YOUR COMPLETE INDIE GAMING GUIDE

debug

FROM UNDERTALE TO DELTARUNE – WE TALK EXCLUSIVELY TO THEIR CREATOR, TOBY FOX

#10

04

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Words James Oakwood

FANTASTIC MR. FOX

For many gamers, the release of *Chapters 1-4* of *DELTARUNE* is one of their highlights of 2025. The genius behind both *DELTARUNE* and *UNDERTALE* is Toby Fox, and in a rare interview we asked him about his creative process, and how an unknown developer managed to create one of the most popular RPGs in recent history.

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THE HUB

DEBUG NEWS

This part's all about us, obviously

▶ **MCV/DEVELOP AWARDS**
Debug nominated for second year
As far as the UK games industry accolades go, it doesn't get much better than being recognised by the **MCV/Develop** awards. We never thought we'd be so lucky, given our very indie approach, but if there's one thing we've learned over the last couple years it's that **Debug** is appreciated by the folks we're doing it all for.

It's truly an honour to be noticed by the industry we love so much, and whilst the competition in our category is incredibly strong, to even be nominated has been a very positive experience for us.

How can I vote?
The fine folks at **MCV/Develop** are voting internally this time around, so unfortunately you can't. Perhaps this gives smaller nominees a fairer chance? **Debug #11** will certainly have the details.

Speaking of voting, our very own **Indie Game Awards** will once again be accepting submissions in a few short months. Keep your eyes firmly on **debugawards.com**

MCV DEVELOP AWARDS 2025

MAKING WAVES

IS DEMON TIDES FABRAZ'S NEXT BIG SPLASH, OR ARE THEY ALL WASHED UP?

Demon Tides, a vibrant spiritual successor to *Demon Turf*, casts players into a sprawling ocean world where Beebz and her crew set sail to explore the secrets of Ragnar's Rock.

A 3D platformer at heart, this open-world adventure blends high octane platforming with strong character identity and raw attitude.

With Akira Toriyama cited as a large source of inspiration for Fabraz, it's no surprise the art direction is a standout feature, with a bold cel-shaded anime-inspired aesthetic and character designs that both seem delightfully nostalgic and original.

Each island is brimming with personality, from sun-soaked beaches to eerie ruins, all dripping with colourful charm.

INFO

Developer
Fabraz

Publisher
Fabraz

On
PC

Released
2025

Demo
Yes

MORE INFO

BY EWAN FISHER AND DANIEL TURNER

GOING
THE

EXT

When College Fun Games, a young development company, were planning a game based around *Les Misérables*, they decided to head to the city of love for inspiration…

Artistic inspiration can come from anywhere – a particular brick, tile, or just a bike leaning against a wall.

Where is your game set? A fantasy medieval world? A metropolis on Mars? A LSD-fuelled Lovecraftian fever dream? How do you bring the player to that space, and make it feel like a real lived-in place?

If you are shooting a movie or TV show, you can film on location, build a set to match your dreams (budget permitting) or do it all on green screen or virtual space like The Volume used in *The Mandalorian*. But building real spaces that cast and crew can inhabit and interact with brings things to a different level – which, I'd argue, is one reason that *Andor* feels like such an immersive world.

For some reason, we are making a point-and-click adventure game that's a parody of *Les Misérables*, using real 2D character animation and backgrounds. 'We' is College Fun Games. Last year we released our first game on Steam, *The Protagonish*, and we're going much (much) bigger for our second one…

So to make sure our world felt real, we spent four days with the whole team in Paris, visiting and mapping real locations, plundering museums (photographically) and taking more pictures than you can shake an SD card at.

This was an amazing opportunity, but in this digital age, you don't have to leave the comfort of your gaming chair to see the world. The critical indie darling *Untitled Goose Game* was set in an '80s English village, but developed by an Australian-based studio, House House. Instead of flying out to the UK, they used Google Maps to find inspiration for the level design, outlined in an excellent 2021 GDC talk 'Google Maps, Not Greyboxes' on YouTube by level designer Jake Strasser.

