

PLAYING ENEMY

1. Intro: The Game that Ambushed Me

Hey everyone, today we're going retro! (Halo fake out) No no we're not doing that again. But yes it's time for E.

Now this game is old school in a few senses of the word. Not only is it a weird nostalgic mashup. But it's old fashioned in terms of how I decide to cover games. We're not only doing some obscure jank, we're playing something I stumbled into and immediately knew I'd have to talk about it.

And boy do I have a find for you today... Well, actually no, it feels wrong to say I found it. It's more like it found me, springing up out of nowhere while I was going to grab Jagged Alliance, you're playing a deadly game surprising me like this! I was grabbed by its title! Today we're playing Enemy!

I mean... Can you be surprised I had to look? It's hands down one of the worst named games I've ever seen. It's like calling your game Difficulty, or Checkpoint, or Jump... Wow, two out of three! Better luck to Checkpoint Inc. I'm obviously no expert but it just strikes me as bad SEO, this video is likely cursed too. At the very least the word Enemy is going to just be noise to you by the time we're done here today, prepare to suffer semantic satiation.

And it's not like it has deeper relevance or a clever spin in the title itself beyond the fact there are indeed enemies! Scores of them! Oh and despite the retro throwback there is no score system. The only points here are hollow (*shoot*)

So at the risk of sounding like a confused commander caveman, where did Enemy come from? Well it's an indie project by Tom Johnson, a former Engine Programmer for Terminal Reality. Enemy is a mostly one man show built on a custom engine with some contributors and pixel artists, which was successfully crowdfunded in 2013 and saw release two years later, and it totally flew under my radar!

This is despite being a moderate Kickstarter success, it even drew more money and backers than Thomas Was Alone, Kentucky Route Zero, The Escapists, the Organ Trail, and... Revolution 60. And well, last one aside, each of those games had a time where I was hearing about them constantly! They've never been hard to find, so why did Enemy have to jump me in the bushes?

Lets find out if I'm in for a beating or a treating, bring on the Enemy!

2. Initial Impressions

Sadly, the first enemy is a poor first impression. The main menu is bare and barren, and the tutorial gave me a flashback to of all things, reading Trainspotting.

For those unfamiliar, the book takes place in Edinburgh and is written in Scots English. Even with a degree of familiarity, the text slowed me to a crawl. (*It's shite being scottish!*)

Enemy is the same way, but it's because all of the text is rendered in this nigh illegible, horrid typeface which is somehow even thicker than the novels accent! I'm serious, my initial hours here had me feeling like I was both tech and just plain illiterate.

Now I'm not going to run you through the tutorial, I also welshed on it at first cause I couldn't read the bloody thing! It took awhile, but like Trainspotting, my brain gradually adapted and I was soon back to my usual pace, with only myself to blame for being slow!

So I guess it's less time for E and more time for H, and Enemy has heroes and heroines both!

3. Character Creation

We open with character creation, and if we're going retro today, why not go with the heart and Saul of the channel. Once more unto the breach mr. Myers!

After that we have some rather minimal customisation, choosing our hair and underwear. We have three difficulties, and this is one of those titles where normal is easy, hard is normal, and very hard is hard. I'm feeling Normal today so hard it is! These options were added post launch and mostly affects the availability of healing because as we're going to learn, scarcity is the real enemy... Actually the real enemy is which pronunciation of scarcity I'll get the most corrections over.

Next up we choose our genre. We've got action, adventure, horror, and platformer! Now don't get too excited! This isn't four games in one, it just determines our starting biome, and depending on the stats we assign afterwards, our equipment.

For example, a ranged action star gets a handgun, adventure and horror protags come wielding crossbows, and platformer heroes... have handguns... Okay yeah Mario here doesn't need a fire flower to come packing heat. (*"Here we go!" - pop pop pop*)

Each genre also comes with two backstories to choose from, as far as I'm aware these have no effect, at least none I've noticed. I guess the Adventurer ones determines which kinda bricks raise your sticks.

4. Game Intro: Enemy Spotted!

Here's our story, there are four evil overlords terrorising the realm and we gotta do something about it. The game randomly generates a worldmap, dots the bosses amongst the four biomes, and our epic quest to save the land begins at 10AM cause I guess we're having a bit of a lie in. Saul could be a sleepy bugger after all.

He's awoken when two randomly chosen party members run in to get us (*fast*) "Saul Myers we hear you're going on a quest, we want to help!" Okay no time to talk! I guess we are starting late! So let the adventure... Uh, action begin! We head out of our home and (*enemy spotted*) Oh my goodness, it's the titular enemy! Roll credi- Oh... wait there's another one... I feel like if there's a sequel we could give it the Aliens treatment.

(*Callback for later (maybe at Gus the 2nd?) Yeah yeah, no time units to talk.*)

Enemy is, to boil it down. A janky mix of Jagged Alliance & Minecraft in a roguelike package.

A turn based tactical RPG with permadeath in a procedurally generated, highly deformable voxel world, it's a premise with a lot of promise! And it immediately hits us with yet more clunk.

A few elements of the control and camera definitely take getting used to, the four set directions the camera snaps too don't feel all that aligned with the levels and the freecam is pretty unwieldy. So if this video seems like me trying to invent the isometric equivalent of a dutch angle, that's not what I'm doing, I'm literally just trying to see what's going on and I cant (*like cant*)

There's also no auto-slicing despite how many tall objects there are, it's entirely manual, which is annoying but honestly may be for the best given how integral the environment is to play. But during enemy turns the slicing defaults to something way too tall, often obscuring what's going on.

Another issue is the complete absence of any way to push or pull the camera.

The mousewheel is instead used for your **INCREDIBLY 3D CURSOR!** You gotta scroll up to roll up on any elevated baddies.

No attacks here are tied to foes, you manually aim everything, Like Brigade you can even manually set the arc on grenades! So yeah, despite a thorny few first impressions this is why I persisted! The combat is incredibly open ended, springing thrilling scenarios and opportunities for big brained moves on me constantly, with a flexible toolset I could think outside the blocks with.

If the price of such freedom is some clunk I can handle it. Though yeah this is your field of view, get used to it.

The combat uses a time unit system for turns. Each and every action from moving to shooting to just changing your facing has an associated time cost.

The 75 time units per turn everyone has at their disposal is enough that you can get a good amount done, but also tight enough where you feel the squeeze. Losing count of these time units is a mistake I made a lot early on, often overstretching and leaving units massively out of position.

I may have solved some equations lately but I am still by all accounts terrible at maths.

There's a solid rhythm where many encounters felt less like wars of attrition, and more about manoeuvring, trying to get things to fall into place where on the next turn you can unleash a devastating attack after getting an enemy right where you want them. Spending all of your time units to just annihilate a guy. Overall I'd say the system is well tuned and refreshingly freeform.

The level up system is again simple yet surprisingly elegant. Killing enemies grants experience to be spent on 8 attributes. The four on the left determine skill with specific weapon categories and allow access to higher tiered gear, and these determine how a unit will be used. Meanwhile the four on the right are secondary attributes which add to *how* they can be used.

There are two systems which add greater depth and decision making and they are Morale and Reaction.

Morale is a secondary, psychic health bar. Allied deaths, damage received, and even missed attacks aimed towards a unit will deal morale damage. Meaning every attack doubles as a panic attack!

When bottomed out a unit will break in one of two ways, panicking means they'll run around aimlessly, while berserking means they'll bumrush the nearest enemy.

Reaction meanwhile is here in place of an overwatch or cover fire type command. If you leave time units in reserve at the end of your turn you'll have a chance to interrupt an enemies move with your own micro-turn. Which is again, enjoyably flexible.

The world is entirely voxel based. With terrain deformation, buildings collapsing and fire propagation, all adding a dash of chaos into the mix, battlefields morph and break apart wonderfully and there's a heavy emphasis on explosives and fire.

The world and its inhabitants are also themed after classic movies and games, with each biome hosting its own variations in terrain to navigate, hazards to deal with, and enemy rosters.

By clearing all enemies from a map, we're allowed to freely navigate and loot the place, and on the overworld we can move to any adjacent tile. We can cross inhabited maps, making stealth possible, but only exit out the cardinal direction we make it to, there's also a day night cycle which I think affects visibility, it definitely affects mine.

A majority of the tiles are simply proc-gen battlemaps filled with foes, but there are also towns for trading, and we occasionally find them under attack, giving us an opportunity to save the day and make some money! Granted I don't think this system fully works. Since I still get paid well when half the town is on fire, there's one survivor, and two of the civilian kills belong to me.

Maybe they're paying us to leave.

