

SO HOW'S LIFE?

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CONCEPT OF LIFE

The project “So how’s life?” is a project that is focussed on portraying the average student life and his or her struggles. The game starts with the choice of gender, one can choose to follow the life of a male or female student. After that the game informs the player that the student is weeks away from his final exam and that the choices that are made in this game could affect the ending. After playing through the game, the game will present the player with 3 different endings based on the points that has been gained from the choices of the player. The 3 points or scores are: Satisfaction, Hobby and Education. Satisfaction is linked to the free time activities, Education to school and studying activities and Hobby to the side activities of the student. The 3 endings are different for each gender.

The game essentially relies on visuals and music to create the mood that fits the activity. Also the game is showed through a first person view. Originally, it was planned to add narrations to some of the events to create an understanding of the student through his thoughts. Also since every activity is a chore and repetitive, like studying, narrations would’ve made it a bit more interesting. But because the lack of time and missed opportunities we decided it was better to leave it out. Instead, we filled the narrationless moments with narrations from third party videos. The last choosing point for the male route contained 3 possible choices and is the day before the final exam. Each of those choices were grand activities that had double the points of a regular activity, illustrating the choices as quite severe since they were the night before the exam.

SCENARIO AND FOOTAGES IN LIFE

The scenarios or fragments in the game were quite repetitive but it is intended, since everyday life is the same. This wouldn’t make for a fun game and so we used visuals, music and interesting editing to spice things up. There is also a contrast between the activities in mood. Since studying is mostly seen as boring and serious we used classical music and footage of studying, making the activity seemingly boring. And when we look at satisfaction activities, footages are more interesting and upbeat. The music has more mood to it and the footages are also more interesting. With hobby activities it is a sort of mix between satisfaction and education. It is an activity which can be fun, but is also quite serious since it can contribute to the future. And so every hobby footage (of the male route) is a time-lapse of paint sessions and contains background music and narrations of artists talking about their struggle of becoming an artist.

Almost every footage that has been used in this game is self-made. The footages were also edited in Sony Vegas Pro, since Ximpel is unable to run multiple media at once. Either a phone or reflex camera was used to film the footages. The footages that were not self-made are from Youtube or other third-party services.

BEHIND THIS LIFE

The theme career was a theme that struck me quite personally. Being a young individual, life can be somewhat hard or confusing. It is not that we lack basic things to survive, but rather we sometimes struggle to find what we want. High school does not prepare their students for life, it prepares them for the next academic step. But because of this it gives the illusion that students have to strive for academics to become successful, while in reality there are many ways to become successful. And of course being successful is highly subjective.

Coming from a kind of prepping for university environment a student is forced to choose what they want to be from the moment they graduate from high school. The students then have to choose what they want to major in and then has to invest funds and time of their lives for what they believe will end up in success and happiness. Not every student may realise it, but they eventually will, is that life is freer than they think. There are more paths to be chosen than only the academic one, and one might realize this too late into their academic careers. And while this freedom may seem liberating at first, it is essentially quite frightening. The choices you have made, will make or should've made will haunt you forever. But freedom has to be frightening, in a way. Without that fear one will never understand the choices they make. And without mistakes spawning from those choices, one can never climb to the top, as mistakes are what make an individual grow.

For me personally it is the switch between striving for the next class to every choice you make now is free but will influence your life greatly. I realized that I was able to choose, but at the same time I did not know what I wanted. And so it stressed me out a bit and forced me to think about life and what I wanted. And that is why the career theme hit close to home and inspired me to make the game: So How's Life.

THE XIMPEL LIFE

Working with ximpel was fairly easy. It felt like html and the documentation was clear, kind of. The game works with all its features, but the documentation could be confusing at times.

For example the score system. We were looking for the evaluation of the scores and expected this to be in the scores and variable section. But for some reason evaluating scores was in the subject section, which explained that one could set conditions in a subject for the subject to proceed to different events. And also, it would've been nice if it could explain the syntax for the conditions. It was unclear if we were able to compare the scores with \Rightarrow \Leftarrow or compare with different scores and variables.

Also ximpel itself could be frustrating at times. When a code in the playlist was faulty, one could not really see what was wrong with it. The application does not give an error or report, it just refuses to load or play. While this may be okay when the code is 100-200 lines, beyond that amount it is hard to spot a typo like “extension/extention” in a sea of codes.

Ximpel is unable to run multiple media types at the same time which can be quite annoying, since then every footage has to be edited accordingly. If Ximpel was able to run multiple media at the same time this could save the time of editing footage.

Nevertheless ximpel is fairly easy to use and is quite suitable to produce interactive games. It would be nice if the documentation were more complete and if there were some sort of error report. And maybe a short ximpel workshop could be nice. Other than that ximpel is stable and does what it's supposed to do.