



The Nightrunners

Assignment 1 - Game Design Document

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BACKSTORY

Story

The setting is a tech-noir era sometime in the future, a lot of things have changed but some things stay the same. Technology has advanced greatly, but so did technological surveillance. You are a Runner, part of what is collectively called The Nightrunners: an underground network of “data messengers” whose job is to run around across cities delivering confidential information from one client to another. In an era where anything sent on the internet is first intercepted by government intelligence before being sent on its way, the Nightrunners make it their business to deliver these data discs from point A to point B. Whether they’re from one friend to another, from the Rebellion that grows restless day by day, or from those who have something to hide.

Characters

The Player - The main character is the player, which assumes a generic male-presenting Runner. A “generic” runner is usually dressed in film noir-esque clothing with a hat and a trench coat, along with a laser gun weapon attached on their person.

The Handler - The Handler is an NPC that usually issues and oversees the data transportation sequence done by a Nightrunner. This is to ensure that the data gets to where it needs to go safely, and that all of the data is with the Runner before teleporting to the client. In the game, the player’s handler is an elderly man with a cane that is usually standing beside the teleportation box (the exit point).

Security Alpha - Instead of a government police force, the authorities of this world have contracted Security Alpha to act as the main police body. The units are a combination of both human and machine, and they are bestowed the kind of authority a government police body would have. As agents of the government, one of their primary directives is to shoot any Runners on sight and intercept their data transporting missions. They are the main enemies of the Runner.

Gameplay

The Nightrunners is a 2D platformer built on the game engine we created on Unit 3, where we followed along a tutorial for a platformer game from the book *Android Game Programming by Example* by John Horton. Like most 2D platformers, the gameplay of *The Nightrunners* involve interacting with enemy units and collecting certain objects (in this case, the data discs).

