Practicality

sit with your team!

User Experience:
the way we play the game

miguel sicart

look at me, look at me ...

- Why should we care about user interfaces and player experience?
- Where should we start?
- How to translate verbs into actions - and make players understand it!
- A world of rules and practices: usability
- What you see is what you may be getting, now or in a patch
- What to know? A checklist for making user interfaces

What have learnt so far?

the most important element of game design?

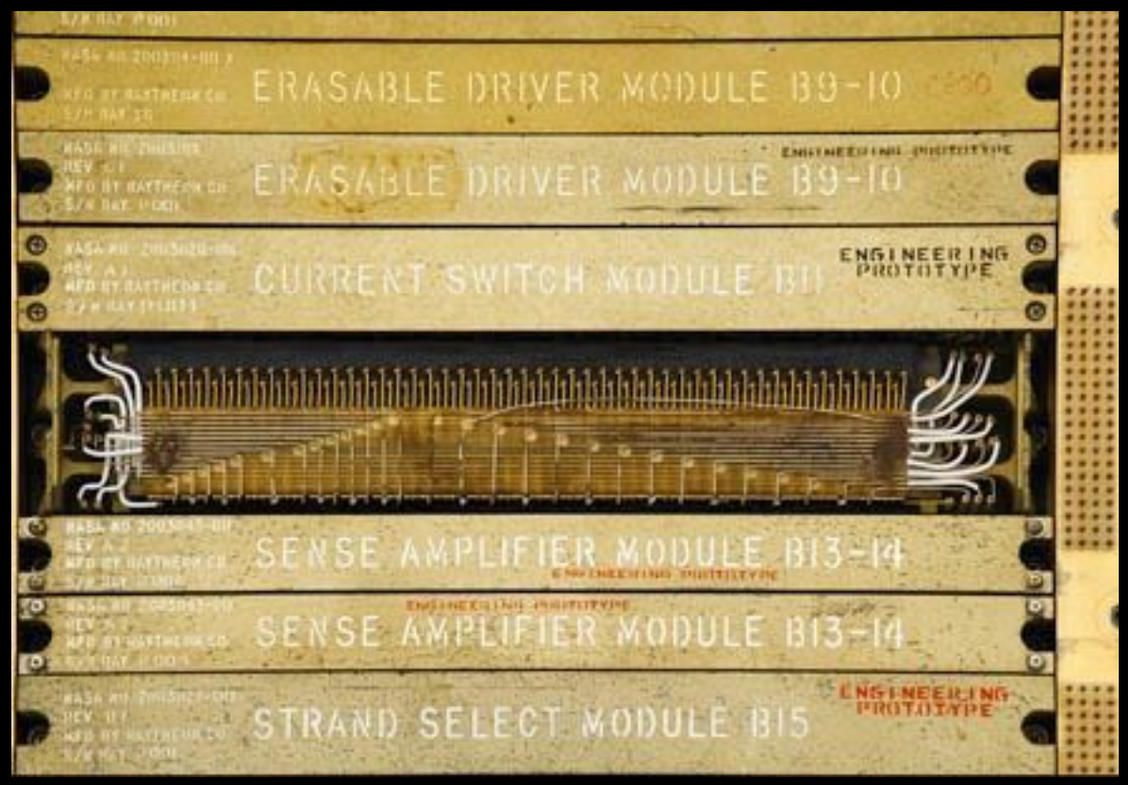
Players

The Importance of the Player Experience

- Playing a game is basically providing input to a state machine and reacting to its output.
- Information! What is the status of the game? And the player? What to do? Where?
- Increased complexity
- How to provide accurate information to the player

