

= LocoRoco =

LocoRoco (????) is a platform video game released worldwide in 2006 for the PlayStation Portable (PSP) handheld game console , and developed and published by Sony Computer Entertainment . The game was developed by Tsutomu Kouno , striving to create a game that was different to other titles being released for the PSP at the time . After demonstrating a prototype of the core gameplay to his management , Kouno was able to complete development over a course of one and a half years . In LocoRoco , the player must tilt the environment by using the shoulder buttons on the PSP in order to maneuver the LocoRoco , multi @-@ colored jelly @-@ like characters , through each level , being aided by other odd residents while avoiding hazards and the deadly Moja Troop , to reach an end goal .

Along the way , the LocoRoco can grow in size by eating special berries , and then can be split and rejoined to pass the LocoRoco through narrow spaces . The game 's bright and colorful visuals and dynamic music soundtrack were hallmarks of the game , earning it several awards from the gaming press in 2006 . While the game did not sell high volumes , its success led to the development of four other LocoRoco titles - two sequels for the PSP (PlayStation Portable) / PSP Go , a spin @-@ off for the PlayStation 3 and a mobile version (called LocoRoco Mobile and LocoRoco Hi , depending on the market) for cellular (mobile) telephones .

= = Plot = =

Living peacefully on a faraway planet , the LocoRoco and their friends , the Mui Mui , help grow vegetation and look after nature , making the planet a pleasant place to be , playing and singing the days away . When the Moja Troop comes to the planet to take it over , the LocoRoco do not know how to fight against these invaders from outer space . As such , the player assumes the role of " the planet " that is capable of guiding the LocoRoco around to defeat the Moja Troop and rescue the remaining LocoRoco , returning the planet to its peaceful ways .

= = Gameplay = =

LocoRoco is divided into 5 worlds each consisting of 8 levels . In each level , the goal is to reach the end point of the level , with the player scored on the number of LocoRoco found , the time to complete the level , and other factors . There are six varieties of LocoRoco in the game , identified by their color , appearance , and musical voice , but outside of the first yellow one (Kulche) , the rest are unlocked as the player completes the levels . The player can then opt which LocoRoco they want to use for a level , however , this selection has no fundamental gameplay effects and only changes the songs used . LocoRoco act as blobs of gelatin , deforming from their normally round shape when demanded by the environment . Certain beings in the world can change the default shape of the LocoRoco into other forms , such as squares or triangles , which lasts until they wash off in water or they encounter another similar being .

The player starts with a single LocoRoco . When this LocoRoco eats a berry , it grows by one , up to a maximum size of twenty . The single large LocoRoco may be split into individual beings by pressing ? or through specific points on the level , while individual LocoRoco can merge back into a single being by holding down ? . Manipulation of the LocoRoco in this manner may be necessary to guide them to the finish ; while the single large LocoRoco is easier to control , small passages can only be navigated by individual LocoRoco . The player can lose LocoRoco if they are touched by harmful objects or they run into the Moja , and the game will be over if they lose all their LocoRoco . With the exception of making them jump , the player does not otherwise directly control the LocoRoco , but instead controls the planet itself , tilting the planet using the L and R buttons . This causes the LocoRoco to roll in the direction of tilt , as well as causing certain mechanical objects such as platforms to also tilt . The player can also cause the LocoRoco to jump by holding and releasing both buttons ; this not only allows the LocoRoco a way to cross gaps , but to burst through walls as well as harm the Moja without taking damage . As the player collects more LocoRoco in a

level , the music gains more voices , each LocoRoco singing a part in the overall song .

Throughout the levels are areas that require a minimum number of LocoRoco in order to cause them to sing and wake up one of the planet 's odd residents , who will then reward the player with an item for their " Loco House " . There are also hidden MuiMui throughout the levels to be found . Levels also contain " Pickories " which can be collected by the LocoRoco and are used as a form of currency to play two mini @-@ games outside of the main game . The mini @-@ games are " MuiMui Crane " , a variation of a crane game , and " Chuppa Chuppa " that use Chuppa , bird @-@ like launchers for the LocoRoco , to navigate a long course . Both mini @-@ games grant additional Loco House parts and Pickories as prizes . The player can use the accumulated Loco House parts to create a course that the LocoRoco will automatically navigate , with additional parts that can be collected by directing the course appropriately . A Loco Editor is also an unlockable feature in the game , creating an interactive course with a start and finish using the Loco House parts . LocoRoco has lots of other characters and enemies that have strange names .

