Game Picked

NEW COMPANION CHARACTER IN *FAR CRY BLOOD DRAGON* DESIGN BRIEF

The new companion character is an enhanced AI system to be added to *Far Cry Blood Dragon*. Different from the existing AI systems (*e.g.* HUD for guidance), the new AI system will be a new character in the story that will interact with the main character REX, influence the plot, and create new features in the game. The character will be a system REX meets on the way of his adventure and will be plugged into REX's cyborg body.

DESIGN PURPOSES BRIEF

The goal of the new design is to make full use of the concept of AI in the classic sci-fi theme to enrich the plot while providing the users with new experiences in playing the game by utilizing a novel guidance system. I believe that a successful companion character should not only support the user along the adventure but also acts as a motif or symbol of the core of the story.

The general goals for the new character design will be:
- New play mode with novel technical features
- Enriched plot
- Guidance to game instructions and expressing the story idea
- Fitting into the existing UI
- Commercial values

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

REX found one mysterious disk. Wanting to see what was inside, he plugged it into his cyborg body. He then figured out it is an independent AI who could partially control his system. He has no idea how to get rid of it without SPIDER. The AI doesn't want to be in his body as well. She especially dislikes DR DARLING for some reason (this foreshadows the scene of the ending that DR DARLING is not such a good person as she seems to be, which also makes the plot more reasonable).

RELATIONSHIP WITH MAIN CHARACTER REX

At first, when REX founds her, they both dislike each other. After they figured out they have to stay together, the AI compromises to use her ability to help REX. In return, REX will need to help her find something. Even though she sometimes makes jokes of REX, in the end when REX was confronting SLOAN, in order to help REX complete his goal, she decided to sacrifice herself to let REX be able to act freely even with HUD's prevention for a few seconds.

PURPOSE OF CHANGE IN PLOT / CHARACTER SETTINGS

The charm of the 80s' sci-fi is not only the attractive visual styles, and tech concepts, but also the emotions and relationships between humans and AIs (such as *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer*), and all the philosophical questions it leads to. Indeed, Far Cry Blood Dragon is excellent in presenting the 80s' visual styles, those humanistic themes can be considered, while the game maintains its sense of humor. From a commercial point of view, some players may not be so familiar with the unique art style, but they still want to experience the story with memorable characters, just like those in Far Cry 3.

Character Design
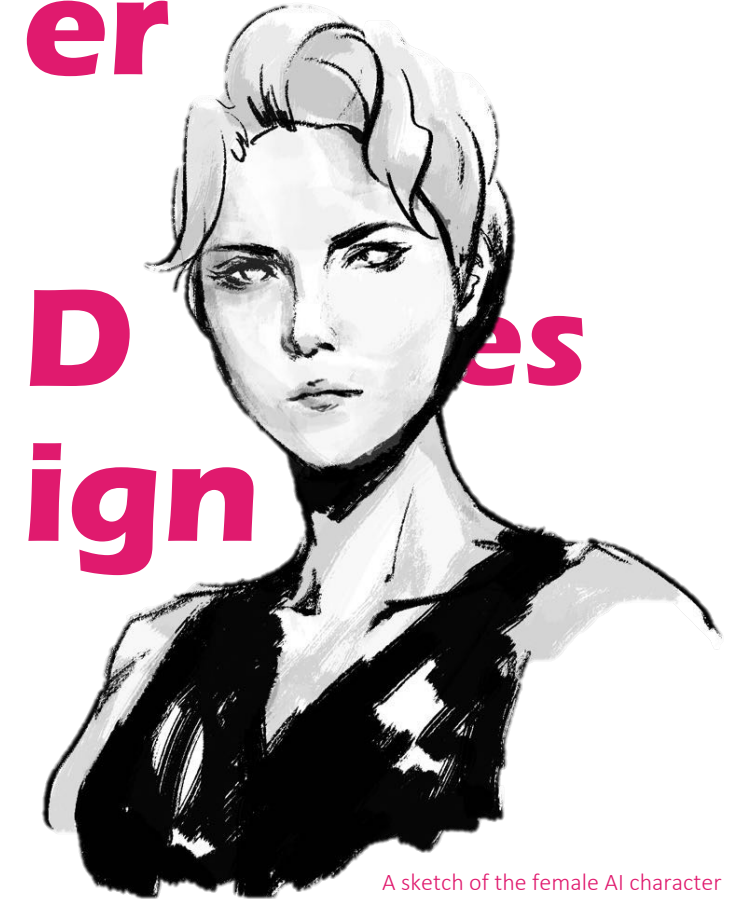
A sketch of the female AI character

SKILLS

Attract Blood Dragon: In the original game, the player can use the hearts to attract the blood dragons. In the new design, hearts will no longer be used. Instead, the AI can enable REX to emit a reflective sound wave so that it can create a sound source at a specific location. It can only be reflected on solid surfaces, so the players need to figure out where and in what direction to play the sound source. AI needs the power to emit the signal, and only killing Omega Force soldiers can refill the power.

