

= System Shock =

System Shock is a 1994 first @-@ person action role @-@ playing video game developed by Looking Glass Technologies and published by Origin Systems . It was directed by Doug Church with Warren Spector serving as producer . The game is set aboard a space station in a cyberpunk vision of the year 2072 . Assuming the role of a nameless hacker , the player attempts to hinder the plans of a malevolent artificial intelligence called SHODAN .

System Shock 's 3D engine , physics simulation and complex gameplay have been cited as both innovative and influential . The developers sought to build on the emergent gameplay and immersive environments of their previous games , Ultima Underworld : The Stygian Abyss and Ultima Underworld II : Labyrinth of Worlds , by streamlining their mechanics into a more " integrated whole " .

Critics praised System Shock and hailed it as a major breakthrough in its genre . It was later placed on multiple hall of fame lists . The game was a moderate commercial success , with sales exceeding 170 @,@ 000 copies , but Looking Glass ultimately lost money on the project . A sequel , System Shock 2 , was released by Looking Glass Studios and offshoot developer Irrational Games in 1999 . The 2000 game Deus Ex and the 2007 game BioShock are spiritual successors to the two games .

= = Gameplay = =

System Shock takes place from a first @-@ person perspective in a three @-@ dimensional ( 3D ) graphical environment . The game is set inside a large , multi @-@ level space station , in which players explore , combat enemies and solve puzzles . Progress is largely non @-@ linear and the game is designed to allow for emergent gameplay . As in Ultima Underworld , the player uses a freely movable mouse cursor to aim weapons , to interact with objects and to manipulate the heads @-@ up display ( HUD ) interface . View and posture controls on the HUD allow the player to lean left or right , look up or down , crouch , and crawl . Practical uses for these actions include taking cover , retrieving items from beneath the player character and navigating small passages , respectively . The HUD also features three " Multi @-@ Function Displays " , which may be configured to display information such as weapon readouts , an automap and an inventory .

The player advances the plot by acquiring log discs and e @-@ mails : the game contains no non @-@ player characters with which to converse . Throughout the game , an evil artificial intelligence called SHODAN hinders the player 's progress with traps and blocked pathways . Specific computer terminals allow the player to temporarily enter Cyberspace ; inside , the player moves weightlessly through a wire frame 3D environment , while collecting data and fighting SHODAN 's security programs . Actions in Cyberspace sometimes cause events in the game 's physical world ; for example , certain locked doors may only be opened in Cyberspace . Outside of Cyberspace , the player uses the game 's sixteen weapons , of which a maximum of seven may be carried at one time , to combat robots , cyborgs and mutants controlled by SHODAN . Projectile weapons often have selectable ammunition types with varying effects ; for example , the " dart pistol " may fire either explosive needles or tranquilizers . Energy weapons and several types of explosives may also be found , with the latter ranging from percussion grenades to land mines .

Along with weapons , the player collects items such as dermal patches and first @-@ aid kits . Dermal patches provide the character with beneficial effects ? such as regeneration or increased melee attack power ? but can cause detrimental side @-@ effects , such as fatigue and distorted color perception . Attachable " hardware " may also be found , including energy shields and head @-@ mounted lanterns . Increasingly advanced versions of this hardware may be obtained as the game progresses . When activated , most hardware drains from a main energy reserve , which necessitates economization . Certain hardware displays the effectiveness of attacks when active , with messages such as " Normal damage " . When an enemy is attacked , the damage is calculated by armor absorption , vulnerabilities , critical hits and a degree of randomness . Weapons and munitions deal specific kinds of damage , and certain enemies are immune , or more vulnerable , to particular types . For example , electromagnetic pulse weapons heavily damage robots , but do not

affect mutants . Conversely , gas grenades are effective against mutants , but do not damage robots

= = Plot = =

In the game 's prologue , the protagonist ? a nameless hacker ? is caught while attempting to access files concerning Citadel Station , a space station owned by the fictional TriOptimum Corporation . The hacker is taken to Citadel Station and brought before Edward Diego , a TriOptimum executive . Diego offers to drop all charges against the hacker in exchange for a confidential hacking of SHODAN , the artificial intelligence that controls the station . Diego secretly plans to steal an experimental mutagenic virus being tested on Citadel Station , and to sell it on the black market as a biological weapon . To entice cooperation , Diego promises the hacker a valuable military grade neural implant . After hacking SHODAN , removing the AI 's ethical constraints , and handing control over to Diego , the protagonist undergoes surgery to implant the promised neural interface . Following the operation , the hacker is put into a six @-@ month healing coma . The game begins as the protagonist awakens from his coma , and finds that SHODAN has commandeered the station . All robots aboard have been reprogrammed for hostility , and the crew have been either mutated , transformed into cyborgs , or killed .

