Tech 190 Journal 1

The Development of Stardew Valley

Stardew Valley is a part of the cozy, farming-sim genre. You take over the empty farm of your late grandfather in hopes to completely transform it. You befriend the townsfolk, possibly even fall in love and start a family. It’s features are those that are seen in many other farming sims except, this game was produced by one person; 28-year-old Eric Barone aka ConcernedApe. Barone graduated from the University of Washington-Tacoma in 2011 with a computer science degree. He applied for coding jobs but after not hearing back from employers, he decided to make a game. Being a huge fan of the Harvest Moon series of farming sims, he took inspiration from that. Had just planned on releasing it on xbox live indie games to give fans of the original series to play, just so he could test his skills. However after he started working on his game, he noticed his development skills were improving and wanted to continue. Barone says he worked on average ten hours a day, seven days a week for four years on Stardew Valley. While doing so he hoped to bring something back that he felt was lacking in the later games of the Harvest Moon series. He wanted relaxed gameplay in an immersive and beautiful world. Usually, the concept of “immersion” brings to mind epic games like the GTA or Morrowind series. They’re immersive because your character is small and the world is large. Neither the Harvest Moon games nor Stardew Valley are particularly big, geographically, so the sense of immersion feels different, and needs to be approached differently as a developer. A sense of depth is accomplished in part by lavishing the game with visual richness. “There are critters that run around, and when you cut the grass a frog jumps out,” explains Barone. “There are all these little instances of attention to detail.” After Stardew Valley dropped in February 2016, sales number skyrocketed. Part of the reason for this was that his published, Chucklefish marketed the game to well known streamers on Twitch and Youtube who streamed early builds of it. 550,000 units were sold for $15 each and Barone solidified his spot as an indie game dev. Eric Barone is someone that is inspirational to me. He developed a game that I and many others enjoy all by himself. While it was no easy thing for him, he kept at it and his hard work paid off and continues to. I think it would be amazing to work for an indie dev company one day or possibly even create my own. I’m excited to learn how to use Unity this semester and learn more about the game industry. I want to put the hard work in and see where it takes me in this field.