

Bungie Halloween Tour
Summery by Sean (kornman00)

Enter Sandman

So, we were crashing at Nitrosoxide's place (he lives within a 5 minute walk from the Kirkland based studios. Thats including time recovering from getting hit by the heavy traffic plaguing the area you have to walk in). Our tour was set to take place at 3:30pm on the October day of the 31st in the year of our Lord, Joesph Staten, 2007. So we hop in his car and get there at about 3:25pm and are greeted by Jerome (who is actually the Incredible Hulk in disguise by the way, Bungie didn't ALWAYS want their security guard to scare off the media, so they asked him to go incognito for now. Don't piss him off).

There, we were made to sign a NDA in order to pass through the glass doors and into Bungie Studios LLC. Its because of that NDA that I could not take pictures or record with my video camera the events that happened after passing through those doors. Nor can I go into any detail of some of the things I saw (which was a uber-lot). But I did record the contents of the waiting room area, we so happily waited in for Davina, the Bungie Princess, to come and greet us. Bada-bing baby.

Through the Looking-Glass

Tour Breakdown

Me: Kornman00 (Sean)

My accomplices: "Nitrosoxide2k" (Chris) & "Cortana" (Kristen)

Other Tour-ies: Scott & Chris | Matthew (whose friend couldn't make it). These guys had won tours via other ways. I had the pleasure of donating \$2700 to "[Hollywood-Arts](#)" to get mine (and a [MC statue](#))...

So at about 3:30pm PST, Davina came out and greeted us all and proceeded to take us through the blurred glass doors that hid the constantly spewing of magic coming from people's finger tips. There, we walked toward the pit of death where some of you may remember Frankie coming back to life from under many pillows of comfort in his Bungie Tour video (recorded by Sketch). There, we were greeted by Jay Weinland, who, by the way, used a queen sized inflatable mattress in his office during the crunch of a very popular game, I think its called Halo 3.

Order from Disorder (its a scientific rarity!)

Sound: ([Jay Weinland](#) \ [Marty the Elder](#)) (~25 minutes)

Jay escorted us most of the way, showing the recording studio. This encompasses the actual booth where the actors record their lines, and even some of their fooley sounds. The booth is actually modular, and was taken from the old Millennium studios and installed in the new Kirkland Way studios. We even got to see the pan that one of the guys beat up with a battle axe (shown in one of the

documentaries along with the same guy beating the crap out of a devkit). We then went into the “quiet” room, which has only one right angle to block any standing waves. It is also sound proof of course. I'm not sure if this room was ever actually shown in any of the documentaries, so I can't give a point-of-reference for it. The animators referencing area is on the floor above though, so you may hear bentllama crashing down to the floor if hes recording a death animation with himself :P.

Connecting the quiet room and Ivory Tower is a machine room with lots of cords for tv screen connections and lights flickering for other junk.

The Ivory Tower hasn't changed much from when Frankie broke into it and impersonated Marty. Kristen was able to get some of Marty's M&M stash too. Thursdays are fresh clothes day during crunch by the way, at least for Jay :P! We also saw the soundboard's “vegas lights” mode where all the knobs and lights dance with life.

AI: ([Max](#)) (~20 minutes)

Talked about how the AI work with a quite a few interesting demos demonstrating their brilliance. Briefed on the upgrades he did from Halo 2 to 3 (and beyond) and some problems they had in development.

Max is actually really tall, I was expecting a medium height guy to be honest. I think thats all I can really go into any detail about.

Campaign: (Chris Opdahl \ [Paul Bertone](#)) (~30 minutes)*

Chris went into a lot of detail with the SP mission design (well, duh, its his job!). He used the encounter in outskirts where you first see the drones flying out of the energy-shielded tunnel. Explained how the designers mark up the environment for the AI to more intelligently move and fight in it. Showed how the scripts judge how AI squads are spawned and how things like game difficulty can affect the script's evaluation result.

Briefed about the evolution of mission encounters in the campaign which was a totally awesome experience. The particular encounter in outskirts was meant to be “acted” out differently early on, instead of how it is now with the chopper crashing into the warthog. Not meaning they cut something from the story, but just the battle field art was changed around.

He also explained things like how the environment is sexed up can make the players go in the total opposite direction than where they are suppose to go to continue the mission. If you read in the usability testing labs interview thing (article was posted somewhere on [HBO](#)), they go into detail about how in S117, they had to basically make the mission's world geometry flow downward to move the player forward because it is a forest and the player before the change was easily getting turned around.

Environment Art: ([Sam Jones](#) \ Cameron Pinard) (~15 minutes)*

Sam. Is. God. 'Nuff Said. Or rather, thats all I can say, sorry. I don't feel like being killed by flaming ninjas tonight.

That would make Cunbelin Jesus by the way. Saw some stuff that may or may not be coming out. I hope it is, was looking totally rad. Nitro pointed out some errors of his in the geometry, which he quickly “corrected” with the flip of the script prompt. If you ever used the Halo 2 Vista Sapien tool, you should probably know what I'm talking about. I think I noticed a Virtual Boy on his desk too...

