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Divine Rampage: Endless Descent

Overview

Awakening in a mysterious dungeon devoid of memories, players find themselves surrounded by hostile creatures and insurmountable walls. In Divine Rampage: Endless Descent, a 2D, top-down roguelike, players embark on a journey of survival and discovery. Combining the strategic depth of classic roguelikes with the cathartic combat of games like Doom, players must navigate treacherous rooms filled with enemies and hazards. To progress, players must uncover illusory walls by splattering enemies' blood on the walls, all while unravelling the mysteries of the dungeon's lore. With each playthrough, players strive to delve deeper, unlock new items, and unearth the secrets hidden within the depths.

Core Gameplay Loops

In Divine Rampage: Endless Descent, players engage in a series of interconnected gameplay loops to navigate the treacherous depths of the dungeon. The primary gameplay loop unfolds within individual rooms, where players must evade enemy attacks while strategically eliminating foes to reveal the illusory walls and progress to the next chamber.

At a broader level, the secondary gameplay loop encompasses the player's journey through each floor of the dungeon. Here, players must navigate labyrinthine levels, strategize paths, evade enemies, and strategically utilize their arsenal of abilities, including temporary, 'run-specific' items. These 'run-specific' items can be picked up throughout a playthrough, providing temporary boosts that expire after a certain amount of time, or after death. Players can also collect 'inter-run' items that unlock new abilities for subsequent playthroughs, fostering strategic diversity.

The overarching goal of escaping the dungeon forms the tertiary gameplay loop, driving players to conquer increasingly challenging levels and uncover the mysteries shrouding their existence within the confines of the dungeon. Narrative elements, gradually revealed after defeating mini-bosses, offer tantalizing glimpses into the player's backstory, complementing the core combat and strategic gameplay.

Replayability is further enhanced through the acquisition of new 'inter-run' abilities with each successful playthrough, encouraging experimentation with different playstyles and character builds. This iterative process of discovery and mastery fuels players' determination to conquer the depths of Divine Rampage.

Mechanics/Dynamics/Aesthetics

The core mechanics of Divine Rampage: Endless Descent encompass nuanced movement, strategic combat, and item utilization. Players navigate a two-dimensional space, wielding equipped weapons and inter-run abilities while strategically evading enemy attacks. Additionally, players can employ 'finisher' moves to dispatch weakened foes, strategically splattering blood to reveal hidden paths forward.

These mechanics drive the core dynamics of destruction and evasion, where players must balance offensive prowess with defensive manoeuvres to survive the dungeon's challenges. Combat mechanics, including weapon variety and ability usage, are designed to offer a satisfying and cathartic gameplay experience. However, players must exercise caution as they are vulnerable to enemy attacks, necessitating strategic evasion tactics. The 2-directional movement and level layouts will enable players to employ cover and strategic positioning, further enhancing the evasion dynamic. While combat and evasion will both be central to progression, player choice and customization through weapon and ability selection will allow for varied playstyles. For instance, players may opt for aggressive combat builds, using weapons that deal more damage or abilities that grant more HP or armour. Alternatively, they can opt for stealthier, more evasion-centric strategies, using weapons that deal less damage instantly, but which deal more damage over time, or by equipping abilities like invisibility.

The supporting dynamics of exploration, collection, and cooperation deepen the gameplay experience. Exploration encourages players to uncover hidden chambers and discover valuable items. Nevertheless, players must weigh the benefits of exploration against the risks of encountering formidable obstacles that could potentially result in a game over. Collection incentivizes players to gather all inter-run items, which unlock new abilities and enhance player customization. Finally, in multiplayer, cooperation becomes vital as players strategize equipment selection and item sharing to optimize teamwork and synergy.

The primary aesthetic of the game revolves around the challenge of mastering its mechanics and overcoming escalating obstacles. Player progression is fuelled by improved combat and evasion techniques, the creation of better builds, and a deeper understanding of enemy behaviours and procedural generation elements. Supporting aesthetics, including narrative and discovery, augment the core experience by offering additional layers of immersion and motivation. The narrative unfolds gradually, incentivizing players to delve deeper into the dungeon to uncover its secrets. Additionally, the thrill of discovery motivates players to unlock new abilities and encounter ever more gruesome and formidable adversaries.

