

DEBOLO

MEW GENICS?

EDMUND MCMILLEN AND TYLER GLAIEL SPEAK TO US ABOUT THEIR FOLLOW UP TO INDIE DARLING *THE BINDING OF ISAAC*



#7

Creative Director
Daniel Crocker

Editor-in-Chief
Andrew Dickinson

Deputy Editor
Dan Morris

Art Editor
Kate Munday

Retro Editor
Marc Jowett

Community Manager
Nick Crocker

Staff Writers
Autumn Wright
Ignas Viewersys
James Tocchio
Jupiter Hadley
Matthew Lundy
Megan Bidmead

Other Contributors
Alex Kanaris-Sotiriou, Anni Valkama, Caspar Field, Edd Coates, Quang DX, Rahul Gandhi, Robby Bisschop, Rosalia Trupiano, Rosie Taylor, Rowen Cameron, Stuart Gipp, Tom Hardwidge, Wesley LeBlanc

Special Thanks To
All of the awesome developers we met at the events we attended. Our friends at GameMaker. You, our wonderful readers, for supporting us all throughout 2024! You rock.

The Fine Print
Debug magazine does not endorse products or services in the magazine, and accepts no responsibility for any supplied content. All content correct at time of going to press. Errors and omissions excepted. All editorial decisions are final.

The opinions expressed by the various authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the magazine.

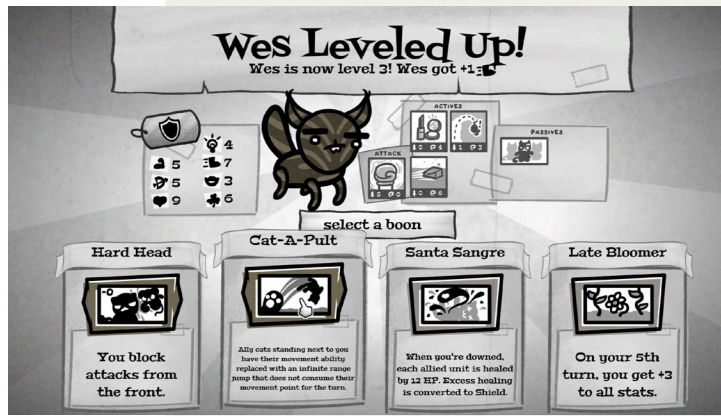
All contents are © 2024 Boss Mode Ltd. No part of this publication may be copied, scanned or reproduced without the prior written permission of the publishers.

teamdebug.com



*Artwork on page 05 from Victory Heat Rally

EVENTS



08 Roguelike Domestication



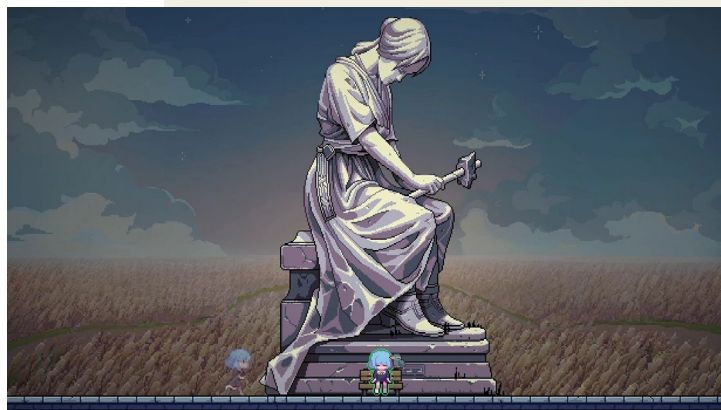
16 Debug Debrief



41 Fruitbus



62 Caravan SandWitch



96 Indie Intersection

FEATURES



- 06** Contributors
- 07** Debug News
- 56** ID: Fury Studios
- 58** Ten of the Best
- 84** Game Dev Diaries
- 98** Discourse

52

PICO-8 AND THE CREATIVITY OF LIMITATIONS

Dan Morris explores why you might want to play (and develop for) the PICO-8 fantasy console.

08

ROGUELIKE DOMESTICATION

Wesley LeBlanc speaks to Edmund McMillen and Tyler Glaiel about their new game *Mewgenics*.

50

WHY I LOVE... THE BINDING OF ISAAC

Our favourite list maker, Stuart Gipp, tells us why he has a soft spot for the indie phenomenon *The Binding of Isaac*.

THE HUB



16

DEBUG DEBRIEF

No international travel this quarter (boo), but we made more than one stop in the north west of England, so that's something! Check out our new 'Game To Watch', too.

- 15** Early Access
- 22** Free Play
- 23** Let's Get Physical

19

RETRO WORLD

New location, same old Marc! He continues to bring you the best of the retro indie scene, but now he's part of The Hub!

