SPACEPORT SLAPDASH
unremarkable alien attack

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In Spaceport Slapdash you play as Zoop, an unremarkable alien, who is trying to escape from a spaceport prison floating about the universe on an asteroid where he is imprisoned for tax evasion. Moving through randomly generated rooms Zoop encounters a myriad of enemies, each of which he must defeat with an assortment of objects and items that can be found throughout the spaceport. Zoop's final goal is to find his way to the warden's office, where he can clear his name and leave the spaceport a free man.

Spaceport Slapdash is a 3D top-down Roguelike action game where a combination of randomly generated rooms, items and enemies create a game with a different experience each time it's played.

Design Document

game modes

Primary Mode: Combat
  Perspective: Tilted top-down, 3D
  Interaction Model: Avatar-based
  Gameplay Challenges: Defeating enemies, finding useful items, staying alive, clearing as many rooms as possible and defeating the boss at the end of the game to escape the prison.
  Gameplay Actions: Attack by shooting ranged weapons, picking up items, moving up, down, left, right on the screen, opening canisters and throwing canisters at enemies.

Secondary Mode: Exploration
  Perspective: Tilted top-down, 3D
  Interaction Model: Avatar-based
  Gameplay Challenges: Traversing the level to find more enemies in unexplored rooms, finding the room containing the teleporter to the next level.
  Gameplay Actions:opening doors to move between rooms,moving up, down, left, right on the screen, using teleporters to transport between levels.

Secondary Mode: Menu Screen
  Perspective: 2D menu screen
  Interaction Model: Menu navigation
  Gameplay Challenges: None
 Gameplay Actions: Starting the game, quitting the game.

protagonist

Zoop (Fig 1.0) is an alien who is quite unremarkable. The name Unremarkable Alien Attack derives from Zoop being an unlikely hero because his enemies are well armed robot guards and Zoop doesn't even have pants. The game starts with Zoop being in cryogenic suspension aboard a floating space jail for tax evasion. He's not a bad guy, he just doesn't really want to pay those taxes. Zoop's Moveset is that he is able to run, pick up objects, fire ranged weapons and aim.

Zoop

Fig1.0   The many sides of Zoop.

functional flowboard

INSTRUCTIONS

MAIN SCREEN

Unremarkable Alien Attack

Instructions

Quit
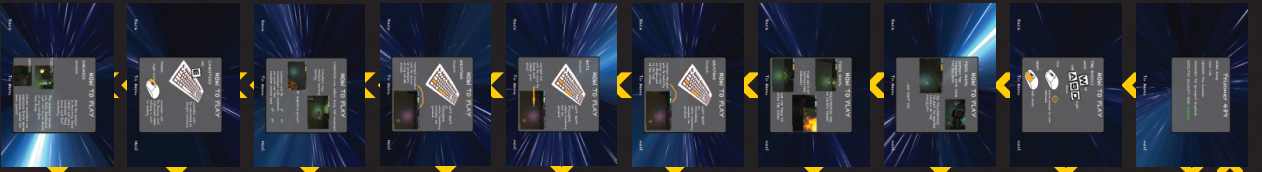
Play!

press high scores

press to menu

press play

find new hat

find new weapon

HIGH SCORE TABLE

To Menu
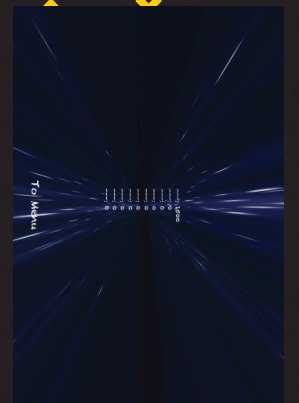
player stops fighting

player engages
weapons/ items

find key

defeat
enemy

player health
becomes zero

enter name and press ok

continue exploring

find gold door

proceed to
next level

reach final level

defeat
control terminal

enter name and press ok

environment

Much of the game world lies in contrast to the protagonist. Zoop is a round, 'bouncy' individual, whereas the spaceport environment is dirtier, harsher and contains numerous cold, unfeeling robots and turrets (Fig 2.0-2.2). This contrast is further perpetuated by the enemies constantly attacking Zoop without pause; the player understands that Zoop is truly in a different world from his own.

