

Shadow of the Colossus generic Q&A

- Q. SotC is more action orientated and could be more difficult are you looking to target a new audience?
- A. Trying to build something which will appeal to ICO fans and reach wider audience too with more understandable content
- Q. Is there still room for artistic games with less marketable content or is Lumines the way forward?
- A. Not a choice – goal is to create something only they can do (Ueda and Kaido). Like to do something different and focus on doing something new. Realism is the way they want to go with this game as it is the way to go with games. Don't set out to create art but to create popular and interesting game – they just happen to be artistic. A lot of value and necessary to create different games – options regardless of their sales. Although ICO wasn't massive it was a success and had its place in the market – important to take risks as they grow the industry
- Q. How would you differentiate the PS2 era versus the PS1 or other titles. i.e, in Ico the player was always succeeding
- A. Their focus is whether interaction with environment is interesting enough – never look at physical aspect of playing a game. Simulation based games make you learn and acquire more info. Different process to pure action games.
- Q. ICO inspired by Chirico (artist) and Zelda. What was inspiration for SotC?
- A. Zelda never a conscious comparison, influences are a culmination of games, books, movies – no specific influence is significant in this game.
- Q. Do you feel this could look better if you had more time? Is it possible to get better with different hardware?
- A. Always better with more time but have to consider industry requirements – will always be better games and timing is key.
- A. PS2 is now proving to be a bit limiting – expectations have to be lowered – sometimes a factor to have to get it out even if we aren't satisfied.
- A. Looking at games around now, many have amazing realistic graphics. They could do the same but there would be no differentiation. This team prefer to be different and would prefer to sacrifice the perfect look for the different game.
The games with higher quality graphics has less developed movement and this team are looking to have a balance.
- Q. Was it the intention to make a more conventional hero than the one in ICO?
- A. In western market in particular it is a requirement to make characters players can relate to. Fantastical players don't work in west so from this point of view it is good. Ueda-san created a story around the character that was appropriate – not a conscious decision but it was how he is and was not conscious,
- Q. Many people worry that in next gen game costs will go up and niche games will find it difficult to be published? How easy is it for this team to get things approved – do you worry this will change in the future?
- A. Was originally creative driven now technology is the driver. This team prefer it to be the other way round. Game design should determine technology. Marketing driven

games are not always a success. Publishers need to have games that challenge and need

Q. How did you come up with the idea of very big giants?

A. Can't remember but did look at lots of games and saw that lots had monsters but they were always just big and their design was never integrated into the design of the game.

Q. Ico had a sense of loneliness and SotC is the same. Was this the intention?

A. NOT SO MUCH AN ARTISTIC THEME BUT BECAUSE YOU WANT A GAME TO BE AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE AND ALL THE ENERGY FROM THE GAME GOES INTO THE ONE CHARACTER WHO HAD STRONG AI.

Q. What do they want the player to gain from playing SotC?

A. Most important factor is the interaction between the main character and the colossi. Mainly because they are more interactive – how you interact with them affects what they do and then what you do next. In a way you are playing with and enjoying the interaction with the colossi.

Q. Do you worry that the game will be repetitive? Is there more than a platform game to this?

A. In terms of game system there is some repetition but because of the game experience they don't think players will get bored. The weak points may only be visible if the colossus is in a particular location or pose. There is a lot of variation in terms of the landscape. You don't see the same thing twice – a lot of detail. Use will be motivated by the variation in the colossi. Once they finish one they wonder what the next one will be like.

Q. How will the players know where to go in the landscape? Will they get lost?

A. The large landscapes are what the user will like. It will be new to the users. Some may get lost but the game rules allow for navigation – the sword. Being able to ride the horse is a new experience. User doesn't have to explore the landscape – they can go quickly if they prefer. Wanted a great size and scale to everything.

Q: Were the beautiful landscapes creatures inspired by specific western and eastern influences?

A: Nothing specific but we consciously avoided creating landscape that looked familiar. Instead we used mixed objects and landscapes as much as possible, for example car headlights, building etc, mixed together so that it's unfamiliar

Q: Is it closed worlds or is it one entire free world that you can freely explore?

A. It is a closed world, the location of the Colossi is already set. How you get from one to another is navigable.

Q. What is the story? Is it a love story like ICO?

A. They're not sure whether ICO was a love story or not and it's the same with this one. They provide the background, but it is entirely up to the user how they feel about the game, so they don't like to give a lot of detail. So the players can fill in the gap.

