



**THE ART OF
BORDERLANDS 2**



FOREWORD

Being the Art Director on a project like *Borderlands 2* was like stepping onto Pandora for the first time. There was raw beauty to witness, adventures to be had, and the ever-present lure of glorious loot to be obtained around every corner. However, just like exploring an uncharted territory, there was danger at every turn. How do I take an immensely beautiful and unique art style and improve upon it? How do I add snow, grass, and lava to Pandora’s barren wastelands without changing the character of this amazing planet? How do I make 87 bazillion guns even bazilliondier?

Quite simply put: *I didn’t do any of those things.*

Instead I had the pleasure to direct an amazingly talented group of individuals who rose to the challenge and made *Borderlands 2* the incredible experience that it is. I am well and truly honored to work with such a passionate, creative, and hardworking team. These folks are the kind of people who are excited to have a fifteen minute discussion about Bandits wearing sombreros and whether said sombrero-wearing-Bandits should drink Molotov cocktails. They are also the kind of people who routinely asked for the chance to improve an asset even though they knew it would mean a long night of work ahead. Mostly, though, they are the kind of people who love what they do and you can see that passion in every crate you leap over, every monster you explode, and every loot chest you delve into.

Many people might assume that in a game where visuals are at the fore, much of its look must come from the Art Team. While we do have a big impact on the game’s visuals, I think it’s important to understand that the final look of *Borderlands 2* was a teamwide effort that involves every discipline at Gearbox. Story and Design dreams up an incredible world, and Code helps us realize those dreams while Effects, Animation, and Audio all make heads explode along the way. I think however, it’s important to note that the Level Designers are the people who combine the elements created by the other teams into a rich and expressive world for players to explore. We owe much of the final look and feel of Pandora to their tireless effort.

Thanks to everyone at Gearbox for making the development of *Borderlands 2* an amazing adventure and I hope this book will provide some insight to the reader as to how we got it made.

Jeremy “The Chef” Cooke

CONTENTS

Gearbox Team 4

Art Style 6

Characters. 12

Environments 78

Weapons & Gear124

Enemies168

Items & Props.194

Marketing238

Tech Art246

User Interface254

Cinematics264

Credits272

CHARACTERS

Though Pandora might be a harsh, unforgiving wasteland of a planet, it tends to attract a wide spectrum of people. The cast of *Borderlands 2* includes all kinds of colorful characters—from attractive fascists to underage demolitions experts, you'll befriend and/or murder countless people during your adventures in *Borderlands 2*.

But of course, you probably knew all that. But did you know that Sir Hammerlock used to be a fat guy? Or that Handsome Jack nearly looked like Gary Oldman's character from *Book of Eli*? Nearly all of the characters in *Borderlands 2* went through several iterations before the game's release, and the following pages will show you the team's philosophies when designing these characters, as well as a few ideas that ended up on the cutting room floor.

Illustration
[Scott Kester] Right



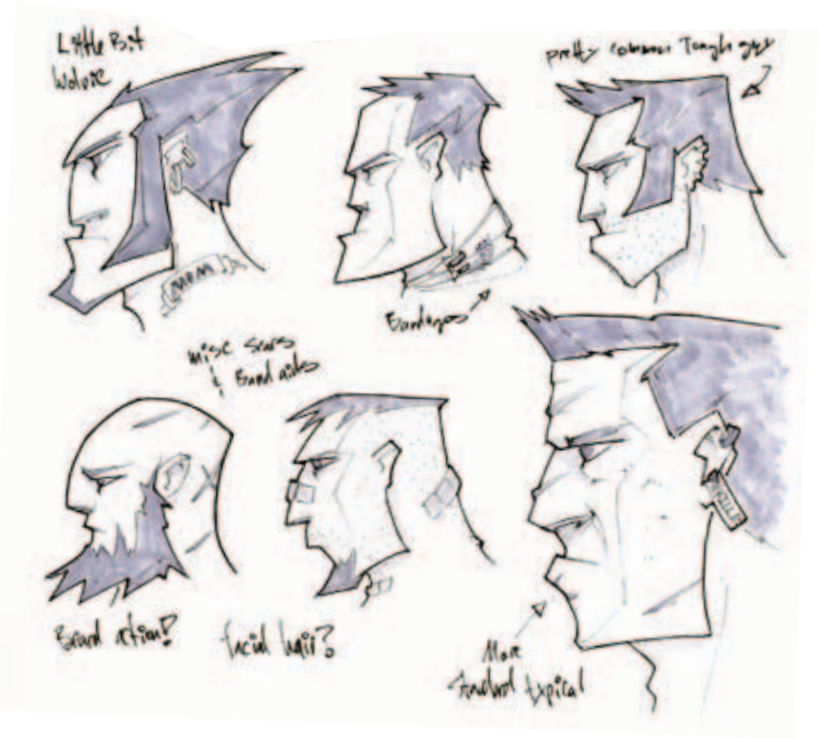
SALVADOR

CONCEPT ART

When it came time to announce *Borderlands 2* to the world, Salvador the Gunzerker was chosen as the game's unofficial mascot—his bandaged, mohawked head was the first thing Gearbox fans saw when the team released *BL2*'s teaser trailer in August of 2011. Why? Perhaps because his action skill was the most easy for fans to wrap their head around in a thirty-second teaser. Or perhaps because his short stature and dark skin made certain that he couldn't be confused with any character from the first game.

