Battleblock Theatre Level Postmortem
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YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/KyNRXOGCIv4
Steam Link: https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=2930119947&searchtext=

Bold Text = Edits due to P01b playtests and critiques

- (0:00)
    - The player spawns and drops down, immediately seeing a boulder hanging above a purple button, wings trapped behind green activation blocks, a checkpoint trapped behind green activation blocks, and a pit with a purple button which seemingly does nothing when stepped on.
        - This should ingrain in the players mind that this area will be visited again in the future and allows them to take note of the terrain above the button, which might be off screen when standing below them on some monitor sizes.
        - This area is revisited at (1:00), for more information on these objects.

- o Having nothing to do, the player will follow the signs that point them to the right.
- (0:07)
  - o Player reaches checkpoint in the boulder room.
  - o **This room had the most additions and changes due to the playtest. First off, it was the only area the player could get soft locked in, with multiple different ways to do so, which will be pointed out as they come up. The terrain also made it difficult to navigate, so slight changes were made to its layout.**
    - ▪ **The checkpoint itself is a new addition to the area. It was necessary because the player could accidentally kill themselves by dropping the rock on their heads, which would cause them to respawn at the beginning of the level. This would always cause them to spawn behind the locked wall, which made it impossible to continue the level, which is why this checkpoint was added.**
    - ▪ **The main problem with the play testers was that almost none had made it to act 4 of the campaign, so nobody knew how to use the rock. This might not be a problem with the people online who would actually seek out and play this level, but I decided that it should probably be altered for the standards of this class. The tutorial sign was added to show players how they could interact with the button, as most players couldn't figure out it was throwable. This was quite a hard puzzle for players who haven't already been trained in the art of boulder puzzles by the game, so parts of it were changed to allow for handicaps to the player.**
- (0:10)
  - o The player grabs the block and moves it off the button, causing the purple activation wall to turn on.
    - ▪ The first association that the player can make as a result of this is that boulders will activate buttons it's sitting on.

- Seeing only purple blocks activate in regards to the purple button while green ones are also on the screen may also clue the player in to the fact that the color of the button block influences which activation blocks are activated, which ends up being the main goal of this puzzle.
  - If so, by looking up the player may immediately be able to intuit that they need to bring the boulder to the green button. Even if they don't notice they'll quickly figure it out due to the nature of being in a locked room whose structure naturally has a pathway to the button.
- (0:15)
  - The player begins taking the block towards the jet pad.
    - Clouds below the second platform catch the player if they fall after throwing the boulder to the jet platform, so the player isn't punished after succeeding. If the player fails to throw the boulder, then it also serves to teach the player that boulders can fall through cloud blocks, which is significant only because the green button is covered by a cloud block.
      - **The block before the jet platform was originally also a bomb block. Players new to interacting with the boulder would often make clumsy movements and accidentally move onto the platform from the jet and need to start all over again. I changed it to a regular block to be more forgiving.**
  - **Many green activation blocks are added on the bottom of the map, whereas there was originally only one blocking the main pathway on the right side of the screen.**
    - **The green blocks below exploding platforms serve a dual purpose.**
      - They allow easier access to the first platform if the boulder fell on the second one, so the player doesn't have to travel a further distance to restart.

- **They cover the previously exposed cloud block, which would soft lock the player in the event that the boulder fell or was pushed through it.**
    - **Originally, if the player brought the boulder all the way to the right, they could stand on it and jump through invisible blocks to just barely reach the strawberry, without actually progressing further into the level. While technically fair play, it needlessly breaks the flow of the level, so blocks were added to the right side to discourage players from ever thinking of attempting such a thing.**
    - Additionally, more green blocks closer to the purple button can help the player intuit the function of the colored buttons better.
- (0:21)
    - The player moves the boulder across the conveyer belts and launch it onto the button.
    - Throwing the boulder towards the launchpad almost always results in landing directly on the launchpad, or on the conveyer after it, which will still activate the launch pad. I just got incredibly unlucky in the video, but it didn't really change anything.
        - **The block on the right after the conveyer belts used to also be a conveyor belt, which would drop the boulder onto the platform below if the player wasn't fast enough. Because most testers weren't trained with boulders, they didn't intuit that the fastest way to use them was jumping over and picking it up from the opposite side, so it kept falling off the platform. I realized that this was too punishing and changed it to a normal block as a mini checkpoint in the puzzle.**
    - **There used to be two invisible blocks behind the button that gave access to the strawberry. Because the path of the puzzle seemed to lead that way, most players found it. They would then jump into the pit because they assumed the level kept going that way. My intention was that if you found this you could**

jump and activate the purple button by dropping the boulder on the purple button. They would then be able to skip half the level and complete it quickly, at the expense of missing a few strawberries. The problem was that most players proceeded to miss this jump, and because they usually did this before putting the boulder on the green button, they ended up soft locking themselves. This wouldn't be as big a problem with the added checkpoint, but I think that if the suicide button is actually necessary to not be soft locked, it's probably bad design, so I removed the shortcut.

- Being able to see the strawberry, which they probably didn't see the first time walking through that area, reinforces that they'll revisit that area and updates their mental checklist of what to do upon reaching it.

