PRE-PRODUCTION GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT - THE LAST BOSS

Project Description

This game design document describes the details for a pc platform based 2d tactical action hybrid game using pixel art, decision based game mechanics and original story and characters.

The name is The Last Boss and is based around playing as the final boss commonly found in the last boss room in traditional action adventure games as said final boss makes his assent towards becoming the powerful villain often represented in said games.

1. Characters

Mayor Cavil.

The main character that the player controls.

Having risen to the mayoral office of the town of Ilya cavil has become frustrated with the apathy and incompetence of his peers in the mayors of the surrounding towns, the lack lustre and disinterested king as well as the preening heroes who often aren't actually heroic.

Deciding that he is the only competent ruler in the realm Cavil begins to plot to usurp authority and take over the realm without being found out.

A tall and imposing figure he commands large resources through his mayor ship and through the loyalty of his subordinates.

Chief advisor Thomas Malory.

Much of the day to day running of Ilya is handled by Cavil's chief advisor Thomas Malory, a rather mysterious figure that is comprised from an ornate cloak and Venetian mask, informing his mayor of the towns needs and carrying out his orders.

Lord Malrich

Cavil's Spymaster Lord Malrich functions as Ilya's diplomat keeping tabs on the other mayor's activities and enacting plots to strengthen Cavils own position within the Realm, generally it is Malrich that assumes the responsibilities of keeping Cavil informed of threats outside of the city.

A human he is known to dress in the clothes of a noble and mask that he only discards when he needs not to be noticed as very few people actually know what he looks like.

Generally Malrich is up to many things at once and tends to spin plots for the sake of spinning plots when nothing is actually happening.

Argus

Cavils master of arms it is his duty to manage both Ilya's town's guards and the various soldiers used to keep order in the surrounding lands, always wearing a heavy suit of armour he has a stark personality and seems to live for performing his duty.

Loyalist of all of cavils subjects.

True hero

The true hero is the chosen by destiny champion of the realm.

He is renowned for his impeccable sense of morality and fighting evil.

A strong character that the player must avoid interacting with until they are strong enough to defeat him as attracting him before the player is ready will get Mayor Cavil killed.

Faux Hero

Unlike the singular true hero the realm is beset by groups of people emulating his actions, this generally doesn't work as they are not able to meet his same standards and range from meaning well to making things worse.

They are usually tolerated as many manage to use the realms citizens to remain undiscovered due to their love of the heroic ideal they emulate though not necessarily due to their own actions

Whispering Penely

A faux hero he is the leader of the bandits operating nearby the town of Thurst, rumours say they attack targets given by Thurst's own mayor so they can sell goods twice, Generally seen as a heroic figure since he robs from rich folks though he is in truth just another bandit.

Mayor Agnis.

The mayor of Thrust controls much of the food production for the realm with his lands holding much of the farm lands, this has led to him becoming very wealthy but it is believed that he accepts bribes and enacts schemes to acquire even greater wealth.

Lord Falon

A noble whose lands are set in the southernmost barren lands known as Lostre, Falon runs his lands using what few resources he has to stay above poverty however he is massively in debt to Thrust's bank and nobles.

The Great Eld One

An ogre that sleeps beneath the forest surrounding little not, occasionally he awakens and strips the forest clean of wildlife before resting again, this is usually a great calamity as Not's citizens rely heavily on the dear, boar and other wildlife to survive though using them as a food source and by selling hunting rights to The Realms gentry an income.

Shaman Rale

A sage that travels The Realm offering his sagely wisdom to those in need, copious use of differing smoking herbs is the common solution but has from time to time offered actual advice and medical aid.

A known interferer he has been a disruptive influence in The Realm by using his alchemical knowledge to attack people for reasons that are often hard to decipher due to his prolonged states of "Communing with nature".

The blind swordsman

One of Little Not's guards is smarter than the rest, while many of Not's professional guards are corrupt only "Blindy", as he calls himself, has managed to be so whilst keeping up the appearance of being a man dedicated to the law.

