

Ibb & Obb

Ibb & Obb is a video game created by Richard Boeser and developed by Sparpweed that was released the 6 of August of 2013 for the PlayStation 3 and on May 26, 2014, for Pc (Steam). The game is a mix between a platform and a puzzle cooperative adventure between 2 players since the games have no solo campaign.

The video game began as the final career project of Richard Boeser, who later on would create Sparpweed, a video game developer company with Roland IJzermans. For the artistic part of the game, Boeser decided to work in collaboration with Codeglue. The commercialization for the product began in 2008 at the E3 celebrated that year in Los Angeles. Later that same year, specialized media and critics acknowledged the game for its visual and sound artist aesthetics and the fact that it was/is a not common cooperative game. The game began development in 2010 but it didn't say a proper console release until 2013 when it went available at the online store of PlayStation, and then in May of 2014 when it was released in Steam (PC). The game saw a lot of popularity right after PiewDiePie decided to stream a let's play playing the game; the stream saw 4 million viewers.

The specialized media and critics have to be very generous, with the game critics giving it an 8.4/10 (IGN) and 78/100 (Metacritic). Steam has also qualified the comments of the users as Very Positive, receiving comets such as:

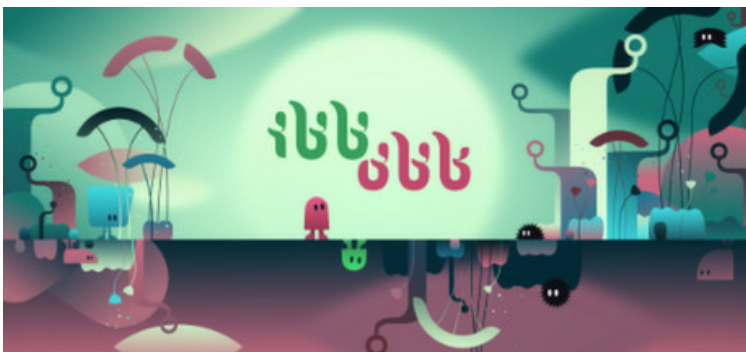
“There's a gorgeous elegance to its simple art style, and a perfect economy to the way it uses space, both above and below ground. It's engrossing, clever and fun”

- Tom Francis -

“It's a must-have for its great cooperative experience - just make sure you pick a good partner.

-Kallie Plagge -

Some of the awards the game has won are: Develop Indie Showcase Awards - 2013, Cinekid New Media Jury Award - 2013, and Indiecade Innovation Award - 2008. Some other awards the game was nominated for include: SXSW Gamers Voice Award - 2014, Dutch Game Awards: Best Entertainment Game - 2013, Dutch Game Awards: Best Entertainment Game Desing - 2013, and Amaze Trophy - 2012.



Up, Down, Above, Below...

Ibb & Obb is a game that bases its gameplay around the idea of solving puzzles cooperatively, working only with gravity (jumping and falling) and some additional objects found throughout the game. For this reason, the game only allows itself to be played by two players because the puzzles require Ibb & Obb to act and react in realtime and precise ways to solve them and move forward, something an A.I would have trouble with. Additionally, the puzzles can, some times, be solved in more than one unique way, so a solo mode will only cause the player trouble and rip him off the true experience of the game, that is working together. Some elements appear throughout the game to help the players such as platforms, trampolines, and moons that the players can use to accomplish higher jumps, more speed when falling or momentum. In that same way there are some “doors” that can only be accessed by one of the two players, and that makes the puzzle solving a little more complex because the game is conditioning you to assume a certain role and position (above or below the middle horizontal line) in the puzzle-solving that can make it a bit more challenging.

The other aspect the game offers is the classic platform experience of jumping over enemies and collecting all of the coins/diamonds each enemy leaves behind after exploding, and the collectibles that are scattered along with the different levels. When you kill an enemy in this game you need to be careful, for the enemies can only be killed by jumping and falling over the white half of them. The enemies are situated in the middle of the division line and have different sizes, they sometimes move and are kind of black and white hedgehogs, so you have to have one player above and the other below to collect and kill the enemies in a synchronized way. Only one of you can kill each enemy and the other has to collect the diamonds. If you touch the black half of the enemies, you die and your teammate also dies, for in this game if one of you dies you both die. If you don't collect the diamonds before they disappear they are lost and even after restart you can not recollect them at all.

