

Level Analysis

BioShock: Fort Frolic

BioShock is a retro-futuristic first-person shooter game. The game portrays an ideal city called Rapture, built by its founder, Andrew Ryan, an extremist individualist and elitist in the "Atlas Shrugged" vein, where Rapture is his vision of a utopia. Here, there are no restrictions, science is unburdened by ethics, and art is unrestricted by morality. However, before the player arrives, most of the city's inhabitants have already lost their sanity due to the abuse of a substance called ADAM, gradually mutating into crazed creatures known as Splicers. In the game, players take on the role of a plane crash survivor named Jack, guided by a man named Atlas, to further explore this fallen and perilous city, seek the truth and make their own choices in the face of moral dilemmas.

In the game's seventh level, players find themselves in Fort Frolic, a city under the erratic rule of Sander Cohen. It's a place brimming with bizarre creations by this mad artist, featuring vibrant neon lights, theaters, shopping centers, and exquisite lounges. Players are tasked with locating and eliminating Cohen's former disciples to gain passage through the city and reach Andrew Ryan's location.



Figure 1. A pianist is performing in the Fleet Hall Theater.

NARRATIVE

This level presents players with a diverse array of enemies and challenges, including the need to solve puzzles while engaging them. The central atrium of this level connects to Rapture Metro. It encompasses upper and lower atriums, plazas, upper-level plazas, lower-level plazas, and a shopping mall.

Fort Frolic is known for its elevated difficulty. Players must navigate a complex puzzle-solving process while contending with numerous enemies determined to hinder their progress. Two new enemy types debut here: Elite Bouncers and Plastered Splicers, both capable of significant harm. The Plastered Splicers, in particular, pose a stealthy threat, ambushing players silently from behind in groups, making it difficult to anticipate their presence or attacks. Finally, the level's portrayal of the deteriorating state of the underwater city reduces visibility, heightening psychological pressure and intensifying the overall challenge.