No, I'm **not** hinting at Virtual Halo Boy being in development :|

Multiplayer Sex Designer: ([Lars](#)) (~10 minutes)

Showed what the maps looked like to him (if you have ever used Sapien, you may be looking through the same “eyes” as him! Well, maybe...). Lars works closely with the Environment Artists to get the map flowing smoothly (really, he sits right next to the guys). Without doing so, we wouldn't have the same fragtacular maps we have today. Talked about the infection playlists that were playing that day (Halloween) in matchmaking, and even showed us a map variant he made with The Pit. Forget the exact name he called it, but it was pretty rockin'. Also briefed about some of the ease and quickness they have now with updating matchmaking to make sure all us Halo 3 players are kicking ass the right way (or the “wrong” way to some of you).

Time to kick-ass and chew bubble gum, and I was all out of gum: (~45 minutes)

We finally got escorted into the game test lab, where of course Luke and Frankie were messing arou-, oh *cough* I mean WORKING. Lucky bastards.

Network game was hosted by “signmyhelmet”, can't remember which Bungie oompa that was though. Took a while for everyone to trickle in from reading an email Lars sent out ordering people to fill in the empty seats, but eventually we all got settled in. I was playing to the left of Jesus, then next to him was Nitro. On the opposite side of the room was Kristen, Frank, Luke, bentllama, Lars I think too was playing and some other people I didn't get a good look at.

I can say that the Bungie guys served me my own heart after blowing it out with every weapon known to...spart-man. We, or they rather, were all enjoying trying to censor themselves. Davina was in the room (the Bungie Princess). I'm not sure if it was because of her, or Kristen. I really didn't care though, I was getting my ass handed to me and needed to express myself. Of course, it doesn't help that the only thing that ever came out of my mouth was some dirty word...

We played only one set of Infection which I did better than the other rounds, which were Team Slayer. I suck at team slayer, because the objective is to kill me, and I don't like the idea of that. Kill Nitro instead =D. Good news was that my name ingame was “dur” plus some numbers specifying the devkit I was playing on, so they don't know it was me who they were owning, haha!

There was, though, a guy which in this test lab, was playing Halo 3 for the first time. I remember Lars briefing him on equipment (so I'm assuming he is a past Halo player) before the matches began and the guy commenting to his friend after the battles were over, that he believes he was in last place each time. So there, I wasn't the caboose!

Afterwards, the oompas walked on out of the prison, err, test labs to go back to their desks. We sadly didn't have any desks to go back to, so we just kinda stood there and stared at Davina until she got scared and gave us some treats to satisfy our hunger for MOAR BUNGIE BLOOD.

OK, so MAYBE she didn't get scared from our stares of madness and MAYBE she had made these bags of treats earlier and not just using her Bungie Princess Wand of Awesomeness right there in front of us. It was Halloween after all.

Some of the generic items in the gift bags were a ["I am Master Chief" T-shirt](#), [Bungie arm band](#), the "Halo 3 Finish The Fight" T-Shirt, "Halo 3 Spinner Key Tag", Halo 3 hacky sack (can't find on the bungie store), and a Halo 3 address book thingy . Also some candy with a cookie that looked like a pumpkin. Finally, a sticker with the MC's face (see image below)



Nitro got a single-cup from the "12 Pack – MC Party Cup" package and a halo 3 pen (to go along with the address book). And I think that's i-O WAIT, AND (can't forget this!) [GREEN PAPER BAG STUFFER STUFF!!!q1](#)

I on the other hand, got the hook up y0! Not only did I get the "generic" stuff, but I also got an unopened regular copy of Halo 3 (which now means I have all three variants) plus a S117 blue beach towel.

Hurry up and wait

Saw some oompas leaving the building to go about their non-Bungie lives (or just to go grab dinner and come back. The dedication! <3 Bungie) ([Carney](#), [Shiek](#), [bentllama](#), and a few others I didn't exactly recognize). Why were we waiting? Kristen didn't follow us closely behind as we exited because

she wanted to give Frankenstein and Lukeworm some gifts (which she also gave one to Marty earlier...who is God too. Fuck, someone call highlander, quick!) And ended up talking for like 25 minutes to him. At least, I THINK they were talking...



That would be the Hulk making sure she doesn't attack Frankie (who is hiding under the webcam) and steal his lolcats. We believe the guy with the Starbucks beverage (I mean, WHAT ELSE could it be?) is one of the coder monkeys behind the Blam Engine. Don't quote me on that though, that's just what I hear. None of the webcam stills my friends, who didn't go to the tour, took caught me while we were all waiting in the lobby before Davina came and took us on the tour. Caught everyone else though (hmpf, some friends they are! Press F5 faster, kthx)

Overall, it was a pretty cool tour, would be an awesome place with some really kickin' people to work at and with. Would have liked to chat a little more with some other engineers besides Max, but I was a guest in the Bungie house, and didn't want to intrude on anything.

Maybe I'll publicly post some other pictures and videos I took while I spent three awesome days in Kirkland, WA as time goes on.

- Sean

PS. From what I understand, the surrounding places around Bungie's HQ don't actually know what the building is for, or who operates inside of it. The place is, after all, void of any Bungie/Halo markings (in fact one of the tour-ies had a bit of a pickle trying to find the place because of that). For all they know, it could be a top secret government project being developed that will be used to make super soldi-oshit, never mind, NDA just kicked me in the leg.