

# SPACETRIS

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**Social media proposal: How we gather an audience  
for our space puzzle shooter Game**

**Start Date: TDB**

**Spacetriss /spās•triss/ (noun):**

1. Monarch's first game.
2. A 3D puzzle shooter for mobile combining mechanics from Space Invaders and Tetris, from which its name was derived.



Founded along with Monarch in 2011, Spacetriss was the first game development project embarked on as part of a thought experiment to combine one type of game mechanic from arcade classics with another on the theory a designer would be able to deepen core mechanics and extend fun using this principle. It took about a year of development for a decent prototype but then fell into hiatus by the end of 2012.

In 2019, Monarch kicked off a series of prototypes and the first among them was a resurrection and refactoring of the core code. It resulted in a faster, better, and completed version of the game. A document and presentation was put together to sell for Apple Arcade when it was first announced the service would be available. The company did not respond,

but early feedback during the holiday season of that year was positive, with one tester commenting on its fun factor and great potential.

Coming up with a marketing strategy for this project was a way to reconcile some of the unresolved differences of the past. I still believe it's worth releasing but as a long term cash cow or long-term dev project, it fails to have the same potential as other games. Mobile apps have declined in revenue due to saturation and low replay. Often any game where a player can quickly mash some buttons and get their fix within an hour aren't going to feel as invested and engaged with today's titles compared to ones with sit-down commitment such as with console, strategy, and MMO games. It's worsened since the introduction of NFT gaming.

Nonetheless, it's worth exploring potential and as Monarch's first game deserves to be a flagship even if the sales won't support it. There are a number of ways we can think of drumming up support. But the commitment value will have to remain low as well as expectations. At the end of the day, Spacetriss shouldn't be anything more than a fun game to make and share.

## The Basics

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**Name:** Spacetriss

**Release Date:** TBD

**Genre:** Puzzle, Shooter

**Platform:** HTML5 | iOS

**Price:** \$2.99

**Summary:** Match 3 space shooter, shoot blocks to change color as they drop from the screen, eliminate by coordinating their hue for points. Players go for as long as they can. Bonuses and

special items allow for large color block elimination like Bejeweled and for the player ship to upgrade weapons for more block color-match shooting potential .

### Unique Considerations

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- Sit-down games such as strategy and console games or simulators are likely to win our audience. It's meant to be a fun, quick mobile fix like Bejeweled.
- Arcade sound and feel is most important. Speed is of the essence, high framerate, and lots of particle FX.
- Yuki the space pilot was meant to be kind of an early adopted version of in-game

instructions and a potential spokesperson for the project.

### General Concept

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## Who

- We're aiming for indies, retro gamers, and classic arcade affectionados
- Folks who love Bejeweled looking for something new, cool, hip, or different
- Anyone into 80's or 90's anime style sci-fi subculture and genre

**What?**  
CONCEPT

SPACETRISS IS A MATCH 3 HYBRID SHOOTER  
THAT COMBINES TETRIS AND SPACE INVADERS

SPACE + TETRIS = SPACETRISS

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*So much retro 80's fun potential if we do it right. Nostalgia plays a heavy role in the game's marketing.*

## What

- Any graphic design and UI updates for sure.
- Fun animated moments as the game progresses
- Emphasis to the audience this is an experiment, a game design thesis.
- Reddit: Only if you're willing to be real about it.
- Videos
- Screenshots
- (optional) Our itch.io page

- (optional) Task Tracker link to our to do list

### When

- When we'll start marketing is a great question:
  - Option 1 - start right away with video or whatever image we have along with an announcement
  - Option 2 - Outline a 12 week plan we can stick to along with a start date
  - Option 3 - Start with the seasons and begin releasing material with folder ready content starting Dec 21 which is technically what we could call "Winter Marketing",
- We need to consider a lead-in. To do that, we might first need to create an outline and get a bigger picture view.

### Where

- Our primary target audience for sharing might as well be IGD and Unity Developers
- Our secondary target audience for sharing might as well be itch.io
- Our tertiary target audience for sharing might as well be Reddit
- Instagram might work if we post animated gifs
- **Reddit (note):** I'm not usually a fan nor do I engage but after reading more information about how to connect, I realize it may actually be the place most compatible with how we are if we do a good job, write a great article, and figure out the best content for it. It's possible this won't matter as much until around week 3 or 4
  - This forum is really for the thinker, if there's an academically compelling reason to share, we should.

