

Content



EDITOR

Dickson Max Prince

@dicksonprincemax



CONTRIBUTORS

*Anita .W. Dickson

*Efenudu Ejiro

Michael

*Bekesu Anthony

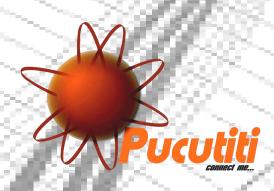
*Samuel Obadiah

*Dickson Max Prince

*Ernest .O.

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Forspoken is an upcoming action role-playing video game developed by Luminous Productions and published by Square Enix. It is to be released on October 11, 2022 for Microsoft Windows and PlayStation 5.

Gameplay

According to director Takeshi Aramaki, the gameplay will be focused on terrain traversal speed and fluidity. Square Enix also described the game as a "narrative-driven adventure". The character will exist in an open world game format where players are able to travel anywhere at any time.

The player character, Frey, has access to a variety of magical spells. Following each combat encounter, the player will earn experience points. Frey's cloak can be upgraded in order to improve her combat efficiency and stats, while applying nail polish unlocks special abilities. The player can also craft new items, or rest at a safe location in order to restore health. While the player is exploring the game world, they may encounter a "breakstorm", a scenario similar to a horde mode in which waves of demonic creatures spawn and attack Frey. The storm will end with the appearance of a named boss character.

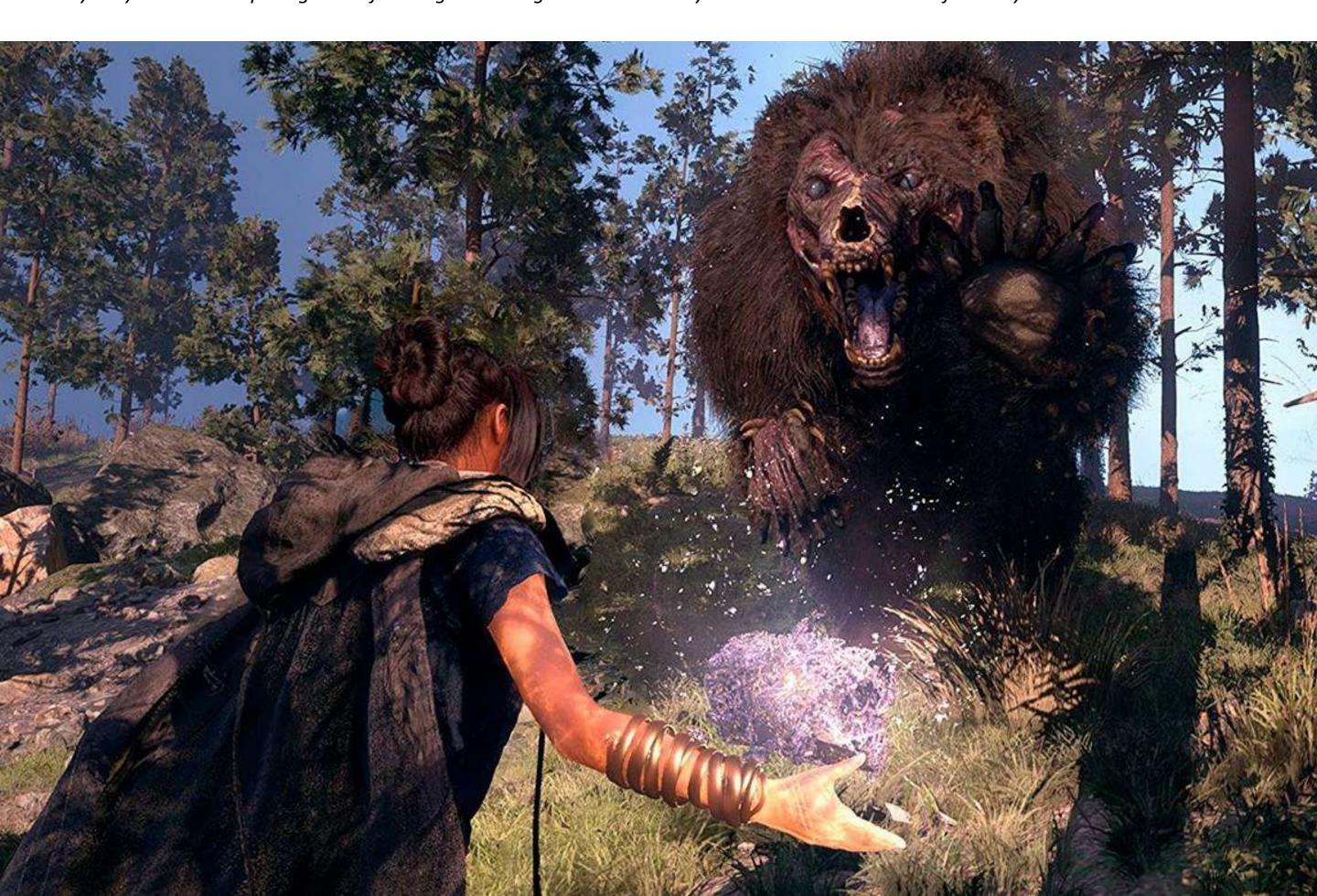
Story

The protagonist, Frey Holland (Ella Balinska) is a young woman who is transported from New York City to the fantasy world of Athia and uses magical powers to journey through it and survive in order to find her way home. Athia is under the tyrannical rule of the Tantas, which include Tanta Sila (Janina Gavankar) and Tanta Prave (Pollyanna McIntosh). Other characters include Frey's sentient bracelet Cuff (Jonathan Cake), the archivist Johedy (Keala Settle), and Auden (Monica Barbaro).

Development

Forspoken is the debut title for Luminous Productions. The company was originally assembled from employees working on Final Fantasy XV. Earlier in development, the game was known under the title Project Athia. It is being developed to take advantage of the graphical capabilities of the PlayStation 5. Technologies featured in the game include ray tracing for greatly enhanced lighting effects, and procedural generation for the creation of large-scale locations. Initially set to be released on May 24, 2022, Square Enix delayed its release to October 11, 2022.

The game's writing team includes Gary Whitta (who also serves as story team lead), Amy Hennig, Allison Rymer, and Todd Stashwick. Bear McCreary and Garry Schyman are composing music for the game. The game will be a PlayStation 5 console exclusive for two years.











Balan Wonderworld 🤚



Balan Wonderworld is a 2021 platform game developed by Arzest and Balan Company and published by Square Enix. Assuming the role of two children guided by a magical being called Balan, the player explores twelve worlds themed after the hearts of troubled individuals. Gameplay follows the protagonists as they explore sandbox levels, collecting items to progress to further areas and using a variety of powers unlocked using themed costumes.

Balan Wonderworld is the debut project of Balan Company, a subsidiary of Square Enix led by Sonic the Hedgehog and Nights into Dreams creator Yuji Naka. Development began in 2018 as Naka's first collaboration with artist Naoto Ohshima since Sonic Adventure (1998). The aesthetic was based on musical theater, and Naka studied the hero's journey when creating the story draft. The scenario was written by novelist Soushi Kawasaki. The music, composed by Ryo Yamazaki and Hironori Anazawa, emulates musical scores and includes vocals from West End performers such as Laura Pitt-Pulford. The CGI cutscenes were created by Visual Works.

Balan Wonderworld was released worldwide for Windows, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X/S on 26 March. Square Enix also published a novelization by Kawasaki. The game received generally negative reviews and underperformed commercially. Critics panned its gameplay and design, although some praised its character design and music. Following the game's release, Naka resigned from Square Enix, later revealing he was removed from the project six months before release due to internal conflict around its quality and marketing.

Gameplay

Balan Wonderworld is a platform game where players take on the role of either Leo Craig or Emma Cole, two children drawn into the magical realm of Wonderworld by a being called Balan. The game plays out across twelve multi-level areas called Chapters. At the beginning of the game only the first Chapter is available, but collecting items called Balan Statues in each area will unlock new Chapters. Within each Chapter, Leo or Emma must navigate through a sandbox environment, searching areas for collectables and solving puzzles to progress to the end of the level. Collectables include Balan Statues and crystalline objects called Drops. A simple control scheme is used, with two buttons used to change between costumes, and other actions aside from character and camera movement mapped to all other buttons. During exploration, enemies called Negati will appear and attack the player character. Each chapter ends with a boss battle themed after the Chapter's environment and narrative. The game uses adaptive difficulty, adjusting the number and types of enemies based on player performance both on the initial playthrough and return playthroughs of stages.

While exploring, Leo or Emma find costumes from the cast of each chapter; these are unlocked using collectable keys. Costumes grant abilities such as hovering, navigating particular hazards and paths, or fighting enemies. When not wearing a costume, Leo and Emma's only available actions are jumping and basic movement. 80 costumes are spread through the stages, some of them in secret locations. Only three costumes can be held at a time; when players acquire a fourth, the costume it replaces is sent into a costume bank which can be accessed at checkpoints. Receiving damage, or falling off the edge of the environment, causes the equipped costume to disappear. If the character is hit without a costume, they are ejected from the Chapter.

Minigames can be unlocked and played within each chapter using special costumes, such as a football-themed challenge. A recurring minigame activated by finding a top hat in levels is Balan's Bout. Taking on the role of Balan, players engage in a series of quick time events, matching Balan's poses with button presses. Performance is ranked, with the best performance rewarding a Balan Statue upon first completion, and multiplying the current Drop total. Chapters can also be played in two-player local co-op multiplayer. Taking on the roles of Leo and Emma respectively, the players can combine costume abilities to simplify puzzles and open potential new pathways through levels.



Developer: Arzest, Balan Company **Publisher:** Square Enix **Director:** Yuji Naka **Producer:** Noriyoshi Fujimoto **Designer:** Tomohide Hayashi **Programmer:** Yuki Hatakeyama **Artists:** Naoto Ohshima, Yuki Endo, Masamichi Harada Writers: Soushi Kawasaki, Yuji Naka Composers: Ryo Yamazaki, Hironori Anazawa **Engine:** Unreal Engine 4 Platforms: Microsoft Windows, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S Release: 26 March 2021 **Genre:** Platform **Mode:** Single-player, Multiplayer TiTi Rating: 8/10

Chapters are accessed through the game's hub world, the Isle of Tims—a floating island inhabited by the titular creatures. In the hub, players can feed Tims with Drops collected in levels, changing their color and consequently their abilities; for example, red Tims aid in fights, while pink Tims recover hidden items. Tim eggs can be found in Chapters, growing the number of Tims in the hub. By picking up a Tim, the player can take it onto a stage. A special construction is the Tower of Tims, which is grown using mechanisms powered by the Tims. After completing the game, a new third stage is unlocked for each chapter, featuring more difficult environments and new costumes.

Synopsis

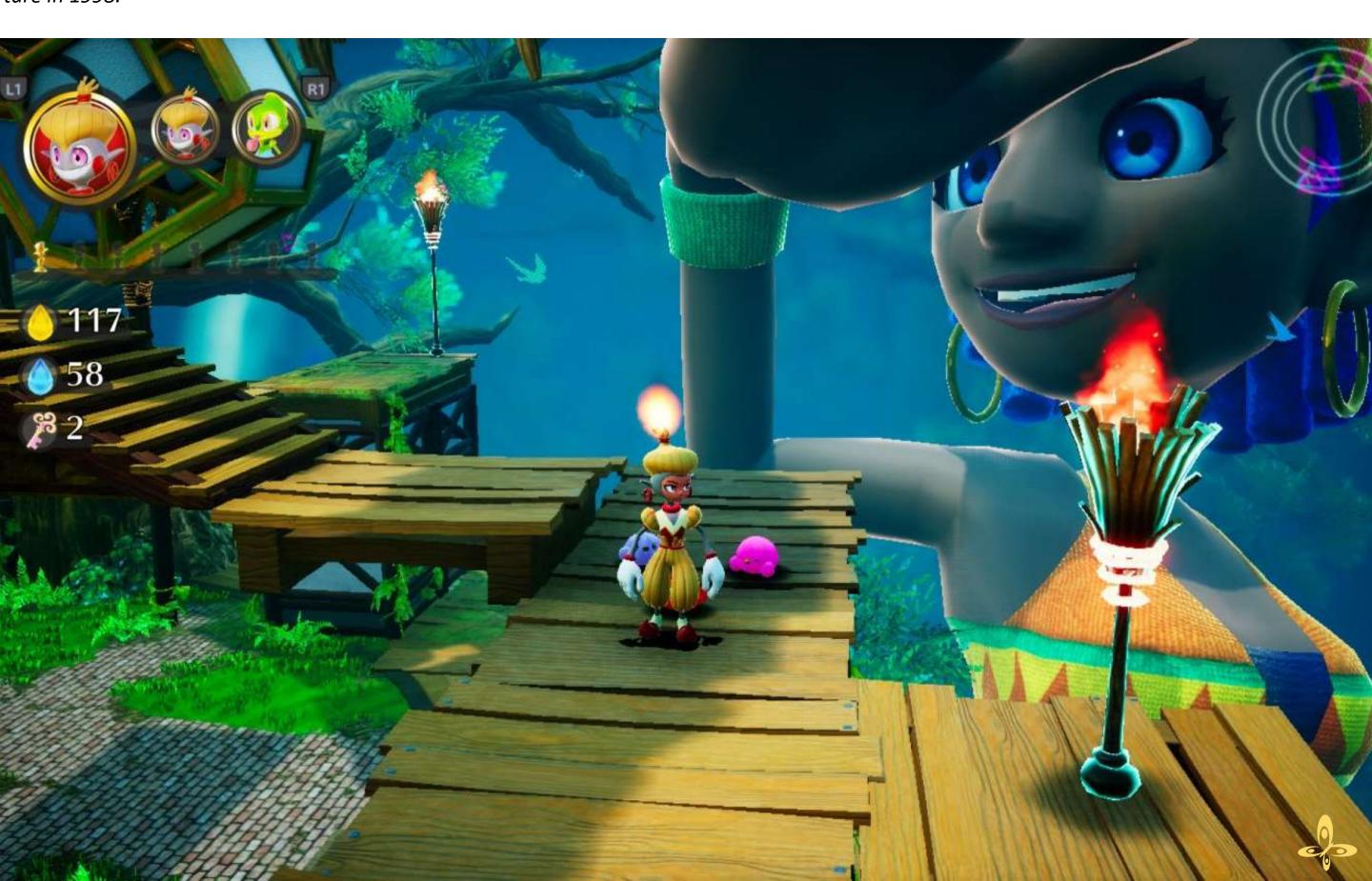
Balan Wonderworld mostly takes place in the Balan Theater, a magical realm overseen by a mysterious being called Balan. The Balan Theater appears when one's heart loses its balance, and connects to Wonderworld, a realm merging reality and fantasy created from memories and hearts. The protagonists are two troubled children called Leo and Emma. Leo isolates himself from social contact due to an argument with a friend years before, while Emma suffers from anxiety about what others might be saying behind her back. Both are drawn into the Balan Theater, and travel through twelve worlds born from the hearts of troubled adults and children alike. Leo and Emma are opposed by Lance, a counterpart to Balan who commands the Negati, monsters born from the darkness of Wonderworld's visitors.

After completing all twelve worlds and freeing their inhabitants of their burdens, Balan opens a portal for the chosen character to fight Lance. Upon his defeat, Lance is briefly shown in his true less menacing form before the Negati drag him into their realm. Balan then bids farewell to all of Wonderworld's visitors, though Leo and Emma's farewell is touching enough that he sheds a tear and shows them his real form; a human-like being similar to Lance in appearance. Leo and Emma are returned to the real world and face their problems; Leo connects with a dancing group he had previously shunned, while Emma learns of a birthday party thrown for her that her servants were keeping secret. The ending credits show stills of Wonderworld's visitors reuniting in the real world watched over by Balan.

Development

Balan Wonderworld was the first collaboration between director Yuji Naka and artist Naoto Ohshima since Sonic Adventure (1998).

Balan Wonderworld is the debut project from Balan Company, a Square Enix subsidiary founded in 2018 by Sonic the Hedgehog and Nights into Dreams creator Yuji Naka to bring together internal and external production staff. Naka described Balan Company as a collective of designers and artists focusing on genres outside the norms of Square Enix. It was co-developed by Arzest, a company which had previously co-developed multiple projects for Nintendo and Mistwalker. A key staff member at Arzest was Naoto Ohshima, known for his work as a Sega artist who created the designs for Sonic the Hedgehog and Doctor Eggman. When Naka joined Square Enix in January 2018, he considered making social mobile games, but was encouraged by Shinji Hashimoto to make action games for the new market, which was seeing a resurgence in classic action and platform games. Naka approached Ohshima and Arzest about a collaboration. It was the first collaboration between Naka and Ohshima since Sonic Adventure in 1998.





Naka was given the go-ahead for the project by Square Enix due to his experience with platforming and action games, but was told it was his "one chance" at the genre with them. The game was described as a fusion of multiple popular styles of platform game aimed at as wide an audience as possible. Describing their approach to production, Ohshima compared it to an earlier less structured style, where features and adjustments continued past the halfway point of production. Production began in July 2018. The game was produced by Square Enix's Noriyoshi Fujimoto, who had acted as a producer for the Dragon Quest franchise. The team shifted to working remotely later in production due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Naka later said that he was removed as director six months before the game's release after complaining over the state of the game, and that Arzest had submitted the game with unaddressed bugs. He said the decision to remove him was made by the producer and other senior product staff. Naka felt Balan Wonderworld was released in an unfinished state.

