Gilbert's Great Escape

Game Design Document

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Title

Gilbert's Great Escape

Description/feature set

The player controls Gilbert, a tiny squid-like alien that specializes in flying space-craft and walks around on land in a robot suit. The game play supports both ship piloting and ground travel. While in the ship, the character is tasked with utilizing a special tool to collect falling meteors. Meteors are exchanged for currency which can then be used by Gilbert on the ground to purchase ship upgrades.

- Gameplay – Action, Skill

- Technology – The game is designed using Game Maker 8 Pro and will run only on a PC

- Story – Simple story with endearing characters

- Visuals – The graphics consists of cheery and blocky characters and objects designed with bright colors.

- Sound – A simple looping composition of computer bleeps and bloops plays in the background while sound effects provide feedback to the player.

- Interface – The interface displays vital information to the character, such as health, currency, and objective feedback as well as level-specific information, such as 'time-left'.

- Mood – The game is up-beat with characters and sound-effects and characters remaining cheery through to the end.

Purpose/application

The main purpose of the game is to challenge the players as they attempt to collect meteors and manage their money while at the same time entertaining them with endearing graphics and audio.

Premise/high concept

You wake up in a daze as smoke fills your five and a half lungs. Suddenly you remember…
meteors! You are Gilbert and your spaceship has crashed on an alien planet. You must now work
with the locals to harvest meteors, repair your ship, upgrade your systems, and escape back to
where you belong: *SPACE!*

Genre

Action, Skill-based

Style

The visual style of the game is designed around a blocky cartoonish style with bright colors.
Characters are stocky and are animated simply. The style of the game is supposed to be cheery
and endearing which will encourage a connection between the players and the game elements.

Platform

The primary platform for Gilbert's Great Escape is the PC due to it using the Game Maker
engine. Other platforms for the game would be incompatible.

Audience/market

The game is designed to appeal to general audiences. Younger players, ages 7 to 14, and older
players, above the age of 20, will appreciate upbeat tone of the game.

Rating

The expected ESRB rating for Gilbert's Great Escape is E, for everyone. The game includes no
violence, profanity, or older concepts.

Player mode

The game is controlled by only a single player in any game mode.

Time interval

The game is played entirely in real time. Players have 60 seconds to play during flight sections.

Back story

Gilbert was once the best meteor wrangler in all of the Andromeda Galaxy, but those days are now behind him. These days Gilbert flies his old ship through the cosmos looking for odd jobs and adventure. He was recently caught in a terrible meteor storm. His ship was damaged and was forced to crash land on a remote planet in the Soolar Solar system. The locals from Meteor Co. have agreed to lend him a replacement ship and help him repair his original ship if he helps them to harvest meteors for the coming season.

Character descriptions

Gilbert, the Alien: (Included Visual 1, Characters/Objects)

Gilbert is a small green squid-like alien that utilizes a grey humanoid robot suit to travel around on land and interact with other species. He has amazing piloting skills with a wide array of ship types and was once one of the best known competitors in the sport of Meteor Wrangling. Gilbert is friendly enough and willing to assist the locals from Meteor Co. if it means getting off this planet and back on the stellar road.

The player controls Gilbert when on the ground. Gilbert is shown as a green squid sitting on top of the shoulders of a stocky grey robot. He is set on a two-dimensional plane and can only be moved left and right. Gilbert triggers no specific audio effects and is animated simply when moving. The player interacts with the Meteor Co. Ship and the Shopkeeper's Shop by walking into them. Gilbert can walk around inside the shop but the player must use the Mouse to interact with the Shopkeeper and the merchandise.

Meteor Co. MKII Meteor Harvester: (Included in Visual 1, Characters/Objects)

Meteor Co. has always used Harvester class hover-ships to collect meteors while they are most valuable; during active meteor showers. The current MKII Meteor Harvester utilizes a Plasma Tether which attaches itself to meteors and then returns to follow the ship automatically. The pilot is then expected to transport the meteors to the nearest Meteor Co. Processing Plant where they are processed and organized to be sold or used by the company.