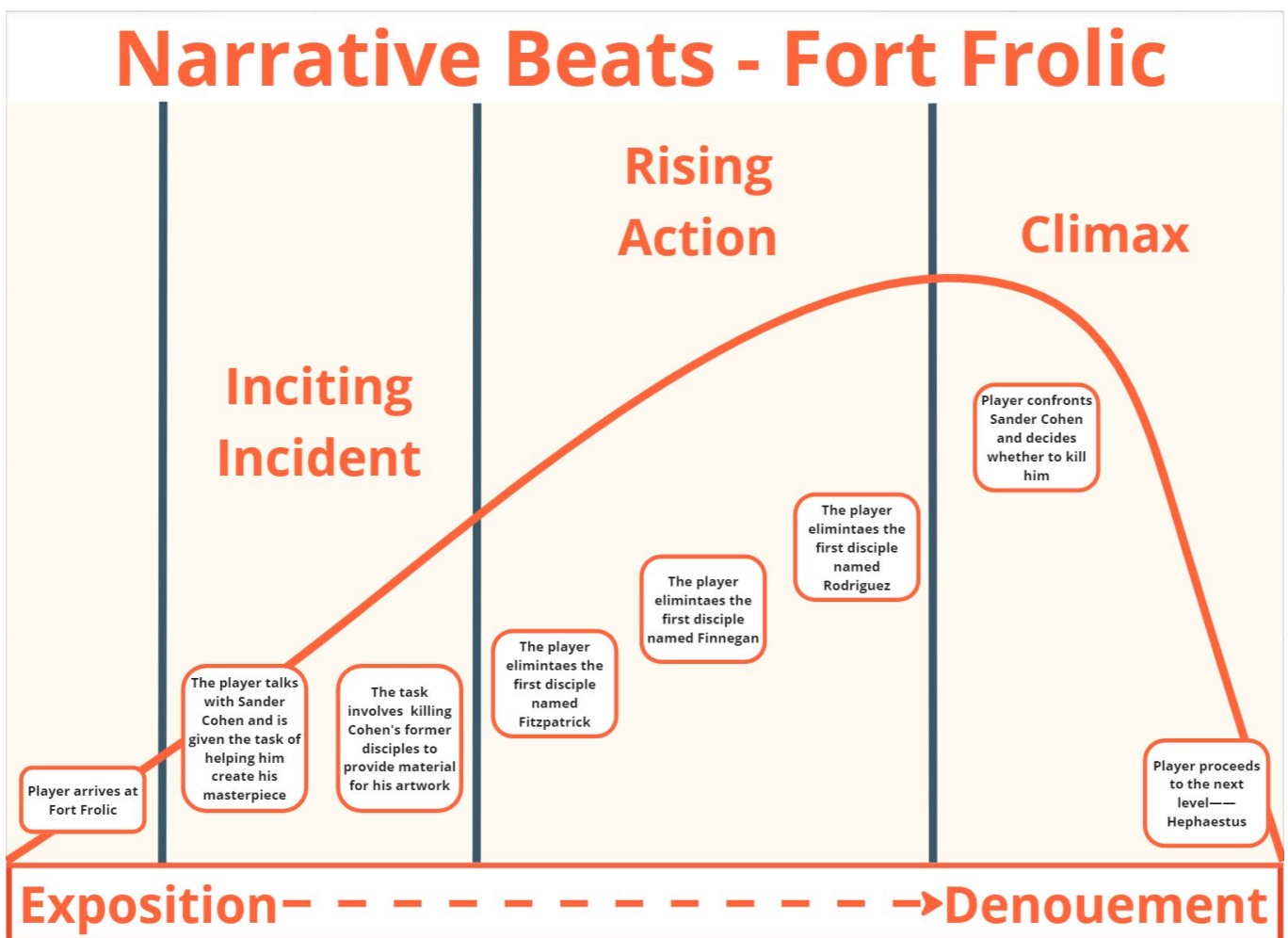


Figure 2. Story arc of the level Fort Frolic.

Narrative Beats – Point Form

- Arrives at Fort Frolic.
 - Talks with Sander Cohen.
 - Accept assassination mission.
 - ◆ Successfully complete the mission.
 - Approach Sander Cohen.
 - ◆ Decide whether to kill him.
- Leaves Fort Frolic, progress to the next level.

LEVEL MAP

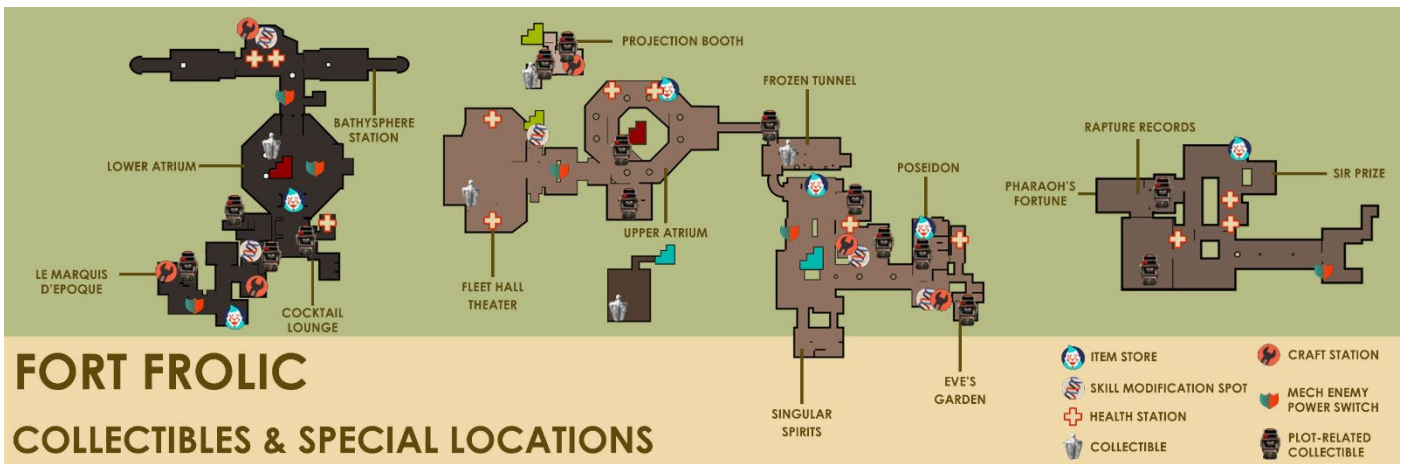


Figure 3. Depicts the collectibles and special locations in the level.

