

= Starbreeze Studios =

Starbreeze Studios is a video game development studio and publisher , based in Stockholm , Sweden . Notable games developed include The Chronicles of Riddick : Escape from Butcher Bay , Payday 2 and Brothers : A Tale of Two Sons .

Founded by members of the demogroup Triton , the company was merged with O3 Games in 2002 but the name Starbreeze was retained . The company produced titles including Enclave and Knights of the Temple : Infernal Crusade . In the early 2000s , cancellations of their projects due to conflicts with publishers , and a failed acquisition , led to a severe financial crisis , resulting in staff lay @-@ offs during the development of Starbreeze 's fourth game , The Chronicles of Riddick : Escape from Butcher Bay . This game received critical acclaim and helped Starbreeze establish a reputation for producing a good licensed game . The company worked on The Darkness , whose sales were considered satisfactory .

Starbreeze partnered with Electronic Arts to develop a reboot to the Syndicate series , but it ended up being a commercial failure , and many staff members moved to rival company MachineGames , established by Starbreeze 's founders . As a result , the company shifted part of its focus on developing smaller games , such as Brothers : A Tale of Two Sons . Starbreeze began expanding the company in 2012 with its acquisition of Overkill Software . Overkill 's first title after the acquisition , Payday 2 , helped Starbreeze make a record profit after suffering an accumulated loss of \$ 14 @.@ 4 million since its inception . In 2015 , the company announced that it would start publishing video games from independent developers , and that it had begun the development of a virtual reality headset named Project Star VR .

= = History = =

= = = Founding and merger = = =

The company was founded by Swedish programmer Magnus Högdahl . Högdahl was a former member of the PC demoscene group Triton , and specialized in making tech demos . He decided to leave the company after his project , an action role @-@ playing game named Into the Shadows , was cancelled . He then decided to found his own studio and began crafting his own game engine . He actively recruited staff among his acquaintances and the studio was officially established in 1998 in Härnösand , Sweden .

Högdahl serving as the company 's head and tech lead , was responsible for creating a new game engine for future games , and looking for publishers willing to help publish its games . At that time , the company had only about five employees , and had created a prototype for a video game and pitched it to publishers at E3 1998 . Gremlin Interactive agreed to publish the game , and the deal was finalized in late 1998 . The company grew to have roughly eleven staff members . The game was a first @-@ person action role @-@ playing game named Sorcery . With a high fantasy setting , the game featured 3D visuals and its gameplay was similar to that of Diablo and Quake . However , Gremlin Interactive was acquired by Infogrames in 2000 and the partnership with Starbreeze dissolved , resulting in the game 's cancellation .

O3 Games was founded by Lars Johansson , who also worked at a demoscene company . Its first game was The Outforce , a real @-@ time strategy space game that was released in 2000 and subsequently became a success for the company . O3 needed to expand so that it could continue video game development . After Sorcery 's cancellation , Starbreeze ran into financial difficulties . Unable to support itself financially , Starbreeze needed to merge with another developer to continue in business . The two companies discussed a merger in Uppsala and merged shortly afterwards , retaining the name Starbreeze Studios .

= = = Post @-@ merger = = =

After the merger , the company began working on Enclave , a medieval fantasy , multiplayer @-@ only video game inspired by Team Fortress . The game also became the company 's first project with international appeal , enabling Starbreeze to partner with various publishers including Swing Entertainment , Conspiracy Entertainment , and Vivendi . However , Swing Entertainment faced bankruptcy at that time , and decided to turn the game into a single @-@ player action @-@ adventure video game with the goal of sending it to market as soon as possible . The game was released in 2002 , and Starbreeze had to lay off staff after its release . Enclave II was also in development . The sequel was said to feature a more elaborate story , 28 different maps , 10 playable characters , and an improved fighting system . However , these features were axed when Starbreeze got into legal troubles with the publisher , resulting in the game 's cancellation . Another game , Knights of the Temple : Infernal Crusade , was successfully released with help from publisher TDK Mediactive . However its sequel was shifted to another developer . Starbreeze attempted to acquire another studio , Rock Solid Games , but the agreement between the two fell apart and brought both companies financial problems .