Lastly there are castles teeming with enemies and loot! There's a reasonable selection of items on offer, mostly pretty simple buffs but there's some cool stuff like completely unpredictable teleporters which make for a comedic ripcord when a unit is in danger, plus a few completely busted consumeables like one turn invincibility and reflex serums to essentially give someone basically another turn. The only modifier present is that some zones will be marked high level, featuring baddies far more powerful than the surrounding area. A great opportunity for experience and gear, if you can survive. And four of these castles will play host to the four overlords!

To win the game we have to go and take them out, and we can do this in any way we want!

5. A Tough Foe

And well... This is no small task.

It doesn't take long to learn that Enemy is not only hard, it's merciless! Saul's squad got lit up by an offscreen foe with ungodly reflexes, any attempt to approach him put down with prejudice! Saul himself died when the tree he was using for cover got sliced in half by gunfire and fell on him, a death so perfectly Saul, I can't think of a more fitting end for the guy.

Sorry Saul, you survived Realia, the Carribean, you took Panama with you. But now you're six feet deep in Enemy territory. Many early runs ended on the first or second map, some died right on my characters doorstep!

Mr. Bits fell to pieces and was gunned down within an hour of departure! Balomontus suffered death by Doki Doki Panic! (*princess kills him*), Medically known as a heart attack. Frank Gibbs, after his mushroom house was torched by villains. Went to put in a complaint with the local lord and died when the castle ceiling collapsed on him and he was then set on fire.

A death more horrific and common than I expected from such a light hearted seeming game.

Death Cubed squared up to a devil in the bayou and burned to death despite being hip deep in water. Lorenzo met one of the most terrifying foes not yet recognised by gaming canon.

The enemies in Enemy have pretty simplistic AI, they struggle with differences in elevation and only one of them knows how to jump, but by god does that one know how to jump.

As familiarity builds you also come to learn they're highly predictable. So just figure them out and all's fine right? Well, no. TNT is predictable, doesn't mean that a moments lapse in judgment won't have it blow up in your face!

Much of their strategy is just beelining into whatever range lets them hit you and trying to knock your block off. with no regard for their own wellbeing unless they're put into a broken state, inability to navigate certain environments aside, and with a wish enemy behaviours were more varied and sophisticated, this is still all Enemy's enemies need. They're engaging and terrifying not even in spite of their idiocy but often because of it.

Besides this, there are two systems which strongly dictate the rhythm of combat and I grew to have a real love hate relationship with them. They are the first advanced things you need to get to grips with to have even a chance of defeating Enemy. Lets dig deeper into Morale and Reaction.

On the whole the morale system doesn't inspire confidence. I wish we had some way of controlling which response we'll inspire when breaking enemies, especially since a berserked enemy is just as reckless than their usual MO. This makes breaking the enemy practically a cointoss for the player as it may just not help at all.

The much bigger issue is there's no interval after a unit is broken in which they're immune to morale damage nor is their mental health refilled to an amount which can handle even a smidgen of stress. Meaning there's NO COOLDOWN on getting broken again!

As it is it often leads to units getting inescapably panicked turn after turn, often dying because of it, which causes everyone else on their side to suffer a severe morale hit!

This makes it easy for your entire squad to descend into panic loops where they're indefinitely uncontrollable. It's down to sheer luck as to whether they'll make good distance as yes their panicked running is entirely random instead of away from what frightened them, or if you're lucky they'll berserk and literally break the cycle along with whichever stupid bastard locked them into it!

It's a frankly fucked fight or flight response, and it means your run can be over several turns before your last unit even hits the ground.

Meanwhile interruptions leave me with a mixed reaction.

It's thrilling to narrowly save a unit's life with an unexpected opportunity to dash to safety, intercept a charging foe, or turn the enemies' sneak attack back on them. It's a system which allows you to feel incredibly daring or dangerously clever, and there's also great comedy to it.

(Enemy R5 002) Watch this, it's awesome! The tree shields Morgan from an explosion, he scores an interruption! But then! (*Crushed*) The tree interrupted my interruption! Gotcha!

Another thing: units are not limited to one interruption per turn!

While subsequent reactions come with less time units there's both a floor and a flaw here!

While it can be really satisfying when working in your favour. It can also lead to the game simply turning your turn against you, as enemies, especially those heavily invested in the stat, can spam you to death with no recourse. It's not enjoyable to play against and essentially punishes you for exposing yourself to the enemy, which you often need to do to attack at all!

I'd say the only winning move is not to play, but no, I'm taken out of the game either way. Whether it's on their turn, or what I'd arrogantly assumed was mine!

I really love both of these systems... When they create cool dramatic moments, which they're both capable of, but both needed further refinement and definitely some tighter limits. As instead of being tactical considerations which expand the gameplay, they override it.

Distract archer before rushing him from the side? How about he instead pulls off 3 interrupts in a row and panics your unit? (*Steve 003*) Amazing tactical gameplay lads!

But then... Set up that same Ninja on a corner after getting the enemies' attention (*ambush*) Man, I love interrupts! Amazing tactical gameplay, by me! The ultimate lad.

I don't want them gone as they're important for making sure the combat is more than just exchanging attacks, the interruption system is a rough diamond. And Morale, even with its shortcomings is valuable for how it adds a soft time limit to engagements, it makes hanging back and playing defensively carry its own risk where the highly dangerous gameplay would otherwise make such an approach far too dependable.

I think it's useful for games to have means to motivate players into proactively tackling challenges, taking risks and challenging the odds, as that's often where the most exciting play is found and morale shakily achieves this.

They're valuable tools for the inventive player, but they're also a means for Enemy to wrench victory from your grasp at a moment's notice!

Enemy is brutal, it's mean, it's tough. Like their arcadey origins the inhabitants of this world will give you no quarter, they're here to take all you got!

And it's here I have to reveal another aspect of how it all makes such a jarring first impression.

6. Super Morose World

I must confess, I've been misleading you. I've been presenting the game as I expected the tone to be, and as such I've toyed with the colour values and grabbed music to match. Because this is what Enemy really looks like. (*Colour Correction off*), and here's how it actually sounds. (*Enemy OST*) It can also sound like this! (*enemy OST*) Or this! (*Enemy OST*) Hey how about some town music! (*townies*) Did the local surrealist die? What kinda funeral dirge is this?

I especially love the combat music (*combat*), it's not driving, it's not heroic or bombastic. It's off-kilter and weird, it makes the battles feel desperate and lopsided, a savage scrum for survival.

Oh, and this is the main menu! I added a picture to it to make it seem slightly less depressing.

The muted palette, the jagged pitch blacks of the world still unseen with only death lingering in the dark, and the utterly miserable music paint a picture of a world beyond the point of saving. Not that it can't be saved, more what's the point in doing so?

This is not a fantastical quest to save video game land. We're merely the last people who give enough of a toss to try and stabilize a dying world. The countryside is rife with banditry, the castles have been occupied, and all the townsfolk do is lament how horrible everything is or speak in bizarre, nonsensical riddles. Their minds gone.

Sure, if you save them during a town raid they'll pay you, but how little they tend to offer says they're giving you this money out of obligation instead of appreciation. Like sure you saved us, but that means this isn't over yet, and speaking of money.

Our princess isn't in another castle, she's in the local bar waiting for someone to slip her 20 bucks to get back into the fight, ain't she a peach.

The whole experience has an air of emptiness and melancholy which you just wouldn't expect given the jaunty premise. When I streamed *Enemy* to a friend he genuinely didn't believe it was real because the whole thing feels wrong. He's still expecting me to disappear in Creepypasta like circumstances at some point.

And I kinda love that about *Enemy*. It's not exactly comedic, but with the brutality of the combat and how it pushes you to fight dirty and underhanded, it winds up working oddly well. Fittingly for a title which snuck up on me, everything about it so far has been unexpected.

I actually have an aversion to what I'd call Kitchen Sink or Ready Player One style geekdom.

Which is mainly just smashing popular IPs together like a kid throwing all his toys into the sandbox. I was also never into 80s nostalgia throwbacks which is obviously a pretty big stylistic influence on *Enemy*.

On an abstract aesthetic level everything about *Enemy* should rub me the wrong way. Initially I looked past that and gave it a shot because this at least sounded like it was using the kitchen sink approach for interesting mechanical opportunities, and it certainly tries. I was expecting to get some kicks out of it in spite of being loud, pandering, and annoying, but then it wasn't any of those things, except arguably annoying, just not in ways I anticipated.

For me the dour tone actually helped. Both because in expecting something cloyingly upbeat I was thoroughly thrown off guard by how bleak it all came across.

And because of that I didn't feel like I was being condescended to, I couldn't help but find the world memorable, presenting this video game reality not as a place full of whimsy, but weariness.

Mario's in the morgue and there's no one ups going because there's hardly any life left in this world to begin with!

It's miserable, it's barren, but by god it's such a fascinating juxtaposition.

