

deobug



A GAME UNLIKE ANY OTHER - THE INCREDIBLE STORY BEHIND QUANTUM WITCH, THIS YEAR'S MOST INTRIGUING GAME



#11

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The fine folks at Silver Lining Interactive for their hospitality. Everyone who submitted screenshots for our Magnify feature. All 300+ of you! And Tom Copeland for being an absolute legend.

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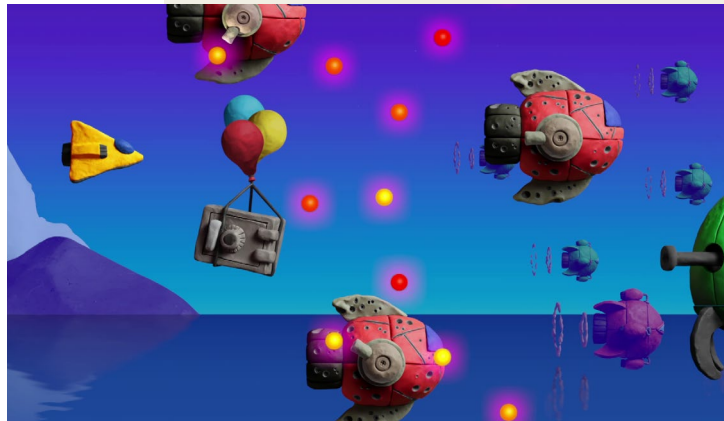
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Indie veteran Quang DX reflects on the challenges of standing out in a sea of blockbusters, and why thriving communities are an often underutilised secret weapon.

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The Colour of

MAGIC

Witches, cults, dancing skeletons and an odd obsession with cheese... gaming throws up a mysterious curveball from time to time, and when it does, we like to be there to investigate. Dean Mortlock is the most curious of us all, so naturally he's the person we trusted to play *Quantum Witch* and then speak to its creator, NikkiJay.

Let's go back a few years to the inception of **Debug**. This was a magazine born from a desire to showcase all-things indie; to pick a cross-section of the most interesting independent games released every couple of months and encase them lovingly in a publication that showed them off as best we could. We believed there were games out there that were not getting the coverage they deserved, and we wanted to create a home for them where they could shine. To us, everyone was a winner – the indie developers got the publicity, and the readers got to find out about a whole heap of games that might have passed them by.

Two years later we're proud to say that our hunch was right, and the magazine is very firmly established in the indie gaming community. Which brings us

neatly to *Quantum Witch*, as you could say that it's exactly the sort of game that qualifies for **Debug's** mission statement. It's a passion project from a solo developer, it's wonderfully original and fun to play, and it's Definitely one we think you should check out. With a capital 'D'.

Quantum Witch is a game that joyfully plays with traditional gaming genres. Glance at the screenshots and you might think it's a pixel art platformer – and there's no shortage of those to choose from already. Watch a gameplay video or trailer and you might think it's a retro-inspired RPG with smart dialogue. Then, when you actually start playing it yourself, you may think you've stumbled upon a blend of both those genres with a smattering of farm simulator thrown in for good measure.



It turns out that what you're *actually* playing is something far more original and interesting. *Quantum Witch* is a game that's been created as a solo project from new developer, NikkiJay. Incredibly, aside from some text adventures she made in her younger days, this is her first completed game, and it's an interesting and confident way to start.





Any project that someone creates is obviously personal but that is especially true in this case, as *Quantum Witch* was designed as a therapeutic way for NikkiJay to deal with her own traumatic childhood. She was raised in a religious cult in the north of England and then, when she came out as a lesbian as a teenager, she was disowned by both the cult and her family and abandoned to face the world alone.

So after playing and completing the game ourselves, and then discovering the back story behind it, we wanted to find out more. Thankfully that proved to be easy, as NikkiJay is very open about her story and very happy to share it.

"I grew up in an apocalyptic cult that was obsessed with the end of the world," she says. "They controlled their members – what they could wear, what jobs they could have, what they could celebrate, what they could think and how they could

feel about things. Even down to not being allowed to 'bless you' after you sneeze. That was the type of control that they had over their members."

With a passion for the written word – including the dark humour of Douglas Adams – NikkiJay felt the best way to exorcise this holy ghost would be by writing a novel based on her life experiences during the first lockdown.

"Initially I tried to write a sci-fi fantasy novel using the themes of what I went through as a child growing up in that type of environment and escaping that type of control," says NikkiJay, "but for me it didn't actually fit with what happened."

"I always enjoyed making little text adventures. Creating my own adventure games was fantastic, as I was making these worlds that took me away from all of the control that I was under, so I tried to do a point-and-click adventure game ▶

I get by...

...with a little help from my friends. While NikkiJay is rightly credited as the sole developer on *Quantum Witch*, she had some important assistants, too.

One of the first things you'll do in the game is stumble upon a religious group that worships the Sacred Lampshade. Remember, though... THEY'RE NOT A CULT.

PAUL ROSE

AKA Mr Biffo of *Digitiser* fame. Paul's help was invaluable when it came to plotting out the various character threads in the game. Over to NikkiJay: "He took my absolute mountain and mess of notes and said, 'Okay, this is how you structure a narrative. This is how you develop a through line, and you've chosen to develop multiple ones at once so good luck. He really showed me how to wire everything up, and without his help, it would still be a pile of Post-it notes."

