

Synthon

DESIGN DOCUMENT

By Laser Jock for Pirate Jam 15

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Introduction

Game Summary Pitch

Synthon features an encroaching darkness mechanic that limits your vision and a spell casting system where you punch in the right alchemical elements with your number keys.

It's part adventure game and part survival where exploration is necessary to success. The encroaching darkness adds significant time pressure and increases the stakes of entering the recipes of spells correctly.

Inspiration

Magnum Opus

I'm using the alchemical elements and the metal upgrading mechanics inspired by this puzzle game from Zachtronics.

Mark of the Ninja

This is the only thing I've played where using the shadows is a core component of the game. You can play aggressively out in the open, or sneak around slowly in the shadows. Different scenarios might be handled better by one or the other.

Player Experience

The player explores a cave-like environment, collecting elemental essence that can be used to cast spells or break barriers. The darkness continuously encloses around you to add time pressure (optionally, this can be turned off for a more calm experience).

You can increase your vision range, and prevent the shadows from damaging you, but there is a trade off. A large vision bubble makes it easier to activate Shadow Summoners, which are obelisks that charge up in the light and summon enemies.

The spell input is purposefully a little bit difficult, to give the player the feeling of struggling and fumbling around in the dark. You remember chemistry lab? Try doing that in the dark. You're going to punch in the wrong keys sometimes.

Platform

The game is developed to be released on WebGL.

Development Software

- Unity
- Krita for graphics, though I am leaning heavily on free art assets
- opengameart.org for music, and freesound.org for audio, lightly edited by my in Audacity.

Genre

Singleplayer, adventure, survival

Target Audience

Anyone who is tired of just clicking a button to cast fireball. It's somewhat challenging on purpose (though turning off the encroaching shadows makes it a lot less survivalist)

Concept

Gameplay overview

Find your way to the exit portal. You may have to fight creatures to get certain elements dropped, or you can fully explore the map and craft them at a forge.

Theme Interpretation (Shadows and Alchemy)

I took these both pretty literally – I wanted to player to be an alchemist, who can craft recipes that do useful things (kindle the vision flame, heal, deal damage, transmute metals).

Instead of just spamming Kindle so you can always see, I wanted there to be a significant trade off. So I made the Shadow Summoner, which penalizes you for having a huge vision bubble by adding more aggressive creatures. But also you can farm the creatures for more elements.

Primary Mechanics

Mechanic
<p><u>Alchemical elements</u></p> <p>Collect these and use them to make recipes</p>
<p><u>Recipes / Barriers</u></p> <p>Spend the elements to Kindle your light, Heal your wounds, Burn your enemies, Transmute metals into other metals. There are also physical barriers which cost elements to break through.</p>
<p><u>Creatures</u></p> <p>They attack you and drop elements sometimes.</p>
<p><u>Encroaching darkness</u></p> <p>You can't see anything outside a limited radius which is continuously shrinking. Cast Kindle to increase it. When it gets too small, you start taking massive damage</p>

Secondary Mechanics

Mechanic

Shadow Summoners

Looking at them with your light summons more enemies. It nerfs the Kindle a little bit. You can sneak past them with a small vision bubble.

Art

It is an absolute hodgepodge of free stuff I found on the asset store.

Audio

Barely had time to think about audio, but it's in there! I wanted it to sound a little spooky but also fun.

Game Experience

Controls

Keyboard + Mouse

Arrow keys / WASD + Mouse to move and look
Number keys or numpad for reagent entry.

Development Timeline

MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT

#	Assignment
1	Basic player and enemy movement
2	Repurpose cutout shader for this project
3	Spell cast and inventory system
4	Level design