

MELBOURNE
MEGAGAMES

Design Workshop



Contents

Section 1: Developing Game Premise

- What are: genre, theme, setting
- Is your premise accessible?
- How could you research theme & premise both inside and outside of games?

Section 2: Core Elements

- What are: resources, agent structures, game spheres
- How are agents structured?
- What are your game's resources? Where do they come from? Why are they useful?
- What are your game's spheres (at the highest level)? How are they interrelated?

Section 3: Game Dynamics

- What are: game dynamics, mechanics
- Now that we have a rough sketch of the game, let's put ourselves in the minds of players.
- How many choices do players have? What's in players' strategic window?
- How do players experience the game? Physically, intellectually, emotionally.

1

Developing Game Premise

Terms

Setting

The game's setting and environment

- *Watch the Skies* - modern world
- *The Ark* - spaceship
- *The Pirate Republic* - the golden age of piracy
- *It Belongs in a Museum* - 1940s

Genre

The stylistic structure the game's elements are leaning on

- *Watch the Skies* - urban sci-fi
- *The Ark* - sci-fi, politics
- *It Belongs in a Museum* - adventure with fantasy elements
- *The Pirate Republic* - historical adventure

Theme

The core conceit of the game world that evokes particular sensations and scenarios for players

- *Watch the Skies* - how do you handle an alien invasion that's already taken place?
- *The Pirate Republic* - the open sea is freedom
- *The Ark* - power is constructed
- *It Belongs in a Museum* - exploration and wonder

Developing Premise

Setting

Genre

The Ark: you are on a ship in the depths of space

Alien: sci-fi, horror

Doctor Who: sci-fi, family, adventure

Solo: sci-fi, action (heist)

Developing Premise

Genre

Theme

The Ark: sci-fi, politics

Firefly: Hustlers just trying to survive in an unjust universe

Bladerunner: Do androids dream of electric sheep?

Star Trek: No problem is unsolvable with technology and optimism

Developing Premise

Theme

Setting

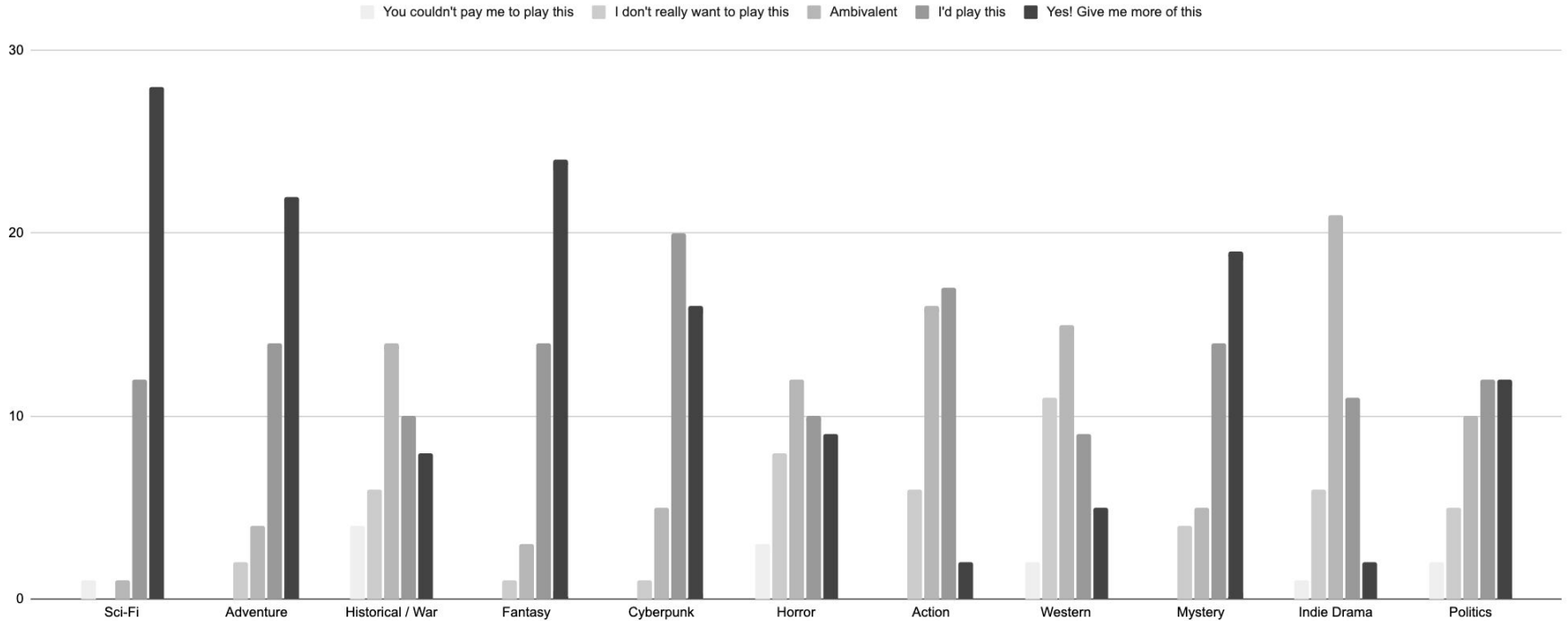
The Ark: factions vying for arbitrarily constructed political power