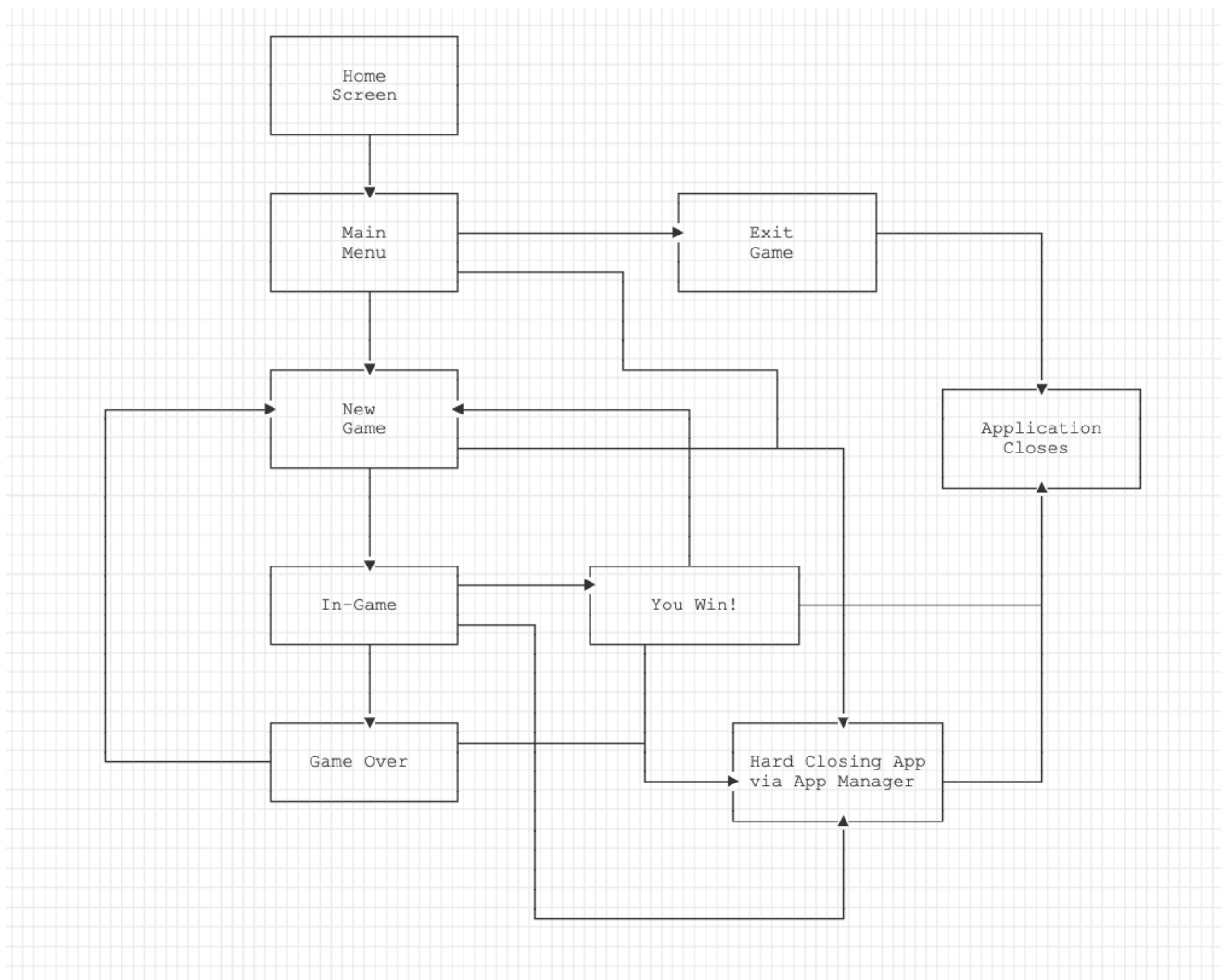
Gameplay Mechanics

To progress through a level in *The Nightrunners*, the Runner — the player — is dropped from a high point and onto a starting platform. The Runner then traverses through levels filled with obstacle such as flying drones, cyborg guards patrolling from left to right, and level design itself. Taking inspiration from retro platformer games like *Circus*

Charlie (1984) and *Super Mario Bros.* (1983), success is determined by level mastery which is motivated by player frustration. This means that it is expected, as well as encouraged, to fail (die) often. Repeatedly playing a level improves the player's confidence of succeeding through a level, guided by previous knowledge of knowing what to expect per level.

The Runner possesses a "laser" gun, which is their only weapon with the exception of the final level.

GAME FLOW



RULES OF THE GAME

The general objective per level is to reach the exit point, which is the teleportation box right beside The Handler. The location of the teleportation box varies per level, and getting there relies a lot on the player's mastery of the level itself. By anticipating what to expect and what to do in every level, then the player can successfully advance from one level to the next. As a Runner, of course, one of the things you can collect are the data discs. The HUD shows your remaining "lives" in the current playthrough, as well as the total number of discs that can be found per level which will be displayed as: (data discs collected so far)/(total number of data discs in this level). The counter resets at the beginning of each level. Deaths within the limit of the number of lives left, does not affect data disc collection. Only when you reach the Game Over screen will everything — including your progress throughout the game so far — will be removed and you must start over.

VICTORY/LOSS CONDITIONS

There are two Victory Conditions, and both must be satisfied so that the player can say that they have finished or "beat" the game. The first victory condition is called a Level Victory, which marks a player's successful run throughout the level. This implies the following:

1. The player has successfully reached the teleportation box.
2. The number of data discs collected at the level range from 0 to the total number of data discs in that level.

The second victory condition is called a True Victory. A true victory requires the player to also successfully beat the final level, which is the "boss level" of this game. In the last level, the health points or HP of the "boss" is the same number as total amount of data discs in all levels leading up to this final level. In this level, the player spend one data disc every time they fire their weapon. Which then implies that the game will truly be "beaten" if the following are true:

