

Retro Resurgence

Art Design Document

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Version 1.00

Produced at New York Film Academy

Index

- Revision History 3
- Art Direction 4
 - Summary 4
 - Visual Inspirations 5
 - Tone 7
 - Style Breakdown 8
 - Character Style..... 14
 - Color Script..... 17

Revision History

- Document Started (4 September 2024)

Art Direction

Summary



Retro Resurgence is an action narrative driven game set in the chaotic and gritty streets of Los Angeles. It draws a heavy inspiration from classic Hollywood films such as Die Hard, Terminator, Robocop etc. The game leans into explosive fast paced action of the era while telling a more personal and emotional story of William, a special divisions agent. At its core, Retro Resurgence is a story about a man trying to forget its past but finds it waiting around the corner.

Art Direction

Visual Representation

The game's visual aesthetic captures the duality of 80s LA. The streets are alive with neon lights, bustling crowds, and the vibrant energy of a city that never sleeps. Billboards flash advertisements in neon pinks and blues, synth music pours out of nightclubs, and people fill the sidewalks. On the surface, the city appears lively, thriving, and full of excitement.



But beneath this façade of brightness and life, there's a sinister undercurrent. The streets may seem happy and alive, but corruption, crime, and decay are lurking in the shadows. The neon lights only serve to highlight the stark contrast between the glittering surface and the darkness that seeps into every alley and corner. This juxtaposition of lively color and hidden evil is at the core of Retro Resurgence's aesthetic—showing that even in a city full of life, danger and darkness are always present.

Art Direction

Visual Representation

Parallel to the urban danger of LA is the protagonist's haunted past as a Vietnam War veteran. Having survived the harrowing, deadly perils of the jungle, he carries the scars of war both physically and mentally. The dark, dangerous jungle, with its constant threats of ambush and survival, contrasts sharply with the neon-lit streets of LA. However, the jungle's dangers—stealthy enemies, unseen threats, and the fight to survive—are echoed in the urban landscape. In *Retro Resurgence*, the city is its own kind of jungle, where the protagonist must once again confront death and violence, using the same instincts that helped him survive Vietnam.

The world of *Retro Resurgence* is unforgiving, whether in the thick, oppressive heat of the jungle or the cold, concrete streets of LA. Both are filled with unseen dangers, and both have shaped the hero into the man he is—a survivor.



Art Direction

Tone

The tone of Retro Resurgence is gritty, intense, and deeply atmospheric, combining the visceral action of 80s cinema with the emotional weight of a man haunted by his past. The game is set in a world where survival demands both strength and resilience, whether on the neon-lit streets of Los Angeles or in the deadly jungles of the Vietnam War.

The tone is dark, with an underlying tension that mirrors the protagonist's internal battle. LA, though vibrant and seemingly alive, hides corruption and danger beneath its surface. The city feels oppressive, a place where hope is rare, and trust is a luxury. The protagonist's journey through these streets is not just about overcoming physical threats, but about navigating a world that constantly tries to break him, much like the jungles of Vietnam once did.

The game's tone shifts between explosive, adrenaline-pumping action—reflective of 80s action films—and quieter, more introspective moments where the weight of the protagonist's promises and past choices bear down on him. His experiences in Vietnam have hardened him, but they have also left him vulnerable to the psychological scars of war, creating a tense emotional undercurrent throughout the narrative.

Retro Resurgence captures a sense of impending danger at every turn. The player feels that no matter how alive the city might seem, death and corruption are never far behind. It's a world of shadows, where even in moments of action and chaos, the emotional depth of the character's journey adds gravity to the relentless pace of the game.

Art Direction

Style Breakdown

Retro Resurgence is a gritty, action-driven game set in the neon-soaked streets of 1980s Los Angeles, inspired by iconic 80s action films like *Die Hard*, *Terminator*, and *RoboCop*. The game's visual style reflects the era's distinct cinematic feel while balancing the protagonist's personal journey of survival and redemption. Here's a breakdown of the game's style through the Four F's: Frame, Form, Feel, and Filter, along with its Focus and Filter elements that unify the visual experience.

