

Menu Analysis

Songs of Conquest menus analysis

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Introduction

This document analyzes the Songs of Conquest Main Menu System breaking down the system in its important core parts and analyzing them in terms of theme, understandability, functionality, and navigation also highlighting issues and offering solutions.

This document aims to expand the readers' menu design understanding and help find principles and approaches to apply to future menu design.

Songs of Conquest Overview



<https://www.songsofconquest.com/>

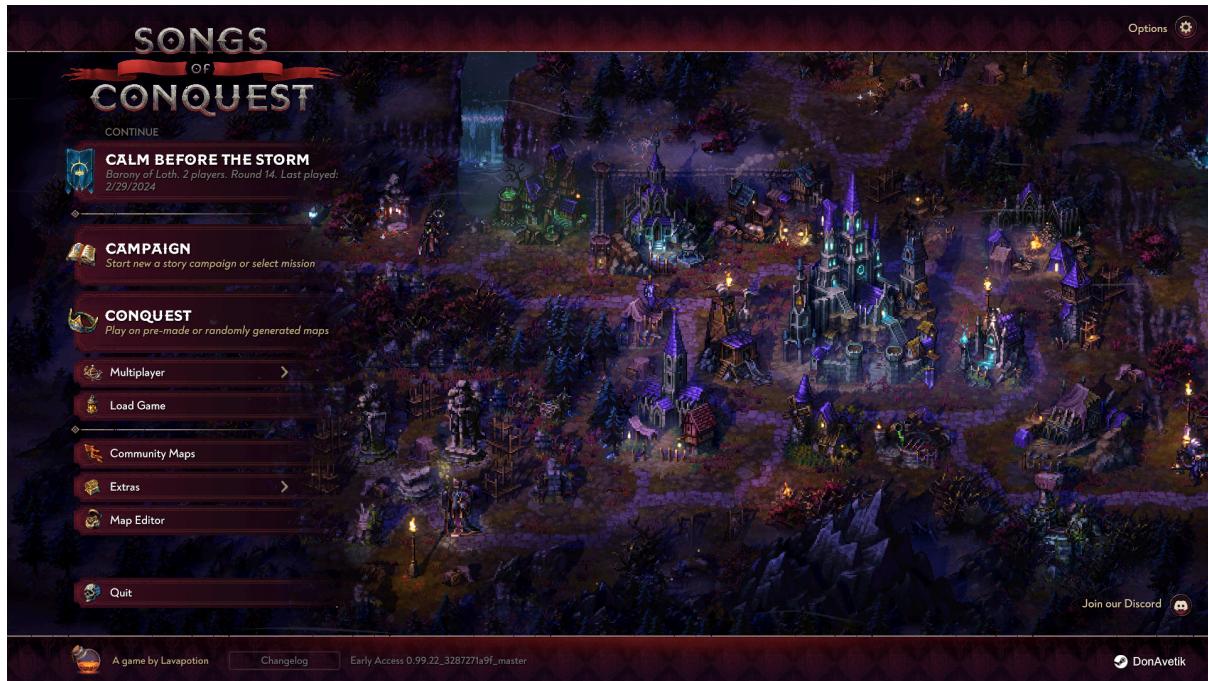
Songs of Conquest is a turn-based strategy-adventure PC game developed by Lavapotion and published by Coffee Stain Publishing, with 2D-pixel art style and 3D environments. The game takes inspiration from 90s real-time strategy games like Heroes of Might and Magic and fuses RPG, tactical combat, and kingdom management.

Players can control 4 different factions each with special characteristics, manage their kingdom constructing and improving buildings to generate resources, and units to smash opponents in quick turn-based skirmishes around the map.



<https://multiplayer.it/articoli/songs-of-conquest-provato.html>

Songs of Conquest Menus



Main Menu

The Main Menu screen immediately appears heavily themed showing an animated playable map full of buildings, enemies, and collectibles looking still in waiting for players. Everything is accompanied by chill music that sets up the pace of this strategy game. This use of in-game elements sets up the feel of the game, creating anticipation and giving a gameplay preview of the game and its captivating art style.