Despite so many odd first impressions, despite the aggressive difficulty, and perhaps in thanks to the defeatist tone, I kept chipping away, getting a foothold and with each run I got a little further from home.

My advice for getting to grips with *Enemy*, do an action start, get a gun, and go to war with the forest! It turns out larpers do not like live ammo! It's the easiest way to earn some levels, gather some equipment, and make some money that'll help you carve your way deeper into a run.

Section 2: Know your Enemy

1. Placements of Power: Melee

So from here I'm going to expand on Enemy's gameplay. While there is no official class system, I've split them into 5 categories based primarily on the skill system to let us tackle this topic by topic. melee fighters, ranged rangers, bomb bombers, throw tossers, and mages, all of these guys will let me discuss different remaining facets of enemy in greater depth.

Rushing in ahead of the pack are the melee fighters, the boxers, the sword and boarders, the big bastards with bigger clubs!

Melee attacks aren't subject to accuracy and do okay damage. But their real power is in how speedy they are, as melee has by far the shortest time cost of any kind of attack.

This is because fighters are the most dependent on positioning. Once they're in the Enemy's face, there won't be a face to speak of for much longer, the difficulty is in getting there.

Part of what I enjoy about Enemy's balancing, is in how, ranged units aside who are decent all rounders. The game is balanced so that every approach is situationally overpowered. May sound an oxymoron but that's how it feels. I find it an interesting way to take things, where if you can crowbar proceedings to your advantage, said advantage is clear, obvious, and devastating. And Melee fighters are the most cutting example!

If you can get a melee fighter in place to do damage, they'll bring the pain! but that's a bigger if than it seems!

If we're going to talk about how you need to navigate the world, we must first talk about how the opposition does. In each map is a random amount of enemies, it can be as low as two, and it seems to pop out around 6-8, with even more in castles.

Before an enemy has spotted you, they'll dart around the level, seemingly at random, if there's a rhythm to how they scan the map I've yet to determine it.

Now, this isn't like Modern X-Com, where an alerted enemy announces their presence and often gives you a turn to reposition or get in a free hit. If they spot you on their turn they are taking it! At most, they'll say Aloha! (*bomb*) This lends proceedings an amazing sense of paranoia, the enemy are out there, in the inky blackness. This is a cat and mouse game, and the roles of Tom and Jerry are in constant flux.

So spacing and positioning are vitally important. You need to navigate the world slowly, cautiously. Ducking from cover to cover and darting through dead man's land. Keeping each unit facing different directions to minimise the odds of getting surprised, as well as keeping some time units in reserve to react to a sudden attacker.

Ideally you should also space your units out just so, close enough to cover each other, but with enough distance to minimise the damage a single bad turn can do.

Learning how best to position and move units is a process, employing it is slow, and maintaining good positioning in chaotic situations can get pretty taxing. The absence of a formalised cover system on top of that took some getting used to though crouching has a couple of uses outside of minimising hit odds, and given the nature of the world all cover is temporary and can turn against you if it takes a hard enough knock.

And mid-fight, other foes may join the fray! There's a noise system in play meaning the din of battle is likely drawing in other foes! So do you face everyone towards the threat you know to maximise your reaction potential, or have some units keep an eye on the flank just incase.

You have to start learning how to play the odds, how close can I risk getting before they'll land a shot on me? Will the tree line deflect any explosives? Am I obeying the 21 block rule? (*cut down*)

In an ideal situation you can expose yourself to the enemy, make an attack, and fall back to a defensible position, but few situations are ideal.

Melee fighters feel all or nothing given how vulnerable everyone is, but over time you develop a solid grasp on how to get in, do damage, and if they can't fell everyone on that one turn, get out of dodge with whatever time units are going spare. Hit and runs are the way to go!

2. Taking Inventory: Ranged

Providing covering fire are rangers. Guns, bows, canons... Not shotguns though, for some reason shotguns are a melee weapon, I guess Tom emphasises the stick in boomstick!

Rangers are the safest option, reliable and pragmatic. No frills but still plenty of spills. They're the easiest unit to use and thus good for learning the games concepts, but they're the least powerful, require a lot of money, and work best supporting the more risky but impactful weapon types.

What rangers largely offer is okay damage at the best possible range, which in Enemy's case is medium. This is where accuracy is thrown into the mix and there is a steep fall off, especially early on. A sniper rifle exists but in my tens of hours playing was sadly always out of my reach! Perhaps the only area firearms excel is in wearing down enemy morale, especially the mid-game automatics, but they chew through time units and ammo both, so lets talk inventory.

Enemy once again does things a little differently in that the player has two distinct inventory types to manage. There's the shared party inventory, as well as each unit having an 8 slot satchel. Taking something from the inventory comes with a hefty time cost, which made it odd to me that it then becomes completely inaccessible during active combat. The fact a turn needs to be near entirely spent retrieving an item already feels like consideration enough. Even from the satchel you have equip and use times to contend with.

Each hand is also its own slot and a majority of weapons are one handers. This means you can have distinct weapons in each hand, or if you equip two at a time you can duel wield, doubling your firerate at a steep accuracy penalty. Longarms tend to have greater accuracy or damage at a steeper time cost.

This goes back to melee troops, while they don't have to contend with accuracy there are weapon categories with meaningful trade offs. Smaller weapons deal less damage, but they're faster and have less knockback, which makes it easier to stay on top of foes and get more hits in.

Meanwhile bigger bludgeons can deal stun, eating time units from an enemies next turn, and while greater knockback means time spent chasing enemies down again, you can get bonus damage by smashing them through stuff which is awesome! Or hey, if you have two melee fighters, you can play tennis! Volleys like this are cool and efficient! So dual wielding weapons is nothing but an upgrade for the fighters right?

Well there are also shields which reduce or even negate damage, and can at higher levels even reflect projectiles. And god does this help them close the distance and stay in the fight!

Both greater offence and defence are viable options, and it can even be worth popping a point or two in melee for your ranged fighters to allow them to offhand a shield.

Overall I think the weapons are in an okay place to start out with, there are appreciable differences in weapon types for the two classes most dependent on changing up gear. Each approach feels viable but requires a different approach to get the most out of them.

While I think dual wielding has far too steep an accuracy penalty to be viable even at closer ranges, and believe me, I tried to make it work, the smaller arms do at least maintain their niche in speed and are better for reaction shots. And yes, because of this system it does mean Jack the Boxer here is technically dual wielding his fists.

Lastly there are three clothing slots, and conversely I wish there was more to apparel as it lacks application. 99% of clothing items are purely cosmetic, and what's left over is a few tiers of armour. Offering differing amounts of damage reduction in exchange for time units per turn.

I feel clothes with status effects is a massive missed opportunity which could have expanded a players options and added nifty modifiers to play.

All this aside, Enemy's resource management is incredibly clunky. Ammo stacks are small and the ability to split and merge is oddly rigid. It's crazy how Brigade feels downright intuitive compared to the bizarrely backwards process Enemy requires simply to jury rig a full magazine unless all the numbers add up perfectly to begin with.

I suppose cuboid hands aren't the best for fine motor control, which probably explains why reloading also has a glacial time cost, to the point it feels like punishment for forgetting to do your inventory chores outside of battle.

On top of this, the placement of certain UI elements is needlessly flipped or compressed depending on how you access the menu which is sloppy to say the least.

None of this is helped by the fact Enemy is a game of constant inventory turnover, you'll be flitting between resource starvation, managing each units satchel, divvying up ammo, consumables, and equipment, and trying to figure out who most needs what. While being con

I never ran out of bullets, of the common varieties anyway, but I always felt at risk of running dry if I let a fight go on too long. Meanwhile rarer ammo types were often in such short supply I rarely if ever got to break out the bigger guns.

3. An Absolute Blast: Bombs

So the first two classes, they do their jobs and do them well, but they're a little lacking for flash, there's no razzle dazzle, no... Bombast. What's the point of having voxels if we're hardly gonna use them? The remaining three blow the game wide open! Bombs are a force to be reckoned with.

The demolition is delicious and there's proper good fire propagation to boot.

Balance wise explosives are odd, they're subject to the same issues of inventory as ranged weapons, having to deal with equip times and so on, but while bombs are less readily available than bullets, I somehow never felt the squeeze. I suppose it's because even the lowliest explosive which aren't too hard to come by, remain viable for much longer.

I said each class is situationally overpowered, when it comes to bombs, the situation in which they're overpowered is just having a bomb. Have bomb? Congratulations, the world quakes before you. They have passable range, you can manually set the throw arc to take advantage of allied sightlines while staying hidden to your enemies, and uh... (*fire bounces off door*) You have to be mindful of doorframes, and a bomber berserking is a disaster as they'll attempt to blow up the nearest enemy with no regards for if they or their friends are in the blast radius, so bare in mind these guys can be a ticking time bomb. That's their downside and it's a fun one.

but yeah, the most I can say about explosives is besides them just being utterly devastating. Is that thanks to voxel physics and how they interact with play, I don't think I've ever had so much joy just blowing stuff up. If you've ever wanted Teardown Tactics, Enemy may give you a taste of what you're after.

