



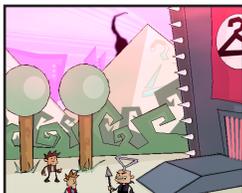
INDIE GAME MAG

independent game reviews, news, + more

Issue 8: January/February 2010

GRATUITOUS SPACE BATTLES

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Time Gentlemen, Please



Machinarium



Euforia



Fat Princess



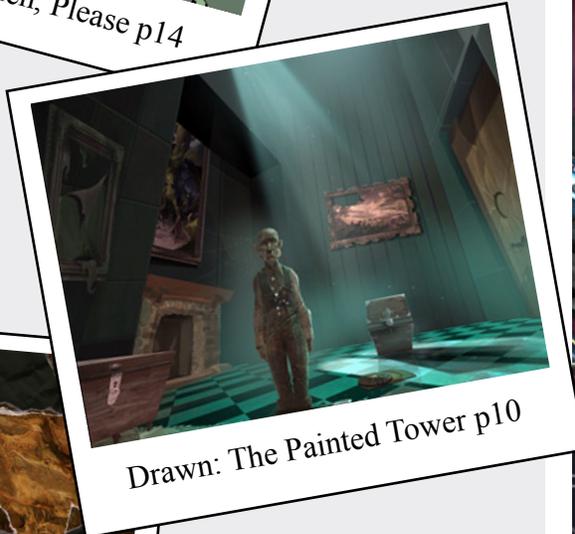
And Yet it Moves

Indie Game Magazine

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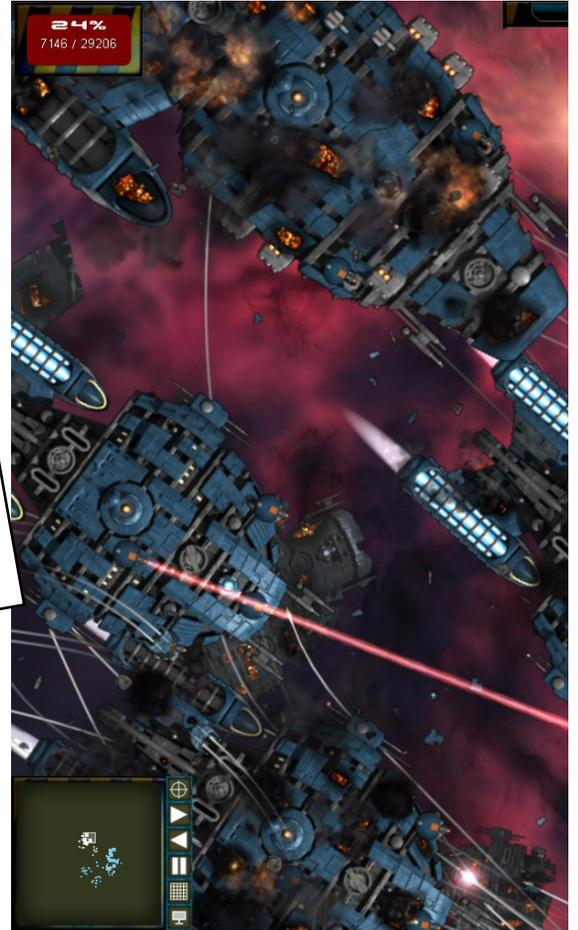


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Good Strategy....Better Destruction



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About our Reviews

We rate all of our games based on their graphics, gameplay, sound, and lasting appeal. Each category is given a score on a scale of 1-10 (10 being perfect and 1 being horrendous). The average of these scores is tallied to give each game a percentage score and grade (A thru F). Games are more than the sum of their parts, so we do adjust our average scores based on our final assessment of the game, its appeal, creativity, uniqueness, and overall value.

A: 90-100%	D: 60-69%
B: 80-89%	F: 0-59%
C: 70-79%	

About our On Trial Reviews

Most game demos are content or time limited and only contain about an hour or so of gameplay. We rate these indie game demos on a quick 1-10 scale:

- 10: Perfection - Buy this Game NOW!
- 9: Fantastic - Buy it
- 8: Great - Download Immediately
- 7: Good - Try the Demo
- 6: Average - Solid but Forgettable
- 5: Mediocre - Below Average
- 4: Pretty Bad - Has Major Flaws
- 3: Bad - Not worth the Download
- 2: Terrible - A Chore to Play
- 1: Abysmal - Barely Playable



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Getting Paid, Earning a Living in a Free World Modern Models: Indie Gaming's path to riches and success

Part 2: In-Game Advertising

In-Game Advertisements

The good . The buzz word 31-years in the making, in-game advertisement has been widely discussed for the damage and benefits it offers the game industry. It first showed its controversial head in Scott Adam's (ever the prankster) "Adventureland". My first memory was with the original Jet Moto, which I blame for my life-long idealism for Mountain Dew and Butterfinger. Even now, as a healthy-eating twenty-something, I gaze at these items in the market and see the plastering of the brands on my hover-racers jacket. If there is any proof to the "get'em young" theory of marketing – I am it.

Younger still, I would have discovered IGA if I ever picked up one of the copies of "Zool" that KB Toys was stuffed with back in 1994 and its marketing tie-in with 1990's candy craze Chupa Chups. Every kid in my school would have them at school and the teachers would give them out as prizes or gifts; their creamy ice-cream flavorings and later, sour soda making the mouths of children water back in the nineties. Hard to give credit for a phenomenon like Chupa Chups to a game like Zool, but with the amount of copies KB Toys had in the nineties, and the amount of systems it appeared on... who could judge? Oh, and according to Massive Inc via wikipedia.com, IGA generated \$56 million in revenue in 2005, due to dynamic (time and audience-based) ads, but could grow up to as much as \$1.8 billion in 2010.

But... With the amount of space shooters,

platformers and generally surreal experiences in indies, most of those game worlds do not lend themselves to IGA, unless it's meant to be tongue-in-cheek. And it's hard to imagine Coke throwing money towards a pixel platformer when there are so many other, presently mainstream, avenues.

IGA also has few successful stories, and its mere presence seems to harm the experience instead of improve it. Remember navigating the large AXE body spray sign in "Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory" (what?). Ever pull a Coke can out of the ground in "Pikmin"? How fast did that send you back to reality? IGA seems to work best at destroying the immersion that gamers feel when playing a game, which is ironically the opposite from what developers say when deciding to use in-game advertisement. And when a game is old hat and outdated, that realism is pulled out from under it. When "The Matrix: Online" was in its twilight years, advertisers pulled out like it was the style, leaving players with miles of empty "advertise here" billboards that were both obnoxious and a sign of the game's inevitable end.

Save our indies? In-game advertising is best left to sports simulators.

In-Game Commercials

The good . While there hasn't been a game or technology that can input commercials into a game the same way that television does its shows, the benefits to a developer would be lucrative. Imagine a mix of

google's ad sense and a Hulu-like 30-second video break. The breaks could be on a per-game system, between levels, at save points, after dramatic points or remaining idle for too long. Whatever. The important thing would be to not break up gameplay mid-play, but during a time when players know that it is separated from actual gameplay, just like it is common knowledge that commercials are a necessary evil of television. This could also present developers with the option of selling a purchasable version or a free version supported by these ads.