Stealth: Before, there are colors on the UI indicating the status of the blood dragons. In the new design, it will only appear with AI's help for calculations. Also, the AI can play a directional active noise cancelation sound wave to completely silence gun shoots. This needs cooldown time to refill.

AI sight: Pressing TAB shows the AI sight, which enables the player to set a tracker on a specific enemy. The player can also see the companion AI on REX's side.

Multi-shots: The AI will emit a strong wave to break one shot to three shots with reduced power. When using this skill aiming is disabled, and it also needs cooldown time to refill.

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

Strengths: Communication with the main character all the time, won't die while fighting (unless is the plot)

Weaknesses: Cannot actively engage in fighting, effects still rely on the players actions

A sketch of the female AI character
with imagined sound emitting device

IMPACT ON THE ORIGINAL GAME

Character interactions: As another important character that will make an impact on the plot, the new character will change the plot as discussed before. Moreover, REX's interaction with other characters will also be different. Before, REX mainly interact with other characters in the plot animation. With the new design, REX can interact with the AI character by using her skills, using AI sight to see the character, and listening to the AI talking to him.

AI reactions: In this case, AI reactions refer to the mechanisms of enemy characters. For example, in the original game, when the blood dragons are searching for goals, their goal is REX, but when using the new directional sound source, their goal may change to the final sound source the player puts on a nearby solid surface.

Level design: In order to enable players to emit sound waves to reflect on solid surfaces, the environment and space near blood dragons need to be further designed so that it is challenging but possible for the users to figure out reflection spots.

Using cyber-hearts to attract blood dragons
Screenshot Source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_UWiuiQj6E

Using directional sound source to attract blood dragons
Screenshot Source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_UWiuiQj6E

Physical simulation and damage: Emitting sound waves will be different as normal gun shots, as sound waves can reflect on solid surfaces. Calculations of reflections of sound waves should be considered. Also, when using multi-shots skill, the behavior of the gun shot will be similar to a shotgun shot, but the damage of each shot will be less, because this skill is to forcing one shot to break into three.

User interface: In the new design, the user interface will only display the color (stages of the blood dragon) after REX meets the AI character. Also, new features of user interface such as the AI sight and trackers as discussed in the last section.

Character stealth: The active noise cancelation sound wave can help REX hide from enemies. In the original game, character stealth mainly used to avoid attacks from the blood dragon. With the augmented user interface, the user can use character stealth to hide from blood dragons, attract blood dragons, hide from other enemies, and set trackers on the enemies.

FEATURES OF FAR CRY COMPANIONS

Important features of a Far Cry companion:
- Something / somebody that the main character / player (an outsider in an unfamiliar place) can trust
- Can enhance the main character's ability (in a fps gameplay mode)

Important features of a Far Cry **Blood Dragon** companion:
- Strong 80s' sci-fi visual & concept style
- Fits into the settings & styles of the existing game (cyborg, black humor)

WHY HER?

- The new character promises the main character that they will help each other.
- As discussed before, the AI can use her super calculation abilities to help enhance the main character's skills such as attracting blood dragons, denoising gunshots, splitting gunshots, etc.
- The concept of AI characters and the appearance design of the character (like 20th-century hairstyle and clothes) matches classical sci-fi style.
- The AI character will talk to REX along his adventure and sometimes make jokes about him, which contributes to a sense of humor.

COMMERCIAL VALUE

When considering whether a new design should be implemented, another factor that needs to be considered is its commercial value. Unique, novel play mode, and enriched plot may attract more players or audiences even though not every player is a fan of classic sci-fi and knows about the visual styles. One of the reasons why Far Cry 3 is favored by players is its fantastic plot and character designs. As a DLC of Far Cry 3, adding similar elements will help the game to attract more players.

WHY UNIQUE?

- First to introduce new acoustic technologies such as reflective sound speakers and active noise cancellation in sci-fi games.
- An independent, rational female character who is wiling to sacrifice for what she believes in in a traditional sci-fi setting that from time to time ignores the powers from women.