Critical Critters: Heuristic Evaluation (Oct 2018)

# Summary

Greetings, valued e*valued*ator. We at Sudden Death Studios greatly appreciate your extrinsically-motivated-but-totally-voluntary participation in the evaluation of the Critical Critters user interface.

Before and during this process, please be aware of the following:

* When writing a note in a heuristic domain, please **write it in the format:** [*severity*]:[issue], where *severity* is a rating, between 1-5, of the severity of the issue, and *issue* is a description of the issue of concern.
  + For example: “2: The rainbows are missing an ultraviolet band. I’m a bee and this impacts my rainbow experience.”
  + For example: “5: The game crashes and deletes itself out of frustration when I annihilate every player at once. Including myself.”
* Feel free to suggest possible solutions in your issue(s)
* It is recommended to **note issues as they crop up**, instead of attempting to linearly complete the form start-to-finish
* The *italic* suggestions in the Heuristics column are simply food for thought when assessing a domain. **You are not required** to address every single one.

# Evaluation

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| **Heuristic** | **Issues and Notes (severity: issue)** | |
| **Enduring Play**  *- The players finds the game fun, with no repetitive or boring tasks*  *- The players should not experience being penalized repetitively for the same failure.*  *- The players should not lose any hard won possessions.*  *- Gameplay is long and enduring and keeps the players’ interest.*  *- Any fatigue or boredom was minimized by varying activities and pacing during the game play.* | 2: Match times are quite long, could do with being half the time  2: Having your death count go up when bombing as the pidgeon makes it feel like a punishment | |
| **Variety of Players and Game Styles**  *- The game supports a variety of game styles.*  *- The game is balanced with multiple ways to win.*  *- The first ten minutes of play and player actions are painfully obvious and should result in immediate and positive feedback for all types of players.* | | 2: More character types to play could allow for more game play style. Having a stealthy character for example. | |
| **Player’s Perception of Control**  *- Players feel in control.*  *- The players have a sense of control and influence onto the game world.* | | 1: Camera being able to spin all the way vertically can be disorientating  2: Bunny wall climbing sometimes doesn’t climb depending on where the camera is angled | |
| **Coolness/Entertainment**  *- The game offers something different in terms of attracting and retaining the players’ interest.* | | 1: Would like to see different maps available | |
| **Humor**  *- The game uses humor well.* | | 1: All round in game humor is great, but could see the death notices getting a bit tiresome if played for a long period. | |
| **Immersion**  *- The game utilizes visceral, audio and visual content to further the players’ immersion in the game.* | | 5: No audio, this could really bring the world together | |
| **Documentation/Tutorial**  *- Player does not need to read the manual or documentation to play.*  *- Player does not need to access the tutorial in order to play.* | | 4: It’s not clear that you can swap characters, I was only aware due to prior knowledge.  3: No information on how the characters play, could do with a quick guide on both at the start. | |
| **Status and Score**  *- Game controls are consistent within the game and follow standard conventions.*  *- Status score Indicators are seamless, obvious, available and do not interfere with game play.*  *- Controls are intuitive, and mapped in a natural way; they are customizable and default to industry standard settings.* | |  | |
| **Game Provides Feedback**  *- Game provides feedback and reacts in a consistent, immediate, challenging and exciting way to the players’ actions.*  *- Provide appropriate audio/visual/visceral feedback (music, sound effects, controller vibration).* | | 5: Again a lack of audio lets the game down here | |
| **Burden On Player**  *- The game does not put an unnecessary burden on the player.*  *- Player is given controls that are basic enough to learn quickly, yet expandable for advanced options for advanced players.* | |  | |
| **Screen Layout**  *- Screen layout is efficient, integrated, and visually pleasing.*  *- The player experiences the user interface as consistent (in controller, color, typographic, dialogue and user interface design).*  *- The players experience the user interface/HUD as a part of the game.*  *- Art is recognizable to the player and speaks to its function.* | | 1: Scoreboard could be improved to look nicer and a bit more in tune with the wacky art style in the game | |
| **Error Prevention**  *- Player error is avoided.*  *- Players should be given context sensitive help while playing so that they are not stuck and need to rely on a manual for help.*  *- All levels of players can play and get involved quickly and easily with tutorials, and/or progressive or adjustable difficulty levels.* | | 2: People with less experience with gaming may struggle to pick up and play without instructions on how the characters work and the game goals | |
| **Communication**  *- Poor support for text or voice chat; poor communication interface; not enough breaks in game play to use supported communication channel* | | 1: No voice chat but doesn’t feel needed really | |
| **Awareness**  *- Does not provide enough information on others’ actions, locations, statuses, or availabilities* | | 1: It can be difficult to find other players sometimes, but this feels like it’s part of the game | |
| **Game play balance**  *- Some teams, weapons, or units are too powerful; maps give unfair advantages to some players* | | 3: Shooting a flying pidegon as a bunny feels impossible | |

# Sources

Heuristics in this evaluation have been derived from the following sources:

1. H. Desurvire and C. Wiberg, *“Game Usability Heuristics (PLAY) for Evaluating and Designing Better Games: The Next Iteration”* in *OCSC '09 Proceedings of the 3d International Conference on Online Communities and Social Computing, San Diego, CA*, *19-24 July 2009, pp. 557-566*
2. David Pinelle, Nelson Wong, Tadeusz Stach, and Carl Gutwin. 2009. *“Usability heuristics for networked multiplayer games” in Proceedings of the ACM 2009 international conference on Supporting group work (GROUP '09). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 169-178.*

These were cherry-picked based on the core values of the game sought by the developer. The former resource by Desurvire and Wiberg focuses on core gameplay, ‘fun’ value and feedback. The latter resource was developed for online games, and focuses largely on the balance and interactivity. The two were selected to provide a balance of player-oriented and multiplayer-oriented heuristics. Networking-specific elements from the latter resource were omitted as the evaluation of the took place on a LAN connection, where network optimisation is unlikely to cause concern.

Candidates for removal were: lowest-priority heuristics removed due to the limited evaluation time, irrelevance to the game or style of the game, non-applicable in the evaluation context, clashing with another heuristic, or complex in a way that threatens the validity of the evaluator’s responses.