

# GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT



# Notes from the Past

Discovering tomorrow,  
what we lost today

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GAME ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MISSION STATEMENT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GENRE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PLATFORMS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TARGET AUDIENCE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>STORYLINE &amp; CHARACTERS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHARACTERS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GAMEPLAY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF GAMEPLAY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PLAYER EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>GAMEPLAY GUIDELINES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>GAME OBJECTIVES &amp; REWARDS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GAMEPLAY MECHANICS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GAME PROGRESSION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>LEVEL DESIGN .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GAME ELEMENTS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ITEMS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>MECHANISMS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ARCHIVES.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CONTROL SCHEME .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>MOUSE &amp; KEYBOARD .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>GAME AESTHETICS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>CONCEPT ART .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>GAME ATMOSPHERE.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>GAME THEME .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>USER INTERFACE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>GUI/HUD .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SYSTEM MENUS.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>MENU SCREENS .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>DESIGN GUIDELINES.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>NOTATION &amp; LETTER CASE.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>COLOR THEME .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>FONTS.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>LOGOS.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>WORDMARKS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>ICONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>USER TEST REPORTS.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>PROTOTYPE .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>ALPHATEST.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>BETATEST.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>FINAL VERSION TEST.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>CREDITS.....</b>	<b>48</b>

## Introduction

Notes from the Past explores human culture through the lens of an alien lifeform. Discovering the Voyager probe and deciphering the Golden Record led these aliens to find music. Enthralled by melodies never thought possible, they began their journey to Earth. While exploring an abandoned house and its surroundings an alien discovers the story of the family that lived there and of humanity's sudden end. Explore an expansive house filled with puzzles. Collect artefacts of humanity and find out what caused civilization to end. Listen to recordings of the people that lived there and learn about their fate.

## Game Analysis

The gameplay of Notes from the Past consists of exploring an abandoned family home. Players can pick up and examine items. These can be examined in a detail view and possibly repaired. Players also have the possibility to clean certain objects in the game world. Puzzles can be completed by using the right items on objects in the game world. Items the player has interacted with are recorded in the Archive with an additional description and can be reviewed at a later point in time.

Collecting items and finding audio logs is the main motivation of the player. Piecing together the story of the individual family members and the backstory of humanity's demise is intriguing. This can also appeal to players who enjoy collecting and want to complete a game at 100%.

The purpose for this game is to question the current events and decision making by using the perspective of an outside person, in this case an alien lifeform. The alien wonders about the purpose of everyday objects and in turn gives players a new perspective that lets them reflect on their life.

This also includes the main story arc in which players are confronted with the end of civilization and humanity as a whole. By utilizing a slightly exaggerated view of the future, it puts into perspective what humanity stands to lose should we continue with some of our most destructive actions regarding the Earth.

## Mission Statement

Notes from the Past is a Walking simulator playable on Windows, set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans became extinct. The player follows the story of an alien on the hunt for music discs who explores an abandoned house and discovers how its residents perceived the last days of humanity.

## Genre

- Walking Simulator; defined as walking through the environment with no danger or possibility of death, limited puzzles and a focus on storytelling
- Puzzle; defined as puzzle solving and testing problem-solving skills

## Platforms

Windows

## Target Audience

The age of the target group ranges between 18 and 24. The game is aimed at casual players who are familiar with basic 3D-Movement and controls. The target audience should enjoy playing walking simulators and have their expectations set accordingly. The target group must have a device with Windows. The target audience should enjoy exploring a game world and collecting objects. This in turn also implies enjoying additional lore in form of flavor text and a general appreciation for environmental storytelling. The target group should also be interested in the overarching story and its themes.

## Storyline & Characters

### Setting

#### Synopsis:

The consequences of the climate change are disastrous. One of the main factors for this is the thawing of permafrost soil in the previously colder zones on Earth. The trapped greenhouse gases were released and accelerated the warming process. The last straw was a forest fire in Siberia, which led to the atmosphere burning out. Losing most of its oxygen in the process, Earth was not suitable for life anymore. Most organisms suffocated, with only microbes surviving.

In the meantime, the Voyager Probe made its way through the cosmos. After a long span of time, the probe was finally found by an extra-terrestrial spacefaring species, the "Zøh". They were small humanoid creatures with big ears and a language similar to that of whales. During the examination of the probe, they found the Golden Record and managed to decipher the instructions to play it. They were enamoured by the melodies and decided to visit the creators of these beautiful harmonies. On Earth they only found a hostile planet with no signs of life. During an expedition of the ruins, they found tapes. The Zøh discovered that they also contain music and began a planet wide hunt for more of these wondrous objects.

#### Storyline

#### Dialogues

#### PHASE 1

The game starts with the player character crashing their ship near a street with various buildings. During the crash the ship got severely damaged and the alien was knocked unconscious. After a while the alien wakes up and notices it is missing its helmet. It quickly spots, repairs and puts it back on. With the helmet back on the alien's head, it tries to establish communications with other members of the exploration team. This proves futile, as the communication device of the ship, which looks similar to a regular satellite dish, was destroyed during the crash. After realizing this, the alien begins to look around and spots a seemingly intact satellite dish on top of a house and decides to use this as a substitute.

After exploring the immediate vicinity of the crash site, the alien makes its way to the house. It notices that most of the entryways inside are blocked of and the roof is too high to climb up there. It spots an open window and decides to enter through that. With the help of a ladder it makes its way into the house.

The alien finds itself in the bedroom of a child and begins to explore the house. After making its way upstairs it spots a possible access to the roof which is unfortunately locked. This forces the alien to explore the other rooms of the house. But it is again stopped by an unopenable door in the hallway of the first floor. The alien spent some time exploring and rummaging through the different rooms and finds audio recordings

of the previous inhabitants of the house. It also discovers a key and subsequently unlocks the roof access.

Its goal finally reached, the alien examines the satellite dish and discovers that it is completely intact and is compatible with the communication device of the alien.

Unfortunately, it is still missing some kind of signal emitter and therefore makes its way downstairs to hopefully find something like that. On its way back the alien notices a dirty solar panel on the roof and cleans it, restoring some of the power in the house. This unlocks the electric door in the first-floor hallway and lets the alien explore the rest of the house.

## PHASE 2

With the rest of the house unlocked. The player explores the remaining rooms of the house facing the last closed door in the basement. In search for a communication device the player can find additional audio logs telling the family's story.

The radio station in the office seems to be broken, after a quick repair it can be placed next to the satellite dish but it's still incapable of emitting a signal. To solve this the player needs to restore the power grid of the house.

To achieve this the player needs to start the generator. Missing fuel, one must find a fuel can, which unfortunately is empty. For this the can needs to be filled at a barrel located at the gas station. Bringing back the tank to the generator and filling it up, it finally starts up.

To put the power grid into operation, the player needs to repair the switchboard. Inside it, there are three coloured areas (red, green, Blue) with missing fuses, as well as a broken one in the red area. Finding those fuses leads to the attic, to the office and to the caravan across the street. With all fuses build in and switched on, the power is finally restored. All the objectives above can be achieved in any order.

Back on the roof the alien is capable to send a signal to its mothership after aligning the signal to the according frequency, but it's not able to communicate with them yet.

Back in the house the once locked heavy door can be opened with the key card on the table in the living room. After picking up the handset and connecting it to the device on the roof. The player solves the last wave align which triggers the end scene.

With the rest of the house unlocked. The player explores the remaining rooms of the house facing the last closed door in the basement. In search for a communication device the player can find additional audio logs telling the family's story.

