

TOMB RAIDER II

INTERVIEWS WITH THE TEAM

Level design

1. What was the most important thing you learned from the design of Tomb Raider 1 that you've implemented in TR2?

The original formula was successful so we've tried not to change it too much. As always, there were some complaints that we've now addressed for TR2 such as more variety in puzzles and traps, more baddies and a few tweaks. Quite a few people said that there was too much wandering around in TR1 so we've really stepped up the content of the game. We've improved the camera system and the control method is now more immediate. We thought we'd learned not to make the maps too big, but TR2 is actually 50% larger than the original and we even had to add a whole new level just so that we could fit all the maps into the game!

2. Are there more puzzles in TR2, or does it involve more action? Is it all about collecting pieces of kit or avoiding rolling rocks and swivelling blades?

There are more puzzles and more baddies so we've got a 50-50 balance between the two. Pick-ups can now be collected from human baddies who drop them when you kill them, some of which are extremely important. We've still got the three secrets per level. The action in TR2 is much more intense than the original and you can expect a lot of really scary traps!

3. Are there any new surprises in terms of Lara's enemies?

Well, nearly all of the enemies are completely new and they're all a lot more detailed than those in TR1. In fact, each enemy now has around 200 polys more than the TR1 enemies.

You'll also see that the enemies are more intelligent and can kill you in a wider variety of ways!

We have a lot more human baddies in TR2 and they can follow you by climbing up after you so there's no getting away until you've wasted them.

Some of the 'enemies' may turn out to be allies, so pay attention and be careful who you shoot...

Yes, there are some real surprises, but we really want to keep them secret until you play the game.

4. Are there many water levels in this version/ The demo has a mini sub - what sort of things is she likely to get up to under water?

One of TR2's 'worlds' is set at the bottom of the ocean on an old cruise liner called the Maria Doria (like the Titanic.) Lara gets to the bottom of the ocean by grabbing onto the mini-sub. The first part of this world finds Lara literally swimming for her life as she attempts to find some air whilst being attacked by giant sharks!

Fortunately she's now equipped with a new harpoon gun so she can fight underwater instead of having to swim away. A new 180 degree underwater roll also helps with this type of combat.

The liner has fragmented and part of it has rolled over so you'll find that the ceiling is actually the floor - quite interesting!
The other part of the ship has rolled into a cave which contains a convenient air-pocket so you can walk out onto the deck.
TR2 has more waterfalls and vicious currents to contend with. Lara's also got a new wade move so she doesn't necessarily have to swim all the time.
Another watery-element is the speedboat. Lara gets to ride the boat through the canals of Venice, true James Bond-style!

5. Is the game purely linear this time round, or will there be more than one way to do things?

TR1 wasn't really linear, unless you knew exactly where you were going. Obviously we have to try to push people in the right direction to save them from wandering around aimlessly. The camera sometimes highlights certain things such as important objects to collect. There is a kind of order for things to be done but you'll often have to back-track in search of various items that you missed first time round. We want the game to be as interesting and as much fun as possible but there's really only one way to do things when it comes to getting the right key for the right door etc.!

6. What is going to make TR2 the BEST SEQUEL EVER? Or is this the idea?

All the improvements mentioned above plus stuff like dynamic lighting effects, a more intriguing storyline, longer and more detailed cut-scenes to unravel the plot, even better FMVs, a brilliant soundtrack that's more varied and atmospheric than TR1, better control over Lara, new moves for Lara, more surprises, loads more detail, new gameplay elements, more intelligent enemies, control over vehicles like the speedboat and a skidoo which is tremendous fun!

Graphic design

1. Just what is it like working with one of the most attractive women in the world?

SHE IS NOT REAL! Just a well-organized collection of polygons.

