

A Thousand Tiny Diamonds

Game Concept by Danaan Campbell Andrew

"A thousand tiny diamonds honey, candles that shimmer in the darkness, dreaming of a new world, out of the city's terrible shadow."

English translation from the hit single, "A Thousand Tiny Diamonds," by Will Suraphon Takayama

Spotify Playlist Inspiration

Overview

A Thousand Tiny Diamonds is a 3D third person single player violent action fighting game set in a retro-futuristic cyberpunk world with art direction inspired by mid-20th century Southeast-Asian culture and music. Players take control of a jazz singer and experience the graphic novel inspired story focused action in the city of New Bangkok, on the planet, Ayodahya III. The story arc throws the main character into a reluctant central role in a complicated revolution that seeks to dismantle the planet's Royalist Military Power Structure and explores themes of authoritarianism, belonging, collectivism and agency.

Fighting With Style

On top of the interesting story the games primary emphasis is on visceral, hardcore third person bullet-time gunplay and hand to hand combat supported by an upgrade system which supports replayability by different playstyles and casual yet gratifying over-the-top action. The game emphasizes story but also pick-up-and-play gratification through thrilling fight sequences. With inspiration from late nineties and early two thousands era “boomer shooters” like *Kingpin (1999), Soldier of Fortune (2000),* and the nostalgic-laden mechanics like bullet-time combat from *Enter the Matrix (2003), Max Payne 1 and 2 (2001, 2003)* players can slow down time to inflict satisfying damage to foe and structure alike. Featuring destructible environments, over the top gore via multiple hitbox effects on opponents, gameplay can be described as over the top.

Dripping in Tropical Atmosphere

The game's environment takes strong inspiration from the multiplicity of hierarchical layers of wealth, culture and ethnicities in cities like Bangkok, Saigon, Manila and Jakarta. From the corporate and military hyper towers that peer up through the atmosphere to the labyrinthine melting pot of the ground levels with its street food stalls, karaoke halls, temples, mosques and churches.



Outdoor Level Design Concept

Players will encounter a supporting world showcasing the poverty and extreme wealth found in many contemporary Asian cities within rethinking of the established genre of orientalist western cyberpunk. The game will thus use subplots to both tell and utilize real Asian contemporary anxieties. Through the main character, the story is able to show the varying physical levels of power and privilege while exposing players to unique Asian sub-genres of western music like Japanese jazz, East and southeast Asian psychedelic rock, and Thai Molam and Luk Thung.



Chinatown in Bangkok

Outdoor environments will primarily take place in the late afternoon to early morning in order to give a strong feeling of what these aforementioned cities are like at night with strong neon reflections on wet streets, steam rising from street vendor stalls and lit up religious buildings and roadway signs, and traffic lights. Indoor tower environments will utilize an abundance of windows to give a grander feeling of the cities colossal size. From a design perspective the action and environment uses high contrast and neon to give a sense of the dripping tropical atmosphere of the game.



Level Design Motifs

Dress and costume design steers away from the plastic gloss aesthetic of *Cyberpunk 2077 (2020)*, and leans more heavily into an amalgamation of Ray Kurzweil's singularity theories of human biomechanical evolution married with fifties and sixties era suits, dresses, and hair styles. Villain design will include a mix of over the top cyborg enhancement and military regalia that show an impossible number of ranks and awards to basic 50s and 60s era cold war inspired military grunt uniforms for lower level enemies.

Platforms and Expected Hysteria

The primary platform for this project is for PC. The justification for this is because PC gamers tend to be a unique niche of enthusiasts that value innovative storytelling and risk taking in their support and consumption of games. Due to the proposed graphic nature of the game, bringing the game to more family friendly and mainstream platforms like Playstation, Xbox, and Switch is proposed for after the game is released as a PC exclusive on distribution platforms like Steam, GOG, Green Man Gaming, Humble, and Epic. The game is expecting considerable hysteria and controversy from censors and governments with strong censorship laws (ultraviolent games like *Soldier and Fortune* and *Kingpin* haven't seen many releases since the late 90s) and governments that the game is modeled after. The marketing plan (see below) then leans into this expected hysteria to boost sales as a PC only title and to boost sales on alternative platforms like GOG. Bad press is good press as places where the game is either banned or receives the highest adult ratings will boost discussions of the game among mainstream game publications as well as influencers and their followers, thus raising excitement for potential consumers.

