Final Project Proposal

**Student Name:**

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**Development Blog URL**

http://paperjuiceinc.blogspot.co.uk/

**Proposed Project Title:**

The project’s title that I am working on for this final year is “Role-Playing Game Development”. Over the development period the title will change into a more specific one that can better reflect the game.

**Brief outline of the work:**

For my final year project I will develop a video game that combines elements from both roguelikes and traditional role-playing games in order to create a challenging experience. The game elements should be able push the player to experiment and explore while trying to adapt and survive in a punishing and cruel world. A key design element for me is to create a strong feeling of fiero through hard and challenging sequences of gameplay that ultimately will greatly pay off. The harder is to succeed, the substantial the prize will be.

**Project target:**

My final target for this academic year is to get the game past Steam Greenlight. The submission requirements are fairly simple to follow and it shouldn’t raise a challenge (*Greenlight FAQ*). The primary issue is building the audience which I am going to do through Twitter, Facebook and development blog (Chaciej, D. *How NOT to market your indie game*, Taylor, P., *Building Buzz for Indie Games*, Hietalahti, J., *The Basic Marketing Plan For Indie Games*).

**Rationale**

The main reason why I considered and RPG game development for my final project is because I always loved the genre. As an example, I have more than fifteen hundred hours spent in the Blizzard’s game, Diablo 3 alone, therefor it is quit an easy task for me to identify and analyse mechanics and elements that build a pleasing experience within the genre. Also, the beauty of being able to follow a personal progression path, combined with the liberty of exploration and possibility of direct control over difficulty make RPGs an amazing experience for me.

Based on a talking conducted by five indie developers, the indie market is not dead but rather a bit saturated, flooded by very low quality games (GDC, *What Do We Mean When We Say Indiepocalypse?*). A good marketing strategy alongside with a well put together game can stand out from the crowd.

The target audience that I am aiming for is traditional gamers that are between 16 and 35 years old, have past gaming experience and tend to spend money on video games (Eric, *Define your target audience*). *Analysts at the research firm NPD Group say that hard-core gamers still spend more than others buying games, but they note that those who play casual games like Candy Crush Saga are the fastest growing segment of the market.* (npr.org, *Hard-Core And Casual Gamers Play In Different Worlds*). Gamers that are more likely to play challenging games are the ones that spend more money on purchasing games than someone who occasionally choose video gaming once in a while as a way of entertainment.

**Narrative and gameplay**

The narrative is going to be set around 17th century when the “Salem witch trial” occurred, in the Salem Village, Massachusetts (Andrews, E., *Were witches burned at the stake during the Salem Witch Trials?*). Therefore, the environment will be created based on that and all the assets will be inspired by the places at that time.

Gameplay-wise, the game can be labelled as role-playing game with roguelike elements. The view is going to be top-down similar to games such as “Sacred” or “Torchlight”. The main mechanics will be combat, which will contain attacking and dodging, as well as exploring and adapting.

**Inspiration**

In terms of gameplay, I am going to use elements from traditional top-down RPGs (“Titan Quest” or “Diablo”) such as camera view, level and character upgrade system combined with roguelike mechanics: permanent death.( King, A., *The Key Design Elements of Roguelikes*).

For the game feel I am looking primarily at “Dark Souls” series. Upon spending numerous hours in game and reading analytic articles about the game, I was amazed how well the game succeeds in making me feel always on the point of losing. The experience is very challenging, the enemies are merciless and mistakes are definitely heavily punished. During my sessions, I felt very obnoxious and stressed out by my future encounters, similar to watching a horror movie. The way tension and relief is generated is amazing and makes me strongly consider “Dark Souls” design choices to be of great help for achieving the same for my game.

The game aesthetic will be inspired mainly by *Necropolis* (http://necropolisgame.com/presskit), because assets they have in game are low polygons and textures don’t have too much details. The reason for this choice is because in order to manage my time efficiently, I have to consider an easy to create and iterate assets style.

**Game engine used**

My first though when looking at which game engine to choose from was Unreal Engine 4 over Unity 5 as I saw that is a lot more powerful for rendering shadows and reflections and the overall graphics are superior. After making some research into the subject, I found out that Unreal Engine 4 has a more “realistic” render capabilities (video source, goo.gl/m4nMN8) while Unity 5 tends to be more “cartoonish” in comparison (video source, goo.gl/Gep4OD). Going through an article written on [blog.digitaltutors.com](http://blog.digitaltutors.com) we can find a fair comparison of those two (Mayden, A., *Unreal Engine 4 vs. Unity: Which Game Engine Is Best for You?*). It covers prices, graphic potency, programming languages supported, asset store and ease of use. After a closer analysis, giving the fact that I have an experience of two years in Unity, I reached the conclusion that Unity 5 fits me best because of the C# programming language, reach asset store and easy to manipulate and iterate within the default interface, key points in order to cover everything this project requires in the given time.

**Relevant specialist skills**

The primary skills that I will use for this project are designing and C# programming. With my designing abilities I am targeting to create rich, intense and immersive experience driven by challenging gameplay and finalised with meaningful rewards in order to create a pleasing feeling of tension and relief.

The programming skill will be put to test by my desire to create A.I. that can behave in accordance to specific situation, lively environment and fluent overall gameplay.

**Issues, problems and concerns and how to solve these**

One of my concerns with the game development is creating poor quality assets as 3D modelling is not one of my strong point. In order to solve such issue, as I said above, will draw inspiration from games such as “Necropolis”, low polygon models with plain texture.

Second concern is, because the action is going to be placed in an open environment, the game can start to feel plain and boring. In order to solve this, I will build small places with specific events that I can randomly populate the map with.

Third problem may be that not enough people will hear about my project over the duration of the development plan and, therefore, the game will not generate enough popularity to be accepted on Steam.

