Report

Group 9

MGS1 VR Missions 2

Candidates

444, 425, 430, 120, 122, 112

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Bardcore

Physical board game

Genre: Party game, (Nerd) Musical trivia game, Magic duelling, Board game

1v1 or team vs team

Mindset behind the gameparts

Game premise

The premise of Bardcore is that you are a small group of bards travelling to different areas obtaining magical spells through music, which you later use to battle with your opponent to obtain the grand prize, a treasure chest full of gold. Only the wittiest and most knowledgeable bards will win. This competitive nature is mixed with fantasy and “nerdy” themes which helps players with these interests immerse themselves in a world that may feel more familiar and interesting to them (Fullerton, 2024, p.84).

Game Purpose

The purpose of Bardcore is to combine nerd music trivia with strategic combat. Players earn elemental spells by identifying songs, then use those spells in a duel where bluffing, timing and smart card play decide the winner. The game is built to create excitement, tension and memorable musical moments.

This game has two phases, a gathering phase and a duel phase. The purpose is to collect elemental cards from guessing songs, similar to the hit game “Hitster” then the player uses these cards during the duel phase, to outwit the opponent. The player can use bluffing, tricks, or just the power of good music trivia knowledge to win. By outwitting your opponent, both through

the trivia and the duelling phase, the overall game is a race to the finish. A race to see who can get to the goal, the treasure (Fullerton, 2024, p.112). This both limits or even extends the game to a maximum of five rounds and gives the players a purpose to play for.

Game Explained

The gathering phase consists of three rounds for each team choosing your elements. When choosing an element, you get a song. Naming the song correctly will give your element a buff (element token), which can give you an advantage for the duel phase. The element's reaction to the other elements are strong, weak or neutral depending on the element.
For the duel phase, each team places down their elemental cards and tokens. Flip the cards. Calculate who wins. The duel winner moves one field towards the chest.
Reset: All cards and tokens get discarded after each duel except for joker cards.
Start over from the gathering phase.

Core Loop

Guess on songs, plan a strategy with cards and tokens, duel the enemy player. Advance towards the center to win the game, win enough duels, and the game is won.

Power up tokens and bluffing

Tokens are hidden information.
Players may place them face-down to buff a card (matching color) or bluff (mismatching color). The goal is to force the opponent to misplay their elemental counters based on the tokens they saw you acquire during the Trivia phase.

These tokens are only obtainable through knowledge and are only available for the current round. They are a resource that is given to those who can guess the songs correctly and is used as a boost to the more knowledgeable player, however they are not impossible to win against

and they are only given as an advantage and a “prize” to award knowledge (Fullerton, 2024, p.126).

Joker cards

The joker cards are a neutral card, given to the players at all times as a means to promote bluffing and strategy. These cards were created to make the duelling phase less predictable as a problem we encountered was that without these joker cards, the opponents cards could be memorised and bluffing would be difficult. By giving players two permanent Joker cards, it eliminates the issue of predictability and helps the player use these cards to outwit their opponent.

Joker cards can be given a powerup token
Normal (unpowered) - draw against normal cards but get beaten against powered up cards.
Powered up - draw against powered up card but beats normal card.

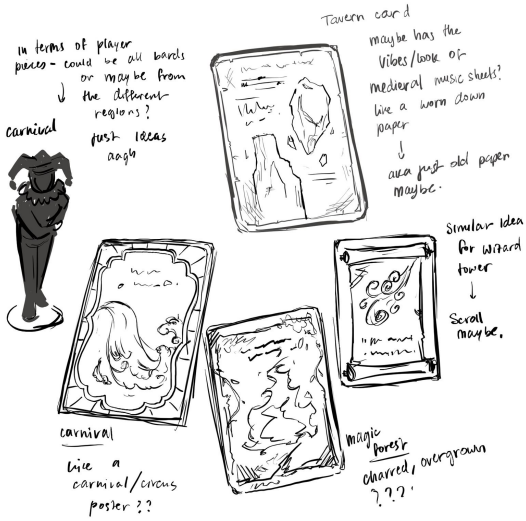
Spotlight coin token

Flip Spotlight coin to assign at game start

The team who gets the token is the “spotify player” for the other team in the first round, then it alternates who begins at the next round.
The spotlight coin switches teams only when a tie is broken. Works as a tiebreaker during duels so that someone always wins each duel. Could also lead to players using tiebreaking as a tactic.

