

Dungeon Trawler

Battle Vast Hordes in Search of Wealth and Glory



Example Game Treatment
August 2004 by Paolo Piselli for IMGD 111x

Game Summary

Dungeon Trawler is a new fast-paced Action/RPG by Paolo Piselli. Dungeon Trawler combines the arcade-style action and maze navigation of Gauntlet with the character advancement and loot hunting of Diablo. The game is fast-paced yet easy to play, has the depth to keep players coming back for more, and works on almost all modern PCs.

Some of Dungeon Trawler's features include:

- A number of Heroes to choose from, each with unique abilities
- RPG-like character advancement: levels, attributes, abilities that improve as the player progresses through the dungeon
- Ability-enhancing items and equipment will be found in chests and dropped by monsters
- Hordes of monsters will be on-screen all at once
- Over 100 rooms in the maze-like dungeon
- Solve simple puzzles in order to avoid traps and reach treasure
- Save-Game to store progress



Game Overview

Concept

Dungeon Trawler combines the fast pace of Gauntlet with a flavor of Diablo.

From time beyond reckoning, the dungeon Gatloppus has stood as the ultimate test of a hero. The only things more legendary than Gatloppus's hordes of vicious monsters are the immeasurable riches in its treasure troves. In Dungeon Trawler, you take the role of a lone hero and enter the infamous dungeon in search of wealth and glory. Within the dungeon lie untold riches, magical secrets, and powerful arsenals – all yours for the taking, if you survive.

Genre

Dungeon Trawler is a 2D-Action/RPG. The game is played from a top-down perspective in maze-like rooms filled with monsters and treasure, similar to the early Gauntlet games. The action is fast paced and requires vigorous use of keyboard controls. The RPG elements are streamlined and lightweight, including simple leveling and inventory systems inspired by games such as Diablo.

Player Motivation

The player will have to fight off legions of monsters in order to survive in the action-packed dungeon. At the same time he will be tempted to hunt for valuable treasure, items and equipment. The ability to save character advancement and customization will keep the player interested in continuing his adventure.

Novel Features

- A number of Heroes to choose from, each with unique abilities: the raging Battler, the lithe Cutpurse, the fiery Mage, and the hardy Templar
- RPG-like character advancement: levels, attributes, abilities that improve as the player defeats more and more monsters in the dungeon
- Ability-enhancing items and equipment will be found in chests and dropped by monsters. Each character can only use certain equipment.
- Hordes of monsters will be on-screen all at once, continuously pouring out of monster dens.
- Over 100 rooms in the maze-like dungeon, which must be cleared one-by-one in order to reach the exit.
- Solving simple puzzles in order to avoid traps and reach treasure will benefit the player, but will not be required.
- Save-Game available at save-points to store progress

Target Platform

Dungeon Trawler is targeted at the modern budget-PC. System requirements will be kept fairly low in order to make the game playable by most PC owners. The game will use sprite-based 2D graphics in order to function on all modern video cards. The game will not require the player to use any nonstandard user-input devices - the player will interact with the game via keyboard controls.

Design Goals

Accessible – Dungeon Trawler should be playable on nearly all modern PCs running a Windows operating system. The graphical and system requirements will be kept low and the game will utilize only standard input devices.

Fast Action – The player should be constantly engaged in some form of action with monsters on-screen almost all the time. Monsters will continuously spawn out of monster dens, which can be disabled but not destroyed.

Character Development – The player's interest will be maintained by the opportunity to develop his character – both through leveling up and through acquiring items and equipment.

Game Play

- The majority of game play will involve the player navigating his way through 2D maze-like rooms rendered from an overhead perspective.
- Monsters will spawn at regular intervals from monster dens located in these rooms. The crowds of monsters will close-in upon the character, damaging him by either contact or projectiles.
- The player will be able to fight back by firing projectiles at the on-coming monsters. The type of projectile the player utilizes will depend on the weapon he has equipped.
- If the player's character is strong enough, he will be able to defeat the monsters faster than they spawn and gradually slash his way to the monster dens or to one of the room's exits.
- Monster dens can be disabled by attacking them repeatedly, but will become active if the player returns to the room at a later time.
- When a player reaches a room's exit, he will be transported to another room. Each room may have multiple exits, each leading to a different destination.
- Some rooms will contain no monsters, but instead will have save-points where the player can save his game, or dungeon shops where the player can buy items and equipment.

