Candy Crab Games

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VHS Horror - Game Design Document

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Version	Date	Summary	Author
0.1	07/02/2021	Initial Draft	Connor

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Game Summary

Horror FPS where you explore a mansion (and its mirror dimension, accessed via VHS tapes) to try to fight and escape from the horrors that the mansion throws at you.

- Survival and Investigative horror
- Mirror dimension mechanic
- Subversive Metroidvania design
- Intertwining gameplay loops
- A Unique retro art style
- Minimal Interface

The game is built on 4 design pillars:

- **Discovery** - It could be said that horror is less about the fear and more about the discovery, the searching for answers in a desolate place with the emotion of fear acting as a motivator - the goal is to convey the feeling of discovery throughout the game.

- **Fear** - The player should constantly be on edge, never feeling quite like they are safe or alone, and that someone is always watching, giving a constant and unending feeling of tension - as well as more traditional dread when desperately fighting the enemies the mansion throws at them while being given just enough resources to be able to have a feeling of...

- **Triumph** - when they narrowly win a battle or hit an important milestone in their escape of the mansion.

- **Minimalism** - Minimal UI Elements to aid in immersion and intentionally force the player to keep a close eye on their resources.

Target Platform & Market

Target platform is Windows PC published on Steam, Itch.io and own website.

Target market is Males and Females between the age of 18 - 30 interested in survival horror, both those who want a new experience and those seeking nostalgia from the survival horror games of old.

Business Model

Upfront cost sold to consumers at £7.99 - At a sales target of 10,000 copies sold at £7.99 we would be looking at £79900 in revenue and £51935 Gross Profit when considering storefront and engine royalty fees.

Game Overview

Theme, Setting & Genre

Survival & Investigative horror based in an intentionally vague and unreliable time period & location, the player will initially surmise that the time period is around the 1980s.

The player exploring 2 mirror dimensions will create differences in the theme and setting, with the normal world, the player only has to worry about the one monster constantly stalking him, and plays more like an investigative horror where the focus is finding a way forward, in the VHS world, there are more enemies and new threats lurking around every corner, playing more like a survival horror.

Similar games in theme and setting would be the earlier Silent Hill games, Lost in Vivo and Paratopic.

(Image 1 Stuart, Keith: 2019)
Game: Team Silent (1999), Silent Hill [Online], PC. Tokyo: Konami

(Image 2 Porreca, Ray: 2018)
Game: Arbitrary Metric (2018), Paratopic [Online], PC. Online: Arbitrary Metric

(Image 3 Sheridan, Connor: 2018)
Game: Haunted PS1 (2020), Haunted Demo Disk [Online], PC. Online: Haunted PS1

(Image 4 Kira: 2018)
Game: Kira (2018), Lost in Vivo [Online], PC. Online: Kira

Core Gameplay Mechanics

As a survival horror with mansion exploration and combat against grotesque evils as well as the unknown with a retro PS1/2 graphics style, there are similar games.

Resident Evil (Steampowered.com, 2015) is similar with its survival horror and puzzle elements based in a mansion (Gamasutra.com, 2021) but our game separates itself by having a unique mirror dimension and being in the first-person perspective.

Silent Hill 1/2 are similar with its art style, mirror dimension and survival horror elements (James Cooke, 2001), but our game separates itself by giving the player control of when to enter/leave the mirror dimension as part of the puzzles and taking place from the first-person perspective.

Lost In Vivo (ProbablyJacob, 2020) is similar in being a retro survival horror FPS that aims to make the player question everything, but lacks the Metroidvania aspects as well as the mirror dimension.

Overall Our game separates itself primarily from other games in this genre by:

- Being an FPS
- Having Metroidvania aspects
- Mirror dimension as a core gameplay feature
- 2 Unique intertwining gameplay loops
- Game with most similar mirror dimension (Silent Hill) abandoned by developers.

Online Mechanics

Very minimal online mechanics, such as Steam achievements will be implemented.

Story & Gameplay

Story

The player, who is a police investigator is investigating a mansion with his partner when things very quickly go wrong when he is separated from them and discovers that this house holds a lot of deadly secrets when he is being chased down by a warped looking monster.

