

AFTERGLOW

a retrowave combat racer

PORT AVALON · 1999

He rebuilt her piece by piece. Then he had to stop her.

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

D. B. WALDTIER · 1–2 PLAYERS · KEYBOARD OR GAMEPAD

WELCOME TO PORT AVALON

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1999, as imagined in 1986.

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PHOTOSENSITIVITY WARNING

AFTERGLOW contains flashing lights, explosions, lightning and fast-moving patterns. If you or anyone in your family has a history of epilepsy or seizures, consult a doctor before playing. Stop at once if you feel dizzy or unwell. **OPTIONS → REDUCED FLASHES** tones the flashes down.

▶ GETTING STARTED

AFTERGLOW runs in a web browser. **Chrome or Edge** on a desktop computer works best: the game draws with WebGPU, with a WebGL 2 fallback. It also plays on phones and tablets.

- **Online:** open the game page and click to start. Sound starts after your first click or key press.
- **Downloaded:** browsers won't run the game straight from your disk, so start the small local server. On Windows, double-click **play.bat** (needs Python 3). Elsewhere, run `python3 serve.py 8080` and open `http://localhost:8080/`.
- Plug in a gamepad any time. It is picked up as soon as you press a button.
- **Phones and tablets:** hold the device sideways and on-screen controls appear. Drag on the left half of the screen to steer (up and down tilt the nose in the air); the car accelerates by itself, and BRAKE, FIRE, TURBO, REAR and SPC sit under your right thumb. Ability and gear buttons appear when you have them. In menus, use the arrows, OK and BACK.

Your progress, garage and records are saved in the browser automatically.



CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY

Port Avalon, 1999. The future arrived the way they promised it in 1986: pop-up headlights, talking cars, rain that never stops, and ARGENT, the corporation that owns the towers, the police and most of what people remember.

Memories are a commodity now. A good one, a wedding, a first kiss, a summer by the sea, is cut onto a **memory reel** and sold to people who never had one. **Vic Calloway** deals in them. He is a memory dealer and a wetware courier, with a courier implant behind his left ear and a cheap silk suit, and he is very good at selling other people's lives.

One night a delivery goes wrong. The Chrome Saints want the chip back, the collectors want their money, and Vic is left in a stolen prototype, NIGHTJAR, with a cracked chip in his hand. He plugs it into the dashboard.

A girl wakes up in the car.



She calls herself **LYRA**. She remembers one thing, the sea, and she is scared. She is only a piece: a mind cut into **seven shards** and sold across a broken continent. Every shard Vic brings back makes her more complete. It also makes the car faster, sharper and deadlier.

So Vic drives. Down the sunset coast, across the desert of antennas, over the snowbound pass, through the flooded lowlands and into ARGENT's own archive, one shard and one city at a time. He falls in love with a voice and a handful of memories.

> *"There is no girl."*
> — Kaede Ostrova, ARGENT

The rest is for you to find out on the road.

WHO'S WHO

THE CAST

Everybody wants something in that car.



VIC CALLOWAY

34. Memory dealer and courier. A fast talker, funny and self-pitying, and kind when nobody is looking. Years ago he sold his own best memories to pay a debt. He knows something is missing.



LYRA

The voice in the car. A vector-line face on the dashboard that completes itself shard by shard. She starts scared and partial, and grows playful, curious, brave, and in love with the world.



KAEDE OSTROVA

ARGENT's best recovery agent. She hunts the shards in a silver prototype, QUICKSILVER. Cold, precise and honest, which is the worst thing she can be to Vic.



ROOK & THE CHROME SAINTS

A biker gang hired to get the chip back. Rook rides an armoured chopper and swings a chain. He does not lose gracefully.



MAMA DOLORES

A retired stunt driver who runs a garage in a dead shopping mall. Vic's oldest friend. Repairs, upgrades and advice, sharp and mostly free.



TOBIAS "STATIC" OKORO

A teenage hacker in a van full of monitors. He reads the shards' code, and he is the first to notice that something in it doesn't add up.

