



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtesting: Avoiding Evil Data

Adriaan de Jongh
Game Designer, Independent

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Evil Data

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





Goal of this talk:

- Make playtests more valuable
- Make playtests easier to organise



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

What is Evil Data?
Avoid Evil Data?
Organise playtests?

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

‘QA’
is not the same as
‘playtesting’

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





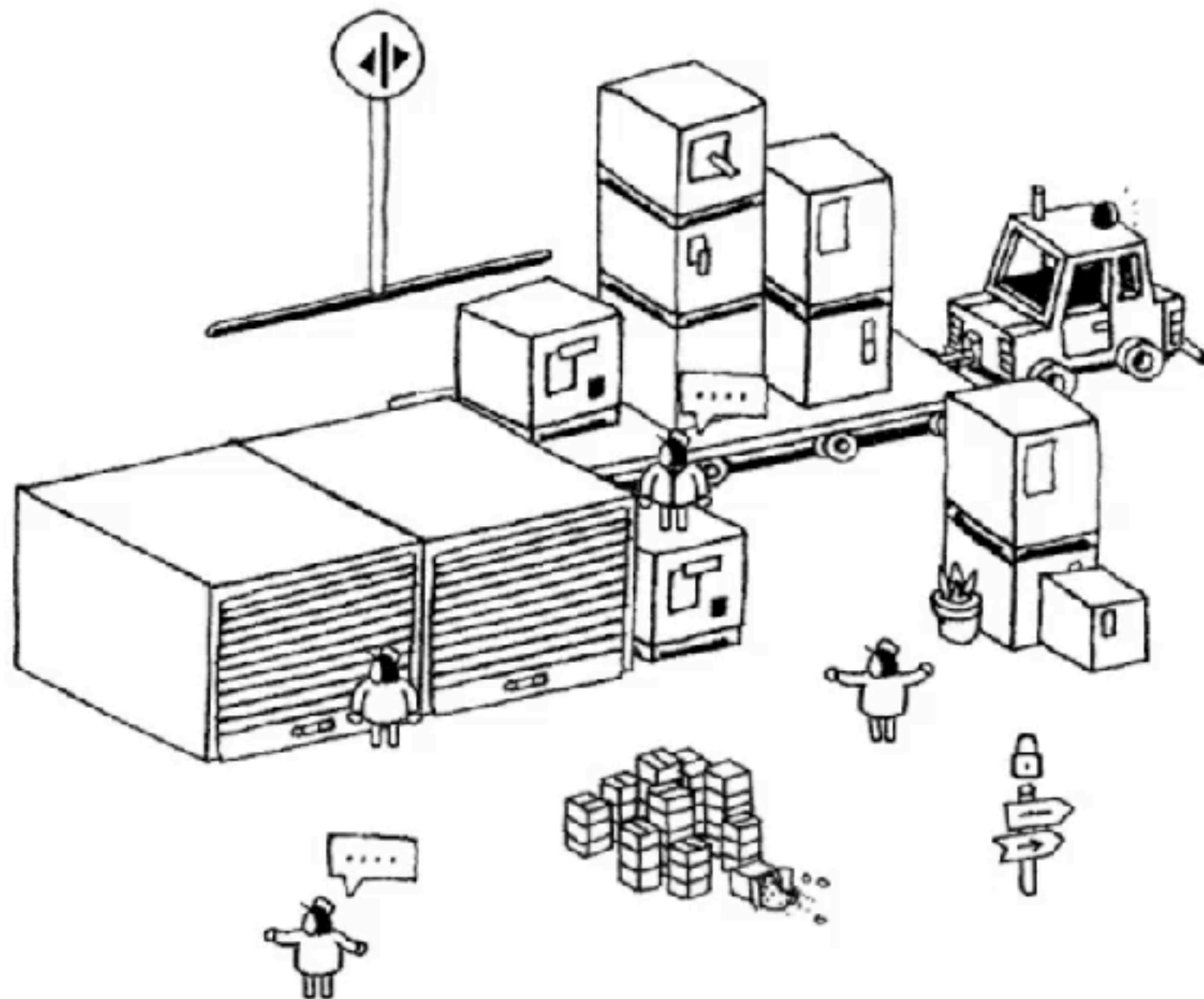








INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



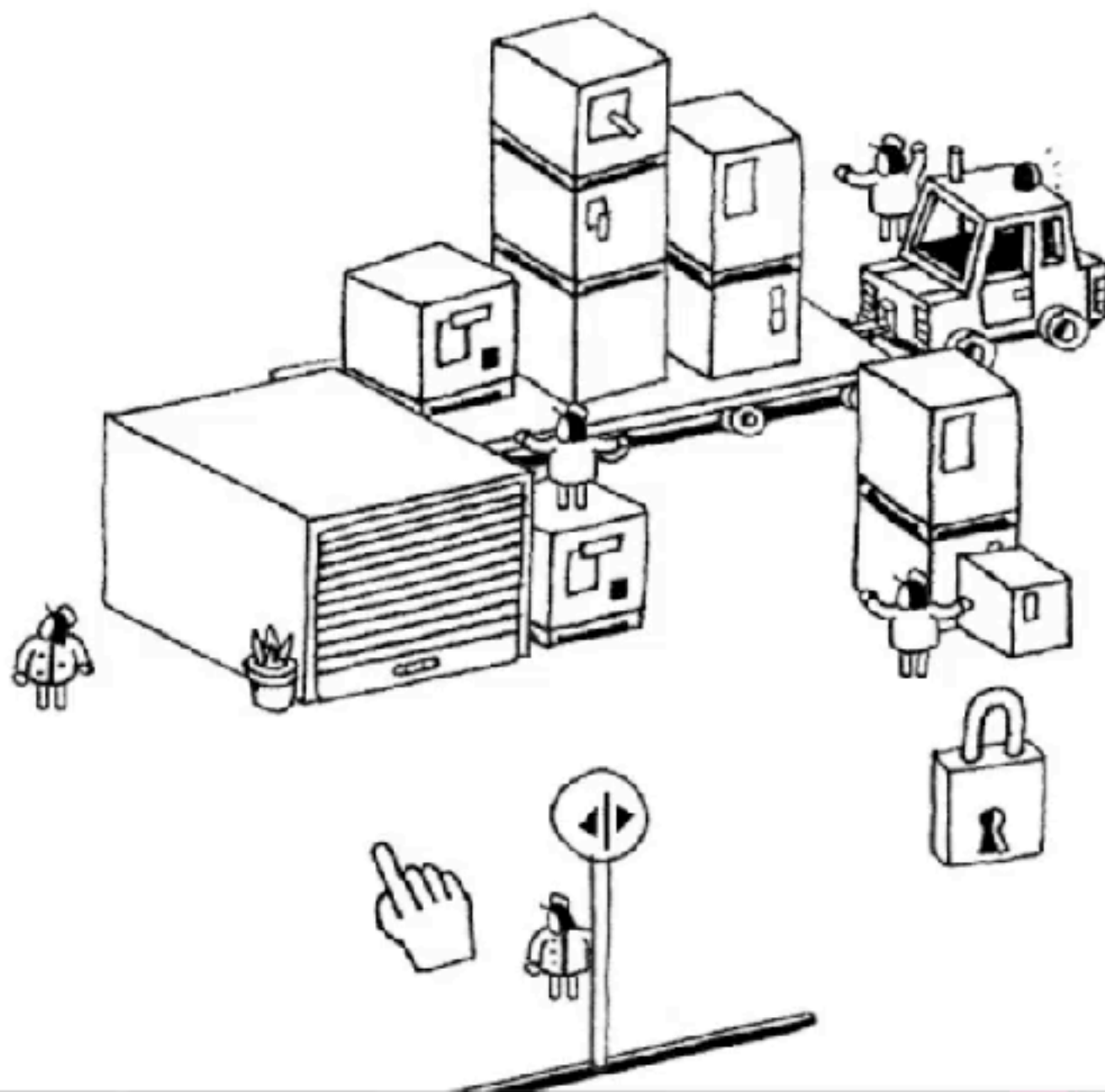
GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



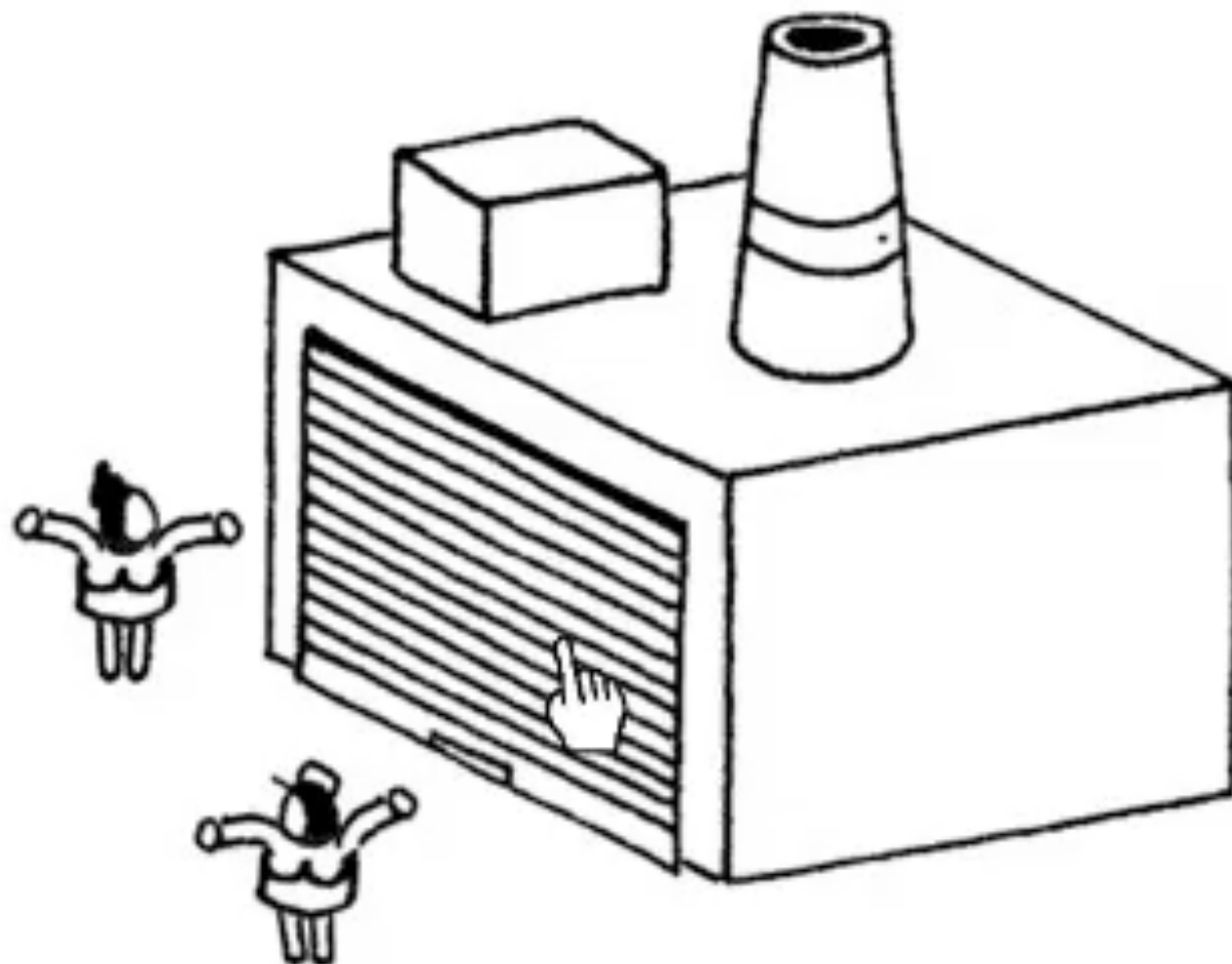
GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Evil Data

Playtest results that are
distracting, unclear, or misleading.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Where Evil Data comes from and how to avoid it?