The gameplay footage takes a large part of the screen pushing buttons to the left without squeezing it. Being in constant movement and animated creates some noise in the background and distracts players from the menu itself.

Players are directed towards the first 3 single-player options in the game thanks to a bigger more relevant font and larger buttons with a short comprehensible description. Stands out the “Continue” button, spatially divided from other buttons, and with an icon, featuring a banner of the faction players last used, that stands out more.

Developers should have made the “Multiplayer” button bigger too since the game has also a strong multiplayer component.

Navigation is intuitive, the “Multiplayer” and “Extras” buttons open a drop-down menu. Clicking on a button opens up a new menu designated to handle the button functionality.

The Main Menu is visually cohesive and does a really good job of reinforcing the atmosphere of the game, but the amount of things on the screen can overwhelm players and make it look a little too cramped up.

Campaign Menu

Main Menu > Campaign



The campaign menu maintains the main menu theme and adds some elements. In the campaign menu players can choose one of the 4 campaigns available for each faction in the game, each decorated with a moving faction's banner, a matching story description, and a background image that supports the description in giving a preview of the campaign to the player.

Information about the progress of each campaign is communicated through counters at the bottom of the button for each mission present in the campaign.

- Grey with a lock: locked mission
- Colored: unlocked mission
- Colored with a tick: completed mission
- Gold and treasures: campaign completed

Each banner expresses the faction's personality and aesthetic to give a brief preview of what he's going to play.

Navigation is directed and clear. There are no elements other than the main 4 buttons and hovering on one of the buttons will highlight it and make the image move showing interaction with the menu and the noise coming from the background is dimmed. Only the "Main Menu" button on the top left looks more like a label than a button and at first this can create some confusion.

These Campaigns also work as tutorials for players, slowly introducing mechanics to players in increasingly harder scenarios. The number on top of each button and their positioning (from left to right) hints at their suggested play sequence. A more clear and distinct hint could help players better orient themselves.

After selecting a story to play, players are shown a cutscene that settles the story: a bard sings about deeds and events that players are going to experience. They are then directed to a detailed map where the story will take place with pins that show player progression in the region, making them feel like planning a war or retracing a story, giving them a clear sense of progression and a setting to the level they are going to play through a description

When selecting a mission the menu shows the hero they are going to play, the mission name, and a description about the setting. Here they can also set the difficulty and watch the cutscene again before starting the mission.

From these early screens, the game succeeds in immersing the player in the game settings and unfolding story, making them feel like participating in historical events or being part of the making of epic songs of conquest.

Main Menu > Campaign > *The Song of Stoutheart*



Conquest Menu

Main Menu > Conquest



The Conquest Menu, similarly to the Campaign menu, shows in a tidy and direct way the 3 clear options to play the game mode. Each of these modes is identified by an icon and a color scheme, as well as a brief and thorough mode description. As for the Campaign menu, here the choices are clear, and the noise coming from the rich background is dimmed:

