

# Production Management

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## Amazon's New World

Amazon's video game venture started in 2016, with the announcement of Breakaway, New World and Crucible at TwitchCon. Out of the three games New World has become Amazon's first successful game release, with a great reception from the gaming community and a record-breaking player count. Amazon's blockbuster MMO is set in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, where players can come together to battle, explore, and colonize fictional land. New World combines the best features of an MMO and AAA game. The gameplay consists of a long series of challenging quests, fighting tough enemies to max out your player level, and collecting the best items for your character. The AAA visuals make the experience even more immersive and engaging. The expectations were always high when it came to New World, mainly due to Amazon's high profile and budget capability. It is safe to say that the production of New World has been well funded by Amazon, spending nearly \$500 million a year on their video game division. Despite Amazon's deep pockets the release date of the game had been delayed twice during the production process, once in May 2020 and again in August 2021. The game was ultimately released on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2021.

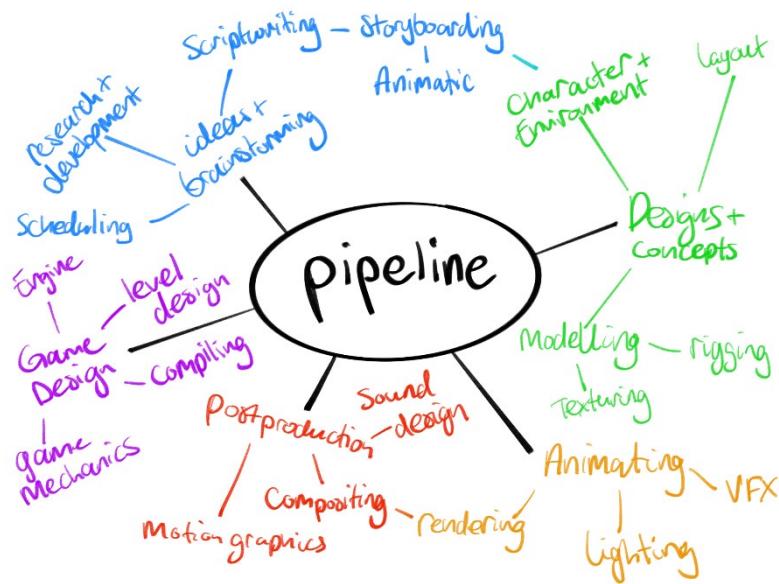
### Development

#### Production

New world was developed by Amazon Games Orange County with the help of Relentless Studios, using the Amazon Lumberyard engine, published by Amazon Games and is available to buy on Steam as well as Amazon. When Amazon licensed the Lumberyard software from Crytek they heavily built it up, an article from 'PCGAMER' suggests that Amazon's decision to make the engine completely free and mod-friendly could backfire; "Lumberyard could cause cataclysmic upset in the engine business, topping the deals offered by both Unity and Unreal Engine." The redeeming factor to this decision is the potential competitive impact this could have on the game engine environment, bringing attention as well as popularity to the engine.

#### Pipeline

The production team that worked on New World is made up of thousands of members which are all credited on the New World official credits page, that can be found [here](#), the list ranges from the Amazon Game Studios VP to the countless number of voice actors. If the whole team was credited in this report there would be over 4000 names on that list.