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

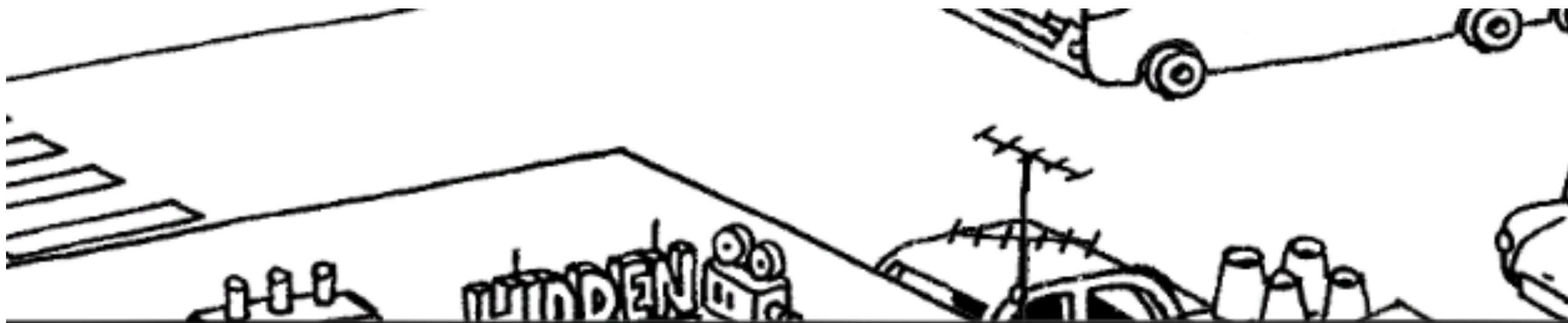
1. (Physical) location

GDC

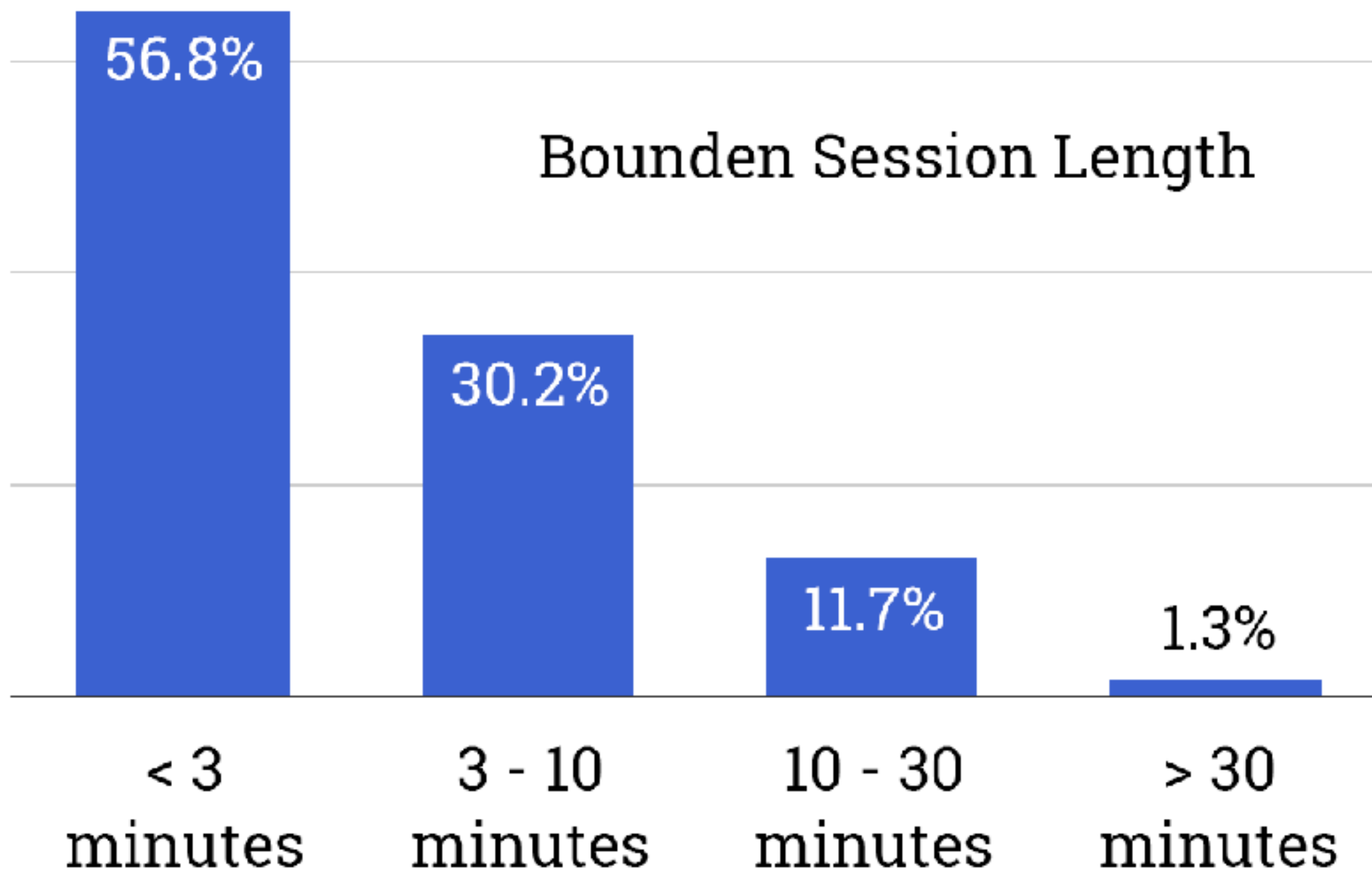
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17







Find 7 more targets to
unlock the next area.