= = Development = =

LocoRoco was envisioned by Tsutomu Kouno , who had previously work on development of Ico . While on a train during the second quarter of 2004 , Kouno had used a PDA to sketch a game that would involve multiple similar characters that would not be in direct control of the player . He realized the planet @-@ tilting aspect after seeing how rotating the phone with the sketch around would lead to a compelling game . At that time , the PlayStation Portable was nearing release , and Kouno felt the unit 's shoulder buttons would be appropriate for the tilting controls . Kouno also opted to develop for the PSP to break the mold of other , more complicated sequels from PlayStation 2 games that were being developed for the unit and instead create something that " really seemed at home on the PSP " . Kouno also wanted " every aspect of the game [...] to be unique " , and led to his choices for graphics and music in the game .

Three concepts were part of Kouno 's vision for the game , " easy to play , fun and to have dramatic visuals " . Kouno sought not only to make the game accessible to younger players , but also to a wider , international audience . While his team experimented with different control schemes for the game , they recognized that the simple tilting controls would be easily learned by children as well as those outside Japan . This approach also led to the use of a new " language " for the music , instead of relying on Japanese works which would not be understood by the international audience . However , despite the simple controls , Kouno noted they included deep gameplay around those that would require players to master to gain all the collectibles in the game .

Kouno opted to keep the game in 2D instead of the more popular 3D to maintain the simplicity of the game . The Loco Roco team had experimented with different designs for the characters and world , including claymation , papercraft , and detailed textures , but settled on the resulting patterns not only to convey a " bright , cheerful " world , but as well as to keep budget costs down , no longer having a need to seek artists for textures . Kouno drew upon his interest in the natural world to design the other characters in the game ; for example , one character was based on the appearance of his pet tropical fish . Kouno found that using 2D graphics allowed him to constantly present the faces of the LocoRoco and other beings within the game , and used that to convey a constant sense of emotion from all the characters . Maya was used to construct the levels and place hazards and obstacles . The graphics themselves were based on using and animating Bezier curves , a feature of the PSP 's software capabilities .

Kouno had attempted to present the idea at pitch meetings twice in the early part of 2005 but was turned away . While management was able to understand the mechanic of tilting the world , they could not understand Kouno 's vision of applying artificial intelligence to the LocoRoco or other creatures in the game . On the second rejection , the management staff suggested that Kouno return with something more concrete to explain his ideas . Kouno spent one month with a four @-@ person team to create a simple pre @-@ prototype version of the game that demonstrated the rolling gameplay aspect . The pre @-@ prototype version was well received , and Kouno was given further resources to develop the full game . A complete prototype was created by an eight @-@

person team over three months to establish the rest of the game 's core mechanics , including the joining and splitting of the Loco Roco and the dynamic music . The remainder of the game was completed in the following 11 months by the full 16 @-@ person staff at Sony Computer Entertainment Japan .

= = Soundtrack = =

The soundtrack for Loco Roco is based on a fictional language created by Kouno to avoid alienating foreign players by using Japanese music . Kouno created the language by compiling a list of interesting words in katakana , then altering the words slightly to make them sound cool in Japanese as to mask their origins . Kouno then sent the lyrics along with some of his preferred reggae , soul and R & B music to the composers , Nobuyuki Shimizu and Kemmei Adachi , to complete the soundtrack . Kouno requested that the composers use as little electronic @-@ sounding instruments as possible to give the music a feeling of " live sound " . The team ultimately created about 60 songs to be used in the game . While the soundtrack had many different themes , Kouno felt that the fictional LocoRoco language helped to unify the songs across the game .

The LocoRoco Original Soundtrack : LocoRoco No Uta was published by Columbia Records and released in October 2006 in Japan . The album contains 42 tracks from the game .

= = Demo versions = =

= = = Standard demo = = =

Following the release of Firmware 2 @.@ 7 on April 25 , 2006 , a downloadable demo of LocoRoco was released on the game 's Japanese website and was the first Sony @-@ sanctioned user @-@ downloadable game for the PSP . A demo localized for western countries was released in June 2006 , shortly before the game 's full European release . It includes one level that will take the player around 5 ? 15 minutes to complete , depending on the number of secret areas the player encounters .

= = = Halloween demo = = =

A special Halloween @-@ themed demo was released for download on October 26 , 2006 , It featured some exclusive graphics and objects , like Jack @-@ o @-@ lanterns , spirits , and more . Few puzzles were implemented .

= = = Christmas demo = = =

A Christmas @-@ themed demo was released for download on December 11 , 2006 . It featured some exclusive graphics like Santa 's sleigh and more . A unique LocoRoco song is implemented .

