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9/11/22

Research Paper on Fighting Games

Fighting games are a niche and very unique genre in the gaming industry. They are very difficult and competitive by nature compared to other video game genres, so they attract a small audience with a very specific mindset. They must also focus way more on game feel than most other genres because that is what the games revolve around the most. If the game doesn't feel good to play, there are very rarely any reasons to play them. That being said though, fighting games have a ton of dedication and passion put into their development. If you analyze everything about them, from their gameplay intricacies to their visual designs, they can be a sight to behold.

Nowadays, most AAA fighting games use Unreal Engine to display highly detailed graphics. One of the main draws of fighting games is the aesthetic, and fighting game developers know this, so they want to make their games look as good as possible to draw a lot of attention. However, most indie fighting game developers don't have the budget to make games that look as good as the AAA ones. Instead, most of them use an engine called M.U.G.E.N., a popular engine for making 2D fighting games. "It requires work and dedication, but there is a large support community and lots of already-done characters you can use to test your game mechanics." (Demetrio, 2021)

In regard to common intricacies in fighting games, most of them follow specific trends that have proven to be effective over the years. The common interface for fighting games is each character having a health bar at the top of the screen, a timer in between those health bars, and a meter that is used for performing powerful moves known as super moves at the bottom of the screen. Control schemes vary wildly from game to game. However, most of them follow the trend of having multiple buttons be used for attacks so the characters have a large number of moves to use and they feel fleshed out. Gameplay mechanics also vary wildly from game to game, as that's the main aspect that gives each fighting game their own identity. However, all of them give the players the same goal: win by reducing the opponent's health to zero or have the most amount of health when the timer reaches zero.

There is a yearly fighting game convention that can be used to tell which fighting games are the most popular right now. It's called the Evolution Championship Series, or EVO for short. It was held last month, and it is the biggest fighting game convention in the world, with people from all sorts of different countries around the world attending it. Its registration count indicates that the top three fighting games right now are Guilty Gear Strive, Street Fighter V, and Tekken 7. (Ramsey, 2022)

Guilty Gear Strive is the newest game out of the three, and it has a lot going for its popularity. It has a fantastic anime aesthetic, memorable characters, a robust combat system that is easy to get into but difficult to master, and most importantly, excellent netcode. The netcode of any fighting game shapes its online gameplay, with good netcode making online matches feel as good as offline ones by removing as much lag as possible. Strive came out in the midst of the

pandemic, and since everyone was quarantined, they needed to use online gameplay to play with each other. Since Strive has some of the best netcode among fighting games right now, a lot of people find this game fun to play online, and they keep coming back to this game because of how good it feels to play online with others.

Street Fighter V's popularity contributes to two aspects: its post-launch development support, and the fact that it's a Street Fighter game. Street Fighter V had a rough start back when it launched in 2016 due to its lack of content. "The game wasn't fit for newcomers (those looking to mess around in arcade mode) and even higher-end players weren't seeing the fun in the game." (Epps, 2021) However, the developers continued supporting the game by releasing balance patches, downloadable content, and content updates. Now, it has a lot more content than it originally did, and it is considered a great game now. It's also as popular as it is because of its standing as a mainline Street Fighter game. Street Fighter is one of, if not the biggest and longest-running fighting game series in the genre. People that played the older games transferred over to the new game, which bolstered the game's popularity along with new players.

Tekken 7 is very well known in the fighting game community for being one of the hardest games in the genre. Not only is movement in the game extremely tight since it's a 3D fighter, but every character has over a hundred different moves for players to memorize, and they have to understand every move of every character to be competent at the game. However, the game feels incredibly satisfying to play when they do climb over that massive skill curve. This encourages new players to keep improving their skill and it keeps pros around to keep playing the game. Not to mention matches in the game look very cinematic, and anyone that plays or watches them can feel the impact of every move landed.

Fighting games are usually funded in two different ways: either developers produce and publish the games themselves or the publishers that hold the licenses seek out a development team to produce the game for them. Arc System Works is an example of a development team that has done both. They have their own in-house properties such as Guilty Gear and BlazBlue and publishers requested for them to develop licensed fighting games such as Dragon Ball FighterZ and Persona 4 Arena. Not only do developers and publishers need to fund assets and development, but they also need money to uphold servers for players to play them online. The fighting games then make their money back through consumers buying the games and their downloadable content (DLC).

Advertising and marketing are handled the same way across almost every modern fighting game. Before a fighting game comes out, developers generate excitement by releasing trailers of characters and game systems and mechanics. Sometimes, they will even host periods of beta testing for players to try the games out and so the developers can receive feedback on what needs work before the official launch. After the game launches, they continue supporting the game through post-launch DLC in the form of season passes. These season passes offer a roadmap of what the developers plan to add to the game over the course of a specific amount of time. Not only does this give players an idea of what's coming so they can look forward to it, but they will also be reassured that the developers are still supporting the game. This way, they know the developers will fix any issues relating to bugs or game balance.

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