

SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Design Profile

Name: Ted Price

Title: President

Background: Disruptor, Spyro the Dragon, Spyro2: Ripto's Rage

Influences: Fantasy novels by authors like Robert Jordan, RPGs like EverQuest and Icewind Dale, heavy metal music (though it certainly didn't influence the music in Spyro), lots of caffeine (I suppose you can call that an influence)

Website: www.insomniacgames.com

Product Information

Style: Action/Adventure

Publisher: SCEA and SCEE

Developer: Insomniac Games

Sony Producer: Grady Hunt for SCEA, David Bowry for SCEE

Release Date: October in US, November in Europe

The little dragon's back then! What disaster has happened this time and what's Spyro up to?

Spyro is now back in the Dragon World after his battle with Ripto. It happens to be the day before the new batch of dragon eggs hatch and the dragons are having a big party to herald the arrival of the new brood. That night, as all of the Dragons are snoring away, wily creatures called rhynocs pop out of ground, steal the eggs and jump down the holes to emerge on the other side in the Forgotten World.

The Forgotten World is an old, old section of the Dragon World that has been...well, forgotten at least by the Dragons. It is now ruled by a powerful sorceress who, with her army of rhynocs, has taken over all of the villages and townships. The Sorceress now needs the baby dragons to bolster her magic for the ultimate spell. Unfortunately for her, the rhynocs are pretty stupid and along the way to the Sorceress' castle they've gotten distracted by pretty, shiny things and dropped most of the eggs. Now the eggs are scattered all over the Forgotten World.

Since Spyro is the only dragon small enough to fit down the rhynoc burrows, he volunteers to follow the beasts and bring back the eggs. Hunter agrees to meet him in the Forgotten World and together they begin their hunt for the eggs.

Who are the bad guys?

There are all sorts of baddies but the ones that Spyro sees the most are the rhynocs – big, goofy creatures who like to cause trouble. The rhynocs are employed by the Sorceress, an evil lizard-creature who wants to capture the baby dragons to use in her spells.

What range of items are there to collect?

The two main collectibles are dragon eggs and gems. The dragon eggs will hatch into baby dragons whose magic helps Spyro gain access to later areas of the game. Furthermore, players can keep track of which dragons he/she has collected in the game's Atlas. Each baby dragon has a unique name and appearance.

The gems are used to pay tolls within levels and to free the critters – that two-faced Moneybags is back and this time in the employ of the Sorceress, but he's easily bribed with those pretty gems.

What super powers does Spyro have in this new adventure and how does he learn them?

Spyro can fly, he has his superflame, supercharge, and invincibility. He can now also skateboard, control various vehicles, swim, headbash, glide, flame, climb, and do everything that he was able to do in the previous games. But with the introduction of the critters (which we'll talk about later), players have a huge array of new moves and attacks to try out.

How does Spyro get around? What new vehicles can he use?

Besides being able to charge, glide and fly, Spyro can control a skateboard, speedboats, tanks, and flying saucers.

What innovations are in the new game?

As I mentioned above, Spyro has a bunch of new abilities as far as getting around, but even more importantly there are four brand new playable characters, each with their own moves, their own worlds and their own stories:

Sheila the Kangaroo: This charismatic marsupial lives in a beautiful Alpine world and has a mid-air jump, super jump, kick attack, and a stomp attack

Bentley the Strongman: This gentle giant lives in the Arctic wastes and defends himself with an overhead club smash and a club spin that can deflect projectiles. He can also push objects out of the way.

Sgt. Byrd the Penguin: This seasoned soldier can fly and hover. Plus he has a wicked shoulder rocket attack and can pick up and drop objects (like bombs) on his more stubborn opponents.

Agent 9 the Space Monkey: Being a special agent, this monkey is well-armed. He's got laser gun attack, a special sniper mode and he can even lob bombs to take out the tougher enemies.

Furthermore, while we had minigames in Spyro2, many of them were camouflaged as portions of the primary paths. This time, we've clearly separated the minigame areas and really expanded on the variety. Many of the minigames are quite challenging – a result of getting feedback from both the consumers and the press which indicated that much of Spyro2 was too easy. In some you play as Spyro, in others you play as critters. Some of my personal favorites are the skateboarding, the boxing (which can be played in two-player mode) and the sub challenge.

We've also got brand-new minibosses which aren't as complex as the real bosses but add to the variety within the levels.

Another new addition is the race mode in the Speed Rounds where Spyro can take on the local inhabitants for a great prize.

Finally, we've given Sparx his own levels in which players can guide Sparx through Gauntlet-like levels and blast away with really cool new powerups.

Any sub-quests?

The four critters in the game all have sub-quests of sorts within their own worlds so I'd say yes. Furthermore because there are at least two minigames in each level, you could say the game is chock full of subquests. We're finding now that it takes at least twice as long to get through Spyro Year of the Dragon than either of its two predecessors.

How many levels are there?

37 of them. In general, our levels are 50% larger than the levels in either of the previous Spyro games.

As far as the types of levels go, we've divided them into the following categories:

- Regular levels
- Critter levels
- Hubs
- Flying levels
- Boss levels
- Sparx levels
- Super bonus round

What kind of worlds does Spyro stumble through?

The variety of the worlds in both looks and inhabitants is absolutely huge. Every world has a unique style and each has its own story. Some of my favorites (out of the 37 in the game) are the Fireworks Factory, the Lost Fleet, the Catacombs, and Enchanted Hills. Though I'd have to say that every level is a visual and gameplay feast.

Are there any friends to help Spyro on his quest?

Spyro encounters lots of new friendly faces in each of the worlds to help him along, including the four new critters – Sheila, Bentley, Sgt. Byrd, and Agent 9. But there are also some returning favorites: Hunter, Moneybags, the Professor, Handel & Greta, and Zoe the fairy.

Can you tell us about the mini-games? skateboarding, boxing and the like?

Well, the minigames are even more challenging that they were in the last Spyro plus there is a much greater variety. We've got a full skateboard park where Spyro can compete against Hunter to pull off tricks like the Gnasty Gnorc and a Lime Twist, we've got a first-person shooter segment where Agent 9 has to take out marauding ninjas, a boxing match where Bentley the Strongman takes on a Yeti, thief chases, cat hockey, water tunnels, ice slides, the list just goes on and on...

Can you tell us one secret about the game? Please...

If you play and win the Sparx rounds, Sparx will gain some brand new abilities – ones that will be very helpful!