But... With a Google ad-sense model (every click on an ad registering a micro-cent of profit for the website owner), developers would need a large audience to see a decent return. With a traditional t.v. method, aided by a company like Massive, advertisers would have to expect lower returns while a game develops momentum and also accept a lower audience than mainstream media. Over on newgrounds.com, user PsychoGoldfish invented the NG flash ad system which allws developers to put ads into their games (loading screens and such). The problem is that a user needs hundreds of thousands of ad clicks before it can make a profit. This puts the power in the advertisers instead of a clean split between both parties.

Save our indies? Potentially, but the scene would have to grow before this method is viable and long term.

- Taylor Hall

Beginners Guide to Indie Game Development Part 2 of 6

LESSON 2:

If You Build It, They Will NOT Find It

By Mike Gnade

Online marketing is tough and very few Indies do it well. Lesson 1 advised newbies to wait on their grand idea and start by cloning an existing game. One of the many reasons this is a good tactic is because it's your first step in marketing.

By copying an existing indie or casual game, you will be assured that there is an audience willing to pay to enjoy the game mechanic. You'll even know which portals and websites to submit your game to for publishing and distribution once it is completed, but more on that topic later. Cloning cuts out a lot of the preparation, market studies, and prototype work and gets you right to coding and marketing your game. These are the two things that a successful indie developer spends the majority of their time on. It's assumed that an indie developer does a lot of coding, but a lot of beginners miss out on the marketing.

Marketing can begin before you've even settled on what game you're producing. These next couple tips aren't required per se, but they certainly will help you if you plan to sell your game on your own website. Obviously, if you want that to be an option, you have to have a website. It's never too early to create a website and start generating some traffic. Starting a development blog can be a great marketing tool as well since you can start generating excitement

for your title by announcing the game (when you finally decide on it), revealing screenshots, or even releasing alpha and beta builds. If you want to make some money while you code, you could even sign up as an affiliate with a larger game portal or with other indie developers and sell games on your site. Don't expect big sales, but if you're decent at marketing and get a steady traffic flow you can make something.

Another reason to start your website ASAP is because that the longer a site has been in existence, the better its page rank will be, the more incoming links it will have, and the more time you'll have to optimize your pages with the search engines. Starting your website now will give you time to get feedback and ensure the site looks professional; People won't buy anything from a sketchy or unprofessional website. Building a website, expecting people to find it and releasing a game on it is never a winning strategy. A website is not a brick and mortar store; people won't drive by it and stop in. You have to market it and it's never too early to start.

Once you have a website, market the hell out of it. But a link in your forum signature, submit it to the free online directories, post about it on facebook, myspace, twitter, etc. Start networking and connecting with potential customers. You can build a fanbase and

community for your game before it is even released. Your website is a crucial marketing tool. Generating traffic for your site and excitement for your game will assure better sales.

Is creating a website and marketing it effectively crucial to making an indie game? No. But to be truly independent, a developer shouldn't rely on a portal or publisher to peddle their game. Distributing your game thru other channels can be great, but you pay for it. You'll collect 90%+ of a sale on your own website, with a fraction taken out from the payment processor. Most publisher deals will only give you around a 40% cut because you are using their marketing power, web traffic, expertise, and brand. Don't let the publishers and portals make or break you.

HOMWORK ASSIGNMENT:

Build your Website – optimize it, start a blog, make it look professional, start selling games on it by affiliating with a portal or other indie game developers.

Market your Website – build a fanbase and community for your game. Create excitement before it's even released.

INTERVIEW WITH MAKO PUDDING



Adventure gaming's mechanics have rarely seen innovations in the last decade, but that hasn't stopped it's most ardent fans from putting out a steady flow of new adventures in the indie game scene. Though, while the classic gameplay remains similar to its forefathers, the graphics and presentation of these titles are some of the prettiest and ground-breaking of any medium.

Gretel and Hansel, by development team Mako Pudding, digitized watercolor paintings and came out with a visual style that is both fresh and new. The developers were nice enough to tell about the development of their style, the difficulties of a small team and what they love about adventure gaming.

As a sort of strict Adventure title, what did you want to do different from the past?

We wanted to create a game that had a highly interactive environment but felt influenced by the character (Gretel) instead of the player. Many recent online adventure games allow players to click on random objects on the screen regardless of the position of their character. We feel a disconnect is created this way, where the player becomes an unseen force rather than the character onscreen. This can lead to very enjoyable gameplay in certain cases, but we wanted to give the player the sense that they are Gretel, rather than Gretel's helper.

Clearly the graphic style is striking? How hard and long did the process take?

Surprisingly not very long. As you can see from the images I've provided the original art direction was going to be one that was much more realistic and straight forward. However after working with artist David Bae, he decided to work with water colors, which allowed for fairly rapid creation of assets that were very striking and unique from most online games.

How long did it take to decide on the graphic style?

It took about two days of concept work to get to the initial decision to go with watercolors. However the final style was tweaked for several months as the game was being designed and coded.

How did you decide on your distribution?

Being a very small team, we felt releasing the game online through the Flash portals would allow us to receive lots of feedback and plays on a very small budget. We are both huge fans of online flash games. Newgrounds was generous enough to provide us with sponsorship.

What came 1st the game's style or story?

The story, we wanted to use a classic fairy tale that hadn't been explored as much in games. One that is naturally dark and filled with danger and wonder, and the tale of Hansel and Gretel fit this perfectly.



How many members are there in the development team?

Just three of us. David and I (Mako) split the tasks of coding, game design, sound effects, animation and art between us. The music was handled by Mike Rudolph

How long was production?

The majority of the game was completed in two months during August and September of 2008. Various forces kept the game from completion until recently.

What is your proudest moment in the game?

Probably the death where the mother kills Gretel. It took several days to get the animation right, but its chilling and totally unex-

pected. Other than that, the conversation between the parents that Gretel spies on.

What process in development took the longest?

Writing the logic for how Gretel interacts with her surroundings. Since the environments are totally organic it means every interaction is custom and comes with its own set of logic and problems. Each interaction needs custom animation as well.

Who handled the soundtrack?

The soundtrack was handled by Mike Rudolph (<http://mikerudolph.net/>) He composed all the music for the game.

What is it about 2D that seems so pure for gaming?

I think much of it has to do with the focus of a single point of view. 3D games can be incredibly immersive but the camera is often an obstacle rather than an aid for players. A single point of view provides clarity that allows players and developers to focus on goals that are clearly depicted visually.

Any aspirations to jump to consoles with upcoming releases? Could a game like this work on the Indie part of XBL?

Wouldn't that be nice! We believe it could and should. It would just take more content and the power of a console to allow the game to run smoothly full screen. Flash often has trouble running games fullscreen.

Any indie titles you are looking forward to?

I had been waiting for years for Machinarium by Amanita Design, which was finally released a few weeks ago. It didn't disappoint and was totally inspiring and enchanting. Everyone should play it.

What is your favorite game that you have developed so far?

Well I'd have to say the Gretel and Hansel series has been my favorite. Its been a pure joy to work on.

Anything else upcoming?

Other than parts 2 and 3 for Gretel and Hansel nothing I can talk about yet, but I'll keep you posted!

