

= Anachronox =

Anachronox is a third @-@ person role @-@ playing video game produced by Tom Hall and the Dallas Ion Storm games studio . It was released worldwide in June 2001 for Microsoft Windows . The game is centered on Sylvester " Sly Boots " Bucelli , a down @-@ and @-@ out private investigator who looks for work in the slums of Anachronox , a once @-@ abandoned planet near the galaxy 's jumpgate hub . He travels to other planets , amasses an unlikely group of friends , and unravels a mystery that threatens the fate of the universe . The game 's science fiction story was influenced by cyberpunk , film noir , and unconventional humor . The story features a theme of working through the troubles of one 's past , and ends with a major cliffhanger .

The gameplay for Anachronox is turn @-@ based ; the player controls a party of up to three characters as they explore a 3D environment of futuristic cities , space vessels , and outdoor areas . Inspirations for the game include older role @-@ playing video games such as Chrono Trigger and the Final Fantasy series , animator Chuck Jones and the novel Ender 's Game . The game was built with a heavily modified version of the Quake II engine , rewritten chiefly to allow a wider color palette , emotive animations and facial expressions , and better lighting , particle , and camera effects .

The development of Anachronox was long and difficult , originally planned for a third @-@ quarter 1998 release . Tom Hall planned to create a sequel with the copious content removed during production . Despite critics enjoying the game and awarding it high marks for its design and story , Ion Storm closed its Dallas offices one month after the game 's release . In 2002 , Anachronox cinematic director Jake Hughes spliced together gameplay footage and cutscenes to create a feature @-@ length , award @-@ winning machinima film .

= = Gameplay = =

Anachronox is a turn @-@ based role @-@ playing game similar in nature to many Japanese role @-@ playing video games like Final Fantasy . The player controls a party of up to four characters as they explore a 3D environment (colloquially known as a " field map ") of futuristic cities , space vessels , and outdoor areas . Players can swap for new party members , talk to non @-@ player characters , and collect and shop for equipment and items . When players near an interactive character or item , a floating arrow @-@ shaped electronic device called the LifeCursor appears , which lets the player click on the person or item . After a certain point in the story , players can travel by shuttle to other planets , triggering cutscenes of the shuttle trips . Each playable character has a unique skill , such as lockpicking , which may be used to solve puzzles . Some sequences involve minigames , such as an unnamed mission in which the player pilots a fighter spaceship to destroy enemies with lasers . Certain field maps also feature simple two @-@ dimensional minigames , including the original games Ox and Bugaboo . The protagonist Boots also possesses a camera , which the player can use to take screenshots for their own enjoyment or as part of quest objectives .

Enemy encounters trigger a combat mode . As in Chrono Trigger , enemies are openly visible on field maps or lie in wait to ambush the party and thus are not random . Similar to Final Fantasy 's Active Time Battle , each character has a meter that gradually fills with time . When the meter is full , characters can physically attack enemies , use MysTech magic , unleash BattleSkill attacks , use items , move to a different position , or use a nearby object to attack , if present . For playable characters and computer @-@ controlled enemies , each attack has their number of hit points (a numerically based life bar) get reduced , which can be restored through healing items or MysTech slugs . Use of MysTech and equippable shield cells require Neutron @-@ Radiated Glodents (NRG) , a separate energy reserve displayed beneath a character 's life bar . NRG is replenished through certain items . Use of BattleSkills require Bouge , a third bar beneath NRG that automatically fills with time ; players can use different BattleSkills depending on how full the Bouge bar is . Some characters must undergo certain plot developments to unlock their BattleSkills . When a playable character loses all hit points , he or she faints . If all the player 's characters fall in battle , the game ends and must be restored from a previously saved game . Winning battles earns experience points

and raises characters ' levels , granting them improved statistics . These statistics can be viewed through the status screen , which displays important character information and current quests . Unlike many other RPGs , Anachronox displays a character 's attributes with qualitative descriptors (such as Poor and Excellent) instead of integers .

