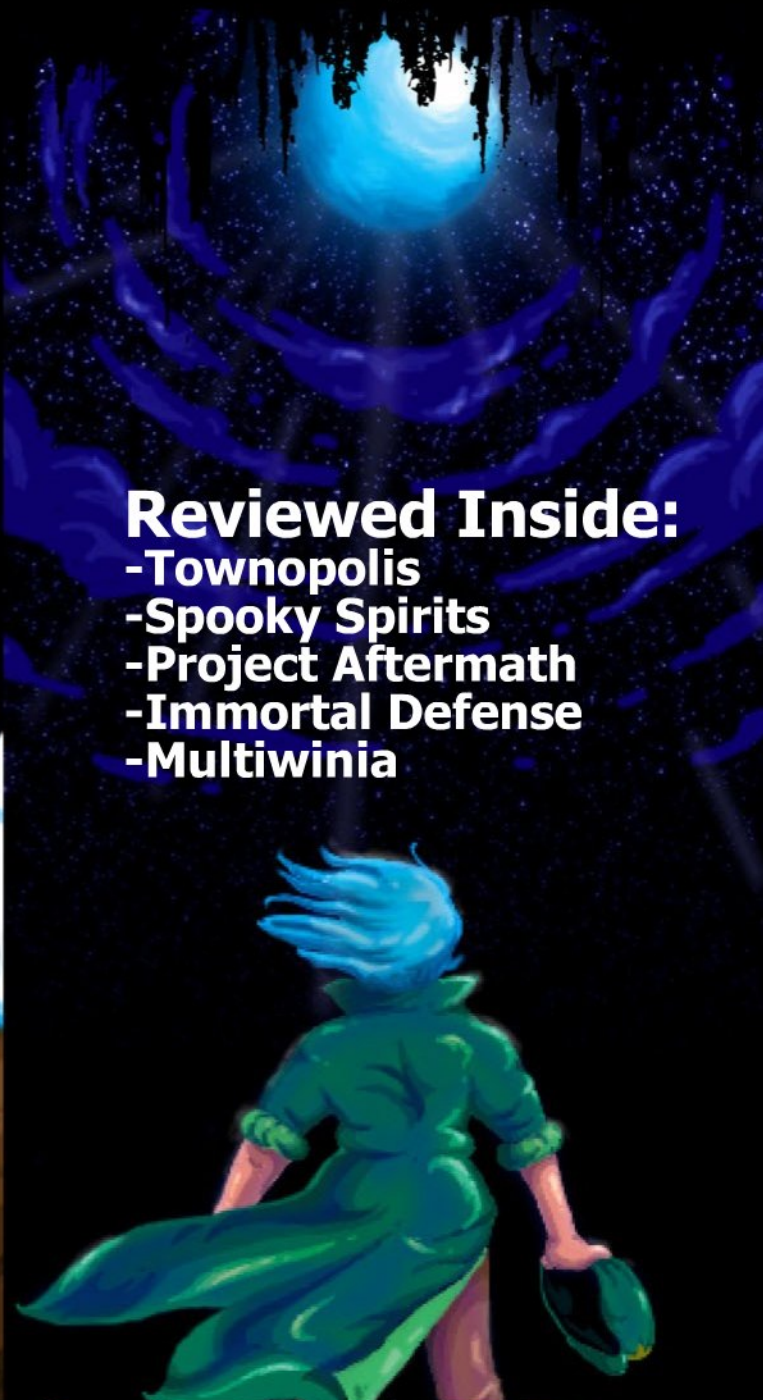


INDIE GAME MAG

Issue 2, Winter 2009



Reviewed Inside:

- Townopolis
- Spooky Spirits
- Project Aftermath
- Immortal Defense
- Multiwinia

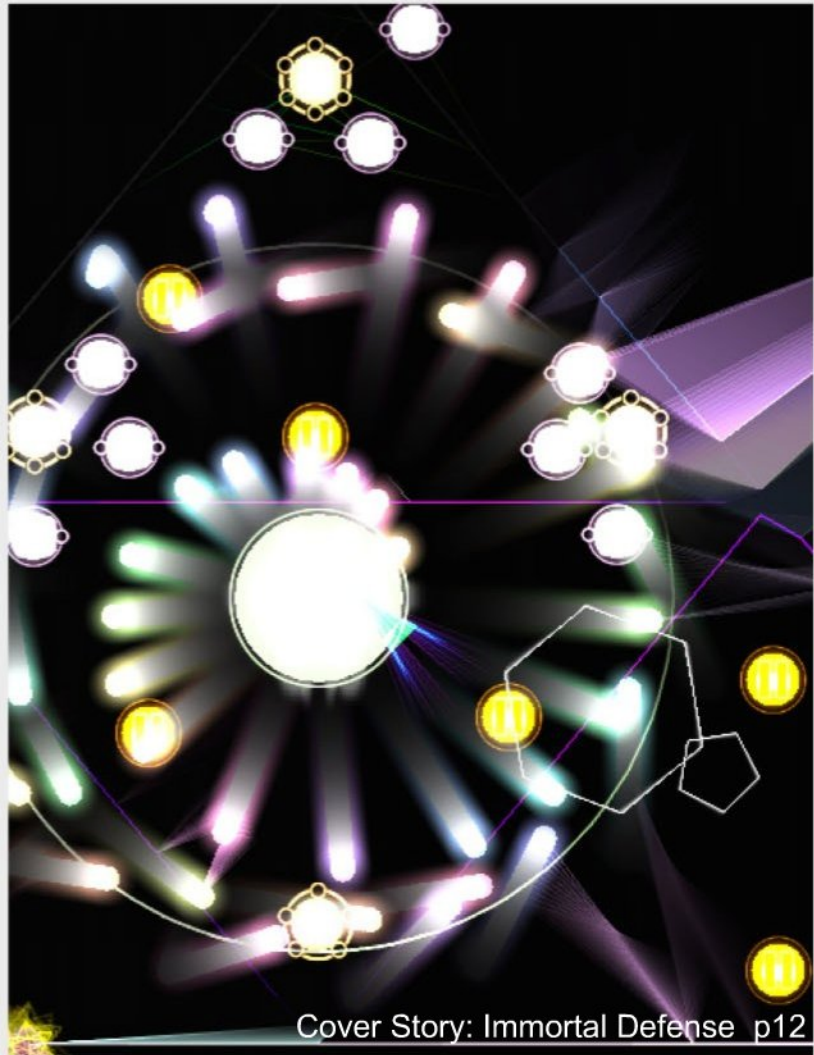


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Indie Game Magazine

Issue 2 - Winter 2009

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EDITORIAL

Is LittleBigPlanet an Indie Game?

