Invasion Cute

"Turning Ugly To Huggly"

A Game Treatment

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Short Description: Invasion Cute (Combating Ugliness Together Everywhere) is a 2D platformer with 2D shooter elements. It is a game in which the player travels to a variety of fictional planets and changes the inhabitants into cute beings that are happy. There are three main characters that the player can choose to play as at the start of each level. Each of the three has its own way of moving and abilities. Each level also offers advantages and disadvantages for each of the three characters.

Tone words: cute, adorable, aliens, ugly

Game Concept

There are three characters the player can choose to play at the beginning of each level. The player will choose a level and then get a short cinematic that will scroll though the entire level. This will allow the player to see what is in the level and decide which character to choose. Each level can be completed with each character but since they are all different there will be advantages and disadvantages to choosing each character. All the levels are re-playable so that more advanced players have the option of playing the levels multiple times in order to get full completion. This will also force more advanced

player to play as all the characters, as each character can access parts of a level that the others cannot.

All three of the main characters – Boing, Tinker, and Fizz – have the same general abilities as well as their own individual strengths and weaknesses. All three can walk/run forward and backward, jump, stun an enemy, and shoot a cute beam. Boing moves slowly because he waddles due to a fat belly. He bounces on his fat belly to jump, which is a way to move much faster. If he bounces on an enemy he stuns them for the longest amount of time because he is the heaviest of the characters. His cute beam shoots slowly in powerful bursts.

Tinker moves at a medium speed. He has wings and is able to double jump and glide short distances. If he jumps on an enemy, he will stun him for a short period of time. His cute beam shoots rapid-fire low powered shits.

Fizz is very tiny and can fit into small places the other two cannot. She has no feet, so she rolls rather than walking. As she rolls, she gains speed. If she rolls into an enemy at a high enough speed she will stun them for a long period of time. She can also jump onto an enemy, but this will stun them for only a very short period because she is so tiny. She cannot jump very high, and she is unable to reach many high places that the others can. Her cute beam attacks at a medium rate of fire in a short-range arc.

Since the gameplay emphasizes using the three different characters, the boss battles are different from normal levels. In a normal level you cannot change the character without restarting the level. For a boss battle, however, the player will switch between the three as much as they want. Bosses will be made cute in portions and to defeat the boss all portions will have to be cute-ified. There will be parts of the boss that only one of the three can change. This will utilize the three characters and provide a different feel and style of play than the standard levels.

CRITICAL PATH

After beginning a new game, the player will be shown an introductory scene explaining the premise of the game and introducing the conflict of the story. When this is over, the first level begins and the player is essentially brought into a tutorial to learn how to play the game. The very first level is designed to introduce gameplay concepts and to bring everybody up to speed.

Once the player has completed the level, an “overworld” type of screen is shown. The player can choose the next level or any previous level to play, as well as see their progress in terms of a completion percent. Upon choosing a world and level to play, a scan of the level is shown, allowing a player to analyze the terrain and determine which character would be the optimal choice. It also gives younger players an ability to see where less accessible parts of the level are.

The level overview serves a second purpose in that it prevents the player from entering a level with a character only to get stuck because they cannot figure out how to get the character through. In this way, the player will at least have some way of knowing in advance what to expect. This prevents it from being too difficult for a younger audience to simply play through the game. When the level has been fully shown, the player is then given the option to select Boing, Tinker, or Fizz to play as. If the player has completed a level with a particular character before, a symbol will be shown next to that character to identify this fact.

Once a player has chosen his or her character, the level itself begins. The level is played and at the end the number of enemies made cute will be displayed. The secondary goal besides simply completing the levels is to completely “cute-ify” them.

There will be about 4 levels per world – determined on a per-world basis – as well as a boss battle. If a player's character becomes too scared on a particular level, they will run back to a previous checkpoint and the game will continue from there. There is no

“death” and no number of “lives”; a player can replay a level as many times as possible to attempt to finish it or acquire 100% completion. Defeating the final boss shows the final ending scene, but the game does not terminate – the player can continue playing the game until he or she feels satisfied.

FEATURES AND CONTROLS

Invasion Cute will be stylistically simple. Artwork will be made with vector graphics that have flat color fills. Gradients and shading will be used sparingly, if at all. Artists will avoid using strokes, except in cases where color boundaries clash or are ambiguous. This graphic style will unify the artwork throughout the game, and give it a distinctive look and feel.

Special attention will be paid to the visual difference between “ugly” and “cute-ified” level areas. Levels will start out completely “ugly,” characterized by dark and bland colors. As the player progresses through the level and cute-ifies enemies, flowers and other doodads will bloom. Different characters will have different flowers. This will help the player know where they have been with each character. Once the player has “cute-ified” the world all of the levels will have a new cute look.

