



Kingdom of Ehcilc Development Log

A series of post from the AGS forums describing and explaining the current state of the game, development process, design plans and everything else Ehcilc related.

- Update 1 (23.04.2014) - Current state of things and the beginning of our journey**
- Update 2 (03.05.2014) - Story and setting**
- Update 3 (15.05.2014) - Small pixels, big picture**
- Update 4 (29.05.2014) - Take a Look or Use the Talk?**
- Update 5 (19.06.2014) - Captain's Log, Stardate 5839.12.3**

Update 1 (23.04.2014) - Current state of things and the beginning of our journey

I've never quite understood how some people define their progress in exact percentages. Have they written complete design documents and thoroughly planned everything out or are they just throwing around random numbers? Well... I must say that I haven't really done much planning at all, but I do have a clear vision, a strong starting point and a vague idea about the ending, I'll just have to wait and see how the rest of it fills up.

Right now, the tech demo is more or less in working condition and most of the buttons do a thing when you click on them. We're currently polishing the GUI and doing some other functionality related scripting. Also, we've got some backgrounds, several character sprites, few items and couple of puzzle ideas.

All this unplanned and chaotic development means that I can't really share any specific and easily comprehensible information about the actual progress of the game, but I'll try to keep you guys informed in my own way.

Let us all close our eyes (not while reading this) and imagine that completing the development of this game is actually a long and dangerous journey to the top of Mount Modnar (the highest mountain in all of Ehcilc). If that were the case, our little team of adventurers would still be in the great plains of Nerrab, in the village of Ystnaf, haggling over food and equipment prices with Leofrick the shopkeeper.

To be honest, Ystnaf is not a bad place to start a journey from. We can easily rest here for couple of more weeks, gather our strength and replenish our supplies, before taking the first bold step towards the distant and mysterious peak of Modnar. Everything looks more than promising and the sleep is sweet under the blanket of our dream.

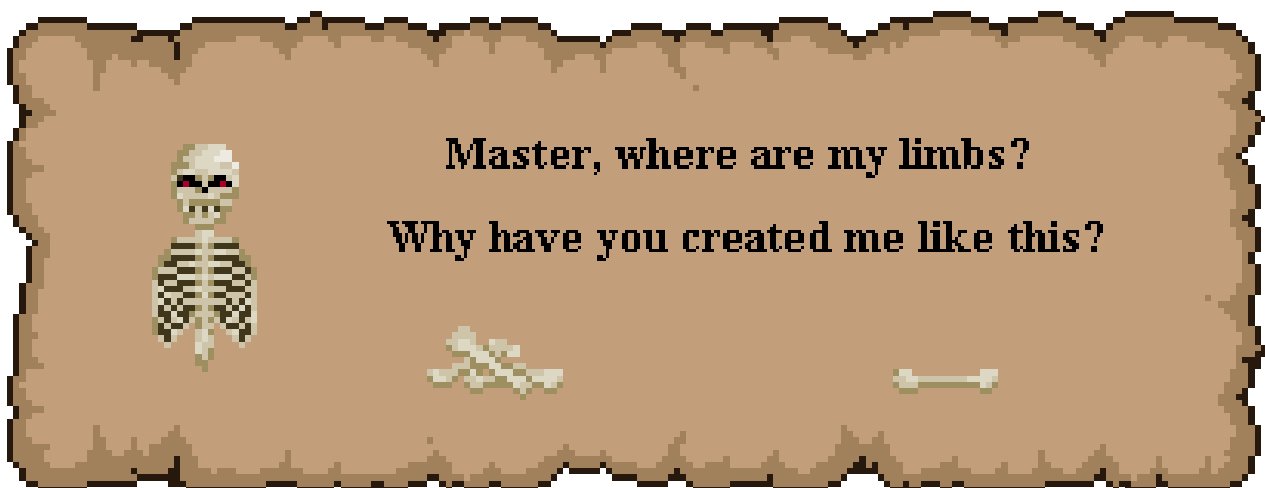


Update 2 (03.05.2014) - Story and setting

I've been studying various old maps and ancient manuscripts during this past week in order to plot the best possible route for our journey and I think it's finally starting to take shape. There are some winding side paths and few dangerous crossings that I'm not that sure of, but in overall it's looking good. Still, I have this uneasy feeling in the back of my head that I'm going to have to keep checking and double-checking these plans over and over again, because, as all things in Ehcilc, the slippery slopes of Mount Modnar are not always what they seem.