Fig 2.0   Spaceport Slapdash 's harsh environment.
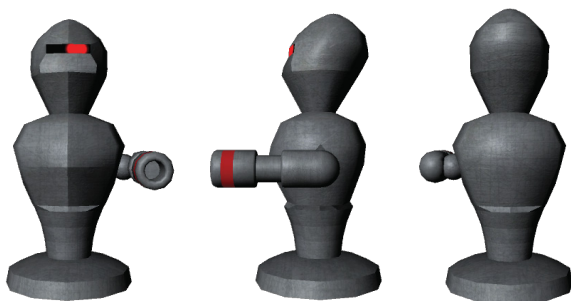

Fig 2.1 Enemy model   Fig 2.2 Enemy model

The items (Fig 3.0-3.1) found scattered throughout the rooms, however, are also in semi-contrast to the spaceport environment. There are many hats and weapons that fit the Sci Fi theme, the: rocket launcher, disintegration gun, space cannon, etc..., but they are much brighter in colour then the other non-equippable environmental objects. In addition, there are some items that also seem to be of another world, the: super soaker, viking hat, the lemon shaped rock, etc... In terms of narrative, the items are from the spaceport's evidence room which handles cases from all across the galaxy, therefore, there is no limit on the types of items that may be found within the game world. The items also add whimsy to the game with their humorous descriptions and the wide variety promotes experimentation as players try to find their favorite items (even if they are not the most powerful).

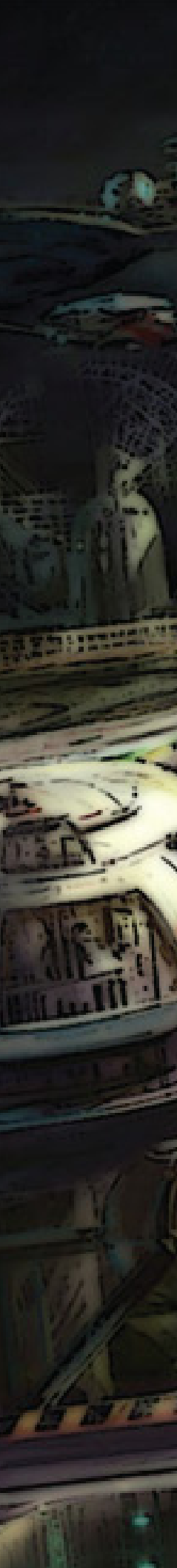Fig 3.0 Some of the hats that can be found throughout the game world.

Fig 3.0 Some of the weapons that can be found throughout the game world.
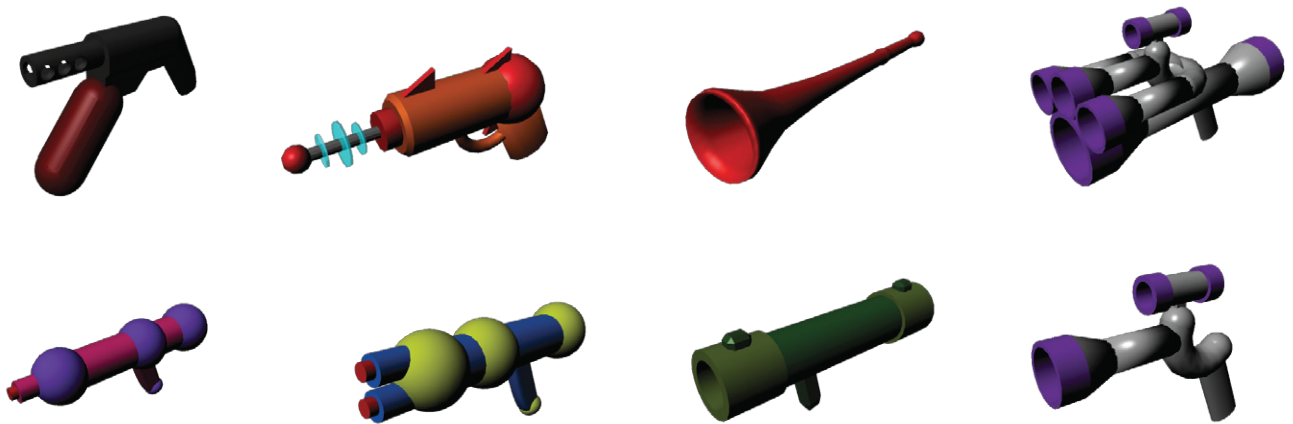
Each level of the game is generated randomly. There will always be a path to the room containing the transporter to the next level, however, there are also corridors that lead to dead ends. The player must create a mental model of the layout during their exploration each time they enter a new level.

Throughout the game the player is exposed to numerous sound effects as well as a musical score. The sound effects in our game are intended to create a more immersive environment, full of elements which are both visible and invisible to the player. The prison which Zoop is trapped in throughout the game is intended to be contrasting to his physical appearance, as he is bright and bouncy the environment is filled with sounds that are low and mysterious. Each weapon is given its own sound effect which cause them to be not only visually distinguishable from the other items but audibly as well. These sound effects are stylized along commonly used Sci-Fi themes in which lasers sound as popular science fiction has taught us they should. Further sound effects provide the player with notifications to changes of state which may otherwise be too subtle to notice; such as when the player picks up a new object or finds the key to the next level.