Why Were Asking For Your Money

The Power of Nostalgia

One of the primary market-oriented justifications for building and creating this game for our studio is leaning into the ever present and strong emotional aspect of nostalgia that exists in contemporary media creation and consumption. However, one of the problematic aspects of nostalgic media creation is the rehashing of existing IP both in games and film. Here we are asking for funding of nostalgic experiences from an exciting time in gamings history while creating a new intellectual property that has the potential for further projects in the future, both in the actual game itself, but also tie-in movies, music and collectibles.

Thirst for Bullet time - Creating *Daaaamn* Moments

While not completely gone, over the past number of years bullet time and slowed down gameplay mechanics have seen decreased use, specifically as a central gaming mechanic for action games. Used more prominently as an effect to accentuate action in many games, our game seeks to reinsert bullet time as a fun and useful mechanic that is controlled by the player. Bullet time will be used to enhance the sense of cinematic action and allow players to think tactically about enemy encounters while diving through windows, guns ablaze, for example. Here we seek to use bullet time as a central game mechanic to reinforce over the top action and create a fun experience which will leave players saying, “daaaamn”, during fight scenes. It’s time for bullet time to have another moment in action gaming and get players to tell their friends about the crazy experience they had with *A Thousand Tiny Diamonds*.

Representation

During the production and writing process of *A Thousand Tiny Diamonds,* we will place a large emphasis on creating realistic and engaging stories within our science

fiction world based on real world locations in Southeast Asia and lives lived therein. Gaming stories and development continue to be plagued by white male Eurocentric lenses and orientalist motifs and we seek to disrupt these trodden tropes to show new realities via main story characters that don't exist within a Eurocentric narrative. For example the background story of the main character is that of a poor rural youth, seeking out a better life for himself and his family in the big city. This is a classic story from the massive urbanization and industrialization movements in Asia in the past century and is very ripe with further storytelling potential.

Asian Market

The game's art and writing direction will include an internationally diverse team of developers, writers and artists to showcase the dystopian world of New Bangkok. With development eyeing both western and eastern markets we plan to include dialogue and music from varying Southeast Asian countries including Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Vietnamese, Mandarin and English both as a representative choice to ground the story and world but also to increase sales in Asia more broadly. Representation is a powerful force in marketing outreach. People want to see their own culture and identities in the media they consume.

Hunger for all things Cyberpunk

Despite the rocky launch of the AAA game *Cyberpunk 2077*, the genre has never been more popular. As humanity more broadly struggles to adapt to the surge of artificial intelligence, multiple modes of technology in everyday life and its effect on authoritarianism and politics more broadly, the contemporary moment we find ourselves in is a prime opportunity to continue the strong legacy of cyberpunk as a genre motif and adapt it to a new unique sub genre situated in an Asian setting. The proposed game seeks to capture the monumental allure of the genre for fans and tell a compelling story set in the framework of over the top nostalgic gaming action.

