

= Life Is Strange =

Life Is Strange is an episodic graphic adventure video game developed by Dontnod Entertainment and published by Square Enix . It is available for Linux , Microsoft Windows , OS X , PlayStation 3 , PlayStation 4 , Xbox 360 and Xbox One , and consists of five episodes released periodically throughout 2015 .

The game 's plot focuses on Maxine Caulfield , a photography student who discovers that she has the ability to rewind time at any moment , leading her every choice to enact the butterfly effect . After having foreseen an approaching storm , Max must take on the responsibility to prevent it from destroying her town . The player 's actions will adjust the narrative as it unfolds , and reshape it once allowed to travel back in time . Fetch quests and making environmental changes represent the forms of puzzle solving in addition to using branching choices for conversation .

Development of Life Is Strange began in April 2013 . It was formed with an episodic format in mind , for reasons both financial and creative . The developers conducted research on the setting by travelling to the Pacific Northwest , and subverted known archetypes to make the characters . Player feedback influenced the adjustments made to the episodes . Story and character arc serve as the central point in the game rather than traditional graphic adventure tropes like point @-@ and @-@ click puzzles . The voice recording sessions took place in Los Angeles , California .

During its release , Life Is Strange received generally favourable reviews commending the character development , rewind game mechanic and tackling of taboo subjects . Common criticisms included the slang that was used , poor lip @-@ syncing in earlier episodes , and tonal inconsistencies in the story . It had sold one million digital copies by the end of July 2015 .

= = Gameplay = =

Life Is Strange is a graphic adventure played from a third @-@ person view . The mechanic of rewinding time allows the player to redo any action that has been taken . The player can examine and interact with objects , which enables puzzle solving in the form of fetch quests and making changes to the environment . Items that are collected before time travelling will be kept in the inventory after the fact .

The player can explore various locations in the fictional setting of Arcadia Bay and communicate with non @-@ playable characters . Dialogue exchanges can be rewound while branching options are used for conversation . Once an event is reset , the details provided earlier are permitted to avail themselves in the future . In some instances , choices in dialogue will alter and affect the story through short or long @-@ term consequences . For each one of the choices , something good in the short @-@ term could turn out worse later .

= = Plot = =

Life Is Strange takes place during the week of 7 October 2013 and is told from the perspective of Maxine Caulfield , a twelfth grade student of Blackwell Academy in the fictional town of Arcadia Bay , Oregon .

The prologue begins with Max (Hannah Telle) being thrown into the vision of a lighthouse destroyed by a swelling tornado . She awakes instantly in the class of her teacher Mark Jefferson (Derek Phillips) . To restore her composure , she proceeds to the restroom . There , Max witnesses classmate Nathan Prescott (Nik Shriver) murder a girl . In a single , sudden effort , she rewinds time and is moved back into the classroom from before . Informed of the following outcome , she hurries off to rescue the girl using her recently developed ability . It is revealed that the person Max saved was her childhood friend Chloe Price (Ashly Burch) . The two reunite and go for a walk to the same lighthouse from her nightmare . Max then reveals to Chloe her capacity to travel back in time . It is made known that what she thought was a dream is rather the reckoning of a future event , and the storm , an approaching disaster headed for the town .

The following day , Max observes fellow student Kate Marsh (Dayeane Hutton) being subjected

to bullying for a viral video depicting her kissing several students at a party . It is suggested that she may have been drugged , and Max suspects Nathan as the perpetrator . Max visits the diner where Chloe 's mother Joyce (Cissy Jones) works as a waitress and meets Chloe there . They decide to experiment with Max 's power at Chloe 's secret hideout , a scrapyard . However , this strains Max and results in her having a nosebleed and fainting . Chloe takes her back to Blackwell Academy . During class , everyone is called out to the courtyard . Kate is up on the roof of the girls ' dorm with the intention to jump . Max stops time unexpectedly and uses the ability in an attempt to reach Kate . At this point , she has the opportunity to convince Kate to get down from the roof and come with her . Ultimately , Max vows to uncover what happened to Kate and Chloe 's missing friend Rachel Amber .

Max and Chloe break into the principal 's office that night to investigate . After they search through his files , Chloe insists on entering the pool for a swim . The campus security ? now alerted ? comes to inspect the activity inside . They flee back to Chloe 's place . The next morning , Max and Chloe depart for the diner to sneak into the motorhome of Frank Bowers (Daniel Bonjour) , a drug dealer and Rachel 's friend . They learn that Rachel was having a romantic relationship with Frank and lied to Chloe about it . Chloe storms off feeling betrayed . Back at the dormitory , Max examines a childhood photo of her and Chloe . Without notice , she is transported to the day that picture was taken . Faced with the chance to save Chloe 's father William (Joe Ochman) from dying in a traffic collision , she conceals the keys to his car , which inadvertently creates an alternative reality where Chloe has been paralysed from the neck down .