Frame

The frame of *Retro Resurgence* is rooted in 1980s LA, a city where the glitz of neon lights and bustling nightlife hides the grim reality lurking beneath. Billboards, VHS tapes, and chrome-covered cars evoke a time of excess and technology on the cusp of change. The city's streets are a chaotic mix of energy and menace, where bright neon signs light the night and bustling sidewalks create a sense of life.

Yet, beneath this urban vibrancy lies a darker truth. Shadowy back alleys, decaying warehouses, and graffiti-covered walls reveal the city's corruption and danger. This duality is central to the game's frame: the seemingly lively surface contrasts with the dangerous reality that the protagonist must navigate. The environment captures the duality of the city, balancing neon beauty with urban decay, and highlighting the tension between illusion and truth.

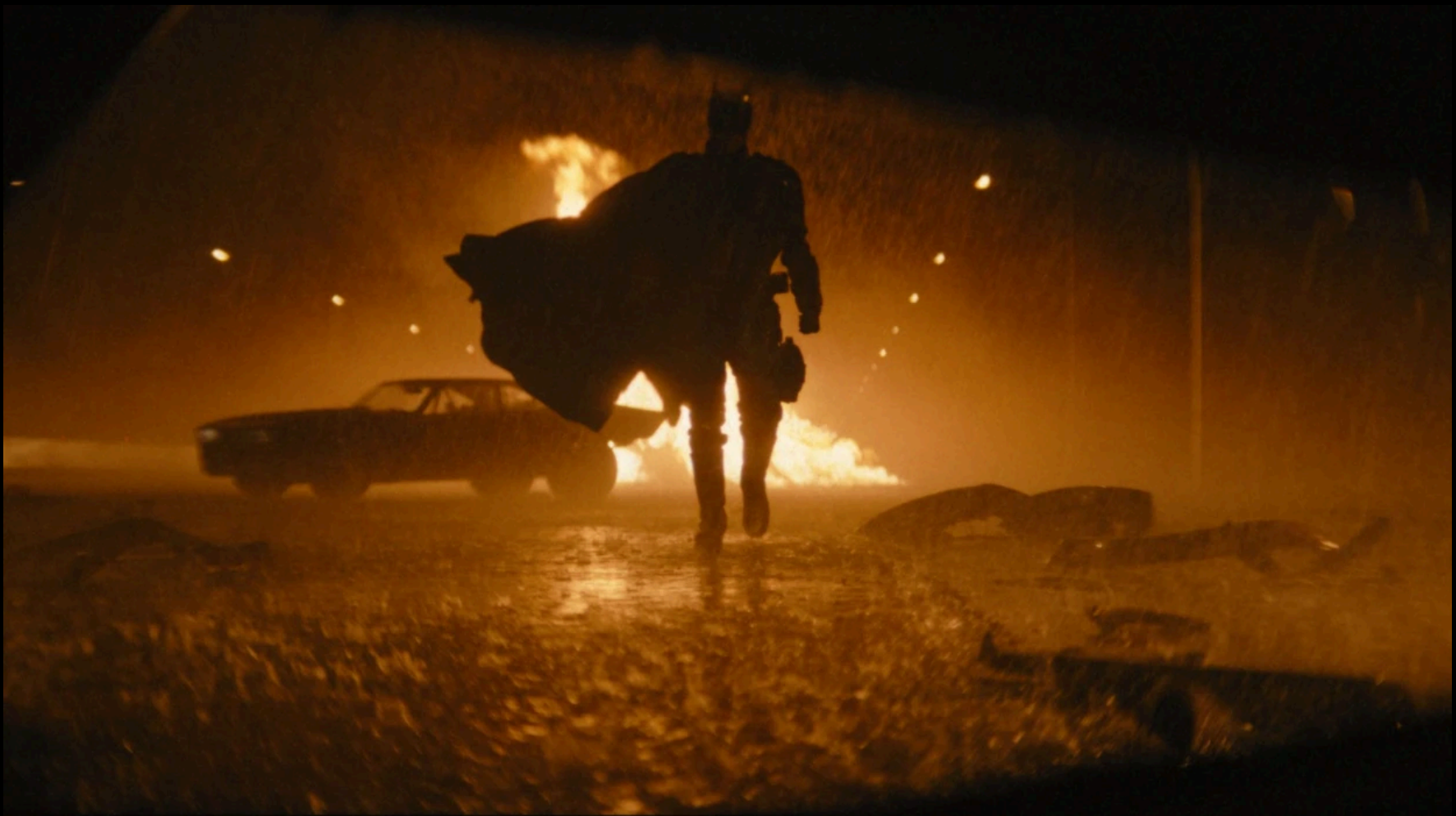
The protagonist's past in the dense, dangerous jungles of Vietnam offers a stark contrast. Here, the frame shifts to a more natural, grounded setting, where survival was brutal, visceral, and unforgiving. The oppressive jungle, with its unseen threats and deadly traps, echoes the challenges faced in LA, making the city another kind of jungle for the player to survive.

