



Creative Corner Cutting:

Tower of Guns Post Mortem

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Developer, Terrible Posture Games



GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE®
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What is **TOWER OF GUNS**

- Twitch based+Roguelite+Bullet-hell FPS
- Lunchbreak FPS: 30-60 min sessions





Critical Reception

Released March 4 2014, 77% Metacritic

Took ~3850 hours to build

Praised for:

Layout/Level Design, Movement, Music...

Enemy Variety, Replayability, Bullet-Hell Aspects,

Look/Artwork, Being made by mostly one dude

Criticized for:

Sound Effects, Gunplay...

Lack of Enemy Variety, Replayability, Bullet-Hell Aspects,

Look/Artwork, Feeling like it was made by mostly one dude



ToG's Content

- 13 Levels (5 Secret)
- 170+ "Playgrounds"
- 14 Bosses
- 50 Triggerable Items,
- 30+ Common Enemies
- 12 "Gunmods", 14 "Statmods"
- 12 Starting "Perks"
- 21 Guns (12 Starting, 9 secret)

Records (verified)

Longest Run: Level 49 Endless Mode, 166 min (@Memoriesin8bit)

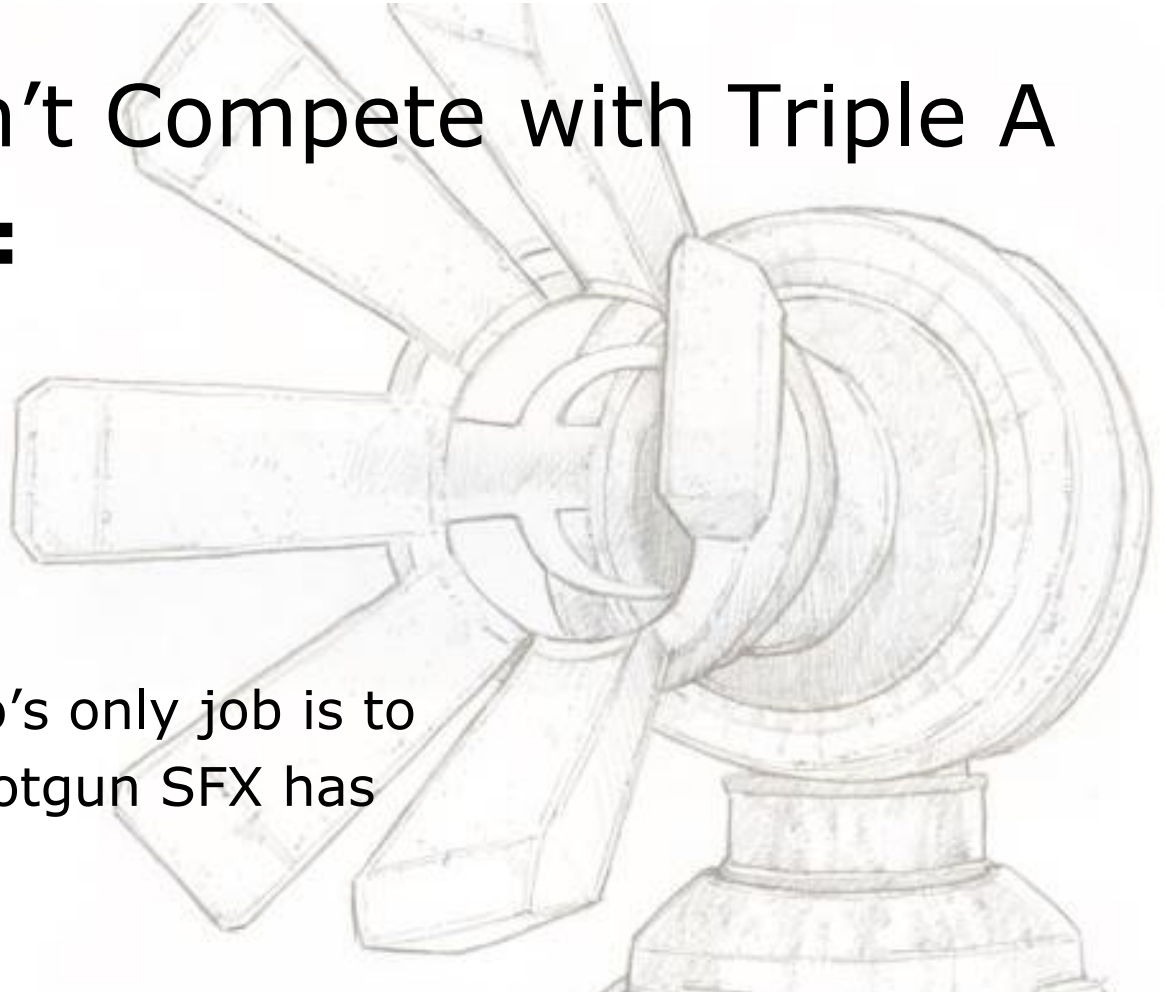
Speed Running: 2 min 25 sec (@HecticXXX9001), 2 min 52 sec (@number_905)



