

UFG INTERVIEWS COUNTERPLAY GAMES ABOUT DUELYST!

COMING SOON

AD SPACE

Coming Soon

WRITTEN BY: [KENNETH SEWARD JR.](#)

MAY 06, 2016

One of the things that get me excited to play a video game is a passionate developer. Their eagerness to show off their latest creation to anyone willing to listen is more appealing than a fancy trailer or the promise of future content for pre-ordering. This is because the energy that's given off is often mirrored; why should I be pumped for your game if you don't appear to be? And while I don't necessarily need a pep talk before being presented with another pending release, the publisher/press "dance" can become tiresome.

Basically, a passionate developer resonates with me because they appear to really care about what it is they do. That's the vibe I got when I spoke with Counterplay Games' Creative Director and producer Keith Lee about their first game, Duelyst. You see, Counterplay is made up of veteran developers from established studios – I'm talking Riot Games, Blizzard Entertainment, and Insomniac to name a few. Keith himself has worked on critically acclaimed series' like Diablo and Ratchet & Clank. That said, when Keith was explaining to me what the Duelyst is, it sounded like he was speaking about his first major release. He sounded passionate!



"DUELYST IS JUST LIKE HOLOCHESS FROM STAR WARS"

From what I gathered in researching, Duelyst is a Free-to-Play, collectible card game. Players would battle one another using summoned heroes, and at the time what I assumed were villains, and their minions using turn based mechanics. I wasn't too far off either. That said, seconds into the interview, Keith lets me know why I should be checking for this game. "Duelyst is just like HoloChess from Star Wars," he said in a proud voice. To which I interrupt him with a resounding "nice" because yeah, Star Wars. Laughing, he continues, "Yeah, it's like HoloChess and is super-fast paced. Each match lasts five to ten minutes. And it's a collectible card game. So imagine you get to collect and build an army like in Pokemon." Ok, we got Star Wars and Pokemon. I sat up in my chair!

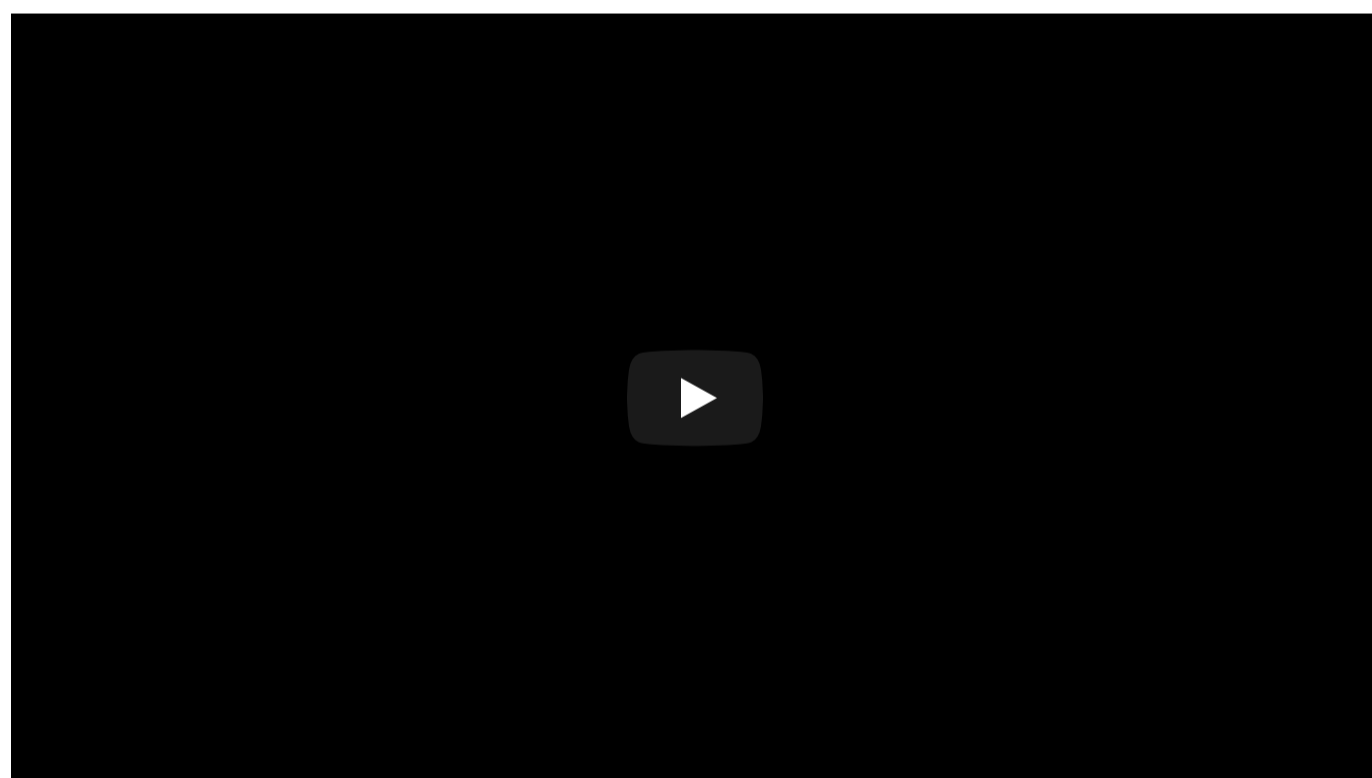
From there he goes on to explain the basic gameplay mechanics. Using collected cards, players will create a squad of units by building a deck based on one of six factions. The most important units are the generals. Like the Kings in chess, the goal is to take down the other player's general while protecting your own. Each match starts with the two generals on the tactical battlefield, with the players taking turns summoning creatures; one can choose to move, summon, and attack all on a given turn. Thinking ahead is key as every attack is met with in kind; enemies will trade blows regardless of the damage dealt to them. Other cards like spells and artifacts, once summoned, can be used to turn the tide when the going gets tough though. It all sounded rather interesting.



