**DES 115 Playtest Report**

**Designer:**  Matthew Oliver **Project Name:** Cut Short -> Spin to Win

**Date:** 11/21/22 **Project Version:** Prototype (v1) -> v2.5

**PART 1: Playtest Goals**

Was the level too easy or too difficult?

Is the level about the right length?

Do players enjoy the level?

Is the gimmick interesting/understood?

**PART 2: Playtest Notes**

**Test #1: Gunnar (g.trimboforthun@digipen.edu)**

This test was done through the DES-115 Whiteboard so I only have the answers to the questions asked there. This playtest was played on the initial version of the level, it took Gunnar 1:19 to finish. Gunnar was able to determine where each of the 5 stages began and enjoyed the Resolution the most.

Gunnar believed that the level was about the same difficulty the entire way through, which makes sense as in this version all the jumps are essentially the same requiring only a small increase in precision as they go on. In fact, he said the only difficult part was getting on the tile to start each section. Gunnar noticed a harmony because each section follows the same pattern with a constant speed. Gunnar also gave an extra note saying that some of the checkpoints were unnecessary.

It’s hard to tell through text but at the very least Gunnar seemed to understand the level. Whether Gunnar actually liked the level or not I don’t know. I don’t have much of a takeaway from this as Gunnar didn’t seem to have any criticisms other than the checkpoints. But I do feel as though having the whole level feel about the same difficulty needs to change.

**Test #2: Gryphon (gryphon.mclaughlin@digipen.edu)**

This test was done on the Whiteboard at the same time as Gunnar’s meaning no changes were made between Gunnar’s playtest and Gryphon’s.

It took Gryphon 1:43 to finish the level, quite a bit longer than Gunnar. Gryphon noticed all 5 stages except climax, which he said he didn’t particularly notice as he was expecting a ramp up in difficulty which wasn’t there. He also commented that the level felt relatively easy, though jumping into the ceiling took some getting used to. (Probably going to have to get rid of this).

Gryphon said that the noticed a base speed, but it is different than the norm as the jumps are being cut short. He also said that harmonies were visible as the level plays the same the whole way through with a slight increase in difficulty. Gryphon disagreed with Gunnar and said the difficulty of the level did go up as the jumps got more precise due to environmental hazards.

Overall I got more criticism from Gryphon which is good because it reinforces my belief that I will have to make some significant changes to the level. Changes to increase both the difficulty scaling and also make the level more interesting.

**Test #3: Jason Wiser (Jason.wiser@digipen.edu)**

I’m not sure if I can count this one but it is certainly a playtest. This was the first playtest where I could see/hear the person’s reaction, it was conducted at the same time as the two prior playtests so no changes had been made.

Professor Wiser was unable to finish the level and did not make it to the yellow zone. He was heavily critical of the difficulty as having to make fast consecutive jumps was both beyond his skill as well as beyond the hardware that he was using. He also did not like the idea of bumping into the ceiling as he disagreed that it was simply a change to base speed. He said that the player should feel free but every time he makes a jump in my level he just says “Ow”

It is clear that Wiser did not enjoy my level and this playtest reinforced the fact that I was going to have to make some pretty big changes to the level in order to fix the problems. It was also interesting that Wiser disagreed with the other two about the difficulty being relatively low and feeling the same throughout the level. I will make some large changes before the next playtest.

**Test #4: Ben (ben.kurtin@digipen.edu)**

This playtest was done after significant changes to the level and was done over discord vc. I could speak with and hear Ben’s reactions but could not see him.

Ben finished my new level in 1:57, which is an improvement as the level is certainly longer now. Ben also said that there is a clear change in difficulty throughout the level and all 5 stages are also very clear. Ben said that the level felt slightly too difficult in the final horizontal section, one specific jump was mentioned. He also said that the portal placement needs to be fixed as it’s possible to die just by going through the portals wrong and they’re hard to get around.

Ben said that base speed and harmony were clear and definitely well done, which is an improvement. He also said that the “gimmick” of spinning was understood, just not at first. I’ll have to use arrows to convey direction to the player somehow.

Overall Ben seemed to enjoy the level and said it was much better than the previous version which I had showed him before. A few more minor changes are necessary but I think that I’m very close to having a finalized version of the level.

**PART 3: Revised Game**

**Playtest Analysis**

The first three playtests made it clear that some pretty big changes had to be made to the level in order to fix its problems. Not only was the difficulty scaling off but the level just didn’t seem fun and got heavy criticism from Wiser. The idea I had for a change was to keep the tunnel idea but make the ceiling much higher so that regular base speed could be used. I also wanted to keep lava as the main obstacle, though I wanted to make it more interesting. The idea of keys and having sections of different difficulties locked behind doors wasn’t something I was very attached to and ended up getting rid of.

The second version of the level had a very different gimmick in that the level “spins.” Basically you reach different parts of the level where it is impossible to continue and you have to jump through a teleporter to “spin,” the level so that you can continue forward. I kept the idea of the tunnel, though now there are vertical parts as well, and the use of lava as a major obstacle. I also had some fun with the lava and tried to make the level look cool/interesting. This version went much better as Ben seemed to enjoy it and I was much happier with the results.

In the current version of the level the Setup is relatively simple as you just jump over some obstacles collecting stars until you hit a point where you can’t go forward. The hook comes in the form of jumping through a teleporter and having the level rotate so that you can continue, though this isn’t super clear at the moment. The development continues throughout the level as the jumps get progressively more precise and difficult with lava becoming more widespread as you move through the level. The turn is the final horizontal section as it is arguably the most difficult section of the level with the hardest jumps and the most lava. The resolution is pretty simple as after the final vertical part you enter a horizontal section with now lava and only a few simple jumps before hitting the checkered flag.

The current level has very clear rhythms which work together to make interesting harmonies that continue throughout. The difficulty curve is also much better as there actually is one now. The jumps aren’t just the same with slightly increased precision anymore and require actual thought to be put into them instead of just being able to mindlessly hold a button and hit another one in sync with your landing.

**Raw Notes**