



WORDS: ROB LEANE

# APOCALYPSE HOW?

Ever wondered how a huge apocalyptic video game gets made? *Rage 2*'s Jeremy Miller and Odd Ahlgren explain how they crafted their fresh take on the end of the world...

**A** hugely ambitious undertaking for the developers at Avalanche Studios and Id Software, *Rage 2* is a post-apocalyptic video game that crams in an awful lot of chaotic content. It's the sequel to *Rage*, from 2010, which means it inherits a savage setting where bandits and mutants battle it out for dominance in a grim, gritty wasteland.

The first game put the player in the army-issued boots of Raine, a government-created super soldier who emerged into this chaotic world after spending 106 years in cryogenic stasis. This first-person shooter title earned a decent number of positive reviews on its release, and it ended on something of a cliffhanger (with Raine bringing hundreds of his superpowered comrades out of stasis), but it took nine years for a sequel to finally appear.

*Rage 2* eventually came out on 14 May 2019, though, and it expands the universe of the first game in numerous exciting ways. *Den Of Geek* got on the blower with art director Jeremy Miller and narrative director Odd Ahlgren to talk about how they pulled it off.

## EMBRACE THE UNHINGED!

"It's much, much harder trying to write 'normal'", says Ahlgren, who penned a lot of weird dialogue for the game's unhinged characters. Embracing off-kilter thinking has "been incredibly inspiring on the art side, too," adds Miller, who was tasked with translating creepy concepts (such as: "mutants think humans taste like pizza") into a visual reality. Bouncing off each other can really help a barmy brainchild grow: for instance, when Ahlgren wanted a bone-based exoskeleton for a villain to wear, Miller came back and said, "Wouldn't it be cooler if he fuses his spinal cord to a mutant's spinal cord, and uses the mutant as his legs?" Just your standard workplace discussion, then.

## DOUBLE DOWN ON DETAILS!

"We put a lot of effort into creating a world," Ahlgren explains, delving into the nerdy details of creating such a huge game. "We started out with the idea that we were creating a world with different types of factions and microclimates. What would people trade with? What are the dangers? Who are we siding with? If there's a swamp, what lives in there? And so on, and so forth. We created a backstory lore bible for everything, so it



Explosions are rife in *Rage 2*'s post-apocalypse





feels comprehensive instead of just 'this is a cool thing, let's put it here, and it doesn't really have anything to do with anything.'"

### EVOLVE THE APOCALYPSE!

Something major has changed, on a global scale, in the 30 years since the events of *Rage*, as Ahlgren explains: "Before the catastrophe, these eco-pods were sent up into orbit, which were designed to re-terraform the Earth. But stuff came in between and it failed miserably." Then the pods came down, "and everything got green, wild and crazy." Miller's art team leapt on this idea and infused heaps of colour into the game's visuals, which helped *Rage 2* move away from the sandy landscapes of *Mad Max* and its ilk. As Miller puts it, the colourful palette "is definitely a statement that we are post-post-apocalyptic."

### DELVE DEEP WITH CHARACTERS!

The player-character this time is Walker, who lived in a secluded compound until it was ravaged and destroyed by the villainous Authority. "It's a three-pronged attack to Walker's motivation," Ahlgren explains, "which is: one, to stop the Authority from doing this again; two, to seek revenge for the people who were killed; and three, warn other people who might be in the way of this approaching monstrosity." These quests send you out into the wasteland, where there is high-octane car combat to partake in and loads of mutants to shoot.

### UNLEASH THE ACTION!

"The guns are quite complex," Miller reveals, referring to the huge number of customisable weapons that gamers can wield in *Rage 2*. "There's a lot of stuff going on there," Miller recalls, "from the point you pull the trigger to the outcome that happens from that. So there's a lot of important communication that goes into that." So, when you're blowing up mutants using gravity-altering guns, just remember that a lot of people put in the hours to make that possible. **DENOFGEEK!**

## THE END IS NIGH (AGAIN!)

RAGE 2 ISN'T THE ONLY NEW APOCALYPTIC EXPERIENCE ON OFFER. HERE ARE FIVE OTHER GAMES TO LOOK FORWARD TO

WORDS: AARON POTTER



### The Last Of Us Part 2

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Naughty Dog's original take on the zombie-infested apocalypse released to critical acclaim when it launched on PS3 in 2013. A much older Joel and Ellie are set to return in late 2019, continuing to survive in what promises to be an emotional and dramatic sequel.



### Astral Chain

PLATFORM: Nintendo Switch

RELEASE DATE: 30 August

Astral Chain is a future-set action game from the people behind *Bayonetta*, *Vanquish* and *Nier: Automata*. You control two police task force officers challenged with facing the invading alien threat head on, engaging in high-flying antics to solve cases and save the Earth.

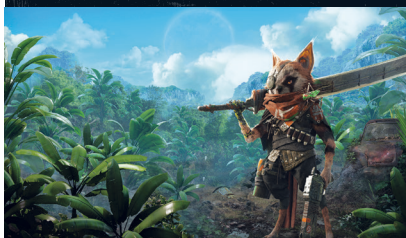


### Dying Light 2

PLATFORMS: PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE: TBC

The first *Dying Light* surprised everyone with its uniquely fluid parkour system, which allowed players to bounce around on zombies' heads and make the fictional city of Harran their playground. *Dying Light 2* goes one better, with a choice-based system that drastically changes how you traverse the open world.



### Biomutant

PLATFORMS: PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE: Summer 2019

*Biomutant* is an open-world RPG set in a plague-ridden land that lets players customise their own raccoon-like critter in a bid to be the most badass. Simply seek out bio-mechanical body parts and upgrade your biomutant accordingly.



### Gears Of War 5

PLATFORMS: Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE: TBC

*Gears 5* sees Marcus Fenix and his team pass the torch onto a new generation of COG soldiers tasked with holding back the Locust threat. Human/Locust hybrid Kait Diaz now takes centre stage.