Although Kingdom of Ehcilc revolves around cliches, it's not intended to be an all-out parody or a game stuffed with every little cliché known to mankind. As Ghost (+10 perception, X-ray vision unlocked) already pointed out, Ehcilc is cliché spelled backwards and that's kind of the direction I would like it to go, meaning that there will be different tropes and clichés in the game, but many of them are going to be turned upside down, tainted by weird sense of humour and offered multiple and/or alternative solutions.

The game itself will be set in a very typical fantasy setting, filled with your usual races and creatures, but we'll try to sneak in some less popular and underused elements and concepts of the genre. As for the plot... well, there's an idea (head) and a strong backbone, but rest of it is just a pile of bones that need to be picked up and fleshed out:



Just like the setting, the premise of the story is also simple and familiar to all who have had at least some experience in the realm of adventuring: Your home gets destroyed/ransacked, you're left behind hurt and dying and venture forth to seek a glorious revenge, but not really. The player will actually have a large say in the motivation and behaviour of the main character and if you don't want to follow the path of revenge, you can go pick flowers instead or whatever... or can you?

Update 3 (15.05.2014) – Small pixels, big picture

Over three weeks have passed and we're still in Ystnaf, still preparing, still not ready. To be honest, we're both very eager to leave, but at the same time we keep reminding ourselves that there's no hurry, few weeks or months here or there don't actually matter, there's plenty of time. It's not like Mount Modnar's going anywhere, at least I hope it's not, because there's actually one recorded instance in history of Ehcilc, when a mountain suddenly just stood up one day and ventured away. Might have been a behemoth or something...

Anyway, preparation is an important part of every journey and I'd like to be well prepared for this one. Last week I went over our equipment list to make sure that we're packing everything we need and it turned out that few important items are completely missing from our inventory and some need to be either repaired or replaced. I guess I'll have to pay one last visit to old Leofrick.

Since there are going to be multiple updates concerning the graphical aspects of the game, I'm going to start with a short introduction to give you some insight about how this game is being created.

First of all, I have a rather uncommon method of drawing – I use a Lenovo T61 laptop touchpad. Obviously I'm not capable of creating hi-res digital paintings with it, but it suits just fine for the style that I'm going for and actually feels quite natural. I have two programs: good old Jasc Paint Shop Pro 7.04 for drawing and GraphicsGale 2.03.20 for animating sprites. Only tools I regularly use within these programs are brush, eraser, fill, line tool and color replacer.

All that is more than enough, considering my current level of experience. I have no background in art and have been actively pixeling less than a year, which means that everything I do is done by trial and error and pixel by pixel. Here's an example to illustrate character progression:



There are still a lot of things (shading, colors, perspective etc.) that I'm not satisfied with, but hopefully my skills will improve enough to fix some of the more obvious problems before the release.

Also, I'd like to encourage everyone who enjoy creating games not to let the lack of skills (in graphics, programming or whatever) stand in your way. Take your time, be patient, use whatever tools you feel comfortable with and just go for it!

Update 4 (29.05.2014) – Take a Look or Use the Talk?

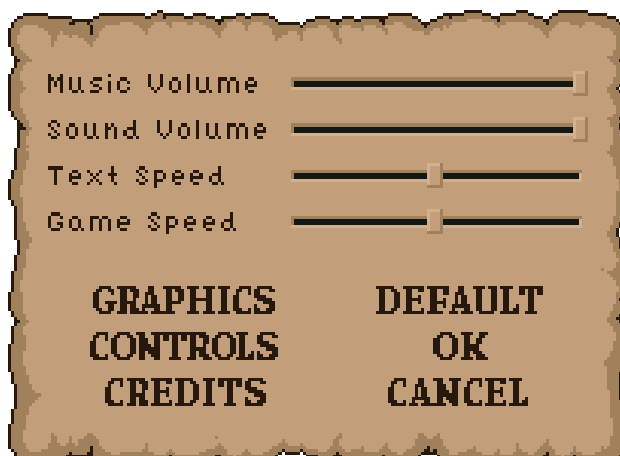
Man, that Leofrick sure drives a hard bargain, nothing is ever easy with him. Oh yeah, have I mentioned that Leofrick's an ogre? Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against ogres, they're friendly folk and make good and trustworthy companions, but there is just something about Leofrick...