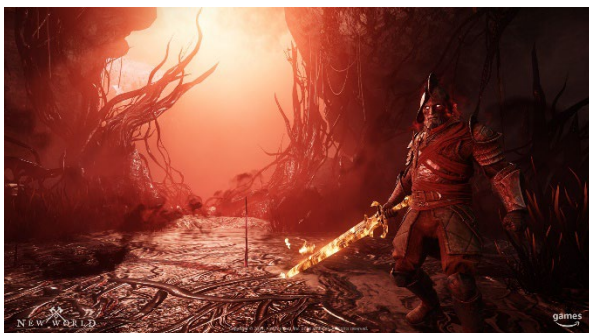


The production was divided into main teams consisting of studio and team leadership, game design, engineering, art, audio, production and product management, quality assurance, and voice actors. Those core groups can be broken down into smaller focus groups, for example the art team consists of the art directors, animation, character art, concept art, environment art, visual fx, technical art, outsourcing, and additional art. The Art Director Charles Bradbury is best known for his work on Bioshock Infinite prior to his work on New World. Bradbury worked on a selection of environments and on each of the three DLC's, this involved the composition through set dressing, lighting, and final polish. Bradbury's role as Art Director for New World was a step up, but his experience and expertise helped



Bradbury, C 2021, New World – Intro, Artstation

shape New World into a visually stunning video game. While Bradbury's involvement focused on the visual looks of the game and polishing, the Associate Art Director Sojin Hwang developed the concept and character art, which provided a nice balance and covered all of the key areas of the Art Direction.



Bradbury, C 2021, New World – Intro, Artstation



Hwang, S 2021, New World - Empress Boss, Artstation

## Budget

New World's production cost is somewhat of a mystery, even though Amazon haven't confirmed the budget they had spent on New World, there is information that Amazon is spending "nearly \$500 million a year operating the video game division, two people familiar with the budget say." – Bloomberg Article. This information provides a rough estimate of how much Amazon could have spent on New World so far, being conservative, if New World had one tenth of the budget that would be \$50 million a year, considering it took around 5 years to develop you could speculate it cost somewhere in the region of \$250 million. But until there is confirmation from Amazon that is just a calculated guess, it is also worth noting that the game is still being updated and developed meaning there is more money being invested on top of that figure.

According to a Bloomberg article by Jason Schreier and Priya Anand, during the early development of the game the Twitch chief, Emmett Shear "asked Twitch to help build a digital game store," this idea would have allowed Amazon to avoid paying a 30% sales commission to Steam, but the idea was shot down as "Twitch employees weren't thrilled because Amazon didn't have any big games to attract shoppers." The employees raised a valid point, since Steam is the most popular storefront for PC games, while others have tried to compete like Epic Games and EA's Origin, none have come close to rival Steam in of terms user activity.

## Breakdown

New World - Official Cinematic Reveal Trailer | The Game Awards 2019



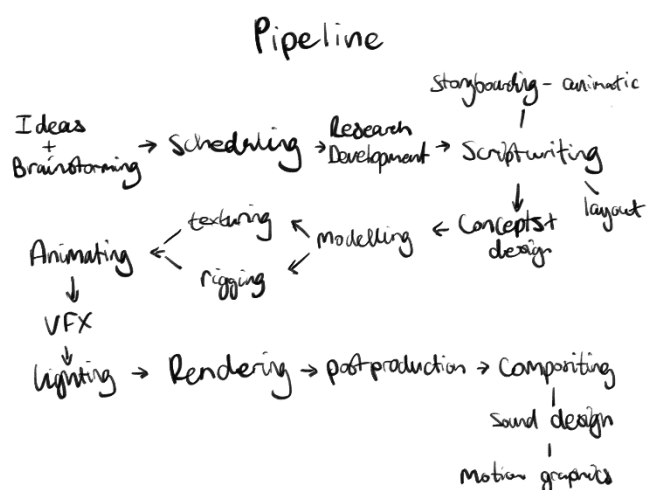
*New World - Official Cinematic Reveal Trailer | The Game Awards 2019, GameSpot Trailers, YouTube*

New World has unveiled its Official Cinematic Reveal Trailer at The Game Awards 2019, running at almost two minutes in length, the trailer showcases the world of Aeternum with stunning visuals and a narrated synopsis.