2. What are the major difference in Lara's performance and appearance this time around?

Lara's smoother and she has more polygons. She's been re-textured and now has the lovely long dynamic ponytail that floats underwater and blows in the wind as well as jiggling around when she runs!. She's got the new moves - she can climb up, down and side to side and she can also go hand-over-hand without using her legs. She can also wade and there's the new 180 degree underwater roll and mid-air flip which are really handy in a combat situation .Improved control over Lara gives her a more immediate response, mainly during those long jumps that had to be perfectly timed in TR1. You can now interrupt the running animation cycle at any time which means that you can jump at any time.

3. How is working with 3D cards from the outset this time making a difference to the game?

It doesn't really alter the design of the game at all. It just makes it quicker and prettier!

And will non-3D card owners be seriously disadvantaged.

Not really. A P166 running in hi-res is absolutely fine. Obviously, the more powerful your machine, the smoother things will become.

4. Have you done anything of note to the water to make it even more realistic?

Not really as it is extremely difficult and we haven't had as much time as we would have liked... 3DFX makes a difference.

6. What has been your biggest challenge?

To make it fun, playable, exciting, different and much better than the first. And to fit it all onto one CD!

1. Who designed Lara Croft?

The original Lara in Tomb Raider was designed by a graphic artist called Toby Gard.

Tomb Raider II features a more detailed, smoother Lara - her pointy bits have been rounded off. She's also been given a lovely long ponytail that flaps around when she runs and floats underwater. These new enhancements are thanks to Stuart Atkinson, the new artist for Tomb Raider II. Stuart has also programmed all the new animations such as the climb and the wade.

2. In the evolution of games heroes was a character like Lara just waiting to happen?

Lara happened just at the right moment - female characters in previous games had been depicted as trophies to be rescued, or added as the 'obligatory female'. 'Girl Power' was taking off just as Lara made her first appearance so we were very fortunate with the timing.

Previous games similar to Tomb Raider featured macho male characters. As Tomb Raider is a third person perspective game, played mostly by males, why not give them an attractive woman to follow around? Also, the female character is far more agile and graceful than the male so Lara was the ideal character to have roaming around the game's environment.

3. Lara has appeared in dozens of newspapers magazine even the front of The Face. She made Tomb Raider one of the most successful games ever. Why do you think she has become so popular?

It's a combination of things really - had the game itself not been so successful then I doubt Lara would have achieved her fame. The game has really acted as a platform to launch Lara as a character in her own right - it's now becoming quite

ironic that many people have heard of Lara but know nothing about the actual game! As I said earlier, Lara was the first female character to really cut-it in the gaming world. Her no-nonsense attitude combined with her phenomenal physical strength really make her a force to be reckoned with. Her visual appeal is obvious! Another factor is definitely the fact that she's not real (although there are many people out there who wish she was!) As such, she is allowed to exist as a unique personality within the minds of each and every person who plays the game - spend a few hours following her around and you can't help but feel a certain sympathy toward her!

4. How important is her look to the success of the game?

The game would have been successful whether the character was male or female - we did not go out with the intention of creating a new icon but are pleased with the way things have turned out! We used a female character the because female is more agile and graceful than the male - see above.

5. Have you tried to make her even sexier in the second game?

Not intentionally - improvements in the character editor system have allowed us to give her more detail so she's now much smoother, but the plot does not portray Lara as a sexier character in TR2 - we would rather understate this side of things and leave it to the player's imagination! Lara herself would not agree to being portrayed as a sex icon - her main priority is simply to adventure forever. It seems that in doing so she's drawn rather a lot of attention to herself, but hey, the girl can't help the way she looks!

6. Having created Lara what do you think is going to be the next big thing in gaming? Are you working on anything personally?

We are working on other games, but I think it will be difficult for anyone to create a new character capable of achieving as much attention as Lara. Obviously with technology improving all the time it' s inevitable that better 3D games will result.

**TOMB RAIDER II
INTERVIEW WITH ADRIAN SMITH
(OPERATIONS DIRECTOR FOR CORE DESIGN)**

1. What is the plot/storyline?

Lara is looking for 'The Dagger of Xian': an artefact that is hidden in an ancient emperor's palace within the Great Wall of China.