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtest in a setting that fits your game

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

2. People

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

[stock photo of wonderful nerds]

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

It's easy to miss
bottlenecks entirely
depending on who's testing.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

People are different;
playtest with everyone.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





coworkers
other game developers
into-games friends
not-into-games friends
family
young / old
people from different cultural backgrounds
fans / online community
etc.



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

3. Your introduction

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

“Okay, so, [game] is a...”

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





Don't tell people what to do.
Don't explain the story.
Don't explain what's missing.
Don't explain the controls.
Don't explain the interface.
Don't explain anything.



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Do tell people the game isn't done yet.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

4. Surface Problems

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



BONUS



BONUS



BONUS



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Surface Problems

obvious & neglected

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Make every playtest about the
experience as a whole.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

5. Game

GDC

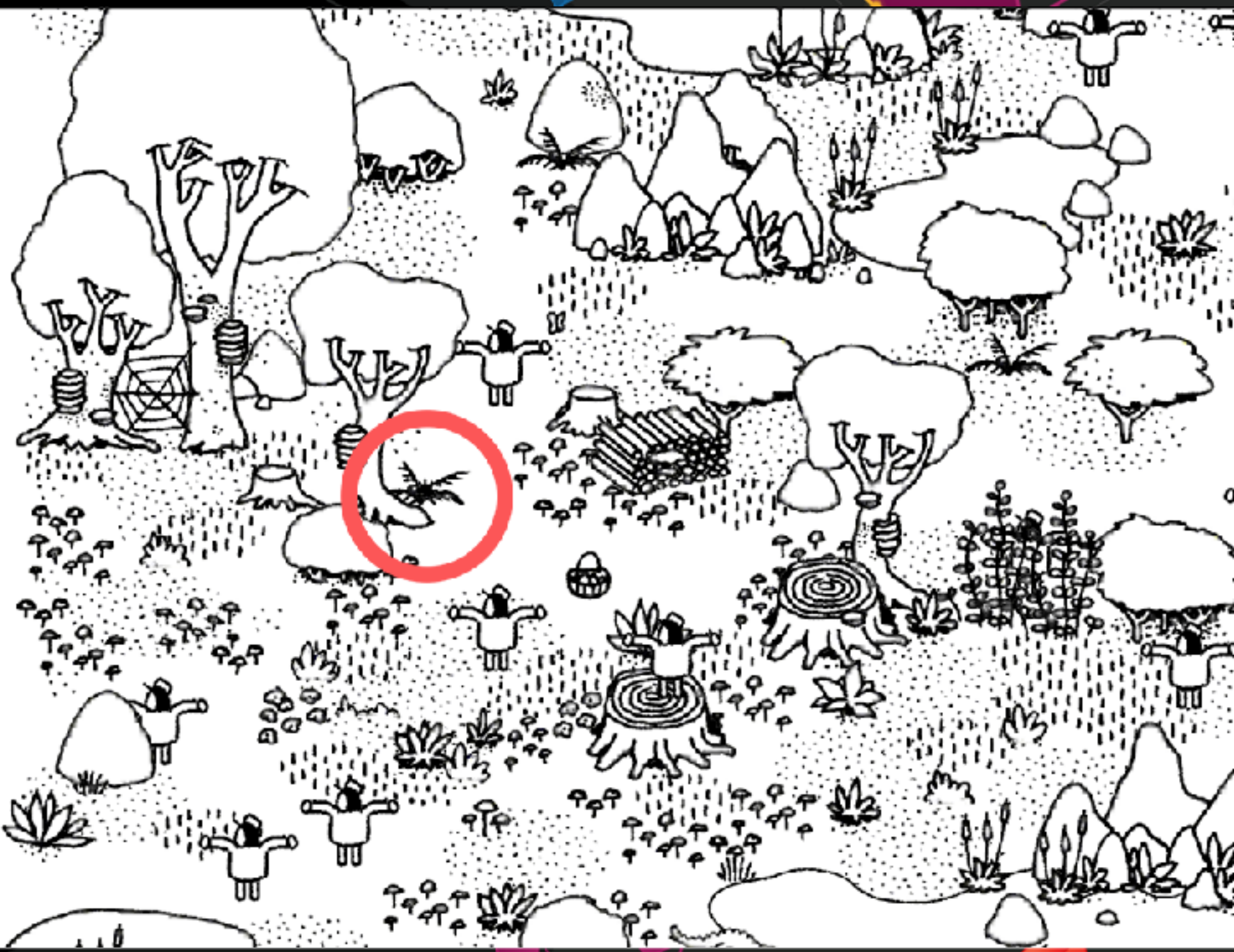
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

SPIDER
IN BUSH?!



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Make 1-minute changes
in between builds.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

