# THE COMMUTE KILLER

Please, mind the gap!

Game treatment

Executive summary

The following is a proposal for a point-and-click puzzle adventure game and it is playable on PC. *The Commute Killer* has a late 80's/early 90's feel and it is initially based on the exploration of the map of a city and the interactions the player can have with the world. The player will take on the role of a contract killer and thus, be presented with targets for assassination throughout the levels. When accepting contracts, some of them can lead the character to new cities, renewing the cycle of exploration of the map and the possible interactions within the world, as previously mentioned. The story experienced while carrying out each contract can also be connected leading to the discovery of an overarching storyline that gives meaning to all the events. This story can be uncovered through attentively seeking clues, motivating inquisitive players to dig up answers.
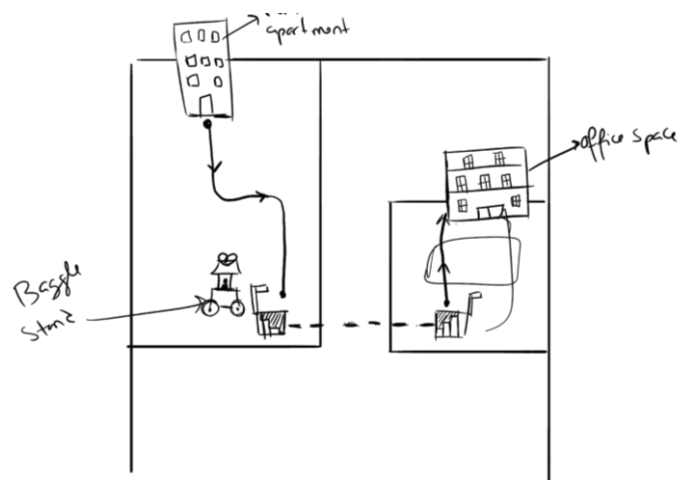
Sketch of a map


Inspiration for the look of the game

Game overview

General Idea

The main character receives contracts that can be accepted or refused. If accepted, the contract must be concluded before its deadline. The player must study the target on their daily commute, interact with the environment to find out how you can get the target killed without getting caught! But that's not everything. Throughout the levels, the hitman notices several clues that lead him to believe that some of the contracts might be related. What is the story behind them? Why is someone trying to get all these people killed? Do they know too much? Will he know too much?

Game Experience and Design Goals

- Generating **suspense and adrenaline** in high tension scenarios where the player feels immersed and really does not want to get caught to not jeopardise their plan.

- Inducing a **sense of challenge** upon tackling a new level as well as satisfaction upon solving it, especially when doing it in an elegant manner, (ie: solving the scenario earlier or finding a less obvious path to success).

- Getting players **enthused about uncovering** the story, the true motivation of the events that take place and who is behind it all, ultimately leading to an unexpected and satisfying reveal.

- Nail a clear aesthetic that is reminiscent of the period (late 80s/early 90s) with the use of a simplified **cartoon art style** that is easy to read.

Make as much use of **analogue and old digital technology** as possible in order to craft unique interactions and stand apart from games that feature high-tech spy gadgets.
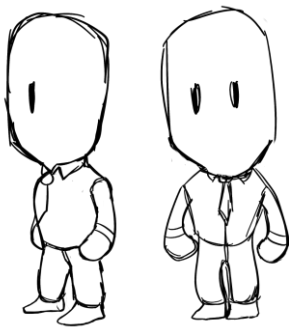
Concept art of a character in-game

3D models for the art-style exploration


Office Sketch

Block sketch

Key features

- The game has 2 main locations - Character's **Office** and the **streets**;

- On the Office's wall exists a **city map** that contains the information discovered and the points of interest from the target's routine;

- The Main Character possesses a **notebook where they annotate the information** about the target; It also has some contacts of people capable of some special activities (eg: closing the road for "construction's purposes", obtaining CCTV footage, etc); Asking the contacts for **help costs money**; More contacts can be found by looking up phone books and searching through people's possessions;

- **Contracts have a deadline** (eg: 1 day, 1 week, etc) and some **initial information on the target** (eg: personal/job addresses, favourite cafe, etc); The amount of information decreases per contract; You may get the wrong person if you're not careful.

