

HOW DOES LOADING SCREEN DESIGN REINFORCE A GAME'S NARRATIVE AND AESTHETIC IDENTITY?



INDEPENDENT PROJECT /// INTERIM VIVA

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**NARRATIVE
REINFORCEMENT**

**AESTHETIC
IDENTITY**

**PLAYER
PERCEPTION**

HOW DOES LOADING SCREEN DESIGN
REINFORCE A GAME'S NARRATIVE AND
AESTHETIC IDENTITY?

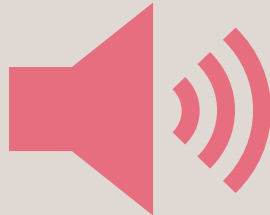
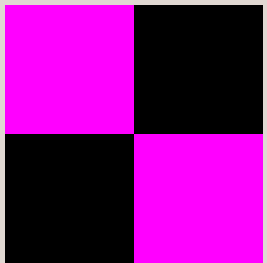


WHAT IS a LOADING screen?

A loading screen in video game terms refers to the visuals shown by a computer program whilst the game is initialising, as data is transferred from the disk to the RAM (REF).

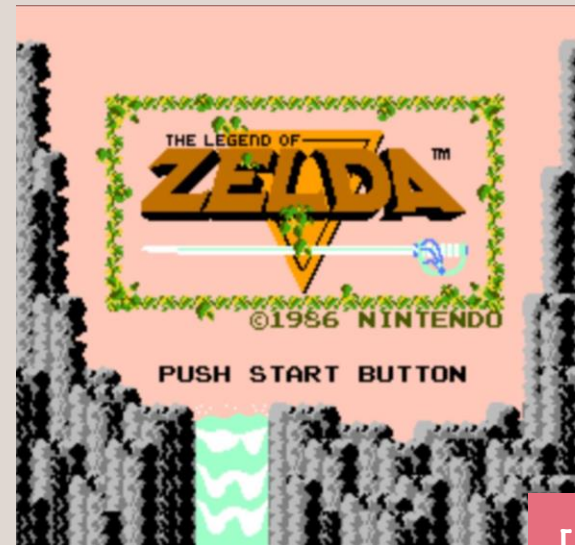
This includes necessary assets the game needs to run, such as models, textures and sounds.

[1]



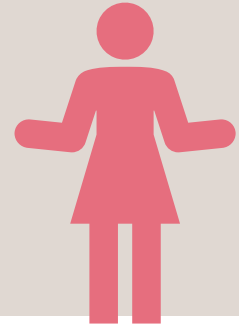
Loading screens first appeared with the rise of home consoles in the 1980's. They were used to load game data from floppy disks or cartridges.

These screens were often simple progress bars or static images with minimal interaction. They were seen as having one primary function - to mask the time it took for games to load data.



[2]

IT'S JUST a LOADING screen. WHY SHOULD I GIVE A CRAP?



THE MAIN PROBLEMS WITH EARLY LOADING SCREENS

- Long wait times.
- Lack of interaction.
- Confusion about loading status

Nobody *wants* to sit through a loading screen.

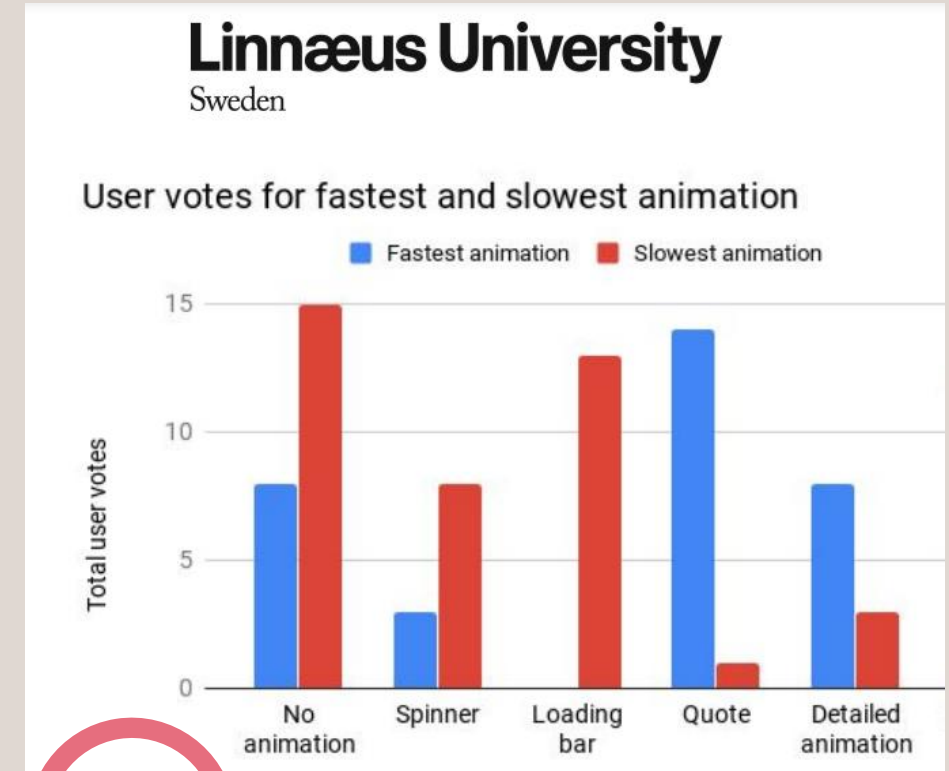
HOW DID WE FIX THIS?

