Labyrinth - a draft of game design documentation, and detailing of project goals

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Abstract

Following note describes video game Labyrinth. It's plot, setting, gameplay mechanics and so on as well as certain details of its technical aspects and reasons for development of this project

1 Introduction

Labyrinth is an RPG game (role playing game) focused on story of single character (refered to as Astronaut). For most of the time player has full control over the character as he progresses through game.

Main character is a pilot of an interstellar transport ship which has suffered malfunction in the middle of galactic nowhere. Be it main propulsion, life support system or both, Astronaut is desperate to find spare parts and assistance to make necessary repairs. The only star system within limited (due to malfunction) ship's range happens to be Praxis with its Praxis prime planet which once was populated, but now is dead (due to civil war, nuclear/biological weapons et cætera). Planet is right now inhospitable, but there is a large orbital station (once living city) which hopefully isn't that much contaminated.

Astronauts decided to dock his or her starship to said spacestation to search for required supplies and possible assistance.

2 Setting

Mentioned space station acts as a whole setting for the game, and exploring it will be one of main player activities. Space station will not be entirely dead. Indeed during civil war quite a lot of people found refugee there and it is far from being empty. While without right governance and supplies most of it's inhabitants have starved, died from diseases and inner conflicts at least few small communities thrive in various subsectors of the Space Station.

Station-dwellers aren't forming unified society. Conversely: most of these small communities have very distinct goals, beliefs and are frequently hostile towards each other.

Moreover, not all of them are human. Many were already exposed to some viruses used on planet surface during civil war, and some of them comprise of semi-sentient robots or even undead zombies reanimated by arcane technology.

Figure 1: A space station

Astronaut will have to approach them in different ways. Some can provide useful assistance, while others are outwardly hostile towards player. Many of them will require certain missions to be undertaken by player (side quests or parts of main quest) or even will force player to side with them in conflict (joining factions may or may not have gameplay effect).

Just as with its inhabitants, many vital systems of Space Station are malfunctioning for years and gradually degenerating. While majority of space station will be accessible, some parts will require wearing proper space suit (with limited power/oxygen supply). Accessing certain areas will require lockpick skill or fixing computers.

3 Plot

Keep in mind that this note won't describe plot of the game in details. Detailed main quest scenario isn't even ready at this point.

4 Gameplay mechanics

Core gameplay will be divided into three main basic mode: Exploration, Battle and Menu. First two will be presented in fully three-dimensional environment. The third is of direct access to character development options, character setup (worn armour, weapons used, default combat tactics et cætera).

Exploration mode will be presented in third person perspective using point-and-click mechanic as this is preferred by users of modern tablets/smartphones, although dual analog stick controls will be provided too for users of (portable) consoles. Clicking [1] on any place

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[1]Clicking or touching, I will use these words as if they had identical meaning even if it is not always the case. After all they do represent the same kind of activity: pointing item on screen

on map will force character to move there and clicking an interactive object will enable some menu driven interaction. I.e. clicking on locked door will enable lockpicking screen, while clicking on non-hostile NPC will trigger talk. Clicking on hostile mob will obviously trigger battle mode.

Battle mode is purposefully different from exploration mode in almost all aspects including user interface options and mood set by music, visual effects etc. While exploration mode will be presenting dark, depressive mood of abandoned/partially ruined space station in the middle of cosmic nowhere, battle mode will be dynamic action paced with all means of increasing tension (including usage of warm colors). In battle mode player will have set amount of combat abilities (like "attack", "defend", "furious charge" etc. with more becoming available while character advances) as well as abilities to consume various combat drugs and possibly escape combat.

Regarding menu mode, there will be plenty of possibilities for character advancement, including increasing skills and purchasing additional abilities, affecting both battle mode and exploration mode, as well as affecting completion of the main quest (one of requirements is to obtain spare parts, other is to even find someone who will perform repairs necessary or just to increase character's "repair" skill to certain level).

5   Project goals and summary

Apart from development of Labyrinth game itself, which serves merely as an excuse to do this, main goal of the project is to research feasibility of development 3D multiplatform video game using OpenGL|ES API.

In fact as this is mainly a research project, main measure of its success will be completeness and portability of (written ground-up) game engine supporting Labyrinth's gameplay, not development of vast set of audio-visual assets (models, textures, soundtracks) and full implementation of cRPG plot.

This is not saying, that whole description of "Labyrinth" game is meaningless. Quite opposite: precise description of gameplay mechanics will serve as fair benchmark of completeness of an engine and therefore of success of a research project.