

CS426 Game project proposal

Team name: Ridiculous Animal

Team members: Alfie Parthum

Game name: *X.N. Proto*

Proposed work:

1. Provide an overview of your game (give a short description about the game, i.e., game plot, objective, etc.):

Plot: When a large, ominous, unidentified spacecraft approaches Earth, your team is tasked with determining the possible damages.

Gameplay: Action segments consist of rail-based space shooting; these are interspersed with story segments.

2. What are the characters and their resources (e.g., health points, number of characters, weapons, etc.) in the game? What are the behaviors of the characters and how do they interact with each other and their resources?

Your team works for an insurance company; your "boss" will present them with the primary mission.

Your team commands a single ship (it's a small but talented group with no clear leader). You may choose who handles which combat roles after mission briefings, and poor player performance may kill specific characters in (known risky) roles. Dialogue will largely be chosen based on their present or preferred roles, and the primary use of characters will be as a vehicle to deliver the story rather than game abilities.

The ship is the real main character; it has two shooting modes: targeted and untargeted.

3. What types of conflicts do you have in the game?

The nature of the conflict will be determined by the player's suspicions about the primary mystery (that is, the answers to the mystery will somewhat confirm what the player decides is correct; this particular game is not supposed to be *The Walking Dead* and I am not out to make them feel bad because of a decision where they were not fully informed). Thus, many literary conflicts are possible; the large ship may be harmless, it may be bent on destroying Earth or a particular nation, it may be a giant government conspiracy to keep its people in line, and so forth.

Depending on who is alive near the end of the story, the team may be out for revenge. There may be some infighting, but the team is loyal to themselves and to their employer (which is also not out to get anyone, just out to get rich).

5. What is the main language you will use to implement the game?

C++, with Lua scripting where expedient (see next).

6. What tools/libraries you will use?

At present, Polycode appears to be the best framework for producing this particular game rapidly. The features that are most compelling in this assessment are its purported GUI and multitouch support, but it provides other things that seem very helpful for this project.

7. What types of user interface will you provide/use?

I intend to make gameplay compatible with controller and touch surfaces; some attention will be paid to mouse and keyboard, but the primary focus will be on touch: tagging enemy vessels to shoot will be very intuitive.

In addition, I intend to have shell menus and solid configuration options as is expected of a quality production. For cutscenes, I want to provide VCR-style controls and the ability to review.

8. What are the milestones you plan to have? Please give a short description and an expected finish time each for milestone.

Milestone 1: Have a basic rail shooter implemented, with movement and shooting mechanics. Target: end of February.

Milestone 2: Have cutscene/mission system in place, with rudimentary story and live-rendered characters. Target: end of March.

Milestone 3: Polish (have menus, configuration, basic story during missions) Target: end of April.

9. What are the difficulties/challenges do you foresee? How do you plan to address them?

I foresee every step of the way being full of challenges. First, I do not have any teammates working on this concept (yet). All asset and programming work falls to me, which means that I will be working with some very simplified assets.

Second, I am almost certainly being too ambitious about some very experimental features including story structure and programmatic art; the consolation for me is that they are based on some solid, conventional, often simple mechanics. Live-mixed music can be replaced with recorded music. Realtime cutscenes can be replaced with videos or less dynamic.

Third, I may be out of my element by focusing on touch input as a primary interface. It is new to me, and I may have some deep misunderstandings on how to design for it. For this, too, I know the mechanics I am planning on having have been done with more conventional hardware.

10. How would you divide the tasks among your team members (if more than one)?

I am prepared to bring my own experience in programming, character art, and music production to the table.

11. Why do you think your game is interesting/exciting?

First and foremost, I am trying to provide a good setting with compelling characters. An experimental character animation system has the potential to make story production more efficient for myself working alone; I want to be able to have characters "act" by expressing themselves rather than by going along pre-set animations, and use a 2.5D non-photorealistic style to save both the quickly made nature of 2D art and time-saving aspects of 3D animation. My mission system will not be conventionally linear, but use a number of flags,

providing a basic structure with a lot of flexibility (as is sometimes found in visual novels). If I can do *any* of this, it will be interesting on its own.

Second, I think this style of rail shooter hasn't been visited often enough; even if it is not well done, I think a lot of people will be happy to see this sort of shooting mechanic.

Finally, I want the product to just feel good. I may not succeed at making a good game, but I want to have a code base that I can reuse where all the expected features of a game (such as configuration and menus) are done right and decent controls can be reapplied. Also, since performance is critical, I will probably learn some very valuable lessons about improving it on this project.

12. Do you model your game after an existing game? If so, what is it?

The proposed project is intended to serve as a prototype version of a larger game.

The intended fully-fledged game will feature first-person space shooting combat and a mission structure, something like *Wing Commander*. Also envisioned is an element of exploration similar to *Freelancer*.

For simplicity and demonstration of touch interface with available hardware, ship movement for this proposal will be more like a rail shooter with a tag-and-fire system, which might hark back to *Star Fox 64* or *Panzer Dragoon*.