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- To make it work, we need to find the right subreddit to fit the audience who would most appreciate both our dev journey and the type of game we're making.
- It's possible we need to hunt for anyone or anything making similar content to our own.
- Itch.io may help us prep for this, again, this option might be best for week 3 or 4

### Why

- We need to develop an audience
  - We need it for Monarch Games
  - It's necessary to build momentum for the game, especially since this type is already so flooded in the market
  - Eventually we'll take what we've learned from this project to share Monarch Arcade if we end up with more. In the future we might be able to release an app that bundles all of our mini-games into one.
- We need testers. We learned the hard way just because we have something working or completed doesn't mean we can count on friends and family to help support us. Not everyone is a fan of early adoption and this is normal as well as to be expected
- We're learning and iterating to match our content with our target audience. Feedback iteration is huge and it's nice when design decisions are partly owned by the audience members who supported the project early on.
- There's entertainment value - I think Spacetriss has enough of an interesting visual to make it worth sharing but it's also possible the flood of games like these would keep it from standing out compared to 3D games. It's hard to say how much of its uniqueness will truly stand out or not.

### How

- 80's nostalgia is a big part of what this game is about. Showing mock ads, graphics, and illustrations to conjure up retro vibes is a great part of the game's lure (image above).
- Since this game has a lot of gif-worthy animated moments, it makes sense to share as many video captures as possible.
- Each new mechanic we're testing and implementing can be shared along with the title of the feature name.
- One strategy we can implement is a lot of voting for major choices so developers eventually feel a sense of ownership they had a hand in creating what we made. This may also be a hit in Unity Developers.
- A caveat to voting is how tricky it may be without constant iteration.
- There's a good chance we may be able to release on either itch.io early on for Alpha testing or the Monarchgames.net website. We might even be able to use both and constantly have them available for anyone interested in playing. Paired with voting, this could prove engaging enough.
- Before and Afters might also work since we're lacking in depth. But adding new features might be more than enough. Camera shakes, particles, and post FX are all best examples of things to share with an audience.



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- With an outline, we'll have a powerful approach in terms of following a 12 week schedule to the best of our ability.
- We need to consider our company email, username, or company name as a universal account for all social media promoting the game
  - We can use Gabearts
  - We can try Monarchgames on Insta and others
  - We can consider giving the project it's own account page for all media

### Cool Ideas

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Connecting with retro theme art, mechanics, and marketing, we may be able to tap into a particular kind of audience. There are a couple of things I believe I'll enjoy making that may create really great buzz and traction, especially if done right. It's by no means a full list but a good starting point. Consider the following:



- Show ads, sci-fi posters, and retro game cover art ideas involving Spacetriss. Make retro marketing itself part of the appeal and charm of the game.
- Creating or iterating on the items that are introduced.
- In terms of voting, there are major mechanics such as adding meteors, 2D versus 3D mode, and presenting problems I'm wrestling with to make the game awesome might create a greater engagement with the audience, since they'll be co-developing with me. Had I known this sooner maybe we would've had a faster hit.
  - My pride cost me my business, this opportunity to engage in a real and genuine way.
  - I need to let go of this emotion where I have all the answers and am the one with everything figured out. If there's too much me, there's not much room for anyone else and we'll keep ending up with a game that's flat and dead on arrival.
  - We also have to admit to ourselves and our audience the lack of experience and harp a lot on the idea this project is all about learning, testing, and iteration.
- Get a vote on the cover art.

- Get a vote on power ups
  - When introducing new abilities and features, make it available in the latest play test and get a vote.
  - Even if players don't have time, we can still include a video gif of what it is and why we're doing it.
- Show key moments in video
- Talk about the dev process and Core Theory
- Ask about price and recommendations.

## Burdens

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One major obstacle to this project is how retro graphics, while popular in one aspect but in another, can lose its appeal due to flooding. Part of the answer is choosing a hub where all other social media connects to. The only advantage we have is the creation of marketing materials and concept art that may tap into our target group's love of nostalgia. Because of flooding, there's no guarantee our efforts in this area will yield fruit. It may be either a combo of factors or a particular aspect that resonates with an audience. Lots of experimentation would be needed to find out.

Here's a quick list of things to consider we should do but don't feel anything for. It's probably best for other projects or to push back for later dates. For now we should append these items for consideration.

- **Preparation:** I believe to do a good job we need to think about or consider planning all 12 weeks on a notepad, images, videos, and descriptions may be temp since we're unable to predict entirely what we'll share. But having a preset template may help gauge where and how our shared content may fit.

