

# IRONSTAG

The Search For Old Charlie

“A good old fashion space western!”

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## 1 General Overview

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IRONSTAG is a Platformer/Shooter with a blend of humor and action across environments that are an amalgamation of a sci-fi space and old western setting. The game's play mechanics make use of tight controls combined with a variety of obstacles and enemies for the player to shoot and defeat. The game play is intended to be reminiscent of games such as the Mega Man series and Cave Story.

The player will experience the world of IRONSTAG through the eyes of laconic cowboy Flint Ironstag and will guide him through his journey as a new "Space Cowboy" to rescue his horse Old Charlie. This will take Flint Ironstag across various environments littered with ne'er-do-wells whom hamper the player's progress. If one grows weary of righteous murder, IRONSTAG includes a wide cast of various NPCs whom will interject plot details, back-story, humor, and other tidbits of information, through interaction at various points throughout the journey.

## 2 Detailed Game Description

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### 2.1 Game Description

Game Description	
Genre:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Platformer</li><li>• Shooter</li><li>• RPG elements<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Upgrade Abilities and Statistics</li><li>▪ NPC interaction</li></ul></li></ul>
Platforms:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PC</li><li>• Xbox 360</li></ul>
Game Elements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shooting / Combat</li><li>• Timed Escape (Finish a level-section in a time limit)</li><li>• Platforming / Jumping</li><li>• Obstacles</li><li>• Dodging</li></ul>
Game Content:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Humor</li><li>• Action</li></ul>
Theme:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Western</li><li>• Sci-Fi</li></ul>

Style:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old-School / Classic</li> <li>• Pixel-Art (SNES-Era)</li> </ul>
Game Sequence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linear-Storyline</li> </ul>
Player:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Basic Concept

IRONSTAG is a side-scrolling 2D platforming shooter set in both a western and science fiction setting. The player will have to defeat enemies to traverse the various portions of the levels, often running into situational mini-bosses, to make it to the ultimate end goal where they will be met with a level-boss to defeat. By making use of a transformation system, the player will be able to power up the main character for limited periods of time and be able to accomplish feats unobtainable in their regular form. Additionally, the player will be able to purchase upgrades or “Level Up” their equipment and statistics through coins which are automatically collected for defeating enemies.

## 2.3 Camera Position

IRONSTAG, being a side-scrolling 2D game will make use of a side-view perspective. In order to make the perspective and interface as intuitive as possible, the camera will follow the main player character as he moves throughout the world. This includes allowing the character to back-track to parts of the level that have already been visited, with the exception of portions of levels that are timed which allow only forward progression.

## 2.4 User Interface Design

The game’s screen consists of one window, which depending upon the platform can be windowed or full screen. The majority of the screen real-estate is dedicated to the action occurring on screen. The game screen at any point in time may contain any of the following elements:

- **Player Character:** Flint Ironstag, the game object the player controls. This object is the center piece of the screen, which the camera follows.
- **Enemy Character:** Game objects which actively oppose the player character, either by obstructing passage or attempting to deplete the player’s health. Enemy characters include both normal enemies and boss characters.
- **NPCs:** Non-Playable Characters will be included in particular segments of levels, such as in towns or other such locations. NPCs can be spoken to by

standing in a small proximity around the sprite and pressing the action button.

- **Life Gauge:** The life gauge will be used to display how much of the player character's hit points are remaining. It will be located in an area that is unobtrusive to the player (such as in the upper or lower left hand side.)
- **Transformation Gauge:** The transformation gauge will be used to display how much time the player character is able to stay in "Space Cowboy" form. When the gauge has some "charge" the player is able to transform into a "Space Cowboy" at which time the gauge slowly depletes. When the gauge is empty, the player transforms back to their normal state. While in the normal state, the gauge slowly refills over time.
- **Dialog Window:** The dialog window is used to display text and/or a character portrait to the player. This window can be used to display information from NPCs or from interaction with other objects.
- **Countdown Timer:** In certain portions of the level a timer will be displayed in the top-center of the screen to indicate to the player how much time they have to reach a particular goal.
- **Upgrade Purchase:** A menu which allows the player to upgrade certain statistics and abilities can be chosen and will display the options available to the user. Displaying this menu will pause the action of the game.

