STEAMGIFTS COMMUNITY'S
DIGITAL GAMING MAGAZINE

SGM 2.0



REVIEWS

Bastion
TOHU
Little Misfortune
Enter the Gungeon
Coffee Talk
and more!

EXTRA

Screenshot of the Month
Dev Interview
Movie Review
Playlist

#11

CONTENTS

SPECIAL SECTION
02) Hello again!

INTERVIEW
04) Solar Eclipse Games

REVIEWS
10) Noxious Weeds
15) A Juggler's Tale
18) Coffee Talk
21) Nine Witches: Family Disruption
24) Gorogoa
28) Bastion
33) Storm Boy
38) Mail Time
43) TOHU
49) Little Misfortune
54) Enter the Gungeon
64) Disco Elysium - The Final Cut
74) Snowtopia

FREE2PLAY SECTION
77) Swallow the Sea

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH
79) Winner
80) Honorable Mentions

MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT
81) Movie Review
83) SGM's Playlist

CREDITS & THANKS
84) Thank you!

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HELLO AGAIN!

Hi everyone! Adri (kiiroichi) here.

So, here we are! After all these months, the best Unofficial SteamGifts Magazine is back with a new look and more realistic expectations of what it means and what it takes to make these things.

There have been many changes, which is why it took us so long to return with this issue. We have overhauled many designs and design aspects (under my very inexperienced lead), and we've probably got things to change still. We look forward to your feedback in this aspect!

There have been changes in our staff team as well. Vin is now the owner of our Discord server and supervises the group here on SG as well as on Steam, I took over the design side of the mag, Jbond has been pumping out features and updates to our beloved discord bot Paige like there's no tomorrow, and Abubis took care of the interview section. Everyone in the staff team has worked very hard to make this overhaul a reality.

Full disclosure, this issue is a bit of a mess. We have been a bit of a mess (at least I know I have). It's taken a bit to transition to our new systems and responsibilities. So you might notice that some things are different, some sections are missing, etc. We aren't sure if we'll bring them back (again, feedback is our friend!), but the core is still there, along with a lot of love and effort!

We can't promise a new issue each month like we've done with the first 10. It's a very time consuming project, and we can't let it take priority over our actual lives. We're very passionate, but in the end this is just a for-fun thing that doesn't give us anything other than the satisfaction of completing it, and the amazing community we keep building day after day (and we don't want it any other way).



That said, you won't have to wait five months for each issue. We needed some extra time to take a vacation after 10 monthly issues as well as to organize ourselves again, but the idea is to put issues out every few months from now on, to avoid burnout and not let our passion die.

The magazine will probably receive tweaks and changes in the next few issues, but we're back baybee!!

Hope you're looking forward to the next set of issues as much as we are, and have a nice read!

■ **Adri (+ SGM staff & community) (+ Paige)**



Interview with Alessandro Marcomini, coder of

Noxious Weeds

Hello, Chocolate here! First of all, thank you so much for joining us in this issue of SGM. I have been a fan of Noxious Weeds since first playing the Prologue back in June last year, and am beyond thrilled to let more people know about the joy of farming in a very dangerous time.

After sinking quite a few hours into this delightful little bullet heaven, I have quite a few questions I'd like to ask. So, without further ado...

Could you introduce yourselves to our lovely readers?

Hi, I'm Alessandro Marcomini, one half of Solar Eclipse Games and coder of Noxious Weeds. Happy to be here!

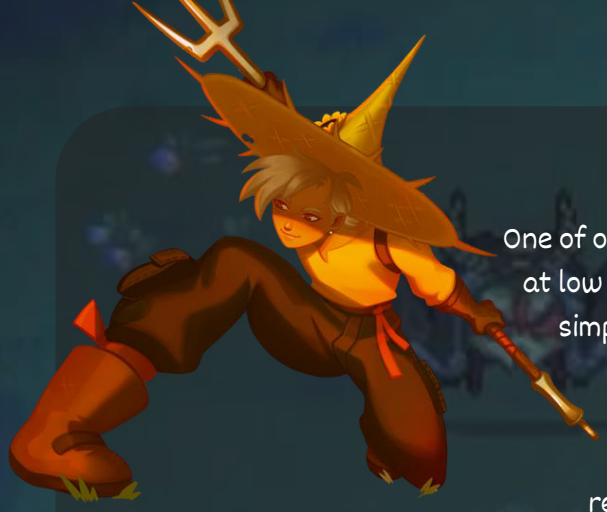
What made you make a game about dangerous farming in the first place?

We were fresh from our last project, Hardest Harvest, where we toyed with the idea of mixing the fundamentals of different genres that we enjoy, and we wanted to further explore the subject: to take the cosy aesthetic of farming sims and give it an action-oriented turn, to replace conventional weapons with practical tools, to use natural resources as a currency instead of the usual coins/gold.

How did you approach playtesting? Did it lead to any evolution or revolution of your game?

We are lucky to have several dear friends who have been helping us test the game since the first stages, finding bugs that eluded us and giving very objective and constructive criticism along the way, which is essential to keep the kind of polish and quality we strive for in our game.

What was an unexpected or interesting problem you had while making this game?



One of our enemies, the Owlnion, flies toward the player starting at low speed and accelerating over time. I thought it would be a simple behaviour to make but it gave all sorts of bugs (at one point a random hit from the player would make it stop in its tracks and never resume movement, another time it stopped registering knockback from hits, making it relentless and almost impossible to defeat). After several modifications I decided to scrap the code entirely and rewrite it from scratch using a different approach, and then it worked as intended. Even today, I never really understood which lines in particular were responsible for all those unintended behaviours.

Did any games, or media in general, inspire you/influence your work? If so, which?

We found Brotato shortly after starting development. We enjoyed it so much that it inspired us in shaping the gameplay loop, dividing the run into short waves and having all the choices between waves, so as to keep the action uninterrupted. This influence worked well with our long-running obsession with Risk of Rain, with our freedom of movement and no-border maps aiming to mirror the feeling of always having a way out between enemies that RoR creates, and of course referencing them with the items' effects and the conditions that trigger them.

Was there any player feedback that made you change your mind on some design choices?

Even though we initially didn't plan to add a meta-progression system, seeing it as the most popular request from our players persuaded us. After some thinking, we believe we have found a way to implement it while still staying true to our original vision.

During development, what was the biggest problem you ran into? In fact, what are some of the biggest struggles you've had?

By the end of 2022, me and my brother lost our father to cancer, after a months-long battle. It was as devastating as one could expect, made even more painful by the experience of having lost our mother the same way more than ten years before. We needed to grieve, and that also meant completely halting development for a time. Something like this highlights how no matter the planning, there will be some struggles that simply can't be predicted, and they will inevitably delay or break your plans.

What's an average day of game development like for you?

I work from home, and since I have taken this on as a full-time effort, game development has become the core part of every day. I know I am more productive in the morning, so I take my dog out for a walk first thing after breakfast and then I'm off-limits focusing on coding until lunch. I'll keep going in the afternoon, and I might need to pause for a moment for chores or an unexpected event. I wish I could say the evening is downtime only, but sometimes there are things left from the day that will really bother me if I don't complete them. But I tend not to overdo that, it's important to keep a healthy schedule!



How big is your dev team, and how do you balance specialised roles with generalist roles? (E.g. a software engineer just coding game tools and systems vs. a software engineer weighing in art or design topics)

We are a two-person team composed of me and my brother Fabiano. While I do all the coding and he does all the pixel art, we share every other role, from each aspect of game and level design to marketing. Being such a small team forces you to become competent in every field of game development, and it may be frightening at first but, if your game is scoped correctly, it's definitely approachable.



How much does your final game resemble your initial idea of the game? And how did you go around iterating on ideas until you reached the final product?

I'd say Noxious Weeds still retains many of the concepts that it started with. Frequent testing highlighted features that weren't entertaining or didn't work the way we thought, in that case we would go to our whiteboard and brainstorm a different route to obtain the result that we wanted.



How did you decide on the scope of the game? Were any hard constraints present, and if so, which ones? Time, money, release date, etc

Especially approaching this experience full-time, money dictates time, so the scope of the game had to be realistically small for us two to be able to complete it in a reasonable time, also taking into account that unexpected things will for sure take more time to be realised than you ever woiuld've thought.



What sales expectations did you have before release, and did things go as you had hoped? Regarding the release, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

I wish we had approached marketing differently. At first glance, our game visually resembles Vampire Survivors, and while our game is indeed a bullet heaven, our design choices ultimately made it into a different game experience. Sadly, this caused many early customers to jump into the game expecting something quite different from what we are offering and being disappointed by it.



Any advice for developers trying to make a game?

I probably won't say anything new but: start smaller than what you think small is. And if at a certain point you feel like you bit off more than you can chew (I know I did), that is okay too. Failure is part of the process and many of the skills you need benefit from first-hand experience that you can only get by keeping trying. Game development is also made up of things that don't feel like game making at all (the first of which is marketing), but which are all crucial to your success, so don't underestimate them. If you're alone or in a very small team the need to cover all these roles will feel overwhelming, but if you're at this point we probably share the same burning passion for games, and I can assure you that the satisfaction of having created your own game is worth all the hard work. Also, take breaks and don't burn yourself out. Rome was not built in a day.

After Vampire Survivors appeared and put the genre on everyone's radar, a lot of bullet heavens have appeared. Since there is so much you can do with the basic premise, the market has become quite saturated. What would you say are the main features that make Noxious Weeds stand apart from the rest of the games in the genre?

I believe Noxious Weeds' core loop has its own strong identity, with the day/night cycle switching the player's focus between collecting resources and acquiring upgrades and companions, creating in itself many risk/reward situations that always keep you on your toes. We also do our best to make all the characters and tools feel unique and spice up the obvious repetition that this genre of game tends to feature.

How did you approach the challenge of coming up with those distinguishing features?

Tons of pre-planning. Thinking beforehand about what kind of mechanics you could want to have lets you create a structure flexible enough both to accommodate new features and also allow changes to the old ones without risking having everything crumble in on itself.

What can we expect to see next in Noxious Weeds?

There's a lot in the works! Our roadmap includes new characters (reaching 12 characters total) each with their own playstyle and dedicated tools, challenge maps that will differ from a normal run by having specific objectives to complete, more bosses to face, and many more harvest items to further increase the possible builds.



All the characters in Noxious Weeds play differently, most of them even introducing new mechanics. Is it hard to come up with them and make sure they differentiate from one another? What about implementing them in practice?

I find making new character mechanics one of the toughest but also most satisfying tasks. You have to be careful and find the right balance to make sure that the new mechanic you're adding integrates itself with the base gameplay, instead of distracting from it. As I said before, having planned ahead during the first development stages made it very easy to implement most of them, while others might need more tweaking, but luckily we haven't yet encountered a mechanic that would ask us to rework big parts of our code.

All of the characters also represent different jobs related to the rural setting of the game. Are any of them inspired by real people?

We thought about which jobs would fit our setting best but no, we went fully creative on their looks. Some of them (especially the upcoming ones) are actually easter eggs from other media though!

How do you approach balancing the different characters, given that their gameplay differs so much?

The characters all have varied strengths, and each of them will always excel in a certain playstyle more than another. So, what I focus on is for all of them to have a similar difficulty curve, to provide a challenge but also make it possible to reach their potential with the same amount of effort.

Is there any character or playstyle you like the most? Which? Why?

I'm not allowed to say, I love them all equally!

Are the different seasons to be understood as different game modes, or different difficulties?

They are meant as different difficulties, as enemies get more numerous and powerful, but things like weather hazards are more thematically related to the season rather than tied to a difficulty curve. The player will face new circumstances that will be different, but not necessarily harder to deal with than the previous ones.

Some members of the magazine have played the demo of Hardest Harvest and wonder what's the fate of the game: is it still in development, on hold while you focus on Noxious weeds, or stopped completely?



Hardest Harvest is officially on hold. We love what we created, but we hit some obstacles in game design choices that didn't work out as well as we thought, and we were too inexperienced at the time to overcome them in a quick way, so it ground to a halt. Time is always the biggest constraint, and Noxious Weeds became a more realistic and attainable objective. We'd love to go back to HH at some point, but it's a more ambitious project and not a priority for us now, so we will either release what we have as freeware, or rework it extensively, probably building it back from the ground up.

The main character of Hardest Harvest looks like the farmer in Noxious Weeds, and the enemies look similar too. Is there a connection between the two titles?

We haven't established it in-game (yet), but there is indeed a link! We worked with our amazing friend Marina Papetti (@sarenhale) for the concept and cover art of our games and, with Hardest Harvest in an unfinished state, we wanted to give both the Farmer and the enemies another chance to shine.

A lot of the thematic elements of both Noxious Weeds and Hardest Harvest have to do with agriculture and farming. Do any of you have a background in this field?

We do not have a professional background in the field, but we share a common passion for nature and a rural lifestyle that we both dream of (that surely has been incentivized by being born and growing up in the city). Our current space limitations don't allow us to even have some homegrown vegetables, so I believe this is really our little escape from urban life.

Is there anything you'd like to tell our readers?

Thank you for taking the time to read this interview. I hope it sparked your interest in playing our game, and if you join our community we'd love to hear what you think about it and have a chat!



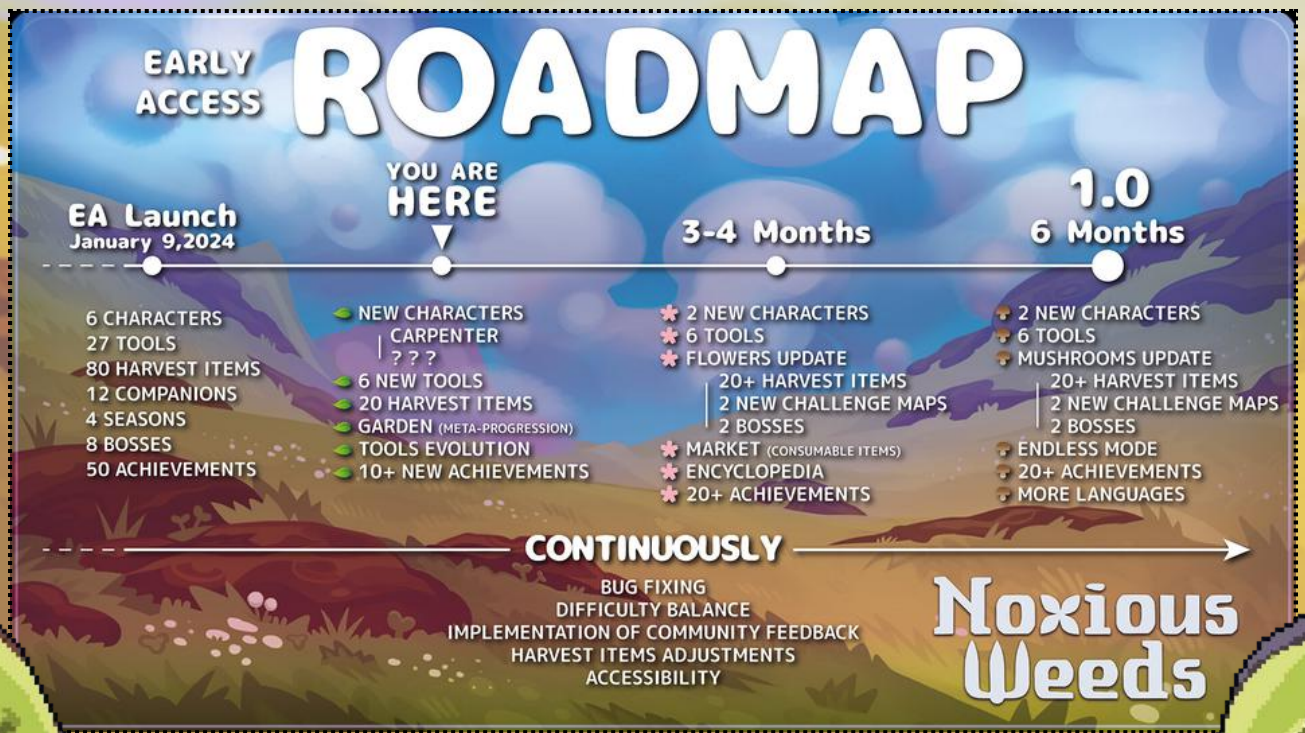
Noxious Weeds

“Wake up, grab your tool from the shed, and BLOODY HELL WHAT IS THAT?”

Welcome to Noxious Weeds, Solar Eclipse’s first full game! It’s no secret that I love bullet heavens – in my first magazine issue, I even reviewed a F2P one. However, I do not have that much experience with them (yet...) and yet I can still confidently say Noxious Weeds is a ridiculously fun game that brings new things to the genre – and it is still in Early Access! But enough subjective opinions, let me tell you all about it.

As part of our interview, I received a Steam key so that I could review the real thing, not just the demo. That’s why, apart from giving my impressions on the game, I will also mention how it compares to the demo – after all, I spent a lot of hours on each of them (almost 40 combined).

I’m Chocolate, local SGM goblin, and I may be a bit addicted.



The game is still in development, but there is so much we can already talk about. Here’s a peek of what comes next!

