

= TowerFall =

TowerFall is a 2013 archery arena indie video game created by Matt Thorson where up to four players use arrows and head @-@ stomps to fight in a battle royale . It was released as an Ouya microconsole exclusive on June 25 , 2013 , and was later ported to PlayStation 4 , Microsoft Windows , Linux , Mac OS X in 2014 as TowerFall Ascension . TowerFall was Thorson 's first full commercial game , and it grew from a June 2012 game jam single @-@ player prototype . Thorson tested the game on his indie developer colleagues with whom he lived , and developed its capacity as a party game . Its mechanics were inspired by games of Thorson 's youth , such as Bushido Blade and Goldeneye 007 , and influenced by feedback received at the Evolution Championship Series fighting game tournament . The game was known as the standout title for the Ouya at the console 's launch , and sold well .

When the Ouya exclusivity expired , Thorson signed another exclusivity agreement for the PlayStation 4 , where Ascension received an expanded single @-@ player mode , and new levels , weapons , and gameplay variants . Ascension received generally favorable reviews . Reviewers praised the game 's balance , compared it favorably with Super Smash Bros. , and recommended it as a party game . Critics felt that the single @-@ player mode was a low point , and lamented for an online multiplayer mode .

= = Gameplay = =

TowerFall is an archery combat arena game where players kill each other with arrows and head @-@ stomps until only one player remains . In multiplayer , up to four players fight in a battle royale using a limited supply of arrows . Players replenish their arrow supply from those shot about the arena . The players can also catch other players ' arrows . " Treasure " power @-@ ups give players shields , wings , and arrows with increased power . The game 's rules can be customized and saved for future use . Kotaku 's Chris Person described the gameplay as " [Super] Smash Bros. bred with games like Spelunky or Nidhogg " .

There are four game modes . In single @-@ player , the player must hit targets around the arena before a timer runs out . The developer compared this mode to " Break the Targets " in the Super Smash Bros. series . Ascension adds a remodeled version of the target levels as a Trials mode , which requires the players to use power @-@ ups to break all targets within several seconds . Ascension also adds a Quest mode , where one or two players attempt to survive against enemy waves of increasing difficulty . As a single @-@ player event , Quest functions as a score attack mode . The new Ascension improvements were also released for the Ouya version .

The Ouya release supports the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 controllers . Ascension uses the DualShock 4 controller 's built @-@ in speaker to play sound effects . The game does not have online multiplayer .

= = Development = =

The game was developed and produced by Matt Thorson , who previously made Planet Punch and browser games . TowerFall was his first full commercial game . The idea came from a visit with Alec Holowka as they worked at a game jam , the 48 @-@ hour June 2012 Vancouver Full Indie Game Jam . The team iterated through a Legend of Zelda @-@ inspired multiplayer mode that became a single @-@ player platformer Flash game where the player was a " skilled archer out of an ancient legend " . They intended to add multiple weapons , but chose to keep their first one ? the bow and arrow ? due to its feel . The arrow was designed to fire without charging and to bias towards targets so as to give the player " more leeway " . Thorson also chose to limit the aim direction to the eight ordinal directions rather than affording complex 360 degree controls . They also added levels , items , a store , and a story based on ascending a tower . Along with progress , players would gain new items and skills . Thorson originally intended to send the game to Adult Swim for " easy money " , but changed his mind upon developing a multiplayer version after the jam .

Holowka credits the multiplayer 's party game feel to the many hours of local multiplayer testing it received in Thorson 's homes in Vancouver . Thorson lived with a developer he met through Game Maker 's community and the two eventually moved in with Holowka in " Indie House " , a Vancouver house whose occupants are all indie developers . The close community of indie gamers and their interest in trying new game ideas was both a product and generator of their living arrangements . Though Holowka dropped back from the project shortly after the game jam , leaving the project to Thorson , he stepped in to demo the game at the 2013 Game Developers Conference at the last minute when Thorson 's passport was expired . With an increase in press attention following an exhibition at PAX East , Thorson entered an agreement with Ouya 's Kellee Santiago to release exclusively on the microconsole . Critics saw this as being the action the new console needed to compete with existing consoles , and Thorson felt the release for Ouya to be less " intimidating " than if for the PlayStation 3 . The game also fit Ouya 's emphasis on couch co @-@ op gaming . Thorson originally did the artwork himself but was not satisfied with the results and hired MiniBoss to finish the graphics . Holowka composed the music , and Thorson hired Power Up Audio to make the sound effects .

Thorson said that the game started to come together about six months into its development . He tested the game on close friends once every few weeks and they would ask him when they could play it again . Thorson brought the game to the 2013 Evolution Championship Series fighting games tournament , where he unexpectedly received more praise than criticism . The game mechanics were inspired by games from Thorson 's youth . Upon reflection , he felt that the game had the item @-@ catching mechanics of Super Smash Bros. , the one @-@ hit kills and tension of Bushido Blade , the playfulness of Goldeneye 007 , the shooting mechanics of Yoshi 's Island , and the positioning strategy of Team Fortress 2 . He described his development process as tweaking Super Smash Bros. Melee to his tastes . The limited arrow design was intended to slow the gameplay and encourage player strategy . He considered adding online multiplayer , a popular request , but lacked the programming skills himself . The game 's medieval scenery came from his contemporary interest in the Game of Thrones book series and his pairing of the arrow mechanic with " stone @-@ walled castles and lava @-@ filled dungeons " . The player @-@ characters also have individual personalities and backstories that Thorson intended to elaborate in a " lore " section of an instruction manual .

