Fallout 76

A post-apocalyptic holiday for you and your friends

GOIN
NUCL

War. War never changes...
and you should really not
drop your helmet!

Fallout 76 plays like any other Fallout game. You begin your journey creating a character and stepping outside the security of Vault 76 to the wide open world of a post-nuclear war. Exploring relics of a forgotten time, you can explore abandoned buildings, hard-scrabble camps, and build your own community. You can play as a vigilante, a hero, a travelling merchant, a marauder, barter your way through life or resolve issues violently and with persuasion. Unlike past games in the series, however, instead of playing alone, you'll be alongside other players in an always online world.

In Fallout lore, Vault 76 is one of few controlled vaults that is designed to house people in the hopes they can resettle and restore society after the nuclear war. Set 25 years after the bombs are first dropped, and 200 years before the events of Fallout 4, the game follows the first group of vault dwellers leaving the safety of their home to the post apocalyptic world outside.

BALANCING SINGLE-PLAYER AND CO-OPTIONAL PLAY

As Bethesda Softworks Vice President Pete Hines explained to The Know, Fallout 76's online component is not an MMO, nor a battle royale experience, but a world populated by up to 12 players. In an effort to make encounters between other players more special and tense, there are no fully-fleshed out NPCs for you to recruit and fight with in Fallout 76. Rather, the world is dense with mutants, points of interest, natural threats, and other players. While many may be disappointed by the absence of the richly developed and engaging companions they've come to know from the Fallout series, Hines says that adding enemy human NPCs like raiders would make it hard to decipher whether what you're fighting is a player or non-playable character. Bethesda wants to make seeing another human in the distance a tense and paranoid experience - but how you choose

to interact with others is purely up to you.

"You have the ability to decide whether to play with other players, if that matters to you," Hines told The Know. "If you see your friend playing and decide you want to play with her, then you are now in the world that she's playing in, but if not, you'll just be playing in your world and who knows who will be in that same one."

"They aren't NPCs, they're real people," Todd Howard told IGN. "There are obviously differences in how you communicate or what other people might want you to do… We still have robots and we use robots a lot for delivering what the quest story is and what would traditionally be told by a human NPC."

While you can party with up to three other friends and go on quests together, Hines insists that you will still be able to experience a traditional Bethesda single player campaign and play solo. Like in Fallout 4, you can build your own settlement, but also create a community with other players and invade others. You can trade with other players but also chose to keep all your resources to yourself.

"When you log off, your camp goes with you," Howard told IGN. "No one can mess with it. When you log in, we put your camp back in."

To best balance the always online mentality of Fallout 76 with the traditionally single player player base, Bethesda is also tweaking familiar gameplay mechanics of the series to be more online-friendly. The Vault-Tec Targeting System (VATS) mechanic, a handy feature that allows you to slow down time and auto-fire on specific body parts of an enemy, no longer freezes time and, understandably, there's no NPC reputation or opinion of you that can be changed by your actions.

Although Bethesda admits that it's still in the middle of playtesting and finalising how to best integrate Fallout gameplay into a multiplayer setting, the real-time aspect of an always online game means there is no actual pause menu, and you can still be attacked while micromanaging your inventory. Character progression has been changed to skills becoming equipable, point-based cards that you can assign to your S.P.E.C.I.A.L stats, and you can combine cards to make more powerful skills. Spending points upgrading a specific S.P.E.C.I.A.L gives you more points you can spend assigning cards to that character trait, allowing you to customise your character as a specific build - a charmer with high charisma or melee user with brute strength, for instance - without committing to certain skills. Other online functions, like PvP, are being controlled to be single-player friendly. When you're killed by another player,

❚❚ Like in Fallout 4, you can build your own settlement, but also create a community with other players… ❚❚

you won't lose progress or loot, and will be able to respawn to a far away location to avoid being griefed by the player that killed you in the first place.

You'll also be able to temporarily change the layout of the land by firing nukes onto the map, creating high level zones within those areas where creatures and things inside become irradiated. In many ways, these "high content survival areas" act like temporary raids, where you can earn rare items and fight tougher creatures in a specific area for a limited time. While some players may use these to sabotage other settlements, Hines says you'll need to find various codes scattered around the map to fire a nuke, and will be warned if a nuke is being fired on your location with plenty of notice to evacuate.

"The whole theme of this game is that you emerge and the world is a blank canvas," Hines explained to Variety. "It's your job to rebuild the world and everything that means. If you want to be nomadic and never put roots in one place, you can totally do that."

PAY TO PLAY?

Bethesda promises that they'll be constantly updating the game with free updates. Although there will be microtransactions, they will only be related to cosmetic features and you can effectively get all of them eventually with in-game resources.