22

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

We're giving you two for the price of one this issue, with streamers Blue and Queenie choosing some banging indie games!

INDIEDEVELOPMENT



41

FRUITBUS

Can you make your grandmother proud? Forage for fruits in the wild and make the tastiest salads from the back of a van in this cute and cosy title.

- 25** Nowhere
- 26** Building Relationships
- 28** City of Springs
- 29** Dead Meat
- 29** Realms of Wilorth
- 30** Mika and the Witch's Mountain
- 31** The Holy Gosh Darn
- 32** About Cannons & Sparrows

- 33** Parliament of Hell 1796
- 34** Phonopolis
- 37** Herdles
- 37** Journey Beyond the Edge of the World
- 38** Last Spartan: Glory Over Madness
- 39** Hollow Home

- 40** Morsels
- 42** Truer Than You
- 43** Map Map
- 44** Red Metal
- 46** Horses
- 48** Puppetmaster
- 48** Brew

62

CARAVAN SANDWICH

Everyone loves a good sandwich in their house, but are people as keen on a SandWitch in a caravan? Find out in our review!

- 63** Necro Story
- 64** Cat Quest III
- 65** Hollowbody
- 66** Dungeons of Hinterberg
- 67** Victory Heat Rally*
- 68** Thank Goodness You're Here!
- 69** Tiny Glade
- 70** Copycat
- 71** Gori: Cuddly Carnage

- 73** Grapple Dogs: Cosmic Canines
- 73** Exophobia
- 74** Gestalt: Steam & Cinder
- 75** Omachapon
- 75** Retro Drive: Revamped
- 76** Star Trucker
- 77** The Crimson Diamond
- 78** CONSCRIPT
- 79** The Plucky Squire

REVIEWS



- 80** Melobot - A Last Song
- 80** Dungeons & Degenerate Gamblers
- 81** Also Released

COLUMNS



89

GAME UI MUSINGS

Edd Coates really knows his stuff. Like, seriously. If you want to talk UI, he's the man to approach! Now he's sharing his musings with all of you lucky, lucky people!

96

INDIE INTERSECTION

Join us in welcoming former Game Informer editor Wesley LeBlanc as a new regular columnist!

94

SAFE IN OUR WORLD

We're big supporters of the gaming mental health charity Safe In Our World, so we're super excited to have Rosie Taylor writing for us.

- 88** The Art of Art
- 90** Unmasking Publishing
- 91** Rahul's Legal Letters
- 92** PR Parables
- 93** Being An Indie Dev
- 95** Both Sides Now

How **MEWGENICS?** the cat-breeding RPG from EDMUND MCMILLEN and TYLER GLAIEL, makes *The Binding of Isaac* feel like the prototype.

As I watch lead programmer Tyler Glaiel and co-designer and lead artist Edmund McMillen play through a random run of *Mewgenics*, my eyes widen more and more as the game continues to grow. There's a staggering amount of mechanics and systems happening on-screen, and even as I take detailed notes for this very story, I struggle to keep up with everything they're doing in-game. Despite my confusion, though, I'm enamoured with the idea of *Mewgenics*. Knowing it comes from the duo behind a heaping dose of various *Binding of Isaac* releases over the years is enough to warrant me checking this game out when it launches next year. But watching it in action for the first time, with all its cat-breeding morbidity, *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Dungeons & Dragons* inspiration on display, it has shot up on my list of games to check out next year.

McMillen says something early in our interview that sticks with me throughout my two hours checking the game out and discussing it with its lead creators: "This very well could have been an *Isaac* game, and it would've fit that theme. All the stuff I thought about messing with in an *Isaac* sequel, we're doing a lot of those things. It's more so

that this is the logical next step. *Isaac* was a prototype for *Mewgenics*."

That's a bold statement. *The Binding of Isaac* is a beloved indie with roguelike elements released in 2011, long before 'roguelike' became arguably the most popular genre of indie games in today's marketplace. It has millions of fans, and, according to McMillen, was the financial hit that allows games like *Mewgenics* to stew for more than half a decade in development without a worry of its own financial success (McMillen says the team isn't trying to beat *The Binding of Isaac*'s sales with *Mewgenics*, nor does it believe it will happen either). Calling that game a prototype for *Mewgenics*, at first glance, seemed dismissive of everything accomplished in *The Binding of Isaac*. After watching roughly 40 minutes of *Mewgenics* gameplay, though, I understand wholly what McMillen means. It's not dismissing *The Binding of Isaac* – it's highlighting how much McMillen, Glaiel, and the rest of the team, which has seen roughly a dozen people come through at various times over the years, have accomplished. It's recognition that without *The Binding of Isaac*, *Mewgenics* wouldn't exist.