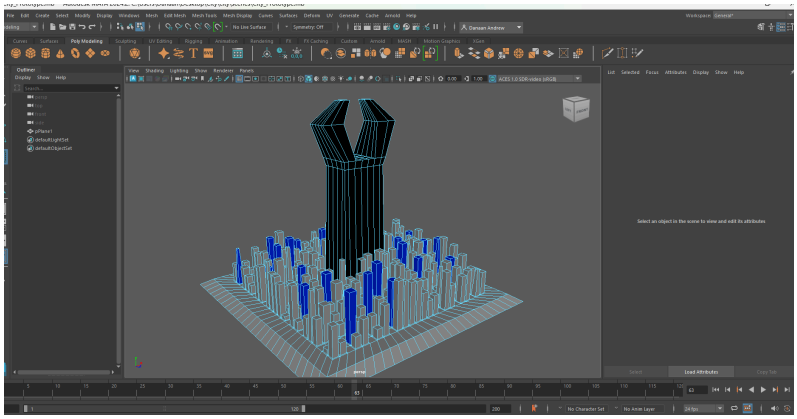
Target Audience

Broadly, *A Thousand Tiny Diamonds* banks a lot of its identity on having a strong M rating which is typically ages 17 and up in many markets. For the North American target audience, consumers with college degrees will appreciate the nuanced counter-orientalist writing in the game, but the over the top brutal fighting and action can be enjoyed by anyone. However, the game, with its nostalgic gameplay roots in the late nineties and early two thousands, will appeal to gamers in their 30's and 40's who loved the *Max Payne* series, *The Matrix* films and be open minded enough to appreciate niche music genres like Asian takes on jazz and psychedelic rock music. The game in its marketing strategies will lean heavily into creating a new lexicon for nostalgic millennial shooters in the same way that, "Boomer Shooters," have become synonymous with mid nineties era first person shooters like *Doom*. The annual income for the target audience in the United States for the game will be above a 24,000 dollar annual salary which supposes that players can afford a laptop or desktop pc and disposable income which includes gaming as a hobby.

Internationally the target audience is focused on East and Southeast Asian gamers eighteen and above. As the game seeks to root its story in Asian identities and stories of urbanization and authoritarianism, targeting audiences in these countries will be reflected in the marketing strategies for the game near release. Due to likely regional pricing that exists within the gaming industry among platforms like Steam, the decrease in price in many Asian countries will see the target audience's income level reduced to a minimum of 12,000 dollars a year income.

Premise

In the gritty science fiction cyberpunk universe of *A Thousand Tiny Diamonds,* the game follows Will Suraphon Takayama, a Molam Jazz singer in New Bangkok, who is trying to make life work in the big city as he supports his family in the hinterlands of Ayodahya III. At the beginning of the game, Will realizes during a live performance that he has run afoul of the city state's powerful royalist military as special military agents show up during his show. The agents attempt to stop the concert and accuse Will under Section 2 of the Rights of Speech Act of Buddhist calendar year 2874, due to his divisive lyrics in his latest hit single, *A Thousand Tiny Diamonds*. As the agents attempt to detain Will, a bomb explodes in the club targeting a well connected VIP, Will escapes with his life and is forced into the city's underworld where he's caught up in a bubbling revolution against the regime, led by two main factions.



Early Concept for the City and its Central Tower

The game employs a similar storytelling style as the first two games in the *Max Payne* trilogy to explore the world of New Bangkok in its neon- drenched urban psychedelia, night markets and subdistricts. Storytelling scenes use both typical cut scenes and animated graphic novel panels in the style of Frank Millar's, *Ronin*. Many cut-scenes and playable moments will take place at night to showcase the science fiction setting with its multicolored reflective surfaces, underground jazz grottos, illuminated Buddhist and Hindu temples, Muslim masjids and Catholic gothic church spires juxtapose with impossibly tall towering corporate buildings and the hover taxis that meander among them ala, "The Fifth Element." The Graphics engine will utilize Unreal 5 but employ textures and shading paying tribute to the first and second Max Payne games.

The game takes players on an arc starting where the main character on the surface appears as a fun-loving bon vivant who enjoys the sensual trappings that his life provides as a rising star Molam jazz singer while still supporting his family, to a grisled yet wise-cracking reluctant revolutionary outlaw who becomes a key element in the fight against the fascist military and monarchy. The game concludes with an epic two part conclusion where the player takes down the city's central corpo-military tower and then ascends to the golden floating pyramid palace that hangs above the tower and the city.

Story Content Outline

The game's structural content revolves around a cooldown area where side quests and main quests are introduced, players sleep, interact with key npc's, upgrade abilities, purchase and upgrade weapons, followed by the main story and side quest mission levels themselves. The primary narrative structure is as follows:

Intro

The introduction, or prologue to the game begins with Will singing his new hit song, A Thousand Tiny Diamonds with his backup band in a large jazz club, The Purple Lotus. After the show is stopped and he is to be arrested, a bomb goes off and the tutorial for the game starts as the character flees the scene with the help of two characters who are later revealed to be representatives of the two factions vying to take down the government: The Structuralists and the Jakarta Triad. The tutorial lets the player learn the controls of the game by assuming the main character escaping, fighting off the force outside of the club that was sent to arrest Will and other suspects and then establish a perimeter defense around the area thus starting the beginning of the revolution against the antagonists.

