Neverwinter Nights 2

Neverwinter Nights 2 is a role @-@ playing video game developed by Obsidian Entertainment and published by Atari . It is the sequel to BioWare 's Neverwinter Nights , based on the Dungeons & Dragons pencil and paper fantasy role @-@ playing game . Neverwinter Nights 2 utilizes an adaptation of the Dungeons & Dragons 3 @.@ 5 edition rules . Players create player characters to represent themselves in the game , using the same character creation rules as found in the Dungeons & Dragons game . They may gain the assistance of additional party members , and they eventually acquire a keep that can be used as a base of operations . Neverwinter Nights 2 is set in the Forgotten Realms campaign setting ? in and around the city of Neverwinter . The story is mostly unrelated to Neverwinter Nights and follows the journey of an orphaned adventurer investigating a group of mysterious artifacts known as " silver shards " and their connection to an ancient , evil spirit known as the King of Shadows .

Neverwinter Nights 2 went into development in July 2004 . This sequel was designed with the Aurora Engine , also used by its predecessor , and the game 's toolset was included in the game 's release for players to use in designing their own adventures . The game 's design team drew upon older role @-@ playing video games , and decided that the player character would have to earn the respect of others by the things the character does . The game was also designed to be playable with other players online in a cooperative fashion . The game was released in October and November 2006 . Official multiplayer support for the game was suspended in December 2012 . In response , the Neverwinter Nights 2 community developed several initiatives by which players can continue to play the game online .

Reviews of Neverwinter Nights 2 were generally positive . Reviewers were pleased with the changes that had been made from the first game in the series , especially regarding the storyline and party management . The game won GameSpot 's Best Story award for 2006 . One of the most commonly raised complaints about the game was the presence of numerous technical glitches in its initial release . Two official expansions and one official adventure pack have been released for the game : Mask of the Betrayer in 2007 , Storm of Zehir in 2008 , and Mysteries of Westgate in 2009 .

Gameplay

Neverwinter Nights 2 is played in the third @-@ person from a top @-@ down perspective , where the player controls a hero and his or her attendant party . As a role @-@ playing video game based on the Dungeons & Dragons 3 @.@ 5 edition ruleset , players build a player character in accordance with the character creation rules of Dungeons & Dragons , which includes selecting a race and class , then assigning skill points . There are sixteen races and twelve classes available , including the rogue and the wizard , as well as an additional seventeen unlockable classes . Neverwinter Nights 2 makes use of the d20 system introduced in Dungeons & Dragons , where a die roll or random number is used to determine the probability and effectiveness of every action , including attacks and saving throws . The player character can recruit companions during the campaign , and may form a party with up to three of them . Party members can be controlled directly by the player or given orders dictating how to behave in combat .

The game is set in the Forgotten Realms campaign setting . The party is able to explore various areas of Faerûn ? including its cities , forests , and dungeons ? while earning experience points and treasure by defeating monsters and completing quests . The entire party collaborates during combat , with characters ' behavior determined by their class and abilities . Upon gaining specified amounts of experience , characters level up which allows them to earn new abilities such as magic spells and feats . Some races , like the drow , are more powerful than others and require characters to accumulate more experience to earn levels . Characters can access Prestige classes , more specialized versions of base classes , by fulfilling certain requirements . The warpriest , for example , is available to divine spellcasters such as clerics after they have reached a set level of power . Items such as weapons , armor , potions , and scrolls can be used or equipped by characters , and some equipment changes will affect a character 's appearance . As the game progresses , the

player character acquires a keep that can be used as a base of operations . Initially , the keep is in a state of disrepair and must be refurbished using party funds . As the keep is improved , it can generate income and gain stronger defenses to repel sieges . Non @-@ player characters such as equipment vendors can be recruited to work at the keep , and the player must manage the training of guards and the allocation of resources .