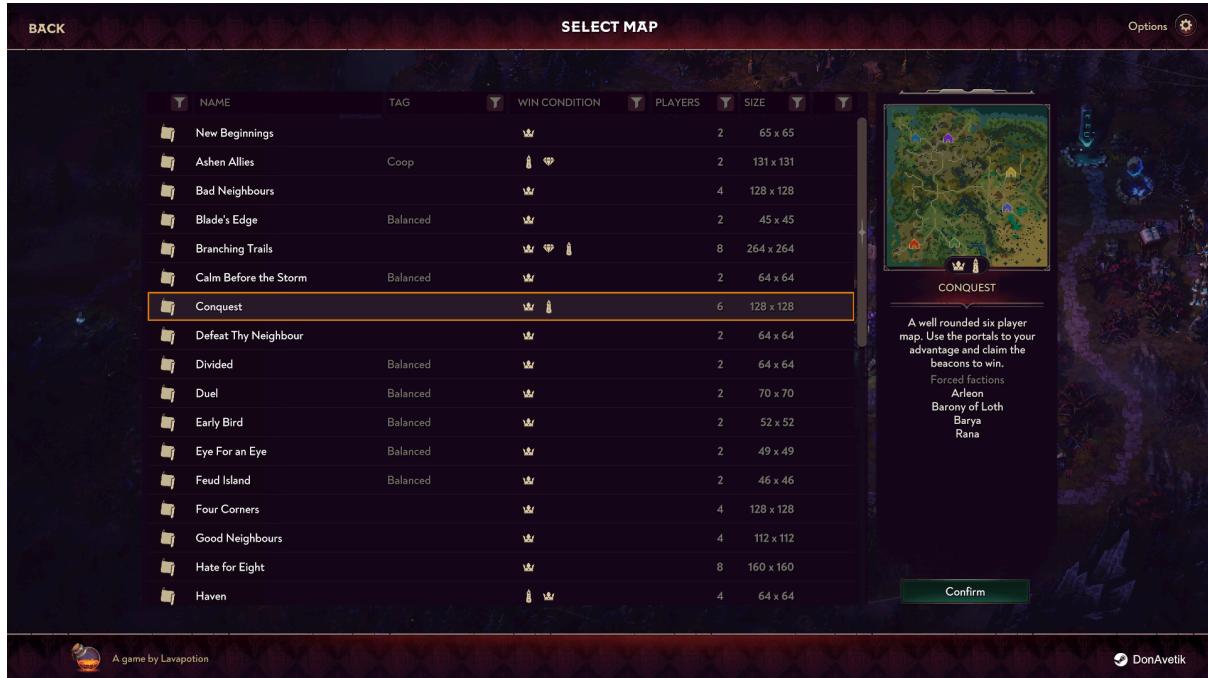
- Conquest Maps: Play classic games in premade maps.
- Challenge Maps: Play games with special objectives in premade maps.
- Random Maps: Play classic games in randomly generated maps.

When selecting one of the modes, players are presented with very different screens that should serve a very similar purpose. These differences between each menu tell their differences in functionality.

Conquest Maps

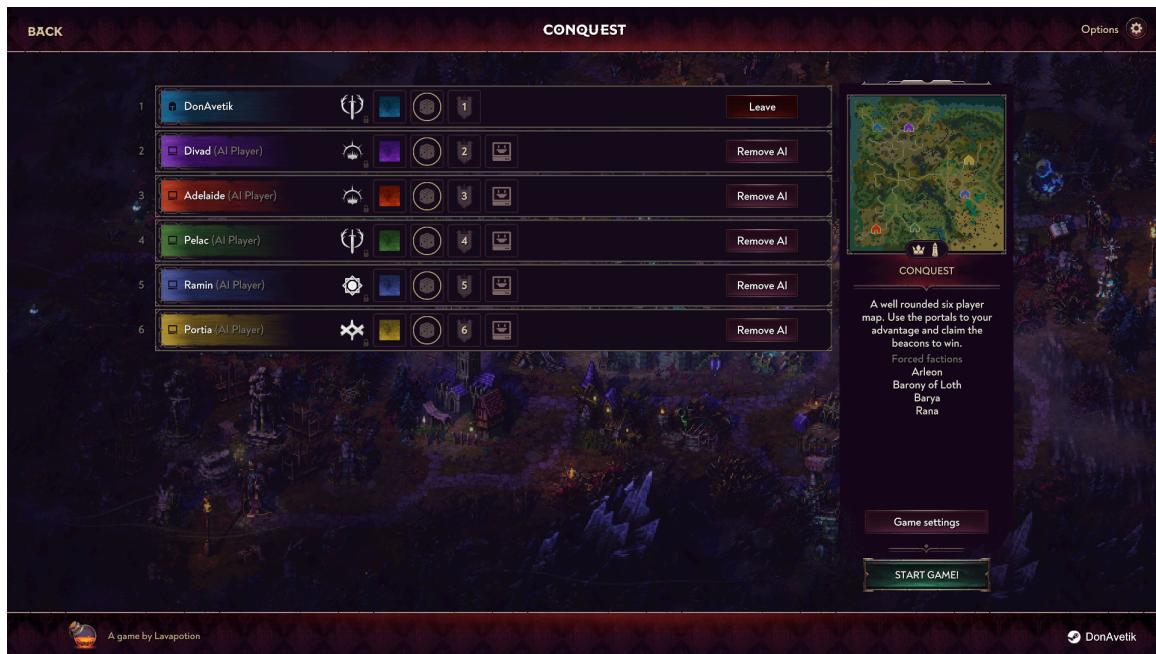
Conquest Maps revolve around a more classic and strategic approach to the game. In conquest maps, most of the strategic information is shown to the player through an easy-to-understand table: the map structure, a brief description, the exact size, factions, and main objectives as “win conditions” to win the game.