These last three classes give you so many more options to control the battlefield, charging fighter? Spark a fire in their path and force them to go around. The blaze can also conceal you from sight. Squad lacks cover? Just blow something up nearby and boom! You have materialised cover! It's so satisfying to manipulate the environment to your ends.

I don't think I've ever started so many forest fires, sometimes I'd do it just because I didn't like how dark it was. Environmentally irresponsible maybe, but hey, I'm the one trying to bring some light back into this world, it just so happens molotov cocktails are the quickest way to do it.

Fire is so good, and the way it spreads adds a nice chaos to fights, it's nobody's friend, and if you forget that, you're cooked.

It's an area where melee and ranged units are relatively limited, but they can get some work done. (*Enemy R1 003 17:40*) If a tree falls on a Ninja does he make a sound?

I love how utterly creative Enemy lets you get, and that creativity is rewarded with survival. The enemies are stupidly good at being stupid, so facing them head on a fools errand! Use your head or lose it!

It defeats the issue I've had with other games which allowed creative problem solving, but were so easy or had such easily employed dominant strategies that it made thinking outside the box an extravagance at best. This isn't the case here.

I mentioned how I don't like cheese strategies because I want my wins to feel legitimate, I want to feel like I tried to engage with the game rather than circumvent or bypass it.

Enemy's difficulty is tuned in such a way where it is unfair, but that's mostly okay because I have the means to turn that unfairness back on it. Which liberates me to do whatever it takes to win and feel like I'm still on the games wavelength. It allows me to cut loose.

One of the joys I had in Enemy was simply taking in the map after a battle was done. Admiring the battered props and scattered bodies. Enemy has, for whatever reason, a combat log. A beat by beat text explanation of events, seems a little redundant when the levelled level tells the story a lot better. The world is my canvas, and bombs are my paintbrush.

Razing the forest and raising our levels has never been quite so much fun.

4. Absolute Tossers: Throw

Now we get to Enemy's gimmick attack type, throw, and I love it. Instead of using weapons tossers rip chunks out of the environment to use as projectiles. All blocks are on the table from bricks, to birch, to bodies, to boulders, with different materials having their own damage.

They come with some pretty major downsides. They're quite time inefficient for a start, getting off more than one attack per turn requires being in a good position to begin with, and long odds on that one given they lack range and accuracy without significant skill investment. Operating best at point block range. When they're hoisting a block they also can't access their satchels, and they can't pass through tight spaces, larger objects even stop them from getting near walls! Making it harder to take cover! On the bright side ammo is limitless and they have bonkers single target damage potential! It turns out against a very fast rock, there's still no such thing as a fair fight!

They also allow for controlled demolition and finer environmental manipulation than explosives, picking holes in walls to look through, placing and creating cover, though this is all quite ramshackle, I do wish these guys could do more indirect combat stuff to aid the team.

For instance, they can pick up still living enemies and allies, and I wish this feature was in any way useful. I thought I'd be clever, picking up my melee troops, carrying them into battle and tossing them at foes! Making for a really weird and interesting support style unit, but it turns out being carried eats up their time too which feels like an annoying limitation.

And given how long it takes to pick up enemies not to mention how dangerous it is, I rarely if ever found myself in a situation where it'd be advantageous, or even advisable to do so. Especially since the range you can throw people is tiny, likely for balance reasons.

Now I know playing smart isn't my forte, but when I was thinking about it, I never found it worth the risk (*callback for later*)

Regardless, throw units are well balanced and great fun to make use of. With a tosser on the team you'll never be more than a stones throw away from victory!

5. Staffs & Stats: Mages

So that's four stats but I said we have five classes, this just leaves us with mages

They use staves to cast magic spells, with morale now doubling as a mana bar. This means you can have ferocious fireballs and scintillating psychic blasts on tap, an enticing offer!

But what's the cost of such power? Well, these guys are sort of like DND Wizards.

Unless you get a mage recruit with some points good to go, building one yourself takes babysitting as you get them the levels and experience they need to get going, and the requirements are doubled as staves take two stats to use!

Depending on the staff they require a mix of either bomb or ranged, alongside a heavy investment in mind. Doubling or maybe even tripling the experience needed to get going, you gotta give the guy time to cook cause he's a slow burner.

It's a great way to handle them, because they're so powerful you'll always want a magician on staff.

The only downside left is that spells are by far the slowest attacks at a meaty 35 time units. Mages have to be practically stationary to get off more than one per turn!

But hey, because they'll likely also have points in bomb, you can pop a few pineapples down their pants and they'll more than do in a pinch. The lower time cost can easily double their explosive payload while leaving them at least some time to reposition! Say hello to Gandalf the Grenadier!

Though this brings us to the secondary attributes, the real drawback of their unique balancing is thanks to requiring two stats to advance, mages wind up relatively inflexible.

Level ups are frequent enough and their gains apparent enough that I always felt like my units were growing in one way or another, but just restricted enough that I had to weigh up each and every decision. Simple way to look at it but you can get away with good investment in 3, maybe 4 stats, I preferred 1 weapon skill and 1 secondary attribute but that's just me. The more you spread a unit around the more you dilute them so it's a question of focus vs flexibility and depending on the situation and your handling of it either can work.

In this aspect I dig Enemy's imperfect balancing, even if in the end it feels like a series of disparate experiments stapled together, everyone is being kept in check by utterly different concerns and subsystems, considering it's a videogame mashup the eclectic nature of the balancing does at least add to the kitchen sink vibe.

6. Secondary Stats

Lets go over those secondary stats. Health is health! Pretty straightforward!

As I mentioned early on, the biggest effect difficulty has is the availability of healing. Recovery items are rare loot, only sold in short supply in towns, towns which never refresh their stock.

Money is similarly in short supply, and much like Brigand, there is no selling items.

You can sleep in hotels to recover half of everyone's max HP, but clearly we're terrible guests because we're only allowed to use each hotel's services just once. I imagine we trash the place to protest the extortionate rates they charge!

Oh, and as you level up the already uncommon medkit disappears completely from the loot table, leaving only the incredibly rare healing potions in circulation.

Because of all this damage easily becomes a long term conundrum. Medical supplies are to be rationed. After each scrape you have to weigh up whether to heal the wounded or hold off for later. Each medkit and potions healing efficiency must be maximised.

Even when I got a stockpile going all it takes is one less than decisive victory to clean it out. So yeah, health is precious, but it's also by itself a pretty boring stat. Boosting your HP is giving yourself room to make more mistakes, the remaining three stats aid in avoiding them to begin with.

Endurance adds to your stamina metre, which can be spent on two actions, sprinting, and jumping! Both are more efficient than standard movement, giving you greater control over getting out of bad situations or seizing on advantageous ones which can be a life saver.

Plus Jumping, besides allowing repositioning to higher ground which is very powerful against melee and bomb units, also acts as the game's one and only secondary attack, and with enough investment becomes one of the longest ranged, with great damage and 100% accuracy! It's a pretty cool aid! (R12 005 23:05 Jack goes through wall)

Mind boosts your morale metre but don't panic! That's not all! It also increases your units view distance and expands their peripheral vision. Meaning my mages also doubled as spotters.

Massively helping my odds of finding enemies before they find me.

Lastly is Reaction, which gives you more time units on an interrupt, making them more likely and potent, so if you want a real quickdraw cowboy on the team you can drop points here and say tarnation to the whole concept of a turn order. There is another bit of forethought here as the baseline reaction time all units get is shorter than many of the more potent attacks. So if you want your riflemen and mages to be able to take full advantage of interruptions you need to divert some level ups to do so.

There's a surprising variety of playstyles and approaches available, every stat is alluring and useful in different ways, and I always felt like I was getting pulled in multiple directions with no wrong choices but no perfect ones either. It's a rugged little system, it works well and creates a good conflict of short term wants vs long term planning.

Backtracking on intended builds as the situation demanded or experimenting and seeing what worked well together, it was always exciting to stumble on a killer stat combo or a new insight into how an attribute can give me an edge. Level ups are pretty regular but no progress felt empty and every point allocated felt like a real decision. Growth is a good mix of satisfying and thoughtful and even as the runs piled up I never got sick of this aspect in particular.