- Taylor Hall



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#1 Game Demo - Machinarium - 9.25

Zak: 10

Machinarium by Amanita Design is a perfect 10 in my book. This puzzle game features perfect graphics and great sounds effect. The game ran smooth with no technical issues and is reminiscent of Amanita's previous Samorost games, but set in a raw steampunk world. As for the story, the player begins with a robot which has to solve puzzles and sneak back into the city from whence he came. The puzzles vary in difficulty, but there are a few clues to help the player along. You just need to know where to look. The game features some beautiful and quality hand-drawn artwork

and I must say the whole package won me over. Go get it!

Peter: 8

Machinarium is a hand-drawn point-and-click adventure about a small robot's journey. Nobody talks, but the visuals and sound effects give you a pretty good sense of what's going on. The little guy reacts slowly to your controls, but that could just be because the demo is played in a browser. The three rooms presented in the demo are from the prologue, and you

have to help the robot put himself together, fool a guard and sneak into a city. The puzzles are pretty clever, and each puzzle serves to advance the plot, which isn't always the case in adventure games. If I were a fan of this kind of game, I would probably own this now.

Colt: 10

It has sentiment without being sentimental. It's Fantastic Planet, Dystopian, Orwellian. It begins where Samorost left off. It oozes emotion and mood from simple gestures and thought bubbles, our hero and his woman holding hands. Its puzzles are clever and rewarding, even after a half-hour of thinking. It has heart, under the alienating and amazing music, the industrial prison; it's a loyal dog laying at your feet, the warm feeling after slugging back bourbon. It's name is Machinarium. Pleased to meet you.

Andrew: 9

The unique visual appeal of this game is practically undeniable. This dystopian junkyard adventure game has tons of appeal, and a great grasp on the aspects of the genre that make it great. Beyond just the visuals though, the sound design in this game is incredible. The soundtrack is eerie and atmospheric, and the minimal sound effects bring creatures to life like you wouldn't think possible. All of this works together to bring to life a world that is at once bleak and grim, and yet interesting and brimming with robotic life. Plus the demo doesn't even require a download so there's no excuse not to give it a try.

Andrew: 10

Windowsill is a puzzle game of the most abstract variety. You have to get the square peg through the hole above the door. That's all you need to know. The rest is derived from contextual clues, and organic puzzle solving of the highest quality. It's got a visual style that would make an abstract painter proud. And the game plays like a really neat toy. You keep pressing all the buttons because you want to see what it'll do next without ever giving a second thought to wondering why it's there or what it's for.

Zak: 9

Vector Park's Windowsill is a wonderfully put together game. The graphics are clean and simple; yet convey a superior quality of artistry. I absolutely loved the style of this game, great job Vector Park! Gameplay was simply point and click with the player interacting with the environment to achieve the level's goal, that is: finding the little box that opens the next door. Some puzzles can be pretty complex, requiring multiple steps. The sound effects and music were great. The game sported some pretty original puzzles. I just really wished the demo lasted longer than it did. If you like point and click puzzle games, pick this one up!

Ben: 8

It's rare to see something as wonderfully creative and fun as Windowsill made in Flash. It's almost a shame to review it; Windowsill feels like something that should be stumbled upon on the internet. It's not even obvious it's a game at first, until you discover it's first "room" isn't merely a collection of Flash toys, but a cleverly disguised puzzle. Each of the subsequent rooms house equally clever challenges. It's a generous demo, too, offering up half of the game, then asking three dollars for the rest. It could be very well worth the money to find out where Windowsill takes you.

Peter: 7

It's a pretty confident developer that gives away half its game in the demo. The first five rooms of Windowsill are free, and they're a little weird. You have to find the cube in each room and use it like a key to open a door. Some rooms require



2: Windowsill - 8.50

a lot of experimentation, but others just throw a lot of objects at you that do something, but nothing useful, and you have to sort through them to find the cube. If you can, download Windowsill. It runs pretty slow in the browser, and the art only comes alive when the game runs at a proper speed.



3: Zuma's Revenge - 8.00

Zak: 9

PopCap has brought back the hugely successful Zuma franchise in the sequel: Zuma's Revenge. For those who have been on another planet, Zuma's Revenge like its predecessor, is a match

three game. The player controls a frog which has to match three of the same colored orbs before the "orb snake" reaches the Tiki-like head. At the end of each stage, there is a main boss which must be defeated before progressing. The gameplay is exactly the same as its predecessor and honestly why change what works? However, this sequel follows up with some better graphics, more levels and different game modes. It's surprisingly addictive and sure to please anyone who was a fan of the original.

Peter: 8

Zuma's Revenge takes the idea of Bust A Move and straightens it out. Instead of a descending stack of bubbles, colored marbles roll down a path that circles a frog. The marbles move slowly down the path, but stop when you shoot a marble between two the same color. This either stops the movement or causes the marbles further down the line to roll back and knock the whole line a bit further up the path, which is pretty satisfying. The gameplay isn't terribly new, but it is well executed, and the boss fights are quite a bit of fun. If you've ever had Snood installed on your machine, Zuma's Revenge is worth a look.

Andrew: 8

What can I say? This is still Zuma, and if you like Zuma, you're going to love Zuma's revenge. This is still one of the finest match-three puzzle games around, and this time it's got the production values to match. The aesthetic style is still right on the money, and the feedback garnered from matches is excellent. For the first time in my life I can say that I actually cared about making combos happen, simply because the effects are so nice that it genuinely seems like a big deal. There's still few finer than Zuma, and for good reason.

Ben: 7

Oh, Zuma. How many hours have people wasted on you playing with their cell phones and so-predictable mp3 players? This is the same game you're used to: fire colored balls into a line of the same colored balls to keep said line from reaching the end of the line. This PC title has some nice graphics (although they can slow down machines at critical moments), and exciting and creative boss battles. But, even though it's fun, 20 bucks seems a little steep judging from the gameplay in the demo.

4: Euforia: 7.66

Mike: 7

Euforia's ambient gameplay, artsy visual style and unique setting of fighting seedlings on asteroids are all positives. Unfortunately, this unique spin on Real Time Strategy never really came together for me gameplay wise. The ambient world is very enjoyable, but simplistic gameplay plagues this game's potential. Its uniqueness certainly warrants a try, but at \$20 this isn't for everyone.

Andrew: 8

Euforia wins big points with me for being not just a unique (finally) take on the RTS genre, but also for having a gorgeous visual style that sets it apart from every other game on the market. The unique RTS style is interesting, but not entirely successful. The demo doesn't show any need for much strategy other than attacking en-masse, although the last level hints that may change later in the game. The final product has the potential to turn out utterly brilliant, but as of now I remain a bit skeptical.

Peter: 8

Fighting flora is at the center of Euforia. A race of grey seedlings competes with your seedlings to colonize habitable asteroids. The game is sparse and laid back, with uncomplicated space battles you can control with one hand. Your seedlings turn into trees that defend the asteroids or produce more seedlings, which then travel to other asteroids to battle bad seeds or populate. The demo is fun, but doesn't offer much of a challenge. Just wait and build up an army of seedlings because the grey seeds don't seem to fight back. If they did, Euforia could be very interesting.



5: Widget TD - 7.00

Colt: 8

Boy this is fun. Tower Defense with some rad inclusions, like a user controlled camera and

first-person mode. Even though a single tower, and a player with steady aim, can handle the first few waves solo, when the difficulty ramps up FP is a lifesaver. Awesome animation, inventive towers, great sound effects, a staggering number of user-made and downloadable content; Widget exceeded my first thought of another entry in a tired genre. Woohoo.