Pillars

Cathartic Combat: Combat in Divine Rampage: Endless Descent is designed to be exhilarating and satisfying, epitomizing the dynamic of destruction. Players will wield a diverse array of weapons and abilities; each meticulously crafted to deliver visceral feedback and create impactful moments of triumph. From the satisfying crunch of a well-timed finisher move to the dynamic visual and auditory effects, combat will immerse players in the thrill of battle, encouraging them to engage with the game's mechanics and aesthetics on a visceral level.

Versatile Tactics & Balance: The game fosters strategic diversity by offering multiple viable playstyles and strategies. From aggressive combat builds to stealth or tank-focused approaches, each playstyle is designed to feel distinct and rewarding, with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Maintaining balance among these strategies ensures players have genuine choice, encouraging experimentation, rather than attempt to find the "optimal strategy". This balance encourages players to master a variety of playstyles and mechanics, aligning with the overarching aesthetic of challenge and the dynamics of destruction and evasion.

Endless Replayability: To sustain player engagement, Divine Rampage offers dynamic replayability through procedural generation and multiple endings tied to player choices and playstyles. Multiple endings and post-story content ensure that players remain engaged long after completing the main campaign. Furthermore, as players delve deeper into the dungeon, they'll encounter new environments, uncover hidden secrets, and face off against increasingly formidable foes. The allure of achieving high scores, battling new enemy types, collecting all inter-run items, and mastering diverse playstyles will keep them coming back for more, supporting the dynamics of collection and exploration as well as the aesthetic of discovery.

Ability Synergy: Central to the game's combat mechanics is the concept of ability synergy, where weapons and abilities complement each other to create powerful and satisfying combos. Whether playing solo or in multiplayer, players will discover the thrill of chaining together devastating attacks and coordinating strategies with allies. The seamless integration of weapons and abilities fosters a sense of creativity, supporting the dynamic of cooperation.

Cryptic Lore: The narrative of Divine Rampage is steeped in mystery and intrigue, offering players glimpses into an eerie and unsettling world. Through carefully crafted storytelling and pacing, players will be drawn into a world teeming with secrets and enigmas waiting to be unravelled. Lore is revealed gradually, leaving players both intrigued and bewildered, driving them to uncover the secrets hidden within the game's cryptic narrative, supporting the aesthetic of narrative.

Game Components

In Divine Rampage: Endless Descent, players encounter three core game components: enemies, environmental hazards, and items—the last of which is divided into weapons, run-specific items, and inter-run items—which are progressively introduced to enhance gameplay depth and challenge. New weapons and inter-run items are strategically placed throughout the dungeon (approximately 1-2 items introduced every 10 levels) with buttons for use standardized to facilitate ease of understanding. This gives players the opportunity to experiment with items and abilities before new ones are introduced. Such items cannot be used in the playthrough in which they are picked up, instead becoming usable from the beginning of any subsequent playthrough in which they are equipped. This gives players the opportunity to test their new abilities on easier levels and master them as the difficulty increases. Examples of weapons planned for introduction include slash and blunt damage types, elemental damage dealers, and support abilities such as slowing enemies. Examples of inter-run items planned for introduction include invisibility with a cooldown, short bursts of invulnerability, dashing, increased efficacy for different elemental attacks and additional armour or health.

New enemies, environmental hazards and run-specific items will be introduced every 10 levels, culminating in challenging boss battles that test players' mastery of existing skills. Each new area introduces thematic variations, incorporating new enemy types and hazards to keep gameplay fresh and engaging. The first level following a boss battle serves as a mini-tutorial, allowing players to familiarize themselves with new elements before facing high-tension battles. Enemy types will include close and long-range attackers, elemental variants, and specialized foes such as 'suicide bombers' with low HP but high speed, and 'tanks' with low speed but high HP/armour. Each enemy will be a monster, with a gruesome appearance. Additionally, bosses on every 10th level will incorporate the abilities of every new monster encountered in the previous section of the dungeon, as well as potentially unique abilities. Examples of environmental hazards planned for introduction range from lava pits requiring careful navigation to ice areas limiting movement precision to poisonous areas requiring quick decision making. Run-specific items will provide temporary boosts and support abilities, such as health or armour restoration, temporary invisibility or temporary damage amplification, enhancing players' tactical options in combat.