= = = MysTech = = =

The Mysterium Tech (or MysTech) system allows players to use in @-@ game objects collectively known as MysTech , and create new MysTech by using a configuration screen accessed through Elementor Host items . MysTech cannot be used until they are awakened after a certain story event . Eight basic colors of MysTech exist , representing different elements ; for example , green represents poison . Players can use MysTech to inflict damage upon enemies , plague them with certain status effects (such as freezing them in place) , or heal party members . Casting status effect @-@ MysTech on party members will cure them if afflicted by enemy status spells . MysTech slabs and Elementor Hosts can be found as treasure in the game world or bought from shops . To create MysTech , players place colored bugs (found on small hills in several game locations) in empty slots on an Elementor Host . The color of bugs placed in the function slot determines the color of MysTech , while other slots modify the power and / or range of the spell . Players can add special bugs known as Cobalt Crawlers to make a spell target all enemies instead of one ; a Host filled with eight Crawlers unlocks a secret spell . The effect of bugs can be amplified by feeding them petals from Lifeflowers , which can be found scattered throughout the world of Anachronox . Special types of Hosts with two or three different functions allow players to pick which MysTech function to use in battle .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

The game takes place on Anachronox (a portmanteau of anachronism and noxious , meaning " poison from the past ") , a small planet floating inside a huge artificial sphere known as Sender One . Husks of futuristic cities exist on artificial tectonic plates , which constantly shift to connect different parts of the planet . Inhabitants believe that diseased aliens were quarantined there eons ago , resulting in the name Anachronox . Northern Anachronox is clean and upscale , while southern Anachronox is crime @-@ ridden and run @-@ down . Humanity travels to different planets from Sender One , which had been the center of a transportation system for a race of non @-@ humanoids enabling faster @-@ than @-@ light travel . Inbound and outbound traffic stops at Sender Station , an orbiting construct above Sender One with hotels and a red light district . Civilizations conduct business using currency like the one @-@ dollar coin known as a " loonie " , while several people collect MysTech ? shards of rock with markings , believed to be dormant weapons or art pieces created by an extinct alien race . MysTech were first found three @-@ hundred years ago , and are poorly understood , though avidly collected .

Other planets in Sender One include Sunder , Hephaestus , Democratus , and Limbus . The galaxy 's scientific community is headquartered on the temperate planet of Sunder , and people are only permitted to go there if they are sufficiently intelligent . Hephaestus is an important religious center . A mostly volcanic planet , Hephaestus hosts a town and temple complex of monks who study MysTech . Democratus is climatically similar to Earth , with regions of desert , snow , forest , and prairie . Several populations of different sentient species exist on the surface , but the planet is ruled by a race of tall , thin humanoids with large craniums who dwell on a large mechanical ring constructed around the planet . This race is obsessed with the ideal of democracy , and though they possess incredible scientific and engineering knowledge , they are constantly bogged down by their own ineptitude and the frailties of the democratic process . Limbus is known as the " planet of death " , as voyagers never return ; its surface is arid and rocky , with sparse vegetation . A planet

mentioned but not seen in the game is Krapton , home to superheroes and villains . Most of Krapton 's human population has fled , tired of being constantly abducted and saved by warring superpeople .

= = = Characters = = =

The protagonist of Anachronox is Sylvester " Sly Boots " Bucelli , a human and former private detective on Anachronox . Twenty @-@ nine years old and described as " bold , brash , and overconfident " , Boots has gotten himself into trouble and now runs his agency out of rented storage space above a seedy bar . His only friends are PAL @-@ 18 , his spirited , sarcastic robot assistant since childhood , and Fatima Doohan , his secretary . Fatima was fatally injured and digitized by Boots onto a PDA @-@ analogue " LifeCursor " , where she bitterly lives to render assistance . Several allies join Boots over the course of the game ; first is 71 @-@ year @-@ old Grupos Matavastros , a " scholar , outdoorsman , eccentric recluse , and renaissance man " ? and a very grumpy person . A former curator of the MysTech museum on Anachronox , Grupos devotes his life to studying the artifacts . Dr. Rho Bowman joins the party on Sunder ; she is a brilliant scientist who 's been branded a heretic after publication of her book , MysTech Awake ! The team then gains support from Democratus , an eccentric planet boasting a planetary ring and brilliant technology . Said technology includes having the planet shrink to human height to be part of the team . Two further allies are the femme fatale Stiletto Anyway ? a 25 @-@ year @-@ old former companion of Boots known for being stealthy and aloof ? and Paco " El Puño " Estrella , a washed up superhero who 's turned to alcoholism after his comic book series was canceled . Their foes include Detta , a heavysset crime boss / kingpin on planet Anachronox , and several other monsters and shady characters .