Before the online component was disabled (see Development below) , the campaign of Neverwinter Nights 2 could be played with other players , but only from the beginning of the storyline . The rules could be modified for multiplayer games , such as deactivating friendly fire . A BioWare community account was required to play online , and players were able to search for game servers matching their style of play . Players could upload and play modules online created with the Electron toolset , which is included with the Windows version of the game .

= = Story = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Neverwinter Nights 2 takes place in and around the city of Neverwinter , in the Sword Coast region of Faerûn . The first part of the game is set in the small Sword Coast village of West Harbor , which was the site of a battle between an evil host led by an entity known as the " King of Shadows " and the warriors aligned with Neverwinter . The player character 's fate is tied to this battle , during which his or her mother was killed . During the campaign , the player has the opportunity to recruit party members to aid in the cause , including the violent dwarf Khelgar and a vocal young tiefling . Antagonists include the King of Shadows , a manipulative Luskan diplomat named Torio , and the warlock Ammon Jerro .

= = = Plot = = =

Neverwinter Nights 2 is composed of three distinct acts . The game 's first act begins in the village of West Harbor , where the player 's character was raised as an orphan by the elven ranger Daeghun . After a festival , the town is attacked by a group of githyanki in search of an unnamed object . Afterward , the character is sent to retrieve a mysterious silver shard from a nearby cave , which was left there years earlier after the defeat of the King of Shadows . The character then sets out for Neverwinter , meeting other adventurers along the way , several of whom are available for recruitment . In Neverwinter , Daeghun 's half @-@ brother Duncan offers a more comprehensive explanation of the situation . In Neverwinter , Duncan instructs the party to speak with Aldanon , a sage who reveals the shard 's connection with a dead warlock and his descendant , a farmer named Shandra Jerro . However , the githyanki kidnap Shandra and the player character must rescue her . At the end of Act I , the party dispatches the githyanki , rescues Shandra , and learns of the origin of the shards .

In act two , the party discovers that an evil wizard , Black Garius , is plotting to subsume the power of a powerful entity known as the King of Shadows . The party interrupts Garius during the scheme and Garius is apparently killed . As a reward , the protagonist earns a title of nobility and is awarded a stronghold , Crossroads Keep , by Neverwinter 's political leader , Lord Nasher . After tracking down Ammon Jerro , the warlock who fought the King of Shadows and the grandfather of Shandra Jerro , the player character learns that the King of Shadows was once known as the Guardian , a powerful creation of the ancient fallen empire of Illefarn . The Guardian was corrupted after tapping into a dark magical energy called the Shadow Weave . Thereafter the Guardian destroyed Illefarn in a misguided attempt to protect it . Ammon is initially unwilling to help the player character , but after inadvertently slaying his descendant Shandra , he repents and joins the party .

Act three introduces the Shadow Reavers , a sect of powerful undead mages that include a revived Garius , still intent on resurrecting the King of Shadows . The player must prepare Crossroad Keep for imminent battle by fortifying its troops and lands . After additional shards are retrieved by

defeating Shadow Reavers , the shards are reformed into a powerful unique weapon for the player character , the Silver Sword of Gith . The sword , stolen by Ammon Jerro in the first battle against the King of Shadows , is the only weapon that can resist the enemy 's power . The army of the Shadow Reavers lays siege to Crossroads Keep and is repelled by the occupants . After making their way through Garius ' new stronghold , the party engages the mage in a second confrontation . After Garius is defeated , good members of the party begin the final fight against the King of Shadows . Evil and neutral characters (including the player character , if applicable) can decide to attack the King or fight alongside him . A cutscene afterwards details the battle 's effect on the world , and ends on a cliffhanger which is continued in the Mask of the Betrayer expansion pack .

