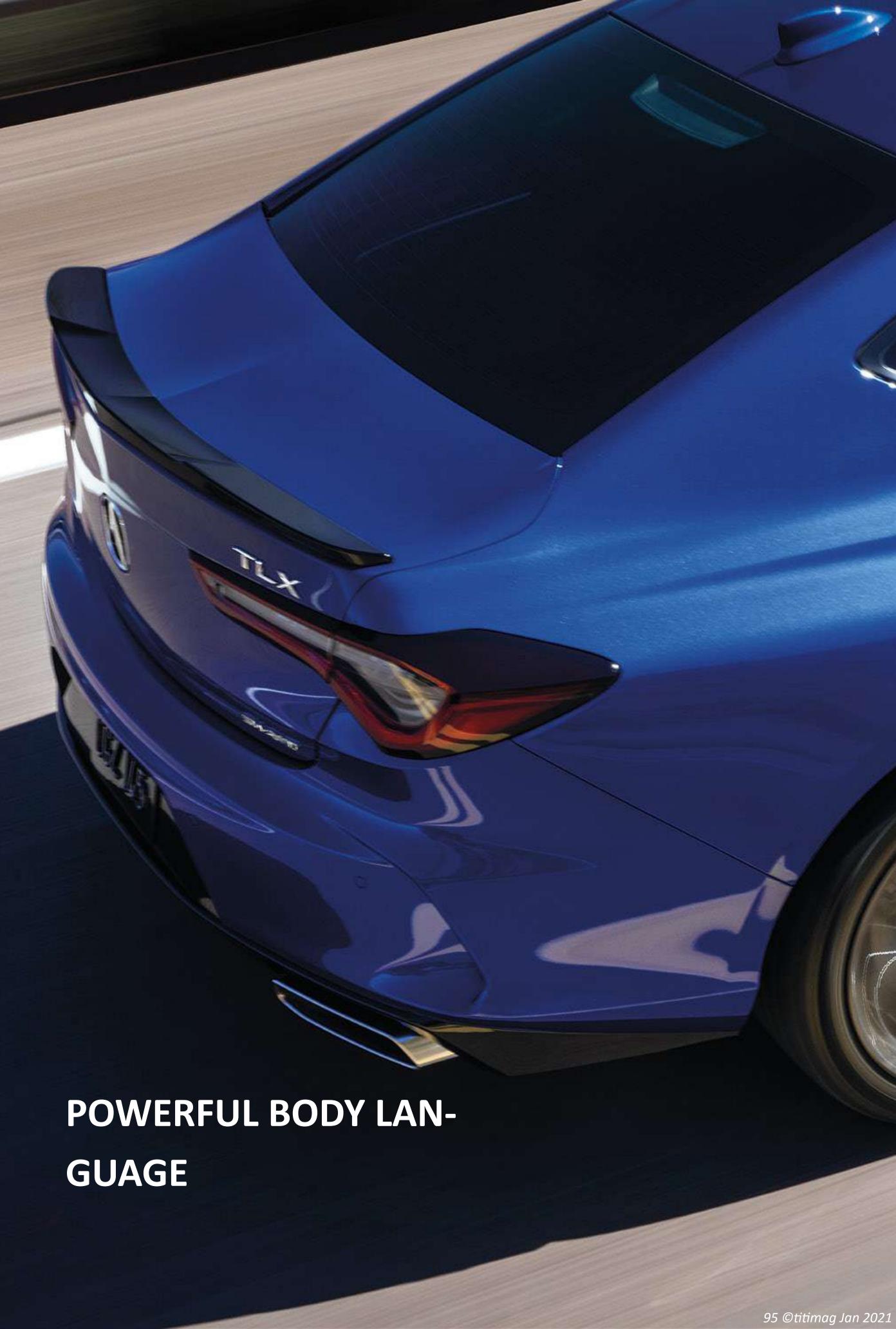










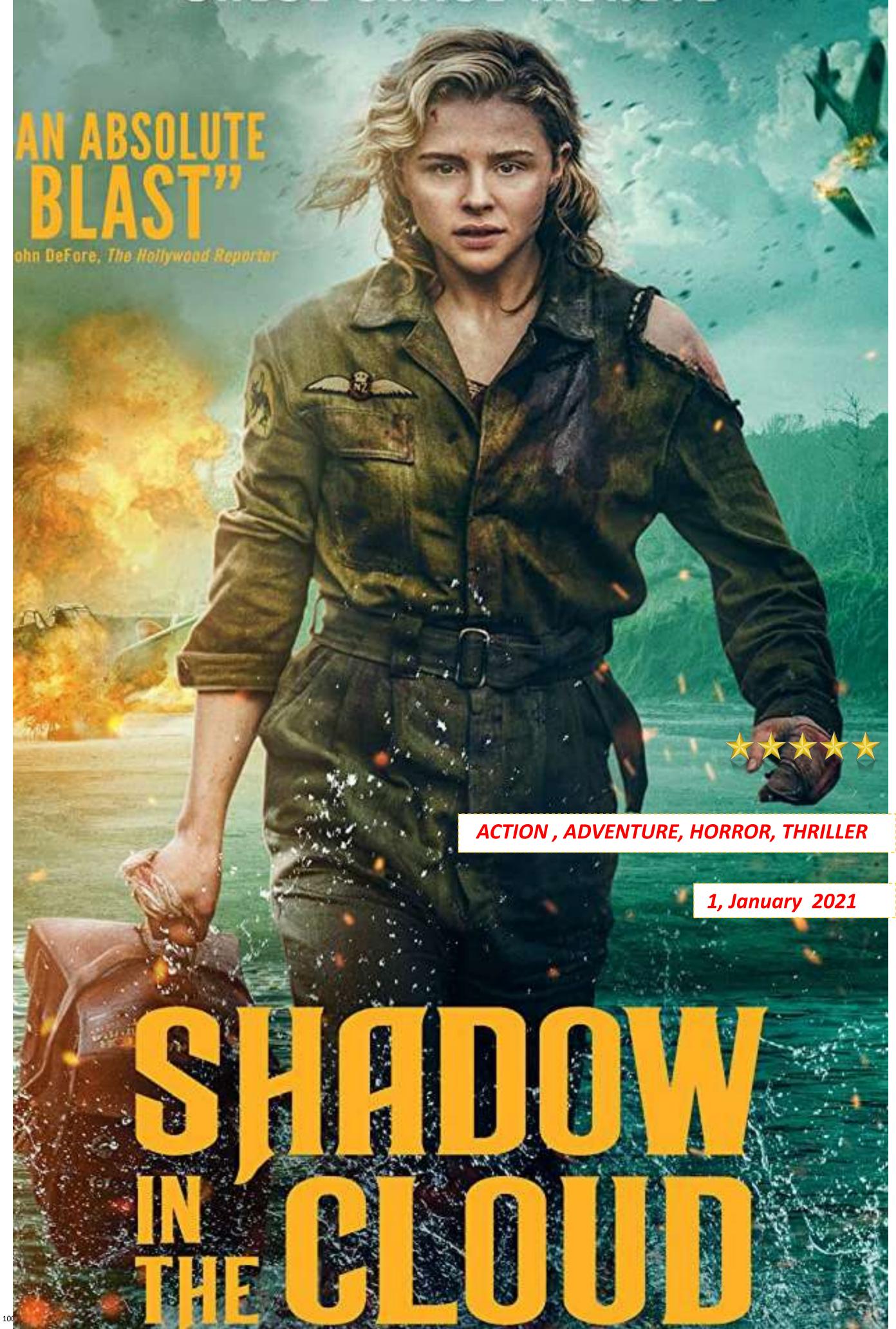














FORREST & CHARLOTTE LUCAS AND FORREST FILMS PRESENTAN ALI AFSHAR/ESX ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "BORN A CHAMPION" SEAN PATRICK FLANERY AND DENNIS QUAID

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ACTION, ADVENTURE, DRAMA

22, January 2021









ACTION, THRILLER, CRIME

15, January 2021





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