THE SHIP

Overview

Imagine a game in which you don't know who to trust, you don't know who may be about to kill you, in fact you don't even know who is human and who is artificial. Welcome to the world of Mr. X, the shadowy figure behind the cruise ship the Northern Star, and the eccentric genius who created the Hunt, a deadly game played by contestants aboard the ship.

The rules to the Hunt are simple: each contestant is given the name of another contestant. They have to hunt them down, murder them, and be the last contestant left alive at the end of the game.

There are catches of course…

The contestants have needs which they have to take care of, they must eat, sleep, socialise and have fun, all while staying alive, and keeping an eye out for their quarry.

Contestants start unarmed, and must find weapons on board. While Mr. X likes to see unusual techniques used for murders, and rewards contestants with money for their originality, the crew know nothing of the Hunt, and have orders to keep law and order aboard the ship. Cameras, security guards and other passengers all act as witnesses and crimes such as murder, theft, trespass, and possession of deadly weapons lead to fines and jail time on board.

As a single player game the Ship has two basic modes: story mode and arcade mode. In story mode the player arrives on the Ship believing they have won a free holiday cruise but instead Mr X explains that they must join 'the hunt', a murder game with fatal consequences. Shortly after receiving this shocking news the player meets a female journalist who's trying to find out what's going on onboard the Ship, uncover Mr X's shady identity and discover how to escape the hunt. The player must then play against a range of A.I. killers in the hunt and at the same time work with the journalist to uncover the story behind the Ship in a series of missions and encounters with characters onboard. In the Arcade Mode the player plays against A.I. killers, emulating online play, providing an excellent training ground for the online game.

Played online, you hunt a human player, while another human is out to kill you, in an ever decreasing loop of human hunters, mixed in with AI passengers. Online gameplay offers a new and rewarding gameplay experience for fans of first person action and adventure games.

How does the game work?

The concept behind "The Ship" is a game of killer, set on a Ship, where each player is given a quarry to kill and has a hunter trying to kill them.

Each player is given a room key to a cabin which they share with three other passengers. The player is also given a locker in the cabin to store personal effects, and a wardrobe to store clothes in. Players are also given bank accounts, in which to store their winnings.

Players must use the ships facilities to take care of their needs and keep their character alive. The presence of needs in the game adds immersion, and also gameplay potential, drawing hunters and hunted together in crowded and isolated areas.

Players can talk to other passengers to find out if anyone knows any information about their quarry: what they look like, where their room is located, or where they were last seen.

Once the player knows the whereabouts and identity of their quarry, they will also need a weapon with which to kill them. There are hundreds of potential weapons on the ship, all hidden in various places, many are improvised weapons. Examples include a piece of piping, a fire axe, a frying pan, or a flare gun. Other means of killing someone are subtler: a push at the top of a flight of stairs, a push overboard, or a drop of poison in their food.

The ship is both rewarding and challenging for the player to explore and find their way around. Some areas, such as crew areas, take preparation, cunning, or old fashioned bribery to gain access to.

Once the player has a weapon, they can lay a trap, or use a weapon to kill their quarry as long as no-one is looking, and there aren't any cameras or crew nearby. If they're spotted with a weapon they will be arrested and put into the brig.

Successful kills are rewarded by Mr. X with cash paid into the players' bank accounts, with the amount being dependant on the technique used. This system prevents players re-using the same weapons, and makes each game unique.

Players can kill the crew and passengers to steal their room keys, clothes and possessions, or to gain access to new areas of the ship. Players can spend money in the various shops on the ship to acquire useful game items such as clothes, food, and potential weapons. The gameplay mechanics shift the focus away from twitch responses and fast reactions to ones of investigation, exploration, intelligence, planning, stealth, and cunning.

Unique Selling Points

• Innovative combination of Sims like needs and traditional first person gameplay, adds depth, replayability, and new gameplay potential that makes the ship a unique gameplay experience.

• Mix of exploration, investigation, survival, stealth, and combat.

• Beautifully crafted and highly interactive environments.

• Complex but intuitive game world rewards exploration and experimentation, and offers massive replayability.

• Unique IP with amazing brand potential for expansion packs and sequels (using the core foundation of the game and modular components which slot easily into the design), as well as excellent potential for product placement.