= = = Story = = =

Sly Boots lives in a cheap apartment above Rowdy 's , a bar in the seedy " Bricks " section of South Anachronox . Grupos Matavastros commissions Boots to find a piece of MysTech , but Detta accosts them and steals it . Grupos , Boots , and robot assistant PAL @-@ 18 then seek out Dr. Rho Bowman , an expert on MysTech , at an institute for troublesome scientists on Sunder . She undertakes an experiment to activate MysTech , apparently causing the destruction of Sunder . Rho and the others escape the planet on a shuttle , and drift in space for seventeen days until they are brought on board a habitat ring around the planet Democratus . Rho discovers that all MysTech is now active , and can grant powers and spells . Boots pilots a fighter ship to save Democratus from insectoid invaders known as the Virulent Hive . The heroes return to Sender Station 's Lounge of Commerce ; Democratus joins the party , the High Council having shrunk the planet to human height . While searching for equipment , Boots earns money as an erotic dancer and encounters Stiletto Anyway , an old flame who 's become an assassin and plots revenge against Detta . Rho explains that the universe operates on the big bounce principle ; a universe that forms with a big bang will eventually suffer a big crunch , giving rise to a new big bang . She explains that Sunder was destroyed by an injection of matter from the previous universe , which will hasten the current universe 's big crunch . If enough matter is switched between universes , the previous one can escape a big crunch and the current one will cease to exist .

The team heads to Hephaestus , transformed to a tourist destination now that MysTech is active . They realize MysTech functions can be customized through the use of small , colored bugs and a MysTech host . Sly gains audience with the Grand Mysterium , who tells him that in the next universe , species known as " Chaos " and " Order " fought a bitter war . Order enslaved Chaos in the current universe , but Chaos wishes to escape to the previous universe to prevent future ones from existing and thus eradicate Order . The Mysterium tells Sly he must find and seal off the gate to the previous universe , and to journey to Limbus . The team is captured en route by comic supervillain Rictus ; Boots meets former superhero Paco in his prison . Rictus flushes them into empty space ; the High Council of Democratus restores the planet to its original size to save them .

Scenes of reflection reveal the past on Anachronox . Stiletto had been Sly 's young assistant at his upscale agency ; he was in love with her , but Fatima was in love with him . Detta abducted Stiletto , spurring Sly 's search . Her love unrequited , Fatima went into his office one night to leave a note of resignation . Sly burst in with news of Stiletto 's location , and he and Fatima pursued Detta across Anachronox by flying car . Sly lost control , wrecking it and accidentally killing Fatima . Suffering from major depression , Sly ran up debts with Detta to pay for Fatima 's revival inside the LifeCursor .

The team regather at Democratus and journey to Limbus , where they meet creatures of the same race as the Grand Mysterium . They repel invaders called the " Dark Servants " from an orbital portal . The leader of Limbus explains that though Chaos is enslaved in the current universe , the Dark Servants (who originate from the current universe) are trying to free them and have found a way into the previous universe , where they initiated the destruction of Sunder . MysTech is a gift from the forces of Order to help the current universe 's inhabitants fight Chaos . The team return to Anachronox to find Rowdy , a disguised citizen of Limbus who has been searching for the gate to the previous universe . Rowdy notes that they must destroy the key to the gate , now in the possession of Detta . The team infiltrate his fortress , kill him , and prepare to destroy the key at the gate itself ? the fountain spiral of Anachronox . Grumpos seizes it , revealing himself to be a Dark Servant ; he escapes with the agents of Chaos into the previous universe . Sly and the others prepare to follow them and save the universe ; the game ends as they approach the gate .

= = Development = =

= = = Conception = = =

Ion Storm announced Anachronox in April 1997 , and planned for a third @-@ quarter 1998 release . Tom Hall , veteran designer and one of the founders of Ion Storm , helmed the project and originated most of its story and design . Other founding members of the team were Todd Porter (producer) , Jake Hughes (associate producer and director of cinematics) , Ben Herrera (artist) , Brian Eiserloh (programmer) , and David Namaksy (lead mapper) . Mapper Larry Herring was hired after being mentored by John Romero and submitting a custom Doom 2 map to Tom Hall . Hall first conceived Anachronox in his bathroom , prompting him to install a whiteboard and sound @-@ recorder in his shower , as well as several notepads around his house for future ideas ; he had conceived the character Sly Boots years earlier in college . He wrote a 460 @-@ page design document (completed in May 1997) outlining the universe of Anachronox , beyond the game 's scope ; other game design documents of the period , he noted , were usually only 125 pages in size . He then condensed the story , leaving a third beyond the scheduled game . The game 's design phase lasted three months . Hall made plans for two expansion packs from the outset of development , owing to the huge story . Developers told Next Generation Magazine the story would be " Campbellian " and feature immense environments . Hall noted in mid @-@ 1997 , " Not since Keen has a universe been so clear in my head . "