= = Development = =

 Neverwinter Nights 2 was unofficially announced on April 1 , 2004 , when an Atari employee listed the names of several games in development , including a " NWN2 " in response to an inflammatory comment on Atari 's forums . The company officially announced the game on August 4 , 2004 . Obsidian Entertainment handled development of the game , and BioWare , the company that created the first Neverwinter Nights , offered support and guidance to Obsidian . The two companies collaborated in a similar manner on Star Wars : Knights of the Old Republic II , an Obsidian ? developed sequel to a BioWare game . BioWare joint CEO Ray Muzyka said " Neverwinter Nights remains one of the most important titles BioWare has ever created . We certainly plan to remain involved in the production and development of Neverwinter Nights 2 " . Obsidian employed several game designers from the defunct Black Isle Studios , which developed other Dungeons & Dragons role @-@ playing video games such as Planescape : Torment , the Icewind Dale series , and the Baldur 's Gate series . Development of Neverwinter Nights 2 began in July 2004 , when Obsidian assigned several staff members to work on the project . Staff included Darren Monahan , the producer of several Icewind Dale and Baldur 's Gate : Dark Alliance games ; Marc Holmes , art director of the first Neverwinter Nights ; and Chris Avellone , lead designer of Planescape : Torment and Knights of the Old Republic II .
 BioWare provided its Aurora Engine from Neverwinter Nights for the sequel . One of the decisions to use Aurora rather than build a new engine from scratch was the toolset ? Obsidian wanted players to continue to be able to make content for the game , which may not have been possible with a new engine . BioWare made itself available to Obsidian with technical support on the engine , but Obsidian planned on completely overhauling Aurora , including its code . The designers wanted to improve the visuals of the first game with additions such as better lighting and textures , which required significant changes to the engine . The upgraded engine was referred to as Electron . Electron was designed to incorporate DirectX to make it compatible for a potential Xbox 360 release , but Obsidian eventually abandoned plans for a port to the system for financial reasons . The toolset that was used to create the game was also revamped , and included several additions like a customizable interface , a new dialogue format , and building assistants ? similar to the wizards found in Microsoft Word and Excel . Like Neverwinter Nights , the toolset was included in the game 's release for players to use .
 Obsidian drew on older computer RPGs for inspiration on the storyline and gameplay , like Fallout and the Ultima series . Obsidian CEO Feargus Urquhart said " We 've been thinking about a lot of older RPGs , and we have this feeling that something has been lost with recent RPGs . " He compared Neverwinter Nights 2 to Baldur 's Gate II , stating that he wanted to expand upon the city of Neverwinter as Baldur 's Gate II had done with its setting , Athkatla . " We 're looking at how to make Neverwinter a really intriguing place to be , and make it a place where you go and come back to and go and come back to and have it really be a center for the game , " Urquhart said . The game 's story , while still revolving around the city of Neverwinter , would be unrelated to Neverwinter Nights . Instead of starting the game as a powerful , important character , players would begin Neverwinter Nights 2 as nobodies . Obsidian wanted realism in the game and concrete consequences for the player 's actions . The story would be centered on the player character , who would have to gradually earn the respect of Lord Nasher and the city of Neverwinter .

" At the beginning of the game , the main character will run into a person of importance and be ignored like any other lump of crap with legs . The powerful simply don 't notice those weaker than themselves . It 's this kind of philosophy that promises a more cohesive story . "

 Instead of the henchmen system used in Neverwinter Nights , Obsidian overhauled the game 's party format to mimic Knights of the Old Republic II . Like the Neverwinter Nights expansion Hordes of the Underdark , the player would be able to recruit more than one party member . Each character could be directly controlled , but party members would also be able to come to a player 's aid even when not controlled , such as summoning a rogue to open a locked chest . Companions would have distinct personalities and their own agendas , but it would be possible for the player character to influence them . Characters can leave the party permanently under certain circumstances . Other changes from the first game include the addition of prestige classes and more exotic races , like planetouched and Elven subraces .

 In 2012 , GameSpy , the company providing multiplayer support for the game , was purchased by Glu Mobile . After the purchase , Glu Mobile raised the fees being charged to publishers to provide online services for their games . The new owners then shut down a number of the online services for different games , including Neverwinter Nights 2 . GameSpy claimed that the developers had allowed their contracts to lapse , and , after providing free services for a time , were no longer willing to continue .