Or maybe it's just because he looks so damn cool.

Concept designer Scott Kester strove to create a character who is "the essence of *Borderlands*...a guy who lives and breathes guns." From the numerous bandoliers slung across his body to the bullet tattoos that adorn his right bicep, Sal makes no pretenses about his purpose on Pandora. He's here to shoot stuff, and have a hell of a lot of fun doing it.

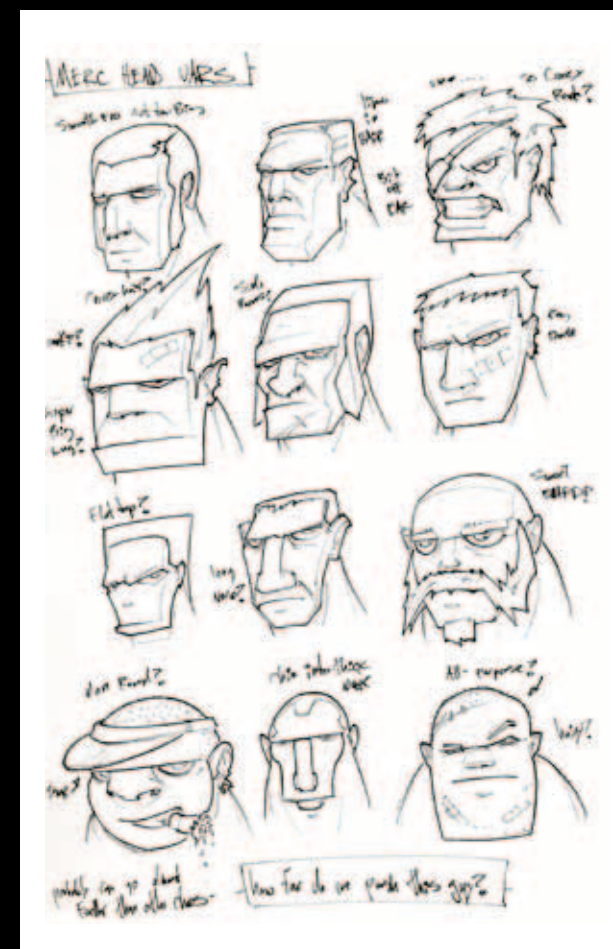


Gunzerker Model [Adam May] Left
Gunzerker Concepts [Scott Kester] Right



Despite his relatively simple gameplay premise, Salvador's class name changed more often than any other playable character. First, his class was called "Merc," until the team decided that was too bland. Then, "Gunslinger." Then, finally, "Gunzerker," to convey his status as an evolution of the Berserker class from the first game.

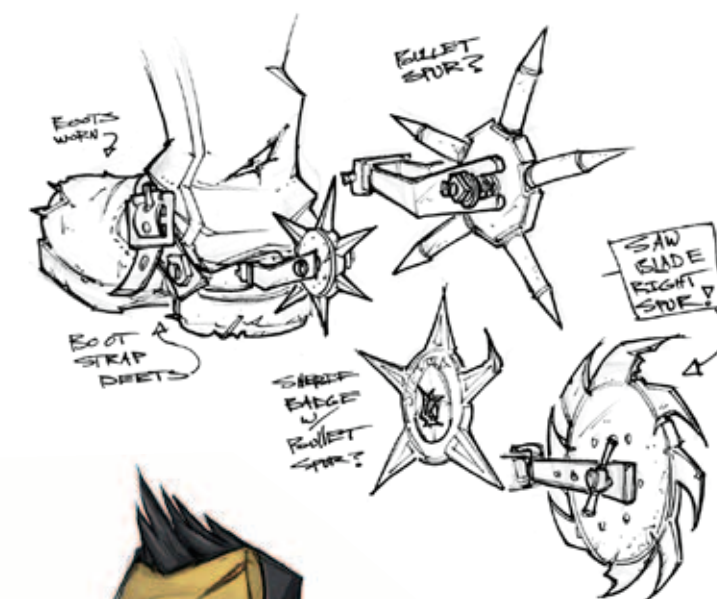
Much of his design also revolved around creating a distinctive silhouette. “In *Borderlands 1* we had Brick, the big tough guy,” Scott Kester says. “This time around, we wanted another big guy, but didn’t want to use a similar body type. So we said, ‘Let’s make a little big guy!’ From the start we really wanted to make a more compact character with Sal: short and stocky, and totally badass.”



“It’s true, the little dude loves his big guns. But no, he’s not compensating.”