STEPHANIE STERLING

Freelance journalist, game writer, renowned YouTuber and – get this – professional wrestler, is there no end to this woman's talents? NikkiJay again: "Steph wrote the vast majority of Riverhome, which is a chapter later in the game. She was amazing because there was a bit of a misunderstanding at first. I asked her to write dialogue for four scenes, but she completely misunderstood and wrote a whole chapter!

"We share a lot of the same life experiences, as she was a queer person oppressed by religion in the American Bible belt, which went hand-in-hand with what I'd experienced. It was absolutely fantastic to work with her."

JERDEN COOKE

NikkiJay co-wrote the game's superb soundtrack with her friend Jerden Cooke – who, fortunately for NikkiJay, happens to be a talented musician. There's a staggering variety in the game's music, but we definitely picked on some *Twin Peaks*-style undertones. Search for 'Quantum Witch' on Bandcamp, and you can check it out for yourself.





debugdiscord

PLAY
GAMES?

MAKE
GAMES?

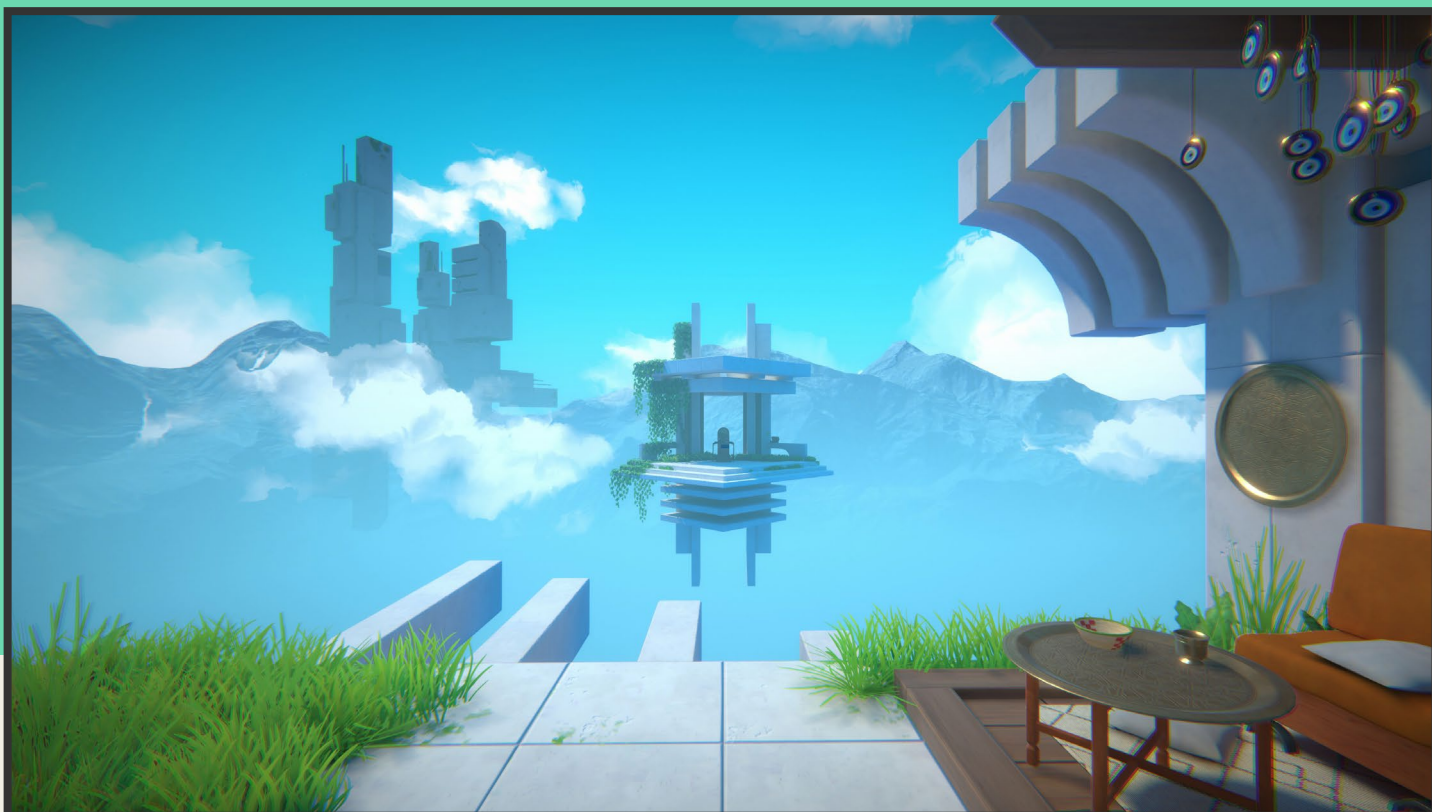


LET'S TALK!

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR INSTANT ACCESS, OR HEAD TO TEAMDEBUG.COM

THE HUB

THE PLACE TO DISCOVER WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE INDIE SCENE RIGHT NOW



DEBUG NEWS

This part's all about us, obviously

▶ DEBUG++ LAUNCH The Free Games Industry Mag

We are incredibly excited to announce **Debug++**, a completely free new games industry magazine headed up by print media veteran and former **MCV/Develop** editor Richie Shoemaker.