Tools of the Trade

Most bullet heavens either have you aim your weapons with the mouse (an analog stick if you're using a controller) or do not let you aim at all. Noxious Weeds is one of the latter types, but most weapons aim themselves at the closest enemy or are area effects anyway. Off the top of my head, I only recall one weapon that fires in the direction you are facing. One out of thirty, that is. Not bad at all!

Sorry, did I say weapon? I meant Tool, since our characters defend themselves using the tools of their trades. For example, the carpenter brings a hammer, the shepherd brings a flute, and the hiker has their trusted portable stove... you level up by picking up vitamins. Level-up upgrades are named after vitamins and minerals. How much health you have left is represented by a cup of tea...

This game oozes flavor in everything it does. You can tell the two guys behind it have made sure everything is related to the theme: the difficulty levels are named after seasons (only spring is available in the demo) and aren't just based on sending more enemies after you, but the enemies are produce that makes sense for the season.

In winter, for example, there are only trees to pick up, and there are windy days that throw frozen avocados at you. The setting is ever-present, giving the game its strong identity.

Help Wanted

In the prologue, or demo, of Noxious Weeds, there are three characters: the Farmer, the Orchardist, and the Beekeper. When the full game first came out, they were joined by the Hiker, the Shepherd, and the Woodworker, and two months later, the Carpenter joined in. Five more characters will also be present in the 1.0 version.



The Carpenter could have their own variety show: which tool will trigger next?

AAAAAAAAAAAAH! IT'S ON FIRE!

The thing is, unlike in other entries in the genre, the way each character plays is quite different. I won't say anything about the first three (play them yourself!), but I'll gush a bit about the rest:

-The Hiker: You are far from home, but not too far! At the start of every round, you set up a camping tent. The further you go away from the tent, the higher the damage bonus you get, but your HP regeneration plummets as a consequence. It is a bit of a juggling act!

-The Shepherd: For every level you have, you get a herd companion! You need to keep them awake, but they hurt enemies on contact and give a buff when hit by one of the Shepherd's starter tools. You also get a doggo friend who helps activate companions.

-The Woodworker: There is a new resource, wood, which you can get by hitting specific spawns with a tool and by harvesting trees. Before every round, you get the chance to spend wood on an upgrade that lasts only until the round is over.

-The Carpenter: You get two choices of tools at the start of the round and can have as many as 12 tools instead of the usual 6. But be careful: the more tools you have, the more enemies spawn!

Something I would like to mention is that there is never a dull moment in Noxious Weeds. In my experience, games in the genre tend to converge into a specific build and, when built right, become an idle. No need to move, since you mow down the enemies before they even approach! At most, you need to choose an upgrade when leveling up and do nothing else. That does not happen here, though. A combination of the night/day cycle and the harvesting mechanic makes it so that, by staying still, a lot of value is lost – which will punish you in later rounds. Even the shepherd, who in theory could go over this issue with the bonus defense granted by their herd, is not immune: if still for too long, their flock will disperse.



Choosing an upgrade. The fruit of our labor.

Healthier Every Day!

So how do the weapons, upgrades, and harvests (told ya' the setting never left) work? As I mentioned earlier, you get to choose a tool (or two) before starting each round.

There are two kinds of upgrades: the ones you get after a level-up, which boosts a stat, and those that come from harvesting, which may boost a stat, boost it a lot while lowering a different one, or do something different altogether.

And what are harvests? Collecting (non-herd) companions counts as a harvest, as does picking up upgrades through bushes or trees. Trees are more expensive, but you get to choose among three upgrades, while a bush will only allow you to accept or refund the item.

Wait... expensive?

Yes, expensive! We finally got to what makes Noxious Weeds so fun: water and vitamins! Now, I already explained that vitamins are drops that you pick up in order to level up. Worry not – at the end of the round, any leftovers go to your pouch, and in the next round they'll drop among those you get from kills. No vitamin goes to waste!

However... enemies may also drop water. You need water to harvest bushes or trees, and it gets more expensive every day. That's right, you can only harvest upgrades during daytime, so once every two rounds! And water you haven't picked up at the end of the day is water lost. So how do you make sure you have enough water? Worry not, since at night cacti pop up, and they drop a lot of water! As well as teapots, which refill your life.

So you need to stay alive, as well as juggle priorities – do you want to level up now, or maybe wait a bit and make sure you collect all the water? What about companions? They help, but are gone at the end of the round! There are also dangerous encounters, both on nights 5 and 10. But you don't need to beat these creatures – as long as you survive, you progress. There is no right answer, apart from whatever answer helps you stay alive!



The best loading screen to have ever loaded.

Chill After a Long Farming Day

I want to mention the art of this game: it's so cute and so creative! Your herd isn't only sheep, and all enemies are based on produce – and the music goes way harder than it has any right to. I just did not focus so much on this since you can see it all around the design!

The dev team is also lovely. Solar Eclipse has a very active discord, in which suggestions, bug reports, or just nice chats are to be had. Any small details I would like to add or change are already planned, mentioned, or maybe even implemented.

Give Noxious Weeds a try!

■ ChocolateVC



The Avocabros are the greatest pun ever.

STORY	N/A
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★★☆
SOUND	★★★☆☆
FUN METER	★★★★★

the good

- Ridiculously fun
- Day/Night cycle is a new take on the genre
- A lot of doable achievements
- You can modify the difficulty at will
- New features drop very often
- Very active and communicative devs

the bad

- Some stuff - like a bestiary, for example, is still missing (but planned!)
- Shepherd can't pet the dog :(





A Juggler's Tale

Crowd around, all who visit here,
I'm Chocolate... call me the reviewer!
Quiet down and lend me your ear!
I know exactly what you want to read!



Hi, hi, welcome! My name is Chocolate, your local SGM goblin, and I'm here to tell you about the delightful gem that is A Juggler's Tale.
As this is a short game, I am at a great risk of spoilers. Thus, I will keep things nice and vague. You have been warned!

The game opens with a little 2D cutscene (the only 2D art we will see in the game, which makes it feel a bit jarring but makes sense in retrospect), in which Jack, the puppeteer and storyteller, introduces himself. He announces to his audience that he's about to tell the story of Abby, a little girl. And then, the game starts.

The first thought that crossed my mind was: wow.

Listen, dear reader: this game is gorgeous. When the curtains of the mini-theater open, you can still see the stage's floor, and the first decorations we see are made from cardboard. I would have been happy with this aesthetic, to be honest – I'm a theater kid at heart – but the scenery quickly transforms as both the audience in the tavern and the player become invested in this tale. That's what I meant by the intro making sense in hindsight: it represents a different reality than Abby's story. The player sees the audience as fictitious, and both them and us see the stage as entertainment, but for Abby, her story is very real.

So, what is her story about?





Why, she is a member of a traveling circus! But although she brings cheer to the places they visit, her own life is rather grim. You see, when not performing, her existence is limited to being inside bars, as she gets locked in. Urs, her coworker, is also unfairly caged (and a bear). The circus master enjoys the profits of their act while they rot in a cage.

Well, no more, they say! They escape their respective prisons, although, in the end, Urs sacrifices his own freedom so that she can leave.

And thus, Abby begins her journey, traveling and seeing the world for the first time.

Sadly, it doesn't take long for trouble to emerge: lamenting the loss of the girl, the circus master pays a group of mercenaries to catch her and bring her back.

Will they manage to catch her? Or will she perish in any of the innumerable dangers the outside of her cage pose?

Now, here is where I need to get... very vague. You see, those questions I just asked... Jack has an answer prepared. And Abby...

Abby does not agree.

And so, at the end of the third act of this lovely game, Abby does something that changes everything.



The gameplay is pretty basic: move around, jump, pick up stuff, throw stuff. Nothing groundbreaking, but also nothing wasted – the game has the kind of gameplay it needs.

If I need to nitpick a bit, jumping could benefit by being more forgiving, mainly because of a certain wretched achievement that requires transversing a whole chapter without falling into the water. But with me taking more than an hour on said achievement, it could simply be because I am not used to this kind of gameplay.

However, more than an hour is quite worrisome, especially since this is a short game. Including the achievement hunt I did at the end, I spent a little over five hours on this title; more than a fifth of that was me playing the same area again and again, screaming each time I failed a jump.



Lastly, the sound. The music in this game is adorable, and the sound effects are all aptly applied, but the real star of the show is none other than Jack, the storyteller.

He narrates the whole game and any and all actions Abby takes.

If you're stuck on a puzzle, he drops hints after a while.

And slowly but surely, he becomes a character of this story in his own right, not only from our perspective but also from the audience's.

All in all, I found this title to be incredibly charming, and I would recommend it to anyone interested – my only gripe apart from the jumping hell is that the price might be a tad too steep for the game's length.

-. Chocolate Van Candy

STORY	★★★★☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★★
GAMEPLAY	★★★☆☆
SOUND	★★★★★
FUN METER	★★★★☆

the good

- Gorgeous graphics
- Very cute story with an interesting twist midway through

the bad

- The jumping achievement
- A bit too short

A tale worth listening to!



Coffee Talk

Coffee Talk is a wonderful visual novel by Toge Productions that centres around multiple characters. You are simply a barista serving tasty, warm drinks and lending an ear to those who need it. Unlike a lot of games, the story isn't exactly about you or the character you are playing, but instead about the characters inhabiting the fantasy world of Coffee Talk. Whether that be an orc or cat girl, simply having someone to talk to can go a long way, and this cosy, wholesome game shows it. The game was very relaxing to play, to just chill out and enjoy the wonderful stories the world had to share.

The style of the game alone gives quite the cosy feel, whether it's from the 90's anime-inspired pixel art or the music; the experience overall was lovely. The art chosen for this game looks wonderful, with the models and the background being fully animated. The style was very well chosen to fit the atmosphere the game aims to give.

While the game is very focused on the stories the world has to share, there's plenty for you to interact with. For starters, the main mechanic of the game is making those lovely warm drinks for your customers! Upon requesting a drink, the customer will often tell you the name of the drink. Or, they'll provide some details, such as "something with cinnamon," – and then it is up to you to perfect their requested brew. There are many ingredients: coffee, green tea, milk, mint, etc. However, you need to be aware if you want to experiment, as specific ingredients are often only available on certain days. If you find yourself forgetting these recipes, do



not fret. There's a handy little phone you can use in-game that can do several useful things. One of them being a record of drinks that you have already made. It's a pretty big list with filters for what kind of drink it is, so it's very easy to navigate.



Speaking of your phone. That's not all you can do with it! It also includes an app called 'Tomodachill,' which you can use to see more details on the characters you have met throughout the game. As you progress their unique stories (and get their drinks correct!), their profiles will update more, revealing more of the character and helping you know them better. It may be their favourite things or even what they wish to do with their life. Next, there is a small application where you can read short stories by a major character, Freya Fatima. You'll see her very often and, hopefully, enjoy it each time. Lastly, we have 'Shuffld,' which allows you to change the music playing in the game, which has some great tracks. I'd definitely recommend giving them all a listen. In fact, the music felt like such a major part of the atmosphere to me. The lo-fi music was just right for the vibe.

While this game does not have any typical story choices, it does have one thing that affects each character's route: preparing the correct drink for them. Simply messing up their order once can be fatal, so it is strongly worth doing your best to get the drinks right. Do not worry if you mess up, though. The game autosaves at the beginning of each day and also has a fast-forward feature, so it is very lenient with these mistakes! While some customers like to have a variety of drinks, it is not all that uncommon for them to order the same thing. So make sure you use that recipe list!



There's an additional little minigame for you to play if you make a latte, and the game has a very fun game of latte art you can do. While this doesn't affect the game directly, it's great fun to mess around and enjoy making patterns and experimenting. And don't worry. You'll probably suck your first time, it works rather accurately with how the milk tends to float a little and is not entirely accurate as it will drop south ever so slightly, but the cup can be rotated 360 degrees to help you, as it will always drop to what is the most south for more milk flow control. So, if you enjoy the latte art, take your time and have some fun with it. There's also an achievement for spending an hour in latte art, so feel free to perfect it!



For those who enjoy the coffee making in this game, don't worry about missing it after the story! There's an endless mode that is actually rather fun. It is just like the main story's drink-making game, except all ingredients are available as you serve the familiar faces before you. It starts off rather simple. The characters ask for named drinks, which, at this point, you'll probably have unlocked, and as you progress the mode, their requests will get more advanced. They'll ask for something like "extra cool, not bitter," which you'll have to get a balance with. Thankfully, bars show you the amount of each stat whenever you make drinks. You can also use guides if you struggle with some combinations! There's also a final mode, but this one is much simpler. It's a non-timed mode where you can simply experiment and unlock any recipes you missed in the story.

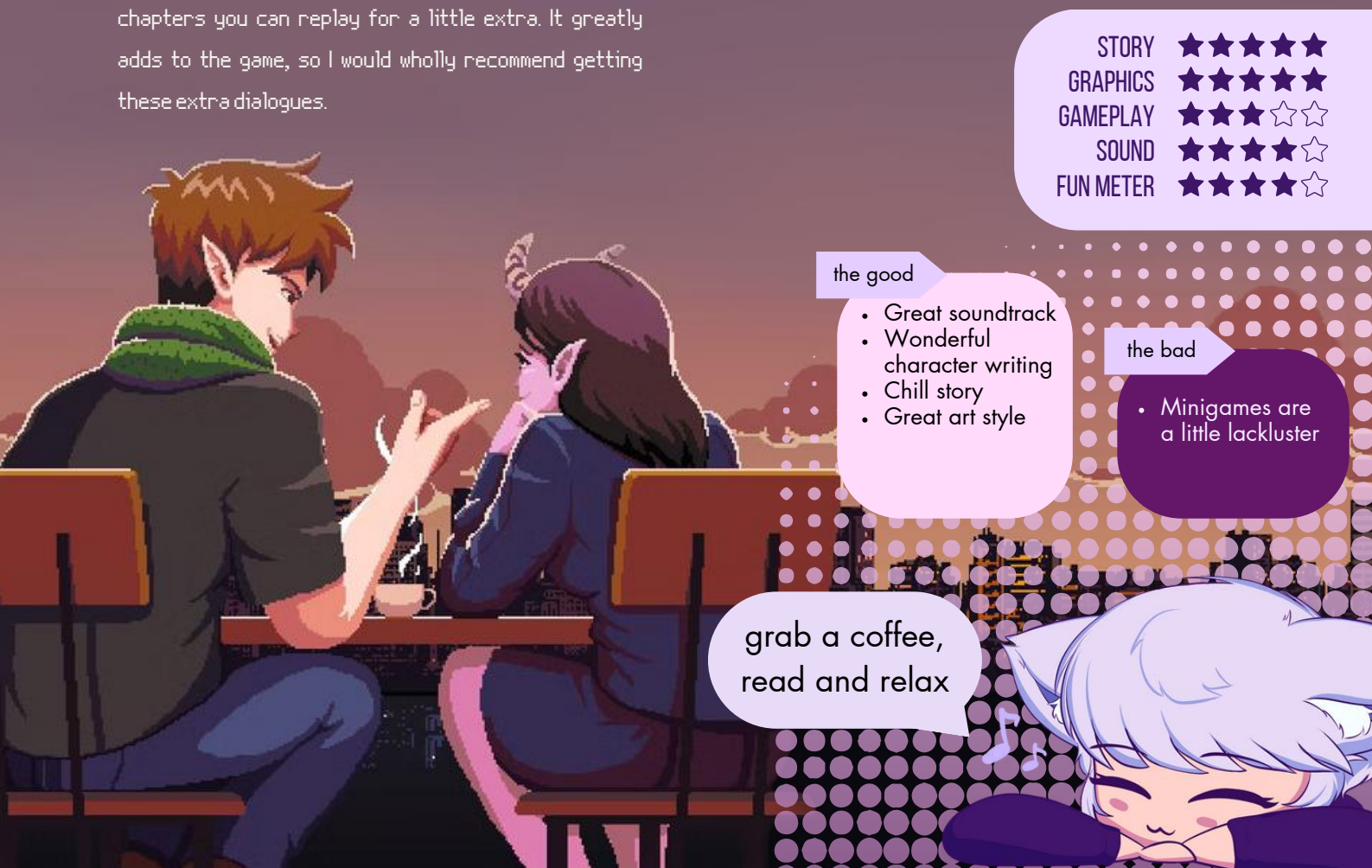
One more thing I'll add is that there isn't much replayability here in terms of different things. If you get any of the character's orders wrong and don't realise until you cannot get their ending/s, then there is indeed some replayability for you. Outside of that - once you finish the game the first time, there are certain chapters you can replay for a little extra. It greatly adds to the game, so I would wholly recommend getting these extra dialogues.

Now, you may have noticed that there has been next to no talk about the story here, and I am doing that for good reason. In Coffee Talk, you follow several people and their journeys to deal with their troubles as you lend an ear to them. I don't want to spoil this; I want you to meet the characters and see for yourself. One thing I can say is that I loved every character. Each one is different, and seeing them develop just felt lovely.

The experiences these characters are going through are real and, in a lot of circumstances, can be translated into the real world. Not only did I feel for what they were going through, but there were also moments I felt understanding. I never felt like Coffee Talk wanted me to feel horrible about what they were going through, but it just wanted you to understand how they may feel as well as how these scenarios can affect people.