Being a skilled swordsman and well versed in discerning lies from truth has meant he has often been able to follow his duty of protecting Little Not to the best of his abilities whilst accepting bribes to allow trusted people to enact criminal enterprises unnoticed.

The sorcerer

A mad man wanted by the entire Realm for many crimes against its people, a known abuser of magic he has from time to time worked for the mayors to help them further their own schemes.

A practitioner of illusions and pyromancy there's little he won't do for the right price.

The Assistant.

Tremocks mayor controls the largest city in The Realm and by his side is the person known as the assistant, never far it has been remarked that no one has ever seen assisting mayor vallar in his duties.

It has been noted that he has been missing during times where key enemies of Vallar have disappeared leading to the belief that The Assistant is actually Tremocks leading assassin.

The Paladin Markel

The true hero of the realm destined to strike evil from The Realm.

Unlike many of the faux heroes roaming The Realm Markel has

2. Story

The Realm is ruled by ineffectual leaders and beset by chaotic hero's causing the mayor of Iyla no end of problems, when even the supply of food is threatened by the tumultuous leadership Cavil decides that a more competent ruler is in order. Himself.

In order to accomplish this Cavil begins to undermine and sabotage the surrounding mayor's authority in order to usurp power from them in various ways, as he proceeds in this process Cavil often acts covertly in order to amass enough power in order to resist drawing the attention of the true hero of the realms attention, The Paladin, before Cavil is ready to deal with him.

2.1 Themes

This is a game about the battle between the interpretation of actions and the actual fact of the actions themselves. There is a heavy focus on the difference between Control and leadership as well as the structure of a society with heroes acting within it.

Whilst having the player run around a large environment could offer more interesting interactions with the world the game is largely about the choices they make, giving them only the counsellors to interact with enforces their own participation in events making them pay attention to what those choices are.

By having the faux heroes break into this room it reinforces the idea that they are affecting the world outside for their own ends, by keeping him relatively secluded operating through shadowy others we use the mechanics to subtly drop hints as to how the game should be played, without being seen, without being caught.

The heroes also have to reinforce another theme, that the mayor Cavil is more competent, save for the true, than the faux heroes. A tricky act as it will require imbuing the faux heroes with an arrogant, clueless or self-serving attitude that explains why their causing many of the problems in the realm whilst

3. Gameplay

3.1   Goals

Overall/Long term:

Dethrone the mayors to become the overlord of the real.

Gameplay/short term:

Acquire resources and deal with threats/problems to your long term goal.

Defeat the heroes who turn up when you put an end to their actions.

Cloak actions in deception so as not to alert the mayors or the true hero as to taking over the realm.

3.2   User Skills

- Problem solving.
- Strategy.
- Asdw, space bar and arrow based keyboard control use.
- Memory.
- Management of town resources.
- Cunning and political decision making.
- Recognition of self-destructive choices.

3.3   Game Mechanics

There are five towns and the capital city, not including Ilya (The players own town) the gameplay revolves around using option based dialogue to undermine the rule of the other towns and eventually the city of the king in order to bring them under the players control which the player does by commanding his subordinate (Or minions) to take advantage of weakness in the realm or create the weakness to take advantage of it.

While the player enacts these plots they must be careful not to be obvious in their schemes, while each choice will lead to a hero appearing if the player is villainously evil McClearly Evil the true hero will appear that the Player cannot defeat until the very last level.

Each Level is broken into three stages.

The first stage allows the player to walk left and right within the Cavils chamber hall and speak with his advisors, Chief advisor Thomas Malory, Lord Malrich and Argus.

When each advisor has a dialogue option available a "!" mark will appear their heads allowing the player to interact with them and start a dialogue option screen.

Each dialogue option will present the player with a problem that if resolved will enhance the players position to take over the realm, by securing Cavil's own position within Ilya, By spreading his control to the other towns and by defeating enemies towards his plan of conquest.

Evil Rating system

Each problem will present at least three options to resolve the issue presented through texts boxes with the player able to select one of choices.

However while the morality of the choices is an important aspect the Evil rating" system of the game functions under the premise of an Evil, Machiavellian and useless basis.

