DANGER DUCKLINGS

69 (NICE) **Week Post Mortem**

John D'Amico, Alyssa Morvillo, Arianna Sargent, Ashley O'Handley, Cam Connor, Michael Schubert, Ezra Szanton, Halia Jones, Tristan Sistare, Tucker Greene, Sean Parks

Accomplishments

- **2022**
  - UI Overhaul
  - WebGL Build
  - Achievements
  - Controller Support
  - New World Audio
  - Duck Movement / Animation Fix
- **2023**
  - Mastery / Secret Levels
  - Cutscenes / Concept Art
  - New Original and Guest Costumes
  - Steam Demo
  - Steam Build

Programming Report

Changed

💥 **All UI-** Took a significant amount of time reformatting, and in some cases redoing.

💥 **Time Trials-** Kept on being revisited after full rework, unfortunately it took focus away from other tasks.

💥 **Duck Movement / Animation-** Important for making the ducks not slide from space to space, and circumnavigating bugs.
   🐥 Made W3 Costumes need their spritesheets redone

💥 **World Structure-** Worlds 1-3 were made to have 30 levels instead of 35
   🐥 New Mastery Worlds were implemented, each having 10 levels.

Programming Report 2

Axed

💥 **Vertical Screen-** Some levels had to be redesigned to fit a vertical screen along with adding a variable camera distance to allow for bigger levels.

💥 **Daily Wheel-** Didn't fit the revised premium toast collection or the gameplay of what we saw as a steam game.

💥 **Boosters-** They weren't being used in the phone version and they broke the way you get stars.

💥 **Analytics (Dev to Dev)-** Steam has policies against third party analytics.
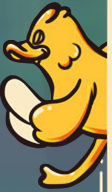
Analytics

Demo (7 days active [6/26/23])
- 💥 **1,977** game purchases
- 💥 **14.08%** of active users played more than 20 minutes

Demo to Release
- 💥 **7.25x** increase in median playtime
- 💥 **1.68x** increase in active users
- 💥 **1.33x** increase in percentage of active users
- 💥 **21%** wishlist conversion rate

Full Release (7 days active [7/3/23])
- 💥 **2,637** game purchases
- 💥 **3 - 268** minutes (σ of playtime)
- 💥 **42%** active users Beat World 1
- 💥 **35%** active users Beat World 2
- 💥 **17%** active users Beat World 3

14,156 game purchases as of 8/20/23!

Steam Integrations (Achievements)

What Went Well

💥 Achievements are basically a requirement when porting to Steam

💥 Not too hard to implement, with the existing code meshing well with our new systems

What could have gone better

💥 It took a while to learn the Steam api, which could have taken less time if all the programmers learned it at the same time (Process not documented well)

💥 Steam achievement tracking was connected to Unity and caused some confusion with testing the build in editor

WebGL build

What Went Well

* Made testing with anyone and on more machines easier.
* By giving players the option to play in-browser, we went from only 6 itch.io downloads to 313 plays

What could have gone better

* We found focusing on both the Steam and WebGL incredibly taxing
  * Our original plan was to release Steam first and then WebGL, which seems preferable in hindsight
* Didn't contribute as much as we'd like to our First goal of getting the game on Steam

Time Trials

What Went Well

💥 Removing all* of the bugs in the current phone version
💥 UI rework meant we could have this beautiful working clock
💥 Has a purpose to award players with cutscene art

What could have gone better

💥 Commit to a design instead of repeated reworks
💥 <u>50%</u> of reporting playtesters said it was their least favorite part of the game even after rework.

🐤 *People did not like being required to complete all 100 time trials, which often repeated levels, in a week.*
🐤 In retrospect, we found that designing a side mode of this scale wasn't as easy as we originally envisioned, especially with trying to make it work with the "Random Levels" framework we came from the mobile version with.

Secret Levels

What Went Well

- The ability to hide secret levels until the player finds them adds an extra layer to the puzzle element of the game
- Half of the levels were already made, just needing minor reworks and redecorating

What could have gone better

- If development of this mechanic started sooner, it could have been better integrated into the game
- The way the worlds are setup doesn't nicely allow for secret levels to function
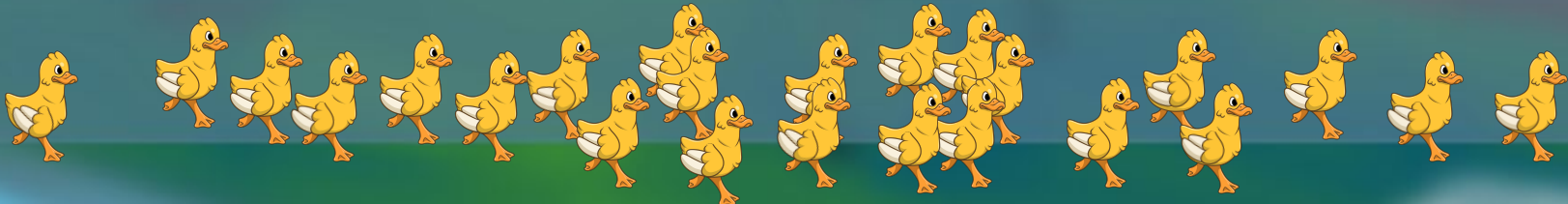
Art Report

