

Crystal Compass Podcast: Episode #30 - Transcription

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Description: Episode #30 of the Crystal Compass Podcast keeps things simple, featuring news updates and a sizable Q&A session with Rise of the Tomb Raider Game Director Brian Horton. Hosted by Meagan Marie.

Intro:

[Meagan Marie] Hi everyone, welcome to episode 30 of the Crystal Compass Podcast, I'm Meagan Marie your host and Senior CM over at Crystal Dynamics. It's an exceptionally busy time but equally exciting time at the studio, there are only a couple of months left until November when Rise of the Tomb Raider launches on Xbox One and Xbox 360. The Lara Croft Universe is also full of exciting new offerings, including Lara Croft GO, a new Lara Croft comic book from Dark Horse and fresh updates for Lara Croft: Relic Run. So with this in mind, we're going to keep things simple. This month, following a rundown of the latest news, we're going to host a massive Q and A with Rise of the Tomb Raider Game Director Brian Horton to answer questions you've had since we showed off our two new gameplay demos at Gamescom. So with that, let's jump right into it, enjoy!

[Musical Transition]

Quick Hits [1:34]:

[Meagan Marie] All right, so since we last had this podcast, there's been a bunch of news. So our quick hits this segment is actually not so quick this time. Joining me I have Robin Huey (Brand Coordinator, Crystal Dynamics). How are you Robin?

[Robin Huey] I'm good, how are you?

[Meagan Marie] Great. We have a lot of stuff to go through, so let's go ahead and get started. So E3 was really successful, we had our ambassador program, which was wonderful, and our community ambassadors, who did a fantastic job at providing global coverage at the show, also continued recording after E3. So, if you head over to Tumblr, our blog, which is www.tombraider.tumblr.com, and you search the "community blogs" tag there are some great articles from each of the ambassadors that dive deep into unique facets of Rise of the Tomb Raider's development. It's everything from the tech to the concept art and that process and so on so you should check it out!

[Robin Huey] Our next bit of news is that we have some awesome limited edition posters that have come out. They're created in collaboration with Xbox and four unique artists, each celebrating a pillar of play in Rise of the Tomb Raider. The first was illustrated by comic book artist, Geof Darrow and focused on the theme of woman vs wild. The second poster, and also my personal favorite, highlighted tombs and was designed by the award winning London studio La Boca. Two are still to come and they're from graphic artists Frank Kozik and poster artist Tara McPherson.

[Meagan Marie] How could you say that one is your favorite if you haven't seen the other two
[Robin Huey] I just love their art in general...

[Meagan Marie] so you just love La Boca?

[Robin Huey] I love La Boca's stuff! It's great!

[Meagan Marie] Okay, I'm a huge Tara McPherson fan, I love all of her stuff and I have wanted to own her stuff forever. So actually I'm just really excited to see that one too. But they're all so unique and I really enjoy them.

[Robin Huey] I'm excited for all of them. I'm just saying, I'm a little more excited for La Boca so let's rephrase that: I'm excited for everything, and like La Boca a lot.

[Meagan Marie] All right, big news Square Enix announced in August that Rise of the Tomb Raider will be available for Steam and Windows 10 in early 2016 and the PS4 in holiday of 2016. Get more details on the blog, again that's www.tombraider.tumblr.com

[Robin Huey] Check it out, exciting news!

[Robin Huey] The next bit of news that we have was we were in couple of GameSpot features for Rise of the Tomb Raider. They featured a series of in depth looks. They were released during Gamescom and they detailed player choice in combat and our bigger and more challenging tombs and the myths at the heart of the game. Super detailed, check them out at GameSpot.

[Meagan Marie] Yeah, they're great reads. Also out of Gamescom, we released a video of the Prophet's Tomb. This is our first really big look at tombs. This is what we showed behind closed doors at Gamescom and then after the show was over, we put it online for everybody to see it. It's a great piece of content, it shows why Lara eventually travels to Siberia so you definitely have to check it out. You can check it out on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/user/tombraider

[Robin Huey] But yeah, super exciting clip. I love that section so much – there's so many things to explore and look at in that area.

[Meagan Marie] It's great.