Take your time with Coffee Talk. Enjoy the characters and the atmosphere. And most importantly, listen.

■ Abubis



NINE WITCHES
FAMILY DISRUPTION

Nine Witches: Family Disruption is a point and click game set during the Second World War. It follows two resistance members investigating an occult event in the fictional Norwegian town of Sundäe brought on by a secret division of the Third Reich. It may surprise you that the real-world Nazis did actually look into the occult. The story is quite zany, and the game often breaks the fourth wall. It's quite clear the game was heavily inspired by the original Monkey Island and other Lucas Arts games.

What the game does fail to mimic is the humor of the aforementioned games. This one has a lot more crass humor: there are a lot of fart jokes and some genitalia, defecation, and urination jokes.



He then proceeds to wet his pants. Yes, that is the kind of humor you can expect.

For the rest of it, it tries to be funny by making absurd statements (and I do love absurd comedy when done right), but you can tell they're trying too hard to be funny, and the large majority of it falls flat. They also fail to provide entertaining or interesting item descriptions - often when you look at something (for example, a door), it will just state, "This is a door". I can quite easily see that it's a door. Telling me what I already know makes me feel like I've just wasted time and discourages me from examining objects. Item descriptions add a lot of humor to many successful point and click games - an important lesson they seem to have missed.



One needs to break his neck to commune with the spirits, apparently.

The game also has combat sections where you have to use your assistant to shoot enemies. These sections aren't too hard but may deter some. Although there is an option to make these sections easier, I can't comment on that since I didn't use it.

I love pixel art, but the pixel art in this game is just okay. It's serviceable, but I've definitely seen better. Also, despite being set in the World War II era, they have heavily censored any Nazi symbols and references. The music does its job, but similarly to the graphics, it doesn't really stand out. Being an indie game, a lot of the sound effects they use are very recognizable stock sounds. A big negative is that you are forced to use a fixed WASD control scheme or a controller with no option to bind keys yourself, which always just feels lazy to me.

You control two characters in this game: a quadriplegic professor of the occult and his Japanese assistant. The professor, being a quadriplegic, is not able to interact with any kind of object but is able to pass through (locked) doors and can communicate with spirits (and later on has a limited influence on certain people). So you'll use the assistant for the majority of tasks. The puzzles are pretty straightforward - you don't have to combine any objects, and for most of them, it's pretty obvious what you're supposed to use them on. There also aren't any red herrings - every item has a purpose in the game. I've only gotten stuck once in this game because I didn't find an area I could go to. The game uses the exact same way to traverse different areas as the first two Monkey Island games. There's a big map with smaller representations of your characters where you move around but can't really do much else in.

Monkey Island see, monkey do. An example of how you move between locations.



I did not encounter any bugs in the game. Achievements were, except for one that requires you to watch the full credits, unmissable. So quite an easy game to 100%.





One of many pixel art references, in case you hadn't noticed.

STORY	★★☆☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★☆☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★☆☆
SOUND	★★☆☆☆
FUN METER	★★☆☆☆

the good

- Mildly entertaining
- Decent pixel art
- No bugs

the bad

- Toilet humor
- Most of the humor falls flat
- No keybindings
- Stock sound effects

In conclusion, it is an "okay" point and click game with a lot of toilet humor and humor that otherwise falls flat. It was rather disappointing to me, and I wouldn't really recommend it.

-Fallen Kal

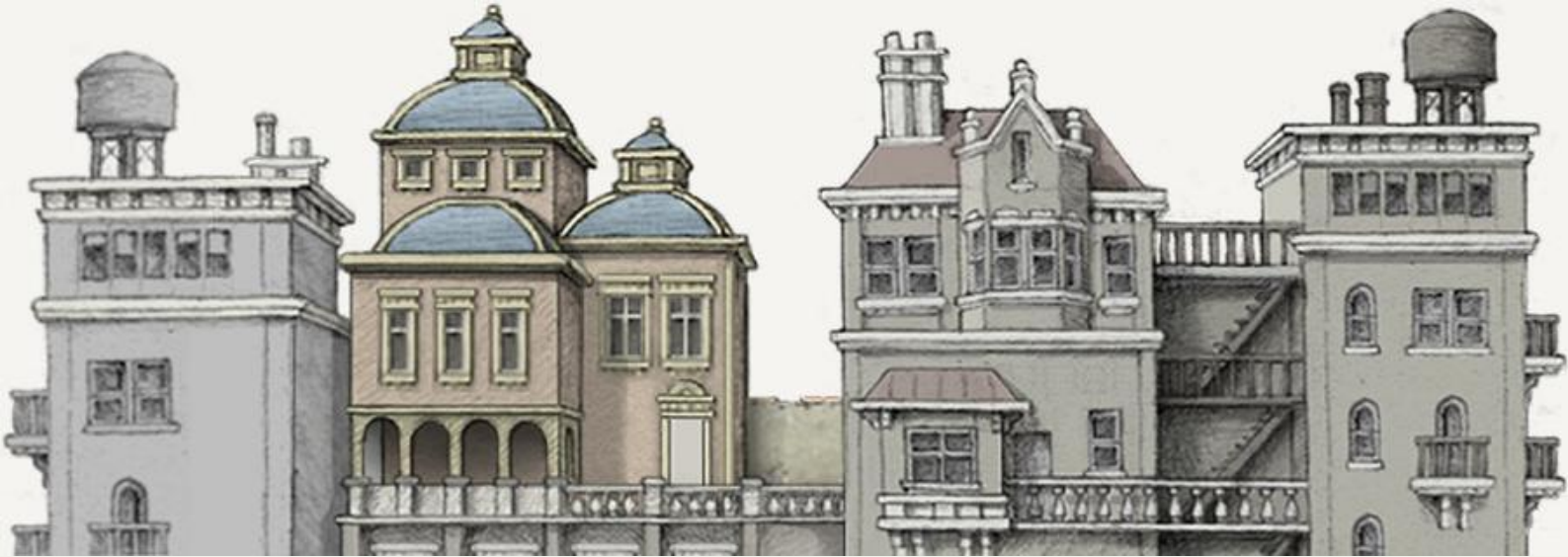
Don't let it disrupt your game library.



GOROGOA



I understand that I may be in a minority, but I love puzzle games. And I don't even mean games like Portal or It Takes Two, where in addition to all of the brain teasers, there's an engaging story. Sometimes I just like to spend a few hours on a game that is just challenging for me. You know why? Simply because those examples I gave you are pretty much a rarity. From my experience, games with really good and clever puzzles and mechanics don't have a great story (or they don't have one at all). But Gorogoa is unique, and I'll try to show you why I think so.

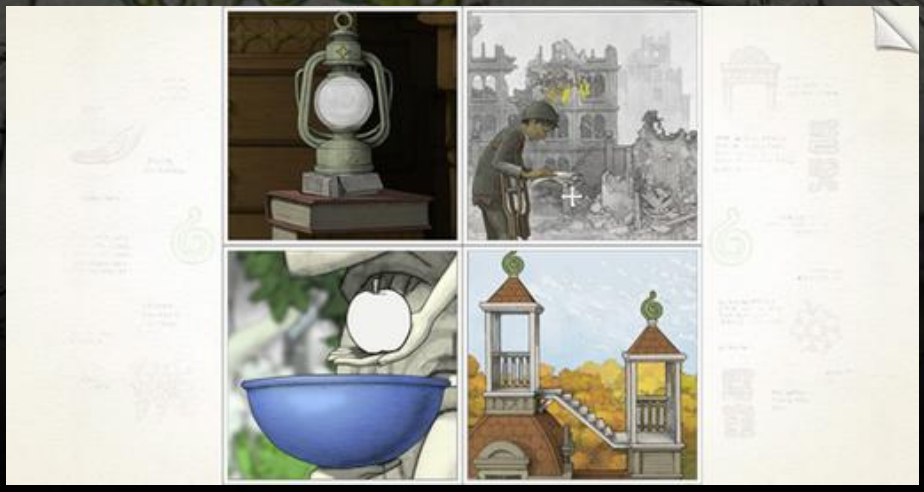


There's a big monster and cool puzzles

When playing Gorogoa, you'll probably mainly focus on two things: graphics and mechanics. I'm not surprised because almost everybody who played that game praised it for those two things. The beautiful and colorful compositions of each frame, mixed with clever mechanics, make this game really stand out. And it's all (mostly) thanks to one man.

Jason Roberts started the development back in 2011, originally with a card game in mind. And after years, you can still see that inspiration, even with the basics of it. The gameplay of Gorogoa takes place mainly over only four panels. Each one of those panels is interactive, so you can take actions inside of one or interact between some of them. Every puzzle that Roberts created needs you to think outside the box (sometimes literally). You need to play with perspective, figure out how to move between the panels, and have your mind open to some really abstract solutions. What more can I say? Just try them yourself and see if you can figure them out without any help.

The second thing that stands out is the previously mentioned graphics, and here's where you can clearly see the whole craftsmanship of the creator. Everything you see on your screen is hand-drawn. Jason Roberts not only created engaging and challenging puzzles, but he also framed them all with beautiful graphics. The style of the entire game, starting with the monster we see at the very beginning, looks like a mix of illustrations from children's books and ancient art from India or Byzantium. This art style, mixed with well-composed music and sound design, makes you feel like you're reading a book with a really engaging story. And yes, what may come as a surprise to many is that Gorogoa has an actual story. Which is better than you expect.



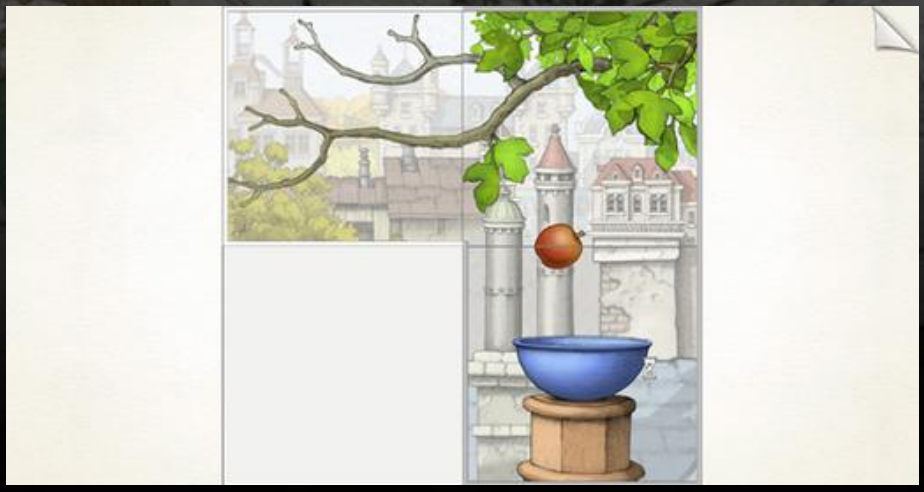
Sometimes it all seems like it's not connecting at all.

Wait, there's more to that?

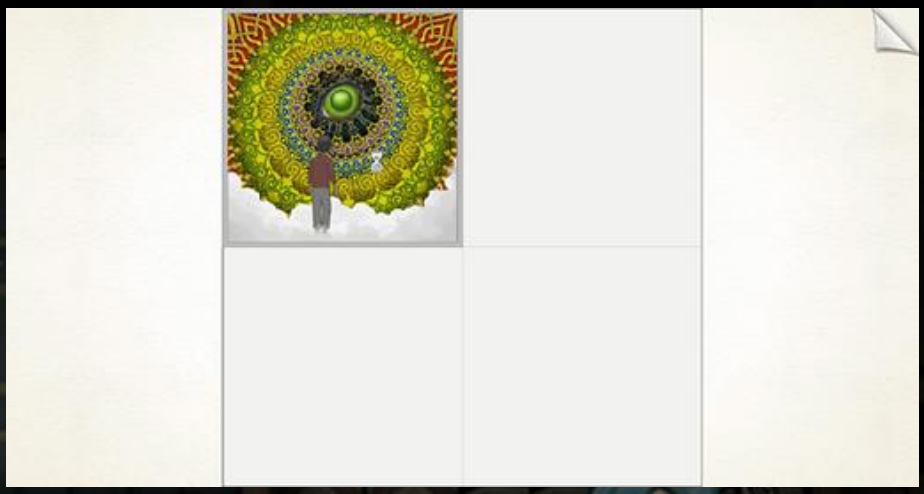
I'm writing this review at the beginning of February, and by this point, I have finished 20 games already. Yes, I know, it's a lot, but why am I saying that? That's because most of the titles I've beaten are different puzzle games, from jigsaw puzzles to games where you play with gravity. So considering how much I've managed to see already, I have a pretty good overview of this matter. And my main issue with them is that many indie puzzle games have rather weak stories...

Either you'll get another spiritual story about the meaning of life, or just clearly see that the whole experience you're getting is a collection of well-thought-out puzzles with a weak story written just to be there. Gorogoa, on the other hand, handles it a bit differently.

Of course, I won't tell you everything about it, mainly because it's a really short game and I could probably summarize the whole thing in a few sentences. So, without any spoilers, I can only say that it is also about life, but in this case - one specific life. Even though everything is really convoluted, you can follow the journey of some unnamed man. Throughout his life, he experiences times of war, peace, and recovery, as well as touching on the topics of religiosity or even, in some way, mental health. Thanks to the way it is shown to us, everything is open to interpretation. You can just understand everything as is, but in many ways, some people will see themselves in this story about a boy who saw a monster.



But in the end you see that everything leads to this one moment.



When you've been a believer all your life, and at the end, it turns out that behind everything is an ancient god that no one has believed in for over 3,000 years.

If you try it, it will stay with you for a while

You may be wondering if I'm not exaggerating. This is basically a game that you can play on your smartphone and complete in around 2 hours. Yes, that's true, but so what...? Let's just say that this is one of the best parts of Gorogoa - it isn't unnecessarily prolonged.

You are getting a compact experience of a man throughout his whole life. Despite its length, you don't feel like it's missing anything. You are getting everything you need to know. Moreover, this is the result of the work of one talented man, who devoted several years to completing and refining his game. Could this game be extended to add even more content? Probably, but in my opinion, it is better to finish the project at that point, where you can see that everyone involved still had strength and ideas to work with. But yeah, I would easily play Gorogoa for a few more hours...

-Jahas10



That's a weird fruit bowl.

STORY	★★★☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★★
GAMEPLAY	★★★★☆
SOUND	★★★☆☆
FUN METER	★★★★☆

the good

- Beautiful hand-drawn graphics
- Creative and fun puzzles

the bad

- Once you're done, you'll definitely want at least a few more hours of gameplay

A pint-sized puzzler that's big on charm!



BASTION

Proper story's supposed to start at the beginning. Ain't so simple with this one.

The Scribbler sits there, contemplating.
They tell me their name, their experiences. Says you folks might be interested, asks me to pass it forward.
Well, they might be right, if you're here.

Their name is Chocolate, they say. They've been playin' this one game. I usually tell people about the Kid, and the Kid ain't one for words.

The Scribbler sure is.
But I just gotta do the same as always, tell others the story I've been told. Let's see how this one goes.



The Scribbler woke up one day, and started playing.

It started in the middle of the Calamity. A teen just waking up. He sees the world's fallin' apart, literally. Ground disappeared all around. But when he starts walking? A path comes up. He sees his trusted friend, his hammer. He takes it. And he makes way to the Bastion.

On the road he sees mementos. Grabs 'em. Sees Squirts and Windbags. Beats 'em. Sees a brewery, stops by to take a swig. Sees some rubble, wrecks it.

And then he gets to the Bastion. He sees a stranger. He sees me.
He asks me questions. I answer a bit. Tell him to look for the cores. Nice and shiny rocks that used to power up cities, and we need them to power up this safe place. Six of them. I call him "the Kid" since that's what he is 'fore my eyes.

And there he goes.





Chocolate tells me the game is gorgeous.
Says it's a joy to look at, that every place is beautiful.
I tell 'em they should have seen it before the Calamity struck.
It was even prettier back then. They answer that the details are still great even after the disaster happened, and that they wouldn't have seen so many places if the Calamity didn't come.

They're a bit crazy, but I don' say anythin'. It's hard not to be after what happened.

The Kid brings back a survivor, then a singer.

I talk to them, ask their names. They also talk to the Kid. They brought a pipe and other things with 'em, things that let the Kid go Who Knows Where. There he can practice with weapon loadouts and fight enemies in waves. Get some experience, grab some fragments.

And hear our stories, too.



Chocolate says the music of the game is like an old friend. Seems they used to study while listenin' to it, years ago.
Says it's good music, all around. I tell 'em we have those songs on the gramophone, and they nod, lookin' happy.

