Do You Know Them?

The game of theft and espionage

Game Design Document Written by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Do You Know Them? is a game of deception and espionage. The premise is you are Birch, a master thief. You have been contracted to break into a bank and steal a precious diamond. To do this you will have to find the right outfits to wear to get where you want to go and make a plan to get to the diamond and escape with the goods. This game will feature quite a bit of trial and error experimentation to complete the level successfully. The main mechanic of *Do You Know Them?* is its emphasis on outfits. Players must find outfits around the map and not only find a way to get them but pick the right outfit to go to the right areas. I hope to make interesting puzzle challenges with enemy placement for players to maneuver around. My hopes are that the challenge presented by these puzzles and the satisfaction of completing them will motivate players to continue playing and retry when they fail. *Do You Know Them?* fits within a sub-genre of stealth known as social stealth. Other occupants of this genre are the *Hitman* franchise, *The Ship*, and *SpyParty*. The game will bear a low-res visual style, with characters consisting of simple shapes such as rectangles and environments featuring a floorplan look, as if the game was being played on top of a map. Audio will use a digitized 8-bit style to match the looks with music being themed similarly to spy films and other sneaking media. The target audience of *Do You Know Them?* is primarily fans of other social stealth games, as this project is very much rooted in acting as a sort of homage to the genre. While they may be the primary audience of my game, they aren't the only audience who would enjoy this game. Fans of puzzle games should find the trial and error nature of my game similar to a puzzle game. Fans of stealth media general, ranging from games to movies, should have fun playing my game because it's very much a stealth game first and foremost. The score is calculated as a deduction-based system, with max score being given by default, but mistakes deducting points from that score, of which a text pop-up will notify players. Win and lose screens will be presented to players at the end.

GAME CONCEPT

The concept of *Do You Know Them?* is to create a stealth game that puts its focus on blending in than hiding in the dark. Instead players must blend in with crowds of people and find different outfits to progress to different parts of a level. Levels are laid out in an overhead view and players are spawned at the start and given free reign to approach their objective as they please. Players are given the objective to steal an object from a restricted part of the map. Players want to remain undetected or else face stiff resistance from security guards placed around the map. To get to their objective, players will have to blend in with crowds and find outfits lying around the map to move farther into the level and achieve their objective. The game will sport a simple art style with an overhead viewpoint. The tone is meant to be more comedic than serious. With it's low-res visuals, any attempt at deep messages or seriousness would seemingly come across as weak or perhaps not at all, as it would be incomprehensible through the game visuals.

GENRE

Do You Know Them? is a stealth game with minimal and simple combat elements. While it is a stealth game, it's more social-stealth than action-stealth in terms of sub-genre.

VISUAL STYLE

The visual style of *Do You Know Them?* will be simple. Level design will be akin to games such as *Hotline Miami*, with an overhead/floorplan design. Player models will be simple sprite towers, similar to those found in *Thomas Was Alone*. To differentiate players from NPC's, I will have the player always be a different color from NPCs, even outfits found throughout the level will use a slightly different shade of color compared to the NPCs that the outfit is meant to resemble. This will create a dissonance between the player and all NPCs.

Figure 1- Hotline Miami Floorplan

Figure 2- Thomas Was Alone character models

Figure 3- Reference Image for Bank

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for *Do You Know Them?* will be fans of the stealth genre. From video games it will appeal most to *Hitman* fans. From the theatrical side, *James Bond* fans will feel most at home when playing this game. It will also appeal to fans of puzzle games, as the use of the game's systems will make it a puzzle game of sorts. Fans of the *Hotline Miami* franchise should find a similar feel in its combat and weapon feedback.

PLAYER MOTIVATION

I hope to motivate the player through use of challenge and combat feedback. *Do You Know Them?* is meant to be quite hard which should lead to a lot of trial and error experimentation from players. I hope to balance this challenge with viability to make sure that players aren't constantly hitting roadblocks otherwise they won't continue. I also want the combat to feel satisfying to motivate players to use the system and hopefully to help take off the pressure of restarting over and over by acting as a fun thing to do while playing.

