

Devlog 5 - November 22, 2025. Reviewing and Re-Planning

Last week's devlog ended with me believing that I would finish both the touring and exclusive contract implementation, and the hiring dashboard this week. Neither have happened: not only didn't I finish it in a week (which would have meant starting with the User Avatar on Wednesday or Thursday), I didn't finish it to fit the initial timeline while having 150% more time to do so than originally expected.

Those plans were an extra addition after deciding that I was going to release this to the world at large before Christmas, and I'm not enjoying the rush. I don't think I work particularly bad under pressure, but sustaining it for two weeks now when I don't have to is not proving to be very enjoyable, and I think it's making the already limited quality of the development even worse. So I will go into a much more leisurable pace and scale back ambitions. I have the fear that I've already taken too long to get to where the game is at the moment, and that I should be going much faster if I actually want to eventually get something worth playing, accounting for the fact that the development relies entirely on free access to AI capabilities, but the hope always was to get a collaborative project going on, and the most important thing for that is to actually get the project out there.

More Hiring

Introducing the hiring dashboard ended up being very frustrating too. I couldn't find a good way to structure it, neither visually or in terms of logic separation. I did end up using some of the stuff originally meant for it in the regular Talent Tab tho; now the filter can handle role selection and further filtering by other skills and attributes that do not conflict with the ethnicity and gender filtering of the role one. Additionally, there are two location columns now: one shows the talent's base location (their place of residence), and the other show their 'effective', which is where they actually are physically at any given time. The filtering by role works with this, taking the date of the scene that is being filtered to show where the talent will actually be at that time (in case they are on a tour).

Additionally when filtering by role, it will also show automatically the role details (and I plan to add the whole scene summary at one point). It does so using a Splitter layout, meaning the user can adjust the size of the table and the role details view relative to each other, and which was the last compromise I tried during the hiring dashboard implementation. I've also implemented a menu that allows for hiding and showing that panel on-demand, similar to how it would work in a dockable view.

The talent table itself now has a way of customizing which headers are or aren't visible, since it had got quite big with the nationalities and locations.

Aside from this, the changes were mostly focused on the Talent Profile side of the game, as the hiring now only takes places there, being able to hire per-scene, exclusively long-term, and to sponsor a tour.

For Exclusive Contracts, I have settled on the player selecting which Tag Concepts (Oral, Watersports, etc), and which Orientations a talent will perform while under contract, with real time salary updates depending on what is selected. At some point, the cold number should be dressed with some fluff comments by the talent, to not make it so mechanical.

Sponsoring a tour basically works like hiring in bulk (for which I added a discount), but while only having to pay the travel fee once (plus an extra accommodation fee, depending on the accommodation tier selected). Adding on the talent AI logic I talked about last time: 'knowing' their fatigue (although this one isn't really implemented yet, as they only know their fatigue at the current point in time), their recent and future bookings, and their location at any point in time. This allows for autonomous touring logic: every talent (in batches of 25% of them per week), 'decides' if they will go on tour for 1-5 weeks within the next 2-4 weeks, and to which location. The location choosing is totally random at this point; in the future, it should depend on talent preferences for locations and the amount of bookings there have been in said location over the last few weeks relative to its talent pool. The location of the player's shootings is also hardcoded at the moment, but it should be possible to shoot scenes in locations other than the studio's base eventually.

Tools

Both forms of touring require a robust system for locating and schedule querying. The first try at it didn't go very well because the AI kept trying to patch the current queries for talent and the new calculations for tour cost to include the location, which led to very messy and quite faulty code. Thankfully, creating a dedicated talent location system unlocked the feature. So when the implementation of the autonomous logic required several new calculations for finding out when stuff was happening, I decided to rework the time system: instead of storing both week and year, the game now only keeps track of a week number and a time formatter tool handles conversion to a week/year separation when it matters.

This involved a much bigger refactor than the locations one, since time in that form has been in the game from the very beginning, while location was a new addition only used in a couple of places. So its side effects have been a lot bigger; I keep running into errors because of old logic still left behind, and a few files lost its inline commentary during the refactor. I'm usually more careful when making the AI do edits on its own, but I wasn't that time. In any case, I will do a round of review to get better documentation, particularly of the API flows, so it shouldn't be an issue.

Related to this, I tried a new way of prompting the AI, trying to give it a kind of

'persona' depending on the task it had to do. That wasn't very successful, but it has put me in the habit of making it review the code it wrote for weaknesses and faulty logic in another chat, documenting everything, and testing the new additions, which I feel will be very useful going forward.

I have also created another tool for handling the Action Tag orientations; every tag used to have one entry per orientation, if applicable, which made the process of adding them a lot more time consuming and prone to error (forgetting to change which gender was each role). So now every action tag has a base template, and a number of orientations it can build into, and a tool handles the creation at runtime. It has worked very well so far, and adding new orientations (for trans stuff, in the future) should be pretty easy.

I have also finally created the custom scene presets, which aside from removing the need of giving the players extra ways of not having to click so much for scene creation, and makes playtesting much faster.

New Plans

So, while I should be introducing the User Avatar and revamping the Production Settings this week, I will instead focus on the revamping and leave the User Avatar for the future. Perhaps I will simply introduce Relationships so the Interactive Events and decisions about not paying salaries when cancelling scenes and some stuff like that has actual consequences. I will also remove the Policies from the Shooting Block creation dialog and make them a studio-wide thing, perhaps with some way of slowing down the changes to them, so it feels like they have some weight; we could use EUV's law implementation mechanic to simulate the fact that talent and staff aren't used to the new policies.

In any case, the plan after that will be to add a very basic AI for rival studios, put them in different locations, cleanup the game, prepare the GitHub page for handling collaboration (fingers crossed), and release the thing. Hopefully plans don't diverge again much from this.