

Pacing analysis of Black Cats levels in Call of Duty: World at War

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Introduction

The following pages will analyze the construction of the interest curve in Black Cats level of Call of Duty: World at War.

I chose this level because I consider it one of the best *level on rail* for the FPS console games.

As rail level the action phase is based on velocity movement, never go back possibilities and possibility to finish the level without killing all enemies. All this aspects contribute to create a sense of excitement.

Late in the game will be introduced a sense of urgency and this is done without introducing a real time pressure component.

Method of analysis

For the analysis of the level I chose the cluster method. Those are the cluster types that I identified:

- **C** : cinematic sequence.
- **D** : dialogue sequence or rest moment for the player.
- **S** : soft resistance, the player is engaged but he doesn't to use all his own skills.
- **H** : hard resistance, the player is engaged and he needs to use all his skills to survive.

Reference

During the analysis I will indicate the start and end of each cluster, basing the time on this YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYBPmyHieEk>

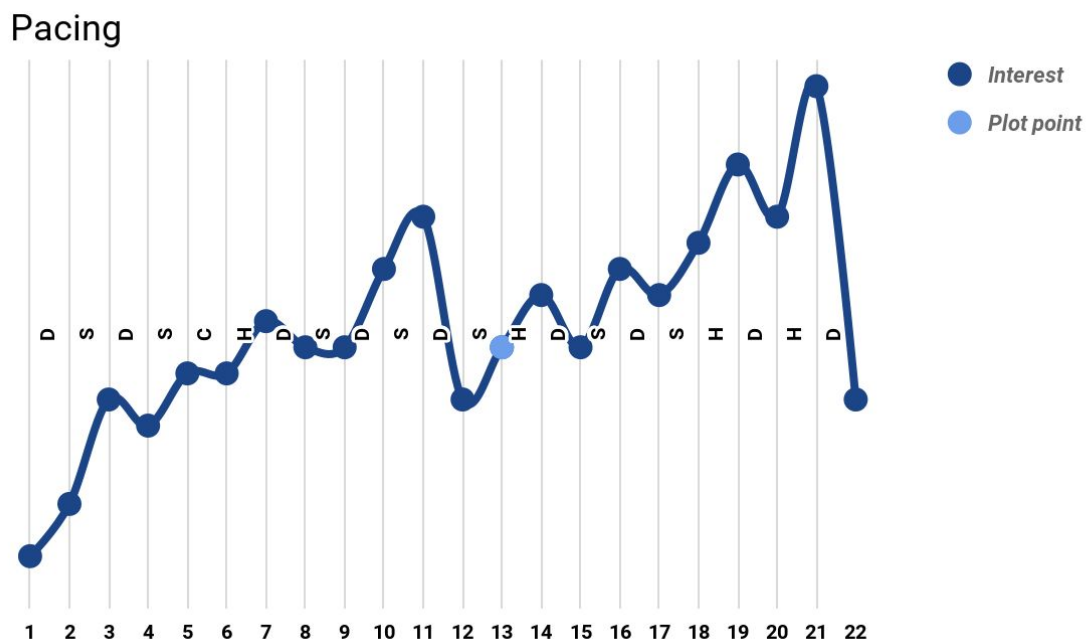
Analysis

1. **00:00 - 00:32 (C)**: a video introduce the situation. The previous level is over and the player is relaxed.
2. **00:33 - 01:05 (D)**: the level begin with a dialogue between comrades. The player understand to be on an aircraft in the pacific ocean. The playable character is sitted on a machine gun turret. When the dialogue ends the character change his position, the enemies are near.
3. **01:06 - 02:15 (S)**: the player fires on the japanese merchant ships from the cockpit turret. Once the fire fight is over the character moves on the rear turret.
4. **02:16 - 02:26 (D)**: preparatory dialogue for the second wave of enemies. Suspense grows, the player understand that the waters in the zone are infested by enemies.
5. **02:27 - 02:35 (S)**: the player continues to destroy the merchant ships.
6. **02:36 - 02:40 (C)**: airplane is hit. The rear turret is destroyed. The player's alter ego recover himself from the explosion and goes to sit on a lateral turret.
7. **02:41 - 03:18 (H)**: the airplane is under enemy fire, some comrades want to abort mission. The first engine of the vehicle is destroyed, it's smoking. This is a peak of interest in the pacing chart.
8. **03:19 - 03:24 (D)**: small dialogue while the airplane goes around to target again the enemies. Here we have a slight release of tension.
9. **03:25 - 04:18 (S)**: reward for the player: this cluster is full of over kill and easy kills. The airplane flank the enemy boats. The enemies on the deck are easy targets. Kills are easy thanks to the big explosive targets.
10. **04:19 - 04:37 (D)**: preparatory dialogue before the last rush on the merchant ships.
11. **04:38 - 05:25 (S)**: this is another peak of interest. The player easily destroy the enemy ships.
12. **05:26 - 06:17 (D)**: another dialogue while the airplane fly over the relic of the ships. The player understand what will happen.
13. **06:18 - 06:40 (S) PLOT POINT**: a myriad of Zero Fighters appears ahead the airplane. Now them are easy to shoot down. This is the plot point of the level from now things will change.
14. **06:41 - 07:20 (H)**: now the Zeroes approach the airplane with frontal and lateral attacks. The glass of the turret is broken covering in part the visual of the player. Comrades cries warn the player about the enemy swarms.
15. **07:21 - 07:56 (D)**: player's airplane is the last one operative flight in the zone. The player have tasted the power of the temible Zero Fighter. Ally ships are under enemy fire and there are soldiers to rescue. Suspense grows, player knows that he cannot get back.
16. **07:57 - 08:16 (S)**: the water landing to rescue the survivors begin. Once on the water the player shoot down some Zeroes. The situation is desperate, all around are flames and the sound of the kamikaze airplanes covers everything. The climb to the climax begins.
17. **08:17 - 08:22 (D)**: change of turret. Small rest for the player.

18. **08:23 - 08:57 (S)**: the player rescues the first survivors.
19. **08:58 - 10:06 (H)**: the climb to the climax continues. The player shoot down airplanes and rescued some survivors.
20. **10:07 - 10:12 (D)**: change of turret. Rest for the player and slight release of tension.
21. **10:13 - 11:35 (H)**: this is the turning point, the situation is dramatic. There is no escape and the ammo are in short supply.
22. **11:38 - 12:00 (D)**: the end is near when the ally airplanes rescue the player's vessel. Total release of tension, the interest curve decreases significantly.

Pacing curve

Based on my game experience I gave an arbitrary value to each cluster. This is the graph I obtained:



From this graph it's possible to understand how the dialogue and cutscene (showing the character change turret) are fundamental for the player's experience. Thanks them the player can rest and release of tension (in the graph represented in the descendent edges of the curve).

The airplane structure is a map in the map, in which the time spent to go through fire postations and the position of the airplane itself in the scene are perfectly lined up with the game events. This matching of elements and events are fundamental for the construction of the curve above. This is helpful to understand that the slightest element, starting from the simple dialogue, should be calibrated very well.