[Robin Huey] Our next bit of news is preorders. So pre-order offerings have started going live with retailers around the world. You can read more about them and get a first peek at card packs on the blog – www.tombraider.tumblr.com

[Meagan Marie] We haven't really gone into too much of what card packs are. We haven't talked too much about what our re-playability of our game is but we'll be getting that soon.

[Robin Huey] Yeah, it's a lot of fun!

[Meagan Marie] You can get an idea of maybe where we're going and then we'll show you more in depth later.

[Robin Huey] Yes, it's a really big tease we know, but it's totally worth it.

[Meagan Marie] It's cool. All right, this was actually news out of San Diego Comic Con, we should have some updated photos soon, a new Rise of the Tomb Raider Play Arts Kai figure is on the way, so again, go to the blog and check out some of the first looks of that. Again it's a Play Arts Kai figure. We had one last time, this one is a new one of Lara in her green jacket and it's super cool.

[Robin Huey] Yeah, I love the prototype, just looking at it and... more news soon!

[Meagan Marie] Yeah, the gray style is cool. I mean like seeing it in black and white is actually kinda neat.

[Robin Huey] Yeah, it's impressive to see the process!

[Robin Huey] Another piece of news we have is Titan Books is releasing "Rise of the Tomb Raider: The Official Art Book" on November 10 in celebration of the game's launch, and we also have another book by Prima Games. They just announced a pair of strategy guides to go with the game's release, promising to help you get to 100% completion. Check out their respective sites for more details.

[Meagan Marie] Right, so let's move on the Lara Universe. This month Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris is free on PlayStation Plus. So if you're a PlayStation Plus subscriber, check it out. There's a whole bunch of people playing it right now, we brought back the community challenges and everything just to celebrate that awesome deal, so take a look.

[Robin Huey] Lots of co-opetition that can happen on your couch or online.

[Robin Huey] Our next news is that classic Lara returns in a new mini-series from Dark Horse comics. It starts with Lara Croft and the Frozen Omen kicking off October 7th.

[Meagan Marie] And you can preorder that on the Dark Horse site.

[Robin Huey] Yes...

[Meagan Marie] Very Cool. Lara Croft: Relic Run is still updating regularly which is, I'm still playing it, it's a lot of fun, still trying to get a lot of the relics!

[Robin Huey] Oh yeah. My thumbs hurt! (laughs)

[Meagan Marie] There's new items and a classic inspired Lara outfit which is a lot of fun- she has her braid and everything, so you can actually check it out on iOS, Android, and Windows devices. It's a free to play game. It's fantastic. If you haven't had a chance to check it out yet you really should.

[Robin Huey] Yes and use #RelicRun across social to share favorite gameplay moments. It's a lot of fun.

[Meagan Marie] Yes! And this last story is actually a pretty big story so we should split it! Lara Croft GO!

[Robin Huey] Yes! Huge news!

[Meagan Marie] So we announced that at E3 and pretty soon, let's see, we're going to get this podcast up soon early next week, it'll be out in just a handful of days after this podcast is up. So if this podcast is the first time you've heard about the game, you'll have wait like three days max, that's it, to play it.

[Robin Huey] Super exciting - it is kind of like a twist on Hitman GO, but "Lara Croft-ized".

[Meagan Marie] Yes, instead of like distilling the brand down to the essence of assassination (like in Hitman GO), it's the essence of adventure. So it's puzzles, there's some and it's all one touch play so it's very simple but the puzzles are actually quite tricky. And there's a lot of classic elements in there and even classic elements – and classic sounds - which I love.

[Robin Huey] Also strategizing too, and you know, having to do some brain work to figure out puzzles like you're actually Lara Croft.

[Meagan Marie] So that's Lara Croft GO, it's developed by Square Enix Montreal, and it's really a fantastic game. We're excited for you guys to take a look at that. It's going to be iOS, Android and Windows mobile, coming August 27th for \$4.99. Not bad!

[Meagan Marie] I think that's all the news we have. Actually, there's tons more news stories, but these are the big ones, so you want to keep up with the day to day, www.tombraider.tumblr.com

[Robin Huey] Yes, and follow us on social.

[Meagan Marie] I'm just saying, that's where you're going to get the daily dose of everything Tomb Raider. All right, well thank you so much Robin, we appreciate you joining us, and next month, next month's podcast might be all yours, because I'm going to be traveling so you guys can look forward to Robin hosting and producing podcasts on her own.