The radio station in the office seems to be broken, after a quick repair it can be placed next to the satellite dish but it's still incapable of emitting a signal. To solve this the player needs to restore the power grid of the house.






To achieve this the player needs to start the generator. Missing fuel, one must find a fuel can, which unfortunately is empty. For this the can needs to be filled at a barrel located at the gas station. Bringing back the tank to the generator and filling it up, it finally starts up.

To put the power grid into operation, the player needs to repair the switchboard. Inside it, there are three coloured areas (red, green, Blue) with missing fuses, as well as a broken one in the red area. Finding those fuses leads to the attic, to the office and to the caravan across the street. With all fuses build in and switched on, the power is finally restored. All of the objectives above can be achieved in any order.

Back on the roof the alien is capable to send a signal to its mothership after aligning the signal to the according frequency, but it's not able to communicate with them yet.

Back in the house the once locked heavy door can be opened up with the key card on the table in the living room. After picking up the handset and connecting it to the device on the roof. The player solves the last wave align which triggers the final end scene.

## Characters

Character	Description	Characteristics	Misc. Info
	<b>Name:</b> Zøh The player character; Is part of the team exploring Earth, is stationed at the house of the family	Similar to other of his species enamored by music; initially disinterested in humans, gets curious and is invested over the course of the game	Part of alien species, has whale-like voice, 120cm tall
	<b>Name:</b> Karter van Boos <b>Relation:</b> Grandfather, Father of Olivia <b>Age:</b> 71	Has a collection of audio devices as a former sound engineer, has a good relationship with son-in-law	Needs ventilator
	<b>Name:</b> Olivia Snider <b>Relation:</b> Mother <b>Age:</b> 34	Main breadwinner of the family, works in the MINT Sector, low frustration tolerance	
	<b>Name:</b> Aiden Snider <b>Relation:</b> Father <b>Age:</b> 31	Primarily homemaker, works part time from home, empathetic	Began audio recording of various events and situations
	<b>Name:</b> Jaiden Snider <b>Relation:</b> Son <b>Age:</b> 8	Shy, cautious, is scared of many things	



## Gameplay

### Overview of Gameplay

The game is developed for the current Windows OS and supports keyboard and mouse controls. The game is singleplayer only and has no social component.

The game falls under the umbrella of the “Walking Simulator” genre. However, it deviates from the expected gameplay by including the “Puzzle” genre as well.

The game draws inspiration from other walking simulators like *Gone Home*, *Dear Esther* or *Firewatch*.

As a walking simulator the movement of the player consists of walking, walking with a slightly accelerated speed and jumping. Items are found in the game world which can be interacted with or be picked up. Held items can be thrown or dropped. The player can toggle position mode which lets items be placed more easily. Items can also be looked at in detail by activating object view. In this view, items can be rotated and the player can interact with points of interest on the item, changing its possible usage in the game world.

The game includes the puzzle genre as items can be used on other interactable objects in the game world. The player has to find the correct item to use and the object to use it on. The game also includes several minigames in form of separate views.

### Player Experience

When starting the game you are greeted by a start screen with background **music** that sets the mood and a menu which lets you change settings should you want to. After selecting “New game” you see a series of pictures which explain the backstory and the main motivation of the player character. Following this scene you are thrown into the world and are tasked with picking up and examining your helmet. This functions as a tutorial for you, as it explains the basic forms of interactions you can expect. When examining your helmet you notice that it is dirty and you are instructed to clean it. After cleaning your helmet you automatically put it on and are from this point onward free to explore the game world as you please. There is one map you can explore, which consists of a house and a garden. You can now walk through the map and interact with items by picking them up and examining them closely. Finding out how to proceed is dependent on you and your ability to solve the puzzles and obstacles before you. You can also open the Archive and look at items you found before. There you can read up on background information and the story.

### Gameplay Guidelines

The game is allowed to contain violence or similar themes as the **target group** is explicit over 18 years old. This does not mean that such themes are the main focus but merely that these can be included to a degree.

## Game Objectives & Rewards

The difficulty level of the game is dependent on the problem solving skill of the player. The main obstacles of the game are the puzzles. The difficulty of the puzzles can be reduced by finding hints and clues in the environment or through listening to audio logs which can also be found in the game world. Finding these clues is once again dependent on the ability of the player to observe and interpret the environment accordingly. The main objective of every part is to open up a path to the next part of the house. This includes collecting and documenting relevant artefacts audio logs. These are either keys or contain hints to find keys. Obtaining and using the keys rewards the player with new pieces of the story.

There are no direct penalties for not completing the objectives aside from not experiencing the full story.

An optional objective is to find and collect every artefact, rewarding the player with additional lore via flavor text. These are not required to progress in the story and are merely a way to flesh out the world and the characters. Because they are optional there is no penalty should the player not find the artefacts.

## Gameplay Mechanics

The player can move, sprint, jump and crouch.

The player can either interact with objects directly or pick them up and hold them. The player can hold one item at a time and can drop it at any point in time. When held, an item can be used to interact with another one. Should the item be pickupable the currently held item will be switched out. While holding an item, the player can toggle between standard and position mode. Position mode moves the held item in front of the player so it can be placed more easily. While holding an item the player can switch view from standard to object view. In the object view an item can be examined closely. The item can be rotated and has points of interest which can be interacted with. These interactions change the item and unlock new possibilities to use the item in the game world. Points of interest consist of singular spots or larger surfaces. Larger surfaces are used for a minigame in which a given surface has to be cleaned by dragging the cursor over it while the interact button is pressed. Singular spots may lead to a repairing minigame. This minigame consists of interacting with points of interest and disassembling the item piece by piece. The item can be reassembled by interacting with indicators for the positions of previously removed parts of the item.

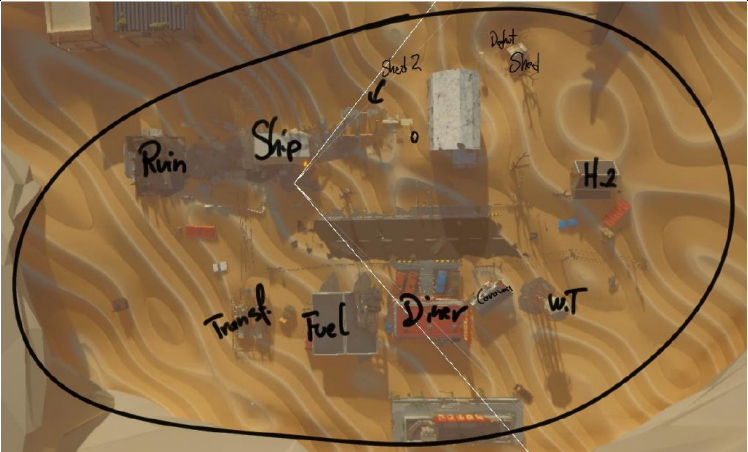
The game has several minigames. One minigame includes adjusting the frequency and amplitude of a wave to match another. The wave can be manipulated with two sliders.

Game Progression

The game progression consists of finding audio logs which contain clues about the whereabouts of keys. These keys unlock the next part of the game world. This progression is built upon the structure of the story as every important story event is experienced through an audio log. By advancing through the story the player also unlocks new parts of the map to explore. Hints and key items can also be found through exploring the game world as many clues are hidden in the environment through level design and asset placement.

