Zoe - Game Design Document

Table of contents

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1. Summary

Working title: Zoe (Will change in the future)
**Player(s)**: 1 or 2
Genre: Platformer
Platform(s): Main platform will be NES but will probably be ported to other systems.
**Duration:** Estimated play time will be about 10-13 hours depending on skill level.

Key Features:
- A completely newly made NES games that works on an actual NES console!
- Quick platforming action in the style of classic NES games such as Mega Man
- Explore several hundreds of rooms while you make your way down the castle while escaping the clutches of evil
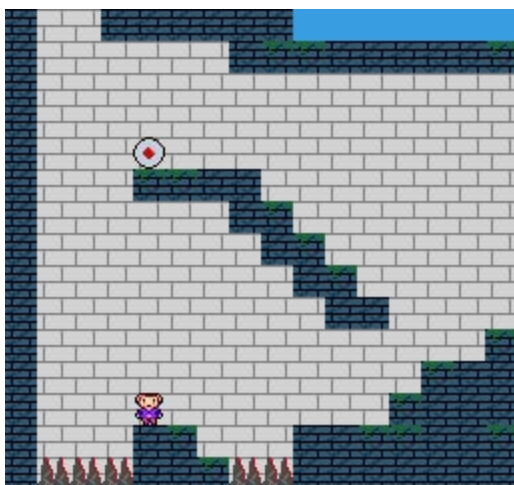- Pick up where you left using the built-in password system

Early mockup of the game and gameplay
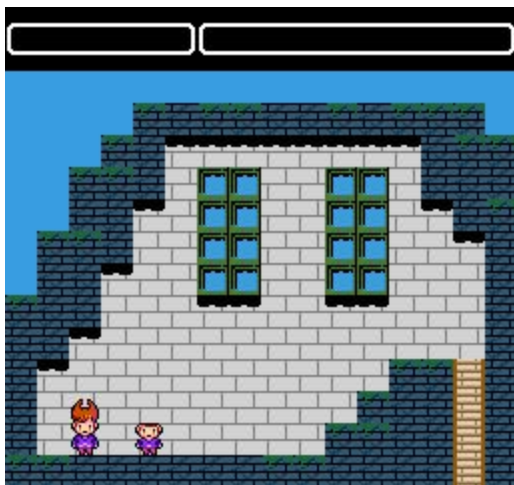
(1)
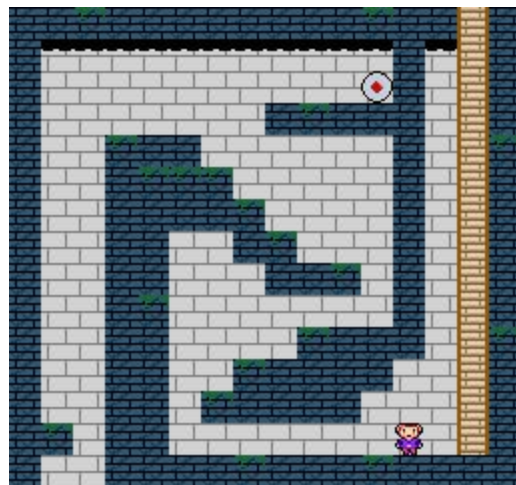
(2)

(3)

(4)

I am not a pixel graphic artist so these doesn't look that good but they were made to show how the game will play and look. The picture from Room 1 has two sprites. One with the dimension of 16x32 sprites and one that is 16x16. I haven't really decided on how the main character will look yet. Room 1 also has a HUD on top of the pic which isn't in any of the other pictures.

2. The game

A quick platformer in the style of Mega Man. The game is going to be hard but not extreme. Every time you die the game will immediately start over making you want to jump right back into the action. Scheduled release will be in spring 2016.

The ambition is to make a NES platform game inspired by the classics. After being sucked into the NES (read more about the story under **2.3 Writing**) the objective is to make your way down a high tower. Fight your way through enemies and bosses while solving puzzles along the way. The game will play like Battle Kid but instead of going right/left you primarily go down (with some detours). The game should still be really hard with a lot of patterns to remember. A lot of cheap deaths and very hard. The game should be optimized for speedrunning.