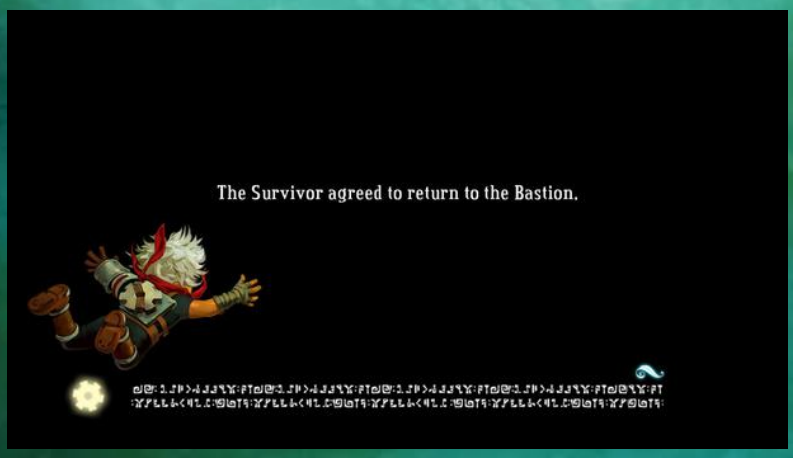
They also say they like my narration. Happy to hear, I s'ppose. They say that whenever the Kid falls, I say somethin' new for each place.
I tell 'em the Kid shouldn't fall so much.

After getting' all of the Cores, our Bastion is lookin' pretty complete. But then there's a fight, and Kid has to go out again, look for shards this time. I shouldn't tell you much more. This ain't the Kid's story, but the Scribbler's.

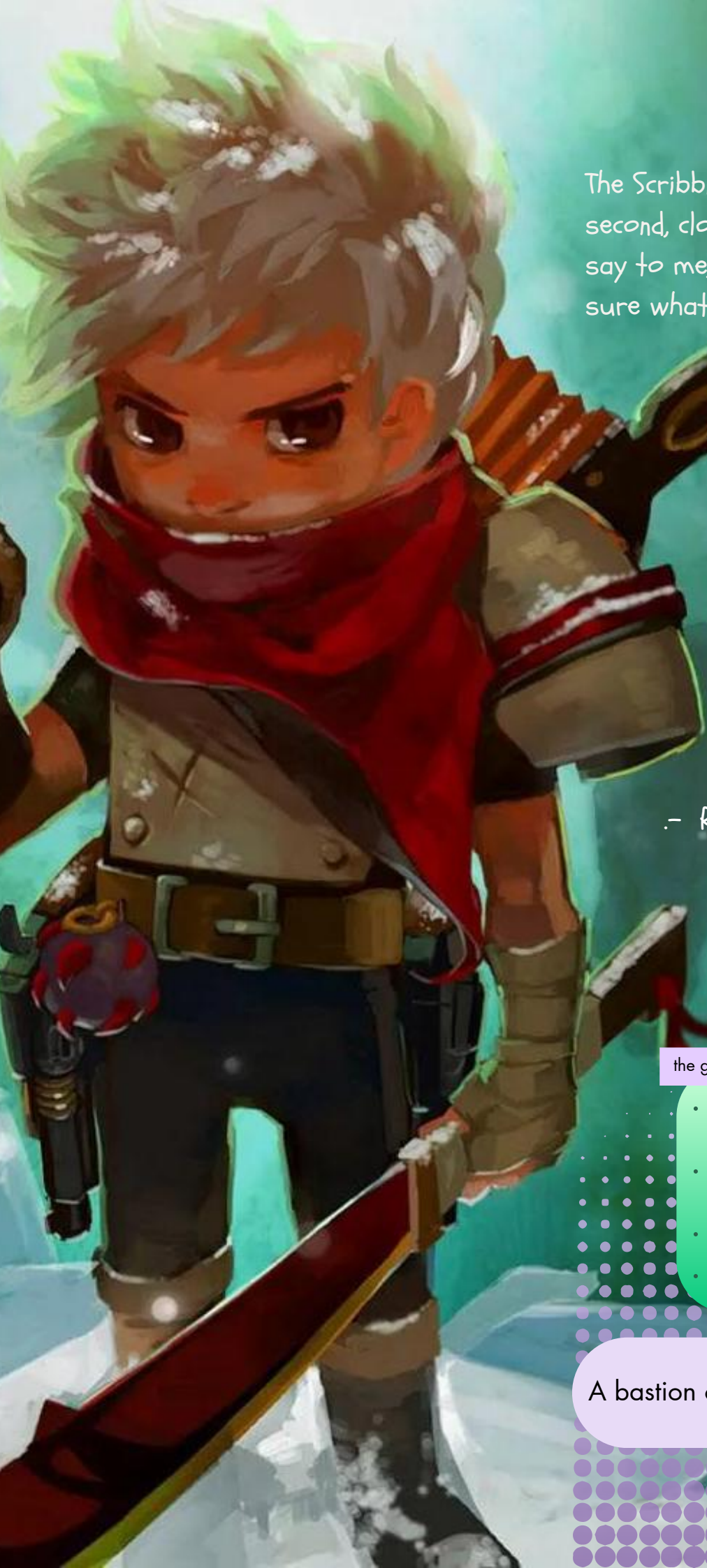
They say you can play the game if you wanna hear more.

They say the gameplay is pretty fun, even with keyboard an' mouse, whatever those are supposed to be.

Kid has a lot of weapons, and you can mix and match 'til you find a combination you're happy with. And upgrade it, and drink some stuff from the distillery that will give ya some effects. We also have our memorial, our lost and found, and one more. Guess you'll have to play to find out.



"We have to go. Please."



The Scribbler stops talkin' for a second, closes their eyes. And they say to me, "Y'know, Rucks, I wasn't sure what to expect. Bastion's considered a classic. What if I didn't like it? What if I stopped liking the OST, what if I couldn't get into it? But it's a classic for a reason. It's fun, it's pretty, it's touching. Don't think I can find any problems with it."

Now that's a job well done.

.- Rucks (Chocolate Van Candy)

STORY	★★★★☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★★☆
SOUND	★★★★★
FUN METER	★★★★★

the good

- Both the OST and the narration are impeccable
- Thought provoking story told by show, not tell
- No "good" or "bad" guys
- Ridiculously fun

the bad

- Character model might be a bit dated

A bastion of fun!





Storm Boy: Now a video game as well!

Do we have any Australian readers here? If so, they might recognize the name of this game to be from a children's book. The novella Storm Boy was written by Colin Thiele, an Australian writer who penned over 100 stories. While I had never heard of him until now, he's apparently pretty well-known in his home country. Storm Boy, in particular, was released in 1964 and has two movie adaptations. This game adaptation was released on Steam, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, and mobile on November 20, 2018. It was both developed and published by Blowfish Studios.

After I played Storm Boy, I wanted to check out the original novella before writing this review. What the game provided had me interested, and given its short page count of 50, it would've been a quick read if I could've gotten it. Unfortunately, my local library didn't have it, and I wasn't in a good position to shell out money for the online shipping options, so I only had a few free sample pages to go off. It seems like a nicely written book from what little I did get to read, but it led me to wonder: why make a game adaptation for it? We'll cover that in this review, along with whether I'd recommend it overall.

Story: A Boy and His Pelican.

This tale takes place along a wild coastline in Australia. Storm Boy lives with his father, Hide-Away Tom, and enjoys playing on the ocean shores. On one of his outings, he comes across a nest with three baby pelicans. These orphaned birds are adopted by Storm Boy until they're old enough to take care of themselves. Although two leave for good, the third returns to stay by Storm Boy's side as his best friend. The rest of the game focuses on Storm Boy's relationship with this pelican, Mr Percival. (Yes, the Mr is without the period; it drives me absolutely mad, but that's also how the book writes it).

There isn't a lot in this plot that's meant to subvert the usual 'boy and his blank' storyline. That's totally okay. It's a good tale for a young reader. The language and narration works well for children, and it discusses heavy topics in a way that isn't dumbing it down for them. There is joy and sorrow in this story, and I think it's executed well for its age demographic.

My issue is that while it appears the developers tried their best to follow the story, including written narration that may have come from the book itself (with quite a pretty font at that), it's still limited. I'm willing to bet I'd have been much more invested if I'd read the novella. It also feels like the only focus of the story is Storm Boy and Mr Percival's relationship. My guess is that the book has other plot threads that didn't get touched on here. I wanted to see more interactions with Hide-Away Tom, and I also saw that there's another human living in the area that barely gets talked about. With how short this game is (see the gameplay section for more details), they definitely could have put in other parts of the novella.

As it is, I feel like the story here is a watered-down version that isn't worth making a game for. But what about the other aspects of this game? Graphics, sound design, and gameplay aren't going to be easily comparable to anything in a physically printed book. Let's see if they're a good reason to have Storm Boy in this medium.

The main part of the game is walking while reading the narration.



Playing fetch with Mr Percival is wholesome fun.



Graphics: A good justification for an adaptation.

When I started up Storm Boy, I knew it was based on a children's book, but I initially thought it was a full-fledged picture book. The reason for this assumption was the graphics and art style in this game. It's got some very pretty scenery, ranging from the shorelines the birds flock upon to the pristine ocean encircling Storm Boy's home. I especially liked how gorgeous the sky was at various story beats. Whether it was a blistering sunny day, a wild rainstorm tearing apart the heavens, or a blanket of light-kissed clouds as far as the eye could see, the skies were a high point for me.

As the pictures for this game show, its graphical style is well suited for a children's story. My original thought was that the developers had based their designs on actual pictures from a picture book, but no, that was off the mark. They simply did a really good job of having fitting art for the source material. Because of this, I'd say the graphics were my favorite part of the whole experience. My only regret is that there weren't many areas to explore. I'd have loved to see more of the landscape and wildlife.

If I was to argue that the game adaptation should exist, this category is what I would base said argument on. The graphical style portrays Storm Boy in a way that the book can't strictly 'do better' with. It's up to the audience on whether they'd prefer reading descriptions or seeing the setting. I still don't consider this a good enough reason for the adaptation to be made on its own, but it's worth commending the graphical work.

Sound: It was there and did the things it needed to.

The music in Storm Boy was pleasant to listen to. It helped add to the atmosphere by sticking to the background, not standing out but also being a nice compliment to the wilderness. However, there weren't many tracks. That's not surprising, given the short length of the game, but some more variety would've been nice.

There aren't many other things to comment on in terms of sound design. The sound effects present (such as walking through the sand and rain beating upon the waves) were accurate for what they represented. The text is not voice-acted, and there aren't any scenarios that require pinpoint audio cues. In other words, the sound design served its purpose but wasn't exceptional.

As most can infer, there isn't anything going on here that needs a video game to capitalize on it. If you want something besides the rustling of pages to listen to while reading, you can play some ambient music of your own, or naturalistic noises. Heck, there's got to be an audio book version of it if you'd rather take that avenue. The point is that there's no reason for the game to exist if we're looking at sound design alone.



The ocean is lovely, but provides nothing else.

Gameplay: Not a good justification for an adaptation.

Here's the big issue. If you're going to make a video game adaptation, then it should probably have some kind of gameplay to make that media transition worthwhile. This is especially true since the story has been cut down. Yet the gameplay for Storm Boy is, at best, lacking. Perhaps you could argue it is meant to be relaxing rather than engaging, but I tend to like relaxing games, and I was still underwhelmed.

The 'main' gameplay of Storm Boy is strolling along the beach. You walk right to advance the story. Said story portions are shown in text at certain locations. Other locations have minigames that you can play. That's the entire game, which will take slower players and those who go back for achievements (like me) only an hour or so to complete. This lack of substance is what puzzles me about the game. Perhaps it would be suitable for children to engage in for longer than I did, yet it feels like there's not enough for even that age range.

Most of the minigames don't have set goals. To give some examples, the minigames include but are not limited to: digging up cockles, throwing fish to pelicans, drawing in the sand, riding a raft around the ocean, and playing fetch with Mr Percival. The digging minigame has a max of 100 cockles to find, but you don't have to get all of them. The others I listed literally have no end condition beyond leaving the game. I like to have goals to accomplish in minigames, but if the player enjoys them for what they are, then they could get more out of Storm Boy than I did. I just feel that none of the minigames do enough to make this adaptation worthwhile on their own.



It is cute to have Mr Percival follow Storm Boy around.

I will say that of all the minigames, I thought that playing fetch with Mr Percival was the best. It gives a cute way to interact with Storm Boy's closest friend and allows a bonding experience that is different from what a book could provide. Unfortunately, there aren't enough differences in the minigame to make it worth lingering on. Mr Percival has some nice animations for retrieving the ball, but after you see them, there isn't much else to do.

There is an exception where one minigame does have an end goal and has to be completed to proceed with the story. However, if you fail it too many times, the game will offer to let you skip it. I can see why, given that the controls were annoying and the finicky lose condition could make it frustrating. The controls in the other minigames ranged from serviceable to slightly irritating, such as trying to flick the fish to the pelicans.

The weak gameplay is the main reason why I would rather this adaptation have been something other than a video game. An animated movie or picture book would have been better mediums for Storm Boy, at least in my opinion. However, I do acknowledge that those would have most likely been far more expensive to make. The devs seem to have a lot of love for the story, so if this is their way to pay tribute to it, who am I to judge? It is a way to spread knowledge of the novella to people who would never have heard of it, such as me. I can appreciate that much.



Congrats Storm Boy, you've become a father.

Conclusion: But did it have to be a video game?

Storm Boy is a passable game for someone that wants lovely graphics, snippets of a promising story, and some casual minigames. However, I'd much rather read the book and see what the entire story is, especially with the gameplay quickly becoming dull. This is especially true with the game's price tag being a whopping $5.99 USD. If I'm only going to get less than an hour's worth out of a game, it'd better be spectacular for that price, and Storm Boy doesn't cross that threshold. However, if this type of game sounds like one you'd enjoy, it does enough good things to be worth looking at during a sale.

■ Celtic7Guardian

STORY	★★★☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★★☆☆☆
SOUND	★★★☆☆
FUN METER	★★☆☆☆

the good

- The graphics are lovely.
- Sticking to the book means the story's fine.
- Lots of different minigames.
- A mostly relaxing experience.
- You get to play with a cute pelican.

the bad

- There isn't much engaging gameplay.
- Lack of differing music.
- The minigames usually lack goals.
- Feels like it should be longer than the hour or so it is.
- The other two pelicans abandon you.





The world is hell

Such was the conclusion of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, and that was way back in the 18th century – we can only imagine how much less cheery his outlook would be if he had to put up with popup advertising and McDonald's jingles.

In all seriousness, for so many of us, life today is a psychological firestorm. At any given moment, there are at least a dozen metaphorical swords of Damocles precariously suspended above us, perhaps half of them borderline apocalyptic in their perceived severity and scope. Looming overhead, seemingly swinging closer and perilously closer, day by fraught day, at nerve-joltingly unpredictable and inopportune moments. It is, to coin a phrase, less than ideal.

But if we want to find the silver lining, it is that the mental burden of our portentous modern world is surely also the driving force fuelling the meteoric rise of the cosy gaming phenomenon. Providing a much-needed balm for our frayed and frazzled nerves, we have more avenues than ever before for easy-going, warm-hearted escapism. And thank fluff for that.

This place is so wholesome, even the outhouse has a heart.



The motivational punk-rock woodpecker. Classic trope.

Mail Time is...

Well, just look at it. You're a peppy, earnest young trainee mail scout with a mushroom for a hat and a pet bee who follows you wherever you go. It is *exactly what you think* it is... A hard-hitting, cynical dissection of the darkest impulses of mankind. Just kidding! Or at least, if it is, that's very much a secondary meaning buried deep beneath the surface – a few thousand metres under such weighty topics as whether the secret crush a goose has for a snail may or may not be unrequited, or if a capybara will ever see his favourite hat again.

A veritable menagerie of creatures such as these will keep you flitting back and forth, completing deliveries and fetch quests in all corners of their quaint, serene garden world. The design of the environment and its inhabitants is pretty simplistic, but very effective and endearing, with a child-like charm that would have been lost if the developers had gone for a more polished style.



Not only in the visuals, but similarly in all aspects of the game, Mail Time is infused with an exuberant, uninhibited sense of joy, which just shines through. The movement mechanics of running, jumping, and gliding feel carefree and satisfying. I was having fun with them from beginning to end, and there wasn't a single instance where I felt frustrated at trying to get somewhere. What's more, all members of the cast of characters are eclectic and full of personality, but never gratingly wacky, and there isn't one among them who I wouldn't happily spend more time chatting with.



And that brings us to the first issue I have to raise with the game: I would appreciate having some further conversation with the characters, but then, the game could really do with having a bit more of *everything*. Even taking the completionist route, the game barely has 3 hours of content. Considering that the game isn't – by indie standards – particularly cheap, you certainly aren't getting a lot for your money.



Worse than just wanting to justify the price, though, is that in terms of content, the game sometimes borders on feeling unfinished. In a few aspects, it seems like things were created with an eye to fleshing them out somewhere down the line, but the realities of having a tiny studio cut short the intended scope: a couple of areas which (although just as pretty as the rest) feel a little empty and notably underutilised; a couple of characters who (although charming) conspicuously never actually feature in any quest; and items to collect which (although fun to hunt down) serve no purpose whatsoever, despite having obvious connections implying how you would expect them to be included in a quest...



It is a little disappointing, but also understandable, that in a game which evidently had a lot of love poured into it, you can really feel their aspirations of giving you more than they were ultimately able to.

