

Bounty Hunter Tactics

Design document project

Pitch

Battle Brothers + XCom with realistic combat mechanics

Genre

Turn based tactics

Gameplay

The player is the leader of a small squad of mercenaries who take orders from local lords to eliminate bandits, rebels, and other troublemakers.

The usual two-level gameplay:

The top level is squad management.

The lower level is turn-based battles on a tactical map.

The game's signature feature is its realistic combat mechanics: even the most powerful and skilled fighter can be killed with a single blow; conversely, sword strikes against heavy armor are practically meaningless. This is achieved through unique fencing mechanics, which give the game an unprecedented level of realism and immersion.

Setting and lore

The game takes place in a world of low-grade medieval fantasy—so low-grade that it's barely visible from the grass: no magic and no healing in combat. Only swords, axes, spears, bows, shields, and, of course, armor.

At the center of a vast continent without a silly name lies Interfluve, a land bounded by three rivers. It has long been a battlefield, a constant source of war. Firstly, because the interests of various powers intersect in the center of the continent, and secondly, because only in the soil of Interfluve grows the herb Atalos, which has phenomenal healing properties:

decoctions and ointments made from Atalos can cure any illness, restore a person with two broken tibias to health within 24 hours, and so on.

Interfluve is divided into eight fiefs, each ruled by its own lord.

Interfluve was once part of a vast forested land, home to the Aasaali, the forest people. But about a thousand years ago, it was conquered by a powerful Empire, which soon took control of almost the entire continent. After about four hundred years, the Empire began to decline. Another hundred years later, it split into the Eastern Empire (the Imperials) and the Western Empire (the relatively peaceful Galori). Interfluve suffered from civil wars, raids by nomadic Bull People and the pirates of the Konungs, as well as raids by Aasaali foresters.

About a hundred years ago, the entire Interfluve was conquered by the Northmen from beyond the mountains, who built their stone castles there. But their reign also came to an end: six months before the game's start, sun-worshipping cultists from the Free Cities in the far east invaded Interfluve. A long and bloody war resulted in the opponents exhausting each other: the Free Cities army was routed, but the Northmen also lost control of Interfluve.

As a result, the country, as in the old days, is divided into eight fiefs, each ruled by its own feudal lord. And the forests, swamps, plains, and hills of Interfluve are teeming with bandits of all stripes: the remnants of the cultist and northern armies, former mercenaries, smugglers seeking to enrich themselves by trading Atalos, and rebels terrorizing the local population.

The player will have to clean up all this mess.

Upper level gameplay

The game is divided into 8 chapters, corresponding to the number of Interfluve's fiefdoms: in each chapter, the player is hired by a new baron.

Each chapter is a new global map.

The player's default base is located at the baron's headquarters (castle or town). There, the hero accepts quests—usually to capture or kill another bandit. Quests can also be accepted from third-party clients. Capturing bandits is generally more profitable, as it yields more gold.

Quests offer several simple choices that affect both tactical battles (for example, ambushing a gang leader or storming his camp with swords drawn) and the player's progression through the overall storyline. The overall storyline offers several possible endings: the player can bring one of the barons to power in Interfluve, maintain the status quo of feudal fragmentation, condemn the country to ruin, or seize one of the counties and become a baron themselves.

In total, the game involves about 200 tactical battles throughout the game.

Between battles, the player manages their squad: buying weapons and armor, outfitting their fighters, and upgrading them.

He can also hire new fighters and improve his squad management capabilities: increase the number of fighters available on the tactical map, speed up healing, improve equipment, learn special skills - by hiring non-combat characters (quartermaster, cook, healer, blacksmith, recruiter).

It is possible to introduce a player's alter ego into the game: a fighter who fights on the tactical map, whose death immediately leads to the end of the game.

The game features two currencies: money and Atelos leaves, which can be used to heal characters' inevitable wounds and sold (for very good money, if necessary).

The lower level of gameplay is tactical

On the tactical map, the player controls a squad of 4-8 fighters, fighting against opponents numbering up to 20.