[Robin Huey] Yes, get excited guys! Thanks for joining us!

[Meagan Marie] I'm sure it'll be amazing and a lot of terrible puns.

[Robin Huey] YAY!

[Meagan Marie] (laughs) Bye.

[Musical Transition]

Q&A with Brian Horton [8:55]:

[Meagan Marie] As I mentioned, this podcast is essentially just going to be one big giant Q and A with Brian Horton who's here with me now. Thank you for joining me Brian.

[Brian Horton] It's great to be here Meagan.

[Meagan Marie] So after Gamescom we released two huge pieces of content at Gamescom, and now we're going to talk over them, because the fans forums, and the fan sites, and all of our social media has questions about those two demos. But first, before we jump into that, there's a couple of questions that people have been asking repeatedly, and I want to at least address them quickly. So people are wondering when we're going to see Xbox 360 gameplay, and when we're going to reveal the composer. Kind of non-answers but we only have a couple months left until launch so before then we will be showcasing these things. Everything has its time and place.

[Brian Horton] That's right.

[Meagan Marie] And also there was some clarification desired on the ship date. So in the Americas and Asia, it's November 10, Japan is November 12, and Europe, Middle East and Africa is November 13.

[Brian Horton] Great.

[Meagan Marie] So there we go, spelled it out nice and clear.

[Meagan Marie] So, starting with you Brian, I think what would be good is if you could give us an overview of the two demos that were showed off at Gamescom so that people who haven't seen it, I hope they have at this point, they're definitely online, they know what they missed.

[Brian Horton] So we wanted to show two different aspects of gameplay. One was about Lara's choice and the open world and the fact that we're building these large open spaces where the player's going to have a lot of opportunity to explore, get rewards, do challenges, and build the kind of character that they want to take on these challenges of combat. What we've been talking about is guerilla style combat which opens up a lot more opportunities for stealth, and more opportunities for strategies and transversal, and can ultimately be played in different ways. That was one piece of content that we wanted to show.

[Meagan Marie] Yep!

[Brian Horton] And the other piece of content we wanted to show was, yes, Rise of the Tomb Raider has tombs, and it's something we know you guys have been asking for and we're very excited to be able to show it. We're also very happy that, for the most part, people really seem to appreciate the way Syria played out, but we didn't want to do that in the stage setting because we wanted it to play it out in its entirety. And from the time we have on stage, it was better to show that behind closed doors and ultimately as a video after the fact, so we always had a plan to show those two pieces of content in that order.

[Meagan Marie] Yeah, that's nice to hear because a lot of the time fans don't necessarily have the insight into why we make these decisions, but it's a little bit more difficult to show a large exploration space on a stage. And then there's also- even in the "Prophet's Tomb" we didn't show any of the puzzle-solving, we walked into that big room and then cut it into a little montage...

[Brian Horton] And we hope you guys appreciate that too, because we could've shown the whole sequence, but we want the players to really experience the tombs. We wanted to show off some of the new things, like Lara can translate them, you can build up her language skills, and translate monoliths. There's going to be dark, creepy parts of it but there's also going to be this great, fantastic, classic discovery of an ancient space. We wanted to be able to show something that was controlled enough in a tomb setting that you could get through it and it's the early tombs that have a lot of that "tutorialization," that deliberately guided stuff, but understand the concepts that we showed there are going to be opened up once we get into our larger tombs. You'll be able to explore those more.

[Meagan Marie] Great. Okay, moving forward, just so people have the reference, we call the Gamescom demo the "Advancing Storm" demo, correct?

[Brian Horton] Correct.

[Meagan Marie] Okay, and then the Syrian tomb, that was behind closed doors, the “Prophet’s Tomb.” For additional context, how much time has passed between Tomb Raider and Rise of the Tomb Raider?

[Brian Horton] It’s been about a year, right?

[Meagan Marie] Yep.

[Meagan Marie] How would you describe Lara’s headspace or mental space motivation at the beginning of the game?