= = Release = =

 Neverwinter Nights 2 was ready for mass production on October 17 , 2006 and was released on October 31 in the United States , on November 3 in Europe , and on November 16 in Australia . The Electron toolset was available early for consumers who pre @-@ ordered the game through GameStop or Best Buy , as well as exclusive class @-@ specific special items . Alongside the standard version , Atari also published a special edition . The United States and Australia " Limited Edition " contained several physical items like a cloth map depicting the Sword Coast , as well as in @-@ game benefits like the " Blessed of Waukeen " feat that grants players a bonus to saving throws . The Europe special edition was split into two separate boxes , dubbed " Lawful Good Limited Edition " and " Chaotic Evil Limited Edition " , a reference to the Dungeons & Dragons concept of moral alignment . Each box contained the collectibles available in the United States and Australia versions , as well as copies of the original Neverwinter Nights and its expansions , and a trial code for Dungeons & Dragons Online : Stormreach .

 Atari licensed Aspyr Media to develop a port of Neverwinter Nights 2 for the Apple Macintosh ; the game was announced shortly before the Windows release . The initial announcement gave a December 2007 release date , but the port was not shipped to retailers until February 2008 . It included the full version of Neverwinter Nights 2 with the exception of the editor toolkit . Atari announced in March 2008 that many of its PC games , including Neverwinter Nights 2 and its first expansion , Mask of the Betrayer , would be available online via Valve Corporation 's digital distribution service Steam . A " Gold Edition " bundle was also published in May 2008 containing copies of Neverwinter Nights 2 and Mask of the Betrayer . A platinum edition containing the original game and both its expansion packs was released on the Steam platform on December 27 , 2010 . As of May 2013 , Neverwinter Nights 2 is no longer sold through Steam .

 A complete edition that contains the original game and the three expansion packs (Mask of the Betrayer , Storm of Zehir , Mysteries of Westgate) was released on GOG.com on January 24 , 2013 .

= = Expansions = =

 Mask of the Betrayer , the game 's first expansion pack , was announced in April 2007 by Atari and Obsidian Entertainment . It was released on September 28 , 2007 in Europe , on October 9 in the United States , and on November 1 in Australia . Mask of the Betrayer 's story begins shortly after the events of Neverwinter Nights 2 and is set in the country of Rashemen , a matriarchy near Thay .

The expansion contains several new options for character development , including additional races and prestige classes . It received favorable reviews from critics .

Storm of Zehir was announced in June 2008 . The pack is set on the Sword Coast and Chult areas of the Forgotten Realms and was released on November 18 , 2008 in the United States , on November 21 in Europe , and on December 11 in Australia . Despite being released after the introduction of the D & D 4th edition ruleset , Storm of Zehir made use of the 3 @.@ 5 ruleset like its predecessors . The expansion featured gameplay with similarities to previous D & D video game series Baldur 's Gate and Icewind Dale and received mixed reviews .

Mysteries of Westgate was announced in October 2007 . Atari referred to it as an " adventure pack " , comparing it to the premium modules of Neverwinter Nights . The game was developed by Canadian @-@ based Ossian Studios , the designers of the cancelled premium module Darkness over Daggerford . It is set in the Dragon Coast city of Westgate . Atari 's initial press release gave a release date of fall 2007 for Mysteries of Westgate , but it was not released until April 29 , 2009 .

= = Reception = =

Reception of Neverwinter Nights 2 was generally favorable . It placed number 6 on Amazon 's video game pre @-@ order list the week before its release , and was a best @-@ seller for several weeks afterwards . It received GameSpot 's " Best Story " award for 2006 , beating out the reader 's choice , The Elder Scrolls IV : Oblivion . It was also nominated for a Golden Joystick Award for Best PC Game of 2006 .