Production Details

Development Team

Paolo Piselli, currently a graduate student in the Computer Science department at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, is developing *dungeon Trawler*. Paolo has previously worked as a professional game artist on *Dungeon Siege: Legends of Aranna* at Mad Doc Software and as a “character builder” for various interactive games at Zoesis Studios. He has also developed a number of popular custom maps for *Warcraft III* and created plug-in player models for various *Quake* games. Paolo brings to the development team the well-rounded talents of a combined artist/programmer.



Game World

Story

No one knows who built the dungeon Gatloppus, or for what purpose. What is known about its infamous halls was given to us by the legendary Virtuon – the only hero ever to crawl up from the depths of Gatloppus alive. Upon his return, Virtuon spoke of both the ravenous hordes and the immeasurable wealth within...

“When I set foot inside the Gatloppian threshold, I was instantly transported by some unseen force to the deepest bowels of that foul place ... although it was dark, and the way was barred by countless numbers its feral denizens, there was naught to do but raze my way back to the surface ... chamber after chamber was littered with the corpses of the unfortunate travelers who had happened upon this abysmal place ... oh the riches I could have returned with if I had but a large sack with me ... alas it was all I could to do fend for my life against the tide of beasts.”

Despite Virtuon’s dire warnings to those foolhardy enough to lust for the treasures of Gatloppus, innumerable heroes have quested into its cyclopean gates brandishing sword and large sack in the hopes of emerging with a legend of their own and a small fortune to boot. No would-be hero since Virtuon has ever returned, and it is doubtless that the corridors of the cursed dungeon are littered with the trappings of those who have tried.

Characters

Battler – The Battler is a seasoned gladiator and fierce fighter. Sold into slavery when his people were conquered, the Battler was thrown into the arena to combat all forms of men and beasts. After climbing the ranks to champion gladiator, he was freed from bondage and leading several successful military campaigns for the emperor. Now the Battler hears the call of Gatloppus, and there he seeks to either make his name as the greatest warrior of all time or end his life of ceaseless combat.

As an experienced fighter, the Battler’s abilities are well-rounded. He is the only hero that can use all types of standard weapons; however, he is distrustful of magical artifacts. The Battler is also untrained in the use of plate armors, and thus prefers to don the less intricate chain-mail and leather varieties.

The game play style of the Battler is “wade into the fray with axe flailing”. With the Battler’s solid fighting ability, a player will be able to go toe-to-toe with a great number of monsters, especially in narrow corridors. His main advantage is access to the Axe weapons, as they deal the most damage and can penetrate

through multiple enemies in one swing. This allows him to make steady progress in a single direction filled with enemies. However, the Battler should be wary of getting surrounded, as he is not as hardy a hero as the Templar and may have difficulty fighting foes all around.

Cutpurse – The Cutpurse is a wily rouse and weathered traveler. A mischievous and unruly character since youth, the Cutpurse has always preferred to be independent and self-reliant. He gets by on his instincts, reflexes and quick wit. Unlike the other heroes, the Cutpurse has been drawn into the dungeon mainly in search of its vast riches.

The Cutpurse cannot take as much punishment as the Battler or the Templar, but he is fleet-of-foot. He is not a trained soldier and thus can only use the simplest weapons and armor – knives and leather.

The game play style of the Cutpurse is “hit and run and grab the cash”. Because he is unable to take lots of damage, a player using the Cutpurse does well to constantly move to evade his foes. Although he only has access to knives, the Cutpurse has an accelerated rate-of-fire, which allows him to deal out a moderate amount of damage. The Cutpurse’s real advantage is in his lock-picking ability – he does not need any keys to open locked doors and chests. This allows him to rapidly collect treasures that might be difficult for other heroes to reach.

Mage – The Mage is a wizard of great power and terrible temperament. A great thirst for knowledge led this man to a lifetime of searching for arcane wisdom. Great were the secrets that he found, but greater still are those rumored to be held within Gatloppus. Driven by an insatiable need to know, the Mage delves for the mysteries of its dank halls.