Before this token was added, an issue we encountered was not knowing exactly what to do when there was a tie in the duelling phase, when all the cards ended up in a draw. This token was created as a means to solve this issue by giving priority in the tie to the player with this token. This also forces the game to keep moving forward instead of staying in a standstill due to the ties. The switch to the other team is a mechanism to ensure that both teams are able to experience this advantage.

The spell cards



The spell cards are the main resource the players go around gathering. They are divided into four different elements that the player later in the game can use for duels against each other. The different elements have different genres. With music only based on their genre. The cards also display the correct answer that players have to guess to get a token to upgrade their cards. Genres for movie soundtracks, anime and video games display what media the song comes from instead of the song title and artist. We did this to make it earlier for people who have less experience with knowing those and focus on making people guess the correct media instead. For bardpop we have displayed the song name and artist because it is your everyday pop song but as a medieval cover with no singing.

On the back of the cards is a spotify scan code that leads people directly to the song displayed on the card using the spotify app. We originally thought of using a QR code on the back like Hitster does it. And then we realized we could just use the Spotify app itself. It has an inbuilt function and most people have spotify available on their phones.

4 Elements (Genres):

Fire - Movie soundtracks (Carnival)

Strong against Nature
Neutral against Storm
Weak against Water

Nature - Anime songs (Magical forest)

Strong against Storm
Neutral against Water
Weak against Fire

Storm - Game music (Tower)

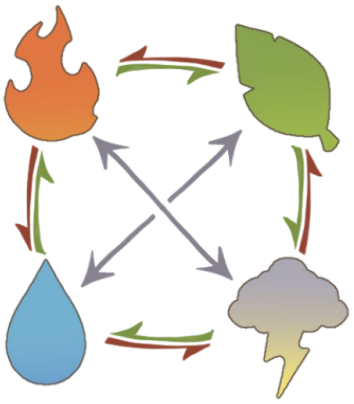
Strong against Water
Neutral against Fire
Weak against Nature

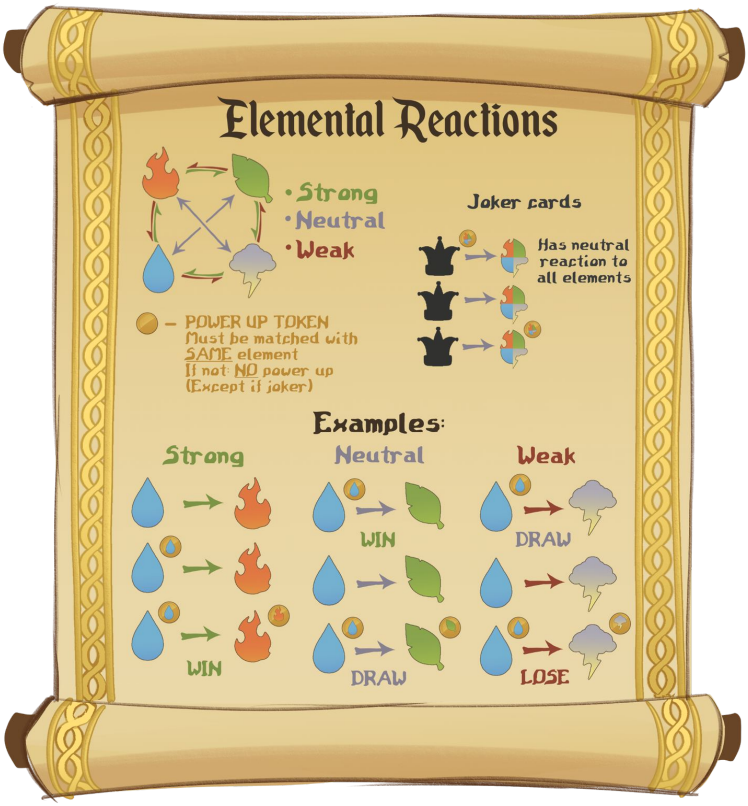
Water - Medieval covers of pop songs (Tavern)

