

Encounter the speed demon

In the last couple years I found that learning about and uncovering unreleased or unseen footage from games has been an interesting pastime for me, I've found the discovery of that kind of stuff incredibly fascinating, seeing what we never got to see, and a lot of the time these days I've found myself finding the pre-release content of sonic games to be the most interesting to dig the past of.

Games like Sonic Xtreme especially caught my eye, so I wanted to make a discovery of my own to see if there was any content from other sonic games that nobody had discussed.

After a month or two of searching I thought it would have been fruitless, until I ended up finding something that piqued my interest instantly. I had found some unseen concept art of a character called "Xtreme the Vulture", and from the context clues on the concept art, this character was going to be in the game Sonic Riders, and seemingly was created before the babylon rogues were even created, or at least was going to be the character jet the hawk was originally meant to be, and even his name evoked the hoverboards name in the final game.

With this information I knew I had to keep looking, it was too tantalizing, I felt like I had discovered something immensely substantial and Sonic Riders was actually one of my favourite games from my childhood, but when I kept on searching, I wasn't prepared for the piece of gaming history I found next.

On the same Forum I had found the concept art of Xtreme on, I had found a rom of a pre-release beta of Sonic Riders that claimed to not only have unreleased tracks and multiplayer characters, but even featured Xtreme the Vulture as an actual racer.

When i saw this i was ecstatic, this is a major find, so without thinking i decided to download the rom.

When i opened it, it just booted to a crude version of the main title screen, its obvious this was a purely unfinalized version of the game itself so i wasn't surprised, but what did surprise me was when i continued, it booted me straight to a character select, and in the menu itself there were of course the usual sonic riders characters minus the babylon rogues, but rouge, shadow and cream were also unlocked, and there were even some racers not playable in the game at all, some listed were Omega, Big, Blaze, all the members of the Chaotix and weirdest of all Silver was there too, which I wouldn't expect seeing how the game came out the same year as 06, maybe they suspected he would do well as a character initially and wanted him in but decided against it. But the strangest part was the reason that i downloaded this rom wasnt there, Xtreme the vulture wasnt there at all, but either way i decided to continue playing, after all this game features stuff that wasn't in the main game, so i selected Silver due to him being one of my favourite characters and continued on.

After selecting my character it instantly took me to the first racing stage; Metal City. And everything at first seemed normal, but there were no other racers, then again this was seemingly just a test build of the game so maybe they were just testing the tracks and character playstyles before adding in the AI for the E-10000G's and other racers.

I started the race and it was just normal other than a few things; The track didn't feature any hazards and a lot of its appearance seemed very unpolished, but it didn't matter, I was still familiar with the track itself so I kept on racing.

I completed the first 2 laps with zero issue and was just about to cross the finish line of the final lap, but as i got to the finish line, i saw it, something suddenly rushed past me and crossed the finish line, and my game froze. From the appearance of the character, it seemed to be Xtreme. I tried to get the game to respond but it just wouldn't, it was just frozen on the frame of Xtreme passing me and the audio kept looping, it almost sounded like some kind of laugh as it played over and over.

After a few seconds it seemingly stopped, but the screen turned pure black. I figured this was just an issue with the emulator, so I restarted the rom file and entered the game again.

It was different this time though, the title screen booted up but the title text wasn't there, the only title elements were the press start button and the other bits of copyright on the sides of the top and bottom of the screen.

I continued on anyway, and the screen remained black for a while, until the text box popup appeared, normally it would only say something like "accessing memory card" and other unimportant details for someone just playing, but this box's text was different, it read "So you like racing do ya? Let's have a little challenge!". I was frozen, I couldn't process what I was seeing, the game was talking to me.

