Space Station Silicon Valley

Space Station Silicon Valley is a platform video game developed by DMA Design and published by Take @-@ Two Interactive . It was originally released for the Nintendo 64 in October 1998 , and was ported for the Game Boy Color in 1999 , and for the PlayStation in 2000 under the name Evo 's Space Adventures . Players control Evo , a robot reduced to a crawling microchip after a ship crash , and are tasked with taking control of animals to solve puzzles and defeat enemies .

The game began development in September 1995 , as part of a publishing deal with BMG Interactive . When this deal fell through , the development team turned their focus to the Nintendo 64 , which allowed for a more advanced environment and model processing . The hardware also shaped the game 's humour and style , with a soft focus look leading to a style akin to Plasticine models . The game 's distinct British humour was also used to distinguish it from other games . Similarly , the game 's music was created to resemble B movies .

Upon release , Space Station Silicon Valley was acclaimed by many reviewers , with praise particularly directed at the intuitive mechanics , innovative level design , and comical concepts . It won numerous awards , including Game of the Month and Most Innovative Game from IGN . Despite this , the game performed poorly commercially , and was unable to secure enough sales to warrant a sequel .

Gameplay

Space Station Silicon Valley is a platform game that is viewed from a third @-@ person perspective . Players traverse several different environments to advance through the game . During the game , players control Evo ? a robot who is reduced to a crawling microchip during a ship crash , and is losing energy at a steady rate without protection . In order to survive , players attack animals , which disables them and allows players to assume control of their bodies . Each animal possesses different characteristics , including survival rate and special attacks , and uses different abilities ; for example , large animals such as bears are able to destroy ice blocks , which other animals are incapable of doing so . Some animals are also unable to survive in certain unfamiliar environments , forcing players to enter the body of another . The animals are used to solve puzzles and defeat enemies in each level , collecting Evo 's power cells to maintain energy .

During the game , players are frequently accompanied by the voice of Dan Danger , a human who is trapped in the destroyed spaceship . Dan assigns missions to players , occasionally commenting on their performance . The game is set on a space station ? the titular Silicon Valley , which consists of four environments : Euro Eden , Arctic Kingdom , Jungle Safari , and Desert Adventure . The environments are unlocked as players progress through the game . Each environment consists of numerous sub @-@ levels , ranging from six to ten , each of which task players with certain objectives ; examples include activating switches , disabling electric fences , and gathering a set amount of objects . As players progress through the levels , they collect the scattered remains of Evo 's protective shell suit , eventually re @-@ assembling them for the final level . Each level also contains a hidden objective , such as collecting a souvenir or making an animal perform a certain act ; as players complete the hidden objectives , they are rewarded with a gold trophy , and collecting all trophies unlocks a bonus level .

Plot

In the year 2001 , the space station Silicon Valley was launched , housing numerous animals . Seven minutes after its launch , it vanished . Believed to have disappeared forever , it reappears in the year 3000 , and the many expeditions sent to retrieve the space station vanished without explanation . Following this , the duo of Dan Danger and Evo were sent to investigate ; they discover that the animal cargo has evolved and merged with the station 's technology , resulting in animals such as an electronically @-@ powered fox with motorised wheels , and a steam @-@ powered hippopotamus . Evo sets out to fix the control station , which is on a collision course with

Earth . Upon arriving at the control room , Evo confronts the Evil Brain , who is fascinated by Evo 's abilities and wants to keep him to complete the collection of robotic animals . The Evil Brain threatens to destroy the Earth , but is quickly defeated by Evo . Despite this , Evo is unable to stop the space station from spinning out of control ; it collides with Earth , landing in New York Harbor . The robotic animals escape and flee around New York City , and Evo sets out to terminate them before they terrorise the planet .

= = Development = =

 Space Station Silicon Valley began development in September 1995 , as part of a three @-@ game publishing deal between developer DMA Design and BMG Interactive , the other games being Grand Theft Auto (1997) and Tanktics (1998) . All three games were planned to be released on Microsoft Windows , PlayStation and Sega Saturn , as they were the most popular platforms at the time . Following Take @-@ Two Interactive 's acquisition of BMG Interactive in March 1998 , Take @-@ Two acquired the publishing rights to the game , and the team instead changed focus to develop the game for the Nintendo 64 , upon discovering that Windows was incapable of processing the models and environments intended for use . Every member of the team that developed Space Station Silicon Valley began working at DMA Design at the beginning of development , in September 1995 . Development began using the new DirectX libraries , following the release of Windows 95 . The levels were designed and edited using Silicon Graphics computers , which were transferred directly to the Nintendo 64 development boards . The team found the Nintendo 64 to be more advanced than previous hardware ; programmer Grant Salvona described the development kits as " the most powerful hardware available in the building " .
 The game 's humour and style was shaped by hardware limitations ; when the hardware rendered the character models in soft focus , the team noted that they resembled Plasticine models , and continued to create the game with a look and style akin to Wallace and Gromit . The game was presented with " distinctive ' British ' humour " to distinguish from other games ; lead programmer Leslie Benzies and artist Aaron Garbut often presented the team with other Nintendo 64 games , such as Super Mario 64 (1996) , to identify the differences . The team ensured that each level felt distinct , while maintaining a coherent style . This diversity was achieved using the development tools , which allowed various members of the team to experiment in creating designs . Manual text writer Brian Baglow said that the game 's music provided freedom to the team , as it " doesn 't necessarily have to fit the action on the screen " . He explained that the audio was designed to fit with the " cheesy , slightly twisted B @-@ movies animation kind of feel " . Baglow found that creating the music on a cartridge instead of a CD prompted the team to discover new techniques of working within the boundaries of the former , stating that " people who are doing music for CD @-@ based systems get very , very lazy " .
 While similar body @-@ swapping games already existed , such as Paradroid (1985) , they had little influence on the development of Space Station Silicon Valley . The team were instead influenced by other games in development at DMA , including Grand Theft Auto and Body Harvest (1998) . Unlike those games , Space Station Silicon Valley does not take place in an open world ; " they 're a bugger to make , " explained creative director Gary Penn . The objective of the team was to create a game where players were encouraged to try new things to see the outcome . The original concept for the game was that players would eat robots and become increasingly larger , retrospectively described by creative director lead artist Jamie Bryan as being similar to Cubivore : Survival of the Fittest (2002) . Another early idea was for the in @-@ game animals to consist of different parts , and destroying one animal would allow players to swap some features with their existing body ; this was quickly discarded , as the team realised it would require extensive testing .
 The game was developed with little interference from upper management ; programmer Obbe Vermeij said that " only after 18 months was there a push to get everything together into a finished game " . Space Station Silicon Valley entered beta in August 1998 , and was first released for Nintendo 64 on October 21 , 1998 . Baglow attributed the lengthy development cycle to the scale of the game , stating that " it 's got to be fun " . A Game Boy Color version of the game ? a 2D remake