## 2.5 Saving

Saving will be an important aspect of IRONSTAG. When starting the game, the player will select a file to play from. The player will be allotted one life, and throughout the level there will be a number of checkpoints. Passing a checkpoint will automatically save the game, and upon losing all of their health, the player will start at the most recent checkpoint.

## 2.6 Game Play Details

The player will take control of an on-screen avatar through a two dimensional level that scrolls in both the left and right directions. There are ultimately two objectives for the player, depending upon the section of the level they are playing:

1. **Defeat the end-boss:** At the end of the level, there will be a boss for the player to fight. After defeating the boss, the player will complete the level.
2. **Reach the goal within the time limit:** The player will attempt to reach the goal point of a level before the timer counts down to 0. If the player

fails to reach the goal in time, the player will start over from the last checkpoint.

To achieve these objectives, the player will have a variety of abilities to assist them. The abilities available to the player will depend on the state of the transformed state of the character:

- Regular Cowboy
  - Shoot Gun (Slow speed)
  - Jump (Medium Height)
  - Run (Slow speed)
  - Transform
- Space Cowboy
  - Shoot Gun (Fast Speed)
  - Jump (High Height)
  - Run (Fast speed)
  - Backwards Dodge-Roll
  - Revert Transformation

As the player collects coins from defeating enemies they will have the option to purchase upgrades to their statistics and abilities. Statistics that can be upgraded include (but are not limited to):

- Increase Health Bar Size
- Increase Transformation Bar Size
- Increase Gun Power
- Increase Gun Speed
- Reduce Damage

Throughout the course of the level, the player may be contacted by NPCs via their communication link. These communications can serve as giving hints about enemy weaknesses, level shortcuts, or as providing plot points.

Boss battles will also differ from traditional enemy fights. These battles may have their own special twists to the mechanics, such as fighting in zero-gravity and using the gun to propel oneself.

The player will be able to pause the game at any time, enabling the player to exit the game, restart (return to the title screen) or resume their game.

## **2.7 Controls**

The game controls will allow input from either a keyboard or an Xbox 360 controller. The specific key mappings have yet to be finalized, but will be updated to reflect the actual input in the near future.

Movement and aiming will be tied to the same control mechanism; the player will move in the direction they are aiming. The player will be able to aim up, left and right. Expected controls for these functions are the directional pad (Xbox) and arrow-keys (Keyboard).

Firing the main weapon will be tied to a face button (Xbox) and a key (Keyboard). Additionally, a button (Xbox) and key (Keyboard) will also be tied to jumping and will also act as the “Action” button used to interact with NPCs and the environment.

“Space Cowboy” transformation and dodge-rolling will be mapped to Shoulder buttons/triggers (Xbox) and keys (Keyboard).

## **2.8 Art and Graphics**

Character portraits, sprites, and textures will be done in pixel art. (See sketches for an indication of style.) All game elements will follow a consistent look and feel, reminiscent of the Super Nintendo Entertainment System era graphics.

The main menu’s graphic display will be dynamic in the fact that it will change depending on what section of the level the character is currently in.

## **2.9 Sound Effects and Music**

Sound effects will be used for specific game actions. These actions include (but are not limited to):

- Shooting
- Moving
- Jumping
- Taking damage
- Making Selections
- Scene-specific events

Each section of the level will also have its own background music. This music will play at the start of the level, and may be stopped or changed due to changes in the environment or situation.

Additionally, if time permits, voice-overs for characters in particular scenes will be incorporated.



