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How the design of the games Blacklight: Retribution, Natural Selection 2, and Tribes: Ascend affect gameplay

In this essay, we will explore the designs of the three action first-person shooters, and how each of these games affect the user's gameplay in their own unique ways. This can be further analyzed through the core mechanics of each game, how players react towards these different mechanics, and the connections that lead to different gameplay experiences.

Blacklight: Retribution is an action sci-fi first-person shooter that takes place in a futuristic environment. There are two teams that will compete against each other in order to capture three nodes located around the map. The objective of the game is to capture and hold these nodes as long as they can to gain points for the entire team. The longer and more nodes each team has, the more points the team acquires. The team with the most points after twenty minutes will win the match.

Alternatively, Natural Selection 2 involves infestation of aliens against marines located deep in space. Players have the option to play as one of the two races, where they fight for resources and map control. Marines must move in groups to gather resources that will significantly improve their armour and weaponry against the aliens. However, a more stealthy approach is recommended for aliens, as they can travel through small vents in the map to take down wandering marines. In addition, aliens can also use their resources to upgrade themselves, such as moving more swiftly, evolving into different species, and even going invisible. The first race that eliminates all of the opponent's resources wins.

Lastly, Tribes: Ascend is a fast-paced first-person shooter similarly like Quake. Players use weapons such as lasers and gamma cannons to shoot their opponents. However, the game introduces "skiing", where the player would gain speed by riding down slopes around the arena and leaving at a certain angle that would make the player move at an incredible speeds. The objective of the game is to capture the other team's flag, while dodging lasers from multiple enemies.

To start off, in Blacklight: Retribution there are several core mechanics that makes the game unique and different than the other shooters. The first core mechanic is what interests the players the most, and this is seeing through walls. Every player has the ability to turn on and off their visors (called the HRV) to see through walls for a certain amount of time. Because the traditional minimap is replaced by the HRV, it requires a new balance for the game. The time that you can use the HRV is substituted with a HRV bar. As the players spend more time using the HRV, the less they will be able to use it as the bar is decreased, resulting in a more strategic approach to for players to perform certain situations. Another core mechanic is the weapon depot hidden around the maps, players have the choice to use their points gained by killing enemies and capturing nodes

to buy superior weapons. The depot includes weapons such as flamethrowers, air strikes, and even mechanic suits. Implementing these features creates a greater dynamic experience, allowing more choices for the players to approach each scenario differently.

Unlike Blacklight, Natural Selection 2 involves core mechanics that revolves more around team benefits than individually. These are the battle for resources, and upgrades. As each race strive for more resources, it significantly improves the performance of the players, which leads to more creative ways in executing strategies as a team. This can crucial and can easily result in a victory or loss. Without this core mechanic, players will not be able upgrade (another core mechanic) their equipment and evolve, ultimately decreasing the overall aesthetics of the game.

In Tribes: Ascend, its core mechanics are the skiing attribute and the laser trajectory. The sense of moving at rapid speeds make players a harder target for enemies. In order to gain speed, it requires players to land and slide down slopes at an angle which involves skill, whereas the more acceleration an individual hits a slope, the greater the speeds. The core mechanic of the laser trajectory opens a greater skill cap for players to experience. The projectile of the laser involves players to predict and aim at their targets. With the combination of the laser trajectory and movement, it brings a larger competitive factor into a simple concept game.

The core mechanics in each of these three shooters have their differences and similarities that makes them enjoyable. For example, in Tribes: Ascend the design is simple, and its mechanics clear. The competitiveness lies strongly in the gameplay, where it depends heavily on skill and a small random factor. Alternatively, Blacklight and Natural Selection are more casual games. Players do not relate these games as competitive as Tribes because of the different core mechanics that they have. However, the three shooters are all similar in terms of user friendly. Beginner players often find these games easy to start out, but difficult to master. This is important because it gives the user a sense of success and long-term goals in which intrigues the user.

Furthermore, the different core mechanics in each game creates different themes and allow diverse experiences for players accordingly. In Blacklight, players lean more towards strategic approaches in gameplay, because of the ability to see each other through walls. Nevertheless, Natural Selection put users in more stealthy situations, relying more on team strategies due to the upgrades and resources that benefits the team as a whole. Lastly, Tribes's core mechanics steer players into competitive gameplay. This is because the weapon involves more skill to hit enemies, the movement a player needs in order to manoeuvre around the arena, and the consequences that come along with the mechanics.

Users experience the games based on the core mechanics and themes of the game. The actions that each individual makes are influenced by game tokens and what they are and are not limited to. Through the core mechanics of each game, and the reactions of players towards the different mechanics leads to different experiences of gameplay.