Scott Kester says, “Sal is probably my favorite design of all the characters; I love how he came together. The small touches on him, the bullets, buttons, and bullet spurs. His whole body has so much personality. I think we tend to try things that other companies might not in regards to characters. I’m thankful we are asking more questions than just starting with what is already status quo.”

"It's true, the little dude loves his big guns," Adam May says. "But no, he's not compensating."



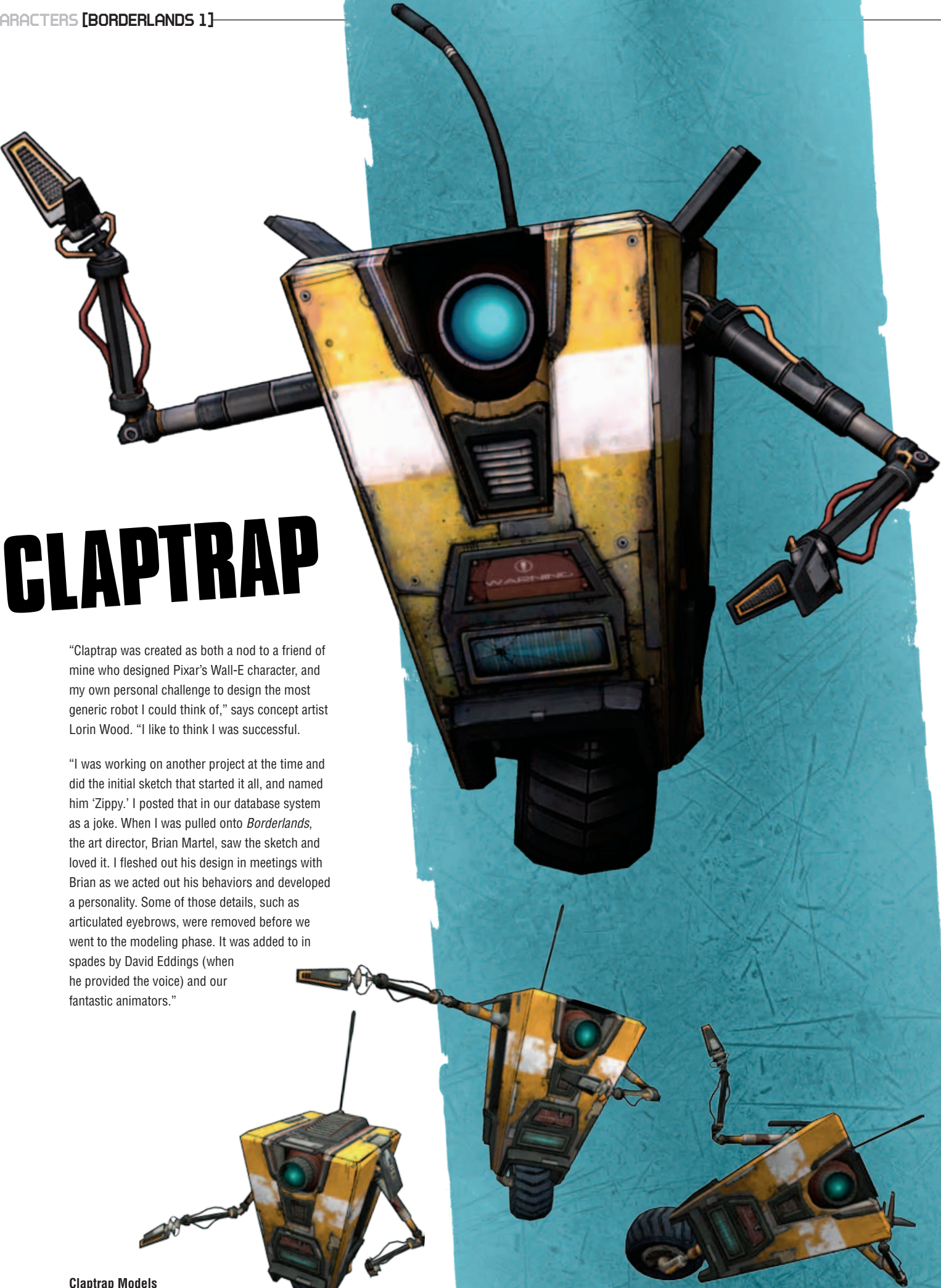
Gunzerker Concepts [Scott Kester]

