Spring 2022

Tony Hawk Pro Skater

Kelly Stone-Patrick
San Jose State University, kelly.stone-patrick@sjsu.edu

Recommended Citation

Tony Hawk Pro Skater

Kelly Stone

Intro to Game Studies

James Morgan

San Jose State University

May 23rd, 2022

Looking back on life there are so many memories that have truly made a lasting impact, these can include different vacations, accomplishments, and family, but have you ever had one that included a game or video game? From my personal experience, Tony Hawk Pro Skater has been one of those memories for me from childhood and now as an adult. Tony Hawk Pro Skater was a key part of my enjoyment and leisure as a child while also providing me with memories of time spent with my older brothers. In this paper, we will be highlighting the different elements of the game as well as sharing my personal account of the game as a child and as an adult. The key areas we will be discussing and talking about include graphics, audio/music, MDA (mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics), and the original vs. the updated version of the game.

To give some background, we have to start with the famous pro skater named Tony Hawk who made his way to fame and popularity as a young boy in the skating scene at the early age of eleven years old in the late seventies. Throughout the next ten to fifteen years of his career, he not only won multiple skating competitions but also created new tricks that had never been seen before in the skating world. Due to his popularity, hard work, and love of the sport, he became a household name and had a major following for many years. This led to the creation of the first of multiple skating video games in his name and the impact the games had on the gaming world.

In 1999 Tony Hawk Pro Skater was released by Activision for the Sony PlayStation game console and became a sensation due to the game's "fluid control scheme, smooth animation, and goal-based progress" (Bill Loguidice Blogger March 10, 2009). The game allowed players to skate in different skate parks and areas while attempting different challenges. These challenges included combos, hidden items, and practicing/learning new tricks. Once each level was finally completed, another level would open up with new challenges and the play would start all over

again somewhere new. The game also provided a chance to free skate and build up different skills to take into the challenges of the game. With the game's popularity along with the subsequent games created, the Tony Hawk game franchise has grossed nearly a billion dollars since its creation in the late nineties and still holds a popular following to this day.

Graphics

In the late nineties and early two thousand video game graphics were still very basic and in two dimensions. When Tony Hawk Pro Skater came out it was one of the first video games ever to create a three-dimensional game for players (Conceição). This helped to create a new interest in gaming as well as begin a new era in three-dimensional graphics for many up-and-coming games on the market. The new graphics alongside the heightened interest in skateboarding skyrocketed the popularity of the game and spurred many more games under the Tony Hawk Pro Skater name.

Audio/Music

One of the most important parts of playing Tony Hawk Pro Skater is the audio and music that the player hears while skating in the game. Background sounds are a key part of playing the game because it makes the player feel as if they are listening to someone skating in person as well as other common background noises. While the player is skating, they can hear the wheels rolling over the ground, the sound the board makes when the character jumps, a board splitting or breaking in half, and when the character falls off the board or gets hurt the player can hear a knee sliding sound or grunting noise from the character. When the player accomplishes a new trick combo and makes a clean landing there is an added sound as well as if the player slaps the wall in the middle of doing a trick/grinding it makes a slapping sound. Alongside this common background noise, when a challenge is completed, it adds another sound and flashes the player's

accomplishment on the screen. Although these background sounds are a key element of the game the music is what pulls many players in and has been a highlighted topic for many years amongst all Tony Hawk Pro Skater games. In Tony Hawk Pro Skater there was an original soundtrack of ten songs which included artists like Dead Kennedys, The Ernies, Even Rude, Goldfinger, Primus, Speedealer, Suicidal Tendencies, The Suicide Machine, Unsane, and The Vandals (Tony Hawk's pro skater soundtrack). These songs would play in the background while skating and added to the play of the game. Without adding in these two elements of background sounds and music, Tony Hawk Pro Skater might have been a different game entirely because it would've lacked one of the key enticing elements to playing and enjoying the game.

