Iteration in Isolation

Finding Success as a Solo VR Developer During a Global Pandemic

Content

- About me
- Features of the game
- Skills, resources, and challenges
- Staying organized
- Day-to-day as a single dev
- Porting for multiple mobile VR platforms
- Finding the perfect partner
- Timeline & Polishing and shipping
- Tools used and lessons learned

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I love 🧡

Music
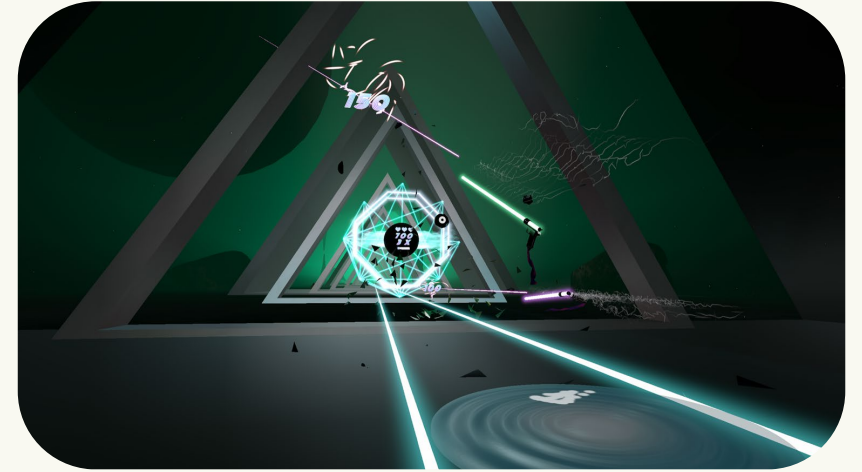**Videogames**
Nature
Learning

SOLARBLACK

Niel Widy

Austria - Vienna
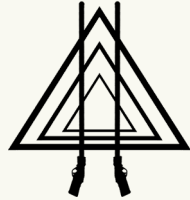
How it all started

Making a VR Game to flee from the pandemic
"to stay grounded"

- Teaching – Game Dev hobby
- VR exercise
  - Scuba diving
  - Tunnel vision
  - Spatial recognition
  - Don't make it (too) hard

Features of the game

SaberGuns

Slow-down time whenever you like and find your strategy to crack the high score

Fitness stats like squats and calories burned are tracked and displayed

Base score on the **strength** of hits in combination with **precise slashing and shooting** mechanics

Unique **soundtrack** featuring a song composed specifically for each world

Worlds inspired by modern **sci-fi and fantasy** films and novels

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Skills and resources needed for VR

Games + music + teaching => rhythm game teaching action choreo

Make a **dream come true** - see it through to the end

Great opportunity to **learn a lot** – fail, fail and fail again until it works

Unity and Unreal are both great – prefer Unity

Think efficiently – development for a **mobile chip** targeting 72 – 90 fps
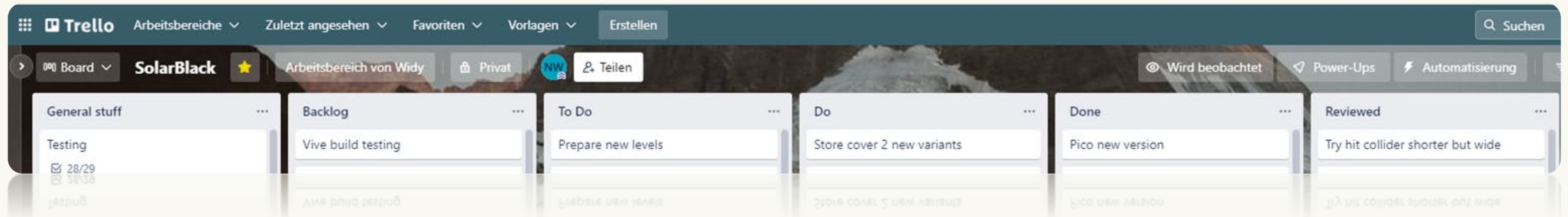
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Challenges during development