Design

Balan Wonderworld was produced for Microsoft Windows, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X/S. Fujimoto said the team got carried away slightly by the increased hardware specifications of next-generation consoles, wanting to add more features as production advanced. It was made available on a wide range of platforms, allowing for the largest possible audience. It also notably targeted a wide audience including children when other producers for next-generation hardware were mostly aimed at an adult audience. The design proposal included the 80 costume count as a hook, and Naka was sure he would need to halve the number as production went on. In the end and to his surprise, he was able to create all 80. During the concept stages, Ohshima created 120 concept costumes, narrowing it down to 80. He later commented that as the 80 costumes were a core pillar of the game, reducing the number would have shifted its design. The team tied a single action to each costume to give them relevance, with only one button command so the younger players the team were targeting as part of their audience would not get confused. Later in development, the team incorporated the DualSense controller's haptic feedback.

The process of creating the different costume's single actions was difficult for the team, especially as they wanted to leave players the freedom of challenging themselves to complete levels with a particular costume or set of costumes. The character models of each level's "cast" vanished when approached so players would not mistake them for enemies, while also playing into the themes of each world. The penalty for taking damage was made minimal so players would not be discouraged from experimentation. Balancing the different costumes and fitting them into each stage to preserve challenge was one of the hardest aspects of development. In the middle of development, the co-op mode was suggested as an entertaining addition, further complicating production. The difficulty scaling, which adjusted both combat difficulty and item placement based on player actions, was handled by a meta Al designed by Yoichiro Miyake, a Square Enix employee specialising in game Al. Bug testing caused trouble as it was unclear whether the game code, the engine development kit, or the platform-specific version was the one in need of attention. Ohshima attributed their successes with finding bugs to Square Enix's resources.

The game was built using Unreal Engine 4, chosen due to its wide multiplatform support, with a dedicated version of the game being created for each platform. The game's technical director Koichi Watanabe made adjustments to the engine, replacing most of its original Blueprint Visual Scripting with C++ to speed up processing, though this caused problems getting the reworked engine working across its platforms. They also needed to cope with updates to the engine software, with Watanabe collaborating with Epic Games to incorporate his customization alongside the updates. The Steam version caused its own issues due to needing a keyboard option, and the wider variety of graphical options compared to home consoles. After transitioning to remote working during 2020, the team cooperated with Epic Games to have access to the Unreal development environment, having separate environments for the Windows and next-generation console versions.





The cinematics were created by Square Enix's CGI subsidiary Visual Works, directed by Kazuyuki Ikumori. Ohshima revealed the original plan did not include CGI scenes, but Visual Works wanted to be part of the project, and Ohshima created rough storyboards from which the studio designed the cinematics. When creating the cinematics, they combined the "cool" style of Final Fantasy with more cartoonish Dragon Quest aesthetics. This allowed for both emotional depth in expressions and an aesthetic that would appeal to younger audiences. Due to its musical elements, special attention was paid to synchronizing the movements and lighting with the musical score. Due to the ability to choose the ethnicity of Leo and Emma, which were reflected in all cutscenes, Square Enix partnered with CRI Middleware to provide graphical software. CRI Middleware customized one of their software tools to adjust each character's hair and skin tones based on choice within both real-time and CGI scenes without taking up space with tailored cutscenes for each choice.

Balan Wonderworld was revealed in July 2020. It was released worldwide on 26 March 2021. The PlayStation, Xbox, and Switch versions saw physical and digital releases, while the PC version was a digital exclusive through Steam; the Xbox version was only available digitally in Japan.[35] Bug testing was a high priority and troubling, as when a bug was found it had to be individually corrected for each platform version. The game was accompanied by a novelization by Kawasaki, Balan Wonderworld: Maestro of Mystery, Theater of Wonder, released digitally on 26 March through Square Enix's publishing imprints. The novelization adds context to some events and characters. Lance was the former master of Wonderworld before being overwhelmed by negative human emotion, creating Balan as a replacement. Visitors to Wonderworld are drawn from various time periods and locations around the world, and normally lose their memories upon leaving. The novel ends with Balan allowing the visitors to retain their memories, vowing not to become like Lance.

A demo, including the entire first Chapter and the first level of Chapters 4 and 6, was released on 27 January. Naka's later comments revealed the demo was delayed at Fujimoto's request, though Naka was critical of this as he claimed Fujimoto initially decided the "tight" development schedule initially. While progress did not carry over into the main game, save data from the demo unlocked a special costume themed after each platform. The demo was taken down on 14 April for consoles, and the following day on Steam. Reception of the demo was generally mixed; while many praised the art style and music, several faulted the control and camera. While the game was too close to release for major adjustments, Square Enix created a day-one patch to address camera and character movement problems, and alter the difficulty to make later bosses more challenging. The patch also fixed a bug involving flashes of light in the final boss which raised concerns about epileptic seizures, causing Square Enix to warn players to install the patch before playing. According to IGN reviewer Tom Marks, Square Enix did not provide advance copies to reviewers.

Shortly after the game's release, Naka resigned from Square Enix and contemplated retirement from game making, but later announced that his next game would be an independent mobile project, under Prope. In late April 2022 he elaborated that he was removed from the project six months before release by the producer due to both the game's state and the use of a fan cover during promotion without due credit to the artist. He had sued Square Enix over releasing the game in its current condition, accusing Square Enix and Arzest of not caring about consumers. This was seen as a notable incident both due to the game's troubled release and recurring news trends relating to the treatment of staff within the video game industry as of 2022.







Trek to Yomi 👃

Trek to Yomi is a side-scrolling action game developed by Flying Wild Hog and published by Devolver Digital. The game was released for Windows, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X/S in May 2022. Based in Japan and set in the Edo period, the game follows a young warrior named Hiroki who goes on a journey to confront the people responsible for the destruction of his village.

Gameplay

Trek to Yomi is a side-scrolling action game. There are two modes of melee attack; light attacks are fast but weak, and heavy attacks are slow but strong. A well-timed block will break an enemy guard, giving players an opportunity to counter-attack. Melee attacks can be combined with directional movements for actions such as thrusting a sword forward, or turning deftly to slash enemies attacking from behind. Players need to observe the combat stance of their opponents and react accordingly. For instance, the player should stab an enemy by thrusting forward if their opponent is prepared to block the player's attack by holding their sword horizontally. The player character is equipped with a samurai katana. New weapons such as ozutsu, bo-shurikens, and ranged weapons such as bows and arrows unlock as the player progresses in the game. While the game is set in the Edo period, it also features bosses, mythological creatures and other supernatural elements. The player can also occasionally use various environmental hazards to kill their opponents, avoiding direct combat altogether.

Gameplay regularly alternates between freeform exploration and side-scrolling combat sessions that utilize a fixed camera. While the game is mostly a linear experience, its world features secret areas where players can find additional health and stamina upgrades, as well as bonus tools and weapons. They would also discover shrines which replenish the player's health and stamina. Each shrine, however, can only be used once in a playthrough. The player may also encounter other friendly non-playable characters who may give them clues as to where to go next. While the game is designed to be a challenging experience, it also features a cinematic mode which lowers the game's difficulty level. Once the player completes the game once, they will unlock an extra difficulty mode in which the player character would die immediately when they are hit.

Development

The idea for the game emerged when game director Leonard Menchiari was experimenting with black and white imagery using Unreal Engine. Publisher Devolver Digital then approached one of their long-term partners, Polish studio Flying Wild Hog, who was developing Devolverland Expo for the publisher at that time, about a game set in the Edo period. The studio was intrigued by the project and agreed to serve as the game's developer. Devolver Digital then brought Menchiari and Flying Wild Hog together and began the game's production. The game was heavily inspired by classic samurai movies, especially those directed by Akira Kurosawa. Its 2D side-scrolling gameplay was influenced by silent movies from the 1920s to 1930s, in which "each scene is designed to look more like a magical moving theatre stage rather than a screen". According to game director Marcin Kryszpin, Trek to Yomi was not designed to be a big game, and that the game should last around five hours.

According to Menchiari, the game's story and themes were focused on two major components: historical Japan and Shinto mythology. As the game was set during Edo Japan, the team worked extensively to ensure that the game is historically accurate and authentic. The team consulted Aki Tabei Matsunaga, a Japanese historian who helped the team to translate and stylize the dialogue so that they are period appropriate. The team also used the displays at the Edo-Tokyo Museum as the foundation for the design of various in-game assets. The team collaborated with Emperia Sound and Music and composers Yoko Honda and Cody Matthew Johnson for the game's music. Japanese musical instruments that were found during the Edo period such as taiko drums and shamisen were used to record the game's original soundtracks. A Gagaku (traditional Japanese orchestra) were recruited to perform the game's music during the recording process.

Devolver Digital officially announced the game during its showcase at E3 2021. The game released on May 5, 2022, for Windows, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X and Series S. The game also became available to Xbox Game Pass subscribers at launch.













Six Days in Fallujah 🦂



Six Days in Fallujah is an upcoming tactical shooter game developed by Highwire Games and published by Victura. It is slated to be one of the first video games to focus directly on the Iraq War. The game's plot follows a squad of U.S. Marines from 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1), fighting in the Second Battle of Fallujah over the span of six days in November 2004.

The premise of the game was the subject of controversy in 2009, with questions raised as to its appropriateness, especially given the fact that the true events the game is based upon were recent at the time. It was originally to be published by Konami, however, in April 2009, a spokesperson informed the Associated Press that Konami was no longer publishing the game due to the controversy surrounding it. The game was originally slated for a 2010 release, but it was cancelled due to controversy; the game was put on hold until 2016 after its original studio, Atomic Games, went bankrupt in 2011.

In February 2021, the game was announced to be back in development at Highwire Games, consisting of former Halo and Destiny game developers. Six Days in Fallujah is expected to be released on Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X/S in late 2022.

Background

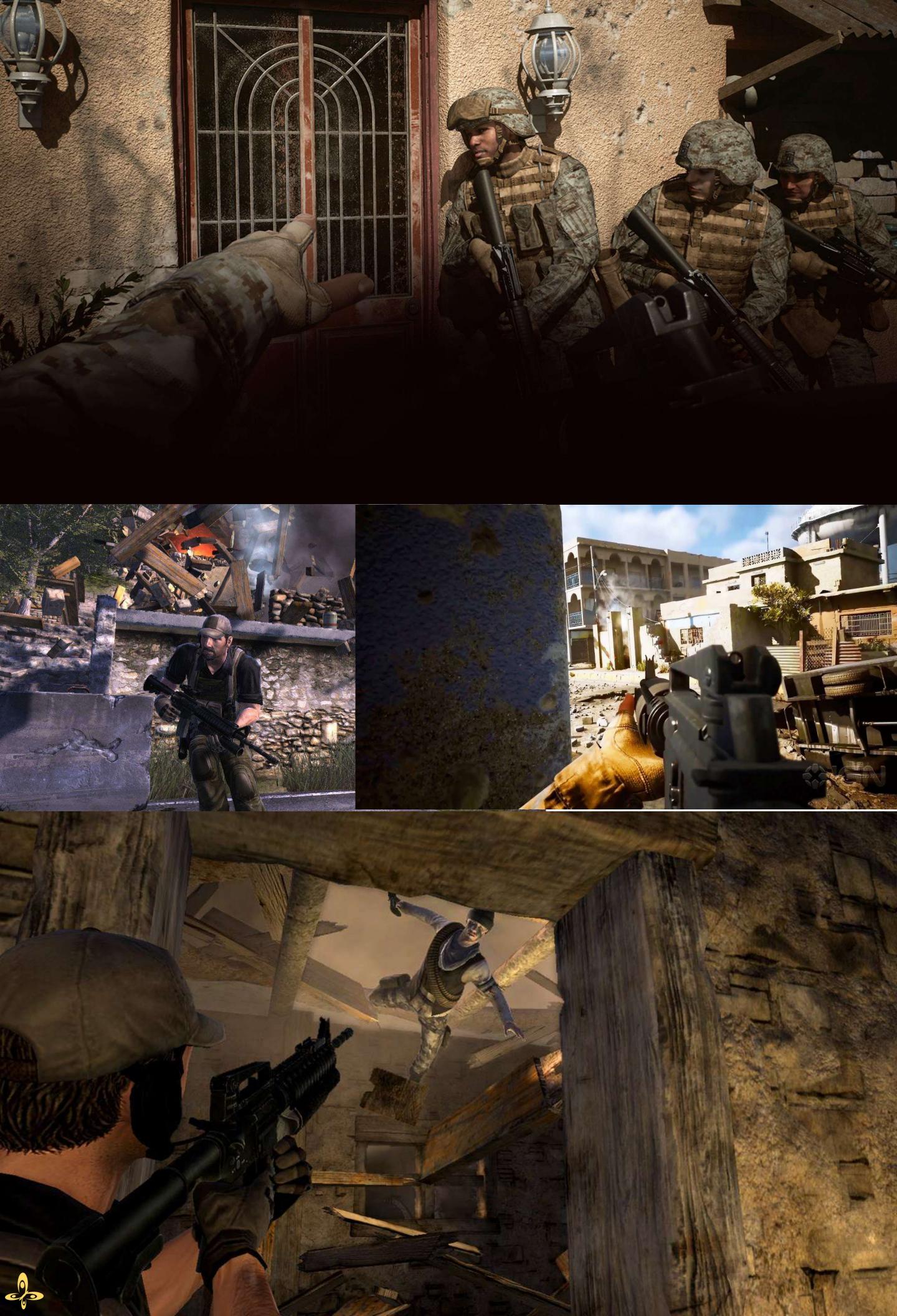
In an interview with Atomic Games president, Peter Tamte, he stated that "One of the divisions in our company was developing training tools for the United States Marine Corps, and they assigned some U.S. Marines from 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines to help us out." However, a few months into development, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1) was deployed in Iraq and participated in the Second Battle of Fallujah. The inspiration for the game came from a U.S. Marine who participated in the battle and asked to have a game made of it. Tamte later stated that "When they came back from Fallujah, they asked us to create a video game about their experiences there, and it seemed like the right thing to do." Tamte further stated that the goal of Six Days in Fallujah is to create the most realistic military shooter possible, and that "Ultimately, all of us are curious about what it would really be like to be in a war. I've been playing military shooters for ages, and at a certain point when I'm playing the game, I know it's fake. You can tell a bunch of guys sat in a room and designed it. That's always bothered me.". Tamte further elaborated in an interview with Joystiq that, "The words I would use to describe the game—first of all, it's compelling. And another word I use—insight. There are things that you can do in video games that you cannot do in other forms of media. And a lot of that has to do with presenting players with the dilemmas that the Marines saw in Fallujah and then giving them the choice of how to handle that dilemma. And I think at that point, you know - when you watch a movie, you see the decisions that somebody else made. But when you make a decision yourself, then you get a much deeper level of understanding.". Tamte describes the project as "a meticulously recreated in-game version of Fallujah, complete with real life Marines lending their names and likenesses, as well as recreations of specific events from the battle. It's almost like time travel. You're experiencing the events as they really happened."

Development

The team at Atomic Games interviewed over 70 individuals, composed of the returning U.S. Marines, Iraqi civilians, Iraqi insurgents, war historians, and senior military officials, and learned the psychological complexity of the battle. The game's director, Juan Benito, elaborated that "Through our interviews with all of the Marines, we discovered that there was an emotional, psychological arc to the Battle of Fallujah.

Atomic Games describes Six Days as a survival horror game, but not in the traditional sense. The fear in Six Days does not come from the undead or supernatural, but from the unpredictable, terrifying, and real tactics employed by the insurgents that were scattered throughout Fallujah. Benito states that "Many of the insurgents had no intention of leaving the city alive, so their entire mission might be to lie in wait, with a gun trained at a doorway, for days just waiting for a Marine to pop his head in.









They went door-to-door clearing houses, and most of the time the houses would be empty. But every now and then, they would encounter a stunningly lethal situation... which, of course, rattled the Marines psychologically." GamePro has stated that for Benito, giving players a taste of the horror, fear, and misery experienced by real-life Marines in the battle was a top priority. Benito states "These are scary places, with scary things happening inside of them. In the game, you're plunging into the unknown, navigating through darkened interiors, and 'surprises' left by the insurgency. In most modern military shooters, the tendency is to turn the volume up to 11 and keep it there. Our game turns it up to 12 at times but we dial it back down, too, so we can establish a cadence."

According to one of the developers who worked on the game, the development team consulted non-fiction books about the battle as part of their research, such as Patrick K. O'Donnell's We Were One: Shoulder to Shoulder with the Marines Who Took Fallujah, incorporating their recollections into the game's events and story-line.