### **3 The Game World**

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#### **3.1 Story and Narrative**

Our story begins in a town of the old west. There, Flint Ironstag discovers that his longtime-faithful steed Old Charlie has been stolen by his outlaw nemesis Machine Gun the Kid. Ironstag heads to Dull Knife Creek to confront Machine Gun the Kid to rescue Old Charlie. Along the way, Ironstag encounters the Space Cowboy, Clay Tin, locked in a deadly confrontation with Machine Gun the Kid and a life-form he has never encountered before. Clay Tin is defeated and his assailants high-tail it across Dull Knife Creek. Sensing the righteousness and fierce determination of Flint Ironstag, a dying Clay Tin imparts his “Space Cowboy” powers to Flint Ironstag. After being contacted by Clay Tin’s partner, Sherri, via a communication link and being updated on how his new-found powers work, Ironstag pursues Machine Gun the Kid across Dull Knife Creek. There, Ironstag witnesses Machine Gun the Kid and the unfamiliar space entity taking off in a space ship which appears from underneath the desert. Ironstag climbs aboard the ship as it takes off and his adventure as a Space Cowboy begins.

#### **3.2 Plot Elements**

Plot elements will be acquired as the player progresses through the game. Plot elements can come in different forms. Some pieces of the plot may be transferred to the player through scripted scenes at various parts of the level. Additionally, the player may be able to learn more about the plot from conversations held with NPCs, be they the player’s partner Sherri, encounters with enemies, or NPCs found in towns.

#### **3.3 Locations**

IRONSTAG takes place in a few different locations. The initial setting is the planet Earth, in the 1850’s. The locale is that of a typical western. A Western town, Dull Knife Creek, and the stretch of desert between the two will be available to explore.

After gaining the abilities of a “Space Cowboy”, the player is able to board a space ship as it takes off. As the ship ascends into space, Ironstag must find his way from the outside of the ship to the inside before they reach the space station.

At the end of the trip, a space station will be available for Ironstag to explore. This space station serves as the end of the level.

### 3.4 Characters

The following characters will play a role in IRONSTAG:

- **Flint Ironstag:** The main player character. A well-known and renowned Bounty Hunter who upholds the Code of the West. He is known across the western frontier as hero and champion of the common man.
- **Old Charlie:** Flint Ironstag's faithful steed since birth. There has scarcely been a moment when the two have been apart. When one speaks of Flint Ironstag, the words "Old Charlie" are not far behind.
- **Machine Gun the Kid:** Well known outlaw of some fame. He has met Flint Ironstag on various occasions but has always been met with defeat. Despite this, he has always managed to escape and has vowed to get his revenge.
- **Space Boss:** The unnamed being from space who has currently teamed up with Machine Gun the Kid. Nothing else is known about this space denizen.
- **Space Cowboy Clay Tin:** A member of the Space Cowboy Federation who has tracked "Space Boss" to the planet Earth. He is defeated in battle and transfers his "Space Cowboy" abilities to Flint Ironstag.
- **Sherri:** Every Space Cowboy has a partner. It is Sherri's job to scan the unknown area ahead and inform the Space Cowboy of anything out of the ordinary. Sherri, formerly Clay Tin's partner, joins with Flint Ironstag when he receives Clay Tin's legacy.

## 4 Process Information

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### 4.1 Team Roles

To ensure a smooth process throughout the quarter, we have decided upon team roles for each member to take charge of and be responsible of:

- **Program Manager:** The program manager is responsible for overseeing delegated tasks and to ensure that no two team members are inadvertently working on the same task. Additionally, the program manager is responsible for overseeing the integration of the various pieces of the project.
- **Art Director:** The art director is responsible for ensuring the game assets all conform to a consistent look and feel. This is to make sure no aspect of the game unintentionally feels “out-of-place”, and to maintain a certain degree of “polish”.
- **Tool Manager:** The tool manager is in charge of handling any issues that crop up with the tools the team has decided to use. This includes setting up and maintaining any tools used. This position allows for one member to specialize in this area and act as a resource to other members who encounter issues.
- **Test Manager:** The testing manager develops test plans to test the various aspects of the game. This includes play testing, black box testing, and creating test cases and test plans.