[Brian Horton] We’ve seen a big turn from when she started Tomb Raider 2013 to when she’s finished it. She’s obviously experienced a lot. She’s gone through this traumatic event, but she’s come out of it stronger and a lot more confident and seeing a glimpse of something that she couldn’t quite explain. And what drives her through the end of that game, and through the comics, and ultimately to the beginning of Rise, she needs to know more about this. She’s got this drive, this desire, to understand more. She follows the breadcrumbs of her father’s research which she didn’t quite believe when she was younger until she saw these things and now she’s using that as a launching point to ultimately reach out on her own and find this amazing discovery, this idea, of the immortal prophet. That’s what drives her - is to, at all costs, show there are things like that are being kind of covered up. No one quite believes her, so there’s a bit of frustration in where she’s at. Ultimately she has this drive to discover more.

[Meagan Marie] Right. We do have a couple questions about Richard Croft. We’ll get to that in just a second. So you mentioned the Syrian tomb isn’t really a [full] tomb, correct?

[Brian Horton] Yes.

[Meagan Marie] And so it’s going to have a bit more of the hand-holding and also, because we cut out the exploration, we didn’t want to showcase all the puzzle solving. It felt like it had a more scripted or set piece moment in the video. So what would you say is the balance between these scripted moments and open moments of exploration in the game?

[Brian Horton] In general to tombs or in the whole game?

[Meagan Marie] In the game, in general, there is quite a bit of open, isolated exploration in the game, correct?

[Brian Horton] Yes, there is. If you want to fully explore the entire game, you’re going to be spending a lot of time on exploration. It’s much more open as far as the options the player has. So it really comes down to your play-style, your preference. If you want to direct line it and do just the story, you’re going to have a third of exploration puzzles, combat, and hidden tombs or something like that, but if you really are taking advantage of 100% you’re going to be spending at least 50% of the time in exploration or discovery mode, which is really exciting.

[Meagan Marie] It is! And my next question is going to be on hour counts for that. And this is actually something I can weigh in on now...

[Brian Horton] Yeah, you can.

[Meagan Marie] Because the last three days, last weekend, I spent playing the game...

[Brian Horton] You're going to make people jealous.

[Meagan Marie] I know, I'm sorry. I put in 30, probably 35 hours, and I got to 97%.

[Brian Horton] That's crazy.

[Meagan Marie] I'm still not finished!

[Brian Horton] And it's not the first time you've played this either.

[Meagan Marie] No, I've played through the game several times but I just tried going through the story very quickly.

[Meagan Marie] So the story, if you just play critical path, what would you put that hour count at?

[Brian Horton] Well we've been saying, if you're really good, you could probably get through in 10-12 hours or something like that. But you have got to be blazing through that game. I think most people generally will be spending 15-20 hours on critical path; as a first play. And that's not just us gut-checking that, that's from experience, watching people play it. So it's a bigger game.

[Meagan Marie] Yeah, and I feel like because I'm one of those "completionists," and a lot of people listening are also going to be the "completionists," that 30-hour mark is a real thing. There are a lot of hidden things in the environment.

[Brian Horton] I played it again recently and I was trying to get to 100% and but because I got to a point where I had to finish, I got 79% and I spent 21 hours.

[Meagan Marie] That is so good to hear. End the podcast now, that's all they need to know, right?

[Meagan Marie] So now that we got that out of the way, we'll get to more specific questions directly from fans. As I mentioned, we have a lot about Richard Croft. So Evan, you know Evan-

[Brian Horton] Yes.

[Meagan Marie] He says, “What’s the relationship Lara has with Richard Croft now. In the last game, Lara was forced to see things differently after Yamatai and her perspective over myths and her father’s work has changed.” So, are we going to get into the mystery over his disappearance, is the manor coming back, lots of questions there.

[Brian Horton] There’s going to be a lot of these kind of questions that we will want to go into all this detail because it’s so cool and there’s so much cool stuff. But a lot of it unfortunately goes into the territory of things we want to experience in the game. I’ll try to skirt around some of these things, I’ll qualify a little bit with these answers. Lara has a complex relationship with her father. Obviously, there’s a love that she has for her father, but at the same time there’s issues she’s going to have to deal with. And that’s really what this story deals with, in addition to her going after her goals that she really is dealing with that relationship that she has with her father.

[Meagan Marie] (From Shaikh) How far into the game is the Syrian Tomb demo?

[Brian Horton] I can say it’s very early in the game and that it’s one of our first experiences, you’re going to learn a lot of your core skills.

[Meagan Marie] So we could consider Syria as a prologue, correct?

