

= Charlie Murder =

Charlie Murder is an action role @-@ playing beat ' em up video game developed by Ska Studios and published by Microsoft Game Studios . First revealed in January 2010 as an Xbox Live Indie Games title , the studio announced in May 2010 that the game would undergo a " complete overhaul " and be published in 2012 through Xbox Live Arcade for the Xbox 360 . Charlie Murder was eventually released on 14 August 2013 to positive reviews , with critics praising the game 's soundtrack and hand @-@ illustrated visuals .

The game features five playable characters ? all members of the garage punk band Charlie Murder ? who fight a demonic army raised by a former band member in attempt to save the world from the apocalypse . Charlie Murder has both single @-@ player and four @-@ player online and offline cooperative gameplay modes . The game was created using Microsoft 's XNA tools .

= = Gameplay = =

Charlie Murder is a side @-@ scrolling beat ' em up game with role @-@ playing game elements . Players select one of five band members to play as ; the lead vocalist and band namesake Charlie Murder , guitarist Lester Deth , bassist Tommy Homicide , backup vocalist Kelly " Skelekitten " Skitten , or drummer The Rexecutioner . Players can complete the game alone , or can team together with up to three other people , through either offline ( with all of the players using the same Xbox 360 ) or online cooperative gameplay ( co @-@ op ) . With each additional player , the number of enemies that appear on screen at once increases . Players can also fight each other in special areas of the game . The game takes place across several different areas , including a construction site , a graveyard , a pirate ship , and a mall . Players are pitted against a large variety of enemies , including zombies , witches , ninjas , giant rats , yetis , and sharks with dynamite strapped to their heads . Interspersed between the normal combat levels are a number of minigames and special levels , including driving and flying levels .

Players fight using two buttons to string together combinations of light and heavy melee attacks . Players can also use grabs , launch enemies into the air , use character @-@ specific special attacks , and pick up and use weapons . In co @-@ op mode , players can also team up to execute highly damaging group attacks . Scattered throughout the game are bosses , unique and challenging enemies that have more health and are more difficult to fight than normal enemies . There are also " minibosses " , enemies that are less challenging than bosses but more challenging than regular enemies . Minibosses have the ability to block and counter players ' attacks , which few other enemies in the game do .

Each of the five band members has a unique character class , which vary from one another mainly by the special magical attacks , called Anar @-@ chi , that they can use . Anar @-@ chi attacks include Tommy Homicide 's ability to summon acid @-@ coated buzzsaws and The Rexecutioner 's ability to summon and use a debris @-@ spitting drum kit . Players are able to use new abilities by visiting an in @-@ game tattoo parlor . Tattoos , and the special abilities that they unlock , are character @-@ specific . Players can also unlock new abilities , including additional combination attacks , group attacks , and the ability to use two weapons at once , by leveling up .

Players use an in @-@ game Windows 8 phone to manage their inventory , level up , read emails that explain game mechanics , and scan QR codes that unlock items and give the character money or followers ( the game 's experience point equivalent ) . Players earn money by defeating enemies , and outside of combat , they can purchase weapons and armor ( all of which is visible on the character ) , stat @-@ boosting food and alcohol , and the aforementioned tattoos from shops .

= = = Plot = = =

The game 's protagonist , Charlie Murder , is a member of a garage punk band of the same name . Charlie kicks one of the founding members , Paul , out of the band , and begins to experience chart @-@ topping success creating music in a new genre with new bandmates . Under the name Lord

Mortimer , Paul forms his own band , Gore Quaffer , and makes a pact with a demon , raising an army of demons and undead in order to destroy Charlie Murder . Charlie and his band are killed at the beginning of the game , fight out of hell , and are reborn on Earth amidst an apocalypse caused by Lord Mortimer and his army . In order to stop the apocalypse , Charlie Murder must defeat Gore Quaffer in a Battle of the Bands .