Q. The giants are the real stages of the game, but what happens in the rest of the world when you're looking for the giants? Can you interact with the rest of the world?

- A. Most of the action is based around finding and interacting with the Colossi, However the world around you is not boring. It is populated with other animals that you can interact with, as well as the scenery
- Q. I've never heard anyone say they didn't like ICO. Was it hard to start on a new project, knowing how much everyone loved and respected ICO.
- A. The pressure was not so much about Ico's critical success, although they did want to top that acclaim. The pressure was that they did not want to make a sequel, so the hard thing was creating something was different, not only from what's on the market but also from ICO.
- Q. What about the true sequel to ICO, Nico?
- A. There's been some confusion about that. Nico was the code names for Shadow of the Colossus. Some people wanted to call it Nico, but the team, wanted to be clear that it was not a sequel.
- Q. So will there be a sequel to ICO?
- A. There are no specific plans for a sequel but while they could make some changes, but they don't think they could make something completely different in the same way they did back then,
- A. Ico was astounding because it didn't have any icons on the interface. Why have you now chosen to insert these icons?
- A. The reason they weren't in ICO is because that was very different at the time, but now, because the game is very action oriented and not revolutionary not to, they felt it would benefit the user to include the icons where necessary.
- Q. How is the relationship with the main character and the horse work? Is it like Ico and Yorda?
- A. We do understand that there's some expectation for a similar relationship in this game. Yorda was kind of a life gauge in ICO, but that is done by icons in this game. There will be some companionship between the character and the horse, but we don't want to replicate the relationship in this game.
- Q. Will the monsters increase in difficulty?
- A. There is a gradual increase in difficulty but it's more in peaks and valley, because the difficulty depends on how the user solves the puzzles in the colossi and how the user deals with them.
As you progress the giants become more unusual not necessarily more difficult, shape and form of creature will give you clues how to knock it down.

Please introduce yourselves.

Kaido-san
Worked on Ape Escape, Ico and SotC
Ueda-san
Sony – Ico
Warp – XXX Zero

Q. In Ico once the game is cleared you can play again and the last word of Yorda is not translated to enable the player to imagine his own ending. What endings had the team imagined?

A. The end words weren't planned but the sound man put them in. Ueda-san imagines that it is to do with the storyline of Yorda forgetting and then remembering ICO and the last line would have something to do with remembering that relationship. Who are you or we meet again? Either.

Q. Have heard that there are only 2 games that do justice to the power of the PS2. GT and ICO – do you agree? It is necessary to have inside knowledge of Sony to enable the best game.

A. First we're heard of it! Sometimes get criticised that they give more support to third parties – less to internal teams.

Q. How to you go about making the game?

A. Design, furnish, add story

Q. You shifted ICO from PS1 to PS2, why not go from PS2 to PS3?

A. Not allowed – and it would take so long?

Q. Why Shadow of the Colossus?

A.

Wanted it all to be unusual so there are no expectations.

Q. Do the characters have an emotional link like ICO?

A. Similar only in that there is a young girl but she does not accompany him. He is accompanied by a horse who takes him throughout the game and they work together to defeat the colossus. Not the same relationship as ICO.

Q. Again, two characters that can't communicate – ICO, Yorda and now Wanda and another girl who is a sleeping beauty. Why are you exploring this uninteractivity again?

A. When there is conversation it becomes less real. When the communication has to come from the game itself it is a truer experience. The game does the talking.

Q. At GDC you talk about music effects changing the mechanic, why did you change it this time?

A. Consciously targeted male players and needed someone who could make music appropriate that would appeal to male players which is why they used this composer.

Q. Visually there is a lot of light and the environment is very bright. Will you use contrast (black) to show enemies or something similar?

A. As the world is bigger it is necessary for it to be brighter. Ueda-san was conscious of using contrast and has tried hard to do this well.

Q. Are all the colossi as hard/different

A. The earlier colossi are similar in how you approach them but they change how you approach them and their form is different and you have to determine how to overcome them. Will have to think differently.