Form

The form of Retro Resurgence balances realism with slight stylization, enhancing readability in the fast-paced action sequences. Characters are designed with rugged, muscular silhouettes, channeling the larger-than-life action heroes of the 80s. Proportions are pushed just enough to emphasize the physicality of the protagonist and his enemies, giving them a distinct presence without detaching from the gritty realism of the world.

The architecture of LA reflects the cold, angular feel of a city on the edge, with towering buildings and industrial zones that trap the player in tight, tense spaces. The environment supports the narrative and gameplay, with wide streets for fast-paced action and dark, claustrophobic alleyways that heighten suspense.

The color palette is a striking blend of neon blues, purples, and pinks contrasted with the deep shadows of the city's underbelly. Bold, saturated colors reflect the high-energy 80s aesthetic while the interplay of light and dark mirrors the game's themes of deception and hidden danger. Warm tones, particularly in explosive action sequences, add intensity, while cool neon hues evoke the cold detachment of the city. The visuals also incorporate a dirty, textured look, featuring lens dirt effects and anamorphic cinematography, adding to the gritty realism and atmospheric tone. This aesthetic evokes a visual style similar to *The Batman* (2022) by Matt Reeves, enhancing the raw, cinematic feeling of the world.



(The Batman(2022) by Matt Reeves)

Feel

The feel of Retro Resurgence is defined by a tense, atmospheric mood that keeps the player on edge. The game is not just about fast-paced, high-octane action but also about the oppressive weight of survival in an unforgiving world. The city feels alive, but in a dangerous, volatile way—each alley hides a potential threat, and every neon sign is a reminder of the corruption lurking beneath the surface.

The Vietnam War flashbacks offer a different feel—oppressive heat, dense foliage, and constant threat. The jungle is dangerous, primal, and its influence on the protagonist is felt in every moment of the game. The feel of survival in the jungle is echoed in the city, where the protagonist must rely on the same instincts to survive.

Moments of quiet tension punctuate the action, allowing the player to feel the weight of the protagonist's promise and the scars of his past, making the action sequences feel even more impactful when they erupt.

Focus

The focus of Retro Resurgence is on lighting and environmental mood. Neon lighting is not just a visual element but a storytelling tool that shapes the player's perception of LA. The city's vibrant, glowing lights represent its surface-level appeal, but as the neon flickers and fades, the grimy truth of the city is revealed. The lighting plays a key role in the duality of the environment, emphasizing the contrast between the glamorous and the grim.

Special attention is given to the game's dynamic lighting and reflections. Rain-soaked streets reflect neon signs, creating a gritty, cinematic atmosphere reminiscent of the 80s action genre. These lighting effects are crucial to setting the tone and mood, especially during key moments of the game's narrative. In Vietnam flashbacks, the lighting shifts to more natural, muted tones, contrasting the urban environment and emphasizing the raw, survivalist feel of the jungle.

Filter

The filter of Retro Resurgence is driven by the tension between gritty realism and the cinematic stylization of 80s action films. The visual presentation is filtered through the lens of 80s excess and action, with the neon lights, bold colors, and stylized action sequences providing a heightened, film-like experience.

