

Elliott Sullivan Golden Axe Game Report

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GOLDEN AXE GAME REPORT

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Genre:

Golden Axe is a Hack and Slash game which is all about fighting and defeating your enemies to progress through the stages just like in many other Hack and Slash games it was also developed by SEGA [4]. In regular Hack and Slash games you might not have a choice between characters and might be stuck with the one character. In Golden Axe they give you a choice between 3 characters [2] which have the same base attacks but different magic attacks per character. Gilius the Green armour character has lighting magic which makes him unique, and the others have unique magic too differentiate them and make them different from the other characters other than just looking different

Main menu and Game mode description:

Although the logo is in a simple font, it stands out and feels aggressive. Which makes sense since the game has bounds of violence. And then there are different game modes, you got arcade which is you just going through the levels of the game with limited lives like you would find in a genuine arcade beginner is then your tutorial so you can learn how to play the game easier. Duel is a game mode where you fight different waves of enemies and progressively gets harder the more you go through it. Additionally, this mode has its own map different to any of the story areas, this mode also poses an increase in challenge which would keep players engaged in the game for a longer period of time. In options you can choose to either increase or decrease your lives, change controls or test your sound.



Character selects and more game mode explanation:

Before you go into any game mode you must select your character, you have a choice between 3 characters which are Ax Battler (no armour), Gilius Thunderhead (Green armour) and Tyris Flare (Female character). After choosing your character you load into your selected mode.



Figure 1 This shows the character selection screen between the playable characters in Golden Axe

The Duel:

In this mode you fight waves of enemies but as you progress the more difficult it gets, and this presents the player with a challenge and an interesting new gameplay loop which is different to the original mode of the game.



Figure 2 This is the Duel map in which you fight waves of different and multiple enemies.

Beginner:

This is an introduction to the game doesn't tell you how to do attacks [3], but you deal double damage and reduced magic cost but other than that it is the same as the base game.

Arcade:

This is the original Golden Axe experience. You have 3 lives and when you run out you could (back in actual arcades) pay to get back alive but it allows you to do this 3 times. The gameplay is quite simple you attack and dodge enemies to progress through the stages although some controls can be quite difficult to do fluidly like the bash it requires you to move your joystick twice in the direction you want but it's awkward to do so. Additionally, as you progress the stages get more difficult and there are boss units at the end of each stage. There is an intermission stage which can give you pieces of food which replenishes one of your bars of life, and mana potions which you get in more abundance this allows you to use magic more efficiently. As you progress it shows you moving through the map as shown in Figure 3. [3]



Figure 3 This is the map to show you where you travel too in the world of Golden Axe

Visual style:

Golden axes Visual style is in a pixel art style and is a sprite-based game which is common in the 16-bit era. The game has side scrolling elements as when you pass some part of the stage you can't go back once you progress, another interesting element is how muted tones are chosen for the environments in the background to make the sprites stand out more. The character and enemies design and difficulty indicators are colour based for example the pink coloured enemies have more health and do more damage so you can distinguish difficulty based on colour. Also, due to the designs being more like macho men and bikini armoured women which could be influenced by fantasy themes or it's trying to cater to a Male audience which fit in with the fantasy genre of games in the period it was released. The Visual in the different levels is very fantasy for example a level being set on the back of a turtle, dilapidated wooden huts and large castles to name a few which all keep in theme with the fantasy elements of the game. The architecture is very rustic, beatdown and ruined due to the Death Adder in the story being this evil presence and it's an intriguing detail that they show his effect on the world.



Figure 4 The medieval visuals mixed with the modern pixel effects [3]

Intended demographic/Target Audience:

The intended demographic for this game is older teenagers to adults and is more aimed at Male customers, this is because of the visual style and the gameplay. The visual style caters to a Male audience due to the designs of the characters such as the main character Ax Battler [2] which is shown in figure 6 being hardly clothed but having huge muscles and on the other side of it you have Tyris Flare (shown in figure 5) [2], which is dressed in bikini armour which clearly, they are trying to advertise and cater to Male audiences. The gameplay also dictates this by being more violent and to clear the game there's no option to complete this game without fighting, this also makes the game more interesting as it provides conflict.