Tom Hall announced that Anachronox would feature a " turbulent story with a roller coaster of emotion " , and promised it would bring personality and humor to the role @-@ playing genre . Hall aimed to make an emotionally gripping , cinematic experience from the beginning : " I want this game to answer the question , ' Can a computer make you cry ? ' I want to make the characters so warm and friendly and lovable and identifiable ... I want to start them off in fun situations , but as the game goes on , I want the atmosphere to get darker and darker . Friends betray the lead character , other friends die , and you will feel some of what they feel because you have been with these people for 50 hours , and in a sense , lived part of their lives with them . " Hall remarked that the characters were facets of his childhood . He later compared the name Anachronox (meaning poison from the past) and the internal struggles of each character , caused by turbulent events in their pasts and " psychic poison . " Hall aimed to feature high @-@ quality direction and camera @-@ work in Anachronox , reminiscent of epic cinematic themes in role @-@ playing video games like the Final

Fantasy franchise . Hall enlisted producer Jake Hughes to direct cut scenes ; Hughes had previously worked on several short independent films . Developers used real @-@ time game cutscenes instead of live @-@ action cinematics to avoid " [taking] players out of the game . " Hall remarked , " All these games switch to cutscenes that look five hundred times better than the game . The secret is not to let the cutscenes kick the game 's ass . "

Tom Hall chose the Quake engine for Anachronox ; its developer John Carmack took interest in its use for a role @-@ playing game . Ion Storm would soon switch to the id Tech 2 engine , necessitating a transition from December 1997 to March 1998 . The team would implement engine support for 32 @-@ bit color , particle systems , a spline @-@ based camera scriptor , facial deformations , and lip @-@ synching . Facial deformation involved moving the vertices of a character 's face , thereby creating emotional expressions and body language . Developers built the first models in Lightwave ; the main characters had polygon counts of 500 @-@ 700 . By the end of 1997 , Hall had scripted interaction with 130 non @-@ player characters for 160 planned locations . Hall cited Chrono Trigger as a strong influence ; previewers drew parallels with the Final Fantasy series and Ultima III . As in Chrono Trigger , battles were scripted and not caused by random , unavoidable encounters . Hall explained , " if there 's a dragon guarding a door , I want the chance to say , ' whoah , look at the time , gotta run ' , not , ' think I 'll check this door . (* roaaar *) Dragon ? Where the hell was that ? ! ? ' " The team expanded the Final Fantasy @-@ style combat by allowing actions to be queued in advance . Hall listed some of his inspirations for Anachronox in mid @-@ 2000 : " In movies , some inspirational people are Spielberg , Hitchcock , George Roy Hill , Rob Reiner , and now Sam Mendes . Also a big fan of Chuck Jones , who directed Warner Brothers cartoons . Novels : Gateway , Ender 's Game , Snow Crash , Hitchhiker 's , so many more . Games : Chrono Trigger , Final Fantasy , LucasArts adventures (Ron Gilbert and Tim Schafer rock) , Ape Escape (buy it now) , Mario , Ultima III , Wizardry I , oh , I 'm sure I 'm forgetting some ! " Hall also drew dramatic inspiration from a scene in Chrono Trigger in which the characters discuss the theme of regret around a campfire .