But real locations don't necessarily make for great gameplay. It's important to note that locations were used for asset inspiration, rather than trying to replicate the exact layout of one specific location. House House were looking for locations that had the key areas they already wanted in the game, like gardens, churches, shops. It was gameplay leading to the location, rather than vice versa. So the village in *Untitled Goose Game* is a hybrid of several villages, with a fictional layout that gives gameplay logic priority over exactly mapping a locale.

This was a key philosophy of our approach in Paris, too. We have a bunch of different puzzles based in Notre Dame, and we spent a long time taking pictures of different parts of the cathedral, knowing that we were not going to create game locations that were accurate to the layout of the cathedral. We wanted to use real lighting and pillars that exist, but move

REVENGE OF THE SAVAGE PLANET LIKES TO CLOWN, BUT IS THIS SEQUEL PAGLIACCI OR KRUSTY?

Games and comedy are strange bedfellows, the latter being so dependent on timing and structure that the free movement and interaction offered by player input can often strip a joke of its impact. Furthermore, attempts to remedy this by issuing gags during cutscenes or mandatory dialogue can have the adverse effect of frustrating the player by stripping control from them and utilising what they will perceive as downtime in order to showcase their 'tight five'. Put simply, trying to make a funny game is a bit of a minefield, and it's one that *Revenge of the Savage Planet* power-walks into, arms flailing as it tries to raise a laugh by any means necessary.

Scarcely a moment seems to go by without some sort of humour being crowbarred in, whether it's in the chirpy dialogue from the floating navigational computer Eko, the snarky text descriptions that pop up when you scan something, or the outlandish and overtly silly animations of the astronaut you take control of. This game is wacky, and that's not something everybody can tolerate. It's worth putting up with however, because behind the constant tickling of your ribs lies a solidly designed

1

2
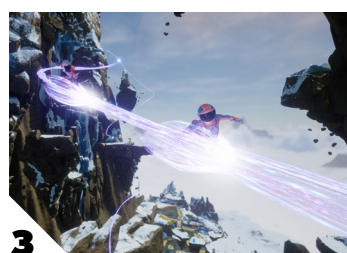
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Metroidvania-style adventure, **with gorgeous visuals [1]** and a smart drip-feed of new mechanics and areas that'll keep you – and, optionally, a co-op partner – playing until the credits roll... and beyond.

Revenge of the Savage Planet offers a literally shocking change of perspective from its predecessor (*Journey to the Savage Planet*), and the move from first-person to third-person is a wise one considering how **much of the game's appeal is down to its character [2]**. Nobody could say that *Revenge* hasn't had love poured into it from all angles, as it buffets you with personality from start to finish, painting a gloriously garish picture over inspiration from games like *Metroid Prime* or the *Ratchet & Clank* series. Exploration, scanning and combat come together to form a satisfying soup as you explore the **very different biomes [3]**. You'll be dashing, dodging and capturing

creatures, gathering resources and crafting upgrades in a tight little loop, though there's nothing here you won't have seen before – and the game knows it, cracking wise at its own contrivances in a way that, while funny, might make you wonder if self-deprecation is an effective salve for derivative gameplay.

Originality isn't everything when you copy other games well, and *Revenge* certainly does that. It's pretty, it's playable and its focus on both online and local split-screen co-op is a breath of fresh air. I found the humour to be quite obnoxious and ended up lowering the game's voice volume to zero, but that's obviously subjective. Add an extra 0.5 to the score if you think it's funny.

★★★½☆

Stuart Gipp

MORE INFO

Pseudoregalia
While this one boasts a darker tone, but a similar focus on exploration.

Supraland
Supraland is a more puzzle-focused, but just as cheerful, adventure.

THE BACK CATALOGUE
Direct predecessor *Journey to the Savage Planet* remains a thoroughly playable slice of Metroidvania silliness, albeit in first-person this time.