1. The player has achieved Level Victory in every level leading up to the "boss" battle.
 2. The player has collected all data discs in the entire game.
 3. The player used all of the data discs to defeat the "boss", which is done through consecutive successful firing of their weapon. This means by the end of the fight, the number of data discs and the number of health points the boss has left are both at 0.
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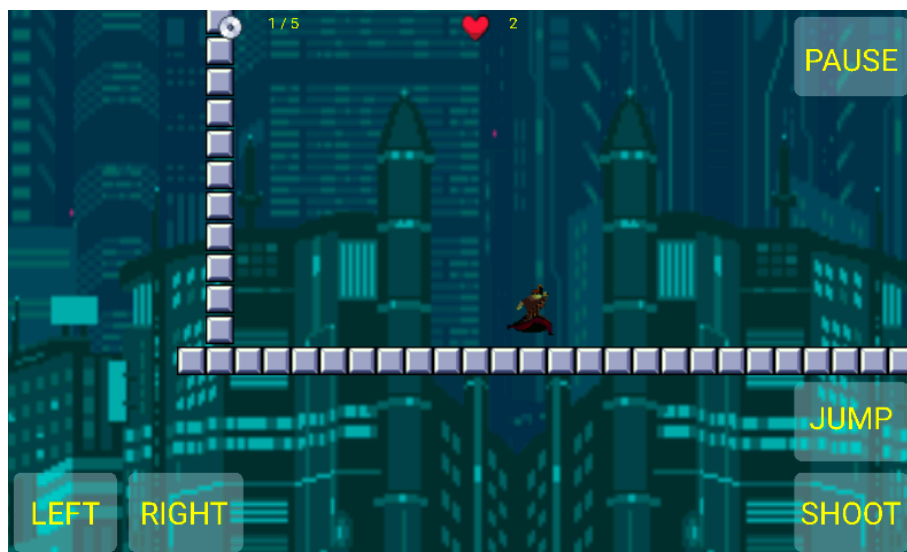
There are three Loss Conditions, and they are listed as the following:

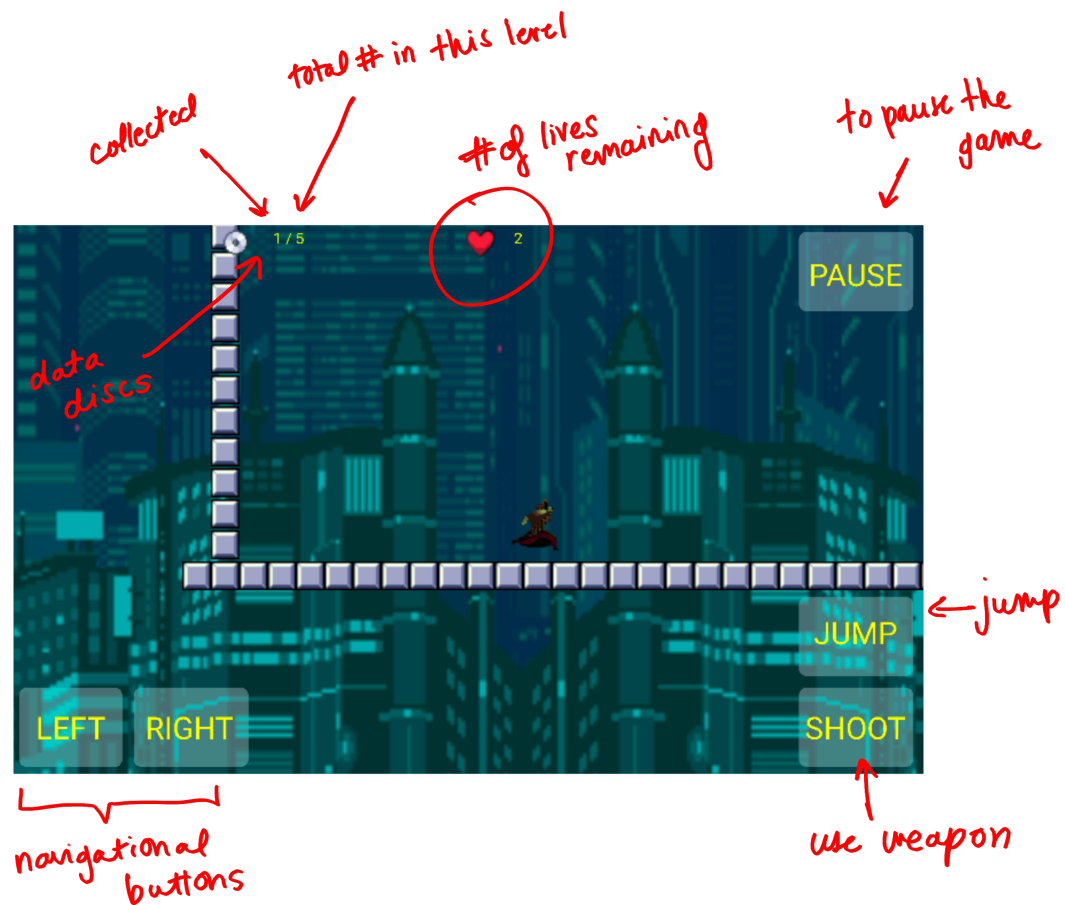
1. The player has collided with an enemy unit, was attacked by an enemy unit, or have simply fallen off the map — all of which results to an immediate loss of a “life”.
2. The player has spent all of their remaining “lives”, and met an untimely demise on their last one due to a collision with an enemy unit, an attack by an enemy unit, or falling off the map.
3. The player has successfully traversed through all the levels leading up to the “boss” fight, but has failed to collect all data discs in the game. Thus, they are inadequately prepared to get the health points of the “boss” to 0.