Ben: 7

Widget TD is a standard tower defense game, save for one brilliant innovation: any of the units placed on the map can be commandeered and completely controlled by the player, often giving the unit augmented abilities. The enemies and units are pretty standard in their variety (the enemies have different speeds and HP, the units have different ranges and a couple of debuffs), but the unit-piloting hook is game-changing, and a lot of extra innovation is necessary. Both the visuals and the audio are completely unimpressive, though.

defensive structures and hope they're enough to keep wave after wave of attackers under control. The only mechanic WidgetTD adds to the mix is the ability to take control of any one tower. This brings up a first person cockpit view, and you can aim for the enemies you want. For some towers, this isn't much use, but from the cockpit, your basic gun tower can hit anything on the map. The difficulty seems a bit out of whack though; creeps' hit points ramp up far faster than you can upgrade your towers. Otherwise it's a strong entry for the genre.

Andrew: 6

WidgetTD is a surprisingly difficult tower defense game that in most ways blends into the gigantic pack of me-too tower defense games that have flooded the market in the past few years. However, Widget stands out by allowing you to get into the turrets and fire them manually. While the strategic benefit of doing this is debatable, this polygonal strategy game earns points for originality, and yet loses points for unoriginality. One innovation is not enough when you're competing in a genre of games so incredibly identical. It's certainly not bad, but this is mostly stuff you've already seen before.

Peter: 7

WidgetTD is a simple tower defense game with one map that's playable in the demo. Like any other tower defense game you build and upgrade



5: The Painted Tower - 7.00

Ben: 8

Drawn has beautiful artwork, graphics, and animation, rivaling or surpassing many mainstream commercial titles. It's classic point-and-click adventure format doesn't have many surprises, but a lack of innovation is more than made up for with wonderfully creative worlds. There aren't many challenging puzzles in the first hour of the game (dumbed down even more by a overly-generous and way-too-tempting hint system), which unfortunately waters down another triumph of the game; the narrative is expertly told, and really makes the player feel like the mysterious Princess Iris's life is in there hands. It's just a shame that there isn't more challenge in the mission at hand.

Zak: 8

Drawn: The Painted Tower (available from Big Fish Games) is a good adventure game. The gameplay, like other casual adventure games, is pretty basic. The player has to collect, combine and use items to solve puzzles. The story involves rescuing a girl from the top of tower, by working through various puzzles and worlds within paintings. There are heaps of mini-puzzles that take the player through the dark world of the Painted Tower. The greatest feature of the game has to be the great artwork, voice over work and music. On all accounts, the game was a good time.

Peter: 6

Drawn: The Painted Tower is an uneven point-and-click adventure game buoyed by wonderful art direction and strong voice work. You enter a tower and are charged with finding a girl by her previous caretaker. The girl can turn her paintings into real worlds, so half the quests take place inside children's paintings. This premise is cool, but the game doesn't follow through; you'll stumble over unclear objectives and an unwieldy inventory. The game gives out hints and lets you skip puzzles, but those challenges should be fun in and of themselves, not something to get through to see more of the game.

Andrew: 6

Drawn: The Painted Tower is the next in a long lineage of assembly line adventure games produced by Big Fish Games. This title is very similar to many of these other titles, and the gameplay mechanics haven't changed a bit. You travel through a mysterious place trying to solve mysteries and unlock doors. It's pretty standard stuff. The art style is pretty great though, and it's definitely pleasing to the eyes. Give this a try if you like the adventure genre, but don't expect to be surprised in the least.



7: Dangerous High School Girls in Trouble - 6.50

Colt: 6

First off, I love the aesthetic, flashy feathers and bold boas. The writing is clever and full of time-piece jargon. But the thrill dissipates with each elementary puzzle (Fill in the Blank, a lite form of "B.S.") that would fit well with Windows pre-installed card games. I guess I expected Laura Bow and got Dick Tracy. Though I am still curious to see exactly how much Danger these Girls can get into.

Zak: 6

Mousechief's Dangerous High School Girls in Trouble isn't the typical puzzle game; actually it has elements of various genres. In the game the player builds a team of 1920's era girls with different abilities, like an RPG, to interact with various characters in the pursuit of solving a mystery. The style of the game was unique, combining various elements with some interesting hand drawn graphics. I think the gem of the game lies with the originality and script writing, which was humorous at times. However, something kept me from loving this game. It was almost like the game tried too hard to integrate the various genres.

Peter: 7

The high school girls at the center of Dangerous High School Girls are trying to discover what's going on in their high school. The game takes place on a board game, but your girls confront other characters through a series of minigames. Characters level up in skills like Popularity and Rebellion, which make them more effective at taunting, fibbing, flirting and exposing. The games are easy at the start, and they'd probably get repetitive as time went on. But the dialogue is sharp, so the story might be worth the hassle.

Andrew: 7

While it's certainly true that Dangerous High School Girls In Trouble is one of the most unique games released in a long while, the gameplay doesn't quite live up to those standards. It's still good fun, but it's carried solely on the back of its amazing concept, not through depth of gameplay. The mystery storyline is mostly played out in dialogue trees and minigames which, while novel, don't quite live up to my dreams of living the life of a 1920s high school girl.



8: Little Space Duo - 6.00

Ben: 8

Little Space Duo is visually stunning, with some great in-game artwork, a teasingly short opening cinematic, and some great sprite animation. The environment detail is particularly nice, with some great detail (although if it doesn't change up later in the game, it's going to get old). Some of the puzzles in the demos are real head-scratchers, and give the player those great "ah-ha!" moments that quality logical puzzle games can provide. The pacing can be frustratingly slow, though, and a couple of design decisions are questionable; Rewarding players with extra score for skipping mid-level checkpoints might seem like a good way to add thrill, but it usually just ends up being frustrating.

Zak: 7

Little Space Duo, available from Jugilus, is an interesting addition to the platform puzzle genre. A little girl wakes up on a troubled spaceship and with a robot helper, has to avoid enemies (as they can't really be defeated) to solve puzzles and save the ship. It's up to the player to solve the puzzles by taking turns playing as the little girl and the robot helper, each has their own capabilities. The game seemed geared for the more-than-casual crowd, as the puzzles can be complex and sometimes leave the player cursing the cargo-bots. I have to say the graphics show a lot of time and consideration. The animations and backgrounds are quality, almost flawless. The music can be a little humdrum at times, but it didn't drive me nuts. Little Space Duo was a little slow for my taste, but if you like this type of game, pick it up.

Peter: 4

A little girl has been abducted by someone on a space ship, and it's up to her and a plucky robo-sidekick to save the spaceship where she's been stored. In order to repair the ship, she and the robot have to move about the ship without being mistaken as cargo by the other robots on the ship. But movement with the mouse is bad, and the keyboard commands don't all work, so playing requires an awkward combination of mouse and keyboard. Add that to clunky dialogue and uninspired puzzles and you've got a skippable game.