CLAPTRAP

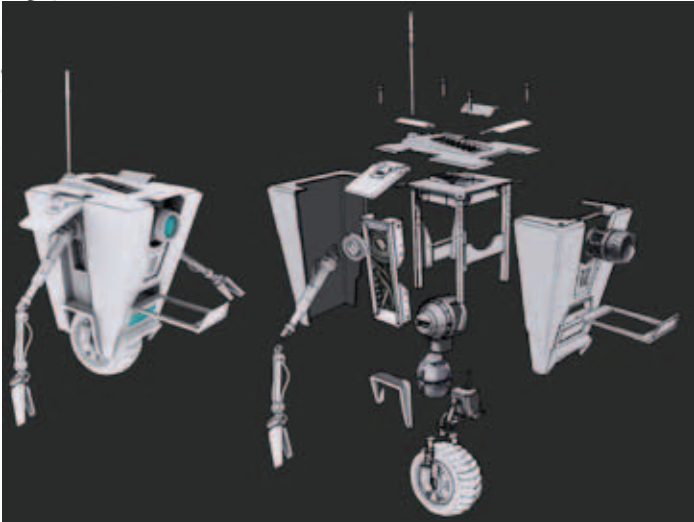
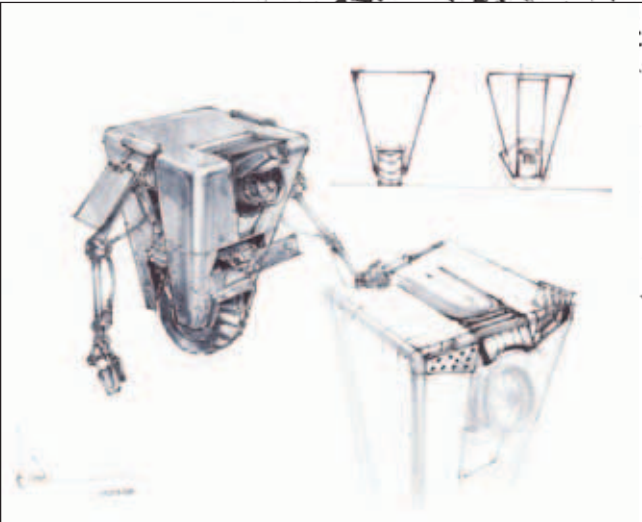
“Claptrap was created as both a nod to a friend of mine who designed Pixar’s Wall-E character, and my own personal challenge to design the most generic robot I could think of,” says concept artist Lorin Wood. “I like to think I was successful.”

“I was working on another project at the time and did the initial sketch that started it all, and named him ‘Zippy.’ I posted that in our database system as a joke. When I was pulled onto *Borderlands*, the art director, Brian Martel, saw the sketch and loved it. I fleshed out his design in meetings with Brian as we acted out his behaviors and developed a personality. Some of those details, such as articulated eyebrows, were removed before we went to the modeling phase. It was added to in spades by David Eddings (when he provided the voice) and our fantastic animators.”

Claptrap Models
[Brent Hollon] *This Page*



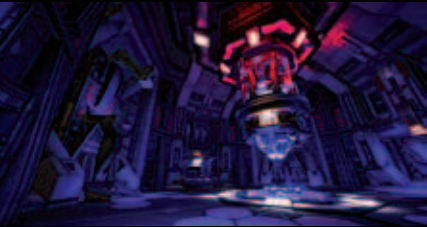
Zippy (Claptrap) Concept
[Lorin Wood] *Top*
Claptrap Concepts
[Lorin Wood] *Middle Left*
Claptrap Model
[Brent Hollon, Lorin Wood]
Middle Right
Claptrap Credits Cartoons
[Kale Menges] *Bottom*



ZONE 2

CONTROL CORE ANGEL

A techno-horror battleground of sudden death and harsh lighting.



FINK'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE

If you love ice and bandit murder, this is where you wanna be.



LYNCHWOOD

Of all the wild west-esque areas in Pandora, this is the wildest and the westiest.



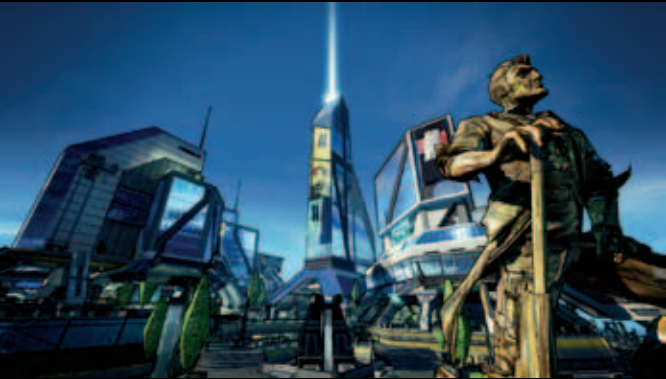
NATURAL SELECTION ANNEX

This Hyperion-owned circle of slaughter arena is a paradise of overgrown machinery and Varkid blood.