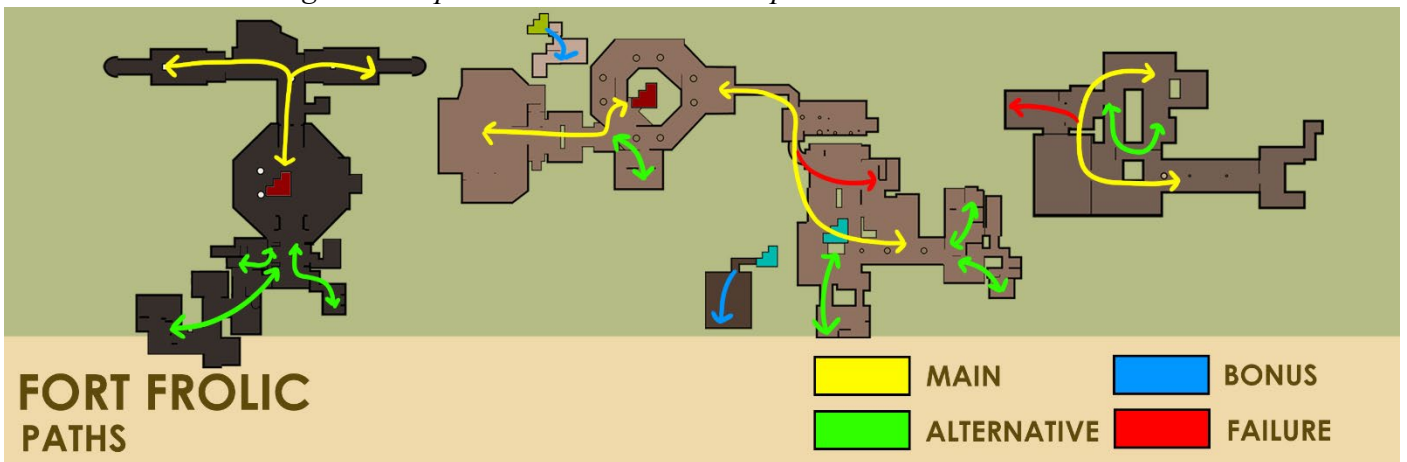


Figure 4. Depicts the gameplay paths in the level.

