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Level Design

2/12/19

Is Surprising

Making a game with surprising factors may not seem that difficult with horror games but more action and calming games can be a bit difficult, games like tetris or gran turismo have almost no surprising aspect about them, but that does not mean you can't add some features to them to make certain parts of the game more interesting.

Subnautica is one game that can seem calm at first but when actually diving deep into the game you can start to see everything unfold one at a time. One way the game is surprising is how it introduces alien monoliths. Upon your first arrival at a monolith you first swim to an island that houses it. When reaching the island you are met with a small cave system and a purple stone slab that can be used to open the monolith structure doors. All of this is made apparent that Subnautica has more than just regular fish swimming around. By this time you would have already gotten a sneak peak at a leviathan near the ship's crash site by the audible roar it gives out when going near the back of the broken ship giving even more evidence that there are more hostile fish in the waters. These two encounters provide a shocking discovery in their own merit alone but having surprising factors in games can be done outside of the horror genre just like what Subnautica does on its own.



Although Subnautica has these surprising elements about them the game could have been a bit more allusive in how they introduce the monoliths mainly because the game tells you where they are located and what you are expected to see. The surprising factor lies within the monolith and the island itself. But even with these minor issues it still gives off a surprise to the player because of the unexpected structure being placed there and how big the structure is inside with a pool leading deep into a dark cave. The game also adds more tension as the day turns to night which gives the more hostile fish the ability to swim to shallow waters where the player would normally see non-hostile fish. With these two elements it also provides a surprise when the player overstays their welcome in the waters instead of heading back to the life pod that acts as the main house for the player.

Adding surprising features may seem difficult to fit into a more calming game like Subnautica or Abzu but it can be done with the correct game structure and spacing of game events to give more build up for the player, something that has made those two games what it is when they each came out.