TowerFall was released June 25 , 2013 as an Ouya exclusive . The game sold well , minding the Ouya 's newness , which allowed Thorson to develop the game into a fuller package . Thorson stated his plans to extend the single @-@ player , and signed a new exclusivity agreement to release TowerFall Ascension on PlayStation 4 and Steam with new levels , weapons , and gameplay variants after the Ouya exclusivity agreement ended six months later . Sony actively pursued the game , and a majority of the porting work was handled by Dallas @-@ based Sickhead Games by two people over the course of eight weeks using Monogame , " an open source rewrite " of Microsoft XNA . Thorson thought that the DualShock 4 's directional pad was " perfect for TowerFall " and that the PlayStation 4 was " the natural next step " for the game . He received a letter from George Broussard before Ascension 's launch with pre @-@ congratulations on Thorson 's becoming a millionaire . The main additions to Ascension were its single @-@ player and cooperative gameplay modes . A level editor is planned for a future update , and Thorson has expressed interest in six controller support for three @-@ on @-@ three matches . Ports for Linux and OS X platforms were released on May 29 , 2014 with updated game variants . TowerFall was selected for the July 2014 Evolution Championship Series fighting game tournament 's Indie Showcase , and as a free game with PlayStation Plus for the same month .

= = = Updates = = =

In February 2015 a " Blue Archer " was revealed as a new playable character for the expansion " Dark World " , developers stated her appearance was based on that of Anita Sarkeesian . An expansion pack , Dark World , was released in North America on May 12 , 2015 , for the PlayStation 4 and PC (Linux , OS X , and Windows) via Steam , the Humble Store , and GOG.com. The

European PlayStation released followed several days later . The pack includes a four @-@ player multiplayer campaign mode where players fight boss battles together and can resuscitate each other . It also adds a power @-@ up that makes arrows explode by remote @-@ detonation . The pack began as a set of new levels and became four sets , ten new characters , procedurally generated levels , and the aforementioned power @-@ up , co @-@ op , and boss battles . A PlayStation Vita version was released on December 15 , 2015 .

= = Reception = =

Multiple reviewers cited TowerFall as the standout game for the Ouya microconsole at the time of its launch . The Penny Arcade Report 's Ben Kuchera called the game " the Ouya 's killer app " , Polygon 's Russ Frushtick and Chris Plante said that TowerFall was the reason to purchase an Ouya . Destructoid 's Spencer Hayes said that he did not consider purchasing the Ouya until he played TowerFall . He added that the game had a " deceptive level of depth " . Eurogamer described its reputation as " the only thing worth playing on Ouya " . The added cost of additional controllers (for four @-@ player local multiplayer) exceeded the cost of the new console itself , and was cited as a negative for the game , though later offset by its support for Xbox 360 and PS3 controllers . Plante later described the original release as " critically beloved , humbly sold " , " punching way above its weight class " with recognition on the yearend lists of Ars Technica and Polygon .

By April 2014 , Thorson told Eurogamer that the game had grossed a half of a million dollars , with the most sales from Ascension on the PlayStation 4 . At the time , a fifth of the games sales came from Ouya , a comparatively smaller platform with a smaller install base than PlayStation and Steam . The game was a nominee for the 2014 Independent Games Festival 's Excellence in Design award , but lost to Papers , Please . TowerFall Ascension received " generally favorable " reviews , according to game review aggregator Metacritic . Reviewers praised the game 's balance , compared it favorably with Super Smash Bros. , and recommended it as a party game . Critics felt that the single @-@ player mode was a nadir , and lamented for an online multiplayer mode , with Denton of Eurogamer calling the lack " painful " and " a crying shame " .

Griffin McElroy of Polygon found the game joyful and called it " a powerful distillery of childlike glee " . IGN 's Jose Otero thought highly of its visuals . He considered the single @-@ player mode a low point of the game , that it was only useful as practice . Eurogamer 's Denton called it " an afterthought " , and that Trials was " a tertiary mode at best " . Edge wrote that the boundaries of the game 's play area were confusing , and that it was difficult to watch both the area around the player @-@ character as well as the boundaries , which worked against what they deemed to be TowerFall 's " greatest strength " : close range combat . Denton praised the arrow catching mechanic , which he compared to the " hooks " of other " great multiplayer games " , like the Ultra counter in Street Fighter IV . He further compared the multiplayer to the battle modes of Bomberman , Mario , and Super Smash Bros. , the Trials mode to 10 Second Ninja , and the game 's " immediacy " to Nidhogg and Samurai Gunn .