Level Structure

The level structure of Divine Rampage will be designed to immerse players in a procedurally generated dungeon filled with unique challenges and climactic moments. Each room within the dungeon will be dynamically generated using a combination of procedural generation techniques and heuristics, ensuring diversity and unpredictability in room layout and enemy encounters while making sure that a path to victory always exists. While exact generation methods have not yet been decided on, random walks and recursive

backtracking are being considered. Nevertheless, the overarching goal is to create rooms that offer strategic cover and engage players in tactical combat scenarios, while making sure that each room feel distinct.

The layout of rooms will follow a network structure, with interconnected rooms offering multiple paths for exploration and optional dead ends containing additional rewards. Binary space partitioning techniques are likely to be utilized to generate these floor layouts, with room contents randomized based on predefined heuristics, such as item and enemy rarity based on their usefulness and difficulty, ensuring rising tension and challenge progression. Additionally, 'total difficulty' will be calculated for each floor based on the enemies and items placed in it to further refine pacing, gradually increasing the challenge as players progress deeper into the dungeon.

Floors will be linked in a linear manner, with each floor featuring a single entrance and exit, to maintain tension and prevent backtracking. New weapons and inter-run items will be placed randomly on pre-defined floors, allowing for the controlled introduction of new abilities. This will once again allow for the careful control of the games pace. To further maintain tension and challenge, the difficulty of each floor will increase progressively, with boss battles occurring every 10 levels to serve as climactic moments and catalysts for narrative progression. After defeating a boss, subsequent floors will undergo thematic transformations, introducing new hazards and enemies. The first floor after each boss battle will act as a mini-tutorial, giving players recovery time after the hard-fought battle, while also allowing them to adapt to the new challenges, ensuring a smooth learning curve and gradual escalation of difficulty.

While the main story will conclude after a set number of levels, players will have the option to continue descending into the dungeon endlessly, encountering increasingly difficult challenges. The collection of all inter-run items, seeing the story to completion, the intrinsic desire to overcome increasing challenges, the competitive spirit among players, and the desire to explore all possible builds and environments, will serve as the driving force for continued progression.

Vertical Slice

The vertical slice of Divine Rampage: Endless Descent will showcase the first 10 levels of the game, focusing on core gameplay mechanics, narrative elements, and immersive combat experiences. Essential features such as smooth 2-directional movement, enemy blood splatter revealing illusory walls, and a visceral finisher move will be included, supporting the dynamics of destruction and evasion, aligned with the minimum viable product (MVP) requirements.

In addition to the MVP features, the vertical slice will introduce procedural generation of rooms and floors, a local multiplayer mode, and a basic AI companion for single-player mode. The exclusion of environmental hazards planned for later levels is justified by their common presence in roguelike games and their relatively lower impact on showcasing the unique character of Divine Rampage.

The inclusion of a subset of weapons, enemies, and items in the vertical slice aims to highlight the satisfying combat mechanics, strategic depth, and progressive difficulty curve of the game, supporting the dynamic of collection and the main aesthetic of challenge. Players will experience a sense of challenge and intrigue as they navigate through the procedurally generated levels, culminating in a boss battle on level 10, where the first piece of the game's lore will be revealed, supporting the narrative aesthetic.

Visual effects and sound design will further enhance immersion and the visceral nature of combat. The inclusion of multiplayer and procedural generation supports the dynamics of cooperation, exploration, and the aesthetic of discovery, offering players a glimpse into the diverse gameplay possibilities and playstyles available in the full game.

Development will prioritize the implementation of core features present in the MVP, followed by procedural generation, local multiplayer, and AI companion in single-player mode. Contingency plans include reducing the scope of content creation by implementing a smaller number and variety of enemies, weapons, and items, prioritizing core features and mechanics. Additionally, potential adjustments to procedural generation and simplification of the AI companion will also be considered if necessary, to ensure a polished and engaging vertical slice.

Target audience

The target audience for Divine Rampage: Endless Descent encompasses avid PC gamers aged 18-35, drawn to challenging and engaging experiences within the roguelike genre. This demographic of young adults values games that offer a blend of fast-paced combat, tactical decision-making, and high replayability. Within this audience, several player types emerge, each with distinct preferences and motivations.