Joining **Debug** earlier this year, Richie returned to the heart of the development conversation, digging into the quirks, challenges, and quiet triumphs that define game making today. From on-the-ground

dev insights to deep dives into industry trends, this is a no-fluff, sharp-minded look at what's going on behind the scenes.

Where Can I Get It?

You can subscribe directly on our website, with the digital edition being completely free. The physical version can also be yours for just the cost of shipping.

Navigate over to **debug.plus** and get reading straight away. **Debug++ 25.07** is available right now!





PAWS, CLAWS AND POWER CORES

MECHANIMALS BLENDS FURRY FURY WITH STEEL AND FIRE

Mixing chaotic co-op beat-'em-up action with roguelite elements, *MechAnimals* is BouncyBrain's debut title. Featuring four unique characters and mech suits, this vibrant, screen-filling brawler bursts with charm, wild energy and stylish animation from veteran industry animators.

With the team behind *MechAnimals* boasting an impressive career in huge animated franchises such as *Kung Fu Panda*, *Minions* and *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*, it's not surprising to hear when these seasoned professionals decided to break their big studio shackles, they made a game with an intense focus on eye-capturing art, fluid animation, and an edgy style that would easily draw comparison to games released from much bigger studios.

Throw in a pulsing, catchy soundtrack and a crew of four badass (and slightly unhinged) mech-suited animals – like Eggz, a grizzled, cybernetic chicken, or Phoebe, a

rainbow hammer-wielding penguin – and you start to get the picture.

“ This vibrant screen-filling brawler bursts with charm. ”

Launched into a cute world of bunnies and little mushroom towns, you quickly find yourself under siege by unscrupulous, non-eco-friendly, diesel-powered AI robot constructs with boxing gloves – that's like *all* of the bad things at once.

INFO

Developer
BouncyBrain

Publisher
BouncyBrain

On
PC, Mac,
PS4/5, Xbox
Series, Switch


Demo
Yes (PC)

Released
TBA

It's now your job to push them back, gather parts and grow stronger, with roguelite-style upgrades ranging from mech enhancements and assist moves from allied pilots, to shock grenades, katanas, pulse rifles and more.

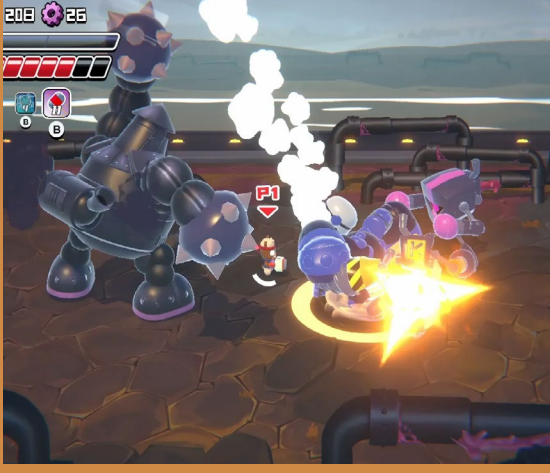
Either fight on foot, or power up, summoning your steam-mech to kick, shoot or punch some arse. Filling your energy will allow access to mech abilities, but boosting and using abilities in this form will deplete your charge, so use it wisely, as being hit with low energy will boot you from your bot.

An on-screen timer will also be ever-ticking to the next enemy power up. Yep, even the bad guys get power ups, which technically seems pretty fair, but that does mean that it's in your best interest to dispose of them quickly, or face increased enemies, bombs, and fireballs to the face.

For those craving some extra competition, there's a PvP mode, too. Battle it out across multiple arenas filled with hazards and surprises, perfect for proving who really runs the scrapyard. 

Q&A GUY BARELI

Founded by animation director Guy Bareli, BouncyBrain is an indie team focused on delivering creative, fan-driven games. Their mission is to create fresh, high-quality experiences free from corporate constraints.



Your team proudly calls itself 'experienced artists from the feature animation world that broke loose to make indie games'. What inspired that jump, and how has that shift in creative freedom shaped the vision and direction of *MechAnimals*?

The creative freedom part is the answer to the question. I've been storyboarding/head of story on blockbuster animated movies for so long I'm all too familiar with how everything needs to be approved by three or four levels of producers and executives. In most cases, I've had to redo a certain scene at least five or even 10 times, and then maybe, just maybe, it ends up in the final movie.

And so, when I decided to make *MechAnimals* into an indie game, I wanted to work on a product that would go directly to the audience, without these extra layers of approvals. The overall vision for *MechAnimals* is that it is a franchise for all ages, but with that extra bit of craziness that wouldn't be approved by the big studios.

How did you approach character design to ensure each pilot not only stood out visually, but also felt unique in gameplay and personality?

MechAnimals has been developed as an original animated series long before it was an indie game! These characters are well-rounded not only in terms of design, but also in terms of their backstories, personalities and how they play against each other.

For Pheobe we just thought that it's funny that she's this cute Hello Kitty character but loves to smash stuff! I like to get that sweet-and-sour flavour in my work, and I'm always gravitating towards these contrasts. Hence the 'Cute Animals in Mechs' idea!