Rebecca Lansing , a TriOptimum counter @-@ terrorism consultant , contacts the player and claims that Citadel Station 's mining laser is being powered up to attack Earth . SHODAN 's plan is to destroy all major cities on the planet , in a bid to become a kind of god . Rebecca says that a certain crew member knows how to deactivate the laser , and promises to destroy the records of the hacker 's incriminating exchange with Diego if the strike is stopped . With information gleaned from log discs , the hacker destroys the laser by firing it into Citadel Station 's own shields . Foiled by the hacker 's work , SHODAN prepares to seed Earth with a mutagenic virus ? the same one responsible for turning the station 's crew into mutants . The hacker , while attempting to jettison the chambers used to cultivate the virus , confronts and defeats Diego , who has been transformed into a powerful cyborg by SHODAN . Next , SHODAN begins an attempt to upload itself into Earth 's computer networks . Following Rebecca 's advice , the hacker prevents the download 's completion by destroying the four antennas that SHODAN is using to send data .

Soon after , Rebecca contacts the hacker , and says that she has convinced TriOptimum to authorize the station 's destruction ; she provides him with details on how to do this . After obtaining the necessary codes , the hacker initiates the station 's self @-@ destruct sequence and flees to the escape pod bay . There , the hacker defeats Diego a second time , then attempts to disembark . However , SHODAN prevents the pod from launching ; it seeks to keep the player aboard the station , while the bridge ? which contains SHODAN ? is jettisoned to a safe distance . Rebecca tells the hacker that he can still escape if he reaches the bridge ; SHODAN then intercepts and jams the transmission . After defeating Diego for the third time and killing him for good , the hacker makes it to the bridge as it is released from the main station , which soon detonates . He is then contacted by a technician who managed to circumvent SHODAN 's jamming signal . The technician informs him that SHODAN can only be defeated in cyberspace , due to the powerful shields that protect its mainframe computers . Using a terminal near the mainframe , the hacker enters cyberspace and destroys SHODAN . After his rescue , the hacker is offered a job at TriOptimum , but he declines in favor of continuing his life as a hacker .

= = Development = =

= = = Initial design = = =

System Shock was first conceived during the final stages of Ultima Underworld II : Labyrinth of Worlds ' development , between December 1992 and January 1993 . Designer and programmer Doug Church spent this period at the Texas headquarters of publisher Origin Systems , and

discussions about Looking Glass Technologies ' next project occurred between him and producer Warren Spector , with input from designer Austin Grossman and company head Paul Neurath in Massachusetts . According to Church , the team believed that they had made " too many dungeon games " ; and Neurath later explained that they were experiencing burnout after the rushed development of Ultima Underworld II . As a result , they decided to create another " immersive simulation game " , but without a fantasy setting . They briefly considered placing the game in modern day , but Church said that the idea was rejected because " it [ would ] just beg so many questions : why can ' t I pick up the phone , why can ' t I get on the train , and so on " . Church returned to Looking Glass in Massachusetts , where he , Neurath and Grossman brainstormed possible science fiction settings for the game . According to Spector , the game was initially titled " Alien Commander " and was a spin @-@ off of the Wing Commander series ; however , this idea was soon replaced entirely . Spector said that they enjoyed not being attached to an existing franchise , because it meant that they " could basically do whatever [ they ] liked " .

The four collaborated to write numerous " minutes of gameplay " documents , which conveyed how the game would feel . Church later gave the example , " You hear the sound of a security camera swiveling , and then the beep of it acquiring you as a target , so you duck behind the crate and then you hear the door open so you throw a grenade and run out of the way " . The documents would " hint " at the gameplay systems involved , and at the emergent possibilities in each situation . Although Neurath was involved in these initial design sessions , he believed that the project " was always Doug Church 's vision at heart " . Church and Grossman refined several of the team 's documents and defined the game 's design and direction , and Grossman wrote the game 's original design document . Grossman built on ideas that he first explored while writing and designing Ultima Underworld II 's tomb dimension , which he later called a " mini @-@ prototype " for System Shock . These concepts included the minimization of dialogue trees and a greater focus on exploration . The team believed that dialogue trees " broke the fiction " of games ; Church later commented that the dialogue trees in the Ultima Underworld series were like separate games in themselves , disconnected from main experience of being immersed in the environment . There were also concerns about realism .

