

Concept Document Version 2.3

A top-down shooter for 1-3 players and 2-16 players online

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High Concept

Valkyrior takes placed in a mechanically infused world inspired by Norse mythology and Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung/The Ring Cycle).* Players are able choose a Valkyrie and her mechanical mount to pilot in a top down shooter; embarking on a co-operative adventure, or competing competitively in an online battle that incorporates popular gameplay that has emerged from the successful First Person Shooter (FPS) genre.

Target Platforms

"Valkyrior" is poised to be released in two flavors: "Valkyrior" for the Sony PSP and "Valkyrior Online" for the PS3's "arcade" downloadable distribution service. We are also considering the Nintendo DS and X-Arcade as viable options.

Feature Overview

- Original IP; original story, character designs, and mech designs
- Classic top-down shooter gameplay, reinvented
- Up to 3 player co-operative "story mode"
- Bosses that become beefier during co-op play
- All direction, strafe, and circle strafe shooting
- Team and deathmatch online/network multiplayer game modes
- Per player adaptive music
- Mixed gameplay combining long adventurous levels, arenas, forced screen movement, player controlled screen movement, waves of minions, and bosses
- ➢ 3D graphics and FX
- World-wide player ranking



Business Feasibility

"Valkyrior" is a feasible game to create because it will not have the astronomical production costs associated with other next-gen games. Because of the development team's background, this game is also a prime candidate for release in multiple regions, and combines stylistic aesthetics and gameplay that will help to diversify your portfolio of original IP.

Production Value Where It Counts:

- Games like Geometry Wars and Advanced Wars prove that you can have a fun and financially successful game without FMV cut scenes; we hope to follow the lead of games like these, taking an approach that will focus on game-play and in-game wow factor.
- The top-down camera means that the engine doesn't have to draw scene elements all the way to the horizon, instead detail can be placed in player's immediate vicinity.

Scenario

In the not-too-distant future, large-scale war is considered a thing of the past – it's been over 100 years since the last world war. Even so, the most economically powerful nations continue to advance the field of military technology with the advent of robotics.

The main concern is smaller-scale terrorist attacks, which pinpoint certain areas of significant economic or governmental importance. Robotic mechanized units, code-named Wolves, and ridden like beasts, are ideal for



dealing with this sort of localized threat.

The Office of Defense for Interdependent Nations (O.D.I.N.) is the governing body that maintains peace across all joined nations, similar to the United Nations in times past. O.D.I.N. has gathered intelligence which shows these terrorist attacks are not as random as they initially seemed. There is an organized force behind the seemingly disparate attacks, led by a general by the name of Loki, and O.D.I.N. fears a third world war. As such, they decide to unveil a project that's been going on behind the scenes – a weapon of unbelievable destruction (ragnarok) that can lay waste to an entire nation with a single push of a button, but which can also operate on a smaller, more pin-pointed scale, for assassinations.

The peacekeeping weapon is stolen by the rebel army, but they lack the knowledge to operate it. It's only a matter of time before they figure it out though, so O.D.I.N. deploys an elite force of female warriors - who were raised for combat under a program called Valkyrie – to retrieve the weapon and disband the rebels.

The valkyrie warriors (valkyrior) head out to save the world. During one of the final battles, one of the valkyrior will be killed, driving home the destructive power of the device.

In the end, they must make a choice about what to do with the weapon. Will they return it to O.D.I.N.? Will they refuse to return the weapon, destroy it, and have to fight O.D.I.N. itself? Or will they use the weapon on both sides, cleansing the warlike nature of man altogether?

Character Bios

Gunnr

19 years old (high energy, brown hair). Gunnr is to be the "main character". Her skills are balanced, and she has an even temperament. Her abilities are more natural than trained, and as such she has a very laidback attitude. Her wolf has moderate speed and decent firepower. The mech is very balanced, just like the skills of the rider. She's trustworthy and loyal, but in certain ways a bit naïve.