After the player escapes, they find their partner dead and mutilated, with a VHS tape on their body, when played, this takes the player to a mirror dimension where the mansion is distorted, new paths are open and others are blocked off, and a new threat is made bare…

The opening story will be told via an FMV intro which will set the groundwork that the environmental storytelling and journal discoveries within the mansion will build upon.

The mantra for the game is minimalism, and that applies to how much hand-holding we give as storytellers within the game, the player will learn and piece everything together themselves.
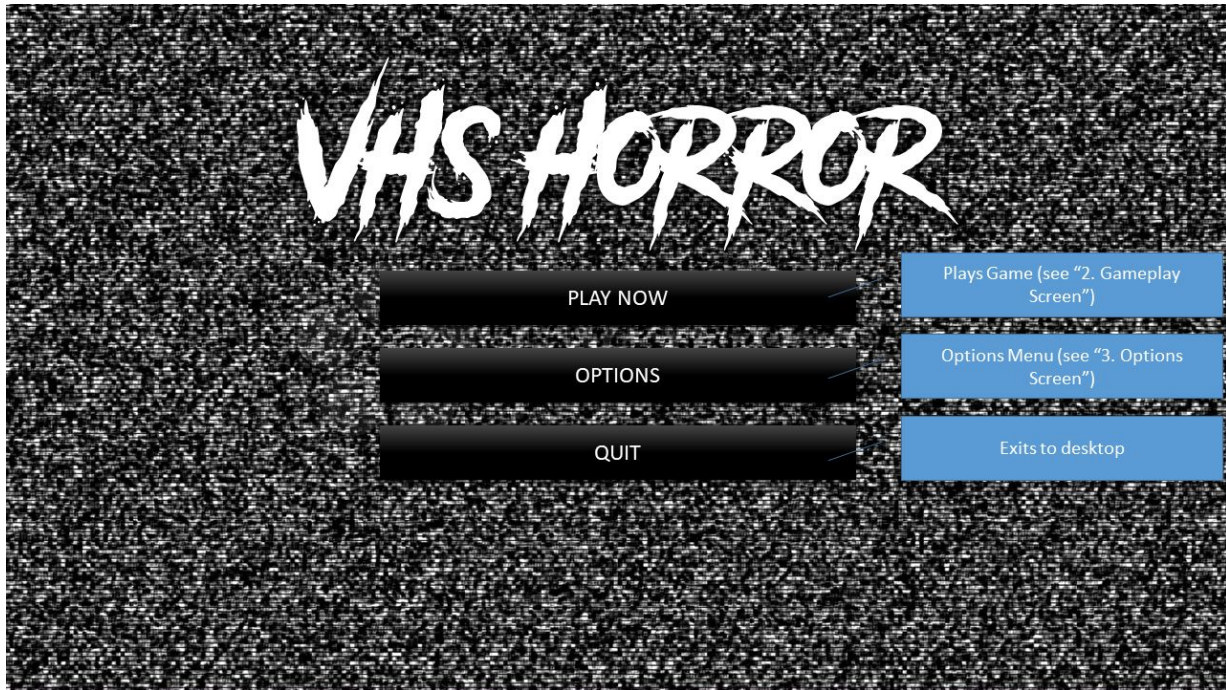
Gameplay

