

DARK EARTH

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Dark Earth was officially started on **July 7 in 2019** after I first showed the project on the *OldUnreal* forums. It was a rushed decision on my part, because I didn't know how much work it was going to be at first. I should have waited for a bit longer before revealing our works.

But what started Dark Earth?

I've been obsessed with beta Unreal since 2013 and I always dreamt about playing those infamous prototypes in their "full forms". Always wanted to play those maps being shown on the screenshots and videos, but as of yet, still only a couple were recovered by the Unreal community. In 2017/2018, I've played both the ***SkyCity Remake & Cryptic Pyramid*** made by **Yrex** and... they had a big impact on me. Playing them was the closest I could get to experience this "full beta remake". And my long-time friend, ***makemeunreal*** was also remaking beta levels at the time. I got inspired.

My very first beta map was a mine-themed one, namely the "*Warehouse*". You might know which screenshot I'm talking about. I never showed it to anyone beside makemeunreal, and although it was just a single room, it's a nice memory to me. After the first attempts with a full mine level, I made my own SkyCity remake in Unreal prototype version *0.84a*, and by March 2019 my crypt map, *Midian* was "done". I have to say, it was also a learning experience. I had to learn the very basics of map making for this project, just kind of like how the Epic team did. Not only did I learn how to use the Unreal Editor, but also learnt how to use Photoshop, GIMP and Blender too. I'm thankful for that as well. A handful of maps were in the making already, so I started thinking... What if I used all these levels to create the "*ultimate beta experience*"? I asked Yrex via email if I could use said levels of his for this project, and he said yes. I got permission, so it was time to work on Dark Earth.

The title of this project was different at first. I named it "*YearZero*" because of my obsession with the same titled album by Nine Inch Nails at the time. It didn't feel right, so I asked makemeunreal for a proper title, and he started listing names that were once considered for Unreal. Namely they were *Fire*, *UnGod* and *Dark Earth*. The last one immediately got me hooked, and I said, "*That's it!*". Although it shares the same title with another game from 1997, it has nothing to do with it.

makemeunreal and I were the only ones doing new maps in the beginning, but it was already too big for us. In 2019/2020 I was in my senior year in high school, and a year later I went to university, and so did makemeunreal. As I said, I shouldn't have shared Dark Earth so early. It built up a quick enthusiasm (or hype) for the project, and though the feedback was lovely and really nice, I just couldn't bring myself to work on it more. It was either a focus on school or this. makemeunreal had to unofficially "leave", because med school is no joke, he had no free time. And therefore, Dark Earth got stalled and slowed down a lot of times during development. Mainly because of me not having motivation to continue, IRL problems, burn-outs and school.

Then Yrex joined the "team" to speed up the process. You finished most maps by the end for which I am grateful and **very sorry for my lazy, unmotivated ahh**. Sorry again! At least your maps absolutely ROCK!

Lastly, I want to say a personal thank you to the following people: *my family, the ISV Clan (including: makemeunreal, Chocky0424, WizMyCookie, Carlos and everyone else over the years), Kati, Bebe, Yrex, Leo, Saul Strange, Neroche, Twiztid (the axe is family!) and YOU! (and, also whoever I forgot to or should have put on this list)*

THANK YOU FOR THE DOWNLOAD, SEE YOU ON THE NEXT ONE!