The Useless choice is one in which the player does resolve the issue at hand however it does not enhance Cavils position to take over the realm whilst the evil most certainly does it is damaging to the player as too many of these actions will draw the attention of the true hero paladin Markel, The best choice is the Machiavellian choice which allows the player to enhance their authority or position with the realm without being appearing openly malevolent in its intent or being discreet enough to go unnoticed.

While too many Evil or useless choices will result in the player receiving a visit from the true hero or not gaining enough power to take over the realm it is important that no single choice constitutes an instant fail.

The second stage consists of a boss battle with a stage specific faux hero, this is in the standard 2d action/adventure style, such as metroidvania style games, the battle is real time allowing the player to use swordplay through a Weaker quick attack and a slower strong attack as well as the ability to jump and move left and right to dodge enemy attacks.
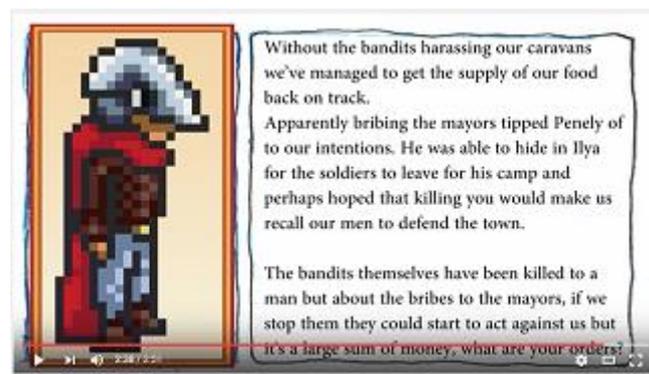
The third stage is a results screen giving the player a rundown of what the consequences of their choices where, how well they worked, what they gained from this level and/or setting up some information for future problems.

By and large this is how the player will interact with the game, there are no items in the throne room to interact with in order to place importance on the choices and consequences of the players dialogue puzzles and combat system with the bosses.

3.4   Progression and Challenge

The difficulty will advance through the game as the choices become more nuanced, at first the lines between what each of the three options during the dialogue option stages are will be clear but caution and consideration of the presented information will be needed to understand the choices in the later stages.

The boss battles will not particularly advance in difficulty though better strength or such but rather by having different methods of attacking and defending in a traditional high fantasy setting. It is through understanding when a enemy presents themselves as vulnerable and creating distinct movements before they attack that will aid this.

As players advances through the game making choices and slaying the faux hero that confront him the evil rating metre in the players UI will appear to display a certain number yet there will also be a Authority metre showing how close the player is to having enough to take over.

The evil must be kept below a certain level as the player advances or the true hero appears.

The authority metre must be above a certain metre before the end level to have enough power to take over where the player can challenge the true hero to openly take over the realm.

3.5   Losing/end state

The player loses under one of two conditions.

If the player acts incompetently he will squander his position within the realm and be unable to gain enough influence to take over the realm, how well the player is doing in this regard will be represented with a gauge in the UI.

If the player makes too many "Evil" choices then the player will attract the attention of the player before the end level creating an automatic end game as they do not have the strength until to defeat the player until the end level.

4 Genre and art Style

Genre Style

Since this game features heavy emphasis on player driven choice and boss battles during stage two of the game I choose to study Symphony of the night, a platform-adventure action role-playing game, as it features a wide and expansive selection of monsters as well as Chrono Trigger for it early use of dialogue and action driven choice system.

Castlevania: Symphony of the night

In symphony the enemies are well crafted, given earie and varying identities with distinct personalities demonstrated through expressive animations and attacks giving them a more

believable presence in the game. Even the death animations for each creature vary greatly with some spectacular and unique example throughout.

To an action game this is important as much of the gameplay is derived from the battles between the player and the games enemies, by filling the castle with as much enemies to fight through as was possible it created the intense situation that the plot of assaulting an evil stronghold would demand.

Gargantuan monsters such as Granfallon creted the idea of these hell like monsters that if not stopped would destroy the world, it was this attention to the design of these monsters that interested me, we never see the end of the world that the player battles to stop but by showing the hordes of monsters waiting to march out onto the world it left no doubt that this is what would happen if the player lost.