== Programming and design ==

As production continued , Tom Hall dubbed the game 's scripting language " APE " (Anachronox Programming Language) . Hall explained , " I call it my new Apple II because it 's so much fun to program in and it takes all the drudgery out of it . It 's sort of if you mashed together C , Basic and Java in a way ? for programming people it 's sort of Windows based . It began as a defined dialogue window , but provided variables so that you could position and move a picture . So from there it grew like UNIX with little bits and pieces , and you have things that initialize data to the window , things that constantly update the window , and things that happen after the window , in little code chunks and with that you can do any little thing . " Hall wrote and coded the mini @-@ game Bugaboo for Anachronox in 15 hours to demonstrate the environment 's simplicity . Other tools developed for the game were B.E.D. (a battle editor) , ION Radiant (for level design , based on QERadiant) , NoxDrop (for item and character placement) , and Planet (a spline @-@ based camera system coded by Joey Liaw) . Ion Storm worked with QuakeEd developer Robert Duffy to create QERadiant , later adapted to ION Radiant . Hall lauded Planet : " you can control entities on paths , trigger events , manipulate particles , and do just about anything you please . One of the more common team beliefs is that the only true limit to Planet is the person controlling it . " Hall aimed to provide several end @-@ user modification tools , such as one to allow gamers to create their own MysTech elements . Other programs would allow implementation of new dialogue , voice @-@ acting , and camera work . Ion Storm developed tutorials and documentation for each tool .

Developers tasked both art and map design personnel with creating levels , ensuring visual quality . Hall implemented a " grow as you play " philosophy , choosing to show certain features and statistics (like " Beat " or the use of MysTech) only after the player enabled their use . Developers sought to make the game accessible to expert and casual players through two statistic displays ? numerical or qualitative (using categories such as " very good " or " bad ") . Hall disparaged complicated number systems found in other games : " One of the things I hate about RPGs is , you

've got , like , ' here 's this thing and here 's that thing ' and it 's like ' this is 52 and that 's 53 ' I mean , what 's the difference ? It 's like , OK it 's ' a point , ' and the formula will come up to be like ' two points ' and like , sure , that 's going to make a difference . So now I have to hit the guy three times ... " Hall also sought to ensure players knew their next goal , and invented the character of Fatima Doohan to keep track of missions . Fatima 's name is a pun born from the phrase , " What am I doing ? " Hall named her after the experience of loading an old saved game in an RPG and having forgotten what comes next in the current quest or storyline .

Ion Storm contracted Soundelux Design Music Group to provide music for Anachronox . The firm hired Bill Brown for additional music . Tom Hall was impressed with Brown 's work , particularly music for the planet Democratus . Hall worked with musician Ron Jones and a local Dallas band to record the game 's two funk numbers by mid @-@ 1998 . Tom Hall planned for each character to have their own theme music , and for songs to change via interaction or exploration . He spoke of the planned music , " The Anachronox sound will be industrial , mixed with forties bluesy swing . As you get on later in the game , the music gets scarier , more chaotic , and gets down to hard @-@ core metal . " Developers integrated DirectMusic support in 1999 to allow dynamic changing of background music . Sound programmer Henrik Jonsson implemented 3D sound and other capabilities using the Miles Sound System . Developers also planned to use software called Magpie Pro to lip @-@ sync animated mouths to spoken words . The team chose not to record voices for each line of dialogue , as Tom Hall felt certain speech would become repetitive . The Undermain Theatre group of Dallas provided several voices . Tom Hall voiced PAL @-@ 18 reportedly because " no one else got it goofy enough " .

= = = Promotion and later development = = =

Ion Storm debuted a trailer for the game at E3 1997 . The team worked several long nights and slept in a cardboard fort (named " Fort Nox ") in the office to prepare the trailer . A thief stole developers ' laptop at the Dallas airport , requiring Ion Storm to upload a new demo for the conference . Hall continued writing and designing ; he invented the Brebulan language by creating several phonemes and glyphs of the letter 8 turned on its side . Ben Herrera completed several sketches of characters and worlds by August 1997 , and the team hoped to achieve full engine functionality by September 2 , Hall 's birthday . The game would suffer serious delays in its production .

Ion Storm solicited feedback from fans after demonstrating progress on Anachronox at E3 1998 , and assured inclusion of a multiplayer mode . Tom Hall touted , " It is going to be very cinematic and about as non @-@ linear as you can get . Some levels will be bigger than anything ever seen in a 3 @-@ D environment . We are really pushing the engine for this , with loads of textures . " Developers made two demonstrations ; the second featured lasers , lens flare , and volumetric fog . The gaming press received Anachronox well ; one reporter wrote the game was " stunningly beautiful ... [with] some of the most superb effects ever seen in a computer game , including rippling water , stunning laser lights and shadow effects " . Another wrote that the game would be " graphically spectacular , with detailed characters " . Panelists at E3 nominated Anachronox in the " Most Promising Game " and " Best RPG " categories for the Game Critics Awards . Ion Storm planned for a 1999 release , and unveiled new screenshots at the 1998 European Computer Trade Show . Among the game 's maps developed in 1998 were Hephaestus (polished by David Namaksy) ; Whitendon (likka Keränen) ; Democratus , " Matrix 0 " , and certain interiors of Anachronox (Larry Herring) ; and the city of Limbus (Rich Carlson) . Lead programmer Joey Liaw left Ion Storm to attend Stanford University in mid @-@ 1998 . That November , several developers at Ion Storm departed to form their own company ; among them was David Namaksy , lead level designer for Anachronox .