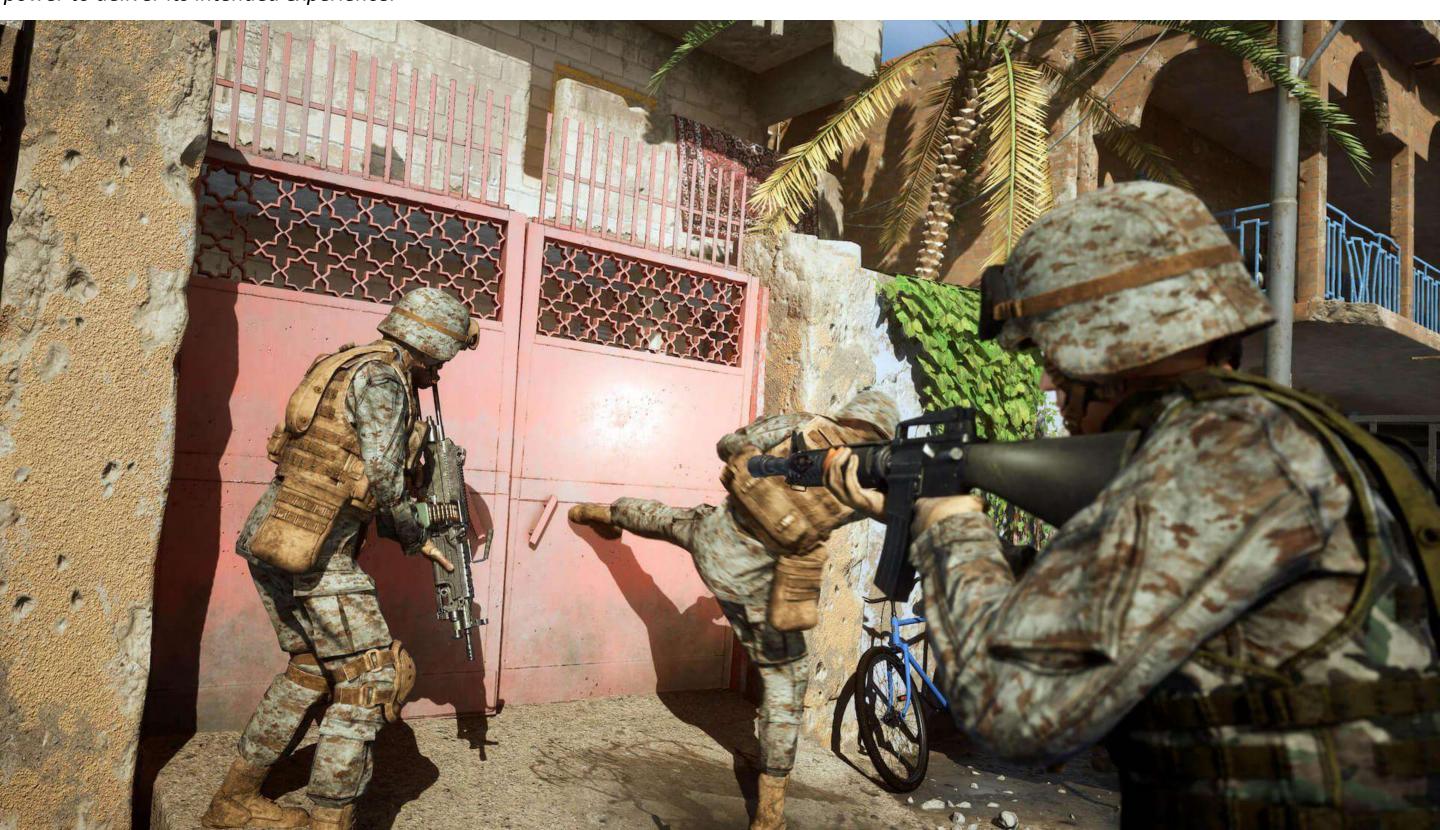
Atomic Games has also stated that the game's environments are 100% destructible and degradable thanks to a completely custom rendering engine, and it would surpass that of Battlefield: Bad Company. Tamte states that "This engine gives us more destructive capability than we've seen in any game, even games that aren't finished yet." According to the developers, destructible environments are critically important in telling the true story of the events in Fallujah, as the Marines eventually learned to blow holes in houses using C4, grenade launchers, air strikes and depleted uranium shells to blindside anyone waiting within, being considered as "combat puzzles". It is also stated that the claim of the game containing destructive environments is genuine and not based around a "goofy, out-of-place marketing gimmick."

On April 27, 2009, it was announced that, due to the controversial nature of the game, Konami suspended its role as a publisher. The game is still in development by Atomic games, but Konami will not be publishing it. On August 6, 2009, Atomic Games said that they were unable to obtain a new publisher and would let go of some staff. A day later Industrygamers stated that they heard from a source, "Out of 75 people, less than a dozen are left and about a third of that isn't even developers. The remaining team is basically a skeleton cleanup crew that will be gone soon too. They are trying to downplay the extent of these layoffs, but the reality is that Atomic is pretty much dead.".

On March 2, 2010, IGN claimed the game is still coming out and is finished. In August 2012, it was revealed that Sony may have once considered publishing the title. Later that month, Atomic Games' president, Peter Tamte, informed the British website, Digital Spy, that Six Days in Fallujah was "definitely not canceled" and remains "very important" to the studio.[20] In 2018, Tamte again stated that the game was not cancelled, that the assets were still intact, and that it would eventually be finished and released at an undetermined future date.

Sony Interactive Entertainment's Santa Monica Studio had developed the game at one point.

In February 2021, it was announced that Victura, a company formed by Peter Tamte in 2016, would release the game later the same year, and that Highwire had been contracted as developers. This revived version would feature extensive commentary from Marines and civilians, as well as two playable campaigns: one in which the player controls a squad of Marines to hunt down insurgents while avoiding civilian casualties and another where the player controls a patriarch of an Iraqi civilian family as they struggle to escape the war zone. After a dearth of reports over its developmental status throughout the year, the developers announced that the game will be delayed to 2022, as they need more time, resources and manpower to deliver its intended experience.





Disco Elysium

Disco Elysium is a 2019 role-playing video game by ZA/UM. Inspired by Infinity Engine—era games, particularly Planescape: Torment, the game was written and designed by Estonian novelist Robert Kurvitz and features a distinctive oil painting art style with music by the English band Sea Power.

Disco Elysium takes place in a large city still recovering from a war decades prior to the game's start, with players taking the role of an amnesiac detective who has been tasked with solving a murder mystery. During the investigation, he comes to recall events about his own past as well as current forces trying to affect the city. Disco Elysium was released for Windows in October 2019 and macOS in April 2020. An expanded version of the game featuring full voice acting and new content, subtitled The Final Cut, was released for consoles in 2021, alongside a free update for the PC versions.

Disco Elysium is a non-traditional role-playing game featuring no combat. Instead, events are resolved through skill checks and dialogue trees via a system of 24 skills that represent different aspects of the protagonist, such as his perception and pain threshold. In addition, a system called the Thought Cabinet represents his other ideologies and personality traits, with players having the ability to freely support or suppress them. The game is based on a tabletop role-playing game setting that Kurvitz had previously created, with him forming ZA/UM in 2016 to work on the game. Disco Elysium won numerous awards for its narrative and art, while being named game of the year by several publications. A television series adaptation was announced in 2020.

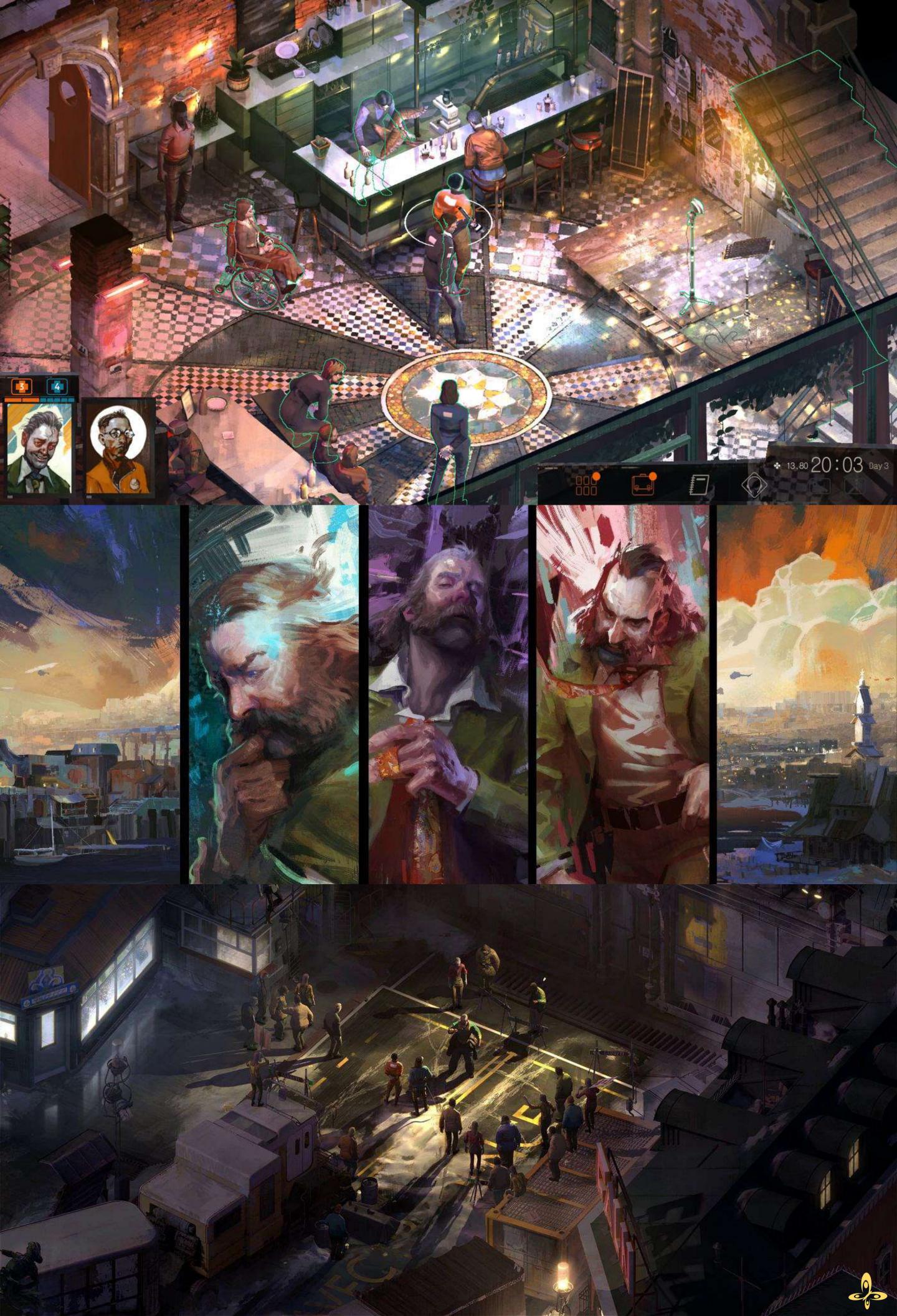
Gameplay

Disco Elysium is a role-playing video game that features an open world and dialogue-heavy gameplay mechanics. The game is presented in an isometric perspective in which the player character is controlled. The player takes the role of a detective, who suffers from alcohol and drug-induced amnesia, on a murder case. The player can move the detective about the current screen to interact with non-player characters (NPC) and highlighted objects or move onto other screens. Early in the game they gain a partner, Kim Kitsuragi, another detective who acts as the protagonist's voice of professionalism and who may be able to offer advice or support in certain dialogue options. Other NPCs may be influenced to become temporary companions that join the group and provide similar support.

The gameplay features no combat in the traditional sense; instead, it is handled through skill checks and dialogue trees. There are four primary abilities in the game: Intellect, Psyche, Physique, and Motorics, and each ability has six distinct secondary skills for a total of 24. The player improves these skills through skill points earned from leveling up. The choice of clothing that the player equips on the player-character can impart both positive and negative effects on certain skills. Upgrading these skills help the player character pass skill checks, based on a random dice roll, but potentially result in negative effects and character quirks, discouraging minmaxing. For instance, a player character with high Drama may be able to detect and fabricate lies effectively, but may also become prone to hysterics and paranoia. Likewise, high Electrochemistry shields the player character from the negative effects of drugs and provides knowledge on them, but may also lead to substance abuse and other self-destructive behaviors.

Disco Elysium features a secondary inventory system known as the "Thought Cabinet". Thoughts are unlockable through conversations with other characters, as well as through internal dialogues within the mind of the player character himself. The player is then able to "internalize" a thought through a certain amount of in-game hours, which, once completed, grants the player character permanent benefits but also occasionally negative effects, a concept that ZA/UM compared to the trait system used in the Fallout series. A limited number of slots are available in the Thought Cabinet at the start, though more can be gained with experience levels. For example, an early possible option for the Thought Cabinet is the "Hobocop" thought, in which the character ponders the option of living on the streets to save money, which reduces the character's composure with other NPCs while the thought is internalized. When the character has completed the Hobocop thought, it allows them to find more junk on the streets that can be sold for money.







The 24 skills also play into the dialogue trees, creating a situation where the player-character may have an internal debate with one aspect of their mind or body, creating the idea that the player is communicating with a fragmented persona. These internal conversations may provide suggestions or additional insight that can guide the player into actions or dialogue with the game's non-playable characters, depending on the skill points invested into the skill. For example, the Inland Empire, a subskill of the Psyche, is described by ZA/UM as a representation of the intensity of the soul, and may come into situations where the player-character may need to pass themselves off under a fake identity with the conviction behind that stance, should the player accept this suggestion when debating with Inland Empire.

Plot

The player character wakes up in a trashed hostel room in Martinaise with a severe hangover and no memory of his own identity. He meets Lieutenant Kim Kitsuragi, who informs him that they have been assigned to investigate the death of a hanged man in the cafeteria's backyard. His identity is unclear and initial investigation indicates that he was lynched by a group of people. The detectives explore the rest of the district, following up on leads while helping residents with a variety of tasks.

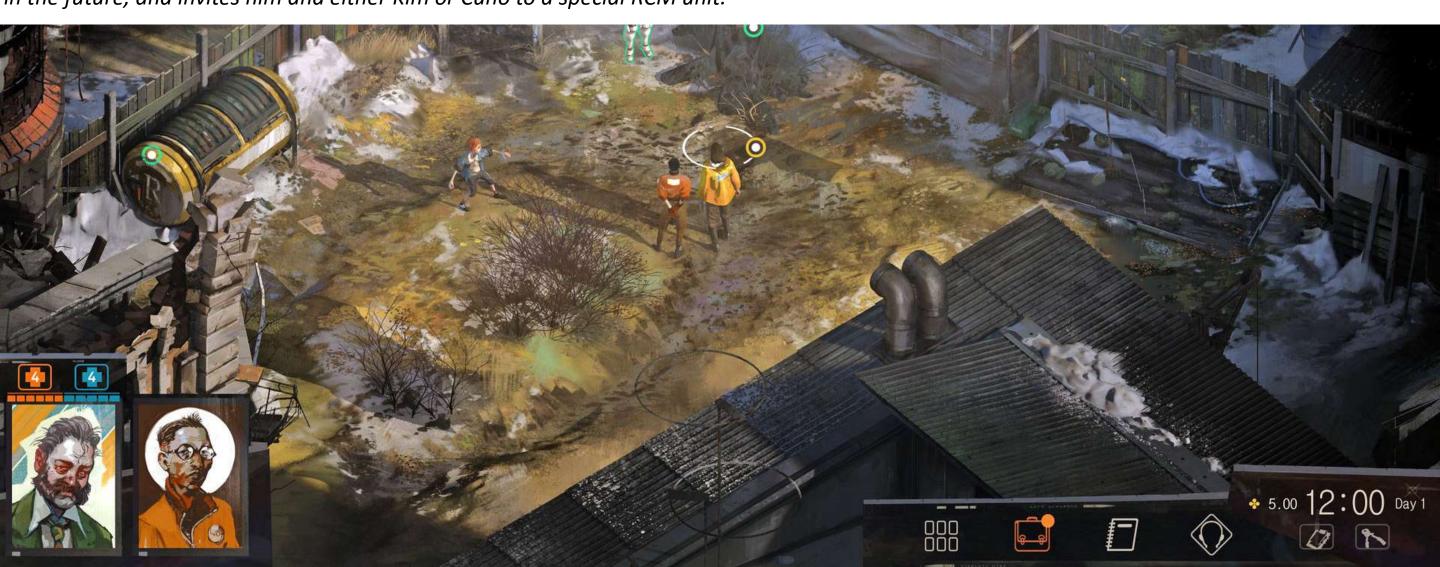
The player character gradually learns that he is a decorated RCM detective, Lieutenant Double-Yefreitor (meaning he twice declined promotion from his current rank) Harrier "Harry" Du Bois. Harry experienced an event several years ago that began a mid-life crisis, and on the night he was assigned to the hanged man case he finally snapped and embarked on a self-destructive bender around Martinaise. Through Harry and Kim's work, they discover the killing is connected to an ongoing strike by the Martinaise's dockworkers union against the Wild Pines corporation. They seek out representatives of the dockworkers and the Wild Pines corporation, meeting up with union boss Evrart Claire and Wild Pines negotiator Joyce Messier. Joyce reveals that the hanged man, named Lely, was the commander of a squad of mercenaries sent by Wild Pines to break the strike and warns that the rest of the squad has gone rogue and will likely seek retribution.

This leads them to discover that Lely was killed before the hanging. The Hardie Boys, a group of dockworkers who act as vigilantes, claim responsibility for the murder. They assert that Lely attempted to rape a cafeteria guest named Klaasje. They meet with Klaasje, who reveals that Lely was shot in the mouth while the two were having consensual sex. Unable to figure out the origin of the bullet and fearful of the authorities due to her past as a corporate spy, Klaasje enlisted the help of a truck driver and union sympathizer named Ruby, who staged Lely's death with the rest of the Hardie Boys. The detectives find Ruby hiding in an abandoned building, where she incapacitates them with a Pale device. She claims that the coverup was Klaasje's idea and has no idea who shot Lely. The player manages to resist or disable the Pale device and tries to arrest her. Ruby, who believes Harry to be a corrupt cop, either escapes or kills herself.

