



[Game Critique]

[Rock Climbing compared to climbing within game platforms]

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INVOLVE



Rock Climbing compared to climbing within game platforms

To help Involve develop our new light-hearted four player climbing game, I am going to complete some primary research and look into real life rock climbing, looking at its different techniques and then comparing it to climbing within game platform, Assassins Creed and its new Ubisoft's "puppeteering" control system. What I am hoping to achieve within this critique is a greater knowledge of climbing itself and learn how we can make our game Cling more effective and simulate climbing better than our competitors.

Rock Climbing

Our game Cling based on climbing an indoor artificial wall. But climbing itself can come in many different styles and variations. Whether these being on a hill, mountain or the artificial wall that I will be closely looking into.

History

Rock climbing is said to have originated from Mountaineering (walking, hiking, backpacking and mountain climbing, where the climber carries their loads with them at all time) so that mountaineers could prepare and train themselves for a climbing expedition. By 1950 Rock Climbing went from being a sub-sport to Mountaineering and started to get considered as a serious sport of its own.

Lecturer of Physical Education and Founder of DR Climbing Walls, Don Robinson produced the first concept for the artificial climbing wall at Leeds University in 1964. Don simply inserted pieces of rock into a corridor walls. But it became a popular climbing playground; amongst the users were Jon Syrett who attempted to climb the 'Wall of Horrors' at Almscliffe Crag, north of Leeds.



Syrett , John (1950-1985)



Different Types of Walls

After further development on Don Robinson's first indoor wall you can now find walls in many different shapes, sizes and materials. These included plywood, slabs of granite, concrete sprayed on to a wire mesh, pre-made fiberglass panels, manufactured steel and aluminum panels and textured fiberglass walls.



Plywood Wall



Manufactured steel and aluminum panels Wall



Textured Fiberglass walls



Techniques

The basic knowledge and skill sets of being a good Indoor Rock Climber are: Having good balance skills, making sure your keeping your body close to the wall, using your legs to carry your weight and using your arms for balancing, weight shifting and for gripping pegs to move around the wall.

The technique to climbing is a simple repetitive process:

- 1) Move limbs
- 2) Shift body weight
- 3) Repeat



When moving up the wall, you horst you body up with your upper body strength but making sure your weight it on your legs. The sequence being:

- 1) Move limbs
- 2) Horst up
- 3) Legs up
- 4) Repeat





Indoorclimbing.com recommend this as the easiest and best climbing technique:

“Move yours hands keeping your body motionless. Listen to the sound your feet make when climbing. Make quiet smooth movements staying directly over your centre of balance. Find your foothold visually - don't stab or slide with your feet until you find a hold, then make a deliberate and precise foot placement. Developing good foot placement is essential for improving your climbing technique and balance...”

Rock Climbing Technique, Performance and Climbing Tips
http://www.indoorclimbing.com/Climbing_Technique.html

Challenge

Indoor climbing is mainly used for training and improving skills. So the individual climber will challenge themselves to different goals. The main drive climbers have towards climbing are:

- Getting to the top of the wall
- Learning new moves
- Improving their climbing skills
- Becoming a faster climber

It is also known that whilst climbers are climbing walls, they challenge themselves by only allowing themselves to use one colour peg on the wall. This is so they can improve their flexibility and learn how to jump across the wall.

Along with self-challenges, climbers do have healthy competitions between each other; such as races to the top of the wall know as, “The Climb-off”. This helps motivate the climbers but also it is a good way to learn off of each other.

We here at Involve our hoping that our new game Cling will create a friendly racing competition between the players, in the same way as Rock Climbing does.

