

The Battle for Middle Earth II (BFME2)

Nazgûl's "Special Extended Edition"

Interview

- What got you started on modding?

I've always been a "nerd" in some ways (even if I don't look like the stereotype nerd, lol) and I'm very much into electronic entertainment such as movies and games. It was some years ago when I got totally obsessed with the strategy game Settlers IV that I got a keen eye on modding, even if it at the time only involved map making for that game.

- What led you to do the "Special Extended Edition" mod for BFME2?

Simply put – I was disappointed with the game. EA bought a movie license, but made the game entirely after "their" own heads, not after the words of Professor Tolkien or the great Peter Jackson and his epic movies. Being a total movie freak, I wanted to put more of a "movie feeling" into this game. And also, I wanted to add "realism" in the greatest possible extent within a game like this. This meant re-skinning and re-balancing of the entire game!

- What differs S.E.E. from other mods mostly?

I'd say that most mods focus on bringing the game tons of new units and factions, and some even alter the story or concept to something else. That being very cool indeed, I still wanted to keep the LOTRs concept, extend it, and focus primarily on doing the best possible alteration to the game "as it is". Some things have been added, but mostly it's about modifying BFME2 from a state of inconsistent and imbalanced mess – to this "cure", I hope ;)

- How much work have you put into this project?

Oh boy... too much? So far, since the middle of December I've done basically everything myself, with some exceptions from my new team member Sûlherokhh that helped me fix the Rohan Statue and Well. Everything else is a result of me spending too much time with this (when not working or hanging out with family and friends) and the wonderful guys of The 3rd Age Forums that helped me basically every time I ran into problems. Some of them even gave my complete solutions to where I had got stuck, like Lauri with the IsengardFellbeast and Ithronaiwendil with the Forged Blade BLUE fx glow...

- So what is your specialty according to yourself?

I'd have to say SKINNING, without a doubt. INI coding gives me headaches, but I have to do them since they're the most important thing to modding! *lol* I really need more coders on the team though. But skinning is fun and is something I really can do all by myself. It helps pretty much that I've been an artist (oil paintings, drawings, illustrations, computer graphics and layout and such) for most of my life too ;)

- And what is the hardest thing to do, for you?

Modeling and Animation is completely impossible for me to do! AI coding is doable but really hard. So those are extremely important positions to fill with new team members. IF this mod is ever going to be as great as it could be.

Some detailed questions about S.E.E...

1) Why no more rushes?

Rushing and everything related to it such as cost, buildtimes, damage and armor are completely adjusted to slow this game down noticeably. This has been done to make this game more of a “realistic” strategy game, than merely an FX action oriented extravaganza. If you want more troops fast, build more structures though. And if you are really devoted to how the original retail version works. This mod will not be for you ;)

2) How far have you taken the “realism” factor?

Well, as far as I could without compromising too much on the game, actually being a game. I’ve removed a lot of unwanted and unnecessary FX like various glows and stars, but I’ve also decided too keep some of them, like the Banner Carrier glow and Statue and Well glow that are all indications of something magical going on. In a way, that’s also “realism”. But mostly it’s about adjusted damage done (weapons & spells) and damage taken (armor). This does however not mean that units will die from a single strike of the enemy, or one arrow hit – not unless it’s given by a more powerful hero. But then again, in real life, an arrow wouldn’t necessarily have to kill you. It can miss, it can bounce off your armor and it can hit a non vital part like a foot, arm, shoulder and so on. Same goes with melee weapons. That’s why units still can battle it out for a little while before they fall down. This concept is also widely used in movies right, where actors sometimes beats the living daylights out of each other, only to carry on fighting. But I’ve tried to adjust it so far towards realism as I could without removing the fact that it is still a game and some units needs to be really strong. Mainly I think this regards SIEGE though, that was completely worthless in the retail version of BFME2, where the need from siege weapons was utterly useless since a small team of swordsmen could tear down a building in a matter of seconds. Now, you will NEED siege units for sure, and heavy magic off course, so the magic factor has not been taken out – more the other way around.

3) Why isn’t the mod compatible with the expansion “Return of the Witch King”?

Easy – because that expansion sucks BIG time! There’s hardly nothing in it that has anything to do with Lord of the Rings. It’s merely a wider step FROM that concept, and even the art such as menu colors and start up screen have been altered to a less beautiful state, so I needed nothing from that expansion, and that’s why I never included it.

-When will this mod be 100% finished?

I have no idea – but I’m hoping this summer? It depends on me getting a complete team together or not. When new as a modder, everybody says “-*You have to show some work before you can ask anyone to join a team*”. I guess I have showed “some work” now, but it’s still hard *lol*. The Beta III is just finished though, and it has like 10000 things the EA game does not in terms of how this movie license should have been exploited – I hope! ;)

-Are there anyone in particular you’d like to thank?

You bet! EA Games actually deserves credit for being such a good and big developer of quality games, even if they didn’t go all the way with this one in particular. They did still make the game

and also make it mod-able and they deserve credit for that. Then there's the whole 3rd Age community and all that helped out in there, but mostly all pure contributors with codes and skin details. I'd especially like to thank: Sûlherokhh, Lauri, Ithronaiwendil, Zimoo, Stealthsnake, Cahik, Lord of Gifts, Celeglin, Kobra, Samurai, and off course Mark "Sniggles" Hambly, for his mod "Marks Full GamePlay Mod" that this mod was based on back in December 2006!

-What are your hopes with this mod?

Primarily that as many people as possible will find this mod really enjoyable, perhaps as much as me even, and secondly to get a job on EA maybe? *LOL* Just kidding, but my ex fiancé was working there actually, and it would be kind of nice! ;p