The detectives return to find themselves in a standoff between the mercenaries and the Hardie Boys, the former seeking revenge over Lely's death. A firefight breaks out and the player is wounded, blacking out and waking up a few days later. Most or all the mercenaries are killed and Kim may be hospitalized, in which case street urchin Cuno offers to take his place. The detectives begin chasing down their last leads, determining that the shot that killed Lely came from an old sea fort off the shore of Martinaise.

The detectives explore the fort and find the shooter, a former Commissar from the Revachol communist army named losef Lilianovich Dros. losef reveals that he shot Lely in a fit of anger and jealousy; his motivations are born out of his bitterness towards the capitalist system Lely represented, as well as sexual envy for Klaasje. The detectives arrest him for the murder. At this point, an insectoid cryptid known as the Insulindian Phasmid appears from the reeds. The player may have a psychic conversation with the Phasmid, who tells Harry that it finds the notion of his unstable mind to be fearful, but is in awe at his ability to continue existing. It comforts Harry, telling him to move on from the wreck of his life.

Harry and his partner are confronted by his old squad upon their return to Martinaise. They reflect on Harry's actions during the game, whether he has solved the case and how he handled the mercenaries. Harry's usual partner Lieutenant Jean Vicquemare confirms that Harry's emotional breakdown was the result of his ex-fiancé leaving him years ago. Depending on player choices, the squad expresses hope that Harry's state will improve in the future, and invites him and either Kim or Cuno to a special RCM unit.





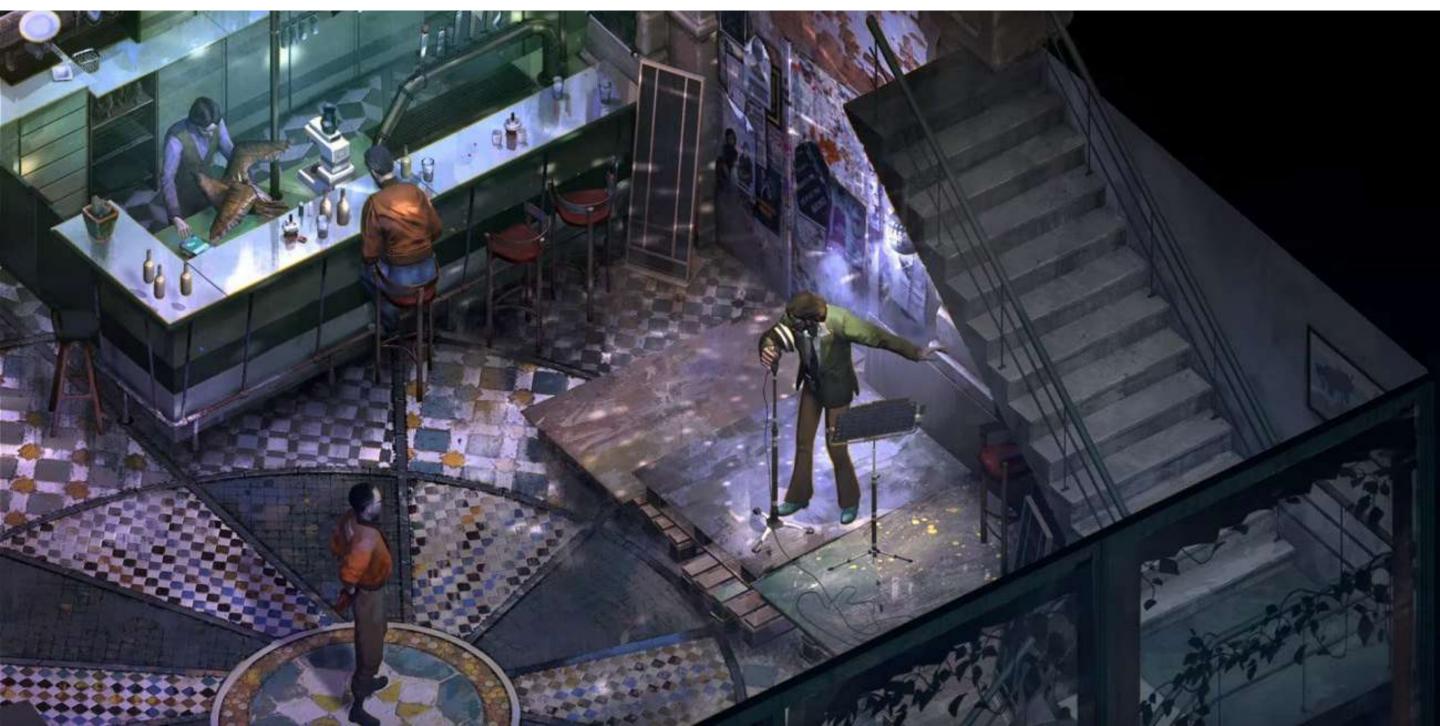
Development

Disco Elysium was developed by ZA/UM, a company founded in 2016 by Estonian novelist Robert Kurvitz, who served as the game's lead writer and designer. Kurvitz since 2001 had been part of a band called Ultramelanhool, and in 2005, while in Tallinn, Estonia, with the group struggling for finances, conceived of a fictional world during a drunken evening while listening to Tiësto's "Adagio for Strings". Feeling they had a solid idea, the group created a collective of artists and musicians, which included oil painter Aleksander Rostov, to expand upon the work of that night and developed a tabletop RPG based on Dungeons & Dragons on this steampunk-like concept. During this period, Kurvitz met Estonian author Kaur Kender who helped him to write a novel set in this world, Sacred and Terrible Air, which was published in 2013 but only sold about one thousand copies. Kurvitz fell into a period of depression and alcoholism for about three years following the book's failing.

Kurvitz eventually managed to overcome this period of alcoholism and helped Kender to also overcome his own alcoholism. As a sign of gratitude, Kender suggested to Kurvitz that instead of pursuing a novel, that he try capturing his world as a video game instead as to draw a larger interest. Kurvitz had no experience in video games before, but once he had seen artwork of the game's setting of Revachol as easily fitting into an isometric format, as well as Rostov's agreement that they might as well continue taking the risk of failing on a video game together, Kurvitz proceeded with the idea. Kurvitz wrote a concise description of what the game would be: "D&D meets '70s cop-show, in an original 'fantastic realist' setting, with swords, guns and motor-cars. Realised as an isometric CRPG — a modern advancement on the legendary Planescape: Torment and Baldur's Gate. Massive, reactive story. Exploring a vast, poverty-stricken ghetto. Deep, strategic combat." Kender was impressed by the strong statement, investing into the game's development, with additional investment coming from friends and family. The game was announced as an upcoming 2017 game under the title No Truce With the Furies, taken from the poem "Reflections" by R.S. Thomas and published in Thomas' No Truce with the Furies in 1995.

Kurvitz established the ZA/UM team to create the game, using the name "za um", a reference to the Zaum constructed language created by Russian avant-garde poets in the early 1900s. Its name can be read in Russian as either "for the mind" or "from the mind", while the use of all-capitals and the slash to present the team as "something that definitely exists and weighs eight tonnes". Work on the game started around 2016, with the local team living in a squat in a former gallery in Tallinn. They were able to secure venture capital into the game during that first year which allowed Kurvitz to seek out the English band Sea Power for their music for the game's soundtrack. While in Birmingham to speak to the band, Kurvitz realised England was a better location for the main development team as there were more local resources for both development and for voice-overs. During development, some of the staff relocated from Estonia to London and Brighton, with other designers working out of Poland, Romania, and China. Overall, by the time of the game's release, ZA/UM had about 20 outside consultants and 35 in-house developers, with a team of eight writers assisting Kurvitz in the game's dialogue. The majority of the game's funding was provided by Estonian businessman Margus Linnamäe. The game uses the Unity engine.

As originally planned, the game was to focus on action in a single city location to make the 2017 release. However, as ZA/UM had indicated to investors that this was to be a game that spanned a larger world, they found the need to spread beyond that single location, forcing them to delay the game's release, along with the name change to Disco Elysium. This title plays on a few double meanings related to the word "disco"; in one sense, it refers to ideas that briefly gain the spotlight before burning out similar to the fad of disco music, and reflected in the protagonist's clothing style, while in a more literal sense, "disco" is Latin for "I learn", thus reflecting on the protagonist's overcoming his amnesia to learn about the world of Elysium. Kurvitz had always anticipated the No Truce title to be more of a working title and wanted to reserve it for when they had bundled Disco Elysium with a second planned game. Though ZA/UM had initially planned to publish the game through Humble Bundle, they ultimately chose to self-publish it.





Release

Disco Elysium was released for Microsoft Windows on 15 October 2019. The macOS version was released on 27 April 2020. One of the first languages that ZA/UM had translated the game for was Chinese, which was released in March 2020. Its release had bypassed the typical approval process needed to release games in China as the virtue of its content, which included themes of communism, did not meet the Chinese governmental typical restrictions on content. After its release, reviews left by Chinese players had stated that they were drawn to the game as it reflected similar periods of communism that they had gone through. In May 2020, ZA/UM released an update that improved some of the game's performance on lower-end hardware, as well as adding support for additional language translations, which are being developed by the community and by the localization firm Testronic Labs.

After its original release, Kurvitz announced plans for an expansion for the game as well a full sequel. In addition, a tabletop RPG based on the systems the game used, tentatively titled You Are Vapor, was also announced, with Kurvitz also announcing plans to translate his novel Sacred and Terrible Air in English, which narratively takes place 20 years after the events of Disco Elysium. ZA/UM launched a limited edition clothing and artwork line, Atelier, in March 2021, featuring pieces based on the game.

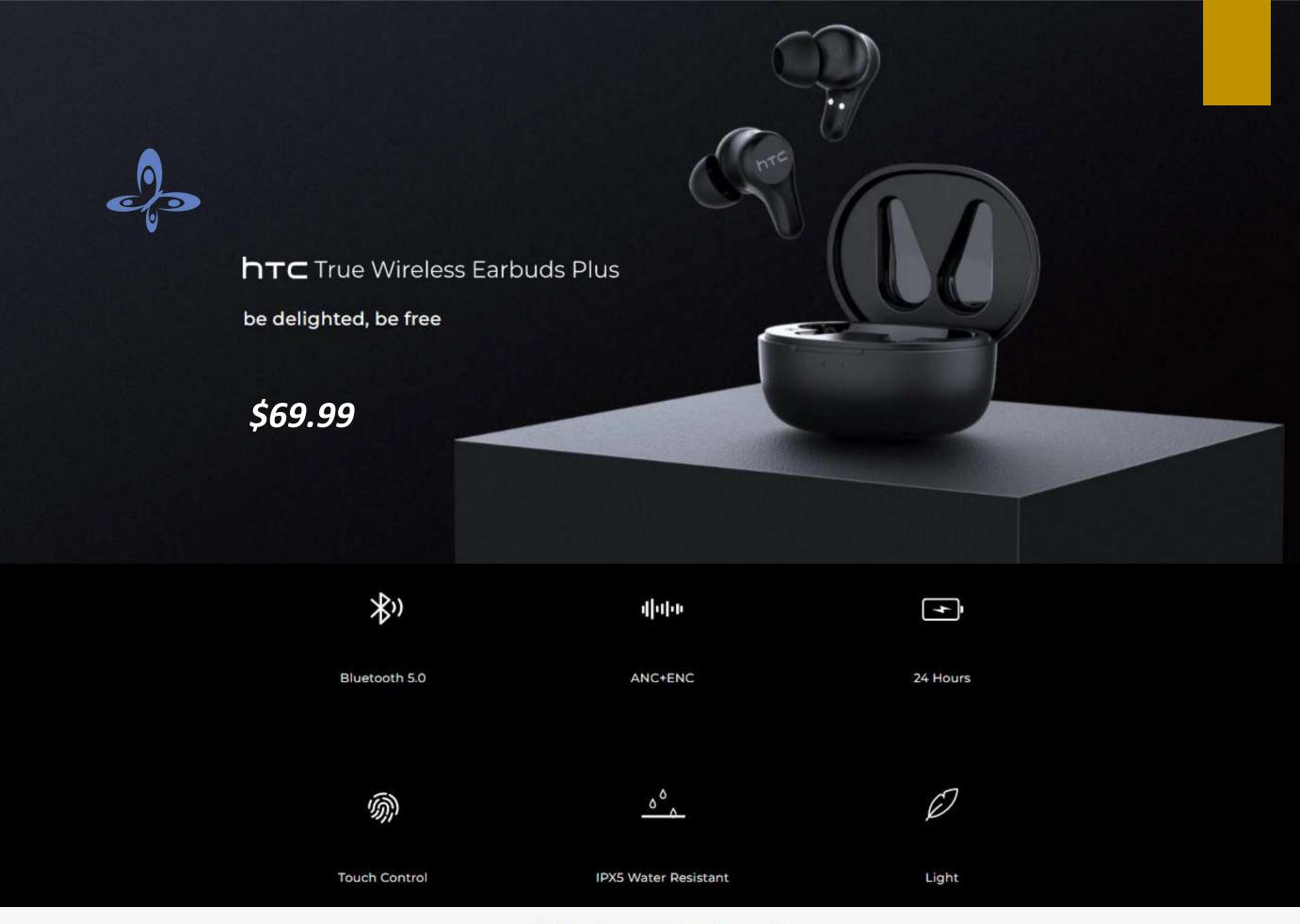
The Final Cut

The Final Cut was released on 30 March 2021 for PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, and Stadia, and as a free update for existing copies of the game on PC. Versions for Nintendo Switch, Xbox One and Xbox Series X/S were released on 12 October 2021. While the original game was not submitted for rating for the Australian Classification Board as it was only released digitally for personal computers, the planned console release of The Final Cut required a Board review. The game was refused classification by the Board, making it illegal to sell in the country, due to its depiction of sex, drug misuse or addiction, crime, cruelty, and violence, as well as showing "revolting or abhorrent phenomena in such a way that they offend against the standards of morality, decency, and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults". The ban was appealed by ZA/UM then subsequently dropped, with the game reclassified to an adults-only R18+ rating and allowed to be sold, as the Board acknowledged that the game provided disincentives related to drug-taking behavior where "regular drug use leads to negative consequences for the player's progression in the game".









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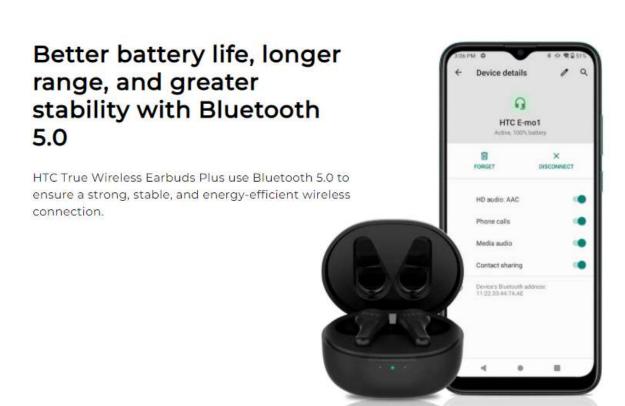
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Each earbud has two built-in microphones to support both Active Noise Cancellation (ANC) and Environmental Noise Cancellation (ENC), allowing clear communication in any environment. ANC

(Active Noise Cancellation)

ENC

(Environmental Noise Cancellation)



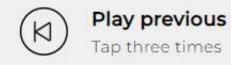
The clearest sound, in any situation.











