

Submerged Postmortem

Name: Fenn Ingram

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Introduction

Submerged is a survival horror game that sees the player try to escape a cavern system whilst avoiding a beast like monster that stalks them and attacks from behind. The player must manage the noise they create as they manoeuvre around the monster and make their way out of the mine.

Research Evaluation

I began my research process by looking at games with similar styles and locations as the initial concept of Submerged. I used then collected images from those games and combined them into mood boards that were then given to the art department. They created concept designs from the references and their own research which then I reviewed and gave feedback on.

Games Design Theory

I implemented a number of ideas from other games and studies. Colour theory was added to the caves, the player beginning in the cave is surrounded by cold colours such as blues, greys and browns, then as they climb out of the cave there is more and more warm green coloured plants that make the player feel they are headed the right way.

Risk and reward was added to the game through the use of wooden boards covering the shortest routes through the caves. The player must find a weapon to destroy the boards, but doing so attracts the monster to the Player's position, thus making the shortest routes the most dangerous for the player.

Technical Research

I used mechanics I had experimented with on previous personal projects and iterated on those mechanics improving the code from them. Any elements of the code that I could not work out on my own I either looked at forums or asked for advice from my lecturer.

Contextual Research

I watched videos of spelunking looked through a bunch of example environments from other games. I looked at numerous pictures of actual caves.

Game Research

I looked at horror games with similar environments such as Until Dawn, Tales of Escape, The Vanishing of Ethan Carter, Resident Evil 7: Biohazard, Resident Evil: Remake, Soma looking at level design and villain design. I used this to create an enemy who fit the location but also had unique elements such as the attacking from behind.

Research Conclusion

The research that was put into Submerged served to help create a strong concept. I believe the right amount of research went into the game. The only thing that could have been improved would be completing some elements of the research faster thus beginning some elements of development faster.

Technique Evaluation

I worked away at the concept of this game nearly every day after receiving the brief. Whenever I had access to the machines I was working on the mechanics and environment designs. I made sure I was always progressing through my work, but I also allowed myself to have time away from the project to help maintain my enthusiasm for the project.

Identification & Suitability of Production Methods

Unreal Engine 4's blueprints enabled me to quickly and simply construct the core mechanics of the game and begin prototyping immediately. Thought was put into whether to pursue VR accessibility, but this was decided against as this would have created a lot more work to do. We opted to use the PS4 DevKit to make the game playable on PlayStation. This decision was made mainly out of a desire to experiment and begin developing the skills needed to develop games for PlayStation.

Development of Techniques & Skills

I have learned a number of new skills throughout the process. I know how to properly setup a new Unreal Engine project, how to use the PS4 DevKit and how to use custom events in the Blueprints to name a few.

Overall Quality of Work Produced

It always feels as though there is more I could have done. But looking at the project I am very pleased with the work that I have produced. I accomplished a lot of new things I set out to do and even fixed some of the things I felt were broken in my previous projects.

Technique Conclusion

I am excited to continue the project and develop more skills. The next step for me is to code the AI of the enemy of the game before beginning proper playtesting of the game.

Development Evaluation

As it was my initial idea that was selected by the group to be worked on, I naturally fell into a leadership role. Outside of Project Management I also was also in charge of developing the mechanics of the game using Unreal Engine's blueprints.

Creativity

I always like to set the bar high when creating the concept for a game. I use a mix of things I already know how to do and add new and ambitious ideas to them. The idea takes a lot of standard mechanics for the genre and adds some more unique elements.

Relevance to the brief

The initial prompt for the game was a 7-10-minute survival horror game set in a single location. My idea originally conformed to this prompt but after so many people joined the team it became clear we could accomplish more than was set out by the prompt.

Teamwork

Right from the beginning of the project I knew that the only way this project would be successful was with good teamwork. I was quickly thrust into a Project Management role which I decided to embrace. I checked in on my peers at regular intervals giving them feedback on their work and advising them on what to work on next. This also allowed me to keep the concept of the game on track. I feel the teamwork was very successful.

Iterative Design Practice

A number of the mechanics I created for the game in the first Project file were buggy and not streamlined. When moving to a new better designed project file I began all my code over again and was able to streamline it into a set of working mechanics.

Time Management

Following from previous projects I had a much better idea of how much time would be required for each task. I set out a new set of milestones each week for my class and most of them were met on time. The ones that weren't met were discussed and we arrived at new milestones that more suited the individual.

Development Conclusion

Having worked on the project for a while now I have a much clearer idea of all aspects of the game. Moving into the second part of development I will be able to answer team questions much more clearly.

Analysis

Contextualising your work within a wider theoretical practice

This project is about tapping into the fears of the player. Fears of being hunted, followed, snuck up on from behind. The darkness of the level, the speed of the enemy and the lack of UI add to this fear, drawing the player into the game. Successfully beating this game will feel rewarding to the player as the stress of the game wears off to leave only the exhilaration of victory.

Critique of the work you have produced

There were many small issues that showed themselves over the course of the project. These were quickly resolved either through my own knowledge or with assistance. I believe the work I have created has been high quality. The area I believe I need improvement is my Project Management. I need to be clearer about certain aspects of the project to assist in its development.

Critique of your own practice (and action taken)

My knowledge of Unreal Engine has grown over the course of this project thanks to my willingness to try and fail at certain elements of development. I created a lot of broken code and spent a lot of time developing a prototype that was never used. But these expanded my knowledge so when it came to making the actual code to be used in the game I was very successful