Cheat 1: Don't Compete with Triple A

Triple A Has:

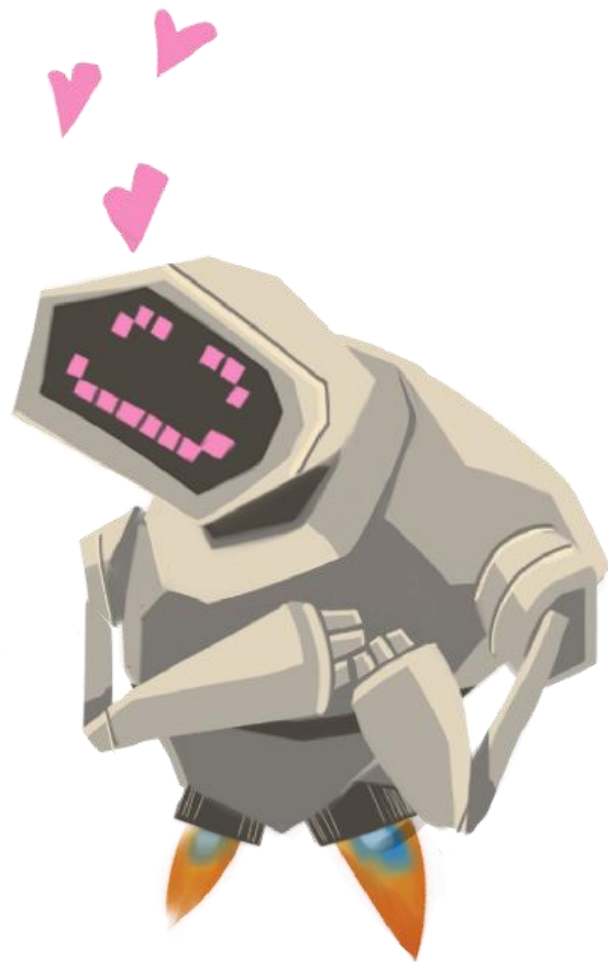
- Money
- People
- Skills
- Technology
- Marketing
- That one guy who's only job is to make sure the shotgun SFX has enough "kick"





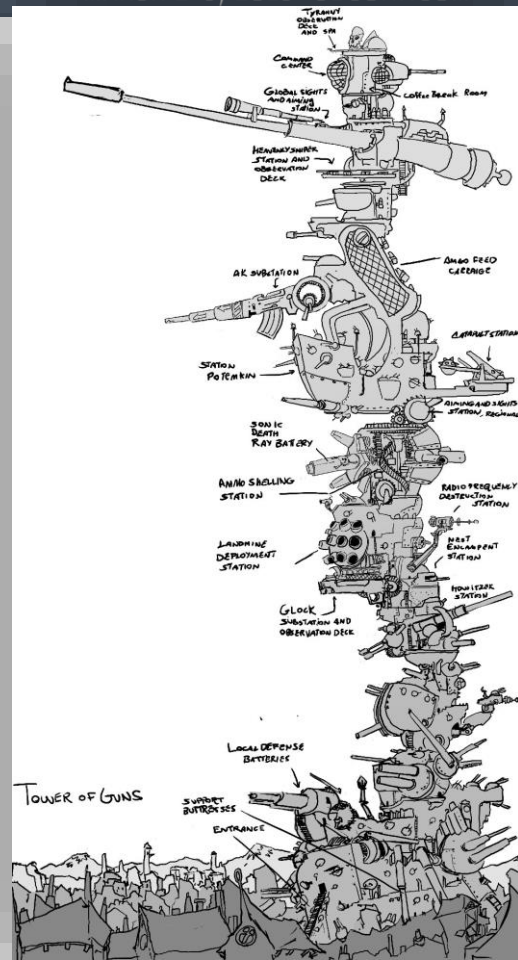
Triple A Does NOT have:

- Ability to take stupid risks
- Ability NOT to see money
- Actual “agility”



“What game would I make if I were still eight years old?”