While some reviewers considered Neverwinter Nights 2 superior to its predecessor , Neverwinter Nights , the sequel received lower overall review ratings . Implementation of the Dungeons & Dragons 3 @.@ 5 ruleset was praised as faithful to the pen @-@ and @-@ paper version , with GameDaily stating " The 3 @.@ 5 edition ruleset is in full swing in Neverwinter Nights 2 , where critical hits can devastate your entire party . " The game 's representation of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting was also well received . The storyline was widely considered one of the game 's strong points and an improvement over Neverwinter Nights . GameSpy stated that the single ? player campaign was " worthy of its exhaustive pedigree " , and Game Informer 's reviewer said " This title easily trumps the original NWN ? s campaign with a vastly superior story and characters " . Another reviewer declared it " one of the best written games in history " . Aaron R. Conklin of The Wisconsin State Journal said , " It 'd be very easy to be turned off by the first mundane chapters of the game 's sprawling plot .... Stick with it : Once your party hits Neverwinter (and reaches level seven or so) , the proceedings become significantly more interesting ? especially in terms of character interaction and development .... NWN2 is a masterpiece of storytelling and scope . " Conklin and Matt Slagle of Deseret News were pleased with the ethical choices in the game , with both noting approvingly that diplomacy was a very valid option that could succeed in place of combat .

Other reviewers were less convinced , with Australia 's PALGN referring to the story as " rather predictable and clichéd " . Jonathan Parkyn of Personal Computer World wrote , " Dialogue is NWN2 's key component .... but those who favour fisticuffs may find it tiresome after playing for several billion hours . " Similarly , reception of Neverwinter Nights 2 's graphics was mixed . Some reviewers referred to the visuals as " new age " and " beautiful " , but others noticed inconsistencies in their rendering and performance , especially on lower @-@ end PCs . The Sydney Morning Herald said " The detailed 3D engine allows for lush scenery , giving you a greater sense of exploration as you poke around the rustic villages and murky swamps " . Several comments on the audio and voice acting were positive , though one reviewer expressed disappointment that some sound effects had apparently been recycled from Neverwinter Nights . Conklin called the in @-@ game camera " abysmal " and said the game had a many graphical glitches . Slagle agreed , writing , " I had a lot of stuttering graphics and voiceovers that were out of synch with the characters ' on @-@ screen animations . "

The most common criticism of the game was its numerous technical glitches . Adam Diamond of Isthmus was not happy with the pathfinding , writing , " I often found myself traveling solo through a

dungeon , my companions spread out far behind me , leaving me vulnerable to attack . What 's the point of having henchmen if they 're not there to protect you ? " . Some reviews compared Neverwinter Nights 2 to Star Wars : Knights of the Old Republic II , a previous Obsidian game that had received similar complaints . The bugs were described as disruptive to gameplay and " downright infuriating " , and one reviewer encountered a " showstopper bug " in the initial retail version that prevented him from playing the game past a certain point . The bugs were said to negatively affect NPC AI , camera operation , and pathfinding . One review stated " The launch ? to ? load time is fairly long so be prepared to wonder if the game has crashed or is loading . " Obsidian was quick to release fixes for several bugs , but later reviews still described the glitches as a serious problem . 1UP.com 's review , written two weeks after the game 's release , stated " But the sad truth is that NWN2 shipped in a pretty messy state , and even after a couple patches (as of this writing) , the biggest problems remain . "

The level editor and design toolset were widely praised , with Deseret referring to them as " insanely powerful and complex " . The Mac version received mixed reception , and reviewers complained about its lack of the editor toolkit and its high system requirements .

1UP.com writer Matt Peckham caused controversy with his initial review of Neverwinter Nights 2 . A 1UP editor pulled the review from the site and officially retracted it from the print version of the January 2007 issue of Games for Windows : The Official Magazine , explaining that " we felt that this particular review of Neverwinter Nights 2 did a disservice to fans of the [role @-@ playing game] genre . " The subsequent review by Jeff Green gave the game a score of C + and is one of the most negative reviews among major outlets . A modified version of Peckham 's review was later published by the Sci Fi Channel , and another version of the review can be found at Penny @-@ Arcade .