You start at Level 6-6 (The level should always be visible on the HUD) and work yourself down. When you reach 1-1 you get sent back to the beginning and have to fight the end boss which will be something funny and unexpected. The game should feel like a classic NES game but still add some new flavour to the concept, which I think players will appreciate.

Picture 1 - Castlevania map

The castle map should look like the map from Castlevania but the player will start at the end (top middle) and work himself towards the tower entrance. It will be six different levels with a number of checkpoint rooms on every level. This will be a subtle and funny reference to Castlevania and the graphical representation on the map will make players want to push further into the game.

Only thing that is really decided is the fact that I would like to make a platform game. Exactly how it will be played will be decided more in the future. Either make a very fast, action-oriented platformer but another awesome idea would be to make it a 2-player game and add a lot of co-op puzzles. Remember Lost Vikings on the SNES? You had to work together with tree characters in order to solve puzzles. The Trine games that came out just recently uses the same

system as well. I think a "Couch co-op NES game" would be a major USP. Making the game play and look too much like Battle Kid might be a problem.

Another fun idea is you add Metroidvania elements to the game. For example if some places required a gun (you have to break something) to get somewhere maybe if you go back to the same place again you can reach other areas (or upgrades). Maybe if the game has a 2-player mode one of the characters can shoot, the other one can block enemy projectiles (just like Lost Vikings) so you have to work together to overcome each screen. The possibilities are endless!

2.1. Inspiration

Zoe draws inspiration from a number of games. The most apparent one is the Battle Kid games by Sivak Games but Zoe also has a lot of inspiration from classic games such as Mega Man and new games such as Super Meat Boy, Rogue Legacy and the Trine series.

Picture 2 - Battle Kid by Sivak Games

2.2. USP

In order to stand out in a more and more over-crowded game market it's super important to define the USP:s (Unique Selling Proposition). The fact that the game will get an actual physical release on a cartridge will of course be a major selling point but I need to define one or two more.

Example: *"The first European made NES game to be released in 20 years!"* This particular quote has to of course be validated first but you get the point.

2.3. Writing

The main plot of Zoe is that Zoe gets sucked into a NES game while sitting home with a friend and playing it herself. It's sort of a meta story with a lot of references to classic NES games but also has a lot of humor and references to pop culture. Although taking place in a castle maybe

at the end - the castle turns out to be the inside of a NES and all the bosses the player met throughout the game was in fact different parts of the NES such as the CPU :)

The writing should be quirky and funny with lots and lots of references to other classic NES games. What's important is the fact that the story is about a strong woman fighting her way through hoards of evil. I want a strong heroine such as Samus Aran. This will be an USP by itself.

I want to make sure all the dialogue is in a Google Spreadsheet with correct name for each dialog. This will help when exporting the dialogue to other game engines. It will also help with localization. One could easily set up so that fans can translate dialogue themselves. (Which won't be feasible to do on the NES version though)

Example:

dialogue_welcome1	Welcome stranger!
dialogue_welcome2	Welcome! Watch out!
dialogue_ending	A winner is you!

3. Graphics

The NES has a resolution of 256*240 (PAL) which means it can fit 16 tiles horizontally and 15 vertically. Where each tile is made of a 16x16 pixel sprite which itself consists of four 8*8 pixel sprites, as you can see in the screenshot below. The game uses 4 rows at the top for display of the HUD. NTSC has a smaller resolution so this needs to researched before actually starting the level design.

Picture 3 - Legend of Zelda NES

Zoe will have this exact setup, with one screen at the time. When you reach the corner of the screen the next screen will load. Not sure yet if Zoe requires a HUD but if so, stuff like lives, energy, level, score and weapon would be displayed. As I mentioned earlier Zoe will have a lot of fun references to other classic NES games from the past. The Game Over screen could be the one from Zelda II laughing at the hero. Also spoof Legend Of Zelda 1 by calling e.g a snake for "Rope". At the ending screen when someone beat the game it must of course say something like "Congraturations! A winner is you"

4. Gameplay

D-pad: Control character
Select: TBD
Start: Pause game
B: Action
A: Jump