YOUR NEW HOME

My demo with Glaiel and McMillen begins in a home, the main hub of *Mewgenics*. It consists of just one room at the start, but can grow to include more — including an attic. That's important because cats will only breed with others in the same room. Plus, Glaiel hints at a 'feng shui' aspect with furniture and home cosiness that factors into the game's *Pokémon*-esque breeding and attaining perfect stats for your various cats. Outside of combat, this home is where a lot of important things take place in *Mewgenics*. When each day ends, every cat will eat one unit of food so make sure to have enough. And then, *Mewgenics* runs a sim: depending on feline attraction, libido, sexuality, and aggressiveness, your cats will or will not breed. And thus your family tree begins.

Mewgenics keeps track of your home's feline lineage, including when inbreeding takes place and subsequently implements negative traits and mutations. I only see a taste of these mutations — both the good kind like spider limbs that let you walk freely through spider webs that would otherwise slow

WORDS BY WESLEY LEBLANC

ROGUELIKE DOMESTIC

As your feline family tree grows in-game, *Mewgenics* will keep track of your lineage, including inbreeding, mutations, traits, and more.

ATTENTION

Marc Jowett brings us a whole load of **new** stuff to play on **old** stuff



The Secret of the Four Winds

Developer KAI MAGAZINE SOFTWARE **Publisher** KAI MAGAZINE SOFTWARE
On MEGA DRIVE **Released** Q1 2025 **Socials** @KAI_MSX

Following on from the successful titles *Life On Mars* and *Life On Earth*, Kai Magazine Software is back with its most ambitious title to date.

The Secret of the Four Winds is an action role-playing game that plays a bit like *Resident Evil*, as you get into stance to shoot enemies including zombies and feral chickens! I had the chance to play a demo version of the game and it is shaping up to be very exciting.

After a long and impressive intro, I am soon introduced to some zombie-like creatures that need shooting with a special gun my character has acquired. Once I am given the information that these enemies are strong in the dark, but pretty pathetic in the light, it becomes a game of cat and mouse.

Holding B puts you into the stance for shooting, while the A button brings the reticle out, and you need to move this manually into the path of the enemy.



After being saved from an impressive-looking demon, the next part of the demo saw me chatting with some of the locals in a city to obtain information about animal attacks and a missing patrol.

Those animal attacks turn out to be the feral chickens, and after dispatching them (they do explode rather satisfyingly!) the demo concludes. But it left me wanting more.

If you're as excited about *The Secret of the Four Winds* as I am, you don't have too long to wait now until it finally releases! [▶](#)



MORE INFO





CAN I ...

MAKE A GAME?

YES YOU CAN

```
on  
ys_fc  
1.playe  
eRight  
oveUp  
moveLeft  
moveDown  
}  
if (global.playe  
moveRight  
moveUp  
moveLeft  
moveDown  
}  
un with Shif  
g = keyboa  
if r  
= t
```



GameMaker makes game design simple - all you need is an idea!
Enjoy free tutorials and join an active community of creators.
Follow in the footsteps of your favorite indie classics, such as
Undertale, Hotline Miami, and Pizza Tower
It's 100% free. No credit card required.



INDIE DEVELOPMENT

MIKA AND THE WITCH'S MOUNTAIN

RELEASED
EARLY
ACCESS

WE WERE CHARMED

MIKA AND THE WITCH'S MOUNTAIN IS A TREAT

Mika and *The Witch's Mountain* is a charming, Studio Ghibli-inspired adventure game where you play as a plucky young girl who wants to become a witch. Despite a lot of encouragement from her mother, she's found herself pushed off the edge of a mountain, with the challenge of getting back up in order to start her witch training.

As her broom is now broken, she needs to spend her days delivering packages and getting to know the people at the edge of the mountain, upgrading her broom in the evenings before starting again the next day.

Everything is charming in *Mika and the Witch's Mountain*. The world is stunning, the characters are well-developed, and I found myself enjoying every moment, even when I was unable to really make it to the area I wanted to. You see, as your broom is upgraded, you can travel further, easier. You're able to fly higher, take advantage of wind streams, and carry more items.

There are lots of items to deliver too, some of which need you to be careful with, but also items to collect and hand back out to those who lost them. It's got a wonderful world, and while the gameplay mechanics take a bit of getting used to, the game is truly fun to play. I only wish that I could have a mini-map, as I found myself pausing the game to reference the map often. [▶](#)

Jupiter Hadley



INFO

Developer
Nukefist

Publisher
Chibig

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

LIKE THIS? TRY THIS...

Summer in Mara

Another stunning game starring a young girl, trying to find herself on her island home.



