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High concept

When the hive gets hungry, Scout the brave explorer must journey into the hazardous backyard to find food.

In a normal backyard on a normal day, there are tiny battles for survival. Hundreds of thousands of ants struggle to overcome life-threatening hazards for the good of their hivemates. The growth of the hive depends on the strength, courage, and loyalty of every individual ant. When the Queen sends Scout on an urgent mission of exploration, he cannot refuse.

In this 2D, top-down adventure, players guide Scout through a vast, labyrinthine world of hungry insects and difficult puzzles. With each food source Scout finds, the Queen promotes him and sends him ever further from the hive into increasingly dangerous territories.

Gameplay

Scout finds himself in a tiny corner of a sprawling maze of towering grass and seemingly enormous stumps and flowers. As they explore, players discover hungry insects they must strategically avoid, as well as natural obstacles in their path. Ant-like resourcefulness will serve them well as they heft seemingly impossible weights upon their backs and use them to create new paths. When Scout performs an action, a magnifying-glass effect zooms in on the otherwise expressionless ant to show his struggles in his tiny world, allowing the player to emotionally invest in the character.

Although there are very few dead ends and several ways to reach the destination, each level has two to four choke points. These points are defined by puzzles of increasing difficulty and reward. Puzzle-solving consists of strategically picking up and placing pebbles, sticks, and leaves to proceed past lethal obstacles such as chasms, rivers, and spiderwebs. Additionally, after these particularly difficult puzzles are solved, the player's progress is saved as a checkpoint.

By the end of the first level, "The Wild Backyard", Scout has found three food sources. In an animated cutscene, the Queen Ant promotes Scout and sends him on a new mission to "The Sandbox". The second level plays much like the first, though it is a more fiendish maze of looming sand-dunes. Before Scout can find the sixth and final source of food for his liege, he must solve an intricate puzzle, carefully transporting and arranging sticks, pebbles, and leaves to cross a deadly puddle.

Scout is intended to give the player a feeling of awe as they step into a world from the perspective of a tiny insect. As the player becomes more confident in their capability as an ant, satisfying puzzles of increasing complexity continue to challenge the player.

Characters

Scout

Before the Queen's orders, Scout knew only how to obey. Now, with a mission at hand, Scout must find his own path using only his resourcefulness and inner strength.

Army Ants

Ants never fight alone! Scout's more muscular hivemates are willing to come to his aid when he calls. They fight enemy insects in Scout's path, clearing the way in times of dire need.

The backyard is a dangerous place for a tiny, lone explorer. Beware these creatures on your journey!

Beetles

These plodding, armored insects usually stomp on a predictable path, but some wander aimlessly. Scout moves more quickly than slow beetles if he is empty-handed, but they can quickly become a threat if Scout weighs himself down.

Grasshoppers

Bounding between paths as Scout only wishes he could, nimble grasshoppers also tend to follow a strict path. A distinct bouncing sound warns the player of the insect's proximity.

Mantis

An unwary Scout may find himself in Mantis' jaws before he knows what has happened! Mantis has learned to camouflage herself to catch her prey, though her darting eyes can give her away.

Spiders

Mysterious shadows near webs can be a sign for Scout to tread carefully, lest he disturb a hungry spider!

Environments

The Queen's domain may seem boundless to her subjects, but in reality Her Highness' kingdom extends only as far as scouts are willing to venture. This demo will feature two brightly colored levels, both of which are scattered with simplified, easily-identifiable objects both natural and man-made. These looming, to-scale reminders should help engender a feeling of being one tiny adventurer in a big, big world.

The first level, "The Wild Backyard," is primarily constructed from a green palette, dominated by grass and weeds. Flowers and tree roots add variety and shadow to the level's colors, as well as the odd bit of litter – soda cans, keys, etc.

The second level, "The Sandbox," is based around a paler, beige palette of sand, dirt, and mud. This monotony is regularly broken up by brightly-colored toys of all kinds, from shovels and buckets to blocks and trucks.

Items and Map Objects

Bread crumbs

Although Scout will dutifully report large food sources to the hive, when he needs a bite to eat, it's in the hive's best interests to let him nibble! Bread crumbs heal a portion of his health.

Sticks, leaves, pebbles

Scout is strong enough to lift small objects and place them strategically to solve dilemmas. Pebbles divert streams and stop approaching enemies. Scout uses sticks to cross rivulets and chasms. Leaves camouflage Scout to fool enemies, or float him downstream. Careful use of these tools will prove essential to Scout as he explores.

Lookout towers

Scout uses stumps, steps, and soda cans as lookout towers to survey the landscape. This new perspective can help Scout discover puzzle solutions and find routes to food sources.

Minimum System Requirements

- English version of Microsoft® Windows® 98SE/ME/2000/XP
- Pentium® III 1.0GHz (1000MHz) or Athlon™ 1.0GHz (1000MHz) processor or higher
- 256MB RAM
- 8x speed CD-ROM drive (1200KB/sec sustained transfer rate) and drivers
- 2GB of uncompressed free hard disk
- 100% DirectX® 9.0b-compatible 16-bit sound card and drivers
- 100% Windows® 98SE/2000/XP-compatible keyboard and drivers

Controls

Move: W – up

A – left

S – down

D – right

Interact with item: U – use

Call army ants: Spacebar

Target Audience

Scout's simple game mechanics, playful tone and eye-catching colors have a mass market appeal that is attractive to players of all ages. As the game progresses, the puzzles become increasingly difficult and require more planning on the part of the player, keeping the interest of more advanced players.

Marketability

Scout's cute characters and relatively simple puzzles follow a market model similar to handheld children's games such as *Hamtaro: Ham-Hams Unite!* or downloadable PC games such as *Bookworm*, which are extremely popular among casual gamers, especially older women. A marketing emphasis on bright, eye-catching colors and easy-to-learn controls has proved a consistently lucrative strategy. *Scout* is attractive to any gamer searching for a whimsical yet intellectually challenging experience.