Space Bomber Critical Analysis

Rules Critique

Introduction - *Space Bomber* is a top-down arcade shooter played with one joystick and two buttons. The game introduces the premise to the player upon starting; the goal of the game is to repel alien invaders by shooting away the colorful assortment of enemy units and bosses through six levels as the ship, *Space Bomber*. Because the game is focused on gameplay and the continued engagement of the player (in order to attract an audience amidst other arcade titles, and take the maximum amount of quarters), this abrupt introduction is well-suited to the design of the experience.

Gameplay - During actual gameplay, the rules are only explicitly stated during "death screens" displayed whenever the player loses a ship. While a majority of these screens are more so tips than rules, occasionally small explanations of game mechanics are offered. As an example, one of these screens explains that after you capture an enemy unit and that unit appears behind your ship, holding down the primary fire button will allow you to charge up a special attack, something that is not told to the player in a clear fashion up until seeing that specific screen in the game. This method also reinforces the design decision to obscure particular information from the player that they can likely figure out on their own, but is not explained in great detail until the player dies. This method gives players just enough information to motivate them to continue play without giving them a perfectly clear explanation from the very beginning.

Game Mechanics Breakdown

Shooting - The main method of defeating enemies in the game is to shoot them by launching projectiles from your ship by pressing the primary fire button, firing for each individual press. Projectiles that hit enemies deal a set amount of damage.

Movement - Players can use the joystick to move their ship in eight directions.

Power Ups - Blue pellets will appear when enemies are destroyed, and collecting these pellets will cause the player's ship to shoot more projectiles until they collect three, at which point no more will appear.

Capturing - The alternative method for destroying enemy units is to press the secondary fire button, which will shoot out a claw that captures regular enemies and places them behind the player's ship (with a limit of three). These enemies can be "fired" as a special shot by holding down the primary fire button instead of tapping it.

Scoring - The game uses a basic scoring system that increases by a set number of points per every regular enemy and boss defeated, as well as spawning money bag icons for the player to collect for more points if enemies are defeated using special shots. Players receive no points for capturing enemies, and will have their score reduced to zero if they lose all of their lives.

Game Mechanics Critique

Shooting - The player is only able to shoot normally if they spam the primary fire button, meaning over time, the physical fatigue of firing will fight against the player's ability to progress. The game's design as an experience encourages players to continue playing through multiple deaths, but the fatigue-inducing primary firing works against encouragement by offering a more artificial increase in challenge.

Movement - Players can always move, even if they are pressing a button, giving them the maximum amount of control over their ability to dodge through bullets at all times, encouraging more complex patterns to appear later in the game.

Power Ups - Players will immediately be able to collect the necessary number of power ups to achieve maximum shot output after destroying a few enemies, and will only ever collect new ones after losing a ship. Considering new enemies will spawn at almost every point in the game, the inclusion of these power ups are negligible to the playing experience.

Capturing - Capturing enemies is the most unique mechanic in the game, and is also the most heavily incentivized based on multiple other mechanics. The player is almost always able to capture enemies, even if they are simultaneously firing using the primary method or moving. The special shots fired from the player produce money bag icons that can be collected for more points.

Scoring - The game's scoring system heavily incentivises using the secondary fire button and special shot mechanics, highlighting the unique aspects of this particular arcade shooter. This

type of competition for players is common for arcade games, and is well-reinforced through the game's scoring mechanics.