We talked about the different modes, with the ranked Season Ladder being the most popular. When we got to the rewards for ranking well in a given division each month, Keith got excited again. "Then at the end of the month, what's really cool is you get completely new monthly content, like new cards, that's never been introduced into the game," he explained. "So you have a reason to ladder every month because you can get cool new prizes and the prizes are based on the highest rank you've achieved that month." His enthusiasm reminded me of how I feel when after unlocking rare items in the games I play. In other words, Keith probably enjoys playing Duelyst himself or at the very least looks forward to showing fans the newly made cards.

"WE HAVE THIRTY THOUSAND YEARS OF LORE..."

As I listen to Keith talk about what went into the Duelyst, I was fascinated by the sheer volume of content. For instance, the single player offerings are there to teach new players the ropes and/or to give returning players a challenge. Eventually the more challenging aspects will turn into a campaign of sorts, giving context to the current events amongst the factions. Talking about what's to come, Keith says "The idea is to expand into a campaign. It'll sort of be like Final Fantasy Tactics or Fire Emblem and be way more story focused. We have 30 thousand years of lore, [with] anywhere of between three to four hours of voice over and about five hundred thousand words of text." Wow, I exclaimed. "Yeah, we wanted to build a deeply immersive world that, you can just dig down into the rabbit hole. It's like the audio journals from [other games], where they're optional but it's there for people that really want to dig deeper and to know that the developers really have spent a lot of time to layer the game for the people who like story lore." Like everything else, Keith was excited to talk about the game's story. And that's not because he wrote most, if not all, of the lore; he really does like that aspect of the game.



"WE WANTED TO PUSH OURSELVES TO BE ABLE BUILD SOMETHING THAT IS GOING TO LAST..."

Unfortunately, I can't post the entire interview – we talked for a decent amount of time on everything from balancing to making sure Duelyst isn't a pay-to-win title – but I have to mention how Keith loves working with the other developers over at Counterplay. There were glowing mentions of Glauber Kotaki (Rogue Legacy, Chasm) for his amazing artwork and Eric Lang (XCOM, Dice Masters) for his board game expertise for instance. I gathered that the ten veteran developers that make up Counterplay are all really dedicated. "We wanted to push ourselves to build something that is going to last for many years and still have a team of ten people."

If what I was getting at isn't absolutely apparent, Keith Lee is passionate about the Duelyst. So much so, that he sold the game without selling it. He was just happy to talk about what he had worked on. He also enjoyed what he was doing, which was evident in how he spoke about his colleagues. And what were the results of our rousing conversation? After we finished talking, I immediately went and downloaded the client. I had to see what the fuss was about.



Duelyst is currently [available](#) on PC and Mac, with a mobile release on the horizon. I wholeheartedly recommend trying it out if you're a fan of tactical turn based games. Actually, if you aren't a fan, you still should check it out. Either way, be sure to check back here as we continue to follow this title!