

# 5 Playtesting

## 5.1 Organisation

Playtesting took place on Thursday, May 10th 2012, from 3pm to 7pm in the student lounge in CAB E 32. We'd like to thank the Academic Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Society (AMIV) for allowing us access to their plasma TV and wireless controllers.

Our sample set of testers was recruited both from random passers-by in the lounge (which, as a consequence, were mostly computer science, math, physics and electrical engineering students), and unrelated friends of our team members, specially invited for the purpose of blind testing.

We collected anonymous feedback on forms inspired both by specific questions our team had in mind, as well as questions taken from the lecture slides. All in all, we collected 19 feedback forms and one sheet of paper with just "Bubbles are awesome" written on it.

You find the raw data in appendix A. We apologize for the mixture of English, German as well as Swiss German, and the poor handwriting of some testers, which obfuscated some answers beyond recognition.

## 5.2 Feedback form

We asked the following 10 questions:

- Are all weapons useful?
- What confuses you?
- How did the controls feel?
- What was your first impression?
- Was there anything you found frustrating?
- What additions/changes to the game would you propose?
- If you were to give this game as a gift, who would you give it to?
- What did you especially like?
- What did you dislike?
- General comments

As you can see, we tried to supply both closed (yes/no) and open (Explain how...) questions to allow for a wide variety of answers.

## 5.3 Feedback

### 5.3.1 Foreword

Feedback in general was very positive. Especially the graphics and intuitive controls were praised beyond our expectations. One player positively mentioned the possibility to try out the different control schemes before starting a new round. Multiple players testified that our game was very addictive, and most testers played multiple rounds to get revenge on the players

who killed them in the previous round.

Besides some unfortunate unhandled exceptions and arbitrary crashes, we encountered only a few persistent complaints. Whenever the same issue was raised by more than one tester, we tried to take it into account. You find these issues and the steps we took to resolve them below.

### 5.3.2 General trends

#### *Issue I: Insufficient explanations*

Both for item pick-ups as well as game modes, we have heard multiple times that our game lacks concise explanations. Especially in Defend-the-planet mode, it was unclear what the final goal of the game was. The same could be said about the messages which pop up when a player collects an item.

We improved on this situation by expanding the explanations of game modes (even though we observed some players blindly mashing the A button to skip that screen), completely removing the defend-the-planet game mode (which was unfinished anyway), and re-writing the item pick-up messages to make more sense.

### 5.3.3 Specific suggestions

#### *Issue II: Color correction / Display safe area*

As we had only tested our game on computer displays and video projectors before, we had not encountered any problems with typical TV problems such as color correction and “safe areas” before. During playtesting, we found that both these issues were non-negligible:

As colors were set to a very high intensity on our TV, the background of our game was more royal blue than the near-black midnight blue which it was supposed to be. As a consequence, the deep blue spaceship of player 4, and especially its laser shots, were nearly invisible compared to all the other players.

We also found that the lower edge of our game screen (and the GUI elements near it) was cut off to some degree (see picture 5.2). This is due to the fact that TVs usually don't display the full pixel area of their signal, but cut off a certain border region.

We resolved this issue already during playtesting by setting player 4's color to light blue instead of navy, and rescaling the GUI to fit on screen better.

#### *Issue III: Too much damage on planet-spaceship collisions*

Players often became frustrated when they accidentally collided with planets, as their ships took more damage than they expected. This is an issue because we want the challenge

in our game to come from your human opponents, and not the scenery.

We are currently working on resolving this by tweaking a handful of damage constants in our code.

#### *Issue IV: Default laser gun underpowered*

Players noted that it was very hard to hit anybody with the default laser gun, as the projectiles were slower than a spaceship's top speed, and as such, players could avoid getting hit very easily.

This has been resolved by harshly raising the projectile speed, but not the damage, of the default laser gun.

#### *Issue V: Disorientation on respawn*

We got multiple mentions of the fact that players were confused as to when and where they reappeared after death. This was the case both at the very beginning of a round and during actual gameplay.

This issue was solved in a very effective and visually appealing manner: Whenever players (or collectibles) are positioned on the battlefield, a nice particle effect is positioned at the same position beforehand to indicate that position.

#### *Issue VI: Unbalanced game modes*

In Deathmatch, fleeing was as valid a strategy as attacking them. While this is excellent in terms of balancing, this also means that this might cause unfairness in ranking by "last man standing" rules only.

We took care of this issue by renaming the former "Deathmatch" to "Last man standing", where these rules still apply, and introducing a new default "Deathmatch" mode, where players have an infinite number of lives, and need to achieve the highest kill-death-ratio (KDR) before a (configurable) timer expires. This punishes players who intentionally avoid confrontation.