The Meteor Harvester is disk-shaped and houses only enough room for a single pilot in its transparently-encased cockpit. The player controls the ship as it is piloted by Gilbert and is able to move it up, down, left, and right. The ship wobbles slightly as it hovers around. When the player clicks his mouse anywhere on the screen, the ship launches the Plasma Tether which is animated as a flying electric mass accompanied by a shooting sound effect. An audio effect plays when the player drops collected meteors into the Meteor Co. Processing Funnel and numerals are displayed above the ship to communicate with the player how much each collected meteor is worth. Finally, the ship changes mechanically and visually as the player upgrades it.

The Shopkeeper: (Included in Visual 1, Characters/Objects)

Meteor Co. always makes an effort to deal with or employ the locals who live on the planets which house their facilities. This is often to the benefit of the inhabitants as Meteor Co. treats all their associates fairly and their facilities are renowned for their environmental friendliness. The Shopkeeper is one such individual living near the Meteor Co. Processing Plant on the planet Greyble 9 in the Soolar Solar System. The Shopkeeper has a special deal with Meteor Co. wherein he repairs the company's Meteor Harvester ships while using company resources to develop and sell general ship wares and upgrades. The Shopkeeper has agreed to repair Gilbert's ship by the end of the season if Gilbert assists Meteor Co. in harvesting special Glowtanium meteors.

The Shopkeeper is a short, green, pointy-eared alien. He wears his mechanic's coat while tending his shop. The Shopkeeper initially greets the player at the beginning of the game, addressing the game objective and informing the player about ship upgrades and repairs. The shopkeeper is only animated at the beginning and end of the game. There are no sound effects associated with him and the player only interacts with the shopkeeper when he runs into him outside the shop.

Competitive analysis

PixelJunk Shooter:

PixelJunk Shooter, by developer Q-Games, is a recently released game designed around piloting a small ship while underground on an alien planet. PixelJunk Shooter tasks the player to fly around in their tiny ship and use a claw to grab and rescue tiny stranded aliens. The game provides physics-based multiplayer game-play. However, Gilbert's Great Escape competes directly with PixelJunk Shooter by offering the player currency and ship upgrade options in addition ship piloting and object collecting. Gilbert's Great Escape also provides a different atmosphere with characters and objects that are more defined than the indistinguishable characters in PixelJunk Shooter.

Rules

Number of Players:

Only one player is able to control the game during play.

Length of play:

The player has 60 seconds during each piloting session and is given only ten sessions in which to complete the overall goal. The entire game should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete.

Gameplay:

The player uses the Meteor Tether while flying his ship to collect falling meteors. Meteors come in various sizes and are differentiated as regular meteors or special Glowtanium meteors. All meteor types are automatically turned into currency. While on the ground the player can use collected currency to buy upgrades and repairs from the shop.

Victory/Loss Conditions:

The player has 60 seconds to pilot his ship while collecting meteors. At the end of this period, the player is returned to the surface where he can return to the meteor shower or visit the shop. The ship can also be damaged by falling meteors while flying. If the ship takes enough damage then the player will be returned to the surface where he must spend money to repair his ship before he is allowed to fly again.

Game End:

The player is tasked with collecting 100 Glowtanium meteors throughout the length of the game. If the player succeeds then he is greeted by Shopkeeper who repairs Gilbert's ship and sends him off cheerfully. If the player does not succeed then he is greeted by the Shopkeeper who expresses sadness that Gilbert did not gather enough meteors, but informs Gilbert that he has repaired his ship anyways.

Challenges

Dangers:

The only immediate danger faced by the player during game play is the threat of meteors colliding with his ship. Meteors must be avoided by the player as colliding with them will deal damage to the player's hull (health). Smaller meteors are easy to avoid and do not deal as much damage while larger meteors are more deal more damage and are more difficult to avoid.

Economy:

The player must keep in mind how efficiently he is able to collect currency in relation to how he wants to spend it.

Objective:

The player will become more focused on collecting only Glowtanium meteors as the game nears its end. However, regular meteors are more common than Glowtanium meteors and the player will be forced to maneuver around them in order to collect the Glowtanium meteors specifically.