Level Design

The game consists of one continuous game world. This world is separated into different parts which require a key to access. Keys can be acquired by finding hints in audio logs important to the story.  
Because there is a singular world the player can freely go back to already visited locations.  
The games difficulty is not dependent on the game progress and therefore unrelated to the current room the player is in. **DIFFICULTY**






Floor	
	<p><b>Name:</b> Surroundings</p> <p><b>Look</b> Outdoor, desert-like environment; Street with various buildings;</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> Gaining entry to the house Acquiring a ladder</p> <p><b>Interactables</b> Multiple crates, ladder, 2x metal rods, 2x branch, fuel can</p>

<p>1. Stock</p>	<p><b>Name:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor</p> <p><b>Look</b> Standard décor of middle class suburban family; consists of bath, bedroom parents, bedroom child</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> Opening the door to the catwalk Find key for roof access Open hallway door</p> <p><b>Interactables</b> Radio, Fuse, Key for roof access</p>
<p>* Stage I vorbei Stage I</p> <p>100cm</p> <p>Dachboden</p>	<p><b>Name:</b> Attic</p> <p><b>Look</b> Cluttered and dusty attic, expansive and somewhat luxurious bath</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> Opening the door to the catwalk Access roof via trapdoor using the key</p> <p><b>Interactables</b> Fuse, Cassette, Door, Instruments</p>
	<p><b>Name:</b> Roof</p> <p><b>Look</b> Weathered roof</p> <p><b>Objectives</b> Opening the door to the catwalk Cleaning Solar panels on roof</p> <p><b>Interactables</b> Solar Panels, Satellite dish</p>


## Game Elements

The following list contains all interactable objects currently planned for the game. All items can be categorized as items (objects which can be picked up) or mechanisms (static objects which can be interacted with but not picked up). All interactable items are also automatically registered in the archive. These entries contain additional information about the items, possible hints and general background information.

### Items

Item	Name	Placement	Description	Interaction	Dependencies
	Helmet	Surroundings	Hemet of the player character; Has to be picked up at start	Minigame: Dis/Assemble	X
	Ladder	Surroundings	Standard ladder	Use items on object	X
	Wooden Post	Surroundings	Thick wooden post	None	X
	Fuel Can	Surroundings	A fuel can	Usable on objects	X
	Plastic Bottle	Surroundings	Plastic water bottle; Damaged and crushed	None	X

		Crate	Surroundings	Wooden Crate; Just a Crate; Nothing special	None	X
		Spice Mill	Surroundings	Standard mill for grinding spices; For salt, pepper, etc.	None	X
		Café Menu Card	Surroundings	Menu of the diner as a card	None	X
		Café Menu Board	Surroundings	Menu of the diner as a board	None	X
		Cup o' Straws	Surroundings	Cup filled with straws	None	X
		Mop	Surroundings	A mop; Part of the Mop Trinity	None	X
		Mop Bucket	Surroundings	A bucket for mop usage; Part of the Mop Trinity	None	X

		Floor Sign	Surroundings	A floor sign warning about wet floors; Part of the Mop Trinity	None	X
		Payment Terminal	Surroundings	A payment terminal; Does not accept cards	None	X
		Napkin Holder	Surroundings	An advanced device to hold napkins and keep them fresh	None	X
		Straw Holder	Surroundings	A luxurious and inefficient way to hold a small amount of straws	None	X
		Tip Jar	Surroundings	A way for workers to earn a living wage in a capitalistic society	None	X
		Trash Bag	Surroundings	Bag consisting of humanities wastes	None	X
		Fan	Surroundings	Device used to help keep humans cool and hot days	None	X






		Folding Chair	Surroundings	A chair, which can be folded and therefore save space thanks to its reduced frame	None	X
		Grill	Surroundings	Also known as "Chai"	None	X
		Plastic Chair	Surroundings	Sturdier than the folding chair but not as efficient in space management	None	X
		Basketball	Surroundings	Representative for all ball-like objects	None	X
		Step Ladder	Surroundings	A step ladder; Smaller than a normal ladder, but foldable	None	X
		Dog	Surroundings	A very good boy	None	X
		Baseball Glove	Surroundings	A baseball glove	None	X


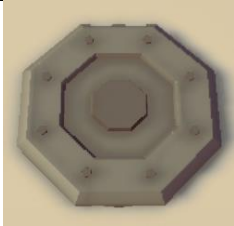
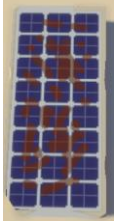
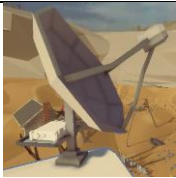



	Cardboard Box	Surroundings	A cardboard box	None	X
	Roof Hatch Key	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	Unlocks the hatch to the roof	Usable on objects	Roof Hatch
	Teddy Bear	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A teddy bear	None	X
	Toy Car	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A toy car	None	X
	Guitar	Attic	An acoustic guitar	None	X
	Amplifier	Attic	An amplifier	None	X
	Guitar Stand	Attic	A guitar stand	None	X



	Radio Equipment	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	Non-functional radio equipment; Is used on the satellite dish	Usable on objects	Satellite Dish
	Radio	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A radio	None	X
	Drill	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A drill	None	X
	Soap Dispenser	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A soap dispenser	None	X
	Tooth Paste	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A tube of tooth paste; Content is probably petrified	None	X
	Trash Can	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A trash can	None	X
	Toilet Brush	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A toilet brush	None	X

	Remote	<b>1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>	A remote for the TV	None	<b>X</b>
	Console	<b>1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>	A console; The new PlayBox U	None	<b>X</b>
	Speaker	<b>1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>	A speaker	None	<b>X</b>








## Mechanisms


Item	Name	Placement	Description	Interaction	Dependencies
	Com-Device	<b>Surroundings</b>	Looks like a satellite dish; Does not work	Minigame: Wave Align	<b>X</b>
	Roof Hatch	<b>Attic</b>	Metal hatch; Allows access to the roof	Use items on object	<b>Roof Hatch Key</b>
	Solar Panel	<b>Roof</b>	Standard solar panel, covered in sand and dirt; Can be cleaned to restore power to door	Minigame: Clean	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> floor Hallway Door</b>
	Satellite Dish	<b>Roof</b>	A still functioning satellite dish; Radio equipment can be installed	Use items on object	<b>Radio Equipment</b>
	Light Switch	<b>House</b>	A standard light switch; Can turn on lamps after restoring electricity	None	<b>Lamp Ceiling Lamp</b>

	Lamp	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A regular lamp; Can be turned on after restoring electricity	None	Light Switch
	Ceiling/Wall Lamp	House	A ceiling lamp; Can be turned on after restoring electricity	None	Light Switch
	Drum Set	Attic	A drum set; Plays sounds when interacted with	None	X
	Keyboard	Attic	A keyboard; Plays sounds when interacted with	None	X
	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Hallway Door	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	Modern door, electric; Is opened by restoring electricity through solar panels	None	Solar Panel
	Closet	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A regular closet; Can be opened	None	X

		Door	House	A regular door; Can be opened	None	X
		Shower Door	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	A shower cabin; Can be opened	None	X