Each fighter takes turns making moves, the order of moves is determined by initiative, with the initiative scale being the same for both squads.

The map is made up of hexes. Each character occupies one hex and has an Orientation—they face one of the six hex faces.

During a turn, characters spend action points (AP – Action Points).

The mechanics of character interaction are implemented through an interrupt system. When one character enters another character's zone of control or takes any action against them, the other character can react by spending reaction points (Rea). For example, if a character enters an opponent's zone of control, the opponent can strike them preemptively. If a character strikes the opponent, the opponent can dodge to the side—moving to another hex—or parry.

Each interaction allows you to create two pairs of activities:

1. Character action
2. Enemy reaction
3. Character counter-action
4. Counter-reaction of the enemy

This mechanic allows the implementation of fencing techniques such as parrying, riposte, volt, batman, feint, mouline, half-swording, and dirty tricks such as grabbing a weapon, kicking, blinding with a cloak, and stabbing with a dagger into a gap in armor.

Due to the limited number of reaction points, a single character who has to fight two or three opponents will soon be unable to actively fight back and will have to rely only on the protection of his equipment.

Moreover, even one precise blow can be fatal or disable the enemy.

The game also implements morale through Courage checks: an enemy who has taken damage can surrender. If a character spends a few action points to tie them up, they become a prisoner on the global map, and a live bandit can be exchanged for a few extra coins.

It is also planned to implement interaction with the environment: jumping over obstacles, hiding behind an obstacle, igniting flammable liquids, rolling barrels and carts, etc.

Fighters can be leveled up in over 20 skill trees. Many skills are cumulative: to use them, you need to level up in several branches simultaneously; for example, to use Assault, you need to simultaneously level up one of the weapon skills and Footwork. This allows you to create a variety of unique characters, given that the effectiveness of each skill depends on the character's stats (Strength, Dexterity, etc.).

The location on the body where a successful blow lands is determined by the relative heights of the characters, as well as their orientation relative to each other.

Gameplay Features

The game is hardcore. It has an easy difficulty level, which allows you to replay the final battle, and a normal difficulty level: every decision, every move, every death is final, and there are no opportunities for savescamming.

A reverse-progressive experience scale: the first 10 levels are gained quickly, 11-20 slowly, and 21-30 very slowly. There's no mechanical level cap, but a fighter's chance to reach level 40 should be ephemeral, even if they've participated in every battle throughout the game. This makes the loss of skilled fighters less painful: even a rookie in the mid- to late-game will develop into a decent warrior in a couple of battles, even if they don't have time to reach true heights.

UI and visuals

The top-level gameplay is implemented in a familiar way: the player sees a global map, on which active icons indicate quests, their camp, shops, etc.

When equipping fighters for the next battle from the shared inventory, the player can spin their dolls to admire the result.

Lower tactical level: it is best to use Black Guards and XCom as a basis for visuals.

The key gameplay element—interruptions—is implemented using beautiful, translucent pop-up dialog boxes. Despite the complexity of the gameplay mechanics, each specific combat situation will require a limited set of responses, allowing the UI to be visually pleasing and intuitive (in some cases, this may require the use of nested menus), and combat to be fast-paced.

Cinematic cutscenes of specific combat interactions are also expected, in the style of XCom.

Chapters:

1. Suomaa. Swampland. Karhutaalo - Bear Castle. Knight Lembit Karhu.
2. Domain of Firaxos. City of Sardaron. Castle Egzarquem. Imperials.
3. Domain Montus. Castle Turris. Imperials.
4. County Lament. City of Towers. Castle of Tears. Northmen.
5. Domain Hart. Castle Sol. Northmen.
6. Karyupuu's lot. Boar forest. Dunloe Castle. Koenigi.
7. Iolian's Domain. Gaer - Castle at the Bridge. Western Empire.
8. The Land of Rojak. The Castle of Wooden Walls (The Wandering Castle). The People of the Bull.