There are also three musical scores that can be found throughout different areas of the game. The main screen opens with an upbeat score intended to reflect the light-hearted nature of the game. The in-game music is more reflective of the game environment, it is heavier and "dirtier"

than the music of the main screen. This in-game music while feeling dark and unrefined also provides the player with a fast paced score to enhance the excitement of play. Should the player fall victim to an enemy drone, they will be exposed to the final musical score. The death screen score was inspired by military funeral music, it is slow, mournful yet still has a powerful feeling to it.

core mechanics

The main mechanics for moving are going north, west, south and east, with each direction corresponding to the 'w', 'a', 's' and 'd' keys. The character can also go north-west, north-east, south-west and south-east by holding down the appropriate keys.

In regards to interacting with the world the main mechanics will be picking up objects and attacking. The main challenge for the game is defeating enemies with the items that are given to the player. In this way, the player uses their ability to attack enemies to defeat them and progress. The reward for these actions are access to more items and levels. To defeat enemies, the player must use items to bring the enemies' health below zero. If the player's health is brought below zero by attacking enemies, the player dies. The result of death requires the player to start a new character.

The process of defeating enemies and gaining items to progress grows more challenging as the game progresses until the player reaches a set final room, upon the completion of which the player wins the game.

Secondary mechanics in the game include being able to throw items and open items. Opening items can be done by selecting the option on compatible items and to throw an item the option must be selected likewise.

dynamics

Players can combine keystrokes and mouse movement to strafe around enemies. This enables the player to dodge incoming fire while keeping their view aimed at their target.

The variety of objects allows players to develop their own strategy to defeat enemies; this means our game can appeal to different player types. For example, conquerors may be drawn to the rocket launcher that does a great amount of damages at close range while survivors may like the super soaker that does less damage, but allows them to stand well away from their enemies. The player is only able to hold one hat, weapon and canister at a time. This adds a layer of strategy to the game as players must decide what to take and what to leave. A poor decision may result in death, so players must choose wisely.

The game requires the player to develop skills and strategy before they are able to defeat the final boss. This challenging gameplay results in the player dying many times, however, their high score shows them how far they have progressed in the game and keeps them motivated to play again and again.

Players will mainly be throwing and opening canisters. Canisters have a set array of effects, but the associated colours change each time the game is played. This creates another opportunity for players to use strategy. They must decide when and where to test and then use certain canisters and as a result player's behaviour will change.

aesthetics

Spaceport Slapdash's 'fun' is challenge; players see the game as obstacle course to be overcome. This tough as nails game has no need for for eccentric storylines, we just let the player blast everything on the screen. Frustration is kept in check with the games slightly humorous side; it is hard to stay mad when your lemon shaped rock got stuck to a exploding robot.

narrative flowboard

LEVEL GOALS

LEARN ENVIRONMENT
LEARN ABILITIES
DEFEAT ENEMIES
COLLECT ITEMS

DEFEAT FINAL BOSS
DISCOVER THE TRUTH

LEVEL DESCRIPTION

Prison Alien

Setting: Space Prison
Actions: Awake - Explore - Fight
Goals: To find a way out by finding keys to the next level
Enemies: Laser Guards, Laser Turrets
                    Fire Guards, Fire Turrets
                    Rocket Guards, Rocket Torrets
                    Chaser

6 Levels

I Beg Your Pardon

Setting: Space Prison (Server Bank of the Control Terminal)
Actions: Survive
Goals: Defeat the Control Terminal
Enemies: Laser Guards, Laser Turrets
                    Fire Guards, Fire Turrets
                    Rocket Guards, Rocket Torrets
                    Control Terminal

1 Level

Reflection

Through the process of making Spaceport Slapash our team learned a lot about the process of making and developing games from concepts to release. Some of our thoughts about this process are detailed below.

Coming up with a game idea actually wasn't that difficult, partially because of the training some of the team members had received from the SFU Game Developer's Club and partially because everyone just wanted to play a game that they would like. Simple, but fun was our mantra.

Creating a paper prototype and two digital prototypes allowed us to validate good ideas and refute bad ones in a quick and dirty fashion. We learned that we should make the prototype 'simple', i.e, it should be built around a few particular questions. This allows for focused playtesting with results that can be reintegrated into the game.

Working in teams was very important for this game because of all the different roles people could take to separate the task into smaller parts. Without this separation, and along with constant communication between departments, the game came together effectively and with vastly less effort than would have been required if the game had been made individually.

We learned how playtesting is invaluable for finding bugs and exploits, as well as being a good gauge for telling whether a game is actually fun or not. The extensive playtesting ur game went through made the finished product a solid experience.

Maya was chosen for creating the models that would be used within the game. Some team members had experience modeling with the program and taught basics to the other members. Everyone has something that they made in the final prototype. This is an example of our 'from scratch' approach. It has enabled us to create a game that we can truly say is ours.