- Story/art/logic/production values: excuses to NOT make something fun
- 8 year olds don't care why something has spikes, only that it has ALL the spikes
- Looking “Fun” was more important than looking “Good”





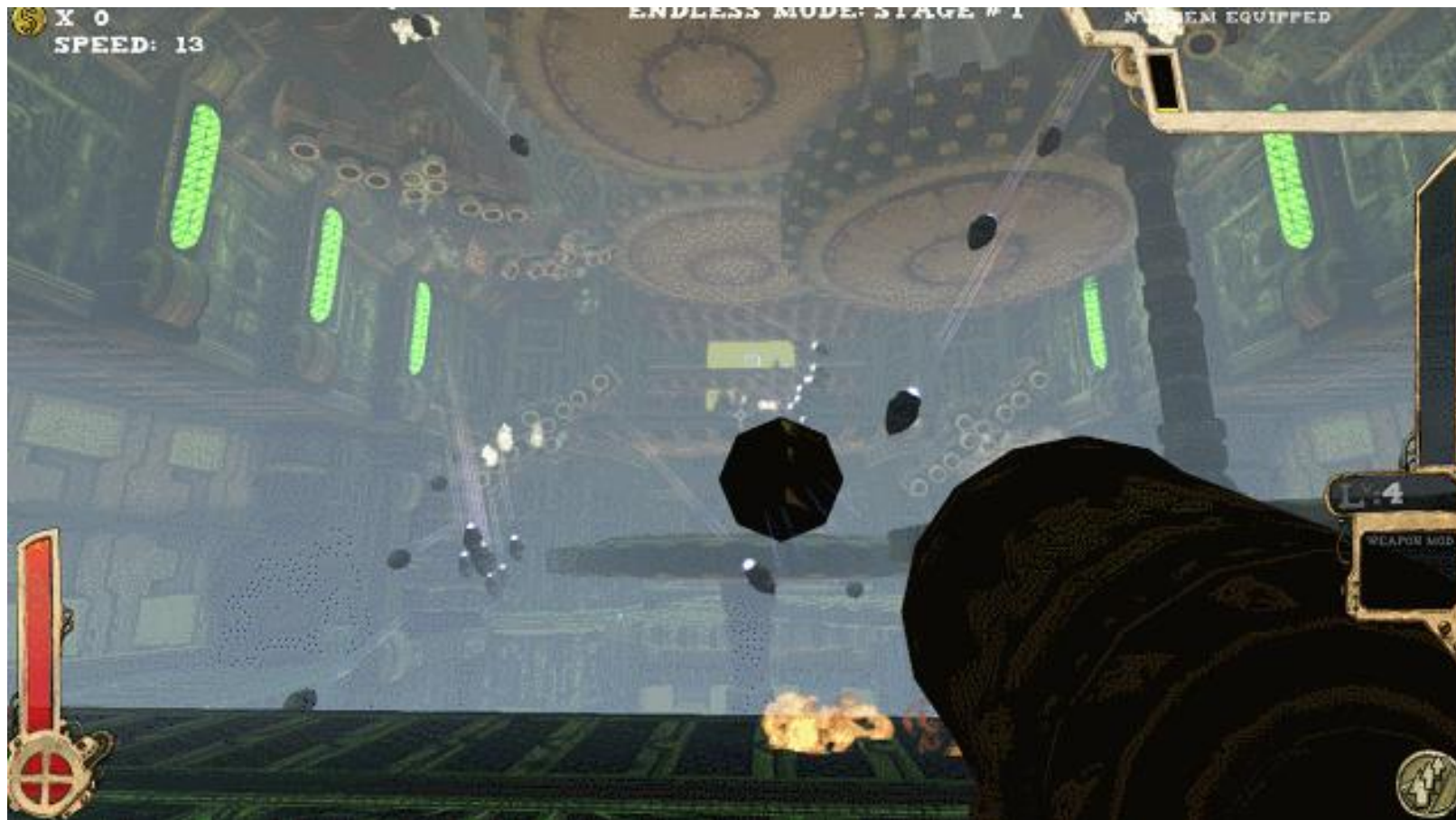
Looks Good





Looks Fun







The Delight of Surprise





Cheat 2: Tactical Procrastination

Planned very little....but still more than I should have:

- Incorrect assumptions about easy/fun (example: many initial Perks)
- Quickly adopted fun when identified(Example: ToG's Bullet-Hell gameplay)

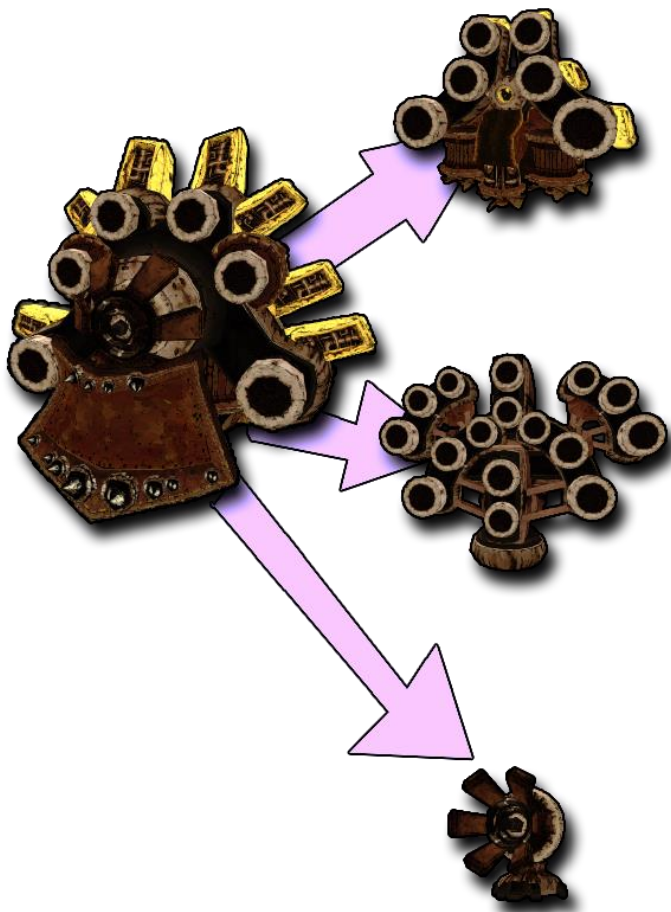
Hierarchal Design: Plan "Trunk", discover "Branches"

- Attitude wasn't "Don't plan ahead" but rather "Don't get ahead of myself"



Boss: "Grandpa Napoleon"

- Orbital Movement
- Pattern Based Rapid Firing
- Slower, heat seaking projectiles



“Napoleon” – Common Orbital Enemy

“Double Dutch” – Pattern Based Turret

“Betty” – Slow Heat Seeking Projectile Turret





Benefits of Hierarchal Design:

- Quick & Fun (players noticed parts I had fun designing)
- Capitalized on Discovery during process
- Allowed fuller exploration of mechanics I spent time on
- Very easy: similar to how I was coding things anyway

Downsides:

- Dependent on assumptions that design “trunks” were fun (failures propagated deep)
- Variety: Things “felt” similar—major criticism of ToG



Cheat 3: Embrace Restrictions





Tog's Art: Optimized, Easy, VERY Fast

- Standard AAA FPS Gun: 40-60 hrs
(Concept/Model/Bake/Texture/Shader/Rigging/Animating)
- ToG Gun: 1-2 hrs

My Limits:

- No money
- Novice Animator
- Novice Scripter
- Terrible Hard Surface Modeler



Problem: I'm a terrible High Res Modeler (Mudbox/Zbrush)

