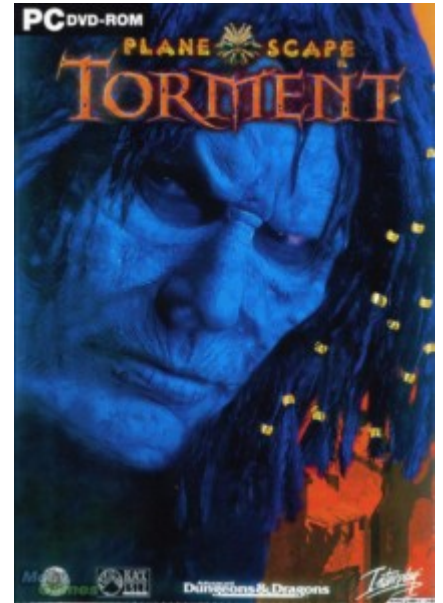


Planescape: Torment

2015/04/19

Planescape: Torment is a story-driven role-playing game that is considered by many, myself included, the best RPG ever made. In this (short) article I'll do a highlight of what the game is about and why it's so good. The game was made by Black Isle Studios back in 1999 and can be modded to still make it look decent. In terms of game play it's a classic RPG in which you control up to six characters, do turn based combat, gather items, do quests, talk to characters, etcetera. The main distinguishing feature is the amount of dialogue in the game. If you don't like to read a lot, you probably won't enjoy this game. Other distinguishing features are the dark setting, unique characters and the main character. This won't be a detailed review as I last played the game over a decade ago. Instead I'll list some of the things which I still remember even now (and yes, there will be minor spoilers). If I ever end up replaying it I'll probably update this to a full review.

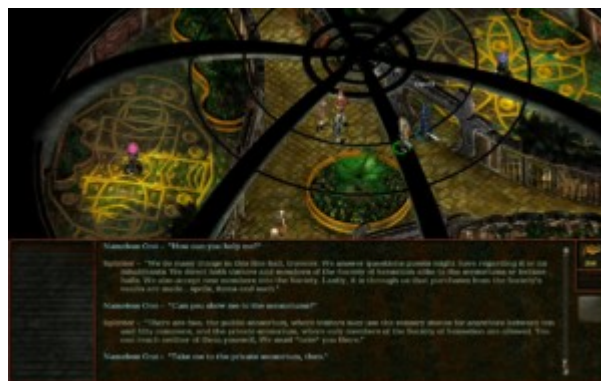


The main character

You play as 'The Nameless One', an immortal, who revives any time he dies, but forgets everything that happened in his previous life / lives. The whole game is about trying to find out who you were originally and how you came to be as you are (and figuring out what to do next). This makes for some very interesting situations where you meet people who met you in a previous life and you come across things that were left by a previous self (including real body parts). It's also woven throughout the game mechanics as you can for instance read tattoo's on your own body to remember important things and add new tattoo's to gain benefit's. And most in-game deaths are handled by the player simply respawning in the starting area. The game is not like most rpg's about saving the world, but much more about discovering who you are and figuring out fundamental questions about yourself (like: 'what can change the nature of a man?'). I really like games like this which aren't black and white but offer all kinds of grey.

The story

The game is set in a multiverse (various planes of existence) which makes for a very interesting world where you have no idea where you'll be going next (pretty much everything is alien). Even more impressive is that there are many deep psychological concepts that are either explicitly told to you or implicitly experienced during the game. One moment for instance which had me spinning was when I looked into a 'sensory' stone and was experiencing an interaction between a previous self and my wife from the first life all from the viewpoint of my wife. Another concept is that (if I remember it correctly) gods and goddesses only exist if they still have people who belief in them, so there's competition going on between deities. And these are just two example's. Note: You are also free to choose how you want to 'live' this new life, alignment is dynamic based on the choices you make.



The other characters

There are a number of characters that can join you on your quest and those characters are really developed. One moment I remember fondly is when I came to a new area and spent over an hour just talking to one of my characters. I ended up leveling 3 or 4 times during that extensive conversation. That kind of depth in dialogue is incredible and I haven't seen that since. Aside from that the characters are very interesting and often have multiple layers you will discover further in the game (like the talking skull). Even the non player characters are often interesting in their own right and can have extensive conversation trees. And as the game is set in a pretty weird universe, you'll generally be talking about pretty interesting things.

The gameplay

This is actually the part of the game I recall the least of. If I remember correctly the inventory system, items, leveling, party system and such was good enough to be interesting. I don't actually recall much of the combat or combat mechanics although most reviews seem to agree this is one of



the weak points of the game. They were definitely forgettable compared to the rest of the game (you can even avoid most combat). Another thing which was definitely disappointing when I played it is that the depth of the game drops off near the end of the game. The last few areas are relatively sparse and it really feels like the latter part was much more rushed than the first part. Which is not that surprising considering the amount of content in the first part of the game.

Conclusion

If you enjoy immersive, dialogue heavy RPG's, this is a must play. Especially if you can appreciate the non-standard setting / story and characters. Honestly, this is one of the very few games that defined the rest of my gaming experience (even just reading small snippets years later brings some of that back). And for those wanting more information: Here's one more in-depth reviews for those who enjoy reading those. And here's a full play through (a mostly blind play through, with commentary, reading aloud and recent mod's):