### 4.2 Meetings

In addition to scheduled class times, our team intends to have one large group meeting in which all members are required to attend weekly Saturdays at 12:00 PM. It is during this time the group will coordinate activities, receive status updates from one another, and determine what tasks are to be done.

It is our intention to also hold shorter, less involved meetings several times per week. These meetings will not require full attendance, and will serve as quick sessions for individuals who are having important issues that need to be resolved quickly, or for members collaborating on specific components.

### 4.3 Milestones

While we currently do not have a list of milestones determined, we intend to designate specific milestones for tasks to be finished by. Examples of such milestones include completion of the Game Design Document, completion of initial game-engine, completion of main character sprite animation, ect.

Throughout our development process, the team will also determine a bi-weekly release goal. These goals will be for both individual, and for team coordination.

### 4.4 Tools

The following tools are to be used in our development process:

- **Subversion** – Revision Control
- **Adobe Photoshop CS** – Image editing/creation
- **Visual Studio 2008** – Development Tool
- **XNA** – Development Framework

## 5 Concept Sketches

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### 5.1 Game Introduction Sketches

The following are the initial sketch ideas for the game's introduction sequence (the sequence that plays before the title screen). One thing to note is "Rock Steel" has since been renamed to "Flint Ironstag".



IN THE YEAR 1842,  
A LEGEND NAMED ROCK STEEL



WAS BORN.  
ROCK STEEL AND HIS



HORSE, OLD CHARLIE,  
WERE DESTINED TO BECOME



HEROES.  
UNTIL ONE DAY...



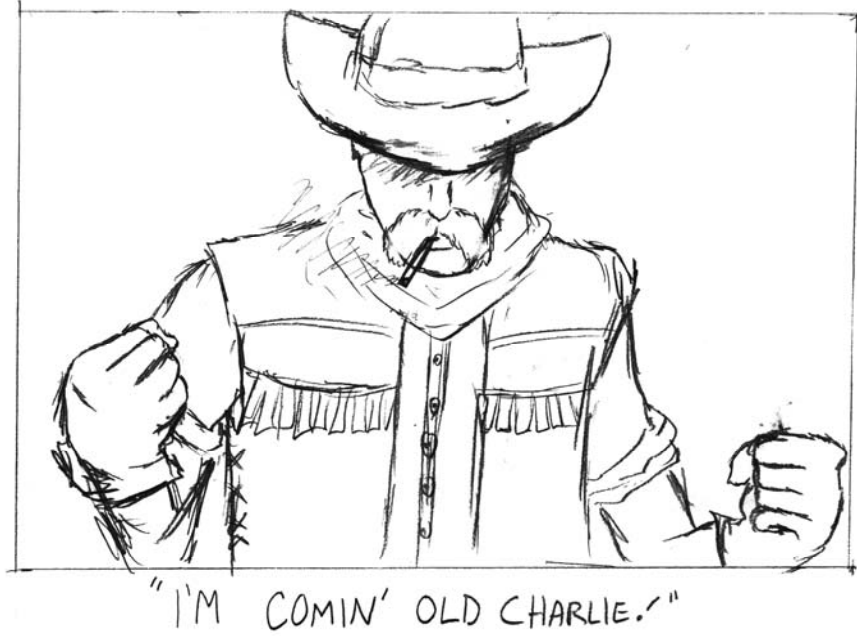
SCREEN  
FLASH

AND  
NES LIGHTNING  
SOUNDS



I'VE GOT  
YER HORSE  
COME TO DULL  
KNIFE CREEK  
IF YOU DARE!

—MACHINE GUN THE KID



## 5.2 Character Sketch

The following is a sketch of Flint Ironstag in his "Space Cowboy" transformation.