Strong against Fire
Neutral against Nature
Weak against Storm

If upgraded

Strong + 1 = Win
Neutral + 1 = Win against +0
Draw against +1
Weak + 1 = Draw against +0
Lose against + 1





The game board

The board consists of the four gathering zones based on the different elements and the battlefield line with two steps for each team and the third step being the reward goldpile in the middle. On each gathering space there is a mark where the cardpile of each element goes. The board design also works as a visual guide to how the different elements work against each other. The fire is burning the forest area, the forest is overgrowing the storm area, the storm is striking the water area and the water area is overflowing the fire area. There are also spaces for the players to place down their cards during the duelling phase with number indicators telling them which card goes first on each side. Card in slot 1 goes against the card in the opposing slot 1.

The board had a few different design ideas at first before we settled on a more symmetrical silhouette with the four distinct zones. This symmetry allows players to sit on both sides of the board as well as allows the players to be face to face during duels. This design is more intuitive and allows for the four card pile design with the race to the treasure staying in the middle.

The player figurines

The player figure design is based on the four different areas of the board game that the player can gather spells from. But they are all a different form of a bard.

A bard is a historical profession set in medieval times originating from different cultures. The word bard is a common term for poet, storyteller and music composers, but they are mainly related to music and stories. In fantasy games like dungeons & dragons, bard is a class that can

use their artistic talents to use magic. That's where we got the inspiration for the game to mix music and magical battles.

The fire bard is a clown with a clown horn as an instrument as it comes from the carnival.
The forest bard is a forest creature with an enchanting harp playing harmonious melodies.
The storm bard is a wizard with a flute. The flute is a wind instrument and has the shape of a wand. We also like to imagine him being an introverted gamer locking himself in the tower playing video games as that is also storm's genre.
And finally the water bard is your classic tavern bard who brings in all the good vibes with his lute. These designs were created to appeal to the different types of players within the target audience and to give more personality and story to the game to help players feel more emotionally connected.

These figurines were created to help players immerse themselves as well as identify what pile they last stopped at and which spaces are occupied, as well as show how close to the winning goal they are.

The hourglass

The hourglass is there to add a time constraint to guessing the songs so that the time guessing doesn't last forever. It gives the player max 1 minute to guess. This time constraint was added to make the gathering rounds go a bit faster as a problem we encountered was that the time to guess songs could vary from a few seconds to several minutes. This addition seemed to prove effective as the gathering rounds were shortened down to a maximum of around 10 minutes before reaching the duel phase.

The chest

The chest is a visual indicator of the goal. It is both displayed on the board

but also as a 3D model to make it pop more and show off that it is important. It is more of a decorative piece to emphasize the end goal for the game and to give players more interest, as the treasure they work towards is a physical object.

Game setup

Step 1:

Set up the board. To play the game it requires the minimum of two players (1v1) or team vs team as many players as the players want.

Step 2:

Cards get sorted out into the four different categories. They should be shuffled to randomize what songs the players get and placed on their designated spots on the board.

Step 3:

Spotlight coin (tiebreaker) gets handed out via a coin flip. The winning team gets the coin and starts gathering the first round while the other team starts as a spotify DJ. The app should be logged into and ready on Spotify code scanning (camera icon in top-right corner under the search tab) Teams take turns on who's using the phone with spotify and who's guessing the songs.

Step 4:

Both teams start with 2 joker cards on hand.