Andrew: 5

The appeal of this game relies heavily on the likability of its characters, and therefore it's a shame that both of the characters are pretty unlikeable. Which is quite a feat considering one of the characters is a lost little girl. Why do I care about helping this snotty little girl get off the ship? I didn't really, and thus much of Little Space Duo's appeal was lost on me. The premise of the story could be interesting though, and there's some decent puzzle solving. All told, it's not a complete loss, but it would have helped if I didn't actively dislike the person I'm supposed to help.



9: Millennium - 5.25

Colt: 3

I never got into the RPGMaker niche. While the games look neat in the vintage sense, gameplay is ancient. I think the biggest progression is the automatic battle, which is broken in this case. No map, no autosave, confusing level design with all sorts of bushes and plants and rocks to hinder exploration. Millennium looks nice enough, and it may feature lush environments and a stirring story or whatever, but I'll never know. After I inadvertently spent all my money upgrading Speed of all things, and my fairy sidekick, the one living in my earring, started talking, I was done.

Zak: 6

Millennium: A New Hope, available through Big Fish Games, follows the typical path of a run of the mill role playing game. The gameplay is reminiscent of traditional 16-Bit Final Fantasy-type RPG. The player collects a team and defeats enemies as they wander through towns, forests, dungeons, etc. Where the game deviates from the run of the mill, is in the challenge and artistry. Most of the enemies in the demo were pretty easy to defeat, but don't take on more than you can handle - you have to manually save your progress. A lot also rides on remembering dialogue, so grab a notepad (maybe). The cut-to and battle scenes exhibit some great artwork, coupled with the 16-bit over-world art, I actually felt like I was back playing my old SNES.

Ben: 5

Although it's got some nice hand-drawn artwork and is fine from a technical standpoint, Millennium suffers from being painfully generic. Although it is probably meant to be homage to the isometric-view console RPG's of yesteryear, it doesn't have any new ideas of its own, and even takes a few steps back in some areas. Both the keyboard and mouse control schemes are awkward feeling, and playability really suffers from the lack of gamepad support. Plus, the small sampling of music in the demo is really weak.

Andrew: 7

Millennium is practically worth playing just for its soundtrack alone. Though it can be said that some of the tracks don't exactly fit with the tone, the soundtrack includes smooth jazz, snappy pop, and heavy drum jams. The JRPG turn-based gameplay is relatively standard, though, and the story gets in the way far too often. At first the story seems pretty interesting, but conversations between characters tend to go on far longer than they have to, and soon any interest in the story gives way to a desire stop all the yapping and get to the point.



10: Balloon Brothers - 5.00

Ben: 5

Although the Bejeweled-inspired sub genre can get tired, Balloon Bros. has enough of a hook to justify its creation. Popping balloons (complete with a morbidly comical pre-demise expression of horror on their inflated faces) causes the balloons below them to rise up, hopefully creating chains and combos. The gameplay does get a little tedious after a while, even with consistently new game mechanics being added throughout the game's progression. The graphics are pretty underwhelming, but the simplicity is also probably good for this kind of gameplay. Unfortunately, a lot of the challenge boils down to staring at the game field, trying to find a cluster of three balloons to pop.

Andrew: 7

I can scarcely believe there are still people out there making match-three puzzle games. However, as snooze inducing as the genre itself can be, if you're into that sort of thing, Balloon Brothers is a pretty decent one. The circus themed soundtrack is highly entertaining, and most importantly, the feedback for matching balloons is quite well implemented. It also packs a surprising amount of personality, and seeing the little faces on the balloons turn to horror just as you're about to pop them never really gets less funny.

Peter: 6

You've probably played a game where you line up three or more blocks of a similar color before. If you want to do it some more, go ahead and try Balloon Brothers. Balloon Brothers introduces a rotating board and puzzle pieces that rise instead of fall. If you pop a balloon, and the one below it doesn't resolve a line when it rises, one of the other balloons turns into a skull. Skull balloons can only be popped by bomb balloons, which are rewards for lining up four balloons. If you accidentally put three skulls in a line, you lose. The gameplay is solid and the art design is competent, but neither is anything new.

Colt: 2

Bookworm adventures without the aptitude, Bubble Bobble without the kitsch.

This Issue's Contributors

Peter Rambo

Plays stringed instruments, wrangles headlines for a newspaper, and writes and talks for gamesaurus.com.

Andrew Groen

A full-time video game freelance writer based in Chicago, Andrew Groen's life is completely consumed by video games. After spending long hours during the day playing video games and writing about video games for work, Andrew likes to unwind by playing video games. In his spare time he works with a local indie studio developing their first video game.

Ben Montgomery

Small-town newspaper reporter who moonlights as a video game journalist.

Colt Pakos

When I'm not playing Xbox or indie games, I read books by Erikson and McCarthy, watch movies by Cassavetes, and attempt to make music on Reason. I smoke cigarettes like a chimney and drink water like a fish. Dwarf Fortress, Cortex Command and Persona 4 are the current games in rotation.

Meg Stivison

Meg Stivison has been a computer gamer since discovering text-based PC games as a little girl. She is a freelance writer and English teacher, currently based in Raleigh. She blogs at www.SimpsonsParadox.com

Taylor Hall

A Hawaiian whose career aspirations are to be a game journalist, focusing on indie and retro titles. My dream job would be penning a blog for indie games or being an editor for a retro gamer magazine.

Zak Gebelein

I've always been a sucker for RTS, but open to any game that peaks my interest. Give me a game with classy graphics and a keen sense of story and I'm hooked. Some of my past times include killing zombies, conquering the world (if not the universe!) and dwelling on games of yesteryear - call me traditional.

Mike Gnade

Mike got married in September and is now under the careful and watchful eye of his wife. He is only permitted an hour of indie games a night and is forbidden to enjoy them. Congratulations?



Gratuitous Space Battles | www.positech.co.uk | PC

Gratuitous Space Battles, from Positech Games, is the UK developer's next great addition to indie gaming. If you are a fan of space management games, where you collect resources, expand territory and deal with advisories through careful diplomacy – this game is not for you. Let's be honest people, half the time we went through the trouble of all that management stuff was to build kick-butt ships and lay waste to rival factions. Thankfully, Cliff Harris has relieved us of this time consuming resource gathering burden. GSB has taken us straight to the main event: lasers, explosions and victory with honor. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot more depth to GSB than just giving the people what they want. You're still going to have to work for it.

Gameplay:

On its face, GSB is a strategy game with some management and tower defense elements thrown in the mix. Like other great strategic games, GSB forces you to learn from your mistakes. With few exceptions, I was forced to watch as my beautiful armada was destroyed in glorious fireballs. I only avenged my past failings with a better strategy and keener tactics. The strategy involved in accomplishing each mission is where the real genius of GSB comes into play. Once the battle begins, all you can do is sit back and watch as the two armadas clash. The ships have some AI which can lead to unintended consequences and occasionally disaster for your fleet. More often than not you are going to have to rethink your initial strategy. Positech has also placed some nice little obstacles in some scenarios (like spatial anomalies that allow no fighters!).

GSB gameplay breaks down as such: you build the ships in your fleet, you place the

ships on the battle grid, give orders to your ships and click the fight button. If you are going to get anywhere in the game, ship design is a must. This is where some of the management elements enter the game. Each class of ship has a unique number of modular components for weapons, engines, defenses and other specialty parts. The player has to balance these parts to create a viable and effective ship. Ship specialization increases with the level of mass; bigger ships equal bigger booms! Ship customization can even be completed at the battle placement screen for those last minute tweaks.

