Control developer Remedy explores military shooters with CrossfireX on Xbox One

Around five years ago, Remedy Entertainment — the Finnish developer best-known for supernatural thrillers like *Alan Wake* and *Control* — decided it wanted to become the kind of studio that worked on multiple projects at once. Meanwhile, many on the team were interested in expanding into first-person shooters and finding a way to tell Remedy-style shooters in the pervasive genre.

So when Smilegate, the Korean developer behind the massively popular FPS *Crossfire*, reached out, it made a lot of sense. "They were looking for a studio to help them on the narrative side on the *Crossfire* franchise," Remedy executive producer Tuukka Taipalvesi tells *The Verge*.

The two are now collaborating on *CrossfireX*, a console version of the military shooter coming to the Xbox One this year. (Microsoft says the game will be optimized for Series X, but there are few details on that right now.) Smilegate is handling the multiplayer portion, while Remedy is building a single-player campaign, a first for the franchise. (If you've never heard of *Crossfire*, just know that it's extremely popular, with an estimated 1 billion lifetime players, primarily in China and Korea.)

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For Remedy, it was a chance to try something new in a well-established universe. The sheer popularity of *Crossfire* was part of what made it appealing, but the developers also say that its world and lore are much more interesting than they might appear. "The entire world of *Crossfire* is full of really, really strange things so it kind of just played into

our hands," Taipalvesi. "It provided a lot of source material to get crazy Remedy ideas from."

Art director Mikko Kinnunen likens the universe to Hideo Kojima's idiosyncratic *Metal Gear Solid* franchise. "If you think about a traditional military first-person shooter, what's the definition of a soldier? It's almost a person with a mask on that has no personality, just does the job. In some games I don't even remember what the main character's name is. Was I Dirk? Or was I Hank? We're kind of at the other end of the spectrum, where we have these over-the-top characters."

Taipalvesi says that the team at Remedy started by taking all of the myriad elements of the *Crossfire* that have been introduced since 2007 – which has included things like a post-apocalyptic zombie mode and another that transforms characters into Terminator-like killing machines – and figuring out a fictional timeline that made sense. "We needed to deconstruct that," he says.

While it was daunting to work in a universe beloved by so many, Taipalvesi says that Remedy was given a lot of freedom to explore. "Smilegate is a developer," he says. "They didn't look at this like a publisher. They were bringing us in to collaborate with them. And it's nice to be wanted. It's nice when outside parties come to you, knowing your expertise."

The biggest challenge was learning how to tell stories in first-person. Things like the scale of the world and how narration worked had to be different from what the team at Remedy was used to. There were also technical challenges; the single-player portion of *CrossfireX* is being made with Remedy's own Northlight engine, and the team had to find ways to make it feel as close to the multiplayer component as possible. "There are different kinds of rules for third person

and first person storytelling," Taipalvesi explains. "But ultimately, we think it always boils down to character building, world building, and good dialogue."

The single-player portion of the game will consist of "operations," which will then be divided into individual episodes, though how these will be released remains to be seen. And while building an offshoot of a popular online game isn't necessarily an obvious move, it fits with Remedy's history of trying new things. After all, this is a studio that made a game / TV show hybrid and recently signed on as one of the first creators for Epic's new publishing label. *CrossfireX* is just another chance to expand Remedy's particular brand of storytelling to a new audience.

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