

Minute of Islands
Preview 30/03/21
By Chris Getliffe

Mo is woken by the sound of silence, the constant groaning of the machinery in the basement where she sleeps has ceased. Having lived next to busy roads all my life, I can relate. When I go to the countryside the nights there are deafening with silence. Mo is the protagonist of Studio Fizzbins latest game Minute of Island. These islands have machines that power all aspects of their life and are now inexplicably breaking down, and it's her job to find them and fix them, hopefully finding out why everything seems to be going wrong whilst she does it.

This takes Mo through some beautifully illustrated 2D environments, all without fail are brimming with imagination and life. A lot of thought has gone into the little details of any given place, skilfully conveying both the possible upcoming horrors, yet also what these places were like when everything was going well. The writing and voice over work is equally as accomplished, how Mo ponders and reacts to situations is very nuanced, she feels very believable and rounded as a character. In the time I spent with the story, I always wanted to find out what was going to happen next, the underlying tension as I progressed was captivating.

I loved watching it. I loved reading, and listening to it, yet sadly I didn't enjoy playing it. It's stiflingly linear. Only a handful of times was I offered a choice of route. Only for the game to turn me back from my choice with an invisible wall, as it didn't want me to be there just yet. This lack of agency pervades through all aspects of the game. There are no choices to be made- at all. At one point my Uncle asked if I wanted to join him for a drink, giving me a key to unlock an area that both contained his prized wine and the next location. I had taken pity on my Uncle as he seemed so lonely, so I thought I'd join him for a quick drink then head back later. Mo however decided there was "no time for that" and just tossed the bottle away and carried on to the now unlocked new locale, what a cow!

The few puzzles there are in Minute of Islands are incredibly basic. Just requiring you to push or pull the single thing that you can physically interact with. There's a mini game you have to do every time you try to fix the broken machines, but it's very basic button mashing, and always a variation on the same crude technique.

The game won't be released until later this year, having been delayed from its intended March 2021 launch due to Covid. Yet it seems unlikely that these problems will be addressed by then. The near non interactive way the game is played may indeed be a deliberate choice. That being said, I still want to see the story through to its conclusion, and witness more of these fantastic environments. Ideally I'd prefer to experience it as a graphic novel, or an animation. Yet the tale is so compelling, I'll most likely experience it all be it slightly begrudgingly as a game.