Mountstrosity Devlog - Liam Person

Aug 3rd.

Completed market research for Mountstrosity.

Aug 4th.

Sketched some ideas for initial levels, not too many stuck out to me.

Aug 5th.

Goal: set up the three C's. Went in engine, set up the sidescrolling camera, added a red sphere as the initial reference for the monster. Bound movement to only the X and Z axis'. Tried to set up the controller so the character would follow wherever the player dragged their mouse. I was only able to get it to where the character would follow along the X axis and not the Z.

Aug 6th.

Goal: camera and character set up so the focus is the controller. I was able to enable the character to follow the mouse along the Z axis with the use of the node 'Get Hit Result Under Cursor by Channel'. However, it only works if the mouse hovers over a mesh and not empty space. I will be consulting Michael on this as the internet hasn't been of use to me so far. I also worked on setting up my PS1 style graphics. In order to do this I went into the 'Default Engine' files and changed the screen percentage to 25 instead of 100 in order to display the game at 25% of the screen's resolution. I also tweaked the project rendering settings to set the game to a solid 30fps.

Aug 7-10th.

Out of province for a funeral, no progress was made during this time unfortunately. Though I did ideate on some more potential levels.

Aug 11th.

Goal: get the mouse to work properly. Michael suggested to fix the issue with the mouse that I place an arbitrarily large invisible plane behind the pawn in its blueprint. This worked, however now the pawn is passing through geometry it's not supposed to. I spent the rest of today tweaking the player acceleration, deceleration and max speed, fine tuning it the best I could given my initial concept of how the game should play.

Aug 12-13th.

Goal: complete the initial look of the monster (at least for this prototype). I was able to fix the issue with player collisions by simply replacing the default scene root of my player pawn blueprint with the pawn itself. I spent a little time on both of these days working on the monster character. Placing multiple deformed spheres together and then adding a panner node with a horizontal bar on the material to give off the impression of the pulsating blob created in my concepts.

Aug 14-15th.

Had work so no work done these days.

Aug 16th.

Michael contacted me and told me that he thought of a better way to set up my pawn movement. Instead of line tracing to the plane we would use NDC (universal dimensions) coordinates. I spent today reworking the movement system to use the NDC coordinates and the results were an overall improvement on the original.

Aug 17th.

Goal: finish the initial aesthetics and add in a health mechanic. I ended up throwing a green filter and film grain on the camera in order to add to the PS1 style I'm going for and to simulate that the monster sees the world differently (green X-ray like vision). I then blocked out the initial level design, making tight and snaking corridors. I implemented the health mechanic, starting the player with three health points (small pool as the game is short and relatively simple). I then implemented the ability for the player to die and respawn with full health. The health mechanic included a health bar placed in the top center of the player viewport. I also added a light cone blueprint that will damage players if they overlap with it.

Aug 18th.

I didn't work on my build today as we had our first round of playtesting! I received lots of good feedback! One of the common sentiments was that the FOV was too close and focused on the player. Another was that the movement of the player could've benefited from incorporating variable speed instead of the player moving at a constant pace. Along with that, the monster stopped too quickly when players were expecting it to slide slowly to a halt due to its slippery nature.

Aug 19th.

Goal: implement the feedback from yesterday's playtesting, a lot of it involved the pawn movement and because that's at the core of what I'm prototyping I want to make sure I get it right. The first thing I did was adjust the FOV from 90 to 97, allowing players to see more of the game world, thus making it easier to plan navigation. I also altered the character movement function I had created in order to introduce variable movement speed. Now, the closer the mouse is to the player position, the slower they will move. When the mouse is further from the player the pawn will move faster. The last thing I implemented was the slow, but not immediate stop, lowering the player deceleration to increase the immersion into the monsters movement style.

Aug 20th.

Goal: add sound effects in. I ended up adding in a sloshing sound that plays whenever the player moves the monster (presses and moves the mouse). The idea behind this was to add to the slimy, disgusting feeling of the monster. It's a 45 second clip that loops, has a slight pitch randomizer and starts at random intervals as to lessen the friction the players feels with hearing the same audio continuously. I then added in a damage sound, a louder slimy slap, also with a pitch randomizer. I also added a unique sound for when the player dies, similar to the damage sound but with more of an impact effect to sell the gravity of the death. I packaged this build and did another couple rounds of playtesting. This one mostly centered on the new audio and the changes made to the movement yesterday. Overall, people were really satisfied with the mix on the audio and the opinion was favourable on the sounds utilized. The changes to movement were also enjoyed, especially the variable movement speeds, the FOV change also went over well. The thing that didn't go over too well was the change of friction for the monster. It used to decelerate too quickly and now it's too slippery, taking too long to come to a stop after relinquishing control of the mouse. This is a MUST FIX, especially as it was the consensus across all three different rounds of playtesting today.

Aug 21st.

Goal: fix the deceleration and add music in. I ended up tweaking the numbers on the deceleration in the flying pawn movement component in my player blueprint. Playtesting it thoroughly myself until I was satisfied that I had done my best to address the players' concern. I then took the instrumental from Lil Uzi Vert's 'Amped' and plugged it into the game, looping it. I was incredibly satisfied with how well it fit with the game as it was one of the songs that inspired this game idea, as stated in my design document.

Aug 22-24.

No work on the build during these ideas as I ended up going to the ER after having a severe asthma attack on Friday night.

Aug 25th.

Playtested again and players were satisfied with the deceleration. Some feedback was to add a little more set dressing instead of leaving it entirely grey boxed. Additionally, dying and instantly respawning felt too fast to players. That will be the last thing I'll do alongside adding some quick and dirty tutorial text.

Aug 27th.

Goal: set dress and tutorial-ize the project. I added in a bunch of assets to craft the feeling of an authentic looking laboratory. On large TV props I rendered some text informing the player on how to play the game, slightly diegetic.

Aug 29th.

Added in a death screen, allowing the player to restart the level or quit the game. I think this slows the death experience and thus the friction some players were having with the initial design. The prototype is now considered complete, at least for the purposes of the course.

Aug 30 - Sep 1st.

Focused entirely on polishing my pitch deck and my game trailer, preparing for the final class presentation on the 3rd of September.

Final Thoughts:

Overall, I'm pretty happy with the results of this capstone. I put my all into getting the project to where I wanted to get it, and even though I didn't quite get there I still think my effort shows. The movement took a long time to figure out and polish to a serviceable place which took away from time I wanted to use to spend on the tentacle mechanic. However, I still prototyped what I think was essential for the idea I was trying to communicate with Mountstrosity, that being the movement. It's the foundation of my idea and really showcased what I learned over the course of the past thirty weeks. I'll continue to work on Mountstrosity and see if I can complete the mechanics that haven't been finished. This mostly entails the tentacle mechanic, prototyping to see if I can get it to pull vents down, throw items, and polishing the ability to pick up items.