

Waiting on the Beat Playtesting

EILEEN VAN HEERDE

CORTLAND LAIDLAW

MARTIN THINGVOLD *

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE goal of playtesting is to have users interact with our product and to utilize their feedback to improve the product. Our group chose 11 participants to run through our alpha and give feedback. The evaluator carried out the following three steps to conduct the test; they first introduced the product to the player, then they observed the player engaging with the game and transcribing their comments, and finally they had players answer specific questions.

II. PLAYTESTING SCRIPT

To discourage biases from influencing the test results, it was decided that a script would be followed to ensure that all the participants were introduced to the product in the same way. This also minimized the risk of the evaluator potentially assisting the player (i.e. "hand holding"), which could potentially skew the feedback given by the player. The script consisted of the following points:

- Our group has been working on a game called Waiting on the Beat.
- It's a rhythm game, so you have to hit the arrow keys to the beat of the music.
- There's a helpful visual component that should help you keep the beat at the bottom of the screen.
- Use the arrow keys to control the movement.
- The goal is to take orders, get food from the bar, bring the food to the customer and collect money.

- Here's where the bar is to submit orders and here is where you get food.

What was found was that we should've created UI indications for elements that need explaining.

III. OBSERVATION

After compiling all the observations, some common themes were identified by analyzing them. It was made clear by these observations that major improvements could be made to the product. Common problems found in the area of customization were: ¹ Common problem areas we found for **customization** were:

- Some players were disappointed with the skin tone options.
- Female testers unanimously wanted a gender option.
- One player noted a hair texture looked "very pixelated"
- The change direction option has an ambiguous outcome.
- Customization options have no back button making navigation difficult.

For the most part during observation the character creator was well received. Our **gameplay** received the majority of criticism:

- Players often waited until the visual beat bars hit the centre to move.
- Players needed direction to go to the bottom area to submit orders.
- Players didn't get necessary feedback to understand that the lasers were to be avoided, or they failed to understand that the lasers took tip money away.

*Connor Cooke, Sarah Piot, Josh Stanzeleit assisted by proofreading

¹Full transcript available on Google Drive

- Players didn't like not getting instant feedback for drinks.
- All players had no idea how to collect tips after serving customers. Although some happened across the correct answer, it was not intuitive.
- Players were confused as to why they had lost or won at the end of the level. The timer mechanic is not clear.
- Several Players complained about the timing of the beat input and how it syncs with input.
- Players would often try to give the drink to the table instead of the customer.
- Some players didn't understand they could take multiple orders at once.
- Players were confused by a bug where customers south of the table would not place orders.
- Players didn't feel that their performance was good while playing.

A major error was noted during observation when the game did not show a results screen and instead spawned numerous lasers before locking up interactable objects. This problem has yet to be replicated and the cause of it is currently unknown.²

IV. POST GAMEPLAY QUESTIONS

After the player finished engaging with the game, they were asked to answer several follow-up questions. This was done to gain clear constructive feedback and identify the issues players had with the game directly. It was decided that a Google Form would be used to process feedback because of its ability to summarize the responses, which made analyzing the data easier. We decided to ask the following questions:

- How much experience do you have playing games?(Linear scale)
- How much experience do you have with rhythm games? (Linear scale)
- Do you have any experience playing a musical instrument?(Linear scale)
- How difficult did you find the game?(Linear scale)
- Was there anything that you found frustrating?(long answer)
- What changes would you suggest to improve the game? (Long answer)
- How intuitive did the controls feel?(Long answer)
- What did you like about the game?(Long answer)
- What did you not like about the game?(Long answer)
- What changes would you suggest we make to the game?(Long answer)

i. Demographics

³ Our participant diversity is adequate for the scale that testing was conducted with. The only underrepresented group that could have interesting insights are people who would rate themselves as having a below average game literacy.

ii. Post-Gameplay Criticisms

A large majority of criticisms were already covered in the observation section. Those criticisms will not be repeated here, however after having time to contemplate; participants did have new criticisms that will be summarized here:

- the speech bubble not being clear as to whether a customer is ready to order, or is giving an order.
- The ordering counter not being visually intuitive.
- The music loop was too short.
- The game's pacing felt slow.
- The music got repetitive.
- Numbering character customization options.
- The beat visualizer was found to be unforgiving in handling user input.
- Customers don't care about sitting in a lobby forever.

²This occurred while testing subject 4

³Google Form result provided here.

- Visual and audio beats did not properly sync up.

V. MOVING FORWARD

This section will provide a list of problems generated from common complaints in the feedback given by the playtesters and what will be done to address them. A table format will show this best:

Problem	Solution
Lack of information about how to play the game	Create new screen(s) that explains the controls, how to take/serve orders, the purpose of the laser, etc. before starting gameplay
Slow tempo and and no variation in the music	Increase bpm of songs and rework some of the music to make it more engaging
Unable to interact with customers seated at the bottom of tables	Increase bpm of songs and rework some of the music to make it more engaging
Unable to interact with customers seated at the bottom of tables	Developers will have to debug customer interaction scripts and test them to make sure the issue is fixed
Tedious having to use button presses to circulate through character customizations	Use scroll wheel for selection instead and add ID number so that customer has a reference for the options
Range for hitting the beat is too lenient	Use scroll wheel for selection instead and add ID number so that customer has a reference for the options
Range for hitting the beat is too lenient	Recalibrate beat accuracy window to make it stricter (will require some trial and error)
Customer states are unclear (waiting for order to be taken, waiting for food, eating, etc.)	Use exclamation point to represent new customers who haven't had their orders taken and have a thought bubble of their order to show their waiting for it to be served
Not enough auditory or visual feedback to reflect if the player is doing well/poorly in the game	The team will have to go through the game and asses where visual and audio cues should be added to keep the player updated about their current status in the game