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Stardew Valley [Developer Interview] | Shogun Gamer

8-11 minutes



I can't be the only one who has spent hours searching the web for games that both my significant other and I can enjoy together. During one of those searches a few months back, I came across a title called Stardew Valley.

Drawing heavy inspiration from games such as Harvest Moon, Minecraft, and Terraria, Stardew Valley is another entry in the country life RPG genre that adds some features and tweaks the genre has been screaming out for, for some time, namely a proper multiplayer.

Although I plan to spend most of my time farming, fishing, and

flirting with the cute blue haired girl who works at the general store (don't tell my fiancée), Stardew valley appears to be a game that leaves it up to the player to decide how they spend their time. Did you want to relax on the docks leveling up your fishing skill? You can. Did you want to venture out into the wilderness slaying beasts and leveling up your combat? You can do that too.

Stardew Valley Creator Eric Barone or as he is otherwise known ConcernedApe, has been kind enough to answer some of the questions that I've been dying to ask.

Craig Gamache: Hi Eric, would you mind telling our readers a bit about yourself?

Eric Barone: I just turned 26, I live in Seattle, and I love developing and playing video games. Some of my other interests include making electronic music, poems, drinking wine, and coffee.

Craig: Is there a story behind the name ConcernedApe?

Eric: I get too stressed trying to pick the perfect username, so I often end up choosing whatever pops into my head immediately without giving it a second thought. For the most part, ConcernedApe was one of those quickies, but I also think I chose it because I am personally concerned about our species' role in the global ecosystem. The "Ape" part is a nod

to humanity's roots, as well as our primeval motivators which restlessly churn beneath the veil of civilization.

Craig: What was it that pushed you to start working on this game? Was this something you always wanted to do?

Eric: I've always been a big Harvest Moon fan, but I miss the older games in the series. I always wanted to find a game that captured the feel of those early titles, but never had any luck. So I decided I'd give it a shot.

Craig: As people may or may not be aware. Stardew valley has been developed entirely by yourself, which I have to say is a pretty impressive feat. There are obvious disadvantages to creating a game this way, mainly the sheer amount of work that is required. What I'd like to know is what you feel has been some of the biggest advantages of creating this game yourself.

Eric: If I have an idea, I have complete freedom to incorporate that into the game, exactly the way I want it. I think it can result in a little more cohesion, since you don't have competing visions for the game battling with each other. I also find it more fun to do a variety of things, rather than spend all of my time programming, for example.





Craig: How do you feel about the attention Stardew Valley has had thus far? Has it all been positive?

Eric: The response has been great. It's encouraging to hear from people who are excited about what I am doing, and feel the same way I do about this genre. Most of the attention has been very positive.

Craig: I know you've been very active with your community, answering questions, posting updates, and so on. Has there been any community feedback that has caused you to add, remove, or alter any aspects of Stardew valley?

Eric: Definitely. When I first posted the game to Steam Greenlight the graphics weren't as nice looking as they are now. People told me about this, I practiced my pixel art for a while, and ended up redoing almost all the graphics in the game. It was totally worth it... the old stuff was hideous.

Craig: I've read that Stardew valley originated as a small project being developed as an Xbox indie title. In what ways has the game expanded since that original idea, and what made you change from the Xbox to the PC as target platform?

Eric: I originally wanted to make a quick little game in the style of the SNES Harvest Moon. I intended to release it on both the

Xbox Live Indie Marketplace and PC, if I could find some way to get it out there. Then Steam Greenlight came out, and I felt like I had to get in there while it was still hot and fresh. A lot of people seemed really excited about the game, and so I kind of shifted my attentions to PC. The Greenlight response also resulted in the project becoming a lot more ambitious.

Craig: Will the game ever be available on Mac, and or Linux?

Eric: I'm hoping that I can port the game to Mac and Linux before release, with minimal effort. I can't make any promises though.

Craig: How high are the chances that we will see Stardew Valley released on consoles in the future?

Eric: It would still be pretty easy to set the game up for Xbox, so I'd probably be interested in that at the very least!

Craig: How important is story in your game? Will the game have a concrete end that players will be striving for?

Eric: Story is important to me, and I want Stardew Valley to have enough of a storyline to create an immersive experience. In addition to a major story arc involving the entire valley, there's a ton of character development involving the townspeople. Still, I think it's important to give players the opportunity to create their own goals... so if players want to ignore the main story, that option will be available to them.

While there is a concrete end to the storyline, the game itself doesn't end at any point... you can continue playing forever.

Craig: I've been a big fan of farm life RPGs ever since harvest moon on the SNES. What I've always felt these games were missing was a solid multiplayer component. Games such as later entries into the Harvest moon series and Farmville have had limited multiplayer features such as the trading of crops, but nothing that has been properly fleshed out. What first caught my attention with Stardew was its co-op component. How will the co-op system work? Will the players share a farm, just pop in to help on someone else's farm, or will they be able to make a farm of their own in a shared world?

Eric: Currently, players share one big farm... but multiplayer is still in development and I haven't finalized anything. Multiplayer gameplay will definitely need some testing and balancing to find the best way to maximize "fun". Popping in to visit a friend's farm is something I've considered as well... but I can't say anything concrete about multiplayer until it's finished.



Craig: In Stardew Valley, players will have the ability to court

and marry one of the many NPCs residing in the valley. Can you tell us a bit about how the romance system works? Will there be options for those looking for same sex marriage? Can we marry non-NPCs?

Eric: There are 10 eligible bachelors/bachelorettes in Stardew Valley. Same-sex romance/marriage is absolutely allowed. Romance works in a similar way to Harvest Moon, although I'm trying some things out to make the process less of a grind (I'm trying to avoid the old "bring so and so their favorite gift every single day until they marry you"). Each datable character has at least 5 unique event cutscenes... there's lots of surprises there. For multiplayer I am planning on allowing players to marry other players.

Craig: Are you excited to see that consoles are becoming much more open to the indie scene? Do you see the openness of next gen consoles affecting your future projects, or will PC always be your primary platform of choice?

Eric: I think the more platforms that embrace indie developers the better! I think the growing number of tools to ensure cross-platform compatibility from the very beginning of development will make it a lot easier for us to release games for consoles. But PC will always be my primary target, because I love it most...

Craig: Is it just my imagination or did I spot a couple Studio Ghibli references in your most recent trailer?

Eric: You did... I'm a big fan of Studio Ghibli. :)

Craig: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us at Shogun Gamer. Personally I'm really looking forward playing this game with my fiancée, or wife depending on when it is released. Is there anything you'd like to add before I let you go?

Eric: I'm really looking forward to sharing this world of Stardew Valley with all of you. Thanks to all the great people who have given me their encouragement so far, and congratulations on your engagement, Craig!

For those of you who would like to find out more information on Stardew Valley, please visit <http://stardewvalley.net/>, and check back here at Shogun Gamer for a review upon the game's release.