Unique Gameplay Features

• The Hunt, with its focus on hunting one player instead of killing any player

• The addition of needs for the player character in a first person game world, which adds depth to the gameplay

• Security guards and cameras which enforce the laws of the game in a multiplayer context, where traditionally players are allowed free reign

Platform   Engine
PC (& X-Box)   Valve's Half Life 2 Source Engine

Genre
First (and third) person action adventure with role playing elements

Game Modes
Single Player Offline and Multiplayer Online

Estimated Release Date
2nd Quarter 2006

Comparative Titles
The Sims: needs and character management
GTA: exploration and real world environments
Fable/Zelda: layered gameplay elements combine to create massive replayability and reward experimentation and exploration

Player Roles

Players join a cruise on The Ship as a passenger; they're given a cabin and a wardrobe, a bank account and identity, and can explore the ship, find weapons and items, shop and play games, socialise and take care of their needs.

They can change their role at any time, and join in a game as a killer, thief, security guard, bodyguard or hitman. As a killer they are hunter and hunted. As a thief they try to steal from passengers, cabins, and other locations on board. As a security guard they work with other human and AI guards to prevent crimes. As a bodyguard they must protect their client (usually a killer), and as a hitman they must kill a target for their client (again, a killer).
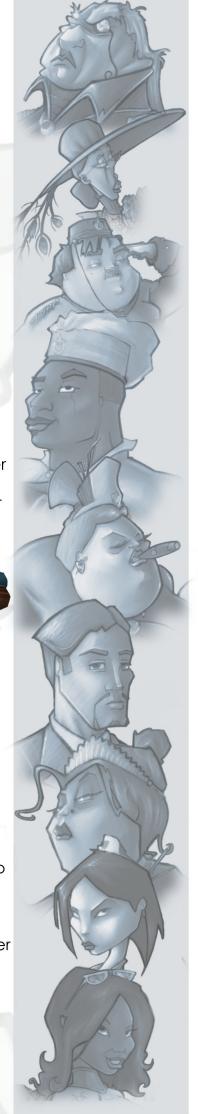
In all roles except the passenger, successful players are rewarded with cash.

The Hunt

Mr. X gives each player one of the other players as a quarry to murder, thus creating a loop of players, each out to murder another player with a different player trying to kill them. Mr. X rewards successful hunters by giving them money for their murders, however Mr. X has peculiar tastes, and he likes to specify the methods that the players use to knock each other off.

He gives them a list of the top 10 methods to use, ranked by his current preference. Mr X does this by selecting 10 of the available weapons in the game. If the players kill each other by alternative methods not used recently, they'll gain a default amount and whenever a weapon is used Mr. X will reduce its reward for the next time. This system prevents players camping at the "best weapons" as the best weapon keeps changing throughout each game. It also prevents players over-using what are perceived to be the best methods, and encourages the players to explore to find new weapons and ways to kill each other. Players have a much more diverse weapon set than is traditionally found in a first person shooter available to them. They can use classic weapons like guns, or everyday objects like books and plant pots in their attacks. The ship offers a veritable multitude Sof murder techniques including poisoning, suffocation, traps, explosives, and more opportunistic methods such as shoving someone overboard or pushing them down a flight of stairs.

As a hunter, players must explore the ship to find weapons, take care of their needs, use costume changes to confuse their hunter, find their quarry by talking to passengers who may have seen them and searching for them visually. Once they have located their quarry, they must follow or lure them into a quiet area (where there are no guards, cameras or passengers to witness them), and, preferably, use a high reward weapon to kill them. Alternatively they can learn their quarry's movement and routines aboard the ship, and place a trap for them in one of their favourite spots, or lie in wait for them.

Player Character Needs

The unique combination of first person gameplay with needs for the player character adds immersion and complexity to the game, with very rewarding gameplay consequences for the players. Players must eat, drink, use the restrooms, keep clean, socialise, have fun, and sleep to stay alive. There are numerous locations and objects on board the ship which allow the players to satisfy their needs. They can wine and dine in the restaurants, or use food and drink bought from shops or vending machines to consume on the run. There are restrooms dotted around the ship, while showers, saunas and the swimming pool allow players to keep clean. Players can socialise with each other and the AI passengers that populate the ship, improving their relationships with chat, physical contact, and gifts. Fun can be found in a variety of interactive shipboard activities and games, or by visiting a bar, heading to the cinema, or for a quiet night in players can read a book or magazine.

