NEW YORK NOIR: REALITY VS. FICTION

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About The Maps And Directories

The New York City of New York Noir is a "remembered" version of New York City -- a city recreated from a million sharp, jagged, dirty little memories -- grounded in reality but exaggerated, distorted, and romanticized by the passing of time.

The maps here are real - these are the streets, avenues, and landmarks of Manhattan. But they're frozen in time here, in a snapshot that's been smeared over the decades. *New York Noir* takes place from the late 1920s to the early 1950s, and while the chapter text reflects the changing times, the maps and the directories remain static; you may occasionally find businesses locations, and people in the directory, that only existed in the real world for some subset of the years covered by the game.

While New York City comprises 5 boroughs, the main *New York Noir* campaign takes place primarily within the borough of Manhattan, a densely populated sliver of an island thirteen miles long and little more than two miles wide at its widest point.

New York City is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own personality. But the personality of these neighborhoods has evolved over time, along with their boundaries, demographics, and unofficial nicknames. Neighborhoods play an outsized role in the world of *New York Noir*, and some license has been taken to exaggerate their differences.

This can be seen most clearly in the residential directories of *New York Noir*. While the real telephone books serving Manhattan during the time period were well over a thousand pages long, the directories in *New York Noir* cover only a small fraction of Manhattan's residents. Residential entries are fictional and are intended to broadly match relative neighborhood population densities and ethnic breakdowns. Although the directories are stylistically presented as if they are telephone directories, no attempt has been made to account for differences in telephone ownership between different demographics.

A Small Slice of Life

By 1930 there were almost 2 million residents of Manhattan. The New York Noir directories contain entries for over 10,000 residents. You should view the directories as being a small (random) slice of the occupants and businesses of the city, and assume that there are many more people and businesses occupying the city that are simply not listed in the directories provided.

References To Real People And Places

New York Noir takes place within our own timeline. As such, important historical events and figures are presented in ways that are consistent with known facts and history. Culturally

significant real world landmarks and businesses in New York City have been treated similarly -- where possibly we have placed them where they really existed, and described them in ways consistent with the historical record. Excerpts of statements made by real world figures on the radio or in a newspaper are taken from actual statements.

But most of the people and places encountered in New York Noir will be fictional; the crimes, criminals, and victims described in the course of the campaign are all fictional. Occasionally players may interact with real world figures; in those cases the dialog is entirely fictional.

Offensive Language and Attitudes

Much of the text and dialog in New York Noir may be jarring and offensive to modern ears; some terms that were commonplace in the 1930s are rightly considered inappropriate in our current day. We have tried to capture the exaggerated language and attitudes of the time period in the voices of characters being depicted.

The characters described here behave in the stylized, stereotyped roles, seen in noir movies of the 1930s-1950s. Misogyny, sexism, racism, stereotyped gender roles, profanity, smoking, and drinking, are all commonplace in this world, much as they were in America itself during this time period. They are largely presented here without criticism and treated unironically and uncritically.

These stories are not intended to be an endorsement or glorification of the attitudes of this fictional genre or this time period in actual American history, and this game does not provide a meaningful commentary on past societal oppression, culture, and norms.

Those hoping for a more critical analysis of behaviors and attitudes seen in the game will need to look to external sources; some suggested references are listed below. You are of course encouraged to bring your own critical analysis of the text to the material.

These stories are focused on providing an escapist experience - a chance to spend time in the company of a fictional protagonist raised in a different time, and in a world that in many ways only ever existed in the film noir movies of a forgotten era.

New York Noir is a narrative game. If you find yourself confronted with having to make a choice in the game that you find particularly morally objectionable, feel free to write your own alternative narrative branch and share it with the community.

The building blocks of New York Noir are designed to be freely available for anyone to make and share their own cases. We encourage others to create and share stories that include social and political commentary that reflects the real life struggles of the time..

Resources for cultural commentary on the film noir genre:

- https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=utpp
- https://ils.unc.edu/dpr/path/filmnoir/essay.htm
- https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/dpdfilm/chapter/woman-on-the-run-1950/
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/490180
- https://research.library.mun.ca/8520/1/Black%2C_White%2C_and_Blue-Collar_Noir.pdf
- http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/general/does-film-noir-mirror-the-culture/index.php