GameLab²⁰¹⁰

# Play Testing

Historic Places and Events:
Pretty wall, pretty fast!

LUN

big asteloid, tiny you

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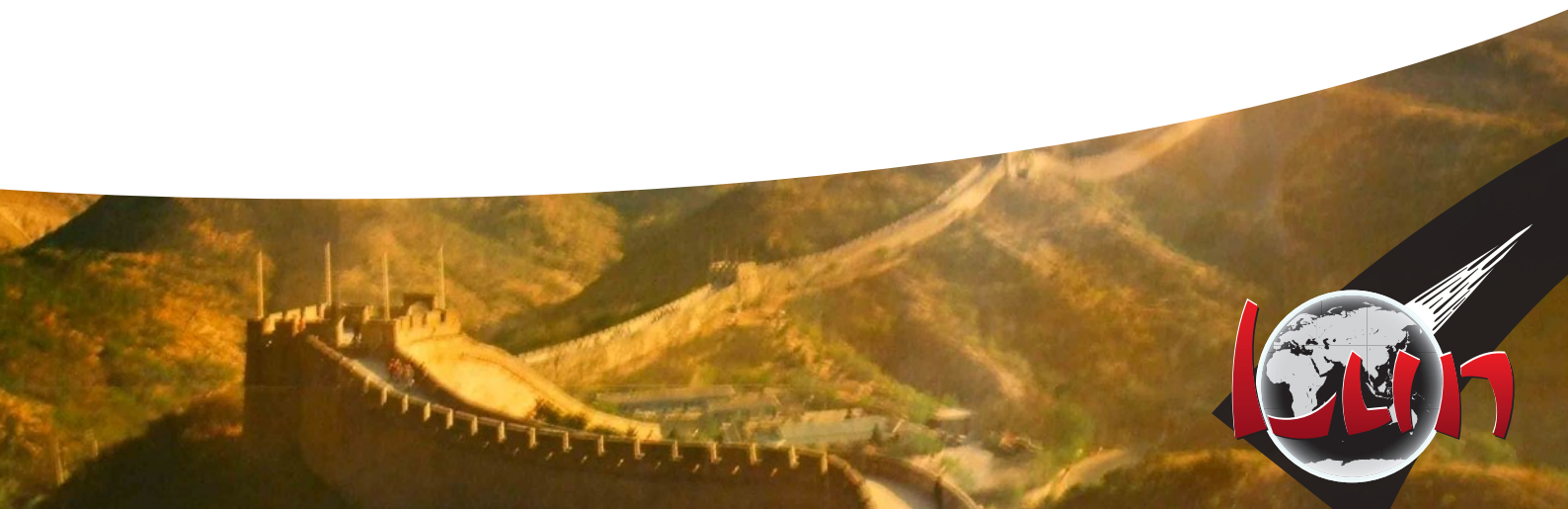
# Setup

It's Thursday Noon, the 13th of May 2010. We from Just 42 (Alessandro, Philipp and Rafael) just arrived in the huge hall of the StuZ2. With us we had a shopping trolley full of snacks and drinks, a few ten meters of different cables, 5 meter of gift wrap paper, a stock of 900 post-its, an Xbox, a laptop, a monitor and a whole lot of fun. After a good hour of installing everything - using most cables - each electronic device and the complete room in StuZ2 we were ready for the testers to come over. Because that is what this whole event was all about: The play testing session of Lun!