DIRECTOR ANTON KRELL

Head of ARGENT. The man who wants LYRA back, whole and under control. You'll mostly see him on screens.

AND ON THE ROAD

Lucky Vance, the pier-arcade king of the coast · **The Listeners**, a desert cult that worships the signal in the dishes · **Dr. Imre Szabo**, a memory surgeon in a mountain clinic · **Marrow**, queen of the flood scavengers.

HANDS ON THE WHEEL

CONTROLS

Every key can be remapped in Options → Controls.

KEYBOARD · ONE PLAYER

ACTION	KEY
Accelerate / brake	↑ ↓
Steer	← →
Turbo	SPACE
Front guns	Z
Rear weapon	X
Car special	C
Gear up / down (manual)	W Q
Cycle lock-on target	TAB
Traffic hack	A
Shield	S
Afterglow	D
Radio: next station	R
Pause	ESC P

Lock-on, hack, shield and Afterglow work once you have the shard that unlocks them (page 11).

MENUS

Arrows or W A S D to move, ENTER / SPACE / Z to confirm, ESC / BKSP / X to go back.

GAMEPAD

ACTION	BUTTON
Accelerate / brake	RT / LT
Steer	Left stick / D-pad ← →
Turbo	RB
Front guns	A
Rear weapon	B
Car special	X
Traffic hack	Y
Shield	LB
Afterglow	L3 (click left stick)
Cycle lock-on	R3 (click right stick)
Gear up / down	D-pad ↑ ↓
Radio	Back / Select
Pause	Start

TWO PLAYERS

ACTION	PLAYER 1	PLAYER 2
Drive	W A S D	Arrows
Turbo	L-SHIFT	R-SHIFT
Guns / rear / special	F G H	K L ;
Gears	X Z	. ,
Lock / hack / shield	V R T	M I O
Afterglow	Y	P

Or two gamepads: one each.

READ IT AT 300 KM/H

THE DASHBOARD

Everything you need is under the windscreen.



1 **Checkpoint timer.** Seconds left to reach the next checkpoint. Each checkpoint adds time. At zero, the race is over.

2 **Threat radar** (shard 3). Enemies around and behind you, missiles, mines ahead.

3 **Progress strip.** The whole stage, start to finish. The white mark is you, the small marks are your opponents.

4 **Speedometer** in km/h.

5 **Gear**, with `A` for automatic or `M` for manual.

6 **Tachometer.** With manual gears, shift as the bar fills for a *perfect shift*.

7 **Power.** Turbo and guns both draw on it. Shooting a lot slows turbo recharge.

8 **Heat** of the front guns, and the gun fitted. Fill it and the guns lock for two seconds.

9 **Rear weapon** and charges left; `SPC` lights up when your car's special is ready.

10 **LYRA's display.** Her face completes itself shard by shard and shows a waveform when she talks. The icons under it are the abilities you have.

11 **Damage.** Body (armour), engine (top speed) and tyres (grip), green to red. Repair at the garage or with repair kits.

12 **Race info:** position, race time, distance to the next checkpoint or the finish, and the stage name.

Call-outs appear at the top of the screen (LONG LEFT, CREST, JUMP, TUNNEL…) and LYRA reads them out. **Subtitles** show who is talking. A **boss bar** appears at the top when someone important is on the road.



SPEED FIRST

DRIVING

AFTERGLOW is fast. Stages last two to four minutes, checkpoints come every half a minute, and the road throws hills, curves, traffic and weather at you the whole way. Hold the throttle, read the road, and let the car do what it does best.

STEERING & CURVES

Curves push you outward, harder the faster you go. Brake *before* a curve, not in it, and keep to the inside. Choose how the car steers in **Options → Handling**:

- **CLASSIC**: the Lotus 2 way. The car side-steps instantly and stops when you let go.
- **WEIGHTED**: the car builds and loses sideways speed with inertia and tucks in when you lift.

TURBO & POWER

Hold SPACE for turbo. It draws on the **power** bar, the same bar your guns use, so you can't do both forever. Power recharges by itself and with turbo cells. Each car spools its turbo differently: MANTA GT's turbine takes its time and then doesn't stop.