In the alternative reality , Max comes across the photo that let her save Chloe 's father , but now instead uses it to undo her decision and restore Chloe to health . It manages to re @-@ establish the original timeline . Max and Chloe continue their investigation and obtain clues that lead them to an abandoned barn owned by the influential Prescott family . They discover a bunker hidden underneath that contains pictures of Kate and Rachel tied up and intoxicated ? Rachel is shown in one image being buried at Chloe 's secret hideout . They speed in the direction of the scrapyard . Rachel is found dead and buried , much to Chloe 's despair . Max follows Chloe to a school party to confront Nathan , believing he will target another student there as his next victim . They receive a text message from Nathan threatening to destroy the evidence , which returns them to the scrapyard . There , they are ambushed by Jefferson , who anaesthetises Max and shoots Chloe in the head .

Max is held captive inside the bunker with Jefferson , who reveals that he has been drugging and kidnapping young girls in order to photograph them and , as such , capture their innocence . Max uses her powers to escape into a photograph . Emerging back at the beginning in Jefferson 's class , she informs Chloe 's stepfather David Madsen (Don McManus) , the head of security at Blackwell , of her kidnapper 's identity . Jefferson is caught , Chloe is rescued and Max is afforded the opportunity to go to San Francisco and have one of her photos displayed in an art gallery . She calls Chloe from the event , realising that , for all her effort , the storm has reached Arcadia Bay . Max teleports to the time she took the gallery photo , which eventually leads her to sojourn alternative realities as they devolve into a dreamscape nightmare . By the story 's end , Max arrives at the lighthouse with Chloe . They confront the fact that Max brought the approaching superstorm into existence by availing herself of the time travel abilities in the first place , and the only way to prevent it is for her to go back in time once more and allow Chloe to be killed by Nathan . Max must make a choice : sacrifice Chloe 's life to save Arcadia Bay , or sacrifice Arcadia Bay in order to spare Chloe .

= = Development = =

Life Is Strange was Dontnod Entertainment 's second title starring a female protagonist (the first being Remember Me) . It was disclosed in a developer diary that , as with its first project , efforts were made by potential publishers to have a male protagonist put in place instead . Square Enix was the only publisher with no intention to change it . Dontnod co @-@ founder Jean @-@ Maxime Moris brought up the Gamergate controversy in the same context as an example of " a great debate to have " , but put emphasis on that they were not using the issue to stand out from the rest .

The development of Life Is Strange was started in April 2013 with a team of 15 people , which expanded once collaborations with Square Enix¹ commenced . It was originally codenamed What If but then retitled to distinguish itself from the film of the same name . The game was born of the idea for the rewind mechanic , which the developer had already experimented on with their last game Remember Me . The lead character Max was created with the ability to rewind time to supplement this mechanism . The episodic format was chosen by the studio for creative reasons , financial restrictions and marketing purposes , allowing them to tell the story in its preferred slow pace . The Pacific Northwest was picked as the setting for the purpose of conveying a nostalgic and autumnal feel to the game . The development team visited the region , took photographs , looked at local newspapers and used Google Street View to make sure the environment was accurately portrayed .

It was decided early on that most of the budget be spent on the writing and voice actors . The original story was written in French by Jean @-@ Luc Cano , and converted into a game script by the co @-@ directors and design team . It was subsequently handed over to Christian Divine and Cano to be fine tuned in English . Story and character development were highlighted over point @-@ and @-@ click puzzles , making choice and consequence integral to how the narrative unfolds . Hannah Telle auditioned for Max Caulfield in July 2014 and was offered the part ; Ashly Burch auditioned for both Max and her given role Chloe Price . The recording sessions were done in Los Angeles , California , with the French developer brought in via Skype .

Although it holds significant differences from Remember Me , the game addresses similar themes of memory and identity . Life Is Strange was specified as an analogue look at human identity in contrast to Remember Me , the digital view of the same theme . Running on an improved version of Unreal Engine 3 , it makes use of the tools and special effects like lighting and depth of field engineered for Remember Me as well as subsequent advances . Visual effects like post @-@ processes , double exposure and overlapping screen space particles were used as an artistic approach to be displayed while the lead character rewinds time . The textures seen in the game were entirely hand painted , adapted to achieve what art director Michel Koch called " impressionistic rendering " . Elements were adjusted based on player feedback , with influences like The Walking Dead , Gone Home² and Heavy Rain in mind . The Catcher in the Rye was an additional source of inspiration , whose protagonist Holden Caulfield shares a surname with Max , the game 's lead . The characters were created using known archetypes , at first to establish an entry point for the player , and then to subvert them . For the sake of serving the realism , the supernatural elements were designed as a metaphor for the characters ' inner conflict , and experts were consulted to tackle the subject of teen suicide .