As we were able to use the whole StuZ2 we had to fill the place somehow. The StuZ2 comes with a beamer and a huge screen. So it was obvious that we would use this area for the great multiplayer fun. Connecting the laptop with the beamer and the audio-system in StuZ2 gave the correct amount of gameplay experience we needed. Further connecting 3 (of our 5) Xbox- Controller to the laptop and placing some sofas around the laptop our main "attraction" of the play testing session was born. In the far corner we further installed the Xbox, and a much smaller (in comparison to the screen) 24" Monitor to show that our game also runs on the Xbox. Here we used another 2 gamepads. This setup allowed us to have 5 players play-ing "Lun" at the same time, which was a good starting point for a whole afternoon of fun and people coming over playing our game.
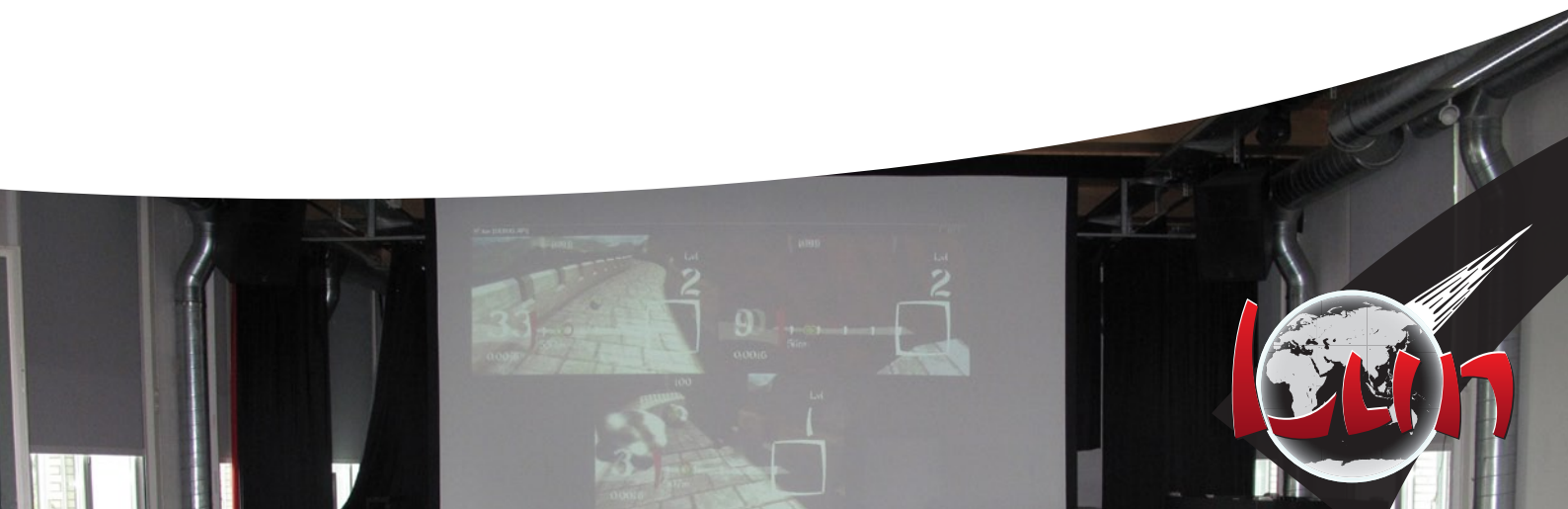
# Play Testers

Inviting people was rather easily made. We asked mainly all our friends and family to come over. We also invited our flat-mates and neighbours. We created a Facebook- event and tried to reach as many people as possible. True to the maxima: "The more the better". We finally could gather some 30 friends coming over for a few minutes or even hours.

Because we have been working for this project for weeks now, many friends came just over to get a glimpse at this time consuming project of ours, but also to see ourselves again. Thus not all our friends which came over, are enthusiastic console gamers. Also this rather special opportunity to playtest our first game, let to a rather widespread audience. From all major subjects, both university and ETH, both genders, and people from age 20 to 30 were around.

So all in all we can say that we had a good afternoon with many friends, which led to good feedback and many inputs from different aspects.

# Feedback

How to organize the possibility of giving – and more important of receiving – feedback from our play tester? This was one of the main questions we had to ask ourselves in front of the above described play testing session. As it was mentioned in the course we could have worked out a questionnaire. But none of us really liked this idea. This is mainly due to the fact that filling out a questionnaire is probably one of the most boring tasks to fulfil.

So we decided to go for something completely different. We bought 5m of white gift wrap paper, and two piles of post-its - one greenish, one reddish. So anybody could make some feedback on green and red post-its. We asked the people to write things they liked on green, and things they disliked, should be improved or just didn't work on red post-its. After having marked some regions on the gift wrap paper for different aspects of the game, the people could easily write down what they thought.

This way of having feedback has the great benefit for us that we easily do see if we are on a good track without having to bother around with evaluating questionnaires.   In fact we needed just a quantum of time to get the overview and to be able to tell which features are cool and which are not.

# Result

## Graphics

Many people where confused about our player sphere models, because they seem to look more or less the same for each player.

We had to find out, that our HUD is way too big, so that in the three- or four player mode of the game, some parts where overlapping others, so that the gamers were not able to see all information on it at once, which was also due to the fact of the reduced beamer resolution and the introduced quick fix to make it work nonetheless.

Further quite a few people have been missing an intro to the game.

## Sound

Most people liked the background music, even if it had a huge bug due to the XNA MediaPlayer. But quite some of the implemented sound effects turned out to be more disturbing than helping to play the game, so they have to be exchanged or switched off totally.

## Idea of the Game

Besides a few really cool inputs like weather effects or improved towers in the game, we collected quite a few hints how the game felt for beginners. And for most people it was a little bit too hard in the very beginning, because it is too fast and the doom is apparently already in the start too close to the player. But after a few tries the people were getting better and even found the game concept so easy that they think it should be a mini game at every flat party.

## Controls

Most people understood the concept of the controls rather easy and found it quite helpful that we offer many ways of triggering coins. We implemented further vibrating effects for the approaching doom, which are mostly disturbing and annoying instead of helping to understand where the doom is right now. And we obviously had some problems with the controller: some people were not able to navigate correctly through the menu. And as many guests have not ever played on an Xbox before, they could not figure out which player on the screen they are, so we have to implement a visual aid for that.

Other people called for a visual input if you are driving in the wrong direction, which will be implemented soon.