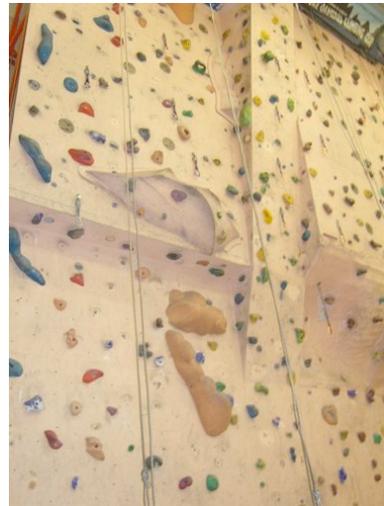
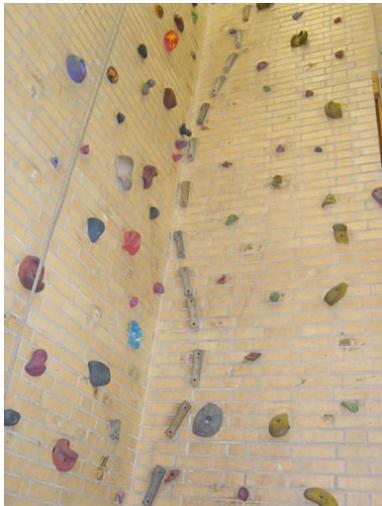


Day with a Climber

For additional research on Indoor Rock Climber, I went climbing for the day at Stock Damerel Climbing Club in Plymouth.

Here is a photo diary of my day and what I gained from the experience:

I noticed that each of the walls had the pegs placed in different positions and all the pegs varied in size and shape. This gave a choice to climbers to have different climbs per wall:



From studying a few of the climbers in the session I noticed how before each climber started their climb, they would semi plan their route and place judgement on how far they would need to stretch pure each move. Also during the climb I noticed how the climbers would always be looking around for their next move, firstly being which peg they could grab next with their hand and then where they could position their foot of the matching side.

If the climber did become stuck, they would go down some pegs and manoeuvre in a different direction



The climbers always seemed to be pushing themselves and would try as many challenges up the walls as possible, however the main goal was to get to the top without falling off. To signal the climber has got to the top of the wall they would ring a bell, or simply tap a bar to signal their end goal.



I watched a race between two climbers, and what I noticed from watching was how they both did not rush their way up the wall, they were more concentration on not having to need the same one peg at one time.





I gained a lot of inspiration for our game *Cling* from attending the climbing session. It certainly has given me the confidence in our game and to know that we have the same Physical Challenge within our game that real life rock climbing has.

Here are just a few more pictures of the session:





Climbing within Gaming Platform - Assassin's Creed

For part two of my critique I am going to look into climbing within game platform – Assassin's Creed and then compare it to real life climbing to see how close the relationship between them is and whether it does give you the same experience of climbing as if you were on the wall yourself.

Assassin's Creed on Xbox 360



Trailer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccClutaN_I&feature=player_embedded#

Background information of the game

Assassins Creed is a third person action-adventure game, developed by Ubisoft Montreal and published by Ubisoft.

The game is set in September of 2012, where Bartender Desmond Miles has been kidnapped by an unknown person prior to the start of the game and was brought to Abstergo Industries, where researches are working on the project – Animus. Animus is able to read genetic memories from ancestors of the user that have been stored in DNS, allowing the user to replay those memories as if they were right there themselves. Desmond has an ancestor Altair, who was a member of the Assassins during The Third Crusade of the Holy Land, around the year of 1191.

The player plays the part of Altair on his quest to assassinate 9 individuals in the interest of bringing peace to the region and to help the researches gain the information they need to find. Plus you get to roam an enormous environment, based around "The Kingdom" of Jerusalem, Damasus, Acre and Masyaf.



Controls

The game Assassin's Creed has an open wall climbing structure within the game play, that give the player the option of letting the main character Altair to climb pretty much anything, along with extremely high towers with what seems super human strength.

All of this is made possible by some incredibly fluid and intuitive controls that allow pretty much anyone to pick up the controller and know how to climb around and explore at will.