Mist

17 years old (skinny, gothy, black hair). Mist is the youngest of the bunch, but is wise beyond her years, values training and mental exertion, and shows a unique ability to pilot the fastest wolves, because of her quick mind. She is less skilled with heavy firepower, and prefers to use precision weapons such as lasers, dodging enemy fire. She is heavily distrustful of others, and often questions her superiors. She is, however, loyal to her teammates, in spite of her cold façade.

Prima

22 years old (tough exterior, leather, short red hair). Prima is the oldest of the bunch, and has been working with wolves for the longest. She grew to love the older, heavier wolves and feels as though the lighter models just aren't enough of a challenge. As a result, she relies on heavy ballistics and hand to hand combat first and

foremost, preferring to charge straight through rather than take the scenic route. She is hotheaded, quick to anger, and prone to rash decisions.



Inspiration

The core gameplay is a spiritual successor to Mercs; a free roaming, mostly top-down, action shooter, but it injects the over-the-top battles, weapons, and mobile suites dramatically depicted in anime. The game also incorporates innovations that have been made in both top-down shooters and first person shooters over the years; aiming to incorporate control schemes, game modes, and level design ideas that have proven to be successful, while avoiding the pitfalls of the coin-op design mentality shared by most shooters.

Speed:

In terms of the mobile suits themselves, the main point to grasp is that these are not lumbering mechs; they are mechanical "athletes". The essence of the gameplay should be **fast, fun, and strategic**.

Visuals:

The art style should be bright, colorful, and potentially described as cyber or techno. Vivid should contrast with stark and ethereal should contrast with angular. In general, players, enemies, and dangerous things should be bright while backgrounds should be subdued or desaturated.

<u>Audio</u>

Per player adaptive sound/music:

Often times in single player games, the music that you hear expresses or amplifies the level of tension or emotion that you or your avatar is supposed to be feeling. A multiplayer games does not have to behave differently; a per player system could be accomplished by composing music modularly and describing those modules with metadata that label the part (bass line, melody, ambient, main loop, breakdown), intensity, event type, danger, winning streak, etc. The engine could then understand music in terms of a series of calls as opposed to specific music tracks, allowing players to choose what "songs" are playing during a deathmatch without compromising the intended dramatic effect.

Events categories that make the "per player" system possible:

- Local Events: affect the soundscape of players within a given radius or zone of an event.
- Global Events: an event that could have happened anywhere on the map changes everyone's soundscape.
- Player Specific Events: something that you did or that was done to you that changes your soundscape.

Using this method, no other players will be hearing the same exact sound track that you are; there will be similarities to everyone based on global events, further similarities to players on your team or in your proximity based on local or team events, and wholly unique aspects of your soundtrack due to player specific events.

Music:

The music will have a retro flair expressed so well in many past shooters, brought into the 21st century with improved production value. Wailing synth leads and progressive chord changes should be combined with dramatic underscores that highlight the mood of the game.

Screen shots of representative camera angles and aesthetics







Control Scheme

Our survey of top-down shooters, and shooters in general, revealed shortcomings and successes of previous shooter control schemes. None of these classic games completely satisfied our requirements for a new generation of top-down shooter gameplay, so we took pen to paper and developed several theoretical control schemes. Comparing these schemes to pre-existing examples that shared some traits, we were able condense our desired functionality into the following scheme.

What the controls should enable:

- Free-roaming movement
- Strafe/circle strafe: the ability to point your gun in a different direction than you are moving
- ➢ Dash, roll, or flip
- Smart semi-auto targeting/aiming
- Responsive gameplay

While the controls will be fully customizable, with various attacks able to be assigned to unique buttons, our default control scheme aims to be as simple as possible.

Tentative control scheme:

- Analogue and D-pad = 8 way movement
- L1 = Super (from Valhalla meter)
- ightarrow R1 = Strafe toggle
- SQUARE = Press on once for powerful short range attacks, hold to fire rapid fire weapon and charge weapons simultaneously.
- \succ X = jump/boost/dash





Weapon Categories

Single shot: fire one round at a time, usually with a recovery time.

Examples: rocket launchers, grenades, rail guns, pistols

Rapid fire: hold down the trigger, you fire continuously, potentially limited by energy drain, heat build up, or ammunitions.