What Went Well

- 💥 **Lot's of new costumes! And many guests artists collabed to bring more unique costumes for players to unlock!**
  - 🐤 Very well received aspect of the game- in playtesting and reviews

- 💥 **Cutscenes- added narrative context to the different worlds the players journey through**
  - 🐤 Making the player care about Ollie and Opal!

- 💥 **New UI (buttons, clock, and more)- helped to add more polish and juice to the game!**

- 💥 **Added new artists to the team to help with development**
  - 🐤 Made the workload more manageable and tasks were able to be completed more efficiently

Cutscenes

What Went Well

* **The cutscenes are a very polished portfolio piece for the art team**
  * 🐤 Coordinating the team to create a very high-scope aspect of our game was a great challenge that we learned a lot from

* **The game has a new level of quality and depth**
  * 🐤 The community has an opportunity to talk about aspects of the game other than gameplay

What could have gone better

* **We didn't cut any scenes when we fell behind schedule, so it took the art team much longer to complete the cutscenes, which pushed back the release date a few times**

* **The art team needed to remake some of the assets because keeping the art style consistent wasn't enforced as much as it should have from the beginning**

Storyboards to Cutscenes

What Went Well

💥 **Shots were divided evenly amongst the artists**
- 🐤 Storyboards were created quickly and efficiently

💥 **Halia joined the team and took on designing backgrounds for the cutscenes**
- 🐤 Great addition to the team and took on an extremely important role!

💥 **Character assets were rendered to be posable**
- 🐤 This allowed for more expressive cutscenes rather than stiff/static frames

Cutscenes (Animations)

What Went Well!

💥 **Learned a lot on the way**
🐤 *Setting up animations in the animator*
🐤 *Camera tricks (panning, zooming and screen shake)*
🐤 *Walk cycles*
🐤 *Different requirements for asset separation for specific movements*
🐤 *Layering and masks*

💥 **Finished 4 cutscenes**

💥 **Coordination with artists**
🐤 *Quick Turnaround*
🐤 *Good communication*
🐤 *Duck decimation was expedient*

Cutscenes (Animations)

What didn't go so well

💥 **The quality of earlier cutscenes is lower than later ones due to learning along the way**

🐤 *Camera movement is nonexistent/not great or extremely simple*

🐤 *The intro cutscene animation is suboptimally designed on the back end (Harder to change than the others)*
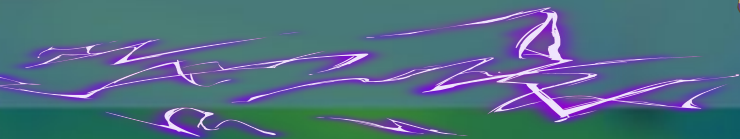
🐤 *Lack of asset separation*

🐤 *Less movement*

💥 **Communicating early on which parts of the assets the artists should cut to make them posable, would have required less asset revisions**

🐤 *Quench the need for duck dismemberment*

Costumes

What Went Well

💥 **Added 19 new costumes**
- 🐤 Shout-outs to other SIP games
- 🐤 Recolors of existing costumes
- 🐤 Able to design new ones efficiently

💥 **Outsourcing for costumes got more artists involved**
- 🐤 Artists outside our network promoted the game

What could have gone better

💥 **Streamlining the animation pipeline for new artists**
- 🐤 Confusion with animating
- 🐤 Simplifying the artbible
- 🐤 More work for one person

💥 **Making a more solid list**
- 🐤 Last minute costumes
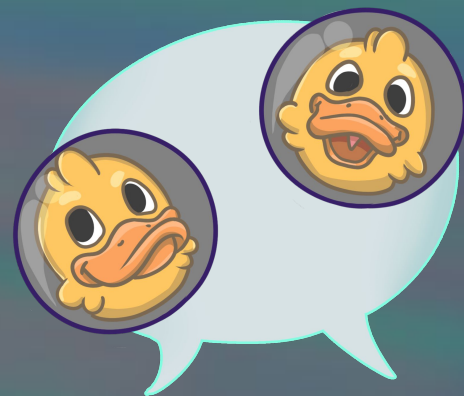- 🐤 Lots of ideas, little time