The audio of the game will be an important cue – it will help to set the mood of each level as well as to provide the player with a sense of immersion. Each character will have his or her own voice, which be used solely as sound effects – the dialogue of the game will be text-only to reserve space on the cartridge for other media. Even the general sound effects, such as Boing's bounces, will be designed to make the game feel “cute and adorable.” The background music of each level will suit both the concept of “cute and adorable” while maintaining an atmosphere unique to each particular level – showing the disparity between our heroes and the enemies as well as showing the constantly-growing cuteness of each level. The music will not, however, change as the level is slowly made cuter.

Each of the characters has their own way to channel their cute essence into the cute beam. Fizz's attack is a medium rate of fire but shoots a short-range arc of fire, allowing her to hit multiple enemies that are close to her. Boing's attacks are slow powerful bursts. Tinker's attacks are rapid-fire low powered shots.

Enemies can be briefly stunned by jumping on top of them. This will weaken them, making them easier to attack. All the characters have this ability; however, Boing has the ability to stun them for a longer period of time. Fizz's rolling movement also can stun enemies when she is moving at full speed.

Each of the character's abilities gives them advantages and disadvantages in a level. Tinker can reach higher platforms and glide across canyons. However, he cannot fit under things and into narrow spaces the way Fizz can. And neither Tinker nor Fizz can take on swarms of enemies the way Boing can. Each character has their own way of travelling through the level and combating enemies. In each level, there are places that can only be reached by a single character using their unique abilities. To fully cute-ify a level, the player will have to go back as each character. This gives the game a longer lifespan than a single run through and adds a completion challenge that will appeal to an older audience.

As the player travels through a level, flowers bloom behind them. The player must also cute-ifying enemies. So to reach that 100% cute-ification, the player will need to use all of the characters. This adds two extra challenges: first, the player will have to figure out how to use each of their characters to get through a level. Even if the player can race through the level as Tinker, they will still need to go through the level as Fizz to access to the areas that only she can get to. Secondly, the player will need to identify areas that can only be reached as a specific character. On the level fly through, the player can see the areas that do not have flowers. Using this, they can determine which character they will need to use for the current run.

CONTROLS

Invasion Cute is intended for the Nintendo DS. The primary control scheme would utilize the D-Pad to move – the left and right buttons would move the character in their respective directions, the up button would jump, and the down button would crouch – the stylus to aim, and the L button to shoot. For Tinker, a pressing up while performing a jump allows for a double jump; holding the up button allows Tinker to glide. Boing's bellyflop attack also uses the D-pad to move by jumping up and tapping down in the air.

The controls for Invasion Cute do not favor either left- or right-handed players. Because the game calls for a player to hold the stylus in their hand for most of the game, left-handed players may find it uncomfortable to hold it in their right hand and manipulate the other controls with their left. To deal with this, the ABXY buttons can also function as a D-Pad and the right bumper can be used to fire instead of the left. This allows the player to hold the stylus in a more comfortable hand.

Additionally, playing in lefty-mode will reverse the levels, so that forward is moving to left instead of the right. This way, holding the stylus will not obscure the screen with the player's hand.

DEVELOPMENT SCOPE

This game will require a development team of ten people – four artists, four programmers, one level designer, and one writer. Moreover, a budget of 1.5 million would be expected in order to complete the game in a fifteen month period. This allows time for the media involved in the game to be developed and for QA to work out all of the bugs.

The programming in this game would not be complex. Implementation of the mechanics explained above will not be a difficult task; the programmers will, however, need to work closely with the artists in order to ensure that the game has smooth animations and implements all of the media items properly. To ensure that they work together closely, a smaller team is preferable. Working to ensure that all of the levels are input properly and that everything – especially bosses! – is bug-free will be one of their more important jobs. With a DS cartridge, bug fixes cannot be added later via a patch, so ensuring that their code is as bug-free as possible will be important later on in the production process.

The game also would have a very stylized look – and with too many artists, the style could get lost due to miscommunication. As each level has a different feel to it, many things will not be reusable across levels – such as enemy sprites – and so there will be a lot of media to develop during the production process.

The sole writer will be in charge of further developing the story and dialogue in the game. The story will progress outside of levels in a text-only format, so the written word will be an important element. The story is also a key feature in terms of keeping

parents who are playing with their children interested, as – much like Disney or Dreamworks films – there will be a number of clever references written in only for older players.