At the same time, the game's filter constantly reinforces the theme of deception. The city's vibrant exterior hides deep corruption, and this visual contrast is expressed through the use of shadow and light. In the bright neon glow, danger is always lurking. The filter also extends to the protagonist's Vietnam past, where the jungle's oppressive, natural environment contrasts sharply with the artificial urban sprawl of LA. This duality defines the filter, creating a world that feels both cinematic and raw.



(Source: Google Images)

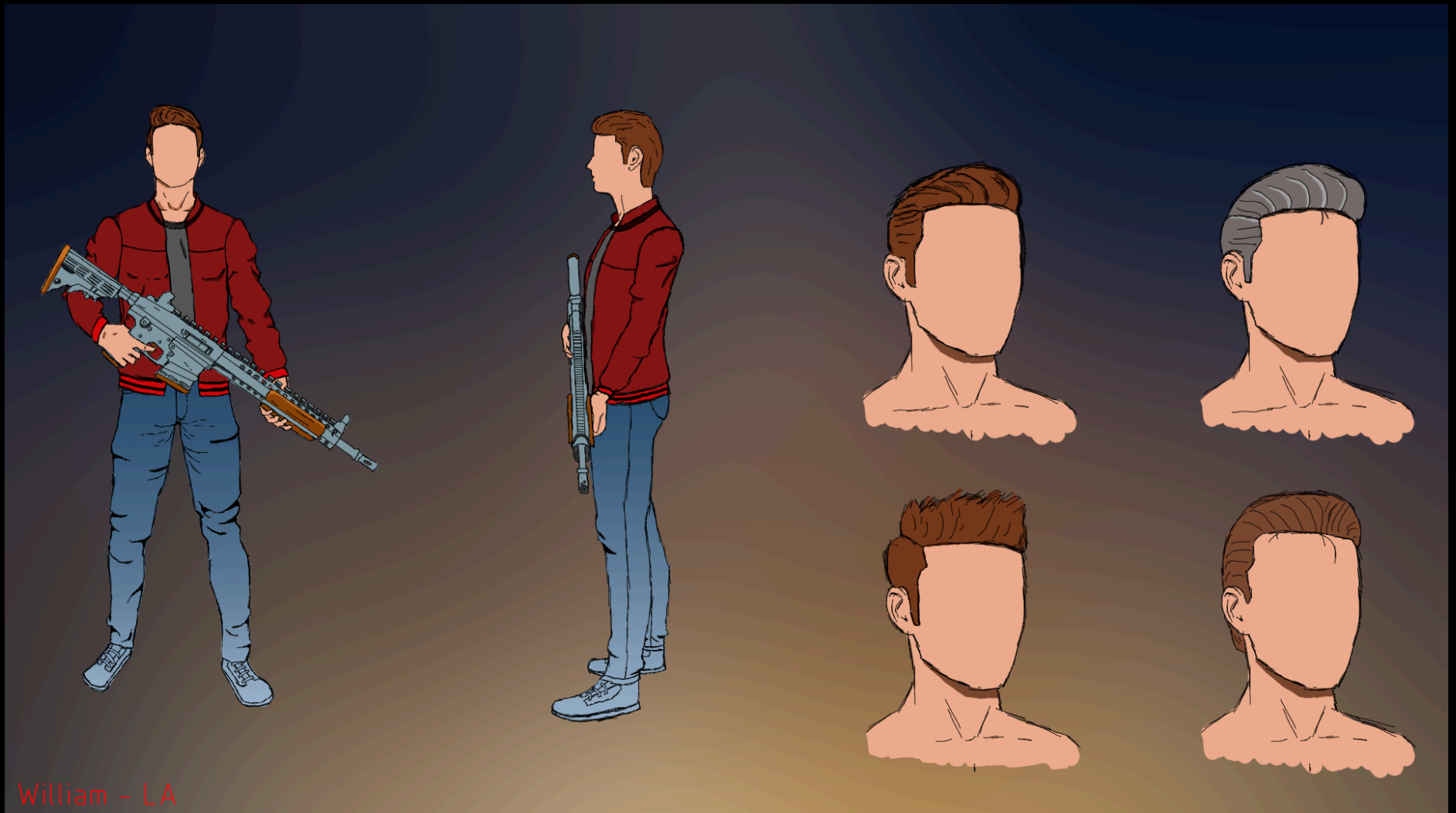


(The Batman(2022) by Matt Reeves)

