

Project Postmortem

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Module Code & Title: M4X01557 Creative Practice 1

Project Title: Cheimaphobia

Date: 6/1/2019

Introduction

Cheimaphobia is an exploratory survival horror game with FPS qualities. Awakening stranded in the mountains the player must find a way to survive while an ever-present timer ticks down to their ultimate death by hypothermia. But there are other dangers out in the cold, wolf like monsters hunt the player down. In its current state I am the only person working on the game.

Research Evaluation

I began my research by looking at the visual styles' other games within the same kind of settings have taken. I then studied the effect of hypothermia on the body and learned that the body slows down. This led to my decision to slow the player down the further into the countdown they got.

Technical Research

When I came across issues in my blueprints I turned to forums where others had similar issues, the answers of these assisted me greatly.

Contextual Research

I watched several films set in freezing conditions. I listened to quiet ambient piano which felt as though it fit the theme of the game. I think I should have researched sound a lot more than I did.

Game Research

Kona was a key reference for Cheimaphobia. It had a lot of the types of mechanics I wanted for my game. It also gave me the idea to include a Map in the game. The metro game series shared a lot of the visual designs I wanted to use.

Research Conclusion

I believe the research process to have been a success. Next time however, I will not focus as much as I did on visual research and focus on researching mechanics.

Technique Evaluation

This project was the first time I used Unreal Engine's Blueprints without a lecturer's guidance. I very quickly improved and was able to create working code without assistance.

Identification & Suitability of Production Methods

Unreal Engine 4 presented me with everything I needed to create the core mechanics of my prototype. The engine's blueprints enabled me to do, in a short time, far more than I ever would have without it. It was the perfect tool for the job.

Development of Techniques & Skills

Every aspect of this project was designed to put me outside of my comfort-zone and learn new skills. I entered this project without an understanding of blueprints which I now have. I was also able to create a particle emitter and edit it to my precise specifications.

Overall Quality of Work Produced

I am extremely satisfied with the work I have produced during this project. The only thing which held me back was time. With more time I would have continued to improve the prototype to a professional standard. And even though I do not think I met that standard, I still perceive this project as a huge success.

Technique Conclusion

I have only just scratched the surface of what it is possible to do with blueprints. I will continue to develop these skills through further projects. I want to learn how to effectively use the landscapes functionality and paint and foliage modes in Unreal Engine.

Development Evaluation

As I was the only person working on this project there was no specific role I filled and no specific plan. I did the work in my free time. Only a couple of problems arose during development were some small coding issues which research into led to a quick resolution. Sadly, a crash caused me to lose a few hours work on the game world design, the end result of my reproduction was way too large compared to the player.

Creativity

I have gone above and beyond by setting myself high targets I risked failure, but through determination and enthusiasm I easily accomplished my goals. This project is worth it, I feel I am onto something with this project, something not entirely original, but not entirely unoriginal either.

Relevance to the brief

When I created the idea for this game, I knew I had to do more than just tick boxes on the brief. I want to make this game and I want it to be great. The only changes to the original idea were small details like having to add a health bar to the screen. In the future I want this bar to instead by a slow fade that obscures the player's vision as they lose health.

Working Alone (individual projects)

I told a few others about my idea for this project. Most expressed they liked the idea, but some gave me advice on producing the effects I want. I was advised how to make my timer/clothes pickup mechanic function.

Iterative Design Practice

Inevitably things did not begin perfectly. My original Unreal Project was a mess of code. I had to create a couple of other projects, cleaning up the code with each iteration. While playtesting I focused on combining every mechanic to make sure they interacted the way they were designed to.

Time Management

The time management I set for myself was too generous. I met my personal deadlines way before intended. I used this extra time to create more mechanics. I prioritised the core mechanics required for the prototype to function. The timer and the clothes pickups were a priority. I would have certainly given myself more time for world creation.

Development Conclusion

With the knowledge I have gained my future projects will only be made quicker. I will give myself stricter allowances of time and be able to predict more feasibly where the project will be after my deadlines.

Analysis

Contextualising your work within a wider theoretical practice

The project is designed to tap into the player's fear by immediately applying stress with the timer and obscuring visibility through thick snow that allows the monsters to sneak up on the player. When these stressful situations are overcome the player will feel relieved and fulfilled at beating the odds.

Critique of the work you have produced

There have been several minor issues which have been quickly resolved through the course of development. These have been rather painless.

Critique of your own practice (and action taken)

I have vastly improved my knowledge of Unreal Engine's Blueprints and have learned how to develop Particle Emitters and UI Widgets. I have learned how to alter collision fields and have them interact with the player. This is partly due to a great number of video tutorials and articles I have studied.