As of January 1999 , Ion Storm CEO Todd Porter expected the game to ship 2 @.@ 5 million copies . Ion Storm decided to produce a sequel for Anachronox around early 1999 , feeling there would otherwise be too much content for one game , requiring prohibitive costs and delays . Team member Brian Eiserloh noted that several art assets had already been created for the sequel . By

May 1999 , the team had settled on a cast of 450 non @-@ player characters , and planned for a late 1999 or early 2000 release date . Ion Storm launched the Anachronox website in early 1999 with a movie @-@ style trailer . Tom Hall featured four Anachronox non @-@ player characters in his online tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek spoof of Kasparov versus the World . Among the game 's maps completed in 1999 were the Bricks slums of Anachronox (Seneca Menard) , Ballotine (Josh Jay) , Sender Station (Lee Dotson) , others parts of Democratus (Matt Sophos) , the Casinnox area of Anachronox (Brian Patenaude) , and the junkyard maze of Anachronox . Tom Hall reported in 1999 that an option was being developed to remove adult themes , later manifested as an option to turn off profanity . Ion Storm demonstrated the game at E3 1999 ; the team drove an RV to the event , which suffered a blowout and electrical failure . Computer Games Magazine afterward commented that Anachronox had " wider roots than a Banyan grove and more promise per square byte than a CD collection of political speeches . "

Hall personally invented and scripted Boots 's erotic dancing mini @-@ game . He noted , " we 're not above degrading our main character . " Ion Storm showed off the mini @-@ game at E3 2000 , drawing humored reactions . Art director Lee Perry noted in March 2000 that perfecting the battle system was the biggest remaining hurdle for release . Ion Storm promoted a fall 2000 release date in May , and IGN reported in July that a Dreamcast port of Anachronox was planned for production after the PC version 's release . Ion Storm issued a clarification that they were only considering a Dreamcast port . The firm transferred staff who had worked on Daikatana to Anachronox after the former 's release in summer 2000 . The team finished the game 's control setup in August .

The team began working six @-@ day weeks by late 2000 . By 2001 , the team was working 12- to 16 @-@ hour days and 6- to 7 @-@ day weeks . Hall described weekly bug meetings before release : " you see 100 bugs at the start of the week , fix the 80 you can replicate , and then meet the next Monday to address the 200 bugs they found , fix the 160 you can replicate , then meet to discuss the 400 they found ... the time in @-@ between is scary . Usually , the programmers find the bug , then stumble out of their cube , ' we were SO lucky to find that ' or ' how did that EVER work ? ' It 's like some bizarre divination method that no one is quite sure how it finds things , but no one wants to ' disturb the mojo ' . " Several Internet rumors that Ion Storm would soon close spread in May 2001 . By June 2001 , all dialogue had been recorded and Ion Storm was working on balancing , playtesting , and adjusting gameplay ; release was set for the next month . Anachronox went gold and shipped to manufacturers in late June .

= = = Release and patches = = =

Anachronox was released on June 27 , 2001 , in North America , June 29 in Europe , and June 30 in Oceania . PC Gamer packaged a game demo of Anachronox with its 100th issue . The Canberra Times staged a giveaway of three game copies to coincide with its release in Oceania . The game was rereleased in Oceania as a budget title in 2004 .

Team member Lucas Davis compiled the development tools and documentation for Anachronox and released them in August 2001 . Four bug @-@ fixing patches exist for Anachronox . Ion Storm created the first (1 @.@ 01) , which fixed the Windows 2000 buffer overrun crash and implemented other improvements such as taxi @-@ cabs between distant points and enhanced save game functionality . Ion Storm released the first patch (1 @.@ 01) on July 2 , 2001 . Joey Liaw set up a GeoCities website for reporting bugs and technical information after the game 's release , and worked on a new patch in his spare time . The second patch (1 @.@ 02 , or build 44) was released in May 2003 and overhauls the save @-@ game system and provides other important stability fixes . The third and fourth patches ? 1 @.@ 02 (build 45) , released September 2003 , and 1 @.@ 02 (build 46) , released April 2004 ? are fan @-@ made unofficial patches and fix most of the remaining bugs . Fans have translated the game into German and released a conversion patch . Level designer Rich Carlson released a scrapped secret level for Anachronox in February 2004 after finding it on an old floppy disk .