MORE INFO



END OF THE DARN WORLD

LAUGH IN THE FACE OF DEATH IN **THE HOLY GOSH DARN**

The *Holy Gosh Darn* is a narrative driven point and click adventure game where you play as Cassiel, a teenage angel who is sent to save Heaven. You do have the power of time travel on your side, allowing you to go backwards in time and fast forward through conversations, as you only have six hours until the end of all time. *The Holy Gosh Darn* is a hilarious take on such a disaster, with the end of Heaven happening, but tons of humour twisted in. There are moments when I found myself immersed in the story and moments when I was laughing out loud, trying to figure out how to hang out more with the dogs! *The Holy Gosh Darn* is out right now, so look out for a review in the very next issue of **Debug**. [📄](#)

Jupiter Hadley

INFO

Developer
Perfectly Paranormal

Publisher
Yogscast Games

On
PC, PS4/5,
Xbox Series,
Switch

Released
Out Now



MORE INFO

We wanted to learn more about the inspiration behind the team, who seem to make these types of humorous adventure games around an often sad topic.

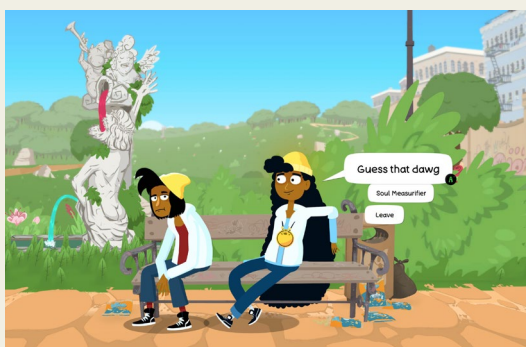
What made you want to create such a funny game around the subject of death?

Death is terrifying, and sad, and it sucks. Nobody knows what really happens when we die but we all know we are totally going to die one day. It can happen anytime. It's hard to go about your business when that thought is just somewhere in the back of your head constantly trying to make eye contact and you have to pretend you don't notice it, like when you see a guy you kind of know at the store but don't know well enough to stop for a chat. Anyway, what was I even talking about? Oh yeah, death is terrifying and incomprehensible. By making the whole concept ridiculous, with very human/comprehensible problems like being in love with the concept of war or trying to do a kick-flip, we attempt to ease the pain of existential dread.

Also one thing I find hilarious is when we anthropomorphise incomprehensible concepts like death, or other super powerful beings, [and] give them really mundane problems. Which is why it is so hilarious to me when *The Holy Gosh Darn*, a near incomprehensible artefact of huge importance, potentially a weapon of mass destruction, turns out to be... wait, is that a spoiler? It probably isn't it? Whoever is reading this, go play the demo and you'll see what I mean.

What were some of your inspirations for *The Holy Gosh Darn*?

Ohhh let's see! [We took inspiration from] Kevin Smith movies! What I loved about those movies were how the setting and characters were always different rather than being straight up sequels. You wouldn't even know they take place in the same universe before Jay and Silent Bob would show up. The fact that every myth legend and god exists in the Perfectly Paranormal-verse in a way that attempts to make sense is inspired by the show *Supernatural*. I loved how they would encounter a cherub in one episode and then an Egyptian God in the next. I also like *Adventure Time*, [which] would feature everything from goblins to demons to candy people, or *Gravity Falls* which takes place in a world where every myth and urban legend seems to be true.

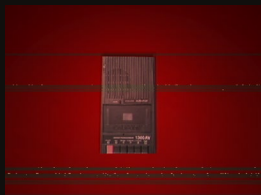


THE TOP 10 SCARIEST INDIE GAMES

“D-d-d-do I have to?” pleaded scaredy-cat **STUART GIPP** when asked to write a feature on the pant-wettin’est indies ever to go “boo!”. And yes, he did have to. And has.

ANATOMY

2016
Kitty Horrorshow



This masterpiece sees you exploring the dark corners of a family home as it gradually degrades and transforms around you, eroding any and all sense of safety from what should be a comforting environment. It's so terrifying that you might not even want to finish it, but multiple endings await.

WORLD OF HORROR

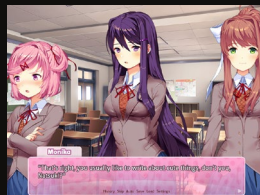
2020
Paweł Kozmiński



Taking inspiration from the terrifying manga of Junji Ito, as well as old Macintosh Hypercard games, with a signature '1-bit' art style. You'll go up against monstrous yokai in turn-based battles as you solve the paranormal mysteries plaguing a small town, pushing back a seemingly inevitable apocalypse. Oo-er.

DOKI DOKI LITERATURE CLUB!