#### *Issue VII: Missing sound effects*

Not all of the newly introduced weaponry etc. was fully supplied with sound effects. This caused some breaks in immersion during gameplay.

Sound effects and background music are currently being supplied simultaneously to creation of new weapons.

#### *Issue VIII: Better distinction between planet foregrounds and background*

Planet foregrounds were visually just as obvious as their backgrounds. This led to some confusion among players. We fixed this by making backgrounds blend more into the dark blue scene background.

### *Issue IX: Missing “Press A Button” hints*

When navigating through the menus, we noticed various situations in which players were unsure what they had to do. This will be fixed by adding additional “Press A” or “Press B” button prompts.

### *Issue X: Primary weapon upgrade system confuses players*

Especially in combination with the different system for secondary weapons, players were often confused about the weapon upgrade system. We intend to use the same system for both primary and secondary weapon types instead, after careful deliberation.

## 5.5 Impressions



*Fig 5.1: Four players are spellbound by the gameplay, and don't even notice the delicious snacks on offer. One tester sits out the round and fills out his feedback form.*



*Fig 5.2: The huge plasma TV we used for playtesting. Bottom shows some issues with safe-zoning, and colors are more intense than on computer screens.*



*Fig 5.3: Players confusedly gape at the defend-the-planet mode.*

# A Playtesting raw data

## Are all weapons useful?

- Yes, Laser is awesome
- Yes indeed
- Yes x2
- Yes, balance is good
- Yes, each has its advantage and disadvantage
- Green and yellow are useful
- “unpredictable” is not, others are OK
- Ja, fast zu viele Waffen
- Würde eher weniger Waffen und kürzere Zeit machen
- Can't say because I didn't understand all weapons
- No
- Laser-beam hard to direct, standard weapons very weak
- Default gun too weak?
- di “normale” Laser sind nöd sehr “schlagkräftig”
- I don't like bouncy things, but that is a matter of taste.
- Homing is slightly too powerful among bad players who would never hit otherwise.
- (no answer) x4

## What confuses you?

- Effect on yellow items not clear
- Yellow power-ups
- Nicht klar, welche Waffe genau welche Funktion hat
- Sometimes it says I picked up a laser but I can't shoot it?
- No background story :). Distinction between dead and “living” planets.
- When you die and reappear, there is no clear sign telling you where you are
- Wenn man Leben verliert, taucht man einfach irgendwo auf.
- After respawn, position is not really clear. Maybe signal somehow?
- Little small things floating around
- Can't see what direction the ship goes in if the screen is zoomed out too far (especially with the blue ship)
- Laser, Weapons, Shooting stations on planets
- health state not clear
- Gravity of the planets, but it fits in the game
- Player identification
- Wer bin ich? (Ganz am Anfang)
- Was machen die jeweiligen Waffen?
- Controls (right vs. left trigger): When picking up the “laser ftw”, I always thought I had a special weapon for left trigger.
- Am Anfang die verschiedenen Waffen & Rüstungsklassen
- Nothing
- (no answer) x4

## How did the controls feel?

- Good. x3
- OK x2
- Just fine
- Supi
- Like in space
- OK, but I hate always pressing the right shoulder button.

- Oh, could be easier, I guess.
- As soon as you have played one first game, it is good.
- Awesome (pro setting)
- Pro is good and intuitive
- Beginner is pretty cool
- Pretty good, cool controlling options
- Good to have several options
- Easy, intuitive
- Sofortiges Bremsen wäre evtl. hilfreich
- (no answer) x2

### What was your first impression?

- Good.
- Nice menu design / preview of controls
- Looks nice
- Looks good
- Looks good, looks like fun
- Cool :-)
- Should be fun!
- very addictive game
- Awesome
- Kuhl (*sic*)
- WTF? Just kidding...
- Kannte etwas ähnliches, jedoch unterhaltsam
- Gseht super guet us
- Tolle sound bi de player selection
- Cool game, it's fun to play with anybody
- Fun, easy to pick up, not too easy to hit desired target (even with directed missiles)
- It's a funny game for a few rounds with friends
- It takes some time and has lots of long pauses without "action"
- One needs 3-5 rounds to get used to it. After that, really nice.
- (no answer) x1

### Was there anything you found frustrating?

- No. x2
- Nein
- Infinite ammo = bad
- Not knowing in "planet defense" mode what was my target (3 enemies but 4 planets)
- It's hard to evade planets and aim at opponents.
- I never scored a single kill in 3 games, but that is my fault.
- being trapped in a laser beam feels kind of frustrating
- Zu grosser Schaden bei Zusammenstoss mit Planeten
- Han mich die ganz Ziit selber zerstört weg de Planete
- You can survive very long by just hiding from the others
- Abstürze
- (no answer) x7

### What additions/changes to the game would you propose

- No bubbles for pickup info. Maybe bubbles directly above the ship?
- Make the blue lasers lighter, because they are a bit hard to see
- Better sound effects
- Anderer Sound beim "kleinen laser"
- Hintergrundmusik wär toll -> evtl au verschieden?