- For each **successful hit job, the player receives a reward;** If it was finished before the time limit the player receives a bonus. However, if the time limit ends they then receive a penalty;

- The contract and the payment are delivered in a secret room at a nondescript location under the guise of a local business (like a teahouse for example);

- There are **several ways of observing the target** (eg: following by foot, seeing through a telescope, analysing CCTV footage, getting on the subway car next to them etc);

- For the assassination it is possible to **interact with elements** on the street (eg: cars, traffic signs, some NPCs, etc) and thus change the environment; It is also possible to leave the Office with some **specialized equipment** that helps you on the job (eg: night vision goggles, costumes etc);

- There will be several **clues spread across contracts** which the player must collect/remember and find out about the main story behind some of the contracts.

Depending on the target, if the assassination does not **look like an accident** it will arise suspicion!!
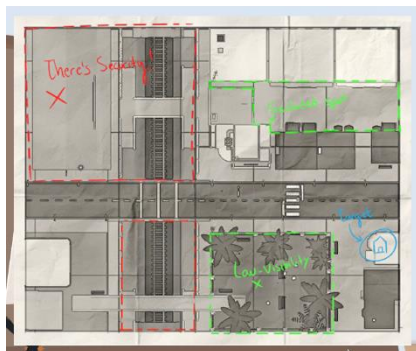
Example of a map
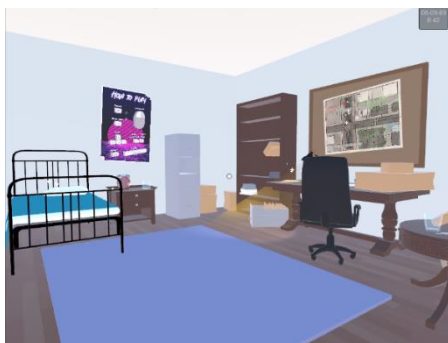
Character's office

Example of a contract

Genre

The game follows in the footsteps of the beloved "point-and-click" adventure games of the 90's and early 00's (eg: Grim Fandango, Deponia, Monkey Island) mixing the puzzle and exploration factor of those games with the strategy and deduction mechanics of modern "information" games (eg: Return of the Obradin, Her Story etc).

Target Players

The target audience is PC players that enjoy puzzle and strategy titles with a focus on storytelling. Teenage gamers and older, people who have a good time solving challenges and unravelling secrets or fans of cute cartoon violence.

Due to its characteristics, the game could appeal to specific types of player such as achievers and explorers, and due to the simple and non-intimidating art style it could even reach non gamers.

Unique selling points

Despite the properties shared with the previously mentioned style of games, *The Commute Killer* provides a new spin on the detective/hitman style of game with a more softcore, puzzle and storytelling approach that other games neglect in favour of gunplay and building an action first experience. Unlike those, the truly special features that set the game aside are the ability to attain, manipulate information, and plan the best way to go about your task. All the while experiencing the world in a simple, light cartoon art style that brings levity to a typically heavy setting.

Highlights

The Commute Killer is a first-person game from the hitman's perspective. As the game progresses new mechanics and tools are gradually introduced and the scenarios become more complex and challenging, keeping the player interested and curious to see what comes next.

In order to develop this game, it was used the Unity engine. In addition, almost every model in the game was built in Blender. The people and the buildings in the game are 3d and have a cartoony style. In the city, everyday background audio can be heard, for a more immersive experience.

In addition, some AI algorithms were applied for all the NPCs pathfinding. This way, when the player blocks part of the target's usual route, they can change their path, allowing the player to create amenable conditions for the assassination.

Game world and characters

The Commute Killer has several "town instances" which are small, but detailed and full of life. They feature lots of props to interact with as well as unique events that can be triggered to create special situations or alter the level layout. To complete the "town feeling", the instances are also full of NPC's.

The main character of this game was a private detective that fell into bankruptcy and was forced to become a hitman so he could make ends meet.

Example of a town instance

Progression

The levels start in the hitman's office. On top of the desk, the player always has the accepted contract with the respective information. The first task is always to explore the city they are in and understand the routine of their mark, in order to develop a strategy to complete the job. It is important that they are not noticed by NPCs or leave evidence behind. Depending on the level, there might be several ways to achieve this goal. Sometimes, help will be needed, and the player should use the contacts available to them to hire the required assistance. These services will cost money and so will decrease the jobs profitability. The monetary reward will allow the purchase of new equipment for future contracts they might accept, or it can also be spent asking the acquaintances for help, as previously mentioned.

Meanwhile, the player will also gleam some information about the story behind the contracts they receive through the study of each target. During this investigation they might stumble upon connections to other contracts they have or will carry out.

Competition and business model

Similar games

Some similarities to existing titles like "Hitman" (strategy assassination gameplay) or "Detective Grimoire" (storytelling and deduction mechanics). Games that tackle storytelling in investigation/assassination scenarios, feature planning/strategy mechanics or puzzles can generally be considered competition due to their nature, however these games should not constitute direct competition as the experience we are aiming towards hasn't really been implemented in a meaningful commercial game or planned title.