2017
Team Salvato



Hooray! A lovely little visual novel with all the hallmarks of the genre — Japanese schoolgirls making friends and having a lovely time after school at the literature club, and absolutely everything is fine and nothing whatsoever goes wrong and you should definitely play this without knowing anything about it.

SOMA

2015
Frictional Games



This claustrophobic sci-fi experience raises plenty of existential questions, but you'll need to get past the hostile robots before you've got any time to ponder philosophy. *Soma* includes a mode that switches off the monsters so you can focus on the story — and it's no less frightening. An unforgettable nightmare.

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S

2014
Scott Cawthon



You're stuck in the office at Freddy Fazbear's Pizza, besieged by murderous animatronics. All you can do is chart their progress through security cameras, switch the lights on and off, and open and close the metal shutters. And you're running low on power. Hold on. Did you hear that? Sounded like footsteps. . .



TEN OF THE BEST

HORROR is big in the indie scene. In fact, there's so much of it that there's — shall we say — a fair bit of copycat chaff among the truly original wheat. Picking 10 of the scariest indies, then, is a bit of a tall order given the sheer deluge of content to choose from. Taking into account PC and console games (with some receiving future ports at the time of writing), here's a list that encompasses the well-known and the truly obscure. The only thing these games have in common is that they instigate pant-wetting fear. So bring some paper towels.

MURDER HOUSE

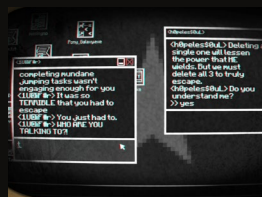
2020
Puppet Combo



There's definitely something a bit Renseal about *Murder House*, isn't there? Exactly what it says on the murder tin, basically. You're in a house. There's a murderer there. Deal with that! The lo-fi PlayStation 1-esque visuals give the whole thing a scuzzy, deranged feel. And the jump scares. Oh, the jump scares!

PONY ISLAND

2016
Daniel Mullins Games



Lots of horror gets meta, but few are able to match this one. Cursed to play endless runner *Pony Island*, you'll need to modify the game's code to make progress in the game, all the while chatting with a mysterious other whose dark identity will become clear as the game itself becomes more and more obfuscated.

OUTLAST

2013
Red Barrels



You're stuck in a seemingly abandoned psychiatric hospital with only a video camera's night vision mode for light. And — of course — it's swarming with homicidal patients. With no way to fight back, it's a tense, frightening experience that sees you vaulting obstacles and hiding in cupboards. From naked blokes.

DARKWOOD

2017
Acid Wizard Studio



A brand new perspective on survival, *Darkwood* is an absolutely horrifying world in which appalling things lurch within your peripheral vision. It makes complete sense that you can only see what you would realistically be able to see of course, but so few games make use of this idea that it's totally fresh.

MUNDAUN

2021
Hidden Fields



Striking and scary, *Mundaun's* sketchy sepia style can make even the most innocuous object seem bizarre and foreboding. Your quest to climb an imposing mountain by car, truck, or sled is a test of sanity with several endings. Esoteric puzzle solving and minimal combat are the orders of the day here.

REVIEWS

GESTALT: STEAM & CINDER

INFO

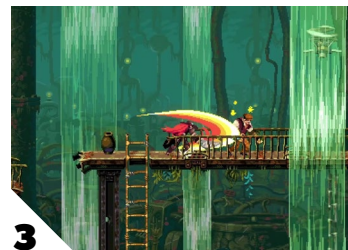
Developer
Metamorphosis
Games

Publisher
Fireshine Games

Price
£15.99

Released
July 16

On
PC (tested), PS4,
Xbox One, Switch



WHAT IS GESTALT?

Some of you may have heard the world gestalt before, possibly in relation to psychology. It is a school of thought within the profession, with its name deriving from a German word meaning 'whole', 'pattern', or 'form'. Thus, Gestalt theory looks at the whole when it comes to psychological issues, rather than concentrating on one thing in isolation. We may have all learned something new today! One would think that the title of the game derives more from the German word, but you can we'll let you decide that one...

WILL YOUR FUTURE HOLD UNKNOWN HORRORS IN METROIDVANIA GESTALT: STEAM & CINDER

Gestalt: Steam & Cinder is a narrative driven Metroidvania, inspired by 16 and 32-bit classic games. You are challenged to play as Alethia, a mercenary (otherwise called a Soldner) whose life revolves around taking odd jobs and completing them, to pay her bills.

You're currently living in a world that's basically at it's end, there are tons of battles, and demons are appearing, making it not such a great place to live [1]. You've ventured out beyond the city's walls, to find out what actually happened, and to better understand the war that has left your town devastated. Brought together by story and fast-paced action, this is a very engaging tale; meeting new characters and hearing more of their story drives the progression [2].