Plus to cap off this unofficial class discussion what's really neat is thanks to how flexible Enemy's approach to combat is you can actually get by decently well with an incomplete party. One run everyone died save for two similarly specced fighters, yet I got decently far with just them by playing smart and forcing enemies face me on my terms as much as I could, I felt really limited but even with Enemy's simplest unit I was capable of some mind games and the game didn't seem to mind, but the Enemy sure did. (*die*)

There could have been more class interplay but as it is they do at least wind up covering for one another well. Fighters and tossers hold the front, creating a buffer zone for the longer ranged classes or rushing down the enemy for devastating attacks. Rangers soften up approaching targets, finish off stragglers, or interrupt enemies. Bombers and mages reshape the environment, blowing open opportunities and opponents both for their buds.

But that's just my interpretation of their roles, they're all incredibly malleable especially given differences in secondary stats and their specific equipment.

A fully rounded party can take advantage of how distinctly each attack type plays, and it does ultimately lead to some pretty *class* warfare.

7. Biomes & Baddies

But god we're how long into the video and we're still in the forest! There is a reason for that and it's downright unfortunate. The forest is just where Enemy is at its best! The terrain is the most varied and enjoyable to navigate, and there's the greatest usage of props which prop up all of the games systems! From fire to terrain deformation to ammo for tossers!

The fact it's also the easiest zone and the first port of call on a new run to bulk up means a majority of my playtime was spent here. Both because the others are less interesting, less dynamic, and each represents a jump in difficulty so go in ascending order.

The tropics, or action biome. Is a militaristic zone of mostly flat grounds, with barbed wire, palm trees, and concrete pillboxes. Cover is scarcer than the forest, leading to longer sightlines putting more of an emphasis on ranged combat.

The swamps, or horror biome. Is a creepy bayou. You're mostly wading through hip deep water, with occasional outcroppings providing both cover and a vantage point. Wooden shacks and walkways provide expedient travel but are susceptible to fire, I like the risk and reward inherent in that but being perpetually bogged down loses its lustre pretty quick.

And lastly the plains, or platformer biome. Is a Super Mario Bros themed... Plain, and well, it certainly is. I very much dislike it here. We terrain generation which seems downright fractured with nothing coming together, which creates disgustingly long sightlines with scant cover to break them up. There's no feeling of rhyme or rhythm, just a hodge podge of fairly empty level chunks. Put all together this makes navigation tedious and ironically given this area is most in line with Enemy's core inspirations, nothing about it emphasises what can allow Enemy to be fun to play. At best engagements here are dull and at worst they're deeply frustrating as the player is given nothing to work with.

Each zone has variations on the same stable of enemy types corresponding to our own classes. Fighters, rangers, bombers, and so on.

For example forest fighters have armour and shields, slow but defence based, pushing the player to flank and focus fire.

Tropical ninjas will use smoke bombs and flashbangs to disorient before charging in. Vampire thralls use chainsaws which deal hefty morale damage. Meanwhile the bludgeoners of the plains... Are incredibly fast and can basically one shot you... Huh

Forest rangers are accurate but struggle to break cover, the mobsters of the tropics are inaccurate but heavy on reaction and fire quickly, the mysterious gunmen of the plains... are accurate, fast firing, and set you on fire! Can this place get any worse?

The forest is simple, the enemies straightforward. Action turns up the intensity a bit but there's still hope. Horror makes sense as much of the roster is focused on dealing morale damage and while I'm mixed on the environmental gimmick, it changes up the gameplay and works well in conjunction with the areas demons and ghosts, both enemies which enforce more mobile play either through fireball spam, or being an unkillable pursuer who can only be vanquished by clearing the rest of the level.

But while the swamp horrifies my characters, the plains truly terrifies me! It doesn't help that the plains also feature two unique foes. Chimps! Which uh, okay I can't hate these guys... Ninjas vs Monkeys huh, it's a wonder this didn't take 2015 internet by storm. They're the one enemy in the game who've picked up throwing mechanics and that's pretty funny, if absolutely terrifying.

Then there's the Explo-Steve... Words cannot express how much I hate the Explo-Steve. Enemy's answer to the Bob-omb must have come from a question asked with an interrobang. They are, obviously, a walking bomb, they spot the player, and LEAP at them! Three court slam dunk detonating themselves and dealing insane, often instantaneously lethal damage to everyone within their obnoxious blast radius.

Now, unlike non-bomb, uh, bomb enemies, their jumps are 100% accurate, their spotting distance is absurd because I guess they're of a fine mind too, and the fact they're leaping extends their effective range further than practically any other unit. I said this game jumps you, well Explosteves are just taking the piss! We're up against bipedal stealth nukes, ICBMs, intercontinental bastard monsters.

So, on top of how much I already dislike the plains for just how plain busted their variations on the standard enemy roster is, you can be mortared at basically any moment.

These guys are often run enders, if they catch you unawares, you're dead, if they wander into you on their turn, you're dead, if you fail to kill them on the first turn you encounter 'em, you're dead. There's no counterplay beyond just lucking into finding the explosteve first *and* being in range to kill them... Just don't send your fighter (*fight blows self up*) I don't know why I was hoping for an edge case here. Like they somehow wouldn't explode if taken out in melee!

They've rocketed into one of the worst enemies I've ever faced and honestly it's no wonder the mushroom kingdom has fallen!

There's a reason this clip of me scoring an interruption on an airborne explo-steve and smashing it out of the sky has crept into a few videos, because this is my proudest moment in Enemy, sending one of these bastard bob-ombs to the great beyond! Snatching victory from the jaws of defeat! So yeah, in Enemy, getting out of the woods, just means even greater danger.

8. Castle Doctoring

And eventually we face the greatest danger, when it comes time to storm the castle and face the boss head on!

Castles are the ultimate challenge and encapsulation of Enemy. They're the only consistent source of indoor combat present and like much of Enemy, it works, with deep caveats.

Given managing distance and limiting enemy opportunities to attack is the key to victory the tight quarters and far greater quantities of enemies make for a great escalation in difficulty and change in concerns. Battles in here get downright messy, as you dive into siderooms, exploit corners, and collapse passageways just to buy space. There's plenty of pleasure to be had and the de-struction is de-lightful.

There's also some bonus considerations, risks and rewards., like if you're early in a run or in a bad spot. It can still be worth storming the storeroom, nabbing loot and booking it back into the countryside. And then there's the castles only other gimmick besides hosting bossfights, the cells! Most of them are empty, but some hold a captive party member who'll join you for free, or, an entire squad of enemies who'll jump you when the cell is disturbed.

I wish there were more little gambles like this, and it turns the castle partly into a fun house while adding another good balance against destruction, it can backfire!

Eventually you make it to the throne room, where the boss will be flanked by his guards, finally time for the showdown... But a question, why am I facing him head on? When I could instead drop the ceiling *on* his head? (*collapse throne room*)

Yeah I've been writing about the castles as if they're a linear challenge when no, they are just as open ended as anything else. Every way in is to be weighed up and a moat is at best a maybe. If the enemy blocks your path, just do a little feng shui and clear the way!

The bosses are absurdly tough, but they're also going to wait until you begin your attack, so you better make it count. Why not fake a direct assault while you have troops ready to blow the back wall. Stage full blown pincer attacks! Take out the ceiling and have units on the roof rain hell from above! Hit the room with mollies and fireballs and smoke em out. They put you through hell to get here, so it's only sporting you brought hell along with you.

Sometimes you don't even need to set foot in the castle itself to begin the attack! Granted this tends to mean they have cover while you have a hell of a time praying the bullets miss!

God the amount of destruction is amazing and it slows my computer to a crawl! I guess this is the processor equivalent of reading trainspotting! I was worried the game died at times but no!

And there is risk to wanton destruction, done poorly it's all too easy to bury your own units in rubble, cut off your own means of retreat, impede your own ambush, or if things go especially poorly, damage or even kill your own troops with shrapnel from the blast! You do still have to exercise caution

If I do have any downsides, while layouts do vary castles are on the whole pretty monotonous.

The generation often creates obnoxiously long hallways, there's only a handful of different rooms and they'll be present in every single instance, and how they're remixed rarely creates an interesting or unique flow, that's left up to me I guess. The tedium is exacerbated by castles possessing no biome based themeing outside of their enemy roster which really sucks, the same is true of towns by the way. Forests don't have elf villages, platformer towns aren't mushroom based and so on.

I could imagine action castles having sandbags and landmines, horror castles hosting switch traps, secret rooms and sarcochphagi spawning foes, platformer castles having lava pits and so on. Given the camera I can understand why they're never multi-story but the ultra tall single floor still creates problems. Another issue, one I tried to avoid exploiting, was the ability to tell different rooms apart from the roof tiling, making it possible to just search out the shape of the throneroom from above and skip a majority of each castle.

And look, none of what I've said should lead you to think castles are easy once you know you can ignore corridors or whatever, you're still being packed into a tight space with a horde of bad guys who won't hesitate to make your life hell before delivering you to the devil personally.

A good many runs ended here, sending us right back to square one...

9. Rogue Dislikes

... And man, I'm starting to feel my own morale running low after so many failed runs.