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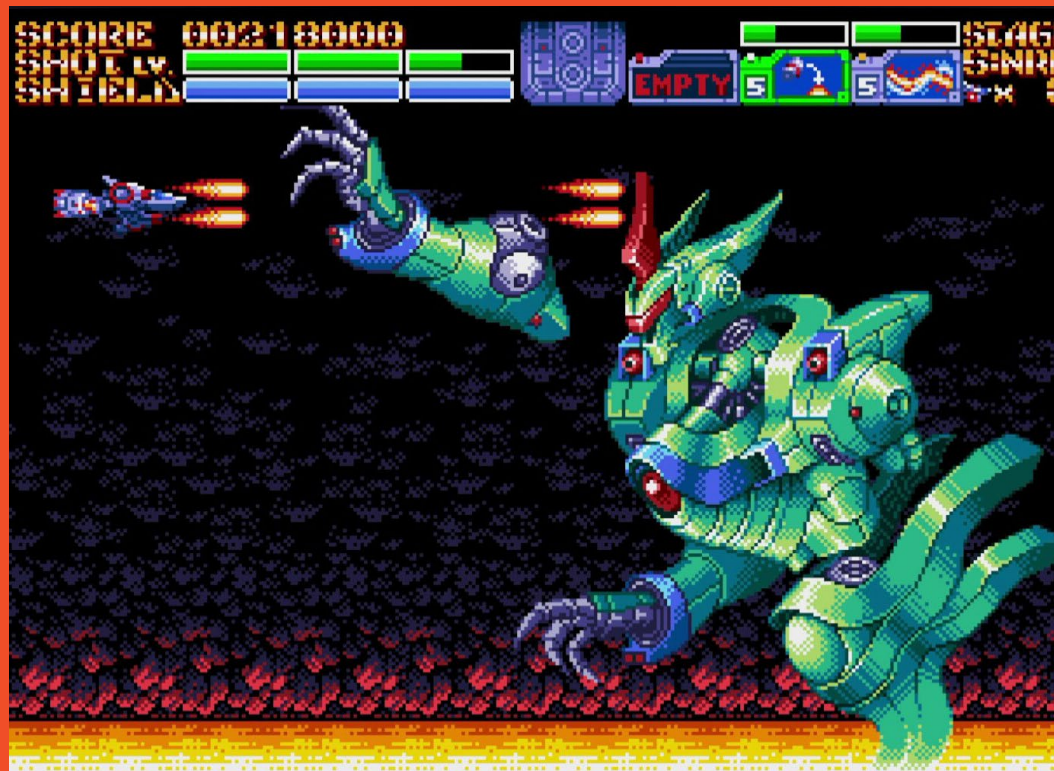# BUY TICKETS HERE

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RETRO WORLD

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

Earthion

Developer ANCIENT CORP, BITWAVE GAMES **Publisher** LIMITED RUN GAMES
Retro MEGA DRIVE **Modern** PC, PLAYSTATION 4/5, XBOX SERIES X, NINTENDO SWITCH **Released** 2025

With Earth's resources depleted and its environment in ruin, most of humanity has fled to Mars. But when hostile invaders launch an attack on Earth, mankind has no choice but to fight back. As environmental researcher Azusa Takanashi, you'll pilot the state-of-the-art space fighter YK-IIA and mount the most important counterattack in human history.

Legendary composer Yuzo Koshiro (*Streets of Rage* and *Shenmue*, to name just two) has been teasing us for what seems like an eternity with his new shmup, *Earthion*. The official website has now been launched (officially), and it reveals the splendid news that the game will also be ported to PC and consoles.

Earthion has been created using 16-bit hardware, and a look at the trailer and the accompanying screenshots shows a 2D shooter that is shaping up to be absolutely gorgeous – one that is even comparable to some of the greats of the genre, like the *Thunder Force* saga.

The pixel art looks beautiful, with the action running smoothly at all times, despite the number of enemies on screen. With Yuzo Koshiro composing the game's soundtrack, it sounds incredible, too.