Not a warrior by any means, the Mage has lower abilities than the other heroes and is not accustomed to the use of any weapons or armor. However, he does have a deep understanding of magical artifacts and can use them to their full devastating potential.

The game play style of the Mage is “frail man of destruction”. The Mage can neither take damage like the Templar, nor quickly evade like the Cutpurse. The real strength of the Mage lies in his ability to use magical artifacts as weapons. With these artifacts, he is able to unleash the most offensive power of any hero. Artifacts come in many varieties with different attack patterns – some cause devastation in a single line, some release a spray of destructive magic, some detonate explosions around the Mage. The player who chooses the Mage must use his artifacts to their full potential in order to eliminate his foes before they get close enough to strike!

Templar – The Templar is a pious warrior, skilled in the art of defensive fighting. Orphaned at a young age, he was taken in by the clergy and raised as a servant of the temple. Noted early for his fiery spirit, the Templar was transferred to the temple's martial branch and instructed in the ways of defending the temple. After many years of disciplined training and loyal service, the Templar now sets out to prove that his faith is invincible.

The Templar's disciplined training and perhaps divine providence make him the sturdiest of all the heroes, although he is not fleet-of-foot by far. He can wear all types of armor and thus can take more punishment than any other hero. Due to his beliefs, the Templar shuns the use of bladed weapons and magical artifacts, instead opting to use heavy cudgels to bludgeon his foes.

The game play style of the Templar is "slow and steady wins the race". A player using the Templar will be able to survive longer against the hordes of monsters, but will tend to progress more slowly due to the Templar's low offensive output and low movement speed. The Templar's strengths are his high health, poison resistance, and access to all armors. The Templar's weakness is that he cannot defeat monsters very easily and can get overwhelmed when fighting in the open.

Equipment

Axes – Axes are the most powerful melee weapon, and can only be used by the Battler. When thrown, they will travel in a straight line, cutting down enemies in their path until they have done a certain cumulative amount of damage or have traveled a short way.

Knives – Knives are weak melee weapons and only strike a single target when thrown, however they tend to travel very far. The Cutpurse is skilled at throwing knives at a high rate of speed.

Rods – Rods are magical artifacts that release destructive magic when used properly. They tend to throw out multiple magical projectiles simultaneously, and have various effects. There are many types of rods, each with its own strength, effect, and attack pattern. Some rods spray projectiles in a spread pattern, some shoot in all directions, some slow monsters, etc. The Mage is the only hero capable of using rods.

Cudgels – Cudgels are simple blunt instruments used for striking one's enemies. These weapons only fly a short range when thrown, striking a single enemy for moderate damage. The Templar prefers cudgels, and the Battler may also use them in a pinch.

Leather Armor – Leather armors slightly increase a hero's hit points. Any hero except the Mage may wear leather.

Chain Armor – Chain armors moderately increase a hero's hit points. The Battler and the Templar may wear Chain.

Plate Armor – Plate armors greatly increase a hero's hit points. Only the Templar can wear plate armor.

Items

Balms – Balms are healing treatments that a hero can apply to recover lost health. They can be found in a variety of strengths, but a single dose must be used all-at-once.

Tonics – Some traps and monsters can poison the hero, causing him to take damage over time. Tonics are used to counteract the poison and eliminate it from the hero's system.

Monsters

Specter – Specters are the translucent entities that spawn from the bones of fallen adventurers in Gatloppus. Although their weak bonds to the material plane allow them to be dispatched fairly easily, they can overwhelm the unwary traveler when in numbers.

Troll – Trolls are grotesque humanoid creatures that thrive in the dank and sunless subterranean spaces. Their vicious nature and tendency to multiply have allowed them to establish a foothold in Gatloppus.

Masticon – Masticons are gigantic, bestial floating heads that feed on any living thing they happen across. Although they are slow moving, they are magical in nature and have an unnaturally tough hide. A Masticon will relentlessly pursue a victim until its appetite for flesh has been sated.

Lich – Similar to the Specter, but leagues more dangerous is the Lich. Spawned from mages that fall in Gatloppus, Liches retain some of their magical powers in death. These creatures hurl magical bolts at the living before closing in to steal their quarry's life-energies.