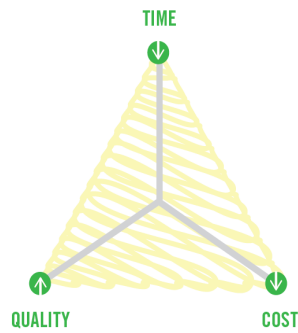
The trailer has a natural flow and seamless camera transitions that complement the motion of the trailer. The shot that stands out the most occurs between 0:31-0:53, with the withering of the monolith that symbolises the narrative of the trailer and the withering caused by the corruption of Aeternum. The 22 second shot takes place over many decades if not centuries, the passage of time is conveyed by the degradation of the monolith. The monolith is subject to corrosion and wear from weather and nature damage which grows over time, with trees growing through it ripping it apart, followed by a dark energy taking over, that has more of a drastic effect but reflects that of nature damage. The corruption that has manifested within the monolith has the same terrifying impact on the explorers that interact with it, which is shown on the Roman warrior looking character.



Breakdown of Trailer



This shot on its own required a large production team, starting with the concept artists, character artists, storyboards, script, and animatic. Followed by 3D artists, character models, environment models, rigging, texturing, animation, visual effects, lighting, rendering, audio design, voice overs. And finally, the compositing, quality checks, promoting and more.



Without a proper team and a lot of money this trailer would not be produced. Usually, a producer would use the production triangle, to illustrate the basic types of choices a producer must make when organizing a project, consisting of good quality, fast turnover, and cheap cost, and focusing on two of the options. In this case with the trailer, it's safe to say the quality was there and it came out relatively fast, it wouldn't be foolish to assume it did cost a substantial amount of money. "Although it is nearly impossible to have

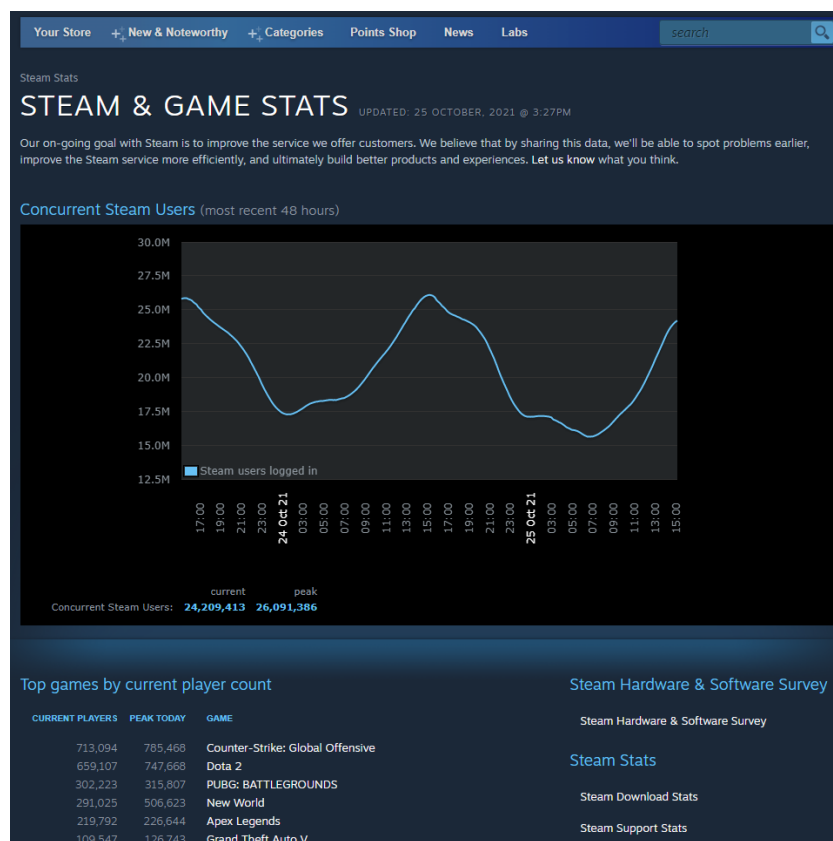
all three attributes in the production triangle, the right people and the right technology can help enhance the end result." – Adam Mittner.