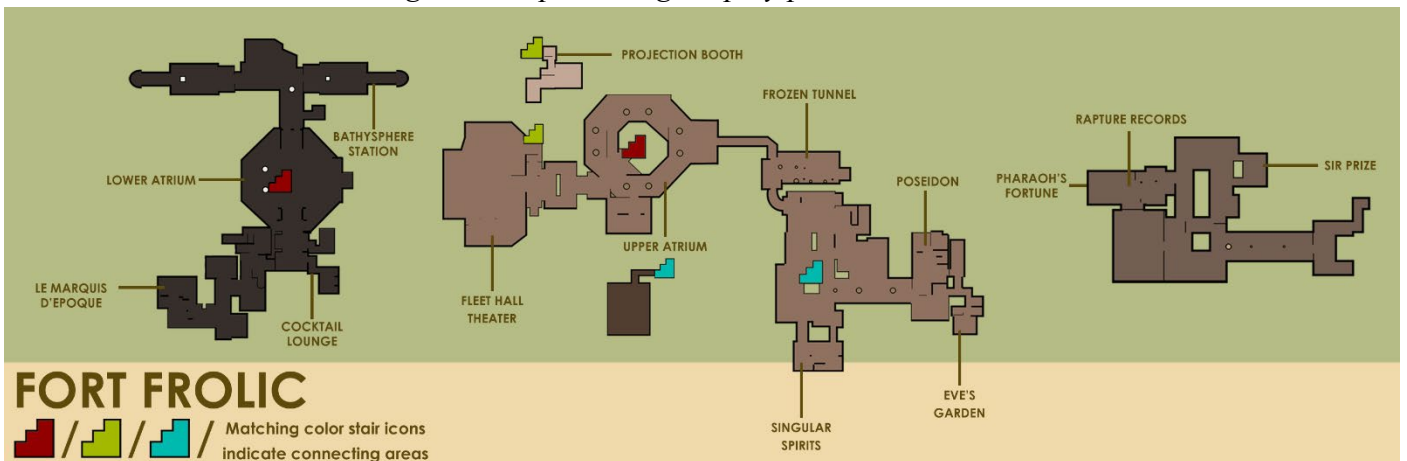


Figure 5. Depicts floor connections in the level.

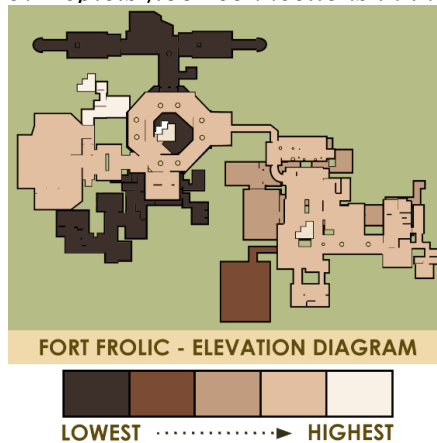
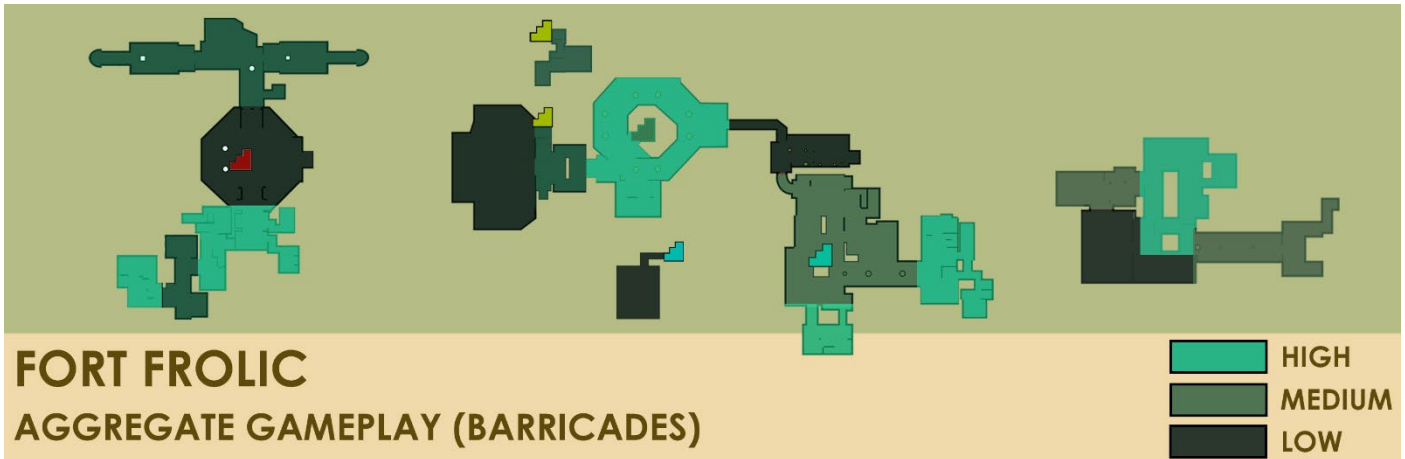
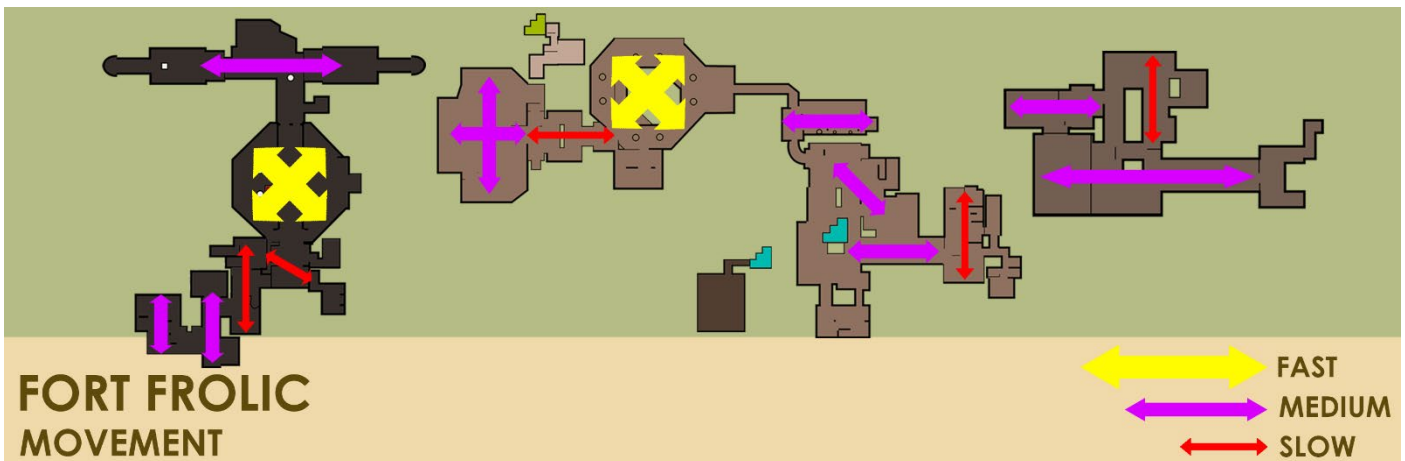


