MOONRISE

BY EL SCHAEFER

Project #3 – Kinesthetic Flow

DES365 Spring 2022-A

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Chicago, November 2015. Airport workers are on strike, the Bulls have just lost to the Pistons, and the Werebeast Civil Rights Association is gearing up for the 11th annual Shifter Rights March. In a bold move, the WCRA has decided to hold the march on the morning of the 25th – the full moon. As always preparations are a tense affair, but with the completion of the first public shift sanctuary and recent rumblings from the state legislature, the Chi-fter community is cautiously hopeful.

And then on Wednesday the 18th, Rozey Tiaret – musician, local celebrity, and werelion – is found dead in her car at Montrose Beach at 7:13am.

Delphine Kessler – club bouncer, local nobody, and mongrel werewolf – always struggled with Rozey's optimism, her belief that things could change for them (certainly not the only thing that broke them up, but…). But with her gone, and the police dropping the investigation like a hot wereboar turd, Phee can no longer stay away, no longer hold herself back. With one week until the full moon, Phee sets out to find the killer and avenge Rozey - and just maybe uncover a massive conspiracy, confront her own identity, and save the entire Chi-fter community as well.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

- **GAME SPEC OVERVIEW**
  - GAME ENGINE: Unity 2022.1.10f1
  - GAME TYPE: 1st person adventure/exploration
  - ESTIMATED GAME TIME: 5-10 minutes (for this demo)
  - GENRE: Urban fantasy adventure, neo-noir
  - MOOD: Gritty, but not grim, with healthy dashes of irreverence and stubborn optimism
  - ART STYLE: Simple, saturated, and stylized - very comic-inspired
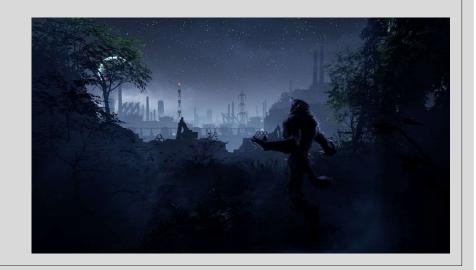 - MUSIC/SFX STYLE: Exaggerated realism, emphasis on diegesis

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Kinesthetic Flow Concept

This project is meant to emulate lycanthropic transformation and exploration, the rage, strength, and raw sensory experience of becoming an animal. The player will have some time as their standard human self, getting the lay of the experience, before being prompted to transform and feel the contrast between the controlled, constrained human existence and the unfettered, unfiltered animal form. The transformation itself should be rapid and responsive, while still feeling impactful and strained. In their transformed state, the sensory experience of the player will be heightened – lights will be brighter, sounds will be sharper, movements will be heavier, focus will be more direct, etc.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

<u>Market Research 1 – WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE - EARTHBLOOD</u>

Based on the *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* TTRPG, this game brings players into its grim, realistic atmosphere as a werewolf eco-warrior. The game is dark and intense, putting players in the role of the brutal underdog against a background of human failings.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Market Research 1 - WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE - EARTHBLOOD

PROS/WHAT I LIKE & WANT TO EMULATE

◦ Transformations feel fluid and powerful

◦ Great use of lighting and particles to enhance feel

◦ Distinct abilities and control between forms

CONS/WHAT I DON'T LIKE

◦ Third-person perspective

◦ Not much sensory difference between forms

◦ Strong emphasis on violence and combat

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Market Research 2 – <u>THE WOLF AMONG US</u>

A key inspiration for *Moonrise,* this game is a colorfully gritty fantasy neo-noir that pulls players in with its world and characters. The visuals balance colorful comic-inspired cel-shading, clear-cut adventure game stylings, and urban chaos in ways which are engaging in both their identifiability and twists on the familiar.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Market Research 2 - THE WOLF AMONG US

PROS/WHAT I LIKE & WANT TO EMULATE

◦ Strong visual aesthetic – it's based on a comic series, and it shows

◦ Balances fantasy and neo-noir stylings

◦ Well-framed interactive fantasy action sequences starring a werewolf

CONS/WHAT I DON'T LIKE

◦ The game spends very little time or focus on the player's wolf form

◦ Third-person perspective sometimes fails to put the player in their character's shoes

◦ Visuals can sometimes be more distracting than atmospheric

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Market Research 3 – MIDNIGHT MASS