There are eight stages in total, with the objective to destroy all enemies in sight and pinch their resources to upgrade your own ship.

We have also learned that there will be various sub-weapons to play around with, enabling different strategies and tactics to emerge victorious.

Two modes of play are currently planned – the main story mode and a challenge mode. Exactly what that means for the player is something we'll be able to share with you when we finally get hold of a review copy of the game.

To make *Earthion* accessible to as many players as possible, Ancient Corp has included Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese and English languages, with a further 10 languages available via subtitles on the modern platforms.

Judging by what we have seen so far, and the sheer amount of talent on board for the project, *Earthion* could be on track to become one of the greatest Mega Drive shmup of all time. Words on this very page don't do the game justice. Head on over to **www.earthiongame.com** and prepare to be blown away by the video footage.

Full review to come in *Debug* as soon as the game releases.

MORE INFO

Robby Bisschop – Pirate PR

HOW TO GET MARKETING SUPPORT FOR YOUR GAME FROM NINTENDO, PLAYSTATION AND XBOX

Robby Bisschop is a Belgian PR and communications expert at Pirate PR, a company he founded to help indie game studios with their marketing needs. It's a shame when great games get overlooked, so he's always happy to lend a hand (or a hook!) where possible to help them navigate the unruly waters of the internet.

So you're releasing a multi-platform game. After wrangling with Steam's medieval-looking backend, you're ready to tackle consoles. That's when you start wondering how to get Xbox, Nintendo or PlayStation to actually help promote your game. The good news is they sometimes do. The bad news is they don't make it easy to figure out how.

This article focuses on how to get marketing support from the big three. We're talking about having your trailer hosted on their YouTube channels, getting some love on their socials or landing a spot on the console dashboard or store. It's not guaranteed and it's not fast, but it can be worth the effort for the right game and the right timing.

You'll need to be set up as a developer or publisher first, but that's a different topic entirely. Once you're in their ecosystem, it's usually on you or your publisher to submit marketing materials. Most platforms don't advertise how to ask for support, and the process varies wildly depending on where you're launching.

Before you even think about asking for coverage, your trailer has to meet their standards. Each platform has specific requirements and failing to follow them can mean instant rejection. For a solid breakdown of trailer specs, look up Derek Lieu's site: **gametrailerspecs.com**.

Make your trailer platform-specific. That means using the right intro and outro clips, staying within their branding rules, and designing thumbnail art that doesn't clash with where each platform overlays logos or text. Never show competing platform logos, and avoid quoting reviews from platform-specific sites. PlayStation isn't likely to promote a trailer that includes a quote from *NintendoLife*, and Nintendo won't love one referencing *PC Gamer*.

Xbox is relatively approachable, especially through the ID@Xbox program. Start by reaching out to their indie marketing team. If timing lines up, they can support your launch through pre-release social posts, YouTube Shorts and Reels. On release day, your game will likely be included automatically in the Xbox Wire roundup and featured on the New Releases section of the dashboard. No request is needed for that part. If your trailer hasn't been shown on other platforms in the past 48 hours, it might also qualify to be hosted on their YouTube channel.

Extras like dev interviews or stream features are possible if you ask far enough in advance.

If you want your trailer featured on PlayStation's YouTube or socials, you need to submit it at least 72 business hours before any embargo. For a shot at a PlayStation Blog post, plan to send materials 20 business days ahead. Their support focuses on major beats such as announcements, release dates, gameplay premieres, and content drops. To improve your odds, your game should prioritise a PS5 launch over other platforms, highlight visually striking content and interesting mechanics, use DualSense features if possible, and should be localised for key regions. Note: PS4 support is tapering off, so focus your efforts on current-gen development.