Step 5:

Both teams choose **two** player figurines.
One will be placed on the battlefield space marked with "start", and the other will be moving around to the different elements gathering spots around the board where the team is going to guess songs for.

Source for inspiration

Before we landed on the idea of Bardcore, we had a brainstorming session. The first idea was making a game called wizard battle. The game simulated a classical wizard battle where the player has to collect resources to build up attack and defense based on type of magic.
The game would take turns on attacking and defending.

The game was inspired by card games such as Magic: The Gathering, Yu Gi Oh and Pokémon. But then we would have to create a complex element system like pokémon's "fire beats grass", a mana system, forms such as "shield", "area attack" and "shield" and then we would also need modifiers like "direct attack" and so on.

This magic system seemed like a bit too much effort for the team and way too many cards, so this idea was shelved, but later integrated into the final concept.

Another idea is another fighting game. A board game inspired by Halo Wars. an idea of factions with different units who have advantages and disadvantages.

One unit was a tank. Moves slow and has lots of defense. Good against other ground units but weak against air units.

Whereas air units move faster, have less health and are weaker against anti air units. The units would be on cards and the players could place one on the map per turn.

The players would start with 3 cards and pull a new one after using one. Everyone has a base to protect and the goal is to destroy opponents' bases.

After a bit of discussion of what games the group enjoys playing in their freetime, we ended up at music trivia games. They bring a good mood and people can share their music knowledge between each other. And since we're going to a game school with a bunch of nerds, why not make a music game for nerds?

We also liked the first idea of adding magic battles,but making it more simple and easy to understand so the player doesn't have to be a professional and read tons of pages of rules to just be able to play the game.

After pitching the idea to friends and family, the name "Bardcore" came up. Inspired by the Dungeons & Dragons class bard, because they can do magic with their artistic abilities. Players playing as bards, collect musical spells and fight each other with the power of music knowledge to obtain gold and fame.

It's nerdy, has fantasy, magic duels and the music trivia appeals to the people that enjoy nerdy interests such as anime and video games and not just everyday pop songs that play on the radio.

Initial base concept we moved forward with

Bard core🪕

A fun nerd music trivia game where you collect spells to fight your friends. Win 3 matches to win the game.
2 teams. 2 phases: spell gathering and fighting

✨Spell gathering✨

There's a map you can walk around to gather spells. There are areas with different music genres. On each of them lies a bunk of cards with QR codes and magic spells under them. If you guess the song correctly or where it's from, you can upgrade the spell by flipping the card to something stronger. App to scan qr code to spotify songs blindly:
https://github.com/Theys96/blind-song-scanner (no clue if it works)
This part is inspired by a game called Hitster.

Tavern - medieval popsong covers
The magic forest - anime intros
The wizard tower - game music
The carnival - Theme songs (movies/series)
(Each area has their own specific magic creating 4 different spells that can each be enhanced)
Each gather round you can collect 3 spells. You can mix different spells or have all the same. It's up to you.

💫Duelling💫

You have 3 spells to attack with. Line them up in which order you want to attack them with. And then players roll a dice on who gets to start for each card. Some cards may cancel each other out. Others have advantages. And the upgraded ones are more powerful. They will advance backwards and forward towards a gold pile or something. The one closest to the goldpile wins one round. If it's a tie… rock paper scissors to the death!!!

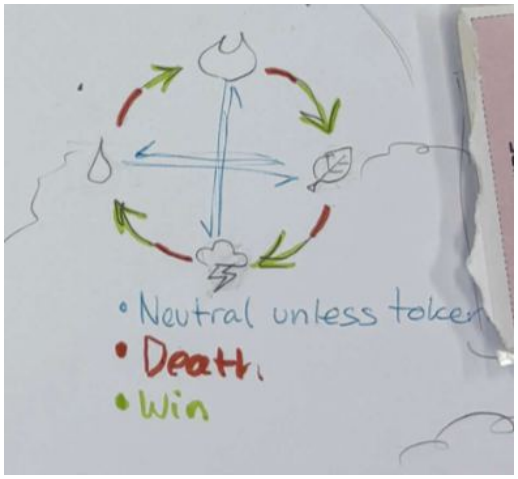
♟ Point system / player pieces ♟

Then we have a line on the board where we have a player character / token that can advance with the points perhaps 3D printed. It would be cool if the player pieces were a character based on each area walking around the map and the battlefield. Thinking we can make 4 player characters so people can switch between or maybe try making it 4 player if they want.