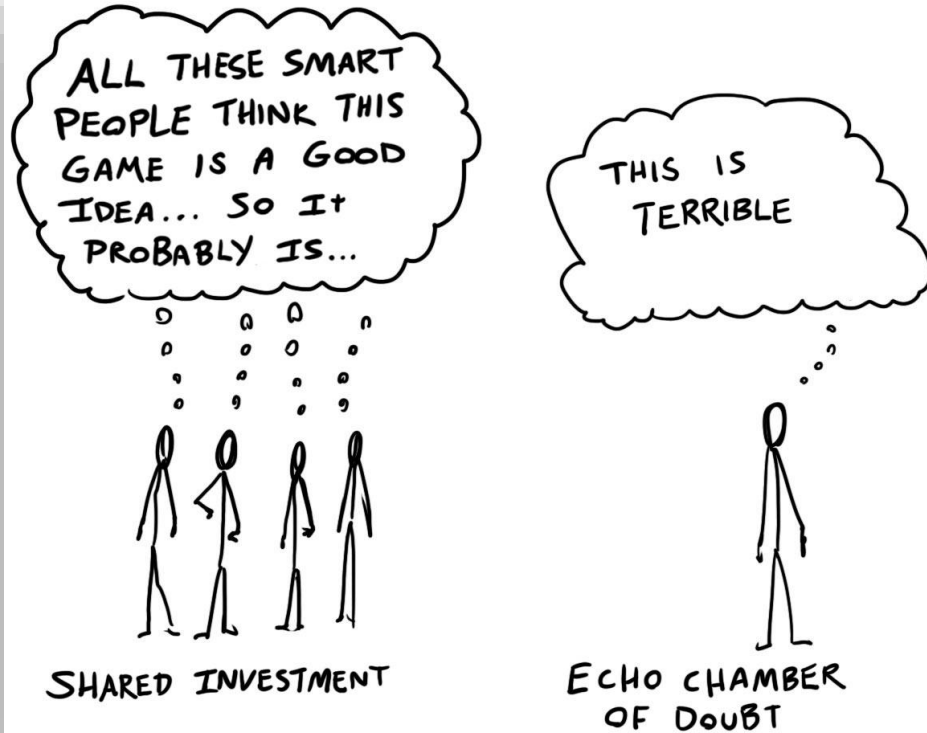
Solution: Style around simpler hard surface low poly meshes

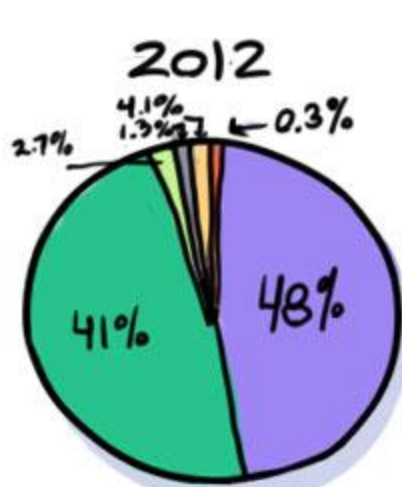
Bright Sides from adopting limits:

- Modeling to Texture
 - Extreme Texture Reuse •MOAR MESHES!!!!
- No Normal/Spec
 - Cheaper In-Game Materials
 - No "stitching seams" In-game, Less Fussing with final level art •MOAR ROOMS!!!
 - Faster creation of Rooms •MOAR GUNS/ITEMS/MOBS/ART/ETC!!!
 - Faster asset iteration
- Able to hand draw art and get away from the damn computer
 - MOAR TELEVISION!!!

