



Q&A – September 2005

In terms of design of the game firstly have the team thoroughly researched similar titles and got feedback from a number of sources and what part has technology played in the creation of the game?

DAN - We love racing games at Naughty Dog – everything from solid sim driving right down to simple party kart racing titles. With Richard Lemarchand (Jak X Design Lead) leading the way, we played them all, then decided to make a game that would combine the best elements of each racing sub-genre. The solid and lively physics and unique per vehicle handling of a racing sim like Gran Turismo, the modification, customization, and upgrade elements of an enthusiast racing game like Need for Speed, the weapons combat fun of a Twisted Metal, and of course the easy to play, anyone can come from behind to win, fast action play of a kart racer like Crash Team Racing. It's all there in Jak X, and our unique "cocktail mix" of these play elements combined with our full animation adventure story, and Jak's world to race through, it makes for a very special and fun experience. The best of all worlds we think!

Please can you tell us about some of the interesting features within the game?

DAN - There are tracks and arenas for every taste in Jak X. The Jak universe provided for a great diversity of places to visit for fans of the series, and some new places in the universe everyone said they wanted us to explore. There's a fast night time racing track on the streets of Kras City (the burg where Krew came from) that provides for lots of 90 degree turns and even some dead end alleys to avoid. You get to go back to places in Jak 3 and race through the dusty streets of Spargus City, but this time at lightning speeds! You get to visit where the icy Marauders originated and tested their driving skills. You get to go back to the Sewer underworld of Jak II's Haven and see if you can avoid being flushed with the trash, and of course many new places that flesh out the unexplored universe and add to the mythos. In addition, the arenas provide intense play head-to-head for both two player and online play with a variety of play types including frag fests, collection tasks, hunts, and team play. Most of the tracks were designed by Yasuhara-san (level designer for all the original Sonic series and our own Jak series), and his unique play insight provides for a wide spectrum of driving experiences.

Can you tell us a little about the varying power-up's available and what form weapons take within the game?

DAN - True to Jak's universe, everything is powered by eco, and just like in Jak's previous adventures, the different eco colors correlate to what fans of the franchise

have come to expect. Blue eco is for fast motion, so it powers the turbo. Yellow is for forward weapons like gun and missiles, Red eco powers explosives and defensive weapons, Green powers the damage control system on your car, and yes, there's a Dark Eco meter that when powered up gives all your weapons a huge boost. Weapons in Jak X were designed to be strategic, with plenty of counter measures. There are good times and BETTER times to use each, and there are always strategies to defend against them. Players will have a ton of fun trying to match strategies against their friends both in person and on-line.

How extensive and customizable are the combat vehicles and do they vary that much in their handling characteristics depending on how they are customised?

DAN - With the rigid body physics system each car feels very unique. As to customization, there are so many options, and each has an impact on a vehicle more or less depending on the model. Again this is part of the fun in finding your special mix of parts that makes your ride look better and scream through lap times faster than your friends. But the player is in control of the choices. For example, the Road Blade is a great handling starter car, and it will take a few upgrades growing with the player, but as you put on engine upgrades (especially after reaching engine level 5 or 6) the car begins to get a bit loose, requiring better player skills to handle the extra power. Each vehicle has a different upgrade path like this, and some can grow better than others. In addition to performance mods, you can customize the paint colors, wheels, hood styles, side panels, fenders, and even a few fun upgrades like a bobbing Daxter Head antennae you can unlock.

Please tell us about the adventure mode; what tasks are presented and does a background story play a significant part, does this tie-in with the Precursor trilogy?

DAN – We feel Jak X's adventure mode is a unique layer for racing in that it provides for a real motivational and emotional reason for racing across the tracks. Just as we did in the previous adventure series, we applied the same high production animation team to flesh out a story with all the humor and intrigue of fans have come to expect. Since we completed the trilogy in Jak 3, this story is not about the Precursors. We wanted to go off in a new direction that wasn't about saving the world (tough to do on a race track anyway!) This is a stand alone story about Jak and his friends, about loyalty and betrayal, and about how the past can come back to haunt you. It reveals fresh insights into characters we all know from the series, while adding new insight into new characters and places in Jak's world he has yet to visit. The game tasks are presented in a very open, non-linear way, and include everything from Time Trials, to full on races, to collection tasks, tasks to earn rewards, hunting in vehicles, and good old fashion high speed boss races. We feel the story adds a much needed boost to the emotional impact of the racing experience.

What kind of damage do the vehicles suffer – does a badly deformed car have a real effect on how fast and precise you can control your vehicle and you spoken about strategies that can be partaken; expand please?

DAN – From our earliest design meetings, we wanted the rewards of combat racing to be evident and visibly empirical to the players. To this end, the vehicles exhibit real time deformation and damage scaring. Hit a wall on the right side and the car's right fenders will deform. Take a missile hit in the rear and your spoiler will fall off. Car parts will drop off right down to the frame cage! Catch fire and see your cool paint job melt to black char. Tumble and watch your wheels fall off and see a tire go rolling by on fire. These real-time elements add to the excitement and rewards for a well placed shot. But that's nothing to the scream of pain you'll hear over your online head-set from a "friend" 500 miles away who you've just smoked with a well placed missile barrage! Now that's priceless!

Could you elaborate on how Jak X connects to the PSP for extra bonuses, characters, etc?

DAN – We are working very closely with our friends at Ready at Dawn who are making the Dexter PSP game. I have even been involved with the story, writing dialogue, and directed the voice acting sessions to help ensure that the feel of the Dexter PSP story matches the previous Jak titles. The RAD team is incredibly talented and doing a great job, and Dexter PSP will be a ton of fun for old and new Jak and Dexter fans alike! As both teams we in concurrent development (with Jak X having a slight lead time) both Naughty Dog and RAD wanted to make sure we had a connection between the games...so when either platform notices a saved game from the other game, each will unlock secrets. What the secrets are is a mystery only players with the resolve to get both games together will uncover. Trust me though, it's worth it!

E. Daniel Arey
Creative Director – Naughty Dog

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Contact your local PR Manager for more details

Notes to Editors

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