



ALIEN SYNDROME

Title: Alien Syndrome
Developer: Totally Games
Format: Wii, PSP
Genre: Action RPG
Release date: Sep 7th 2007

Jeff Kung, Senior Designer Totally Games:

Some of us remember Alien Syndrome fondly as an arcade game with dozens of different aliens' intent on taking over the universe and snuffing out the human race. How many hours did we spend at the arcade shooting at monsters with flamethrowers or a fire ball gun? Well, we wanted to bring Alien Syndrome to the 21st century and revive an old classic run 'n gun shoot 'em up arcade game and put a Totally Games spin on the franchise.

The original Alien Syndrome was purely an action game and we wanted to make sure we preserved that sense of action with our Action RPG version of Alien Syndrome. We think we've struck a great synergy between action gameplay and deep, engrossing role play gaming that's all driven by an intense story line.

The story is what launches our main character, Aileen Harding, into a series of harrowing adventures as she tries to uncover the mystery behind the Alien Syndrome. It takes her to widely varied locations from an alien infected ship to an orbiting terraforming station. From earthquake filled planets to bizarre looking alien worlds. The art team has done an incredible job of defining some very different looking environments. Each world is unique with their own special style that will keep the player feeling like they are a part of story line.

The gameplay for both the Wii and the PSP platform is essentially the same. Both have huge 40 levels to play through. Both have the same fast paced action and deep RPG elements. There are 40 different monsters plus variants, sub-bosses, and bosses. Five player class types (Tank, Fire Bug, Sharp Shooter, Demolition, and Scout) are available for both platforms. And both have up to four player cooperative modes. On the Wii, the players will be on one screen simultaneously. On the PSP, the players will be all on one screen as well but connected via the AdHoc feature on the PSP. Where the two platforms diverge is in capacity and controls.

It's been quite a fun ride developing for the Wii. Most of us were lucky enough to find a Wii to purchase and we played tons of Wii games. So getting a chance to build our game on this platform has been exciting. The larger memory pool and better graphics allowed us to really expand on the rich look of the game even further. Bigger texture resolutions, specular mapping, more dynamic lighting, and better shadows has made our Wii version of Alien Syndrome so much more immersive and realistic looking.

But probably the most intriguing thing about Alien Syndrome on the Wii is the fact that the Wii remote and Nunchuck makes the player control totally intuitive and fun. We've come up with what we think is the most natural controller configuration for a 3rd person, 3/4 view action game hands-down.

Wherever you point the Wii remote on the screen, that's where your character will point as well. Movement is done with the joystick on the Nunchuck. So aiming, firing, and moving is extremely simple and easy to learn.

Melee combat is fluid and dynamic on the Wii with special moves, combos, and finishing hits all tying into Wiimote waves, shakes, hammer downs, and thrusts. We've tried to take every advantage the Wii control system offers and integrate our character movement combat system with the Wii remote/Nunchuck.

Pick up and play is how we designed Alien Syndrome for the PSP. With it's emphasis on action, the player can start up the game and get right into the fray. With numerous checkpoints to save the game's progress, the player never has to worry about losing progress.

We've made the controls incredibly intuitive for the PSP. The player can strafe, perform melee combos... pretty much anything the Wii version can do, the PSP version of Alien Syndrome can do as well.

Tuning, tuning, and more tuning. We're at the stage in production where all the elements of Alien Syndrome are in. The art is beautiful. All the features are firing on all pistons. The only thing remaining is putting the final touches on balancing the game from level 1 to level 40 and from normal difficulty to expert difficulty.

This means tons and tons of playthroughs for the devs. One of the great things that's coming out of these playthroughs is that people are having fun playing and testing the game. That's a great sign for us because it seems that people are enjoying the game and not just play testing because they have to. For devs, that's always a good sign.