Another project being worked on by Starbreeze at that time was The Chronicles of Riddick : Escape from Butcher Bay . Set in the The Chronicles of Riddick movie universe , the game was published by Vivendi . The team took inspiration from films such as Escape from Alcatraz and video games such as GoldenEye 007 and the Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell series . However , the company was downsizing due to its financial problems and the number of employees dropped from 80 to 25 , and the entire development team moved away from the main Starbreeze floor to prevent it from being affected by low morale , and to allow it to focus on the game 's development . The game enjoyed an 18 @-@ month development cycle , which was significantly longer than typical licensed games . A PlayStation 2 version of the game was also in development , but was ultimately cancelled as the then head of Vivendi 's publishing division , Michael Pole , ordered its cancellation to " make his mark " . Universal Motion Pictures intervened and kept the game 's Xbox version . Escape from Butcher Bay received critical acclaim upon its launch , with many critics regarding it as one of the best licensed games ever made . Its gameplay element including the puzzle @-@ solving mechanics , the stealth segment , and its ahead @-@ of @-@ its @-@ time visuals , also received praise from critics . Despite receiving critical acclaim , it was not a commercial success for Starbreeze .

After the release of Escape from Butcher Bay , Starbreeze again encountered financial difficulties after having not received a significant royalty payment from Vivendi . It sold part of its motion capture and animation department to a British company , Centroid . However , the game helped set Starbreeze 's reputation as a studio capable of making good licensed titles . With the help of Union Entertainment , an intermediary company , Starbreeze signed an agreement with Majesco Entertainment for a new title set within the The Darkness universe owned by Top Cow Comics on July 16 , 2004 . Mid @-@ way through the game 's development , Majesco underwent restructuring because of financial difficulties , shifted its focus , and dropped the game . 2K Games stepped up and acquired the publishing rights . 2K extended the game 's development cycle , and asked Starbreeze to develop a multiplayer mode for the game . The Darkness was released in 2007 . It fared worse than the team expected critically , but its commercial performance was satisfactory , selling more than 1 million copies worldwide .

After working on two different licensed games , the team intended to develop its own games . A game named Kano , involving mind @-@ reading , was started but was never completed . After the release of The Darkness , the company signed a two @-@ project contract with Vivendi . One of the games was a new property known as Polaris . The game was set in a post @-@ apocalyptic environment . Players were tasked to overcome snowstorms , and defeat terrorists and monsters cooperatively with other players . Vivendi was not convinced the game would succeed and adjusted the contract to a remake of Escape from Butcher Bay , The Chronicles of Riddick : Assault on Dark Athena . Vivendi originally named the game Riddick 2 but Starbreeze disagreed claiming the name would raise expectations among gamers that the remake might not be able to deliver . Vivendi 's subsidiary Sierra Entertainment was set to publish the game . After the merger between Activision and Vivendi , the new company began streamlining Vivendi and put the game , along with Brütal

Legend , and Ghostbusters : The Video Game up for sale . Atari eventually acquired the publishing rights and the game was released in 2009 .

== 2010 ? 2016 ==

Starbreeze then partnered with Electronic Arts for two different games , one was known as Project Redlime , while the other was an action @-@ adventure video game set within the Bourne universe . The Bourne game was cancelled as a direct result of Matt Damon and director Paul Greengrass not participating in the fourth Bourne film . Project Redlime had a larger scale than the Bourne game . It was said to be a reinvention of one of Electronic Arts ' franchises . The company shifted from a technology @-@ orientated company to focus more on the core gameplay mechanics of their new project . Syndicate was announced in September 2011 . The game suffered from a troubled development , with Starbreeze completely reworking the game one year after its initial development . There were also many creative differences between the developer and the publisher , and the two companies suffered from an inharmonious relationship . During the game 's development , seven senior members of the company , including Högdahl , left to form their own smaller studio . Some of them formed MachineGames to work on their own original games . With a budget that was less than other typical AAA video games , Syndicate received average reviews and was a commercial failure . Grefberg left the company after the game 's completion , and 25 employees were laid off .