by Mike Gnade, Editor-in-Chief

This is the question I have been asking myself all month. In fact, I came very close to even including a review of LittleBigPlanet in this issue. The minute you boot up LittleBigPlanet, it feels like an indie title. From the eclectic pop-up book style visuals to the community focused features, LittleBigPlanet is like no game you've ever experienced before.

The "story" of the game is that our world is full of people and dreamers who imagine and create the worlds of Sackboy and friends. The whole game exudes creativity and shares a lot more with indie games out there than the perennial games that Electronic Arts churns out.

On the other hand, LittleBigPlanet was developed by a huge team at UK based Media Molecule and has received an extreme amount of hype and attention. Furthermore, Sony has stepped in and not only started work on a LBP sequel, but practically adopted Sackboy as their new mascot. We're not far away from an overwhelming LBP merchandizing and marketing campaign.

But the question remains. Is the size of the game studio the only factor that defines an indie game studio? Is a small casual game studio that creates match-3 clones indie? Or is indie a reference to creativity and experimentation that must be reserved for only the most artistic and unique games regardless of studio size? I don't know, but I do like LittleBigPlanet.



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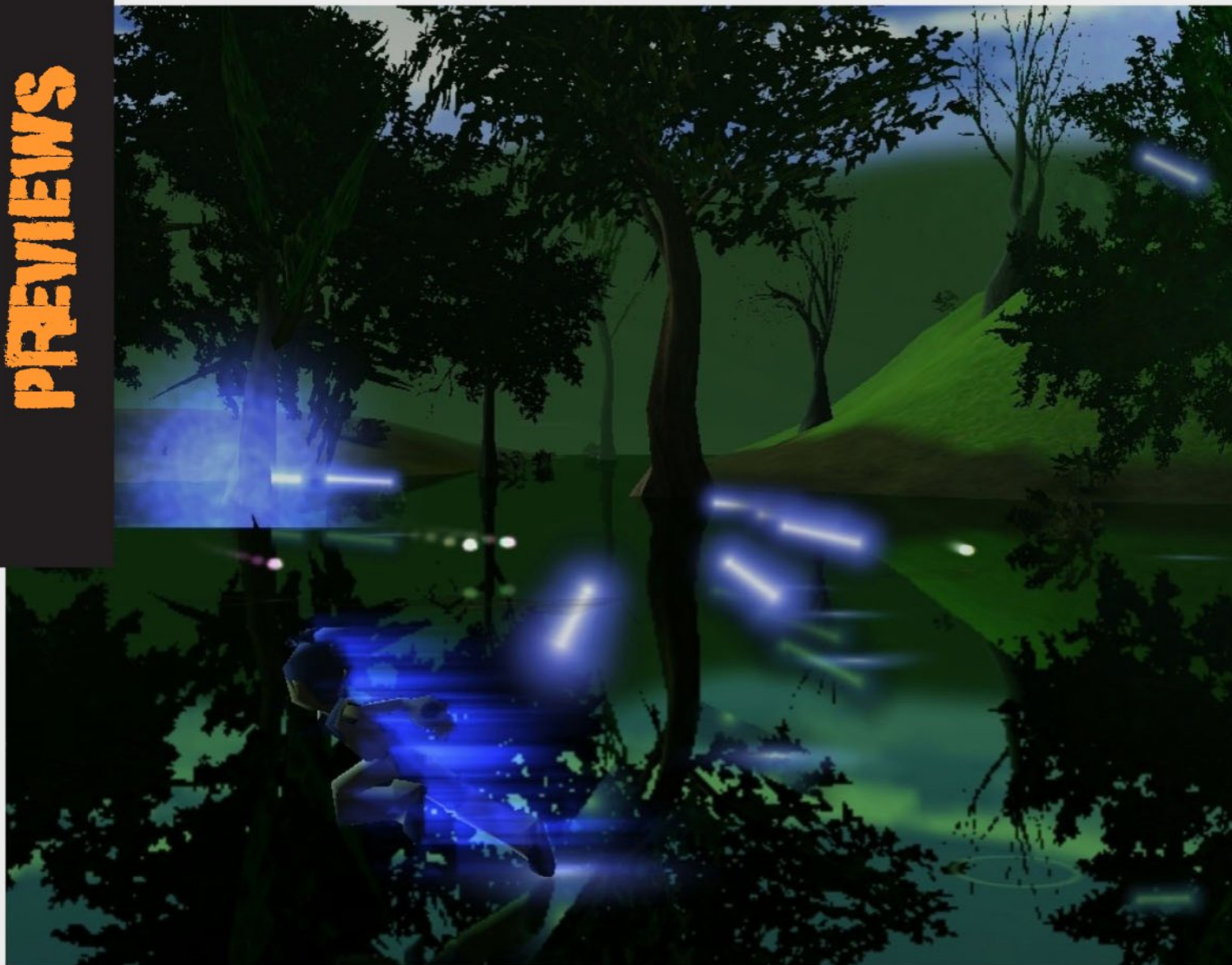
Awesome Soccer
 Preview by:
 Mike