## Archives

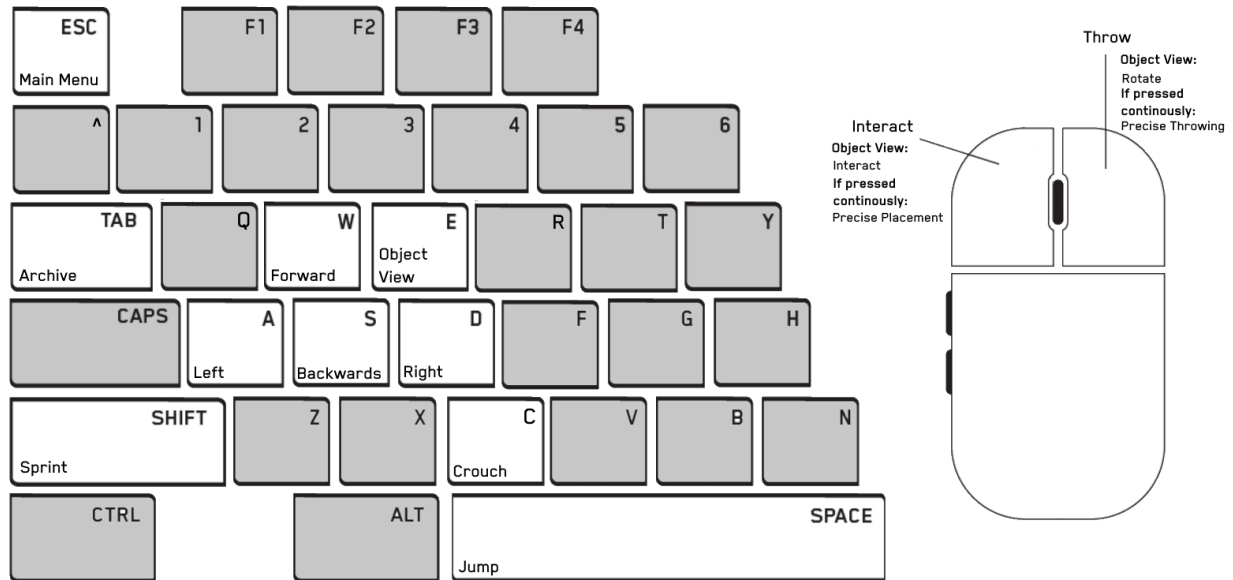
Entry	Name	Placement	Category	Content
	Dog House	Garden	Furniture	Alien is surprised by the small size of the house
	Tree	Garden	Furniture	Alien speculates about the fauna that existed here
	Barricaded Window	3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	Furniture	Question the purpose of different looking walls
	Bed	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien is wondering why the surface is soft
	Wardrobe	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Questions the usefulness of a large contraption with little content
	Chair	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien comments on the size
	Desk	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien is wondering why a shelter is indoors
	Chest	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien observes the content

		Shower	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien speculates about the purpose of a glass tube
		Sink	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Did something carve out the surface?
		Toilet	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	Alien is wondering where the hole at the bottom leads to
		Towel	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	Furniture	A sturdy web
		Tub	Attic	Furniture	Alien is wondering why a larger version of the sink exists



## Control Scheme

### Mouse & Keyboard



Button	Action it Performs
Left Mouse Button	When in standard view interact with objects/pickup object if possible and drop them; When in object view interact with object; When holding an item and keeping the button pressed, enables precise placement
Right Mouse Button	When in standard view throw item; When in object view rotate item
E	When holding an item, toggle object view
W	Move forward
A	Move to the left
S	Move backward
D	Move to the right
Mouse Movement	Camera Movement
SPACE	Jump
SHIFT	Sprint
C	Crouch
TAB	Opens Archive collection
ESCAPE	Opens the Main menu

## Game Aesthetics

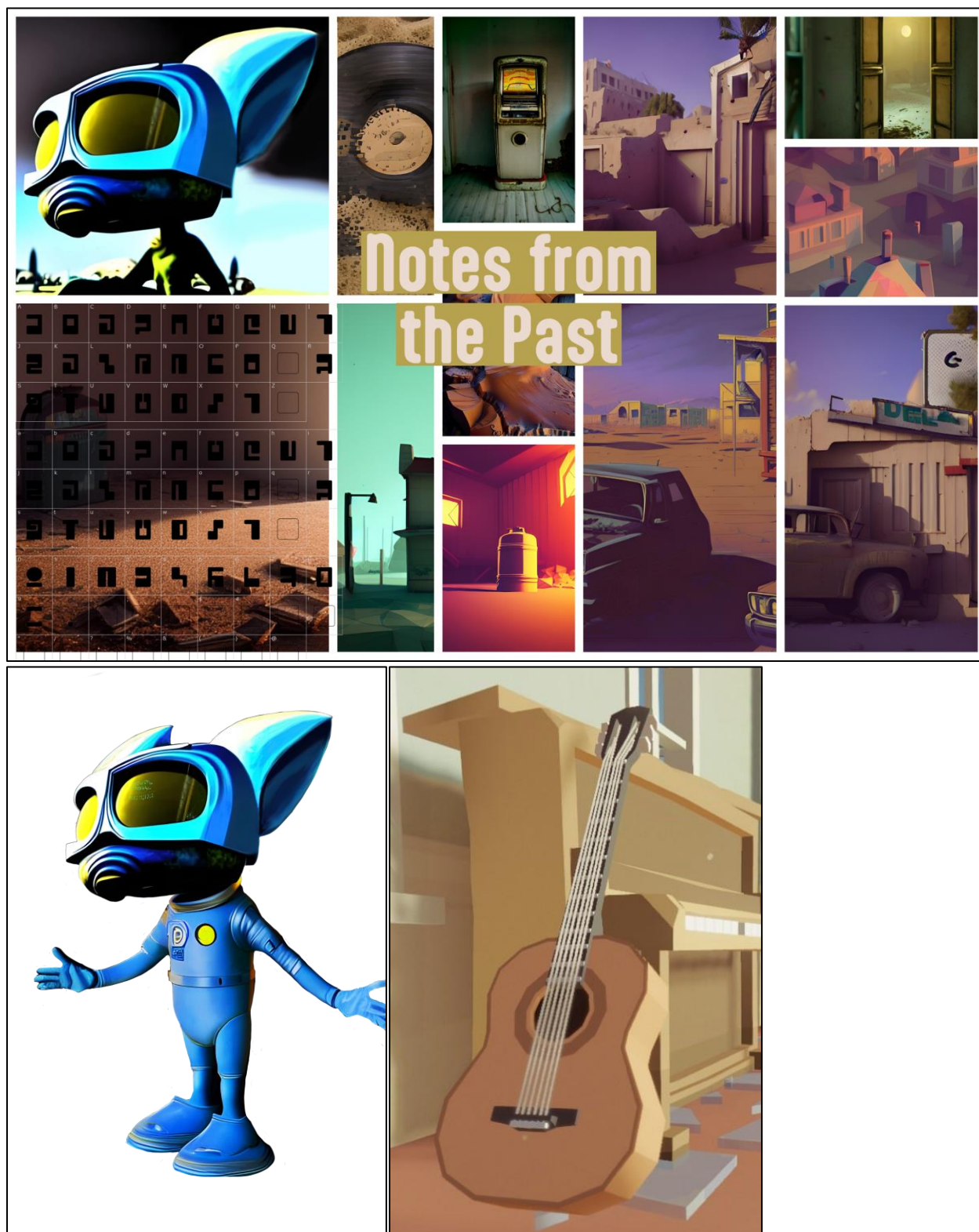
The game has a low-poly art style. Assets have a reduced number of polygons and simple textures. A less realistic art style underlines the alien nature of the player character and their view on the game world.