Activate voice assistant
Press and hold (right earbud)

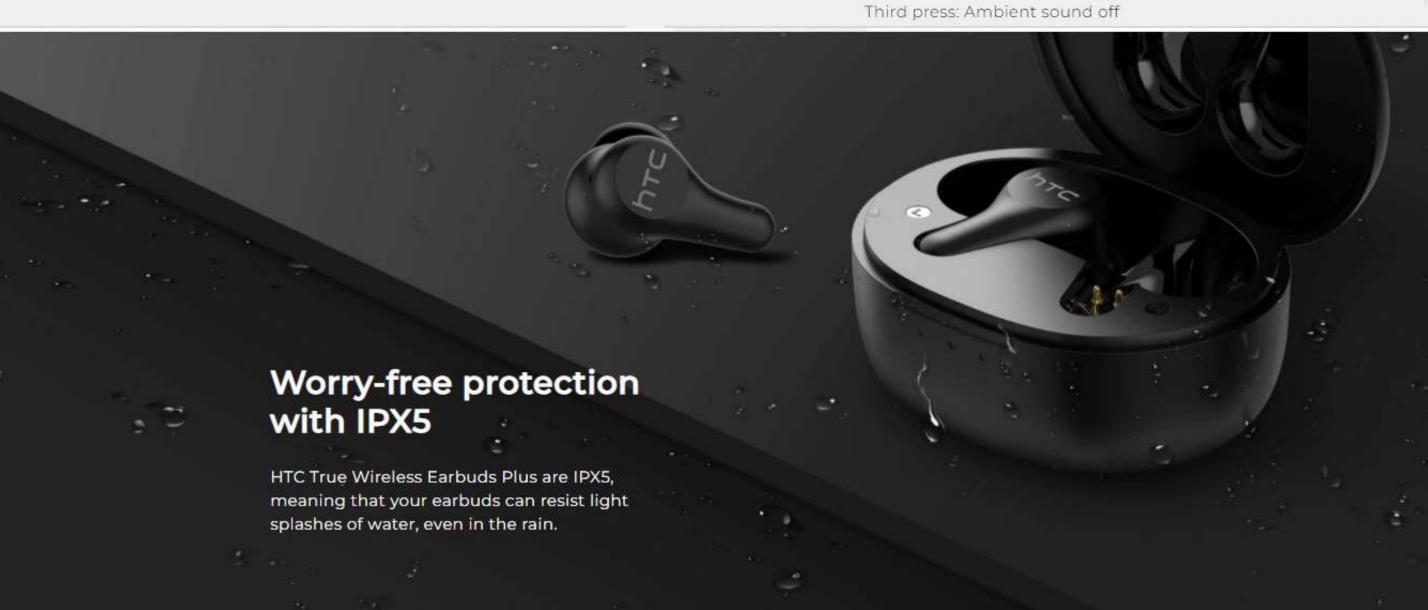
Answer/End call
Tap once

Decline call
Press and hold

ANC (Active Noise Cancellation)

Press and hold (left earbud)

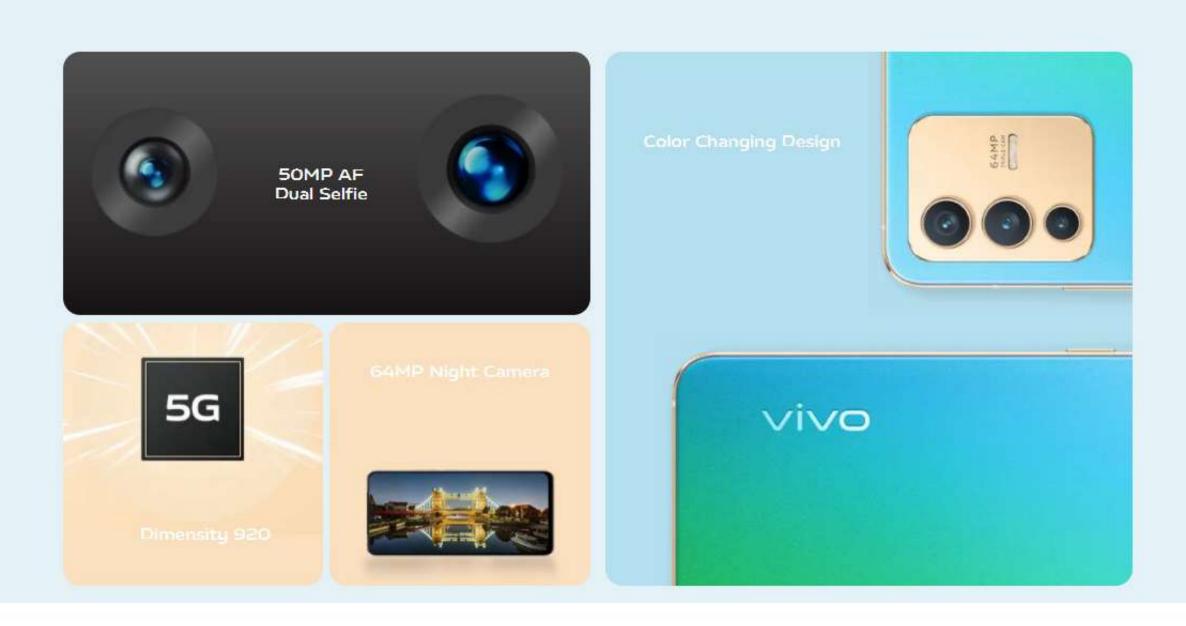
First press: ANC on Second press: Ambient sound on Third press: Ambient sound off

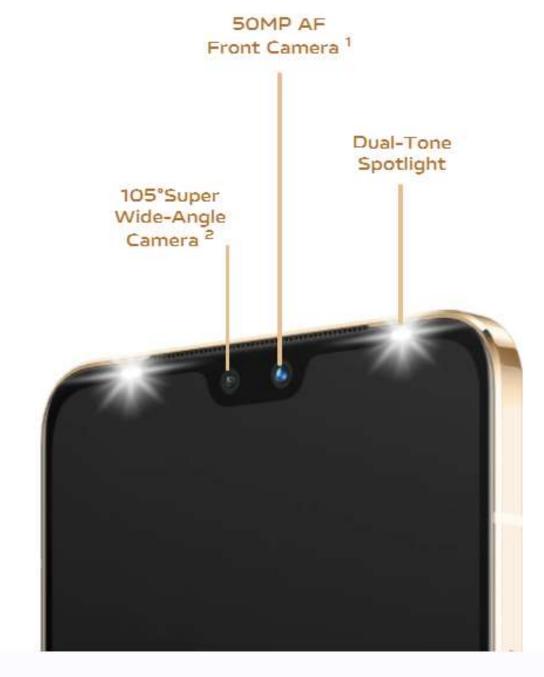




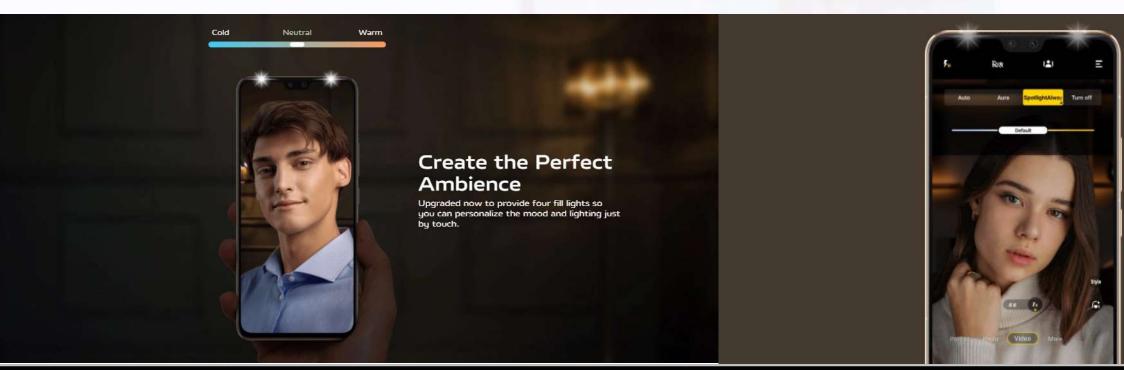


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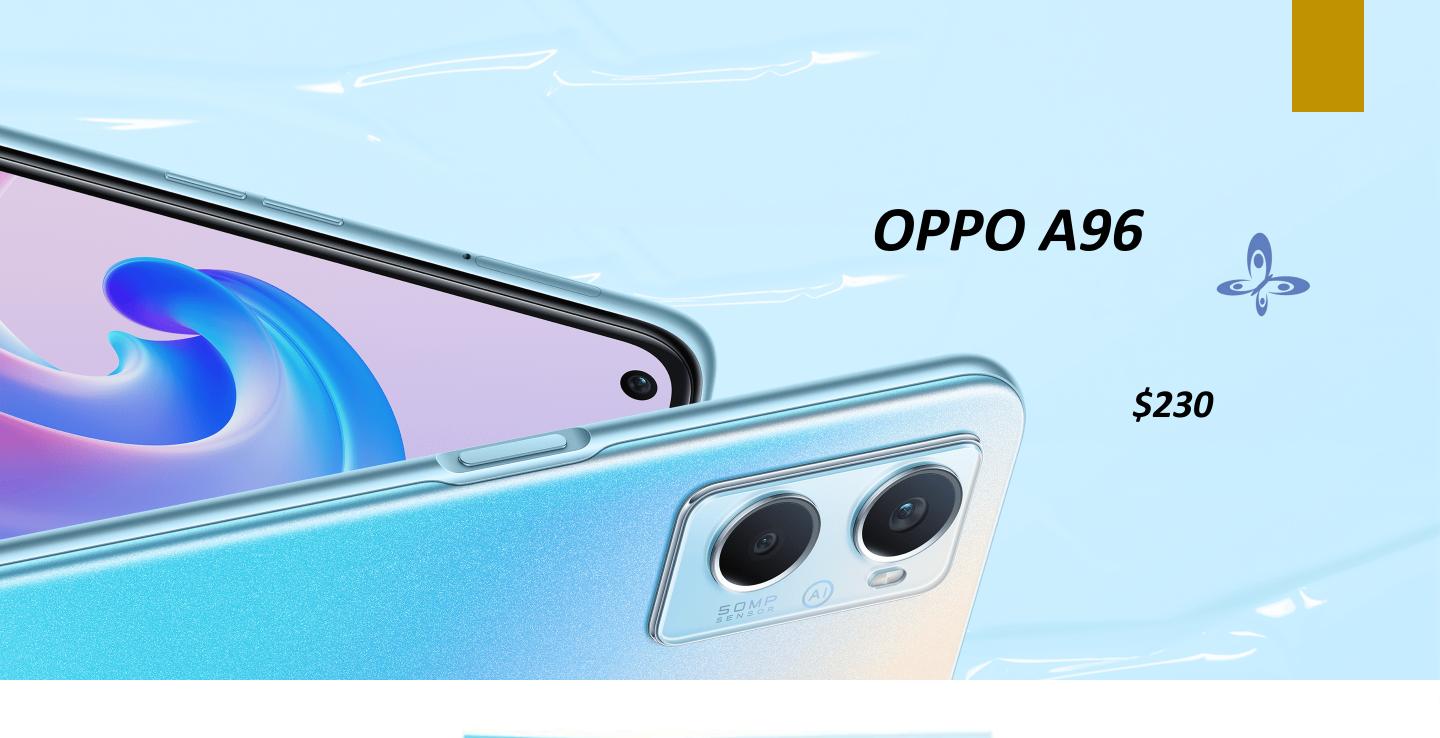
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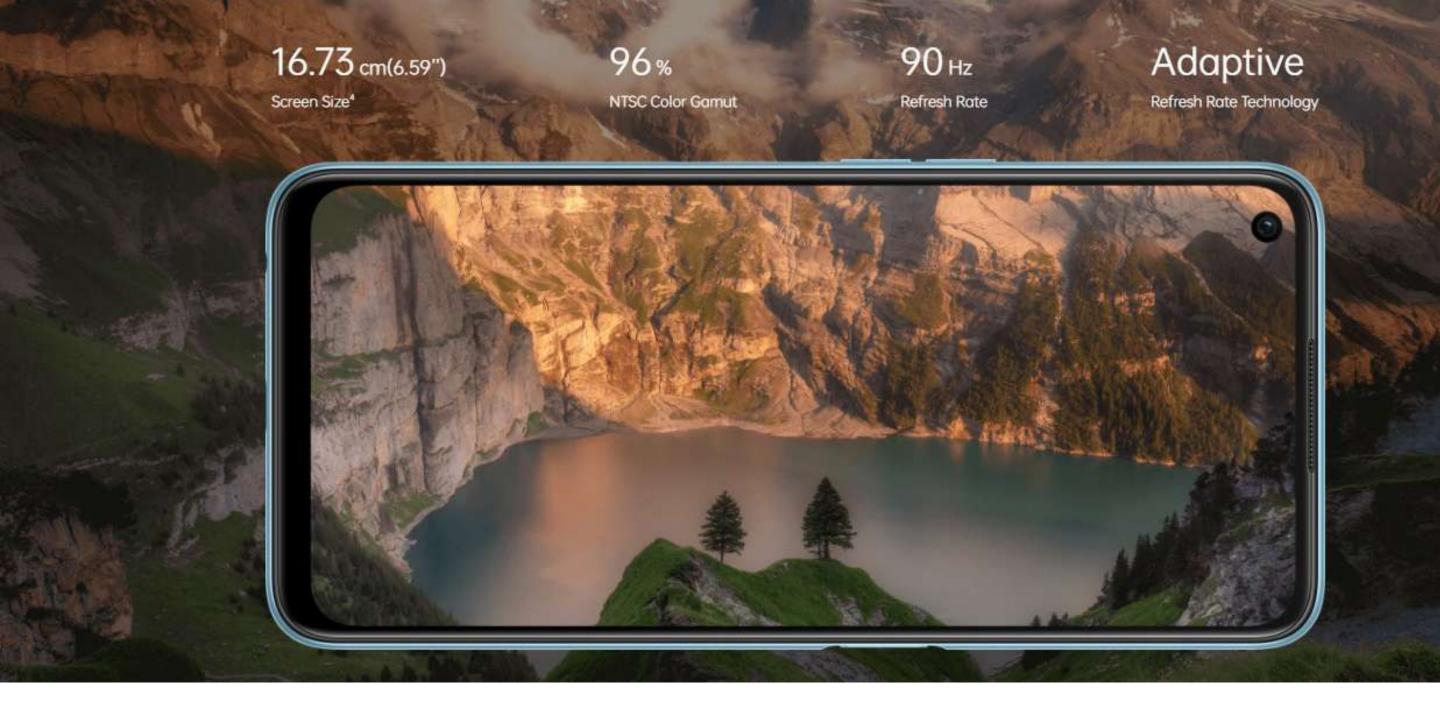


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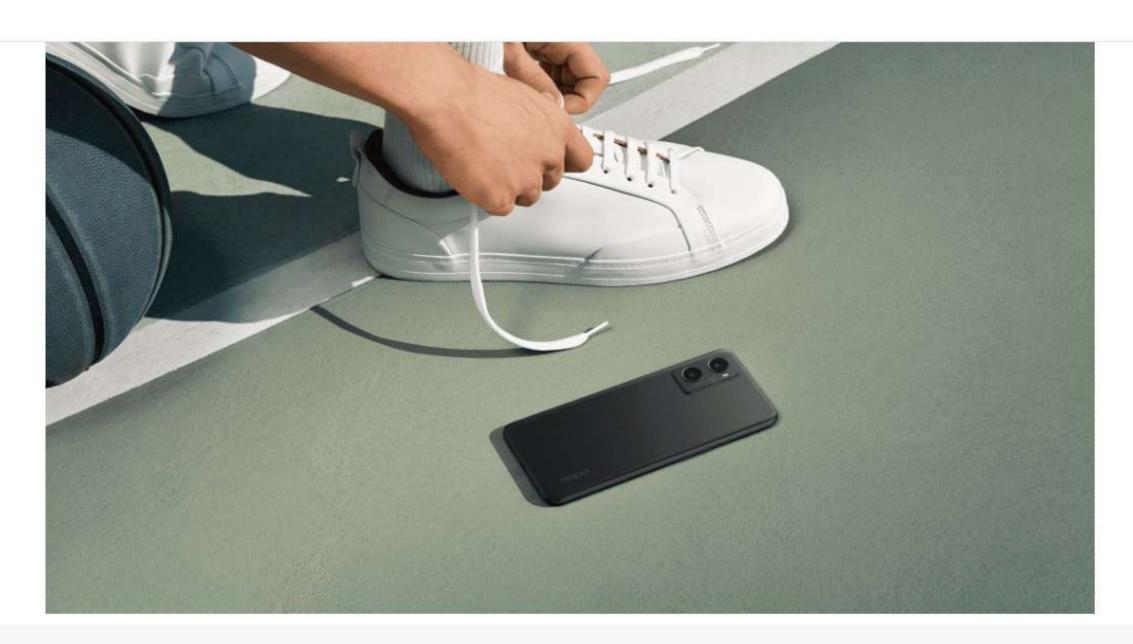




Quality

Safe from Scratches

OPPO A96 glides through life without collecting marks or fingerprints. Whether on the commute or when going for a run, this phone is safe from scratches. Premium design, premium durability.