THE ORIGINS OF 76

The idea of an always online multiplayer Fallout experience first came to Howard and the team when developing Fallout 4 in 2014. After someone suggested the idea of a co-optio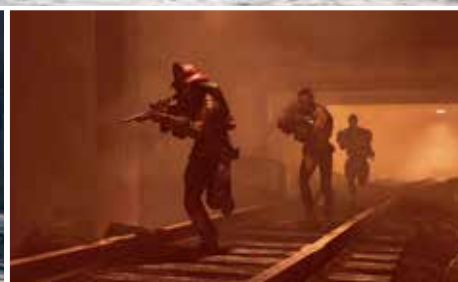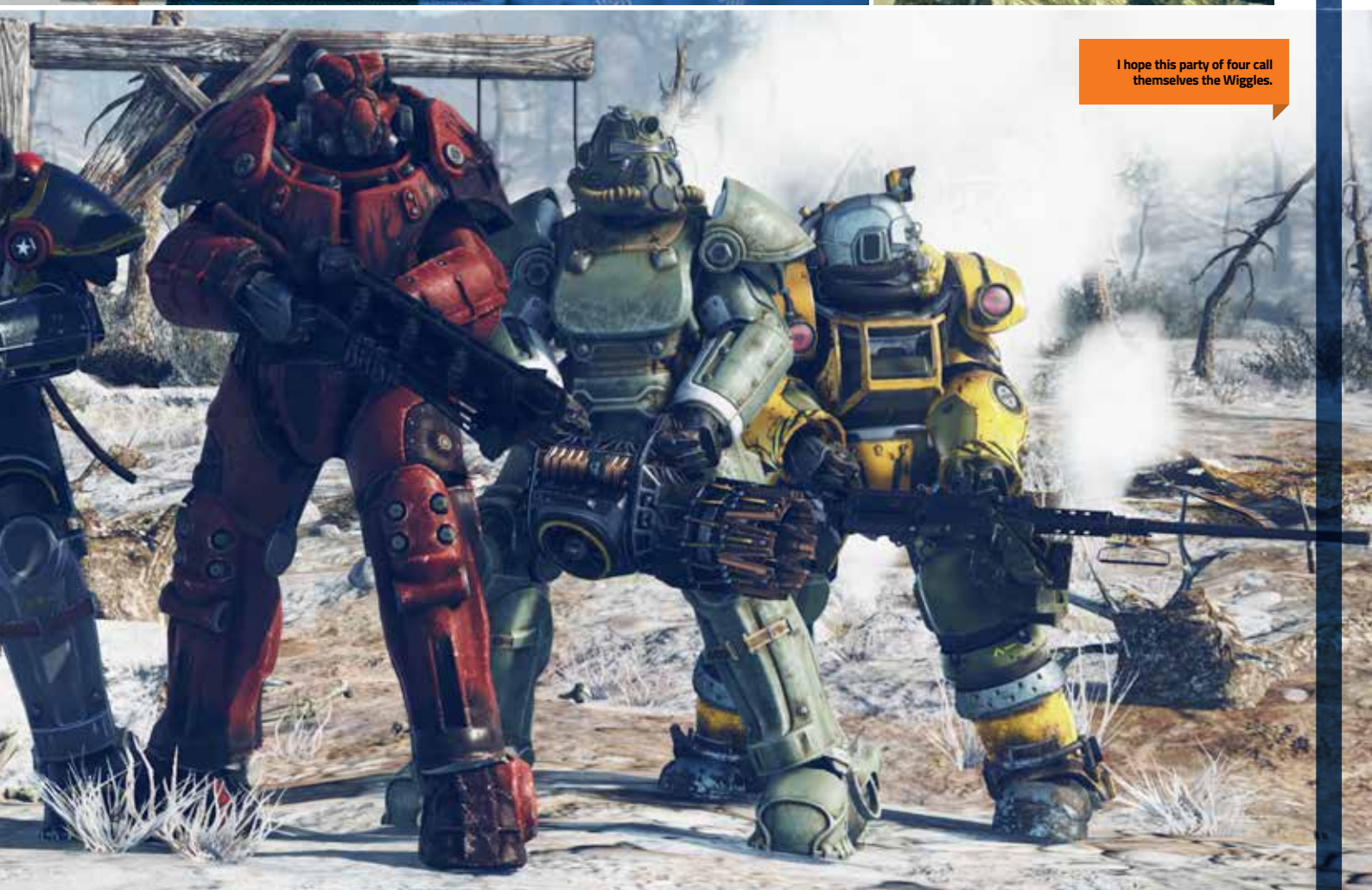nal Fallout experience in a meeting, Bethesda Games Softworks discussed it as a possible feature for Fallout 4, but it soon became obvious it was too big of a project for the time they had, and it was put on hold in order to focus on the single player campaign. Shortly after, Bethesda's parent company Zenimax opened a new studio - BattleCry Studios - made up of veteran ex-MMO game developers from Austin, Texas, who had worked on games such as Ultima Online and Star Wars: The Old Republic. The studio began work on a new, class-based multiplayer game called BattleCry, which was soon suspended and staff were laid off.

As Bethesda Games Studios' Todd Howard explained to NoClip, the lead programmer of Fallout 76 had worked with many of these developers, and given how grand of a task applying Bethesda's expansive open world settings, rich with opportunity and interactivity, to an online multiplayer setting was shaping up to be, their expertise was seeming increasingly valuable. BattleCry Studios, along with the developers of Fallout

What you really want to know is how detailed the in-game camera effects are, right?!

