PreviewLabs
Rapid Game Prototyping

Zzebbraa – Brainstorm Report

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Summary

This document summarizes three game concepts that are the result of our brainstorm session held on the 4th of June.

1   Hidden Object Game

Much like the games of the Mystery Case Files series (gameplay demonstrated in the following video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bwFhMW2Mow&feature=relmfu), this concept would be about spotting the right object or creature within a collage.
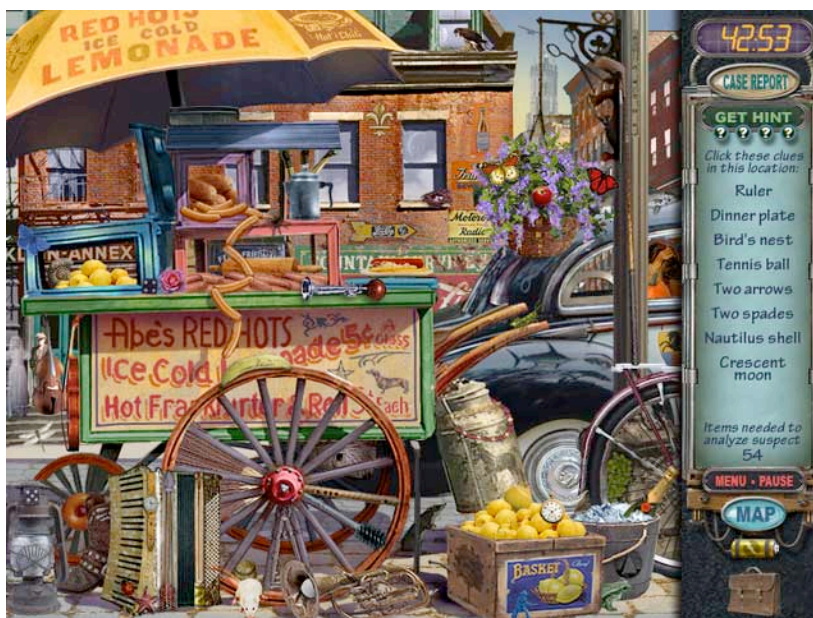
Mystery Case Files

This summarizes the gameplay:

- The game consists of a series of collages, each time containing the Zzebbraa character.

- Each collage contains a lot of different items, some of them partly covering other items. The items could be creatures, plants, objects, etc. They don't necessarily have consistent scales, lighting or perspective.

- One by one, the player needs to look for a specific item visible on-screen. When an item is found, it's displayed full screen, while a voice is heard, naming the item. Then, it's removed from the collage. The next item's name is then called out and displayed in text at the bottom of the screen.

- Our Zzebbraa is animated, and gives feedback on whether the player is doing well. This is done by making him/her look in the direction of the item that needs to be found at certain points, and by showing certain animations when you're tapping objects that are nearby or very far from the item to be found. Animations could include nodding / shaking its head, dancing, etc.

- After a certain amount of items has been found, the game advances to the next collage. An animation where Zzebbraa walks out of the collage and into the next one is shown.

- In between levels, a map screen would be shown where Zzebbraa walks a certain distance along a path, leading through the different themes of the game.

With some adaptations, this concept can work for a variety of age groups.

For example for small children:

- Limited amount of items in a collage
- Using everyday items and showing items in their normal environment – e.g. a carrot in a vegetable store.

For example for adults (mainly 30+ female audience):

- Many overlapping items
- Items shown at a wrong scale and totally out of place (e.g. a mountain in a basket)
- The object wouldn't be shown full screen and named after finding it; this would be skipped.
- The player could have to look for multiple words simultaneously (as it is the case for the Mystery Case Files series).
- Zzebbraa wouldn't give as much hints (less frequently).

A few possible environments where the game could take place:

- garden
- kitchen
- vegetable store
- zoo
- north pole
- school
- forest
- meadow
- on a different planet or underwater (where Zzebbraa could be depicted with a fish bowl over its head).

In addition to the gameplay outlined above, the collages could also contain certain animations (e.g. a bird flying in the background, a clock's pendulum swinging, …).

2   Zzebbraa's Journey

This concept would be much in line with the gameplay of Samorost 2 (http://amanita-design.net/games/samorost-2.html).

Rather than going into all the details of how we see this work for the Zzebbraa character, I've outlined some scenarios that I'd suggest to try if a prototype would be developed for this concept.

The full game would then contain a multitude of this, offering dozens of puzzles.

Intro Scene

- The Zzebbraa and a child are shown.

- If the child is tapped, it walks out of the screen, leaving footprints behind.

- After a short pause, Zzebbraa follows the child, walking into the next screen.

River Scene (1)

- A river is shown, in a forest with tall trees, where only the trunks are visible (much like in Muir Woods). The child is waving from the opposite side of the river as where Zzebbraa is standing. A few seconds later, the child walks away, off screen.

- All that can be done now, is to tap a ladder to climb up a hill (yes, a ladder for a zebra).

Impression of what the bottom of the trees may look like

Hilltop Scene

- Here, Zzebbraa is shown on the top of the hill. The trees are still visible, but this time only their tops.