How to make money

The game would be sold on a platform for computer games such as Steam for around 10€. There would also be a definitive edition of The Commute Killer, which would be composed of the main game and some DLCs, costing 20€. Those DLCs would also be available for 5€ for the players that bought just the base game, which is also a way to keep the players interested on the game.
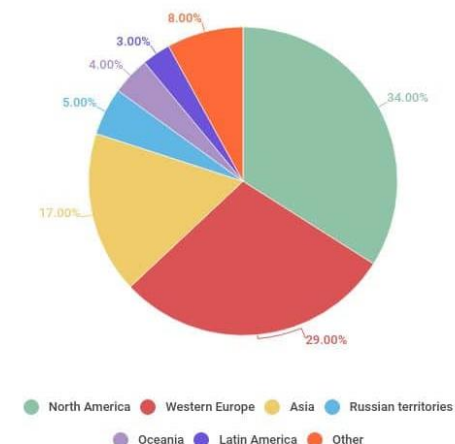

Worldwide Distribution of Games Market Revenue from 2015 to 2019 (by segment and screen)
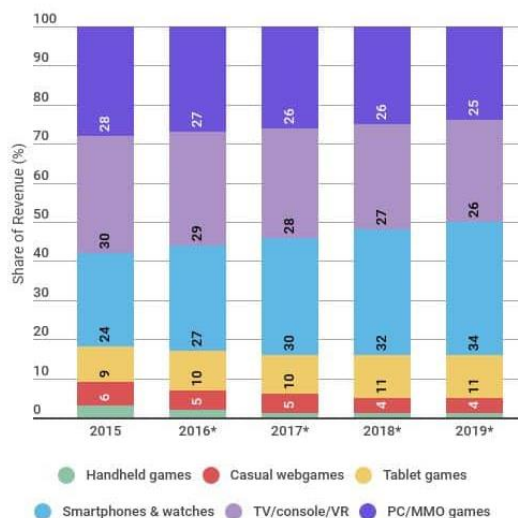
Source: Newzoo — Created by WePC.com

Worldwide Steam Sales Revenue and Distribution as of August 2017 (by region)

Sources: GeekWire; Valve — Created by WePC.com

Marketing / player acquisition

In order incentivise early adoption of the game, there would be a pre-order discount on Steam. This way people would be more compelled to buy the game. There would also be some advertisements on the platform which would last until some months after the release, in other to reach as many people as possible.

With the intent of reaching the core audience as efficiently as possible, we would also contact YouTubers and Streamers to arrange for paid promotions on their channels.

Production details

Current status

Currently, the game only has one level implemented in which people can get familiar with its fundamentals and feel. Players are tasked with killing a target by exploring a small section of a town featuring a railway station, a park, a gas station and some houses. The target uses the train to commute to work and so their commute ends with them reaching the train platform.

In this level, the player will only be able to kill the target by using the knife in their office to stab them, so luring them to an alley is a good way of avoiding getting seen. The level is won when the dead body is put inside a trash can, so nobody can see the cadaver, making the alley even more convenient as there are several dumpsters available.

The game is still lacking a reward system. Furthermore, many more levels need to be developed and the main story still needs to be fleshed out, so it becomes compelling and grabs the players attention, leaving them curious at each turn.

Development team

The Commute Killer team is composed of the following members:

Ana Abreu:
Developer.
Bachelor's in Computer Science.

Francisco Nicolau:
Developer and Artist.
Bachelor's in Computer Science.
Developer and Artist - The King's Gauntlet.

Manuel Correia:
Developer.
Bachelor's in Computer Science.
Developer and Artist - The King's Gauntlet.

Miguel Valério:
Developer.
Bachelor's in Computer Science.

Budget

It is expected a 11.000€ budget to develop The Commute Killer game. 70.000€ would be invested by the owners. The other 40.000€ would be a loan with a 1.3% rate.

This money would be used for the acquirement of needed licences for a professional product, such as a professional Unity licence, and copyright material.

Schedule

It is estimated that it would take 3 years to build the entire game in order to be complete for release. The agenda would be the following:

- 0-0.5 years: development of The Commute Killer prototype
- 0.5-1.5 years: development of the alfa version of the game
- 1.5-2 years: development of the beta version of the game
- 2.5-2.7 years: development of the pre-release version of the game
- 2.7-3 years: fixes for release
- Release
- 6 months after release: Dlc