Act I

Act I sets the story in motion and introduces the various central characters to the storyline. Missions include lore building action packed quests to establish the two groups mentioned previously, the stakes of the battles to come and the brutality of the regime. In the first act the two revolutionary groups are forced to work together in a marriage of convenience. While one group is based on academic revolutionary fervor the second is an old earth criminal organization.

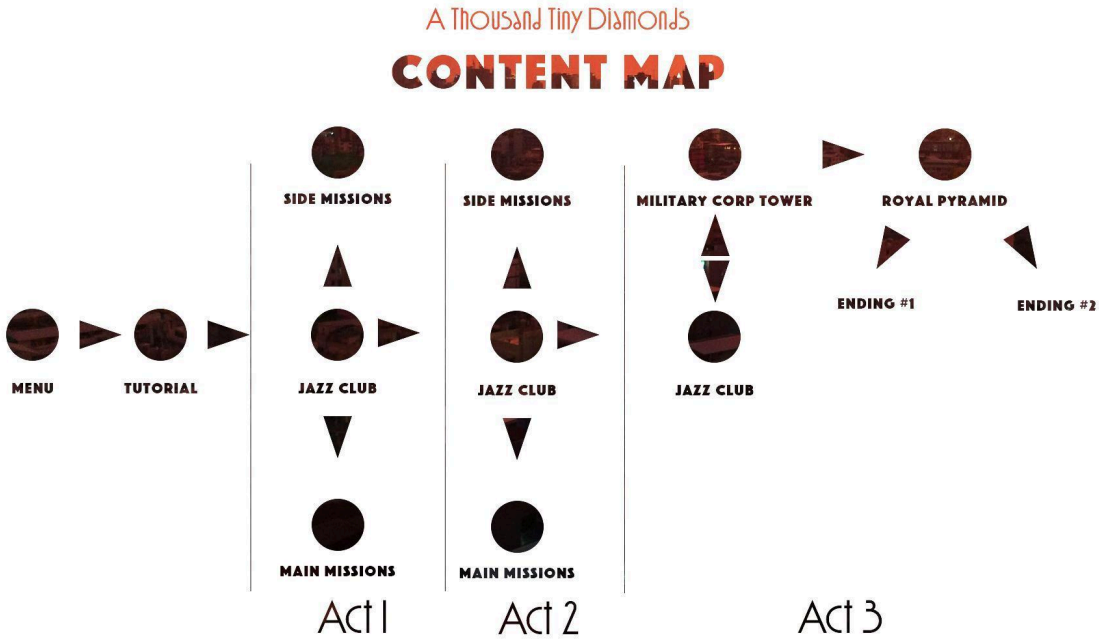
Act II

Act II focuses its missions and storytelling on the growing friction between the two groups as they battle for districts within the city against the military and secret police. The act has an abundance of interpersonal drama between the characters and supplies the meat of storytelling potential for critiques of stereotypical orientalist cyberpunk tropes and real issues in Southeast Asia like pollution, multiculturalism, gender disparities, freedom of speech and wealth concentrations among the elite.

Act III

At the end of Act III the player is tasked with deciding which faction to support. The same intense two part battle in the central tower and the Royal palace happens regardless of the choice but the conclusion reveals one of two unique endings on defeating the field marshal the monarch. Players will have an ability to return to the Jazz club in the final two battles to change loadouts. On leaving and returning to the areas, a unique battle mechanic of jumping through the glass of the tower in bullet time to and from a flying taxi with guns blazing will add a unique heart pumping action sequence to the third act.