During the game , a series of flashbacks detail the game 's backstory . As Charlie and his new band mates experience success without Paul , the latter becomes increasingly upset , eventually vowing revenge . The flashbacks neither paint Charlie Murder in a wholly positive light , nor Paul in a wholly negative light . Charlie Murder has an in @-@ game talk radio station , which plays in enemy @-@ free areas . Additional information about the band and about the game 's world is presented in the form of people calling into the radio program .

= = Development = =

Charlie Murder was first announced in January 2010 in a Ska Studios blog post as an Xbox Live Indie Games title set for release in March 2010 . The game 's plot was a four @-@ member band 's journey to save Skelekitten ( Murder 's girlfriend ) from a rival metal band . A demo of the game was showcased at PAX East 2010 . In April , Ska Studios founder James Silva announced that the game was in development for an unidentified platform and would no longer be released through Xbox Live Indie Games . Joystiq noted that the demo ran on Microsoft XNA Game Studio 4 @.@ 0 , which is designed for the Xbox 360 , Microsoft Windows computers , and Windows Phone 7 . Ska Studios announced in May that the game was to undergo a " complete overhaul " , and would be released through Xbox Live Arcade in 2012 . The game was eventually released in August 2013 as part of Summer of Arcade , an annual Xbox Live Arcade promotion known for releasing several of the platform 's most acclaimed games .

Ska Studios ' first games , including the Xbox Live Arcade game The Dishwasher : Dead Samurai ( April 2009 ) , were developed entirely by James Silva . Michelle Juett was a tester for The Dishwasher : Dead Samurai , and the two met in person for the first time at the September 2009 Penny Arcade Expo . They began to date a year later , and Juett eventually left ArenaNet to join Ska Studios , becoming its second employee . Charlie Murder was one of the first games that the two worked on together . Silva did all of the game 's programming work , while Juett handled its marketing . Silva and Juett worked together to design the art and compose the soundtrack . Charlie Murder 's music was produced by Silva and sung by the pair . In an interview with Joystiq , James Silva explained that he used major game conferences , such as PAX East , as public betas . The conferences allowed Silva to expose a large number of people to the game , providing him with the opportunity to solicit feedback and discover issues . The couple also invited friends over for parties in order to test the game while it was in development . Silva proposed to Juett at the Charlie Murder booth at PAX 2011 , using an in @-@ game cutscene built in secret for the occasion .

Charlie Murder was the third Ska Studios game published by Microsoft Studios . During development , Microsoft Studios provided Ska Studios with usability testing and play testing feedback , handled localization , and found and suggested bug fixes . Microsoft required Ska Studios to create picture packs ( Xbox Live account customizations ) , but was not responsible for the Windows Phone 8 game mechanic . Ska Studios had complete creative control over the game itself . Charlie Murder was promoted as a free Xbox download with Microsoft 's Games with Gold program during the month of June 2014 .

= = Reception = =

Charlie Murder received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review aggregator Metacritic . The game 's music was highly praised . The game 's hand @-@ illustrated visuals were also praised by reviewers . Critics felt that the music and visual style complemented the game 's punk rock theme , and Official Xbox Magazine 's Cameron Lewis praised the game for being rich in personality and detail without being over @-@ polished .

Reviewers were less enthused about the game 's user interface , and found that many gameplay details went unexplained . IGN 's Jose Otero found the inventory management system , which lacks an easy way to sort items , to be problematic . Chris Carter from Destructoid noted that the game 's intricacies are described in messages on the in @-@ game phone , which he considered difficult to navigate and read , and that the messages were often insufficiently clear and detailed .

Critics compared the game to Ska Studios ' previous side @-@ scrolling beat ' em up games , The Dishwasher : Dead Samurai and The Dishwasher : Vampire Smile . Game Informer noted Charlie Murder 's similarity to the Dishwasher series , and Destructoid 's Chris Carter believed that Charlie Murder was an improvement over the previous games , in both presentation and in the amount of personality that the characters had . There was a consensus among reviewers that the game was more enjoyable in multiplayer , with Hardcore Gamer saying that the game felt designed for cooperative play .