Once the player is happy with their mad ship building skills, it's time to put the strategy into place. There is a limit in pilots, tonnage and treasure to each level, so the player must choose ships that can be most effective against the enemy, maximize the honor to be won and provide a good show. Battle prep is the key to victory. Each victory brings honor which can be used to unlock new parts for ship upgrades, ship hulls and eventually unlocking other species.

The player has the option of assigning various orders to each ship or fighter group. For example each ship can: protect a certain ship, escort ships, attack a certain type of enemy and even retreat at a player set amount of damage. By assigning orders to certain ships, the player can effectively create layers of defense; combined with specialized ships this can lend itself to complex strategic ship placement. With the various orders, the player can lure the enemy into a trap just as easily as commencing an all out assault. There is something deviously satisfying about watching your enemy fall hopelessly into a carefully laid trap. Get the right combination of placement, orders and

ship design and sit back and enjoy the ride.

Graphics:

GSB is visually spectacular; there is simply nothing I didn't love about the graphics. From the cut-to screens to the over-the-top particle effects, every detail has been well thought out and brilliantly presented. Another great feature is following a single ship through combat; the player can zoom in and watch the ship be taken apart by enemy fire or dole out a good thumping to enemies. The graphics remain flawless throughout both the macro and micro view. Zooming in on the action is simply a feast for the eyes and draws the player into the action. Together with the sound effects, the explosive manifestation of some weapons jolt the camera for a great concussion like distortion; which makes explosions all the more pleasing to the senses. There's nothing quite like watching swarms of fighters take down a capital ship.

REVIEW

Gameplay:	10
Graphics:	9.5
Sound/Music:	9
Lasting Appeal:	9.5
Score:	95%
Grade:	A



Sound/Music:

From the opening score, the sounds and music take GSB to the next level of interactive enjoyment. One of the really effective elements Positech has chosen to include is the interactive sound effects. Different weapons have unique sounds, which is gleefully fun with missiles and pulse weapons. When you zoom in on the action, the sound effects of that part of the battle come into clarity instead of being lost in the macro-view. It's an endearing quality that enhances the action sequences. The entire game is served well by the epic music and perfectly suited sound effects.

Lasting Appeal:

Each battle is a singular experience and I literally spent hours just trying to see how few fighters/ship I had to commit to win each battle. Since there is AI which lends itself to random outcomes, battles vary time after time. I haven't even mentioned the clever and colorful communications dialogue during the battles, it's just fun to watch. In addition to the campaign mode, GSB offers a survival mode (which tells you upfront that you will eventually lose) and user-created challenge mode, which can be fairly difficult. All these games modes combine for hours of explosive entertainment. And for those who can't get enough, there is an expansion pack with a new race and new ships (see sidebar).

I rarely get uber-excited about forthcoming games, but I had my eye on this one for a while and I wasn't disappointed. Sometimes you just need a really good strategy game with no apologies and self described "over-the-top explodiness." To fulfill this necessity in life, Positech Games has given us Gratuitous Space Battles. Good hunting!

- Zak Gebelein



Positech Games isn't finished with GSB yet! They just released their first expansion pack, The Tribe. It features a brand new alien race with 11 ships. The Tribe is described as a "pan-species collection of idealistic space-hippies and bringers of galactic peace (through a short-term period of intense furious stellar warfare)." The pack also includes 11 new ships, 2 new scenarios, new ship bonuses, and a new weapon type (kinetic weapons). The Tribe is more of the same, but when a game is this good – there's no harm in new scenarios, weapons, and ships. The new bonuses and modules add even more depth into the GSB package.

Don't let the \$5.99 expansion pack fool you, Positech is still hard at work on the core game and plans on several updates which will expand and enhance it. Some of the planned improvements are supply limits, user-made scenarios, variable squadron sizes and more. You can check out Cliffski's blog at www.cliffski.com for more updates, news, and announcements about the game

- Mike Gnade



REVIEWS



Time Gentlemen, Please | www.zombie-cow.com | PC

Time Gentlemen, Please opens with Dan and Ben looking to fix their TV in order to watch Magnum PI, when aliens descend onto earth to attack them. Dan and Ben are not the basement-dwelling slobs they first seem, but are actually adventuring heroes from Zombie Cow Studio's previous game, Ben There, Dan That, so they immediately leap into world-saving, alien-destroying action, only to realize that the aliens are Evil Future Dan and Ben in disguise, and the only way to save the world from the dastardly plans of their evil future selves is to go back in time and prevent the invention of the coathanger!
With me so far?

Time Gentlemen, Please is a hilarious, vulgar romp. The not-so-dynamic duo riff on the inconsistencies of time travel and adventurer kleptomaniacs, as they haphazardly rip holes in space-time to pocket surprisingly useful found objects. World domination, Nazi attack and the demise of the entire human race create a backdrop for Dan and Ben's perverted banter and meta commentary.

This is not a game for kids, unless you're looking to explain the facts of extremely twisted life to a traumatized youngster. Jokes range from the slightly risqué to jaw-droppingly obscene. The word "gentlemen" in the title is used in the loosest sense, sort of like the sign on a seedy bar's bathroom door, and a lot of the game's humor would fit in well inside that bathroom.

TGP didn't need to rely on shock value, F-bombs and genitalia jokes to be funny, and constant vulgarity just cheapened the real laughs.

Gameplay:
TGP uses the good ol' Sierra-style adventure interface. Click items with the eye icon to examine, click with the hand icon to interact, combine items into makeshift tools, and pocket everything that's not nailed down. Actually, if you klepto a crowbar, you can even steal things that are nailed down.

The floppy disk save and load icons, and quick lines like "I'm selling these fine leather jackets" in between all dick jokes and laser dino battles completed the illusion that I was playing a late-night adults-only version of a Sierra game. In a good way.

Graphics:
The robots, aliens, laser attacks and the rest of the charmingly out-of-proportion sketch art all looked like something that might be drawn in a notebook during a boring lesson. Clearly the focus is on zany dialogue, and storytelling, and not using an increasingly-complex engine for even more realistic blood splatters.

Occasionally the notebook-doodle art style makes it hard to tell what's terrain, and what's activatable, but since Dan and Ben have something obnoxious to say about, oh, everything, this isn't much of a problem.

Sound:
I didn't shut the sound off until about halfway through, which is high praise from someone who always hates computer game sound. Most of the time, I moved through the scenes quickly enough to avoid getting annoyed by repetitive music, I really only noticed background music once or twice when I was bogged down in my progress. Noninvasive is pretty good in my book.

Lasting Appeal:
Ridiculous dialogue choices added longer playtime by keeping me experimenting even after it was obvious which option would lead to further progress.

I hesitate to call the wild time-jumping in the style of a filthy Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure a linear story, but all the zaniness leads to one chain of events, and I don't see a lot of replay value in completed linear games. But quoting lines from the game, laughing at Dan and Ben's antics, or even trying to explain the plot stays funny long after time-traveling Dan and Ben have saved the world from, uh, time-traveling Dan and Ben.