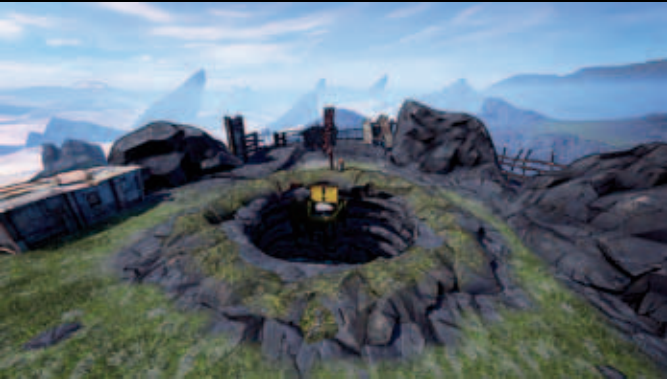
OPPORTUNITY

Handsome Jack's fascist city of the future is waiting for *you*...to get the hell out so our taxpaying tenants can move in.



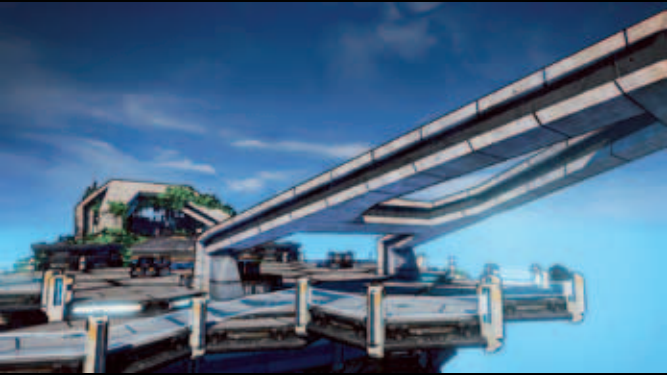
TERRAMORPHOUS PEAK

The mysterious cliffs where *Borderlands 2*'s terrifying raid boss lives. Try not to fall to your death.



THE BUNKER

Handsome Jack's stronghold in the sky affords players the ability to get killed by all kinds of fun stuff, such as robots, turrets, or a giant, transforming warship.



THE HIGHLANDS

Grass! Water! Stalkers! The highlands of Pandora are as lush and inviting as they are dangerous.



THE HIGHLANDS - OUTWASH

Hyperion's Eridium Extraction Plant stands out like a garish, industrialized sore thumb. Covered with robots. This metaphor is atrocious.



THOUSAND CUTS

The bandit-infested cliffs that Brick's Slab Bandit Clan calls home.



THE HOLY SPIRITS

Welcome to the home of the amoral Zaford Bandit Clan, who love murder as much as they love booze. And they *really* love booze.



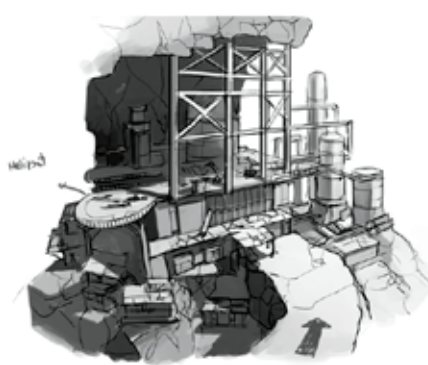
WILDLIFE EXPLOITATION PRESERVE

Hyperion's awful creature torture facility of awfulness. Visually, this map represents a close marriage of Hyperion hi-tech with Pandoran nature.

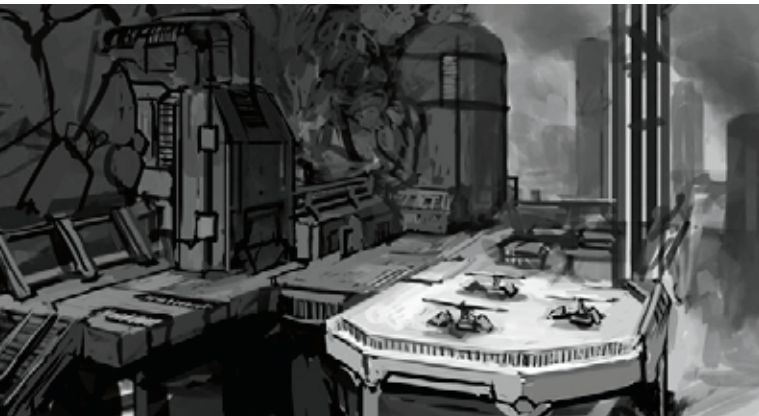


GYROCOPTER FACTORY AND JACK'S BUNKER

"The fight up to Handsome Jack's fortress needed to feel epic," says Kevin Duc. "The house was intended to sit on the edge of the Grasslands and Ash. I pulled a lot of influence from the recent volcano in Iceland, and thought that a giant, lightning bolt laden volcanic plume would be a perfect backdrop to the player's first encounter with Jack."



Artist Matias Tapia was tasked with creating a Buzzard factory—before the Buzzards had actually been designed and built. "At this point, I think we didn't have a Gyrocopter yet, but needed to have a factory. So, the factory sketches were sort of designed to be an abandoned Hyperion factory instead of what it actually became."