Likewise, sound design will be handled by a contract employee during a short time in the development process. The sound designer will be responsible for composition of the music for the levels as well as the sound effects and character voices in the game. This is an important component of the game, and the "cute sounds" will help to draw in younger players as well as provide a sense of immersion.

TECHNOLOGY FEATURES

Important components of the game include the control scheme, the implementation of media, and the level design. The control scheme is the easy part – coding the alternate scheme and implementing the controls are some of the simplest parts, as the DS has quality APIs for working with the buttons and the touch screen. Implementing the controls on the characters will require a bit more code, however, as certain button combinations will only apply if you are playing as a particular character.

Implementing the media is another part of the game that will require quite a bit of code. As the DS has a limited amount of storage and memory, it will be necessary to write code to swap media in and out of memory and to ensure that there is no slowdown. Code to properly implement animations will also be important, as a tight combination of animation and gameplay is vital to the game.

Finally, the level design will be one of the trickier pieces of code to be implemented. Designing a level editor will make things much easier, as it will allow the level designer to add media to a level, design the level itself, and load it into the game without a problem. It will also allow the programmers and the level designer to work much more closely – for instance, a programmer can put a completed enemy into the

library and the level designer can then use that enemy – and will allow the thematic separation of worlds to be easily defined. This will be much easier than hand-coding each level, as there will be a multitude of levels designed and will allow for potential sequels to use the same design.

POTENTIAL TECHNOLOGY ROADBLOCKS

There are a few potential roadblocks to be aware of as well. The amount of storage and memory is a definite concern, and something to be aware of sooner rather than later. This, for instance, is one of the reasons that there will be no voiceovers for the dialogue. As code to manage swapping data in and out of memory when necessary will already be put in place, worrying about the speed of that swap will be important as well.

Writing the general engine should not be as difficult as, say, writing a 3D FPS engine, but there will still be a concern implementing it and having it work properly with the level editor. Ensuring that levels designed in the editor load in properly and work properly is also important, as it adds a new layer of potential issues into level design.

PLATFORM(S)

The game will utilize the Nintendo DS. One of the biggest advantages of the DS is the control scheme we have developed specifically for it: the player is meant to aim with the stylus on the touch screen. It is also well-suited to the game because it is the primary market for the target audience. Tweens, for instance, are unlikely to have an Xbox 360; instead, they tend to have Nintendo consoles such as the DS. Another advantage of working with the DS, as with any console, is that unlike the PC, all units are standard – there are no compatibility issues.

One of the primary disadvantages of working with a system like the DS is the inability to apply slipstream patches after release to fix bugs and/or add features. Extensive bug testing will be necessary to ensure that the game is bug-free on release. Other disadvantages included limited space and memory and a need for programmers who have experience with the DS.

BUSINESS CASE

The target audience of Invasion Cute is females between the ages of 6 and 13. This is a proven demographic – part of the "tween" market – with purchasing power through their doting parents. They have a tendency to realize that they are growing up too soon and a desire to avoid this for as long as possible – the world is a scary place, and they don't like that fact. Their parents, too, often want to give them everything they desire, and due to this a number of them already have a DS due to the success of other games such as Nintendogs.

While this is the main intended audience, it makes sense that some of the parents would desire to play the game first – or even that others may be interested as well. There will be comedic elements via the writing of the game – much in the way as Disney tends to write – and there will be optional challenges as well. One character, for instance, may have a much more difficult time in a particular level than the others; a younger player may decide to switch to another while somebody more interested in a bit of a challenge may stick with the more difficult character for that level. As any level can be completed with any character, this allows for varied play and difficulty across every level. Moreover, a completion percentage allows the dedicated player something to strive toward after finishing the game and adds replayability as well.

It is expected that we would sell somewhere around 200,000 copies of the game because the younger demographic has purchasing power through their parents. The

game is non-threatening and non-violent, which is a draw for concerned parents who want to "protect" their children. Furthermore, many younger girls would be drawn toward the package design and the general "cuteness" of the game. At $29.99 a copy, it is priced well within many parents' price range (especially compared with $59.99 PS3 and Xbox 360 titles) and with a potential holiday release it will be on shelves when a lot of parents are looking for gifts. As many younger children have DS's, this is an optimal gift for the parent who is looking to justify their previous purchase of the DS handheld. It is also an easy "yes" for a parent when a child wants it; it is a positive game with a positive message.