Art Direction

Character Style

William



William, the main protagonist of Retro Resurgence, is a hardened Vietnam War veteran now serving in a special division unit. His experiences in the war have shaped him into a battle-hardened, resilient individual, but they've also left deep emotional scars, most notably the loss of his closest friend. The physical manifestation of this tragedy is etched onto his face—a scar on his lip that serves as a constant reminder of the war and his fallen comrade.

William's visual design mirrors his inner turmoil and the gritty world he inhabits. He wears classic 80s fashion: a bold red leather jacket, which symbolizes his rebellious, fiery nature, paired with rugged blue jeans that reflect his down-to-earth, no-nonsense attitude. His clothing, while typical for the era, contrasts with the dark, gritty streets of Los Angeles, making him stand out in the city's shadowy underworld.

His weathered face and battle-worn expression tell the story of a man who has seen too much, yet his sharp eyes remain focused and determined. His scar, prominent but not overwhelming, is a focal point of his look, hinting at both vulnerability and strength. This mark ties him to his past, giving depth to his character, as it represents not just physical injury but emotional wounds that have yet to heal.

William's overall aesthetic—classic 80s fashion combined with the tough, worn look of a seasoned soldier—embodies the duality of his character: a man at war with both the world around him and his inner demons, caught between the past he can't escape and the dangerous present he must navigate.

Owen



Owen, a 27-year-old rookie in the special division unit, serves as a stark contrast to William. While William is battle-worn and emotionally scarred from his experiences in the Vietnam War, Owen brings a fresh, optimistic

energy to the team. As a husband and father to a young daughter, Owen's priorities lie not just in the mission at hand but in returning home to his family, which keeps him grounded and hopeful.

Owen dresses sharply, in clean-cut, stylish attire that reflects his younger age and lighter approach to life. His well-maintained appearance—perhaps a sleek, leather bomber jacket and well-fitted jeans—shows his attention to detail and desire to present himself well, both on and off duty. His clothing mirrors his youthful spirit, standing in stark contrast to William's rougher, worn-out look.

Emotionally, Owen is far more light-hearted than his older counterpart. He often tries to break the tension with humor or a casual smile, adding levity to the otherwise dark and serious situations they find themselves in. Where William is serious and introspective, weighed down by his past, Owen tends to be more outwardly positive, helping to balance the emotional tone of the team. However, beneath his light mood, Owen carries a deep sense of responsibility, knowing that his decisions not only affect him but also his family. This gives him a quiet determination, though he lacks William's hardened experience.

Owen's emotional contrast to William creates a dynamic tension in the game, with Owen representing hope and family, while William symbolizes loss and survival.

Art Direction

Color Scripts (Level and Area Wise)

Tutorial Level



The tutorial level of Retro Resurgence is bathed in warm lighting, moving through hues of yellow and red. This warmth contrasts sharply with the clear blue sky overhead, still fresh from a recent rain. The warehouse setting is gritty and industrial, with wet concrete reflecting the golden light, adding a sense of unease to the atmosphere.

Inside the warehouse, the shadows grow deeper, with the amber glow highlighting rusted machinery, stacked crates, and water dripping from exposed pipes. The warmth of the lighting creates a stark contrast with the cold, slick surfaces, emphasizing the tension in this early stage of the game.

