

The Lunar Engine Review: The Moon is Made of Us

by Richie Hoagland, @pjchardt

The Lunar Engine strives to be the ludological embodiment of Jane McGonigal's proselytizing. Part MMO, part engineering project, part social experiment, The Lunar Engine is an insanely ambitious project that strives to shape our future while simultaneously permitting us an escape from our present. It does all this and more.

Before I go on to praise the Lunar Engine for all its glory, I must address the pink elephant in the room. The game costs \$15,000. Continue reading to discover why this game garners such a lofty price tag and how the developers and others are working to provide access to individuals across the economic spectrum.

The Lunar Engine has a simple, albeit grandiose, premise: REAL robots, on the REAL moon, in REAL VR. Players purchase a real world robot avatar on the moon, wittily named a Ravatar, and then control this Ravatar through an Oculus Rift VR headset. Players are given real-world quests: geo-plotting a route for a drain line, helping construct a satellite, or laying cable between stations to name a few. All of which pay real world money to the player. In effect, players are terraforming the moon for future habitation by playing this game.

If players wish to take a break from these real-world quests, AR quests abound. Enduring a harsh alien desert while battling an Alpha Centauric slug or joining a party of other Ravatars to invade an enemy encampment; fascinating worlds are overlayed on the moon through AR to create some of the most compelling MMO-style questing I have ever experienced.

The game designers on this project shine through in the intimate touches layered onto the experience. For example, audio and text communication channels are the only way to distinguish individuals as all Ravatars start out the same (something similar to the Mars rover). On top of the indistinguishable form of the Ravatars, there is no way to personally modify your unit. Yet in a brilliant move to create

Jump a Third Time

by Asian Steev

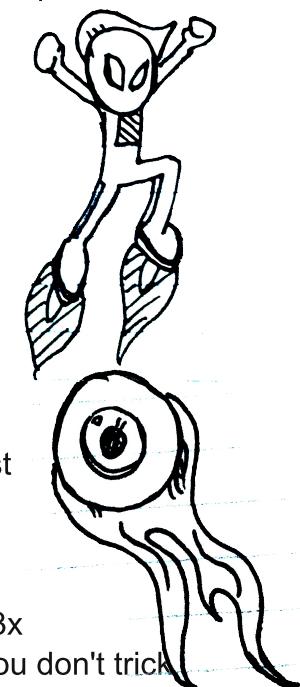
Amazing games have been built on the premise of a single idea. Portal and Minecraft come to mind as simple ideas that could have fallen under the weight of the primary idea driving them, but the execution carried the idea from gimmick to innovation.

Here we have *Triple Jump* by Sky Reacher Games. *Triple Jump* is a game based entirely on the mechanic of jumping two extra times in the air. What. What else sets this retro-styled 2D platformer apart? Let me tell you, certainly not execution. Hastily cobbled together 8-bit sprites across bland environments, hoardes of repeating enemies and puzzles, if you can call them that, where the solution to the puzzle is always "jump a third time" all come together to form a game that must have taken a weekend for the developers to code. And that's probably not all they did that weekend.

The controls are tight enough and I occasionally feel a sense of accomplishment for making that third tricky jump up to a platform that seemed unreachable. My concern is that the current generation of consumers is content with this kind of product. Flappy Bird provided the same fleeting feeling of achievement for a modest run, and provided the same feeling that given another go, I could do better.

But the gimmick fails. You don't earn your rite of 3x jump like you would in the Mega Man X series. You don't trick the game into awarding you an additional jump like an upward attack in Super Smash Bros. series. You just push A a third time.

Pass on this game... now excuse me, I have one last pit to clear and I'm pretty sure I'll be at the final boss.



Walk

Walk the Talk

by Mitch Schwartz, @mitchschwartz

Titty Punch by Asian Steele

Walk the Talk has failed to live up to its promise. Game tie-ins for Hollywood synergistic money-grabs. But, like bumping into someone as you briskly turn a corner in the office hallway, Walk the Talk surprises blockbusters rarely succeed. Most often, they feel simply like movie.)

The fighting system is straightforward. You and your opponent use basic attacks, tilt for tap, whittling each other's health away. Charge up the Mammory Meter to execute your Rack Attack. I can't believe I just typed that.

The story, the cinematics, everything. You'll fight characters like permates every aspect of the game, the characters, the backdrops, it.

The strength of the game is how they deep the breast puns go. It permates every aspect of the game, the characters, the backdrops, across the front, Luchadores, a Mexican wrestler who grapples with her chest muscles; Ultramam, whose Rack Attack involves her flaming moonshine and jugs, a hillbilly moonshiner who blows Ultramammy Cannon; and Jugs, a skimp 1700s colonial-themed costume, in front of Mount Bustmore, a mountain with busts of busts carved into the side. Other characters include a lady dressed as a seductive burglar named Funbags, whose top has large dollar signs complete with stinger. The breast allusion of this theme didn't click for me until a few hours after encountering it.

The creators of this game knew their strength was humor and they killed it. The game is packed with dialogue. I don't think I heard a repeated line for the first three days I played. Sure, I constantly rolled my eyes, but I didn't stop smiling for hours. I wasn't as offended as I expected I would be after reading all the criticism coming from many high-profile game news outlets. "Misogynistic," really? Using breasts as a weapon is anything but. This seems more like a 14-year old boy's love letter to boobs.

If you want a relaxing game to play with friends this weekend, this is it. Cans-ele your plans, invite your bras over and treat them how to rack up points in one of the breast games of the genre.

Walk the Talk also really highlights the sophistication of the Kinect.

What makes the story so intriguing is that you feel like you're playing out all the different ideas Sorokin had for the movie. The game is basically one giant alternate ending, except it's more than just the ending that's alternate. The best comparison I can think of is the "Remedial Chaos Theory" episode of Community. In Walk the Talk, you're playing out these different timelines, each representing a rewrite or cut that didn't make it into the movie is engaging and And because it's all Sorokin's writing, even the storylines and dialogues that didn't make it into the movie is engaging and entertaining.

Path in the story's branching narrative. With each turn and dialogue choice taking you down a different film. You control characters, motions via the Xbox One's Kinect, trying to turn one of their mainsstay sitcoms into a feature-length (the fictional TV network from Studio 60 on the Sunsets Strip), the gameplay unfolds as you walk through the hallways of NBS game, you spend time controlling each of the six main characters. Imagine Stanley Parable meets Just Dance. Throughout the game play until you don't walk through the hallways of NBS game, you spend time controlling each of the six main characters. The gameplay unfolds as you walk through the hallways of NBS (the fictional TV network from Studio 60 on the Sunsets Strip), trying to turn one of their mainsstay sitcoms into a feature-length film. You control characters, motions via the Xbox One's Kinect, with each turn and dialogue choice taking you down a different path in the story's branching narrative.

If you can't wait for the theatrical release in June, this is the perfect appetizer, as the game opens with the first 15 minutes of the movie. I know it sounds like a long time to wait before you start playing, but Sorokin's writing is so sharp that you don't even notice. From there, you basically get to walk-and-talk with Sorokin notice. In fact, Walk the Talk works even better as a game than it does as a film. (Check next month's issue for my review of the movie.)