GAME PROGRESSION

- Start
    - o At the start of a level, before the game actually begins, players will be presented with a pop-up window featuring images and text demonstrating controls and giving the player their objective. It should be noted that this pop-up is can be exited to allow players familiar with the game to just start the game. After this popup players are spawned outside of the level building and given free reign over their character from that point on.

- Gameplay
  - Once players are given control of the character and the level begins proper, players will be given full control of the game's systems to steal their designated object. Systems include wearing a variety of outfits, engaging NPC's in CQC and ranged combat, finding weapons in the environment, and wearing outfits to appear as different NPC types, such as security, maintenance, and kitchen personnel. These outfits function similarly to the disguise mechanic found in the *Hitman* franchise. Players are free to use these systems as they see fit to achieve their objective, but certain actions will have different responses. Certain actions, such as firing a gun in public and changing outfits, will be marked as suspicious. If an NPC is within a certain range of a suspicious action, they will question your presence, this activates a timer (time limit to be determined once tested). If players cannot escape the room in time, they will be marked as hostile to all NPCs within a certain range and will be attacked by security personnel in the area. Players must use outfits and other systems to make their way to the item placed somewhere on the map and steal it. Afterwards, players must sneak their way back out of the map to an exit point.
- End
  - After a level ends, players will be given a score based on whether they engaged in combat or ghosted their way through the level, as well as other factors.

MOVEMENT

Do You Know Them? will implement basic WASD key movement, with camera movement being linked to the mouse position, allowing players to get a feel for the level layout just with a

flick of the mouse. There will be a range, however, that the players can move the mouse within to keep from players losing track of the player model.

ACTIONS

Actions will include opening doors, engaging in CQC combat with NPC's, and changing outfits. All of these actions will be linked to the "E" key to allow for easy interaction without repositioning hands from WASD position. Action prompts will be displayed when colliders with certain tags. For example, guard CQC will be prompted when the player collider collides with a collider tagged "guard".
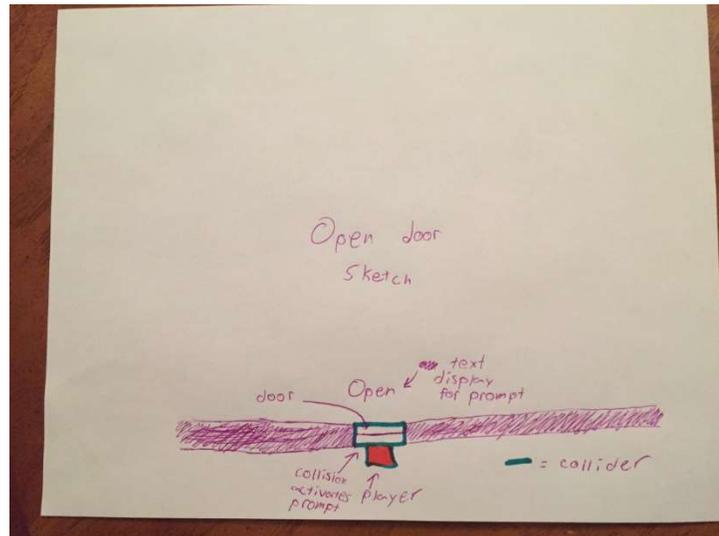

Figure 4- Example sketch of door opening interaction

COMBAT

Since the focus of *Do You Know Them?* isn't on combat, combat will be kept to a minimum. Players will be given prompt-based melee combat if undetected. When close to enemy NPCs, such as security personnel, they will be prompted to press "E", this will eliminate the NPC. Since the models are essentially just squares, the animations will be simple, but enough to convey that combat is occurring. If detected, players can left click to perform a melee attack in the direction of their mouse. NPC guards can melee the player if they are within a certain range, determined by a check set within a collider on the guard. In combat, both guards and players can take 3 hits before dying. If the player is killed, they must start the level over. No checkpoints are offered.