[Brian Horton] Yeah, it’s a prologue, it’s one of our playable spaces in the game but it really is a prologue location

[Meagan Marie] With that being said, the diversity in Siberia is actually quite stark. The different locations are very different and very unique.

[Brian Horton] Each time you went into a different location, it really felt like a new dimension and a new kind of weather, a new kind of flora and fauna, and I think it’s going to be even starker in this game because of the extreme temperature differences.

[Meagan Marie] Great. So Lukass is wondering is the town we see in the Syrian demo “explore-able”?

[Brian Horton] That’s a great question. We never intended for that town to be an explorative space. It is to set context, its remoteness, against the backdrop of a larger city. It has proximity to a town but Lara will not be exploring that.

[Meagan Marie] Okay. LarasFan asks, “The backpack in the demo, is she carrying this for a specific reason, are you guys bringing it back as a permanent object?” People picked up on that right away that the leather backpack looked a little familiar.

[Brian Horton] Yeah, it is not something she will use on her person, but there are going to be other things that will show through her progression that you will be able to craft, which is pretty exciting.

[Meagan Marie] They are pretty cool and they feel very appropriate because of the setting she is in.

[Meagan Marie] Fear Effect asked, "I noticed during the Syria demo, the necklace doesn't move at all." Did we remove physics and is it coming back?

[Brian Horton] That's a good question. I fight very hard that we invest in our secondary animation. That is one thing I cannot confirm at this time that we are absolutely going to have, unfortunately.

[Meagan Marie] Okay, so we will TBD that.

[Brian Horton] And there are reasons why, with our new facial animation system and how the necklace works -- I'm going to go into detail...

[Meagan Marie] No that's great, go into detail!

[Brian Horton] The necklace had to be sculpted in and around her facial animation system, and now that her neck flexes, that impeded our ability to easily create the same physics system we had in the Definitive Edition, because it's part of her facial animation system. In a way, it made it a complication for the necklace.

[Meagan Marie] Well that is cool to know, it's a trade-off, you have the improvements in one area, and it's a little bit of give and take.

[Meagan Marie] Can you clarify what type of customization there is for hints and visual aids in terms of being able to turn things on and off? So this is not one specific person, this is a bunch of people on the forums wondering, they want to know if there are options to turn things on and off, survival instincts, glows, hints, buttons, and so on. But they would like that one definitive answer, we've answered parts of that in different forums before.

[Brian Horton] Well I can talk about some of the parts because as we're putting the final tuning into the game, one of the things we're looking into is more options for the player, but we are absolutely able to turn off survival instinct for the game. You can toggle that off. There are other things we do not have manual controls for that we are looking into. But to say everything is going to have that toggle, we can't promise that right now.

[Meagan Marie] OK, we're still looking into it and the bottom line is that we do hear you and you are looking.

[Brian Horton] Noah and I are very much excited to give you as many options as you can to customize that experience.

[Meagan Marie] Ok. So, Mikky asks, as we saw in the first Gamescom demo, the one in we saw in Siberia, Lara has her four main weapons, but we've also said we can switch between different kinds of weapons, bows and so on. How are we able to do that, is that something you can you do on the fly or only at basecamps?

[Brian Horton] That is at Basecamp. So when you're at Basecamp, you will have the options to go into your weapon selection and equip the specific class that you want. What's really cool is that we give you the stats on each of those things, you can see how you've upgraded them and how they compare to one another. So it is not just aesthetic, there are strategic differences between those weapons. And you can make your choices at base.

[Meagan Marie] Great. Another question, at the end of the Gamescom demo we saw a flamethrower enemy. If the flame touches Lara, does it affect her outfit at all?

[Brian Horton] That's a good question and the answer is no.

[Meagan Marie] What are the inspirations for the pre-order outfits? These questions are both from Fear Effect, "What is the inspiration for the preorder outfits, which feel very hunter like in nature, and are there more different and diverse outfits coming?" So a lot of the outfits we've shown are things she would've crafted with resources available in the environment, correct?

[Brian Horton] Yes and it feeds into our system, so there's a reason why they look like that, because they're not just there for "alternate outfits", they're actually things that you can craft and make...

[Meagan Marie] Or would've found contextually in the environment...

[Brian Horton] Or would've found contextually in the environment... That's why those themes feel very similar but there are going to be outfits that are not all of that rustic nature.