Figure 65 Ax Battler also a show of a muscular man like many other designs from this game.



Figure 54 Tyris Flare in bikini armour to appeal to the game's male audience.

Audio and Visual feedback and how it impacts the player:

In Golden Axe the audio lets you clearly understand when your attacking, although it doesn't provide sufficient audio queues for when your attacked. They could have improved this by making the characters make a hurt noise when they get attacked or at least a different sound for when an enemies attack connects. Moving forward the soundtrack [5] in Golden Axe is repetitive and this can lead to it getting agitating and overall, the repetitive soundtrack makes parts of the experience worse for example if you keep failing on a part of a stage and then the music repeats it can make the player annoyed. On the other hand, the Visual feedback is useful you can tell what enemies are more difficult after seeing them for example it could be a colour change or an enemy which is huge, or even them riding a dragon which you can also mount. Being able to tell which enemies are the bosses or mini bosses of a stage are easy too as they have unique designs and tend to attack differently or do more damage.

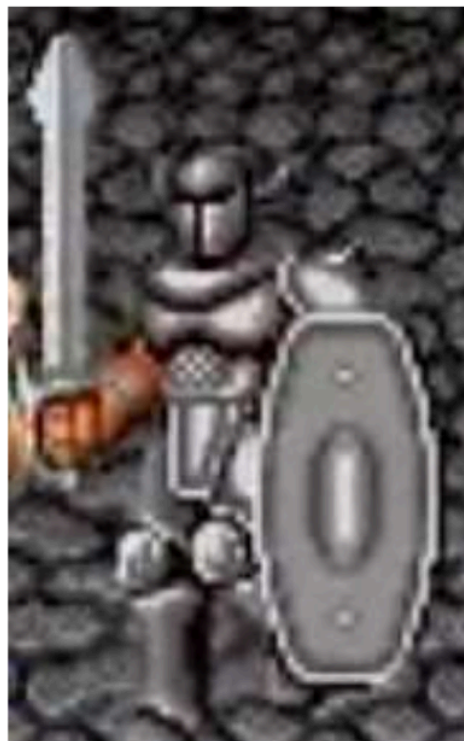


Figure 7 6 Example of a boss of a stage in Golden Axe [1][3]

Game Structure:

In Golden Axe you choose your character, and you start with 3 lives although in the settings you can up your lives to 5 if you wanted to. Then you enter one of 8 Stages which all have a unique layout and showcases different aspects of the world from a forest to a huge Turtle and Eagle that you fight Death Adders underlings on. Due to the game originally being an arcade game, it is entirely point based and on how high a score you get puts you in certain grades and typically the further you progress corresponds to what grade you get.



Figure 8 7 High score as mentioned along with the grading system

Challenges:

The biggest challenge in Golden Axe is to traverse through all the enemies without losing all your lives, which is very challenging to do as there are 8 levels with unique enemies per stage. Although there are other special stages with thieves that drop food and mana potions, this isn't a challenge but aids the player in beating the game.

The main goal the player needs to do is beat Death Adder [2] on the 8th Stage as the combat is decently challenging to master this is a hard feat to accomplish. Other challenges in Golden Axe include gaining score so you can increase your rank. You can also start the game with less life in the settings if you want to increase the challenge.



Figure 9 Death Adders in game sprite

Game Flow:

The flow of the game doesn't match the difficulty and is frustrating this is due to the nature of Arcade games trying to get you to consistently play it, so they can make more profit. Although it is too difficult right off the bat as it does start you with regular enemies it doesn't have a proper tutorial, so you have to figure out your moves as shown in figure 8 through playing. The game does get progressively more difficult throughout the game you traverse which can make it more fun if you are familiar with the controls, although to start the game it gives you a far greater challenge start out with. Arcade games don't offer a difficulty slider, so the game is stuck to the same challenge for everyone. Golden Axe does follow the level structure of doing a mechanic letting the player sit with it to learn how to play it/ play against it and then move onto the next mechanic/challenge the game introduces.