💥 **Saving for future updates**
- 🐤 Hank, Viking and Ostrich costumes
- 🐤 Allows us to add more content later on

Steam Capsule Art

What Went Well

💥 Experienced industry level thumbnailing process

💥 Met deadlines without having to cut corners

What could have gone better

💥 Not prepared for all capsule types
- 🐤 Several last minute tweaks needed to fit capsules I wasn't aware of
- 🐤 No updated Steam library art

💥 Too dependant on feedback
- 🐤 Work stagnated between meetings
- 🐤 Didn't trust my own artistic instinct enough to progress on my own

Audio Report

What Went Well

💥   4 new songs in the game's soundtrack, each world has its own theme now

💥   All new sound effects for all game mechanics and cutscenes (everything has a unique sound now)

    🐤   Filled in some of the missing sound effects from Live Studio

💥   I learned a lot about composing for cutscenes (and the challenges that come with it)

What could have gone better

💥   I need to practice my better time management, which caused certain tasks to take longer than they really should have, and for me to have to crunch a couple times

Cutscene Audio Report

What Went Well

💥 The team and I were generally very happy with how the Cutscene Audio came out

What could have gone better

💥 I didn't communicate with the artists during cutscenes, causing some confusion on the intended tone of certain scenes

💥 The cutscenes were my first time composing for a piece of linear media, so I struggled with timing the music to what was happening in the scene, as well as writing such short pieces to begin with

💥 Could have directed Emmaline better, I should have gotten on call with her and acted as the VO director instead of just handing her a script

Design Report

What went well

- Added 52 new levels to the game
- Tuned difficulty curves for main worlds
- Mastery and Secret levels add a higher skill cap and maximum difficulty
- Redecorated all levels to fit 1920x1080 canvas

What could've gone better

- Stagnated towards the end of development on new level ideas (additional eyes appreciated)
- Hand-crafting a small amount of time trials, instead of leaving them randomized
- Better documenting the level solutions before beginning QA testing

loaf of
duck

QA Report
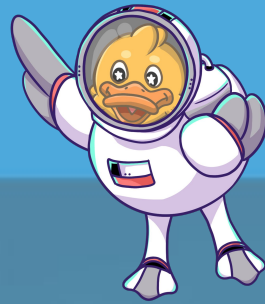
What went well

- 💥 <u>Having a dedicated QA person</u> allowed playtesting to run simultaneously with development

- 💥 <u>Feedback could be acted on much quicker</u> with weekly patches and direct feedback via Discord.
  - 🐤 For example, when testers felt frustrated and overwhelmed by the time trial difficulty, we were able to reduce the difficulty and they were able to continue by the next week.

What could have gone better

- 💥 Out of 20 testers that signed up during round 2, <u>*only 35%* of testers completed playtesting.</u>

- 💥 <u>Pushing updates while testing caused some issues</u> that hindered player progress.

- 💥 Despite our improvements to time trials being well received, <u>it was generally received as the weakest part of testing.</u>

Challenges-Tester Retention in Discord

💥 **10/20 testers** who signed up did not follow through with testing.

💥 **3/10 active testers** dropped out when time trials got introduced.

💥 Discord is a popular platform among gamers that offers very direct communication, but the casual atmosphere may have caused some testers to blow off playtesting.

Silver Lining

💥 **Still addressed many bugs with 7 testers who were very active in Discord.**

💥 Using Discord made communicating with playtesters quick and easy, allowing for a lot of valuable discussion during playtesting.

"I think the handling of information and documents were quite well done. the constant communication in discord if any one had questions was a huge help."

Challenges-The Save File Incident

* During week 2, one of the updates accidentally shipped with a pre-existing save file that overwrote everyone's progress

* Required swift damage control to keep playtesters motivated, which we were able to roll out in just a few days.

* We made sure to be as transparent as possible, and gave them a cheat code to skip levels to regain their progress.

Silver Lining

* Highlighted a major precaution we needed to be aware of when rolling out updates, and we're lucky we learned about it before release and not after.

* Nobody dropped from playtesting as a result of the mistake and our flexibility in the face of setbacks was a common source of praise on the exit form.

"The fact that you actually allowed us more time to handle things when bugs went sideways, bothered to patch balance in things that were too challenging, and the like… you guys treated us super well"

Playtesting Exit Form Summary

A solid base, but the side modes can be frustrating

What was your favorite part of the game?

"I enjoyed progressing through the story and seeing the cutscenes. I liked the music too."

What were your thoughts on the secret levels?

"the mechanic to find them was really interesting but I will admit my heart dropped to my ass seeing the ones that had a goal completion of like 106 😭 I think for people who like puzzles they would be fun but for me they were scary LOL"

"Maddening. Ludicrously hard. Sometimes deviously well-hidden. Excellent."