Main Menu > Conquest > Conquest Maps

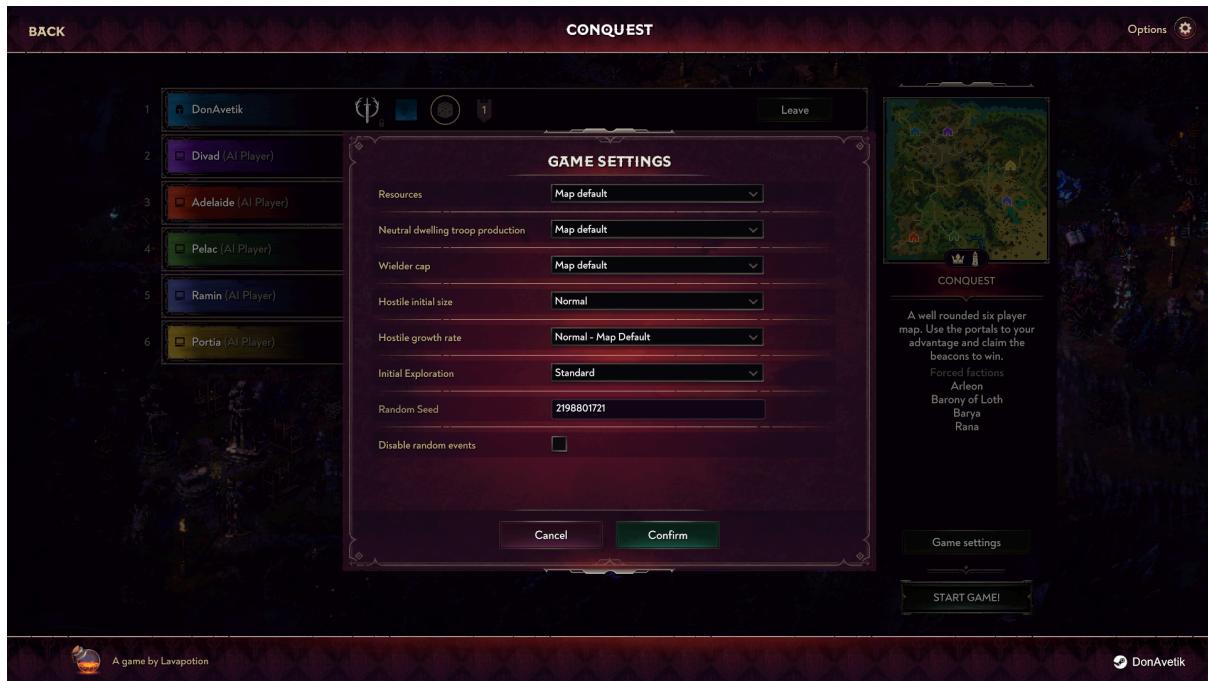


Progressing in the menu players have access to further customization options, using comprehensible imagery and icons to reinforce recognition over recall of information.

