

Game Breakdown

Celeste Classic 2

Celeste Classic 2 is a short platformer developed for the PICO-8 virtual console by some of the team at Extremely Okay Games. Extremely Okay Games are known for their hit games Towerfall and Celeste. The PICO-8 virtual console is a 1980's-style emulated console combined with an integrated development and asset creation environment. Celeste Classic 2, though unforgivingly challenging, feels fantastic to play and enjoy.

Input

Celeste Classic 2's input is dependent upon the PICO-8's input options, which are then dependent upon what system the PICO-8 is running on. PICO-8 can be run on nearly any operating system, including Raspberry Pi, so the number of possible input devices is overwhelming, but most players will be playing through itch.io and using their computer's keyboard as the sole input device.

The specific inputs used by Celeste Classic 2 are very simple. The character is controlled with only four keys: left arrow (left), right arrow (right), X (grapple), and C (jump). All four inputs are keyboard buttons which only accept binary input, and there are no button combinations that are accepted. The layout of the keyboard negatively affects the feel of Celeste Classic 2, due both to the movement and action controls being the reverse of modern game controls and the small distance between the X and C keys.

Response

Celeste Classic 2's input response is very similar to other Extremely Okay Games titles, with players having direct XY control of their avatar with no character rotation and the camera being

indirectly controlled based on the avatar's position on screen. All the input keys feature some degree of scaled modulation over time.

Horizontal character movement has the faintest of attack and release slopes, and the character moves at a constant rate while the buttons are held, giving the movement a very responsive, twitchy feel. When on the ground, the avatar changes direction and begins accelerating immediately when the movement key is pressed. When in the air, the avatar accelerates at a much slower rate but can still arrest forward movement by switching directions mid-jump, which makes move then jump distinct feeling from jump then move.

Vertical character movement is limited to the jump button. When the jump button is pressed the avatar makes a very short vertical hop (one world unit), but if the button is held the jump's total height increases to threefold (three world units). The vertical input response has an incredibly fast attack and delay, making it difficult to reliably reach the minimum jump height.

The final input option, the grappling hook, has a very similar response pattern to the other inputs. Quickly tapping the X button to grapple will cause the grappling hook to shoot out approximately three units from the avatar. Holding the grapple button for more than a few milliseconds causes the grappling hook to fire out to its maximum length.

Context

The high-level context of Celeste Classic 2 lends a sense of openness and scale to the feel of the game. Like Celeste, Celeste Classic 2 features the protagonist climbing a mountain, which is conveyed well through the relative size of the avatar when compared to their surroundings. Everything in Celeste Classic 2 is scaled to the same unit, and the screens are composed of 16x16 units. With the avatar also

being one unit tall, this gives the maps a grand size relative to the avatar and also makes movement feel faster when the player is deftly maneuvering obstacles.

The medium-level and low-level context of Celeste Classic 2 feature a small number of obstacles and interactions. The player encounters stones which need to be jumped over, springs which can be used to launch the player, snowballs which slightly bounce the player, and spikes which need to be avoided, in addition to other less common obstacles. Stones have no give when interacted with by the avatar, giving them a hard feeling. Springs and snowballs both have a bouncy reaction to the avatar jumping onto them, both pleasantly deforming as the avatar lands on them.

Polish

For as simple as the aesthetic of Celeste Classic 2 is, the level of polish is incredible. The sprites, character, item, and environment, are all very well detailed and convey their physical properties well. The avatar's few animations convey their movement and actions even without the context of an environment. The color palette used for the background and environment helps to convey the frigid and distant region that the character is adventuring through, and the minimal visual effects accentuate collisions between the character and environment. Every interaction in the game has a bright, punchy sound effect associated with it, and all of the sound effects are unique to specific interactions.

Celeste Classic 2 perfectly implements two aspects of polish that boost the game's feel immensely, even in addition to the overall quality of polish. First, the animation that resets the environment after the player dies. The animation is simple and very fast, lacking any degree of fanfare. Second, the soundtrack. The soundtrack to Celeste Classic 2 is great, the music is bright and driving and makes you want to continue playing the game. Another aspect of the soundtrack that improves game feel, is that it doesn't reset when the character dies. The combination of a fast, mundane screen wipe

and driving soundtrack that doesn't miss a beat make it feel like deaths are no big deal, which is incredibly important in a game that is completely unforgiving in its difficulty.

Metaphor

Celeste Classic 2 uses a mix of iconic and realistic metaphor which skews more towards iconic. Objects look and behave mostly as would be expected in the real world, but their scales and behaviors are skewed towards the cartoonish. Falling into spikes or down bottomless pits kills the avatar, icy surfaces are more slippery, springs can bounce the avatar, and snowballs can crush the avatar.

Rules

Celeste Classic 2 is interesting in that it has few, if any, rules on top of the raw gameplay. The avatar can die, but the player has no limit on retries. The player can collect up to 16 fruit throughout the game, but there is no scoring system or mechanical benefit. The game has a timer that counts up, but it has no effect on the game's mechanics. The only loose goal that the player has is to move from one checkpoint to the next, and the game doesn't give the player much choice since you can't backtrack in most areas. As a result, the game feels like it's about progressing and overcoming progressively more challenging obstacles, which is accurate to the game's design.

References

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