

## **This was my Post Mortem of Paper Dash for the StencilJam 14.**

### **Background information:**

- Paper Dash is a sequel to my 3rd stencil project, which was made in 2012. After the first game I decided to make a series about a paper character which has to prove his value to become one of the paper gods of the game world. The character has to participate in different challenges which consist some known basic mechanics for a platformer like avoiding falling objects, running from different threats or jumping to the sky to reach the temple of the gods (the 3rd part will take place in this setting). After creating the 3 different challenges I want to combine them into one big game and publish it as "Papergames" as an allusion to the ancient Olympic Games.
- The story and the idea behind the project was to create gods that test your abilities in a Japanese mythological world. The 3 main gods Raijin (thunder god), Dōsojin (spirit of the land) & Fūjin (wind god) have their special abilities which will correspond to the challenges you will be tested in. The thunder god uses lightning and rain, the spirit uses the power of the earth and so on.
- The mechanics behind the game, should be a setting, that let the player overcome his own faults and become better after each play, e.g. if you were greedy to get a power-up but at the same moment don't see the falling raindrop. The gameplay is not unfair and the obstacles are always randomly generated to achieve another experience after each start. Also the difficulty rises stepwise. The special abilities of the player which can be gained temporarily by using a powerup always have an advantage and a disadvantage, so you have to use them wisely, by not wasting them and not bring yourself into trouble by misuse. For example using a swift powerup let you run faster and jump higher (first game) and you can reach higher powerups and avoid obstacles faster, but on the other side you'll be vulnerable by the reduction of the precise control of the character. This mechanics are also present in the second game and will be continued in future sequels.

### **Why did I decide to create this project for the Game-Jam?**

- As mentioned I wanted to finish an old idea that I wrote down 2 years ago. The other reason why I specially wanted to make this project come true, is the fact that my first project of the series had the best rating of my projects so far. Therefore I wanted to join the success of that project and make another one of the series.

### **How did I made the project? (Tools)**

- I created the project myself with all resources using Photoshop CS3, Fruity Loops and Stencil 3.0. For character design I searched with Google for ancient art of Japanese mythological characters.

## **Time management and methods:**

- It took me 1 month to finish the project. I didn't work every day, but the last ones before the deadline continuously.  
At first I began with the basics by using the old project as a sample and deleting all the behaviours. I didn't want to edit the old ones to be compatible with 3.0 and started from scratch again, also for a better overview.  
My first action was the creation of the movement system and the randomly appearing of the earth actors. After that I started to add the old god sprite to the game and gave it the abilities of the first project. The next step was the addition of the main god and his abilities.
- Due to a problem I encountered by pushing the player character to the screen bounds on the left side and by letting him glitch through the earth actor I got the idea to fix that problem by using a boulder in the left lower corner, that destroys the earth actors and defeats the player by touching it. I liked the idea of the destroying earth and so I thought it would be better to improve the visual effects by adding more particle effects and draw new defeat graphics for the player. After that I created the other threats and decided to increase the difficulty after 60 seconds and loop the movements of the characters. The difficulty consists the addition of another stronger attacks after a longer playing period. I also wanted to let the player know in what threat level he is by changing the bar color on the top. The screen size was set to 480x320 because of the future adaption to a mobile device, therefore I had to minimize the field where the action takes place. I improved the icons of the power-ups to let the player know what they are good for, instead of using one sprite and recolor it like I did last time.  
At the end of the project I focused on the credits, mainscreen graphics and the "moderate" help screen, which will be improved in the next update.

## **What went wrong:**

- I created the project on newgrounds days before I finished the game and added placeholder graphics for the medals. The problem after uploading the game were that the icon graphics didn't want to be replaced with the new graphics. I saw them in my account, but at the game site the placeholders were visible. Clearing the cache and using different browsers didn't work, so I had to reupload and recreate every medal new. Don't use placeholder graphics if you didn't want to encounter a similar problem.
- I wished I had more playtesters before publishing the project to tell me that the difficulty is very high. Also the bugtesting wouldn't be so time consuming, but I guess I have to be faster and more efficient with asking next time
- Days before I encountered a common windows problem with svchost.exe with extreme cpu activity. Therefore I had many hard times to test the game and it took very long to search for solutions.
- The most important problem I encountered was the time. I was a bit slow at the beginning and hadn't enough time at the end to finish the 3 remaining power-ups, which were meant to ease the gameplay a lot, by using them strategically.
- I didn't get enough feedback in how to improve the gameplay and the score was very low in the judgement phase.

### **What went right:**

- The best part was that I finished a project with all the ideas that I had and with the progress as it was meant to.
- I'm relatively happy about the result of the project, even at this low score

### **Summary & advice or what I learned by this project:**

- Personally I feel that I should continue to create short projects that didn't take more than 2 weeks to finish, because this could be my personal developer way. I recognized that these projects have a commonly higher score and are not as stressful to create. For example, I made Paper Dodge in 3 days and it got the highest score. When I decide to create longer projects then I commonly overload the project with new ideas and try to polish them so much that they got worsen than before.
- Take your time to prepare the project and try to get ready at least 3 days before a jam ends to prevent stress due to surprises.
- And an advice for people who didn't know the "friday is my day" rule (I call it this way ). Don't submit your game on friday unless you are absolutely sure that you made the next big hit or have a big fan base, cause the most experienced developers use this day to submit their projects, cause of the weekend and the most players have the most time in that period and it will be more difficult to stand out with your project and get some more views.

### **What I disliked:**

- Sometimes there were some really unfair ratings. I got some 0 stars in the judgement phase -\_- which was very demotivating. I know that not everyone has the same taste for games, but seriously 0 stars? I commonly rate submissions with 0 when they offend people or the project is a troll project, but this is ridiculous. Every game has a value of at least 2 stars, if it contains original ressources and gameplay and does not offend anyone. I saw this problem also occurs with other original projects, which is some kind of sad.
- I also don't like the fact that some people just submit some "kit"-like projects in Game Jams. Come on, please try at least to change some graphics and don't post the crashcourse or other ressources which were not made by you. You are harming your name as a developer by this and your reputation suffers.

### **What I liked:**

- I liked the thrill to be part of another Game Jam and to bring another of my ideas into life.
- And at least many of the good projects got the deserved high ranking.

### **What's next?:**

- Next I want to improve the gameplay of my project by adding the last parts to it, like an improved help and the remaining power-ups.
- After that I want submit the project to flashgame distribution with another ad service implemented.
- I'll also try to implement some online scoreboards, but at the moment I don't know an alternative to the mochi scores, which as you know are not available anymore (if someone knows an alternative for easy using online highscores like mochi, please let us know)

### **Wishes for the future:**

- I would like to see a new scoring system for newgrounds and other flashgame sites, where the player can evaluate more categories instead of just one general. An implementation of the system that is used at the ludum dare site (with audio, graphics, innovation, mood, humor, fun and overall) would also help the developers to see the main issues about their games and learn from their work.  
The current system just tells us what players generally like, but because every player is different and has different perception during the gameplay, it would be better to see a valuation in different categories. The combined values can then be shown as a general score.  
This feature would help developers to make more quality content in the future.
- I also would like to have a chosen theme for the next jams to let everyone start his ideas and projects with a common goal and nearly the same requirements.

So this is the end. I wish everyone happy reading