Testing and changes that were made

Magic system

In the start, we had the genres as places, but we hadn't figured out how to make the magic system. This went through a lot of changes.

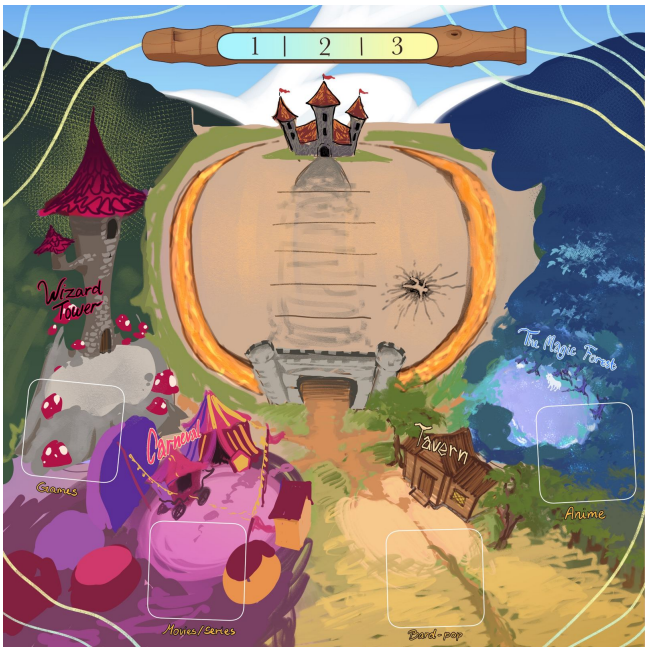


We started basing the magic system of the elements in avatar the last airbender. In the start the magic forest was fire, the wizard tower was wind, the carnival was water and the tavern was earth.
The thought process behind the magic forest being the fire element in the start, was because of anime being more powerful. But having a forest with the fire element felt weird. Suddenly it became water because the anime genre is emotional. And the carnival became a fire instead. We wanted the relationships between the elements on which one beats the other, make sense. And it never really sat right until the version we currently have.

A large reason we made these changes to the elements and what areas held them was to feel appropriate to the world we were building. The forest in the end became nature to symbolise the nature of the forest and the serenity and harmony of it, the carnival became fire to fit with the feeling of intensity and performance arts, the tavern became water to show the flow of the feeling and the drinks served at taverns and the tower became the storm to symbolize the wizards and the solitude of the far away mountains.

Each of these were made with a reason and these changes were important to guide the player a little better and make the gathering feel more intuitive without any confusion.

The board design



The game board game design changed a lot based on elements and how the duelling would work. The initial idea was for the spells to be able to push and pull the player back and forward towards the prize that could be gold or a castle or something of that sort.

On the right you can see an early concept of the game board. The battlefield acted like a ladder the players had to climb up towards the goal.

The current board game was made to have a more symmetrical design with the goal in the middle and four distinct areas in each corner representing their element. The style we wanted to go for was playful and fun. And the players can see little stories play out on the board's design.

Production process

Making the board

The board was made using a 300g A1 cardstock paper. On top we glued on 4 A4 glossy photopapers. We printed on photo paper to keep the vibrant colors of the board. To make sure the photopapers didn't pop off when the board was folded, we laminated the A4 papers. We kept folding the board and putting pressure on it so it would fold correctly and not unfold right away. Also had to make sure the box was big enough for the board to fit.