While not a video game, the way TV series *Midnight Mass* depicts the sensory experiences of the converts is both subtle and powerful. The sound modulation and light effects used convey the tempting power and beauty of the experience, while working in tandem with the framing to create an undercurrent of animalism and isolation.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Market Research 3 – <u>MIDNIGHT MASS</u>

PROS/WHAT I LIKE & WANT TO EMULATE

◦ Beautiful sound and visual effects create interest and emotional response

◦ Setting is familiar without being mundane through its design and atmosphere

◦ Balanced blend of modern and neo-gothic influences

CONS/WHAT I DON'T LIKE

◦ Non-interactive, lacking a sense of immersion

◦ Little focus on the physical or kinesthetic aspects

◦ The subtle effects work for this series, but not so much for my intended feel

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Player Movement/Controller

In this demonstration, players will be asked simply to move about the environment. However, said movements will be quite different between the two, conveying both the physical and characteristic differences between the player's forms.

Element #1-2 – Human vs Wolf Walk Cycle

Along with the character physically growing/shrinking, the walk cycle in human form will be slower and more deliberate, while the wolf will be wilder, faster and more uncontrolled, e.g. taking a moment to slow down.

Element #3 – Controller Vibration

If I can get my hands on a controller, I'd like to have the controller rumble during the player's transformation to sell the physical strain and energy. I may also add it to a lesser degree to certain interactions (e.g. smelling, running).

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Camera

The camera's movements will be used to sell the physical experience of the player character. Other camera effects will be used to convey the player's perceptions and focus. Again, both will shift along with the player's state of being to create a contrast.

Element #1 – Camera Bob

The camera will bob slightly along with the player character's breathing and movements – subtly for when they're standing still, more quickly as they walk/run. As the player transforms, so does the degree of camera bob, becoming more pronounced in wolf form to fit their larger, more lumbering body.

Element #2 – Camera Shake

As the player transforms, the camera will shake – subtly at first, then more violently – to help lend impact to the shift and its stresses (and maybe a little bit to hide awkward element transitions if necessary).

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Camera

Element #3 – Zoom/FOV

As the player performs key actions (e.g. walking/running, sniffing objects), the camera will zoom in slightly to direct the player's focus to said action. Also (if I can manage it), as the player shifts into wolf form, their field of view will narrow somewhat to reflect the difference in the two species' visual abilities.

Element #4 – Color Vision

Using a camera add-on, the player will shift between full and protanopic color vision as they transform, reflecting canine colorblindness (and to give the wolf form some drawbacks, making sure the human half isn't completely inferior).

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Audio

Various audio effects will be used to sell players' actions and physicality, and how they change between forms. Others will be tied to the world around them and how they relate to that in their different forms, particularly regarding their wolf form's enhanced hearing.

Element #1 – Transformation Sounds

The player character will let out a strained groan as they transform, reflecting the physical and mental stress of the change, with the sound shifting up or down in pitch to indicate which form is being shifted towards.

Element #2 – Walk and Breathing Changes

Background player sounds – namely the character's breathing and footsteps – will shift in volume, pitch, and speed, in reflection of the player's transformation state.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Audio

Element #3 - Hearing Sharpening

As the player shifts into wolf form, surrounding environmental sounds will increase in audible range and volume, the wolf having better hearing than a human – a once basic park soundscape will be filled with animal chatter, buzzing lights, cross-chatter, etc.

Element #4 – Sniffing Sound(?)

Assuming I'm able to implement the sniffing mechanic, players in wolf form will be able to sniff certain objects, accompanied by a sound cue.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Visuals

Much like the other effects, changes to the visuals will be used to enhance the contrast between human and wolf forms, highlighting the difference in perception.

Element #1 - Vignette

When the player assumes their wolf form, a slight vignette effect appears around the screen, enhancing the sense of animal focus by framing the central action. This vignette effect increases as the player is in motion, driving them forward.

Element #2 – Lighting changes

To replicate the werewolf's sharper night vision, the environment becomes brighter as the player transforms, while fog dissipates as their distance vision clears.

EL SCHAEFER - MOONRISE

Visuals

Element #3 – Reticle change

The player's interaction reticle will change appearance (size, shape, color) between their human and wolf forms to denote the change in their nature and focus.

Element #4 – Particle effects

To enhance the sense of climate (assuming I can get the timing right), the player will be able to see their breath via a particle effect. Said effect will change in scale between human and wolf forms. In addition, smellable objects will have scent particles clinging to them to draw players' attention.