The game world is bright and adorable on the surface, but beneath it lies a struggle against Krok Inc., a corrupt, diesel-powered megacorp destroying the environment. Was this contrast a conscious commentary on industrial

greed and environmental themes, and how are those ideas reflected in the way players interact with the world?

This is related to the above comment about the sweet-and-sour flavour – a bubbly world filled with adorable critters that seem like they belong in a pre-school show, but with some serious themes of corporate greed, climate change and the dangers of AI. That is the core idea for not only the game, but also the animated series we are developing.

Beyond the story-driven campaign, you've also added a PvP mode complete with chaotic arena hazards. How do you see this competitive element enhancing the overall experience, and what kind of community interactions are you hoping to encourage through it?

This is a relatively new idea, but it's a lot of fun to jump in and compete against your friends. I'm inspired by games like *Super Smash Bros*. In our game, unlike *Smash Bros*., players also fight on the Z-axis. I'm really surprised there's not many PvP's doing that.

What was the creative process like when developing the game's soundtrack and audio design? And how did you ensure it kept pace with the game's wild action?

I started by buying a very good Vintage Anime Robot sound effects library, which gives the game the overall vibe. Then our sound designers, DoubleJump, did a great job creating custom-made effects for entering the mechs, getting hit, special moves, etc.

Finally I'd like to mention voiceacting, which really give our characters a lot of personality. It's not a beat-'em-up without some fun voice taunts! I've worked with the actors that have been recording voices for the *MechAnimals* animated series. Some of what they're saying is scripted and some a total improvisation! It's always a blast to see these characters come to life in a voice record session. □

MORE OF THE SAME

Rampage Knights – Combines roguelike dungeon crawling with beat-'em-up combat, allowing players to upgrade characters and unlock new ones in a procedurally generated environment.

THE CLUEDO FMV GAME

WHY I LOVE... CLUEDO (1998) WORDS BY ALASDAIR BECKETT-KING

You know the score. Mr. Boddy has been murdered, and the suspects are six colour-coded rotters. *Cluedo* (known as *Clue* in North America, where life is fast and puns are cheap) is a phenomenally successful board game with more than enough spin-offs, but only one of those cash-ins actually changed my life.

I'm a comedian and writer, and I've always loved detective stories. With the success of *Only Murders in the Building* and *Knives Out*, the whodunnit genre hasn't been this popular since the 1930s. Sadly, the same is true of fascism, but you can't have everything.

Back in 1994, 3T Productions released a full-motion video (or FMV) game based on *Cluedo*, boasting a digital reconstruction of Arlington Hall and properly good actors stomping around a stately home near Knutsford (which is a real place, honest). This game remains one of the best, and most underrated detective games ever made. I'd place it alongside *Her Story*, *Return of the Obra Dinn* and *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* (the brilliant tabletop mystery).

In the 1990s, the letters 'FMV' were almost synonymous with bad writing, bad acting and bad directing (see: Sierra Online's 1995 trash-fest *Phantasmagoria* for details), but the performances in this game are spot-on. Joan Sims was born to play Mrs White, and Terence Harvey's narration brings both gravity and wry humour to the dreadful business of murder. Fans of British whodunnits will recognise Stuart Milligan from *Jonathan Creek*, and in this game he plays Mr Green – transformed from a reverend into a smooth-talking American.

We're talking murder weapons, fingerprints, secret passages and flashbacks. There's a blackmailer, there are artificial rubies and there's a con-man going straight. The game has all the hokey components of a classic murder mystery. Dice rolls have been dispensed with, because this

game is all about the story. Or rather, stories. The Windows edition of the game featured three cases, each with multiple endings depending on the difficulty level chosen by the player.

In 1994, *CD-i* magazine was thrilled to announce that "live actors will move across the screen on a three-dimensional set". Which is a very futuristic way to describe people walking around a room. But, in spite of its fizzy sound and low resolution, the game still looks beautiful. The live action sequences benefit enormously from having been shot on film and on location. They have the hazy, melancholy charm of vintage TV dramas like Granada's *Poirot* and the BBC's *Miss Marple*.

During the Great Lockdown of 2020, I created my own interactive murder mystery, played out over the course of a week on social media. I filmed it in my flat, I played all the suspects and people could vote for whoever they thought was guilty. It was called 'ABK's Murder Mystery WHODIDIT?' and everything about it was a direct homage to this unjustly forgotten FMV game. Amazingly, it's thanks to creating that silly online spoof that I have ended up writing a series of murder mystery novels for kids aged 8-12. Which has been a source of delight to me, because if there's one thing kids like more than jokes, it's murder.

Cluedo was originally released in 1994 as two games for a contraption called the CD-i. But only three of the original stories made it to the 1996 Windows edition that I loved so much as a child. Which means there are still three lost mysteries out there that I've never played. How tantalising! It's notoriously difficult to remaster FMV games though, because film negatives tend not to be archived and nobody really liked them in the first place, but how I would love to step back into Arlington Hall to solve one last case...