- Maybe better overview/representation of the weapons (symbols instead of text bubbles?)
- Bilder von Waffen!
- Rockets could look more impressive
- Raketen etwas grösser
- Speed boost (power up)
- super acceleration
- Respawn animation
- Fließendere Map
- more weapons
- more first weapon extensions
- additional maps, maybe custom games (custom maps, resizable planets, objects, figures)
- tutorial introduction to all weapons and controls
- Dass man automatisch wieder verheilt (*sic*) mit der Zeit
- Kill Counter
- Deathmatch mode: Stats like #kills, #deaths, accuracy? Or after 5 min, player with most kills wins.
- Last-man-standing with 5 lives is good as it is
- Some tactical option. E.g. a large super laser powerup, shows up disabled with a countdown, when the countdown is over, the powerup is activated.
- health bars/ammo bars
- Indicate how much damage one already took by some more qualified mean than fire. E.g. fill out circle around your lives indicator filled out with your remaining health.
- Nothing specific
- (no answer) x3

#### **If you were to give this game as a gift, who would you give it to?**

- Some random dude. Everyone can play this!
- My neighbour
- My brother
- My brother, so we could game the whole night through, but I think it's for every age.
- My friends, little cousins
- einem Kolleg (für zum Bsp. WG-Party)
- Cousin
- an meinen Cousin (6)
- Primärschüler
- junggebliebene Erwachsene
- Your mom
- A friend who owns an Xbox, so I can play it :)
- (unreadable)
- (no answer) x7

#### **What did you especially like?**

- Graphics, controls, game types
- Graphics, Gravity
- Homing rockets
- Rockets that follow target. They are nicely balanced.
- Heat-seeking missiles (fair chance to get rid of them)
- Balancing
- die verschiedene Sache zum Isammle
- verschieden Spielmodi
- s'erschinigsbild allgemein!!!
- Die Farben, die (Flüche? *unreadable*) des Spaceshuttles
- Hat Suchtpotential



- 4-player game
- Mehrspieler-ausgerichtet
- The short rounds. They should not be much longer as waiting for everybody else to get killed would get annoying
- Gravity of planets
- That big and bad thingy.
- Loading time of the big laser
- Gegen Kollege spiele
- Following/Zooming camera
- The Camera was nice
- Size of the battle field and the amount of planets was perfect
- The menu is very nice
- Menu is awesome!!
- (no answer) x4

### What did you dislike?

- There are not enough explanations about how the weapons work and what the game mode targets are (in planet defense).
- Flying into my own bombs right after shooting them.
- Random crashes ;).
- I think the attraction is an epsilon too powerful compared to the rocket acceleration.
- Gravitation z.T. zu stark
- "This guy can take care of his own" was confusing at first
- The super badass laser made you immovable for too long.
- Zu viel Schaden wenn in Planeten geflogen
- Kollisionen mit den Planeten zu heftig
- S'isch schwierig zum gezielt schüsse bim spile (aber evtl. lits au a mir)
- Steuerung
- Slow movement of the first weapon bullets
- Lasers too slow in comparison with flight speed
- Pretty hard to aim with usual gun, you're pretty much dependent on special weapons.
- Laser power ups could last longer
- How understanding weapon system. I guess after a few rounds, things would be clear.
- (no answer) x6

### General comments

- (no answer) x8
- sounds of bullets is too monotone
- if you fly out of the boundary, the warning sign is not fully on the screen sometimes
- Sports level!
- Good job!!!
- Top!
- Geile Scheiss! (*sic*)
- Nais (*sic*)
- kreativ, witzig
- addictive like nothing else
- Sehr hübsches Spiel, s'isch nur scho zum aluege/zuluege läss (*sic*)
- Bubbles are awesome
- Very nice details etc., game menu is cool, game idea...
- It's fun, well done!
- In Deathmatch, the one who kills the most should win, otherwise one can just run away all the time and still win.
- number of lives is not entirely on screen
- more serious messages (not "laser ftw")

- There should be a respawn effect