Strategy

An effective strategy that the player can employ is to upgrade his thrusters as early and as often as possible. Buying new thrusters will increase the player's speed while piloting his ship, which will lead to various benefits. First of all, a faster ship will be able to maneuver quickly towards Glowtanium and larger more valuable meteors. Furthermore, the increased ship speed will allow the player to return collected meteors to the Processing Plant more often. Lastly, increased ship speed will aid the player in moving around regular meteors later in the game where Glowtanium becomes more valuable as the objective than the simple meteors which only translate into money.

Theory/game balance

Meteor Value/Danger:

There is a balance between how valuable each meteor is, how dangerous it is in a collision, how easy it is to transport them, and how easy they are to avoid. Smaller meteors are worth small amounts of currency but do little damage, are simple to transport, and are easy to avoid. Larger meteors are worth large amounts of currency, but are difficult to transport. If the player is not cautious then they may accidentally drag a larger meteor into the shield that protects the funnel, destroying their bounty. Larger meteors also deal more damage to the player and are more difficult to avoid when attempting to gather Glowtanium meteors.

Randomized Meteors/Player Skill:

Meteors of all types are dropped randomly upon the playing field at rates according to their value. The largest Glowtanium meteors are the rarest while the smallest regular meteors are the most common. It is ultimately up to the ability of the player whether they are able to take the opportunities to collect the more valuable meteors as they appear or to be content with steadily collecting the less valuable ones which appear in bulk.

Upgrade Cost/Variety:

Items in the shop are balanced by their costs. Both the hull and the thrusters provide suitable upgrades which allow the player to explore various strategies based on either maneuverability or hull strength. Further thruster and hull upgrades are made available to the player as they purchase the preceding items. The new upgrades are more effective but they also cost more. A player may be inclined to save their money to put towards the next thruster or may be encouraged to spend what they have on the early hull upgrade.

Perspective/game view

Visual 2, HUD/User Interface

The game environment is shown from the side view of characters on a two-dimensional plane. Characters and objects are shown in profile.

User interface

HUD: (Included in Visuals 2 and 3, HUD/User Interface)

Passive HUD elements relay the status of game elements to the player. A health bar, currency tracker, and objective tracker is displayed in the upper left hand corner of the screen. The player is able to use these to keep track of how much money he has accumulated and how much more Glowtanium meteors must be collected throughout the course of the game. Players also only have a certain amount of time they are able to fly their ship for, which is relayed as "Fuel Left" in the center of the screen and counts down in seconds from 60.

Active HUD elements include in-game menus and items within the shop. The player is able to make menu selections and confirm dialogue segments with the Mouse. When in the shop the players can hover their mouse over merchandise to display textual information about the items.

Controls:

The game is controlled using the keyboard and mouse. The W, A, S, and D keys move the characters around while the Mouse is used to interact with game menus and items in the shop. The Mouse is also used to launch the plasma tether while piloting the ship. The player can press Enter to open up a pause menu.

Audio

Music:

A looping composition of bleeps and bloops plays in the background throughout the game.

Sound effects:

Sound effects provide feedback to the player in a variety of ways. A wooshing noise plays when the player successfully drops a meteor into the funnel. A collision noise plays when the player's ship is hit by a meteor. The sound of a cash register plays when the player purchases an item in the shop.

Summary/future updates

Additional Features:

There are a few features which could be implemented in future versions of the game. For example, players could be given more items to purchase at the shop which allow them to customize their ship aesthetically, such as ships that differ visually both in shape and in color. More level types utilizing the ship and plasma tether game play mechanics. For example, a rock-hurling monster could threaten the area. The player could use the plasma tether to catch the rocks that the monster throws and then drop them back on top of the monster to deal damage. Lastly, multiplayer modes can be added which allows players to compete with each other to harvest meteors.

Sequels:

Further adventures of Gilbert the alien and the universe he lives in could be explored through sequels to this game. Other games would include his piloting skills in their mechanics but will not necessarily utilize the same tether mechanics shown in Gilbert's Great Escape. Further ground game play could be explored in sequels as well, allowing the player to interact more actively on the ground using Gilbert's robot suit.