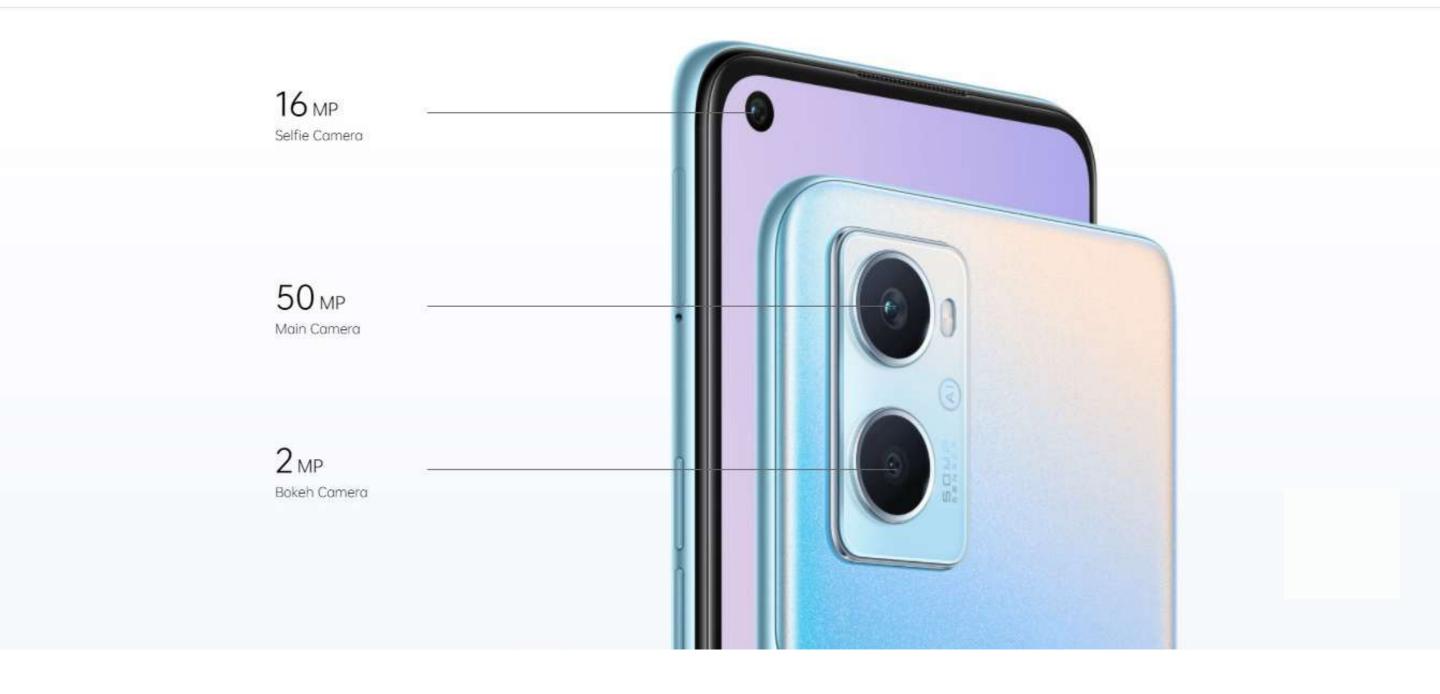


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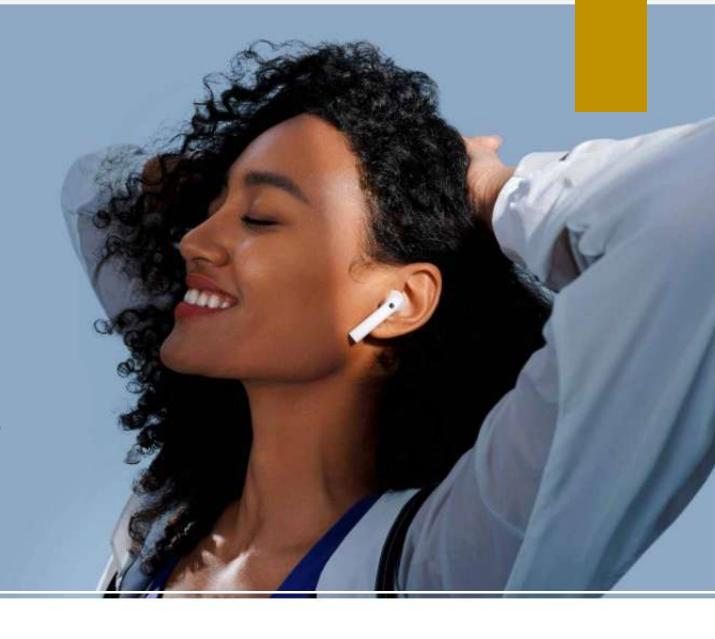


Redmi Buds 3

Dive into the beat

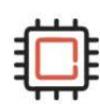
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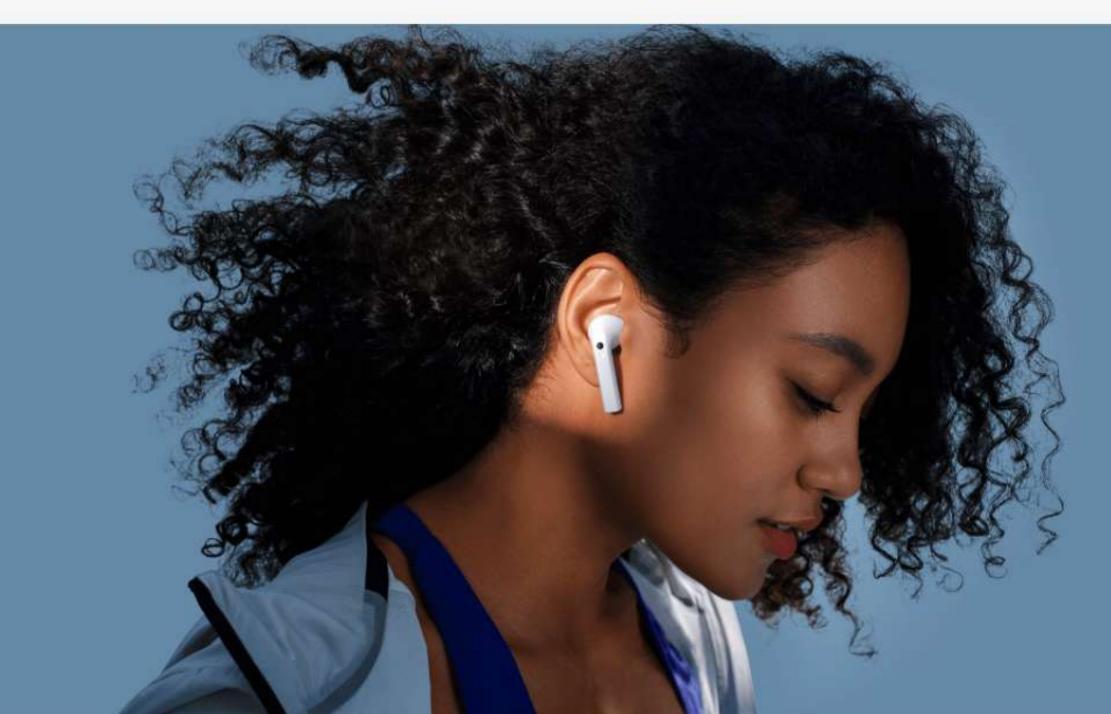
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e. Qualcomm® QCC3040 BLUETOOTH® chipset



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Enjoy more detailed sound with our large, 12mm dynamic driver made from composite materials.

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Though small and lightweight, the Redmi Buds 3 offers both power and comfort.

Enjoy up to 5 hours of battery life on a single charge, or up to 20 hours' use when paired with the charging case.

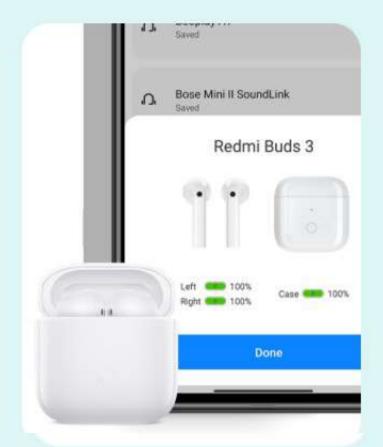
Relax and get back to your music. Enjoy up to 1.5 hours' playback from a single 10-minute charge.

5 hours

20 hours

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Simply open the charging case near your smartphone and tap the screen when the pop-up window appear.

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Tap the rear of the earbuds to switch modes, pause and resume music playback, and more.



Tap twice Next track Answer a call

Press and hold either earbud Pause/play

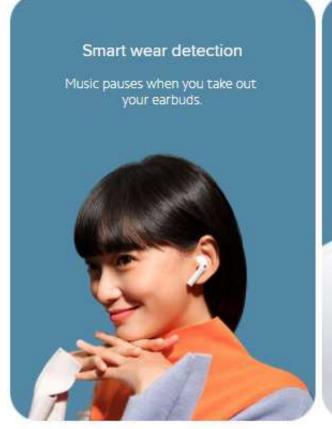
Tap three times
Previous track
Hang up a call
Reject a call

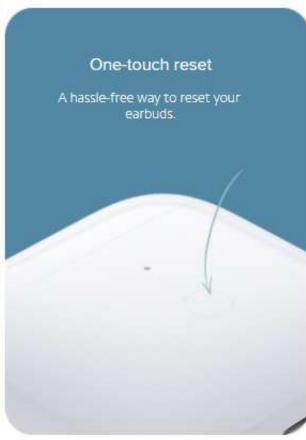
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Nokia X10

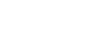
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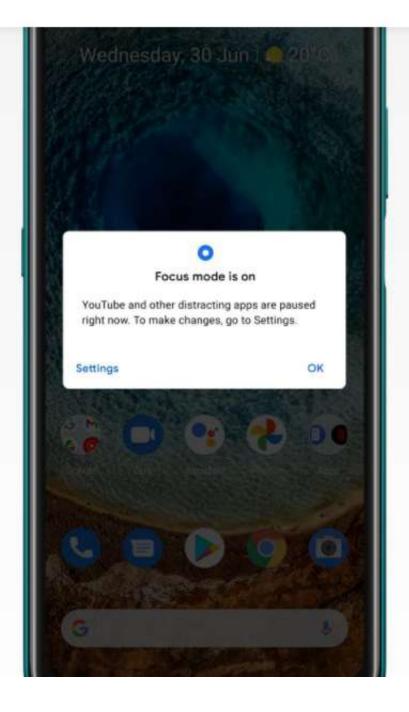
Immerse yourself in more than work

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Focus Mode lets you work without interruptions and Bedtime mode helps you unwind. Because a good tomorrow starts with a good sleep.

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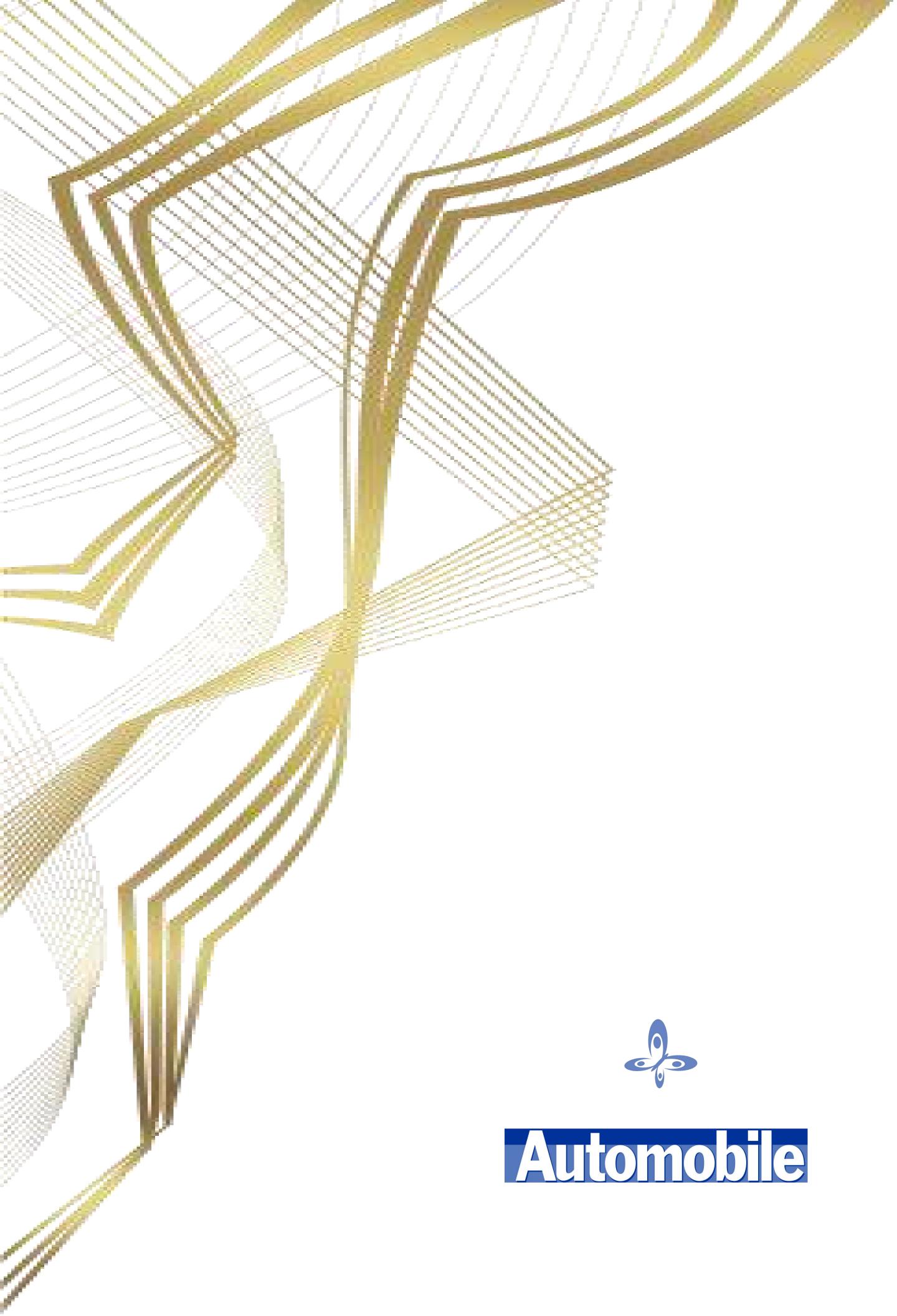
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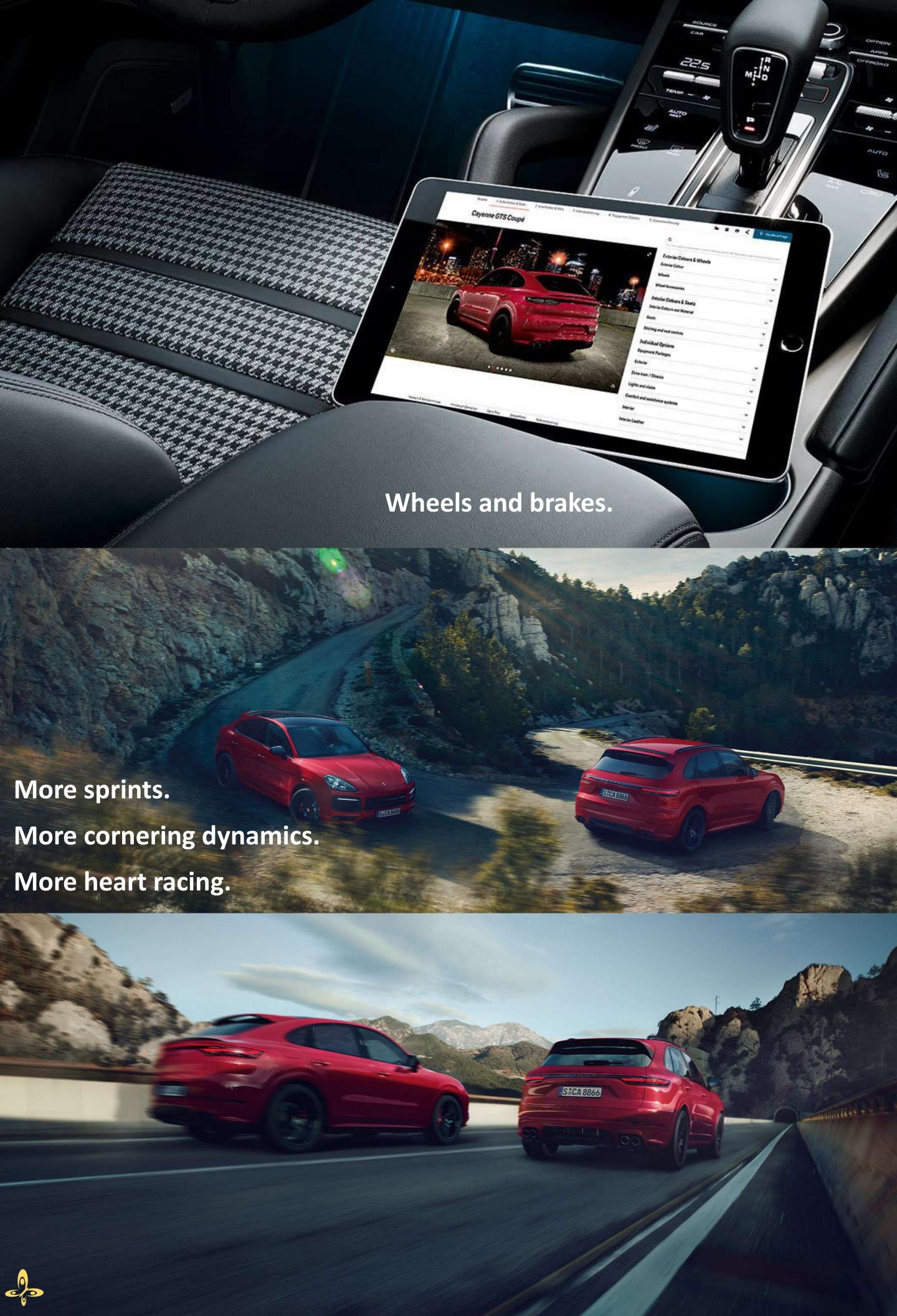










