

Puzzle Penguin

Escape from Music Island

Date - 3/22/2008

Genre

Puzzle Game

High Concept

Puzzle Penguin is a puzzle game based on a Penguin's traversal of individual maps. Players must alter the terrain to make the penguin's path correctly imitate a given musical score, unlocking the way forward and eventually off the mysterious island.

Premise

In Puzzle Penguin, players must assist Pingo the penguin through individual rooms as he tries to escape Music Island. Pingo starts off in a cell deep inside a laboratory on the island, having been abducted by the crazy scientist, Hugo. In his lunacy, he has decided to lock each door in the laboratory with a musical jingle. Various floor tiles trigger the sounds required to unlock the door, and hitting them in the correct sequence and speed will open the way forward. Normally this would be an impossible task for a penguin to replicate, but as his guardian angel, players help the ever-clueless Pingo get from room to room.

Hugo takes note as you progress through the lab and begins actively changing the door locks to more and more complex tunes. As the locks increase in complexity so do your angelic powers. As you progress, you gain new abilities and are able to use them more frequently.

Goal

The goal of the Puzzle Penguin is to correctly solve every puzzle, unlocking all doors and allowing your escape from the clutches of the evil scientist, Hugo!

How It Works

The game consists of a top-down view of Pingo as he traverses through the various stages. Each stage contains a music box at the very entrance which you can play as many times as needed to hear the tune, as well as colored tiles which play the notes necessary to unlock the door. Pingo begins at the leftmost side of the screen with time stopped. Players have as much time as they deem necessary to listen to the music box and various music tiles to mentally prepare. When ready, the player will be able to start time and play will begin.

Once Pingo has begun moving, time may not be stopped again unless the player wishes to retry the level. Pingo will begin walking forward and it is up to the player to dynamically change the path ahead of him. The player's avatar will be a small angel, controlled in much the same manner as a mouse cursor. The game will therefore be more suited to Wii or PC gamers, but can also be ported to other platforms. Rooms are successfully completed once the player forces Pingo to walk a correct path from the entrance to the exit, playing the tune provided on the way. In order to alter Pingo's path, the player will only be able to place turn arrows to begin with. Each ability has a cooldown timer associated with it before it can be used again, after which that ability will disappear from the playing field. In later levels, players will be able to have multiple instances of each

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ability in play, each with it's own timer, denoted by a clockhand revolving around the icon occupying the square that the ability is affecting.

More abilities are unlocked as play continues including a 4-way bumper that reverses Pingo's direction and sends him shooting quickly the other way (Better set up that turn arrow behind him before placing the bumper!), as well as a ramp to make him skip over an incorrect note or a pit.

Along with the note tiles are other parts of the scenery and environmental hazards. As mentioned already, there will be pits, as well as spiky balls that bounce back and forth across the field. Less deadly environmental objects will include computers, sludge, and simple walls. When presented by a non-deadly hazard such as a wall or computer table that cannot be passed, Pingo will always attempt to turn right. The more deadly hazards are of course not found until later stages of the game to allow the player to get used to the controls and gameplay.

Success & Failure Conditions

Failure occurs when Pingo is killed by an environmental hazard. Failing this, it is up to the player to decide whether they should restart a level as they will still technically be able to navigate to the start and try hitting all of the notes correctly once again. Success is achieved on each level when the player makes Pingo replicate the song within a certain threshold of accuracy. Each level is graded according to how closely the tune is replicated as well as how long it took the player to navigate Pingo through the map, and the number of retries. Achieving an S rank on every map will unlock a final series of maps for Pingo to navigate in which the player must place the musical tiles as well before play begins for added difficulty!

Carrot Says:

Title: Puzzle Penguin

Written by: ShinobiAC

Week 1

High Concept: Not bad overall; it gets the point across, though I think that it can get the point across just as well in fewer words. This High Concept can be done in a single sentence.

Critique: This is a tough game in envision; the way that I imagine that it plays sounds like it could be a really fun and neat puzzle game, but it's hard to know if my vision is the same as the writer's. The writing gets a bit confusing at times because there is too much superfluous content for such a simple sounding game.

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The way I look at this game is as such; its *Chu Chu Rocket* meets *Lemmings* with a unique twist on the environmental puzzle. That right there sounds really fun to me. The problem is; there were a number of un-answered questions that popped into my head as I read the Treatment. Such as; how does the player affect the speed at which Pingo hits a sound tile? Hitting the notes in a proper order *a la* Simon Says makes sense and is doable, but then to try and hit the proper notes in the proper time? That just sounds hard. Also; does the game expect the player to memorize the proper sequence and timing by ear only? That is going to make *Puzzle Penguin* impossible for a lot of players, though I can see it being popular with hardcore fans, so it would probably be best kept as a 'hard mode' and not the default difficulty.

The idea is *almost* there; it just feels like it is too complicated for its own good and would do well in a much simpler form. To reference *Chu Chu Rocket* again; take a look at how simple the gameplay mechanic was, yet how addictive the game was.

The presentation could use some work, it wasn't terrible, but there was more than one spot where I stopped reading to try and figure out what was going on. There were also a few grammar issues here and there that shouldn't be allowed;

"The goal of the Puzzle Penguin is to correctly solve every puzzle, unlocking all doors and allowing your escape from the clutches of the evil scientist, Hugo!"

This sentence is a mess of verb confusion that needs to be addressed; it also makes me think that the player directly controls Pingo, and nothing else, even though it was stated that the player controls a guardian angel previously.

Fun: B+

Presentation: C

Originality: C+

Kaiser Says:

Title: Puzzle Penguin

Written by: ShinboiAC

Week # 1

High Concept: This sounds pretty good. It gets right down to the point, and presents something interesting right off the bat. Thumbs up.

Critique: This game is interesting. I get the impression that this game is along the same lines as something like Pipe Dream with a twist. The music seems to be integrated well, in that you have to memorize the tune prior to beginning the puzzle, and can't map out what you're going to do ahead of time.

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The difficulty of this game could definitely be tweaked to make it interesting. Level design would be very important, and would go a long way to making or breaking this game. Between the placement of obstacles, the speed of Pingo, the complexity of the tunes, the size of the maps, and the frequency and usefulness of the abilities, there's a lot to work with for balancing or unbalancing this game. Additionally, this type of gameplay welcomes itself well to a "create-a-stage" mode, which can be fun. Such a mode would also encourage users to make their own tunes, which helps with the musicality of the game well.

The encouragement on the quick memorization of music is welcome, and fits along with this week's theme very well. Heavy knowledge of music isn't required, but it's going to be rough if you're tone deaf.

Overall, I'm a fan of this idea. It doesn't seem to be an extremely layered game by any means, but that's not a bad thing. On the surface, this game is extremely simple, and has a very clear goal. Once you get down to it, though, the game becomes a lesson in balance for the creators, and a lesson in managing dynamic mazes for the player. It's also possible that some new players who aren't too good with music could pick up a few things about pitch, too.

Fun: A-

Presentation: A

Originality: B+