Many employees left Starbreeze when MachineGames recruited . Then CEO Johan Kristiansson also stepped down , and was replaced by Mikael Nemark . Nemark took the studio in a new direction . Besides focusing on AAA video games , it would also allocate resources to develop smaller , downloadable games in order to broaden the company 's portfolio . These new games would no longer use the engine created by Högdahl . In 2011 , Starbreeze announced that it was partnering with Epic Games to use their engine , Unreal Engine , for their first small titles . In 2012 , Starbreeze announced Cold Mercury , a free @-@ to @-@ play video game and a project codenamed P13 . Prior to that , Josef Fares , an award winning Swedish director , had been unsuccessfully pitching game ideas to several Swedish developers . Starbreeze was in need of new , original properties , and accepted Fares ' pitch . P13 later became Brothers : A Tale of Two Sons . Focusing on creating an emotional and " personal " experience , Starbreeze partnered with publisher 505 Games to publish the game . It was released in 2013 to critical acclaim and received numerous awards and accolades . The rights to the Brothers intellectual property was later acquired by 505 Games in 2015 . After the success of Brothers , Fares announced that he had established a new studio named Hazelight and is working on a project with Electronic Arts .

In 2012 , Starbreeze also announced that they had acquired Overkill Software , the developer of Payday : The Heist , granting them rights to all of Overkill 's propriety technology and intellectual properties . At the time , Overkill was working on the sequel , Payday 2 , a game that was set to " broaden the Payday template " . The game was a massive commercial success , and was profitable from pre @-@ order sales alone . Payday 2 also became Starbreeze 's best selling game of all time , and helped the company to make a record profit for the first time after suffering an accumulated loss of \$ 14 @.@ 4 million between 1998 and June 2013 . The game 's success also prompted publisher 505 Games to invest \$ 5 million in Starbreeze in March 2015 to continue to improve and develop additional content for Payday 2 over twenty months . The game was ported to PlayStation 4 and Xbox One under the title Payday 2 : Crimewave Edition .

Starting in 2014 the company began broadening its business . On 25 September 2014 , Starbreeze Studios announced that they had acquired a Los Angeles @-@ based studio called Geminose for \$ 7 million . The studio is currently working on a toys @-@ to @-@ life game . In May 2015 , Starbreeze announced that the company would start publishing video games from independent developers . The first independent title set to be published by Starbreeze is Raid : World War II , an upcoming four @-@ player , World War II shooter , being developed by Lion Game Lion . During E3 2015 , Starbreeze Studios announced Project StarVR , a virtual reality headset , which is currently under development by InfnitEye , a firm acquired by Starbreeze . The company also acquired Payday Productions and the film rights to Payday in July 2015 . In terms of projects , Starbreeze

subsidiary Overkill is working on Overkill 's The Walking Dead , which is set to be released in 2017 with the help of publisher 505 Games , and Storm , which was merged from Starbreeze 's own Cold Mercury . Starbreeze is also set to publish a John Wick game developed by WEVR and Grab for virtual reality platforms . The core Starbreeze team also received investment from Korean publisher Smilegate to develop a new first @-@ person cooperative game set within the Crossfire universe . Starbreeze also announced that it will be publishing Dead by Daylight , an asymmetrical , multiplayer , survival horror game developed by Behavior Interactive .

On 30 May 2016 , 505 Games announced that it had sold the Payday franchise and intellectual property to Starbreeze in exchange for US \$ 30 million worth of stock . Starbreeze also announced that they had acquired the name and the franchises of Cinemaware a day later .

= = Developer = =

= = Publisher = =

= = Philosophy = =

According to Starbreeze , the studio both develops and produces intellectual properties and licensed projects which allow it to have creative control . According to Starbreeze 's CEO Johan Kristiansson , in 2008 the company did not wish to recruit numerous employees because of the time that is needed to integrate them into the company . After the 2012 departure of many employees , and the disappointing commercial sales of Syndicate , Mikael Nermark , the company 's CEO , decided to shift the company 's focus from producing standard licensed games to creating new and original intellectual properties . He stated that he believed strongly in Starbreeze 's ability to make games that are more than typical AAA games , and that its employees would consider making games their " daily work " , taking ownership of their projects .

As an independent company , Starbreeze believes that in addition to developing AAA games , it must develop some smaller @-@ scale projects like Brothers : A Tale of Two Sons , or free @-@ to @-@ play games like Cold Mercury to survive . Nermark added further that he is confident that the studio is capable of bringing its " style " and business model to all genres and that gameplay innovation is one of the most important elements when developing a game .