**Employability statement**

I plan in getting the game accepted on Steam. If it is successful, I will be able to search for an investor with more confidence because I already have a number of people interested in my project. If an investor accepts to fund me, then I will invest in a 3D artist, animator and sound artist in order to improve the game and ensure myself higher chances of getting revenue out of the project.

**Project Timeline**

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| **Project Milestone** | | |
| **2016-2017** | **Week#** | **Milestone Deliverables and Tasks** |
| 26-30 Sep | Week 1 | -game idea research and inspiration(defining main mechanics and game feel)-- |
| 3-7 Oct | Week 2 | -game idea research and inspiration (main character, enemies and enemy boss designs, look for sources to draw inspiration from)- |
| 10-14 Oct | Week 3 | -research into what elements that build anticipation and curiosity- |
| 17-21 Oct | Week 4 | -list of events that can be added to the game, design five of them to build towards the experience I am trying to achieve- |
| 24-28 Oct | Week 5 | -main character behaviour(took me two days to animate, model and program, tweaks will follow shortly), first enemy (took me two days to animate, model and program, tweaks will follow shortly)behaviour(roughly) in order to see how the main mechanics feel- |
| 31 Oct-4 Nov | Week 6 | - research grey box level design and program the ”death screen” which should enumerate a score based on slaying enemies, collecting objects, completing events(a variable will increment every time the player perform actions from above list)- |
| 7- 11 Nov | Week 7 | -implementing first event from the list –  **r** |
| 14 – 18 Nov | Week 8 | -new enemy modelled, animated and programmed (code is already done but needs tweaking), model one NPC and animate-  **Submission of Final Project Proposal: by noon, Friday 18 Nov 2016** |
| 21-25 Nov | Week 9 | -second event to be programmed and modelled – |
| 28 Nov- 3 Dec | Week 10 | -second boss 3D modelled, animated and programmed, also if time allows, will start working on the passives - |
| 5-9 Dec | Week 11 | -finish passives(max 5 for beginning) and add badges(max 5 for beginning)- |
| 12-16 Dec | Week 12 | **-**third event to be programmed and modelled**-** |
| 19-23 Dec | Holiday | **-**two new enemies modelled, animated (will use the same behaviour for all melee enemies), |
| 26-30 Dec | Holiday | **-**new enemy boss 3D modelled, programed and animated**-** |
| 2-6 Jan | Holiday | **-**new event from the event list**-** |
| 9-13 Jan | Holiday | **-**model 5 swords (the minimum amount I am targeting), model an item that will depict food which, upon consumption, will heal the player**-** |
| 16-20 Jan | Holiday | **-**program four swords to have one out of five passives programmed in week 11; start playtesting and tweak enemy/player behaviour**-** |
| 23-27 Jan | Week 13 | -third event to be programmed and modelled; playtesting and number tweaking- |
| 30 Jan- 4 Feb | Week 14 | **-**forth event to be programmed and modelled; playtesting and number tweaking **-** |
| 6-10 Feb | Week 15 | **-**fifth event to be programmed and modelled; playtesting and number tweaking**-**  **Seminar Presentation** |
| 13-17 Feb | Week 16 | **-**playtesting, debugging, number tweaking, ask friend to try the game**-**  **Seminar Presentation** |
| 20-24 Feb | Week 17 | **-**if feedback from players on enemies/mc behaviour is positive, I will continue working on the 6th event **-** |
| 27 Feb- 3 Mar | Week 18 | **-**if feedback from players on enemies/mc behaviour is positive, I will continue working on another 5 passives and 5 badges **-** |
| 6-10 Mar | Week 19 | **-**if feedback from players on enemies/mc behaviour is positive, I will continue working on another enemy and will start working on the 3rd boss design, model, script and animations**-** |
| 13-17 Mar | Week 20 | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 20-24 Mar | Week 21 | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 27-31 Mar | Week 22 | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 3-7 Apr | Week 23 | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 10-14 Apr | Holiday | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 17-21 Apr | Holiday | QA (playtesting and tweaking/improving) |
| 24-28 Apr | Week 24 | **Submission of Final Product and Blog: by noon, Friday 28 Apr 2017** |

**Bibliography**

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| **No.** | **Bibliographical item** | **Summary** |
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| 4. | Bycer, J.. (2016). *The Successes and Failures of Dark Souls 3's Design.* Available: https://goo.gl/ZzV4wE. Last accessed 10th Nov 2016. | The article is about the pros and cons of the design decisions in comparison to previous titles in the “Dark Souls” series with examples to support the analysis. |
| 5. | Chaciej, D.. (2013). *How NOT to market your indie game.* Available: https://goo.gl/35qtkA. Last accessed 10th Nov 2016. | Author writes about his mistakes in marketing and what we shouldn’t do when it comes to promoting our indie games. |
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| 13. | Hietalahti, J.. (Not mentioned). *The Basic Marketing Plan For Indie Games.* Available: http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/2695/  the\_basic\_marketing\_plan\_for\_indie\_.php?print=1. Last accessed 10th Nov 2016. | General advice on what are the most important actions an indie developer must undertake in order to have a successful marketing plan. |
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| 18. | Mayden, A.. (2014). *Unreal Engine 4 vs. Unity: Which Game Engine Is Best for You?.* Available: goo.gl/yo2bOj. Last accessed 10th Nov 2016. | Brief comparison between Unity and Unreal Engine 4. Price, programming language, asset store, graphical capabilities and ease of use were covered. |
| 19. | Nutt, C.. (Not mentioned). *'Roguelikes': Getting to the heart of the it-genre .* Available: goo.gl/SmtOsc. Last accessed 10th Nov 2016. | The article is about why roguelikes caught attention of the public and are still quite popular nowadays after more than thirty years. |
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