

Project Postmortem

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Group Number/Name: INDUSTRIAL

Project Title: NEO DRIVE

Introduction

For this project we were tasked with making a 3D racing game with hover mechanics and has been decided by the group that it would have a futuristic styling with the main theme being Neo-Tokyo. My role in the team was the level designer for the industrial level as well as being one of the animators.

Research Evaluation

Most of the research I did was in order to gather inspiration or references in order for me to get a clearer picture of what I was going for. However as the project went on and I had to add more sections to my level I researched similar themes to extend it while making it seem more interesting.

I also did some research after I was assigned to animate the Neo Titans roar later on and researched into that.

Games Design Theory

Did you use academic sources on games design theory did you use in support of your game? (eg: Schell, Swink, Zimmerman, Fullerton, Koster...). Provide an example stating what you used, why and how.

I didn't use any academic sources while doing research.

Technical Research

Describe your use of technical learning (eg: proactive use of forums, use of documentation, technotes, peer and tutor support, self-initiated learning etc.)

I used some peer reviews when I asked my classmates to give their opinions on my level designs. I asked about the layout of the course as well as hazards and traps that could be laid out along the track.

Contextual Research

As part of animation research I look at scenes from the Jurassic Park and Godzilla films in order to get visual references for the Neo-Titans roar. The Godzilla films were also useful as references of how the Neo-Titan would move.

Game Research

My main game reference was Mario Kart 8 for the Nintendo switch as it was a game I already owned and could play anywhere. In particular the Bowser's castle, the Neo Bowser city and mute city levels seemed to most fit the visual themes of the industrial level I was design.

Research Conclusion

Overall I think my research was very successful providing me with many creative influences for my level and animation.

Technique Evaluation

When designing the Industrial level I would first draw segments of the level on paper then scan it and redraw it in photoshop with different layers for the base track, hazards, height map ect and then organise them into one large level.

While animating the Neo Titan I acted out some of the actions to try to get a feel of the animation while animating it and making it more realistic. I was using software I had used before however when it came to editing the trailer it had been years since I had edited anything using Adobe Premiere Pro and in addition to this the user interface had been changed significantly meaning I had to relearn how to use the software.

It was my first time designing a level which was even harder in a genre where my only real experience is Mario Kart. Because of this the whole project was a learning experience which required me to develop a new skill set. I initially approached designing the levels by focusing on traps and hazards in the level however over the course of the project I had to shift to altering the duration and size of the track since the vehicle was being developed at the same time meaning that its speed changed. At one stage my track was timed at being 1:50 however in the most iteration of the game it is only 1:20 although it is still missing the elevator segment.

Development of Techniques & Skills

Learning a new skill set was mostly trial and error trying to figure out what works and what does not. Animating the Neo Titan was an interesting test of my skills since it was still humanoid but I had to make it feel like a giant hulking creature as well as robotic and calculated.

One method I theorized about later in the production process which I never got the chance to use a grid system to get a better estimation of the duration of our track. However the levels

were already in the tuning stages of production and the vehicle's performance was still in fluctuation.

Overall Quality of Work Produced

Overall I am quite happy with the quality of my work however I feel like my level was lacking in size compared to the rest of the levels made by other level designers. I feel like I have learnt a lot over the development process.

I feel like communication between team members could have been improved which would have made us more professional as well as speeding up the process.

Technique Conclusion

I believe my technical skills were adequate during this project however in future I would like to iterate more on paper before it is modified in the engine.

Development Evaluation

Since we were already given a game concept stated the development process by discussing different themes for our level as well as additional mechanics that could be implemented. We decided that we would have three levels in our game a broke into teams for each level. We presented various mood boards with different themes then selected three to be made into levels.

I was selected to design the fire/steampunk level which with further research evolved into a industrial level. I then came up with the initial level design which would be a small shanty town that would lead into a thermal power plant inside a volcano.

After making the level in engine and testing it using pre existing content we discovered that my level was significantly smaller than the other two levels and would have to be greatly extended to roughly four times longer since we wanted all the course to be around two minutes long.

During the animation of the Neo Titan I was initial going to have it roar upwards as a way of asserting its presence in the Neo Tokyo level however upon further consideration I thought it would have a greater effect and be more intimidating if It got low and roared at the players instead.

Creativity

While making my level I tried also implementing a story for the game by making an assembly area in my industrial level where you would be able to see parts of the Neo Titian linking the Neo Tokyo level and Industrial level. After some discussion this also spawned the idea that

the portal would also have some time travel effect so you would be able to see the Neo Titan before, during and after the destruction of Neo Tokyo.

Relevance to the brief

This project follows the brief addititly as the brief itself was rather vague stating that we would simply be making a hover car racing game. Initially we were considering making the game multiplayer and implementing a health system although we haven't completely abandoned these concepts they have been given a low priority due to the time constraints of the brief and current skill level of the team working in the Unreal Engine.