SUSPICION

Not all actions are allowed to be performed by players. Actions such as changing outfits, engaging in combat, and walking into prohibited areas will mark the player as suspicious. If the player is marked as suspicious. If marked as suspicious players must leave their current room within a certain amount of time,
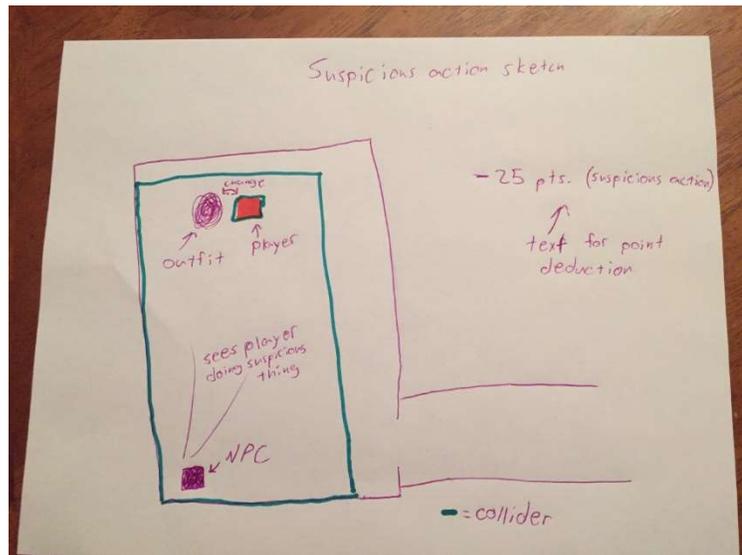

Figure 5- Example Sketch of a suspicious action (changing in front of NPC)

otherwise the player will be marked as a target and will be attacked by security guards. Rooms will be denoted by colliders with tags denoting what room it is. The timers will then be linked to this collider and will listen for the player to be in the room and countdown before alerting enemies, allowing the player to leave the room and carry on. If the player doesn't escape in time, however, guards within a certain range will be given the player location and be sent to attack the player. Players can escape pursuit by using crowds as cover. Once player has escaped, suspicion resets, however a flat rate score deduction is added to the current player score.

SCORE

Players start with a score of 1000. While no score can be added through player actions, certain actions will decrease player score. Engaging in open combat will deduct 50 points for each guard destroyed. If the player is marked as suspicious, there will be a 25-point deduction for each time they are marked as such. At the end of a level, total score is presented to the player, with

different audio clips and win and lose screens playing if score is above or below 500, with each denoting whether the play did well or poorly. A separate lose screen will play if the player outright fails the level.

GAME OPTIONS

The options in the game will include options for both starting and quitting the game, as well as a button to mute all game audio. The player can also press the "M" key to mute solely the in-game music.

STORY AND NARRATIVE

The narrative of *Do You Know Them?* isn't the main focus of the game. As a result, the story is much more a preface to the game level than it is a key component to the actual gameplay. The basic story is that Birch is a renowned thief in the criminal circle. He's contacted by a mystery client who wants a diamond stolen from a bank out in the bush. It's being stored there to take it out of the public's eye, but recently the bank has decided to offer a community day to allow the locals to tour the bank and see the diamond before it's moved away. This is Birch's time to shine. He goes to the bank and prepares to execute the heist of his career. Players will be presented with the story background in a paragraph before the level begins in the start of the instructions pop-up.

IMPORTANCE OF OUTFITS

The main mechanic of *Do You Know Them?* is its use of outfits. The outfit system is based on the system in *HITMAN*, as discussed in my former analysis of the system. I wanted to take the system and tweak it and simplify it. The two key differences are that outfits can't be found on bodies and that their location is randomized. This was done to address my problem with

HITMAN's system where it was too easy to get disguises. Outfits essentially swap the player model with a different one. Entering restricted areas will run a check for a certain player model. If the player is using the proper model, then they remain undetected. If they have the wrong model, they stay undetected but any guard who sees them will immediately become suspicious and players must leave the area within the given time limit or else guards will attack them. Three different outfits will be offered in the featured level; a security guard outfit, a caterer outfit, and a maintenance staff member outfit. Each of these outfits will open up new areas previously inaccessible to the player. The caterer outfit unlock areas like the kitchen and staff room. The security outfit will unlock vault access and most other areas of the bank. Last but not least the maintenance outfit will open up areas like the boiler room and other maintenance tunnels in the bank. Outfits will be randomly placed within certain rooms within the level. The hopes of using randomized placement is to prevent players from automatically knowing where an outfit is. Once an outfit is worn, the player will be allowed to pass into all areas allowed by that outfit with impunity, provided they don't commit any suspicious actions. Without use of the outfits, it will be impossible to progress without engaging in combat. As one of the key ideals held by stealth games is the concept of "ghosting" (or going through a level without alerting anyone to your presence), being able to avoid combat is key. While ultimately not necessary to complete the player's objective, players will have an uphill battle ahead of them if they decide to forego using outfits.

