The Mark of Kri™ – Questions & Answers

Answers supplied by: Dan Mueller

1. In the creation of The Mark of Kri, what has been your main goal?
What kind of experience have you tried to achieve?

Our basic goal was to give the user a dexterous warrior that was easy to control, offer competitive strategy as well as straight brutality, with beautifully animated kills, an engaging story line, in a richly painted world.

2. The combat system has received particular praise - can you explain how it operates?

This is really two questions. The Mark of Kri combat system has solved a lot of problems that current and previous systems exhibit, hence the praise. The main problems have always been related to orientation in 3D space. Sure its fun to take on a pile of enemies, but trying to get your character to face who you want him to face, and to strike who you want him to strike, particularly in a group combat situation, has always been quite cumbersome to control. Even with the camera aiming straight at the main characters back, it has always been difficult to get the correct angles on the directional stick or d-pad.   Auto aim and target locking have tried to solve this problem, but have still shown major limitations, making your character maneuver more like a Buick than an agile warrior when trying to take on multiple enemies. ... until now.

How it works. While our combat system contains a lot of depth, it is quite easy to pick up and use. Simply sweep the right analog stick toward the enemies, then press the X circle or square buttons. It's that simple. You see, by sweeping the right analog stick, a heat beam extends from Rau, the hero, and assigns attack buttons to the enemies it contacts. So if X was assigned to an enemy, simply press the X button, and no matter what enemy you are facing, and no matter where the X enemy is standing, Rau will know just the strike to take him on. Say the X enemy was directly behind Rau. Rau would do a back thrust to nail the enemy in the gut while still facing his current aggressor. We call this the "Bruce Lee" effect. It helps make the user look extremely good at the game before they have even scratched the surface of how to really show off what Rau, and the fighting system, can do.

3. What's the story behind the game?

As the story begins, the player becomes aware of a dark spell that has been hidden from the men who would use it. They player is then introduced to the main character, Rau, but how Rau fits in to the story is for the player to discover. All we can really tell you at this time is that, well, it's no cutesy fairy tale... I don't think people are skinned alive in cutesy fairy tales.

4. How is the adventure structured?

Rau has grown up in an Inn with his adoptive father, who trains Rau in the arts of combat. It is at the Inn that Rau does his training before each mission, if he likes. While at the Inn, Rau meets characters who need someone with "aggressive" skills to handle what plagues them, thus giving Rau his missions. As Rau takes on these missions, word spreads of his skills, and new patrons come to the Inn seeking his assistance... and sometimes, those patrons are not what they seem.

5. We've heard that there are three main weapons available - can you describe each of these and their relative strengths and weaknesses?

Rau makes use of his sword, bow, axe, and Taiaha... as well as his hand-to-hand combat and stealth. The most unusual of his tools is the Taiaha; a weapon from New Zealand, which has a spearing tip at one end and a blunt-flat stretch at the other end. The blunt end is used for breaking bones and cracking skulls. Basically, the sword is fastest, the Taiaha is a little bit slower but more damaging and gets in extra strikes, the bow is long range, and the axe is heavy damage for all out carnage.... think body parts. Given that one can silently kill with a headshot from the Bow, or reek havoc with an Axe, one must turn to stealth if they want to silently dispatch an armored guard without the whole area being alerted. It's in the careful balance of choosing the right weapon or weapons for the job at hand that really make for reviewing the strengths and weaknesses... more so than the balancing of the weapons themselves.

6. The game presents a lush, cartoon world that conceals an undercurrent of quite graphic violence - did you deliberately wish to subvert the mood and tone typically associated with a cel-shaded aesthetic?

People generally equate the look of The Mark of Kri to that of a Disney feature film. The juxtaposition of this beautiful look with brutal violence is one that people have not likely seen, thought it is a style that anyone could use, and we have. With most developers going for hyperrealism, we thought we would do something different. We wanted to bring art to life. We wanted to tell a story, we wanted combat, and we wanted it to actually *look* like someone was hit with an axe when they were hit with an Axe. Pass 50 pounds of sharpened steel through a mans body at an accelerated rate and I assure you, you will not see blue sparkles fly off and the guy simply drop to the floor. So yes, we meant to give the player something they've not seen before in their game library.

7. What role does the character of Kuzo play in the gameplay?

Kuzo is Rau's spirit guide and an essential tool in The Mark of Kri. He is Rau's eyes and ears for events to come. Take a basic scenario for example. Ahead lay 3 armored henchmen, a guard at the gate, and an archer patrolling the roof. Without Kuzo, the player would run ahead, get spotted by the guard, attacked by the 3 henchmen, and while trying to fight them all off,

would be filled with arrows. By sending Kuzo in to have a look around, the player could see that he should take the archer out with his bow, then stealth kill the guard, maybe disarm a henchman for a quick kill, then draw his sword to slay the final two enemies. Surely this is the way to go. Strategizing for combat scenarios makes Kuzo an essential tool for the player who wants to avoid the pains of trial and error.

8. How broad is your quest? Is your adventure essentially linear or is there scope and reward for deep exploration?

There is great reward for exploration, thought not in the way you might think. Rather than have the player scower the environment, looking in every little plant for a couple gold coins, we choose to keep the path mostly linear. This allows the player to explore what the game is about... combat and competitive strategy. The fighting system, while simple to use, has quite a bit of depth. Exploring this depth allows the player to be more effective in combat and see some great animations. Further exploring the different ways to solve combat situations also gives the player the edge they need to make it through the tougher levels. And that's the heart of the game. Combat and competitive strategy; finding out how to snap necks with the Taiaha, take an enemies weapon away and kill him with it causing other enemies to back off with fear, and solving combat scenarios... That is what we designed for the player to enjoy, and that is what we want them to explore. Not wondering around for hours picking up rocks.

9. How many hours do you expect the average gamer to take in completing the game?

That has been entirely up to the player's style. If the player knows everything about the game and wants to hall through as quick as possible, going from point A to B but not really doing what they should, they can finish the game in maybe 15 hours... but probably not getting any extras or completing all the Arenas. The Arenas are like a mini-game. If the player is actually trying to do everything they can, get every extra they can, and beat all the Arenas, then it can take up to 30 hours. By many reports, even longer.

10. We've heard that The Mark of Kri is destined to be a trilogy of titles? Is this true and what can we expect from the future of the franchise?

We can't say anything "officially", but the story is designed so that many tales must be told if one wants to know the full history of the world we have created... and there is much we haven't said in this tale. What we can say is that we are very busy, and so is Rau.

Developer: SCEA San Diego Studio	Publisher: SCEE	Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1	Peripherals: Analog Controller (DUALSHOCK 2), Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2)	