CS 4483 - Game Design

sjøkrigere (sea warriors)

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The Premise (High Concept)

Sjøkrigere is an action-rpg in which the player plays a viking warrior commanding a ship. The goal of the player is to defeat sea monsters, while raiding villages for resources in order to survive. After defeating all monsters, the player will be able to cross the ocean and engage in a final epic battle.

Player Motivation

The player is driven by exploration and a desire to collect riches. The player wants to vanquish the deadliest sea monsters for glory and honour and to become known as a great Norse legend.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

In sjøkrigere, you play as a great viking warrior commanding a ship to roam the sea, pillaging ships and villages, and vanquishing mighty sea monsters! Become an incredible norse legend!

Competitive Analysis

1. Uncharted Waters, SNES (Style, gameplay)

The exploration of the ocean from a top-down 2D perspective is quite similar to this game, with a similar style and aesthetic, as well as having a very similar mechanics for traversing the game world. Although the theme is slightly different, this game gives a good visual indication of how sjøkrigere will look and behave in terms of sea exploration.

2. Broforce, PC/PS4

Broforce is a game which is vibrant and absurd, with its completely over-the-top premise and gameplay. It romantisizes american militarism in game that ends up being extremely fun and ridiculous to play, despite the core theme being obvious political satire. I want Sjøkrigere to draw inspiration from this, going over the top to romanticize viking mythology and violence, while having what is nonetheless a fun, action-packed, and colourful gaming experience. This will be emphasized heavily in the battles with sea monsters, which should have fun, action-packed, satisfying gameplay.

3. The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (Game Environment)

Similarities: Sailing, sea monsters, small islands with villages

Although sjøkrigere is a vastly different game in many ways from The Wind Waker, it can draw inspiration from the game environment and world where much of The Wind Waker takes place. A huge factor in this Zelda game is sea exploration, and players can embrace some of the same aspects in 2D with sjøkrigere. The large open sea will be the main are where the player will roam, much like the wind waker, and in addition to stopping at small islands with villages, the player will be able to stop along the european coast on the east side of the game world.

For The Wind Waker, the developers wanted to create an environment which felt like a large open world, but due to the limited resources that the gamecube has they wouldn't have been able to make a large and complicated world you might see in Skyrim or Breath of the Wild. They got around this by making most of the world an Ocean, which did not require a huge amount of detail. In spirit of the retro theme of this project, I think it is important to pay tribute to the clever developers who embrace their restrictions and use them to draw inspiration for their game design.

Genre
Action-RPG

This game follows conventions of the genre by having real-time combat, and a free-form nonlinear movement/exploration scheme. It will be different than other games in this genre because rather than having a single character with some amount of life, the health of the whole ship will be represented through the loss of its crew. It will also be different because of the village raid mechanic.

In most action rpg games, the player is considered a hero to the local people and seeks to protect them from monsters and villains. In this case, people of the game world will see the vikings as a menace and as barbarians. The game romanticizes vikings directly in spite of its unethical game-play, drawing influence from games such as Spec Ops: The Line (albeit, not on such an extreme level). The intention is that players reflect on the violence of their actions in game, and that they think about some of the misrepresentation of historical cultures through pop culture influences.

Gameplay

1. Exploring the sea

The player will control a viking ship which can explore in the main cardinal directions (N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, SW). This will be a mainly top down view, with icons representing points of interest. When the player enters a tile with a point of interest such as a village, the game view will change depending on the encounter.

The map will be a reasonable size, with the starting area being a home village in the north, and having several island and several coastal villages that the player can pillage. The size of the sea will be limited by storm clouds so that the player cannot venture too far out, allowing some control of the area and having it so that the player doesn't get lost in a vast ocean.

Once the player has defeated each monster, a path through the clouds opens up which guides the player to the final battle.

2. Pillage a Village

When the player enters a village from the sea, they go into the village screen which replaces the default sea view. The player will have a limited amount of time to raid the small island and steal as much food / riches as possible before defensive forces arrive. The player will get kicked back to the sea exploring screen when it's time to escape, or when they have fully depleted the village of its resources.

3. Fight a Sea Monster

When the player encounters a monster, they go into the battle screen which replaces the default sea view. This will be a 2D side view in which the player must use their sword to slay the beast. The player's health will be represented by the crew of the ship, and if too many crew are lost the 'respawn' will be represented by a strategic retreat, in which the player returns to their home village to recruit more crew members.

Story Synopsis

The game starts with the player's viking ship departing from the home village, embarking on a great quest for honour and glory, to defeat all the great monsters of the seas.

The player will explore the map freely, limited by land and storm clouds, and will engage in pillaging villages for resources and battling beasts which roam the ocean.

At the end of the game, once all beasts have been defeated, the storm parts and allows the player to cross the Atlantic ocean, until the ship finds its way to the coast of Newfoundland. There, in the heart of a raging storm, the viking ship engages in a final battle with the biggest sea monster of all. The battle ends with help from the Norse gods, when a final blow is delivered to the beast by way of a lightning strike. This battle secures the player as a great viking who will go down in history as a true legend.

Target Market

This game is targeted for an audience of teens and above, and fans of the action-rpg genre. The mythological viking theme could appeal to those interested in fantasy games and those interested in European history, although the game is not intended to be an accurate representation by any means.

The game-play will appeal to the Explorer type players, who will enjoy the freedom of roaming the ocean and finding interesting encounters, as well as the achievers who will want to find all of the treasure and complete all of the battles. It will also appeal to the killers, because they would enjoy killing monsters and raiding villages. Since it is a single player game, it will have the least appeal to the archetype of the Socializer.

The game will appeal to a range of gamers, from casual gamers to hardcore. It may be too much dedication for an ultra-casual player, and due to the limited scope, will probably not have enough depth or complexity to engage the ultra-hardcore gamer. My goal is to find some middle ground in which the game will appeal to a range of gamers who aren't on either of the extremes.

The ESRB rating should be Teen in correspondence with the target demographic.

Target Platform

PC / Console

This game will have fairly simple old-school controls, and will be played best with a controller. The real-time combat in this game will require precision and timing which is much harder to achieve in a mobile game, where most players would only have a touch screen. Releasing on PC and Console is also better for reaching the target market for this game, since PC and console gamers can range from casual to hardcore.

Summary

In sjøkrigere, you play as a great viking warrior commanding a ship to roam the sea, pillaging ships and villages, and vanquishing mighty sea monsters! Become an incredible norse legend!

Sjøkrigere is a game which creates an engaging retro experience, while exploring video games as a medium for communicating ideas. It will be incredibly fun, and will appeal to a tremendous number of gamers.