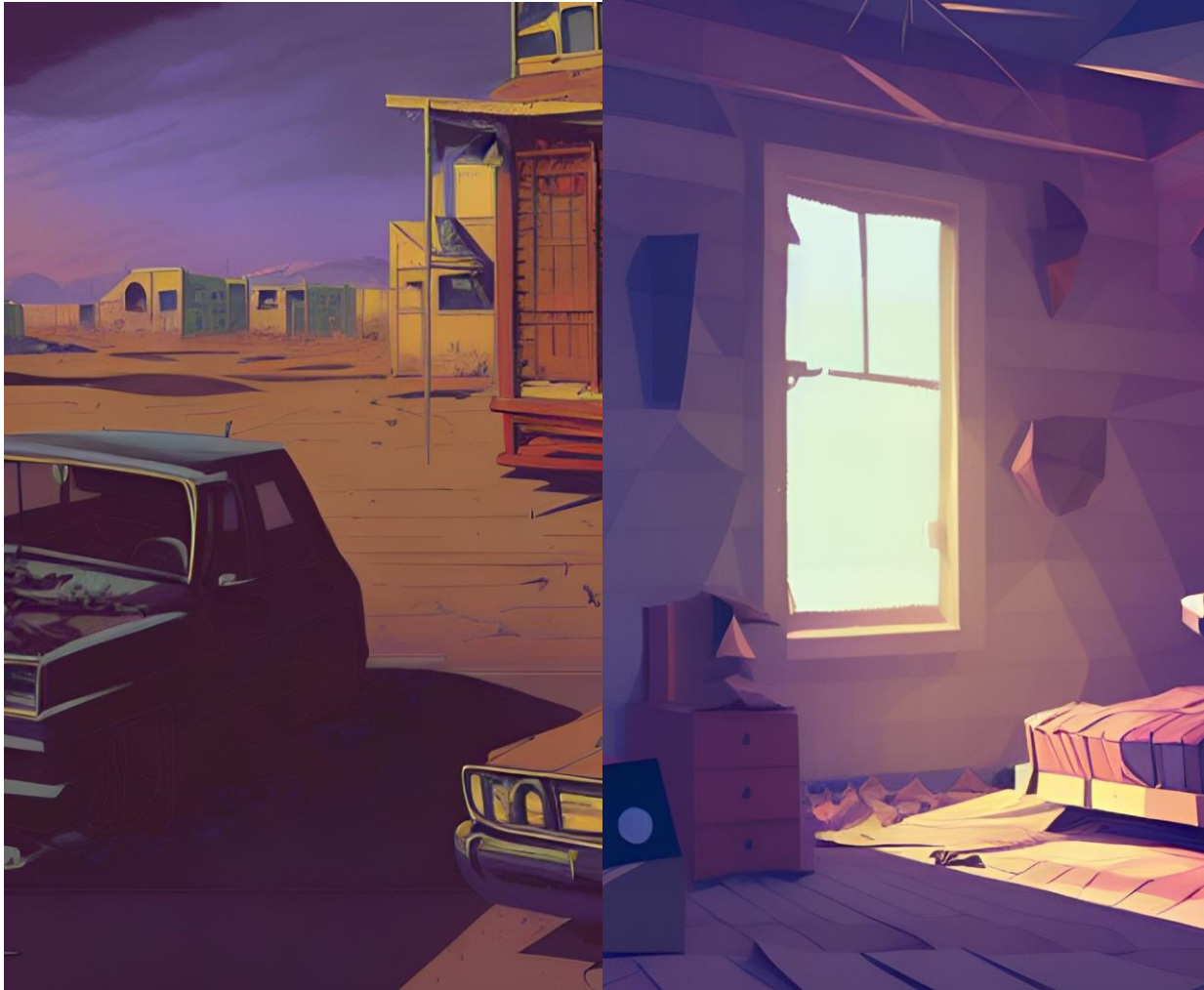
All models are simple but recognizable. This includes interactable items, furniture or environmental objects, for example stones.

A big part of the aesthetic are the effects and particles. To provide an immersive experience and a dense atmosphere aided by effects is key. This is additionally enhanced through the use of lighting to set the mood.

Another important aspect is the dense audio landscape of the game world. A lot of objects emit some kind of ambient sound that enhances the immersion of the player and lets the game world feel lived in. This also includes the background music, which underlines the emotional themes without feeling intrusive. In stark contrast to the ambient music, the music played by audio devices in the game world has a strong presence, which demands the attention of the player and emphasizes the importance of music in the story. The actions of the player have little effect on the visual experience.

## Concept Art







## Game Atmosphere



## Game Theme

The game revolves around transience and what humanity leaves behind. It asks questions about the frugal lifestyle of the current times and sets it into the context of impending doom. What is important in life and how do we want to be remembered. In this sense the story might seem full of doom and gloom, but there is also hope to be found. Culture can survive the destruction of its civilization. It even can be rediscovered and appreciated by a completely separate culture, in the case of this game, an extraterrestrial species. The takeaway should be a new appreciation for human culture and a bit of motivation to protect it.

In addition to the main themes the game also explores the dynamic between the family members. These relationships contain interesting themes as well.

## User Interface

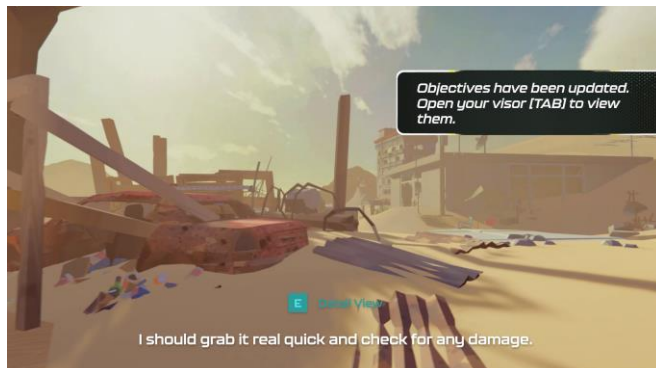
The UI of the game aims to be diegetic. The HUD is inlaid into the visor of the player character. It is also not always visible, only when new information is displayed, for example current subtitles.

The Archive is a collection of all items the player has found. It also contains logs of recent subtitles and the main objectives of the player. It is found in a separate view.

The start menu lets players start a new game, continue with an existing save game, quit the game or change the settings. This menu can also be accessed during and serves as the pause menu. In the settings menu players have the ability to change the volume and the graphics to their liking. The settings menu is a sub-screen of the start menu.

## GUI/HUD

#	Element	Description
1	Cursor	A cursor in the middle of the screen, indicates where the player is currently aiming to interact with an object
2	Held Item	The item the player is currently holding
3	Subtitles	Subtitles for spoken dialogue, includes audio logs, audio flashbacks and comments made by the alien (subtitles are translated from alien language)
4	Notification	Notifications from the Archive, is displayed when main objective is updated and a new item is registered (only for important story items)
5	Placing Item	Is displayed during position mode, held item is moved from bottom right corner to the middle of the screen
6	Object view	Is displayed during object view, held item is moved from bottom right corner to the middle of the screen and can be interacted with
7	Button Legend	Is always displayed, contains a list of available buttons and their function

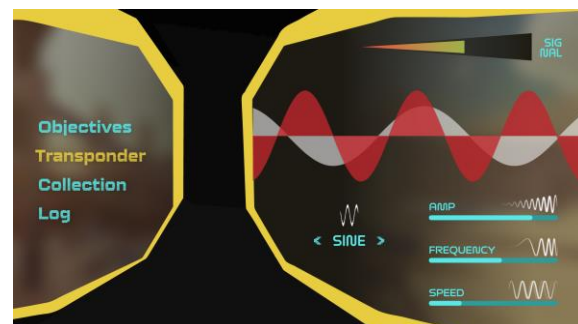
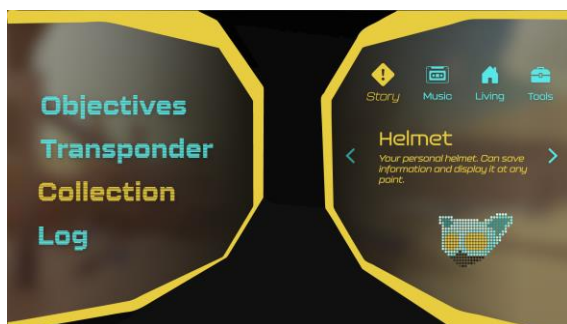




