

Form Info

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Name of the Game

Half-life: Alyx

Date

07/04/2020

Session 3: Video observation | 45 to 60 minutes

a) Descriptive Notes

- For my Session 3 I watched my friend play in person Half-Life Alyx where I could watch him play in front of me as well as watch his progress on the computer.
- Began watching my friend Thomas play VR on July 4th at 10:33am
- He loads up his save game that is slightly further ahead - his first move is to check his ammunition and check the slide of his weapon
- He is spending a lot less time looking around at the environment as his greater experience renders him slightly more immune to the awe-factor I experienced while playing the game
- Thomas is far more direct in his gameplay style, constantly moving and traversing the environment much more efficiently than I was able to.
- His initial challenge has him avoiding a blind monster with a keen sense of hearing literally named Jeff. If he, the player, interacts with something that makes noise, the monster charges towards him. The level design is a cluttered maze-like basement.
- The puzzle to be solved in this area is that he must collect three items that will help him unlock a door to allow his progress through the game all while remaining undetected by the monster (Jeff).
- Even as a spectator, my heart is racing and my adrenaline is pumping watching him try to elude this monster
- He is paying far more attention to what is immediately in front of him as he prioritizes solving the puzzle quietly.
- He has found a useful item (a gas mask) that protects him from a hazard in the level (plants spitting out noxious fumes that cause his character to cough, thereby alerting Jeff)
- He has hit a snag trying to figure out how to raise a grate by turning a wheel that has a piece of rebar through it - clearly the motion of the wheel is limited which limits how high the grate can rise.
- The difficulty with the stuck wheel is that as soon as it starts to turn, it alerts the monster (Jeff) who charges in - Thomas has seconds each attempt to try to solve this puzzle and the grate drops unless it is actively being raised.
- He is trying to utilize the physics of the game to wedge an object underneath the partially raised gate.
- Thomas is getting exhausted as VR is a physically-demanding medium
- After multiple attempts requiring several escapes from Jeff, the puzzle is solved utilizing the gravity glove items which allow the player to manipulate and "grab" objects from a distance..
- Thomas makes much larger jumps through the level keeping most of his focus on what's

directly in front of him.

- Thomas has reached an upgrade station where he can use power cores to upgrade his equipment - there are multiple ways of upgrading your equipment depending on your play style.
- He has escaped the complex that Jeff was in - he is stating his current objective is to finally defeat Jeff once and for all
- He has lured Jeff into a garbage compactor and finally defeated him once and for all.
- Thomas is going to take a break to regain some energy. Stopping play at 11:19am

c) Affective Notes

- Thomas initially experiences joy in being able to share the VR experience with others
- He felt a fair amount of frustration trying to solve the puzzle involving the stuck wheel - expressed exasperation vocally
- I was surprised that he doesn't take any breaks during his play session to pause the game and rest but instead powers through the whole session - having experienced the addictively-immersive nature of VR, I believe I am starting to understand.
- His vocalization is largely based on expressing annoyance or frustration with difficulty he faces trying to solve puzzles but he does still frequently mention his appreciation for the visual detail and level design put into the game.
- I believe it is important for potential players to recognize that, although frustration is vocalized by this expert player, annoyance can come from a challenging moment or puzzle and is not reflective of the game in its entirety - context is always important when subjectively assessing video games.

b) Analytic Notes

- Problems encountered by the player were gameplay-based and solved through trial and error, observation, and exploration.
- Race, gender, class, and violence were not addressed by the player during the playthrough.
- The game seemed more streamline and narrative when played in a direct manner as opposed to my more meandering and less-driven play style.
- Quick connection to Bogost: impossible to separate VR from the idea of texture and how VR supplants a player from the real to a digital world.

Fieldnote Summary Session 3

This game has a driving narrative that can bring a cinematic experience to a spectator as the literal first-person view at play is quite different from often fixed or wide-angle views in other FPS games or 3rd-person RPGs. This is a game that challenges players to master the VR controls and to think creatively to solve puzzles.

Include Images

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