6. What testers say

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





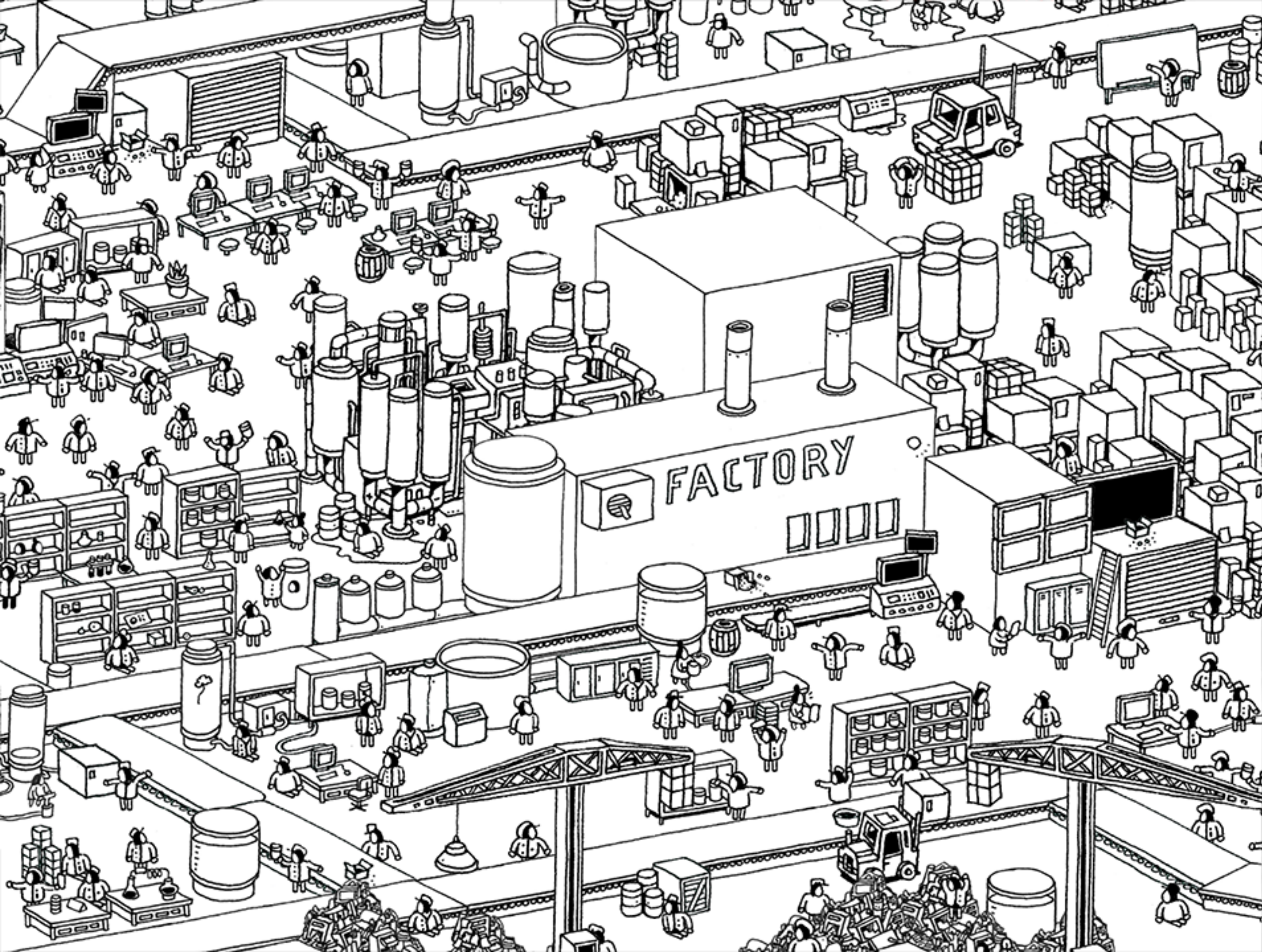
INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

bla bla bla bla bla

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





Find:



3 / 12 found



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Second hand information
can be a huge distraction.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Filter feedback, always.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

7. Surveys

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

What do you think of level 3?



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





What do you think of level 3?
“I didn’t like level 3 because it was
too difficult. I would make John
easier to find.”



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

I loved the third area where there weren't any targets, but I wish there were some things to click on that didn't affect the guy.

I enjoyed the animations between areas.

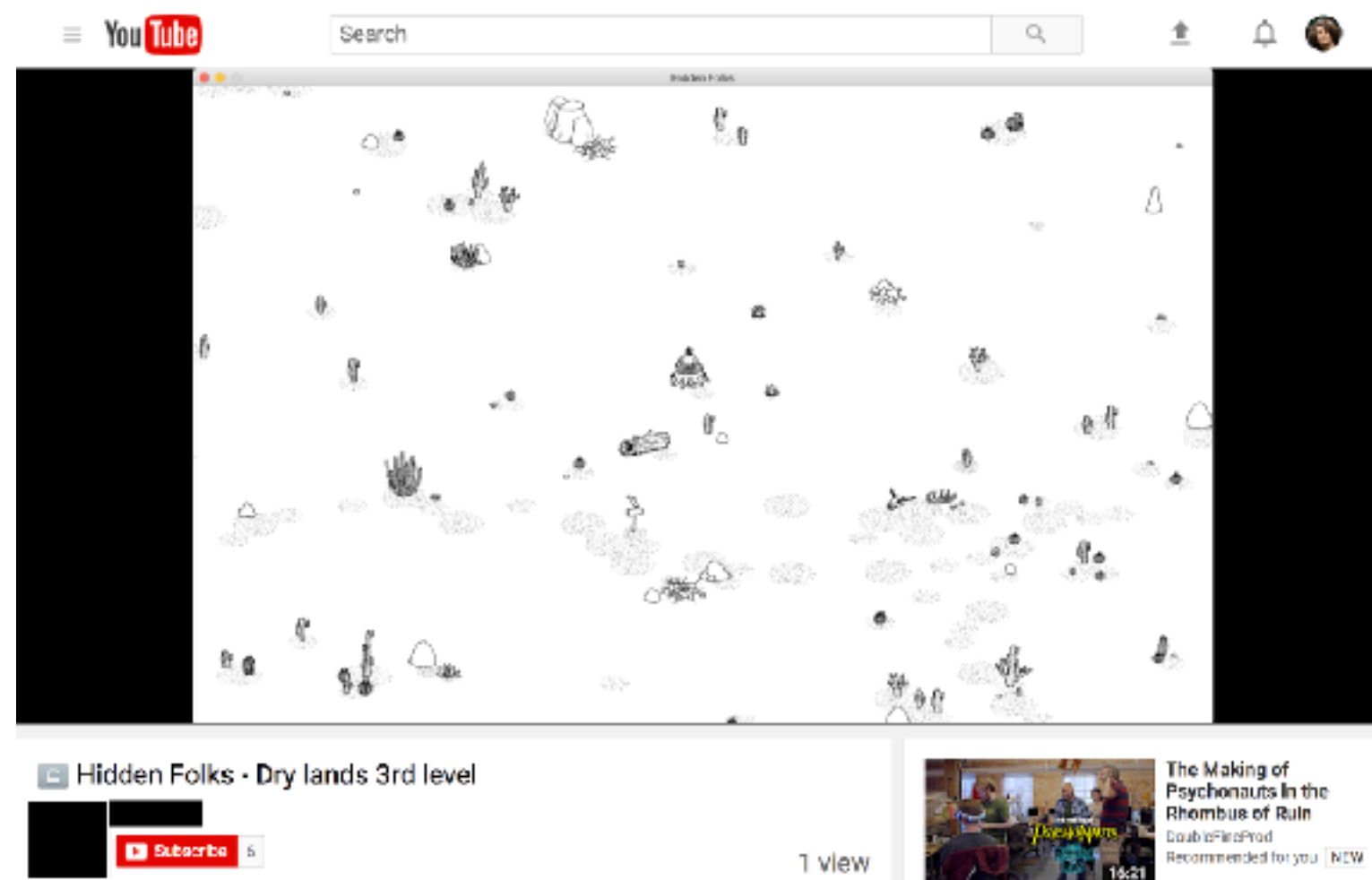
I think some of the more frustrating targets are ones that look very similar to other things, such as the spider that likes fungus flies.