GEARS

Automatic by default. **Manual** (Options → Gears) is a 5-speed: W up, S down. It's faster in good hands, and shifting at the right moment on the tachometer gives a **perfect shift** bonus.

SURFACES & WEATHER

Leave the tarmac and grass, sand, snow and water slow you down. Rain means less grip and spray from every car in front of you; fog shortens the view; snow and ice slide; sandstorms blind you; storms throw lightning and crosswind. Deep water at speed makes you aquaplane.

Fit the right **tyres** at the garage (road, rain, snow or sand) and the weather becomes a lot less personal.

TRAFFIC

Civilian cars, vans, buses and trucks share the road. Weave through them: a bump costs you speed and a little armour. Shooting or wrecking a civilian costs credits and your rating.



Wet Neon, chapter 1: rain, rivals and traffic in downtown Port Avalon.

THE ROAD IS A STAGE

RAMPS, FORKS & CRASHES

Speed is the only argument a ramp listens to.



The causeway jump, chapter 2.

RAMPS & JUMPS

Hit a ramp and the car leaves the road. Speed and the ramp's angle decide how far you fly. In the air you can steer a little and tilt the nose with ↑ ↓:

- **Land on the back wheels**, matching the slope, for a speed boost.
- A flat or nose-first landing costs speed or damage.
- Fall short of a gap (collapsed overpasses, broken causeways, flood breaks, canyons) and you crash and restart on the road, with the time you lost as the penalty.

Some ramps are optional **shortcuts**. They cut corners if you have the speed.

FORKS

The road splits OutRun-style. Pick a side before the barrier between the two carriageways. Each branch has its own length, hazards, pickups and jumps, and the shorter one is rarely the safer one.

SET PIECES

- **Tunnels**: no rain inside, and walls on both sides.
- **Bridges and elevated freeways**: open sides. On some of them you can fall off.
- **Toll gates and security gates**: time the opening, shoot them down or hack them open.
- **Level crossings**: when the horn sounds, either commit and keep your speed or turbo through, or brake hard and wait for the train to pass. Hesitate and you'll meet it.
- **Hairpins** on the mountain pass, oil, debris and snow banks everywhere else.

CRASHES & DAMAGE

Hit a roadside object and you spin out. You're back on the road in under a second, but the clock kept running. Every hit wears down the car:

- **Armour**: at zero, the car is wrecked.
- **Engine**: lowers your top speed.
- **Tyres**: less grip.

Repair kits on the road patch it up. Dolores fixes the rest between stages.



COMBAT SERVES THE RACE

COMBAT

Shooting clears the road, stops pursuers and earns credits. The clock and the finish line still decide.

FRONT GUNS Z

They fire straight down your lane. No ammo, but they **heat up**: overheat and they lock for two seconds, so fire in bursts. Upgrade them at the garage:

GUN	CHARACTER
TWIN PULSE	Steady twin bolts. Where everyone starts.
RAPID	Faster fire, runs cooler.
HEAVY	Slow, hard-hitting bolts.
RAIL	One devastating shot that pierces everything in line. Very hot.

REAR WEAPON X

Limited charges, dropped behind you for whoever is following:

WEAPON	EFFECT
MINES	Explode under pursuers. 6 charges.
OIL SLICK	Sends them spinning. 5 charges.
SMOKE	A wall of smoke that blinds whoever drives into it. 4 charges.
EMP DROP	Knocks out engines and drones. 3 charges.

CAR SPECIAL C

Each car has one, with a long cooldown (`SPC` on the dash lights up when it's ready):

- **Afterburner Ram**: a short charge, boosted and invulnerable. Anything in front of you is your problem no longer.
- **Pulse Wave** (QUICKSILVER): pushes everything around you aside and damages enemies.