Figure 6. Depicts the vertical relationships of the level.

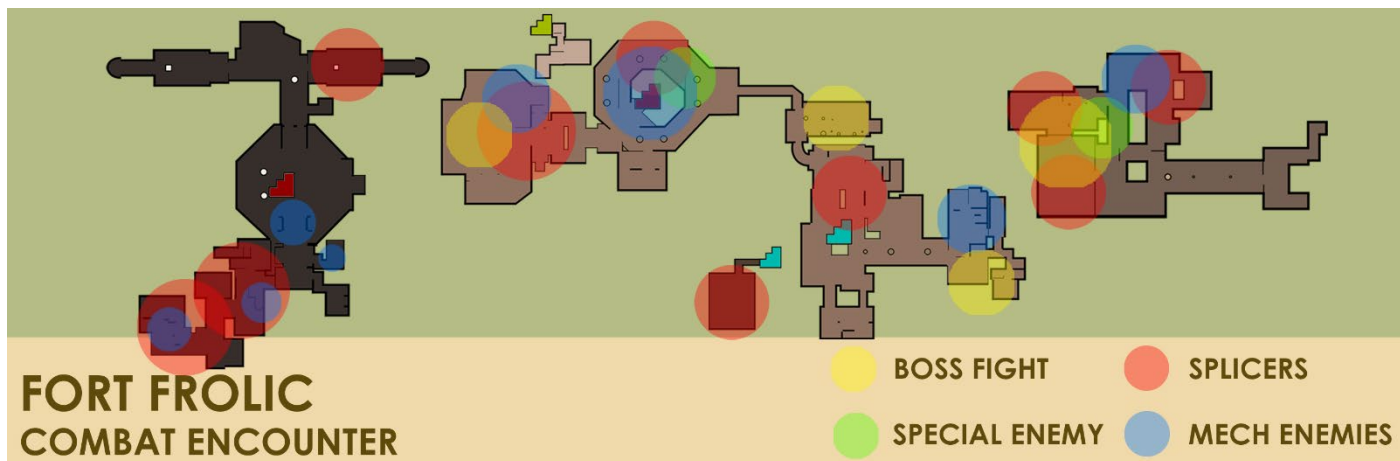
ANALYSIS



As players advance through the **HIGH** area, they will face intense combat scenarios, frequently requiring them to hack security systems and contend with unique foes like Big Daddies and Little Sisters. Upon entering the **LOW** area, players engage in narrative-driven interactions, while the **MEDIUM** area functions as a transitional zone for resupplying and healing.



