



FORMER id Software studio director Tim Willits is now the chief creative officer of World War Z developer Saber Interactive.

quitting id Software last month — broke the news on his Twitter feed, saying: "I will be leading the creative vision of our five studios around the world."



WALMART, which owns Asda in the UK, has ordered stores to take down "signing and displays referencing violence" which includes advertising for games. It follows comments by President Donald Trump on gaming being a factor in US mass shootings.

follows comments by President Donald Trump on gaming being a factor in US mass shootings. Walmart is not gone as far as making sure firearms aren't on display.

Sea quest will be a lone star



WE all love a blockbuster, but a game that makes you think long after the credits roll is a real piece of art. Sea Of Solitude, by Berlin-based Jo-Mei, is just that.

It is from the indie side of EA, is part of their Originals range and follows in the footsteps of Unravel and A Way Out.

It is a very personal tale that touches on a number of real emotional issues you could face in your day-to-day life — we're talking depression, loss and anxiety as well as the fear of being alone.

Kay is a teen who wakes up in a dream-like world ruled by monsters. She has no idea where she is or where she is going. Till you come across a girl who is very much a light in the dark. She sets you on a voyage of discovery as she reveals a sunken city.

You need to scour it for answers as well as taking the opportunity to grow as a person.

You'll come across a number of monsters along the way as well as being hounded by one that is always chasing you.

Each creature is an embodiment of one of Kay's loved ones — from her brother to her parents — and each has a tale.

Kay has to learn from each story if she wants to save them as well as herself.

It's fair to say that this can be heavy-duty stuff. Sometimes the developers get it wrong and it seems a little ham-fisted, but they still deserve praise for trying to tackle mental illness in a game. That alone makes this

Sea of Solitude

Xbox One, PS4 and PC £19.99

A journey worth taking. The gameplay is split into two sides. One is exploring the city in your boat and on foot to find extra details on Kay's life through a number of collectables.

The second sees you helping the monsters which will open up the road ahead by removing darkness.

This is a platformer at heart, with a bit of light combat that is the weakest aspect of the game.

You can never get too lost — you can always fire off a flare that will guide you to your next destination.

Graphically, there is a real charm about it and excited by the idea. But the darkness and the storms are very foreboding.

The sound is also handled really well — all the characters are well voiced even if the monsters are a bit dubious at times.

That said, there is a reason for this which you will discover as you play.

The soundtrack sets the scene very well and follows your actions. There is a real melancholy to the tone.

Sea Of Solitude tells a strong tale that will have an impact on you.

Jo-Mei will have been brave enough to tackle real issues and provoke answers.

It may not be the longest game in the world but it is well worth an evening or weekend of your time.

★★★★ STUART CULLEN



MONKEY BUSINESS

AFTER the challenge of a game like Sea Of Solitude, above, sometimes you just want to let off steam.

Redeemer: Enhanced Edition lets you run around smashing things and beating up the bad guys.

Developed by Russian firm Sobaka Studio this is a top down brawler-comeshooter where the story very much takes a back seat to the action.

You battle through 16 levels looking for revenge. That's it. Story spoiler alert over. OK, that may be a bit harsh but it never gets better than wafer thin.

You fill the sandals of one-man army, Vasily. He has given up his past as a special ops soldier to be a monk and is in search of a peaceful life.

Well, he is until the bad guys come to the door and massacre all the monks as they hunt for him. From that point, you will never stop swinging punches and reloading until you've had payback.

With such a light tale it's up to the gameplay to save the day and it almost manages it.

You have a number of ways to dispatch the enemies — from bare fists to using the environment to give you an upper hand.

You also have an unlock tree which is a bit basic but gives you combat options especially in the later levels.

Redeemer: Enhanced Edition

Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £24.99

You can get powerful electric punches or incendiary rounds for SMGs as well as the other weapons in the health arsenal. If that wasn't enough, there are a number of teeth-gritting finishers.