West Wing: modern political

Stargate Universe: deep space sci-fi

Hamilton: period historical

What does our audience like?



● Accessibility: Examples

The World Turned Upside Down

The World Turned Upside Down is a historical fiction wargame, with individually cast, well-known, historic characters (e.g. George Washington).

Players play as either American colonies or the British government, with established historical positions (e.g. Rhode Island, Virginia).

The Pirate Republic

The Pirate Republic is a quasi-historic action adventure game, with some individually cast, well-known, historic characters (e.g. Blackbeard), and some unknown characters.

Players play as Pirates, Privateers or Nation-aligned roles like sailors and governors, with vague historical positions (e.g. the Spanish have treasure ships, the Dutch like trade).

Consider the difference between these two games from the player's perspective.

Activity #1

Think about how genre, setting and theme combine to create your game's premise.

2

Core Elements

Terms

Game Spheres

Distinct section of the game's mechanics.

The Ark - Council/Elections, The Field

IBAM - Intelligence, Expeditions



Agent Structures

The structures that define what you want to do / can do as a player.

The Ark - structured in teams, with team objectives

The Pirate Republic - allegiances, teams and both individual & team objectives

Resources

Everything you gain or consume to achieve a goal.

The Ark - all the tokens, Rations

IBAM - all the Items

Activity #2

Let's build a mud map! We'll start with [REDACTED].

- ◉ What are your **game spheres**?
 - ◉ What are players doing? (not in a mechanical sense – e.g. The Ark – The Field: growing food)
 - ◉ Why do players want to engage with this space?
 - ◉ How does it fit the theme?
 - ◉ Is it accessible?
- ◉ What are your **resources**?
 - ◉ Where do players get them?
 - ◉ Why do players want them? / What do players spend them on?
 - ◉ Where do players spend them?
 - ◉ Can you lose them in other ways?
- ◉ What is your game's **agent structure**?
 - ◉ Are players organised into factions?
 - ◉ How do player allegiances relate to factions? Are they contained within the faction, or broader? Do some players have cross-factional allegiances?
 - ◉ What level of player hierarchy are objectives tied to? e.g. individual, faction, broader allegiance?

3

Game Dynamics

Terms

Mechanics

The actions, game loops, and systems within a game

- *Voting & change the rules -> Edicts*
- *Tile placement -> Growing crops*
- *Intelligence puzzles -> Research quizzes*
- *Dice rolling -> Skill checks*

Dynamics

The ways players interact with mechanics and game spheres

- *Going rogue on the Council and issuing dramatic Edicts*
- *Analytically developing efficient Field configurations*
- *Creative crop combinations for meals*
- *Teaming up to solve research puzzles together or pooling skill points for checks*

Mechanics

- Generic
 - Dice rolling
 - Push Your Luck
 - Drawing
 - Pattern recognition/Memory
 - Randomness
 - Dexterity
 - Intelligence/Riddles
 - Maintenance costs
 - Game modes
- Time/Actions
 - Real Time
 - Turn based
 - Action Blocking or Modification
 - Engine Building
 - Rondel
 - Simultaneous Action Selection
- Map/Board
 - Area control
 - Grid movement
 - Point to Point Movement
 - Modular Board
 - Route Building
 - Tile Placement
 - Worker Placement
 - Fog of War
 - Hidden Deployment
 - Roll/Spin to move
 - Time track
- Play
 - Co-operative
 - Semi co-operative
 - Player elimination
 - Alliances
 - Asymmetric/One vs Many
 - Catch up
- Resource Management
 - Pick-Up and Deliver
 - Trading
 - Stocks
 - Inventory
 - Auction/Bidding
 - Betting
 - Set Collecting
- Cards
 - Card drafting
 - Deck building
 - Hand management
- Role Playing
 - Storytelling
 - Social deduction
 - Take That
 - Voting

Homework!