Main Menu > Conquest > Conquest Maps > Confirm



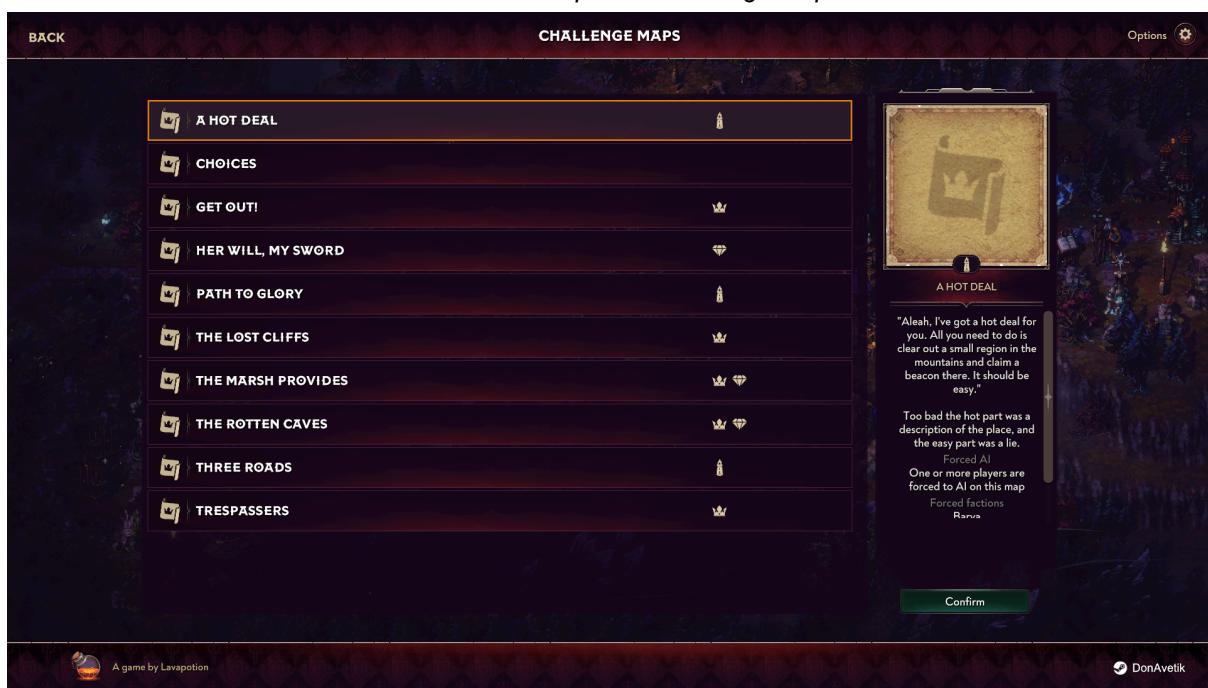
Main Menu > Conquest > Conquest Maps > Continue > Game Settings



Challenge Maps

Challenge Maps are scenarios with specific win conditions that aim to challenge the player, and this is why the menu obscures information like the map structure and dimension to players, putting exploration as a challenge to them.