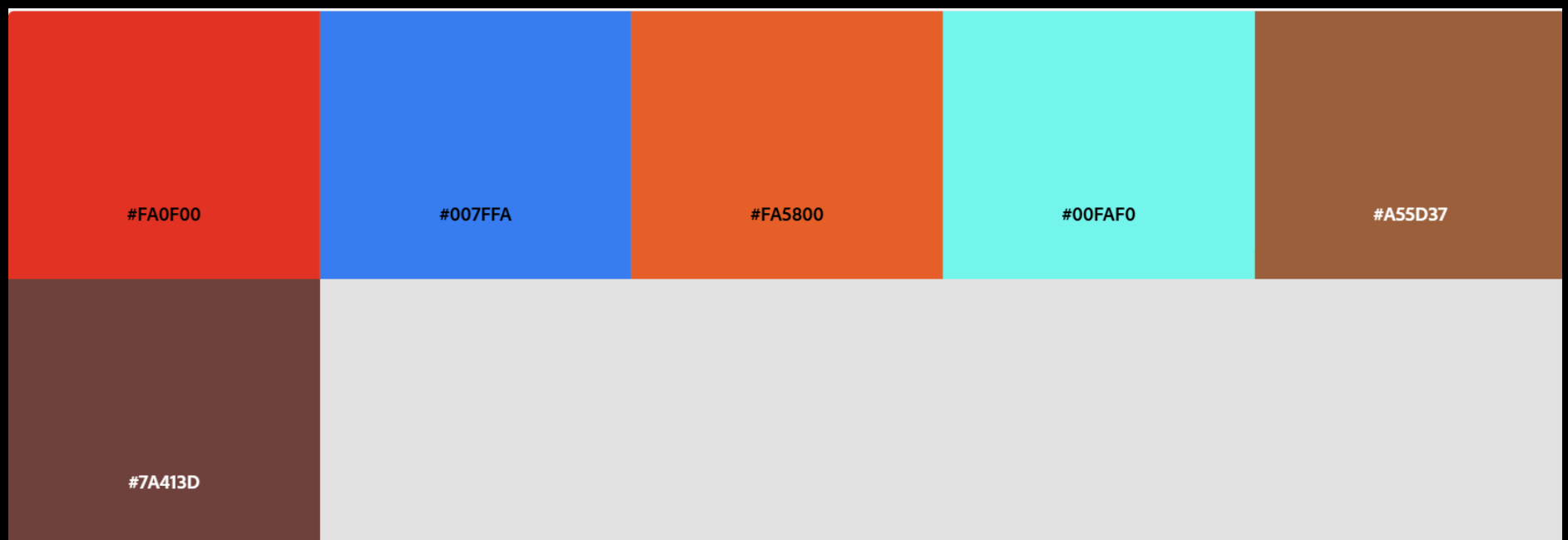
Los Angeles



The Los Angeles level of Retro Resurgence is dominated by a moody, atmospheric blend of blue and red hues. The city streets are soaked in rain, with puddles reflecting the vibrant neon signs that flicker above. Light leaks from broken street lamps and passing cars cut through the rainfall, adding a dynamic energy to the scene. The blue tones in the color grading create a cold, detached feel, while the red adds intensity and danger.

The neon lights of the 80s era pulse in electric pinks, purples, and greens, casting a nostalgic glow over the wet sidewalks. These vivid colors pierce through the otherwise somber, light blue color palette, giving the city both a vibrant and haunting appearance, mirroring the tension between the lively exterior and the hidden dangers lurking within.