That's pretty much your lot. There are a few boss battles, but things never really change for better or worse.

A horde mode where you can attack with a friend in local co-op splices things up but there is no online side.

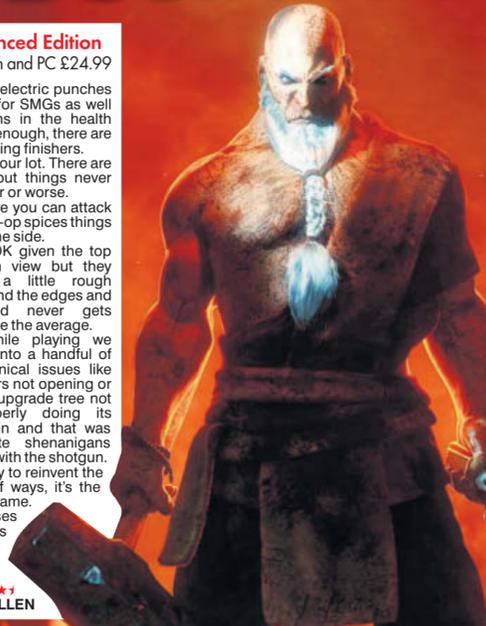
The graphics are OK given the top down view but they are a little rough around the edges and sound never gets above the average.

While playing we ran into a handful of technical issues like doors not opening or the upgrade tree not properly doing its stuff. That was a pain and that was before the framerate shenanigans when you go full auto with the shotgun.

Look, this doesn't try to reinvent the wheel and, in a lot of ways, it's the ultimate bubble gum game.

It's fun but soon loses its flavour. But then it is a budget-priced game and that is a plus point.

★★★ STUART CULLEN



YouTube got our motors running

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

DEVELOPER Filip Hautekeets has revealed they were offered the chance to create the official European Truck Championship game — but they had never even seen a race.

So the team scoured YouTube and went to some events before becoming big fans.

Neopica MD Filip told STUART CULLEN: "After seeing a few truck racing clips on YouTube we were convinced about it and excited by the idea."

"While nobody in the team had attended any truck racing events before, it was very cool to go to some live races for research. It was a great experience and I would recommend everyone to give it a try — the atmosphere is superb and what surprised me most is the accessibility to the teams and drivers."

"Anyone can basically just walk in the paddock and have a chat with any member of the team."

Filip, right, admits the truck racing scene has been the forgotten arm of racing.

He added: "It was probably ignored because it is a niche market and most people associate racing primarily with sports cars. The European Truck Racing Championship has a great format and we anticipate it getting much more traction in the near future."

"We hope the game helps to introduce the genre to racing fans all around Europe. The UK is home to some great drivers, and they can use all the support they can get when competing internationally."

The game has the licence for all teams and drivers and Filip was happy to take advantage of the access.

He said: "We had numerous sessions where we were able to take photos, video or audio reference materials, even between the races, as we endeavoured to recreate the trucks as faithfully as possible."

"The level of co-operation from the organisation and teams was excellent. At the start of the

project we had many interviews with the drivers and their mechanics to identify and pin down all the peculiarities of truck racing. It must not always have been easy for them, but they were always patient."

But the input didn't stop there — the team also got help from a two-time champion in Hungarian Norbert Kiss.

Filip said: "Norbert spent hours setting up and tuning the configuration of the truck physics."

"There is a plethora of values that can be modified in the engine and he did his best to recreate the handling of a race truck as close to reality as possible."

"We think he did a great job — thank you Norbi! — and the result is very noticeable in-game. Jamie Anderson also assisted with the layout of the track racing lines as they are rather different from regular car racing lines."

"With the help of Norbert Kiss we tried to approximate what truck racing physics feel like in real life. Hence the truck racing leans more towards simulation. We kept cooling relatively basic so those aspects learn more towards arcade."