- (0:33)
    - The player has several ways to get the pie and strawberry immediately after the boulder puzzle.
        - For the strawberry only:
            - They can jump on the enemies' heads to reach it after the checkpoint.
            - They can wall-jump against the slime block to the right of the clickey-block puzzle to reach it.
        - For both the pie and strawberry:
            - Immediately after the clickey-block puzzle, or after opening up all of the first section of the map, the player will have access to wings, which will allow the player to fly up to the strawberry and the second end of the teleporter to get the pie.
            - The method I used in the video utilizes a lesser known game mechanic where jet platforms are physically lower after the platform leaves, which allows the player walk through the side of the cloud block. This will get them the pie and they can quickly

jump to the strawberry from above. This is by far the fastest method.

- o I made sure that everything that the platform is only active after the puzzle as a hint to players that there's another potential way to get the pie.
  - **Many play testers quickly found it be investigating so this worked pretty well.**
- o The invisible blocks below the strawberry are there specifically for this route, as players might accidentally complete the clickey-block puzzle and fall to their deaths without getting the checkpoint due to enemy interference. The invisible blocks and layout funnel the player to get the checkpoint after falling down.

- (0:42)
  - o Players get the new checkpoint and complete the clickey-block puzzle.
    - I don't need to teach the clickey-block puzzle because it's easy to figure out and is surprisingly often figured out for you by the enemies.
  - o The two enemies are meant to elicit some panic from the player. The player has two main options for getting rid of the enemies:
    - Punch both enemies 3 times. This is the slow way to deal with them, though this option might expand depending upon the items the player brought with them into the level.
    - Have them fall to their deaths after completing the clickey-block puzzle. This is much more likely to happen, even if you go out of your way to attempt the former. My puzzle was only 3 blocks wide so the erratic movement of the enemies could easily solve it, forcing the players to pay more attention.

- (0:46)
  - o Players grab the wings and fly the safety.

- This is mostly meant to follow through with the sudden stress of the previous section with a section that heavily relies on reaction time.
  - In failure, this isn't very punishing as the previous checkpoint is an immediate redo.
- Players may notice the goal beneath the bottom of the spike pit, which gives them an understanding of the level layout, and may clear up confusion for some players when they find themselves back at the start.
- (0:50)
  - The player makes it to the open room and needs to make it out to the top left.
  - Players will always start this room with wings due to the previous section, but will lose them if they end up needing to respawn, so I made a specific fast route for players with wings who are trying to beat the time goal.
    - Because players start with wings, most will immediately attempt to get the strawberry above the checkpoint. The toaster will spawn a toast enemy that attempts to pursue the player after the enter the room, and it tries to follow the player to the strawberry. It will almost always be in the path of the next bomb from the bomb launcher and explode if the player rushed to the strawberry, giving the player a quick and easy rush to the escape with their wings.
  - This area is a bit harder once the player loses their wings, but there are still plenty of blocks for the player to parkour to the top.
    - **There used to be a lot less blocks and the enemy in the floating orb was present instead of the toaster. This made this area much more difficult and punishing once a player lost their wings, being on the verge of nearly unfair. The large enemy was removed, and more blocks were added to make this area fairer.**
  - The rocket right before the exit puts a lot of tension on escape as the player needs to wait a bit for the buttons activation to take effect. It's a very slight thing

but with a huge payoff for tension. It's a great feeling as the block closes behind you, guaranteeing your safety.

- o There are two autonomous blocks in this area. They are just to add a bit of an element of random and make it more interesting on repeated runs. They don't really add any element of extra difficulty to the level.
- o If a player wanders to the bottom left of this area, a sign will point out to them that they need to go to the top. The player will also be able to see a strawberry directly to their left, which they'll be able to get later in the level. It's a nice setup for a later payoff.

- (1:00)
  - o The player makes it back to the start of the level. Seeing that all pathways are blocked by purple activation blocks, being primed at the start of the level to see the purple activation switch above them, and having access to another pair of wings now that the green blocks are gone, the player should quickly realize that they should fly up and drop the boulder onto the purple activation button.
    - ▪ Biggest potential problem with this area is that the boulder might crush the player and send them back to the previous area. Because the point is clearly to make the boulder fall, most players should be smart enough to avoid this, so no major changes are made in regards to checkpoints in fear of being overbearing.
  - o Depending upon how intelligently players utilized their wings in the previous area, if the kept them, players then have the potential to get both the boulder and the strawberry at the same time. In the video, I barely failed to do this as I used the wings too much.
    - ▪ If the player doesn't have wings when they reach this area, they'll have access to the wings below the start of the level because they've already activated the green switch.

- These can also be used to reexplore the first part of the level or collect some strawberries on the second part, but they are not required at all for moving further into the level.

- (1:14)
  - Player gets the checkpoint and moves towards the bottom part of the level.
  - There's an off-shoot pathway, with an enemy in it that leads to a strawberry.
    - The main goal here is to trick the enemy into wandering into spikes. This is pretty easy to do, as if the player wanders into spikes, the enemy will also likely wander into spikes. Death in this area isn't that punishing as a checkpoint directly precedes it.