Generally, the player will be exploring the mansion, trying to open up more to explore as they uncover the mystery behind everything going on, this will be done by exploring both the real and mirror dimension as you scavenge for materials, fight unknowable horrors and complete puzzles to progress further.
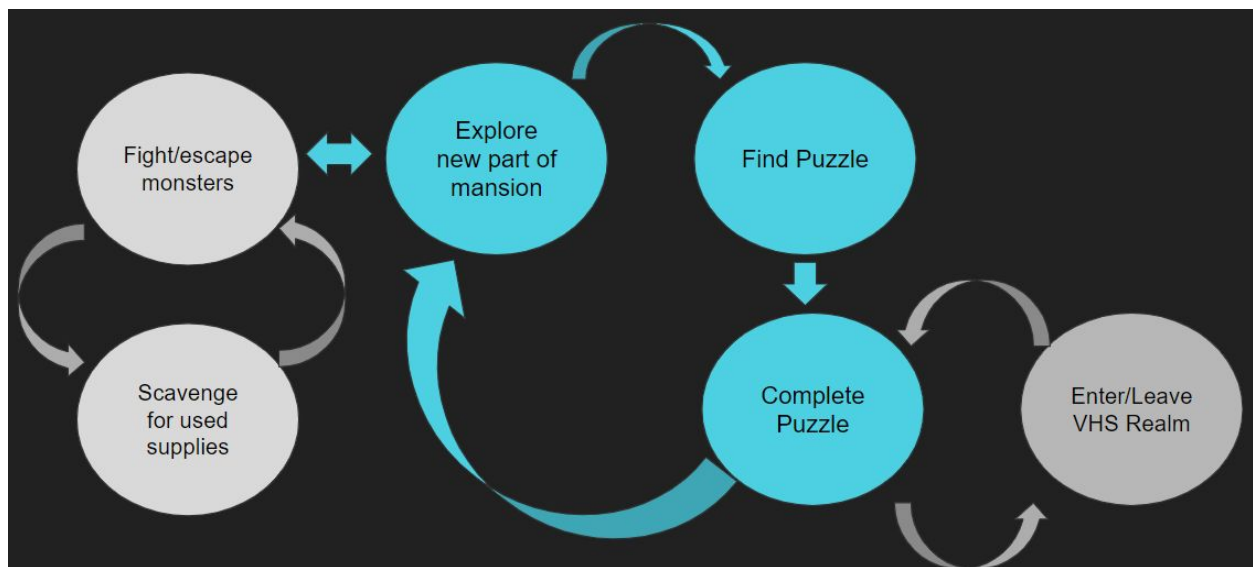
User Interface

Menus will have a simple design that pushes message with font usage and VHS static background, gameplay screen will be minimal with interface elements and rely on visual and audio feedback for ammo, health and stamina.
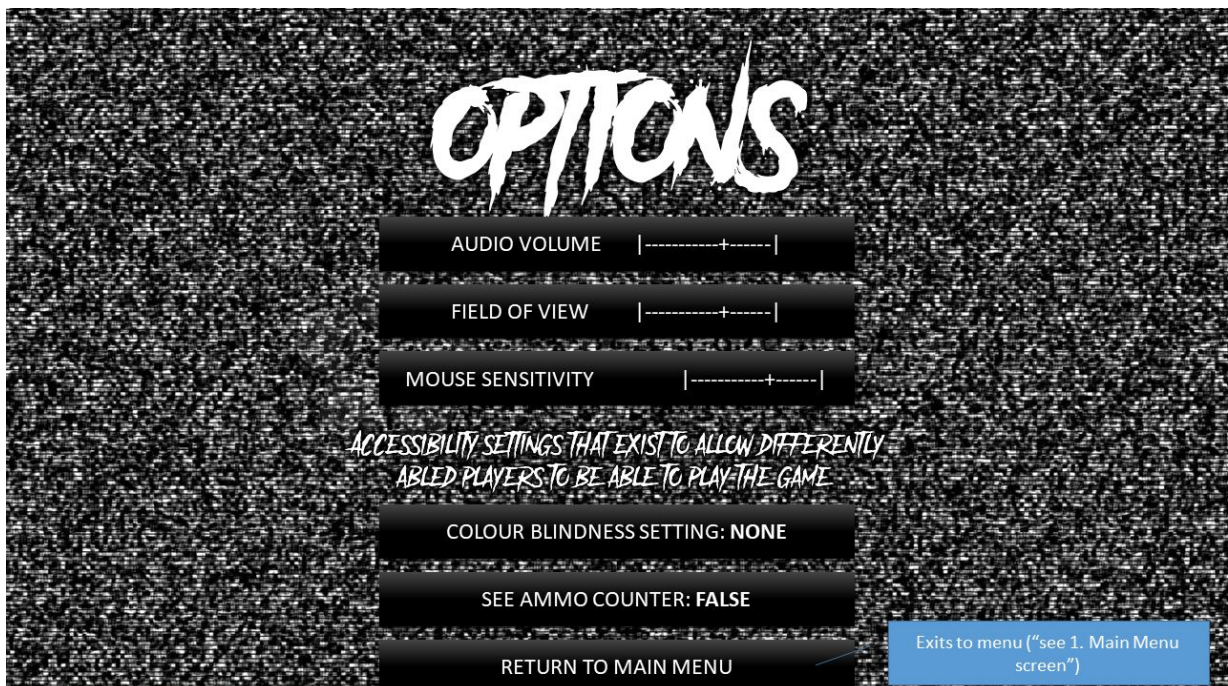
1. Main Menu

2. Gameplay Screen

The resident evil background is used to show what the innards of the mansion will look like when modelled and built out.