Examples: energy machine guns, machine guns, flame throwers

Charge Shot: behave differently after charging weapon fires upon button "off" as opposed to button "on". Examples: laser cannons can be used like a single shot weapon but the longer you hold down the button, the more powerful the blast will become. Another weapon is a flash bomb that clears the screen of bullets and small enemies.

Multi-target charge shots: able to target more than one enemy. The longer you charge, the more enemies you will target, until you reach the weapon's target maximum.

Examples: missile launchers or beam split lasers

Melee: hand to hand weapons such as laser swords, whips, axes, fists, etc.

Mines: mines that can bet set off by various means such as collision, trip wire, remote control, etc.

Defense: heat flares, energy shields, physical shields, mega bombs.



Weapon Swapping and Selecting

Each player's Valkyrie/Wolf comes equipped weapons for each of three color coded "position type" modules. As you progress through a stage, you can pick up replacement weapons, weapon power ups, and mobile suit power ups; touching these items automatically modify or replace any equipped weapon that matches their "position type". We toyed around with ideas of allowing the user to hold many weapons at once and cycle through them as in most FPS game, but decided that the ability to use multiple weapons at once, as well as the simplified inventory management of the current system, would be better for the goals of this project.



Levels and Checkpoints

The levels in a traditional top down shooters, be they forced-scrolling or free-roaming, have always felt long and adventurous. The forced scrolling genre has always done a great job at making their levels and gameplay feel continuous but free-roaming games often broke the pace by having areas that needed to be cleared, much like beat-em-ups where a "Go ->" prompt would alert you to continue your movement to the next area. Recent free roaming top down shooters such as Cannon Spike and The Red Star accentuated this trait to the point where their level design can be summarized as "fight 2 to guys in a room, fight five guys in a room, fight a boss in a room." These small rooms are separated by in game camera moves or cut scenes that result in a staccato gameplay that loses the epic feel that shooters should have. Continuous forced scroll, however, is not a perfect solution either; resulting in a gameplay appreciated only by hardcore gamers.

Another problem shared by all "classic" shooters presented on consoles regardless of when they were made is limited credits and no checkpoints, penalizing the player too severely for dying. What this means is that if you get to the boss of Level 5 with no more credits,

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A level constructed from different stage paradigms to add variety to the game play.

and you die fighting him, then its game over for you; if you want to keep playing you have to start back at the beginning of Level 1! This outdated mentality is not acceptable by the mainstream market.

Both of these issues will be addressed in our level design. The level structure will be, for the most part, long and continuous with waves of enemies. This will

> be spiced up with a few sections or levels that are continuous scrolling, some arenas, and of course bosses. Each stage within a level has an automatic checkpoint save that allows the player to restart from that point if they happen to die. While not topdown, Contra is a great example of mixing up level design archetypes, presenting the player with diverse gameplay that feels continuous and epic. While Contra did not have checkpoints, it did have an easy and well known cheat code that granted the player 99 lives; this game would not have been the success that it was if most players were not able to experience the game from beginning to end!

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This stage allows for the player to move about as they please. Modern games like Ratchet and Clank have levels like this, allowing you to back track.



Free-roaming Top-Down Shooter

Forced Camera Top-Down Vertical Shooter

Gameplay Modes

Overall the gameplay can be conceived as a top-down shooter with FPS elements such as online multiplayer gameplay.

Single player/coop story mode:

The levels in this mode play a lot like the classic shooters. Progress through 10 or more levels with up to 3 players; you gain points or money throughout the level and can buy upgrades between stages. Any upgrades should be easy to accomplish (think *Forgotten Worlds* or *Keith Courage in Alpha Zones)*, this is not an RPG or a simulator.