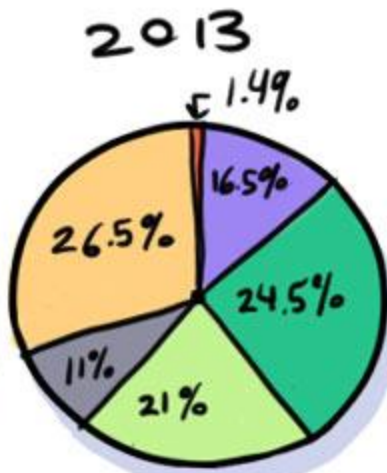


Cheat 4: Motivation is a Resource

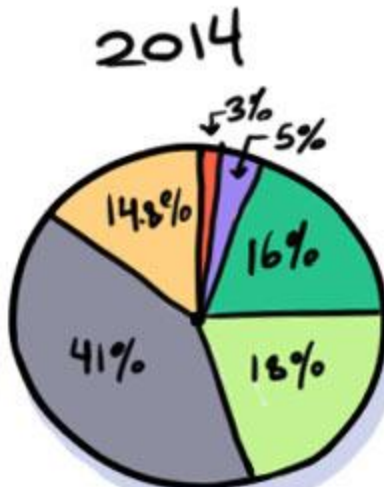




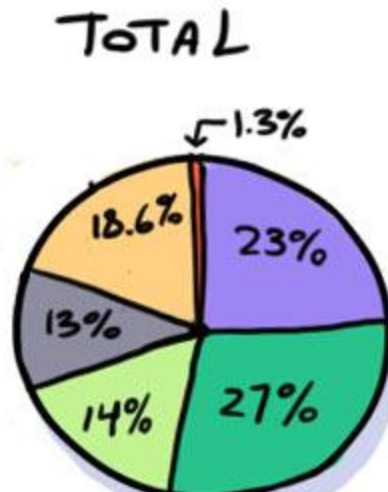
■ ASSET AUTHORING: 505.77
 ■ SCRIPTING: 430.77 hr
 ■ LEVELWORK: 43.15 hr
 ■ BUSINESS: 3.55 hr
 ■ MARKETING: 13.9 hr
 ■ BUGFIXING: 28.6 hr



■ ASSET AUTHORING: 364.6
 ■ SCRIPTING: 518.97
 ■ LEVELWORK: 585.63
 ■ BUSINESS: 30.6
 ■ MARKETING: 241.65
 ■ BUGFIXING: 463.2



■ ASSET AUTHORING: 31.23
 ■ SCRIPTING: 94.56
 ■ LEVELWORK: 87.8
 ■ BUSINESS: 17.8
 ■ MARKETING: 243.1
 ■ BUGFIXING: 56.45



■ ASSET AUTHORING: 901.6
 ■ SCRIPTING: 1044.3
 ■ LEVELWORK: 716.576
 ■ BUSINESS: 51.97
 ■ MARKETING: 498.646
 ■ BUGFIXING: 541.36



Ways I Cheated Demotivation

Obvious things:

- Started day on jumpstart tasks (collision fixes, easy bugs, etc)
- Saved complex tasks for when brain is sharpest
- Broke hard tasks into lots of small, easy tasks
- Made big lists just so I could cross stuff off it

Logging/tracking publically

- This led to “streaks” of good days
- Made me feel accountable

Support Structure: Family, Friends, Fans

- Joint promotions, streaming marathons, trade shows, game jams



Finding Fans

- Early Access Playtesters, charged \$1-5
- Goal: not finding funding, but finding excited people. **Convince others to be excited about your game and they'll convince you**
- New Builds: Underpromise/Overdeliver!
- New builds should FEEL new.
- Interacted with Fans (listen, don't defend, incorporate feedback)
- Positive Reinforcement = feedback loop



Cheat 5: You Are Not Anonymous



1: RELEASE DATE / TRAILER

FIRST OFF: TOWER OF GUNS IS RELEASING ON STEAM ON **MARCH 4TH 2014!!**

ATTACHED IS A LINK TO A NEW TRAILER TITLED "BULLETS AHoy!!"



NO, I DON'T STILL OWN A CRT BUT THEY ARE FUN TO DRAW!

BOTH THE RELEASE DATE AND THE TRAILER ARE PUBLIC AS OF...
...WELL... NOW!
AND I CERTAINLY WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANY HELP IN GETTING THAT TRAILER IN FRONT OF EYEBALLS!

2: STEAM REVIEW CODES

PART TWO: THE REVIEW CODE ATTACHED IS FOR V.1.0 OF TOWER OF GUNS

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ISSUES... I WANT TO MAKE THE BEST GAME I POSSIBLY CAN!
SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO DO A REVIEW OR LP OR IMPRESSIONS PIECE PLEASE REFRAIN FROM POSTING IT UNTIL THE GAME GOES ON SALE (MARCH 4, 2014). THANKS!!

A COUPLE MORE THINGS:

IF YOU PREFER A NON-STEAM REVIEW CODE, PLEASE LET ME KNOW!

HOW TO PLAY

THERE'S ANOTHER GOOPY CARTOON LIKE THIS ON HOW & PAY AT:
www.towerofguns.com/howto/play/

ALL LOWERCASE

SNIPPET FILE!

YOU FOLKS HAVE A LOT OF GAMES TO LOOK AT, SO I'VE INCLUDED A LINK TO A SAVEFILE WITH ALL GUNS/PERKS UNLOCKED.

IT GOES HERE!

INSTALL DIRECTORY \FINRRR\WIN32\

FEEL FREE TO SHOW OFF ANYTHING. IN ADDITION TO THE PERKS/GUNS, THERE ARE A LOT OF PROPERLY DRAWN AND ANIMATED WEAPONS!



Thanks for
listening!

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