Visual 1, Objects/Characters

Gilbert, the Alien
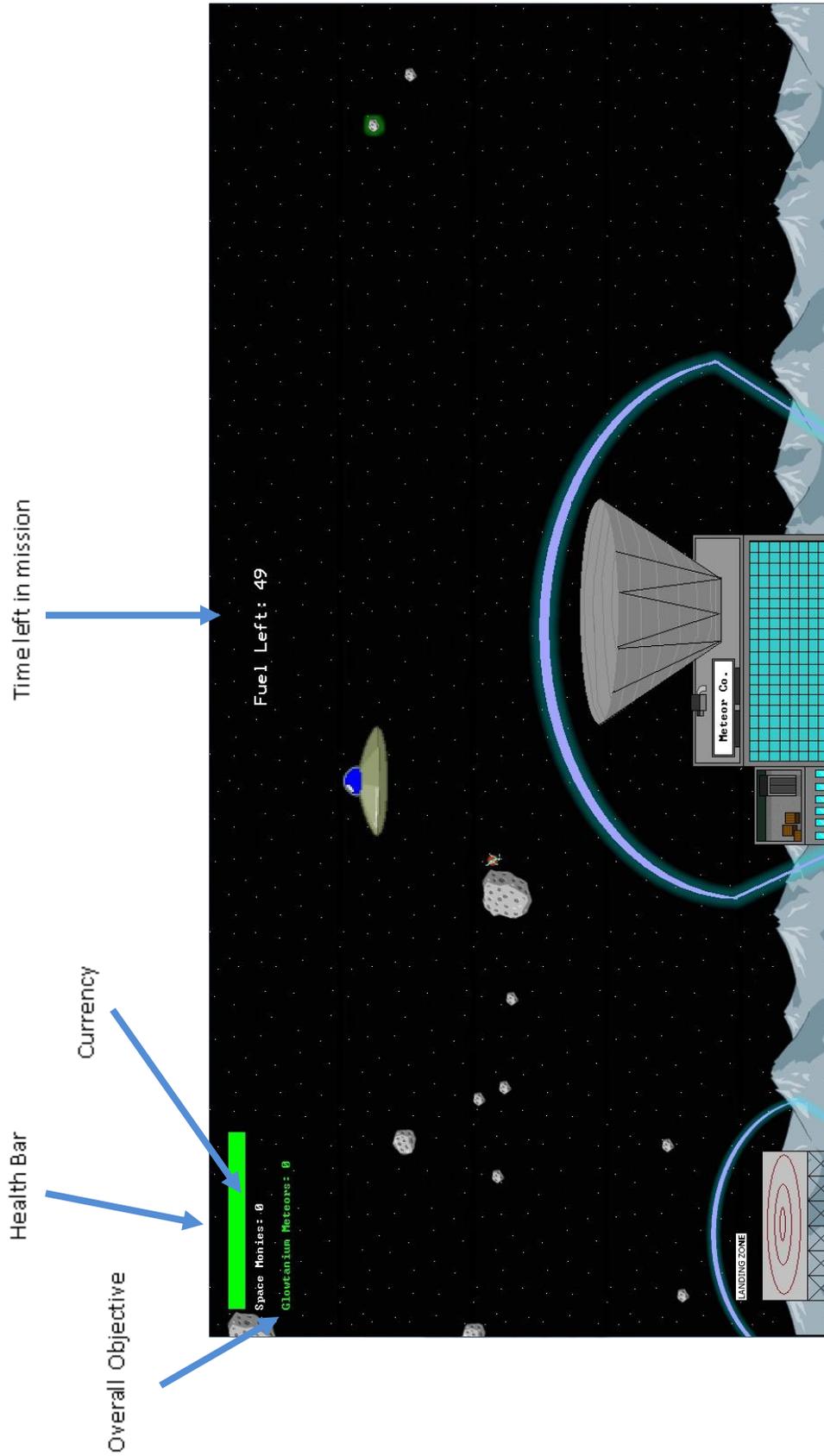
The Shopkeeper

Meteor Co. MKII Meteor Harvester

Regular Meteor

Glowtanium Meteor

Visual 2, HUD/Interface

Time left in mission

Fuel Left: 49

Currency

Health Bar

Space Monies: 0

Gloutanium Meteors: 0

Overall Objective

Meteor Co.

LANDING ZONE

Visual 2, HUD/Interface