MAX PAYNE 4

FALL OF DEMARCO

CHARACTER MECHANICS BLUEPRINT

A comprehensive design document covering character gameplay gimmicks, Bullet Time variants, the 3-Tier Ultimate system, visual spectacle, and dynamic level destruction philosophy.

"The pain is a constant. The only question is how you move through it."

CONFIDENTIAL DESIGN NOTES
For internal development reference

01 — OVERALL CHARACTER STRUCTURE

Each of the three playable characters receives dedicated solo levels specifically designed to let their unique strengths shine without interference. These solo sections highlight individual combat styles, movement language, and personality.

Flashback levels are mixed: some are pure solo experiences that deepen a character's backstory, while others force temporary teamwork, teaching the player how the characters complement one another.

Main story missions periodically introduce character switching. At certain points the trio operates as a unified team; at others they deliberately split up to handle different objectives simultaneously. This creates natural variety in pacing and tactics throughout the campaign.

02 — INDIVIDUAL GAMEPLAY GIMMICKS

MAX PAYNE — The Balanced Core

Max remains the balanced heart of the experience. His bullet power, defense, and movement speed sit squarely in the middle of the spectrum. The design goal is to preserve the classic Max Payne feel: fluid, responsive movement that never feels too heavy or too floaty. He retains the original weight and momentum that made shootdodging satisfying. Max is the most "everyman" of the three — reliable, precise, and grounded. His gameplay is the foundation players return to between the extremes of Mona and Passos.

MONA SAX — The High-Mobility Specialist

Mona is the high-mobility specialist. She has noticeably lower bullet power and defense compared to Max, but compensates with exceptional speed and a lightweight, agile feel. Her movement set is fully acrobatic. She can perform slides, wall-runs, and mid-air shooting combos. A signature ability allows her to reload while airborne. If the player jumps while Mona is already firing, she executes an upside-down spin in the air while continuing to shoot or reload. This gives her a flashy, ninja-like presence on the battlefield and rewards aggressive, vertical playstyles.

PASSOS — The Pure Juggernaut

Passos is the pure juggernaut. He has the highest firepower and defense of the trio but the lowest speed and zero acrobatic capability. His raw strength allows him to tackle through drywall and weak wooden walls, creating new paths or surprising enemies. Unlike Max and Mona, Passos can equip and effectively wield heavy weaponry (miniguns, rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, etc.). His playstyle is about absorbing punishment and delivering overwhelming force rather than graceful movement. He is the tank that breaks the map open.

03 — CHARACTER-SPECIFIC BULLET TIME VARIANTS

MONA — "Swift Time"

When activated, the world slows dramatically while Mona herself continues moving at normal or even slightly accelerated speed. A strong visceral speed-blur effect trails her movements. The result is that she becomes an untouchable high-speed phantom. Enemies appear almost frozen while she weaves through rooms, clears entire groups, and repositions before they can react. It emphasizes speed and fluidity over pure precision — a pure expression of her agile combat philosophy.

MAX — "Critical Bullet Time"

This is the classic cinematic slow-motion fans know and love, elevated by Max's decades of lethal muscle memory. The world crawls. Weak points on enemy bodies begin to light up, turning free-aim shootdodges into clinical, surgical executions. It feels like the purest expression of Max's skill — calm, precise, and devastating. Every shot carries the weight of experience.

PASSOS — "Adrenaline Slowdown"

Time slows for Passos as well, but the focus shifts from speed or precision to raw survival power. His damage resistance and firepower spike dramatically. In this state he can tank heavy hits that would drop the others and completely shred through DeMarco defensive lines. It turns him into a walking fortress of pure destructive force — a slow-motion force of nature.

04 — 3-TIER ULTIMATE BULLET TIME SYSTEM

Core Progression Rules

- The Bullet Time meter is divided into three tiers that unlock progressively.
- Tier progression is driven by kills. Larger kill streaks cause the meter to fill significantly faster.
- On higher difficulties the meter fills more slowly and drains more quickly once activated.
- The meter can continue to refill from additional kills even while Bullet Time is active, though it still drains at the same time. This creates a risk/reward loop where skilled players can sustain higher tiers longer through aggressive play.

TIER 1 — The Core (Original Bullet Time)

Available to all three characters from the start. This is the traditional Max Payne Bullet Time: the world slows evenly for everyone. Screen background is a plain grayish-blue wash. It enables classic free-aim precision and shootdodging. It serves as the foundational layer that every character builds upon.

TIER 2 — The Specialization (Personal Perks)

Once the meter reaches Tier 2, each character unlocks their signature variant and their personal colored Bullet Time background tint appears:

Max: Traditional Bullet Time reaches its peak under a deep crimson red screen tint. Free-aim momentum and shootdodge accuracy feel sharper and more responsive than ever.

Mona: Swift Time fully unlocks under a vivid magenta screen tint. The world slows while she cuts through it with a pronounced speed-blur effect, moving slightly faster than the slowed environment.

Passos: Adrenaline Slowdown unlocks under a Brazilian yellowish-green screen tint. Time slows while his damage resistance and heavy firepower receive major boosts.