Factory Concept [Matias Tapia]
Jack's Bunker Concept [Kevin Duc] *Right*

BANDIT

OVERVIEW

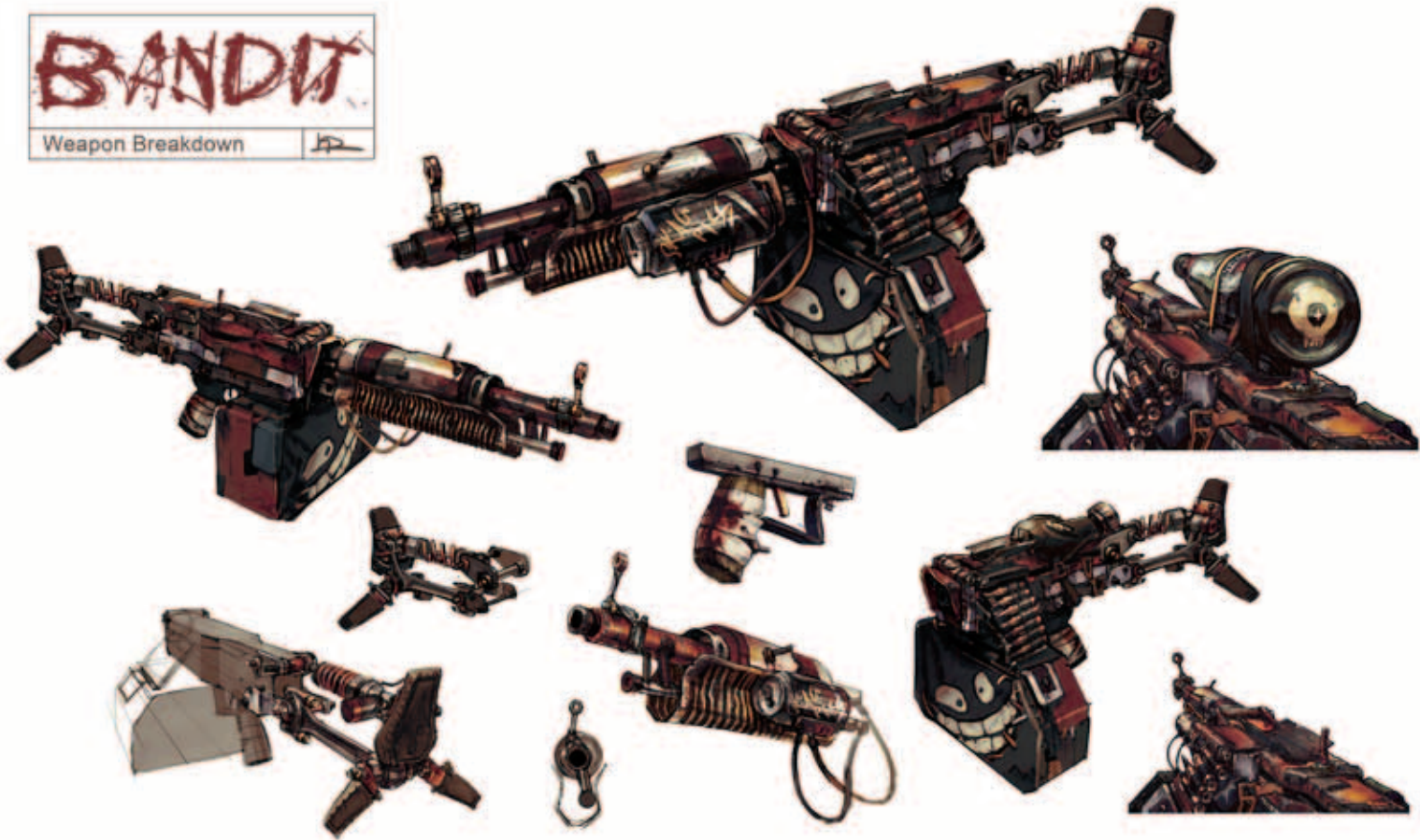
The Bandit class of weapons was pushed by a want for us to answer the question of “what type of weapons would an isolated bandit, sitting out in the wastes, build?” We wanted these guns to look cobbled together with found objects, to have screws and nuts and bolts coming off at skewed angles, and at the same time look dangerous. The design team wanted a large capacity magazine and left the rest to the artists’ imagination.

“On our first light machine gun pass, we went really far into the junky, cobbled together look,” Duc says. “We even built our first scope out of a beer bottle. As the weapons system was implemented, and parts began swapping with other manufacturers, we found that our initial design language may have been a bit too scrappy. In later iterations of the Bandit machine gun, we tightened up some of the odd angles, and went with a sturdier looking design.”