= = Reception = =

Anachronox earned positive reviews from critics , despite production delays and associations with Ion Storm 's ill @-@ received Daikatana . The Daily Telegraph called it the most original game Ion Storm had produced , while The Scotsman 's reviewer appreciated its " many original touches " . PC Gamer featured Anachronox four times in its top 100 PC games lists : # 16 (2007) , # 17 (2008) , # 61 (2010) , & # 76 (2015) . It was also USA Today 's Game of the Week . Writer Jeff Green lamented that Ion Storm had shut down after Anachronox ; he called it " easily the best console @-@ style RPG ever made for the PC . "

Reviewers highlighted the gameplay style , branded an unusual mix between role @-@ playing video games and PC first @-@ person shooters . Some compared it to the Final Fantasy series and the recently released Deus Ex . The Evening Standard wrote , " Anachronox swaps puzzlement for humour while keeping the character interaction , deep storyline and strategic battles that make the Japanese games so good . " Computer Gaming World felt the game " incorporates the best elements of the adventure and role @-@ playing genres . " In contrast , Next Generation Magazine felt the genre @-@ blending resulted in generic gameplay at times . Lyndon Russell of the Herald Sun praised the basic mechanics , though he found the combat predictable . Erik Wolpaw praised the battle system 's unique focus on movement , but wished characters could wait for a turn rather than perform an action . The puzzle elements , such as those brought by Fatima , were well @-@ received , even considered " indispensable " .

The game 's aesthetics were strongly praised . One reviewer appreciated the variety of styles in the music ; it has been compared to Yanni , Enya , John Tesh , and sci @-@ fi scores . Alan Dang contrarily found the music at times " neutral " and generic ; Paul Ward found it pleasant but sparse . Numerous critics praised the voice acting and dialogue . The game 's cinematic cutscenes were also acclaimed ; Computer and Video Games noted they were " superbly used for laughs or to create a real sense of dramatic tension " , while Next Generation Magazine wrote that Anachronox would be remembered as the germination point for blending interactive gaming and cinema . The Guardian , while also giving praise , found them somewhat predictable . Several reviewers praised the field map and level design of all but the last levels . Earlier ones were said to contain many " little details that bring the game to life " and significant immersion . The later levels were less well received , with one reviewer suspecting that ION Storm ran out of time to polish the game , as some end @-@ game locations were " hideously ugly , with huge slab @-@ like polygons , dodgy backdrops and pixelated low resolution textures " . The Guardian felt the lighting was too dark in general , while Kevin Cheung of The Sydney Morning Herald found the graphics blocky .

Reviewers hailed the story , characters , setting , and dialogue of Anachronox , citing its science fiction themes and offbeat , quirky humor . The Advertiser summarized the plot as " a beefy storyline loaded with strong characters , powerful dialogue , outrageous humour , seemingly endless surprises and a wild ride around the galaxy . " Elliott Chin singled out the game 's humor , which , while divisive of Computer Gaming World 's staff at first , won it the publication 's " Best Use of Humor " 2001 award . Even apart from humor , the dialogue was acclaimed as " so clever , it almost distracts from the game play " and as " very natural and colloquial " . David Gordon of The Independent enjoyed the game for its " dark and ominous " plot and setting , centered on the quest to stop the destruction of the universe . The setting was compared to Blade Runner , film noir , The Matrix , Total Recall and the Dark City franchise . Reviewers enjoyed the game 's odd characters and how the team of " has @-@ beens and rejects " brought new life to the genre , particularly by averting the coming @-@ of @-@ age cliché . Sly was well @-@ received , described as a " typical downtrodden B @-@ movie private eye " , a " Mickey Spillane @-@ style hero " in a cyberpunk setting , and a " space @-@ age Sam Spade " . Several critics complained about the game 's slow start on the planet Anachronox , especially its elevator @-@ riding scenes . Reviewer Elliott Chin disagreed , evoking " a superb sense of timing , starting out small and slowly building to the main event " , while David Phelan stated that strong character writing would encourage gamers to play beyond the " pedestrian @-@ paced " opening scenes .

