

Brothel City – a gameplay review

Getting started

When first launching the game, the initial game was quite overwhelming, in a positive and a negative way. Let's start with the positive.

- The game actually looked like a RTS-/simulation game! Tiles, buildings to place, a currency that is needed, some other unidentifiable resources, people running around.
- The first steps were easy to figure out: Construct buildings, hire staff and get money to hire more staff and create more buildings
- NPCs and customers are well described, what they need and which level they need.

Although this is a very decent base, I quickly got lost with the initial possibilities.

- The top row displays a few more resources, but they are neither named nor described. A brief tutorial that explains the UI would be great, either ingame or written on a sheet. Just a brief explanation of the UI. Next to that, a mouseover option that displays the name and small hint on UI mouseover events would be helpful. I know this can be a tough challenge with a custom game engine, but it would improve gameplay experience by a good part.
- It is very hard to figure out what needs what exactly. Although visitors have these descriptions, the player does not know how much(units/second) they need. A statistic that lists these values and updates them on the fly would be a great and maybe necessary gameplay addition.
- A few descriptions are formulated very wonky. For example, it was not easy to figure out how to supply my pub with drinks.

To summarize this: When first playing the game, the experience can be overwhelming, mainly due to the fact that there is no real documentation on how to start exactly. You have to figure out that visitors have needs, and then find the matching building. All though this might be tactical depth, it can be frustrating if this happens in the start phase of the game. A brief introduction and tutorial would make the 'getting started' phase well rounded.

Look and Feel

I can keep this part short and simple: The games look and atmosphere is – as it is now – very fitting and well made. The color choice is good for the setting, it is not too detailed. If this were the final look and feel, I wouldn't mind. A bit more ambient sounds would be an option, visitors and staff chatting, the buildings sounds subtle playing in the background when the camera is close enough, some NSFW ambient sounds, these things would round the atmosphere up, but are not really necessary. I'd consider this a neat additional featured.

Gameplay

Coming to the most important part, the actual gameplay. Again, I'll start with the positive things

- The resources seem to be overall well balanced, with gold being the exception.
- The buildings and their upgrades seem to be well designed. Their dependencies make sense, and they give a neat mid-term goal to achieve – unlock all buildings.
- Another well-designed long- to midterm goal are the hired girls. Getting all seems to be a decent challenge, getting them corrupted is another thing though.
- Secondary, persistent resourced like baths, beds and tables are a great featured, but planning them is too challenging.
- Stealing is well implemented and a good source of income with a few half-naked huntresses.

In general, the strategy aspect of the game is well-built and just needs some minor improvements. This is in contrast to acquiring, corrupting and making the staff less shy. I'll list some of the aspects that are – in my opinion – problematic:

- Taxes. I played for a good time in speed mode, and I believe the fact that the currently payed taxes defined the next minimum tax quantity is problematic, as, the further you get, the harder it becomes to build more and more expensive buildings.

Consider this example: You have an Inn and want to upgrade it to a Hotel. This costs 1900 gold. During the time of the upgrade, you will not have the rooms available to produce income. You have to build as soon as you reach 1900 gold to avoid paying the higher tax rate. This might bring you in debt, which results in your workforce getting unhappy and maybe even leaving, which results in less income.

I do not think this is viable for a long-term sandbox-style game. If this is not what you want it to be, and you want it to be a decent, tough challenge that increases in difficulty, then it is absolutely perfect and well made.

- Staff and getting them less shy – the NSFW content. This is, in my opinion, not well implemented due to a number of problems:
 - No free beds: There should be a way to reserve beds for your workforce. If there is one, I haven't found it – see the documentation argument.
 - They attributes like happiness, shyness and corruption are not transparent. What defines change on these attributes? This should be documented. I had a guard that had pleased a few dozen clients, and she did not get any more corruption or less shyness levels.
 - Abductions: Either there is a trick that I have not found yet, or these happen way too often, even with a good amount of guards around. I noticed that hostesses, for

example, get kidnapped a lot, which makes them a real challenge to corrupt.

- More guards means harder corruption. As I figured out one part of corruption was the amount of pleased clients. More guards means the worker you want to be corrupted becomes harder. Less guards, and they easily get abducted.
- Sickness happens a bit too often. This should be an exception at the start phase of the game, but with increasing time, they could become more frequent, forcing the player to hire more shamans. But then again, this is problematic due to the corruption problem.
- There should be a sort of statistic on how many visitors visit the city and what they want, and how the player is fulfilling the needs and at which percentage. For example: 100 visitors per minute that want a bed, only 30 of them have their need fulfilled.

Remarks

I found a few bugs, but most of them were reported already. The most annoying thing is the nonfunctional save function. This should be fixed as soon as possible.

Other than that, the bugs I encountered were not very severe.

As to the review itself – I tried to be as objective as possible giving you detailed feedback. Overall, in my opinion, the game is already well made and playable. After getting the hang of it, the early-to-mid game phase is very entertaining and challenging. Sadly, this becomes frustrating when entering a long term or sandbox phase.

As to why the negative aspects are so detailed and sum up to a much larger portion of text: I wanted to describe them in detail, giving examples and reasons. This is not to be interpreted as: The game has more negative aspects than positive, because that's simply not true.

All in all I can say this is a very entertaining core game demonstration. I can't wait for more releases, new content, maybe new, larger maps and a bit more tactical depth – and boobs.

Thanks for reading. I hope this can be helpful. Best of luck and enjoy developing your game!