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- **Choosing a hub or homepage:** Several candidates whether it's our own Facebook page, a site for the project with custom HTML, a Wordpress site, Instagram, or itch.io or some other indie gaming site would all be in consideration. By carefully choosing which one is best, we'll have a better chance of expanding the project audience.
- **Dev Log:** itch.io's page might help this time around. We could also create a site dedicated to the project from start to finish from Wordpress but I'm not sure I feel it compared to if we added links on Medium.com.
- **YouTube:** It's an opportunity I recognize. While a pain, this may also be some of our best bet as there's already videos on the web from our dev experience that may be worth turning into its own channel.
- **Facebook Group/Page:** I recognize this helps but I'd prefer quality versus quantity. I'd prefer to focus efforts on Itch and IDG first. We can always leave this for later. There is an opportunity to make it a retro gaming page but it's too much since the project is more of an experiment.
- **Twitter:** It's popular for devs but it's a mess right now since Elon's takeover and generally not a good place for us. We should leave this as a last resort when further along
- **Steam:** Great idea but best left once we've matured our project and audience, it's the next phase.
- **Instagram:** Not worth the effort to be honest, but with a plethora of animated gifs, given its own page, and the right tags, there could be an opportunity here but it would require careful and strategic preparation. In other words, we would need to look for content similar to our own, connect each post to our game beta, share the

same links to our Facebook page, and invite users to try it out. We won't be able to engage so much as lure and promote.

- **TikTok:** Not a fan of this. I'm sure it has major potential but I'd leave it for last unless it's either necessary or there's a great opportunity from it.
- **Reddit:** This has great potential when we're ready to deep dive or by chance find a subreddit channel with folks who share a love for the kind of thing we're producing. I wouldn't hurry this one right away since it requires a bit of a soul search to figure out.

## 12 Week Outline

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The following is an attempt at thinking about a marketing schedule and how we would share ideas and proposals before uploading our game. By no means is this meant to be anything more than a first draft. We'll play by ear the best we can.

Consider developing a lot of the new features to be introduced ahead of time and then deactivate them from the game's build. As weeks progress, you can then introduce them to the audience as if there was little turnaround to its development. It's a great way to break your game down into chunks. I never thought about nerfing a game's full system for the sake of sharing and developing but for a project like this it's totally manageable.

### Week 0

Prerequisites to get ready for marketing: Figure out our main hub, itch.io or custom page or Facebook Page as the main means to share all links regarding the project.

- Hub (itch.io or equivalent) page up and running, no upload necessary yet but make it pretty
- At least a video or screengrab

## Week 1

Prerequisite: Premade ads from the 80's share the one we made from the Apple Document.

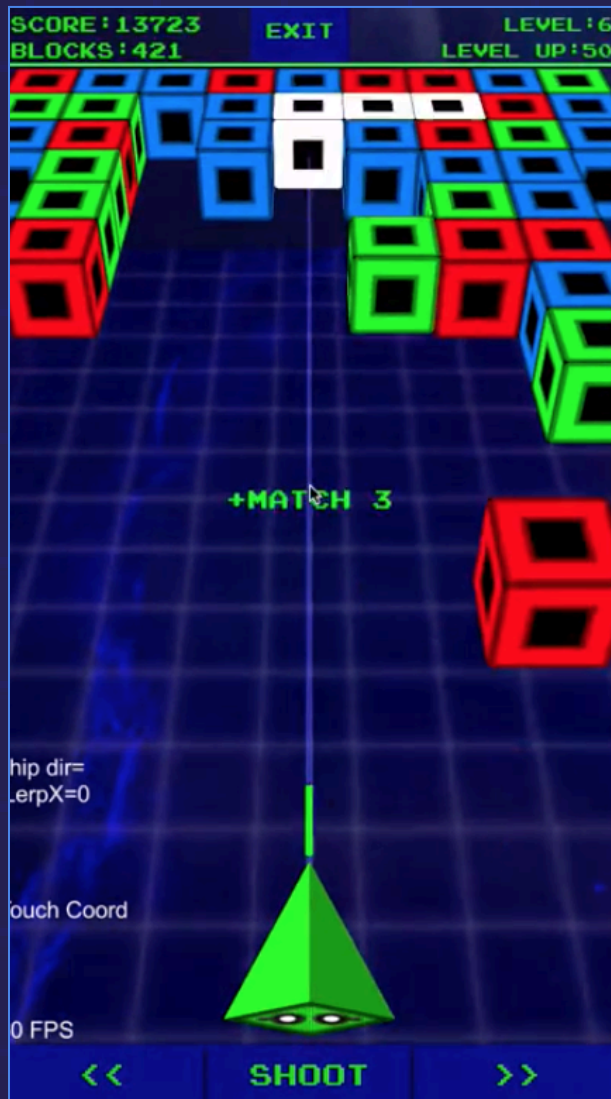
- Announcing our project, screenshot, and 80's retro promotion.
- Get audience vote: Spacetriss or Blockstar?
- Create a mock image of our game in an arcade
- Image explaining what the game is about, Tetris + Bejeweled + space idea.
- Link to project page.
- BONUS: explain core theory behind the project and write an article about it in a dev log.
- BONUS: Introduce Yuki

## Week 2

Prerequisite: Exported demo of our game along with a photoshop concept.