I talked about how you have to move through stages, slowly, cautiously, spacing and facing units appropriately, managing time units for interruptions and over time this gets tiring. What starts as a decent source of friction was soon rubbing me the wrong way. Tension gives way to acidic boredom. It's a dull routine which steadily saps your motivation to keep playing.

You're not buying into this fantasy of being guerilla fighters toppling an evil empire. You're trudging through the woods for the hundredth time hoping the next encounter doesn't open by stealth killing one of your troops because you failed a spot check.

And you can be slowly scanning the map turn after turn after turn just hoping the next bastard turns up! It all makes you want to start rushing, to get things over with! But you can't! Because if you do, the only thing you're hurrying towards is another game over!

Playing Enemy is in a way, a genuine test of patience, to stay the course and maintain formation. because frankly with how quickly things have gone from fine to fubar, you steadily realize you're never more than 2 bad turns away from a run being over, no matter how well things seem to be going whether it be 5 minutes or 5 hours into a run, death waits in the darkness, at the exact same distance.

That's why Enemy's harsh, bleak tone winds up so hauntingly effective, but it's also why despite how much I've said it can be enjoyed, I would not call it an easy recommend. It's clunky, uninviting, unintuitive, oppressive, deeply imbalanced, and its unfairness is both a help and a hindrance. Plus, it's not just a world half empty, but a game too.

Enemy's permadeath, roguelike structure is an odd fit, and at the risk of sounding greedy, its because it is far too thin on content and variables. Before long a new run doesn't feel like an opportunity to learn from past mistakes, see new sights, find new items, and try out new combos, it just feels like stepping back on a treadmill. A treadmill which steadily, outside of your control, at any time, can jump to 100 miles per hour.

The companion pool is tiny, the weapon selection while okay, is pretty stock. The truly esoteric gear enters the picture much too late and in short supply.

It doesn't help that around the same time more powerful toys are barely seeping in the enemies skyrocket in levels. I don't know how Enemy escalates its difficulty. Whether it's distance from where you spawn, proximity to the nearest boss, or if each zone checks your highest level hit when first entering a chunk and builds it from that, it's most likely boss proximity but I've seen hints of the other two and they're all at best, utter guesses.

But at a certain point the already tough foes all morph into blatantly unfair, overpowered variations of themselves, with again, certain biomes being worse than others, and in this changeover we're barely given a window to re-equip for this new level of threat. Money is tight, weapons are expensive, loot is stingy, and the enemy is breathing down your neck.

You hit a point where it's no longer about grinding, but beelining to the end because the world gets too lethal.

The 4 biomes are highly repetitive with only a small selection of different layouts, with terrain generation not creating great variance in encounters and not a great deal of tactical opportunity, all of this results in runs blending together outside of cool micro-moments. Made worse because of those 4 biomes the game only ever fires on all cylinders in one.

Though, much like I enjoyed the cells in the castle. I must give the Plains some props for having mystery blocks and warp pipes, that's a hop and a skip in the right direction! The world could have done with more gimmicks to liven it up, to add further considerations and complications. I could picture wildlife in the forest causing problems for both sides, landmines and turrets in action stages. The ghost already does change up horror a little. I kinda dig the world feeling dead, but by that same token I wish the game wasn't just as lifeless.

If you pick up Enemy because of this video, what you're getting is *some* enjoyable but flawed combat and not much more. Now, if we look at the kickstarter and leaf through the files we learn that Enemy isn't quite everything Tom Johnson initially set out to make, and I'm not bringing this up to drag the guy for not fulfilling everything he outlined. Only he knows why Enemy came out as it did, it's really a lament for what's not here because of how much I like *some* of what is. We were meant to have greater variation in each biome like caves and graveyards. One old screenshot even points to the presence of abstract, gimmicky zones which could have added a little spice to runs at the very least.

An even more fascinating concept were procedurally generated premises with different objectives on each run! Which may have made a game over sting worse, but a new run all the more enticing! As well as a greater variety of more weird and eclectic weapons like spread guns, giant shoes which work off of endurance! Even an airpump to explode enemies! And look, I praised the weapons that did make it in, but when I look at what was proposed it's hard not to feel like somewhere along the way Enemy was drained of much of its colour, with only the most straightforward and barebones versions of everything surviving.

To cap it all off, is made on a custom engine which was meant to be modder friendly, it even comes with an editor to aid the process, and I did try and make a couple things, I failed through a mixture of my own incompetence and a feeling the editor has been left in a broken state if this thread is anything to go by.

The only resources to help newbies find their feet is a starter pack, which is long gone thanks to a dead link. As well as an unlisted video discussing how to create new cells to add to the terrain generation. I wanted to make a custom clothes pack and some new terrain but I just couldn't hack it. Sorry everyone, I can't work christmas miracles.

I like Enemy a lot, but even before I checked the Kickstarter and saw it didn't fully meet its ambitions, I'd already started feeling like I was playing a proof of concept instead of a complete product. There's just a spectre of emptiness that creeps up on you the longer you play and reading the kickstarter just makes it bigger.

This video feels so weird to make right after Urban Reign. There I was left wanting more in a good way, with Enemy I feel like I've been left wanting...

But enough about what I want, what this world needs is a hero who's up to the challenge, and after 11 long runs... I've got a story...

Section 3: The Story of Gus Slinger (The Second)

1. One Last Run: Party Up

Say hello to Gus Slinger... The 2nd, named in dishonour of Gus Slinger the first because I forgot I had already made that joke.

Yet another gunslinger starting out of the tropics, with a sharp eye, a keen mind, and an itchy trigger finger. "Gus Slinger we hear you're going on a quest we want to help" Yeah yeah no time units to spare. We're awoken at 10AM and Gus Slinger has dropped his first bad guy by 10:01!

This time we're joined by Jack the Boxer and Arthur the knight. Champions of the ring and the round table have joined forces!

With the forest on our doorstep, we head south and are given a warm welcome. Daedalus the archer joins our merry band but it's not to last. Within a turn he chances upon two brigands, and that welcome goes from warm to withering! The rogue catches Daedalus with a firebomb!

Immediately sending him to the brink of death! And yet, with neither time nor luck on his side, his two arrows strike true! (*Daedalus dies*)

On the one hand, this hurt! We're already down a man, one who immediately proved himself.

On the other... Well while we were going to kill you all anyway I appreciate we can now frame this as vengeance! I'd say we knew the guy just long enough for this to count as revenge! We'll be having your gold too, it's what he would have wanted.

And that goes right to what's his faces replacement, the Princess, once again at the bar, \$22 huh? She's upping her rates, desperate times I guess, we'd better go rob her house. Our first crack at a castle goes off without a hitch, heavy on lowly bandits who we manage to run into in only small clusters, felling the bandit boss by drawing him out and catching him in a pincher. We've recovered the princesses throne, but I think she wants to stick around a see Gus crown a few more pretenders.

And RNG absolutely smiled upon us here! The coffers in this place were nothing to sneeze at, so in the end we booted a few brigands and made off like bandits!

So with some gold burning a hole in our pocket we decide to head where the action is! Heading to a town in the tropics hoping we might make some more acquisitions, and it seems the Rogue AI's henchmen have had the same idea! We save the town for \$25, and at the bar, a Lythronax who didn't lift a finger wants 24 to join the party! Mate thinks he's royalty! Alright sure, I need extra bodies, that's the thing about Lythronax's, they're all money first.

From here we head to the AREA OF VIOLENCE! And it's just another castle. Albeit one which presents more of a problem than the first, the ninjas lay down thick plumes of smoke to close the gap, but I'm wise to their tricks! Scaring the ninja into giving away his position and smoking him before the smog clears! Bet he was fuming about that!

But as we turn into the longest hallway ever generated a mobster lays down fire! I respond in kind! But this only pushes us into a bad position, and Gus... (*killed*) is gone.

Luckily Enemy is not so precious, as long as any one member of the party stays standing the fight is not over, and as Arthur tackles the throne room, the old knight sees the terrifying future of warfare dawning on him. (*missile*)

Of all the bizarre luck, the debris which traps him protects from the blast! And as his panic turns to anger he bursts from the rubble, and with Jack by his side cuts a bloody path through the throne room!

With a man down, the lesser bounty of this castle stings all the more, but we rescue Alberto from the cells! But what of their fallen leader? He started this journey, and they felt he should be there in more than just spirit. So the Princess decides to bring him along... So that he might still bring justice to evil-doers! (*splat on floor*) Oh, uhh sorry Gus, you're dead weight.

Besides, we found Morgan and he came with better ranged stats! He'll take up arms in your place.

We also rescue Alberto from the cells, though from the looks of him he was moments from doing it himself, then Morgan and his much better ranged stats join the party too! Rest easy Gus, he'll take up arms in your place!

