11/2/2022: Sail Mail (Solo project)

Genre: Platforming speed-run

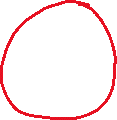
The genre may seem slightly odd, but I think a game like this would be really fun.

Basic setting and lore: On a far-flung island community in the middle of the ocean, you are the one and only postman. Despite the island’s small size, people send and receive mail all the time, so it’s your job to find out how to get it to them to meet your deadline. Since the island has a great vertical geometry, vehicles can only bring you so far, so you’ve been trained to use a boosting device to fling yourself from place to place. Using the device and your wit, you must deliver the mail as fast as possible!

Inspirations: I have always loved movement mechanics in games, but one that I have a particular love for is the rocket jump. *Team Fortress 2* is probably the best example of a game that has a mechanic like that, but *Ratz Instagib,* a game that I played recently, has a more simplified and easier to use version of it that will probably be closer to what I implement. The recent *Neon White,* a speed-running platformer in its own right, exposed me to just how fun these types of games can be, so I wanted to make one of my own, if very simplified.

Feature List (In order of priority)

1. Character controller: This is by far the most important part of the entire game. If the player avatar isn’t fun to control, then the game itself may end up being not fun to play, since so much of it is based around the character movement. I already have a platforming character controller from my previous platformer assignments, but it was built around a flat and blocky tile map environment. I want this game to have fluid and curvy terrain that the player can slip and slide through with great speed, so the controller is going to have to account for that.
2. Boost Mechanic: Its arguable whether this or the basic controller is more important, but I think it would be easier to tweak this so it’s going below. The boost mechanic is going to be the main movement mechanic that all of the levels are built around. Its going to follow the same principles as many other explosive jumps in video games. My basic idea is a gun that shoots a ray cast that can hit the ground. Once collided, it spawns an explosion at the point of contact. If the player happens to be in range of the explosion, it will propel them in the opposite direction of the center of the blast.



Here, the red marks are the center of and radius of the explosion, and the

Blue is the center of the player.

1. Level Format and Win Condition: Of course, all the movement mechanics in the world mean nothing if there isn’t a place to move around in. Since the movement in this game is going to be relatively free form and precise, challenge will come from platforming precision and speed. Levels will also be non-linear, with many different paths to take in order to reach any of the goals in any order, and as such, challenge will also come from planning a route in order to go as fast as possible. Levels will have multiple different mailboxes spread out in each one. In order to win, the player must visit every single one at least once to deliver mail. Once all mail has been delivered, the level is cleared.
2. Different gameplay mechanics: Here are some things that may impede player progress.

* Water: The booster device is electrical and is not waterproof. Falling into water will cause it to stop working, which will fail the level on the spot, since the booster is required to progress.
* Hazards on land: Some hazards on land may hurt the player (Spiked vines, Sharp rocks, barbed wire. Etc.). If the player takes too much damage, they will become to injure to proceed and lose the level. Unlike in many platformers, there aren’t enemies in the standard sense.

There may also be some other mechanics that don’t directly harm the player but make winning harder

* Packages: Most of the time, the mail you have to deliver consists of parcels and letters that can just fit inside of a mailbag. However, occasionally packages may have to be delivered. The basic idea is that the package is something that spawns near the start of the level that you must pick up and then bring to the correct mailbox. Having a normal package doesn’t impede your movement in any way, but you can only carry one package at a time. Other types of packages may be implemented if I have time (fragile packages which are destroyed upon taking damage? Packages that do impede your movement? Packages that can’t be picked up but instead must be pushed to the goal?)
* Time limit: In the absence of typical enemies, the biggest enemy in this game is the time limit. Each level has a time limit, which, upon reaching zero, will cause the player to lose the level. If I can get around to it, maybe having different difficulty levels have shorter minimum times could be a fun idea. Another thing I could do if time allows is to make some sort of medal system? Who knows?

1. Player Progression: Since this game would more focus around an individual player’s skill rather that avatar power, there won’t be any overt player progression over time. The only thing that I would implement is some additional game mechanic tied to the player for even more level variety. For instance, the booster device would start out as a simple mobility tool, but maybe through some upgrade it could destroy weak walls or debris and allow the player to find alternative routes for even faster times. Not quite solid on this idea yet, so this may change in the near future.
2. Modular Level System and save game: Obviously, having some sort of level modularity would make building levels much easier. Having some sort of save game functionality may also be useful, too.
3. Options: What PC game is complete without a way to configure it to your standards. Will probably have generic things like audio level and resolution. My game won’t make use of Nvidia ultra-smooth ray trace technology or anything like that, but having some sort of options panel would be good
4. Graphics: Obviously, I’m only one person, so there’s only so much I can do in terms of graphics. Even so, Unity gives me access to many robust graphical things like particle effects and simple lighting. Even as one person, I’m sure I could make the game look good.
5. Extra: Here’s a list of things that might make it into the final game if I have time

* An actual short story
* Extra secret collectibles
* A bonus level tied to said collectibles
* Cutscenes????