

Transistor



1. GAME DESCRIPTION

1.1 generic infos

Developer : Supergiant Games

Composer : Darren Korb

Release : May 20, 2014

Platform : PS4, Windows, Linus, OS X, iOS, Nintendo Switch

Analysis : Corentin Gaspoz

1.2 gameplay description

Transistor is a top-down, action-strategy rpg. You play as Red, a former singer carrying the

Transistor, a sword-like device. You make your way through the city of Cloudbank, fighting waves

of enemies called "the Process".

The gameplay revolves around the transistor and its powers : the transistor can perform up to four

actions, which can all be customized by the player using chips (CHECK NAME). The Transistor also

allows Red to enter TURN() mode, a state in which time is frozen and the player can plan out

a certain amount of actions that will be rapidly performed afterwards. TURN() has a cooldown

that last longer the more actions you performed during TURN() mode.

The Process is comprised of a large variety of enemies, each having their own quirks and stats that

work together to creating puzzle-like encounters.

As the game progresses, the player will find more chips to mix and combine to increase their power.

2. SOUNDS INTEGRATION

2.1 themes

2.1.1 Sci-fi vs Nature

Transistor takes place in a futuristic city. The soundscape of the game reflects this

environment : synths and heavy sound modulation are used in the vast majority of the game's

sfx and music. Natural, untempered sounds do exist and are made more important due to their

rarity. The most prominent example being Red's singing, humming and various grunts.

2.1.2 Individuality

Individuality is showcased in various ways throughout the entire game. Sound-wise, players

can start "humming" at any point by the press of a button and can build their own "sound"

by arranging different chips together that inherently says something about them as

individuals.

2.2 informative sounds

Each chips have a distinct sound associated to it. Combining multiple chips will often

produce a mix of those sounds when the corresponding action is performed.

Enemies also have unique sound that help distinguish them.

Finally, Transistor features an extended collection of sfx to convey important gameplay

informations : cooldown refilled, hurt sound, ability unavailable etc.

2.3 conveying gameplay

The entire Soundscape changes when players enter TURN() mode : everything gets muffled,

the music becomes quieter and an extra humming melody can be heared.

Transistor also features evolving boss music, amping up tension until the very end.

3. SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

3.1 sound as a guide

There is a big mood switch in terms of sound between TURN() and normal gameplay. During normal

play, the players have to react on the fly to enemies movement and attacks, leading to a more

frenetic and impulsive gameplay. This completely shifts when they enter TURN(), as the world

around them becomes frozen. Instead of quick reaction, TURN() rewards slow, methodical thinking,

asking players to come up with a strategy.

Muffling the music and adding a humming melody guides the players towards that mentality change :

When the soundscape is sharper, they have to be quick.

when the soundscape becomes softer, they need to take their time and think.

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3.2 sound as a reward

As mentionned before, TURN() makes the entire soundscape softer. Upon

exiting TURN() mode, Red will

perform each action planned in quick succession whilst the game sounds become sharp again. Each

action performed is also player-customized, creating unique sounds for each actions. This quick

burst of sound combination, planned and customized by the players feel like a reward : they

emphasize the hits and play whatever the players "composed" with their chips, showcasing their own

creativity in a concrete, hearable way.

3.3 sound as a narrative

3.3.1 Emotions

As Red is a silent protagonist, most of her emotional state is conveyed either by the

sword-boyfriend or the sounds and music. The most obvious instances of this are within

cutscenes and boss-battles, as they feature custom-made music specific to the narrative

at that current time.

3.3.2 Corruption

The process has it's own soundscape. This soundscape is used to convey how much a place or

an entity has been corrupted by its power. A prime example of this is Sybil : her voice

is almost incomprehensible once she's been taken over by the process.

This soundscape is also an extension of the main game soundscape : synthetic, heavily

modulated. Narratively, it tells us that the trajectory of the world (mostly Cloudbank)

will and was always meant to lead to the process : a corrupted, individual-less world.

3.3.3 The Country

in the opposite direction we have the natural sounds : those closer to nature, to analogue

instruments. They stand in direct opposition to the process, depicting a clear "good vs

evil" narrative. In the end, Red is given a choice and completely leaves behind the

technologic part of the world, accepting that this is the only way things can get better.

this leads to a final, triumphant vocal track.

4. TBOI COMPARAISON

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