Revolver weapon, by default the sound will change depending on how much ammo is in the gun

Blood splatter to indicate low health and possibly death (see "4. Death Screen")

Ammo indicator when enabled in options menu (see "3. Options Menu")

Ammo: 6/36

3. Options Menu

OPTIONS

AUDIO VOLUME |----------+------|

FIELD OF VIEW |----------+------|

MOUSE SENSITIVITY |----------+------|

ACCESSIBILITY SETTINGS THAT EXIST TO ALLOW DIFFERENTLY ABLED PLAYERS TO BE ABLE TO PLAY THE GAME

COLOUR BLINDNESS SETTING: **NONE**

SEE AMMO COUNTER: **FALSE**

RETURN TO MAIN MENU

Exits to menu ("see 1. Main Menu screen")

4. Death Screen

Levels & Puzzles

Due to the Metroidvania elements within the game, the number of traditional "levels" is small, with it really only having 2, one being the mansion in the normal dimension and the other being the mansion within the mirror dimension.

Parts of the mansion will be locked behind a mixture of combat and puzzle encounters, as well as needing a certain item to progress. This is how the player progresses within the game and allows us to control what the player sees and when without giving them perceived limits or a feeling of linearity.

How the player perceives the game from a difficulty perspective will really depend on the player themselves, as some may find puzzles easy but struggle with combat and vice versa. Ideally, we would want the difficulty and fear to follow a sawtooth that steadily inclines to stop the player being in a constant state of tension while also becoming more difficult as the player gets better at the game.
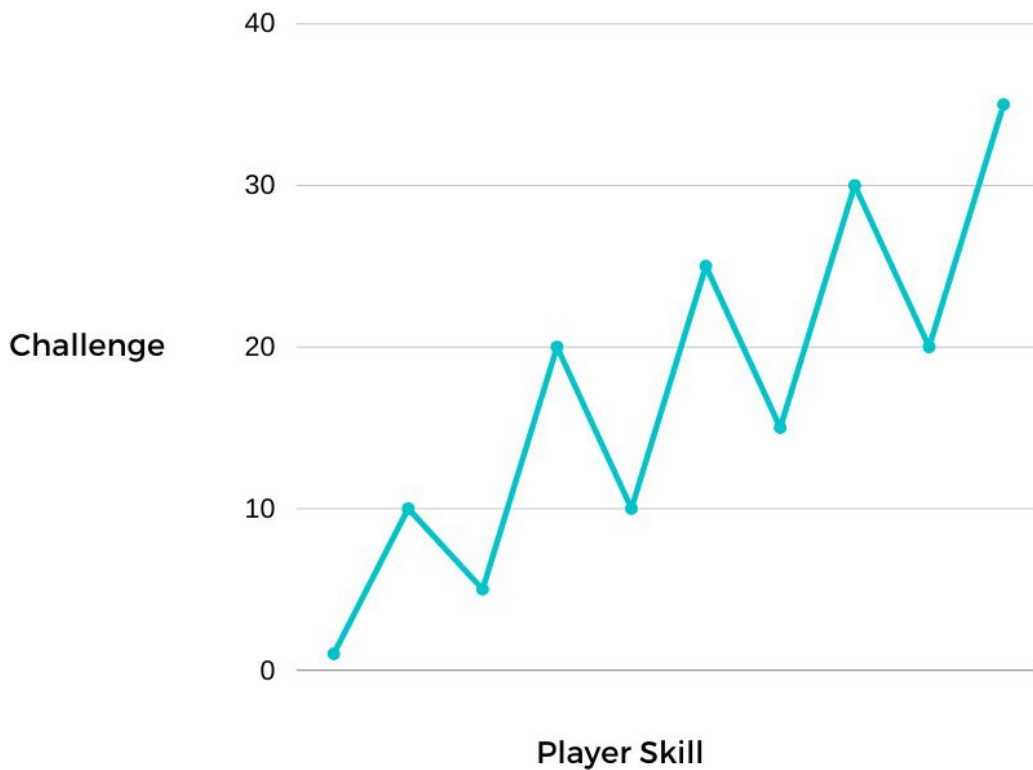
First Time Experience

The first time experience for the player will start with the FMV video that essentially acts to set the mood and explain why the player is where they are, some things are still intentionally left open to create a feeling of unease.