Navigation


A Thousand Tiny Diamonds
CONTENT MAP
MENU
TUTORIAL
SIDE MISSIONS
JAZZ CLUB
MAIN MISSIONS
SIDE MISSIONS
JAZZ CLUB
MAIN MISSIONS
MILITARY CORP TOWER
JAZZ CLUB
ROYAL PYRAMID
ENDING #1
ENDING #2
Act 1
Act 2
Act 3

Project Timeline

The development timeline for the game is split into pre-production, production and QA/Release phases over a timeline of three years as follows:

Task	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Hiring Preproduction Team									
Game Design Documentation									
Continue Game Concept Document									
Writing									
Art Direction Guidelines									
Concept Art									
Prototype									
Hiring Production Team									

January - September, Year 1

Task	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Programming													
2D Art/Texturing													
3D Art													
Animation													
Level Design													
Audio Production													
UI Design													
													Alpha Build Deadline

October - October Year 1 and 2

Task	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Programming														
2D Art/Texturing														
3D Art														
Animation														
Level Design														
Audio Production														
UI Design														
Post Beta Hiring														
QA Testing														
Marketing														
									Beta Deadline					Release

November - December Year 2 and 3

Budget

The rough budget for the game assumes a mix of freelance workers and an in-house development team. With a fulltime development in-house team, the following numbers would likely be between 15 - 20 million USD for development in a timeframe of three years. This early budget estimate does not take into account software licensing, office space, ping pong tables and a beer fridge.

Position	Staff Number	Hourly Rate	Weeks	Wage Total
Lead Game Designer	2	70	100	280,000
Project Manager/Department Head	10	47	95	1,786,000
Lead Animator	1	47	91	174,840
Animator	5	37	91	673,400
Concept Artist	2	56	21	48,666
2D Artist	10	63	91	2,293,200
3D Artist	10	38	100	1,520,000
FX Artist	5	54	91	982,800
UI Designer	2	46	39	143,520
Level Design Lead	1	50	39	78000
Level Designer	5	33	39	257,400
Lead Programmer	2	61	130	634,400
Programmer	10	38	130	1,248,000
Audio Engineer	5	40	87	696,000
Writer	6	23	20	110,400
Graphic Novel Artist	2	62	24	96,000
QA Lead	1	50	16	32,000
QA Tester	10	40	16	256,000
Marketing	5	35	28	196,000
Total				11,506,626

Projected Personnel and Staff

Lead Game Designers

Project Manager/Department Head

Lead Animator

Animators

Concept Artists

2D Artists

3D Artists

FX Artists

UI Designers

Level Design Lead

Level Designers

Lead Programmer

Programmers

Audio Engineers

Writers

Graphic Novel Artists

QA Lead

QA Testers

Marketing Team

Marketing Plan

The marketing plan for A Thousand Tiny Diamonds is tentatively divided into three parts. The first part of the plan is planned attendance to show off a working prototype at GDC in San Francisco in March of the second year and then the following year, nine months before release. With the hoped for excitement and shock of an over the top game like the one proposed, at the first showing of the game, streamers and game journalists will get some moments with the game. This will give momentum and interest as the game enters its final year of development.

After the GDC conference in March of the third year of development the game will be released as a demo in Steam's Nextfest event which will give users a limited timeframe to try some initial moments with the game. The reaction is likely to be mixed with the hoped for shock and discussions of banning the game by specific governments and game review boards being used as a marketing tool to draw more interest in the game. This strategy follows the unfortunately effective manipulation of the press by authoritarian politicians where all news is some type of marketing ploy. The outrage will get more interest in the project.

After the hoped for storm of press about the over the top violence in the game and its anti-authoritarian subject matter, targeted micro ads in social media will accompany word of mouth interest in the game. The marketing team will create content to share on Tiktok, Instagram, Reddit, Facebook and X in the last six months of the games development before release. The marketing strategies will shy away from traditional marketing like billboards to focus on digital marketing and word of mouth excitement and outrage.

Distribution Plan

The distribution plan for the game follows a relatively traditional digital era launch plan. The game, after its marketing cycle, will be released on a number of platforms with emphasis on GOG but also focusing on Steam and Epic for the American market as those two platforms have the largest market share but higher sales fees. Additional marketplaces will include Humble and Green Man Gaming. Due to the game's violent graphic nature, coupled with contemporary limited use of disc drives, no hard copies will be made available.

After the launch a skeleton crew of programmers, a community manager and artist will stay on board to work on patches and bug fixes. Depending on pre-release sales, a season pass will be designed to add content, weapons and new areas to flesh out the world of New Bangkok and its surrounding area, as well as introduce a new faction and ending for further playthroughs.