

Original Pitch For *Bioshock*

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our pleasure to present to you the pitch document for the original *BioShock*. This is the masterful fusion of design and marketing that *Irrational* initially presented to publishers, selling them on the idea of supporting our little odyssey beneath the waves.

In the next few installments of *From the Vault*, we will divulge the myriad departures *BioShock* took from its original vision, but also show our readers just how much the game's heart and soul stayed constant. You will be made privy to our very first design concepts and original drafts of back-story. You will read about game modes and features that fell by the wayside during the many years of production. And you will stand in awe of

visual interface mockups crafted by Mr. Ken Levine himself!

Read on, and enjoy this insider's look at the way we sold the core concepts of the award-winning *BioShock*.



BLOOD SHOCK

FIRST PERSON ACTION HORROR
FROM THE CREATORS OF SYSTEM SHOCK 2
AND FREEDOM FORCE.



IRRATIONAL
games

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Things grow inside you.

We're part of you now, you think you hear them say.

You step away from the med bench. The diagnostics screen presents a revolting before and after.

On the left side, the *before* side, you see yourself. What you were. Human.

And on the right side...what you are. What you've become. The only way you'll survive, the only way you'll-

From down the corridor, by the power grid: a voice. A sound that floats through the air as if swimming on thick, salty brine:

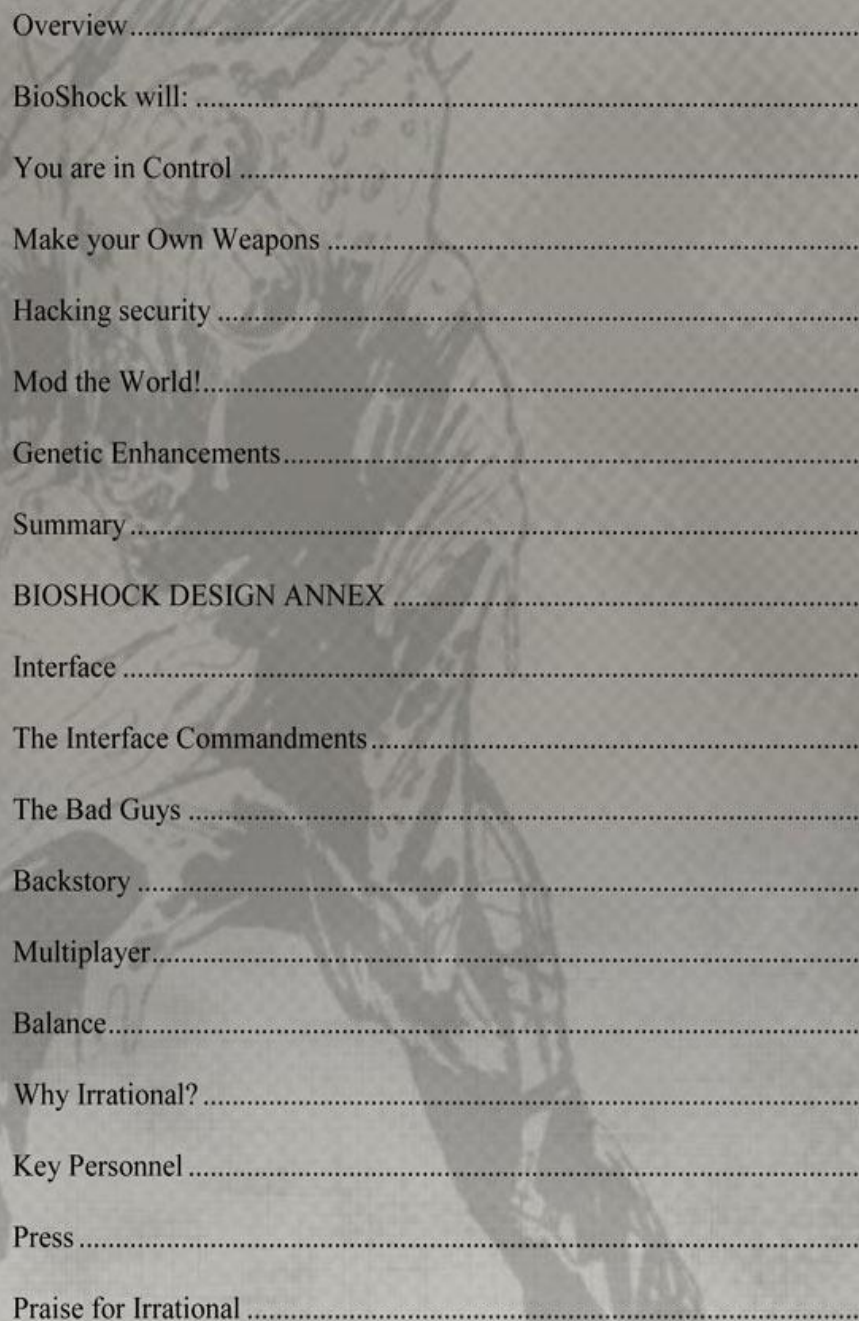
Prepare ye...prepare ye the way of the Lord-

