

ZENITH REPORT.
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ZENITH : CLIMBING TO SUCCESS?

by Kevin Finnigan.

IDEA:

I personally like the idea of a climbing game making it's mark on the next-generation consoles. It's innovative and clever idea is a solid base for a game which I feel, after time could be very good indeed. There has, over the past few years been a saturation of the market with the same types of games. Racing games and fighting games have certainly dominated for some time now and a new idea like this one could certainly prove to be a welcome change to game-players throughout the world. I am not sure of the actual plot or story-line at the moment but these can all be easily manufactured to accommodate the game features. So overall, I feel that this game is the newest and most creative idea to come from DMA that I myself have personally viewed.

GRAPHICS:

At the moment the graphics seem "nice and tidy" with the emphasis on good looking shiny blocks making up the walls. If anything the graphics seem too.....exact and precise with the walls at times looking a bit square and symmetrical. I think it should feel as though the player is in a more hazardous terrain with more rough and uneven blocks making up the walls, this of course would complicate things on the editor, but it's an opinion. The characters at the moment are impressive to look at when zoomed in and fast moving and slick when zoomed out. The items that can be collected in the levels (money and time etc) all look good and not out of place in the landscape. The textures on the walls are good with some great carvings and figures dominating the walls keeping the players eyes constantly interested. I hear there are to be six different worlds, so these graphics can only get more impressive as the game progresses throughout each different world. The world selection screen at the beginning of the game looks good as it smoothly glides between each selection. Overall, I'm impressed. When consumers nowadays are buying games they are expecting a mix of great graphics and gameplay all neatly rolled into the one package. The days of a game just having great gameplay are I feel (on the 64 at least) now truly gone forever and I feel Zenith could easily accommodate the consumers needs by having a good blend of graphics and gameplay.

GAMEPLAY IN ZENITH.

The gameplay at the moment in Zenith is it's best feature. While I have been writing this report I am constantly drawn back to the game just *for research purposes*, erm okay it could be due to the fact I've been trying to complete the level all afternoon. The game is one which I find is nice blend of action, with the enemies and hazards, added to this a strategic thought needed to complete each level.

The main characters movements are hopefully going to be altered to be more analogue, maybe even using the control stick instead of the pad for the characters movements? I would like to see the player having more fighting techniques and surprises up his sleeve for the countless enemies he will be faced with. The players movements must feel as though he is swinging and flowing up the levels whereas at the moment it all seems far too *grid orientated* for my liking.

The added elements I have encountered on this demo have impressed me with the moving platforms and firing cannon looking great as well as the other features adding to this. There has to be more of these feature in the game though. The player should not be faced with a large straightforward wall surface at any point of the game. The electric beams are really nice, as is the large spiked moving block.

I would like more variety in the game though, as I feel the player may get a little bored constantly climbing throughout the entire game. More of the quirky little features like the cannon firing section would be a good bonus section. There has to be a less serious attitude in this game with a few "silly ideas" thrown in to break up the climbing strategy.

I would like to see a few individual missions in the game to create a diversion from "reaching the top all the time." Could we manipulate the game in such a way so that the player could enter small caves in the wall to try to find things. And before you all jump on the band-wagon, NO I do not mean make it like an RPG I just think it needs more thoughtful elements to it's gameplay. Missions like: - rescue the child who is hanging off the edge of a ledge,

- use the cannon to fire a package onto a flying vehicle circling the wall,
- blow holes in the wall to find a certain powerup etc, etc, etc.

The idea of having enemies on the ledges is good and hopefully the fights will be quite hard but also rewarding at the same time. Maybe if we could have *taunting* enemies who are guarding their ledge on the wall enticing the player to either pass or fight.

The camera can at times be quite annoying and I feel it has to behave more intelligently zooming out and in when required but still being controlled overall by the player. I would love to see the 3D camera and techniques used to their potential here to have a whole four sided landscape for this game. The opportunities for really random routes up the walls would be tremendous and add a whole new complexion to the game-play. If this game is carried out on the Nintendo then I certainly feel that this total 3D environment is the way to implement this game.

I am not sure if I like the idea of having as many as 30 levels in this game, unless there are a selection of bonus games implemented throughout the players journey.

Overall I enjoy the gameplay at the moment and feel as though it has the potential to be very impressive indeed.

MUSIC:

Although there is no music at the moment in the demo version that we have, I have a fairly good idea of what I would like in this game. It should be fairly up-tempo and changing rapidly depending on whether the player is ascending or descending the wall. This though will all come in time when the music has been added in to the game.

2-PLAYER OPTION?

This is a game which gives us a perfect opportunity to create a brilliant two-player race game. The amount of pit-falls and routes each player could take makes the prospect truly mouth-watering. We have seen in Waverace just how well the Nintendo seems to cope at handling all the polygons and data in split screen mode for two players, although it is unfair to compare these games I hope that this option looks as good in Zenith. If this two-player option was constructed correctly I feel the longevity of Zenith would automatically be dramatically increased two-fold. Here's hoping anyway.

SUMMING UP:

The game design is an impressive one and one ~~in~~ which could lead towards a great game, if done correctly though. The shell of the game will hopefully be in total 3D, ~~and~~ with lots more puzzle elements added to the game. This looks as though it has the potential to be a winner for DMA.