

= Fez (video game) =

Fez (stylized as FEZ) is a 2012 indie puzzle platform game developed by Polytron Corporation and published by Polytron , Trapdoor , and Microsoft Studios . The player @-@ character Gomez receives a fez that reveals his two @-@ dimensional (2D) world to be one of four sides of a three @-@ dimensional (3D) world . The player rotates between these four 2D views to realign platforms and solve the game 's puzzles . The object of the game is to collect cubes and cube fragments to restore order to the universe .

The game was called an " underdog darling of the indie game scene " during its high @-@ profile and protracted five @-@ year development cycle . Fez designer and Polytron founder Phil Fish gained celebrity status for his outspoken public persona and his prominence in the 2012 documentary Indie Game : The Movie , which detailed Fez 's final stages of development and Polytron 's related legal issues . Fez met critical acclaim upon its April 2012 release for Xbox Live Arcade . The game was ported to other platforms following the expiration of a yearlong exclusivity agreement .

Reviewers commended the game 's emphasis on discovery and freedom , but criticized its technical issues , in @-@ game navigation , and endgame backtracking . They likened the game 's rotation mechanic to the 2D ? 3D shifts of Echochrome , Super Paper Mario , and Crush . Fez won awards including the Seumas McNally Grand Prize and Eurogamer 's 2012 Game of the Year . It had sold one million copies by the end of 2013 , and it influenced games such as Monument Valley , Crossy Road , and Secrets of Rætikon . A planned sequel was canceled when Fish abruptly left the industry .

= = Gameplay = =

Fez is a two @-@ dimensional (2D) puzzle platform game set in a three @-@ dimensional (3D) world . The player @-@ character Gomez lives peacefully on a 2D plane until he receives a red fez and witnesses the breakup of a giant , golden hexahedron that tears the fabric of spacetime and reveals a third dimension . After the game appears to glitch , reset , and reboot , the player can rotate between four 2D views of the 3D world , as four sides around a cube @-@ like space . This rotation mechanic reveals new paths through the levels by connecting otherwise inaccessible platforms , and is the basis of Fez 's puzzles . For example , floating platforms become a solid road , discontinuous ladders become whole , and platforms that move along a track stay on course . The object of the game is to collect cubes and cube fragments , which accrete to restore order to the universe . In search of these cubes , Gomez traverses the game environment by jumping between ledges . Other platforming elements change with the level themes , including crates that activate switches , bombs that reveal passages , and pistons that launch Gomez airborne .

The exploratory parts of the game feature a series of arcane codes and glyphs , treasure maps and chests , and secret rooms . Players are left without guidance to determine whether game elements are decipherable subpuzzles or simply false signals . These sorts of puzzles include hidden warp gates , enigmatic obelisks , invisible platforms , sequences of tetrominos , a ciphered alphabet , and QR codes . One of the game 's recurring themes is an ancient civilization that attempted to make sense of their dimensionality , as told through artifacts .

Fez has no enemies , bosses , or punishments for failure ? the player @-@ character quickly respawns upon falling to his death . The game 's designer described Fez as a " ' stop and smell the flowers ' kind of game " . It prioritizes puzzle @-@ solving and patience over the platforming genre 's traditional interest in dexterity . Fez features a pixelated art style and a limited color palette reminiscent of the 8 @-@ bit era . Its homage includes Tetris tetrominos inscribed on the walls and in the sky , The Legend of Zelda treasure chest animations , Super Mario Bros. mushroom levels , travel by pipe , and floating platforms . The game 's settings include forests , factories , a coastal lighthouse , an urban city , and a library . Fez 's New Game Plus mode adds a first @-@ person perspective feature and lets the player revisit areas to collect " anti @-@ cubes " from harder puzzles . This second half of the game is more challenging and focuses on code cracking .

= = Development = =

Fez 's five @-@ year development cycle is known for its protracted length and amount of public exposure . Nathan Grayson of VG247 likened its rocky history to " an indie Duke Nukem Forever " , and Polygon reviewer Arthur Gies noted its standing reputation as an " underdog darling of the indie game scene " . Its designer , Phil Fish , became renowned in a way unusual for game developers due to his prominence in the 2012 Indie Game : The Movie . Apart from Fez , which was released to wide acclaim , Fish himself became known for his outspoken and acerbic public persona .