Windows & Mac

Red27 Studios
www.red27studios.com



Awesome Soccer by Red27 Studios is a no frills soccer (football) game that focuses on simple and deep gameplay. Awesome Soccer immediately reminds one of the classic Sensible World of Soccer. Awesome soccer has a simplified control system where you move with the keyboard and only have one button to execute all your passing, shooting, slide tackling, etc. There is also an aftertouch system that allows you to put "swerve" on your shots (another similarity to Sensible World of Soccer). Luckily for Awesome Soccer, it's visuals are not a decade old. Awesome soccer has very fluid player sprites and large soccer photographs that display as menu backdrops. While Awesome Soccer shares its gameplay mechanics heavily with SWOS, it does have a lot more features, league options, strategy elements, management options etc. than the arcade sports game classic. If you were a fan of SWOS, Awesome Soccer will certainly give you a similar gaming experience while offering downloadable tournaments and other team, and league management options. Don't be fooled though, Awesome Soccer does not attempt to simulate the sport, but instead replicates classic arcade soccer gameplay. Scoring is much more prevalent, but isn't that more fun anyways?



Caster
Preview by:
Mike

Windows PC

Elecorn
www.elecorn.com

Caster is an upcoming 3rd person shooter action game from developer Mike Smith of Elecorn. The game controls like a first person shooter with the keyboard moving your character and the mouse handling all your aiming and shooting. The basic premise of the game is rid your world of the bug-like Phanx with your magical energy attacks.

The copy we played was a preview build for the Independent Game Festival. While the game's 3D graphics are low-res, there's definitely some impressive real time terrain deformation, particle effects, and lighting going on under the hood. The gameplay is also very playable with responsive controls and a good mission structure and upgrade/leveling system. What really impressed me though was the fantastic music that this game already has in place (and the fact that the game was programmed/animated by a 1 person studio).

Caster has the potential to be a very impressive game. The basic structure is in place, but the game needs a significant graphics upgrade. The level textures are horrendously low resolution and the main character needs some more polygons. If Elecorn takes the time to balance the difficulty, and give the graphics an overhaul, Caster could be an amazing indie game. The gameplay, speed, and action packed levels are already fun to play and the music definitely adds a lot to the game. With varied magical attacks, excellent music, great particle/lighting effects, a level-up system, and what looks to be a great game engine, Caster is poised to be a high octane action game. I only hope that a new coat of paint gets slapped on to improve the game's 3d Graphics (the 2d Graphics are great) before it's released to the public. Good luck at IGF!

Name: Mike Smith
Studio: Elecorn

Game Titles: Caster
Fav Indie Game: Ether Vapor
Fav Retro Game: The original Metroid or Mega Man 2.
Best Current Gen Game: Oni by Bungie
Best Game Console Ever: GameCube

What is the best game of all time and why?

That's a tough one, so I'm just going to give my favorite instead. Oni by Bungie on PC / Mac. Third person action melee and shooter with great controls. Still haven't found a game that combines the two that well. Although Collapse by Createam looks like it might be better

and I'm really excited about it.

What is the goal of your indie game studio?

It's a venue for me to create game play experiences for other people. My goal is to continue to create and share fun and uplifting experiences with others.

When did you start developing indie games?

Probably in 2002. Before then it was just playing around and I never made anything serious or complete.

What is the biggest mistake you have made as a game developer?

Sadly, depending too much on

other people without a proven track record has been my biggest mistake. For whatever reason, most people seldom finish games or other ambitious projects projects. Nowadays I always have a fall back just in case people I'm working with don't come through.

What has been your biggest success?

So far, submitting Caster to IGF. Notice, I didn't say winning. For me, just finishing the game to a point where I felt comfortable submitting it to IGF is a huge accomplishment.

DEVELOPER PROFILE

Caster



A 2ND TAKE ON IMMORTAL

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to defend your loved ones as a disembodied hero traveling through an ethereal plane of existence for all eternity, while destroying enemies with aspects of your persona? If you have, then Studio Eres' Immortal Defense is the game for you. With a unique sci-fi story line and decent game play, this strategic tower game will keep you up late at night.

During game play, the variety

of colors can become confusing when you have lots of enemies to blast. If you upgrade your emotion points to pack a powerful punch, make sure you've placed them strategically and let them do the work. I've had a few baddies slip by when I couldn't see what was going on. Having a "track-polygon run the path was almost a requirement on some of the more intricate paths. This is essential when plotting the placement of

REVIEWS

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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.

DEFENSE — BY ZAK

the emotion points. Studio Eres' music selection gave the game an almost timeless feel. I think the thought-out selections enhanced the theme of the story, since ultimately you are an "immortal" defender.

Probably the most lasting aspect is the need to develop strategies to defeat different stages and enemies. I really enjoyed the fact that certain enemies required specific emotion points/attacks to

defeat them. The concept made the game much more strategic and interesting albeit frustrating at times. It was definitely helpful to have a library of enemies on the level select screen. More than a few levels caused me to reboot and try different strategies. Mastery of the different emotion points had me feeling pretty accomplished by the end of game.

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS

Barry White

An Irish writer who's had a PC gaming fetish for as long as he can remember and who'd like to be a real journalist when he grows up. I enjoy sunsets, fine wines and lots of Team Fortress 2. My turn offs include lag, the PS3 and shoddy DRM software. I'm also part of the shunned minority who didn't like Braid.

Scott Myatt

My name's Scott, my online alias in most cases is Xuiryus. I'm 21 years old and I live in the city of Glasgow in Scotland. I study HNC Professional Writing at college and I'm in my first year.

Rose Bryant

Obsessed with all things Rock Band, I change my rock goddess's style daily. I can play Puzzle Fighter for hours, and was once addicted to XBLA Uno. Nothing gives me motion sickness quite like playing a FPS.

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

Avid Video Gamer currently married to Gears of War 2 Multiplayer. Click Management game's beware, you're barely a video game and I know it....though they're so addictive! Unique art styles make me weak in the knees, but that doesn't mean I'm easy.