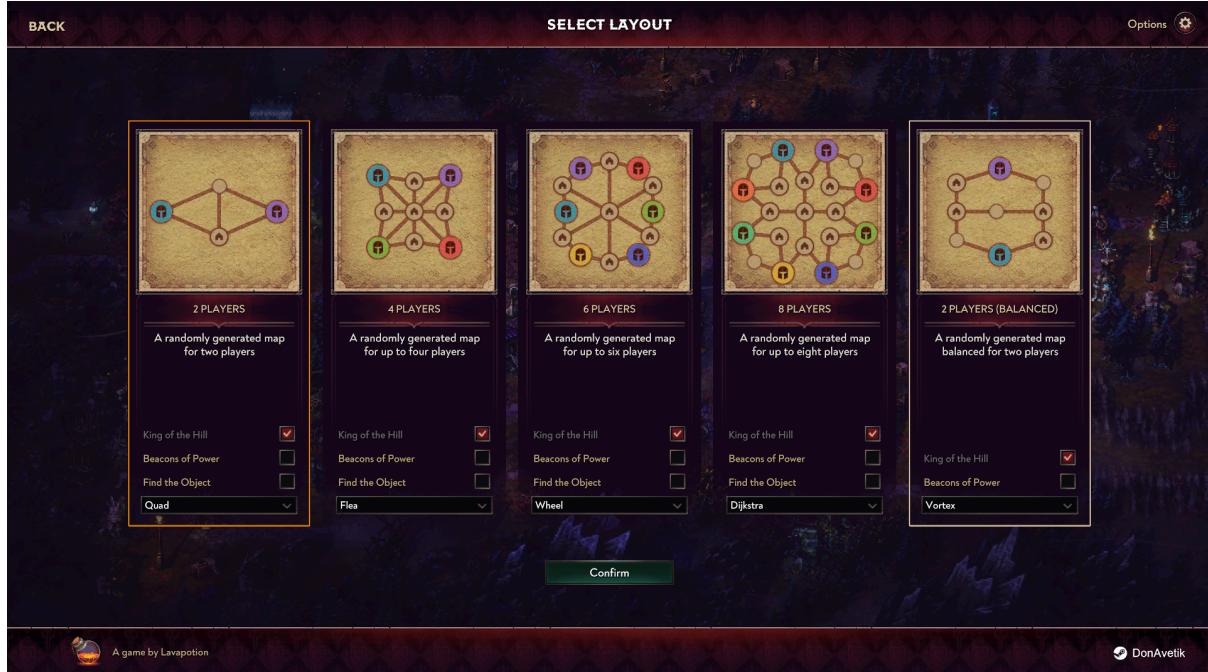
Main Menu > Conquest > Challenge Maps



Random Maps

The Random Maps screen is a good example of how the Songs of Conquest menu system makes heavy use of recognition over recall to express functionality and communicate complex information like the map layout with simple description, imagery, and color schemes.