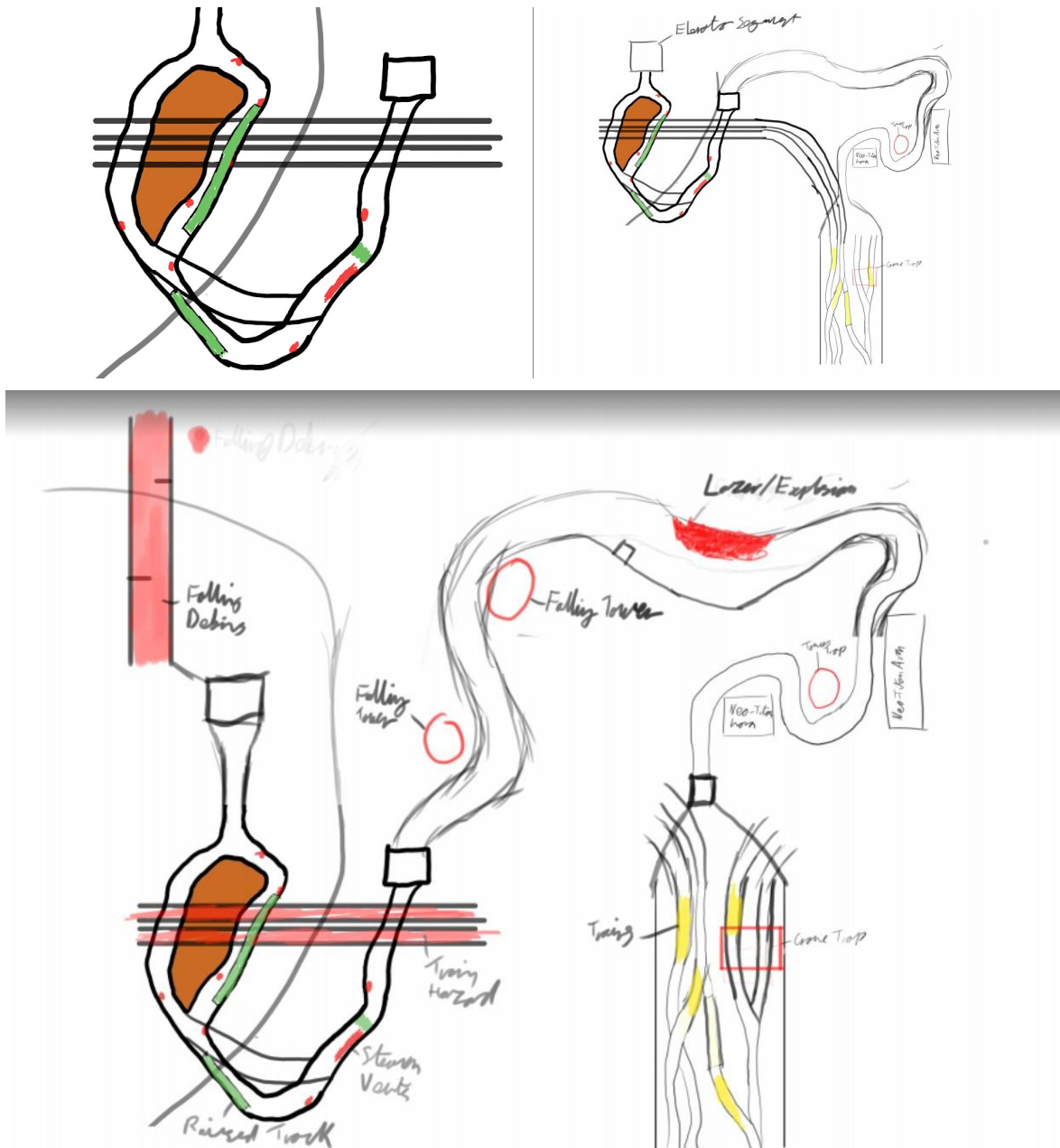
Everyone in the class worked on the game however we split into three teams to work on the three levels. In my team I was the level designer so I had to actually come up with the idea of the level and communicate the idea to the concept artist as well as working closely with the person creating it in the Unreal Engine.

Every week the class would discuss where we currently are with the game as well as any changes we planned to make to it. I was able to attend all of these meetings and talk to some of the other level designers about their levels in order to stop the levels being too similar and critique each other's levels and suggest changes.

This was also a good time to talk to my teams concept artist and make sure we were imagining the same thing or if there were changes we could make. I didn't communicate with my teams modler as much as I should have, I mainly talked to him to ask if he was able to make some of the models and check how much progress he was making leaving the concept artist to communicate the visual references for the level.

The member of the Unreal Engine team making my level in the engine changed throughout the process depending on the tasks the members were doing however I believe I communicated the idea of my level across adequately. It was while communicating with members of the Unreal Engine team that I realised that the elevator segment would not be able to go up vertically like I initially wanted and so were able to compromise by saying it would be at an angle so that vehicles would be able to drive up it.

Iterative Design Practice



Here is evidence of the iterations of the Industrial levels design. The track has been significantly extended from its first iteration when compared to the final version in addition several traps have been added and everything has been more clearly labeled to help the concept artist and person in the engine visualize the level.

Through play testing we discovered that the first iteration of the level was far too short only lasting 30 seconds. We decided that the levels should be around 2 minutes long which led to it being so significantly extended.

Time Management

I think that my time could have been spent more effectively with making more significant changes with each iteration of the level which would also have meant less work for the Unreal team who were building and testing the levels in engine. This would have also cut out the time I was waiting for feedback about the level.

I did fall behind with some of my internal deadlines as I underestimated the time it would take to test and edit the level. However I left I was able to organise my time to be able to finish everything to an acceptable standard.

Development Conclusion

Overall I believe the development process was successful if a bit amateur due to our lack of experience. It slowed a little during the testing phase since there was a lot of back and forth. It would definitely be beneficial if in future if we better communicate the estimated speed the vehicles would be traveling at so we could work out how long the tracks needed to be.

Analysis

I have done little research into game theory for this project however I believe it is something that could potentially improve the quality of my work in future.

The quality of work I have produced has been good however I think that the majority of the group, myself included have been struggling with the scale of the worlds we have been building which has been one of the problems that has affected the duration of my level since the first iteration of levels mine was thirty seconds while another was around six minutes. This of course was fixed though playtesting where we aimed to get our levels to the two minute mark.

I have enjoyed working as part of a team. Overall our communication was good and we were able to accomplish everything we wanted however we could try to organise ourselves better.