- **Distractions**
- **Minigames**
- **Visuals**

In 2019, a university study was conducted where participants were instructed to test different sites and 'see which loaded the fastest.'

The purpose of this study was to test whether animated spinners or loading bars influenced a user's perception of the wait and to see which designs were the most effective.

The results showed that loading screens with no animations made the user perceive the program as taking longer to load when compared with loading screens with animations - even though all loading screens took the same amount of time.

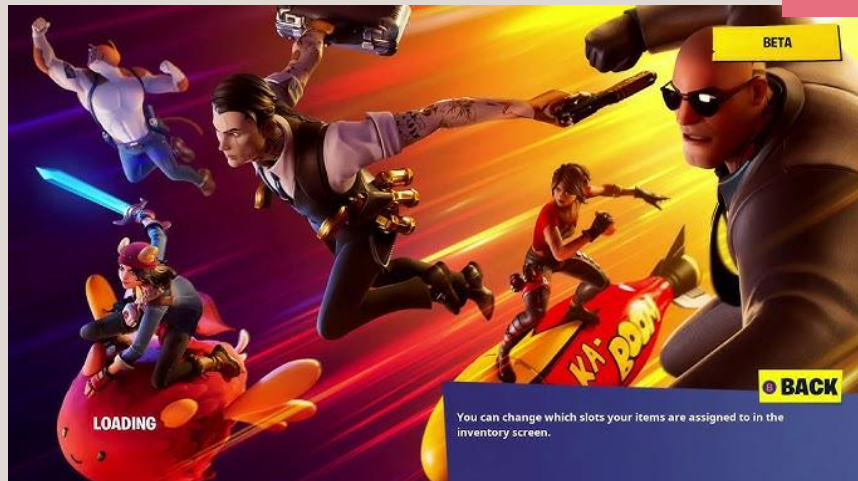


WHY SHOULD I GIVE A CRAP? PT 2.



[5]

A loading screen from Red Dead Redemption 2



[6]

A loading screen from Fortnite with a helpful tip

- 1) Loading screens give time to rest & refocus during intense gaming sessions.
- 2) They provide art, lore, & helpful tips that enhance immersion in the game world.
- 3) Loading screens create anticipation & mark progression, adding structure to games.

[4]

BASIC PLAN

- ✓ **Create a basic platform game 5-10 minutes in length with 3 levels.**
- ✓ **Add a variation of different loading screens between levels.**
- ✓ **Test users on the effects of the loading screens.**

WHAT HAVE I DONE SO FAR?

January - PLanning and Pre-Production

GOALS:

- ✓ Research topics & data collection
- ✓ Plan the game
- ✓ Plan practical work

Find examples of games with strong narrative driven loading screens.

Create a simple GDD.

Choose tools for design, create moodboards, sketch ideas for game and loading screens, list and gather assets.



GAME DESIGN DOCUMENTS: ONE-SHEET TEMPLATE

GAME TITLE **Sunny Meadow Mayhem**

INTENDED
PLATFORMS

PC

TARGET AGE / DEMOGRAPHIC OF PLAYERS

Suitable for all ages with non-violent gameplay, positive themes and a cartoony style.

INTENDED PEGI / ESRB RATING

PEGI 3 / E ESRB Rating.

SUMMARY OF GAME STORY (FOCUSING ON GAMEPLAY)

This is a time-trial racing game with three levels. You play in third person as an animal racing through a farm on three different levels, each getting progressively harder. The objective is to complete each level before the timer runs out whilst collecting farm-themed items to add to your final score. The mechanics are simple, the player must move forward, steer left/right.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS (USP)

A fun and light-hearted take on the usual chaotic, timed racing game experience. This game is more stylised than realistic, providing a unique experience for those looking for a more laid-back gaming experience.