I don't think I'm missing any options.

One thing that I found was that repeatedly clicking things played a lot of overlapping sounds, which didn't sound so great.

Looking forward to continued playtime and the eventual release!

VS



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

No surveys. No questionnaires. Ever.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

8. Online playtesting

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





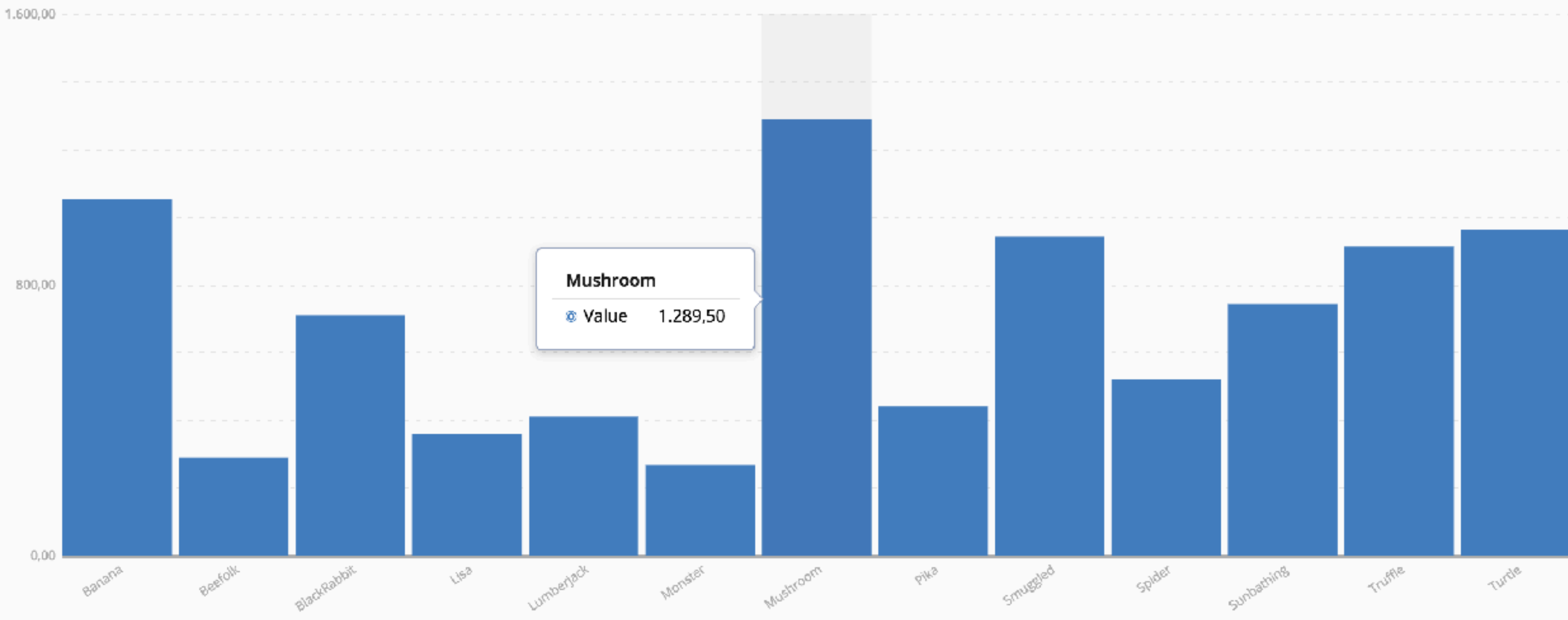
INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Written feedback from
online playtests: don't.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



