

Action / Platformer

(I played all 3 games on Nintendo Switch)

Super Mario Odyssey: 3D Action / Platformer Mario Series game. It implements a deep mechanism, the hat, that has multiple usages. The decision of when and how to use the hat is the crucial interesting decision.

Kirby and the Forgotten Land: 3D Action / Platformer Kirby Series game. The game is built purely for fun. Kirby has only one main mechanism, that is inhale / absorb the enemy / things, and sometimes get their abilities. It is more or less (to me) a collection of mini-games.

Human: Fall Flat: 3D Action / Platformer game. The game is very very extreme in a way that the control is minimal yet difficult. Most movements are achieved by stitching hands with other objects, and the position of hands are controlled by the camera angle, which can be super weird.

(Comparing Super Mario Odyssey and Kirby and the Forgotten Land)

Movement mechanics difference: At the beginning of running, Mario runs first very slow then becomes fast. However, Kirby just runs at a constant speed. (Note: this is not to say any of them has momentum while running, they don't)

Ability difference: Super Mario Odyssey aims at building a deep mechanism for which the hat is multi-use, and can combine with jumping, throwing etc. In comparison, the ability in Kirby and the Forgotten Land is not as deep. It is "merely" a collection of easy abilities, which serve one single purpose (albeit sometimes can be combined with other mechanics)

For the difference in movement mechanics, I came up with multiple aspects to analyze. First of all, from the map design's perspective, Mario does need the slow movement, while Kirby doesn't. It is

really clear that Super Mario Odyssey has a semi-open world, while they really mastered the 3D world, and in Kirby and the Forgotten Land, they intentionally make the map (it is a 3D game) less complicated on the y-axis, and put a lot of invisible walls. Secondly, from the theme's perspective, Kirby is designed with the idea that it is a relaxing and easy game which everyone, even those who see video games for the first time, is able to enjoy. It gives me a strong feeling that movement without "acceleration" is more "free" and "relaxed." In other words, it feels like Super Mario Odyssey is asking you "ARE YOU REALLY SURE GOING TO THIS DIRECTION?" And therefore creating a bit of a tense atmosphere.

For the difference in abilities, I think it also derived from the goal of the game. As a player, it is really hard to master Super Mario Odyssey (I haven't played it for 2 years and it is difficult to learn all the things back). However, Kirby's ability is so easy that players won't even think of mastering it, and instead just enjoy it. (I immediately start to enjoy Kirby, and there's no miserable path to figure things out). Worth to note that it does not mean Kirby's ability is way too simple. Sometimes the combination of abilities makes it more fun, but it is a plus and wow in the experience, but not a must.

(Comparing Super Mario Odyssey and Human: Fall Flat)

Map System difference: ~~In Super Mario Odyssey, Mario / player has a map and once unlocked, the points of the map can be teleported. However, in Human: Fall Flat, there is no map, not to mention teleport.~~

Camera Setting difference: In Super Mario Odyssey, the camera is set back to the normal position quite frequently, and the camera is not so related to Mario's movement. In comparison, in Human: Fall Flat, the camera is strongly related to the character movement, and it is set back to the default position a bit slower.

Movement difference: In Super Mario Odyssey, there are a lot of vertical movements, and jumping is very responsive. Whereas in Human: Fall Flat, the vertical movement is mainly down by pulling two hands.

The camera difference is probably the most interesting thing I have ever seen. Super Mario Odyssey simply uses a fairly normal camera. It is set back to the default position to allow a better visibility (auto zooming). The really fun one is the camera in Human: Fall Flat. The camera position decides how tall the hands can reach and therefore where the character can go. So whenever the character wants to jump and climb, the visibility gets very restricted. It is a bit stressful and tiring. It creates an interesting (or embarrassing? I really don't know how to describe) gameplay that the player needs to manually adjust the camera very often. (Movement difference) The fun moment comes when the player is kind of mastering playing around with the camera. When players are able to maneuver the camera easily, they will find the game changed from challenges everywhere to interesting playgrounds everywhere. The more players mastered the skill, the more interesting the map will get. In Super Mario Odyssey, the movement can get complicated. However, it is more meant to be used in speedrun or for showing off purposes, and I would wildly guess that most players will feel more fun from purely exploring the map, instead of figuring out how complicated throwing hats can be.

(Comparing Kirby and the Forgotten Land and Human: Fall Flat)

Since the most important points are already discussed, this part is approaching from a different perspective.

Art Style difference: In Kirby and the Forgotten Land, the art style is cute and the characters are adorable. Colors are vibrant and chillax. In comparison, the art style of Human: Fall Flat is more plain and simple, especially the use of big blocks of low saturation colors.

Sounds / Music difference: In Kirby and the Forgotten Land, the music is fast-paced, and there are a lot of sound effects to exaggerate Kirby's movement. Whereas in Human: Fall Flat, there is only one slow BGM, and there's a few sound effects.

The difference in art style has a strong impact on how the player perceives the game. And they both fit perfectly into the main theme. Kirby's cute and vibrant art style will distract the player to focus on the overall presentation (big picture) of the map, but not in one particular point. It is exactly how this game proceeds, which the player goes through maps very fast and effortlessly. On the other hand, the low saturation and big blocks of colors of Human: Fall Flat is will help the player to focus on one particular part of the game (this is sort of like color / shape as a guidance we have seen in the lecture), which is always the part the the player need to overcome.

The difference in Sound effects and Music works in a similar way. The repeating sounds effect when Kirby uses abilities will enhance the feeling of (and probably memory to) a fun fight. And the slow BGM in Human: Fall Flat is aiming to stop the player and allow the player some peace time to think about the key of the problem. Actually I can imagine that if Human: Fall Flat uses sound effects in a similar way that Kirby does, then it would be simply too annoying, that sound is repeating when I fail doing one thing again and again.