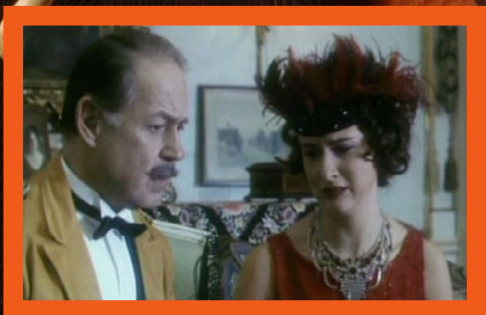
MORE INFO

Photo credit – Edward Moore

Alasdair Beckett-King is an award-winning stand-up comedian and the author of the *Montgomery Bonbon* mystery series published by Walker Books (UK) and Candlewick Press (US). His new live show *Alasdair Beckett-King: King of Crumbs* is running at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe from July 30th-August 11th.



WHY I LOVE...





NEW 3D PLATFORMER **RUFFY AND THE RIVERSIDE IS THE SAME AS OLIVES. DISCUSS**

Much like olives, *Ruffy and the Riverside* is something that grows on you – but not literally, that would be weird. Initially, you might not be sure whether it's something you'll like, but give the game time, patience and an open mind, and it'll be your go-to fave until you complete the final puzzle. See? Like olives? Get it? Jeez.

Let's start at the beginning and explain ourselves properly. *Ruffy and the Riverside* is a 3D platformer featuring a whole zoo's worth of colourful and unique animals [1], but while the backgrounds are very much 3D, the characters are not. But that's okay, and something you get used to pretty quickly.

There's also a lot of dialogue to wade through, and to be fair, 'wade' is an exceedingly well-chosen word, as it's not great. And there really is loads of it, so conversations often feel like a bit of a slog.

And then there's the game's USP, and it's a pretty unique SP. Ruffy, the hero of this piece, has the ability to swap some materials around to solve puzzles and open up new sections of the game. Ruffy simply scans the area until he locates materials he can take, grabs them and swaps them over to change stone to wood or water to foliage. Sounds odd, and to be honest, it does take a bit of getting used to, but give it time (that patience thing we mentioned earlier), and things slowly

**LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE...**

**Bang-On Balls:
Chronicles**

Bangs and rolling balls in this unique platformer.

INFO

Developer
Zockrates Laboratories UG

Publisher
Phiphen Games

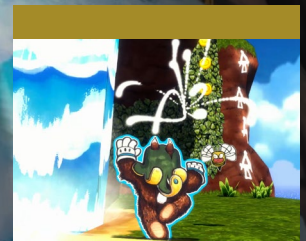
Price
£14.71

Released
Out now

On
PC, PS4/5,
Xbox Series, Switch

Demo
Yes (PC)

“ Ruffy and the Riverside is bursting with original touches and smart design. ”



1



2




3

click into place. You need to get from the mainland to an island, but there are stone pillars in the way. Not a problem when there’s also plenty of wood lying around. Scan the wood, and paste it on the stone pillars and they become wooden crates bobbing in the water, and conveniently placed for you to hop across them.

When the gameplay dynamic does click though, the game completely opens up. You zip around the world (sometimes on foot and other times on the top of a bale of wheat), solving some very clever and satisfying puzzles as you go. The vibrant world Ruffy inhabits is absolutely stuffed with them.

As you’d expect from a platformer, there’s no shortage of stuff to collect. Secrets can be found hidden in every corner of the game, **and some of the trickier ones to find are the butterflies [2].**

Despite one section being **inspired by the 2D sequences from *Super Mario Odyssey* [3]**, *Ruffy and the Riverside* is bursting with original touches and smart design. The conversations that were so annoying at the beginning soon become far less of an issue, and every new and original use of the cut/paste dynamic becomes an utter joy. This gameplay element earns its place in the game quickly, and is much more than a novelty feature.

Proof again that some of the most interesting and inventive gameplay design is to be found in the indie realm. 



James Oakwood



MAKING THE CUT

If the cut/paste dynamic has you going more ‘Uhh?’ than ‘Aahhh’ then let me explain further. Puzzles in *Ruffy* are usually solved by replacing the material in an object.

For example, look at the image above, which is the first puzzle you come to. You need to climb up but there’s this ruddy waterfall in the way. Scan the area though, and you’ll see that the foliage in the background can be ‘cut’. Grab it and then ‘paste’ it in the place of the waterfall. This turns the area from water to plant, and then you can climb up it. Easy peasy, lemon squeezey.



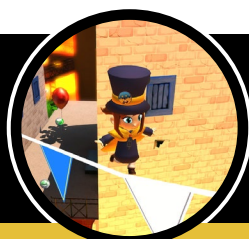
MORE INFO

Another Crab's Treasure

Meeting you, with a view to a krill...

A Hat in Time

This remains one of the best 3D platformers you can get for PC.



THE BACK CATALOGUE

Zockrates has only released one game so far, which would be this one. Based on that though, we’ll be interested to see what the company does next.



icymi.

TIP YOUR HAT TO **A HAT IN TIME**, A BELOVED PLATFORMER THAT IS *ANYTHING* BUT OLD HAT

In *A Hat in Time*, you play as Hat Kid, a silent, adorable space traveller with a stylish top hat, a chaotic streak, and the energy of an over-caffeinated kitten. Her peaceful voyage home is abruptly derailed when a Mafia thug (apparently patrolling low orbit without a spacesuit) takes offence at her ship “orbiting too close to their planet” without paying a toll. Naturally, he punches a hole in her ship, sending the magical Hourglass Pieces that power it tumbling to the surface below.