Making the rulebook

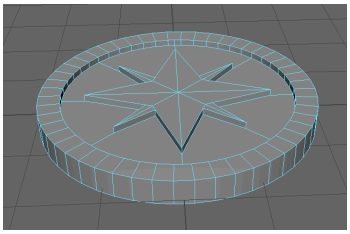
The rulebook started simple. White pages with the rules written in black. After some playtesting with players not from the group. We got feedback on making the rules easier to understand, descriptive pictures and a better visual to describe the magic system. The text got dulled down, has a more playful tone to it and pictures which has helped the readers be more engaged to read. The different sections of text got their own little paper that looks like they've been scattered around a table. Some small doodles of the player figurines were added to set the fact that the game shouldn't be taken too seriously.

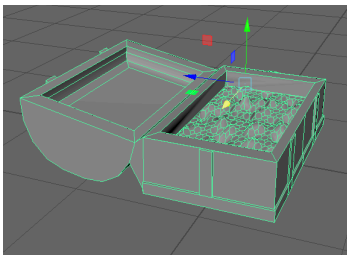
Making the box

The box was made using an old shoebox. Design is based on the manual and inspired by the chest the players are moving toward to win the game. The design was printed out and glued on the box. Gold trimmed edges were added using old leftover material found at home.

Modeling the 3D pieces

The figurines were modeled after the concept art made for the figurines. It was modeled using basic shapes to replicate the concept art. The tokens were made to look like coins. One side with the symbol and another side blank so players could hide what tokens they have. And a simple chest with gold in it was made based on the chest in the middle of the design. The modeling was done in Maya.





Making the 3D-printed pieces

The physical pieces for the game were made with a 3D printer. This includes the player figures, the tokens, the treasure chest, and a box to keep everything in. All pieces were printed on a Bambu Lab P1S with AMS, using filament with a tree-texture finish. Some of the models had the wrong size at first, so they had to be adjusted before printing. There were also a few failed prints because the nozzle clogged from the textured filament, or because the print didn't stick to the plate, so some parts had to be done again.

The spotlight token went through several attempts before it looked right. The first version needed support material, but removing the support damaged the token. The second version was printed without support, but the result didn't look good. A third version was printed in two halves and glued together, which worked better. A final version used a colored note on one side and a yellow star on the front, also glued together.

Some of the figurines also had issues during printing. One of the horns kept snapping off on different attempts, even though the other horn was kept solid. After trying a few times, the horns were printed without support material, which solved the problem.

The figures were printed in two colors to make them easier to see, and they were painted afterwards to fit the theme. Using 3D printed pieces made the game look nicer and feel more

like a finished product than if simpler paper or cardboard pieces had been used. All printing was done outside of school, using a personal printer.

Prototype Setup and pipeline

For testing purposes we acquired plastic trading card sleeves, a card container box, some dice, gem tokens and a deck of cards from the local nerd shop.
The gem tokens were used as placeholders for the future 3D printed tokens, and instead of the player figurines we had pins with pictures of characters on them. On the right you can see the initial setup.

The playing cards were placed inside the sleeves. We then printed and cut out the image of the spotify codes, together with the song names, and placed them inside the sleeves on each side. This allowed us to test the game without finalizing all the cards, as we had not finished the card design during this phase. Later on we finalized the cards as you can see on the picture to the right.
The process took quite a long time to complete, as each song took about 1-2 minutes to get into the sheet. 80 songs was our first prototype batch. And that does not take into account the printing and cutting of each single song.

We made an excel master sheet containing every song and embedded url image, and then we made spotify playlists for each genre to keep track of each one. This allowed us to more quickly work with the songs and find and add more songs to the lists. The excel sheet was also invaluable in linking up songs with the scannable codes.

To test out the rules we also made a digital text based version of the game, this allowed us to test out the token system (and variations of it) and duel system quickly, without linking things up to spotify.

References

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Carleson, M. (2022). *Hitster* [Board Game]. Jumbo