Control will then be given to the player where the game will wait a moment before giving any tutorial prompts, and if during that time the player moves, aim down their sights and shoots then the game will not show any intrusive prompts since the player has shown to have experience with this sort of game.

The player will then be instructed by their partner to check a part of the mansion and while exploring will start to see things that are odd (unnatural shadows, hearing noises) and will eventually see and be chased by a warped looking monster.

After the player escapes, they find their partner dead and mutilated, with a VHS tape on their body, when played, this takes the player to a mirror dimension where the mansion is distorted, new paths are open and others are blocked off, and a new threat is made bare…

Economy

This game doesn't have a traditional economy due to it taking place almost entirely within the mansion. That being said, the game does have items that will be needed to progress as well as weapons with stats attached which will be listed in this section.

Weapons

Weapon	Firing Rate	Damage Per Hit	Notes
Revolver	60 Bullets/Min	20	Starting weapon.
Shotgun	30 Bullets/Min	50	Weapon reward from completing an optional puzzle.
Knife	60 Swings/Min	20	Obtained relatively early in the game, meant as a last resort.

Items

Section not final, more items to be added as needed for puzzles and challenges.

Item	Obtained By	Used For
Small Key	Exploring initial room	Opening door to a new area
Large Key	Entering VHS Realm and exploring	Unlocking the large door to the warped church area
Piano Piece	Exploring church area	Fixing piano
VHS Tape	Looted of corpse	Entering/Exiting VHS Realm
Note	Completing the Piano Puzzle	Getting knife

Asset List

- Textured 3D Models

    - Low Poly (under 1000 per model)

    - Modern textures/materials

    - Substance project files

- Environment Art

    - All Associated Animations

- Animations

    - Player

    - Enemies

    - Items

- UI - menus and accessibility options

- Game Objects

    - Characters

    - Weapons

    - Tools

    - All Associated Animations

- Particle FX

    - Guns

    - Blood splatters

    - misc

- Sound Effects

    - Find and source as appropriate

- ● Music

    - ○ Find and source as appropriate

- ● All Writing

    - ○ Notes needed for puzzles

    - ○ General story

- ● Level Design Documents

Models

Section not final, more items to be added as needed for both gameplay and level design purposes.

Category	Model Name	Notes
Misc	Car	Used for opening FMV
Usable Item	Revolver	Character weapon
Scripted Prop	VHS TV	Used to enter/leave VHS realm
Misc	Mansion	Used for opening FMV
Static Prop	Drawers with mirror	
Scripted Prop	Drawers	The top drawer opens to give an item
Usable Item	Shotgun	Character weapon
Usable Item	Knife	Character weapon
Usable Item	VHS Tape	Used to enter/leave VHS realm
Scripted Prop	Key	Will be scaled to accommodate 2 puzzles
Scripted Prop	Door	Will open/close and sometimes have scripting attached to need a key to open.

Scripted Prop	Note	Give hint to puzzle later in-game

Associated Documents

- Full Asset List (Spreadsheet)

- Full Economy / System Design (Spreadsheet)

- Technical Design Document (TDD)

  - All Tools Used

  - Architecture Decisions

  - Cloud Hosting

- Creative Design Document (CDD)

  - Mood Boards

  - Mockups

- Schedule (Spreadsheet)

  - A list of all milestones

  - What is in the milestone

  - Delivery date

- Budget (Spreadsheet)

  - IP / Brand License Costs

  - Software License Costs

  - Hardware Costs

  - Hosting Costs

  - Team Costs

    - Total

    - And Per Milestone

  - Marketing Costs

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