Bandit Explorations [Kevin Duc, Jeremy Cooke] *Right*
Weapon Breakdown [Kevin Duc] *Below*

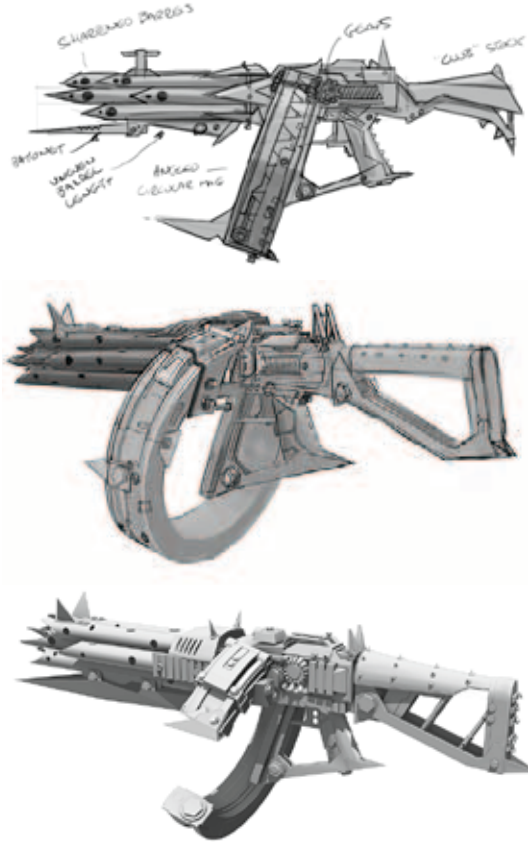


RED
GRAFFITI
BLOOD

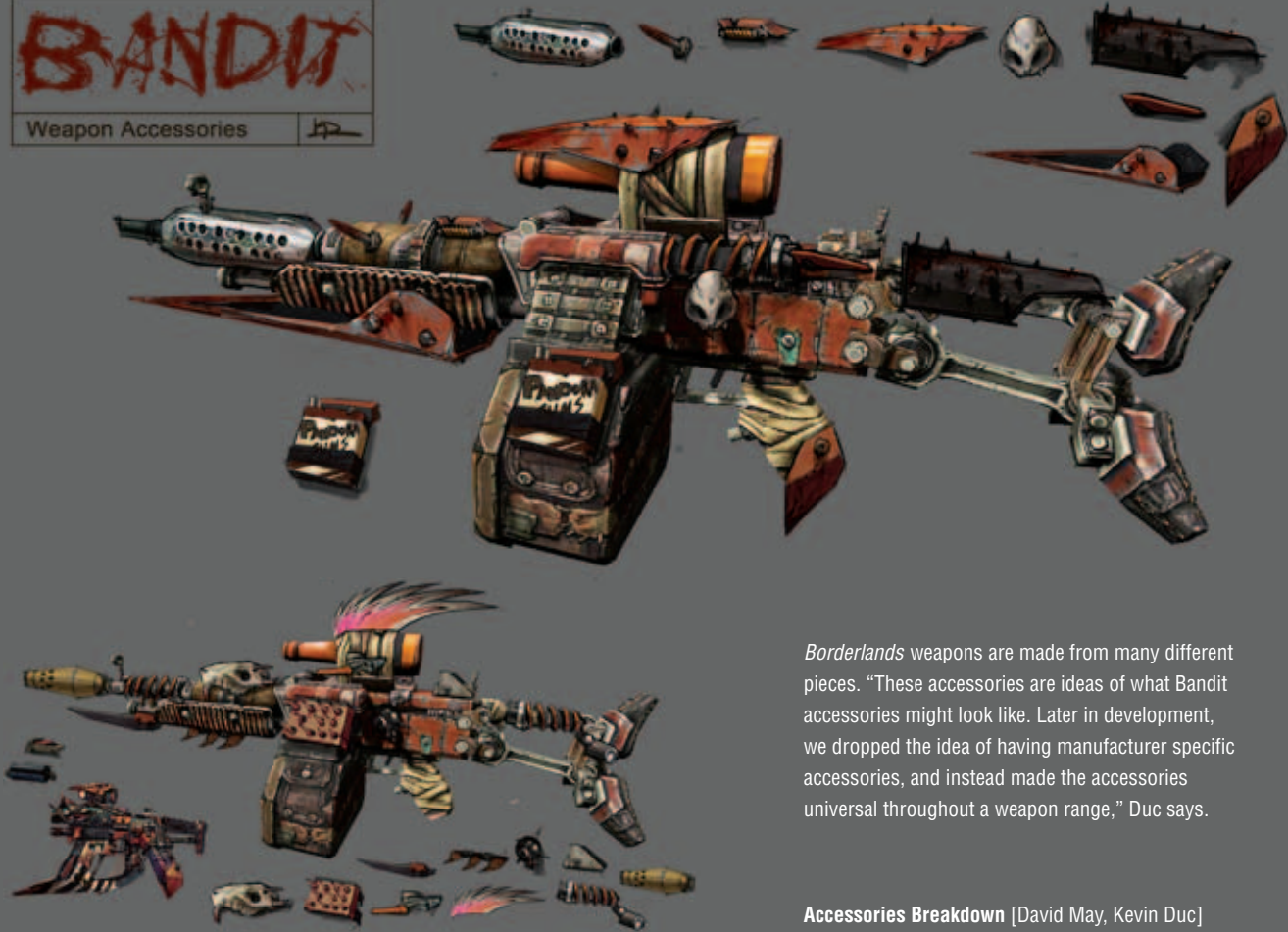


ASSAULT RIFLE

“The Bandit guns were originally designed to have a rag-tag, pieced together look,” says David May. “After a few designs came on board we opted to go with a more streamlined aggressive look. This helped the design to integrate better with other manufacturers as well as look less ‘junky.’ The original gun was then redesigned and built to fit the updated Bandit aesthetics.”