- Meg Stivison

REVIEW

Gameplay:	9
Graphics:	8
Sound/Music:	8
Lasting Appeal:	8
Score:	87%
Grade:	B+





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And Yet it Moves | www.andyetitmoves.net | Windows PC | Mac | WiiWare

The gimmick of snide lead characters that are too crackerjack for their own good and game designers breaking the fourth wall and spouting quips directly at the audience is hopefully fading away. You know the one: break in the action, our hero turns to us and winks. While it's easy to remember these moments in a glowing haze of old-school fondness (such as the classic Monkey Island ending), it seems to be relegated for lesser games such as Conker, or used merely for shock value. This mechanic is used with good intention, a way to cement the character and player together, a bridge between real and virtual.

And Yet It Moves takes this interaction and literally spins it on its head, granting the player ultimate control: avatar, game world, fate. The left hand moves your bohemian character, simply a dude with stringy long hair and thick boots, and the right hand rotates the world left or right, as he jumps and runs through three distinct environments: Cave, Forest, and Acid Trip. More on that last one later. Any obstacle like a high wall is traversed by spinning the world, turning it upside down so the ceiling is now the floor and running along. This innovative game mechanic made AYIM an IGF Student Finalist in 2007. The game starts out simply enough, but the kindergarten solutions at the games start, quickly advance to Calculus and Astrophysics. You will swing from branches, avoid falling rocks, toss unsquished bananas to hungry apes, fight against gravity and momentum. It takes a clever mechanic and stretches it to encompass multiple scenarios, so that once you get the hang of one facet, you suddenly must adapt to a new skill.

With all this control and motivation comes ownership. AYIM is not easy, and it's not exactly hard either. You will die often. And it simply requires patience and foresight. The real pressure isn't repeated errors, because they are so inconsequential, but the reality that if you quit a level or make repeated

mistakes it is your fault, for lack of fortitude or wit. The world is merely responding to gravity, and there is no camera error or cheap kills to blame. When you shatter into a million pieces after rocketing into a wall, you realize, "Hey, I might be falling too quickly." The deliberate physics engine is less about traditional realism and more about keeping the game challenging in its own realm. For instance, when traversing underneath tumbling boulders, rocks free-fall overhead regardless of their starting position: it is cloudy with a chance of rocks, a persistent rain spout spawning rubble just above and off-screen. Trees sway, bats fly, flames always flicker upwards, stuff rolls downhill. The world is alive and squirming under your finger like a pinned sibling. My friend asked me as I repeatedly failed to get past a monkey guarding a door, "Why are you bothering that monkey?" I replied meekly, "It's blocking my way." And come hell or high water, you're going to make it through.

The whole game has this bohemian, organic feel, and maybe that's why I'm looking at it metaphorically. The graphics are layers of ripped paper, the levels the antithesis of structured graphing paper, with sound effects that seem mouth-made. Pops, chica-chica's, finger-against cheek flicks all make an appearance. This all gets pretty grating after a while. I like the clean aesthetic of an N+ over the strange jungle beats and bopping of AYIM. I'm a proponent of less is more. Silence can create incredible tension. There is no real payoff or release after a particularly hairy situation, or any suspense really. It's as flat and linear as the game world.

But it picks up during the last chapter, in which, --SPOILER ALERT-- your character is bitten by a poisonous snake and dropped into a 60's Dante's Inferno, a twisting, tie-dyed world, with slinky extending platforms, possessed trees, jet black persona's, and actual music. It is wonderful. The journey from practical levels as

a lost spelunker in a cave or a jungle explorer leads into the full-blown ridiculousness of a Rez. It is now you against your imagination - your psychedelic imagination beset on squashing you between two kaleidoscopic slabs of rock. The last level is a treat to the ADD audience for toughing it out through the more utilitarian level design of the first two chapters. It is random, with no foreshadowing, hallucinatory, and glorious, with inventive puzzles and eyebrow raising moments, controlling two avatars, ebony and ivory, id and ego, to reach their respective goals. --SPOILERS END--

After this correction, And Yet It Moves is an obvious recommendation for platforming fans, but it won't revolutionize the genre or convert any outsiders. Not that it has to. Despite some of the design turn-offs, AYIM takes a clever mechanic and creates an interesting world that slowly unravels. It is a less flashy Portal, but just as innovative.

- Colt Anaipakos

REVIEW

Gameplay:	9
Graphics:	8
Sound/Music:	7
Lasting Appeal:	8
Score:	85%
Grade:	B





Fat Princess | www.titanstudios.com | Playstation Network

Titan Studios' Fat Princess certainly has a hysterical premise. It's a team-death-match game that features cartoonish visuals, tons of gore, multiple classes and upgrades. Did I mention the whole feeding the princess cake makes her enormous and hard to move? The game's concept, visuals, and overall feel are instantly appealing, but Fat Princesses tend to stumble due to their weight and there are certainly some stumbling blocks that the game must overcome.

When the game first came out it was utterly unplayable online. It had horrendous lag and matches were incredibly unstable resulting in constant restarts, searches, and utter frustration. The game has a single player game, but it is basically just a quick intro to the multiplayer modes with a nice storybook presentation to tie it all together. Fat Princess is all about 32 player strategic deathmatch action and it stumbled out of the gate with a terrible online experience. It's slowly improved, but is still a blemish.

The gameplay of Fat Princess is sort of like the Legend of Zelda; you control a medieval type hero in a cartoon world from a top-down perspective. Like Zelda, tapping the attack button will quickly slash your sword while holding and releasing will unleash a stronger spinning attack – that is of course if you are playing as the warrior. Princess has 5 upgradeable classes which is what

really contributes to the game's addiction since you can swap hats at any time during a match and start playing the game from a different angle. Tired of walking around slashing at enemies? Simply, grab a worker's hat and start chopping down trees and collecting resources. If you get bored of that, grab an archers hat and start shooting at enemies from a distance. Upgrading these classes gives the player even more options. Archers become Rangers and gain musket-type shotguns, but Fat Princess is all about player choices. When you upgrade a class, you can switch between the two weapons/abilities at your own leisure. It's almost like each class becomes a 2-in-1 deal.

The class system is by far the most interesting thing about Fat Princess, but the visual style and Fat Princesses themselves are certainly delightful as well. The cartoon characters and over the top gore all contribute to the game's uniqueness, but nothing quite tops a cutesy princess exclaiming, "More cakey please." The contrast between the cutesy presentation and over the top violence certainly kept me smiling and slashing away.

For the most part, each map in FP offers a different experience, but ultimately I could've used a few more levels and a little more variety – perhaps with ongoing support, FP can get some new maps and play mechanics that keep the cake coming. There's a good amount of

game modes and it's nice that defensive and offensive players are equally rewarded with points. It's a shame that Playstation owners aren't as talkative as Xbox owners, since a coordinated team can dominate in FP. That fact speaks to this game's relatively deep strategy and team-dependent gameplay. Fat Princess consistently delivers on its comical juxtapositions, but it's solid core gameplay is plagued by some glitches and lag. With some ongoing support and a little more variety, Fat Princess could be one of the best multiplayer games on PSN.

- Mike Gnade

REVIEW

Gameplay:	9
Graphics:	8
Sound/Music:	8
Lasting Appeal:	7
Score:	80%
Grade:	B-



REVIEWS



Lunnye Devitsy | www.bossbaddie.com | Windows PC

Lunnye Devitsy finds both its strengths and weaknesses in its simplicity.

