Gods are praised by heroes for many reasons, wealth, power and sometimes justice. Only in a few cases we are allowed to stare at an evil representation of this divine entity. Like humans, it happens that gods succumb to temptations of violence or to inconsiderate answer to their own desires. Such depictions are woeful ones for their targets.

Unfortunately, Isaac fell under the wrong wing. Her mother worshipping the wrong god made her become fanatic and dangerous when it came to the security of the little Isaac. One day her Divine one pleased her for one last act of faith: to kill her son Isaac.

This is the setting in which The Binding of Isaac puts you. Running away from her crazed mother, the little boy found a secret trap to his basement, in which, to find repentance, he will have to face numerous evils. The fit between the story’s context and the play style is quite amusing: The fragility of the young boy can be reflected by the game genre, roguelike. I can bet you already are a bit scared, and you know it, you will die a lot.

Providing randomly generated levels and a large variety of magical items and consumables will keep you trying to go down the several basement floors, even when dying several times on early stages. The unpredictability of each game is the factor that will keep you coming for more. Some of them will be indulgent and generous with you, giving several power-ups without too much effort needed to be given. Others will drag you on the ground with reality and only grow you smarter for the next instance.

The game builds on representation of sins, such as sloth and gluttony, painting a sub-house environment filled with filth and blood. Needless to say it all is a bit raw and vulgar but amateurs of this type of humor will be pleased. On various occasions you will find your way blocked by piles of feces, only to discover a few coins that you will be able to spend of random items if you ever are lucky enough to find a shop. Objects you gather all are as funny as much as they can be gross. Finding a heart on the ground will let you hang it around your neck, granting you supplementary life points; your mom’s dirty bra will be put on your head to freeze time. It surely is a bit disturbing to read, but such assets can really save your life in circumstances.

The precise and simple controls elaborated by the same creators of the as overly obsessively tuned Super Meat Boy. Tears of the little Isaac act as blessed water on the opponents of his quest through the basement. Only four directions can be considered when willing to throw a blob of water, but the player’s movement is also added to the speed of the projectile, opening doors to tricky parabolic attacks usable to wrap tears around covers. Impressively enough, with only a few spectrum of controls, there is a particular way to fight every variety of enemy, each behaving uniquely and posing different threats.

As unlikely as it seems, Binding of Isaac has some relevant female representation to it. Starting off, it is clear the biggest form of it is Mom, which is the game’s ultimate villain. Stepping away from classic male bosses, Mom does not evade the games gross themes, depicted as a corpulent lady, further drawn as a deformed, possessed entity. In addition to the ridicule of the setting, the originality of the prime evil that the game holds bears no barriers gender wise. On top of that many characters are available, and while Isaac is a male character, two of the four additional characters are females. Needless to say this also falls as close as it can to an ideal case of equal gender representation.

The themes of the game, again, satanic sin related environment, contribute greatly to the game’s ambiance that is so accurately orchestrated. Color pallet being only made of a few colors ranging mostly between red and brown gives a sense of alienness to our presence in this underground nightmare. The soundtrack has a lot to account in term of atmosphere. The gloomy music reminds you the precariousness of your adventures while keeping a pace that keeps you on vigilant. The tunes felt authentic and did more than enhance the experience, it was an integral part of the game.

Pros: Addictive gameplay

Good replayability

Excellent soundtrack

Uncommon sense of humor

Cons:

The Binding of Isaac really is a jewel of its own kind. Settling on themes like filth and gore, it challenges conventional graphic representation and proves that photorealism is not necessary for pleasant, and amusing, visuals. It will take you on a journey of death, treasures and sometimes, glory. The game is highly addictive and it’s music will guide you through every playthrough, veiling the passage of time and keeping you wondering how you spent so much time on such a simple game.