[Meagan Marie] Okay cool. They all make sense in the world, I've seen them, they look really cool.

[Meagan Marie] Also, some questions about why we chose the tank top outfit for Gamescom demo, do you want to weigh in on that?

[Brian Horton] Well in Syria, that is what she wears. She goes into the desert with that outfit. And it is an augmentation from what we saw in TR9, and it is a new style of tank top and new pants, but for the Advancing Storm demo we chose that outfit, and that's something that we

did in context to show different material types, so you see the different surfaces in that rain state. It's just something we really wanted to showcase but during the narrative of that section, that's not the default outfit, it's actually that green jacket that you see.

[Meagan Marie] And there is some player choice that once you've unlocked certain upgrades, you can change them at basecamp, correct?

[Brian Horton] Yeah, so if you like certain outfits, if you think Lara's cold and you want her to wear that winter jacket all the time, you can choose to play the game after that section with the winter jacket.

[Meagan Marie] When I was running around in hub spaces, I'd always put on all the fun outfits, and then whenever I would do the narrative section of the game, I would put on whatever outfit she was supposed to be wearing, just to keep that connection in my head. I don't know, that's the way I play.

[Brian Horton] And that was the way you wanted to play it! And it's cool you had that opportunity.

[Meagan Marie] All right. Relight is wondering if there's an Easter egg or any meaning behind the license plate in the Syrian jeep?

[Brian Horton] Hmm...

[Meagan Marie] They tracked it down- they could tell that it's a Turkish license plate. And then they figured that the jeep came from Turkey because it's the northwest of Syria--

[Brian Horton] Yep.

[Meagan Marie] There you go! Is there any meaning there? Did we grab some numbers?

[Brian Horton] That's great! I don't think I knew that anecdote and I've now learned something about our game.

[Meagan Marie] There we go! Relight also asked, "Does Lara's pistol have unlimited ammo in the game or was that just for the demo?" Because it had unlimited ammo in the Syrian tomb.

[Brian Horton] Yeah, so in the Syrian tomb she has unlimited ammo but that is not the case through the rest of the game. The reasons we did that were a lot about fiction, we didn't want to place ammunition all throughout an ancient undiscovered place. So, that is why she has unlimited ammo.

[Meagan Marie] Valenka is wondering about the physics of Lara's hair during the intro cinematic during the Syria Demo. She thinks it moves a little bit like she's underwater, is that a finished model?

[Brian Horton] No, the footage that we filmed for the Gamescom demo is based on the same code from the E3 demo and we hadn't tuned the physics in the jeep ride. I made a comment about this earlier on the forums, but I just wanted people to know that we have addressed it, it was difficult because she was moving through the jeep and that created some havoc in our physics system so we've since addressed the issue for that jeep sequence.

[Meagan Marie] Very cool. Okay, a couple of questions about difficulty modes, so we have multiple difficulty modes, correct? What's the difference between the types of modes?

[Brian Horton] So just like in the last game, a lot of it is very combat centric. So when it comes down to difficulty of enemies, the amount time that Lara takes to heal, the amount of "take hits" that they take, that's the easiest dials we can change to alter the experience. For puzzles, we don't really do a big change other than there are obviously modes that will inhibit survival instinct, and things like that, to make the game a bit more challenging. Now, we do have a mode we haven't gone into a lot of detail about that really is a cool hardcore mode. I think most hardcore fans will appreciate playing and I'll give one little hint on that one. For instance, as you guys know from the last game, we have regenerative health, and in this mode, we've reintroduced the idea of manual heal. We have a mode that will give you the ability to not have that regenerative health, you have to be more med-pack-like in how you deal with your health management. So that's a cool new addition we added to the game.

[Meagan Marie] Great. Tecstar70 asks, "What do you think of the graphical elements like lens flare, water drops, and mud splatters, for the visual experience of the game. Is this something that can be turned off?"

[Brian Horton] Well, you guys must know that I love that stuff, it was in the last game. We don't have the ability to turn off that stuff in the game. But we have made changes to it from the last and I think we do it in a much more judicious way, a little bit more surgical, and hopefully you guys won't be as irritated by it, for those that are sensitive to mud based effects.