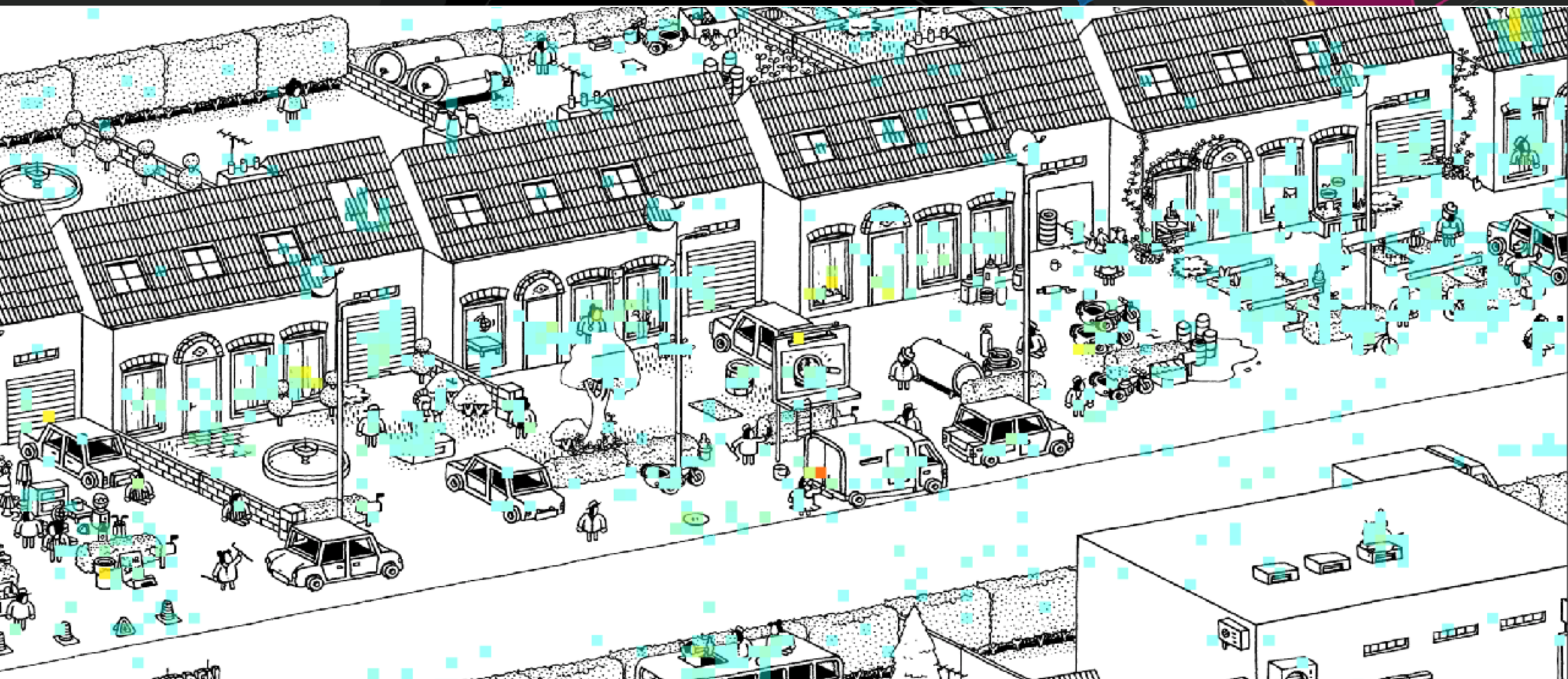
GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





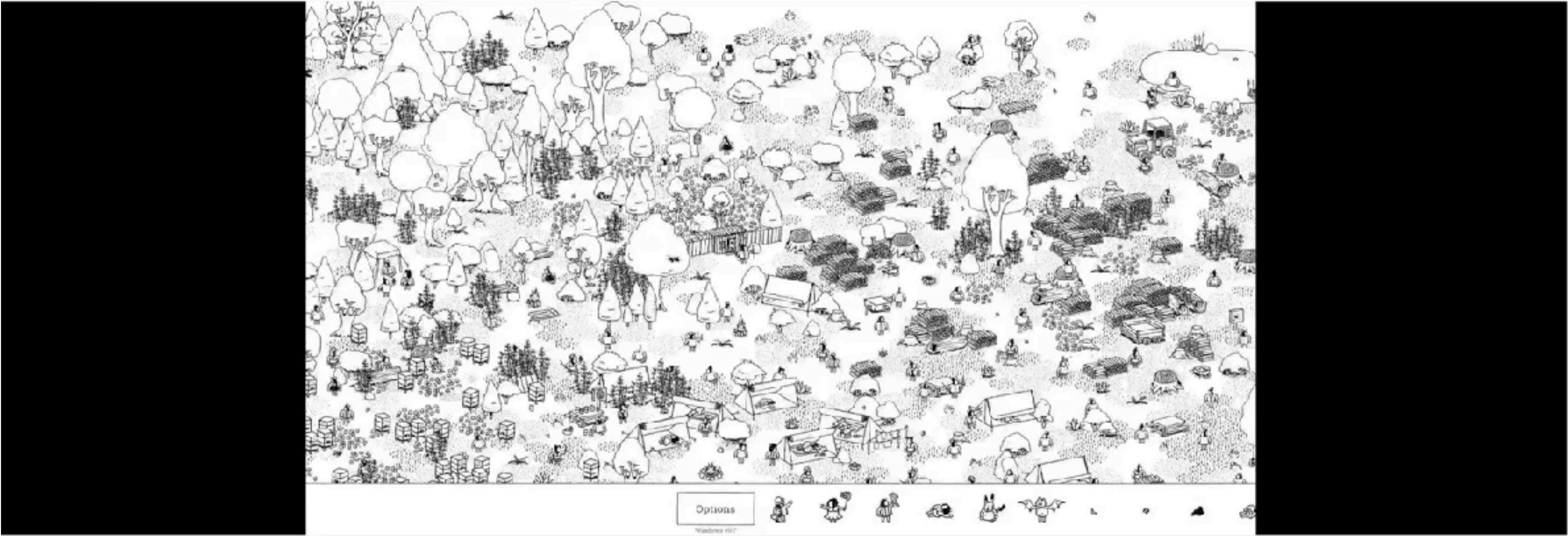
INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





PLAYTESTING A BAD GAME

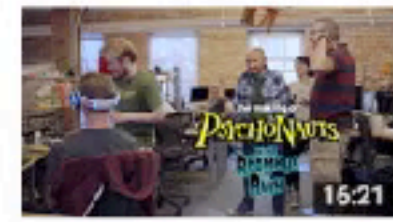


Andrew Gleeson

Subscribe

16

4 views



The Making of Psychonauts in the Rhombus of Ruin

DoubleFineProd

Recommended for you

NEW

16:21



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

How to organise playtests with minimal effort?