The time spent on the production of the trailer could have been anywhere between 4-12 weeks, based on Amazon's large and capable team and budget, this Gantt chart illustrates how the production of the trailer could have turned out within a reasonable 7-week window.

|                         | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Week 5 | Week 6 | Week 7 |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Ideas and Brainstorming |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Scheduling              |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Research Development    |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Scriptwriting           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Storyboarding           |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Animatic                |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Layout                  |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Concept Design          |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Modelling               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Texturing               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Rigging                 |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Animating               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| VFX                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Lighting                |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Rendering               |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Post-production         |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Compositing             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Sound Design            |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Motion Graphics         |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |

## Reception

Since its launch on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2021, New World had taken the gaming world by storm, the game peaked at over “900,000 concurrent players in October” according to Steam’s official game stats, according to a eurogamer article by Wesley Yin-Poole 500,000 concurrent players put New World in “5<sup>th</sup> spot of all-time records” in terms of concurrent players. Despite its record-breaking numbers New World has faced some criticism during launch week about the game being buggy, and especially the long queue times. There would be thousands of players in queue for a single server, this resulted in hours of wait time, and had a negative effect on the game reviews at the time, coming in at a 42% average the day after its release. Amazon would later solve the issue and eliminate queue times, since then the player reviews have gone up to 71% positive on steam, with a total of 156,140 reviews. Google users review has the game at 74%, but the game has been faced with some harsher reviews from the critics, a 60% rating from PC Gamer “New World's attempt to tick all the boxes has left it feeling scattershot and underbaked.” Metacritic have given New World a respectable rating of 70%. Finally, IGN have rated the game a 6/10, stating that New World “desperately needs far, far more story content and gameplay variety to fill the gaps in its massive and visually gorgeous yet otherwise unremarkable world.” Looking at the user and critic ratings you could say that New World has had a successful launch with good-to-great ratings in general, keeping in mind that the game will be further developed and updated, it has more potential for further success and even better reviews.



## Sales

Another way to quantify the success of a video game is by looking at the sales, while New World has no official information regarding sales, 'steamspy' estimates that there are between "20,000,000 – 50,000,000" owners of the game. To put that into context the most sold video game apart from Tetris is Minecraft, selling over "200 million" copies (IGN). If the 'steamspy' estimate is remotely close to the actual sales of New World, this would put New World as a contender to become the most sold video game in the future, considering that Minecraft has released in 2009, and has been released on almost every imaginable gaming platform, consisting of PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Nintendo Wii U, Nintendo Wii, Nintendo 3DS, PlayStation Vita and PC. This information could suggest that the 'steamspy' estimate could be inflated, but assuming that New World has sold 35 million copies (average from the estimate), that would put it in IGN's "Top 10 Best-Selling Video Games of All Time" list, coming in at 10<sup>th</sup>, replacing Mario Kart 8 Deluxe, at 33.41 million. Another aspect to consider is the profit from the game, which is the main reasons why big companies make these games, although in Amazon's case, you could argue that exposure is as important as making a profit. If we take the supposed 35 million sales and multiply it by the games base cost of \$40, we get an astonishing total of \$1.4 billion. That number doesn't include the deluxe edition sales, DLC's or skins. Nor does it include the 30% steam cut and taxes. If Amazon has spent the supposed \$250 million on the production of New World, then you can class the estimated sales as a big success.

## Conclusion

While it's difficult to quantify New World's success without official data, it's reasonable to assume that the game was a success for Amazon, establishing their name in the gaming scene and building a platform for future gaming projects which was Amazon's main objective. The positive reviews and good reception of the game further amplifies the good job Amazon has done, this comes down to their recruitment of a large and capable team of professionals that worked on the game, as well as their serious investment into their gaming division. Ultimately, the production and development of the game had some hiccups with the release being delayed twice, an average launch with the long server queues and initially mixed feedback. But since then, the game has improved and got itself back on track, regaining mostly positive reviews, and keeping a high player count two months in.

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