Gestalt twists a narrative tale, one that will keep you

hooked and engaged, including showcasing moments between heroes who might not even currently be a part of the conversation. There are lots of moments of discovery, and fast battles, as you take on enemies all around you, with your melee weapon and your gun by your side [3].

Though Gestalt is a Metroidvania, it's not one that ever has you feeling like you have hit a dead end and need to go back to find something down another path to get to the next area. The map itself is a very fitting size and the narrative gives a good understanding on why you have progressed and what is happening next. [▶](#)

★★★★☆

Jupiter Hadley



MORE INFO

LIKE THIS? TRY THIS...

Monster Sanctuary
Metroidvania meets monster hunting!



THE BACK CATALOGUE

This is the teams first title, but do check out their publisher Fireshine Games who will soon be releasing killer looking titles like *Odnifal*.

GRAPPLE DOGS: COSMIC CANINES IS A PAW-TASTIC EVOLUTION

Building on its predecessor's groundwork, this sequel tightens the leash on gameplay, enhancing the adventure with clever mechanics and good old fashioned fun.

One of the standout improvements is the revamped currency system. Players can now earn gems to unlock stylish outfits and unique grapple skins, providing a compelling reason to collect. Gemstone collection has been streamlined too, reducing the required gems from five to three per level. This change makes levels more accessible, allowing players to feel accomplished without the stress of missing collectibles.

New character, Luna, adds variety to gameplay. Her weaker gun contrasts nicely with Pablo's melee attacks, offering different strategies for combat. Although swinging and shooting can feel a bit awkward, especially when using the less-than-perfect controller of the Switch, the added complexity keeps the action engaging.

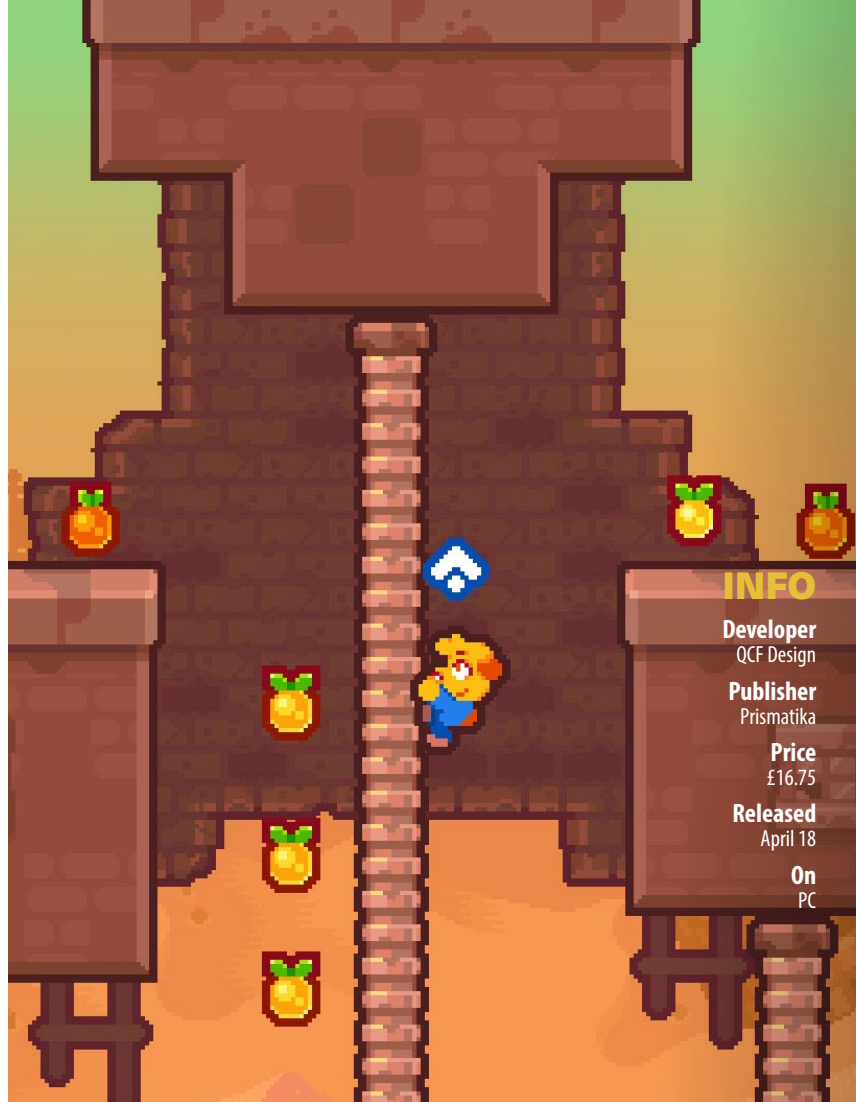
With its engaging dialogue and improved mechanics, *Grapple Dogs: Cosmic Canines* is a solid platformer that appeals to both newcomers and veterans alike. It's a rewarding adventure that ensures players will be left howling for more. [▶](#)