2. The Count & The Horror of the Swamp

With that, we've got a full party of 6! And so it's time to take the fight to the first of the four overlords, and that means braving the swamps! Which immediately swallows two more of my men as we're immediately set upon by devils! The fire they whip up is so thick we lose sight of them as they continue to rain hellfire upon us! Causing a panicked Alberto to immediately immolate himself trying to firebomb a ghost. Jack teleports away to escape the blaze, landing in the midst of a thrall and a third hellspawn and taking them out himself. He's on fire! Luckily ducking here actually extinguishes the flames.

Meanwhile the rest of the team tries to slowly approach the dying flames. Morgan catches sight and wings the damned creature. The Lythronax tries to follow up, but the swampwater slows him just so that he's left just a split moment, a single time unit short of felling the beast! And the devil gets his dude! he's burnt to a cinder, and his death sends Arthur into a blood rage which finishes the fight! If we're gonna wanna deck Dracula, it's going to take a more cautious approach, so we sneak through the swamp, only going loud to uh... Save, a town along the way... Morgan is caught unawares and killed, and in a much less useful rage Jack beat the local librarian to death, so we're paid presumably to leave, but before we go we go we recruit Hayato, who, being a Ninja, was hiding out the entire time.

The assault on Dracula's castle went so well it'd make a Belmont blush. I open by just blowing a hole in the side wall and having Enock firebomb it. When shrieks of pain echo through the wall and a ghost blocks our path. We make a hard left turn! (*Princess box*) And we have stumbled right onto the throne room! The Princess creates an opening and Enock casts fireballs through the breach! The room crumbles and the fighters storm in! Jack punching Dracula through a stony soup which launches him through the ceiling, before Arthur follows up and puts him down for the Count!

And I love this, even the devils surrender! Though it's a bit of a shame we didn't really get to see Dracula's moves, He throws fireballs and summons underlings, what you think I'm scared of a few minions? (*later: yes*) If I was going to make any amendments to bosses, and given all things I perhaps shouldn't ask this game to be harder, and at the risk of contradicting what I said earlier about castles I think blitzing the throne room should be a little tougher. I loved setting up these elaborate, equalising opening moves, but in an effort to keep the throne room enemies in place, ironically in what seems to be an effort to ensure a fight of some kind goes down, they're seemingly unable to react to any stimuli until they spot us, and they're all facing the same direction. Which makes it too easy to rig up truly stupid opening volleys completely unimpeded, assuming you've cleared the rest of the castle.

Plus, I find the bosses are overly vulnerable to morale damage, obviously they're going to be the subject of focus fire, but while they have massively inflated health pools to compensate, they're still easy to panic! And as long as they don't berserk, keeping them broken is easy! I say I'd want them made sturdier but only in the reality where morale was better balanced both ways. Cause yeah, while I'm sure even Vlad the Impaler would fill his trousers if he got uppercutted through his own roof! It's both funny and a little deflating that the boss broke within a couple turns. Turns out the real horror of the Swamp was us all along.

Anyway Hugo, you really don't want to leave the safety of that cell but too bad, you're in.

3. The Blob & The Monsters of the Plains

Our next target is the cyclops of the forest, so naturally I'm headed for the Blob of the plains... I have no idea why I did this, maybe I still can't actually read.

To get there we need to trek across yet another desert, perhaps Enemy noticed my grave error and decided to hold off on burying me. I blasted my way through a desert of ninjas. Pretty easy pickings. Only losing Enock in a horrifying moment of foreshadowing. **(bullet through wall death)**

Less than 5 minutes later, we've downgraded to Ann, a forest ranger. I blow a ton of money getting her a demonic crossbow, multiple maps and castles worth of gold to try out one of the higher tier weapons. But while the desert gave us a break, the Plains opens by introducing us to its entire cast, all at once, in a deadly two pronged ambush. From across a river we're threatened by monkeys and explosteves, and approaching on our flank is an anonymous gunman!

I place the rangers and the tossers to fire on the enemy across the waters, hoping to intercept and shut down the explosteves and stop this monkey business. Having to sacrifice some distance so we can use a nearby hut to deny the gunman an angle. If he wants to take the flank, he'll be walking right into Arthur, lying in wait to spring an ambush! We're making the best of a bad position, it'll be a tough fight but we can... *(princess dies)*

And she's pushing up daises... The team breaks, the explosteves leap the river, Ann is killed, her demonic crossbow gone to waste! And the only one who scores a reaction, multiple even, is an impotent Hayato. All his heightened Ninja senses allow is for him to witness the senseless slaughter. We're beaten and battered and broken.

When I introduced the Plains enemies earlier, those were their base forms, the explosteves already disgusting range and damage grows, the chimps get stronger, and the gunmen trade their fire flowers for cannons, which are accurate up to rifle range, can fire twice in one turn, and completely evaporate cover, any cover. This isn't helped by the fact that Enemy's enemies are basically wallhacking, this is usually balanced out by the fact that cover usually stops projectiles, and that's no longer the case!

This is a problem shared by many of Enemy's late game enemies. They're downright stifling to play against, there's not much joy in finding a game where good difficulty forces you into being clever, but at a certain point that no longer works because the rules, and in this case, the walls, no longer apply. The only counterplay left is luck, and at that point I can save us both time and have exactly as much fun flipping coins.

As we storm the Blob's castle this becomes all too clear. My brain keeps telling me to take cover, refusing to accept that things have changed as the gunmen tear down the castle around me. I even collapse the ceiling thinking it'd save me, with one last shot, the illusion is completely dispelled! **(the wall carving)**

Hugo goes down, Jack panics and flees into the hall as an Explosteve joins the fray!

I hope, and I pray the game has made an allowance for what I'm about to do! **(Hayato dies)**

It has not, it turns out, all Hayato could do *was watch*. When I talked about the two melee fighters I got decently far with, I was neglecting to mention the plains would have stopped them dead. You need ranged options for this place, and my rapidly dwindling party had none.

Hayato only saved Jack's life for a moment, another gunman was all too ready to finish what the bob-omb couldn't, and now, Arthur's rage was just as explosive. He charged deeper into the castle! Directly into the throne room itself! The Blob's guard push Arthur back, only prolonging his rage, his explosteves step out to join and it's then that Arthur, hits Boiling Point... *(explosteve)*

And all I could do was watch. The last member of the original party is dead, even the memory of Gus Slinger goes with them.

But... There's still one man, Carlos! We picked him up at the bar earlier! While Arthur charged deeper, he smartly fled! The only counterplay left is luck, and fortune has favoured the bolter! Every potentially fatal blow has just about missed, and when everything was collapsing around him, he got the hell out of the way!

I push him back into the castle, catching a gunman as he reloads and putting him down, and beneath the rubble is the storeroom, finding some medical supplies, I patch Carlos back up, and finish just in time to catch an incoming gunman and turn his ambush back on him!

But then, something strange approaches (*blob monster*) Oh no, ooooh nooooo!
Arthur had awoken the Blob, and he's been spawning his young ever since!
His blobby brood are filling the castle without limit! Only growing more numerous turn by turn!
I'm not afraid of a few minions, but this is a few too many!

Not wanting to part a purple sea of blobs, I have Carlos rush around, now more aware of the castles layout I make a tragic discovery, at the entrance hall, I had two options, left, or right. I took left, and that means I hadn't chose right. If I had, I'd have carved right into the Blob's throne room. I'd say better late than never, but it appears I am once again too late, the blob is nowhere to be found, and I'm left to face the horde! Putting them down before they overwhelm Carlos, a seemingly endless stream, only ending when the parent finally comes to the sound of his childrens screams.

What follows is a 20 minute slugfest as Carlos just tries to stay on top of the blob, as it blinds him, bites him, as the young pile on to push him away. As Carlos has to repeatedly surrender his advantage to flee, to pick potions off of his fallen allies to stay in the fight. I said enemy is often not a war of attrition, the blob changes that dynamic and eventually (*blob down*) we take our victory, plain and simple.

I know it sounds stupid, but when I watched this back, I was second guessing my own footage, did I win? There's no way I come out of this one alive is there? I keep second guessing this story format, but it's for me as much as anyone else. I don't know I'll ever beat enemy again, and I want the story of the time I did out there.

Funny thing, before Brigade was done I was thinking I'd be able to beat this first as a warm up for the squad tactics genre, but it turns out Brigade was easier for one simple reason: Quicksave can't save me now! It hurts to lose several hours of progress in seconds!

But while quick save couldn't save me, in a way the absence of it saved this story. There's obvious mixed feelings in this whole back and forth I'm mostly having with myself. Because yes lacking said feature means we had to play it as it lays and it was a rush. But I also know if I had quicksave I'd have been hammering the do-over button because the game was so absolutely full of shit to wade through, you better call me Andy Dufresne because we came out the other end, beaten, battered, but alive.