AFTER HOURS GAMING

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After Hours Gaming is a consultation and game marketing firm. Based out of New York, USA After Hours gaming is a division of Session Media who consists of multi-talented musicians, programmers, graphic artists and marketing experts.

Launched in the third quarter of 2008, After Hours Gaming is a privately held Long Island NY consultation and game marketing firm. Providing a variety of services to indie game developers from music composition, game design consultation, branding and marketing After Hours Gaming is the go to source for game developers world wide.

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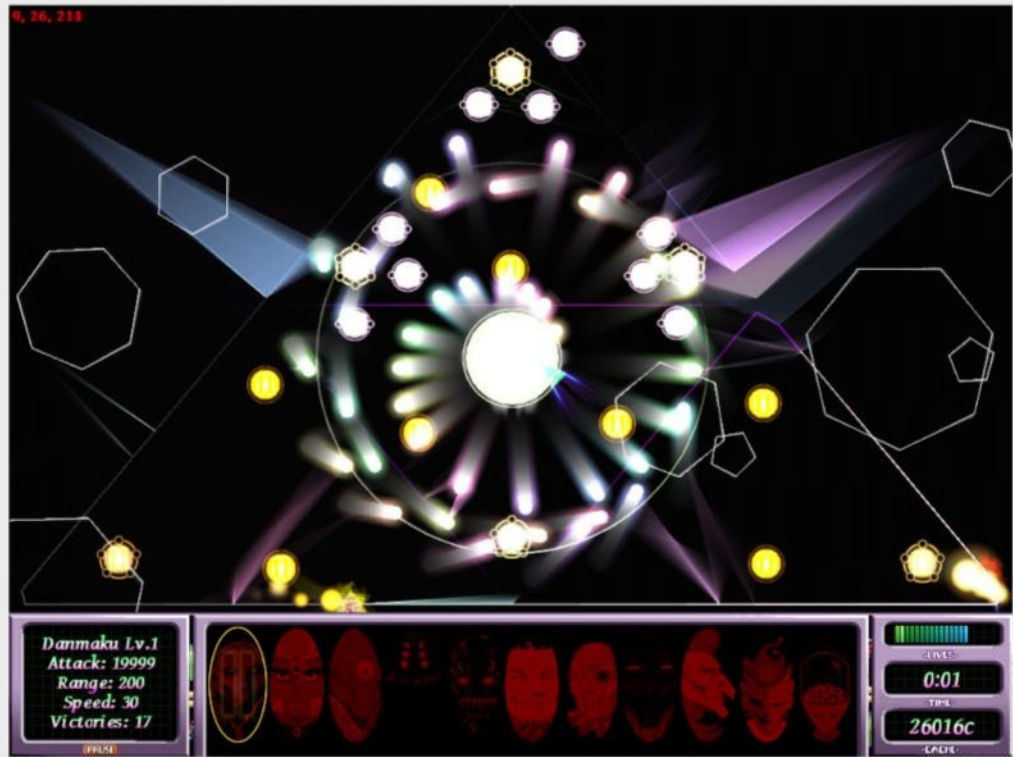
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Windows

IMMORTAL DEFENSE

Developer: Studio Eres - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.studioeres.com

Studio Eres' Immortal Defense has one of the weirdest most preposterous stories I've come across in a videogame: You are a hero who has left their body - becoming some ethereal being in pathspace where you can blast space ships out of the sky with your emotions. This unique story embodies what indie games are about and solidifies itself with solid gameplay.

Gameplay: 9.5/10

Immortal Defense, in essence, is a tower defense game. You don't build towers, but you do set emotion points which blast enemy orb-brains and other odd looking enemies. There are a ton of levels and a fantastic variety of "points" that keep things interesting and new throughout the game. I really like, that your cursor itself is a weapon and hovering it near any enemy will start it blasting - you can even charge up special attacks. This makes the levels feel a lot more arcadey and action oriented than simply building towers and watching them do all the work.

Despite the weird sci-fi premise, the story is very well written and touches on some pretty substantial themes. There's too many metaphors in it to get into in a review, but trust me when I say that the text in this game is worth reading.

Graphics: 8.5/10

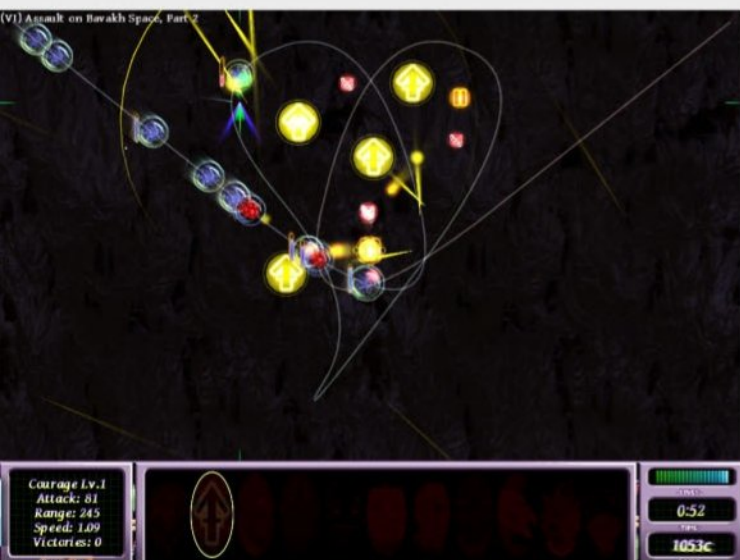
The graphics are definitely the weakest aspect of Immortal Defense. The biggest problem for me is the complete lack of variety when it comes to level appearance. Basically all the levels feature a dark spacey background with some white paths drawn on it. While this fits in with the story, I couldn't help but wish for some abstract paintings, weird animated background or the like. The graphics themselves are all pretty simple. The special effects that permeate the entire gameplay space is what really saves the graphical experience of the game and makes it feel less cheap and more ethereal and supernatural.