Perhaps another sign of these positive intentions is that the character creator includes an option to select your character's pronouns, and indeed, the pause menu allows you to change the setting mid-game should you wish to do so. It speaks so clearly of how much the devs wanted to give players a wholesome, welcoming experience, and is an admirable touch – only undercut slightly by the fact that there's never really any call for somebody to refer to you in the third person...

You're talking *to* people, not eavesdropping on other people having conversations about you. But dangit, the game sees you, whoever you are, and cares about you feeling comfortable!

Perhaps this setting is more relevant when not playing in English, although it may not be entirely effective in such cases – I came across several stories of people who reported that their localisation of the game used incorrectly gendered language on multiple occasions, regardless of what they selected under this option. I'm inclined to take this as another sign of a tiny studio with the best of intentions, but with limited capacity to give the game the polish it would ideally receive.



The use of language in general, in my experience at least, is an area in which Mail Time does a good job on the whole. Typically, when playing indie games whose developers aren't native English speakers, the text has many little mistakes and unnatural phrases, which can sometimes really pull me out of the experience. Thankfully, in this case, I found only a handful of lines which were just a little off the mark. However, one of those examples which struck me as odd was in fact specifically related to pronouns; there are a couple of characters in the game who are flexible with their pronouns, and to reflect this, the game intentionally switches back and forth with how it refers to them, sometimes in rapid succession, even multiple times in the same sentence. So, we are presented with dialogue along the lines of, "Look, he's there, go and talk to them, he can help you!" which seemed, to my mind, clumsy and forced.





In this recurring theme of "nice idea, flawed execution", I also have to include the soundtrack, although they came extremely close to absolutely nailing it. There are a handful of pieces that are each paired with a different region of the map, and all of them have a satisfyingly rich orchestration, incorporating a diverse range of instruments to create a vibrant sense of adventure and fun. They set the scene and create an atmosphere really effectively, and are precisely the kind of background music you would want accompanying your intrepid little courier as they explore the world... With just one exception.



One of the pieces, and unfortunately the one which you probably hear the most (or perhaps it just felt that way), has at its forefront an insistent, plinky-plonky xylophone motif, the melody of which is on such a short loop that it quickly feels relentless. I'm sure most people don't share my delicate aural sensitivities and it wouldn't bother them nearly as much, but to me it felt like attending a sweet, engaging orchestral performance while sitting next to an elderly person who resolutely refused to turn off the alarm on their mobile phone, and as such being forced to put up with a 4-second "marimba" knock-off repeating again and again. It irritated me enough that it ultimately pushed me to disable the background music entirely, which was unfortunate, because aside from that, I really did find the soundtrack to be extremely pleasant.



The final issue I have to address (and potentially the most problematic) would have to be the bugs – and I'm not talking about your buzzy and creepy-crawly friends. I ran into a fairly substantial number of errors in the game, and it would seem that is a pretty commonplace experience. The most frequent in my own playtime, and one also often cited by other players, is that upon finishing a conversation, the game responds incorrectly in a variety of ways: the camera remains fixed in place as you wander off, or your character refuses to move at all, or the only input that the game recognises is to enter conversation again with the same person and repeat what you have just been through... In these cases, if all else fails, it is generally easy enough to exit out to the menu and re-enter the game with no major inconvenience, though it is an annoyance that I came up against with a regularity that some would (reasonable enough) certainly consider unacceptable.







I didn't encounter any of the more severe game-breaking bugs as reported by some users, but I did come across a few more intriguing examples which I don't see people mentioning – such as assets not loading in, or things seeming to appear in the wrong place, or one of the characters in the game disappearing when you leave their area, and after you return, only reappearing again when you jump on top of where they should be located... They were odd, quirky little glitches, and rather than coming together to form a janky and frustrating experience, they reinforced my impression of a scrappy little studio without detracting substantially from my enjoyment of the game.

I guess I can't say if the modern world would inspire optimism in Schopenhauer, or if his mind would boggle at how things managed to get even more hellish since his time... But if he was anything like me, at least he could console himself with cosy games like Mail Time, and – flawed though they may be – the little slice of heavenly respite they provide.



Looking at everything laid out in black and white, you would be forgiven for thinking that Mail Time falls short of the mark. On paper, it may seem like the good points simply aren't significant enough to justify the bad. I have to make it totally clear, then: I came away from the game with overwhelmingly positive feelings. True, there unmistakably are those clumsy elements, the ill-finished details, the best intentions never really achieved, and the fact that it definitely doesn't provide as much content as you would hope. But what it has going in its favour is potent: a rich dose of sheer, unburdened fun in its traversal mechanics, and a warm shot of endearing, affable engagement in its character interactions. In short, the most important thing it needed to include is what it has by the bucketload: heart. That is, if you'll allow me the pun, where Mail Time really delivers.

■ PsychoApeMan

STORY	★★★☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★☆☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★☆☆
SOUND	★★★☆☆
FUN METER	★★★★☆

the good

- Warm-hearted and welcoming: the epitome of cosy, laid-back vibes
- Characters are enjoyably charming and full of personality, without being saccharine or annoyingly quirky
- Traversing the map by running, jumping, and gliding is fun and satisfying
- Breezy, undemanding gameplay is relaxed and comforting

the bad

- Glitches are rarely major, but are pretty frequent
- Some of the soundtrack feels far too repetitive
- More content would be appreciated, and in some cases feels lacking
- Inclusivity settings may not work as intended

Flawed but lovely: almost the full package!




CZECH OUT THIS GAME!
OBVIOUSLY YOU REMEMBER THAT WHEN I REVIEWED DARK TRAIN (A NEARLY TEXTLESS CZECH GAME), I WROTE: "MY THEORY IS THAT THE CZECH LANGUAGE CONTAINS SO MANY OUTLANDISH LETTERS LIKE Ž, Ů AND Ý THAT THE CZECH PEOPLE LEARNED TO VALUE TEXTLESS EXPRESSIONS. I AM POSITIVE OUR CZECH READERS WILL CONFIRM THIS." I SAY THIS BECAUSE TOHU IS THE LATEST GAME FROM CZECH DEVELOPERS AMANITA GAMES, AND IT IS ALSO
PSSST!
A NEARLY TEXTLESS, INCREDIBLY
PSSST!!
CUTE GAME IN THE SAME VEIN OF MACHINAR-
PSSSSSSSSSSTTT!
WHAT THE HELL, CAN'T YOU SEE I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF A REVIEW HERE?
Thexder
SGM
TOHU

mumblemumblenotAmanitamumble...

REALLY? DID YOU DOUBLE CZECH THIS? I HAD ALL THESE PUNS READY TO...

mumblemumblePolandmumble

OH, I SEE... SO, HM... OK. LET'S START OVER THEN. A-HEM.

ENVIRONMENTS ARE NICELY DETAILED.



I KNEW THAT!

Tohu is a 2021 point-and-click adventure game by Polish developers Fireart Games. It is clearly inspired by the Amanita school of adventure games (Samorost, Botanicula, Machinarium) there is even an achievement for "clicking on amanitas two times". If you do not know what that means: Tohu has little written text and only a few voice overs, great art, overwhelmingly cute characters with vibrant animations and sound, and puzzles which work your brain a little, but are not too hard. It is also a somewhat short game it took me a little under 5 hours to finish it, no guides nor hints.

So that's probably all you need to know... But a 1-page review would get me fired from the magazine, so let us expand a little on each item from the previous paragraph and pepper the whole thing with some gorgeous game art.

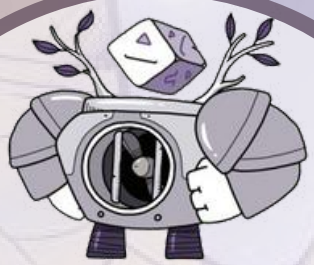


JUST THE TUTORIAL; TOHU IS NOT COMPLETELY TEXTLESS.

STORY AND MECHANICS

So you are “The Girl” , a small purple being which might be the Oxford dictionary definition of cute. You live in this whimsical world with floating fish planets, and yours in particular holds a contraption called “The Sacred Engine” , purpose unknown. As the game starts, a hooded stranger appears and beats the heck out of the Sacred Engine. Your mission is to fix whatever is broken, and possibly send the stranger back to wherever it came from. This will require visits to a few fish planets around yours, of course.

Being a bit of a mechanic, The Girl has access to a small inventory (I do not remember ever having more than 4 items in it), and she can also climb a few structures. Click on her, and she transforms into “Cubus” , a strong robot capable of lifting all sorts of heavy objects. And that’ s the basic loop of the game: switch between characters, collect items, use such items with the environment… standard point-and-click adventure fare (though you never combine two items inside your inventory --this is Amanita-style, not LucasArts).



The puzzles aren' t completely standard, though. You don' t just reason the solutions as soon as you see the environment -- much of the game is exploratory, that is, you must first click random items to see what they might do (usually rewarded with cute animations). There was this one puzzle which required correct character positioning on the screen, but nothing that would make you scream at angry goats. You are usually limited to 2 or 3 screens of content anyway, and 2 or 3 items in your inventory, so a little curiosity will get you to the solution even when it' s not obvious at first. That said, a few of the later puzzles were trite (I played many hidden object games, I know trite when I see it). And there was one sort-of-whack-a-mole puzzle that required timing in your clicks… I imagine some classic adventure players might hate this, but I myself thought it was a nice change of pace, and not too hard at all.

If you are stuck, there is a hint system behind an annoying action minigame -- a red triangle moves fast, and you have to click when it is here, there and over there. The hint only shows a picture diagram of what you are supposed to do anyway, no specific instructions. Why didn' t they just leave it unlocked?



I AM GLAD THIS HINT MINIGAME WAS NOT NEEDED.



THE GIRL PONDERS A PUZZLE.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND AND... STORAGE?

Graphically, Tohu is gorgeous. Most screens are packed with lively details, and the animations are all delightful. The Girl leaps around with joy, and I love the way the robot Cubus joins his legs in a loop to roll down a set of stairs... like, why would you give up your legs and use TIRES to go down STAIRS? There are whimsical creatures moving around (some of them are collectibles, if you care about such things), but a few clicks and you can tell what is usable and what is just decoration, no pixel hunting required.

When I said The Girl is incredibly cute, this is in huge part due to the sound design. She is not voiced at all, but she "ooooohs" and "aaaaahs" , she giggles happily when she accomplished something, and shakes her head "Hn-hn" when you are using the wrong item in the wrong place. Same goes for Cubus, with a slightly metallic voice, but still a lot cuter than, say, Bender.



FLYING ONTO A FISH PLANET.

Last but not least, the music in Tohu is very very good. It is done by Cristopher Larkin, and, though it is not as memorable as what he has done in Hollow Knight, you can definitely hear his fingerprints. But Tohu is a lot lighter of course, so the soundtrack fits this mood.

IF_YOU_USE_UNDERSCORES_IT_IS_JUST_ONE_WORD

Anyway, if I had to use one word to summarize Tohu, the word would be, huh, "amazingly_cute" . While not exactly a memorable game, it is a joyful way to spend a few hours of your time. And, storage weirdness aside, I thought it was a game with real Polish.

HA! TAKE THAT!

Thexder 48

One technicality I feel I should mention: yes, the game is gorgeous and the soundtrack is very good, but it is a fairly short 2D game with only a few narrator voice-overs. I say this because I cannot fathom why the game uses 13Gb of storage in my hard drive (even when the download itself was just 1.5Gb). Really?

STORY	★★★☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★☆☆
SOUND	★★★★☆
FUN METER	★★★★☆

the good

- Amazingly cute protagonists;
- Very pretty art;
- Great sounds and music;
- Whimsical, joyful world.

the bad

- A few puzzles are trite;
- Story is just ok;
- 13Gb, really?



CUBUS STRONG!

An otherworldly, point-and-click adventure!



Little MISFORTUNE

I'm a little lady, you know?

Little Misfortune is a unique, point-and-click psychological horror made by Killmonday Games, the developer who is also responsible for a rather popular psychological game, Fran Bow. Much like their other game, Little Misfortune is not all it seems like from the get-go. You follow the story of Misfortune Ramirez Hernandez, a young 8-year-old. In this 3-4 hour story, you' ll experience her journey and discover what fate awaits her. This is a game I constantly avoid videos of, and it was such a delight to finally enjoy such a great adventure.



As you start the game, you are almost immediately introduced to Misfortune as she meets a new, mysterious friend called "Mr. Voice." Mr. Voice will announce himself as the game's narrator and will take that role as the game proceeds. He very quickly drops a sudden bomb, stating that today is the day she shall die. But that's all he says... before he realises she can hear him. Mr. Voice offers a deal to Misfortune. In exchange for playing a game, his game, she or someone of her choice can be given eternal happiness, and our girl chose her mother. And, of course - our delightful, naive protagonist accepts with great excitement.

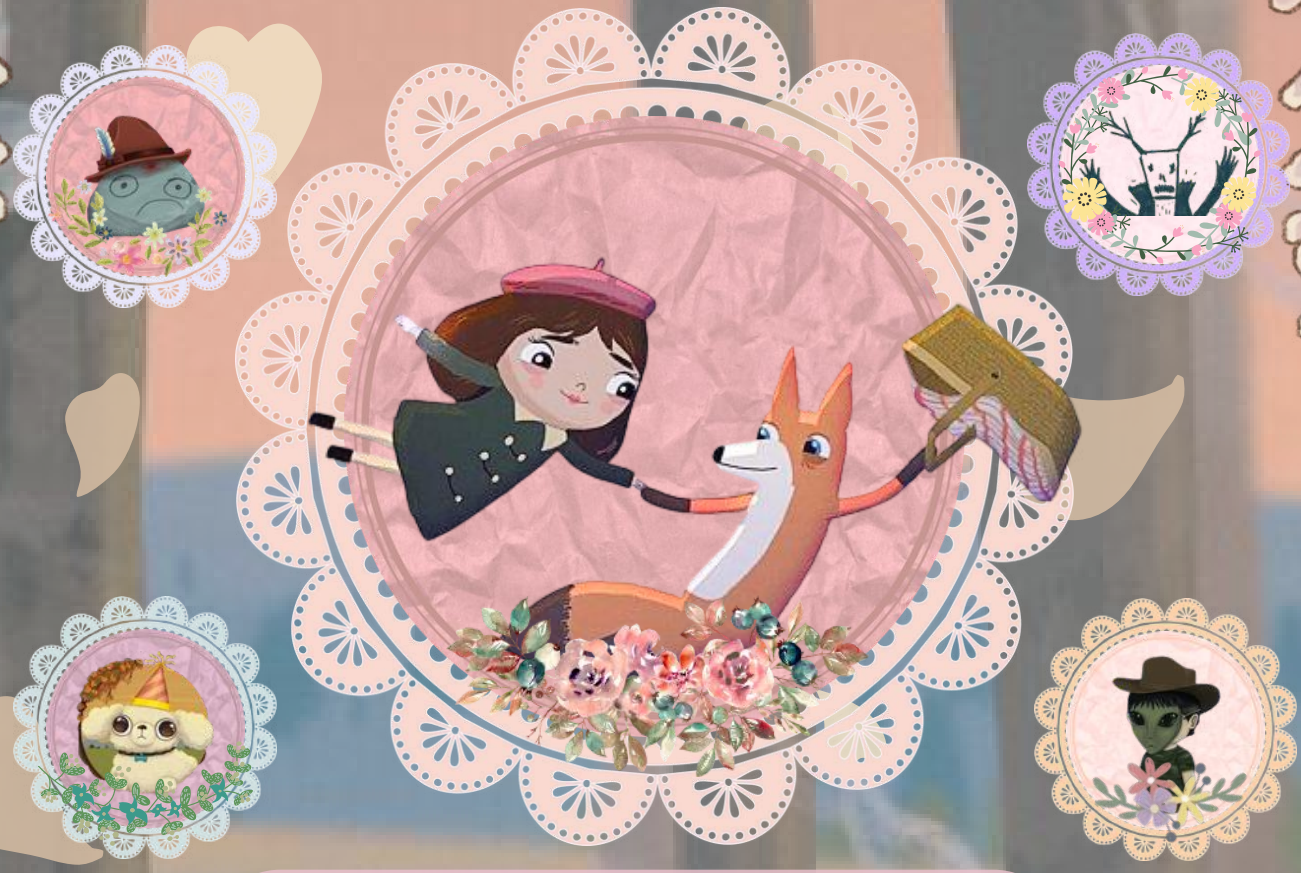


Unfortunately for Misfortune, she was born into a difficult family. While we are not given too many details, it is very clear her parents are not in a healthy relationship with various issues such as drinking, arguing, abuse, and smoking. Once you gain control of our character, you can read through her diary, where you learn of the difficulties of this girl's life. She expresses her sadness and how she doesn't know how to feel - how to cope with her feelings. It is a sad thing to say, but her name is very accurate. Yikes forever...



But here we come with our cutest character, Benjamin! Reading through this diary at the beginning, Misfortune expresses love for a fox that she has called Benjamin that she had seen outside. He is but a mystery that has hooked our young girl and has given her a small spark of happiness. While we know little about him at this point, it is clear Misfortune is happy knowing him, wishing to see the fox more.