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtest v0.1 through v1.0.
(not just v0.8 and v0.9)

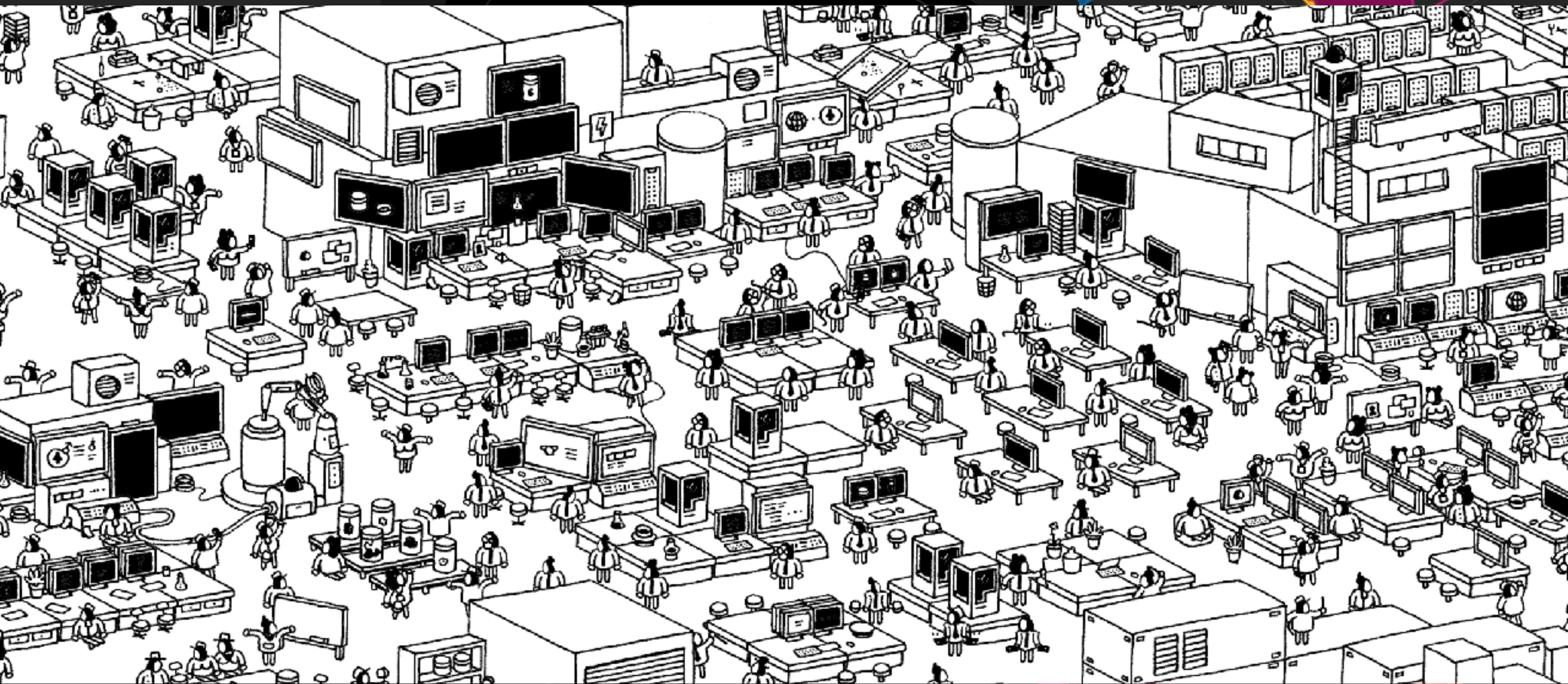
GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT



GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtesting overhead

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

implemented major feature / content
implemented minor features / content
events

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





- keeping a spreadsheet of testers,
- writing a bunch of email templates,
- putting follow-up dates on my agenda.



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Initiate an offline playtest:
1. send texts or emails.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





Initiate online playtests:

1. send template emails.
2. set a reminder.



Thank you for subscribing to playtest Hidden Folks! We really appreciate the effort and look forward to hear your feedback!!

Some tips before you start playing:

- Your feedback comes across best if you record your screen + voice, and upload it to youtube as an **unlisted video**. Seeing what you do and hearing what comes to mind when you play is SUPER valuable to us! (If you don't know how to record your screen + voice, this 4 minute video by Adriaan explains how: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJt2TDqmR7c>)
- If you're really not in the mood or unable to make a recording, obviously feedback in any other form is always welcome.
- Because we're iterating on the game ridiculously fast, your feedback is most useful if you can play the game within the next 7 days or so... but don't rush it! Play the game at your own pace!

The sort of feedback we're looking for:

- What do you think of the stories and the hints? Are there interactions you expected but weren't there? Which targets were too easy or too hard to find? Anything else that comes to mind?

To install the game:

1. Redeem your Steam code: 20E5P-KF5W0-JQXHX
2. Right click on Hidden Folks > Properties > Betas > Enter code: ipromisetosendfeedback



physical playtests: 100% response

online playtests:

30% response < 7 days

+30% response after reminder



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Alternative playtesting structures

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtesting Bounden: every other day.

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Impromptu Fingle playtests at parties

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

UBM



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

playdev.club

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17





Playtest in the right setting.

Playtest with everyone.

Don't explain anything.

Always playtest the whole experience.

Make those 1-minute changes.

Filter feedback, always.

No surveys, no questionnaires, ever.

Try getting gameplay + audio recordings.

Make email templates & make initiating a playtest easy.



INDEPENDENT GAMES
SUMMIT

Playtesting: Avoiding Evil Data

Adriaan de Jongh
Game Designer, Independent

GDC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27-MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17