You tense and feel the unfamiliar chemicals moving within you, unfamiliar muscles tightening, unfamiliar organs working. Your new body comes to life without your consent. Chitinous plates slide over your torso, your groin. Bulbous stalks breach your forehead like knitting needles, releasing a salty green liquid that stings what were once your eyes.

You grab the rifle that you've modified through a direct nanite feed. The weapon is attuned to the jellied mass slithering through the corridor, its ammo designed to penetrate the creature's molecular makeup and burn it from the inside. You're glad you dropped the surface humidity by half in your last enviro system hack...that should slow the Man o War down.

You can tell by the creature's musky, seaweed stench that it's ready to feed. You can tell by the moaning quality of its prayers that the mass is aroused by your scent.

And part of you...the part that is alien and new...is drawn to it in turn.



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"Most of his teeth were gone...only a few remained in front and they were covered with a tough scabrous material with visible mineral striations...similar to what you'd find in a barnacle..."

- Autopsy report, Isla de Salvación, April 12, 2007

Overview

BioShock is the spiritual successor to System Shock 2, 1999's game of the year. Irrational Games, the creators of Shock 2 and Freedom Force are about to introduce the definitive interactive world simulation. Harnessing the key minds behind Thief, System Shock 2 and Freedom Force, as well as the rendering powerhouse that is the Unreal Warfare engine, Irrational is poised to re-invent the first person action RPG.

BioShock is a modern day nightmare of the terrifying nexus between religious fanaticism and unbounded science. The player must come to grips with the remnants of a dangerous cult and the technological and biological horrors they've created in their giant underground and undersea complex that lies beneath the sands of a seemingly deserted island.

While building on the tried and true first person shooter gameplay, BioShock innovates in a number of key areas:

- **Game Design-** BioShock gives the player absolute control; of their environments as well as in the creation of their own weapons and bio-modifications. The only limit is their imagination.
- **Visuals-** The Unreal Warfare engine leverages both the power of today's computers...and tomorrows. Using a highly modified version of this engine, BioShock features some of the most stunning visuals ever seen in a first-person shooter.
- **Physics-** BioShock utilizes the industry proven Karma physics engine to provide unprecedented in game solid body and "rag doll" support
- **Multiplayer-** BioShock allows players to face one another in *Story Based Deathmatch*.
- **Story-** BioShock's dark, sophisticated and relentless story is being written by Ken Levine, the writer behind System Shock 2, Thief and Freedom Force.

BioShock is a horrifying, sophisticated, visually stunning, open-ended experience that will leave players gasping for breath. It is the first person action nightmare that only Irrational could deliver.