It is the boss battles that interested me the most simply for the dramatic way each entrance is given, such as the doppelganger, as a way to indicate the hero's just cause or lack thereof, the lack of grandeur in the hero will mean he's there for petty reasons simply a result of ruling a city that inevitably means someone is cross with you while the more justified the hero the more dazzling his entrance and more just his reason.

This could implant the idea of the players own actions consequences in the mind of the player far better than a simple text crawl.

Chrono Triger

Chrono triggers trial is great example of the connection I wish to make between the first and second stage of my game.

First you simply explore around town and village fair, while at the fair there are a number of ways to interact with the NPC's but for simplicity you can either be helpful towards the fair goers and they will speak in your defence or you can act like a jerk meaning they will speak against you, this affects the outcome of the trial.

The decisions of the first stage, where the player selects what methods will be used to either expand their control of the surrounding towns subverting the mayors or to destabilise threats and rivals to Cavil, should feed into what hero arrives, the more obviously evil the player acts the stronger the hero, the more Machiavellian and subtle the weaker and less justified the hero.

Pixel Art

The great thing about sprite art is the depth and complexity of the stylistic choices and crafted through the decades making it one of the most developed forms of depicting art in games.

The use of illusion of relevant throughout the art form using shape and colour to suggest at detail that is not necessarily present.

To quote Blake Reynolds "*In Mighty Final Fight Guy's eye is constructed with illusion in mind. By strategically grouping colours and observing their relationships, more complex shapes and forms were implied. The use of flesh tone under the eyelash and on the iris even implies other colours!*"

Sprite art works to use a viewer's expectations to fill in the blanks in the art to quickly and effectively create depictions of characters and environments.

Using this art form creatively early graphic limitation's became a source of experimentation to create striking images using minimal colours and space, these techniques became so popular that many of them are still used and preferred over modern techniques inspiring games such as Shovel Knight and Rogue legacy to follow their example.
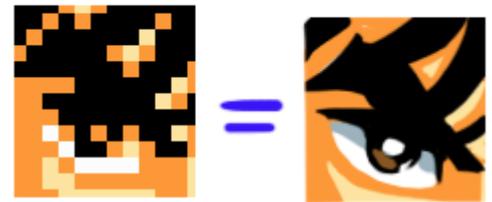
MIGHTY FINAL FIGHT (NES)

The limitations of the style instead became meaningful intent directing artists to focus on what is the most important elements to display with the least effort, this can create a more focused artwork to view and the works of Mario Sifuentes, Roger Lancelyn Green and Fool were great examples of this process using practical composition and colour design to imply more detail than was actually present.
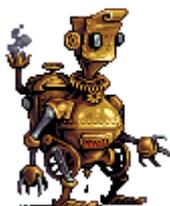
5   Music and sounds

The music should have a somewhat retro style to harken back to the era where Action/Adventure platformers that this game takes inspiration from were prevalent, such as the symphonic orchestra imitations of the Castlevania games that attempted to capture the gothic atmosphere of their world.

6   Other Ideas

Here are some other ideas that could be researched for further game mechanics and ideas but not central to the core idea of the game, these are not necessary to creating the game and can be left as optional includes with time allowing or are unsure as to whether these elements could work

- Base building

Theoretically it could be possible to have a table in the game that would present the player with a map of Cavils city to present the player with the ability to build up their town for beneifts in the dialogue options, giving the player more options.

- Real time strategy elements for controlling soldiers through the realm

Also, in conjunction with the base building choice perhaps the player could use a system in which the player actively choices how and what is being sent where and when to conquer the realm.

- Optional Side Quests

Giving the player more dialogue options which are not centred around further Cavils attempts to take over the realm but instead are predicated on image manage, giving the player the ability to lessen their evil ranking and enhance their authority metre, gain resources for base building or improve Cavils forces throughout the realm or Items and power ups for boos battles.

Trickgs.com/how-to-write-a-game-design-document/