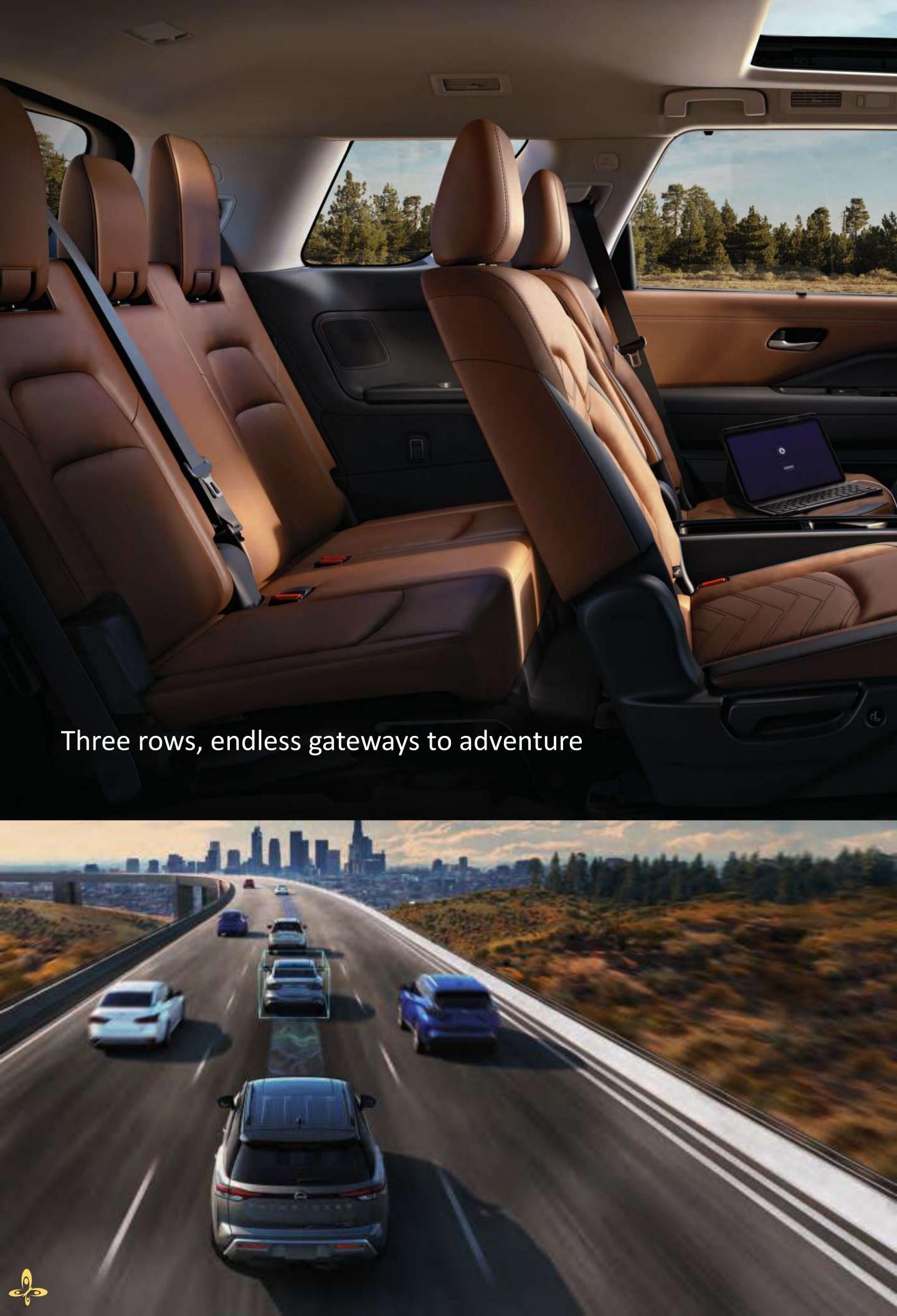






















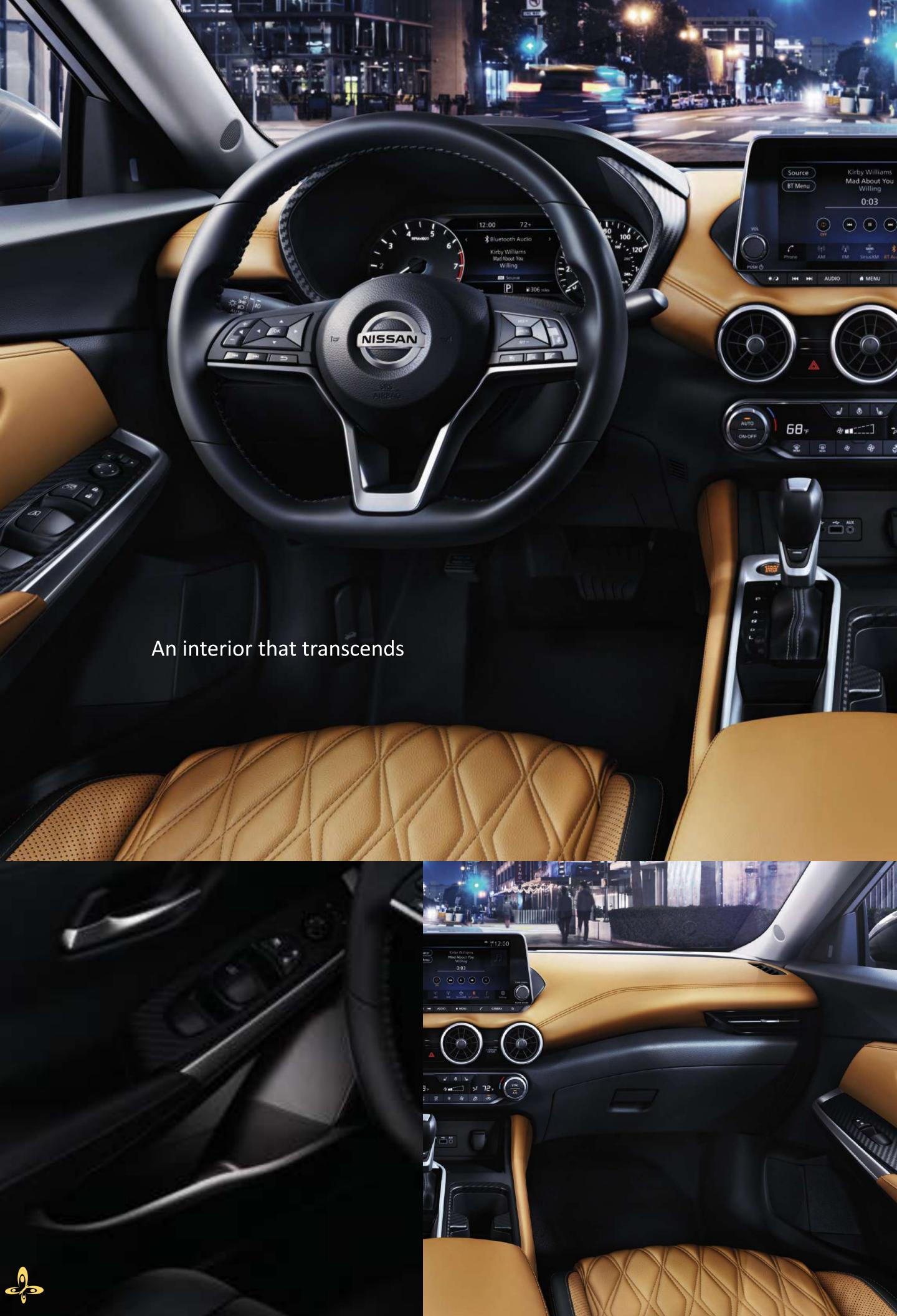
SENTRA





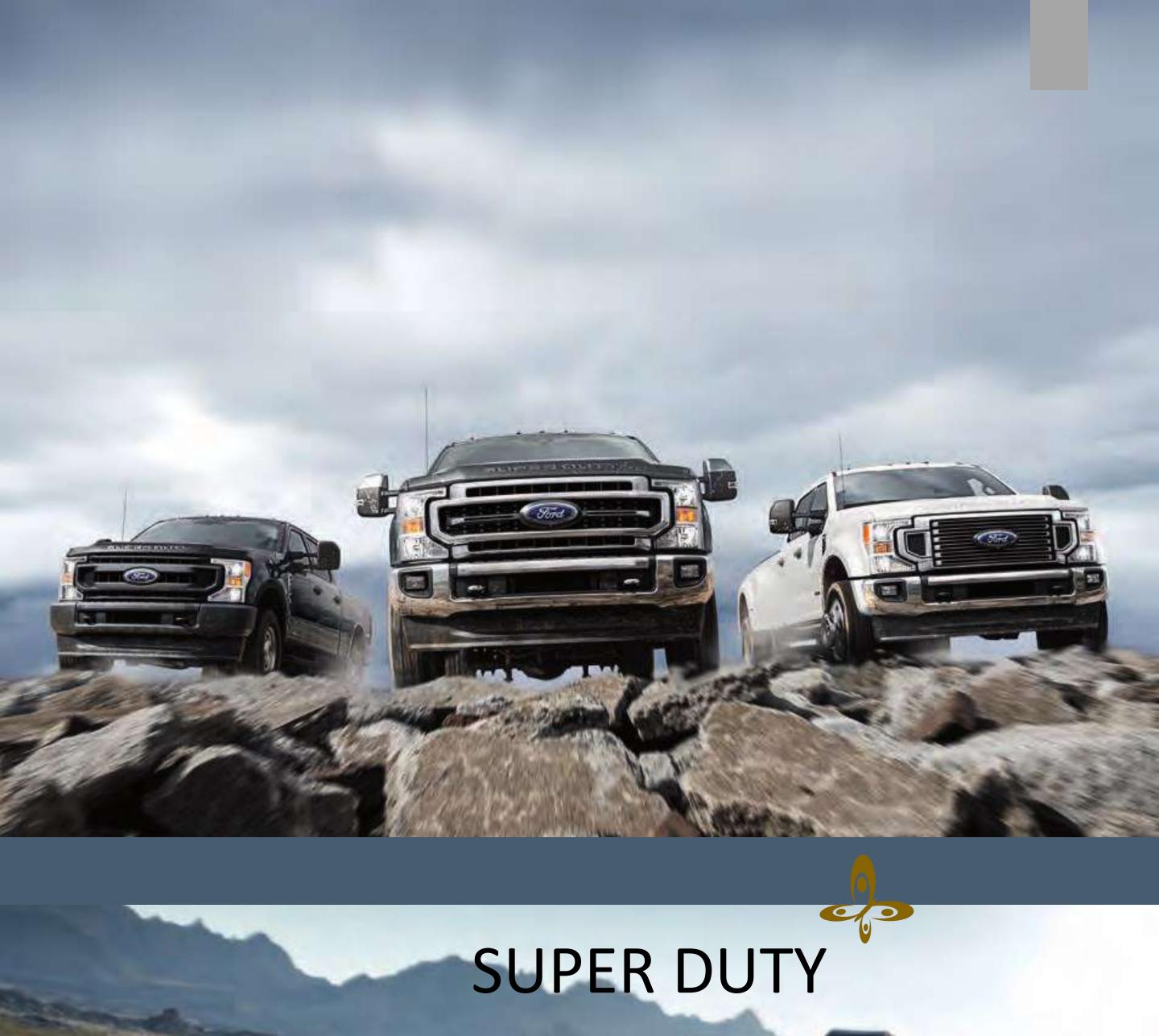












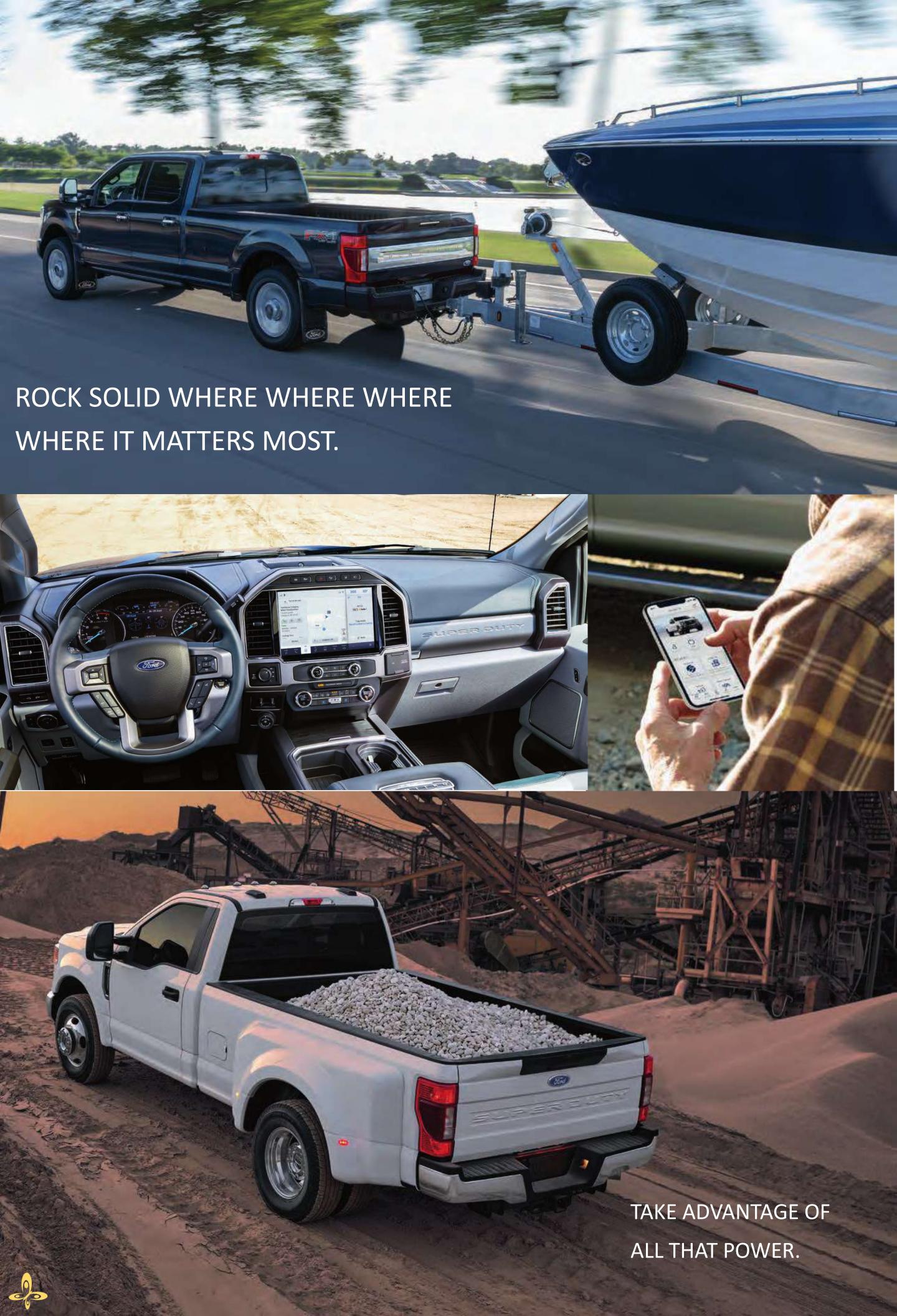












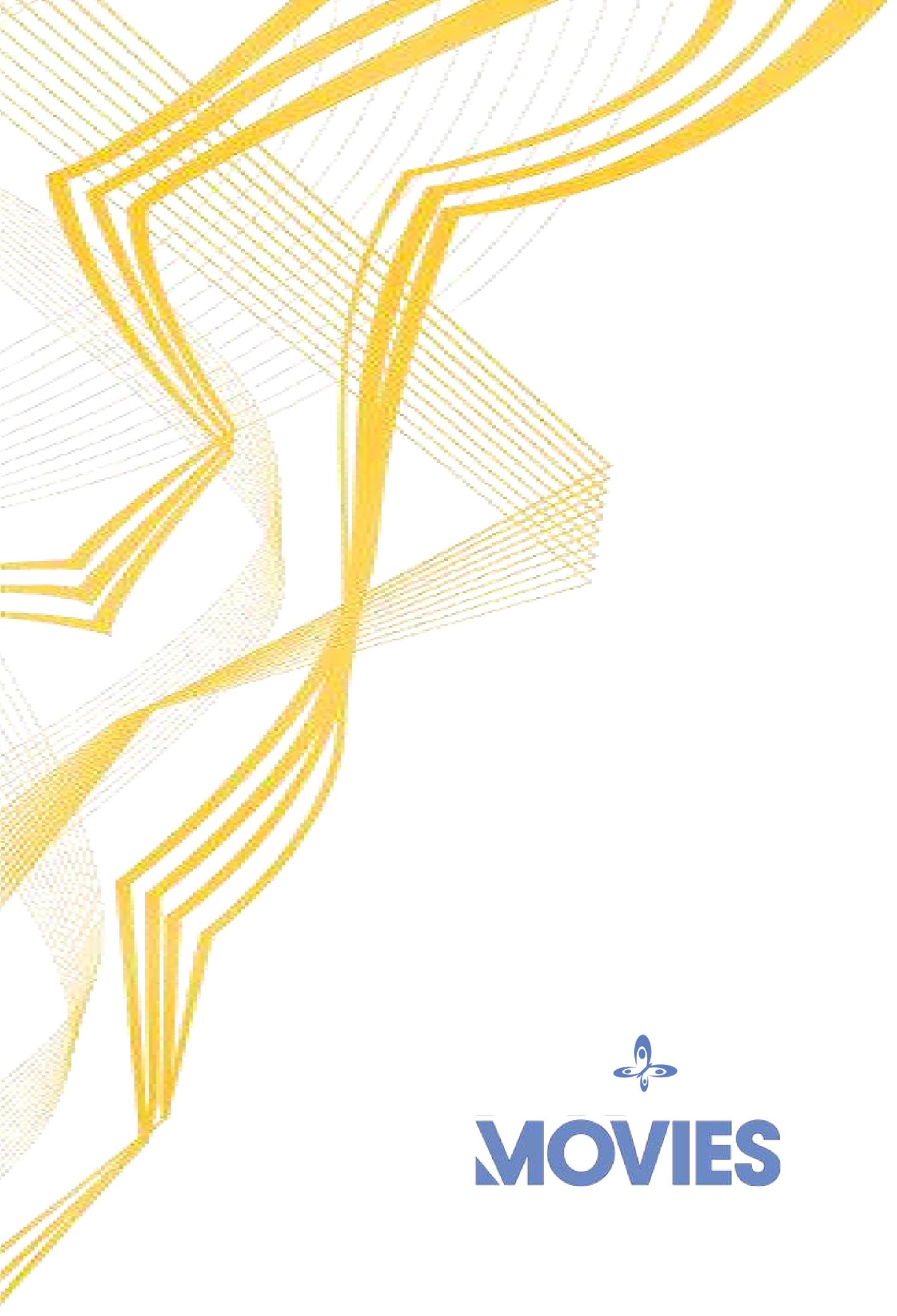












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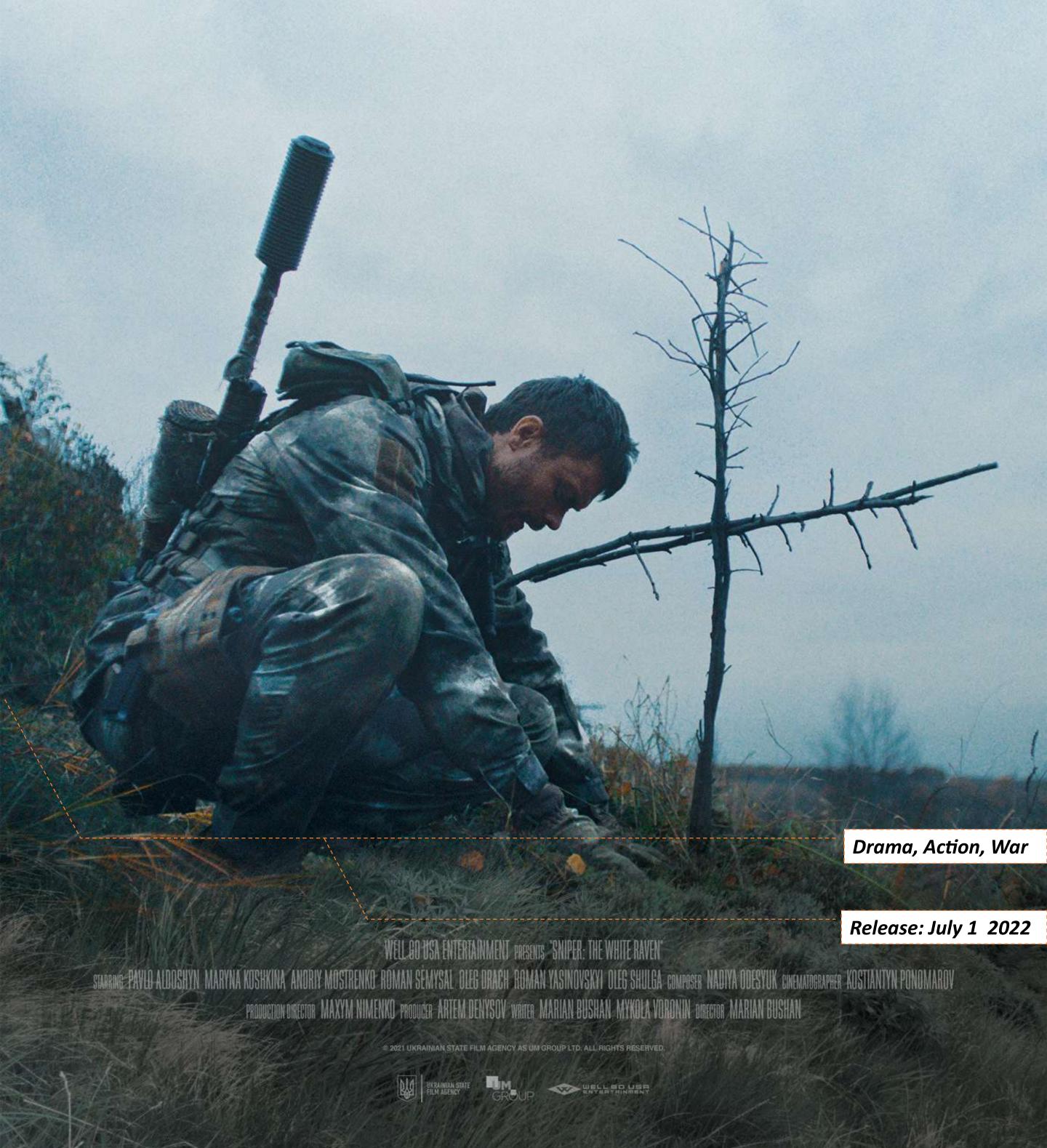


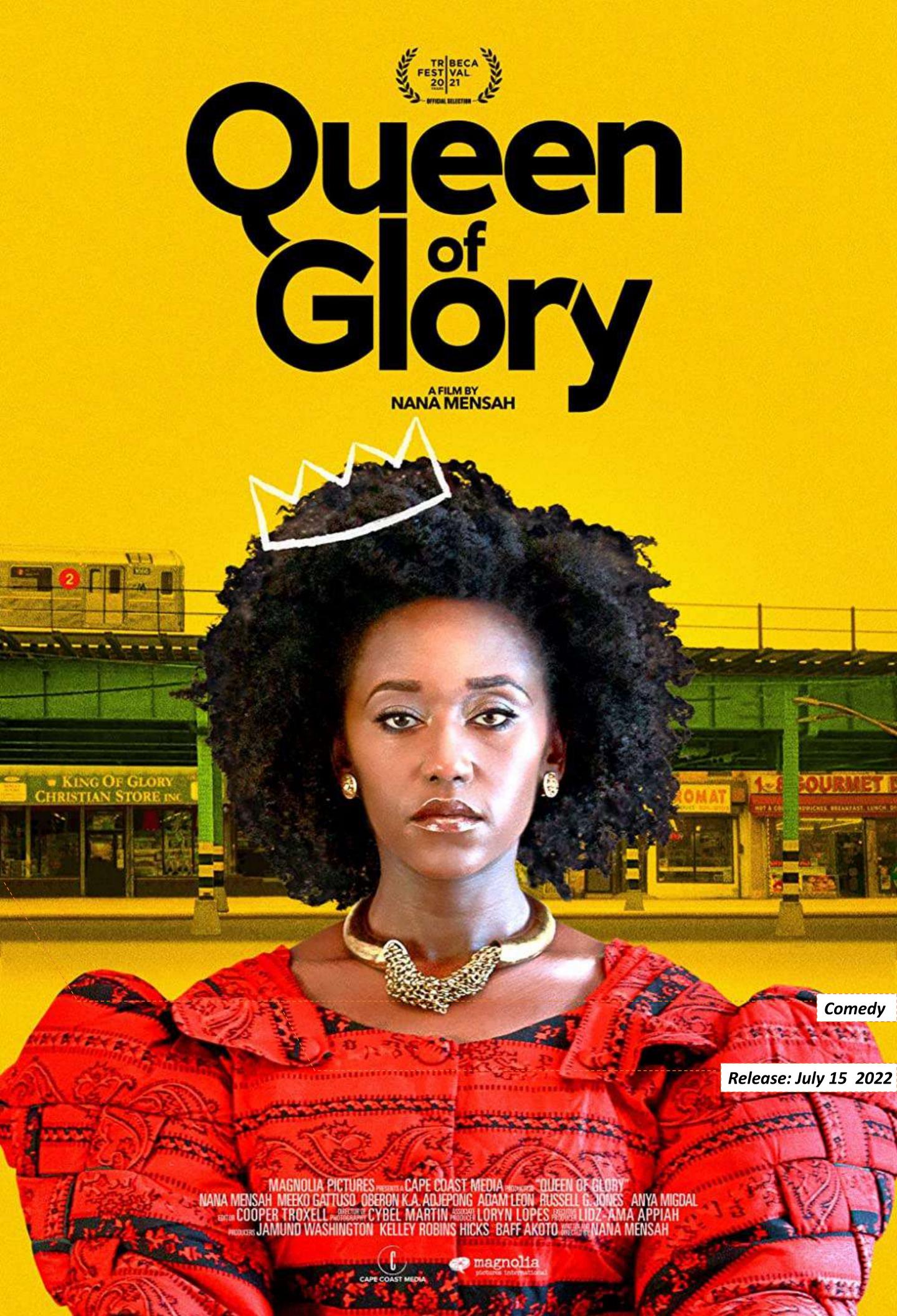




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FROM WRITER/DIRECTOR

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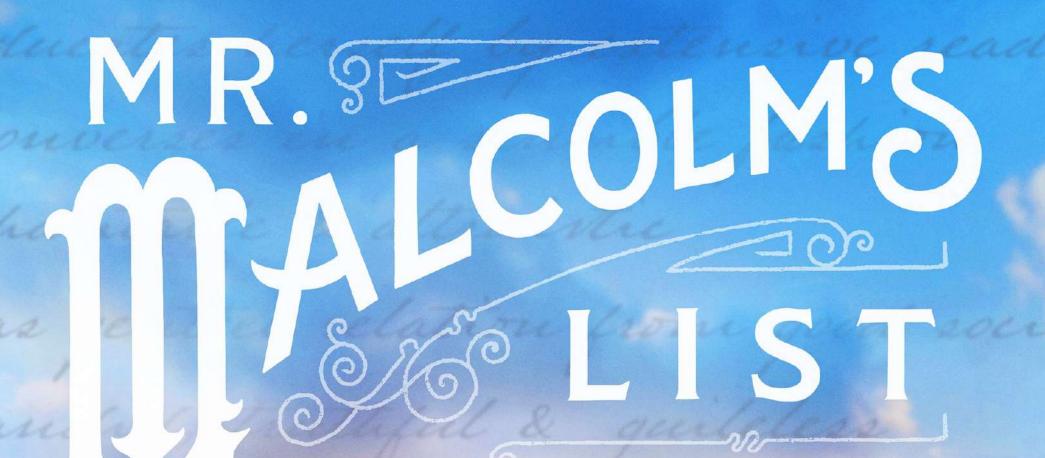