## Environment

Due to that fact that we had a bug in the light code, the wall and the sphere have been flickering all day, which certainly was very annoying. Further we had another bug with the whole environment which led to the fact that the environment sometimes just disappeared completely, and allowed the player to fall forever. And at some moments in the game the player were dying all the time even if they were on the track. These two bugs have already been removed.

Once more the call for shortcuts or crossroads where you have to choose your way was made.

## Coins/Power-Ups

The amount of power-ups in single player mode got some good feedback, but as soon as we are in the multiplayer mode things change. For each coin you collect you get a modifier which is visualized by an icon, some of these icons are not as intuitive as we hoped they would. Further most people claimed that they could not see that an effect on them has started, which is especially a pain if inverse steering is applied on you. Thus we have to stretch the time the already displayed info is appearing.
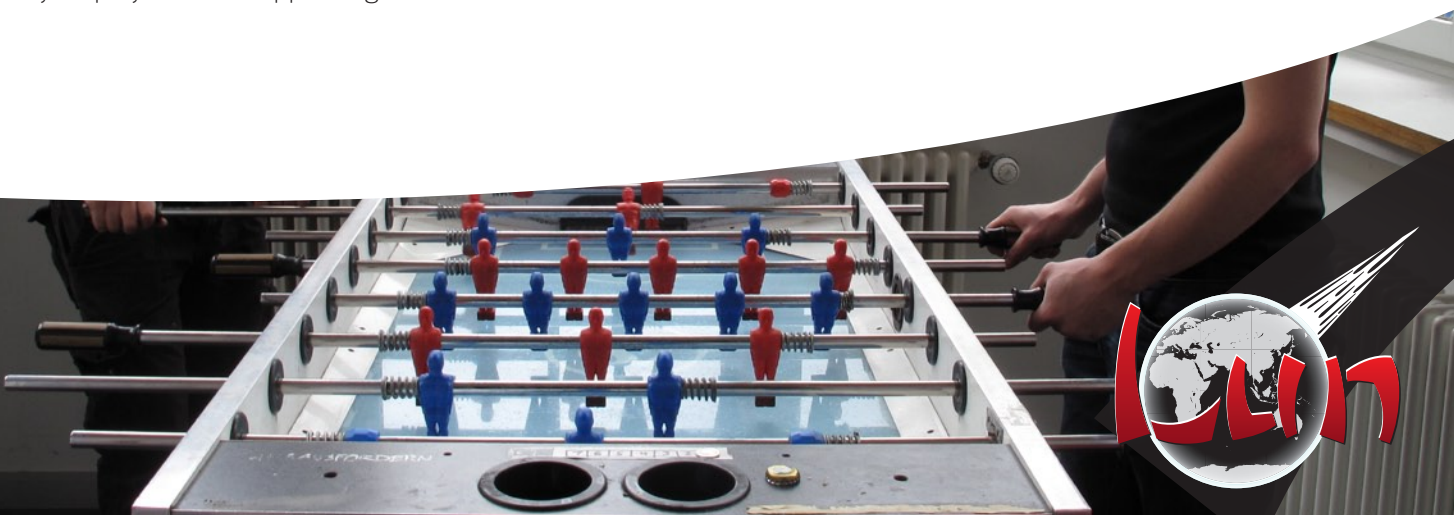
Two modifiers have not had the impact we hoped for. For once this was the "Monsterball" which is due to the just introduced stones on the wall more disturbing and not helping that much. And it is apparently too large for the holes in the tower. Second the concept of "Minidoom" is not really clear. We should work on clarifying this coin.

## Overall

To summarize the whole feedback for the game we made space for an overall column, where people could give feedback of the whole impression they had while playing the game. Here we actually just got green feedback. People love the concept that we posted on the first presentation: "easy to grasp, hard to master"!

# Conclusion

All in all we're very happy with the playtesting session. On the one hand we saw that we've made a game people can have fun with - which was the most important aspect and goal to meet. Ond the other hand we saw that there are a lot of things left to do, not only in removing bugs but also in tweaking and fine-tuning the game.

Luckily most of the bugs were quickly remedied and we already started to improve the playing experience.

Because by now we chose to finally adress one feedback, that was brought to us constantly throughout the course and the play testing: Lun! is lacking a reachable goal. Thus we're introducing a new game mode (and dropped the implementation of the coin collector mode instead) that allows you to set a point limit. The player reaching it first wins. In combination with a quite complex point system there are myriads of ways to win. Stay near the doom to collect Ride-the-doom bonus points or rather jump around to collect air time? Ride towards the doom to get extra points or try to bump stones off the wall? And all this while doom is approaching and you really shouldn't fall off the wall.

# visual impressions

Pretty lun, pretty big



Pretty lun, (relatively) tiny screen – first play tester!

Lun for life!



The hardware prototype...

Feedback! Quite red... uhm, let's see...



Oh yeah, very red