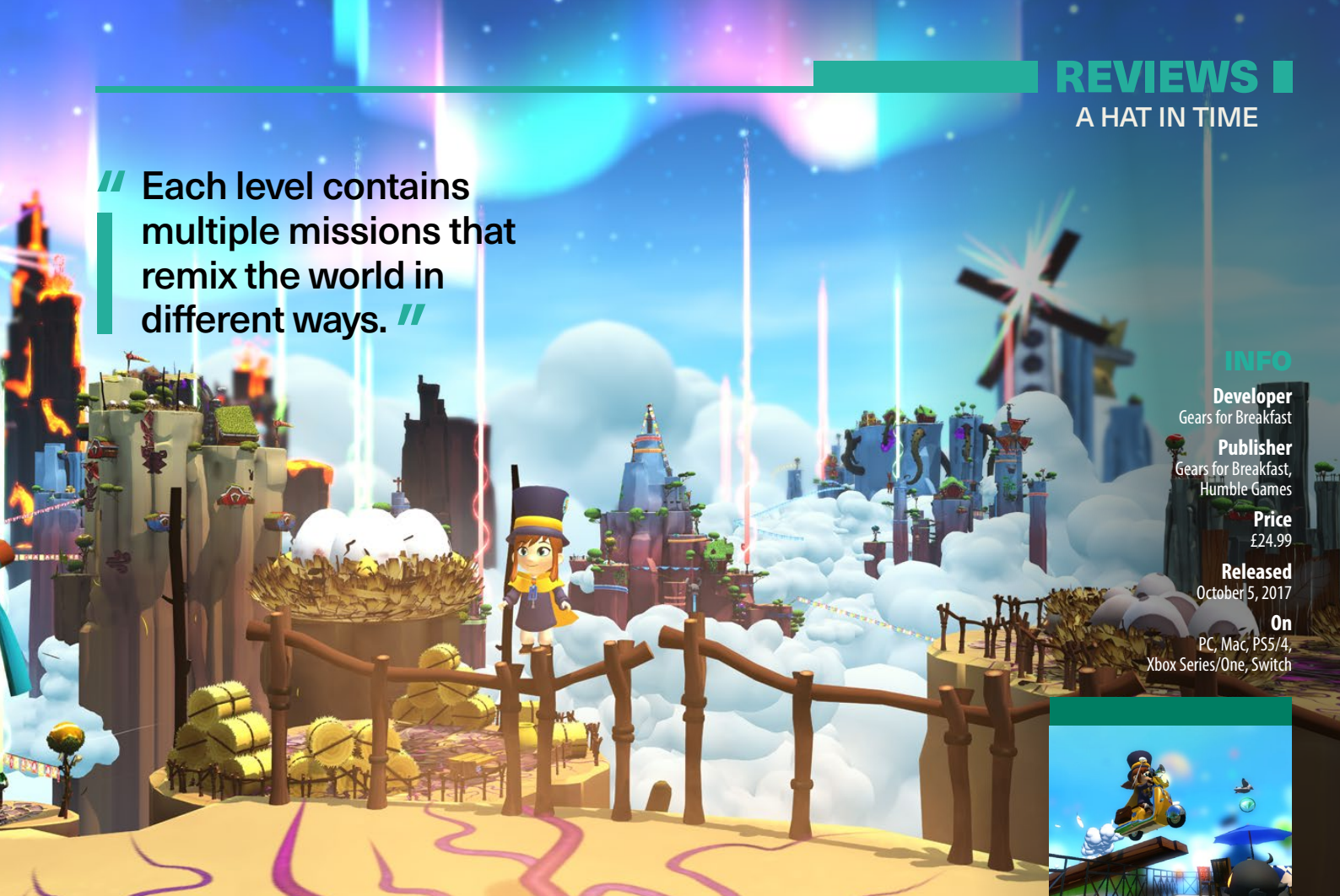
To retrieve them, Hat Kid ventures through five **wildly creative worlds** [1], each cleverly designed like a playground of platforming challenges. In true *Mario 64* fashion, each level contains multiple missions that remix the world in different ways. One moment, you’re solving a murder mystery aboard a speeding train; the next, you’re unravelling a sinister forest contract or helping rival bird directors battle for cinematic glory. There’s a constant sense that anything can happen, and you best believe it might.

The game’s real magic lies in its humour and personality. NPCs are delightfully strange: the Mafia refer to themselves in the third person (“Mafia does not ask questions”), snarky owls demand your personal details at security, and seals staff an

**LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE...**

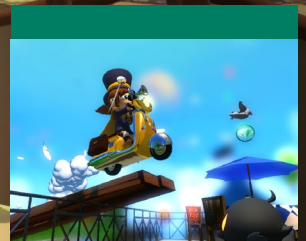
Psychonauts 2
Debatably indie, but story-rich, imaginative, full of humour, and charming.