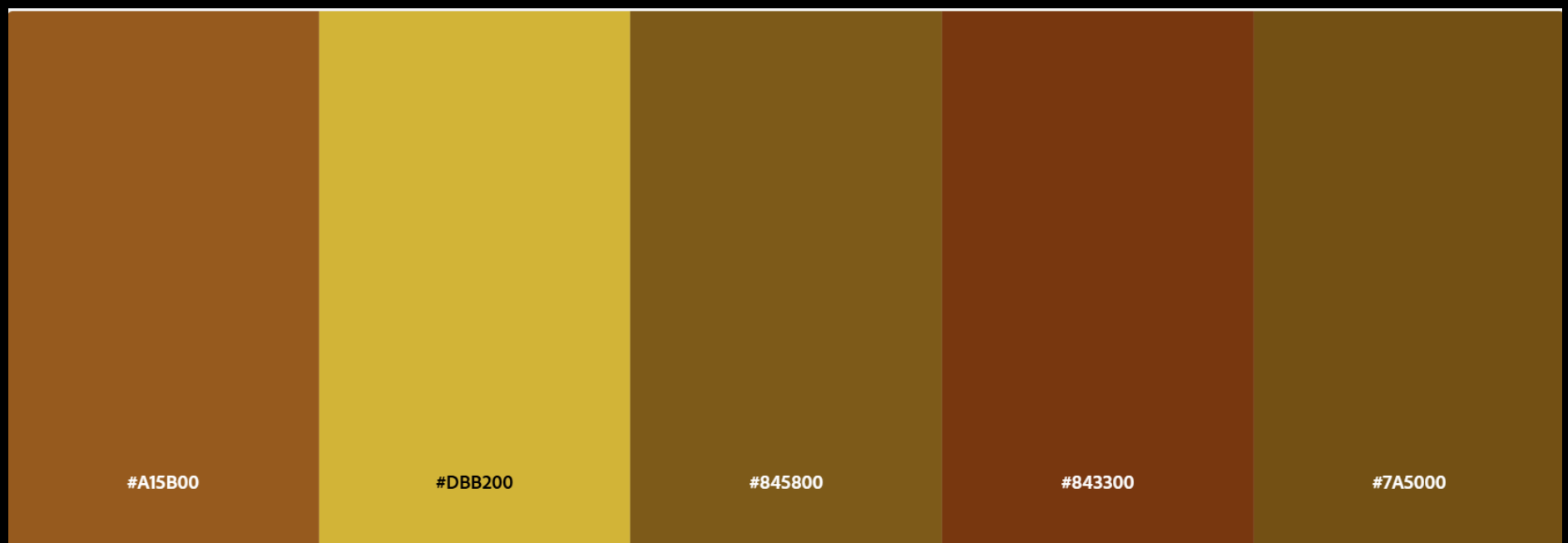
Bar Level



The bar level in Retro Resurgence serves as a moody backdrop for an important cutscene where William meets an old informant. The space is dimly lit, with vibrant red and blue neon lights casting shadows across the wooden interior, enhancing the gritty atmosphere. Warm white and yellow bar lights add contrast, illuminating the dark brown wood of the bar, stools, and tables, giving the room a classic American feel.

The mix of neon and bar lighting creates a layered ambiance, combining the nostalgic charm of an old-school American bar with the tension of the clandestine meeting taking place. The environment feels both inviting and dangerous, reflecting the stakes of the conversation.