Within the atrium (**FAST**), players gain increased mobility due to the interconnecting passageways that bridge two levels of the building, enhancing their traversal efficiency. In the more confined and obstacle-filled sections (**SLOW**), players are encouraged to proceed at a slower pace, fostering exploration and item collection. The **MEDIUM** area, positioned between these two extremes, functions as the central battleground where most combat takes place, providing players with a versatile combat experience without the constraints of overly cramped spaces.



Combat is dynamic and involves engaging with multiple enemy types. The level encourages players to switch between various types of enemies, such as proactively hacking mechanical enemies and directing them to confront another humanoid enemy.

Memorable Moments

Interactions: Players gradually delve into Sander Cohen's madness and Fort Frolic's deterioration as they complete the assassination tasks he assigns.

Level Design: Players are required to explore extensively to accomplish their objectives in this level. The level is teeming with collectibles, well-stocked stores, and craft shops, allowing players to adapt and enhance their combat strategies as they progress. Furthermore, scattered throughout the level are 15 audio diaries that provide additional insights into the game's world and narrative.

Choices: Players are confronted with the pivotal decision of whether to take Sander Cohen's life after experiencing the deranged tasks he assigns and witnessing the enigmatic city he governs. This decision continues to impact the game's narrative until its ultimate conclusion.

SUMMARY

Overall, Fort Frolic boasts an exceptionally distinct artistic style, immersing players in an atmosphere and aesthetic dominated by its enigmatic overseer, Sander Cohen. The level's narrative design adheres to the classic three-act structure: exposition (Cohen assigns assassination tasks to the player), climax (the player completes the tasks and decides whether to kill Cohen), and resolution (the player successfully proceeds to the next level).

The game offers ample opportunities for exploration, featuring collectibles, stores, and craft shops. The distribution of these locations and items allows players to seamlessly switch between combat strategies. For example, using Gene Banks for real-time genetic modifications that grant various abilities. Positioned at roughly the halfway point of the game, this level presents a relatively high level of difficulty, as indicated by the introduction of two new enemy types and three enemies that must be eliminated to progress. Combat unfolds frequently. Nevertheless, the presence of plentiful collectibles, such as Health Stations for healing and Plasmids for unlocking new abilities, facilitates players' progress.

The level's structure is intricately designed, offering players not only primary paths but also alternative paths, bonus paths, and paths to failure. Alternative paths enable sequencing choices related to collecting and puzzle-solving, bonus paths yield rewards like unlockable chests and Plasmids, and failure paths contribute to the level's sense of closure while guiding players along the correct paths.

Furthermore, the level adeptly integrates various mechanics and narrative elements, methodically scattering them throughout the map.

Community Perspectives

1. The level's ambiance is highly captivating, evident in its lighting, settings, and their seamless integration with the narrative. Players thoroughly enjoy observing and experiencing the stark contrast between Fort Frolic's opulence and its post-collapse decay.
2. The portrayal of the final boss in this level, Cohen, is exceptionally well-depicted, fully capturing his madness through his "artworks" players encounter as they progress.
3. The introduction of new enemies adds an extra layer of urgency to combat. Players must remain perpetually vigilant as silent Splicers approach them in dimly lit scenes, intensifying the challenge of combat.

My Perspectives

From my perspective, the level's success hinges on its effective guidance, despite its multi-layered design and interconnected rooms. Navigating the level was easy, thanks to outstanding signposting. Prominent signifiers like flickering neon lights and iconic landmarks efficiently replaced the need for a map and enhanced my memory of the level's layout. However, the level's high combat difficulty created a palpable sense of pressure as I advanced through the level, aware that numerous enemies could rush in at any moment. I found the level's objectives somewhat linear and monotonous in the aspects of progression and narrative, as players are compelled to follow tasks step by step to approach Cohen. This seems contradicted by the moral decision players must ultimately make at the end of the level.