Field of View

View Roll

Depth of Field   ON

Strength

Distance

Range

Ⓐ TAKE SNAPSHOT   Ⓧ TOGGLE MENU   Ⓨ RESET   Ⓑ EXIT

Did anyone order a giant angry mutant... sloth thing?

I hope this party of four call themselves the Wiggles.

Fallout 76's skill system is built around stacking cards into various abilties, because card games are... fun, I guess?

You can tell this is a press shot, because none of those names are like BallSack69.

"One day, son, all of this will be yours... Or it will be nuked. Your call."

Shelter, Bethesda Games Studios' Montreal studio, joined the team. When Fallout 4 was released in November 2015, BattleCry Studios was tasked with creating a prototype online Fallout experience, applying ID Software's Quake Netcode to the Fallout 4 engine.

As Development Director at Bethesda Games Studios Austin, Chris Mayer, explained to NoClip, the engine had been around since Morrowind but nothing that had been made in it was built with multiplayer in mind. The engine was based around a world with a player, but needed to change to focus on the player in any possible world. The engine utilised a design philosophy that Mayer and Studio Director at Bethesda Games Studios Austin, Doug Mellencamp, describe as the "Atlas": a design tool that used the single playable perspective of a single player campaign as a framework for designing the world around them.

"Atlas is because there is one guy in the game, we called him Atlas because he held up the world," Mellencamp told NoClip. "The world that you have only had to be accessed by one player so they were tightly intertwined. So what we had to do was essentially decouple Atlas from the world so there could be multiple people." "Wherever Atlas went, that's what was loaded," added Mayer. "You couldn't go away from Atlas as another player. You were outside the actual realm that was loaded. A big effort was just changing that aspect, but that spreads out into all the quests; multiple people could be doing the same quest and at different stages. The quest needs to live off the character and no longer the quest itself, so that was very challenging as well."

THE WORLD OF WEST VIRGINIA

On the 12th of November 1966, five men spotted a man-like figure with large moth wings fly over them while they digging a grave at a cemetery in West Virginia. A few days after, two young couples told police they felt they were being watched by a large grey creature with glowing red eyes, who later followed them as they drove through a former World War II munitions factory. Following several other reports and the collapse of a famous bridge in 1967 that killed 46 people, the myth of the cryptid Mothman creature began.

In Fallout 76, not only can you come across the Mothman, but an entire abundance of supernatural nature inspired by the rich and haunting folktales of West Virginia. Fallout 76's landscape is harsh and unforgiving, even without the need of human non-playable characters. Of course, you'll encounter mutants and feral ghouls, but for the most part you'll be experiencing the world of West

Virginia through famous points of interest and vicious wildlife.

"It's [set] closer to when the bombs were actually detonated so there's more radiation," added lead artist Nate Purkeypile. "You can get crazier mutants and giant plants because it's more radiated at that time."

The world of Fallout 76 is four times the size of Fallout 4 and boasts a diverse range of environments. There are six distinct areas in Bethesda's West Virginia: the forestlands, a biome populated by trees, vegetation and hills and where you first begin your journey; the Ash Heap, an area ruined by chemically-dense factories, filled with abandoned mines and hollow mountains; the Savage Divide, a barren wasteland that divides the map; the Cranberry Bog, an area of, well, bogs, based on the real life location of Cranberry Glades, dense with carnivorous plants; the rich swamplands of The Mire; and the heavily irradiated and mutated lands of the Toxic Valley, a high level dangerous zone home to a crashed space station. Setting the game only 25 years after the war allows Bethesda to create a world not yet entirely ruined by nuclear warfare, and show the gradual effect of the nuclear bombs.

"If there ever were a nuclear war, none of us would be here," explained studio director Ashley Cheng, "DC is done but West Virginia, no one's going to nuke West Virginia so we were thinking we would be able to do more trees and an interesting visual look."

To truly capture the life of place, the team of lead artists visited key locations in the state and began planning how they could apply them to the rich Fallout lore. The pristine white architecture of Morgantown University is now an abandoned Vault-Tec University populated by friendly robot sentries, the Charleston Fire Department now a critically irradiated campsite near a deep valley turned volcanic lake, and the lighthouse in the middle of land a reminder of a real life landlocked lighthouse overlooking a national parkland.

Fallout 76 boasts a very new and different Fallout experience. While it's still unclear what exactly we will be playing come November, Bethesda are carefully creating a world that combines the rich open world environments and camp nuclear warfare aesthetics of the cold war we've come to love about the Fallout franchise with the rush of experiencing it all with another player. Only time will tell whether it will be as enjoyable as a singleplayer Fallout game, for both those playing alone and with other players, but if so, it could be one of the most unique games in Bethesda's repertoire.

JULIAN RIZZO-SMITH PC

YOUR GAME, YOUR WAY

While not available at launch, you'll eventually be able to create your own private server and add mods to the game. It's unclear how this will exactly work in a multiplayer environment, but there's a potential for servers with rich roleplay AUs, and players creating and giving quests as mock-npcs.