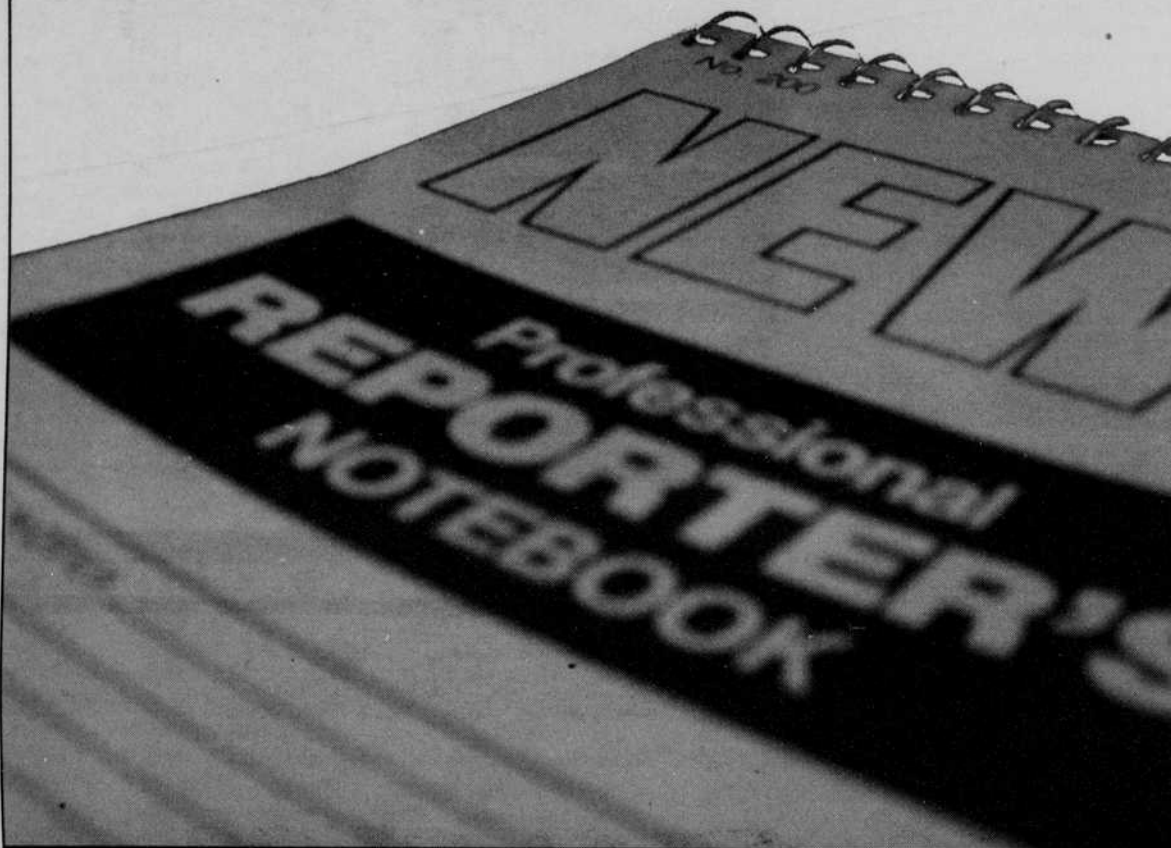


GET EXPERIENCE

[now hiring freelance writers]

Write a freelance story for the upcoming Moving Guides, published May 6 through June 3. Contact Freelance Editor Ashley Griffin with your story ideas at ashleygriffin@dailyemerald.com or at 346-5511.



OREGON DAILY EMERALD

The campus newspaper for the UO Community

'Psychonauts' succeeds with amusing dialogue and unique level design

The game about psychic secret agents hit stands last week after three years of jumping among production companies

BY ANDREW MCCOLLUM
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

"Psychonauts" has been through some tough times. The game was announced at E3 in 2002 by Double Fine Productions, a new studio headed up by ex-LucasArts creative god Tim Schafer. Schafer is known for his work on adventure classics such as "Grim Fandango" and "Full Throttle." Microsoft was to publish the game exclusively as an Xbox title, but the company changed its mind in March 2004 and dropped "Psychonauts" from its lineup, giving no reason for its decision. In August 2004, Majesco picked up publishing rights for the game, which was finally released last week.

"Psychonauts" is an incredibly entertaining, wildly creative platformer destined to be a cult hit. In the game, players take control of Raz, short for Razputin, a gifted psychic kid who just snuck into Whispering Rock Summer Camp. The camp is filled with the standard fare: obstacle courses, camp fires, a canoe-filled lake. But Whispering Rock isn't your typical summer camp; it's a training ground for the Psychonauts, a group of psychic secret agents. Children are taught how to hone their psychic powers so they may someday become Psychonauts themselves, but Raz's father does not want Raz practicing his powers. When Raz arrives at camp, the counselors call dad and let them know where he is, which means our hero has only a few days to perfect his powers and discover why some campers are losing their brains.

"Psychonauts" looks like an upbeat version of Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas." Characters are cartoonish and exaggerated. Graphically, the game looks smooth and colorful. Throughout

"Psychonauts," Raz gets psychic powers that allow him to set things on fire, move objects with his mind and blast enemies with psychic energy, to name a few. The psychic powers work well in the game, but they are nothing special. With that said, "Psychonauts" shines in two particular areas: dialogue and level design.

Schafer wrote some genuinely funny dialogue for "Psychonauts." There are moments in the game when a player can choose to sit and listen while two characters talk to each other. The voice acting is superb, and each character has a distinct voice.

The levels in "Psychonauts" are unique. Most other platformers find players running through worlds with generic themes (Fire, Ice, City, etc.), but the levels in "Psychonauts" are inside characters' minds. Coach Oleander's level is filled with plants sprouting leaves of ammunition, trenches, barbed wire and other artifacts of his military past. Sasha Nein is a scientific Psychonaut; his level is a simple cube adorned with drab geometric art. Boyd Cooper, a conspiracy theorist, has a mind filled with men in dark trench coats doing roadwork in a psychedelic, 1950s-styled neighborhood.

Inside the minds, Raz finds loads of special challenges and visual puns. Censors, who are impish looking bureaucrats, try to get Raz out of the mind he is exploring by hitting him with stamps. Inner Demons blow up in Raz's face if they are not dealt with. Raz will bump into "emotional baggage," anthropomorphic purses, steamer trunks and briefcases that cry until they are reunited with their baggage tags.

"Psychonauts" is a great platformer with classic puzzle-solving elements, amazing level design, fun dialogue and decent gameplay.

Career Fair

Spring 2005

TODAY!



10am - 3pm • EMU Ballroom



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Career Center
220 Hendricks Hall • 346-3235 • <http://career.uoregon.edu>

New Spring Pieces

• flower pots • vases
• candle holders • martini glasses

Brush Fire
www.brush-fire.com

954 Pearl St. | 485-7161 | 10-9 M-Sat. | 10-8 Sun.

Spend an afternoon with us & you will have a piece you are proud to show your friends.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS PAPER.