Two Important Concepts

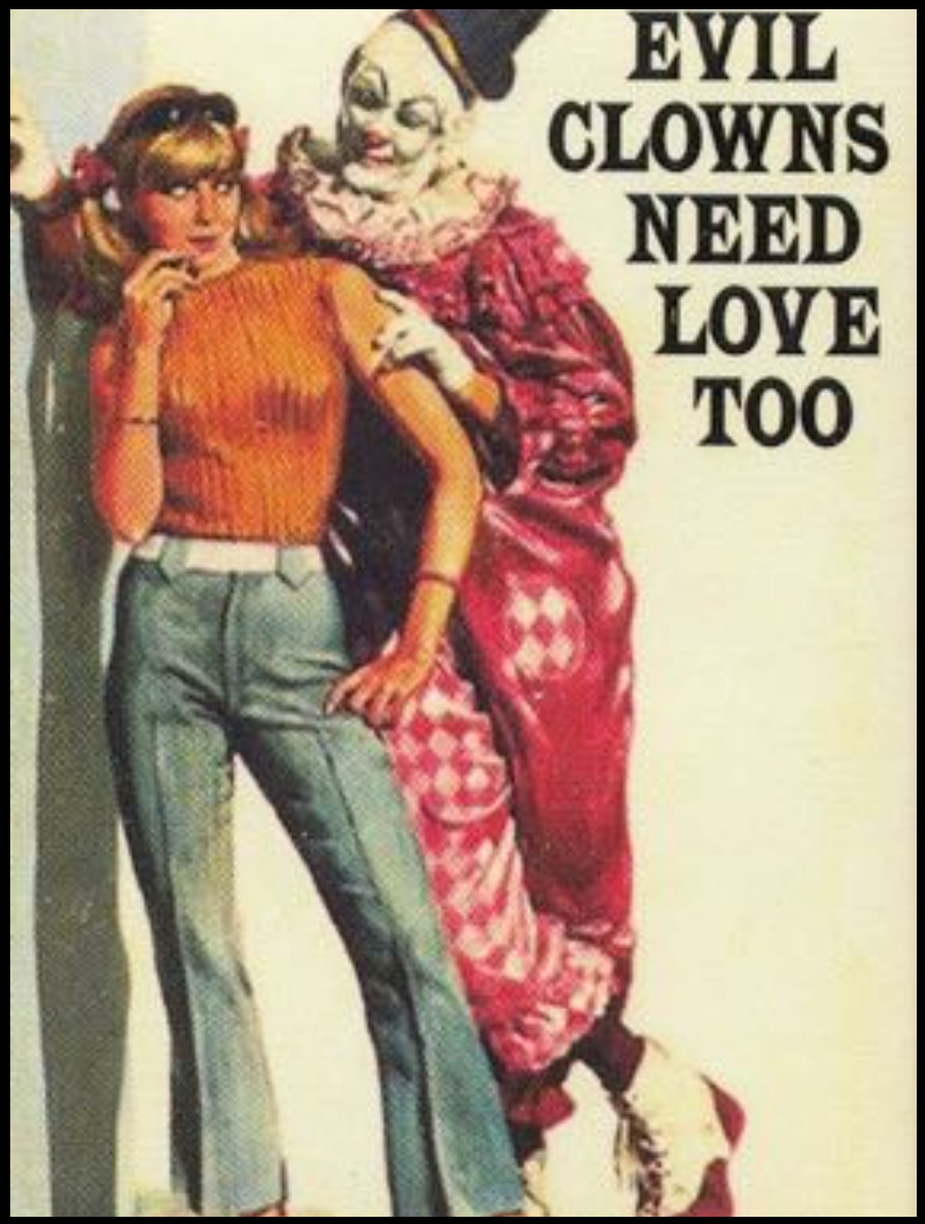
- **Space of Possibility:**
  - space of future action implied by the game design
- **Black Box Syndrome:**
  - games are complex automated machines
  - players sometimes do not understand why things happen



How to communicate to/with the player?

First task

In your game: what does the player need to know?
(5 minutes)



- Basic question: will players understand how to play?
- The question is: how do we understand how to play?

Quiz time

ALPHA 1
BRAVO 2
CHARLIE 3
DELTA 4

And this one?