Fez began as a collaboration between Canadian indie developers Fish and Shawn McGrath . They worked on McGrath 's idea for a puzzle game in which a 3D space was viewed from four 2D angles . Though their partnership broke down due to creative differences , the entirety of Fez 's design , story , and art descends from this game mechanic . Fish continued to work on the project in his spare time and solicited for a programmer on DeviantArt , where he found Renaud Bédard . Fez was first announced in July 2007 on The Independent Gaming Source . It was nominated for two awards at the 2008 Game Developers Conference Independent Games Festival (GDC IGF) . When Fish 's employer did not permit him time off to attend the awards , he quit . He later recalled this moment as " when [he] became indie " . The game won " Excellence in Visual Art " , and its presence created a surge of public interest in Fez that rode a concurrent swell of interest in indie game development as a whole . Fish received a Canadian government loan to open Polytron Corporation as a startup company and began full @-@ time work on Fez . In July 2009 , Polytron announced that Fez would launch in early 2010 as an Xbox Live Arcade exclusive . Development continued with an experimental spirit until the company ran out of money . Fish borrowed from friends and family to keep the company open and considered canceling the project before the nearby Québécois developer @-@ publisher Trapdoor offered to help . Fish felt that the Trapdoor partnership rescued the game .

Fez won multiple awards in 2011 and was a " PAX 10 " selection at the 2011 Penny Arcade Expo . Fish is shown preparing for Fez 's booth at PAX East 2011 , an earlier show , in the 2012 documentary film Indie Game : The Movie . The film chronicles the game development stories of several indie developers . As a subplot , the film presents Fish amidst a legal dispute with a former business partner that jeopardizes Fez 's future . Game Informer called Fish the film 's " most memorable developer " , and Rock , Paper , Shotgun wrote that Fish is portrayed as theatrical in a way that exacerbates his already outspoken reputation . Eurogamer said that the part when Fish resolves to kill himself if he does not release his game is " the film 's most startling moment " . Near the end of Fez 's development , Fish told a Gamasutra reporter that he had received positive feedback from IGF Chairman Brandon Boyer and Braid designer Jonathan Blow , but that he felt " burnt out " . The final game included almost none of the original work from the first two years of development . After several delays , Fez was submitted for certification in February 2012 .

Fez was released on April 13 , 2012 , and it sold 200 @,@ 000 copies during its yearlong exclusivity to the Xbox Live Arcade platform . Fish rebuked Polytron 's co @-@ publisher , Microsoft Studios , for botching the game 's release by way of lackluster publicity . Several months later , Polytron entered a high @-@ profile dispute with Microsoft over the cost of patching Fez . Nearly a year after Fez 's launch , Fish announced a Windows PC port for release on May 1 , 2013 . OS X and Linux ports debuted on September 11 , 2013 , and PlayStation 3 , PlayStation 4 , and PlayStation Vita ports by BlitWorks debuted on March 25 , 2014 . Ouya and iOS ports were also announced . Bédard stayed to port the Windows release before joining Toronto 's Cappybara Games . He credited Polytron 's long development cycle to his own inexperience in game development (compounded by the team 's small size and difficulty in setting reasonable milestones) , the game 's scope , and Fish 's perfectionism . Fish had hoped that players would discuss Fez 's nuances online after its release . Players collaborated online for a week to solve the final " monolith " puzzle by using a cryptanalytic attack known as brute force . Ars Technica described the apparent end to Fez 's harder puzzles as " anticlimactic " , but Fish told Eurogamer in March 2013 that hidden in @-@ game secrets remain to be found .

More than three years after its digital launch , Fez received a physical release designed by Fish and limited to a signed edition of 500 in December 2015 . The deluxe package included the soundtrack and a stylized red notebook with gold foil inlay .

== Design ==

Bédard wrote Fez in Microsoft Visual C # Express and XNA Game Studio Express . He coded the level editor and the game engine , Trixel , which converts 2D tiles (" triles ") into four @-@ sided 3D voxels (" trixels ") . Fish made 2D pixel art in Photoshop for each side of the trixel , which Bédard 's custom software compiled into 3D game assets . Fish would then design levels in the level editor by extruding surfaces , a process he found " overwhelming " but akin to playing with Lego blocks . In their workflow , Fish first proposed ideas that Bédard would implement . The two would then discuss and fine @-@ tune the addition ? they worked well together .

The game came to adopt Metroidvania mechanics , with " secret passages , warp gates , and cheat codes " . Fish cited Myst as an inspiration and compared its open world , nonlinear narrative , and " obtuse metapuzzles " to Fez 's own alphabet , numeric system , and an " almost unfairly hard to get ... second set of collectibles " . He was also inspired by the Nintendo Entertainment System games of his youth (particularly those of the Super Mario and The Legend of Zelda series) , Hayao Miyazaki 's signature " open blue sky " , " feel @-@ good " atmosphere , and Fumito Ueda 's Ico . Fish sought to emulate Ico 's feeling of nostalgic and isolated loneliness , and Ueda 's development philosophy wherein all nonessential game elements are removed (" design by subtraction ") . Fish made a personal challenge of designing a game without relying on " established mechanics " . As such , Fez was always a peaceful game that never contained an antagonist .