"Anisette, if you are hearing this, do not, I repeat, do not come looking for me. No matter what you see...or what you hear. I'm no longer your husband. I'm no longer Bernardo. I've become... something else entirely."

- MP3 Log file of Bernado Castille, Isla de Salvación, April 9, 2007

BioShock will:

- Redefine the first person shooter on console and PC by immersing the player in a reactive and modifiable world.
- Be the most visually stunning Unreal game ever created.
- Unparalleled physics support via the Karma physics engine.
- Establish a new franchise that has strong potential as a film and television property (Irrational's most recent game, The Lost, has just been sold as a feature film to BBC films).
- Provide an accessible and transparent interface.
- Tell a mature, terrifying story.
- Scare the hell out of people.



"We had a service on the beach this morning and the strangest thing happened. In the middle of the singing of the Kyrie, animals began to beach themselves near our group, wriggling in the sand as if they were trying to reach us. Brother Elias wouldn't let us stop singing, no matter what crawled out of the water to meet us.

- MP3 Log File of Brother Timothy, Isla de Salvación, March 19, 2007

You are in Control

The player takes on the role of Carlos Cuello, a down and out "deprogrammer" assigned to infiltrate a religious cult on a remote island and "rescue" a wealthy heiress from the clutches of the cultists. Once on the island, however, you find out that all is not as it seems.

BioShock features an unprecedented level of player customization and interaction during the course of play. This customization is accessed through three different axes – Weapons, Environmental manipulation and Genetic modifications.

Players will be able to use their resources to conceive and construct their own weapons, alter their surroundings and even mutate the very nature of their cellular structure!

Make your Own Weapons

In most first-person shooters players can expect the standard array of modern and sci-fi weapons including a pistol, shotgun, chaingun, and sniper rifle. In these games you find the 8-10 weapons during the course of the game and what you see is what you get. In BioShock, your weapons are limited only by your imagination!

BioShock features an incredibly deep weapon system, which is unlike anything the shooter genre has ever seen. Inspired by the superpower creation tool in Irrational's hit Freedom Force, players can create any weapon they want from a set of attributes and components. For instance, players may start with a stock slug thrower. Through the fantastic technology in the cult facility, the player could add components such as an extended barrel and magnifying scope to create a sniper rifle.

Players can modify their weapons to fit the current situation. Are you having trouble with the hard-shelled lobster mutant? Modify your base shotgun to fire acid filled pellets in addition to the normal buckshot. Still not getting enough stopping power from your shotgun? Add a few more barrels to make a quadruple-barreled monstrosity.

"Vanilla" weapon archetypes (e.g. slug thrower, missile launcher, chemical projector, etc.) that are found around the island can be molded into more powerful, customized versions (e.g. fully automatic acid tipped armored piercing assault rifle, etc.) These upgrades may improve the weapon in several aspects, but the more a weapon is upgraded, the more unstable it can become. Players can tweak and modify variables on all of their weapons including:

- rate of fire
- accuracy

- range
- severity of recoil
- usable ammo types
- clip size
- reload time
- reliability – affects how often the weapon jams

These modifications won't be cheap though. Players have to wisely use their resources to create a good variety of weapons to deal with the various terrors of the island. These additions will also modify the visuals of the in-game representations of the weapons to create weapons never-before-seen in a first person shooter.

Weapon examples:

- Triple barreled, fully-auto shotgun
- Magnetically powered, silent rail gun
- Magnetic field grenades (The grenade explodes creating a powerful magnetic field pulling robots into its field. It can even cause bullets to change direction!)
- Laser sighted sniper rifle...that fires acid coated rounds!
- Chain lightning tazer pistol.

Hacking security

Like in System Shock 2, BioShock players will be challenged by the island's highly sophisticated security system. Players will have to deal with cameras that can sound alarms, stationary turret emplacements, security robots, and regular security sensor sweeps.