TIER 3 — The Critical Mastery (Extreme Slowdown & Vision)

At the final tier, time slows to an absolute crawl — nearly freezing completely. Bullets leave heavy, visible air-distortion ripples that make their trajectories easy to read and dodge. The character's colored screen tint returns but becomes significantly hazier and more atmospheric. This is the peak cinematic and mechanical expression of each character's style.

Max — "Critical Strike"

Time is nearly frozen. Weak points (heart, head, spine) glow vividly on every enemy. Any shot that lands on these highlighted targets triggers an instant, highly cinematic kill — often featuring brutal X-ray or ultra-slow-motion death animations. It rewards perfect aim and positioning with the most spectacular payoffs.

Mona — "Critical Movement"

Mona moves at absolute lightning speed while enemies are completely paralyzed. She can perform short-range teleport-dashes between pieces of cover, strip weapons directly from DeMarco thugs' hands, and execute flawless ninja-style takedowns before the speed blur even clears. The contrast between her motion and the frozen world is extreme and visually unforgettable.

Passos — "Critical Defense"

Passos becomes an unstoppable juggernaut. He can tank direct shotgun blasts or explosions in slow motion without flinching. He gains total immunity to crowd-control effects while laying down devastating, armor-piercing heavy fire that tears through enemy cover and bodies alike. The focus is pure destructive power and survivability.

Bullet Time Screen Background Effects

The visual tint and atmosphere of the Bullet Time screen itself evolves with each tier, reinforcing character identity and power escalation:

Tier 1 — Core (Shared): A plain, classic grayish-blue Bullet Time wash. Cool, neutral, and familiar — the pure original Max Payne slow-motion look with no character-specific coloring. Clean and readable.

Tier 2 — Specialization (Character-Tinted): The background shifts into a strong character-colored overlay that fills the screen during Bullet Time:

- **Max** — Deep crimson red background tint. Aggressive, blood-soaked, and lethal.
- **Mona** — Vivid magenta background tint. Electric, stylish, and sharp.
- **Passos** — Brazilian yellowish-green background tint. Raw, heavy, and forceful.

Tier 3 — Critical Mastery (Hazier Character Tint): The same character colors return, but the overlay becomes significantly hazier, denser, and more atmospheric. The color bleeds further into the environment, softens edges, and intensifies the dreamlike / nightmarish quality of the near-freeze. Max's crimson grows thicker and more oppressive, Mona's magenta turns luminous and surreal, and Passos's yellowish-green becomes a heavy, almost toxic haze that underscores his unstoppable juggernaut presence.

05 — VISUAL SPECTACLE OF LEVEL 3 TIME

The design intent is to turn every major gunfight into a living work of art. When Tier 3 activates, the environment itself becomes part of the spectacle:

- Office papers flutter through the air and freeze mid-flight.
- Lights can be shot out, plunging sections of the room into pitch blackness.
- Shattered glass freezes completely in mid-air.
- Muzzle flashes, floating debris, glass shards, and glowing bullet tracers all hang suspended together in time.

This combination of floating elements, extreme slow-motion, and character-specific visual flair creates unforgettable set pieces that modern technology can finally deliver at the level the original games only hinted at.

Character-Specific Tier 3 Visual Signatures

Mona's Frozen Glass Blurs: When Mona shatters a large window or display case during Critical Movement, the glass shards freeze completely in mid-air. The player watches her speed blur weave between individual floating shards that reflect neon city lights. The result is a striking, almost dreamlike visual of pure velocity cutting through a suspended crystal storm.

Max's Tracers and Wood Splinters: A shotgun blast or sustained fire that hits a wooden door or support pillar shreds it in ultra-slow motion. Individual chunks of wood and drywall tear away and float alongside the

silver air-distortion ripples left by the bullets. The environment feels as dangerous and reactive as the enemies themselves.

Passos's Destructive Power: Heavy weapons under Critical Defense punch clean through thin drywall and wooden partitions in slow motion. Players can watch entire walls collapse piece by piece, exposing hidden flankers and destroying enemy cover in dramatic fashion.

06 — DYNAMIC LEVEL DESIGN & TACTICAL DESTRUCTION

Modern technology allows levels to be genuinely reactive and reshapeable during combat. The battlefield is never static.

Destructible Cover

Wooden bars, concrete pillars, and similar cover pieces can be chipped away chunk by chunk under sustained enemy (or player) fire. Players hiding behind cover must eventually shootdodge out before they are fully exposed. This forces constant movement and prevents static camping. Cover becomes a temporary resource rather than a permanent safe haven.

Passos's Juggernaut Destruction

Especially powerful during Tier 3 Critical Defense, Passos's heavy weapons can blast through thin drywall and weak wooden walls. This lets him open new sightlines, collapse enemy hiding spots, and physically reshape the battlefield mid-fight. The environment becomes another weapon in his arsenal.

Environmental Storytelling Through Destruction

Floating papers, shattered glass, destroyed furniture, and collapsing structures all contribute to the chaotic, high-stakes energy that defined the original Max Payne games — now realized with far greater fidelity and interactivity. Every gunfight should feel like a living, breathing work of cinematic chaos.

END OF CHARACTER MECHANICS BLUEPRINT

Max Payne 4: Fall of DeMarco • Design Document • Confidential
Black • Red • Orange — The pain never ends. The style never dies.