- Behind the trees, a dinosaur is visible standing there - chewing on something.

  There's also a hot-air balloon floating from left to right.

- When the balloon is tapped, a sandbag (visibly hanging at the outside of the balloon's basket) falls down, and a new one grows back.

- If a sandbag is dropped on the dinosaur's head, it stops chewing for a few seconds, and it opens its mouth. Now you can see the dinosaur was chewing on a crocodile. If the crocodile is tapped, it will fall down, off screen.

- If the player didn't tap the crocodile in time, the dinosaur will close its mouth and continue chewing. There is no limit to the amount of times the dinosaur can stop or start chewing.

- The player can tap the ladder to descend.

Impression of what the treetops may look like.

River Scene (2)

- This is the same scene as the previous River Scene.

- If the player freed the crocodile from the previous screen, it's now visible in the river. It looks like Zzebbraa may be able to walk over the crocodile to reach the other side.

- If the crocodile is tapped, Zzebbraa will move a bit closer, and the crocodile will snap at Zzebbraa (making Zzebbraa back off to its initial position).

- There's also a wooden sign visible. If this is tapped, Zzebbraa walks to a different screen.

Owl Class

- On this screen, several owls are visible on branches hanging over the water.

- On one branch, there's a bigger owl, wearing a monocle. On an other brach, there's a group of smaller owls of different postures and shapes, all sitting next to each other in a row. It looks like the bigger owl is a teacher, while the smaller ones are its pupils.

- The teacher owl sings a well known melody (such as Marry had a Little Lamb, and then falls asleep.

- The pupil owls make occasional noises, as if they're a bit confused (e.g. silent squeaking noises).

- If the player taps the teacher owl while it sleeps, it wakes up and repeats the melody.

- If the player taps any of the pupil owls, it sings a single note. Each pupil owl corresponds to a different tone (depending on the posture of the owl – larger pupils would create a lower tone).

- If the player imitates the teacher owl's melody correctly, he goes into a deeper sleep, and can't be woken up any more. After a few seconds, the pupil owls fly away (off screen).

- If the player makes a mistake while imitating the teacher owl's melody, he wakes up and sings the full melody again.

River Scene (3)

- Back to the river, the owls are now sitting on the different steps of the ladder, and in a different order.

- If the melody is reproduced correctly, the owls and the crocodile fall asleep.

- Now, the player can let Zzebbraa cross the river by tapping the crocodile.

Outro Scene

- Zzebbraa and the child are now both visible in a scene similar to the initial scene.
- If the child is tapped, they do a dance together. End of game!

3   Youngster's Toybox

This concept is inspired by an old toy TV, which I used to play in the doctor's waiting room when I was a kid (for a similar model, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oexeUzSBaLQ), this would be an interactive 'toybox' for children ages 0-4, for the iPad.

These would be the key features:

- Colorful
- Funny animations, items and characters (randomly placed).
- Loud and clear sounds
- No real story
- Recognizable repeated background
- Background can be randomized (e.g. a bit different each subsequent day it's used)
- There's no menu system of any kind

The toy would consist of the following parts:

- A scrolling background in side view (like in a 2D platformer game), which wraps after a while.
- Zzebbraa walking along, keeping up with the camera movement and following the curve of the landscape. By tilting the device, Zzebbraa can be made to walk a bit slower or faster. This also influences the speed of the music and pitch of the sound effects in a funny way.
- Various objects to interact with by simple tapping. Each time the screen is tapped, there is clear feedback (if no object was tapped, it's treated as if the nearest one is tapped).

Some examples of possible interactions with various items and characters:

- Zzebbra: a random animation is shown after tapping it
  - It jumps
  - It stand on its hind legs and makes horse like sounds.
  - It looks at the player and kisses the screen, leaving a lipstick mark on the screen for a few seconds.
  - It gallops for a few seconds.
- The sun: can be dragged around (influencing the lighting in the scene).
- Cloud: as long as a cloud is tapped, thick raindrops are falling out of it, and the could scales down. `Where raindrops hit the terrain, flowers pop up. After touching the cloud for a while, the cloud just disappears, making a funny 'poof' sound and emitting some particles.
- A bush: When tapped, it shakes and random animals come out of it, fleeing away. These could be birds, mice, squirrels, a hedgehog, cat, etc.
- A car, tractor, police car or fire engine: When tapped, this makes a 'vroom vroom' sound and drives away (while playing a siren sound if appropriate). Alternatively (randomly determined), it could also sound its horn.
- A mushroom: When tapped, it grows or shrinks. If Zzebraa is standing on the mushroom when it grows, Zzebraa also goes up.
- A fruit tree: If tapped, a fruit falls down (e.g. a coconut, banana or apple). If a piece of fruit lands on Zzebbraa's path, it eats the fruit and makes a munching sound.
- A bird, flying across the screen: If tapped, it poops. If the poop hits an other living creature, the creature reacts to this by making a sound.
- There could also be small kids that have different ways saying hello and waving when tapped.