Main Menu > Conquest > Random Maps

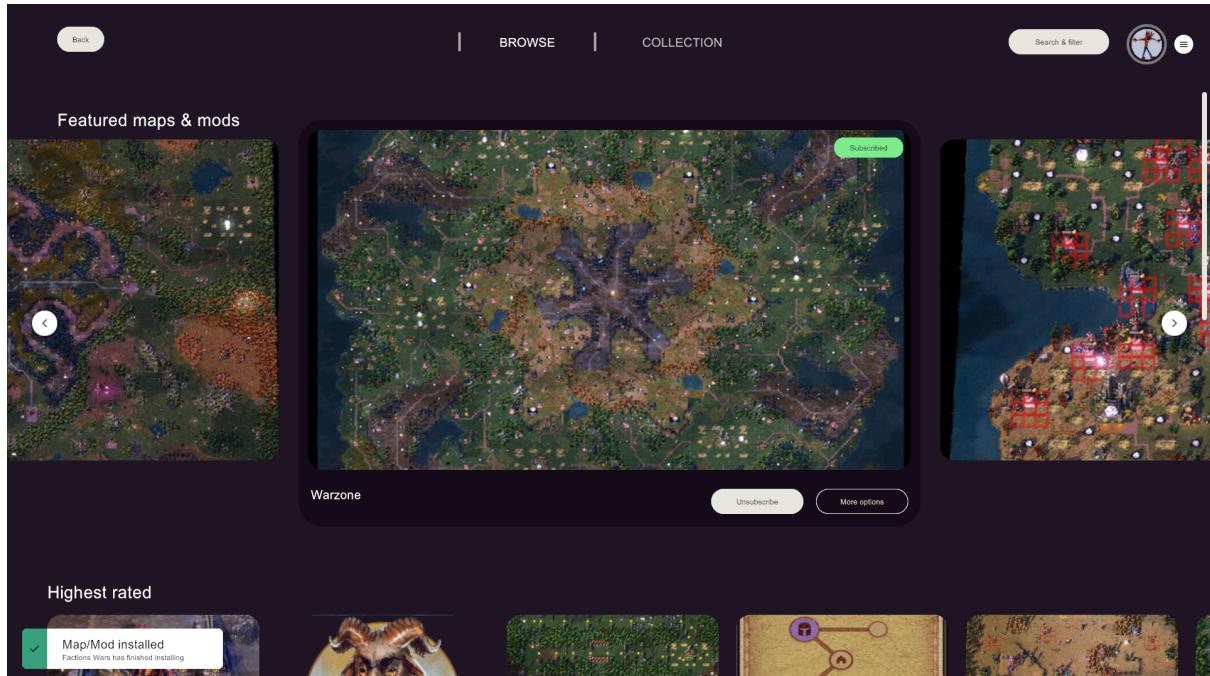


Community Maps

The Community Maps menu is analyzed to highlight an understandability and navigation issue in the Songs of Conquest menu system. From the Main Menu, when clicking on “Community Maps” players are redirected to a completely different client and menu system but still within the game.

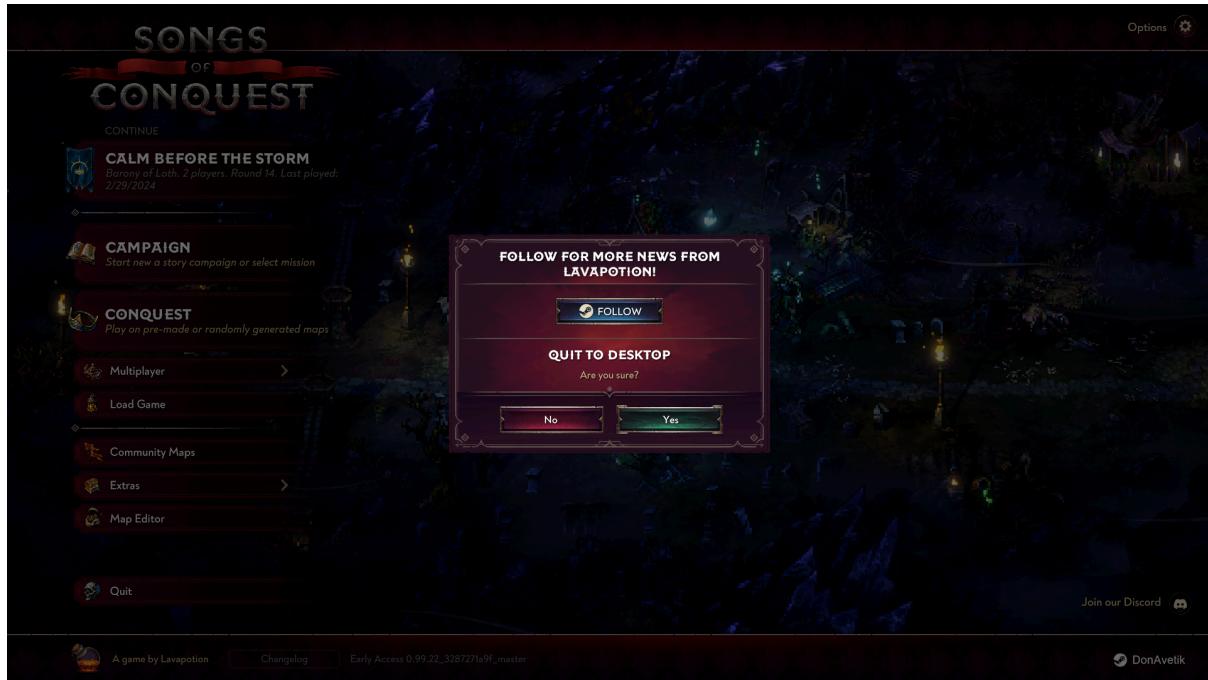
The Community Maps menu doesn't retain any of the elements in the previous menu with a lack of theme and aesthetic cohesion creating confusion among players. Is a feature that opens the game to community-driven content but is not inviting UI-wise. Making it clearer to players that the game is redirecting them to a different client with a pop-up on screen or simply enclosing the menu in a separate window could communicate better its functionality.