Failure to deal with needs leads to comedic side effects, and ultimately death, if the player totally neglects their characters needs. Players can die of hunger or dehydration, they can become diseased if they don't keep clean, die of loneliness or boredom. The only need without fatal consequences is lack of sleep: players simply pass out if they don't get enough rest.

The needs system enriches the game in a number of ways: it prevents players camping and hiding in one spot, it draws players to public areas where they can be spotted and secluded locations such as toilets where they are vulnerable, it adds to the richness of interactivity, drives and rewards exploration, and makes the game world very immersive.

Crime & Punishment

The ship has laws which the players must abide by or face the consequences. Players can be arrested for murder, possession of a deadly weapon, assault, theft, destruction of ship's property, and trespass. More trivial offences such as littering, public nudity, and running in the pool area carry minor fines. The security team enforce the ships laws, monitoring security cameras around the ship, and guarding and patrolling some sections of the ship, most notably crew areas and high security areas such as the armoury, bank and casino.

Passengers will also report crimes they witness, though they are less likely to do so if a player has a good relationship with them. Passengers can also be threatened or bribed into staying silent about crimes they have witnessed, and if they refuse they can even be silenced in more permanent ways, although players should beware leaving a trail of bloodshed for security to follow!

Security cameras can be avoided by careful players, and disabled by those with the skill to do so. Security guards have needs like the players and these can be taken advantage of. Guards can also be distracted by disturbances, or even bribed to ignore things they might see. Players can also steal or acquire crew uniforms, which allow them access to crew areas, without being busted for trespass. If caught in underhand activities, players are transported to the court where they are tried for their crimes, and sentenced to jail times and/or fines depending on the nature of their misdemeanour. Players sentenced to jail time are held in the brig till the sentence is served, and then released back on to the ship with a cautionary warning.

AI Passengers and Crew

AI passengers have the same needs as the players, and this helps them emulate human behaviour, and makes their behaviour predictable in similar ways to that of the players. This allows good players to emulate AI, and to blend into a crowd, making them harder for their hunter and quarry to spot. Passengers add depth to the game world; they act as witnesses to crimes, they provide people to socialise with, crowds to blend in with, and people to steal from. They can be befriended, and will give any information they know about the players quarry (or any other passenger on board).

Sequel & Brand Potential

A new IP is born. The ship can be set in numerous locations; sequels include the Orient Express, a Hotel, or even Tropical Island resorts (with ships that cruise between them). The conclusion of the series will be the Spaceship, where players can choose their species, and the gameplay moves into a whole new dimension! The ship has excellent gameplay at its heart, which can be converted into a board game, a TV show, a movie, or an executive weekend.

Product Placement

The ship has amazing potential for product placement due to the player needs and the object interactions. Products used by the players in game include food, drink, and clothing, and unlike other games these products are genuinely useful within the game world and are "used" in a realistic way. If a player buys food, he eats it; if he buys clothes he can then wear them. This level of in-game interaction with a product is unique to The Ship at this time and offers enormous potential for an alternative revenue stream. Outerlight are already in negotiations with Hive, a product placement specialist, and will be actively pursuing this avenue throughout game development.

Player Comments and Press Coverage

"Innovation keeps coming in the shape of The Ship… It makes a welcome change from the traditional guns and ammo stylings… and we suggest you visit http://www.theshiponline.com for a gander." **EDGE**

"Staggeringly Original" **PC GAMER**
THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE

"Genius Gameplay" The Ship Online Forum Post
"Excellent Game - this is going to be awesome" Forum Post
"I love it, great job" The Ship Online Forum Post
"Fine game, excellent game-play" Forum Post
"An absolute ton of fun" The Ship Online Forum Post
"Extremely good fun" The Ship Online Forum Post
"I've been completely addicted of late…" The Ship Online Forum post

ModDB Award for originality

Finalist - Best Mod Download 2004 (Gamespot)

FINALIST
BEST of 2004
BEST DOWNLOADS OF THE YEAR

OUTERLIGHT

Company Biography

Outerlight, founded in March 2003, is a computer games Development Company based near Edinburgh in Scotland. The company has an experienced team of coders and artists with over 80 years of industry experience behind them working to the highest production standards. Outerlight was established with the aim of producing original, highly playable games for PC and X-box. The Ship is one of a number of unique IP titles in our portfolio. Game production is highly focussed with weekly iterations and an emphasis on flexibility and good communication. In other words we run a tight ship which can turn on a sixpence with an expert crew…

Work in progress with the Source Engine after 6 months.