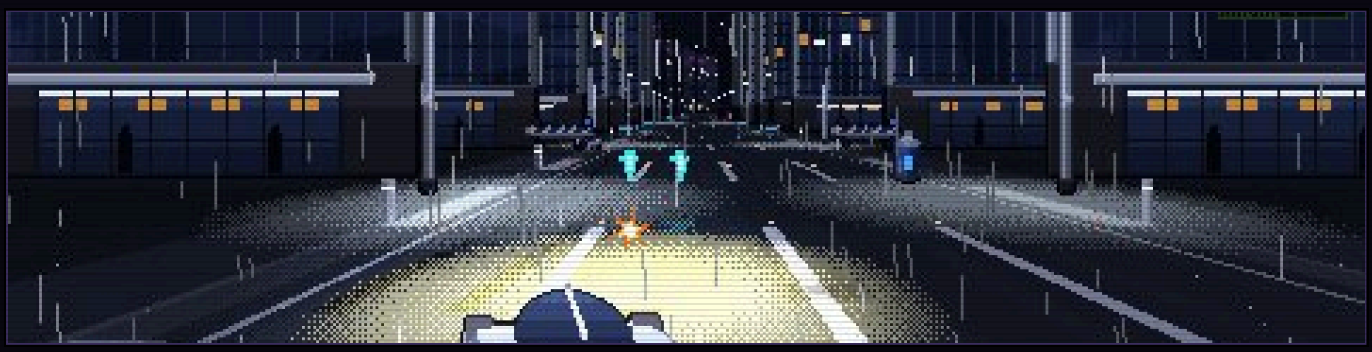
PICKUPS

PICKUP	EFFECT
TURBO CELL	Refills power
REPAIR KIT	Repairs some damage
REAR CHARGES	+3 rear weapon charges
CREDITS CHIP	+250 credits
COOLANT	Resets gun heat
MEMORY REEL	Someone's memory. Keep it or sell it (page 13)

Destroyed enemies spin off and explode, and their drivers bail out with parachutes or tumble clear. Takedowns pay credits and raise your rating.

CIVILIANS

Keep your guns off civilian traffic. Hitting one costs `50 CR`; wrecking one costs `250 CR` and your style score.



Lockdown, chapter 7: ARGENT shuts the city grid down around you.

FIELD GUIDE

WHO WANTS YOU DEAD

A short list. It gets longer.

ENEMY	WHAT IT DOES	HOW TO DEAL WITH IT
Chrome Saints bikers	Fast. They weave between lanes and side-swipe you; some throw bombs ahead of you.	Front guns, oil.
Rook *boss*	Armoured chopper, nitro bursts, a chain swing that hurts.	Lock-on bursts. Out-jump him.
Gun vans	The rear doors open and a gunner fires backward down the road.	Stay out of the cone, pass on the far side.
Hauler trucks	Drop barrels and roadblocks from the back.	Shoot the barrels early, change lane.
Interceptors (ARGENT)	Fast and heavy. They ram and box you in, usually in threes.	Mines, shield, Afterburner Ram.
Pursuit drones	Fly above you, shoot from behind, drop charges.	Radar, EMP, swerve.
Gunship *boss*	A helicopter ahead and above: strafing runs and missiles.	Watch the radar, use tunnels for cover.
Mine-layers	Desert buggies that seed mines in your path.	Radar shows the mines. Jump them.
Snow cats	Slow and heavy, they block lanes on the pass.	Overtake on the shoulder, heavy guns.
Hover skimmers	Ride the floodwater beside the road and cut across it.	Shoot them as they cross.
Turrets	Fixed along the walls of ARGENT's archive.	Speed and smoke.
Rival racers	They don't shoot. They just want to beat you.	Out-drive them.



Skimmers on the flooded lowlands, chapter 5.



ARGENT interceptors at the archive, chapter 6.

EVERY UPGRADE IS HER

LYRA'S SHARDS

Each of the seven shards gives LYRA back a memory, and gives the car a new ability. You keep every ability you have earned, in every mode.