[Meagan Marie] And a big_house says, "The Syria demo looked very linear, not a complaint, just an observation, and with a collapsing tomb aspect, I'd assume there's no way to travel back to that first room in the pillar after finishing this section. Is this correct?" Or was there a camp that was purposely missed and that we didn't show the whole thing?

[Brian Horton] Yeah we didn't show the whole thing and it's, against the linearity question, the section that we skipped over happened to have a lot of your exploration and discovery giving you more to do. But yes in general we talked about Syria being a little more linear because it's an early level and it is one of our smaller main tombs, but what was the other part of the question?

[Meagan Marie] If you would be able to fast travel back to it, in case you missed anything.

[Brian Horton] Yes because there is discovery we will have fast travel back to it.

[Meagan Marie] Great. (From Vintage Croft) Are there going to be abilities to travel back to places that have maybe collapsed or seemed less accessible after that sequence in the game, are you still able to fast travel back to them and explore.

[Brian Horton] Yes.

[Meagan Marie] Okay. So we would not do that to them. We would not put like a collectible in an area and then not allow you to go back and get it.

[Brian Horton] It would be a big no-no.

[Meagan Marie] Yes okay, so no worries there guys. (From Shaikh) Are classic moves like the swan dive and handstand returning?

[Brian Horton] No, but there is a new move that I think people are going get excited about. Well, we showcased it actually...

[Meagan Marie] We did! I'm just waiting for you to say that there's...

[Brian Horton] So we have a dive, it's just not a swan dive. So if you want to be very particular, it's a dive

[Meagan Marie] It's a pretty cool looking dive.

[Brian Horton] It's a dive though yeah we have it. And you can choose to do it and not do it

[Meagan Marie] You can choose to do it and there's some really high places to dive off of. And I had fun running around doing that.

[Meagan Marie] (From Shaikh) From a "dev" perspective, why does Lara talk to herself?

[Meagan Marie] I thought that might be a thing that would be interesting to explain.

[Brian Horton] Yeah, it's funny, it's a discussion we have a lot just about what, when we set up making a game, we never want it to be where Lara would never say anything. We want to know who she is and what she's all about. We're making a game where Lara is often on her own too, so there's opportunities that are there where she can make comments in the world. There's a couple functions for that – 1) to let you know a bit about who Lara is and what she's feeling. 2) It gives us information. It gives the player information. Some people find that to be over-

explaining. We go back and forth. We try to make it so we're never in a position – we try to edit it down as much as we can while keeping the integrity of the goal. What's the goal? The goal is always giving some context and to have a better understanding of who Lara is. That's always what we try to think about. There have been discussions about to prune when we can. There's a lot of games that do this. Batman comments on his world and it happens in The Witcher and all these other games that we've been playing. We don't feel like it's out of sorts with the games that are going on right now, but I understand that some people take issue with Lara talking during the game. We believe it enriches your context to the world and gives us a better idea of what Lara's thinking.

[Meagan Marie] At the end of the Gamescom gameplay reveal, there was a total of 15 screenshots of tomb locations highlighted, mlcKyByRnE is wondering if that is all the tombs in the game or if there are more?

[Brian Horton] That was not all of the tombs in the game in the montage. We don't want to show them all off at that point but we do want to give an idea that there a lot of tombs to explore. You've played the game...

[Meagan Marie] Yes!

[Brian Horton] and you know there are a lot of tombs to explore – both challenge tombs and mainline tombs.

[Meagan Marie] Yeah and the great thing about this – which we've chatted about a little before – is that it's not just the large nested puzzle main path tombs and then what I think are the more challenging, "challenge tombs" as they are appropriately named. I got stuck on a couple of them and they are quite challenging – I was really excited about that. Then there's also crypts which don't have puzzles but these are places where people of interest have been buried and you can find items and discover more about the world. Then there's also caves – you never know what you're going to find in them. A lot of times there are animals which is interesting and can be scary...

[Brian Horton] With the monolith system there's discovery there as well. Once you get journals and look at these murals, you'll be able to translate monoliths and have more discoveries. There's just discovery all over the game.

[Meagan Marie] Absolutely. (From Kxtniss) So... can you tell us more about how many environments there will be in Siberia? Will it be mostly snowy forest? Can you explain?

[Meagan Marie] We touched on this a little bit but maybe you can explain. The Gamescom demo starts off in geothermal valley so right there...

