

Analysis of Mechanics

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Title: Neverhood

Released: 1996

Author: The Neverhood, Inc.(developed), Doug TenNapel(designer)

Primary Genre: Point-and-click adventure

Secondary Genre: Fantasy, Absurdist comedy, Puzzle

Style: Claymation

Analysis

The Neverhood stands as a shining example of what boundless creativity can achieve in video games. Released in 1996, this adventure game was a revolutionary piece that immersed players in a surrealist world perfectly combining very distinct genres and styles.

At its core, The Neverhood is a point-and-click adventure, a very popular genre at the time. Players take the role of Klaymen, a claymation character brought to life in a surrealist clay-animated world. Player interacts with their environment and uncovers the narrative through the means of puzzles encouraging out-of-the-box and creative thinking. Other than puzzles, player can stumble upon numerous hilarious cut scenes helping us understand the character of Klaymen. This creates a bond between the player and the character despite playing in first person. Some of the game mechanics are very unconventional. To name a few, there is no visible inventory as items are stored by swallowing them, there is little to none of dialogues. This all creates a whimsical and absurd feeling providing comedy and challenge.

The puzzles serve as the means of unlocking not only parts of the narrative, but also new areas in the game. Each location in the game is characteristic by its color scheme, sound and landscaping choices. We can see the area reflect the narrative in a way that does not feel excessive. Together the narrative and visuals provide an immersive world that despite its surrealist nature makes sense and feels just right.

The visual style of this game is an absolute delight. The painstaking process of claymation brings an unforgettable quality to this classic. The vibrant and whimsical world is filled with curious exaggerated shapes and creatures. The style gives off the handcrafted feel of stop-motion, however the use of plasticine takes away the seriousness. This creates a perfect contrast with the dark aspects of the narrative. The story of "good and bad", the story has deranged characters, God, creation of the world and the rise and fall of a whole civilisation. This perfectly balances the nonsensical surface.

The game's soundtrack, composed by Terry Scott Taylor, further contributes to its unique style. The music is a blend of funny little tunes and ambient melodies that perfectly complement the visual aesthetics. Taylor's musical choices not only enhance the whole experience but also become an integral part of the game's identity.

Content

The Neverhood's unconventional combination of genres and styles has left an indelible mark on the gaming landscape. Its influence can be seen in subsequent titles that embrace the idea of blending disparate elements to create a truly original experience. Despite its age, The Neverhood remains a classic example of how innovative design and a willingness to push boundaries can result in a gaming masterpiece that stands the test of time and remains a favourite of many.