I came to an obvious conclusion, this game was obviously a hack, this was some phoney creepypasta Sonic.exe crap, hell maybe Xtreme wasn't even a real character and i was lead down an unimportant rabbit hole, at that point i would have just turned off the game and forgotten about it. At least I would have thought that if not for what the game said next; "Come on Matt, don't tell me you are backing out now, after you came so far to find me?". This game knew my name, not only that but it seemingly knew what i was thinking, at that point i began to realise this wasn't ordinary in the slightest, and i had to take this a bit more seriously, so in some weird train of thought, i spoke up; "alright, who the hell are you?" I asked. A laugh echoed from the game itself, one that was certainly from the time the game froze, and the game responded back "you already know who I am, Its me, Xtreme the vulture, self proclaimed SpeedDemon!". So this thing speaking to me was actually posing as Xtreme, at this point whatever this thing is was starting to annoy me, "Alright let me guess, you are going to start bleeding all over the place and using stock scream sound effects to spook me?". Xtreme seemed to laugh at this response too, "oh no no no!" he replied "I ain't the kind of bird to pull that boring nonsense, i prefer a bit of a challenge, so how about it, wanna race?".

I hesitated for a moment, but then decided not to allow this to continue. I force closed the emulator and hung my head low for a second, but as my breathing started back up after holding my breath for so long, the game reopened, filling up my whole screen. "Well that's not very sportsman-like is it, how utterly rude, since when did you think that backing out now was an option?". I looked at the screen, realising that like it or not, im stuck in this situation, so i spoke to it again, "alright... so you want to race...theres obviously going to be some catch to this right, what hidden rules are you gonna make me follow?".

Xtreme laughed once more and responded to my question; "oh it's simple, just one race, three laps around the course!" as he continue speaking i tried shutting down my pc straight from the tower, but it didn't do anything, never the less I kept listening, "If you win, I'll let you go free, and that will be all, but if i win, you will become my trophy, and will be stuck racing in my game till i grow bored...which i doubt will ever be the case!"

I sat there for a second, weighing my options, but I then asked a somewhat reasonable question to whatever the hell this thing was, "What if I refuse, what if I decide I don't want to race!". Once again the game let out a loud laugh as Xtreme responded; "We are long past that now, and come on, you wanted to race, after all you did open the game again, you already signed up for the race as soon as you opened the game!". I knew at that point I was stuck, I was going to be forced to play whatever game this thing wants, so I agreed.

"I knew you would see it my way, now come on, let's see if you can handle my speed!" The text read, and the game started loading. I gripped my controller in my hands tightly as I waited, if I had held it any tighter I'm certain I would have broken it, then I saw the track Xtreme and I would be racing on; RoadKill Hill. The track itself was bathed in a crimson light, the ground scattered with dead trees, tar like sludge, a long winding obsidian pathway and a multitude of bodies on the outskirts of the track, all of them characters from the character select, they all looked like they had large bites taken out of them. I started to wonder if I was the first one Xtreme had challenged, were these corpses the bodies of racers he grew bored of? Were these his trophies? I shook the thought out of my head as I prepared for the race itself.

Surprisingly the character selected for me was Silver, seemingly that decision when I started the game was the one that I was forced to remain as during this race, but I wasn't going to complain. I remembered that Silver in the character select menu was labeled under the Flying type, and I saw there were some flying shortcuts across the track, so I felt a bit more confident about the race.

The only racers on the starting line were Me and Xtreme, it was a 1v1, so i needed to focus on getting ahead of this guy.

The race started and i managed to get a good start, but Xtreme seemed to get it perfectly, but we were still close in starting position, as we started the first part of the race, i noticed the music, while it wasnt a track i recognised from the original game, it still felt like sonic riders music at its core, surprising that whatever Xtreme is prefers to keep things similar to the original game, but soon after thinking, i realised there was no time to notice the music, i needed to focus on the race itself.

Already from the get go Xtreme wasn't holding anything back, any chance he had, he decided to ram into me and strike me, his claw-like feathers slicing into Silver, leaving visible claw marks. Every bit of pain Silver received I felt myself, which I never expected I could feel from a damn videogame, but I needed to push through, because if what Xtreme said is true, temporary pain isn't going to be as much of a problem compared to being a trophy.