How likely are you to recommend this game to others?

Responses (y-axis): 0, 1, 2, 3

Bar values by Rating:
- 4: 1
- 5: 2
- 6: 3
- 7: 1
- 8: 1

Rating (x-axis): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was your least favorite part of the game?

"Pre-patch Time Trials. Those were often more tedious than fun. Time Trials mode as a whole got a bit dull at points, since it sometimes just felt like the same levels were being reused over and over. That being said, this might be a symptom of the way testing went, since I had to perfect everything by a deadline and wasn't able to play at my own pace."
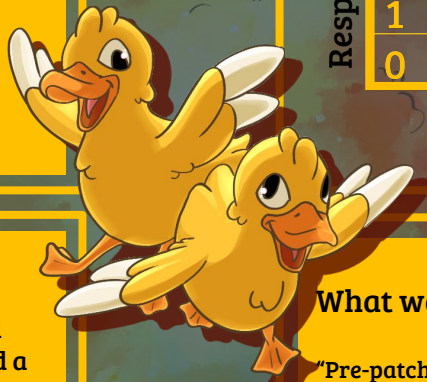
Production Report
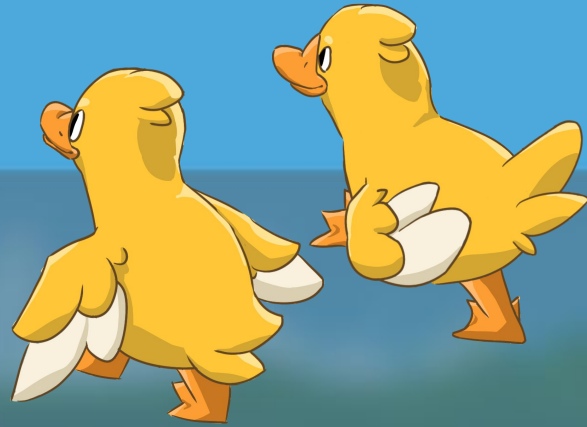
What went well

💥 **Kept strong communication with everyone**

🐤 Tried to minimize time where people did not know or
Understand what they were working on next

💥 **Flexible but constantly high meeting attendance to keep momentum high**

💥 **The Structure for meetings has been praised as motivational and efficient**

💥 **Conducting 1 on 1s with each team member gave me a better idea of what everyone wanted from the project and they were currently getting out of it.**

💥 **Onboarding with Sean went much smoother than onboarding with Ashley and Halia (Because there was an actual onboarding process with Sean)**

What Could Have Gone Better

* I focused too much on working on the game, and not enough time on being a producer

* Should have done more 1 on 1 Check-ins sooner

* Deadlines moved back too many times- should have scoped Less or prepared for the project to take longer

* Put off working on Steam Page because it was not as fulfilling as working on the game (Took 8 months from the start of development for us to have a steam page)

* Not enough delegation of Producer work to our team leads
  * This led them to being too disconnected from each other

* Onboarding new team members in the middle of the project was non existent, should have given them more direction

Marketing Report

What went well

💥 Nick Mudry gave us actionable steps on how to approach marketing Danger Ducklings in a month or so

💥 Ezra created a marketing document to use through the weeks leading up to and of launch
🐤 Ezra did a great job but unfortunately had to leave the week right before launch. The document helped ensure everything was accounted for.

What could have gone better

💥 I should've had someone start handling marketing sooner

Next Fest Report

What went well

💥 About 2k users added the demo to their libraries

What could have gone better

💥 I should've had someone else take the lead for Next Fest like Ezra took care of marketing

🐤 By the time it started, I wasn't ready to utilize the streaming, Q&A, or other developer tools and they fell by the wayside

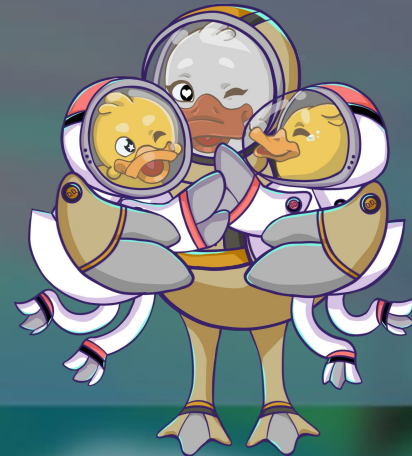# The future of Danger Ducklings?

What we're likely to do:

- Post Launch Update (Minor bug fixes and Viking Costume Addition)
- Become Steam Deck Verified?
- Mac version

What we're unsure of doing:

- WebGL Version
- Updating the mobile version

Unlikely, but would be nice:

- Post apocalyptic fourth world :) (Or more content in general?)
  - Mom is separately controllable (but other ducks are together)

Questions?