Spy mode.
Bug Ambassador
Contact Double Agent
Transfer Book
Steal Statue
Fake Signal Double Agent
Talk Normally
01:54

What about this one?

Player Repertoire

- What we play, we learn.
- But not only rules: we learn modes of interaction.
- Player repertoire: the collection of knowledge on rules and modes of interaction acquired by a player throughout her lifetime as such.

Getting the players to get it

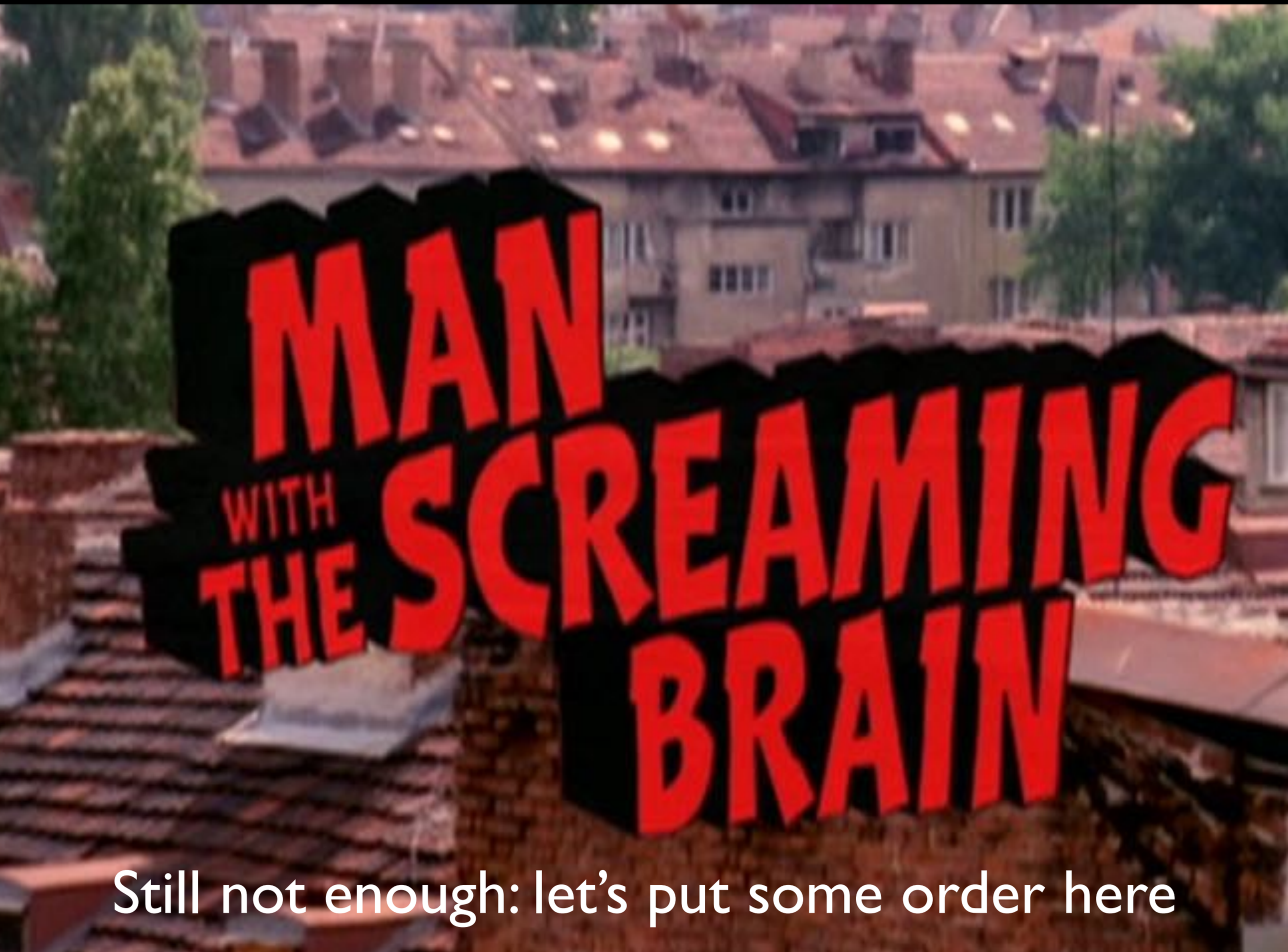
The World as User Interface

Information to the player embodied in the gameworld: where to go, what to do. Think arrows, but also level design ...