COMPETITIVE PRODUCTS / SIMILAR GAMES

Mario Kart series, Forza Horizon series

GDD - INITIAL IDEA

Why didn't I choose this idea?

- **The scope was too large.**
- **There are no templates for racing games.**
- **Difficulty finding tutorials and resources.**
- **Very little experience in 3D and Unreal Engine.**



GAME DESIGN DOCUMENTS: ONE-SHEET TEMPLATE

GAME TITLE **Hot Crop Run**

INTENDED
PLATFORMS

PC, phone

TARGET AGE / DEMOGRAPHIC OF PLAYERS

Suitable for all ages with non-violent gameplay, positive themes and a cartoony style.

INTENDED PEGI / ESRB RATING

PEGI 3 / E ESRB Rating.

SUMMARY OF GAME STORY (FOCUSING ON GAMEPLAY)

This is a simple 2D side scrolling platform game where the player must reach the end of the level while collecting as many crops as possible. The player can jump and move left or right. Certain golden crops can provide power-ups such as a speed boost or jump boost.

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS (USP)

Fun aesthetic – This game is set on a farm, which helps bring a unique visual appeal not often seen in typical platforming games.

Easy to learn controls – this game has only three movement options, left, right and jump, making it easy to play for those new at games and accessible to those that may struggle playing other games with more buttons.

COMPETITIVE PRODUCTS / SIMILAR GAMES

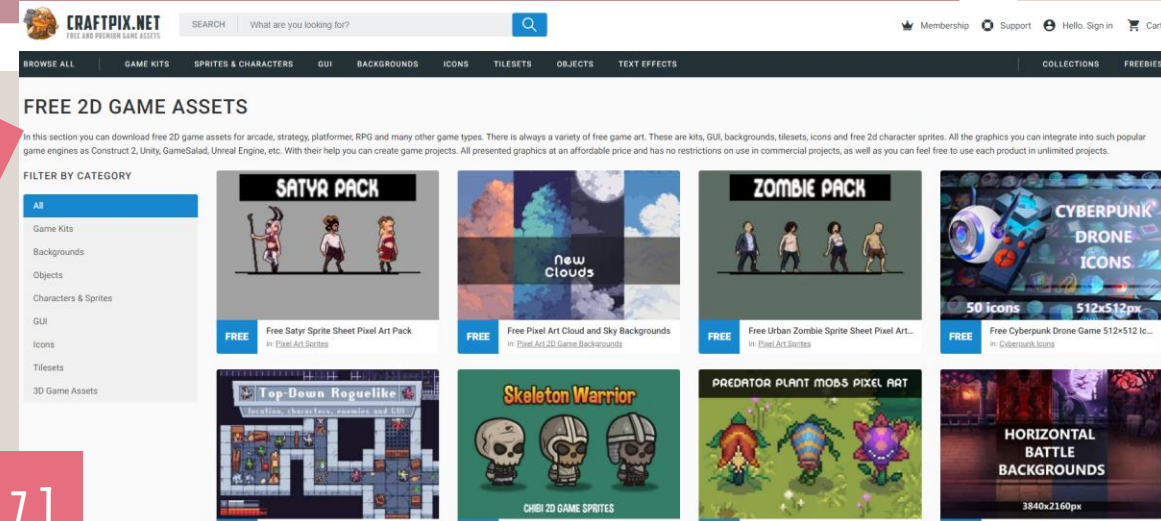
Stardew Valley (ConcernedApe), Celeste (Matt Makes Games), Super Mario Bros. Series (Nintendo)

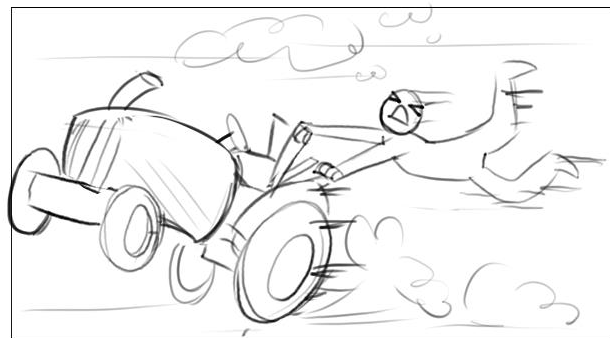
GDD – FINAL IDEA



Why have I chosen this idea?

- Consistent theme and aesthetic, reinforces narrative.
- Realistic scope.
- Plenty of resources and tutorials.
- Previous experience with pixel animations.
- Better to focus on loading screens.





WHAT'S NEXT?

FEBRUARY - PROTOTYPING

GOALS:

- ✓ Design prototypes for loading screens.
- ✓ Begin building the game.