== Music ==

Rich Vreeland , also known as Disasterpeace , composed the game 's chiptune @-@ esque electronic soundtrack . Despite his background in chiptune , Vreeland limited his use of that genre 's mannerisms in the score . He worked with soft synth pads and reverb to push the score closer to an 1980s synthesizer sound . He also reduced reliance on percussion and incorporated distortion techniques like bitcrushing and wow . Vreeland opted for slower passages with varying tempos that could " ebb , flow , and breathe with the player " . He left some portions of Fez without music . Vreeland worked on its soundtrack at night for about 14 months while scoring Shoot Many Robots , and Brandon McCartin of Aquaria contributed the game 's sound effects .

Vreeland 's first composition for the game (" Adventure ") became the soundtrack 's first track . He wrote it after meeting Bédard but before discussing the soundtrack with Fish , and based the composition on Fez audio created prior to his arrival . Vreeland wanted to use tape recorders for their distinctive sound , but potential audio syncing issues with this method led him to employ digital recording . Portions of the soundtrack dynamically change between several dozen constituent elements and react to the game environment . For example , the " Puzzle " track 's elements change musical key based on the in @-@ game time of day . Certain tracks were intended to imitate real @-@ world sounds , such as those of bats , thunderstorms , taiko , and water falling from stalactites . Other tracks expanded from improvisations . Vreeland was also inspired by the Lord of the Rings Shire theme , 1980s horror media , the soundtrack of demoscene game Jasper 's Journeys , the Legend of Zelda dungeon music , the Mass Effect soundtrack , Tangerine Dream , and Steve Reich . " Continuum " is a synthesized rendition of Frédéric Chopin 's Prelude , Op. 28 , No. 4 . Instruments used in recording include the Sonic Charge Synplant , minimoog , " synthetic flute " , and Boomwhacker .

The soundtrack was released in a digital format on April 20 , 2012 . Pre @-@ orders for the soundtrack topped the Bandcamp charts . Kirk Hamilton of Kotaku wrote that Fez 's sound effects evoked Jim Guthrie 's Superbrothers : Sword & Sworcery EP audio . Joshua Kopstein of The Verge called the work " fantastic " and described it as a cross between a " 1980s Vangelis synth odyssey " and a submerged vinyl record from an arcade . Game Informer 's Matt Miller wrote that the

soundtrack contributed to Fez 's " 80s nostalgia vibe " . Eurogamer described the music as " lush , spooky , and electrifying " , and Edge compared it to " Holst put through a Mega Drive " . Oli Welsh of Eurogamer wrote that the music matched the game 's themes of " hidden depth " . Welsh heard influences of 1960s English psychedelia (Pink Floyd , Soft Machine) , 1970s Krautrock (Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk) , 1980s synth (Jean Michel Jarre , Vangelis) , and Erik Satie . He added that the soundtrack 's contribution to Fez was " incalculable " . Damian Kastbauer of Game Developer used Vreeland 's soundtrack to show that a retrogaming aesthetic in sound and visuals could be both " futuristic and nostalgic " and provide the " right ' voice ' to support the game 's design intentions " .

Game Developer listed Vreeland in their 2012 Power 50 for his work on the soundtrack , which they described as " atmospheric , pensive , and maybe even a little bit melancholy " . In keeping with Fez 's theme of secrets , images visible only through spectrogram were embedded into the soundtrack audio . Vreeland released a remix album , FZ : Side F , a year later on April 20 , 2013 . It features tracks from other artists , including Jim Guthrie . Vreeland later released another remix album , FZ : Side Z , and all three albums were included in the August 2013 Game Music Bundle 5 .

= = Reception = =

Reviews upon Fez 's original release were " generally favorable " , according to review aggregator Metacritic . Later releases received " universal acclaim " . Each release was consistently among the top @-@ rated releases for each platform 's year . GameRankings ranks Fez within its top 100 highest @-@ rated Xbox 360 games , top 20 PC games , and top 20 PlayStation 4 games . While in development , Fez had won the 2012 GDC Independent Games Festival 's Seumas McNally Grand Prize , the 2011 Indiecade Best in Show and Best Story / World Design , the 2011 Fantastic Arcade Audience Choice Award , and the 2008 GDC Independent Games Festival 's Excellence in Visual Art . Eurogamer gave Fez their highest rating and named the " perfect , wordless sci @-@ fi parable " their 2012 Game of the Year . Digital Spy listed Fez eighth in its Best Games of 2012 , ahead of high @-@ budget games like Call of Duty : Black Ops 2 and Halo 4 . Fez was chosen as the 2012 game of the year by Diamond Trust of London developer Jason Rohrer and Halo 4 lead game designer Scott Warner . The Windows PC port was Metacritic 's tenth best @-@ reviewed video game of 2013 .