Several critics took issue with the game 's graphics and outdated id Tech 2 engine ; reviewer Stephen Hunt named the game " a muddy affair " due to the " elderly " engine . Some reviewers ,

however , felt the game 's charm made the engine 's age irrelevant . Reviewers also encountered several software bugs and glitches , among them incompatibility with Windows 2000 and a bug forcing the player to repeat a sequence near the end several times . However , they differed in their opinions of the game as a result of them , ranging from " nearly unplayable " to " a flawed classic . " Reviewers also criticized the game 's restricted resolution choices ; players could only choose from two options at polar ends of hardware requirements .

= = Legacy = =

Before releasing Anachronox , Ion Storm retextured characters and adapted sequences from the game for Shiner , a production by the Undermain Theatre . Scenes from the game were used to illustrate the vivid imagination and struggles of a paralyzed woman named Xela . Anachronox references the films Miller 's Crossing and Barton Fink through street addresses on planet Anachronox ; Tom Hall had studied acting at the University of Wisconsin ? Madison and volunteered as an usher for Undermain . Though received well , the game did not prevent the closure of Ion Storm 's Dallas office in July 2001 ; John Romero and Tom Hall departed after its release . The game became " semi @-@ obscure " ; Tom Hall explained : " Millions were spent making it , and upon release , \$ 50 @,@ 000 advertising it . " He reflected on the game in 2007 :

[It was] hubris to take 15 people and say you 're going to make a console @-@ style RPG , but , well , that 's what we did . It wasn 't insanely buggy compared to some titles , but it was rushed out the door . Eidos wanted to ship it . If we 'd shipped Joey [Liaw] ' s final build , it would have been very stable ... I think most people didn 't know the game was out . I sing the praises of Eidos for sticking with us through all the craziness ? they were amazing ! But they spent millions on the game , and in the tens of thousands on advertising . I think it could have found a pretty strong audience . But with all the craziness that had gone on , I feel fortunate that people got to experience it at all ... People still write to me saying they found a copy , that they played and loved the game , and that they wished they ? d heard about it coming out at the time .

= = = Machinima film = = =

Cinematic director Jake Hughes independently combined the game 's cut @-@ scenes into a two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ hour film titled Anachronox : The Movie , released as 13 MPEG files on Machinima.com. The work was considered machinima 's first feature @-@ length production (incorrectly : the longer film The Seal of Nehahra predates it) and one of its most ambitious projects . Judges at the 2002 Machinima Film Festival (MFF) awarded it Best Picture , Best Writing , and Best Technical Achievement . Machinima.com 's editors said of the film , " Anachronox : The Movie is a tour de force , one of the finest Machinima films produced to date , and probably the most accomplished Machinima feature to date . Hell , it managed to hold two overworked jury members in a room for two and a half hours before the MFF 2002 ? what more can we say ? " As of 2003 , Machinima.com planned to release the film on DVD with extra footage and artwork .

= = = Sequel = = =

Tom Hall felt the story of Anachronox was too large for one game (requiring an estimated 70 hours of gameplay) , and planned for two expansion packs in 1998 . Each expansion pack would represent another third of the overall story . He confirmed in 1999 that Anachronox would be followed by only one sequel ; several art assets had already been created for the sequel by mid @-@ 2000 . Hall speculated in 2000 that further adventures in two new universes may take place after the sequel . Ion Storm 's closure nixed plans for a continuation ; Hall has unsuccessfully tried to purchase the intellectual property rights to the Anachronox universe . He later stated that he did not regret ending Anachronox on a cliffhanger , as most characters had resolved their inner turmoil .

Hall noted in 2007 that other team members were willing to come back to help : " We went through such turmoil but stayed for the love of the universe , the game and each other . Former team

members often mention that if I ever got the intellectual property back and was going to make Anachronox 2 , just tell them when and where . We have , as we say , ' The Love . ' " Hall remarked in 2010 , " If I don 't do the game in the next 10 years , I 'll just write up the rest of the story and put it on my website for closure , how about that ? "

On February 17 , 2015 , Square Enix announced that it will allow developers to create games based on some of their old Eidos IPs via the Square Enix Collective project , including the Anachronox IP .