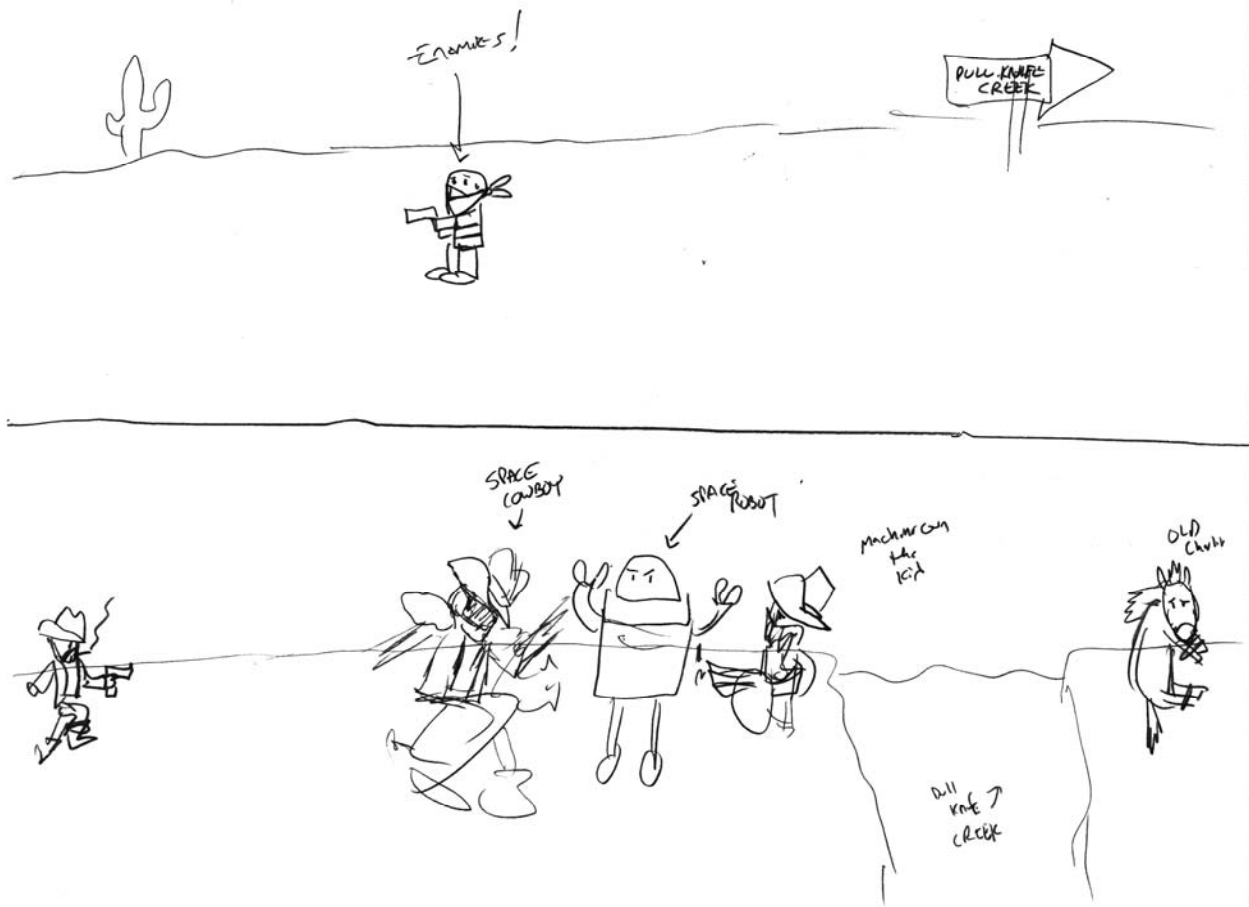


### 5.3 Initial-Level Progression Sketches

The starting point of the game. The player controls Flint Ironstag beginning in a town full of NPCs for the player to interact with, and get the hang of using the “action” button. The player will then reach the town’s exit and will venture into the desert to learn how to control “ordinary” Flint Ironstag in combat with normal enemies.



Flint Ironstag continues through the desert until he comes upon Dull Knife Creek. There he encounters Space Cowboy Clay Tin and Machine Gun the Kid.



A scene plays out where Clay Tin is defeated and the enemies flee the scene.