The style of this game is also... interesting. It, like Fran Bow, has a very unique art style that, while it can be cute, can also be rather discomforting when it wants to be. The art style of this game is almost childlike, which really adds to the charm of the whole thing.



Yet, we have not touched on one thing yet. Today is the day Misfortune will die, Mr. Voice claims. So now, your job is to investigate the mystery of these words because who would dare harm such a young and healthy little girl? Nevertheless, now, his game has started. It is your job to uncover the mystery and search for the eternal happiness she wishes to find. Enjoy your adventure, but watch where you step! Our girl comes with a whole packet of bad luck. Make sure you pay extra attention. Not everyone can be trusted. Maybe you can find the warnings?

When it comes to the gameplay of Little Misfortune, it is a very simple point-and-click adventure. The puzzle parts of this game are quite simple and easy, often not taking much exploring of the area. I would highly suggest you interact with everything you see as you explore the mysteries of the world. There are lots of interesting bits of information you can learn, whether it be about our characters or the world as a whole. Each interactable will be marked with an eye-shaped icon as you walk past. There are also some very fun minigames available as you progress the story. For example, there is a mini dance rhythm game where the toy you picked up from your room as a choice will dance. Most challenges and minigames will relate to an achievement, so I also suggest saving before each. I'll add more achievement details shortly, so keep reading for that.





In this game, there are a few "collectible-like" things to grab and find. One is small straw dolls that are left throughout the world, usually left with a small bit of text to read. These are rather easy to find, and you should be able to get them all without much effort by just playing through the game. Secondly, there are different items in the world that you can sprinkle glitter on, giving Misfortune a small bit of happiness as she blesses such items with glitter! This is something that may be harder to achieve. Even with slight assistance from a guide, I happened to miss one, and there is no going back. If you miss one and don't have a save to backtrack to as soon as possible, then you'll be playing from the start for those achievements. If you care about achievements, I'd also recommend regularly saving to make different decisions. Not only does it help show you different and sometimes interesting scenarios, but it also is required for several achievements. And be careful. There are some achievements that require you to do certain things at the beginning of the game to set up for later. Enjoy hunting!

Playing through this game gave me a range of emotions, varying from positive to negative. But not in a bad way! Moreso, it brought out a genuine feeling of sadness, or despair. Don't forget, this is a psychological horror. If you played through Fran Bow, you have an idea of how not-so-innocent this game may be. Don't worry, though, as the game is full of even more things that should make you smile and laugh. Plenty of things happen in the game that will likely catch you off-guard, getting plenty of giggles and smiles out of you as it did me! Misfortune is clumsy and, as I stated before, filled with bad luck. The amount of times this poor girl vomited or suffered... unfortunate events, I'd definitely say it keeps content frequent within the game. The game is also fully voiced, and hearing everything Misfortune says in her cute, amusing voice makes everything so much better. I feel like the voice acting alone does a lot for this game.

Overall, Misfortune was a fantastic and interesting adventure that I would recommend to anyone looking for something to just sit down and enjoy. The puzzles are not hard, and they don't have difficult things to do that may get you stuck. It is a very straightforward, linear game that is very clear with its intentions. I enjoyed the characters, the writing, and the events. The creative minds that were used to make this did a wonderful job, making an adventure that brought out genuine feelings and emotions from me as I played. I did my best to explore everything for this review, and I can confidently say that it is worth experiencing all it has to offer. Give this game a chance, and it may just surprise you.



■ Abubis

STORY	★★★★☆
GRAPHICS	★★★☆☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★☆☆
SOUND	★★★★☆
FUN METER	★★★★☆



the good

- You can pet the dog
- Great storytelling
- Unique and cool art style
- Misfortune is adorable

the bad

- No skip option
- Very limited saves

Yikes forever...



SECRET SANTA GIFT BY RAYOFLIGHT



REVIEW BY FERNANDOPA

ENTER THE GUNGEON

Enter the Gungeon (which I'll refer to as EtG from now on) is a third-person top-down twin-stick shooter, meaning you control your character's movement and aim with the left stick, while you can control camera movement and look ahead with the right stick. You can play it on a keyboard and mouse config I guess, but a twin-stick shooter is meant to be played on a controller with two analog sticks if you ask me.

Anyway, it's also a roguelike game where every defeat resets your progress and forces you to start from scratch, with unlockables being retained between runs. It's hard, pixelated, funny, and unforgiving. I made the mistake of telling RayOfLight that I thought I could beat it in 5 hours, and in reality it took me over 25 hours to do so - something he'll never let me forget. And it's such a good game that, as soon as I beat it, I started playing again with different characters and testing the new modes that I unlocked.

My hope is that you can understand why I liked this game so much by reading this review, and maybe, who knows, also decide to play it?

Without further ado, let's venture into the Gungeon together.



It took me 25 hours, but I beat the final boss!



GRAPHICS





EtG is a pixel art game, which is a divisive art style. I am familiar with many people who cannot stand the idea of playing a pixel art game, but I'm not one of them. I grew up playing a lot of the 8 and 16-bit era games and have fond memories of games where pixel art was the only available choice.

For a dev, choosing to use pixel art is a strong artistic expression: they believe this art style invokes a certain gaming era or play style, or they have resource or budget constraints and are forced to choose a style that can be developed more quickly than traditional 2D or 3D.
I'm not sure what led this team to choose pixel art, but man, do I love it.

Sprites (including characters, enemies and items) are consistent and easy to read, and there are a lot of them. Browsing through the game's wiki, I learned that there are approx. 145 enemies, 13 main bosses (plus 14 secret bosses), 38 NPCs, 243 guns, and 271 items.
All of them have beautiful pixel art, and more often than not, incredible animation. Bosses also have beautiful portraits which are quite epic and really amp you up before you fight them.



It's worth noting that the artists went above and beyond when creating and animating some specific guns, items and characters.
To mention a few, I love the Crescent Crossbow (which fills the screen with twinkling stars), the Unicorn Horn (which feels like a rainbow slushie and sounds like cotton candy), the Anvillain (which shoots literal anvils at the enemies), the Barrel Gun (which shoots fish - never gets old), the Mailgun (which alternates between shooting mail and packages), and the T-Shirt Cannon (you guessed it). The animation for Patches and Mendy, the nurse NPCs, is also pure gold.



If you want to get a feel for what the reload animations in EtG would look like in real life, look for @kommanderkarl on TikTok, where he reloads random real life items. That's very close to how it feels to play the game hahaha.



Just another chaotic, completely destroyed combat arena.

Environments are varied enough that you can easily tell which world you're in by looking at the map.
Each world has a vibe - the first world (Keep of the Lead Lord) is standard medieval castle stuff, with the second floor (Gungeon Proper) looking like a prison, the third floor (Black Powder Mine) like a ... erm ... mine, the fourth floor (Hollow) looking like ice caves, and the fifth and last (Forge) looking like a hellscape with fire and lava everywhere.
I haven't seen all the secret levels yet, but they are also quite unique in look and feel. They are all filled with destructible props such as books, vases, and headstones, as well as setting-specific enemies.

My two main complaints with the environments are that they are usually on the darker end, so you benefit from cranking up your display brightness to ensure you can see enemies against the background, and that sometimes traps are not easily readable, leading you to step over spikes or over trapdoors more frequently than you would like.

There's not much else to say in the graphics department: if you like pixel art, you're in for a treat, with well-animated and diverse items, characters, and environments.
If you don't like pixel art, this will all look like laziness from the devs, but I would insist you give it a chance because the game does deliver on its pixel art promise.



AUDIO



In general terms, the auditory experience of playing EtG is unremarkably good.

I say unremarkable because the sound effects and music hardly stay with you - don't expect big orchestras pulling at your heartstrings with well composed melodies. And I say good because it works really well in the context of the game.

Musically, the game varies a lot between intense combat tracks that dynamically ramp up once you enter a combat arena, and calm exploration music that loops in a few seconds after the fighting has stopped.
If you're like me and you're always rushing from room to room, you'll spend most of your time hearing variations of the combat music, which is pretty high tempo and keeps you on your toes as you clear rooms of bullet kin.
The exploration music usually just kicks in once you find a shop or after you clear a floor and are looking back trying to remember if you forgot to do something, like picking up an item, interacting with an NPC or opening a chest.

The two musical variations that I haven't mentioned yet are the boss fight theme, which is epic and always gets you in the right mood for the most important battle of your life (or of the last 10 minutes, at least), and the floor clear theme, which only plays once you've beaten the floor's boss. While the combat and exploration music play most of the time, the boss and floor clear theme just play once a level, so they have some special meaning: you'll only hear them when you made it that far in a level, or when you've beaten a boss and conquered the opportunity to advance further.

Over my 25+ hours of gameplay, the music never got in the way or became boring, and it always helped to set the tone of the moment and keep me focused, but I can hardly remember the music after I stop playing. It's mostly synthesizer music, it's good, not great, and gets the job done.

If the music is serviceable, I think the sound effects in general deserve a bit more praise: the same praise I gave to guns and enemies animation, I'll give to sound effects.

There is a huge variety of guns and enemies, and they mostly sound unique, or at least unique within categories. For instance, most shotguns sound like shotguns without much variation. The same can be said of pistols: they mostly sound the same.
But then you get guns like the "lowercase r" gun, which shoots literal letters, and depending on your synergies, speaks words like "ghost", "bullet" or "pow". Or the aforementioned Unicorn Horn, which sounds like a harpsichord on steroids. Or the Patriot, which sounds like the most famous minigun-yielding scene in Rambo. Laser guns like Moonscraper have that futuristic audio cue, heavily inspired by Star Trek and Star Wars blasters.

In general, the guns didn't need to sound that good and diverse, but the fact that they do increase the moment-to-moment enjoyment by a big margin.



PLOT



Yeah, there's not much here. This is a roguelike, so plot is not the focus. That said, the game has some lore about the Gungeon, as well as some character-specific lore and what brought each one of them to the place. Some NPCs also have some light lore elements, and each enemy, item, and gun have their text entries in the Ammonomicon (the game's Pokedex, where all lore and functionality/ characteristics are collected) contributing to the lore.



Now it's real! Boss screen

Long story short, each Gungeoneer is trying to find the Gun That Can Kill The Past, so they can go back in time and fix some aspect of their lives that they screwed up.

It's not deep and it's not super relevant. It's basically window dressing to allow Gungeon shenanigans and enable gameplay. Players who are invested in the lore have a lot to dig into here, but that was not the case for me, and if it's also not for you, I won't judge. You're not missing much.

The only additional comment I have on the lore section is that the overarching gun theme of the game allows for some really good jokes from the writers. That includes saying Gungeon instead of Dungeon, saying Dragun instead of Dragon, the Gatling Gull boss being a gull that holds a gatling gun, the Ammoconda boss being an Anaconda, and I guess you get it at that point. The game literally NEVER stops throwing those jokes at you, and while it can be annoying at times, I generally liked it.

For a roguelike, the skeleton story we have here is more than enough and I'm happy with that.



GAMEPLAY



Now we're getting to the meat of this review. You might not like pixel graphics, you might not remember the audio, and you might not care about the lore, but if you like twin-stick shooters and/or roguelikes, this game is a drug.

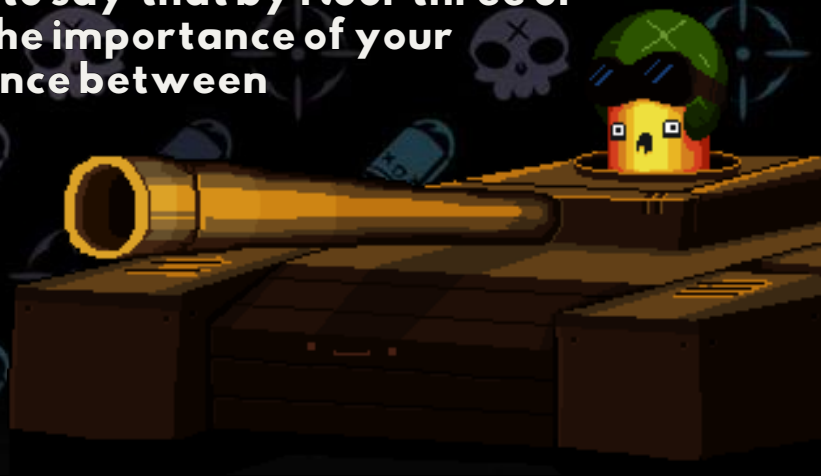
You initially have four characters to choose from, all with the same controls and skills but with different loadouts. Your loadouts are composed of guns, active items, and passive items.
Every character has a starting gun, which is a pistol with poor damage, clip size, and accuracy, but unlimited ammo.
Some characters also start with a secondary gun, which tends to provide some relief for bosses or harder rooms until you start finding new guns throughout the Gungeon. Active items are items whose benefits only apply when you trigger them - think of a healing item, a molotov cocktail you can throw, a temporary shield, or a lockpick. Passive items on the other hand have their benefits always enabled, like the Ammo Belt (which increases your ammo capacity permanently), the bullet powerups (which apply special effects to every bullet fired), the rings (which provide resistance to damage or status effects), and the ammolets (which provide special effects to blanks).



You return to the Gungeon, once more. Notice the UI elements on the top left - hearts, armor, blanks, keys and money.
Bottom left shows your active item, and bottom right shows your gun, ammo count, and clip size.

The different loadouts provide a good level of variety for your starting conditions. I particularly played a lot with the Hunter, whose loadout includes a Crossbow (a great gun to kill the first boss and clear the second level), and the Dog (which allows you to find extra keys and hearts throughout your run). I felt that it gave me enough firepower to consistently beat the first levels, and the extra rewards provided a nice buff as well.

At some point of my gameplay, I decide to try the Marine yet again, whose loadout does not include a secondary gun and forces you to rely on your starter gun for longer, but whose items are really interesting: he has the Supply Drop (an ammo pickup you can trigger at any point), Military Training (a passive that increases accuracy, making all weapons throughout the run more valuable), and an extra point of armor.
The first level was slightly harder with the Marine, but clearing it usually made progress on further levels easier than with the Hunter. There's some strategy in your choice of character, but it's reasonable to say that by floor three or four, your pickups outweigh the importance of your initial loadout and the difference between characters is smaller.



You'll also pick up keys and shells during your runs. There are several types of keys, but the most important are regular keys used for opening chests and secret rooms. You always start your runs with one key, and each floor will have at least two chests, so you'll need at least two keys per floor if you intend to collect all the loot you can in the run.
Chests come in different colors denoting different rarities for the items inside, with brown chests being the least rare and black chests being the rarest.
You also have rainbow chests and synergy chests, with different effects from regular chests. If you have one key and two chests of different colors, you're typically better off opening the highest quality chest first and destroying or ignoring the other. Chests are your main source of item/gun pickups and, hence, crucial for your power creep. After playing the game for a while you start to get a good sense of what you can find at each chest, when to use and when to save keys, when to save chests for later and when to destroy them, and most importantly, how to spot mimics, but I won't spoil any of it.






Defeating enemies and clearing rooms can reward you with shells, which are your currency in the runs. You can use it to buy items, guns, or pickups at the Gungeon shops. Managing your economy, choosing when and how many shells to use, and what items to purchase to complement your loadout is an extremely important skill that only develops with playtime.
The last pickup worth mentioning is ammo, which comes in green packs (which completely fill the ammunition for your current gun) and red packs (which fill some ammunition for your current gun and some for all other guns in your inventory).
With the exception of the starter guns, almost all other guns consume ammo and you need to keep an eye out and balance your ammo use to ensure you don't run out of bullets during a boss fight or a difficult combat room.
Another currency available in the game are Hegemony credits, which are won each time a boss is defeated and are used for meta-progression outside of runs. Outside of runs, you can interact with NPCs in the Breach (the hub area), and visit shops that only accept Hegemony credits. Everything you buy with Hegemony credits in the Breach becomes unlocked for use in future runs, so that's how you unlock more powerful weapons and



items for future runs. While this can improve your runs, it doesn't influence your starting loadout, so every run starts the same. What changes is how they can evolve.



The game map screen.

With mechanics out of the way, we can focus on the game feel! And this is my favorite part of the game. EtG is first and foremost a bullet hell game. That means that if you're good at evading damage, you'll be fine no matter what. Finding good guns, items, and synergies during your run can make your life easier, but if you know enemy attack patterns and can avoid damage, you'll probably beat the game one way or another.
A big part of getting good at the game is playing each floor again and again and again and memorizing enemy attack patterns, knowing which enemies to prioritize in each combat, learning how to use your environment (including tables, pits, and chandeliers), and knowing when to snipe enemies from afar versus when to quickly close the distance and get personal.
When I started playing the game I could barely clear the first floor and defeat the boss with my six starting half-hearts, but after 20 or so hours of playing I could consistently reach the third floor boss without taking any damage, just by learning enemy patterns and when to use keys, shells, and blanks.

Boss fights are an absolute riot, with bullets flying all throughout the screen, and sometimes it's worth it to stop shooting and just focus on dodging incoming damage. But play enough, and you will start defeating bosses without taking damage, cruising through floors, and soon enough, beating the game. The enemies change every run, the floor layout will never be the same twice, and the pickups and items will always be different.