The track felt similar to any other sonic riders track, sharp turns, plenty of shortcuts and alternate pathways, it's just the theming of it was so odd.

I saw Xtreme take a grindrail, so i came to the conclusion he was a speed type racer, which at the time was no surprise seeing how he called himself the speed demon, but that means i had to keep in mind those shortcuts will aid him massively, luckily there was only one of those grind rails on the track so he would only get that shortcut, or thats what i thought at first.

As the race continued, I noticed Xtreme was quite a bit faster than i was, able to boost more frequently than me, so i had to keep an eye out for any short cut i could, i managed to slip into first place as we both approached a large area of the track, "why is this so open, there's nothing else here other than that would need this wide of a track" i thought to myself, but quickly i was proven wrong as the sky echoed with thunder, and bodies started falling onto the track from the sky, every meaty thud echoed through my speakers as i swerved between the corpses, i got slowed down massively due to needing to swerve, but of course Xtreme went through all of it without issue, and he was cocky about it.

As i tried catching up to Xtreme, i saw a shortcut for Flying characters, but as i was preparing to take it, i noticed something that made me audibly yell, Xtreme was able to take the shortcut, at first i thought he was only a speed type, but he was able to take flying shortcuts? "HEY THAT'S CHEATING!" I shouted in annoyance, of course I knew Xtreme would respond "Haha, you forget I'm the SpeedDemon Matt, you better adapt, this is MY race!".

At this point i knew, Xtreme was a cheater, and if i wanted to even have a chance against him i needed to play dirty too, so i made sure to boost all that i could, and i kept boosting into Xtreme to slow him down, and to my ever more annoyance, he seemed to revel in this. "HAHAHA, just like that, give me a real challenge!" he yelled.

As the race continued onward, we were on the last lap, seemingly i had gotten a decent lead on Xtreme, i took every short cut and speed advantage i could, the race seemed to be mine, until he showed up again, he burst through one of the walls in a tight part of the track, seemingly he took one of the shortcuts that the power class could take, this guy could take every single shortcut type, counted as every class, and was faster than me, this race was in his favour from the start, and he knew it.

We were neck and neck, but he slowly gained the advantage, the finish line was in reach, and we were close, but as we got closer, he boosted into me, grabbing Silver and headbutting him, i swear i heard a massive crunch of bone and i saw the spew of blood as their heads collided, and Silver was knocked to the ground, i had lost, Xtreme crossed the finish line.

Even if I knew I was disadvantaged, I felt so close, my chance was torn from me, and Xtreme reveled in his victory. The failure text flashed on screen, and my body suddenly felt so cold and I knew what was going to happen next. I slapped myself, tried anything to see if this was a nightmare, it had to be, but I felt every bit of pain I inflicted on myself. "You did well Matt, but not well enough, but that's to be expected when you are against me!" Xtreme proclaimed.

A sudden surge of pain shot up my body, and upon looking at the screen i could see why, the visual of Xtreme digging his beak into Silver's body filled my vision, his beak ripping apart flesh from Silver's neck, and i felt every bit of it, the pain of your body being torn apart and consumed, i let out a shrill scream, but there was nobody around to hear my pleas, I felt my throat fill with fluid, presumably what my mind thought was my own blood, i coughed and coughed, flecks of crimson fluid shooting from my mouth and across my desk. "You really did try your best, but your best wasn't good enough, I'm glad you lost, losing you would have been a major let down, now we can race again and again, AND AGAIN!" Xtreme cackled, licking the bits of flesh and blood from his beak.

As my vision began to fade, I made one final desperate request, I asked for one final act, one last desperate wish, and he allowed it, so i write this as my body goes limp, so people know not to mess around with whatever the hell Xtreme the vulture is, whatever this game is, i just be that nobody else is stupid enough to play this damn rom like i was...

"But if any of you mortals wish to have a go, come find me, I look forward to seeing your skills on the track, and for you to become my future trophies!"