Main Menu > Community Maps



Error Prevention

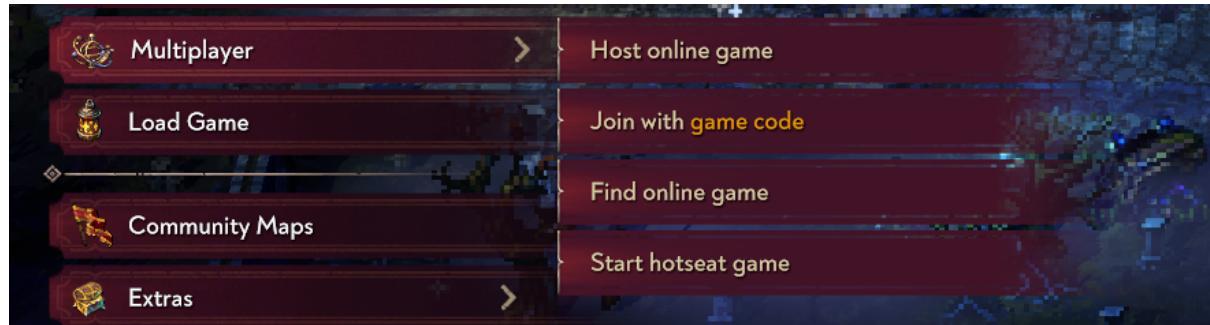
Main Menu > Quit



Error prevention is managed first by UI positioning by placing the “Quit” button distanced from other buttons avoiding unintentional clicks by players, but also more actively with pop-ups that not only function as error prevention but also gently invite players to support developers.

Functionality Issues

When clicking on “Multiplayer” in the Main Menu and then on the “Host online game” option players are presented with a set of Menu Screens similar to the Conquest Map menus.



The menu presented to players after selecting a map (see [Conquest Menu](#) Main Menu > Conquest > Conquest Maps > Confirm) is present in both Conquest and when hosting a multiplayer game. These menus are almost the same but with small functionality differences.

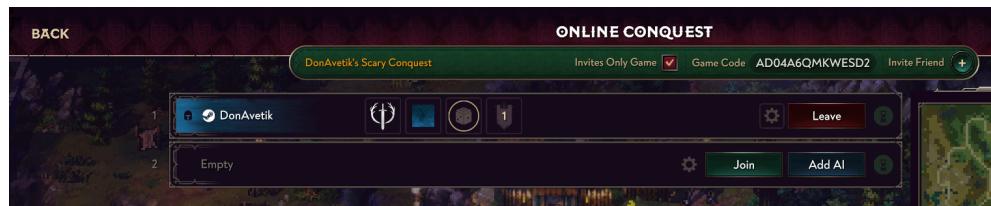
Some functionality issues arise from these menus when players realize that it is possible to start a game vs AI when hosting a multiplayer game, turning the game into an offline classic Conquest, but is not possible to switch from offline Conquest to hosting an online game. This creates a lack of flexibility and efficiency of use for this menu and is effectively a waste of assets and screens.

This issue can be solved by unifying these two menus in the Online Conquest

Main Menu > Conquest > Conquest Maps > Confirm



Main Menu > Multiplayer > Host online game > Conquest Maps > Confirm



Conclusions

Songs of Conquest is a game that requires a complex menu system to express its mechanics complexity. This analysis explored just a few main menu system's core sections that express all points that other sections follow.

All menu screens are highly themed, maintaining a coherent color palette and aesthetic even in more functionality-focused menus managing to immerse players early in the game experience and feel.

Menus are clear and understandable thanks to clear readable font, extensive functionality descriptions, clever use of icons, and color schemes to direct players toward primary choices.

Functionality has some minor problems but overall is extensive, each button serves a purpose, settings are clear and full of options as well as game settings to personalize players' experience.

The Songs of Conquest's Menu System results in a great menu system, that maintains theme and clarity thanks to the compartmentalization of information in specialized sub-menus, use of images, icons, and tooltips, and constant recognition over recall.

This Menu System shows that is possible to design a thematic menu full of flavor, icons, functionality, and details with attention to descriptions and clarity of information delivered in menus.