

User Documentation: COVID Raider

Testing

The process of testing *COVID Raider* was difficult. This was mostly due to issues relating to the version of XCode used. Connecting a phone didn't work, so we had to seek alternate arrangements for testing. Through friends and family, we found a number of participants who volunteered to test *COVID Raider* through the iPhone simulator on the developer laptop. From this testing phase, some feedback was recurrent. We took notice of anything that multiple participants mentioned.

Compliments

1. Sound Design

The sound effects were one of the most consistently complimented aspects of *COVID Raider*. For the opening game screen and throughout the game, an eerie supermarket theme was chosen to help with player immersion. Although it was recognisable as repetitive supermarket music (inspired by music design from the 1980s which was meant to subliminally encourage shoppers to spend more), the tone of the music was off putting. This was an intentional choice to match with the theme of the game: the better your score, the more lives you are ruining through panic buying. Many play testers liked the music choice, but asked us to implement a mute button due to how annoying or uncomfortable they found the track to listen to. We refused, as this was the intended effect. Additionally, a different sound effect was used each time the player interacted with a sprite - positive trills for increasing score, and negative ones for enemy collision or player sprite death. Play testers found these to be useful for immersion, and being able to audibly determine what they had collided with (at higher game speeds, visual detection of sprites was sometimes not sufficient).

2. Game Design

Multiple types of sprites were employed, some of which the players were supposed to "pick-up", while others they should dodge. Play testers enjoyed the variety of sprites. Positive sprites: included the steak, toilet paper, and grocery basket, which all increased the players score to different degrees; the hand sanitizer, which increased the player life total by one if they did not have maximum health; and the mask, which restored all missing lives. Negative, or "enemy" sprites included: the Karen, which would decrease your life total (due to failing to socially distance); and the virus, which would result in instant player character death, regardless of life total. Play testers felt that the presence of this variety elevated the otherwise simple game concept, and increased the investment of the player.

3. Level Design

Level design for *COVID Raider* involved different speeds and spawn rates for approaching sprites. Most play testers really enjoyed that the hardest difficulty level was named 2020, and required a score of 2020 to complete.

Complaints

1. Swipe Gestures

The most common complaint our testers had was that achieving the swipe motion necessary to move the player character sprite was difficult due to the interface. All testing was performed using the iPhone simulator, a mouse and keyboard (or a trackpad if the tester preferred). We considered this issue to be secondary, as the method of play our testers experienced was not our intended play style. In the full release of the game (once downloaded from the IOS App store), we hoped that swipe gestures would be more intuitive. We therefore could not address this complaint further until more testing had been completed using the intended platform for the game.

2. Hit boxes

Play testers also found it difficult to navigate the game due to the size and placement of the hit boxes. Players noted that they often found that they should not have been hit by an oncoming enemy sprite, as they did not perceive it as having come into contact with the player sprite. Our response to this feedback was to decrease the size of the hitboxes, and ensure that they were centred with the enemy sprites. The same changes were made for pick-up sprites to ensure that the player had a consistent sense of how much space the sprites took up.

3. Art Style Consistency

Throughout the development of *COVID Raider*, multiple art styles were employed. Specifically, a pixel art theme was used for the Alpha release. This was employed to ensure a more polished presentation for the Alpha release as pixel art assets could be produced quickly, considering the time constraints on other art styles. However, for the final release we decided to use a semi-realistic art style. From the Beta release onwards, elements of both art styles were still within the game. Play testers found this confusing. After discussion, we updated all of the sprites to the semi-realistic style, except for the background. Due to the size and resolution of the background, most play testers did not notice the difference in art style between the background and the sprites. Additionally, some players were complementary about the colour choices. For this reason, we decided not to update the background beyond altering the contrast to improve sprite visibility.

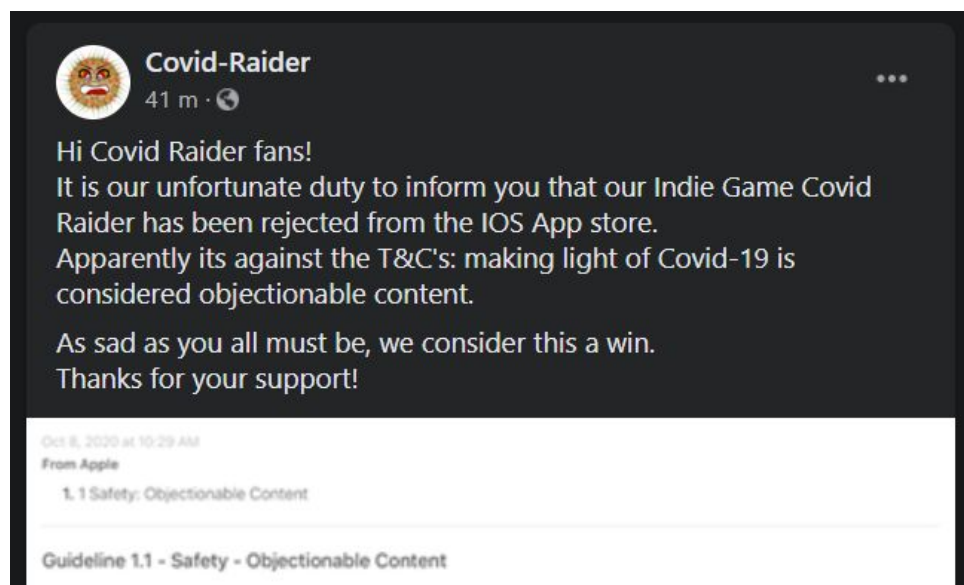
4. Animation

To improve immersion, play testers suggested that enemy sprites and the player sprite could be animated. This would help to confer a sense of motion within the game world - specifically for the enemy sprites which appear to be coming toward the player. We had already attempted the implementation of animation in previous game versions. In Alpha development, sprite sheets for

pixel art style sprites were produced, however the implementation of these assets into the game proved an issue from the coding end. We had difficulty implementing simple animations. For this reason, and the difficulty of producing animated assets in the new semi-realistic art style, animations were not included in the final release.

Advertisement

To gather interest in *COVID Raider*, we created a Facebook page and relied on word of mouth. We posted about our intent to get the game on the IOS App store, and again when our app was rejected for failing the Objectionable Content regulations.



In accordance with this year's theme of Anarchy, we thought that we could not get better than this response! Not only did they deny our game from the Apple Store, we only got rejected because of the concept of our game. Our game was not intended to be inappropriate, but the satirical approach to the COVID-19 pandemic was deemed so by the IOS App store. The topic of our game was a satirical commentary on the public reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, including hysterical panic buying which disadvantaged others in the community and ultimately themselves. We consider our game to have successfully highlighted the selfish behaviour caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oct 8, 2020 at 10:29 AM

From Apple

1. 1 Safety: Objectionable Content

Guideline 1.1 - Safety - Objectionable Content

We found that your app includes content or concepts that some users may find upsetting, offensive, or otherwise objectionable.

Specifically, your entertainment or gaming app inappropriately refers to the COVID-19 pandemic in its concept or theme. Entertainment or gaming apps that directly or indirectly reference the COVID-19 pandemic in any way are not appropriate for the App Store.

Next Steps

While your app's current content or concept is not appropriate for the App Store, we would welcome a new app from you in alignment with our [App Store Review Guidelines](#) that is not focused on or related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resources

For additional information regarding Apple's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please refer to the [Ensuring the Credibility of Health & Safety Information](#) update on the Apple Developer website.

Please see attached screenshots for details.