- Share project demo link: It's possible we can have the Monarch website we originally had with the Arcade graphics around the WebGL demo.
- Create another mock retro ad from the arcade days with screenshots from our demo.
- Share video or animated gif of the game in action for folks to try.
- (BONUS:) If somehow we could use an old commercial from those days and do an AE compositing job of our game on top.

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## Week 3

- Begin to share with audiences the different mechanics from the game's core.
- We can start with the matching system and demo some screenshots or videos of the matching.
- We can also share the colors in our game and explain some values
- Share link to the game itself.
- BONUS: Writing material about what I miss regarding the arcade era and things we'd like to do for this project to get that feel, such as sound FX, framerate, etc.
- BONUS: Introduce particles.

## Week 4

- 2D versus 3D: ask the audience which they prefer.
- Show video and screenshots
- Link to demo
- BONUS: Retro 80's ad for the game in a cover (such as one we used in Apple Doc)
- BONUS: Spacetriss has a major backstory and some lessons learned as a dev worth sharing in an article.
- BONUS: Introduce particles.
- BONUS: introduce camera shake.

## Week 5

- **Controls:** Admit to everyone it's a struggle, tough to make work for iPad as well as mobile, and that while I love it, the original was meant for iCade and it worked really well.
- Ask audience if anyone thinks the controls are cool, maybe use UI variety, option A & B of shoot, left, and right to improve engagement.
- Ask if anyone knows of an arcade type interface for games like this.
- Share video examples of game working in iCade and talk about how it feels too late.
- Share link to playable demo.

## Week 6

- **Introducing special item:** Color bomb
- Show video progress of bomb taking out blocks of similar color
- Ask opinions if it looks like it's worth having
- Share demo link
- Give at least two options for what the bomb would look like and have them choose.



## Week 7

- **Introducing special item:** Block Star
- Show video of this block that eliminates all of same color when shot as part of at least 3
- Share link and video of item in action
- Ask for vote on which style they like better

## Week 8

- **Introducing special item:** Meteor
- Get an opinion if it is better round or square.
- Demonstrate in a video.
- Include mock cartoons about how block works (can't be destroyed except when 3 in a row and awards powerup.

## Week 9

- **Introducing special item:** Powerup triple shoot
- It's untested but worth sharing even if it fails. In theory we can make the two side cannons force the color of either blocks the same color as the middle. It's advantageous in a straight line but cumbersome when blocks become uneven. Even so, it's worth sharing.
- Share demo for folks to try.
- Crate 80's advertisement of new cannon upgrade.

## Week 10

- **Introducing special item:** Coin & Diamond (awards bonus points, nothing more)
- This may be something to ask the audience in the form of a graphic illustration:
  - a. Option 1: Coin falls and you pick up via match row
  - b. Option 2: Coin becomes reward after power up and floats to player

- c. Option 3: Coin falls and you pick up via flying, missing it means it explodes on landing in any block.
  - Share demo link
  - Ask audiences what other shapes they'd like to see as bonus items.

### Week 11

- **Introducing special item:** Shooting turret
- Ask the audience if it's necessary or too much?
- Share video, screenshots
- Share a demo link to play and try out.

### Week 12

- **Introducing special item:** Shield
- Explain how it allows players to knock a nearby block in the way but disappears once it's used up.
- Share art and get votes on what the powerup should look like
- Share demo link.
- BONUS: Introduce particles.

### Conclusion

When I thought about the retro ads, Yuki, and questions about a tutorial level, I realized this project had so much more than what a 12 week marketing blitz could entail. Before going through this doc, I wasn't sure how much marketability this project had. Afterward I felt terrible for the missed opportunity and ideas we could've shared with the audience. Instead of fearing failure, it should've been part of our process with the audience. Even if a villain made of blocks during a boss battle wasn't going to make it work, we could've at least attempted to share it and show the possibilities. I'm sure people would've liked it had we given it the chance to happen.

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It's not too little too late but given how simple the project is compared to others, it's interesting how 3 months of development can yield a lot of exposure with few mechanics. It's astonishingly one of the most marketable games in our roster and I'm sorry we didn't see it sooner. This could easily bleed into another 12 weeks with questions to our audience about how much to charge for the game, if they care about watching ads when they lose, and if they prefer tutorials, like Yuki, or even care about the look of the ship.

We also didn't mention other major grabs like the arcade sound FX, soundtrack, particle FX, camera shake, and so on. There's also a plethora of other things we wanted to try like changing background per level update, retro 80's arcade art, and concept art of the arrow ship. We could've also tried introducing Yuki as a talking host during the game, which would've also been fun. The holes in each block could've also served a purpose, who knows?

It has more potential than I give it credit for and it's sad we abandoned this project with little to no understanding for marketing. But all great things deserve a second chance and at some point we can take this idea and push it further when the time comes. Success is time and chance and this future retro classic may be more than worth it!