The entire game consists of running and jumping through a non-linear open world to find six hidden ways to return a lost extraterrestrial to his home on the moon. You'll find a couple of the methods easily, but some of them are hidden away in some far-off corner or lurking behind a doozy of a puzzle. This wouldn't be frustrating if it weren't for a baffling lack of any kind of save feature (or installer, for that matter. It's a .zip file), making it impossible to walk away from the game to recharge your interest. The game also takes hours to complete, and it seems unlikely that many players will stick it out to the end.

Meander around long enough, and some luck will bring you to a sprint and double-jump ability, both of which should have been available from the start, as it is far too easy to get stuck without them. By the way, pressing F1 brings you back to the moon without losing progress, a detail the developers left out of the way-too-vague instructions.

Wandering the landscape takes up far too much of players' time. There are way too many red herrings scattered around the map--spaces on the map that took a good deal of effort to complete, only to be found

pointless and empty. Rewarding players for completing challenges is the cornerstone of all game design, and shouldn't be ignored even in experimental games.

Perhaps this review has been too harsh, though; it's not like Lunnye doesn't have merits. The explore-the-garden gameplay is fun and even exciting for the first couple of hours, and the dynamic music is phenomenal, changing seamlessly as one region of the map melts into the next. Even though it hindered the instruction manual, the minimalist explanation gives the game a spooky sense of mystery. The background artwork is wonderfully whimsical at times, and is strangely reminiscent of storybook-like games, like Yoshi's Island. Conversely, though, most of the running and jumping is done on boring black geometric shapes.

Lunnye is mechanically sound and excellently coded, a feature not always seen in low-budget indie games. The central running and jumping mechanics feel organic, and the aforementioned music is creatively programmed. The simple pixelated graphics are highlighted by some impressive particle physics-infused set pieces. I encountered one game-breaking glitch, but it was probably a fluke.

Although it's a plat former, there are no enemies, traps, pitfalls, or any danger whatsoever (aside from the initial few jams you'll get into before finding the running

and jumping icons), which can get boring. There's something to be said for relaxing gameplay, but the marathon length of the game will eventually have your leg bouncing up and down in boredom, wishing for an enemy's head to bop on. There are, however, a couple of clever platforming challenges (be sure to check out a particularly creative one spanning the bottom of the world).

Even with its faults, Lunnye is genuinely something that's never been seen before. Experimental games, by their very nature, often have flaws, but also have that little pearl of inspiration in them; Lunnye has such a pearl. It would be fun to see some of these ideas make it into the mainstream game market. It's easy to imagine a handheld title with the side scrolling sandbox gameplay of Lunnye Devitsy, perhaps even on a larger scale. If developer Boss Baddie! studies its notes carefully for its next project, they might be able to make something great.

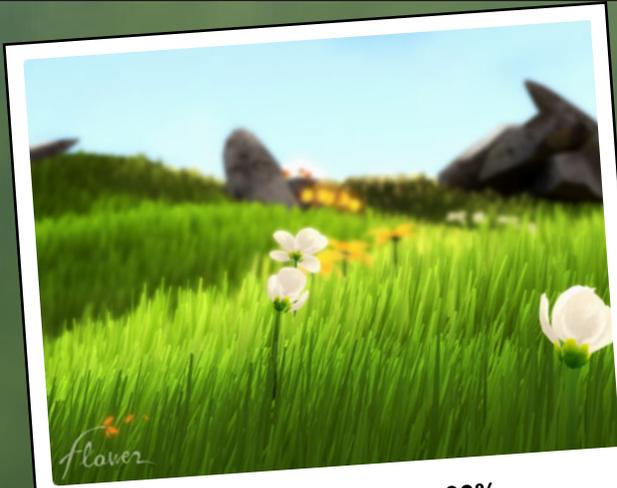
- Ben Montgomery

REVIEW

Gameplay:	7
Graphics:	4
Sound/Music:	9
Lasting Appeal:	5
Score:	65%
Grade:	D+



INDIE CHRISTMAS WISHLIST



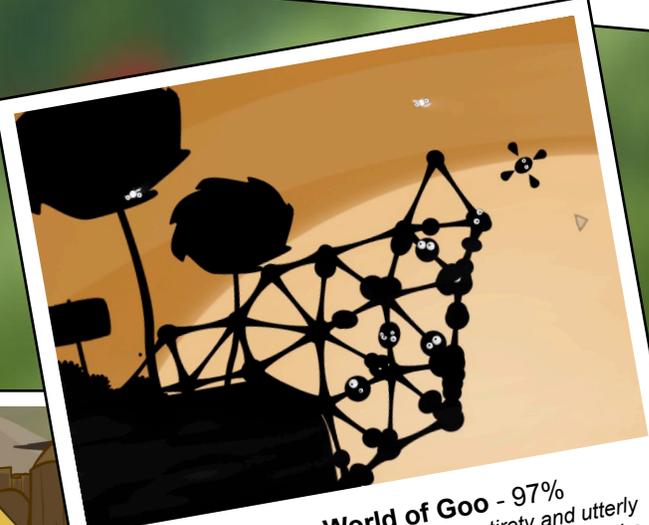
Atmosphere: flower - 93%
Flower proves that games are art. It's like a poem. It resonates with a whisper which overcomes its brevity.



Great Gameplay: Plants vs. Zombies - 97.5%
Plants vs. Zombies title really sums up the humor and absurdity that makes this game so addictive. Pure casual fun!



Strategy: Gratuitous Space Battles - 95%
The special effects and visceral battles are entertaining to watch on their own....then you toss in deep strategy gameplay for good measure.



Indie Must: World of Goo - 97%
World of Goo is unique throughout its entirety and utterly delicious. It's great taste stays with you months after the experience is over



Multiplayer: Castle Crashers - 90%
Castle Crashers' classic beatemup gameplay and superb animation has made it a best selling XBLA game. the behem0th deserves it.

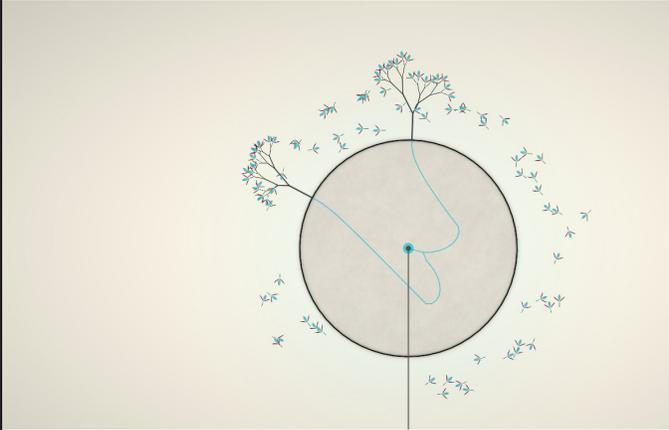


Memorable Story: Braid - 87%
Braid's play with time have made it a critical darling. It's story has an excellent twist and the watercolor visuals impress.



Addictive: Faerie Solitaire - 89%
Be warned, playing Faerie Solitaire's demo may result in an immediate purchase. It's a clone, but boy is it a good one.

NEXT ISSUE



Euforia



Machinarium



Critter Crunch



Aaaa! - A Reckless Disregard for Gravity

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