When she arrives at The Great Wall she'll have to find her way in and then locate the doors to the emperor's palace. However, it's not as simple as opening the doors and taking the treasure... the plot will begin to unfold and will send Lara to several locations in search of clues. Locations will include Venice, Tibet and an underwater shipwreck.

2. Could you describe how a typical TR2 situation differs from a TR1 situation.

Lara will have more freedom to explore in TR2. This is given to her in the new climbing move. She can climb hand-over-hand as well as side-to-side, so instead of looking for ledges to jump up to and making a bee-line for those, she'll have to be looking for hand-holds in the sides of cliffs or other objects that look as if they can be scaled. Once she starts to climb up the walls she can then move across to the left or to the right to access further areas of the map.

Also we'll have the underwater combat working in TR2. Instead of swimming like hell from the underwater nasties, Lara will be able to shoot at them with her new harpoon gun.

The new lighting effects will also distinguish TR2 from TR1. Lara will be equipped with a flare in TR2. We're going to base a few puzzles around this new element. Some stages of the game will be played in complete darkness so Lara will have to rely on her flare to light the way. She can throw the flare wherever she likes e.g.. down dark shafts to see what dangers lurk below. The flare even works underwater...! Dynamic lighting means that we can get really great gun flashes each time Lara shoots - this makes a massive difference to the overall atmosphere of the game, particularly when she's shooting in darker areas. Real-time lighting will mean that by the time Lara has completed a certain stage of the game, the sun may have gone down.

3 What specifically will be different about Lara, visually and otherwise?

- Different 'outfits' for different locations.
- A more detailed model - more faces and polygons.
- Dynamic hair – her ponytail will swing / float around.
- Refined texture maps (more detail).
- Larger palette.
- Additional moves and actions such as hand-over-hand climbing and underwater combat with her new harpoon gun.

4 Has the structure of the game changed?

The structure of the game hasn't really changed. We know from the success of TR1 that the combination of different elements (exploration, puzzles and combat) works really well as it stands. Lara will, however, encounter far more human baddies in TR2, so you can expect quite a lot more action than in the previous game.. The baddies will also be far more intelligent than those in TR1 so she'll have a lot of ducking and diving to do.

5 What kind of visual changes can we expect?

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6. Which graphics accelerators does TR2 support. Are you limiting the PSX version in comparison, or will both versions be pretty much identical?

TR2 will support all major 3D cards as it will incorporate direct X drivers. The PC and PSX versions will be identical in terms of gameplay and SFX etc.

7 Which technical feature are you most proud of in TR2.

We are very proud of all the technical enhancements made to TR2, however, probably the most noticeable will be the dynamic lighting additions. The lighting, as I am sure you will agree, really does add depth and realism to TR2.

7. How many TR2 features have been suggested by fans, and what are they?

Through the many official and unofficial TR websites there have been literally hundreds of suggestions. A great deal of them were ideas that we had been playing around with ourselves: For example, Lara now has a number of costume changes and moves throughout TR2. It's almost impossible to site examples of fans' ideas being specifically incorporated, needless to say we read with great interest any suggestions that are made.

8. How far have you gone out of your way to tighten the gameplay with respect to the criticisms of Tomb Raider 1?

In all areas of development we have looked to enhance and generally improve the feel of TR2. We were aware of certain minor technical problems in the first game and we feel that we have now successfully addressed all of the known problems simply by enhancing the engine and therefore the 3D system etc. For example, clipping and tight spaced camera angles.

9. Please give examples of how the vehicles are involved – how drastically do they affect the gameplay environment?

There are certain elements of the game that we wish to keep under wraps just for a little longer – looks like you've just found one!

10. Any advance information of what kind of soundtrack we can expect? Any major record company tie-ins, famous recording artists, that type of thing?

The soundtrack for TR2 will be produced at Core Design by Nathan McCree, the artist who wrote the original TR score. He'll be composing in a similar dramatic orchestral style with plenty of atmospheric pieces that'll hopefully give you a few goosebumps.