## System Menus

## Archive

#	Element	Description
1	Tab	Tabs for the different functionalities of the Archive, including objectives, collection, the audio align minigame and text log
2	Categories	Only for collection, tabs for each category of items, including interactables, furniture, audio logs and music
3	Objectives	Only in objectives, list of all current objectives
4	Text Log	Only in text log, chronological record of all displayed subtitles
5	Collection List	Only in collection, list of all objects in the category
6	Artefact Detail	Only in collection, an entry of an artefact in the collection, contains a picture, flavor text and the location where it was found
7	Scrollbar	Scroll down the list
8	Transponder	Used for wave align minigames. The overlay wave (red) must be tweaked with the provided controls to match the base wave (white) to establish a connection

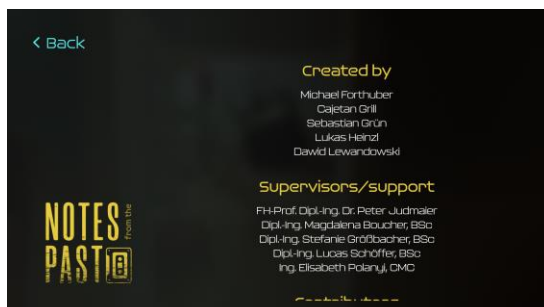
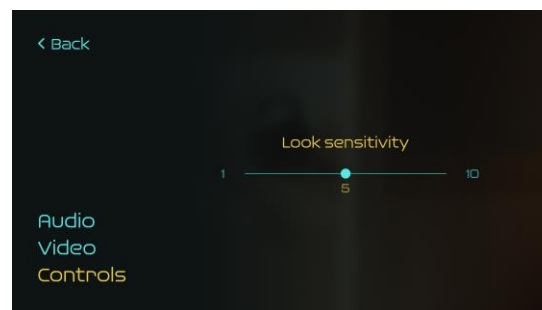
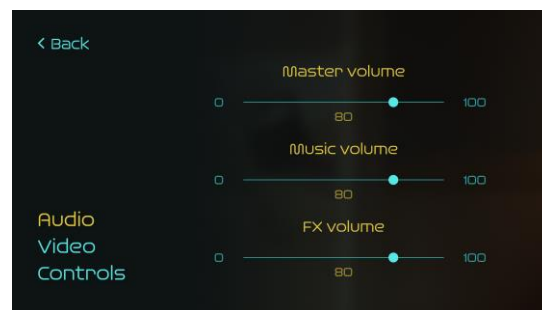
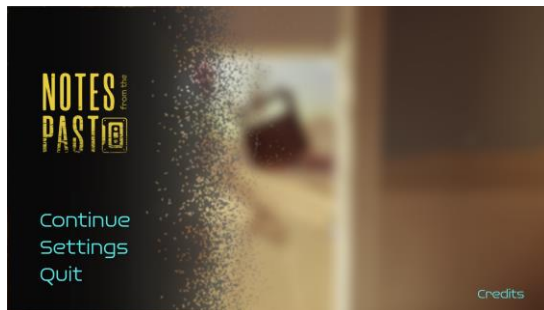


## Menu Screens

### Main Menu

#	Element	Description
1	New Game	Starts a new game, is displayed after the game is launched
2	Continue	Continues with the last saved game or with the current scene if the menu is opened during gameplay
3	Settings	Opens the Settings Sub-Screen
4	Quit Game	Closes the application
5	Credits	Opens the credits Sub-Screen
6	Back	When in the Credits or Settings Sub-Screen, closes the Sub-Screen
7	Audio	Only in settings sub-screen, opens the Audio Sub-Menu
7.1	Master Volume	In Audio Sub-Menu, changes the master volume
7.2	Music Volume	In Audio Sub-Menu, changes the music volume
7.3	FX Volume	In Audio Sub-Menu, changes the volume of effects
8	Video	Only in settings sub-screen, opens the Video Sub-Menu
8.1	Graphics Quality	In Video Sub-Menu, switches between quality options
8.2	Field of View	In Video Sub-Menu, changes the field of view
8.3	Motion Blur	In Video Sub-Menu, toggles motion blur
9	General	Only in settings sub-screen, opens the General Sub-Menu
9.1	Language	In General Sub-Menu, switches between languages
9.2	Look Sensitivity	In General Sub-Menu, changes the look sensitivity

## Menu screens



## Design Guidelines

### Notation & letter case

*Notes from the Past* is written in **AP Stylebook title case** and is abbreviated as *NFTP* or *nftp*. Other letter cases (such as *Notes From The Past* or *NftP*) should be avoided under all circumstances (except for code).

### Color Theme

The NFTP color theme consists of a **main color** (#E8CD41) and its **shaded variant** (#9C8B33), a **primary accent color** (#58E8E8) and its **shaded variant** (#2C9C9C), and a **contrast color** (#E86FC8).

The **main color** is primarily used for **titles**, its **shaded variant** for **secondary titles** or **backgrounds**. The **accent color** is



used for **interactive elements** like links and buttons, its **shaded variant** for **hover effects** and other minor contrast effects. The **contrast color** has no distinct use case and mainly serves as **special contrast** color, it should not be used too often.

### Fonts

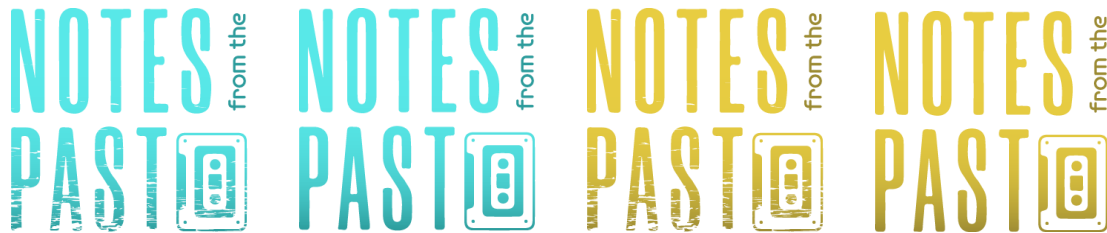
**In-game notes** (and other handwritings) use the **Market Pro** font. **UI headings** and other sci-fi style text use the **Omnium** font. **Regular text** and **secondary titles** use the **Kallisto** font.

All used fonts are Adobe fonts, their use is not restricted in any particular way.

### Logos

Two main logo types are available: **icons** and **wordmarks**. The **icon logo** resembles a **cassette tape** and is primarily used for subtle brandings. The **wordmark logo** is used in all other occasions, such as big **header images**, banners, and other high-profile branding. Both logos are available in various color schemes and as a decayed and non-decayed version.

### Wordmarks



### Icons



## User test reports

### Prototype

#### Executive Summary

The test of the Lo-Fi Prototype was conducted with 12 participants with differing levels of skill regarding video games. The prototype was built using Minecraft and a custom data pack. The testers were tasked with filling out a survey about their general information. Afterwards they played the prototype, during which they had an objective but were otherwise free to explore and try things out. After the prototype the testers had to fill out a feedback form about the game feel of the prototype.

