Map name: House of the Woods

Map Goal: Create an atmospheric and immersive Dying Light map that showcases level-design skills.

Premise:

Why: Hikers in the area described hearing screams from inside the house.

Who: You are a policeman and the lone investigator sent to the site.

Where: An isolated house in the woods.

What: Investigate the sounds and report back.

When: Modern day. There are two versions of the map. One is on a sunny day and another on a stormy day. This was done because both versions have a different ambiance and feel. The two versions have different lighting and different sounds (even inside the house).

How: You have no weapons on you. You can pick up a weapon later on. You have to investigate the whole house.

Walkthrough:

I will be walking through every room in the map discussing the space and events and how and why I implemented them. As a note, the whole map was constructed from scratch. I only used Dying Light assets to build the map.

Area 1: Entrance:

The entrance establishes the narrative. If the player looks back, he can see that the entrance is blocked off which means that he is now "off-road". The concrete blockades and exclamation sign also spark some thoughts as to why they exist. The road may be blocked because this place is abandoned or off limits. The player can also see a police car and can deduct that this is his car as it seems to be in good condition and is the only one at the entrance. The player can see a car in the distance and an intersection.

Area 2: Intersection:

Once the player reaches the intersection, he can see the house from afar. He can choose to go to the car or the house. Intersections such as this one break linearity and give the player a faint illusion of choice.

Area 3: Car:

If the player decides to go to the car, he can open the trunk and find random (useless) items. This aspect increases the feel of realism. Also, the car seems like it was abandoned long ago. This is a form of environmental storytelling. Since the entrance was blocked and the car here is abandoned, that infers that this house is abandoned and has a long history and that the residents are probably gone.

Area 4: Bridge:

The bridge allows the player to cross over a river. The player can see a beautiful waterfall and a lake. The house seems to be in a very serene and peaceful location. This contrast between the house and the environment increases the player's curiosity to discover what happened.

Area 5: House Exterior:

Immediately, the player notices that the house is enveloped by overgrown vegetation. This hints that the house must be abandoned. We can also see a dead tree trunk in the path to unconsciously indicate that this place isn't so pure. The front porch has empty boxes and some toys. This shows that a normal family with a kid(s) used to live here. As the player gets closer to the porch, he can hear a child crying. This is the first horror "event" of the map. The door to the interior looks old and breakable.

Area 6: House Interior (1ˢᵗ floor):

The player can break the door down and start exploring the house. The sound of the child crying accompanies the player and keeps him on his toes. The interior of the house was made to have a "country" feel and warm lighting. The interior of the house looks abandoned and dusty.

Area 7: House Interior (2nd floor):

The player can find two rooms and a ladder leading up to the attic. The lighting is still warm and is contrasted with the the child crying.

Area 8: Child Room (2nd floor):

This room is very important. It confirms to the player that the child lives in this very room (Fun fact: The train tracks on the ground were built manually piece by piece). This creates a strong feeling of worry for the player as the room looks very "innocent" yet the child is heard crying.

If the player is careful enough, he can spot bloodied linen. This gives the player a hint that the child was hurt or abused.

Area 9: Attic:

The attic is there simply for the sake of realism. The air is dusty and there are abandoned pieces of furniture. There is also a hatch to go outside the house.

Area 10: Parents Room (2nd floor):

This room was made to look like someone was planning to travel or leave the house. The key to the basement can be found in this room and is indicated on the player's HUD when he gets near it. When the player retrieves the key, he now knows that he must go to the basement.

Area 11: Basement Exterior:

As the player gets closer to the basement, he can hear the child more clearly.

Area 12: Basement Interior:

As the player enters a basement, he sees a gruesome and bloody scene. He also sees a zombie that attacks him. A scary tune also starts playing as long as the player is inside the basement. While the player can't make out exactly the story behind what happened, he knows that it's terrible and very bloody. The player can find a baseball bat on the ground. We can also see all kinds of tools most probably used for torture and murder. The screams of the child seem to be coming from behind a door.
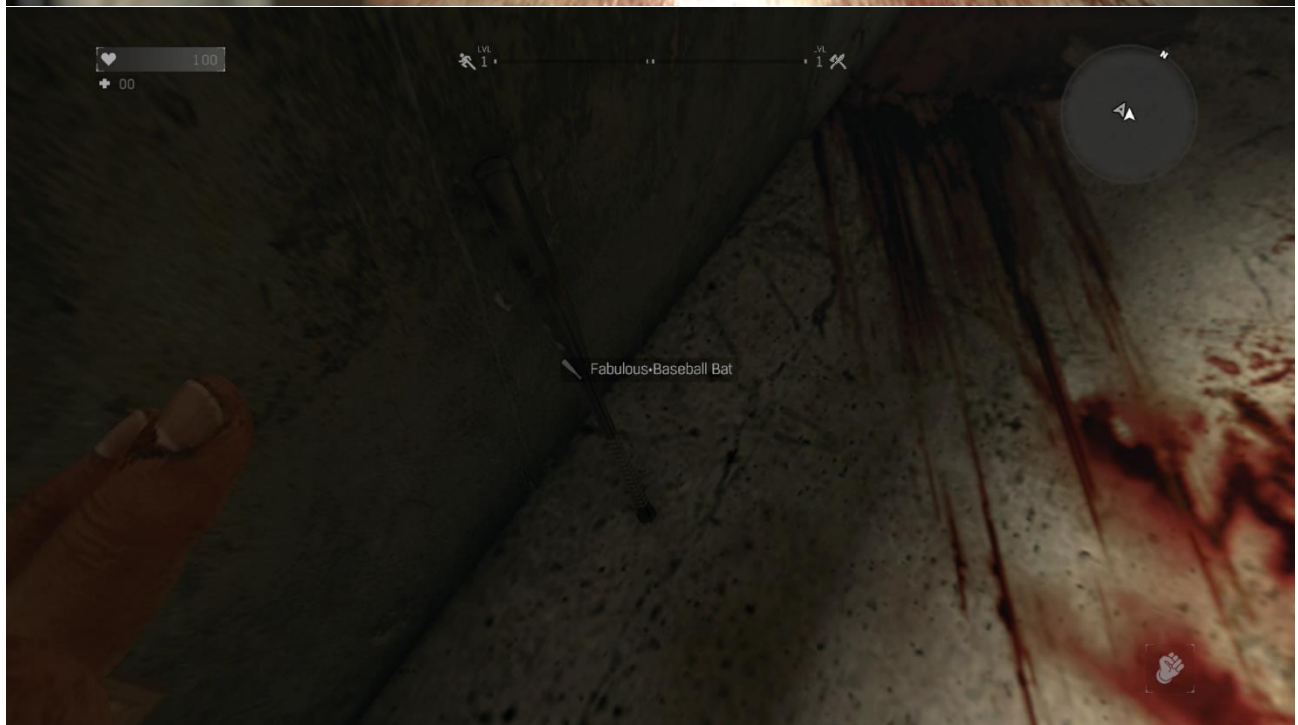
The player finally finds the crying child. It seems like the child was locked in this room. The player has to eliminate "it" as it starts damaging him. After the kill, the player hears screams from the outside and it seems the child has attracted attention. As the player gets out of the basement, tense music starts playing.

Area 13: Survive and Exit:

The player is attacked by fast zombies from all directions and has to survive in any way he can. He sees the enemies on the map. Once he eliminates all enemies, he receives an objective to head back and escape.

Conclusion:

This map provides an immersive, atmospheric, scary and exciting experience to the player. It tries to contrast between peace and disturbance and does so successfully. The map can definitely be improved on by making a richer environment and a more compelling story. Sadly I had to move on to other projects. This map did take a while to make but I learned a lot about the power of Chrome Engine. The engine has some incredible functionality that can rival juggernauts like Unreal Engine 4.
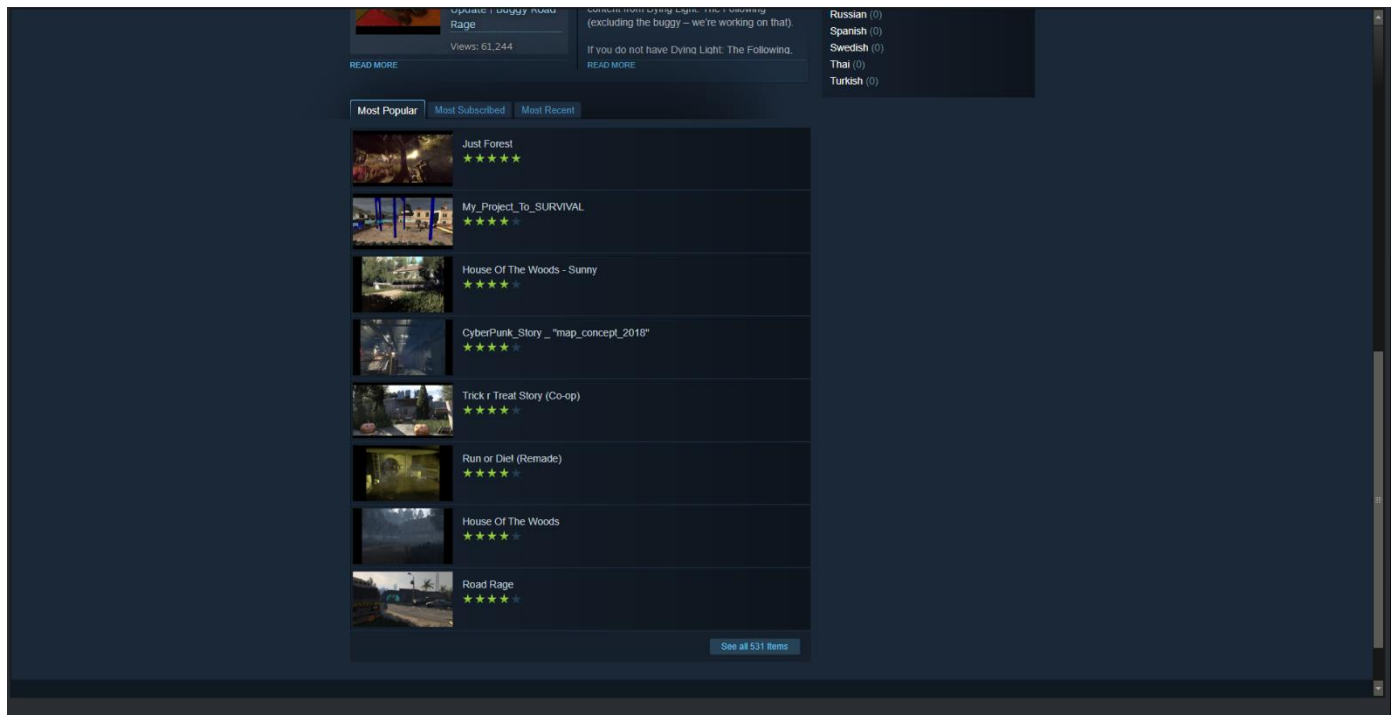
Statistics:

This map performed incredibly well and its two versions are now two of the most popular mods ever made for Dying Light on the Steam Workshop. This map is getting more popular to this day.

House of the Woods (Stormy) Stats:
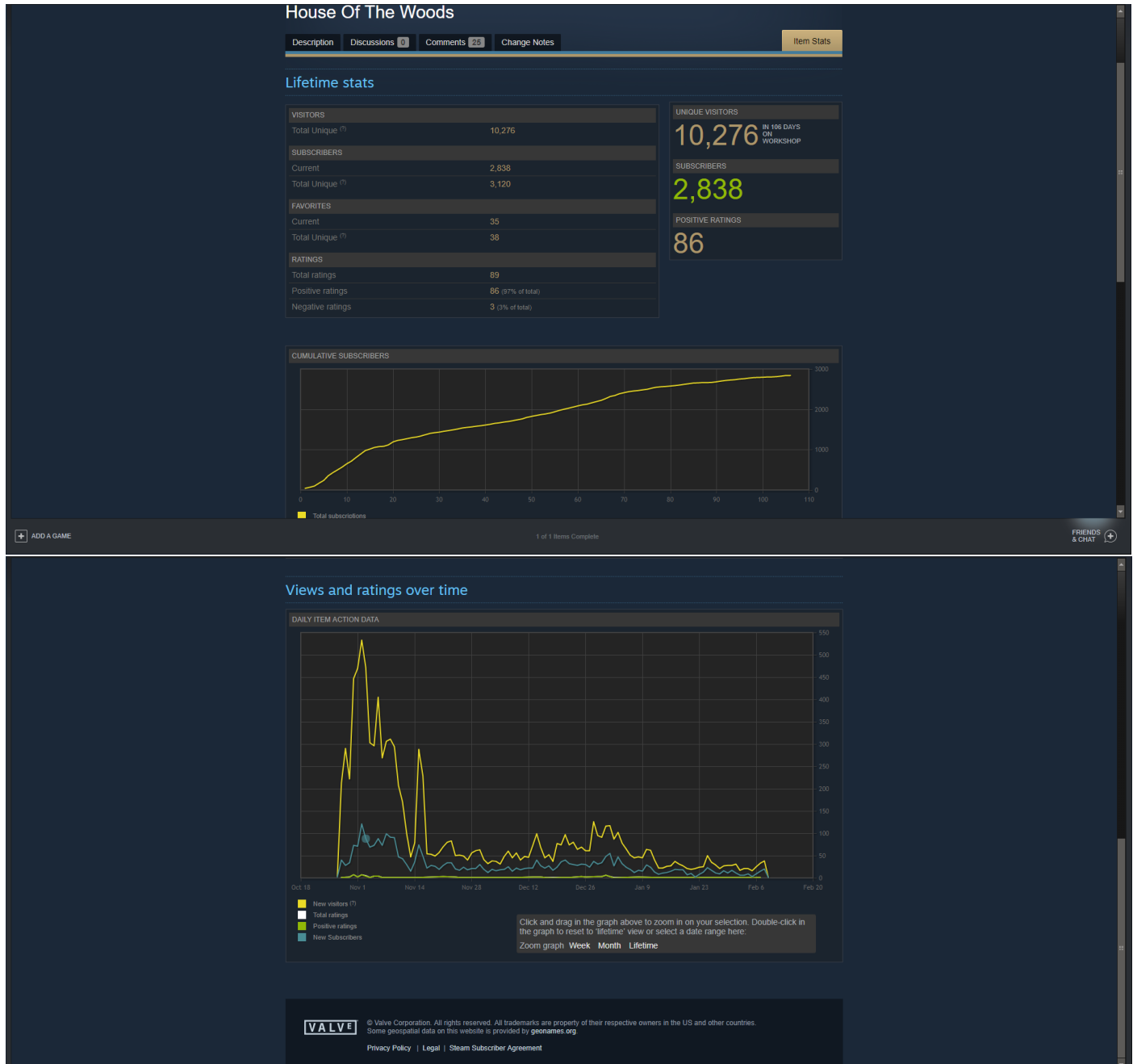
House of the Woods (Sunny) Stats:

Dying Light Steam Workshop Most Popular List:

All of these captures were taken on 02/10/2019.