Immortal Defense
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 9.5
Graphics: 8.5
Sound: 9
Appeal: 9

Final: 90%
Grade: A-





Sound/Music: 9/10

The music is stellar and Walter Eres and Long Dao should be complemented for the soundtrack which really exemplifies the mood of the game and story. The sound effects are fine, but nothing really extraordinary. While the writing is superb, I do wish that Immortal Defense had voicework or a narrator for the story...maybe that's greedy but it would've been sweet.

Lasting Appeal: 9/10

There are 10 difficulty levels and over 90 levels. More important is the fact that strategy is actually needed to plan and beat many of the later levels. Add to this a compelling... if completely out there story... and you have a

game that certainly is worth it's price tag.

Average: 90%
Tilt: +/- 0.00%

The bottom-line is that Immortal Defense is a very polished and unique tower-defense strategy game. The controls are intuitive and its easy to pick up and play. The supernatural / sci-fi story line may not be for everyone - but the game expertly weaves all of the elements: the story, gameplay, graphics and soundtrack into an artistic experience rather than just a game. The creativity and art that permeates through Immortal Defense is what makes it great- not the game itself.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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*I recommend that you go straight into the game options screen, whack the volume of the tunes right up to maximum and connect your Playstation to your hi-fi - it's the only way to fully appreciate these fantastic tunes..
review on absolute-playstation.com*



Windows

SPOOKY SPIRITS

Developer: Legendo - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.legendo.com

Spooky Spirits
Review by Rose

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 9
Sound: 6
Appeal: 5

Final: 70%
Grade: C-



Spooky Spirits is a puzzle game where you help a brother & sister team fight off ghosts and ghouls with your block building skills. While there is nothing spooky about the game, it does have a haunted house theme, trick-or-treat graphics and a ghost-busting story line to drive the missions.

Gameplay: 8/10

The object of Spooky spirits is to recapture all of the spirits that have escaped by matching colored blocks together and blowing them up ala Puzzle Fighter. You start with different colored blocks along the bottom of the screen. You then select 2 blocks at a time from the top of the screen to fall on the blocks below. What is nice about Spooky Spirits is you can select what colors fall by reordering some of the blocks. This allows you to have more strategy and build large blocks quickly. To get rid of your blocks, you must have a ghost block of the same color touching. Once the ghost block falls, your color blocks explode giving you points and filling up your Spirit Meter. Once your meter is full, you can move onto the next round. The game play of Spooky Spirits is simple and something

that casual gamers can pick up quickly and enjoy. As an avid puzzle gamer, I did have some gripes with the game. The levels progressed in difficulty too quickly. This would certainly cause frustration for some gamers. Another issue was with the game play itself. Not being able to rotate pieces in space limits your ability to make larger blocks as well as avoid filling your blocks too quickly. Allowing you to swap colors before they drop is a highlight that is countered by the designers decision to only allow you to drop the 2 piece blocks horizontally.

Graphics: 9/10

The graphics in this game were a highlight for me and what initially drew me to play. The child like Halloween feel was perfect for the fall. While the actual game itself does not have much in the way of animation, the story portion has excellent high quality graphics that give the game a signature feel.

Sound: 6/10

The music is appropriate for the game's spooky theme, but wasn't something that you found yourself humming later in the day. The Sound FX were minimal during

gameplay and appropriate for a casual puzzle game like this. Becky & Tim's mumbled speech between levels was a tad annoying.

Lasting Appeal: 5/10

While Spooky Spirits has a lot going for it on an initial play through, the lack of multi-player and length of levels hurt its lasting appeal. In it's favor are 2 additional modes. After finishing the first 2 levels (a total of 12 puzzles) I found myself not really caring what happened next. This game is fun to pick up and play but not one you have to go back to every night.

Average: 70%
Tilt: +/- 0.00%

Overall Spooky Spirits is a fun Halloween themed puzzle game that will occupy a few hours of your time, but will not draw you to your computer day after day.



Windows

TOWNOPOLIS

Developer: Lonely Troops - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.lonelytroops.com

Townopolis by Lonely Troops is a simple and fun real estate strategy game (with some time management thrown in). The basic premise is that you are a home developer and must do your best in each scenario to build a residential neighborhood and satisfy the folks who live there. The game has simple point and click controls and a nice isometric viewpoint.

Gameplay: 7.5/10

Pros: There are definitely some great strategic choices under the guise of this approachable casual building game. I really like how residents don't like being near train tracks, industrial buildings, commercial strip centers etc. The gameplay is very approachable and easy to pick up and play. There's an extensive tutorial that teaches you the ropes.
Cons: Gameplay is just point click over and over. It's annoying to have to wait until you have enough money or material to do something else. There should be a mechanic to undo an errant click. Another design flaw is the fact that you cannot look up a building's requirements without having an empty plot to highlight.

Graphics: 7.5/10

Pros: I love the Title Screen and all the GUI elements both in-game and on the title screen make the game very easy to navigate. It's all nice, clean and standard issue.
Cons: Some of the people in the game just look creepy - I think a cartoon look may have worked better. There's no real animation, special effects or wow factor. The most elaborate animation/effects you'll get are some fireworks at level completion.

Sound/Music: 6/10

Pros: Sound fx are kept to a minimal but make sense and fit the mood and pacing of the game.
Cons: Music is incredibly repetitive. When each scenario is 10+ minutes, there needs to be more variety in the elevator music. Music/Audio as a whole is a little too thin ... there could be more sound fx and music variety.

Lasting Appeal: 9/10

Pros: Despite the repetitive music, Townopolis is addictive. There are a ton of different buildings, licenses, upgrades, etc. You'll find yourself replaying scenarios to get silver/gold stars or earn trophies by shooting for bonus objectives.

Despite the simple click and casual friendly gameplay, Townopolis is actually challenging unlike so many other casual portal games. The difficulty really forces you to understand the complexities of designing your neighborhood. I forgot to mention the ability to design custom scenarios as well.
Cons: The repetitive music, inability to look up building requirements (and plan ahead) and other minor flaws detract from Townopolis and make longer play sessions tough without muting the audio.