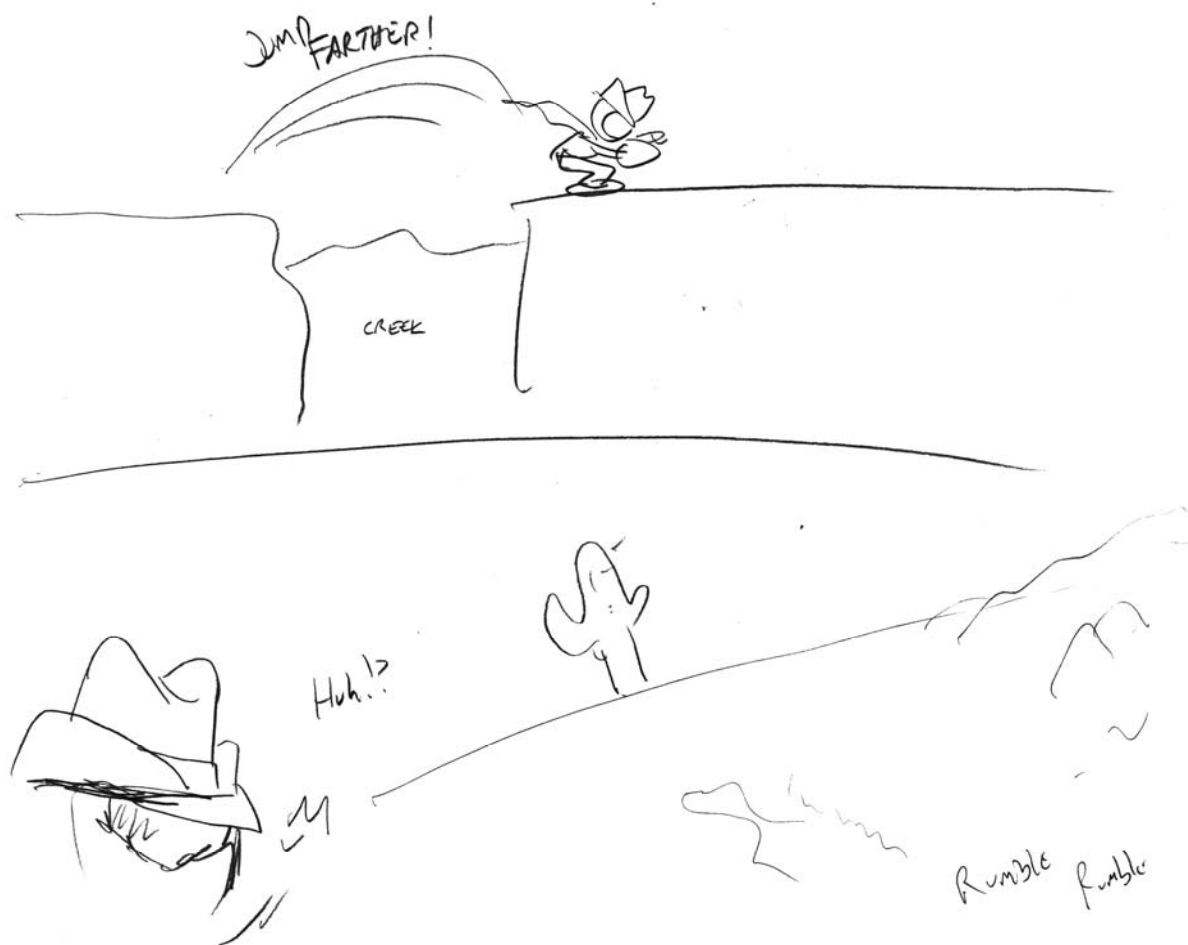


Flint Ironstag obtains the power to transform into a "Space Cowboy" from the dying Clay Tin.





By transforming into a Space Cowboy, Ironstag can now jump over Dull Knife Creek and reach the previously unreachable edge.



In an in-game cut-scene Machine Gun the Kid and the Space Boss begin to take off in a space ship that climbs out from the desert sand.



Ironstag hops aboard the ship and a new section of the level begins!