★★★★☆

Daniel Crocker



MORE INFO



INFO

Developer
QCF Design

Publisher
Prismatika

Price
£16.75

Released
April 18

On
PC



INFO

Developer
Zarc Attack

Publisher PM
Studios

Price
£12.79

Released
July 23

On
PC (tested),
PS4/5, Xbox One/
Series, Switch

EXOPHOBIA BRINGS RETRO VIBES TO THE MODERN AGE

Exophobia was originally created as a game jam game, many years ago. Since that early demo, the game continued in development and became a fully fledged retro-inspired FPS, with tons of Metroidvania progression and stunning pixel art

Clearly taking inspiration from games like *Doom*, *Metroid* and *Mega Man*, it's a lovingly crafted game full of weapons, traps, enemies and boss fights, for you to slowly fight your way through and clear.

Movement and interactions in *Exophobia* feel smooth, almost speedrunable, even if you aren't someone looking to speedrun. You can easily clear rooms, find new weapons, and work your way through the map. I love finding the CDs and learning more about the ship as I explore. If you are a fan of the games that *Exophobia* takes inspiration from, it's a game that you are going to enjoy — it's as simple as that. [▶](#)

★★★★☆

Jupiter Hadley



MORE INFO



Rosie Taylor

GAMES THAT MADE MY DEPRESSION FEEL SEEN



Rosie Taylor is the Content and Community Manager at Safe In Our World, a global mental health charity for the video games industry. Having been surrounded by games her entire life, and faced personal mental health challenges, Rosie is passionate to work within the industry and make a difference. Check out the website: safeinourworld.org



aving experienced bouts of depression over the course of my teen years and early 20s, video games were one of the only mediums that made me feel validated and seen. After years of casually playing games on old consoles, I found myself becoming more enthralled with them upon going to university and finding myself with more free time on my hands than I was used to. During

my time at university, I went through one of the biggest depressive episodes I'd ever had, and the only thing that brought comfort to me was gaming. For me, this was the reality of living with depression. Self-imposed loneliness and isolation was an easy way to add fuel to the fire in my brain, and the depression whispered words of validation while I sank back from society. Video games were one of the only things to make me forget about how miserable I was feeling.

I didn't necessarily play games that emulated my own despair, but when facing characters struggling through their own trauma, I felt seen. Looking back, there are games I wished I had played when I was at that low point. The least I can do now is share three of these titles in the hopes that they might offer a sense of belonging to fellow gamers who might be struggling.

The first title I want to highlight is *Until Then* - one of my more recently discovered games - that initially captivated me with its art style, but quickly became a game I will hold close to my heart for a

long time. *Until Then* is a single-player narrative adventure game that tackles mental health themes such as anxiety, trauma, and grief, while perfectly capturing the nature of what it is to be human.

Some of my lowest points were spent in the walls of high school. This game captured the triad of teen angst, immense pressure, and anxiety about being an almost-adult so well, I almost felt familiar habits and anxieties creeping back up while I played.

I first got my hands on *The Longest Walk* during Scottish Games Week in 2022. I was not prepared. *The Longest Walk* is a BAFTA nominated biographical walking simulator game about a real experience of living with depression and suicidal ideation. It's nine and a half minutes long, and it is hard to listen to. That said, I'd recommend anyone play it if they feel able to; it's free on Steam. I needed a hug after I played this - it definitely hit hard.

With a lot of depictions of depression, it can be easy to romanticise it, or dismiss the truly gut-wrenching moments with humour or an unusually speedy recovery. For me, depression was unbearable. I felt lost, alone, and unlovable. This game doesn't hold back from the 'ugly' traits of depression, but it doesn't lean into them in such a way that players might feel coerced. It tells a story that players are along with for the ride, rather than trying to incite feelings from them.

For me, it's important to try to open up about the moments that we feel most ashamed about. That was one of the only things that helped me feel like I wasn't broken: learning that I wasn't on my own. Don't get me wrong, I didn't relish the thought of others struggling in the same way I was, but it helped make me feel less alone.

Celeste is one of those games that will be timeless in the intersection between interactive media and mental health. Players navigate a challenging platformer to reach the top of Celeste Mountain as Madeline, who is on a path of self-discovery.

