My Favorite Game

My favorite game is Pikmin 2, a real-time strategy game made by Nintendo, where the player must command an army of tiny little creatures called Pikmin to carry treasure, perform tasks, and fight enemies. Compared to other more successful games, the Pikmin franchise was never really a best seller, compared to other Nintendo games, the game appeals to small audience of players, and the installment itself is polarizing to the greater fandom. Polarizing due to either people not liking certain additions in this installment, while others like me absolutely love the changes that was made for this game. Despite all of this, the reason why Pikmin 2 is my favorite game is because out of all three games in the franchise, Pikmin 2 has charmed me the most in terms of gameplay, immersion, and presentation.

Pikmin 2’s gameplay can be summarized as so: the player controls two captains, Olimar and Louie, both captains can move with an analog stick and the player can also pan the camera in the direction the captain that is under the player’s control is facing through a button. The player can switch between captain with a button which, allows the player to divide workloads, not only that but, the player can also blow a whistle at the cursor, which is used to call Pikmin over to you. In game Pikmin, can either be in two states, free and following, free Pikmin, are Pikmin that are not called by the captain, when they are close to an item, obstacle, or enemy, they will automatically carry the item, or destroy the obstacle or enemy. When the player uses their whistle to call Pikmin they will be in a following state and will follow the captain, while in this state the player can throw Pikmin, which will allow them to reach better areas and fight better. The game involves the player uses Pikmin to carry treasure back to their ship, under a time limit in the form of day to night. The incentive of all three games is to get as much done in a day, ultimately culminating in trying to finish the game in the least number of days. This is one of the things I really love about the Pikmin series, when I was younger, during each summer I would try to beat each game with the least number of days, I remember my first time playing it the number of days was 20, then I replayed it shortened it to 14, and then I replayed it even further to 12. In my mind I feel like Pikmin 2 is the best for this because it hit the balance between being replayable, being a game I will come back to from time to time, and is fulfilling enough with its content, each day feeling like I did more than just 13 to 18 minutes of gameplay. As the player progresses through each area, they will encounter more Pikmin types, each with their own advantages and weaknesses, allowing for the player to strategize how they should tackle a certain task. An example would be if the player needs to get across lake and destroy an electric fence, they will need blue Pikmin to cross the water, and build a bridge, and then they will need yellow Pikmin to tear down the electric fence. Finally Pikmin 2’s defining gameplay element that separates it from other installments in the series, is the caves, which are a series of procedural generated mazes separated by sublevels. Each sublevel contains treasures and challenges in the form of difficult enemies and elemental hazards, the caves also stop time limit for the day, allowing the player to freely explore each sublevel without having worry. For the fandom the caves are very polarizing, on one hand it feels out of place and disrupted to the normal gameplay loop of meticulously planning out the day, while on the other hand, the caves bring out a sense of exploration and challenge that isn’t seen much in other Pikmin titles. For me the caves are my favorite part of the game, I always like the dungeon crawling genre, and I feel like the cave are what makes each day feel so eventful. On game design standpoint I also like how the caves encourage different play styles, the caves can be played quickly and riskily, but if that isn’t what player wants, they can also be played methodologically as well. There is more to say about the gameplay, but I think I should move on to the presentation and how the game charms me through story and character.

Pikmin 2 in my opinion is the one with the most personality out of the franchise, it achieves this through is effort given in its presentation. Firstly is its dialogue, and text, though the player character does not speak in game, other characters like the president, or your own ship do speak through dialogue text, some of the text may not be nothing special, but other times they can be quite humorous, a good example being how the ship dislike bugs, and when you carry a bug carcass back to the ship for the first time you are greeted the ship opening dialoguing about how much it dislike you for doing that. Another example of the game’s writing is through its mail system, when the player finishing a day, they will receive three screens, one to tell how much money the player has earned, another for how many Pikmin were grown/killed, and finally a screen that display mail that the captains can receive from either their boss, their families, or even just spam. The contents of each mail can tell a short story of what is going on in the lives of each captain, how Olimar, the main character, just wants to spend more time with his wife and kids, how the president tries to hide from debt collectors by hiding under a bridge, each mail give more insight to world of Pikmin. Finally the best example of Pikmin 2’s charm is in the form of the catalogue for each enemy, the Piklopedia, and treasures, the treasure horde. First the Piklopedia is the game’s catalogue for each enemy, the player can look at how much each enemy is worth, how many they have killed, and how many Pikmin have they eaten. However if the player clicks on the side buttons they will be greeted to log from each captain, Olimar’s log would discuss the enemy’s behavioral patterns and other biological facts, while Louie’s log would detail how to cook the enemy and serve it n a platter. Though unnecessary these tidbits add more flavor to the game and helps the game feel more alive, instead of just being enemies, each enemy is a creature with their own behaviors and habitats. The other catalogue is the treasure horde, which displays each treasure that the player collects, just like before by clicking the side buttons they will be given a log by the Olimar, but instead of Louie, they get the ship’s sales pitch for the treasure. There are other smaller things that add to the charm of Pikmin 2, but I think we should move on.

Finally I want to talk about the flaws in Pikmin 2, even though I love this game, even I understand that the game isn’t perfect. To start, we can talk about how unbalanced the game is, in Pikmin 2, the strongest Pikmin is the purple Pikmin, not only does it do double damage compared to other Pikmin, but they can also carry 10 times the normal amount, have a homing attack when thrown, can stun enemies by landing near them, and are immune to panicking, and wind. purple Pikmin breaks the game’s balance, enemies that would be tough with other Pikmin are made into joke and can be taken down easily. The game tries to balance this by making purple Pikmin hard to grow, but the player can abuse certain caves to receive a lot of purple Pikmin. The player could try not to use purple Pikmin, but then they would lose out on 100% completion due to the fact that one treasure weight 1000 Pikmin. Another flaw is this game’s challenge mode. In challenge mode players must go through caves but under a time limit, before I said that the caves could be complete with enough patience and time, but in challenge mode this is thrown out of the window. I get what they were trying to do, adding urgency to challenge the player, but instead they just made exploring the caves in challenge mode much more stressful and unfun. Despite all of this, however, I still enjoy Pikmin 2 and these complaints come from a place of love.

To finally conclude, Pikmin 2 is one of my most favorite games I have ever played. Though the game does have its problems both frustrating and small, the enjoyment and charm that the game has given me far exceeds and of those problems.