To promote and supplement the sales of the game, there are a number of other ways to increase profits. A great amount of merchandise can be developed alongside the game: clothing, accessories such as hair clips or cell phone charms, misc. charms, jewelry, toys in fast food kids' meals, stickers, toys, DS accessories, and plush characters.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

As a platform game, aimed specifically at the Nintendo DS, there are a number of examples of such games to analyze – the biggest being *New Super Mario Bros.*, which is currently has the second highest sales figures for any DS game, at 5.39 million in the US alone. The game is a remake/reimagining of the original *Super Mario Bros.* for the Nintendo Entertainment System with updated visuals, redesigned levels, and new items, power-ups, and gameplay mechanics.

It sold mostly on the name of the game, since the Mario brand is very well known and recognized, but the game was also very good. Building on the groundwork laid in the original *Super Mario Bros.* along with some of the improvements made in its sequels, the game captures the charm of the original game while also feeling new and different. At its core, what they did right was make the platforming mechanics fun; the

running and jumping through the levels controls very tight, and gives the player a strong sense of control of their character.

To build on that in Invasion Cute, there is not one character to play as – there are three. So as such we can offer more variety in the styles of platforming. In *New Super Mario Bros.* you are always controlling Mario, and he always handles in the same way, so by having these different characters we are able to provide different experiences to the player based on whom they choose to use in a different level.

This also adds a level of depth to the game not seen in the Mario game – players are able to collect things in each level as they play or go back to make sure they can get those collectibles. In order to get most of the collectibles the player needs to be skillful in the control of Mario, and figure out how to maneuver themselves to where the things are. Within *Invasion Cute*, unlike in *New Super Mario Bros.*, each of the levels contains a number of branching paths. The path the player goes on depends on which character they are playing as, so in order to collect all the objects in a level a player has to play through the level with a different character then they did the first time. This provides them with a completely different experience, not just in how the character plays compared to the others, but also in the parts of the level now available and on to them.

Super Princess Peach, on the other hand, is a platformer game for the DS that is also aimed at a similar audience to our game. As such, it is possibly the best game to analyze in terms of *Invasion Cute*. It sold 590,000 copies in the US alone.

In some ways, Super Princess Peach is more complex than Invasion Cute; it has complex puzzles that rely on utilizing Peach's powers. But the game is severely lacking in replayability and it has a short lifespan. After a single play through, there is little to keep the player interested in it.

Peach's cheerful colors and bright themes appealed to a younger audience and its female lead clearly indicated that it was targeted toward a female audience. While our audience isn't entirely limited to females, we do expect to sell better in the female demographic.

As a new IP, we can look at *Super Princess Peach*'s sales figures as a high watermark for potential sales based on our targeted audience. For a better understanding of the kinds of numbers the game could do, we should look at more recent examples of new IPs aimed at the same audience, such as *Viva Piñata* (Xbox 360), *Dewy's Adventure* (Wii), *Ninjatown* (DS), and *Cooking Mama* (DS).

Viva Piñata was originally released for the Xbox 360 and was targeted at the tween demographic (both boys and girls) and sold 670,000 units. Although it sold well, the audience that actually bought the game skewed much older than its initial target demographic. This was likely due to the complex nature of the game; one that was probably too confusing for most of the targeted demographic. But it was also likely due to the game being on the Xbox 360, which has an older audience compared to the DS or the Wii. Even though it did not hit its target audience, it does show that there is potential for new IP aimed at a younger audience to be picked up by an older one.

Dewy's Adventure, although for the Wii and targeted at the younger demographic, only sold about 100,000 units. Its downfall, much like with *Viva Piñata,* was that the game was too challenging for its intended audience. But unlike *Viva Piñata* there is not as large of an older user base for the Wii as there is on the 360.

A somewhat similar problem also befalls *Ninjatown* for the DS, which was released on Oct. 28, 2008 and has sold only 30,000 copies in its first six weeks. Much like the others, *Ninjatown* suffers from being aimed at a younger demographic, but being far too complicated for that audience. Although the DS has a substantial older audience that could pick up the game, much like they did for *Viva Piñata*, they have yet

to do so. This is likely due to the timing of the game's release against other more anticipated games, so given more time it could be picked up by the older audience.

Invasion Cute should not suffer from the pitfalls that befell these games, as it is being designed to be simple enough for the target audience to play and understand, but also have challenging elements to it that will attract the older audience to it as well. This is what happened with Cooking Mama for the DS, which sold 1.25 million units in the US. It was initially made to be targeted at younger girls who would buy it due to its simple and fun gameplay, but was also purchased by older players for similar reasons along with the challenge the game provided them.

The success of *Cooking Mama* along these multiple demographics, as well as to an extent *Viva Piñata*'s success outside its target audience, shows that it is possible to have a game like *Invasion Cute* that is aimed at a younger audience sell to more than one group of people.