You play a run, die, and once you start another run everything has changed, keeping the game very fresh. Every level you go down gets naturally harder, with harder-hitting enemies that take longer to kill and have more complex attack patterns, but with more guns and passives, every challenge can be conquered. And it's this feeling of learning how to counter every challenge the game throws at you that is addictive and keeps me engaged, even after having beaten the game and played for over 30 hours.

While I have written a lot, I haven't even started to cover the game secrets: tables, barrels, braziers, chandeliers, minecarts, traps, mini-bosses, shrines, event rooms, NPCs, the Cartographer, the Gunsling King, Winchester, secret characters and levels, the Master Rounds, assembling the Bullet That Can Kill The Past, secret modes like Turbo, Blessed, and Rainbow modes, the Bestiary (named the Ammonomicon), Hunt challenges, shortcuts, etc.
The list goes on, but I hope I was able to at least make you interested in the game enough to get started and check it out!

CONCLUSION

Enter the Gungeon is a phenomenal roguelike shooter.
No two runs are the same, and based on the number of guns alone (not counting item variety and synergies), this is clearly true. There's enough enemy variety to keep things fresh, an insane amount of post-game content and secrets, and it is HARD. It took me 52 runs to beat the game once, then I beat it again in the following run, and then I haven't gotten anywhere near the end in the subsequent seven runs. It looks good enough, sounds good enough, and has enough content to make any purchase worth it, even if it's not on sale.
Buy it, beat it, and please come back to tell me you took longer than I did, so I don't suffer from my skillz issue 😂

■ fernandopa

STORY	★★★☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★★★★★
SOUND	★★★★☆
FUN METER	★★★★★



NPC's always have something cheeky to say



Victory (?) screen

the good

- Runs are never dull, and short enough to keep you playing "one more"
- Meta-progression is noticeable, you're always achieving something
- Dialogue is really well-written and game is fun

the bad

- It's hard to strategize runs - you just react to what's given to you
- Some bosses are significantly harder than others on the same floor, which can hurt your run
- Steep difficulty can turn down some players

"It's not a hard game, you're just bad at it!"
RayOfLight



THE FINAL CUT

DISCO ELYSIUM

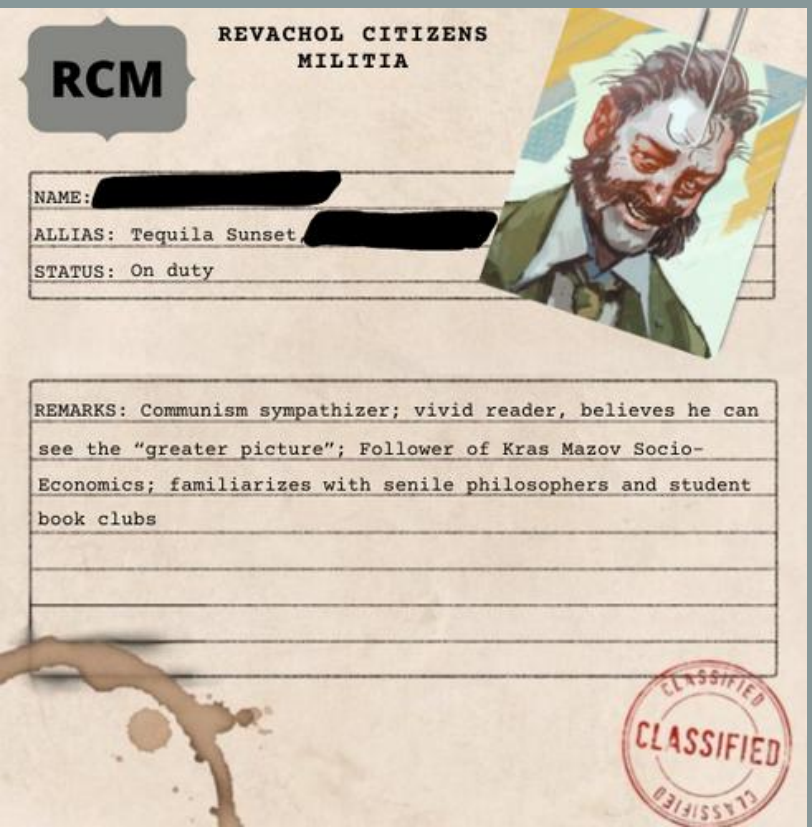
Disco Elysium is a story-based game with RPG elements written by Robert Kurvitz, who co-founded ZA/UM and developed the game with his team. The author is known for his book *Sacred and Terrible Air*, which takes place in the world of Elysium after the events in the game. During development, the name of the game was *No Truce With The Furies*.



The game was warmly accepted by lovers of the genre and quickly gained fame on the video game market, with multiple awards won for best narrative, best music, and best RPG. The only reason the game does not have overwhelmingly positive reviews on the Steam Store is because the original creators of the game, including the author, were pushed out of ZA/UM, leading to huge controversy within the company. Future projects related to the Disco Elysium have been scrapped, staff have been laid off, and the ZA/UM studio is most likely going to become a one-game studio forever.

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened.
Dr. Seuss

Therefore, let us celebrate that Disco Elysium has happened and that its development is complete. Now it's time for us to dig in and learn about the game with the help of the four horsemen of ideologies and their related copotypes.



Psychic Communist Honour-Cop



Before embarking on any journeys in Elysium, fellow comrades must select their sets of skills. The game offers three presets, known as archetypes, that are suitable for beginners. As a fellow builder of Communism, I opted for the sensitive archetype - to comprehend the nature of the new world we are building, one needs a strong soul. Alternatively, you can always build your own preset by allocating attribute points among the four available options:



Intellect - determines how smart you are



Psyche - governs sensitivity and emotional prowess



Physique - defines strength and physical condition



Motorics - dictates agility and bodily control



Splendid start of your journey in Disco Elysium

Attributes are made up of 6 subcategories each, called skills. They are the backbone of the game's mechanics. Skills define the success chance of performing certain tasks and unlock additional dialogue options. Active skill checks show the required level to pass them and your success chance, which is based on your skill level and additional modifiers. Red skill checks won't give you a chance to prepare. If you fail them now, they are gone forever. White skill checks, however, can be tried again. They lock after a failed attempt and can be unlocked by specific events or by leveling up the associated skill. It's best to make a build with clear strengths and weaknesses for the best experience.

But don't let mere numbers define who you are! This isn't a spreadsheet game; we've got style here as well. We've got copotypes! I know you have wondered what the Honour-Cop is all about. Well, I have chosen what defines my actions, because I am the most honourable cop in the entirety of Revachol, and I shall show it to others.

Eventually, your body and mind will suggest what cop type you could be. It would be entirely up to you to decide which style defines you best.

Tell me, have you ever spoken to a corpse? Not in a one-sided monologue, but in a full-blown conversation?! If that is the case, welcome to the club, buddy. We are able to find our way around obstacles toward objectives that others cannot imagine. That is pure talent. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. We still have the great Communism 2.0 to build.

You might wonder how I embraced communism. Well, after enduring several more days in this wicked world, one fateful night, I came up with a great idea: the resurgence of Communism. You see, that was the turning point for me. While you can be the follower of several ideologies simultaneously, I chose to entrust my faith solely to the true and righteous path. Kras Mazov's Socio-Economics shall guide this nation to rebuild itself, and the people of Revachol will be equal again. Our labor shall be dignified and fairly compensated.



Motorically-Superior Fascist Apocalypse-Cop

A fascist? No, no. I'm actually a traditionalist. A nationalist at best. The wording is somewhat stigmatized and, let's say, outdated. After all, our beloved town, Revachol, does not belong to Revacholians anymore. Truly, the good times are over. Now that we have got that matter sorted, let me tell you about the gameplay elements.



As you already know, the gameplay is largely based on the skills you chose at the start of the game. But what if the build you created was not something you entirely desired? Fret not, as there are ways to improve your stance in this world before it all falls to hell. You level up upon gaining 100 experience points, which are rewarded for completing tasks, exploring dialogue options, and learning about the environment around you. Level-up requirements do not increase over time.

Certain actions, locations, and dialogue might trigger a new Thought, which can be internalized in the Thought Cabinet. It's usually a problem that you're trying to overcome or understand.

The development of thoughts takes time and grants you temporary buffs or debuffs to your skills. Once the thought internalization is complete, you will see the solution to the thought you had and get a passive bonus. The number of activated thoughts is limited by available slots, which can be somewhat extended by using level-up points. Should the thought's bonuses not attract you anymore or you want to make space for a new thought to be developed, you can choose to forget a thought. This also costs a level-up point, so you better choose wisely which thoughts you wish to stick with since they will vanish forever.

Some locations are very warm and cozy



How does one not lose their head in all this madness? The answer is magnesium! If your morale is low, you can find salvation in tablets, which will restore the missing points of your Morale health. Once they get depleted, you will die - internally, of course. It happens to a lot of people, especially when the end is near. Well, what about being hit in the gut? Does that deplete your health? Yes, but it would deplete your Physical health, not the Morale one. I know, I know… There's just so much to bear, but I'm sure you will get the hang of it. You just have to have good reflexes like I do. That way you can avoid both physical and mental damage - most of the time. That is the only thing I am actually good at and it keeps me going. Nonetheless, your maximum health can be increased by spending skill points in certain skills if you feel that you might crumble easily.





Life-changing skill checks

Disco Elysium encourages exploration, pursuing your wildest intrusive thoughts, and going with the consequences of your actions. Wear them like armor - no one is sacred in this town after what happened after all. Make decisions and do not regret them. They might not have an effect at the moment, at least not a negative one, but later on you might find out about the consequences. And that is the only beauty in this God-forsaken world.



Every character comes with a stylish portrait














Intelligent Moralist
Sorry-Cop

- Sorry for what the dwellers of Revachol had to go through
- Speaks to himself more than other people
- Rather centrist and focuses on the people, rather than on the ideas

The story takes place in Revachol, the once-capital of the world, which had a revolution break out that was violently suppressed. That is no way to treat people, especially in dire times of need. After all, the fact that there are more hurt people in Revachol after the war is nothing to be happy about. I feel truly sorry for them. I am sure there is a way to blame this on me for doing something wrong - or not doing something right.

However, we are never alone in this world. We still have ourselves. By that, I mean we have our bodies with their quirks and our minds with all the madness. All of it will speak to you, and you will answer. Be wise - they are not your foes; they are here to help you. As the intelligent species, we have to embrace ourselves and seek no division between ideologies.

You only need to delve deeper into your emotions and thoughts. Find a way to make use of them in your new encounters. Sure, they might not always bring you to the best outcome you imagined, but that's the entire point of this game! Stay true to yourself, don't rush things, and go with the flow as the story unravels naturally around you. That being said, let's have a look at Elysium and the stories it contains.

Please take my word with a grain of salt. After all the alcohol I consumed, my memory got a little hazy. Sorry for that; it might not happen again. You begin your journey as a detective for the RCM, the local policing force. RCM is not as widely accepted in Revachol as you would imagine since you are answering to the current local occupying government. You will be met with contempt along the way as you explore the streets of the city.

You wake up at a hotel called the Whirling-In-Rags in a trashed place with complete memory loss and a hellish hangover. A beautiful start to your journey, I must say.







As you leave your room, you will meet the world, which presumably you should have known something about. But that's not going to happen any time soon. You are a detective, and there has been a murder. Together with your partner, you will embark on your struggle to solve the case and unveil the mysteries surrounding you.



Along the way, you will make decisions which may not have an immediate effect on your current situation but may in the near future. Depending on your skills, some options will be locked. If you have a psychic build, you surely wouldn't try to break a locked door. Better smell the air and see if there are any clues as to who could have the key to the door. Perhaps there's a corpse nearby that you could have a full-blown conversation with and ask about the key?



These might as well be hallucinations from your alcohol abuse, but if that gets the job done, then why not? All ways are acceptable as long as we get that door open.

The world around you will influence you. Finding certain things to read or stumbling upon shocking realizations as to why there are bullet holes in the walls - all such events might have an impact on your way of thinking. Sometimes your imagination will produce an entire scene being played out in your head. You found out that there's an entity called the Moralintern - and there you are, imagining a few senile men in their own office playing cards and deciding the fates of the local populace.





Ultraliberal Superstar Cop of Eccentric Physique

- Loves drugs, booze and cash
- Rebellious
- Believes he is some sort of a Superstar
- Free your mind and your ass will follow!



Yo, listen up, citizens of Revachol! This game offers you a persistently high level of unique art style that'll knock your sneakers off! Man, the locations, characters, and sound - all of it was crafted with care and soul. Oh, and let me tell you, this game experiments with a cocktail of emotions, just like the sweet Mamacitas on Saturday's disco. Certain tracks are locked for specific spots, but they switch up their groove depending on the time of day in-game. Personally, I would prefer more disco beats, but the melody is as smooth as a sunset nonetheless.

And those sound effects? Bam! Each skill check flies with ear-gasmic sound effects. All the music bits were performed by British Sea Power, and they nailed it flawlessly.

From melancholic whispers of hope to bright bursts of sunlight, the game's soundtrack is like the music of your weirdest yet coolest dreams.

Now, Disco Elysium is not about creating your own character. You get to play one of the coolest Superstar Cops in the history of mankind! Yeah, the story might get dark at times, but what would you expect from a detective in the Jamrock district? In Disco Elysium, clothes ain't just about style. They give you stat boosts. But hey, don't go swapping outfits every time there's a skill check. Sometimes you just gotta roll with the punches, comprende? It builds character and makes you stronger - just look at me! Embrace your failures, and let them fuel your cool journey through the streets of Revachol.

One thing you should forget about for sure is achievements, man! They are tough and cruel - don't let them hold the man down with this completionist nonsense. This game's about the experience, so don't sweat it. Let the good times roll and become a Superstar-Cop today!



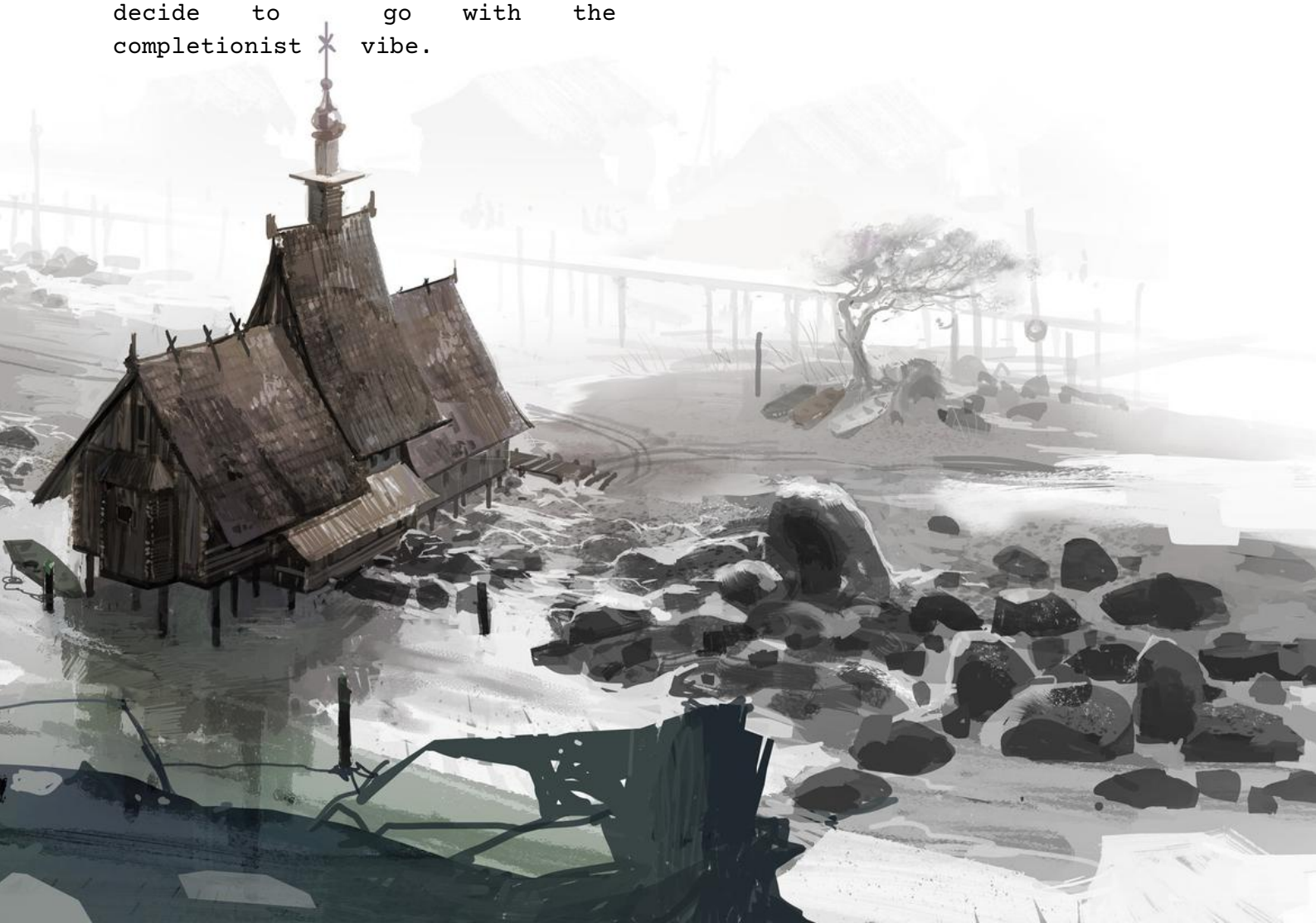
Some locations are very spiritual



Collage Mode lets you go wild with game's assets

Oh, and did I mention I'm a bit of an Art Cop myself? It's wild, I know! Let's talk about Collage Mode, baby. It's a treat for the true connoisseur. The mode lets you mix the game's assets and create your own masterpieces. Place characters, slap on some stickers, and set the mood with different times and weather - unleash the wildest ideas you believe the game was missing all along! And hey, there are even some puzzle achievements thrown in for good measure if you still decide to go with the completionist vibe.