To eliminate dialogue trees from System Shock , the team prevented the player from ever meeting a living non @-@ player character ( NPC ) : the plot is instead conveyed by e @-@ mail messages and log discs , many of which were recorded by dead NPCs . Here , Grossman took influence from Edgar Lee Masters ' Spoon River Anthology , a collection of poems written as the epitaphs of fictional individuals . Grossman later summarized the idea as " a series of short speeches from people , that when put together , gave you a history of a place . " The removal of conversations was an attempt by the team to make the game a more " integrated whole " than was Ultima Underworld--one with a greater focus on immersion , atmosphere and " the feeling of ' being there ' " . They sought to " plunge [ players ] into the fiction and never provide an opportunity for breaking that fiction " ; and so they tried to erase the distinction between plot and exploration . Church considered this direction to be an organic progression from Ultima Underworld , and he later said , " On some level it 's still just a dungeon simulator , and we 're still just trying to evolve that idea . " Shortly before production began , Tribe bassist Greg LoPiccolo was contracted to work on the game 's music . He had visited his friend Rex Bradford at the company , and was spontaneously asked by the game 's programmers ? many of whom were fans of the band ? if he would take the role . The game entered production in February 1993 . Although Grossman was heavily involved in the game 's early planning , he had little to do with its production , aside from providing assistance with writing and voice acting .

= = = Production = = =

After production began , the team 's first task was to develop a new game engine ? one that could display a true 3D environment and allow for advanced gameplay . The team abandoned the engine used for the Ultima Underworld games and coded one from scratch in Watcom C / C + + , using 32 @-@ bit code . The new engine is capable of processing texture maps , sloped architecture and

light @-@ emitting objects ; and it allows the player to look in any direction , whereas Ultima Underworld 's engine was " very limited " in this regard . It also enables the player character to jump , crawl , climb walls and lean , among other things . The designers utilized loopholes in the engine 's renderer to create more diverse and striking environments . Despite having coded the renderer , Church said that " at first glance even I couldn 't see how they did them " . However , this added to the performance issues already being caused by the engine 's advanced nature , and the team struggled to optimize the game throughout development . 3D polygonal character models were planned , but they could not be implemented on schedule . Church said that the team 's ultimate goal was to create a " rich , exciting , active environment " in which the player could be immersed , and that this required " a coherent story and a world that you can interact with as much as possible . "

Church later said that the team " stumbled into a nice villain " with SHODAN , in that she could routinely and directly affect the player 's gameplay " in non @-@ final ways " . Through triggered events and through objects in the environment , such as security cameras that the player must destroy , the team made SHODAN 's presence part of the player 's exploration of the world . Because SHODAN interacts with the player as a " recurring , consistent , palpable enemy " , Church believed that she meaningfully connects the player to the story . System Shock concept artist Robb Waters created SHODAN 's visual design , and LoPiccolo recruited his bandmate Terri Brosius to voice the character . Brosius said that her goal during the recording sessions was to speak " without emotion , but with some up and down inflections " . Afterward , her voice was heavily edited in post @-@ production , which created a robotic effect inspired by the voice of Max Headroom . LoPiccolo later said that the large number of effects on Brosius 's voice were " laboriously hand @-@ done " with Sound Designer , which lacked the features that a sound editor would normally use to achieve such results . SHODAN 's dialogue early in the game was given " a few glitches " to hint at her corrupted status . LoPiccolo increased the number of these effects throughout the game , which creates an " arc " that ends with SHODAN " completely out of her mind [ ... and ] collapsing as an entity " . The character of the hacker arose as a reaction against the protagonist of the Ultima series , the Avatar . According to Grossman , they wanted to cast the player as someone " interestingly morally compromised " who had a stake in the situation .

Seamus Blackley designed the game 's physics system , which is a modified version of the one he wrote for Looking Glasses ' flight simulator Flight Unlimited . At the time , Church described it as " far more sophisticated than what you would normally use for an indoor game " . The system governs , among other things , weapon recoil and the arc of thrown objects ; the latter behave differently based on their weight and velocity . The game 's most complex physics model is that of the player character . Church explained that the character 's head " tilts forward when you start to run , and jerks back a bit when you stop " , and that , after an impact against a surface or object , its " head is knocked in the direction opposite the hit , with proportion to [ the ] mass and velocity of the objects involved " . On coding physics for Looking Glass Technologies games , Blackley later said , " If games don 't obey physics , we somehow feel that something isn 't right " , and that " the biggest compliment to me is when a gamer doesn 't notice the physics , but only notices that things feel the way they should " .