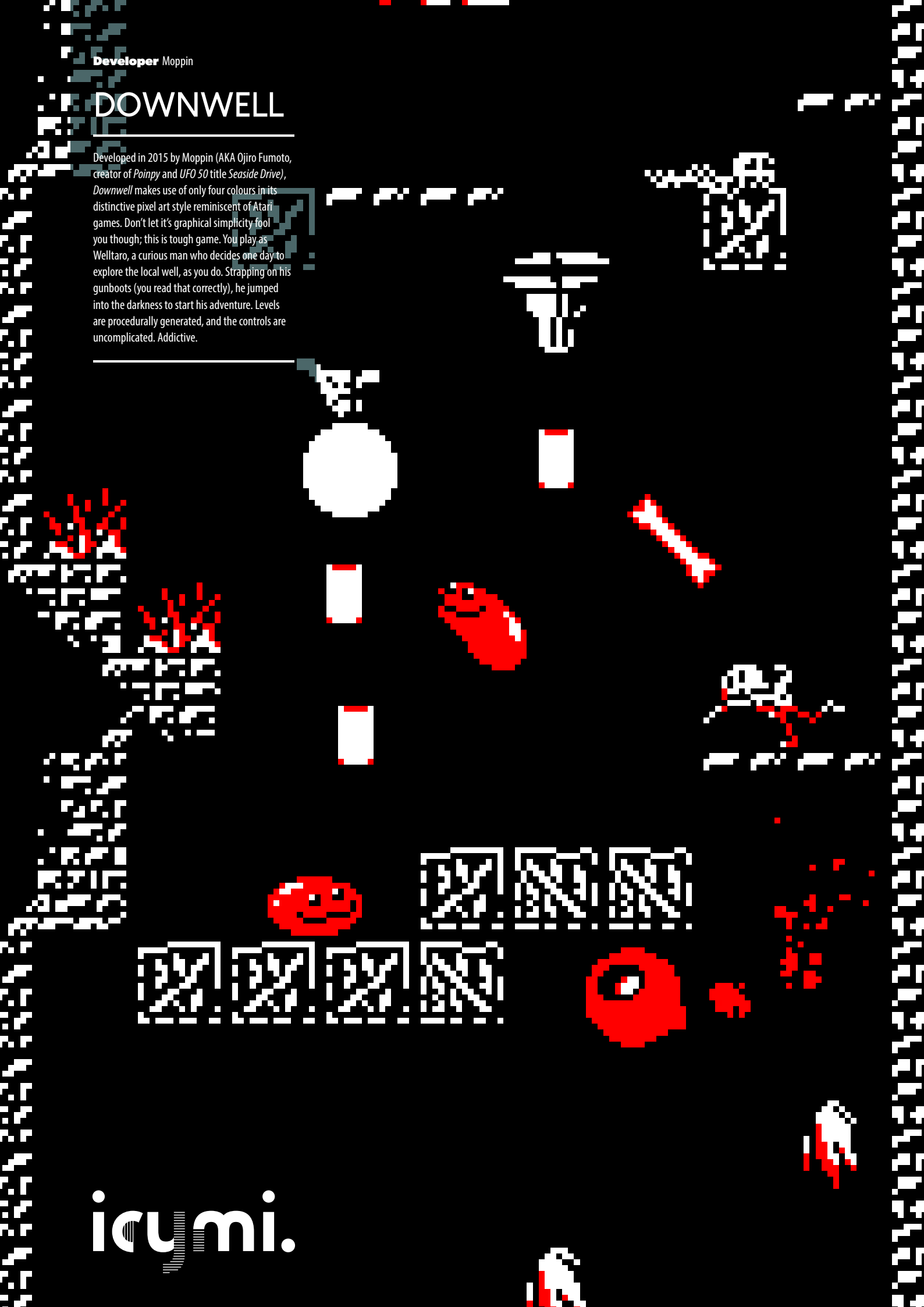
It's a classic example of a game teaching players self-compassion in a way that is hard to reject, even from the darkest of places. Em Aspinall wrote a fantastic piece on their experience with *Celeste* and mental health for the Safe In Our World website, that so beautifully describes their own relationship to Madeline. Having seen so many different ways players have related to *Celeste*, I couldn't not include it here.



Developer Moppin

DOWNWELL

Developed in 2015 by Moppin (AKA Ojiro Fumoto, creator of *Poinpy* and *UFO 50* title *Seaside Drive*), *Downwell* makes use of only four colours in its distinctive pixel art style reminiscent of Atari games. Don't let its graphical simplicity fool you though; this is tough game. You play as Welltaro, a curious man who decides one day to explore the local well, as you do. Strapping on his gunboots (you read that correctly), he jumped into the darkness to start his adventure. Levels are procedurally generated, and the controls are uncomplicated. Addictive.



debug



EXTRA DEBUG.
NO EXTRA COST.

Subscribe to **DEBUG** and get access to extra articles, audio interviews, and video content. **And never miss an issue!**

www.teamdebug.com