Mechanics

Game mechanics represent the different aspects of any game that are incorporated within the play and the process of play (Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek). There are tons of options to choose from when it comes to choosing the right mechanics for any game and it can sometimes be hard to just pinpoint a handful. For Tony Hawk Pro Skater, I have chosen six mechanics to highlight that represent the major areas of the game, these include exploration, movement, risk and reward, time management, balancing, and knowledge of the game controller. Exploration is a large part of the Tony Hawk Pro Skater because every level that the player plays to advance within the game requires exploring the level to find different hidden items, certain areas they want tricks completed, and to find the best places to get high scores. Movement is another large part of Tony Hawk Pro Skater because the player needs to understand the movement of their character on the screen to be able to do tricks successfully and move about the different areas of the game. Risk and reward highlight the player's ability to go for the new combo or trick that is new or hard. Without taking a risk in the game, the player may never achieve the reward of

completing a new trick, combo, or challenge in the game. Time management in Tony Hawk Pro Skater is one of the trickiest and sometimes stressful parts of the game. Most players have to accept that in the general gameplay they will have to do multiple sessions to accomplish most challenges given for each level. If the player does not plan well or struggles to complete their goals/challenges, then they will run out of time and have to start all over again from scratch on the same level. Balancing in Tony Hawk Pro Skater is a key element to completing any trick and understanding how to move their character properly, without understanding and practicing balancing the tricks will not work and the character will fall or get hurt. Last but certainly not least is the knowledge the player has of the controller when playing Tony Hawk Pro Skater. Understanding what every button does and how to use each one of them to do different moves, tricks, and combos in the game can make or break the outcome of each new challenge. This can take lots of time and practice to get the hand movements down to hit every button properly and in the right order to be successful in accomplishing the task or challenge given. All of the mechanics are the key elements to not only playing but interacting with the game itself and have created a love of the game and its popularity for years now.

Dynamics

Game dynamics are the inscribed elements of the game that are directly and indirectly impacted by the player (Bond). To understand the dynamics, we have to look at the aesthetics we have chosen to truly understand how the game is impacted. The three aesthetics we will be focusing on are discovery, challenge, and submission. Discovery is created by the exploration of the different parks/areas and learning new tricks. Challenge is created by the time clock pressure, learning how to do a new trick, and taking a risk. Submission is created by the time given and invested into the game within the player's life. The dynamics of Tony Hawk Pro Skater show that

even the little parts of the game as a whole can have a major impact on the gameplay players have as well as how the game interacts with the player.

Aesthetics

Game aesthetics revolve around the emotions and feelings the players have while playing a game (Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek). When reading through the MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research article by Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek regarding the aesthetics of Tony Hawk Pro Skater the three main examples given that stand out are discovery, challenge, and submission. Discovery is based on the idea of an unknown place and trying to figure out where everything is and how to get to it. This relates to Tony Hawk Pro Skater because the player has to make their way through each "park" or skate area to accomplish the different goals and challenges the game has set. There are hidden tapes, multiple of the same hidden items to collect, and different moves the player needs to do in various parts of the skate area. Challenge is based on the idea that Tony Hawk Pro Skater sets goals and actual challenges that the player needs to complete. These include finding multiple items, finding the secret tape, hitting specific combos of tricks, and high scores for the different tricks and combos the player completes within a given time clock. All of these create a form of difficulty that takes time to complete, and they have multiple layers such as a time window on top of the general tasks to complete. Submission is based on the idea that the game can be used as a pastime or essentially a time to chill out. Many times, the player must do multiple rounds on each level to explore, find the different objects, complete their trick and score goals to be able to accomplish everything for that level and move on or open a new level to play. All three of these aesthetic examples highlight the key aspects of the game and what the players will be interacting with and accomplishing while playing Tony Hawk Pro Skater.

Original VS. Updated

When looking at the original Tony Hawk Pro Skater 1999 Activision Sony PlayStation

release compared with the updated release of Tony Hawk Pro Skate 1+2 in 2020, the two

noticeable differences that stand out relate to the graphics and music in the game. The most

noticeable and impactful change in the game was the updated graphics, it went from the original

very grainy pixelated to an all-new updated 4K resolution view. This change in the graphics

allowed for users to have more lifelike characters as well as highly detailed and clear skate

parks/areas.