The score was composed by Jonathan Morali of the band Syd Matters . Inspired by modern indie folk music , the soundtrack was intended to inform the mood of the game . The music contains a blend of licensed tracks and composed pieces , considered by Dontnod creative director Jean @-@ Maxime Moris as " 50 % of the experience " . Featured artists include José González , Mogwai , Breton , Amanda Palmer , Brian Viglione , Bright Eyes , Message to Bears , Local Natives , Syd Matters , Sparklehorse , Angus & Julia Stone , alt @-@ J , Mud Flow and Foals .

= = = Release = = =

Square Enix and Dontnod announced Life Is Strange on 11 August 2014 . The episodes were released digitally on PC via Steam , PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4 via PlayStation Network , and Xbox 360 and Xbox One via Xbox Live between 30 January 2015 and 20 October 2015 . In November 2014 , the publisher expressed interest in having physical copies released of the game , but at the time added that they were 100 % focused on the digital release . One year later , the retail edition was set to be released for the PC , PS4 and Xbox One in North America on 19 January 2016 and in Europe on 22 January 2016 ; the limited edition featured an artbook , the soundtrack , score and a director 's commentary .

A Japanese version was released for Microsoft Windows , PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4 on 3 March 2016 . Feral Interactive was tasked with porting Life Is Strange for OS X , released on 16 June 2016 , and Linux , released on 21 July 2016 . That same day , the first episode was made

indefinitely available for free on Linux , PC , OS X , PS3 , PS4 , Xbox 360 and Xbox One .

= = Reception = =

Life Is Strange received generally favourable reviews , having aggregated a Metacritic score of 85 / 100 on PlayStation 4 and Xbox One . While criticised for its lip @-@ syncing and use of dialogue , critics notably lauded the character development and time travel component , suggesting that there should be more games like it . Eurogamer thought of it as " one of the best interactive story games of this generation " and Hardcore Gamer declared it the sleeper hit of 2015 .

Kevin VanOrd of GameSpot called Episode 1 : Chrysalis " an involving slice of life that works because its situations eloquently capture a peculiar early @-@ college state of mind " , while Game Informer 's Kimberley Wallace stated that she found the tackling of " subjects that are usually taboo for video games " impressive . Destructoid 's Brett Makedonski noticed that the episode 's strongest characteristic was exploration ? both " self- and worldly " . However , Mitch Dyer of IGN wrote that the story was ultimately obstructed by its " laughable " script and " worse performances " . In response to Episode 2 : Out of Time , Polygon 's Megan Farokhmanesh echoed the view that the emphasis on self @-@ exploration had considerable impact on the enjoyment of the game . Critics opined that the ending was an " emotional high point " and that it brought meaning to the choices from both the first and second episodes . Writing for USgamer , Mike Williams disparaged the pacing of Episode 2 : Out of Time as " slower and less exciting " than that of episode one .

Episode 3 : Chaos Theory was thought by Adnan Riaz of Hardcore Gamer to be a dramatic improvement that presented a " thrilling , poignant , fascinating and ... enticing " narrative whose outcome from past decisions also added a sense of realism . Additionally , Peter Paras of Game Revolution complimented the character beats , particularly the development of Chloe Price , who he said " really comes into her own as [a] fully @-@ formed character " . Though GameSpot 's Alexa Ray Corriea said that the fetch quests interfered with its emotional quality , the episode built up to a " killer cliffhanger " according to Farokhmanesh . GameZone 's Matt Liebl deemed Episode 4 : Dark Room " easily the most emotional episode " and said that the mystery of Rachel Amber had done a " tremendous job in keeping us hooked " . Tom Hoggins of The Telegraph regarded the developer 's venture into subjects like social division , online bullying , parental conflict and suicide as " bold " . Criticism was directed at its " cheap ways " of progressing the plot ? character inconsistency and superfluous shock value ? resulting in tonal problems , with the episode 's puzzles and relationships given more approval . The final episode , Polarized , was commended for having offered a " fitting conclusion " to the coming of age story of Max Caulfield and the relationship between the two leads was similarly noted as having been carried out successfully . One stealth sequence was described as " tedious " and " out @-@ of @-@ place " while other aspects inhabiting the same course of events were favoured . Reviewers were essentially divided on the ending , citing the episode 's subtitle as something that mirrored their own feelings toward it .

= = Sales = =

The first episode was ranked fifth among the best selling PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4 video games of February 2015 . Life Is Strange reached one million sales in July 2015 , having accumulated over 1 @.@ 2 million unique players worldwide . The attach rate to units between the complete season and season pass proved to be " extremely strong " , divulged Square Enix . The retail edition made seventh place in the top ten UK game sales chart for the week ending 23 January 2016 .

= = Awards = =