Pandemic - cut off from most social contacts 🦠

Iterations - cycling around a fixed idea with little feedback

Designing in isolation - I initially made the game much too hard 🎓

Technical challenges - keeping up with the speed of SW/HW development

Staying organized

General stuff	Backlog	To Do	Do	Done	Reviewed
Testing	Vive build testing	Prepare new levels	Store cover 2 new variants	Pico new version	Try hit collider shorter but wide
☑ 28/29					

Different topics and ideas   All tasks   Tasks of the current sprint   Working on right now   I think it's done   Acceptance tested

Single Dev – day-to-day

Stay organized – **SCRUM**

Write it down – brain dump - **Trello**

Step by small step – avoid too much pressure

Keep it clean – clean coding structure

Meditate and **enjoy** life

Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/222083625342963721/
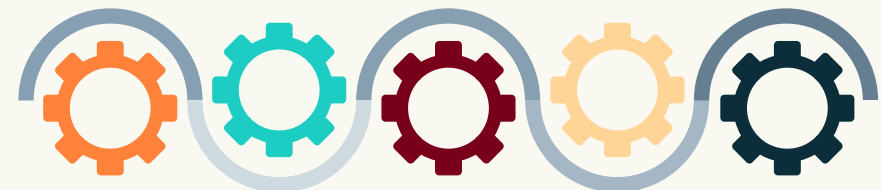
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Porting for mobile VR platforms

It is now easily possible to use **different XR SDKs** in one project

Use **defines** to make specific code for each platform

Adapt the **controller layout** and **SDK features** for each platform

Platforms are similar – **chip, integration, controllers, features**

Extensive **testing and optimization (FFR, rendering features)**

Finding the perfect partner

Why find a partner?

Pitching

Contacting publishers

Recognize the right partner

Get a **contract** and stay cool – legal aspects sorted out

ANDROMEDA
ENTERTAINMENT

Timeline

May 2020 — First prototype [01]

Andromeda Entertainment SideQuest Demo [02] — **Aug - Nov 2021**

Jul - Nov 2022 [03] — Launch on Pico, Nolo and iQIYI

Launch on **AppLab** and **Steam** [04] — **August 2023**
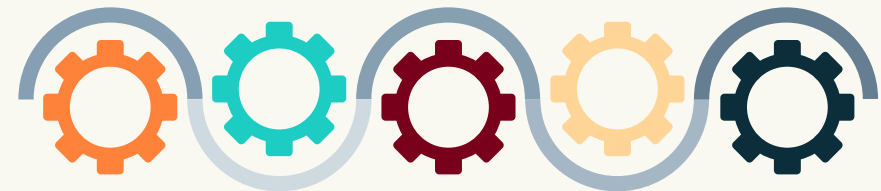
Shipping and making everybody happy

Polishing... **never really finished**

Testing, testing, testing with everybody you know

Get an opinion and really listen, **write it down** right away

Be realistic about what you **want to change**

Integrate and **test again**

Tools used

- Unity

- Blender

- Affinity, Gimp

- Cubase

- Trello

Recommended

- Soundtrap, band lab

- Fruity Loops

Lession Learned

- Build a **core loop**, that is easy to test and understand

- Test early and often – decide on **your audience** and test the difficulty

- Plan **more than 50% time testing** and refining

- Use a **project management tool** (e.g. Scrum, Kanban) for knowledge management and brain dump

- Don't get lost in details too early

- Fun first, polish the **most gameplay-relevant parts first**

- Prioritize from your core loop

- **Anticipation - action - reward** micro loop can be applied to every design choice

Where to go next?

- **Jaron Lanier** – Dawn of the New Everything

- **Keijiro Takahashi** – unity extensions and visualization https://www.keijiro.tokyo/

- **Ian Hubert** – Blender/Photo mapping
https://www.youtube.com/c/mrdodobird/videos

- **Uncle Bob** – Clean Code https://youtu.be/7EmboKQH8lM

#anaburn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMf14-vxmCY

THANKS!

Questions?

SolarBlack.net
SolarBlackGame@gmail.com
🐦 @NielWidy

☺ **Wishlist on Steam**