= = Reception = =

LocoRoco has received mostly positive reviews from critics . The game was consistently praised for its bright and bold graphics . Charles Herold of the New York Times compared the graphics to Katamari Damacy , calling them " simple " and " pretty " while Sam Kennedy of 1UP considered it akin to " playing out an adorable cartoon " . The unique environments of each level were also credited to help the game 's charm , with Kristan Reed of Eurogamer believing that the game presents a " look and feel unlike anything we 've seen before " and that shows " a truly brilliant realisation of how to take 2D gaming into uncharted territory . " The music of the game was considered to be " quirky and catchy " , with Will Tuttle of GameSpy saying that " there 's a good chance that you 'll be humming some of the tunes all day " . The game , at times , was compared to

a " slow @-@ motion version of Sonic the Hedgehog " with the player controlling the LocoRoco as they move up and down hills and through loop @-@ de @-@ loops in the level . This gameplay allows the game to be easily accessible to players , with IGN 's Juan Castro noting that the controls are " not simplistic so much as it 's refreshingly elegant " , and Kennedy commenting that while LocoRoco is not perfect , it was " perfect for the PSP " . As noted by Neil McGreevy of the BBC , LocoRoco " is the best game Nintendo ever made . "

A common complaint for the game reviewers was the repetitive nature of the game , as no new gameplay mechanics are introduced after the player learns to roll and jump , and that the levels are " far from challenging " . However , these reviewers also commented that the monotonous gameplay is not as significant an issue with a gaming system like the PSP that encourages shorter play sessions . Reviewers also commented on the length of the game , considering it short with only a few extras that would add some additional enjoyment after completing the main game .

The game has won two awards at the 2006 BAFTA Games Awards for " Best Children 's Game " and " Best Character " , and was nominated for six additional awards , " Best Audio " , " Best Original Score " , " Best Innovation " , " Artistic Achievement " , " Best Gameplay " and " Best Casual and Social Game " . LocoRoco also won two awards at the 10th Annual Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences Awards for " Children 's Game of the Year " and " Outstanding Achievement in Original Music Competition " , in addition to being nominated for " Outstanding Innovation " and " Handheld Game of the Year " . The Associated Press named LocoRoco its handheld game of the year for 2006 .

Prior to its release in North America , 1UP blogger Alejandro Quan @-@ Madrid equated the Moja characters in LocoRoco to blackface , and citing the game as an example of " institutionalized racism that needs calling out " . Quan @-@ Madrid and 1UP reporter Jemery Parish noted that the Japanese culture does not have the same racial population as western countries like the United States , and as such , blackface or other similar representations of black persons are taken for granted in that country , and localization usually handles such issues . Quan @-@ Madrid called on Sony to make a simple color change to the Moja , similar to what Capcom had done for the character of Oilman in Mega Man Powered Up . Developers for the game , including Kouno , noted that the Moja character design was based on the hairstyle of Keigo Tsuchiya , the game 's artist , at the time of development , and did not mean to imply any racist tones . The accusation of racism came days before a similar charge against Sony for an advertisement for the white @-@ colored PSP , portraying a white woman subjugating a black woman .

The Yellow LocoRoco , as seen on the game 's cover , has become a mascot for the PSP system .

Sales of LocoRoco were not strong in Japan , with just more than 30 @,@ 000 copies sold the first week , and about 170 @,@ 000 in total sales for the year . The game was more successful in Europe and North America , prompting Sony to start development of additional titles .

= = Mobile version = =

A mobile version of LocoRoco , LocoRoco Mobile , was created for distribution via i @-@ mode , a wireless service in Japan in 2007 . The mobile game has since been ported for western countries by Gamelion , however it has been renamed LocoRoco Hi .

= = Sequels and spin @-@ offs = =

LocoRoco Cocoreccho is a LocoRoco program for the PlayStation 3 , released in September 2007 as a downloadable title through the PlayStation Store . It is described by Sony as an " interactive screensaver , " rather than a game . Instead of tilting the world , the game instead puts the player in control of a butterfly that will draw LocoRoco to it , guiding them to sleeping LocoRoco to wake them up and collect enough LocoRoco to progress to other parts of the single stage .

LocoRoco 2 , a sequel to the original LocoRoco , was officially announced at the 2008 Tokyo Game Show though Phil Harrison , Sony 's worldwide studios chief , revealed the game to be in development during an interview at the 2007 D.I.C.E. Summit . The game was released worldwide

between late 2008 and early 2009 .

A third PSP LocoRoco game , LocoRoco Midnight Carnival , is a Halloween @-@ themed spin @-@ off title which features an enhanced bounce skill called " Boing ! " The game was digitally released on October 29 , 2009 for North American and European areas , and on November 1 , 2009 in Japan for the launch of the PSP Go . There are also LocoRoco costumes for LittleBigPlanet .