"Overall, we wanted to make the game accessible to a wide range of players and the design choices were made accordingly."

But when it comes to the tracks, Filip feels there is a real variety in the game.

He says: "The European tracks are the official tracks from the European Truck Racing Championship with the exception of Hungaroring, which unfortunately we have been unable to license. For the World Championship we tried to include a nice variety of interesting tracks from all around the world."

"For some circuits we worked with laser-scanned data, for others we recreated the location with photo and video material."



TRUCK FEST'S IN TOP GEAR

PICK your favourite racing game and there is a fair chance that truck racing won't be in pole position.

Most will name F1, Moto GP or WRC Rally, but the new kid on the block has some serious pace.

FIA European Truck Racing Championship may be a mouthful but it's the first truck racing game in years and it is a winner.

We know the truck SIM market is huge on PC but that's all about long-haul journeys.

And we know Forza has had a truck or two across the series, but this is the full-fat fully licenced premier truck racing series.

Developed by N-Racing the game looks to shine a light on a lesser-known motor sport and to give horsepower fans a real rush by getting behind the wheel of these behemoths of the racing world.

The game is split into two series — the ETRC and the World series. For the most part they are the same. There are just some tweaks to the power of the trucks and the

FIA European Truck Racing Championship

Xbox One, PS4, Switch & PC £39.99

licence means you get all the teams and drivers.

That could also be your first problem because they are all race-suited and booted with helmets on, so casual gamers may struggle to pick a star — you'll more than likely go on which one has the nearest suit.

More familiar are the tracks — 14 locations from Laguna Seca, Nurburgring and Fuji Speedway to Autodrom Most in the Czech Republic and Winton Motor Raceway in Australia.

Then we have the stars of the show — the trucks. There are an eye-watering 45 rigs to pick from including Volvo, Mercedes, Freightliner and Western Star to name a few.

This is very much on the SIM side of things and when you're going over 100mph in a five-

tonne truck into the first corner, be prepared for a shock because it's going big, heavy and very tail happy.

Unlike most other racers the brakes are key to victory so you must look after them. That is almost a game within a game as there is an extra gauge on your HUD which shows when they are over-heating and you need to spray water on them to cool them. That takes a little time to get your head around.

You have a limited amount of water and cooling them in a braking zone and knowing when to push is key to you getting on the podium.

The other thing that will shock you is the ride height. You feel like you're in a high chair when you are in cab view — and that is the way to play this game.

There is no rear mirror.

Instead you have a camera showing you what's happening on a screen on your dash.

The trucks look and sound great, but they seem a bit flat when they hit the crash barriers. It is smart when it rains and we loved that meaty grunt of the engines.

On the downside it's safe to say this isn't going to be everyone's cup of tea. The career mode does become a bit of a grind and, bizarrely, the handling of the truck goes all over the shop when you change the camera view and that takes a bit of time to dial into.

This is an interesting addition to the racing genre. There will be a core fan base who will love the idea of their favourites making it into a game.

The mechanics of the game are really good and it is clear that the dev team researched the series and know their stuff.

If you're looking for a racer that is slightly different then get trucking. But this could be a Marmite title.

★★★★ STUART CULLEN



CELTIC expanded their eSports efforts by signing up a team for the Call Of Duty World League Finals in LA — but their hopes of a slice of the £1.6million prize pot were short-lived. The move had made Celtic the first British club to sign an

eSports team for a major event outside of the FIFA scene. But Sean "Seany" O'Connor, Sheo "wiker" Sweeney, Ben "Bance" Bance, Byron "Nastie" Plumridge and Sam "Chain" Dineley got a rude awakening, falling at the first hurdle.

11 BIT Studios has revealed that city-building sim Frostpunk will be delayed from its summer slot to October 11 for the Xbox One. The PS4 version will be out a week later — on October 18.