GAME WORLD + DESIGN

The game is set years into the future, in a world that has evolved into a tech-noir setting with dystopian elements. Each game level takes place in different parts of this world, which showcases the kind of places and situations a Runner may find themselves in to transport data. A running theme across all levels is the tech-noir style and feel regardless of the layout, and this process involved a careful selection of assets from several artists who share the same thematic styles. This, then, builds the overall look and feel of the game. Because of the 2D platformer format, and the retro video games I was inspired by, it was important to me to use assets that are in the style of pixel art.

Below is a screenshot from the level “Night City” running on a Pixel 2 API 30:





HUD

To keep the HUD interface clean yet informative, symbols are used instead of words to convey information. For example, the disc sprite shows you the (number of discs the player has collected) / (total number of discs in the level). This information is relayed to the player by using the exact same symbols for the ones the player can interact with in the world. The same applies to the “lives” symbol, which is that of a heart sprite.

CONTROLS

Because *The Nightrunners* was built on the game engine we created in Unit 3, the game’s controls are the same as the one we implemented from the textbook. The only difference is that now, each button has a large, clear label which conveys their purpose to the player.

BACKGROUNDS

Each level in *The Nightrunners* feature a background with a parallax effect, where each “foreground” asset is enlarged to create dimension as well as to dwarf the player in scale. This was a design decision that was done in order to convey just how large the world is canonically, as well as make the Runner seem to operate covertly.

BONUS MATERIALS

Because a lot of the replay value of *The Nightrunners* comes from level mastery, as well as from the player figuring out how to play as they go. Thus, there are no added bonus materials in the game which motivate replay.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- The parallax background of Night City is a heavily modified version of "Cyberpunk Street Environment" by ansimuz (<https://ansimuz.itch.io/cyberpunk-street-environment>). Permissions are stated on the asset's page and are as follows:

You may use these assets in personal or commercial projects.
You may modify these assets to suit your needs.

Credit is not required but appreciated it.

- The tiles in which where the Runner traverses on is from "Free Pixel Art Tiles" by TotusLotus (<https://totuslotus.itch.io/free-pixel-art-tiles>). Permissions are stated on the asset's page and are as follows:

LICENCE:

This asset pack can be used in both personal and commercial projects. You can modify it to suit your own needs. Credit is not needed. You may not redistribute it or resell it. If you'll use this asset for commercial use please consider donating.

- The data disc sprite and the heart sprite are from "User Interface Icon Pack" by Kazzter (<https://kazzter-k.itch.io/interface-icons>). Permissions are stated on the asset's page and are as follows:
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License:

You can use these icons in any project, commercial or not. You can modify the files for personal use, but you cannot share them, or upload them publicly. Giving credit is not mandatory, but I'll appreciate if you do.

If you have any questions you can comment here.

Good development! o/

- Kazzter

- The sprite of the Runner (the player) is from "Cyberpunk Character Pack 2" by 0c0 (https://itch.io/queue/c/844603/asset-packs?game_id=851435). Permissions are stated on the asset's page and are as follows:

Notes:

Feel free to use and modify the characters depending on your current project. If you have any suggestions regarding other characters, items or backgrounds, which can fit with this pack, please let me know. In case you want to offer me credits, please use my current username. Also, keep in mind that you can use this in your commercial projects, but please do not resell the assets individually.