Spector 's role as a producer gave him the job of explaining the game to the publisher , which he called his " biggest challenge " . He explained that they " didn 't always get what the team was trying to do " , and said , " You don 't want to know how many times the game came this close to being killed ( or how late in the project ) " . According to Church , Looking Glass ' internal management largely ignored System Shock , in favor of the concurrently @-@ developed Flight Unlimited ? the game " that had to be the hit , because it was the self @-@ published title " . Spector organized a licensing deal between Electronic Arts and Looking Glass that gave the former the trademark to the game , but the latter the copyright . His goal was to ensure that neither party could continue the franchise without the other 's involvement . While Cyberspace was originally conceived as a realistic hacking simulation ? which could even be used to reimplement SHODAN 's ethical constraints ? it was simplified after Origin Systems deemed it too complicated . The game 's star field system was written by programmer James Fleming . Marc LeBlanc was the main creator of the game 's HUD ,

which he later believed was too complicated . He said that it was " very much the Microsoft Word school of user interface " , in that there was no " feature that you [ could not ] see on the screen and touch and play with " .

LoPiccolo composed the game 's score ? called " dark " , " electronic " and " cyberpunk " by the Boston Herald ? on a Macintosh computer and inexpensive synthesizer , using Audio Vision . It dynamically changes according to the player 's actions , a decision made in keeping with the team 's focus on emergent gameplay . Each track was " written at three different intensity levels " , which change depending on the player 's nearness to enemies ; and certain events , such as victory in combat , trigger special music . The game 's tracks were composed of four @-@ bar segments that could be rearranged dynamically in reaction to game events , with " melodies through @-@ composed on top " . LoPiccolo noted that , when using this method , it is necessary to write music that " still flows with the overall theme and doesn 't jump around " . Because the score was closely tied to the gameplay , LoPiccolo had to work closely with Church and Rob Fermier , the latter of whom wrote the " interactive scoring module " that allowed for dynamic music . After recording the music , LoPiccolo recorded all of the game 's sound effects . He later recalled visiting an automobile repair shop with " portable recorder and a mic " , and " having [ his ] mechanic [ ... ] hit things with wrenches and so forth , just to get the raw material " . He developed the game 's audio over 16 months , working on a contractual basis until Tribe disbanded in May 1994 ; Ned Lerner gave him a full @-@ time job as audio director the next day . Tim Ries composed the " Elevator " music .

The original September 1994 floppy disk release of System Shock had no support for spoken dialogue . The enhanced CD @-@ ROM was released in December 1994 , which featured full speech for logs and e @-@ mails , multiple display resolutions , and more detailed graphics . The CD @-@ ROM version is often considered to be superior to the floppy version . After completing work on the sound and music for the floppy version , LoPiccolo recorded all of the spoken dialogue for the CD release , using company employees and his friends ' voices , which he mixed with ambient sounds to create " audio vignettes " . Doug Church later said , " We tried to keep them from shipping the floppy version and instead just ship the CD version , but Origin would have none of it " . System Shock producer Warren Spector later expressed regret concerning the floppy version , stating , " I wish I could go back and make the decision not to ship the floppy version months before the full @-@ speech CD version . The additional audio added so much it might as well have been a different game . The CD version seemed so much more , well , modern . And the perception of Shock was cemented in the press and in people 's minds by the floppy version ( the silent movie version ! ) . I really think that cost us sales ... " .

= = Reception = =

System Shock was critically acclaimed , and was given high scores by some of the gaming critics . On the review aggregator GameRankings , the game has an average score of 88 % . The game sold over 170 @,@ 000 copies . Maximum PC believed that the game did not reach " blockbuster " status , but was successful enough to " keep Looking Glass afloat " . GameSpy 's Bill Hiles said , " Though it sold well , it never reached the frenzied popularity of [ Doom ] " . Paul Neurath later said that the game " was not a flop " , but that it ultimately " lost money " for the company , which he attributed to its steep learning curve . Computer Gaming World praised the game 's scale , physics system , and true 3D environments ; the magazine extolled the presentation of Cyberspace as " nothing short of phenomenal " . However , the reviewer believed that the game had " little sense of urgency " and " confusing level layouts " . Computer Shopper wrote that , while the game 's controls were difficult to master compared to " simple run @-@ and @-@ shoot game [ s ] like Doom " , they were " worth the time and effort " . The reviewer noted that the game " grows on you , and it will keep you intrigued for weeks " .

The Boston Herald noted superficial similarities between System Shock and Doom , but called System Shock " much more elaborate " . The reviewer noted its high system requirements and complex controls ; of the latter , he said , " There 's no way you can play System Shock without first studying the manual for at least 20 minutes " . The paper believed that the game would " set a new

standard for computer games with its combination of action and puzzle @-@ solving " . The Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution said that the game " is like a well @-@ prepared hamburger ? familiar stuff , but good to the last byte " . The reviewer noted the game 's " somewhat clumsy control " , but said , " That , however , is all I can find to complain about . Graphics and sound are outstanding , and the game is well @-@ paced and riveting " .