In the cells we find Douglas and look man, we need bodies and anybody'll do. Count your lucky stars you've been spared the plains.

4. The Final Boss of a Bare and Barren Land

Say hello to our second generation, Carlos and Douglas, hardly like the strapping heroes of old but they're all we've got left!

Up next, or what should have been previously, is the forest, and it proved an opportunity for rest. A reprieve after the nightmare we just went through. A chance to catch our breath and rebuild our confidence.

The boss of the Forest, the Cyclops, is a relatively straightforward fighter, if you can manage distance you can manage him. The fight was far from free of drama, spilling outside the castle when Carlos hit the cyclops so hard he smashed through the castle wall and panicked, forcing Carlos to give chase and splitting the party.

The naive young adventurer was left massively exposed as the monsters minions chased him down and opened fire. Carlos hid desperately behind a tree as bolts and blasts ate away at his hopes. Douglas was in a race against time to seize the flank and end the fight, and the only reason we got out okay was a stroke of luck, a wizards spell goes awry, causing friendly fire. Giving Douglas just enough time to get into place and provide a distraction.

With a moment to breathe, Carlos rushes back in and finishes the fight! (*Cyclops down*)

Can't take your eye off me mate!

All this leaves is the Rogue AI of the Tropics, far in the northwest corner of the map. Our new party doesn't rush, they take their time, they backtrack down the trail the last generation blazed. Picking at the leftovers of their heroism. Finding the people who were waiting in the wings when there wasn't room enough to save the world, now it's their chance to do so. And they lend Carlos their power. (*R12 010 – 17:20 Spirit bomb*)

Before long, a whole new ragtag band is put together! (*R12 011 – 02:10*) And well, they're certainly ragged. After a miraculous town save nets them a huge windfall I go on a spending spree, sparing no expense for what I knew was going to be an ordeal. We finally roll up to the Rogues castle. (*Juan misses grenade*) Might not bode well, but it does what it needs to! Pulling enemies outside so we can thin their numbers! Ninjas wielding energy swords and plasma shields! The only battery they're getting today comes from me! (*kill ninja*)

With the first wave easily defeated, we confidently push ahead, a long, pitch black hallway awaits us, and what lingers in the dark is worse than I could have imagined. (*Missiles! Grenades! Flashbangs!*)

A volley of explosives fly out to greet us! The weaker willed panic while those of sound mind rush for cover, Juan the wizard covering their retreat, I cast flashbang! (*flashbang*) (*More missiles! The archer is killed!*) Our first loss! And Juan soon follows, the enemy uncaringly and unceasingly firing missiles into their own castle and he's lost beneath a sea of stone, a moment of calm as the enemy loses us in the rubble gives me a bad idea.

I try to reclaim a foothold, striking back hard and fast! Carlos teleports, unbelievably, right where I wanted him and gets the drop on the grenadiers, ninjas, and mercs, only to find himself completely surrounded and cut off from his companions His allies rush in, but there's no way they can save him, Carlos is cut down! Patrick falls soon after! Douglas and Jose flee! The lizard coming to his sense just in time to save his one remaining companion! I have them rush after

And this time, there is no heroic second wind, we run, we cannot beat this. I slink back out into the world in the hopes of rebuilding once again. Looking for whatever scraps I'd left behind, looting the long dead corpses of our old team and hunting out any unrecruited party members, only to turn up nothing.

And so my only option is to creep through the incredibly dangerous parts of the world I still hadn't braved, sneaking past enemies I didn't want to risk facing. Terrified of losing, feeling my tenuous grip on this run was looser than ever. We slowly made our way to the towns yet untouched, refusing to save the ones in trouble, and when I finally found civilisation, I also found something strange.

The game had stopped generating items, the shops were totally empty, there was nothing left to buy! Worse than that, we had barely any money, I'd barely managed to scrape enough together to hire... Dave! Yeah, Dave! This is all we can depend on!

I've totally exhausted the character pool! All the heroes I'd grown familiar with, fought alongside so many times were long since dead. By now Enemy was just generating generic men, women, and Lythronax's to keep up the fight, and pretty much all of them were tossers!

There was hardly anyone left to fight for the world, there was hardly any world left to fight for, and there was hardly anything left in the world to fight with, and so they fought with the world itself. Up until now I've been calling Enemy empty in a largely figurative sense, I had never gotten far enough to realise how literal it would become.

Douglas, Jose, Ernest, Edmund, and David approach the castle, creeping through that funnel of death, an ambush from a cell of foes is rapidly bombed into submission! It seems, in a rare bit of luck, the main body of grenadiers wiped themselves out fending off the last party.

Giving us a mostly peaceful journey to the boss.

Taking a chance on another cell we find Alan, another Lythronax tosser, and our last ally, and this one doesn't ask for pay, just a shot at payback! (*grenadier interrupt outside throne room*) It's okay, he's fine folks! Even if I feel like the stress is going to kill me!

With any chance of launching a stealth assault on the throne room gone, the bulk of the party braces for an attack, holding back ninjas while David moves to create an angle on the boss! This was not going to be a fair fight if I could help it! With a hole punched, Edmund rushes to bombard the throne room, in his haste the AI spots him but his shot goes wide! Giving Edmund just enough time to get a grenade in before the rest of the guard retaliate! And all the while Ernest ineffectually bounces off the wall!

The Enemy's turn begins, A rocketman blows down the wall, exposing our flank! And with no cover Edmund breathes his last! Alan's anger is unleashed! He berserks, taking out a mercenary and a sizeable chunk of the AI's health! But time, or more accurately, morale, is running low! One more death could send us into a spiral which would see us done! And my troops aren't the only one panicking, my heart is pounding! The team rushes in, piling as much damage on the now lone AI as they can manage, but it isn't enough!

And then (*pick up AI*) Oh shit! I just panicked and picked up the final boss! I'm having a god damn doki doki Panic, terrified for a moment I'd just thrown the game, I didn't even think about my next move! (*Throw AI*) Enemy Down! We win! Sure weren't quick but we saved the day!

The four kings are defeated. You are cheered as a hero. After paying respects to dead friends. You take a well deserved vacation. And peace returns to the land. The End.

5. Enemy Down

And that's Enemy! I hope you're sick of the word by now. So, did I get a beating or a treating? It was both, frankly. I've thought long and hard on this game and I'm unsure if I've been harder on it than it was to me. A fascinating mixed bag. It's not just a good idea with flawed execution, what it is is so much more frustrating. A good idea, with pockets of amazing execution, drowned in an absolute mire of mediocre implementation, horrible balance, systems breakdown, horrible monsters, and bad jank.

I've been pretty harsh on it, but I can't overstate how great it feels when it works. When that little spark of promise of what Enemy can be and what it could have been, shines through the darkness. Those moments are fleeting, but just tantalizing enough to make me want to press on and see that light once again. I even wrote a wishlist because honestly, this could be an Xcom replacement for me were it refined and expanded, there's something amazing in here and I feel compelled to dig for it.

There are just two mods on the workshop for Enemy, one is a rebalance mod aiming to make the game fairer but also more challenging, maybe too rich for my blood. Another is a character pack, I'm glad I installed and gave this a go after beating the game! Many of the new companions are remixed enemies and bosses, it feels like playing with an old fashioned cheat code which was a nice capstone to the experience.

Way back at the start I asked a knowingly boorish question. Why wasn't this game a breakout hit when its kickstarter was stronger than its contemporaries with relatively less spectacular origins. The simple answer is there is no simple answer. Some things catch the zeitgeist, others do not. So much comes out that some games get lucky and some do not. It was the wrong place at the wrong time, it didn't sell itself to a large audience, perhaps it was just too much of a ballbuster to be a blockbuster.

Tom Johson has since released another title, Ecosystem, an evolution simulation game! This was also a kickstarter project, albeit a failed one. But Tom got it done anyway and it has gone on to greater success than Enemy with support to this day. I bounced off it myself, I've already seen the end of evolution, and reading reviews there is some shared sentiment with how I feel about Enemy. Great promise undercut by wonky systems and unrealised potential.

Anyway, that's all for today. I initially wanted this video out for Halloween, and then Christmas, which man, if I make it, what a bleak Christmas video! Work has really picked up lately, still I hope you had happy holidays no matter how many pass before you see this video! Have a happy new year!

Thank you for watching, if you enjoyed the video and want to help me out please spread the video around. I've got a Ko-Fi and a patreon if you want to support me more directly, everyone gets thanked, they're scrolling past now in a likely legible typeface. At \$3 you get access to my notes and scripts, and at \$5 access to Afterthought videos where I answer viewer questions and go over any last minute thoughts which didn't quite make it into the video!

Thanks again, and watch the shadows, you never know what's out there.

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