The survey indicated an average play time per week of less than three hours for our target group. This would imply that players would prefer a shorter experience they can finish easily than having to interrupt their play session. It also revealed a lack of mobile platform usage.

During the gameplay some test subjects were influenced by their previous knowledge of Minecraft and were in turn confused by the added textures and models. This also impacted the interactions as subjects tried to use items that are normally interactable but were only decoration in our case.

In general the feedback was positive and testers are excited to see our finished product.

#### General Information

Number of participants: 12

Participants used a local setup to fill out the form and test the concept.

Tools:

OBS (Recording)

Google Forms (Survey)

Minecraft (Playable Prototype)

#### Methods and Setup

The test consisted of a survey, which contained questions about the tester. For example, their gender, age, time spent playing videogames and previous experience with videogames.

The prototype was built in Minecraft with additional use of data packs to change the appearance of the game and add additional resources, e.g., textures and audio files. The goal was to find a music disc in the limited game world. The world consisted of a small house including a garage with a garden and a shed. The players started in the garden and were tasked to explore the area. While exploring they could go into the shed and find fuel canister there. The doors to the house were locked in the beginning. The garage contained a generator which made sputtering noises when interacting with it. The goal was for the player to acquire the fuel canister, find the generator and deposit the fuel generator in the generator. After that, the player could interact with the generator, which now gave off start-up and running noises. This unlocked the doors, which led into the living room of the house, where a record player started playing music. The last step for the players was to interact with the record player and acquire the music disc contained within.

After concluding the prototype the players had to fill out a feedback form about their experience with the prototype.

The controls used consisted of WASD for movement of the player avatar, the mouse to move the camera and the right mouse button to interact with objects.

## Target Group

The target group were casual gamers between the ages of 18 to 24. There was no prior experience with videogames and especially first-person controls required.

## Results

### Survey Observations

The survey results indicate that male subjects gender diversity is way smaller compared to the female subjects. Only a small number of testers used mobile devices for playing games. Also of note is the time spend on gaming, which is less than 3 hours per week for 60% of out test subjects. Almost all users started gaming earlier than 9 years old. Male subjects tended to call themselves more "skilled". Also, a majority of male subjects play Shooters whereas female subjects were the only ones to add puzzle games to their regularly played games.

### Gameplay Observations

During gameplay some testers wanted to use the fuel canister to burn something. They were also influenced by their Minecraft experience and tried to use interactable objects used as decoration. Testers with limited gaming experience had a harder time immersing themselves. Test subjects were confused by a lack of direct objectives and missing information about the state of objects. The starting button for the generator was placed beside it and led to confusion among the test subjects because they did not realize the connection. The spatial audio helped test subjects in completing the objective. Hitboxes and

inventory screens were also unintuitive to some testers, which could not be removed as its part if Minecraft's programming.

### **Feedback Observations**

The users were surprised by the prototype, but enjoyed it nonetheless. Multiple users tried to use the fuel can by interact with the environment and expecting it to work. Typical interactable objects were used as decoration which confused some subjects. The testers also missed an in-game objective display about what their goal is. The controls where fine, but some test subjects would prefer controller support.

### **Conclusion**

The feedback from the test subjects was overly positive. The main issues they reported was a general lack of direction regarding the goals of the prototype. By using Minecraft some were also influenced by there previous experiences with the game and draw wrong conclusion from the environment. This also extends to the usage of interactable objects as decoration in the game world, as typically these have a function in Minecraft. Testers were also surprised by the usage of non-Minecraft textures and models and didn't recognize their purpose or how they should interact with them. On the other hand test subjects with no Minecraft experience or less gaming experience in general were trying to interact with things in an unexpected way. Another big issue was the lack of information regarding the stat of things, for example the need for power to open the doors. A helpful feature was the spatial audio which helped testers navigate to and find the objective.

Our survey suggests that people in our target group spend less time on average on gaming per week. This could mean they prefer a shorter experience over a longer on that they potentially could not finish. The self-professed skill level of the subjects also correlated to their ability to navigate and complete the prototype.

## Alphatest

### Executive Summary

The test of the alpha version was conducted with 9 participants with differing levels of skill regarding video games. The test was held in Unity and focussed on the basic interaction system and our minigames.

The survey indicated an average play time per week of about five hours for our target group. This would imply that players would prefer a shorter experience they can finish easily than having to interrupt their play session. Most participants prefer playing on PC however a few also play on mobile and console.

During testing a few issues were found, mostly regarding visual or audio feedback. In general, the testers enjoyed their experience and were looking forward to playing the finished game.

### General Information

Number of participants: 9

Participants used a local setup to fill out the form and test the game.

Tools:

Google Forms (Survey)

Unity (Alpha version prototype)

### Methods and Setup

The test consisted of a survey, which contained questions about the tester. For example, their gender, age, time spent playing videogames and previous experience with videogames.

The prototype was built with Unity using our existing code of the interaction system, minigames and player controller. Players were presented with an image showing all keyboard and mouse button controls. Controls consisted of the usual first-person controls, using WASD for movement and the mouse for looking around.

The test consisted of five rooms, each testing one specific aspect of the game. Players always had to start with the first room, which got them familiar with the basic controls. The other four rooms were played in a different order for almost every test person to ensure that the results of each room were not biased due to the order.



After each room players had to give feedback in the survey about their experience. At the very end there was a summary section where players had the opportunity to share any last thoughts.

## **Target Group**

The target group were casual gamers between the ages of 18 and 39. There was no / very little prior experience with videogames and especially first-person controls required.

## **Results**

### **Survey Observations**

Most testers started playing games at around the age of 7. The age was more widespread than in our first test, ranging from 18 to 39. The test group was nearly evenly split between male and female gender. There was a huge diversity in game genres with the most dominant being RPG, party games, puzzle, sports and platformers.

### **Gameplay Observations**

During gameplay players often had issues with understanding the interactions. Almost always the lack of feedback was the underlying issue. The test did not include any audio or visual effects. In one of the rooms the test setup was suboptimal leading to confusion among a few players. The objective of the room in question was “cleaning all objects”. Two of these objects had to be cleaned by using a sponge while the third one was cleaned in a different way. Another confusion was the difference, or rather the lack there of, between the position mode and object view. One minigame (rhythm) was very difficult for some of the players.

### **Feedback Observations**

The users mostly reported issues that have been described in 3.2. A few suggestions were made regarding the mentioned issues. Overall, the feedback was very positive and almost everyone had fun throughout the entire test.

## **Conclusion**

The feedback was very positive and the minigames were fun to play. Excluding the rhythm game players enjoyed their experience and are looking forward to playing the finished game. Most issues are regarding missing feedback within the game. Most of this won't be an issue in the final game as audio cues and visual effects will be a big part of the game and serve as feedback guides for players. A few of the core issues have been discussed within the team and solutions have been worked out and implemented. A few of the testers were asked about the proposed changes and the feedback was positive.

## Betatest

### Executive Summary

The test of the beta version was conducted with 12 participants with differing levels of skill regarding video games. The test was conducted with the latest bet build of the game and focussed on testing implemented interactions and the general game flow.

The survey indicated an average play time per week of ten to twenty hours for our target group. This would imply that players are willing to spend more time on a game if they enjoy the experience. Most participants prefer playing on PC however a few also play on mobile and console. A majority of the test subjects were participating in a test for the game for the first time.

During testing many subjects responded positively to the game world and its atmosphere, but also criticized the lack of interaction possibilities, e.g. destroying windows. Another point of contention was the connection between the goal to open locked doors, the roof hatch and the key. Some testers either did not realize they could unlock the hatch or thought they could open the electric door with the key.

