

Game Postmortems

CMPUT 299
Fall 2005
November 15

Game Postmortems

- What has the game industry learned about game design?
 - What lessons can we learn?
 - How does the game-development industry work?
 - What parts of the game design process do we not think about?

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The Sims 2



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The Sims 2

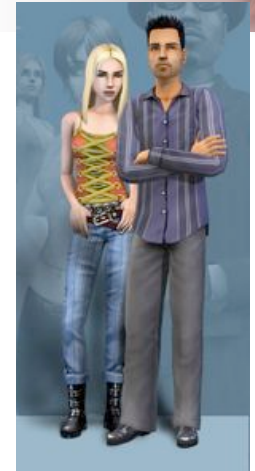
- What went right
 - Prototyping
 - Understanding the audience
 - Kleenex testing
 - Custom content and community
 - SWAT Teams



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The Sims 2

- What went wrong
 - Noisy feedback
 - That's a lot of content
 - New engine, new pipelines, learning curve
 - Sequelitis
 - Big team communications



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Spiderman 2



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Spiderman 2: Swinging system

- What went right
 - Waiting for the right moment
 - Prototyping
 - Rotating talent onto the system
 - The advantages of consensus
 - Hallway gameplay testing



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Spiderman 2: Swinging system

- What went wrong
 - Executives too lenient?
 - Not enough rigorous focus testing in early phases
 - It's not the tutorial, it's the system
 - The disadvantages of consensus

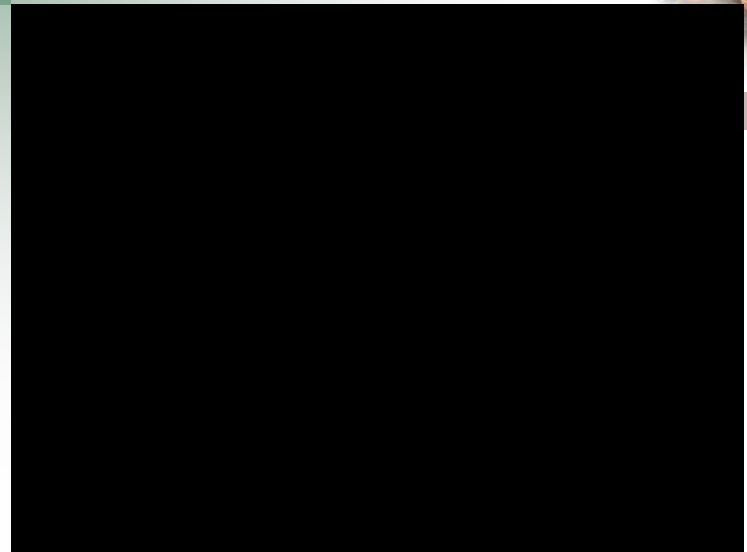


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Katamari Damacy



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Katamari Damacy

- What went right
 - Researching scale
 - No powerups
 - Controlling the rolling
 - Peaceful, easy feeling
 - Audible Excellence



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Katamari Damacy

- What went wrong
 - Tipping the scale
 - Falling apart
 - The camera and the queasy
 - Not getting oblong
 - Time limits



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Neverwinter Nights



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Neverwinter Nights

- What went right
 - Constant communication
 - Extensive tool effort
 - Multiplayer integration from the outset
 - Experienced team members focused on quality
 - Sharing resources with other projects



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Neverwinter Nights

- What went wrong
 - Resources added at non-optimal times
 - Incomplete prototypes
 - Delayed rule implementation (including tools implementation delay)
 - Late feature additions; innovation for its own sake
 - A lot of demos



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Knights of the Old Republic



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KOTOR

- What went right
 - An experienced team
 - Focusing on mainstream players
 - Combat choreography
 - Interface iteration
 - Using feedback to tune the game



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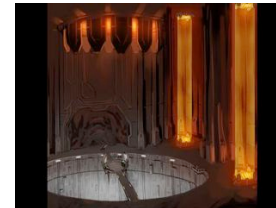
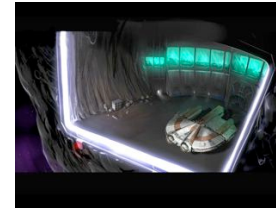
KOTOR

- What went wrong
 - Using a round-based system
 - Tutorial handling
 - Lack of interface prototyping
 - Sequencing of resources
 - Not enough feedback to tune the game



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KOTOR-II



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KOTOR-II

- What went right
 - Alignment and influence system
 - Memorable moments
 - Automated design systems
 - Item creation and upgrading
 - Numerous miscellaneous enhancements



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KOTOR-II

- What went wrong
 - Quality of content
 - Cut scenes
 - Technical limitations
 - AI implementation
 - Insufficient polish time



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Summary

- What are important aspects of game design?
 - Interface control (especially consoles)
 - Visual feedback
 - User testing
 - Testing the right things
 - With the right people
 - Collecting the proper feedback
 - Design team dynamics
 - Feature control
 - Time

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My own experiences

- From Asteroids to Vectrex (GCE's system), vector graphics have a special place in the history of gaming. First pioneered by Cinematronics in the 1977 game "Space Wars", the method of drawing sharp geometric shapes with straight lines harks back to the days when "simplicity and intense gameplay" were the mantra of game players and developers. For the next 21 days, iDevGames invites Mac developers to go retro by developing a game that captures the glory and spirit of vector graphic gaming.

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SV Racer

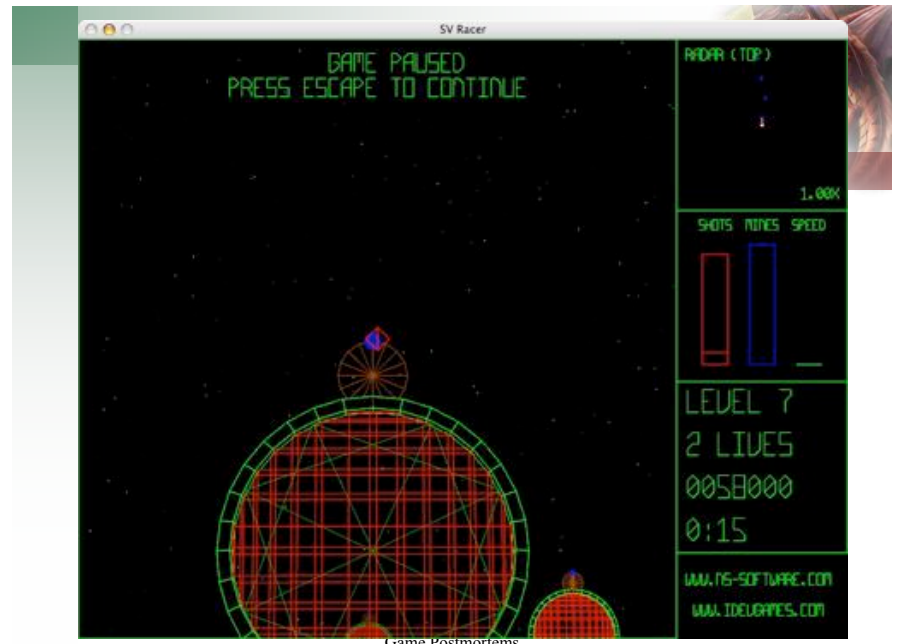


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SV Racer

- What went right?
 - Learned OpenGL
 - Good initial code design
 - Object system allowed innovative levels
 - MIDI sound/music

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SV Racer

- What went wrong?
 - Didn't win contest!
 - What was the contest design goal?
 - Not enough time
 - Controls too complex