“ Each level contains multiple missions that remix the world in different ways. ”

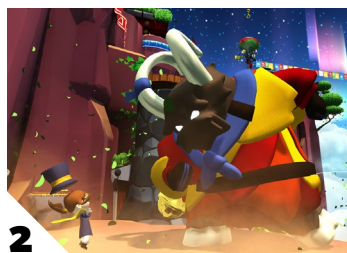


INFO

Developer
Gears for Breakfast
Publisher
Gears for Breakfast,
Humble Games
Price
£24.99
Released
October 5, 2017
On
PC, Mac, PS5/4,
Xbox Series/One, Switch



1



2



3

HATS OFF TO THE MODS

There's a thriving modding community behind *A Hat in Time*, with nearly 6,000 Workshop creations - everything from custom costumes and emotes to full-blown beach parties and surfing levels. Someone even added Bob-omb Battlefield, because of course they did.

Originally a Kickstarter darling, the game has grown massively, with many top-tier mods now featured in-game. None of this existed the first time I played - and it's wild (and adorable) to see just how much extra has been stitched in.

Arctic cruise with clumsy optimism in worthwhile DLC content. Every interaction is a punchline or a surprise.

Even the smallest details sparkle. Hat Kid flails excitedly while charging her sprint, winces after punching without her umbrella, or takes a quiet break in "chill chairs" while the music slows and the world exhales. These tiny flourishes sell the sense of adventure and childlike wonder throughout.

Mechanically, the game's strong, too. Yarn balls scattered across each world let you craft new hats that grant powers, time-stopping, speed boosts, and explosive potions, keeping the platforming constantly evolving. You'll bounce across umbrellas, soar with balloons, grapple across rooftops, and revisit earlier areas with new tricks to uncover secret items and unlock new customisation options like alternate hat designs and colourful dyes.

Boss fights are **colourful, cinematic showdowns full of style [2]** and unique mechanics. The visuals lean into cartoon exaggeration, and the soundtrack by Pascal Michael Stiefel is phenomenal, shifting from whimsical to dramatic in harmony with each moment.

Even the sound design is impeccable, with satisfying effects for collecting Hourglass Pieces, opening chests, or discovering secrets. It's the kind of polish that makes every action feel rewarding, just like the star chimes in *Mario 64* or chest jingles in *Zelda*.

As an avid fan of 3D platformers, trust me when I say this game earns its place. *A Hat in Time* isn't just a tribute, **it's a vibrant, hilarious, and heartfelt experience [3]** with more hats, heart, and humour than most games dare to wear. [G](#)

Nick Crocker



MORE INFO

Yooka-Laylee

Packed with collectables, silly characters, and playful, colourful levels.

Clive 'N' Wrench

Labour of love, collectathon buddy platformer. (3 - Debug #1)



WHAT THEY DID NEXT

Gears for Breakfast published *Here Comes Niko!*, a cosy 3D platformer full of charm, quirky characters, and low-stress island-hopping exploration.



Quang DX

INDIES ARE STRONGER

TOGETHER

Quang runs micro indie game studio **Asobitech**, making retro games with an East meets West design philosophy. He is passionate about building community and sharing knowledge.

Being an indie developer at times feels like you are a tiny fish in a giant ocean, just trying to survive as you keep on swimming. All the while companies like Sony, Microsoft, Nintendo, Embracer, and Tencent are giant sharks consuming everything in their paths. But whereas they need to be making millions of dollars on the games they create to stay profitable and survive, an indie only really needs to make a tiny fraction of that to be able to continue making games. To mix my metaphors, we don't need the whole pie, just a slice will do. There is enough pie to go around for all the indies.

It is true that making a great game isn't enough, you gotta be able to get the word out there and tell people about it. But how do you do this, if you've spent all this time on your own, in seclusion just working on your game. Developing a game in itself is difficult enough, then you have to tell people about it. The triple AAA publishers have marketing budgets in the thousands, if not millions, to get their game in front of as many eyes as possible. The fear of releasing a game at the same time as GTA 6, had every one breathing a sigh of relief when Rockstar announced the delay of the game. As when it is finally released, all the air is going to be sucked up into their massive marketing vacuum.

What can indie developers do to improve their chances? Get involved in communities, online forums, Discords, in-person meetups, conferences, and expos. There are communities for all types of developers, based on the engine or language you use, the genre of games you make, the platforms you're targeting, your geographical location, or even how you identify within the game development world. These groups can be invaluable for learning, sharing resources, and finding solidarity in a field that can often feel isolating.

And if the specific community you're looking for doesn't exist yet, consider starting it yourself. Chances are, there are others in the same position who would be eager to join, even if it begins with just two people meeting at a local cafe to chat about their current projects.

Small beginnings often lead to meaningful connections.

Back when I was developing using Game Maker Studio 1.4, there were no physical meet ups focused on that software, so I started my own with journalist Jupiter Hadley and fellow Game Maker dev Julian 'Juju' Adams. We arranged an event once a month with speakers, talking about Game Maker and game development in general.