Use CSP to create some prototype loading screens based on sketches.

Start creating the game's core mechanics in unreal engine.

MARCH - PRODUCTION

GOALS:

✓ Finish the game.

Finalise the game ensuring there are 3 levels with 5-10 mins of gameplay.

✓ Update prototype loading screens.

Create final loading screens and replace the prototypes.

✓ Playtest.

Playtest the game multiple times, fix any bugs that are found.

APRIL – BUG FIXING and PLAYTESTS

GOALS:

- ✓ Create a survey.
- ✓ Make refinements.



Make a survey with questions relating to my hypothesis and give it to 10-15 willing participants.



Analyse player feedback and adjust the game and loading screens accordingly.

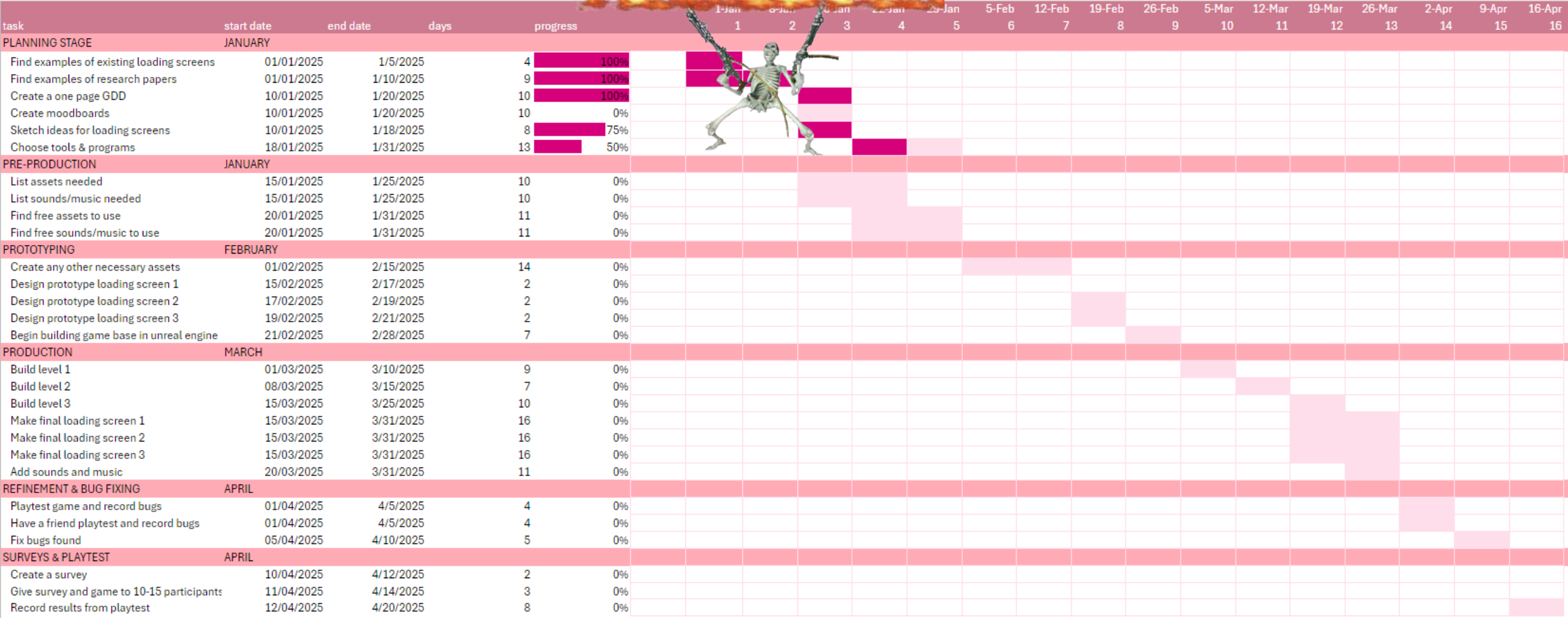
Project Start:01/01/2025

Current Date:16/01/2025

Weeks in Progress:3

Total Project Weeks:16

GANTT CHART



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

REFERENCES

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[2] F. Miyamoto, *The Legend of Zelda*, Nintendo, 1986.

[3] P. Rusu and L. Boström, "Improving Perceived Performance of Loading Screens Through Animations," *DIVA Portal*, 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A1333185/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. [Accessed: 02-Jan-2025].

[4] "The Importance of a Loading Screen," Game Developer, [Online]. Available: <https://www.gamedeveloper.com/design/the-importance-of-a-loading-screen>. [Accessed: 02-Jan-2025].

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[6] Epic Games, *Fortnite*, Epic Games, 2017.

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