

Platform:

PC, Mac

Reviewed on:

PC

Genre:

Adventure

Publisher:

Amanita Design

Developer:

Amanita Design

Release:

March 24, 2016

Be it a triple-A blockbuster like *Fallout 4* or an indie roleplaying title such as *Undertale*, exploration is at the heart of every video game. Most of us can understand – almost instinctively – that peeking into every nook and cranny of our virtual surroundings can reap incredible rewards. You might find the key to solving a puzzle that had you close to ripping your hair out, or maybe you'll uncover an inconspicuous detail that offers a bit more context about the world you've plunged into.

This sense of exploration and discovery is the very essence of *Samorost 3*: the story of a space gnome out to discover the origins of a mysterious flute that fell from the sky. With only a few clues to the instrument's background, the quaint little fellow quickly sets off to return the flute to its rightful owner. Although the distinct lack of text or spoken dialogue may make a slightly confusing beginning, you will soon find that this adventure is not really about the flute's origin, but the mystifying beauty of traversing this grotesque but fascinating universe, set amidst a backdrop of junkyard objects, abandoned moons, and not-so-creepy crawlies.



Stay awhile and listen

Yes, *Samorost 3* is the third game in the series, but don't go beating yourself up if you haven't heard of the first two, which are small browser games developed in 2003 and 2005

by Amanita Design. In fact, you might be more familiar with the studio's other titles – *Bontanacula* and *Machinarium* – both of which became indie cult-hits in their own rights. If you are a fan of these point-and-click games, you might be pleased to know that Amanita Design's brand of exquisitely-drawn visuals and beautifully-crafted music can be found in great abundance, or perhaps even more so, in its latest title.

The amount of graphical detail the game has to offer is astounding – from the scurrying of the strange bunny-caterpillars that inhabit the gnome's planet, to the drifting of flower petals into the winds. These curiosities add to the wonderment of the *Samorost* universe, almost as if the game is coaxing you to stop and smell the roses for a while before you move on to your next puzzle. These sights are set to an equally moving soundscape, whose ebb and flow shapes the game's emotional experience.

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The characters in the game also communicate with one another through a combination of visual and musical cues, speaking in some form of incomprehensible babble with their thoughts expressed through a series of illustrated speech bubbles. These conversations typically contain either clues to the gnome's next steps or background to the goings-on of the game.

For instance, one of the gnome's first objectives is to find parts needed to construct his rocket. He approaches an elderly mechanic for help, who gives him vague instructions accented with a few choice wheezes and grunts. This information is presented through animated doodles that the player has to figure out. Although deciphering them can be frustrating, they are generally not very difficult to comprehend – it's really a matter of putting two and two together. Nonetheless, such conversations are charming and quaint in their own ways; hearing the grunt of approval from the mechanic when the gnome brings the parts to him makes the search much more fulfilling.



Puzzles that teem with life

Aside from these whimsical conversations, *Samorost 3*'s puzzles will give brains quite a bit of workout, so consider this fair warning if yours, like mine, has stalled out and gathered cobwebs from disuse. While most solutions are not immediately apparent, the game's affable charm cajoles you to keep on trying anyway.

On one planet, a group of bizarre creatures can be spotted snoozing at a quiet corner, and you can wake them up with a tap. Instead of flying into a rage at being woken up from their nap, they choose to...sing. One of them – a rotund, newt-like beast – belts out a deep, gravelly tune, and the other two soon join in. After a while, it becomes apparent that you are supposed to conduct their performance till they make a coherent song, but despite receiving no formal instructions to do so the process of figuring this out never feels like a chore. Upon arriving at the right tune, the gnome dances a little jig as the gentle beasts give an encore performance, crooning their hearts out until they gradually fall back into slumber. Heart-warming moments like these can be found in spades throughout your adventure, but are, thankfully, never cloyingly sweet.



Immersion is one aspect the game nails perfectly, and this is most evident in its hints. Even when you cannot seem to make heads or tails of a perplexing puzzle, help is only a book away on the menu bar, such that you never really need to alt-tab to sites like GameFAQs for a thorough walkthrough. Like the rest of the game, the hints in this book are conveyed through simple but colourful sketches that guide you to your next step.

Surprises at every turn

What is most rewarding during your hunt for clues, though, are the unexpected scenes that unravel as you pore over the habitat. Clicking on termites at a specific spot, for instance, will let loose a melodious hymn from the colony, while interacting with certain metallic bugs, perched and camouflaged behind some tree branches, can cause them to buzz a symphonic tune.

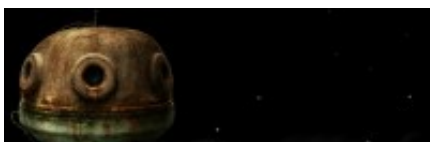
Curiosity is duly rewarded with a growing collection of music loops which you can mix and match to make tunes – and I think I spent a good amount of time tinkering away at my own melodies. In *Samorost 3*, such exploration and discovery can be immensely gratifying, even when it seems like you're spending your time on inconsequential activities.



Verdict

It's such a cliché to say that the journey matters more than the destination, but in this case there's no other quote to sum up the experience more succinctly. The eventual revelation about the magical flute is not what drives the game forward; it is the hours spent on discovering its delightful intricacies that can be missed if you're not searching thoroughly enough. That is not to say that the conclusion is a bore – it is actually an endlessly captivating sight – but what I took away is a yearning to experience the *Samorost* universe again.

And that is probably what I would do every once in awhile. After all, I haven't explored quite enough to unlock all its achievements yet.





A digital copy of Samorost 3 was provided for the purpose of this review. Please see our [Ethics Policy](#) for more information.

REVIEW OVERVIEW



SUMMARY

Samorost 3 is an enthralling trip that fuels your wanderlust. Just like visiting an old friend, it's tempting to pop by again after you're done - if only to relive your memories.

8.1

★★★★☆

OVERALL SCORE

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