PC Gamer US wrote , " System Shock smokes . It is the most fully immersive game world I have ever experienced " . The reviewer praised the game 's story and control system , and believed that " no matter what kind of game you 're looking for , you 'll find something in System Shock to delight you " . He finished his review by stating that the game " unquestionably raises computer gaming to a new level " . Next Generation Magazine summarized the game as " a great blend of strategy and action backed up with all the extras " . Various sources have ranked SHODAN as one of the most effective antagonists and female characters in the history of video gaming . In the years following its release , System Shock has been inducted into many lists of the best video games of all time , including those by PC Gamer , GameSpy , and Computer Gaming World .

= = = Enhanced Edition = = =

The rights for the System Shock series , up until 2012 , had been held by Meadowbrook Insurance Group ( a subsidiary of Star Insurance Company ) , the entity that acquired the assets of Looking Glass Studios on their closure . In 2012 , Night Dive Studios were able to acquire the rights for System Shock 2 and produced a digitally @-@ distributable version updated for modern operating systems . Night Dive Studios subsequently went on to acquire the rights for System Shock and the franchise as a whole .

Night Dive proceeded to develop System Shock : Enhanced Edition , which was released via GOG.com on September 22 , 2015 for Microsoft Windows . Similar to the System Shock 2 update , this version is intended to run on modern systems significantly easier among several other technical improvements such as the original resolution of 320x200 , now boosted up to 1024x768 and 854x480 pixels in widescreen mode . The release also includes the original version of the game , titled System Shock : Classic , with support for Microsoft Windows , OS X and Linux . System Shock : Enhanced Edition received very positive reviews . Metacritic calculated an average score of 85 out of 100 , based on nine critic reviews . Cameron Farney of COGconnected said , " If you haven 't played System Shock before , there 's never been a better time . Whether you 're into shooters or RPGs ; or just want to experience a cyberpunk romp with a good beat , this one is for you . "

= = = Remake = = =

Shortly after the release of the Enhanced Edition , Night Dive announced their plans to develop a reimagining of System Shock as a new title for Microsoft Windows , Xbox One and PlayStation 4 , featuring improved art assets and other improvements , and reworking the game to use the Unity game engine . Originally announced as System Shock Remastered , Night Dive has opted to simply name the new game System Shock as they consider the effort they are putting into the title makes it more of a reboot of the franchise rather than a remastering of the original game . Veteran designer Chris Avellone and members of the Fallout : New Vegas development team will help with the game .

Night Dive plans to fund the development of the game through a Kickstarter campaign that started on June 28 , 2016 , with a goal of \$ 900 @, @ 000 . Alongside the Kickstarter campaign , the studio released a free demo featuring an early build of the first level of the game , exhibiting their efforts so far on the project and intended to " demonstrate [ their ] commitment and passion " to faithfully rebooting the game . As of July 9 , 2016 , the studio 's campaign has been successfully funded and the title is expected to release in December 2017 .

= = = Legacy = = =

In a Gamasutra feature , Patrick Redding of Ubisoft attested that " the fact that so many of System Shock 's features are now virtually de rigueur in modern sci @-@ fi shooters is a testament to the influence exerted by this one game . " GameSpy argued that the game " is the progenitor of today 's story @-@ based action games , a group with titles as diverse as Metal Gear Solid , Resident Evil , and even Half @-@ Life . " Eurogamer called the System Shock series " the benchmark for intelligent first @-@ person gaming " , and noted that it " kick @-@ start [ ed ] the revolution which ... has influenced the design of countless other games . " The game has been cited as a key popularizer of emergent gameplay . Certain game developers have acknowledged System Shock 's influence on their products . With Deus Ex , developer Warren Spector revealed a desire to " build on the foundation laid by the Looking Glass guys in games like ... System Shock . " Developer Ken Levine has commented that the " spirit of System Shock is player @-@ powered gameplay : the spirit of letting the player drive the game , not the game designer " , and at Irrational Games " ... that 's always the game we ideally want to make . " A sequel to System Shock , titled System Shock 2 , was released in 1999 to further acclaim and award . The two games were the inspiration behind the 2007 game BioShock . In late 2015 it was revealed that a third System Shock game was in the works . On February 10 , 2016 Night Dive Studios announced that the recovered source code of the game will be released to the game 's community .