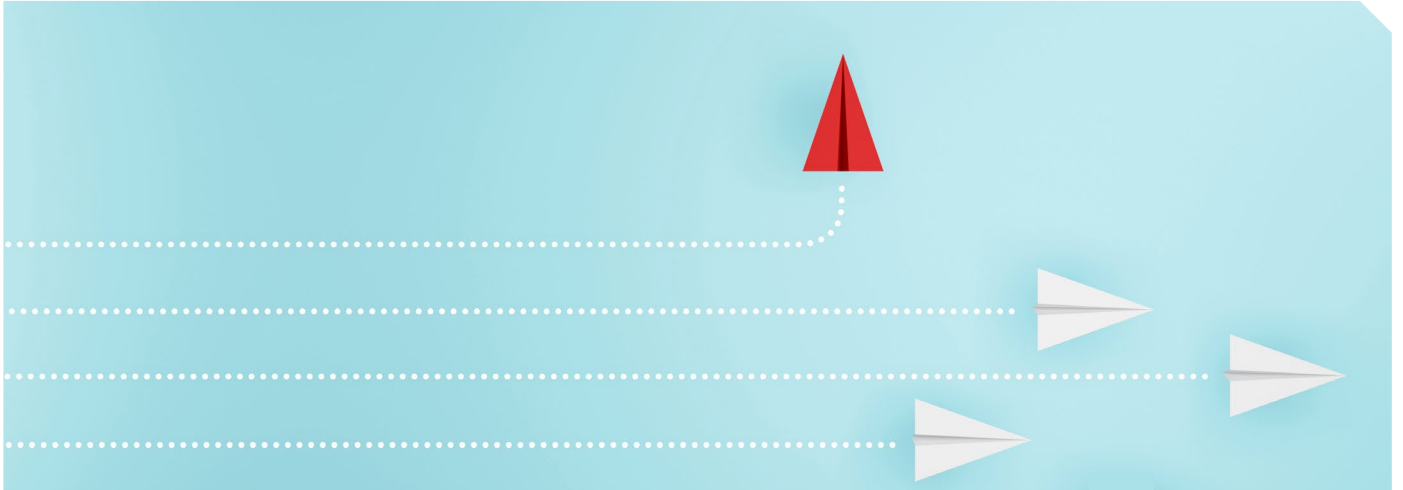
Beyond the talks, we created a space for people to meet, network, and share ideas. These kinds of events offer so much more than just education. They provide community, encouragement, and accountability. Within these networks, you'll find support, fresh perspectives, and solutions to problems you may have struggled with alone. You'll discover motivation to finish your game, collaborators for areas you're less confident in, and when it's time to launch, a community to help amplify your work. Never underestimate the power of shared enthusiasm and mutual support.

Keep in mind, it does go both ways. You get out as much as you put in. Always think about what you can do for your community first, not what it can do for you. Be active, grow your network of peers, colleagues, and more importantly, friends. Engage with others' work, offer feedback, attend their launches, and celebrate their wins. It builds trust and reciprocity.

Building authentic relationships over time creates a strong foundation for future collaborations, support, and mutual growth. You'll be surprised how often opportunities arise from casual conversations, shared interests, or someone remembering your name from a helpful comment.

To paraphrase the proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" - It takes a community to release and market an indie game.





With a career spanning journalism, publishing and development, Caspar Field has been producing games since the turn of the century and playing games since the days of *Pong*. He's been indie, he's been Triple-A, and he's here to share ideas and learnings from both sides of the coin.

I have long said that one of my favourite things about working in games is that it never stops changing, and resultantly there is always something new for me to learn. Presented with fresh challenges, novel ideas or inspiring technologies, we must evolve in line with the industry. I have sought out these changes and challenges, such as when I joined Relentless Software in 2007 to work on what were called 'social games' (the *Buzz!* quiz franchise), or when I joined Creative Assembly in 2021 to work on a Games-as-a-Service title (the ill-fated *Hyenas* project). These shifts have not always (ever?) been easy, but I look back and see that each has expanded my repertoire, my skills, my experience and, crucially, my perspective.

The big shift that we have lived through over the last three years – as so many studios of all sizes continue to cut and close, leaving talented fellow developers adrift in an uncertain jobs market – presents a fundamental challenge to my idea of learning from change. That sense of instability is mentally exhausting at the individual level and risks being organisationally paralysing at the corporate level. We become creatively timid and second-guess every move, which is no state of mind to try and make 'fun things' in.

When we tried to start-up a new studio last year, my business partner and I had to tune-out the ever-grim 2024 industry news so that we could focus on what we were trying to achieve. It was not easy, especially when close friends and former colleagues were

affected. But, if we fear change, we run from it, and instead of learning, we become insular, and our ideas become less adventurous.

My feeling is that the way forward for us as an industry is to do what we do best and deliver scintillating, novel games sparkling with joy and discovery. No pressure, huh? Oh, and if the last three years has taught us anything, it's that we must hold a sharp commercial lens over what we're doing, ensuring that we're making relatable games that lots of people understand and want to play, that we're building them in a cost-effective way, and that we sell them using whatever business model makes most sense for our audience. And given what so many of us (including me) have been through personally, we need to look after ourselves and one another as much as possible as we do it.

Achieving all of that will be no mean feat, and while it is still no guarantee of success, it creates a great foundation for it. Having set the challenge, I carry those thoughts into the position that I have recently been hired to do, heading up development at a respected UK studio. I am honoured and privileged to be offered the role, and I do not take the responsibility it carries lightly. Once again, I am listening and learning from talented people around me, blending innovative ideas with my 25 years of development experience, and taking a step forward into a challenging new world. I hope you'll wish me all the best in this position, as I do to all of you who are hard at work building games and companies, or seeking a new role in the industry. We are the change.

Caspar Field

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE





debug



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