<u>GAME WORLD</u>

The game environment is a local bank. It's big and pretty, with a lot of different spaces making up the floorplan. Its variety of paths can make it quite labyrinthine and cause players to get turned around while exploring the bank. Using the idea of pathways discussed by Chris Solarski

in *Interactive Stories and Video Game Art* (2017) (p.35-40), I hope to create a sort of maze to guide players but have them engaged by having to think of where they need to go. The level will consist of a variety of locations, such as: maintenance tunnels, kitchen, break room, security room, bank vault, bank lobby, etc. Each room will have different makeups of NPCs. For example, the kitchen will feature mostly caterers, whereas the lobby will have a mix of all NPC types. The bank will all be on one floor in order to give players full view of all areas in the bank.

CHARACTERS AND DESCRIPTIONS

- Birch
    - Player character. Master thief and deception extraordinaire. Not great at parties but tasty in a fight.

- Bank Security
    - Take their jobs way too seriously. Would rather pump some lead into crooks than let them escape with enough cash for a happy meal.

- Caterers
    - Culinary Innovators. Just hoping to get through the day without dropping a croissant.

- Maintenance staff
    - You break it, they fix it. Have a lot of access to bank grounds, but not as much as those security fellas.

- Locals
    - Completely oblivious to what's going on, let's keep it that way.

TUTORIAL LEVEL

Do You Know Them? will feature no tutorial level, instead it will be up to the player to interact with the game's systems and experiment with different approaches to learn the game. The controls, mission preface and objective, will however, be given to players at the beginning of the level.

LEVELS

There will be one level featured here, albeit quite large, featuring a bank during a local community event. The player is tasked with stealing a diamond from the main vault in the bank and escaping. Players will have to contend with guards, caterers, maintenance staff, and the local crowds as well. The lack of a strong central narrative should allow for me to slot in more levels in the future with a bridge in the narrative between the two without burdening it with baggage from previous levels.

AUDIO/MUSIC

While there will be no dialogue, there will be sound effects for all actions, from opening doors to engaging in combat. There will also be background music playing throughout the level. All audio will use a digitized style to fit with the low-res visuals, with the music being themed after spy movies such as *James Bond* and *Mission Impossible*.

UI

I want to keep UI elements to a minimum so that the game maintains a clean image. There are a few elements, however, that will be featured. Chief among them, there will be a UI pop-up when a contextual prompt is available. This will be a simple text display that will appear on screen until players leave the zone to interact with the object or until they do interact with the object. There will also be a small dot placed where the mouse is positioned to allow players to keep track of the mouse position. Over the player I will place a small shape above the player model to help players better see where the player character is. If the player does an action that deducts points from their score, I will display a text pop-up for a few seconds showing how many points have been deducted. Aside from this, no other UI elements will be present in gameplay. To

access the menu, players will instead press "P" to enter the menu, rather than have a button on screen.

CHALLENGES FOR THE DEVELOPER
- Create detection for NPCs
  - Find a way to create detection radius zones for NPCs to catch players in the middle of suspicious actions

- Make crowds functional to disguise player
  - Make it so when the player is in the middle of a crowd of civilian NPCs, they aren't detectable to enemy NPCs such as guards

- Create checks for certain conditions such as player model, engaging in combat, etc.
  - Create a way for an NPC and areas to check for certain conditions such as player model, combat, outfit change, etc. and respond accordingly with certain actions.

- Randomize outfit placement
  - Find a way to have outfits have the possibility to spawn in a few different locations, but guarantee it spawns in at least one location. This would work to prevent players from developing ideal strategies to speed through levels.

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