In general the feedback was positive and testers are excited to see how the game progress further.

### General Information

Number of participants: 12

Participants used either a local setup to fill out the form and test the prototype or were sent the beta version built and tested the prototype remotely.

Tools:

Google Forms (Survey)

Beta Version Build

### Methods and Setup

The test consisted of a survey, which contained questions about the tester. For example, their gender, age, time spent playing videogames and previous experience with videogames.

The test was conducted with the current beta version build of the game including a fully implemented first story act. Players had the option to view an image showing all keyboard and mouse button controls. Controls consisted of the usual first-person controls, using WASD for movement and the mouse for looking around.

The test consisted of three main parts and an optional fourth one.

The objective of the first segment was to explore the game world except the family house. Players were allowed to try things out and run around as they pleased.

The goal of the second part was to get into the family house. This included finding the open window, acquiring one of the ladders and climbing through the window into the house.

The objective of the third segment was to unlock doors, namely the electric door on the second floor. Players had to locate a key, find the roof access hatch, unlock it and clean the solar panel on the roof.

The fourth part was optional and the players were once again free to roam around the game world, with no restrictions.

Every segment of the test concluded with testers filling out survey questions about their game experience with each objective.

### **Target Group**

The target group were casual gamers between the ages of 18 to 24. There was no / very little prior experience with videogames and especially first-person controls required

### **Results**

#### **Survey Observations**

The age range for this test was between 18 and 29. The survey shows that testers for this test spent more time on average playing games, the majority spending at least 4 up to 20 hours or more. This differs from our previous test, where the average time was significantly smaller.

The testers are interested in a wide variety of game genres, with the three being sandbox games, party games and platformers.

#### **Gameplay Observations**

During gameplay most players tried to interact with the environment in ways that were not included in the game. For example, many wanted to destroy windows by throwing something at them.

A noticeable difficulty for many testers were the subtitles and notifications in the HUD. Most players did not notice the subtitles or they were too preoccupied with the game world to read them fast enough.

Some visual indicators in the game world were also not entirely clear for testers. Some testers were distracted by the depth of field effect, for example in combination with the world boarder. Many testers had difficulties with connecting the key with the roof hatch and unlocking said hatch, as some had accidentally locked it again after unlocking it. They also did not recognize the electric door as such.

### **Feedback Observations**

Many testers tried to interact with world in unexpected ways, see above, and where disappointed that this was not possible. The depth of field was also a point of contention for many, as testers felt it was too imposing and sometimes triggered in seemingly randomly. Some also reported small problems with the controls, for example confusing the functions of the mouse buttons.

As mentioned above, many players had difficulties with the roof hatch and specified as much in the survey. Testers were also disappointed by a lack of redundant items in the house.

The objective to get into the house was rated on average with a 2, the objective to open locked doors was rated on average 3.

Overall the feedback was positive, especially the atmosphere.

### **Conclusion**

The feedback from the test subjects was generally positive. Especially the atmosphere and the sound effects were greatly appreciated.

Regarding the lack of additional interactions, there's not much we can do in the time we have left. However unclear or unintuitive interactions / objectives should be made clear to not disrupt the players immersion or play flow. The visibility of the visual elements in the HUD should be increased to avoid players missing them.

Overall players were neither overwhelmed nor underchallenged regarding the puzzle difficulty. They also enjoyed exploration and interacting with some of the random items that are found all over the game world.

In conclusion, the testers had fun with the game world and are eager to play the finished game.

## Final version test

### Executive Summary

The test of the final version was conducted at the project vernissage with visitors of our stand. The testers had differing levels of skill regarding video games. The test was conducted with the latest build of the game, which is also the final build sans bug fixes. The test focused on the overall enjoyment testers had with the game and whether the complete flow is intuitive.

Testers had different backgrounds regarding age and video game experience. In general testers had basic knowledge of 3D-Movement and the PC gaming experience.

During testing many subjects responded positively to the game world and its atmosphere. Interaction with items divided the testers as some had no issues while others overlooked possible interactions. Testers also had issues with the flow as some had difficulties in discerning and following the game's objects.

In general the feedback was very positive and testers are excited to play the game.

### General Information

Number of participants: 12

Participants used a local setup at the project vernissage.  
Some participants had taken part in previous tests of the game.

Tools:

Google Forms (Observation)

Final Version Build

### Methods and Setup

The test consisted of a survey, which contained general information about the testers as noted by the moderator, including perceived gender, age and gaming experience.

The test was conducted with the final version build of the game sans bugfixes. Testers could play the complete game without restrictions, except the intro cutscene, which was skipped.

The test consisted of a short introduction told by the moderator, which explained the general setting, and freeform exploration. Testers were allowed to explore as they pleased to observe the experience of a general player. Additional comments of the moderator were given to steer the subject in the right direction, should the need arise.

### Target Group

The target group were visitors of the project vernissage, which differed wildly in terms of age and gaming experience. Although the primary focus were casual gamers between the ages of 18 to 24. There was no / very little prior experience with videogames and especially first-person controls required.

## Results

### Survey Observations

The age range for this test was between 18 and 26. The survey shows that testers' gaming experience primarily ranged from casual to none at all.

### Gameplay Observations

During gameplay most players were comfortable with the controls. Testers had no problems exploring the world, although some were confused by lack of direction. After entering the house subjects could more easily notice their next objectives. However, in the second part of the house this changed and resulted in additional hints of the moderator to lead the testers to the next puzzle.

Subtitles and notifications in the HUD were noticed by most testers and helped them navigating the puzzles. This was especially apparent as puzzles that lacked comment hints were more difficult for testers to complete.

Regarding the repairing minigame, some testers had problems in noticing the silhouettes were items had to be repaired.

Some testers had difficulty noticing the open window to enter the house, which was somewhat resolved after finding the ladder and seeing the silhouette.

For some subjects noticing the broken fuse or fuses that have not been switched on yet proved challenging. This also extended to finding the fuses in the game world, which some indicated is not clear enough as one of the fuse cartons is found outside the house.

### Feedback Observations

All testers were excited to play the game and were overly positive. Especially the look and the atmosphere stuck out. Testers were also enjoying exploring the game world and interacting with various objects.

Some testers criticized the lack of direction regarding the story and its objectives. This also extends to puzzles, which lacked clear instructions and/or the desired outcome. For example the need to go to the roof after repairing the fuse box, activating the transponder minigame before going back to the basement to open the bunker door.

Overall the feedback was very positive and testers were looking forward to play the game's official release.

### Conclusion

The feedback from the test subjects was very positive. Especially the atmosphere and the sound effects were greatly appreciated.

Regarding the lack of instructions, comments and objectives, these are known faults and are fixed in a later version. Still, the feedback showed previously unknown hurdles which require additional instructions.

Overall players enjoyed the puzzles and minigame but criticized the lack of instructions for some of them. This also includes a lack of motivation to why players had to do a certain puzzle.

In conclusion, the testers had fun with the game world and are eager to play the released game.

## Credits

The project team consists of the following people, each contributing the following parts.

**Michael Forthuber**

Game idea, main GDD writer, writer of various supporting documents

**Cajetan Grill**

Concept art, design, UI implementation, character controller, various supporting code

**Sebastian Grün**

Audio lead; dialog recording and production, sound effects, level design/art

**Lukas Heinzl**

Project lead; interaction system, minigames and save game system implementation

**Dawid Lewandowski**

Story writing, house asset, various custom models/assets, voice acting