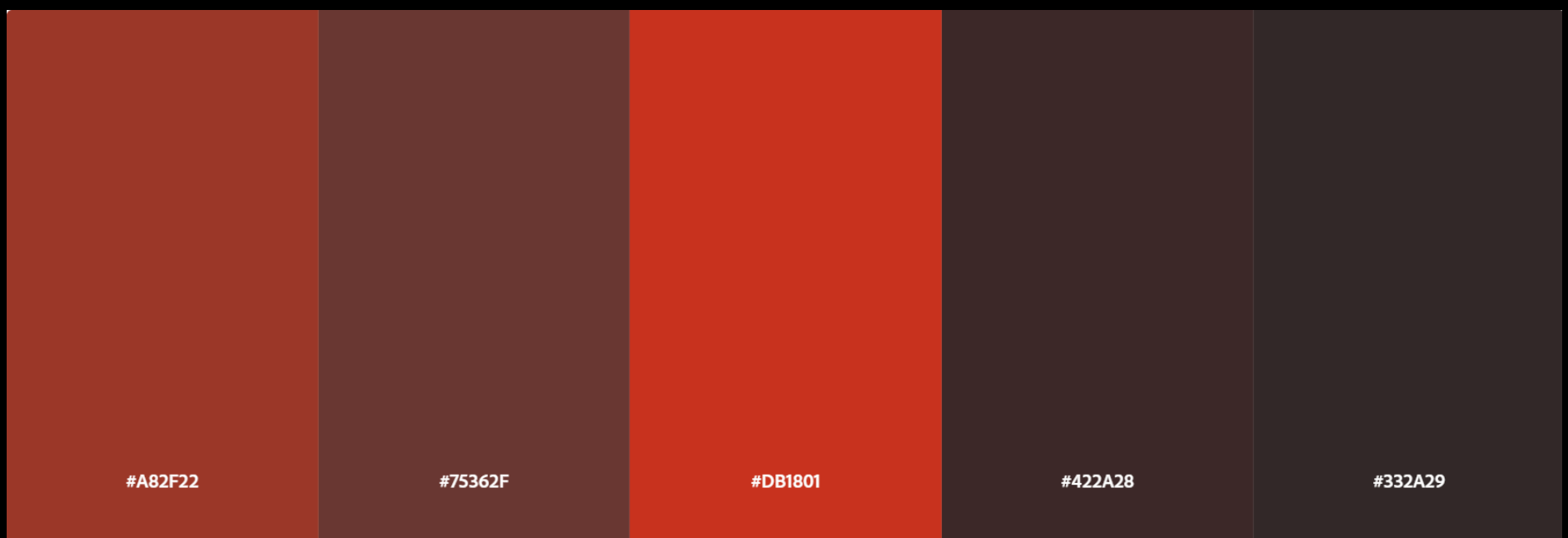
Restaurant



The steampunk-themed bar in Retro Resurgence exudes a rich, vintage aesthetic with its warm wooden panels and intricate golden details. The bar's interior is filled with brass gears, copper piping, and polished wooden furniture, creating an air of old-world elegance fused with mechanical ingenuity. Dim amber lighting bounces off the gold accents, casting a soft glow across the space.

Beneath this luxurious setting lies the villain's hidden lair, adding a sinister undercurrent to the otherwise charming environment. The contrast between the bar's opulent, industrial design and the dark secret beneath heightens the tension, blending elegance with danger.

Meeting Room



The villain's lair in Retro Resurgence contrasts sharply with the vibrant steampunk bar above. The lair is a cold, monotone space, illuminated solely by intense red lighting. The red light casts long shadows, creating an oppressive, dangerous atmosphere. The starkness of the environment, with minimal color variation, emphasizes the sinister and claustrophobic feel of the space, where danger lurks in every corner. The red lighting pulses through the dark, metallic surfaces, heightening the tension and signaling that this is the heart of the enemy's operations.

Parking Garage



The parking garage in Retro Resurgence is drenched in a muted palette of yellow and grey. Harsh yellow lighting from flickering overhead lamps casts a sickly glow across the grey concrete walls and floors, giving the space a gritty, industrial feel. The shadows from the sparse lighting create an eerie, oppressive atmosphere as the beams of light catch on old cars, oil stains, and damp patches on the floor. The combination of the cold grey concrete and the unsettling yellow light creates a tense, claustrophobic environment, perfect for building suspense.

Vietnam



The Vietnam level in Retro Resurgence is awash in lightly saturated tones of green, brown, and grey, evoking the natural hues of the dense jungle environment. The green of the foliage and moss blends seamlessly with the earthy brown of the wood and the muted grey of stones and rocks scattered throughout the landscape. This subdued color palette enhances the sense of being deep within an unforgiving jungle, with the natural surroundings feeling both tranquil and ominous. The misty air clings to the trees, adding an eerie atmosphere, while the interplay of these natural tones captures the danger lurking within the dense wilderness.

Vietnam (Thunderstorm)



In this section of the Vietnam level during a night thunderstorm, the tones of green, brown, and grey remain, but the entire scene is transformed by the blue lighting of the storm. The rain pours down relentlessly, turning the jungle into a dark, shadowy maze, while flashes of lightning momentarily illuminate the terrain. The blue hue from the storm clouds gives the foliage, trees, and rocks an eerie, cold glow, heightening the tension as the natural tones are washed in a nocturnal gloom. The sound of the thunder and the drenching rain adds to the oppressive, foreboding atmosphere