The music was also updated from the original ten-song soundtrack and included nearly fifty total

songs. These songs were taken from the original game as well as other subsequent games and

popular music at the time the updated version was released. With the mix of the music

throughout the span of the Tony Hawk Pro Skater game franchise, the updated version was able

to keep nostalgia while also drawing in a new crowd with popular songs at the time the game

was released. With the new update, they also added characters that are new pro-skaters in the

skate world today as well as the ability to make a personalized skate park and clothing for the

characters to wear. These updates to the game have given a whole new experience for the players while also holding true to the classic game and the nostalgia that went along with it.

Personal Experience

Looking back to the first time I played Tony Hawk Pro Skater I was around nine or ten years old, in the early 2000s, sitting in my brother's room with a PlayStation two controller in my hand. Now, I had played many games at this point on various consoles such as mortal combat and duck hunt, but nothing stuck out to me like Tony Hawk Pro Skater. I loved the graphics, music, freedom, and challenge that the game provided for me even at such a young age, and would get caught up playing the game for hours if I was able to. Although I loved the game, as any other nine- or ten-year-old might have I struggled with the basics of accomplishing the tricks, scores, and challenges. One of the biggest issues I faced was not only finding the hidden tape to collect but also being able to reach the hidden tape without the help of my brother. Every time I struggled to accomplish a new challenge, I would just ask my brother to do it for me because I just wanted to get through the levels and enjoy playing.

Fast-forwarding to today Tony Hawk Pro Skater has come back into my life in a different way but with the same feeling and nostalgia. About two months ago my boyfriend and I decided to pick out some video games to play for a date night and we happened to come across Tony Hawk Pro Skater One and Two on XBOX. Not only was I surprised they even still had the game on a shelf3
 but I was excited to be able to play and relive some of the past fond memories that the game provided for me nearly twenty years ago. After playing the game for a few hours It felt as if I had never left my brothers room but the way I approached the game was different on many levels. This time around I was able to accomplish the different challenges especially the hidden tapes on

my own without the help of my brother. I realized that my age, thinking process, and patience level have completely changed the experience of the game for me while still bringing me the same joy and excitement it did as a child. I also realized that sometimes the simplest memories from our childhood can bring us the same feelings and remind us of a simpler time that allow for an escape from our responsibilities as an adult.

Conclusion

Whether this is the first time you are hearing about Tony Hawk Pro Skater or you are a lifelong fan of the game, the key takeaway from this paper is the impact it had on many generations of video game players. Many people, myself included, have loved this game franchise for many years and it has given us so many wonderful memories and fun experiences. Being able to break down the game and focus on every part that creates the whole solidifies just how well thought out and constructed the original Tony Hawk Pro Skater was and the updated version still holds its place today amongst the many new game options. It will be interesting to look back in another twenty-plus years to see if it still holds its place in popularity wherever the gaming world takes us.

References

Bill Loguidice Blogger March 10, 2009. (2009, March 10). *The history of Tony Hawk's pro*

    skater: Ollies, grabs, and grind. Game Developer. Retrieved May 9, 2022, from

    https://www.gamedeveloper.com/design/the-history-of-i-tony-hawk-s-pro-skater-i-ollies-

    grabs-and-grinds

Bond, J. G. (2018). *Introduction to game design, prototyping, and development: From concept to*

    playable game with unity and C#. Addison-Wesley.

Conceição, R. F. da. (2022, February 27). *20 years later: 'Tony Hawk's pro skater' revolutionized*

    gaming in 1999. Goomba Stomp Magazine. Retrieved May 10, 2022, from

    https://goombastomp.com/20-years-later-tony-hawks-pro-skater-revolutionized-gaming-in-

    1999/

Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Tony Hawk*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved May 9,

    2022, from https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tony-Hawk

Hunicke, R., LeBlanc, M., & Zubek, R. (n.d.). MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and

    Game Research.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 and 2 Available Worldwide Now. (2020, September 25).

    Entertainment Newsweekly,79. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A635986256/ITOF?u=

    csusj&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=92d8cd82

Tony Hawk's pro skater soundtrack. Tony Hawk's Games Wiki. (n.d.). Retrieved May 11, 2022,

   from https://tonyhawkgames.fandom.com/wiki/Tony_Hawk%27s_Pro_Skater_Soundtrack

Ultimate Gamerz. (2020, May 12th). Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 and 2 Remaster Vs Original

Graphics Comparison. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl2-rMQITMs.