Players are not helpless against these systems, though. They can deal with them in a variety of ways including directly attacking the systems, quietly shutting them down for a period, or commandeering them for their own uses. For instance, players can access security terminals and hack into them. Once into the system the player can do a variety of things:

- Shut down the camera security system.
- Shut down (or take control of) security turrets.
- Set off false alarms to divert the enemy's attention.
- Commandeer security robots and control them and their powerful arsenal remotely! Players lose control of their avatar but get a first-person perspective from the robot and now control it directly. But be careful, your avatar is helpless while in control of the robot.



"Frank don't like it when I move things with my head, but then again, Frank was never much help around the house. So I told Frank, if you start moving things with your hands, I'll stop moving them with my mind."

- MP3 Log File of Alberta Bennett, Isla de Salvación December 8, 2006

Mod the World!

In System Shock 2, Irrational allowed you to manipulate the environment in a few minor ways. In most games, elements like fog and advanced lighting are strictly aesthetic. In BioShock, Irrational is taking hacking to the next level. Players will not only be able to do all of the aforementioned hacking, but will also be able to hack the behavior of the environment itself! Fog will thicken as the humidity goes up, heat blurring will distort the players vision as the , etc.

By hacking into special terminals distributed around the mysterious complex, players are able to gain access to the environmental controls. Using these controls, the player will be able to change the very nature of the game space. Imagine:

- **Increase/decrease oxygen content** - Increasing the O₂ in an area causes explosives to have larger blast radius and deal more damage.
- **Magnetize floor** – Causes robots to move more slowly and metal projectiles to be attracted to the floor. Grenades now become sticky bombs.
- **Ionize the air** – Increases range and damage of electrical weapons.
- **Gravitational field manipulation** - Increase or decrease the gravitational field in the area. Decreased gravity allows players to jump higher and projectiles fly farther before falling to the ground. Increased gravity slows down AIs and the player.
- **Electrify the floor** – Causes electrical bolts to play across the floor, damaging enemies but making a very dangerous area for you as well.
- **Flood a room** – Can drown some enemies, but gives aquatic mutants a distinct advantage.
- **Manipulate temperature** – Increasing room temperature can render players invisible to thermal security sweeps, but gives cold-blooded enemies a speed boost. Decreasing the air temperature causes cold-blooded enemies to move more slowly.

"What is the measure of a man? Is it the hands and feet? The eyes and ears? Or is it the Holy Spirit that animates him? If the body is lost, but the soul is saved, is that anything less than a victory?"

- Annals of the Conductor, Chapter V, Verse 11

Genetic Enhancements

Using the cult's bizarre biogenetic manipulation technology to modify their body to survive, the player can sacrifice their humanity to turn themselves into the ultimate fighting machine. Using bioengineering terminals found around the facility, the player can access advanced genotypes and merge them with his human form. This allows the player to take on capabilities of various aquatic and amphibious creatures.

For instance, the player might discover the Hydrozoan genotype (jellyfish). This genotype will allow the player to turn his skin gelatinous, poison enemies with a touch and appear nearly invisible in the shadows!

Some other Genotypes:

- **Crustacean:** hard shells, claw based secondary attack, etc.
- **Electric eel:** electro-electrical senses, electrical attacks, etc.
- **And much more!**

As the game proceeds, the player can find powerful genetic sequences. Once these are decoded, the player can mutate himself into different genotypes. Each genotype has different strengths and weaknesses and are appropriate for different in game situations. The individual genotypes can be individually improved (e.g. making the Hydrozoan (Jellyfish)) genotype more transparent and therefore less visible to enemies and security systems. Unless, of course, said enemy is a robot that only sees in the infrared spectrum...

Summary

The first person shooter market on PC and especially console is stronger than ever. The race is on to figure out who is going to be the next Halo or Half Life. The staff at Irrational has demonstrated a unique ability to innovate in the first person market in both Thief and System Shock 2. BioShock will be the realization of the promise of those games.