Q. ICO was quite a simple controller will SotC be similarly so?

A. A little more complex but not much. It is a function of the game design that it is so but they have tried to make it as similar

- Q. You seem quite happy people. Why are your games so melancholy?
- A. This is just the atmosphere they create. They are serious people but not lonely or depressed.
- Q. 3.5 years is a long time to work on a game. Did you spend a long time experimenting or did you concentrate on making it as good as it could be?
- A. Knew what they wanted to create but working out the technology to enable them to realize their vision was the time consuming process. Making incremental improvements as they went along was important. There is no game to follow as this is so unique and it takes longer to create.
- Q. The current version is very smooth but other versions have had glitches so it seems it was technically very difficult to get these results.
- A. It just took time to get all their ideas in, having said that, there was a lot they wanted to put in but there were hardware restrictions.
- Q.
- 0 A. From a design point of view they focused on making sure there was enough variety in how to approach the characters but there are a lot of colossus and as you progress they get more different. Each will be unique and different. Leads to a sense of anticipation
- 1
- 2 Q. The art style is very different and unique. How do they create an amazing atmosphere – is it the art, the sound or a whole package?
- A. ICO was easy – used visual contrast. Something has been carried into this game but the bug theme which drove everything was the desire to create a larger scale world. Mist and the water in the atmosphere is perhaps a signature.
- Q. Ape Escape is now collaborating with Kojima-san. Who would Ueda-san and Kaido-san like to collaborate with?
- A. Hard to say because the style is so important to the game. Couldn't enter a collaboration because he respected someone – the team would have to understand the vision and be prepared to work within it. Difficult to imagine a partner that would do that.
- Q. So many developers reference ICO as something they aspire to.
- A. Working together is fine - and maybe one day. Any developer want to come and work FOR them – please apply!

Ueda-san

What do you like doing?

Likes fishing and motorbikes.

- Q. The background of game designers often has an impact on the content of the games - is this the case with you?
- A. Possibly is the case as when little he liked to see monster movies so this has a tie.
- Q. Ico is critically acclaimed. You have been considered artists in the game industry. How do you feel about this and how confident are you of your work in the industry?
- A. Kaido-san is very happy and proud to be considered an artist in his work, he hasn't considered himself personally to be an artist but is pleased to hear this.

- Q. You are involved in many aspects of the games' development, why is this?
A. Ueda-san does get involved in many parts of the production process. Being hands on he is more involved and can direct more thoroughly and explain to staff personally. The fact that he can and does do things himself inspires confidence in his team.
- Q. What exactly do you do and where does the art direction come from?
A. Directly involved in game design, art direction and creates reference graphics to ensure quality and standards are seen through. Everything to do with the visual aspect of the game itself.
- Q. ICO is one of the only game that actually makes the player cry. As a game developer how does that make you feel?
A. This reaction was a surprise. As the creator he had looked at the ending and the whole game so many times that he was a little detached. Obviously Ueda-san is very happy that they generated an environment that created so much emotion.
- IQ. We have read that your Mum plays your games. Has she played SotC yet?
A. He doesn't make her play but if she does and enjoys them then it is clear that different generations will get something from the games. His Mum hasn't played SotC yet.
- Q. Do you have strong goals set for yourself, in terms of generating emotive content?
A. Wish to create games that will have some impact on the person that plays. A successful game is one that leaves a lasting impact on the player.
- Q. You have said in the past that ICO could be considered erotic. Would you say SotC is the same undefined love story?
A. A love story makes one consider a defined relationship. ICO was much purer taken from a time before one develops into understanding this. The user will have to decide the relationship themselves.
- Q. You developed for the Saturn, looking back, how was that experience. Seeing how technology has come on was it very restrictive?
A. Platforms used to be quite limiting so there was dissatisfaction with the result as what the technology was restricting. This was a good experience as it showed the possibilities when people were looking at other games.
A. In the future games will become more emotionally involving and there will be more identification between the user and the characters. Doesn't want people to escape into games to escape an unpleasant reality, Should not advance so much that the game world becomes the real world and more appealing.
- Q. You are quite young for a game developer, how does that show in your games?

- A. He grew up with the less sophisticated games machines. Different generations do create different games as their experiences are different.
- Q. ICO has a strong ethical influence about being involved with and looking out for others, SotC seems to be about another kind of loneliness, was this an important theme for you?
- A. Trying to pursue something close to reality. Using available hardware important to have characters which speak through their actions rather than spending time on big translations.