of the original version ? was released in Europe in late 1999 ; IGN 's Tim Jones was critical of the port , criticising the gameplay and level design . The game was also ported to the PlayStation by Runecraft in June 2000 , under the title Evo 's Space Adventures , although the original development team had little input besides providing the models , codes and textures ; a review by JeuxVideo.com criticised the port 's poor gameplay and graphics , and it has elsewhere been described as " one of the laziest ports in the history of video games " .

= = Reception = =

Space Station Silicon Valley was well received by critics . Review aggregator Metacritic calculated an average score of 83 out of 100 based on 10 reviews , for the Nintendo 64 version . Metacritic ranks the game within the top 10 Nintendo 64 games released in 1998 . Praise was particularly directed at the game 's intuitive mechanics , innovative level design , and comical concepts . The game was also applauded for the originality of its concept ; IGN 's Matt Casamassina called Space Station Silicon Valley " maybe the most original game to hit Nintendo 64 " , and Next Generation named it " one of the very best Nintendo 64 has to offer " .

Critics lauded the gameplay . Casamassina of IGN called it " nearly flawless " , while Next Generation named it " a satisfying challenge " . A reviewer from Game Revolution noted that the game " keeps the emphasis on gameplay " , particularly appreciating the attention to detail , however noted inconveniences in the camera . Lauren Fielder of GameSpot felt that the game 's puzzles were very simple to decipher , but noted that the game accomplishes its goal of entertaining and amusing players . Andrew Reiner of Game Informer found the game " monotonous " , and the missions to be " immensely boring " .

A reviewer for Next Generation named the level design " superb " , praising the variety and open @-@ ended approach of the levels . Dan Hsu of Electronic Gaming Monthly echoed similar remarks , applauding the game 's preparation for contingencies , and Daily Radar 's Max Everingham described the levels as " innovative " . Game Revolution disliked the inability to save the game mid @-@ level , but otherwise appreciated the variety of the levels , while a reviewer for Game Informer found the levels to be " fairly small " .

Game Revolution wrote that the game has " some of the best sound yet " for a Nintendo 64 game , praising the variety of the musical tracks . IGN 's Casamassina found the music " very well executed " and " very entertaining " , likening it to " ' futuristic space pop ' and elevator @-@ like tunes " , and named the sound effects " equally satisfying " . Conversely , Electronic Gaming Monthly 's Hsu found the music " ultra @-@ annoying " . For the PlayStation version of the game , in which the original music is replaced , John Szczepaniak of Hardcore Gaming 101 said that it " sucks " , writing that " the elevator style music is made even more obnoxious , and some of the really good tunes ... have been replaced with awful generic heavy metal " .

IGN 's Casamassina found that the game " lacks the graphic finesse of a title like Banjo @-@ Kazooie " , but praised it nonetheless , while GameSpot 's Lauren Fielder called the graphics " nothing special " . Game Revolution praised the graphics , particularly applauding the smooth textures and vibrant colour palette , as well as the detail of the character movement . Next Generation felt that the game " doesn 't push Nintendo 64 's hardware to the limits " , and noted some occasional frame rate slowdown , but appreciated the " cute " and simplistic design . Jon Storm of Game Informer called the graphics " lame " , criticising the lack of detail in the environments and characters . In a retrospective feature , Craig Owens of Nintendo Gamer wrote that the game 's " chunky , angular " art style conveys the " experimental , unpredictable tone " .

Electronic Gaming Monthly presented Space Station Silicon Monthly the Silver Editor 's Choice Award . It was named IGN 's Game of the Month for October 1998 , and in February 1999 it won Most Innovative Game from IGN , who praised it for capturing " old @-@ school " gameplay mechanics . In January 2007 , IGN placed the game fifth on a list of " Underrated and Underappreciated Games " , and in April 2009 placed it on a list of " Nintendo 64 Treasures " , stating that it " remains one of the great unsung heroes " of the console . Despite its critical success , the game failed to match expected sales , and was unable to earn enough money to warrant a

sequel . The team attributed the poor commercial performance to the game 's simultaneous launch with The Legend of Zelda : Ocarina of Time , which was Nintendo 's marketing focus at the time .