The games climbing and combat systems, both of which are controlled by Ubisoft's new "puppeteering" control scheme are one of the first of its kinds. Controlling Altair is much like how a puppeteer controls a puppet. Each face button on the controller corresponds to a particular part of his body, and all of his actions are carried out via the appropriate limb. In combat, the weapon hand attacks, the off hand grabs foes and the feet dodge enemy steel. While navigating the environment, the feet make acrobatic leaps and propel Altair up walls. The empty hand grabs hold should he lose his grip, and his head allows him to view his surroundings more clearly.

Here is the Xbox Controller and a key showing which of Altair's limbs is connected to which face button:



A Button: Controls actions of the legs

B Button: Controls actions of right arm

X Button: Controls actions of left arm

Y Button: Controls actions of the head

Overall the puppet controls work fairly well, however they are not completely intuitive and natural at first, it does take a few tries to get use to the logics, but once achieved the manoeuvres are incredibly easy and pretty effective and based on real life climbing.



Challenge

The main challenge to the game is to assassinate the 9 individuals without getting noticed, whilst you pick pocket, eavesdrop, run around, and climb around the city.

There are even mini games within the main game, but for my purpose I am going to focus on the challenge of the climbing feature within the game.

By having the “puppeteering” control scheme set up the game is very challenging to control at first, and when climbing the walls within the game, it is based pretty much identically to real climbing, because of the controlling of each limb. The only part that does not make it exactly identical is the illusion of climbing with super human strength.

The main game challenges are making it to the tops of the building without falling or becoming stuck with nowhere to move next. Again this is the same as real climbing, as an unsuccessful climb is when the climber either falls off the wall, or becomes stuck with no more moves.

The only aspect the game is missing is Physical Challenges. In real life rock climbing, it is all a physical challenge. This is because of the game's input being only the use of pressing buttons and not a “physical activity”. This is where our game *Cling* differs and is more related to real climbing, as the players will be using all their own limbs to control their game player.

Links to YouTube.com

Here are some links to videos on YouTube.com, of the climbing in action on *Assassin's Creed*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voz6XwwhezC>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e7MfSsaEs&feature=response_watch

Motivation

With all this in mind the motivation the player gets from climbing in *Assassin's Creed* is to get the reward of when getting to the top of a tower. You are able to get an eagle eye view of the city, which is a real spectacular thrill that is undeniably impressive.



Graphics

Assassin's Creed has very detailed, realist let alone stunning graphics and animations. That makes the experience of the game a much more exciting one.

The climbing graphics are done very smoothly and you can see the way Altair's body is moving in order for him to be able to climb the wall. The walls have grips and groves placed in them just like real climbing wall have. The scenery around the wall as you climb becomes smaller and wider to give the effect of being higher.



But the main scene that stands out the most has to be the eagle-eyed view you receive from climbing the tops of the towers. You can span around the environment, giving you a breath taking and thrilling view. Just like what you would experience from climbing a real

wall.

As I said before the main goal and achievement you receive from climbing is to get to the top and experiences the views, and this game has definitely took this into account and awarded the game players in the same light.





Conclusion

In result of researching both real rock climbing and climbing within Assassin's Creed. I can say that both are pretty much the same in techniques, especially because of Assassin's Creed puppeteer control system and how you control each limb separately.

Both have the challenge of getting to the top as smooth as possible without falling off and having to start your climb again. Plus they both have the same end achievement of knowing you have reach the top and being rewarded with the breathtaking views.

The only aspect missing from Assassin's Creed compared to real Rock climbing is the Physical Challenge. Even though you are controlling each limb of your character separately you are only working your fingers and thumbs whilst playing the game. So even though you are getting a thrill from climbing the high towers within the game, you are not experiencing it as if you really are actually climbing the tower.

That is why there is a gap in the market for cling, because your not just feeling like you are achieving the impossible you are actually experiencing it as well!



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Rock Climbing Technique, Performance and Climbing Tips

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Breaking new ground: indoor climbing areas can simulate the outdoor experience, attracting a whole new clientele

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With Thanks

I would like to thank Stoke Damerel Climbing Club for allowing me to come in a view and take photographs of the climbing session.

Here is a link to their

website:<http://www.stokedamerelclimbingclub.co.uk/>