

Design Proposal: Merge Combat with Overworld

Current Design:

The combat has intentionally been clearly separated from the overworld, causing the player to enter an entirely new screen whenever they aggro an enemy. The GUI involving micromanagement, such as the crew assignment, weapons and health bars, is only visible to the player during this phase. Moving around the overworld has a clean screen, with little in the way of a GUI or information displayed. Flying over to a shop allows the player to dock, walk into the shop and purchase/upgrade components of their choice. This is also where they adjust the loadouts of their ship and set up the style of combat they would like to use. The player can only aggro a single enemy at a time, as well as being limited in any maneuvering that can occur during combat.

Overall the current design requires two separate 'phases', causing some disconnect between each of both of them.

New Design:

Combat is within the overworld and isn't separate from the overworld's movement space and player agency. The player can freely move as per normal in the overworld, approaching an enemy ship will agro it. Due to the dynamic camera, as the player moves slowly to engage in combat, the camera is will be at a distance the same as the combat section in the current design. However, the player can utilise more space to move around, and have the option to flee from the fight with enough speed. A group of enemies can approached a number of ways, depending on the player's preference. They may choose to tackle the group at once or perhaps attempt to kite a single enemy at a time to defeat.

>< = merge

+Dynamic camera

+Agro hoarding

+Agro kiting

><UI of combat with the overworld

><The player is able to shoot & reassign crew anytime

-Combat scene being separated from overworld

Reasoning for the Change:

- It creates a more immersive environment when players are not constantly jumping around between a variety of scenes. Cutting between the overworld and forced combat can cause the player to feel trapped, breaking immersion and lowering their enjoyment levels of the game.
 - The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild vs Grand Theft Auto V:
BotW allowed for players to enter and leave puzzles or other areas as they please maintaining immersion, unlike GTA where the player was taken aside from the ever popular 'open world' in order to complete missions. Additionally, while Watch Dogs does take aside the player for some missions, other missions to unlock world content are seamlessly apart of the 'open world.' The player may choose to leave from that area is needed and come back later, again... maintaining immersion. It can be said that the removing this disconnect increases the engagement and enjoyability of players.
- The dynamic camera causes movement to flow nicely, easing the player in and creating visual feedback as to the speed at which they are moving. The current movement of the ship is highly enjoyable, so really focusing on keeping that flowing would help to increase the immersion of the gameplay.
 - The player gains greater vision of their environment when moving at a higher speed and a more needed closer and focused view during combat.
- The player is more comfortable with the micromanagement screen as they are able to learn it within a less pressured environment and become familiar with the controls.
 - Many combat oriented games contains a 'safe space' for the player to familiarise themselves with the basics of their combat abilities and player agency. An example of this is training ground in Overwatch, where the enemies are purely used for target practice (or even the starting room or time before the match begins).
 - Other examples: WoW (training grounds), Fable (training grounds), Mario (start of level), Castle Crashers (start of level).
- The GUI is less confusing, as it remains the same within any environment, meaning that the player doesn't have to familiarise themselves with two different layouts and sets of controls.
 - This means that there is one less tutorial for the player to complete, as well as having less control styles and GUI to learn, making it easier for them to reference in the future and lowering the learning curve.
- Enemies can be engaged at any point within the overworld (as long as they're in range), which allows for a larger variety of playstyles and combat tactics.

- Multiple enemies can aggro on the player at the same time, meaning that not only do they have to be careful with where they fly during combat (and outside of), but they can gain genuine joy in having a horde of enemies chasing after them.
 - When playing an RPG (eg. WoW, BOTW), players gain a large amount of enjoyment from simply running around and aggroing as many enemies as they can. The player gains no benefit from this, they purely do it because of the enjoyment they gain.
- Combatting multiple enemies at once increases the difficulty and the potential enjoyment in the game, as the player must adopt entirely different methods of combat with the amount of enemies that they face.
- The overworld provides a series of obstacles for the player to maneuver during combat, providing additional strategies to the gameplay.
- Player can escape an enemy if they choose (and have the skill/ability), rather than being forced into finishing combat. This provides an avenue of choice, causing them to not feel trapped by a poor or accidental decision they made.