Hardcore gamers are dedicated individuals who thrive on difficult challenges and enjoy mastering intricate game mechanics. They invest significant time and effort into learning the nuances of the game and achieving high levels of proficiency. Roguelike enthusiasts seek a new twist on the genre, appreciating procedurally generated levels, permadeath mechanics, and diverse playstyles. They enjoy the thrill of unpredictable encounters and the satisfaction of overcoming difficult obstacles. Action game fans are drawn to fast-paced combat, intense battles, and satisfying attacks and combos. They are also likely to find enjoyment in the adrenaline-fueled challenges and the cathartic and visceral combat offered by Divine Rampage.

Using the Bartle model, these players align with the Achiever and Killer types, driven by progression, victory and competition. In the Quantic model, they exhibit characteristics of Skirmishers, Gladiators, Ninjas, and Bounty Hunters, drawn to fast-paced excitement, challenge, strategy, and customization.

Monetisation

The monetization pathway for Divine Rampage: Endless Descent will begin with an early access release, allowing players to support the game's development and receive continuous updates leading up to the full release. In the event that early access sales are insufficient, crowdfunding options will be explored, to secure additional funding while retaining ownership of the game's IP. As a last resort, partnerships with game publishing companies may be considered, although efforts will be made to maintain full control over the game's creative direction. Upon full release, the game will be available for a one-time, up-front purchase on platforms such as Steam and potentially the Epic Games Store. While a dedicated website will be established, initial sales efforts will focus on established distribution channels due to the game being the debut title of the new company that will be established to manage the game.

For player capture, targeted ad campaigns and strategic partnerships with YouTubers and other online influencers will be employed to generate hype and drive sales. To promote player retention, multiple DLCs will be released post-launch, introducing new abilities, enemy types, boss battles, and a potential online multiplayer feature, providing ongoing value for players who have already purchased the game. Looking beyond the initial release, the potential for Divine Rampage to become a franchise will be explored, leveraging the success of the first instalment to attract new players to the series. Additionally, revenue will be diversified through the sale of branded merchandise, including plushies, T-shirts, mugs, and keychains, further solidifying the game's presence in the gaming community and beyond.

Competition

In the competitive realm of action-oriented roguelike games, Divine Rampage: Endless Descent faces formidable competition from recent releases targeting similar audiences. Notable contenders include "Hades 2" by Supergiant Games, "Dead Cells" by Motion Twin, and "Risk of Rain 2" by Hopoo Games, each offering unique gameplay experiences within the roguelike genre.

"Hades," developed by Supergiant Games, distinguishes itself with its fast-paced action, strategic combat, and engaging narrative elements, appealing to roguelike enthusiasts seeking immersive narrative experiences. While Divine Rampage shares similarities with "Hades" in terms of genre and player type appeal, it differentiates itself through its emphasis on cathartic combat reminiscent of classic action games like "Doom" and the ability synergy gained through its optional multiplayer mode.

"Dead Cells," developed by Motion Twin, is renowned for its tight controls, procedurally generated levels, and challenging gameplay, catering to hardcore gamers who enjoy mastering difficult challenges. While Divine Rampage and "Dead Cells" share similarities in their roguelike mechanics, Divine Rampage offers a unique blend of strategic depth and visceral combat, as well as "ability synergy" in both single player and multiplayer modes, setting it apart from the competition.

"Risk of Rain 2" developed by Hopoo Games, offers cooperative survival action in a 3D multiplayer setting, appealing to action-oriented players seeking intense multiplayer challenges. While "Risk of Rain 2" provides a compelling cooperative experience, Divine Rampage could outmatch it with a more streamlined single-player experience, its cryptic lore and gameplay that blends intense action with strategic depth.

While each of these existing products offers compelling experiences within the roguelike genre, Divine Rampage: Endless Descent distinguishes itself through its emphasis on cathartic combat, strategic depth, cryptic narrative, and ability synergy gained through its multiplayer mode. By combining the adrenaline-fueled action of classic games like "Doom" with the strategic elements of the roguelike genre, Divine Rampage offers a unique and engaging gameplay experience that appeals to players seeking challenging experiences on PC platforms.