Nintendo is the most complex of the three. Trailer approval requires going through the Nintendo Developer Portal separately for each region. You'll need to submit individually for North America, Europe and Japan. Once approved, you must then email each region's marketing contact five to 10 business days ahead of your campaign. The process often includes multiple rounds of feedback and even minor issues can cause days of delay. Nintendo is extremely particular about thumbnail layouts and CTA language. If you ignore their trailer guidelines, even slightly, your submission could be rejected outright. But if you do manage to get everything approved, the payoff is strong. And your game may get featured on @IndieWorldNA and other official Nintendo regional channels.

Across all three platforms, one rule holds true: you'll need to give yourself plenty of time. Most missed opportunities come down to people submitting too late, failing to follow basic requirements, or assuming they'll be contacted automatically. You almost always have to ask.

Console marketing support can be a powerful tool, but it takes persistence, preparation and some familiarity with how each platform operates. It's never guaranteed, but if you want your trailer seen by more of the right players, it's worth doing properly.

Scan the QR code for a better breakdown, links to forms and emails to contact

piratepr.com

James Lightfoot is a lifelong creative and retro gaming obsessive. From music and acting to art and design, his career now focuses on game development and writing. He co-runs Lightfoot Bros Games with his brother David, creators of *Cars: The Remix* and *The Mystery of Woolley Mountain*, with *Sleepytime Village* and *Catcher & Rye* on the way.

I finally got myself an Xbox Series X last week – mainly so I can play my port of *Woolley Mountain* when it's complete, and mainly to play *Indiana Jones and the Great Circle* on Game Pass. Wait, what? *Blue Prince*, *Mythwrecked*, *Oblivion* and the new *Doom* are available on Game Pass, too? Downloaded. And *Robocop* in the sale? (purchase) Amazing!

And phew, what a month for point-and-click games: *Rosewater*, *Old Skies*, and, wow, *Near Mage* coming in two weeks. That's a lot of games. And it kind of leaves me with a gentle, lingering panic that these games have not been played, started, or completed.

So what's the answer? Crack on and spend all my spare time playing my wealth of games? Well, I can't, my friend. I'm also making a bloody game!

My time needs to be spent doing that, as a lot of time needs to be spent on exactly that. There's so much to do: writing, dialogue, puzzles, art, animation, playtesting, cutscenes, logic, promotion, socials, expos, and everything in between.

If I fully comprehend the extent of what needs to be done to get my game completed, I start sweating and need to lie down. So what on earth am I thinking, trying to *play* any games?

But I really like playing games – after all, it's this very hobby that lead me to the path of being a game designer in the first place. And I like being inspired by games – new games, old games, good games, crap games. What to learn, adopt, or avoid? New UI ideas and layouts, new art styles, new particle systems. Writing. Dialogue. Mechanics. Enemies. Heroes... There's so much good stuff to digest, and the best way to digest the good stuff is to play them!

But no, I need to be making my game!

It's such a dichotomy, and it's so unfair!

If you love football and want to be a pro, surely you watch all the games and practise every day? If you're in the filmmaking world, surely you're watching the new blockbuster or indie hit? And so on. Why does it feel like that's not feasible in the gaming industry?

I think it's because it's pretty much little old me making this game. And maybe it's because when I start playing a game, I can lose chunks of time. And rack up a ton of guilt – yes! I completed the Vatican section in Indy, but oops, I could have finally sorted that bug, set out that scene, or written that puzzle in that time.

There shall be no joy, no pleasure in making my game. In fact, the only joy and pleasure shall be in the incremental steps forward – ticking off lists in Trello. Which, actually, is less joy and more relief.

In fact, as my library of games increases and my Trello list grows, I wonder: which weight is heavier? Or are they equal? On one shoulder sits the weight of the unstarted, unfinished games, and upon the other, the weight of tasks that I must complete to slowly step forward toward releasing my game. But let's be truthful here. I do love making games, and I do love playing games. And, ultimately, life's great quest/achievement is doing both.

THE DICHOTEMY OF PLAYING GAMES WHILE TRYING TO MAKE GAMES

James Lightfoot

* The dog absorbed the
  back cover.