ŞOPÉ DÌRÍSÙ

OLIVER JACKSON-COHEN PARK ASHTON

ASHLEY

ZAWE

THEO **JAMES**





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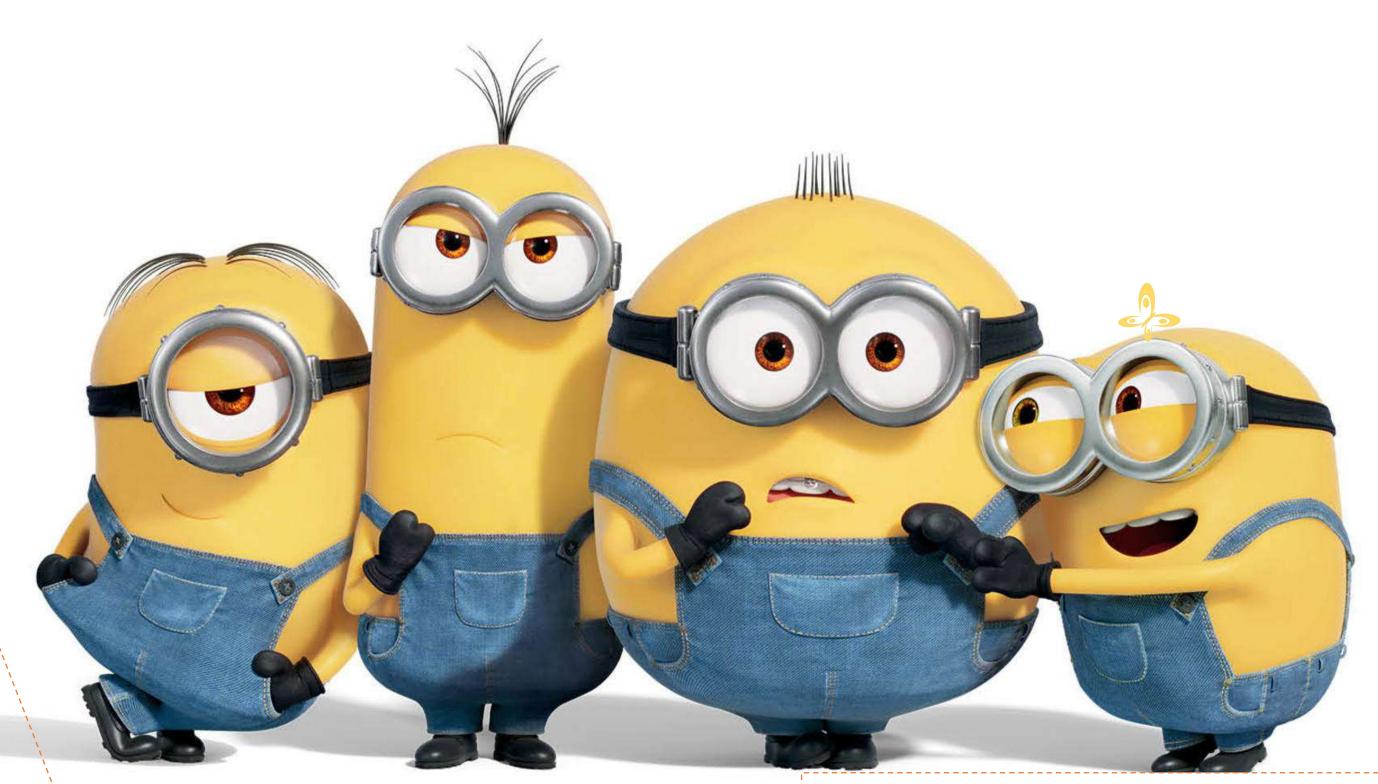
BLEECKER STREET AND INGENIOUS MEDIA PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FIS EIREANN / SCREEN IRELAND AND REFINERY 29 AN UNTITLED ENTERTAINMENT AND REBELLE MEDIA PRODUCTION A BLINDER FILMS AND HOLLY FILMS PRODUCTION A FILM BY EMMA HOLLY JONES.

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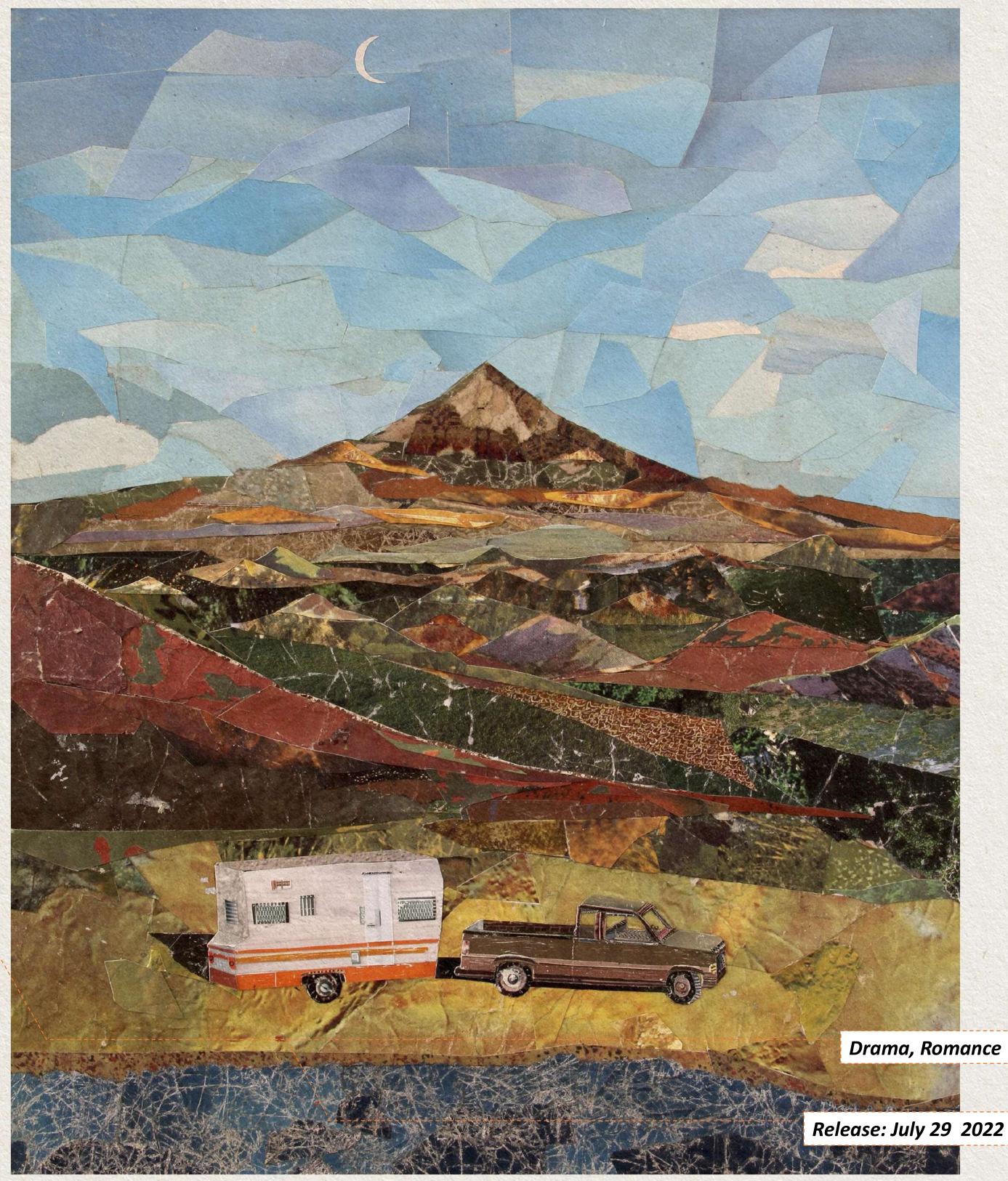


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