The New York Times called Fez Fish 's " tribute to 1980s gaming ... lovingly , almost excessively , devoted to the golden age of Nintendo " . Arthur Gies of Polygon described its aesthetics as " so retro it hurts " , citing its pixelated look , chiptune soundtrack , and ways of clueing the player without explicit guidance . Gies felt that though " 8 @-@ bit nostalgia " was outmoded , Fez showed an understanding of its influences and was the " most authentic " of the style . Jeremy Parish of 1UP.com called the game 's minimalism " admirable " and likened its art style to that of Cave Story . Kotaku described Fez 's nostalgic manner as " the video game aesthetic " . Oli Welsh of Eurogamer lamented how " retro pixel art " became an indie game cliché during the game 's development , but felt that Fez transcended such stereotypes through its dedication to the wonderment of early Nintendo titles . " Fish clearly worships the Nintendo of his boyhood " , he wrote . Welsh likened Fez to a 1970s , peace @-@ loving , surrealist version of 2001 : A Space Odyssey as imagined by Shigeru Miyamoto , and foresaw its social status as " the darling of a certain indie clique " with " studied hipster cool " . Edge described the game as " a place built from gaming 's history " , whose playfulness makes it " an unexpected heir to Super Mario Bros. " with levels like well @-@ crafted toys , and IGN 's video review said the game " drags the 8 @-@ bit era into the future " .

Journalists likened Fez 's rotation mechanic to the 2D ? 3D shifts of games like Echochrome , Super Paper Mario , and Crush . Early in development , Fish himself said that the idea is " nothing mind @-@ blowing " and that the game could have been made " at any point in the last 15 years " . Polygon 's Gies preferred how Echochrome used the perspective mechanic , and Tom McShea of GameSpot considered Fez 's mechanic a gimmick . Matt Miller of Game Informer thought that Fez realized the mechanic 's potential better than other perspective @-@ shifting games , and further commended Fez 's puzzle design and pacing up until the endgame . Miller also compared its story

to that of the novella Flatland , whose protagonist similarly discovers the complexities of another dimension . 1UP.com 's Parish said that Fez 's rotation mechanic was deeper than that of Super Paper Mario and not as dependent on M. C. Escher themes as Echochrome . Edge felt that the mechanic was " far less self @-@ conscious " and " more harmonious " than in Endochrome and Crush . The magazine wrote that Fez 's indoor puzzles were its best . Eurogamer 's Welsh compared the game 's " wraparound platforming " to the 1980s game Nebulus and described the rotation mechanic as among the console generation 's " most unusual technical challenges " .

Reviewers commended the game 's emphasis on discovery and freedom , but found its reliance on backtracking , particularly in the endgame , tedious . Parish of 1UP.com wrote that open @-@ world action games like Metroid Prime all have these issues . Edge compared Fez 's esoteric tricks to an older age of game development that packed games with Easter eggs , secrets , and codes , citing titles such as Exile and Jet Set Willy . The magazine also came to appreciate the 3D map . IGN 's Mitch Dyer contrasted the game 's riddles to the Metal Gear Solid codec frequency puzzle . Jeffrey Matulef of Eurogamer related his experience to the feeling of first playing the 1994 Myst , and The New York Times called Fez " a Finnegan's Wake of video games " for its codebreaking that " makes the player feel like John Nash as portrayed by Russell Crowe in A Beautiful Mind " . Game Informer recommended Fez for completionists who seek challenges . Polygon 's Gies was uncertain as to whether the game 's technical frame rate issues were intentional , and described this dilemma as having a " certain genius " . Other reviewers noted its technical faults : Game Informer as minor , and 1UP.com as " easily the glitchiest game I 've played on my 360 " .

Fez sold 20 @, @ 000 copies in its first day , 100 @, @ 000 in less than two months , 200 @, @ 000 within a year , and , after the Humble Bundle , one million by the end of 2013 . It was Xbox Live 's 13th best @-@ selling Arcade title of 2012 . Fez was cited as an inspiration for 2014 indie games Monument Valley , Crossy Road , and Secrets of Rætikon .

= = Sequel = =

Fez 2 was announced as " one more thing " at end of the Horizon indie game press conference during the June 2013 Electronic Entertainment Expo . The project was cancelled a month later following a Twitter argument between Fish and a video game journalist . In an episode of Marcus Beer 's GameTrailers show Invisible Walls , the journalist criticized Fish 's response to questions about Microsoft 's Xbox One self @-@ publishing policy change . Fish replied on Twitter with condemnation for the industry 's negativity , and announced Fez 2 's cancellation and his exit from the industry in a final tweet . The news came as a surprise to the rest of his company , which has not commented on upcoming projects other than ports since the sequel 's cancellation . Polygon listed Fish in their top 50 newsmakers of 2013 for the social power of his " caustic use of Twitter " .