He's actually one of the most well-spoken and intelligent ogres I've ever met and I guess that might be the very thing that bothers me. He's a bit too smart for his own good, because doing business with an ogre, who can easily beat you in a game of wishwhacks, is somewhat unsettling. Still, after a hard days work (and believe me, it was hard) I managed to get most of the necessary stuff for a fairly reasonable price and now we should have all the basic equipment we need to complete our journey.

And you know what? I think that we're finally ready to leave Ystnaf behind and start following the yellow brick road towards Mount Modnar.

I would like Kingdom of Ehcilc to have as much basic settings and keyboard/mouse options as AGS allows, which means that you can expect stuff like speed and audio sliders, gamma adjustment and other similar options that should offer at least some variety and customization.

Current versions (they need a bit more polish and few more settings):



Keyboard shortcuts for verbs are a must and I'm also thinking of making the keys rebindable and using the mouse wheel to scroll through them. Speaking of verbs, you don't really see many multi-verb adventure games these days and I doubt that I'll use this system in any of my future games, but it should work well with Echilc and I sort of like it. Besides the nostalgia and cliché factor, the additional verbs should give us some extra options when it comes to designing puzzles and interactions.

In an ideal game, all the hotspots, objects and characters would respond differently to each verb, but that's probably a bit too much for this one. Still, the idea is to actually utilize these verbs and use them as well as we can.

Most recent UI version:

Talk	Use						↑	Trophies
Look	Take						↓	Menu

The game will have a permanently visible on-screen user interface, which means that you don't have to make any extra clicks to open the inventory window or mess around with different top/bottom sliding menus. Although it might make the game feel a bit less immersive, I figured it would be easier for the players to make associations when they can always visually see all the tools (verbs, inventory) that they need to solve the puzzles or interact with things. Also, it means smaller backgrounds, which in turn means less drawing for me.

User interface test with a background and few random items:



Update 5 (19.06.2014) – Captain's Log, Stardate 5839.12.3

We're finally on the road and things are looking good! The weather has been near perfect, the path is clear and progress steady.

Our departure did not give cause to any fancy farewell parties or big celebrations. Few villagers wished us safe passage and swift legs and some kids tagged along with us until we reached the edge of the forest, but in overall, our prolonged stay in Ystnaf went relatively unnoticed. Well, to be honest, there's wasn't really any reason for them to celebrate, but I'm certainly hoping to give them one when we come back.

I'm still not completely sure when we will reach the mountain, but I know that the closer we get, the more motivated and committed we are.

Also, I think I should have taken more scrolls with me, because during the first few days I've already been drawing and writing so much that most of them are starting to get full:



As some of you might have noticed (you probably have, if you're reading this), I've been writing a somewhat regular devlog/blog about Kingdom of Ehcilc. I'm mainly doing it because I enjoy reading such things myself. Unraveling the whys and hows behind someone's development process can often even be more interesting for me than playing the game itself.

It usually takes me about 15-20 minutes to write the text, plus some additional time for formatting the forum post, editing images etc. So far, the word count has been around 300-500 words per update and will probably stay in that range in the future. The first part of the update is written as an adventurer's diary and the second part tries to concentrate on a specific aspect of the game.

Besides revealing hints about the current progress, the diary segment also gives me an opportunity to share the quirky lore of Ehcilc, which means that those who are interested in the game have a chance to get familiarized with different locations and characters and know at least some of the backstory before jumping in.

I must admit that the second half of the updates has been rather vague about some things, but trust me (or ask Atavismus), I can't really reveal much about the plot or release a bunch of backgrounds and characters without spoiling the whole game. So, I hope you bear with me, because there's still a lot I want to write about and if anyone is interested in something particular, let me know, I'll try to squeeze it in somewhere.