#	ABILITY	WHAT IT DOES	KEY
1	**CALL-OUTS** *The Sea*	LYRA calls the road ahead: curves, crests, jumps, tunnels and traffic, with arrows at the top of the screen.	automatic
2	**OVERDRIVE** *The Song*	Turbo and gear shifts timed **on the beat of the music** refill power. Keep a streak going and it builds a speed bonus.	timing
3	**THREAT RADAR** *The Fear*	Shows enemies around and behind you, incoming missiles and mines ahead.	automatic
4	**LOCK-ON** *The Name*	Your front guns track a chosen target instead of firing straight ahead.	TAB / R3
5	**TRAFFIC HACK** *The Face*	Traffic pulls over, lights go green, barriers and gates open, trains are held back. One use per charge; charges come back with pickups.	A / Y
6	**SHIELD & JUMP ASSIST** *The Promise*	A short damage shield on demand. Jumps are stabilised and fly a little further.	S / LB
7	**AFTERGLOW** *The Core*	Full sync: a few seconds of slowed time for precision driving and shooting.	D / L3



> *LYRA talks while you drive: short lines, never over a call-out. She jokes about your driving, gets scared in the dark, and hums along to the music once she remembers how.*
>
> The voice in the car



The Listeners, chapter 3: the cult wants you to stay in the desert of antennas.

SEVEN CHAPTERS · TWENTY-ONE STAGES

THE ROAD

Every stage is a set piece.

1 · The Sea · downtown, night, rain	
1.1	Wet Neon *checkpoint run*
1.2	Dead Drop *escape*
1.3	Saints' Mile *duel*
2 · The Song · coast road, sunset	
2.1	Route 1 Sunset *checkpoint run*
2.2	Pier Pressure *gauntlet*
2.3	Last Ride on the Causeway *pursuit*
3 · The Fear · desert of antennas	
3.1	Dish Country *checkpoint run*
3.2	The Listeners *escape*
3.3	Canyon Relay *jump run*
4 · The Name · snowbound pass	
4.1	White Line *checkpoint run*
4.2	Cold Storage *delivery*
4.3	Kaede *duel*
5 · The Face · flooded lowlands, storm	
5.1	High Water *checkpoint run*
5.2	Skimmers *gauntlet*
5.3	The Dam *pursuit*
6 · The Promise · industrial zone	
6.1	Smokestacks *checkpoint run*
6.2	Archive Run *gauntlet*
6.3	The Vault Road *escape*
7 · The Core · the city grid	
7.1	Lockdown *escape*
7.2	Krell *pursuit*
7.3	Afterglow *final duel*

▶ STAGE TYPES

Checkpoint run	Beat the clock to each checkpoint, finish in the top 3.
Escape	Reach the end with the car still in one piece; pursuers spawn behind.
Pursuit	Catch the target and wreck it before it gets away.
Duel	One on one against a boss or a racer.
Gauntlet	Survive the waves and keep your average speed up.
Jump run	Ramps and gaps: time and landing quality.
Delivery	Fragile cargo: keep the damage down.







A DEAD SHOPPING MALL, LEVEL -1

THE GARAGE

Mama Dolores. Repairs, upgrades, opinions.



CREDITS

You earn credits for your finishing position, for time left on the clock, for takedowns, clean jumps and Overdrive streaks, and from credit chips on the road. Civilian damage takes them away.

WHAT DOLORES SELLS

Repair	Armour, engine and tyres back to 100%.
Engine	Top speed (4 levels)
Turbo	Turbo capacity
Tyres	Grip, plus the tyre type: road, rain, snow, sand
Armour	Maximum armour
Suspension	Jumps and landings
Front guns	Pulse → Rapid → Heavy → Rail
Cooling	Guns shed heat faster
Rear weapon	Mines, oil, smoke, EMP, as the story unlocks them
Paint & lights	Free. Looking good is a right.

MEMORY REELS

Reels are hidden along the stages, mostly on jump routes and fork branches. Each one is somebody's memory: a first kiss, a dog, a wedding, a war. Watch it, then choose: **sell it** for credits, or **keep it**. Kept reels go to the gallery, and a few of them remember things you will want to know.

RATINGS

Every stage you finish gets a letter, S A B C D, from your time (the biggest part), the armour you have left, your takedowns and your style: clean landings, Overdrive, perfect shifts. Crashes and civilian hits pull it down.

S-rank every stage of a chapter to unlock a new car for Arcade.