THERE is a new kid on the SIM block — with PC Building Simulator. It was released this week and has sold over 750,000 copies on PC already. It gives gamers the power to build their own PCs in the virtual world. The game features more than 1,000 real-

world parts from manufacturers such as AMD, NVIDIA and Razer and has a Free Build mode where you can create your perfect PC. There is also a story mode where you take over your uncle's shop and have to build upgrades and carry out repair jobs to keep the lights on. Geek nirvana.

LA Noire is set to get a PSVR upgrade. The PEGI ratings board have listed LA Noire: The VR Case Files on PS4. It seems to be a version of the game that had been PC exclusive in 2017.

KYLE "Bugha" Giersdorf's joy at bagging \$3million as Solo Champion Fortnite's World Cup was short-lived. The 16-year-old has been "swatted" during a livestream. The sting, which sees pranksters send emergency services to a streamer's address through false threats like a murder or hostage situation, ended with armed cops at his door. Fortunately, one officer recognised him before it got messy.

THE long-awaited next instalment in the Need For Speed series has broken cover — Heat looks to blend the signature street racing thrills with its cops-and-robbers roots. The Ghost Games creation promises a high level of customisation, authentic urban car culture and fun ride. It's set in Palm City

— a new open world where street racers are boosting their reputations. By day you compete in the Speedhunters Showdown to earn bank to customise and upgrade your cars. And, at night, you can risk it all in underground races where a rogue police task force is ready to shut you down and swipe all your earnings.

Scotland's next global superstar? wouldn't bet against it. MORE: facebook.com/musicbystirling ● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays 2-4pm. amazingradio.com jimgellatly.com



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

STIRLING

WHERE: Los Angeles. FOR FANS OF: Avicii, Years & Years, Ed Sheeran.

JIM SAYS: Though he's based in LA for a few years, Stirling's roots are very much in Scotland.

His artist name is the giveaway, a nod to the city where he was born.

Back home for a visit he said: "I'm all about love for my home town. My family has been in Stirling for over 300 years and it was a way of me staying close to that, almost like carrying my family's banner in the USA."

People in the States mostly think it's just a cool name, something unusual and artsy. That changes when I tell them the history, like there's a new level of understanding."

The first Stirling single continued that thread. He explained: "I decided to release Let You Down first because I wrote it for my parents, a way to let them know that even though I'm chasing this crazy, elusive dream, I'd make them proud no matter how long it takes me."

An acoustic driven pop gem, it was a great introduction. Stirling has surpassed it with his second single All My Friends Have Got This Figured Out. Another slice of pop heaven, it has future classic written all over it.

Real name Robert Gillies, the singer-songwriter first moved to the States just over 10 years ago to study at the renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston.

While there he wrote and performed with fellow student and future million-seller Charlie Puth, even appearing on the Ellen DeGeneres Show.

He said: "I've been playing music since I could walk. Both of my parents are musicians. My mum played with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow and I spent a load of time hanging around studios, musicians and producers."

He was 17 when he first picked up a guitar. He added: "I wrote a few songs here and there, but it wasn't until a pretty huge break-up that the songs just started coming out."

Although he's released a couple of albums under his own name as an acoustic singer-songwriter, the Stirling project comes off the back of a massive co-write. The Machine Gun Kelly, X Ambassadors and Bebe Rexha track Home earned him a gold disc. The song featured on the soundtrack of the Netflix movie Bright, starring Will Smith.

He said: "That took it to the next level. Being able to sustain myself and my family through music as well, that's honestly the biggest thing for me. I could be touring arenas, opening for Ed Sheeran, but that right there is the highlight I'm building on."

It's the perfect foundation as Stirling starts to make an impact in his own right. He added: "From my first single to my second I can hear a huge leap in my abilities as a writer and that comes from constantly challenging myself."

Scotland's next global superstar? wouldn't bet against it.

MORE: facebook.com/musicbystirling ● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com jimgellatly.com

Watch a video of Kerri at thescottishsun.co.uk