Assault Rifle Concepts [Martin Sawkins] *Above*
Assault Rifle Models [David May] *Left*



Borderlands weapons are made from many different pieces. “These accessories are ideas of what Bandit accessories might look like. Later in development, we dropped the idea of having manufacturer specific accessories, and instead made the accessories universal throughout a weapon range,” Duc says.

Accessories Breakdown [David May, Kevin Duc]

SMG

These SMG concepts show the reboot of the Bandit manufacturer identity. We wanted these weapons to look sharp, strong, and deadly. You can imagine the metal is pressed quarter inch steel, the kind of thing you could throw off of a building, pick up, and stab someone in the face with. We still wanted the homebuilt look, but maybe built with a bit more skill than we had first envisioned.

Since our weapons are made of parts that are procedurally mixed in our game system, we have to breakdown each weapon into its component pieces. Here the individual parts that make up the Bandit SMG are called out for the 3D artist.

“Once the initial design for a weapon is solidified, our 3D artist, David May, makes a 3D block-in mesh for each weapon in a class. We have to make sure that all pieces in a particular weapon type fit together. For example, all barrels must attach to all bodies in a functioning, aesthetically pleasing way. Once these pieces fit, I paintover David’s block-in mesh to provide a very accurate representation of what the final model should look like,” Duc says.

SMG Concepts [Kevin Duc] Right
SMG Mesh [David May, Kevin Duc] Below



SHOTGUN

The Bandit shotgun continues the theme of high capacity magazines. 3Point, a partner of ours, handled most of the heavy lifting on the shotgun designs and models. The process was very similar to working with in-house artists, as 3Point sent us a set of sketches, we provided feedback, and so on and so forth. The middle piece is a paintover done over one of 3Point’s drawings to pull the design closer to our established Bandit language.

Shotgun Concepts [3Point] Left
Shotgun Concept [Kevin Duc, 3Point] Below



ROCKET LAUNCHER

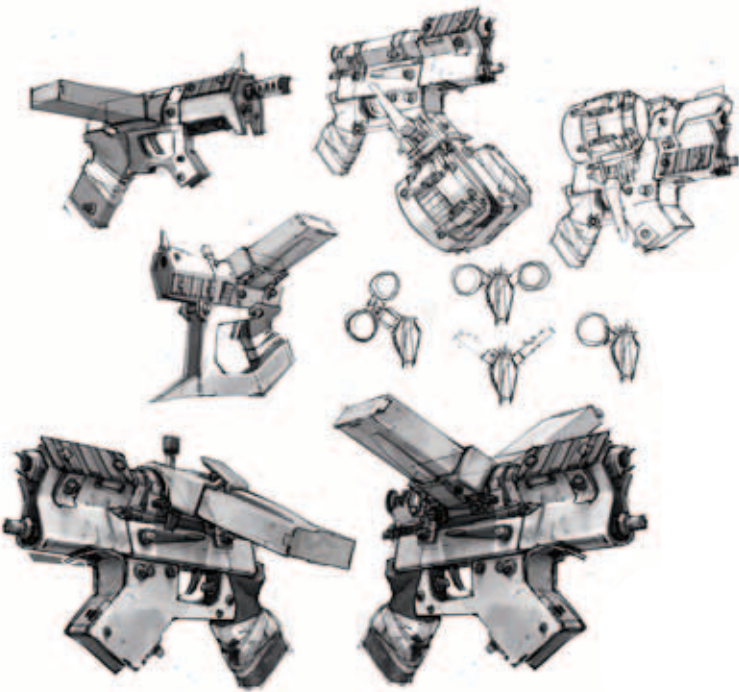
“The Bandit launcher and Bandit weapons in general were a special challenge because all of the crazy ‘bandit’ type things we did in the environments (piecemealing it together from other objects, cloth wrapped around everything, etc.) had to be toned back so they still looked good when mixed with the other guns,” says Jett Sarrett. “I think the end result was better for it.”

Rocket Launcher Concepts [Virtuous] Below
Rocket Launcher Models [Jett Sarrett] Right



PISTOL

“The Bandit pistol retains the large capacity theme. In these sketches we explored various configurations and types of magazines. In the end, we went with a side-loaded magazine and a big, double-drum magazine for rarer pistols,” says Duc.



Pistol Concepts [Kevin Duc] Above
Pistol Concept [David May, Kevin Duc] Right