Lastly, the game has a style that is beautiful and unique. The shapes and the colors, and in general the whole game has a very minimalistic aspect that helps you relax and enjoy the game, and as the mechanics are so simple, you focus in the game and appreciate it, while the game mechanics occupied the back seat. Finally, the game levels are lineal and connections between them. When you finish a level you just pass by 4 characters that hold up a song that tells you how much diamonds you've collected while celebrating, and right after you just continue to walk and get started on the next level. This is a very unique and interesting way of connecting levels. Normally what you would spect is a black screen after the level finishes and then a world map to choose your next level, or the action continuing normally where you left, just as DOOM (4) does, so this is a very nice and differentiating aspect of the game.

The game consist of 15 levels and 8 secret levels that both players have to complete, plus 10 achievements, 7 of them are told to you and the other 3 are secret achievements that give no name or explanation of how to accomplish them.

Kettel, Minimalistic Music

Ibb & Obb's official soundtrack (OST) is composed by Kettel (Reimen Eising) and it contains 26 music pieces in total and it lasts 60 minutes approximately. The OST can be acquired by buying it directly at Steam or PS3 online store, or by ordering it by Kettel official webpage: kettelmusic.com.

Kettel, Reimer Eising, born in 1982 is an IDM musical producer from Holland. He is known for his spontaneous and playful melodies, as well as for his organic folk sound that makes some of his musical pieces come face to face with the works of composers such as Aphex Twin and Jega o Plaid, among others. He tends to play frequently live at his home country, Holland, and participate in festivals such as Virus de Eindhoven, Dutch Electronic Arts Festival in Rotterdam, and the Eurosonic and Noorderzon festivals that take place in his home town of Groningen. He is one of the founders of the music label Sending Orbs. His work consist of 11 EP from 2001 to 2007, and 10 Albums from 2001 to 2009.

The music that Kettel compose for Ibb & Obb is of extreme delight and so well done that even in its minimalistic way there is a lot to say about each piece and the work as a whole. From the 26 pieces that make up the whole OST, 25 are properly the music that plays during the gameplay sections of the game while the first track is just the main title screen music piece. Its very interesting to hear and realize that that first pieces that play during the title screen is a very atmospheric and light musical composition that can contrast greatly with the rest of the work, but at the same time it has an aura or feeling that perfectly send the message of what this game is about and the state of calmness it want you to a front it with. This is one of the most shorter pieces but at the same time one of the more expressive one.

The rest of the 25 pieces that sound during the gameplay sections are scattered throughout the 15 levels and 8 secret levels in the game. Some levels have one or more musical pieces playing during that level gameplay. This pieces, although very simple and easy to understand, are beautiful and well crafted. Is in these compositions that we can appreciate those spontaneous and playful melodies Kettel music is known for. All of the songs have a unique sense and a duration of 2:30 to 3:00 minutes in which digital instruments and sounds play and interact in a way that helps bring to life the cheerful and delightful world that Ibb & Obb presents to us. There is not a single piece that can be catalog as better than the other, because each one of them offers something different and interesting to the game, levels and experience sensation that the players experience during their interaction with the game. Its also a plus the fact that the compositions do no get annoying and repetitive even when the music loops infinitely during each level, for the music plays as long as you take to complete each level. The secret for this to work is the minimalistic aspect that the pieces are build upon and the fact that the music is cut into different musical cues which are then randomized by the music configuration software used by the programmers or musician to attach the music to the game. If by any mean anyone has the opportunity to analyze each piece separately it would be a fantastic study and learning process, as well as a fun and enriching experience to better understand how to work with electronic, minimalistic and video game music.

Conclusion

The OST of Ibb & Obb is one of the best OST that has ever been composed. It is unique, charming, well crafted and it gives a sense of relaxation that a lot of OST lack off. Kettel did understand what he had to do and what the game was trying to transmit to the player so well that thinking of this game without acknowledging the music is something that would rarely happen. The music and the game as a whole are so connected that if this work would have been given to some other composer, maybe the product would not have come to be what is now a day. This is one of the best OST that we have had to review and we are very happy to have done it because games with this quality of work in their music is often rare, for most of the times, games tend to have orchestral work or electronic music but much simpler and club-like, meanwhile this one is more complex and a lot more elaborated even in its minimalistic way. This is a perfect OST to analyze deep with musical theory and sound theory, and an excellent way to understand and learn what an excellent video game OST has to accomplish. With all of that there is no doubt that Kettel and his Ibb & Obb OST is one of the best OST in the video game industry and it would be more than just to situated them up, just at the same position as Toby Fox and Undertale, Christopher Larkin and Hollow Knight, Kristofer Maddigan and Cuphead, and the OST of Hotline Miami, among others that also deserve to be understand and known as great.

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