Average: 75.00%
Tilt: + 1.00%

Don't just look at the score of this review and judge Townopolis. It's a very addictive, methodical, and approachable strategy game. Yeah, the construction dude who gives you tips looks like a pedophile, but these types of games aren't about fancy graphics or complex gameplay. If you can look past the minor flaws of the game, you'll find a very deep real estate strategy game. Townopolis appears to be a typical casual game with shallow gameplay, but almost every level in the game throws something new at you.

Townopolis
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 7.5
Graphics: 7.5
Sound: 6
Appeal: 9

Final: 75%
Grade: C





Windows

SOMERSAULT

Developer: EnterBrainMent - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.somersault-game.com

Enter the strange and wonderful worlds of Somersault and bounce your little companion "Bally" through hazard and hard times.

Gameplay 7/10

Somersault by Enter-Brain-Ment, is something I'd call "a diamond in the rough". It's one of those games that stands out just that bit more. It offers something most games in this day and age fail to deliver, originality. The objective of the game is to navigate your little companion "Bally" through each level by clicking and dragging a paddle by left clicking and literally bouncing your colourful little character through each environment.

The size of the paddle determines the amount of bounce and the projected rainbow which shows the path Bally will take. Each level is full of its different sort of hazards, may it be a blender, a persistent UFO or even a friendly bird pecking the inside of the tree as you navigate into its depths.

Although entertaining, the game is not without fault. Playing Somersault with a track pad is almost impossible and the occasional slopes in frame rates really do beg the occasional cringe.

Graphics 5/10

Although simple at most times Somersault gives way to some impressively beautiful scenery. Bally is simply, a ball with legs, bright and orange with a little cheerful hat. (Just think of an orange version of Mr. Potato head and you'll have the gist of it.) The GUI/HUD are however, ugly at best. Despite the badly created 2D aspects of the game, the overall feel of Somersault isn't lowered... much.

Sound/Music 4/10

Sadly in the sound department the game doesn't live up to much, with random little sound effects here, there and everywhere overall doesn't help the game in anyway. The music is more 'cutesy' and has a nice calm feel to it as you

traverse the game.

Lasting appeal 5/10

Somersault will take up a good proportion of your time if you can bare the first outing. With 21 levels to spend your time on and in most cases "force" your way through each level, you have to wonder "Do I really want to play this game again?" A decidedly average game overall and rough around the edges, its easy to see that Enter-Brain-Ment still have a fair bit to go, however props to the guys for pushing out this innovative little jewel.

Pros:

Innovative gameplay
Beautiful backdrops

Cons:

Rough around the edges.
Frame-rate lets it down at points.

Somersault
Review by Scott

Gameplay: 7
Graphics: 5
Sound: 4
Appeal: 5

Final: 55%
Grade: F



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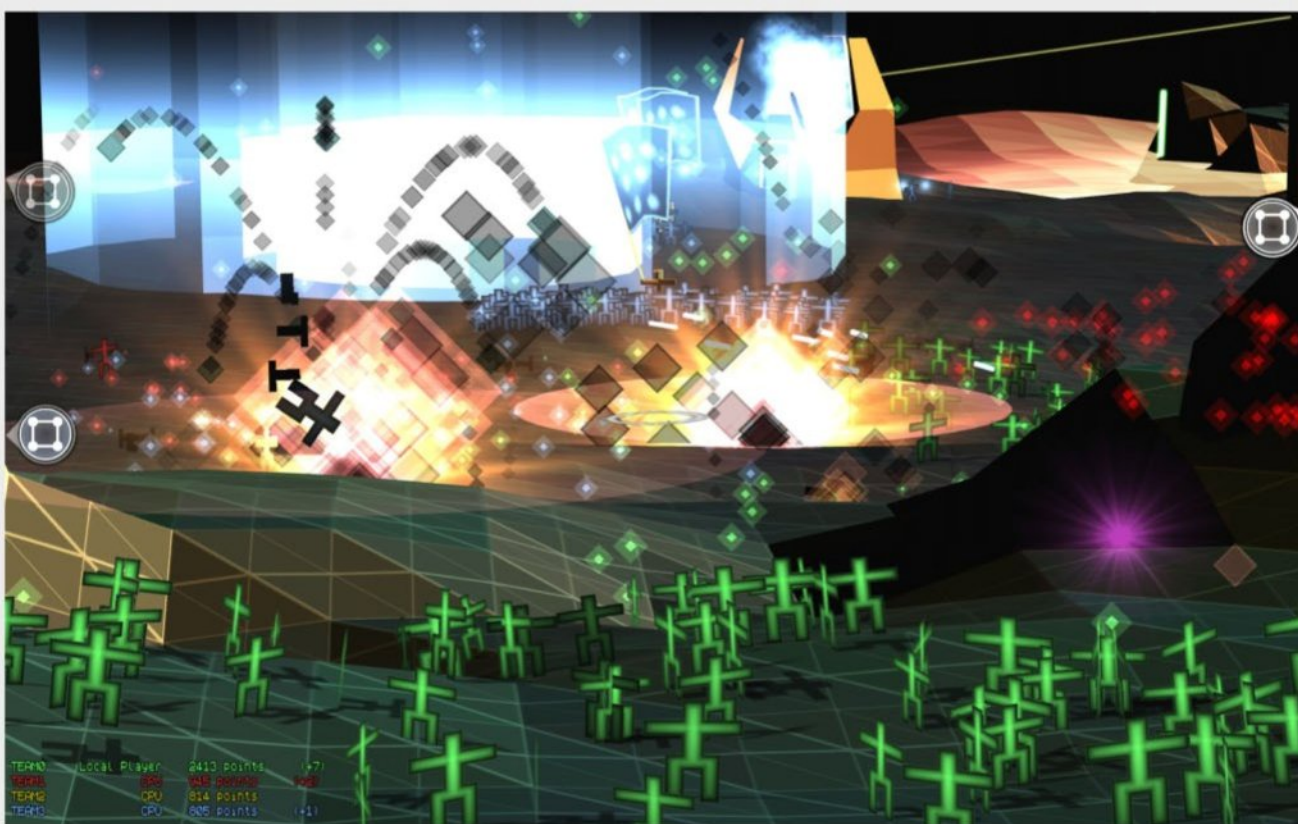
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Windows