Online/Network Multiplayer Modes:

- Capture The Flag: There are two teams, each with their own base, each base houses a flag. Each team has the goal of capturing their opponents' flag, brining it back to their own base. The Team to capture the flag the most times in X amount of time, or to capture the flag Y times first, wins.
- Onslaught: There are spawn locations between your main base and your opponents'. If your team controls a spawn location, then you can choose to re-spawn at that location when you die. To change a neutral or enemy spawn location to your own, you must be on it for X amount of time. Your ultimate goal is the capture/destruction of the enemy base. In some variants you need to capture spawn location "A" before you can capture "B" and so on until you reach the enemy base.
- Deathmatch: Every man for himself. Be the first to reach X kills or have the most kills at the time limit.
- Team Deathmatch: Whichever team reaches X kills first or has the most kills at the time limit wins.
- Counterstrike: Mission based team gameplay. Your team must accomplish X while opponent's team must stop you from accomplishing X, or vice versa. These games often only allow each player to have one life per round. A round ends when the objective is complete or an entire team has been destroyed.
- Gauntlet to Arena: An original multiplayer mode in which you start in your own, instanced, forcedmovement vertical shooter where you can collect power ups as you go. If you make it to the end of the Gauntlet alive, you are placed in a death match arena. If you die in the arena you must run the gauntlet again. This system can also be used to automatically assign you to arenas with others of a similar skill level.

The importance of on-line gameplay:

Games like Street Fighter, Quake, and Starcraft were able to reach their level of success not because of their riveting storytelling but because of their competitive multiplayer gameplay. This is what will set us apart from the other 99% of shooters; the ability to have a real opponent to compete against is what will allow enough replayability to cause players and reviewers alike to recommend "Valkyrior" to their friends and readers.

Combat System Notes

- Enemy forces are, in general, inferior; this allows for one player to believably combat many lesser opponents simultaneously.
- Certain attacks leave you vulnerable (recovery time), so there are many times, especially in multiplayer or against bosses, that you need to use the right attack at the right time.
- In some modes there can be AI grunts supporting your player controlled elite corps.
- Risk VS Reward, Melee Attacks: melee attacks are among the most powerful in the game, but not nearly as safe as sniping from a distance.
- Friendly fire on/off: friendly fire can be turned on or off. Targeting weapons would never auto target your forces, but your forces could get in the way of shots already in progress.
- Many weapons would travel slowly enough that they could be avoided; think projectile speeds from any classical shooters.
- Valhalla Meter: when an enemy is destroyed, its ethereal soul is released. You can collect these souls by touching them before they fade away; doing so will fill up your Valhalla meter. This meter is similar to a super meter in Street Fighter; once the meter reaches its capacity you can enter into a Berserker state in which your strength and speed are increased.
- You have a health meter, you can take more than one hit without dying
- Collision can be handled in 2D

Minimum asset list

- > 2-6 player mechs (1-3 for each faction), includes palate swaps, 3D mesh, and rigging
- ➢ 3 Valkyrie
- > 10-20 AI grunt units (mech, foot soldier, ships) (enemy and friendly)
- ➢ 20-40 grunt unit animation
- > 10 single player/co-op levels for "story" or "arcade" mode
- ➤ 4-8 multiplayer maps (1-2 for each type of multiplayer mode)
- ➢ 5-10 bosses, includes 3D mesh, rigging, and animation
- ➢ 30 weapons and power ups, 3D meshes
- ➤ 10-30 effects animations
- > 10-30 mech animations (shared skeleton)



Wolf mounting method; the Valkyrie ride on the outside of their mobile units.

Platform Feasibility

Sony PSP:

- The screen is partitioned off, so that a 3:4 area is used for the action, and the remaining room on the sides is used for radar and other UI elements
- Use Ad Hoc networking for 3 player co-op and potentially infrastructure network mode for online deathmatch

Nintendo DS:

- \succ Top screen is for action
- Bottom Screen is for Radar, important gauges such as energy level, and weapon configuration.
- Touch sensitivity can be used to configure or choose weapon sets, and click on radar blips for details

Consoles:

- On wide screen TVs, the system can be the same as the PSP
- On 4:3 TVs, the peripherals can have a semi transparent HUD
- Online Arcade infrastructure to be used for online deathmatch
- > Three person co-op play on one console





<u>Credits</u>

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