

GRAEME LAWS

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ZENITH REPORT

First Impressions

When I first saw this game, I thought the graphics were really sharp and colourful, and the whole thing looked inviting. When I played it, I found the controls, really stiff, unresponsive and awkward. It also felt like a 3-dimensional Prince of Persia. I did however feel compelled to get further into it....

Control System

As I got into it, I got used to the control system, and began to be able to use it to do a host of interesting moves. The longer I practised it, the more enjoyable it became.

Soon I was able to run about the play area, jump and grab onto high up platforms, and climb about all over walls, I found it great fun.

The worst part of the control system is the fact that the character moves in grids, that should have been left way behind with games like head over heels on the spectrum. You should be able to walk anywhere on the ground you want. It just seems a bit like going back to the past with these controls and is out of date

Graphics

Play Area

At first I thought the graphics were sharp, and colourful, but then as I played, I realised that this did not suit the game.

There are too many of the same colours used and this causes characters and walls to blend in with each other, like a camouflage. They are also far too bright and hurt my eyes.

The textures are too sharp, and bland. The floor tiles don't seem to have anything drawn on it, like cracks, or dirt, there simply too clean. Also they look tiled, the grid lines are far too obvious, this can be avoided as is shown with the green wall tiles and wooden effect (which are both very nice), where they don't look joined at all. Further up, in the lava pit, the lava looked nice, but you can see small gridlines within it. I really like the fireballs that shot out the pit, they looked great.

The scrolling and camera movement is very smooth, but it was hard to find an angle that showed everything I wanted to see especially at one point where I fell into a pit, and there was a platform just above it, that wouldn't allow me to look into the pit, and I couldn't get my character out.

I liked the border and the clock, although it did not fit in with the game, the game graphics are very medieval but the border and clock are cyber-punk.

CHARACTERS

I did not like the main characters apart from the devil, the rest looked a bit weedy and they had no faces. I did not particularly like their animation, especially when they ran, it was totally unrealistic. Whereas in Flashback, when the main character ran, he took big strides and swung his arms back and forward, the characters in Zenith, sort of half heartedly jogged, but not very well. The jump, was bad too, they just jumped, instead of crouching down and leaping.

Out of all the enemy characters, I thought the bats were amazing, they moved smoothly and fluidly, and had a life-like look to them. The spiders just reminded me of Body Harvest, and the gargoyles looked nice, but nothing special.

GAMEPLAY

The thought of climbing to a top of a tower, to me, is not much fun at all, but surprisingly I found it kind of enjoyable, especially once I had the control system sorted. It was fun to jump from platform to platform. It also has a good feeling of exploration, always wondering what's next. A few things I can think of that would make it more enjoyable, is if you could, go inside certain areas, and through tunnels, that have traps inside, and appear out at another part of the platform, because as it is, it feels that the tower is flat, and has nothing on the other side (I know it hasn't though). So it would be good to go around the tower. Inside the tunnels, could be traps to disarm, with puzzles, enemy ambushes and things like that. Another idea is to have two towers on the level, and the only way to get to the top of one is to find a way to get across to another one, perhaps a rope, and climb up it, alternating between the two. The puzzles in the game were really boring. It ended up that I didn't bother trying most of them as I don't think pushing buttons and moving blocks is much fun. However, what I did like were the razor blades that came out parts of the wall, but best of all was the cannon (surprise), as it broke up the climbing aspect of the game, and was fun shooting things.

OVERALL

In overall, even though I said a lot that was bad about the game, I really do like it, I just don't like the most of the way it has been done. The control system is great (apart from the grids) and fun. The graphics are good in places, but look too much like they have been placed together on an editor, and the gameplay only has a few highs (the cannon for one). But it really does have potential, if it has a lot of smart novelty games in it (like the cannon) and no grid movement at all.