Now that the circus is over, let me give you my personal advice. Follow the main story and don't rush the game. You will have plenty of time to wander off and explore the world. After all, you would not want to ask the pretty lady out while your partner is still around. Wait for your partner to be away for the day and go chase your minor errands - inspect every nook and cranny which you dared not to before. The game has a lot to offer, while the story remains the strongest treat.





As a token of the developers' creativity, they have created a Disco Elysium demake for the Nintendo Game Boy, which covers the first part of the game and is free to play online. A treat for the past gaming era's enthusiasts.

On an ending note, I would like to share about the omnipresent effect the game may have on the player. Disco Elysium teaches one to analyze one's thoughts - find where the good and bad ones are coming from, what their purpose is, and how to work with them. It's a strange concept that the game is based on, and stranger is the fact that it persists outside the game. A similar effect can be achieved after playing lots of Telltale games. In those games, after saying something bad to a character, you might tell yourself, "They will remember that". Or maybe it's just me. After all, I had to relive four different copotypes throughout my review.

I hope this has encouraged you to familiarize yourself with the game and give it a go. The story will definitely remain in your memories and hearts.

■ Sir Packet Lossalot

STORY	★★★★★
GRAPHICS	★★★★★
GAMEPLAY	★★★★☆
SOUND	★★★★★
FUN METER	★★★★★

the good

- Unbelievable esthetics
- Hilarious dialogue
- Unforgettable storytelling experience

the bad

- Being rude to NPC's will upset you
- Questionable publisher's ethics

Side quests deeper than some games' main storylines!



SNOWTOPIA

Are you looking for a simulation game about ski resorts?
A relaxing "management" game?
A cute game with a good art style?
Then you can try Snowtopia.



Snowtopia is a game about building, designing, and managing your own ski resort. There are seven maps to choose from, and they all share the same visual style. The visual is simple yet appealing, featuring some cute, cartoony-looking skiers that add to the game's charm. The interface is also simple, making it clean and intuitive, with easy navigation. However, Snowtopia lacks dynamic weather elements or day and night cycles, which could have added depth to the gameplay. Moreover, the only differences between the scenarios are some difficulty criteria like the ground homogeneity and the obstacle density. There are no scenario-specific objectives or anything that really makes them stand out among others: they all feel the same, making it somewhat repetitive.

One of the game's major problems is the lack of an economic system. There is no money or any kind of financial system in Snowtopia. All the buildings, workers, research, and upgrades are free. This makes the game feel casual, and it ruins the management aspect of the simulation. Almost any simulation/management/tycoon game has an economic system, and part of the fun is to balance the budget. The absence of a financial system makes the game less challenging, and the only downside about building a structure in a bad place is the time it takes to destroy and rebuild it in the right spot. The shops and restaurant structures are built only to meet certain criteria to please the visitors because no money is being made.

Snowtopia feels like a game stuck in sandbox mode. The problem with this is that its research system takes time to build. If the game wants to be a sandbox, everything should be unlocked at the start, not behind a time wall. It feels like an odd choice.

Overall, Snowtopia presents a cool idea and concept, but the execution is flawed. It lacks depth and strategic challenge, leaving the playing experience almost feeling like playing a mobile idle game. It is fun to play for a few hours—very few, to be honest—but it's a difficult game to recommend.



STORY	★☆☆☆☆
GRAPHICS	★★★★☆
GAMEPLAY	★☆☆☆☆
SOUND	★★☆☆☆
FUN METER	★☆☆☆☆

the good

- Graphics are cute and charming
- Simple user interface
- Casual gameplay

the bad

- Have to destroy structures to move them
- Not challenging
- Repetitive

Frosty snow-capped fun?



F2P

SWALLOW THE SEA

Swallow the Sea is a short exploration game developed by Talia bob Mair and Nicolás Delgado and published by ItsTheTalia. In this game, you play as an egg who is attempting to become born. To do this, you need to consume any lifeform that's smaller than you and absorb them to grow. However, this isn't a walk in the park, as in this mysterious sea, there are also other organisms who seek sustenance just like you do. Despite the danger, your end goal stays the same – complete your birth.

Birthed from the meaty, pulsating womb in the depths of the sea, your egg is provided with the non-consensual gift of life. With this gift, you're given the ability to simply move your egg through the sea while also being able to dash every few seconds. This allows you to run into your prey and absorb them while also allowing you to run away from the creatures who you should be wary of... for now.

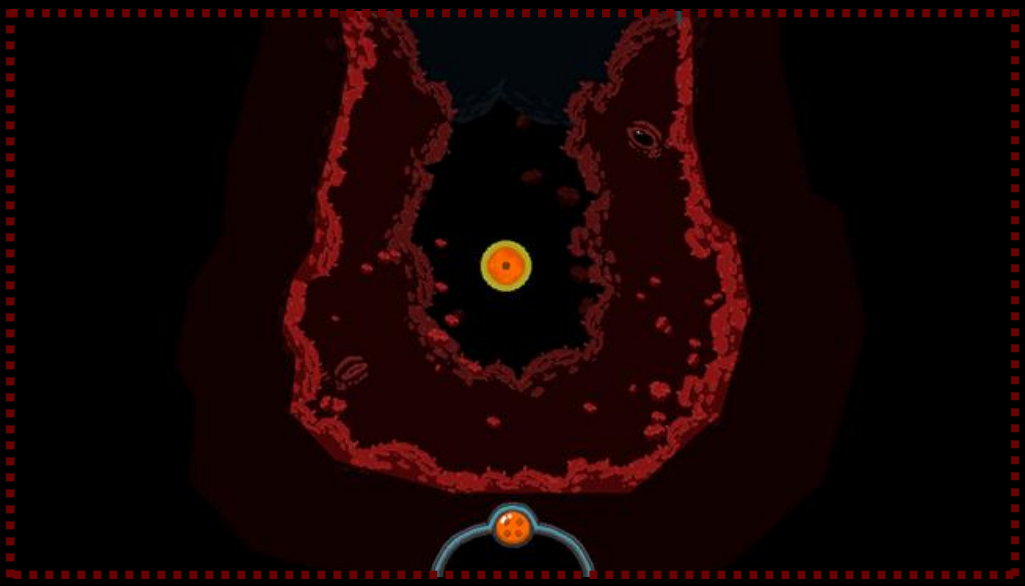


However ephemeral this stage of life may be, we are living it within this game and must embrace the task set before us. The sounds echoing throughout the matter surrounding our feeble egg are enrapturing yet oh-so disenchanting. The faint flow of water, the movement of other lifeforms, the consumption of unfortunate souls, and the indifferent nature of life all envelop you in one nice package.

And what are sounds without the felicitous pairing of sight? As you'll notice, the environment you'll find yourself in is somewhat alien in nature. Some areas throb, while others enshroud. Rocky outcrops, palpating masses of flesh, and hazardous spikes cover this little world. The world is what you make of it and is indifferent to whatever you may feel. It is presented wonderfully, and you can really feel the essence of what the graphics were meant to evoke within the player.

This game is an overall joy. It's a piece that evokes a sense of primal emotion in such a small package. I highly recommend giving this short game a try, as I doubt you'll be disappointed if you were to spend an intimate moment with it.

■ VinroyIsViral



"I am but an egg waiting to be born. A selfish desire I will achieve through consumption."



Screenshot of the month



Oleksyuk
Ruined King – A League of Legends Story

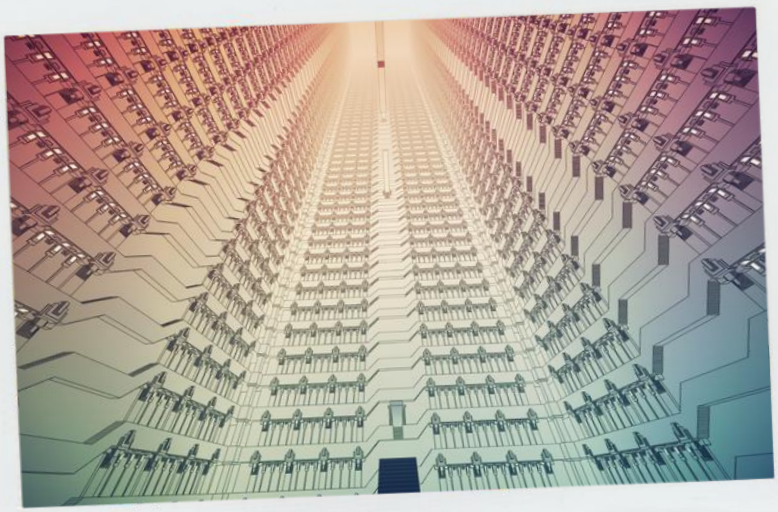
Honorable mentions



adam1224
Control



Zelrune
The Silent Swan



jahas10
Manifold Garden

Tekken (2010)

Let's go back in time, about ten years. Ariana Grande debuted on Nickelodeon, the top song of the year was Kesha's TikTok, and Apple released the first iPad. Truly different times. Amidst all of this, a film was released, which is forgotten by many, but despite everything, it went down in the history of "gaming cinematography." But not necessarily positively...

The movie adaptation of Tekken was announced back in 2002, but the development started in 2007, around the premiere of Tekken 6. Even though I was still a kid, I remember it being a pretty big deal. The entire series, together with games such as Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat, or Virtua Fighter, can be considered a cult classic, taking into account the entire fighting genre. In addition to its reputation, the Tekken adaptation also made sense in terms of a very developed plot. Many thought that it didn't take much to bring it to the big screen. But yeah, do you remember that it was really different times? In the late 2000s and early 2010s, there were quite a few video game-based movies, and all of them had one thing in common - they were horrible. Many of us still remember flops such as Max Payne, Hitman, the Street Fighter movie about Chun Li, or the legendary filmography of Uwe Boll... and as you can imagine, the Tekken movie couldn't be different.



The plot itself is a bit "different" - the world is split up between a few corporations; Tekken Corp. controls the entirety of North America and, to calm down the oppressed inhabitants, decides to create the King of Iron Fist Tournament. So, each of the world's superpowers chooses their own fighter to compete. What is the reward? Fame and money, of course. Our protagonist is Jin Kazama, a young man trained by his mother who lives in the slums of Tekken City. One night, Jin is targeted by the militia patrolling the city, and because of that, his mother, caught in the crossfire, dies. From this point, he vows to take revenge on all of the Tekken Corp, with Heihachi Mishima at its head.

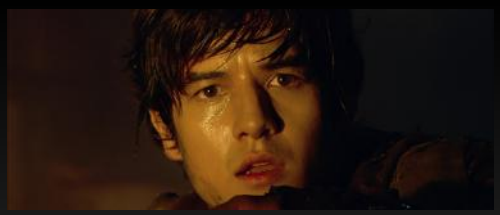
If you played any of the Tekken games, you can clearly see that something's off, and by "something," I mean most of the things. A variety of dictators rule the whole world, and the whole point of the tournament is totally different. And, of course, "TEKKEN CITY!" But trust me, there's more... from characters with absolutely different fighting styles or Heihachi and his son having kind of a good relationship to one of the characters being somehow older than his own mother. The bad plot is not the only thing that this film can be criticized for. Most of the cast's acting skills are almost amateur, the characters look like bad cosplayers, the music choices are horrendous, and the fighting scenes are just bad. You know, the scenes that should be the showcase of this movie...

So why am I even talking about this weird creation? I believe that many people, including me, just like to watch "a movie so bad it's almost funny" from time to time. And trust me, Tekken is exactly that type. It is considered by many as the worst video game adaptation ever. For almost 90 minutes, you can see that everything is just wrong. But hey! That's some kind of achievement, right?

So yes, this is my recommendation to all of my fellow movie masochists. If you want to either have the worst video game movie experience of your life or just want to laugh and cringe for an hour and a half, just watch it. Hell, you can even play a drinking game where you take a shot every time you see that something is either completely wrong or just looks bad. But if anything happens, I am not responsible for any physical or mental health damage.

P.S. In 2014, the sequel to that movie, Tekken 2: Kazuya's Revenge, was released, but even I'm not brave enough to watch it.

Personal Score: 5% (but 95% on the "so bad it's great" scale) ■ jahas10



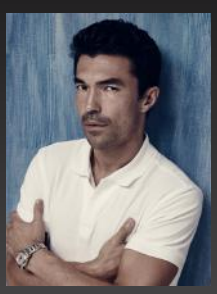

Jon Foo



Kelly Overton



Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa

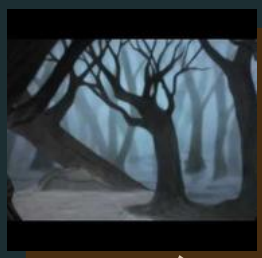


Ian Anthony Dale



Darrin Dewitt Henson

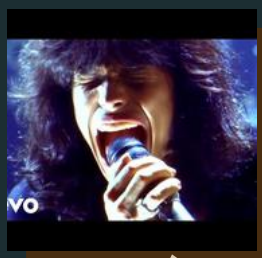
SGM's Playlist



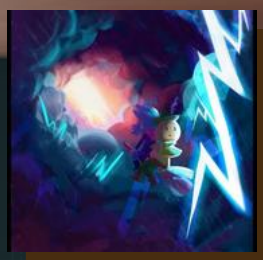
La Volpe



Celtic Guardian



adaml224



Chocolate



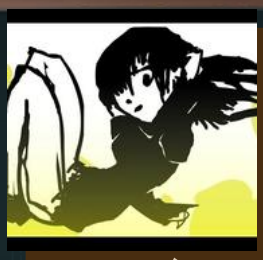
PsychoApeMan



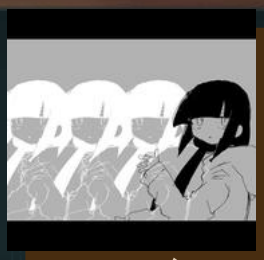
Abubis



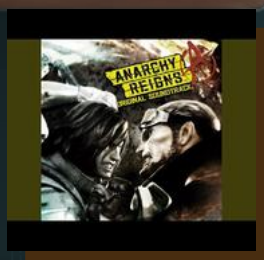
SlickWally



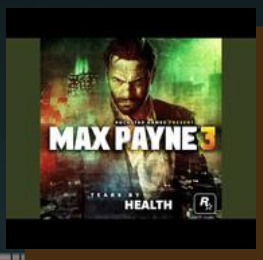
Zelrune



jbondguy007



VinroyIsViral



sirpacketlossalot



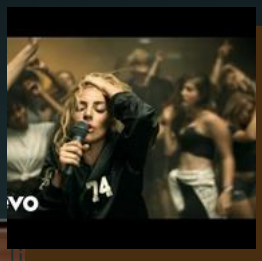
funnyduck



kiiroichi



AtomicBlonde



Fallen Kal

CREDITS AND THANKS!

Well, it's about time we wrap this up for now. The return of the mag has been one hell of a journey, and we definitely couldn't have done it without the help of our wonderful team, our very generous contributors, our patient editors, our creative designers and in general of all the people who collaborated on the creation of this magazine.
But let's be more specific! We want to extend our thanks to:

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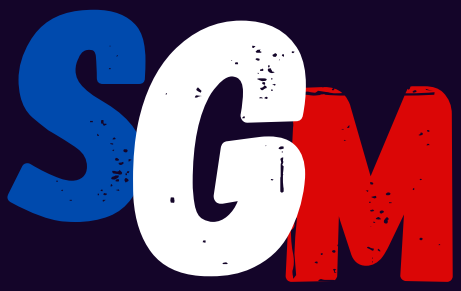
-WallyKazam, for giving us TOHU
-sleepytheham, for giving us Disco Elysium, A Juggler's Tale, and Gorogoa
-Chocolate Van Candy, for giving us Snowtopia,
-AtomicBlonde, for giving us Bastion
-ManlyMeatMan, for giving us Coffee Talk
-Sir Packet Lossalot, for giving us Little Misfortune
-RayOfLight, for giving us Enter the Gungeon
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-schmoan, for giving us Nine Witches
-Alpha2749, for giving us Storm Boy

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-RayOfLight, for editing Gorogoa, Noxious Weeds, Disco Elysium, Mail Time, Nine Witches and Enter the Gungeon

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-kiiroichi, for designing the Coffee Talk review, and other "extra" sections


SGM