The HUD as User Interface

First thing we see, first thing we expect.

What information shall we store there? In which way? What types of icons? Text?



Still not enough: let's put some order here

Elements of UI

- Front End: all menus that are not in game.
- In-game menus
- Control mechanics/ control scheme

5 rules of UI design (Chris Bateman)

- Be consistent - visually, aesthetically, and logically (control schemes/layout)

Use the simplest interface feasible for the gameplay (try checking how long does it take you to explain to a newbie how to play your game)

Draw on the familiar (player repertoire)

One button, one function

Structure the learning curve: introduce the player in the game slowly, think carefully how to relate UI to gameplay progression

5 cautions for UI design

(Chris Bateman)

Shortcuts are for the hardcore only

Icons for speed, text for clarity

Allow players to skip cutscenes

Provide options to customize the UI

Document your UI design (so you know what you were thinking)

Task 2

Layout of the controllers for your game
(10 minutes)

Things to take into consideration: handicapped players

MINI MAP | TERRAIN | CONTROL | EXPLORED | OBSERVED | AP 6 | 13 | 1 | 10 | 3 | TURN 14 | END TURN

Badlands | Desert | Rock Desert | Wasteland | Sand Dunes | Rock Desert | Sand Dunes | Sand Dunes | Rock Desert | Ash Plains | Wasteland | Wasteland | Staging Area | Sand Dunes | Toxic Bogs | Salt Flats | Rock Desert | Rock Desert | Sand Dunes | Craters | Wasteland | Rock Desert | Rock Desert | Wasteland | Rock Desert | Wasteland | Arid Steppe | Rock Desert | Craters

F-227 Nightwing
Stealth
7 7 3 | 5 2/2

Imperial Marines
Air Assault 4
Double Attack
7 5 3 | 2 8/8 2

Imperial Marines
Air Assault 4
Double Attack
7 5 3 | 2 8/8 2

Me3J-II Vengeance
Multi-Target
Critical Damage (X/)
10 8 4 | 2 14/14 2

SA-77 Super Strela
Anti-Air 8
Infantry Robot Mutant
PBA Xenogyte

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DISPLAY HAND | TACTICS | 6 | SUPPLY | EVENTS | PLAYERS | MENU

MINI MAP | TERRAIN | EXPLORED | CONTROL | OBSERVED | AP 10 | 6 | 9 | 16 | 9 | TURN 11 | END TURN

Craters | Wasteland | Sand Dunes | Desert | Destroyed City | Wasteland | Sand Dunes | Scorched Plains | Rock Desert | Rock Desert | Wasteland | Wasteland | Craters | Desert | Staging Area | Scorched Plains | Rock Desert | Sand Dunes | Sand Dunes | Wasteland | Toxic Bogs | Desert

F-227 Nightwing
Stealth

Imperial War College
RC: 1H

The Emperor's Own
Fanatic
Valor

Imperial Grenadiers
Shock Attack
Hyperkinetic +2

Imperial Pioneers
Engineer 5
Assault 4

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DISPLAY HAND | TACTICS | 8 | SUPPLY | EVENTS | PLAYERS | MENU

Some Design Principles

- Proximity principle
- Visibility principle
- Affinity diagramming
- Progressive disclosure
- Consistency
- Hick's law
- Fitt's law

The Central Question

What does the player need to know?

- Where am I?
- What are the challenges?
- What can I do/what am I doing?
- Am I winning or losing?
- What can I do next/ where can I go next?

Summary

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