MULTIWINIA

Developer: Introversion - **Players:** 4 - **Website:** www.introversion.co.uk

Multiwinia
Review by Barry

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 9
Sound: 9
Appeal: 8

Final: 85%
Grade: B



By the time you read this Multiwinia will have been out for well over a month and, if the word coming out of developers Introversion is anything to go by, the game perhaps hasn't done as well as they'd have liked so far. There's a few reasons for this, the biggest being (and this is something that plagues any indie developer) that not many people have heard of it. This is a terrible shame because every game Introversion has produced has been by turns ingenious, engaging and entertaining. The conversion rate for Multiwinia (the number of people who play the demo and subsequently buy the game) is the highest that Introversion have ever had, so at the end of this review if my reservations (and there are a few) have put you off I'd still urge you to try the demo. You might find the game hooks you after all.

In a nutshell; Multiwinia takes the best bits of Introversion's greatest hit Darwinia (namely the aesthetic, the sound design and the little green Darwinians) and straps them to the frame of a very basic multiplayer real-time strategy game.

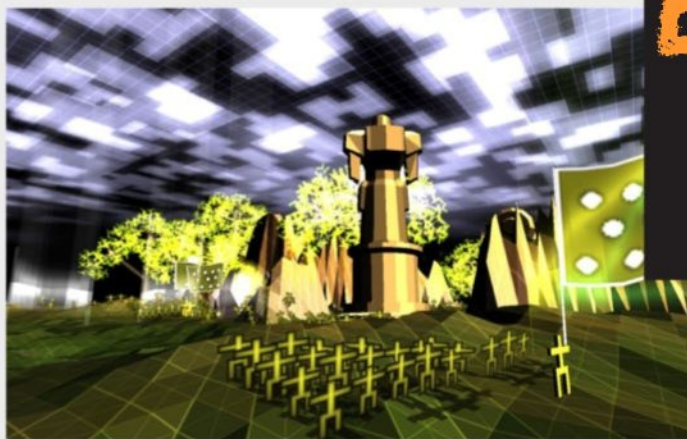
Gameplay: 8/10

The core RTS mechanics of Multiwinia feel very stripped down. Your basic, and most plentiful, units are the Multiwinians. Descendants of the the Darwinians and now coming in a range of colours and delicious flavours, they've been kicking the hell out of each other since the end of the original game. They're plentiful cannon fodder and can be group selected and commanded in large mobs or, if you nominate one of their number as an Officer, organised into rank and file to better concentrate their fire. They're fragile beings, and an average game (which in my experience can be as quick as five minutes) will see you sending hundreds if not thousands to their pixelated demise.

There are several different game types and associated maps to keep things fresh, ranging from King of the Hill (control areas of the map to score points) to the delightful Rocket Riot, where your Multiwinians must protect, fuel and then launch a giant space rocket before the enemy team. Introversion have clearly gone to pains to provide as much variety as possible here, and that's reflected

in their choices of advanced units. Most games will see frequent, randomised crate drops that your Multiwinians can claim. These can contain bonus units such as Armours (troop transports), Squads (grenade launcher packing soldiers from Darwinia), and even the likes of a nuclear strike. There's always the chance that a crate will be booby trapped, unleashing a Virus or deadly Ants instead of some thing you can point at the enemy.

A lot of the power-ups seem to deliberately unbalance the game, suggesting that Introversion were more keen to craft a fun experience rather than a rigidly tuned strategy game. It's a decision that's served Multiwinia well and offers plenty of opportunities for random mid-match hilarity. Matches, even between four players, are quick, manageable affairs and it's not hard to imagine it becoming a popular lunch hour distraction. Losing shouldn't worry players too much as there's always a chance a well placed crate drop can turn the game on its head. Even if you're knocked out early on, there's a vengeance mode that gives you access to power ups you can deploy at regular intervals



while spectating on the remainder of the game. Essentially, a chance to grieve the bastard that knocked you out.

There are problems in how the game handles. Selecting groups of Multiwinians is done by clicking on the terrain and dragging the mouse outwards to create a kind of circular selection vortex. It feels completely counter intuitive to any regular RTS player who's used to the traditional drag-box style. Even with the Officer feature you never have quite as much control over your Multiwinians as you would like. It's a functional system that feels a tad awkward, and I suspect it's exacerbated by the fact that we've never really seen a strategy game that handles like Multiwinia (except Darwinia of course). It's just a bit different.

There's a similar problem commanding the game's special units. At its best, Multiwinia is a frenetic, frenzied experience. Battles can proceed at an extraordinarily fast pace and keeping on top of things can be quite a challenge. But when it comes to using Squads, for example, the game expects you to control the unit individually, meaning to get the most out of them you need to focus all your concentration on that one unit if you want to do anything effective with it. They won't do anything useful if left to their own devices, and having to manage them like that can be distracting.

Graphics: 9/10

As I mentioned at the beginning, one of the best things about Darwinia was its aesthetic and Multiwinia looks almost identical to it, albeit with a few tweaks here and there. You might look at the screenshots and not be terribly impressed, but to accuse Multiwinia of lacking in terms of graphical power or fidelity is to miss the point. The look of the game is unique and the graphical design is damn near perfect in what it's trying to visually represent, and because of that I don't think it's ever going to age. It's got style and a great retro feel, and when the whole thing is in motion it can be astonishingly pretty.

