

Past Final Projects Presentation

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- Generate ideas for what kinds of games we want to make ourselves
- Get an idea of some of the kinds of things that are feasible
- Identify the things that we like in the games, so as to reproduce them (and expand them)
- Identify things we don't like in games, so as to avoid them (or remedy them)
- Identify features that attract players to games
- Identify trouble spots in games that make people NOT want to play them... (How else might we do this?)

How are we going to look at games today?

- Look at the good.
- Look at the bad.
- Think of interesting ideas.

But your method might differ, and that's fine.

A note about game criticism...

The past projects we're examining today are all **good** projects, and they have many things to recommend them. But, in the spirit of game *postmortems*, we want to try to learn from them. Part of that involves pointing out both the good things, *as well as the bad things* – or, perhaps I should say, *the things that didn't work out so well*.

All games have these negative features – but especially games that push the boundaries. We are indebted to the developers of these games for providing valuable opportunities for learning.

With that disclaimer aside, on with the criticism!

Phantom (2004) – The Good

- *Really* nice stylized graphics, and great illustration, design, and theme
- Multi-level parallax – including objects that occluded the foreground is very cool.
- Simple, but nice, smooth animation
- Interesting idea with the saving or banishing of souls
 - And how your abilities are driven by this variable
 - Like *Black and White* or *Star Wars*, provides a (limited) framework for exploring a value set
- Nice non-traditional control like multi-jump, glide, and climbing.

Phantom (2004) – The Bad

- Lots of controls make it difficult to play (from the beginning)
 - I wish it had been incremental
- It wasn't clear when my character was getting hurt. Sure, the life went down, but I didn't really experience it viscerally. I wasn't alerted to it.
- I couldn't actually get the saving or banishing of souls to work (apparently). The best I could get was a little flame (what does that mean?). So, I feel like I was missing out on a major core mechanic of the game. :(
- It's cool that you can speed up or slow down the game, but I couldn't tell any difference in the game speed. Was I missing the needed item? I couldn't tell. But I did hear a sound when I tried to speed up and slow down! These conflicting messages really confused me.
- Also, was I banishing souls or saving them? Some text or sinister laughter or some other cue would have been useful...

Phantom (2004) – Interesting ideas...

- With this many controls, it would have been great to be able to look at the control screen without having to exit the game.
- I like the foreground scrolling, but it *did* get in the way. Maybe instead of getting rid of this cool feature, the foreground elements could sway, so you could look around them and tell what's going on...?
- ...

Dodgemball3D (2004) – The Good

- Good, useful help
 - Pictures are GOOD
- WOW! A DEMO!!!
 - What a great way to attract people to your game – especially in the environment in which it will be showcased.
 - Also good for industry demos...
- Several vehicles from which to choose, as well as several levels. The difficulty level and the number of BOTs is also adjustable.
- Even though a multi-player game at heart, the existence of BOTs made it all the more appealing (and testable, and evaluatable)
- Good camera work
- Game is fun to LOSE, too.

Dodgemball3D (2004) – The Bad

- Powerups – what do they do exactly? It was unclear. Or else I'm just too dumb to realize what's going on.
 - It would have been nice to have a visual or audio clue.
- Which car is mine? I couldn't tell in the beginning. It would have been better if the car had been highlighted, or (especially in multiplayer) it had been highlighted with the text “Player 1” or something.
- Poor feedback for when the car was injured. Blinking is at least *some* clue that I was injured... but it doesn't really conform to game standards, I think – and *for the worse*.

Dodgemball3D (2004) – Interesting ideas?

- It's a good idea to let someone else play (in fact, as many people as possible) your game *from as early on as possible*, so you can adjust the game (NOT JUST AT THE END!). *Observe* your players playing your game, and don't take criticism personally!

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- The *Grandma* test (or whoever...) - but **don't prime your players!**
- ...

Play Place (2005) – The good

- Definitely an interesting core mechanic: guide your *friends* to the goal.
 - similar to Pikmin in this way
- You can call out to your friends to get them to follow you. Again, like Pikmin. Cool!
- Interesting particle physics that had an impact in the gameplay
 - but the physics were not the *usual* physics – the balls tended to an even distribution across the arena. Nice visual effect.
- It was cool that you could change your mass.

Play Place (2005) – The bad

- Changes in mass didn't seem to register
 - It *worked*, but there were no cues. This would have been so *easy* to implement, via audio and/or video (preferably *both*).
- No cues for calling out to your friends! I thought this was especially bad.
- The balls, instead of providing an interesting interaction environment, just got in the way. It was frustrating.
- This was a game that I wanted to like so bad, but in the end I just didn't like it that much. It just wasn't that much fun.

Play Place (2005) – Interesting ideas

- What could we have done better?

Takeaway

- Analyze games
 - Determine the good, so you can replicate and reinforce this success
 - Determine the bad, so you can avoid it in your own games
 - Think about interesting ways in which you could extend games at which you look.
- Get some feedback
 - Get other people to look at your games, even non-gamers
 - The Grandma test
 - But don't prime them!
 - *Observe* what they do, get their impressions, and adjust your game as necessary.
 - Welcome criticism