

Reflective Report - Luke Rees

2100874

by Luke Rees

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Game Design and Asset Creation – Luke Rees 2100874

Reflective Report

Game Overview

The game we created as a group was a sci-fi noir themed detective game, we called Cyber Sleuth.

In the game you play as a detective and are sent to a crime scene to look for clues to try and solve a murder. This leads the player to a house that contains a scientist's lab where you find out the truth of what happened and why.

In the game you must look for clues in each area you travel too before being allowed to travel to the next area, you do this by exploring the environment and interacting with anything that seems out of the ordinary. For example, in the crime scene you find an ID card of the scientist which leads you to their house.

The game takes place in a New York inspired city with elements of both old 1920s style and a futuristic Cyberpunk style.

Target Audience

The target audience would be fans of similar detective/story-based games. Also, this game would be targeted at fans of the noir film genre due to the inspiration taken from that genre for the style used. Additionally, it will be targeted at fans of the Cyberpunk genre for similar reasons.

It may also interest puzzle game fans specifically detective puzzle games as you need to look at an environment and search for any clues you can find.

The media we researched and used as a basis for our game also helps to define our target audience as the similarities between them and our game allows us to target our game at that particular audience.

Some examples of other media that our target audience would be interested in are:

- The Wolf Among Us [1]
- Life is Strange [2]
- Blade Runner 2046 [3]

These pieces of media all share some elements with our game be it the style, gameplay or general themes.

Design Choices

The game is designed around a mix of old detective noir films based around the 1920s/30s and the genre of cyberpunk and gritty sci-fi. This provides an interesting style as we incorporated a mix of both themes as much as we could. For example, my environment was the detective's office which I designed based on pictures of cliché offices from detective films, tv shows and games but I mixed tech into different aspects the scene, such as, the filing cabinets containing computer screens rather than paper files and the detective's 'scanner' tool is modelled after an old 1920s camera. In the alleyway scene we modelled the buildings after New York style buildings since New York is a popular location for detective media due to all the alleyways and dark corners.

These design choices also influenced the story of the game as the murder you are sent to investigate is caused by a rogue science experiment and the final area you end up in is a cliché mad scientist's lab found in many different sci-fi media. Furthermore, the police that you work with in game are based off robot police in fiction as robot police are a common idea used in this style of sci-fi media due to the coldness and indifference, they have in the way they act.

I took the role of creating the story for the game as well. So, using the theming as a base as well as the different media we researched, I created multiple story drafts that would fit within our chose design. I then presented these story drafts to my team members who provided feedback on them which I used to further refine the story into what we ended up using as a basic script for our game. We did unfortunately have to cut certain elements of the script due to skill constraints within our team that couldn't be overcome due to our lack of knowledge in certain areas. This wasn't a hinderance, however, as we were able to come up with alternatives that better fit our skill level while still making sense within the design we decided on in the beginning.

Learning

In this project I had to learn multiple new skills to assist in the creation of the game. I had to learn how to use a variety of software more efficiently as well as skills that assisted in working with a team on a joint project.

In Maya I learned how to better create models using multiple shapes rather than one object as well as how to correctly setup and scale a model to export into substance painter and unreal. I also learned how to more effectively apply textures specifically for models that are transparent and require multiple textures sets to work. I also learned how to more effectively UV unwrap an object by making use of the auto unwrapping tool in Maya and then converting that UV into a cleaner one. All of this allowed me to create higher quality models in a quicker amount of time and led to my scene being a higher quality compared to my previous work.

In Adobe Substance Painter I learned how to create better looking textures. I made greater use of emissive, metallic as well as transparent textures to provide more interesting objects in Unreal. I learned how to use smart masks to provide effects like rust and dirt on a window as well as how to bake assets for a better overall look. I also learned the importance of scaling the texture quality based on what is required in the game as our project ended up breaking in one version due to the textures on all our models being too high, this caused some graphical bugs in one version of our project that we couldn't fix, however, this allows me to avoid this issue in the future as I now know how to better create my textures.

In Unreal I learned multiple new skills and developed old ones. For example, I learned how to use blueprints in a basic format as I used a blueprint to make the ceiling fan in my scene spin when the game is run. I also improved my skill in general level design as my scene looks more natural and interesting compared to my previous work. I also improved my ability to use lighting within a scene as the outside of the office is lit in a way reminiscent of a Cyberpunk sighting with blue and purple that would come from neon lights and street signs found in that kind of environment.