[Brian Horton] Yes, and just to be absolutely clear, the Geothermal Valley is in Siberia. It is a location, a pocket in there that has no snow but is surrounded by mountains of snow. That is to

show that we are doing different kinds of ecosystems in Siberia. In addition to the two – the big snowy hub that you saw in Bear Valley, the Soviet Installation that you see screenshots of, the Geothermal Valley is another. There's other locations as well that you haven't seen yet.

[Meagan Marie] From Awestruck, are all the traps in slow motion?

[Brian Horton] We give you a bubble of slow motion because we tried it in real time and what a trap feels like in real time is instant death. We tested it too and we wanted a real time trap system – especially the ones of the swinging arms. It was impossible to complete that challenge. So the quick answer is yes, and there is a reason we did it and it's because it helps with the amount of reflex time that people need to survive.

[Meagan Marie] That being said even, there were a handful of times that I did not survive my playthrough. Every once in a while they get tougher and I would be caught off guard and they would still get me.

[Meagan Marie] Our next question is from LarasFan: my question is about the language system upgrade. How exactly does Lara benefit from it? If you upgrade your language skills to the max, can you re-visit some tombs and read stuff that were unreadable before?

[Meagan Marie] Can we talk a little more about that?

[Brian Horton] The monolith really is the thing you're trying to translate. There's different levels of monoliths for different languages so for instance, there's a Byzantine language that we've talked about. There's not just one level, there's multiple levels, and if you unlock one, you might encounter another Byzantine monolith that is at another level of language that you have to decipher that requires more exploration and finding those murals and journals. The idea behind all of them are a map that gives you locations that you can discover new things. Everything that you try to discover has a purpose in the game whether they're narrative or, in this case, it's going to benefit your gameplay.

[Meagan Marie] Shark_Blade asks: resolution and FPS?

[Brian Horton] Yes, resolution, we've targeted 1080p. That's not upscaled, that's 1080p at 30 frames a second.

[Meagan Marie] Mikky asks, "Has item crafting speed been increased for the demo or is it slower in the real game or is it something you can upgrade?"

[Brian Horton] It's something you can upgrade so it's another cool part of the game loop.

[Meagan Marie] If it's a priority to you to be able to craft on the fly, it's something you can choose to make quicker.

[Brian Horton] It's one of the things that we've said, "Hey, people really like doing this..." and when you're thinking of things you want to invest in, that's one of those things.

[Meagan Marie] Also, some questions about, since there isn't a day/night cycle, the more narrative driven time change. How do players fast travel back to specific times of day post-game to secure those rare resources? So we mentioned those animals that only come out at night or in the rain and so forth...

[Brian Horton] Yeah, that's a great question! At this time, we are focused on sort of a cycle of day and night from the locations and we cycle those pretty rapidly. As you're making your way through that area, you can catch a nighttime-time of day or a daytime-time of day and those resources will be available to you.

[Meagan Marie] That's specific to post game though...?

[Brian Horton] Yes, specific to post game.

[Meagan Marie] And... I put this at the end because we've been asked this so many times and now we might actually be able to answer it. Will there be any playable flashbacks between Lara and Sam? Is Sam playing a role in this game? Can we answer that?

[Brian Horton] I think we can answer that...

[Meagan Marie] The comics are done at this point.

[Brian Horton] Yes, the comics have expressed the story of Sam and that Sam is not a part of Rise of the Tomb Raider.

[Meagan Marie] Read the comics if you have not read the Dark Horse comics yet. That will tell you where Sam is and it's Lara and Jonah at this point moving forward.

[Brian Horton] Yeah, I feel like we're able to answer stuff at this point. It's kind of nice!

[Meagan Marie] Yeah, we're getting close to launch!

[Brian Horton] We're getting so close guys. I cannot wait!

[Meagan Marie] That was a lot of questions. Thank you for answering all of those and I think those were questions we have had for a long time. It's wonderful to finally be able to get to them and to get your insight on things like the necklace – interesting things that we otherwise would not have known.

[Meagan Marie] Thank you so much Brian. I really appreciate it.

[Brian Horton] It was great talking to you guys!

Musical Transition

Outro:

[Meagan Marie] That's it for this month. Keep up with us on the blog, Twitter, Facebook and our other social channels as we continue the march towards November 10 – not long now. See you online and thanks for listening!

[Musical Transition/End]