Sound/Music: 9/10

There's a very understated, unobtrusive score backing Multiwinia that you can't really say too much about because... well, because you won't really notice it. Unlike, say, Defcon (to pick a game not entirely at random), where the haunting music complemented the already thick layer of dread and desperation, there's just too much flying around the Multiwinian battlefields for any music to make much of a noticeable impact.

The rest of the sound design is, like the visual style, pretty much spot on and there's not much more to be said about it. What will probably strike you most are the horrible, high pitched death screams of the Multiwinians. They're positively haunting.

Lasting Appeal: 8/10

This is a strange one to call. On the one hand, I think Multiwinia is perfect bite-sized gaming. Short, intense and very easy to dip in to. It's about as far away from the usual RTS online slugging match as you could hope to get. But that might be a problem too. As a huge RTS fan (weened on C&C and it's clones before becoming addicted to Company of Heroes back in the day) I found Multiwinia to be almost too much of a departure in some respects. It looks and feels so alien compared to what you expect an RTS to be that I can easily see how it would be off-putting to fans of the genre.

But that's no reason to ignore it. Multiwinia is a great little game - very focused, very compact and very entertaining. It's easy to grasp and has sufficient variety, and I suspect how it differentiates itself from the traditional RTS may end up being its greatest strength in the long run. It's different enough to appeal well beyond the boundaries of the genre.

It's currently ten dollars on Steam. If RTS is your thing, or even if you just enjoy new, weird, fun games to play with, then this one is a no-brainer.

Average: 85%
Tilt: -



Windows



PROJECT AFTERMATH

Developer: Games Faction - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.gamesfaction.com

Project Aftermath
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 9
Sound: 10
Appeal: 7

Final: 85%
Grade: B



Upon first look at Project Aftermath, It's hard to believe that the game was made by such a small team (3) of British Game Developers. The production value of the game is incredibly high and the download is enormous (over 200MB). But the high production of Project Aftermath is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, I can't imagine how Gamesfaction's team of 3 produced the 3D graphics, and a game of this magnitude...it's truly an achievement. On the other hand, all of the AAA production - the large download, 3D graphics, voice work, and real time strategy genre takes away from this game being "indie" and makes it feel like another big budget RTS. The shame of it all is that when you compare this game to big studio RTS games, the graphics and game aren't quite so impressive. This dichotomy made it difficult to review Project Aftermath. Yes, it's an Indie Game, but it doesn't look or play like one.

Gameplay: 8/10

The game's site describes Project Aftermath as an arcade Real

Time Strategy game. Basically, what that means is you will not build any bases and collect a ton of resources in this game. The game is all about commanding "heroes." The game's heroes each have their own squad of troops, but the hero takes care of telling them what to do, so all you have to worry about is commanding your hero. The game has several different types of attacks and armor and a lot of the strategy in the game has to do with selecting the correct armor and weapon for the battle ahead. I really enjoyed the more action-oriented pace of this game, but the lack of base building mechanic does sort of make the game feel like it's missing an essential RTS element. Then again, the hero concept and the lack of base building does make this game interesting and gives its gameplay a slight unique flare.

Graphics: 9/10

I have to admit that my PC struggled with this game. If not much was going on, it looked great, but the animation, camera, and effects were all choppy. My

PC is fairly new (11 months old) but I don't think my graphics card was up to snuff with the required/suggested video: GeForce 6 series, RADEON 9600, Intel GMA 950 or above, 1280x768 resolution or better. Again, this indie game resembles the major PC titles system requirements more than your typical casual or indie title. Based on the game's videos, it seems like the animation & particle effects work. Just know that you need a decent computer...otherwise you're left with one jerky action game.

Sound/Music: 10/10

The voice acting for this game is jaw-dropping. I simply could not believe the quality I was hearing. In fact after watching the first comic-strip story sequence and then hearing the voice work (and the sheer amount of voice work) I immediately went online to double check the size of the development team. The music, sound fx, and voice work is absolutely top-notch and is better than some fully priced console games out there.



Lasting Appeal: 7/10

There's only 10 single player missions and no multiplayer. The story is interesting enough and presented in a really cool comic style, so you'll want to play through it...but that's all you get. The developer wants to make a stand-alone multiplayer game separate from this first entry. Multiplayer definitely would have boosted the longevity of the game, but while Project Aftermath is short...it's also only \$20 but has the production value of \$50+... so it's a good value (even if multiplayer is another stand alone piece for \$20 the game would be under other RTS games).

Average: 85.00%

Tilt: +/-0.00%

The fact that I'm comparing a 3 person team's action RTS to the likes of Starcraft, Warcraft, Command & Conquer, etc. is quite an accomplishment for any Indie Studio. But when push came to shove, Project Aftermath just didn't capture me. It's a great game and quite a technical achievement, but it's a little too much like a whittled down commercial studio RTS rather than an innovative and fresh gameplay experience. I don't think the game does enough to capture non-RTS fans, but fans of the genre should rejoice because this indie title packs quite a punch



VS



GAMEPLAY

Multiwinia's focus on Multiplayer gives it legs if you like it, but has some serious balancing issues and control quirks.

Project Aftermath's Action focus and Rock-Paper-Scissors weapon mechanics make all 20 single player missions thrilling.

WINNER!



GRAPHICS

Multiwinia offers a very unique aesthetic capturing the retro feel of 2D arcade games in a 3D environment.

Project Aftermath is a very technically impressive 3D RTS title, with a straight forward Sci-fi Art Style.

WINNER!

SOUND/MUSIC

Multiwinia's music is not very noticeable, but the sounds and cries of the multiwinians fit very well with the unique look.

Multiwinia doesn't hold a candle to the charming narrator and full range of voicework in Project Aftermath.

WINNER!

LASTING APPEAL

Multiwinia's aesthetic is great, but it's quirky controls really sour the experience. No real single player missions and unbalanced multiplayer...

...makes Project Aftermath's gameplay all the more appealing. Since our review they've added 20 challenge missions and a lower price - \$10

WINNER!

WINNER



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