I also learned more teamwork skills that I can take into the next project, for example, I now know how to effectively use certain types of software to assist in teamwork and project management. The software that I used for this are GitHub and Discord. GitHub helped greatly in access the unreal project and allowed me to keep the project on my end up to date with other team members. Discord provided a great method of communication for our group and allowed us to help each other whenever an issue occurred or to inform the whole group of a design change or development in the

project. Furthermore, I learned the importance of allocating work between our group to get the project done more efficiently and effectively, such as, using the research we conducted as a group to create an asset list of each scene and character we needed as well as objects we would need to create within a scene.

Outside of the artwork, I had to develop my writing skills as I was given the role of making the story. I learned how to effectively create easy to understand story drafts and scripts for a game as well as creating inventory descriptions and character dialogue. I also learned how to effectively incorporate feedback from my group into my story drafts as well as how to compromise aspects of the story to better fit the scope that the team could achieve in the given time and with our current skill level.

Research

For our research we started by gathering images from various forms of media to create a mood board. This allowed us to decide on the specific theming and style we would use in game and allowed us to focus in more rather than having a broad genre that could include any sort of additional styles or ideas.

Following on from this research I investigated more specific details for our theme, this included ideas for objects that I could create as well as the story ideas to use within our game. This research mainly came from areas of interest to me as I could better understand the ideas being used. For example, for my office scene I took inspiration from media I've seen that includes similar styles of environments, one being the TV Series Jessica Jones [4] as one of the main environments from that show is a detective's office.

Another aspect of research I conducted for my side of the project was research on story aspects. This included getting a general overview of the story ideas that the chosen genres present. For example, I researched cliché writing tropes for noir stories and stories that use noir ideas as a basis for their plot. One good example of this is episode 4 season 7 of the show Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D [5] which takes the ideas presented in typical noir films and tv and incorporates them into that particular episode to act as a parody of those tropes. This includes things like a gruff narrator, the focus on a murder mystery and character archetypes. I also used the TV Tropes website [6] as it allowed me to research further tropes that relate to the noir genre. Additionally, I wrote the note that was planned to be included at the end of the game. This note would've been used to explain the mystery of the game and finish the story. I wrote this note in the style of a laboratory experiment log, but in order to make it entertaining, I based it on experiment logs found in the various stories on the SCP Foundation website [7] this is a fictional website that includes a multitude of reports written as if they were professional research documents and as such I decided to base my note off of those rather than a real life lab report as the fictional reports are written in a more interesting and entertaining fashion since they aren't expected to be factual unlike real life reports which would have been boring as the conclusion to our game.

Bibliography

- [1] The Wolf Among Us [Software], United States: Telltale Games, 2013
- [2] Life is Strange [Software], France: Don't Nod Entertainment, 2015
- [3] D. Villeneuve, Director, Blade Runner 2046, United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2017
- [4] M. Rosenberg, Creator, *Jessica Jones*, [DVD], United States: ABC Studios, 2015
- [5] J. Whedon, Director, Agents of Shield, United States: ABC Studios, 2013
- [6] "Film Noir", Tv Tropes, [Online], <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/FilmNoir>, [11/08/2022]
- [7] "SCP Foundation - Homepage", SCP Foundation, [Online], <https://scp-wiki.wikidot.com/>, [11/08/2022]

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

60/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

1. Engagement with Literature Skills - 15/25

A good amount of research and methodologies mentioned, but would liked to have seen more images/references alongside mentions of research and workflow.

IEEE referencing used with bibliography/reference list. Well done.

2. Knowledge and Understanding Skills - 17/25

There is a good level of knowledge shown, with an awareness of advanced software techniques and usage (Maya, Substance Painter and Unreal)

3. Cognitive and Intellectual Skills - 16/25

Analysis is clear and looks into not only own workflow but also team communication and research methods. Well done.

4. Practical Application Skills - 5/10

Document could benefit from clearer formatting as there are large amounts of text that could be easily broken up with relevant imagery mentioned above, as well as perhaps quotes?

**5. Transferable
Skills for Life and Professional Practice - 7/15**

A Contents and Title page would help with formatting and giving the document a more professional appearance.

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