Reflection 4: Spelunky

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Ah it’s again the category causing the most amount of headache on me—platform games. Last year when I was in that 5111 class I was once required to play one, but I couldn’t even finish the tutorial level. My brain and my hands are cooperating really poorly. This time it’s the same: I kept failing at the end of the tutorial level (I know it was the ending because the level name suggested so), at the end I rage quitted. But let me try to reflect on what I’ve observed in this game.

What I really like about it is its visual style. It’s very retro. The grainy UI elements remind me of those classic cartridge games, like *Metal Slug*. I could also see a lot of totem-like elements in the scene design. I couldn’t tell if they are that of Aztec, Mayan or Egyptian, but another classic *Popcap* game *Zuma* jumped out in my head. These cultures are always used for rendering the mystical mood, lol.

The character’s actions are especially amusing. I can make the little character look up or ground down with my arrow keys. These actions aren’t just a hard switch of the sprite, but there are proper intertweening animations. I really like the big nose of the default character pointing to the sky when looking up. It makes him cute and dummy.

It seems like everything in this game is granted real physics. I could tell that from the very starting scene, where the protagonist drops a torch or something on the ground from above. When the torch touches the ground, it didn’t just stick to it but rather bounces 2 or 3 times until it stopped. Also, when I pushed a stoney block, the gold coins behind it are pushed along as well. Although, the coins would just overlap on each other—they won’t collided with their own kind.

The key binds are pretty much the same as *Hollow Knight*: Arrow keys for movement, Z for jumping, some other random keys for interacting or using props. I wonder if this is like the industry standard for platform games. Because one major factor that’s causing me to fail on these games is just these key binds. After passing the first tutorial level I really couldn’t put up with it anymore and changed it to WASD for movement, space bar for jumping, left shift for dashing in the settings. Now it matches with all other games I’ve played. (Interestingly, the binds for dashing/crouching in Minecraft are reversed compared to other games. Normally the control key is for crouching, but there by default crouching is bound to shift.) After changing, it became easier to play, but still hard enough for a player who’s really bad at platform games like me :))