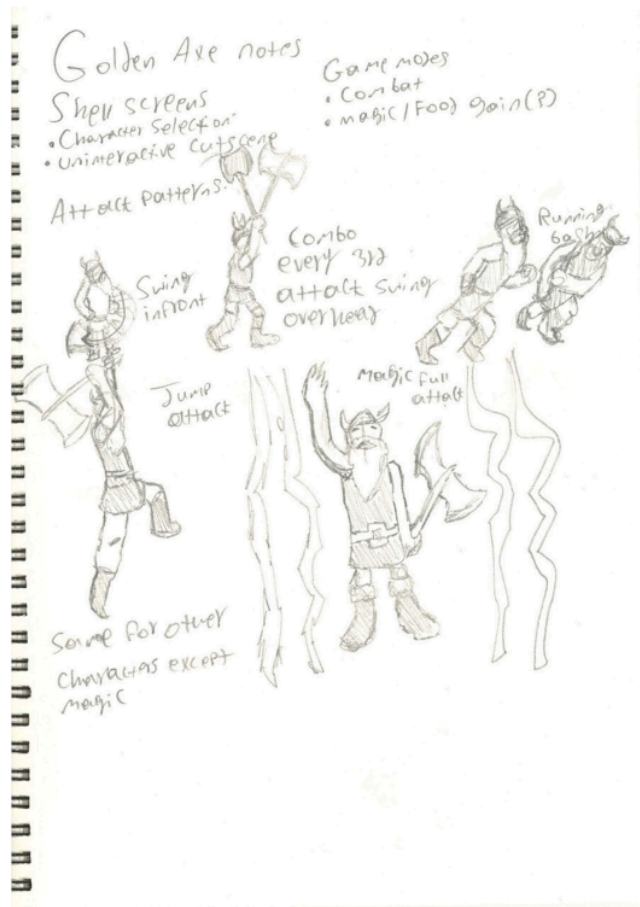


Figure 10 sketches made of the characters combat attacks.

Replay Value:

There is high replay value in Golden Axe this is due to the fact it is an arcade game they need to have high replay ability so they can gain profit from the machines. The way Golden Axe gets you to replay is to reach a higher score or get to the next stage you couldn't reach the last playthrough and offering you an incentive to pay more to continue the current run. The replay value is high due to the fact of the game being difficult and it being decently long for what type of game it is. This game benefits from the gameplay being interesting and challenging which could engage the player base to come back and repeatedly play it till they complete it. The game also hooks players to return by telling you about your goal at the start which is to defeat the villainous Death Adder [2] (shown in figure 9) which they all have their own gripes with. This can lead to players getting attached to characters to make them want to complete that character's story.

Positives and Negatives about Golden Axe:

Positives:

Some of the positives for this game is its visual style as it makes its characters and sprites stand out and feel like they belong in the world they have built. Another positive is that the gameplay is simple to learn but hard to master this keeps the player interested. One last positive this game offers is that they offer visual aid so you can tell the difficulty of the enemies and different areas where the stages are set easily this is helpful to the player first of all because it tells you how challenging an enemy is so it might change their approach and the other is handy to keep track of what stage you are on.

Negatives:

Some negative aspects of this game are the soundtrack [5] gets very repetitive and be irritating quickly due to it being the same track throughout most of the game. Another prevalent issue is the challenge for players who are new they are thrown into the deep end the game could benefit from a tutorial with controls. One last aspect that could be improved upon is the lack of direction at the start of the game it tells you the characters goal then no direction from then onwards.



Figure 11 An example of the muted backgrounds mentioned which elevates the character.

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[5] You Takada "Golden Axe – Original Soundtrack" YouTube video (2020, Sep. 3.)

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Elliott Sullivan Golden Axe Game Report

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

61 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

This report demonstrates clear familiarity with Golden Axe and provides a broad overview of its mechanics, structure, visual style, and arcade design conventions.

The discussion of character selection, enemy design, replay value, and challenge reflects good engagement with the game and an understanding of how arcade systems encourage repeated play.

However, much of the work is descriptive, with limited critical evaluation of *why* specific design choices are effective or problematic.

Stronger use of game design theory and tighter analytical focus—particularly in sections on flow, challenge, and target audience—would help move the work beyond explanation and into more evaluative discussion.

Overall, this is a competent submission that meets the brief at a basic analytical level.

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