- (1:24)
  - Player gets propelled by lava blocks towards the next checkpoint.
    - This section is here just because bouncing on lava blocks feels fun.
  - If player decides to hold left or right as they enter the lava block area instead of dropping directly down, they'll instead shoot directly upwards out of the area, adding the fan at the top prevents this by pushing the player back into the lava block area. The fan at the bottom of the area gives horizontal momentum so that the player shoots out towards the check point.
  - There is a strawberry directly in the middle lava block area that involves double jumping at the correct time in order to collect. There is then a color-coordinated invisible block pathway from this strawberry that drops the player directly on the next checkpoint.
    - Alternatively, if the player misses the strawberry, knows about the invisible pathway, and still has wings, then they can easily fly up and collect the strawberry from the hidden pathway.

- (1:35)
  - The player needs to choose between two pathways, the top pathway is slower and has a strawberry, while the bottom pathway is faster and easier.

- The top pathway is interesting as it requires the player to crawl through a narrow space horizontally against fans while a laser constantly threatens them. The player needs to constantly seek shelter on the ceiling each time the laser fires.
    - As is seen at (1:50), with very precise timing, the player can make it to the second rung, which saves a lot of time over going for all 3.
        - **This was originally the only way to do this level. After having a lot of difficulty doing this myself and watching play testers have the same problems, I added the first rung to make this section a bit easier. It's still easily possible to complete the time challenge taking the first rung, though performance on the rest of the level will be a bit stricter.**
    - At the end of the pathway, along with the strawberry, is an invisible block leading into the exit of the bottom pathway.
- The bottom pathway involves players avoiding vertical lasers, along with one horizontal laser, as the make it to the end of the hallway. Two autonomous blocks occasionally move around the hallway so what cover the player has and how they navigate the hallway changes over time.
    - This area is a little bit easier with wings as players can hover over the bottom laser.
    - If the player got the strawberry on the top pathway and then managed to die to the final enemy or laser, then the existence of the bottom pathway takes a lot of frustration away because of how quick it is.
    - **This area was originally composed of three lasers, the one at the beginning, and two horizontal lasers on the top and bottom at the end of the hallway, with the exit only being one block wide.**

The entire idea and purpose of the area was identical with the autonomous blocks giving cover for the player. The problem was that, vertically, the players hitbox was almost exactly 1 block tall, so entering the exit was nearly impossible if either one of the lasers were currently activated, and I had no means of synchronizing them. This was especially frustrating if coming from the top routes' invisible blocks as chances of surviving were low, which reset around 10-25 seconds of progress. Switching to vertical lasers kept the idea the same with much less frustration.

- **The laser warning sign was also added because I felt the area became much more laser centric and I didn't have many decorations on the map.**

- The autonomous blocks, on very rare occasions due to rng, will both navigate to the beginning of the hallway and block entry temporarily. This is why it was useful to have a dual pathway.

  - **This could also potentially happen to the exit, though I've never seen it happen. Now that the end is two blocks instead of 1, it's much less likely the player can ever be completely blocked into this area.**

- (2:00)
  - The player needs to figure out a way to get past the enemy. There are several methods to do so.
    - The player can attempt to run past the enemy or jump on it's head to get to the slime blocks above.
      - Due to how movement is restricted by slime, both these things are incredibly hard to do and will almost always result in the players death.
    - Similarly, if the player has somehow kept their wings up until this point, they can attempt to fly over everything.

- This is also pretty risky as the acid bubbles float pretty high, though this is likely the fastest potential route.
        - You can quickly remove the boulder from the area and let the laser take care of the enemy.
            - I was attempting to do the final option in the video, but managed to get extremely lucky with my timing and somehow had this end up happening to the enemy. Usually, you would throw the boulder backwards if you were to attempt this.
        - Finally, you can throw the boulder directly at the enemy's head and crush it.
            - This is the lowest risk strategy and directly gives a platform so that they can make it to the slime blocks above them.
    - There was a small attempt in worldbuilding in this area, where it was implied that the enemy was shooting slime and slowly covering all the walls with it. Some of the impact is lost by them being different colors, but some of the impact is still there.
- (2:04)
    - Player tackles the smile area, which contains a strawberry and the exit. This mostly involves wall jumping off the slime blocks with appropriately timed double jumps to get more vertical height.
        - Both things can actually be easily reached if the player somehow still has wings.
        - Players may not know about the wall jump mechanic at all, so I designed the level so that there is little danger left in the area once they reach it, which will allow them to experiment with how to reach the goal. It's not a very difficult thing to figure out by accident.
        - The strawberry is actually pretty easy to achieve without many wall jumps, though it will be much faster if the player can consistently wall jump.

The time challenge is set to 1:50 to pass. I've beaten the level around 1:35 when I've rushed through it so I decided that about 15 seconds worth of extra time should be added to that, accounting for different strategies/pathways, mistakes, and due to the fact that I know all the shortcuts and mechanics better than many other players might. There were many points in the video where I wasted upwards of 10 seconds in multiple sections to show differences in fast and slow routes, which explains the differences.