> *"Memories are like engines. Sell one and it's gone, no matter what you get for it."*
> — Mama Dolores

THE CARS

All prototypes. None of them legal.



NIGHTJAR

Low black wedge. Talks back. Vic's stolen prototype, balanced in everything, with an **Afterburner Ram**.

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR



QUICKSILVER

Kaede's silver prototype. The fastest top speed, precise, lightly armoured. Its special is the **Pulse Wave**. *Arcade: S-rank chapter 7.*

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR



TALON 6

Six wheels. Grips in rain and through curves like nothing else. *Arcade: S-rank chapter 1.*

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR



MANTA GT

Turbine power. A huge turbo with a slow spool: wait for it, then hold on. *Arcade: S-rank chapter 2.*

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR



OBSIDIAN

Armoured. Rams, and its ram hits twice as hard. Slow to get going and doesn't like to fly. *Arcade: S-rank chapter 3.*

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR



ZERO-LINE

The best car on jumps, and the quickest off the line. Fragile. *Arcade: S-rank chapter 4.*

SPEED ACCEL GRIP ARMOUR

MAIN MENU

MODES & OPTIONS

One player, two players, forever.

MODES

Story	Seven chapters, 21 stages, with the comic panels in between. Continue where you left off, or replay any chapter you have reached. Finish it to unlock **Night Shift**: all 21 stages again, mirrored and after dark, with faster rivals.
Arcade	Any unlocked stage, any unlocked car. Local leaderboards.
Time trial	Empty roads and the ghost of your best run.
Versus · 2P	Split screen, Lotus 2 style, on any unlocked stage.
Convoy · 2P co-op	Two cars, shared credits, everything trying to kill you.
Endless highway	A road that never ends. The landscapes cycle, and it gets worse.
Gallery	Story panels you have seen, kept memory reels, your records.

DIFFICULTY

EASY	More time, less damage, rivals that wait for you.
NORMAL	As intended.
HARD	Lotus-tight timers.
1986	No call-outs, manual gears. Like it used to be.

Fail a story stage and you can lower the difficulty right there and retry.



OPTIONS

- **Gears**: auto or manual. **Handling**: classic or weighted.
- **LYRA call-outs** on/off, and **speech synth** to have her lines spoken by your browser's voice too.
- **Volume**: master, music, sound effects.
- **CRT filter**: scanlines, mask, curvature. **Bloom**: a tiny glow on real lights. **VHS glitch** for LYRA's moments.
- **Scaling**: integer (pixel-perfect) or fit. **Split screen**: top/bottom or side by side for ultra-wide screens.
- **Reduced flashes** and **colour-blind HUD**.
- **Controls**: remap every action for one player or for each of two players.
- The **track editor** and **audio editor** are there too, if you want to make the game your own.

FREE. MOSTLY.

DOLORES'S ADVICE

Twenty years of stunts, in a few lines.

- Brake before the curve, not in it. Old as dirt. Still true.
- Turbo out of the corner, not into it.
- Land on the back wheels. Nose-first is for amateurs.
- Ramps don't care how you feel. Speed's the only argument.
- Overheat your guns and you're just a loud car. Fire in bursts.
- Shoot the barrels, not the truck. Barrels don't have mothers.
- Interceptors hunt in threes. Kill the middle one and the other two forget what they were doing.
- Rain makes the road slick and the drivers stupid. Be neither. Rain tyres help.
- When the train horn sounds, decide. Then don't change your mind.
- Turn the music up. After the second shard, the beat is a weapon.

> *"A car that talks back is a car that's thinking about leaving you."*
> — Mama Dolores

CREDITS

Written, designed & directed by D. B. Waldtier (dbx)
Programming dbx, with Claude
Pixel art dbx: Blender renders, converted to pixel art and finished by hand
Story panels generated with AI image models and finished by dbx
Music generated with Stable Audio; lyrics, arrangement and selection by dbx
Sound dbx

In memory of the Amiga racers, the late-night OVAs, and every rented tape we never rewound.

All characters, cars and companies are fictional. No memories were sold in the making of this game.



AFTERGLOW

thank you for playing

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