

My Friend Pedro
James Moller
Klutch Kitten Gaming Podcast
02/28/20

Introduction:

[upbeat intro music]

Hello and welcome everyone! This is James Moller, also known as Klutch Kitten, and I'm so glad that you're here for Episode 69 of the show!

Before we jump straight into this week's game, I want to quickly let you know that I released a new roundtable episode on Wednesday the 26th. Like I mentioned a couple weeks back, I'm going to be releasing roundtable episodes as bonus content from time to time, so I hope you enjoy having those extra interviews in your podcast feed!

Let's transition now into this week's game.

[transition music]

Game Facts:

Today we're going to be looking at My Friend Pedro: Blood, Bullets, Bananas, which is a side-scrolling, acrobatic, platform shooter. It was developed by DeadToast Entertainment, and was released on June 20th of 2019 for Switch and PC and on December 5th of 2019 for XBOX 1.

DeadToast Entertainment is a solo venture by Victor Argren, who was originally an employee at Media Molecule where he worked on Little Big Planet 1 & 2 and Tearaway. In 2006 he started DeadToast as a place to release his experimental flash games, and once those flash games started to gain traction, including the original My Friend Pedro, Victor decided to leave Media Molecule to go full-time with DeadToast.

My Friend Pedro currently costs \$19.99, and according to howlongtobeat.com, it takes around 4-5 hours to beat. In terms of controls, my recommendation is to use a controller if you're on the PC. I briefly used mouse and keyboard, but unfortunately I found the controls didn't feel that great. As such, gamepad is the safe way to go.

Let's take a look now at the narrative.

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[transition music]

Narrative:

This is going to be a short section because My Friend Pedro is not at all focused on the narrative.

You begin the game as a mysterious man in a mask with an obnoxious, talking banana that convinces you to pick up a nearby gun to start murdering fools. Beyond that and without spoiling the endgame, there's nothing more of worth to share.

This game is not only very light on story, but it's light on world-building as well. Environments are fairly standard, and even areas which tried to add a twist of flavor aren't all that funny or interesting. For example, there's a sewer location with a bunch of armed, raging gamers because apparently gamers can't deal with life above ground? Also, the chapter where you're supposedly in the internet looks about the same as everything else with the exception of added security and electricity.

On one hand, the lack of plot and world building isn't surprising given the game's origin in Flash, but on the other hand, I found the dull narrative, confusing world building and frankly lame jokes to display a lack of polish.

The silver lining is that dialogue and cutscenes are short and infrequent, but what's there doesn't develop the experience into something better.

[transition music]

Gameplay:

Despite our negative start, this game does fight back when it comes to gameplay.

At its core My Friend Pedro is an arcade, side-scrolling, action game, which borders on being a shoot 'em up. Each chapter contains a series of levels which culminates in a boss fight, and after completing each level, you're given a grade based on how many points you scored.

If you're with me so far, the game probably doesn't sound that unique. I'm guessing you've played a ton of action platformers, so let's look at what sets this game apart from the

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rest of the pack. Unlike your typical side-scroller, which is focused on creating a tight and balanced experience, My Friend Pedro is focused on creating cinematic moments.

You don't have to look far to see inspiration from The Matrix. This game allows you to flip, spin, and roll your way through hordes of enemies and makes you feel like a complete boss while doing it. Those showstopper moments are accomplished in two main ways.

First off, levels are designed to create those moments: gas cans are lying suspiciously close to enemies, zip lines are apparently a staple decoration in every bad guy's lair, and for some reason skateboards are often left close to windows and gigantic drop-offs!

Even if you aren't a particularly creative person, DeadToast designed the game to make every player feel cool. Just like in blockbuster films where you know everything is fake but still adore the movie, you can't help but get a rush of adrenaline when you participate in these epic fights that have been carefully crafted.

Of course, setting the scene for these moments isn't enough on its own. You have to equip the player with proper tools to make those fights pop. Just think, if time wasn't slowed down when Neo dodged those bullets on the roof of the skyscraper, that Matrix scene would have been pretty lame. That's why My Friend Pedro includes a time slowing mechanic which allows you to execute badass stunts.

Imagine with me for a moment: you hop on a skateboard, pick up speed, and fly through a huge window above an expansive room below. You hit the button to slow time - this is your moment. You expertly do a kick flip and pull out your Uzis in the process. As you perform a front flip, dodge-spin immediately after, you begin lighting up the room with lead. You aim your weapons at two different enemies, and after ruining their day, you switch out your Uzis for a sniper rifle. While finishing the back half of your flip, you shoot a frying pan on the floor. It flies up. You shoot it again, and the bullet perfectly ricochets for a headshot. Bullets obliterate your enemies, gas canisters explode in flames, and you land gracefully back on the skateboard.

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This is the sort of stuff I daydreamed about while playing with my toy cars and tech deck as a young boy, and that's what's so cool about My Friend Pedro. It allows you to experience those blockbuster moments!

Beyond those aspects, the point system is also a smart addition to the game. It encourages killing with style and speed and also opens up the game for a lot of replayability.

When it comes to some small aspects I disliked about the game, a couple come to mind.

First off, due to the immense amount of freedom you're given in character movement, some jank is brought along for the ride. Movement feels floaty at times, and if you fail to complete a flip, sometimes your character model will turn into a crumpled pile of limbs.

Second, I found the level design in some later chapters didn't display the same amount of finesse as shown in earlier locations. Although I thoroughly enjoyed some of the concluding levels, they became much more puzzle and traversal focused rather than action-driven.

Although both of these aspects were obnoxious at times, neither of them detracted from the core strength of the game. Those cinematic moments stole the show and made me come back for more!

[transition music]

Art & Sound Design:

Now that we've discussed the narrative and gameplay, let's take a look at the art and sound design.

On the art side I wasn't particularly impressed. The game uses 3D models in a 2D perspective, and although I wouldn't say the game looks bad, it steps into the realm of being underwhelming. The reuse of assets, including enemy models, creates a visually homogeneous experience which is a bad look when layered with boring environments.

On the sound design side, there isn't any VO to look at, but the soundtrack was a solid accompaniment to the game.

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It's a bass heavy, electronic score that amplifies those slow-mo moments where you're slaying an entire gang of enemies. What I appreciate is that the soundtrack doesn't try to be something it isn't. It's not about creating sadness, empathy or joy for the characters and story. It's there to make you feel cool, and in that goal it succeeds with flying colors.

[transition music]

Summary:

Now that we've discussed the narrative, gameplay, art and sound design, let's summarize with some positives and negatives:

First off on the positive side, Deadtoast did a superb job of creating environments and mechanics which enable players to do cool stuff. From the level design to the slow motion to the variety of weapons, everything about this game is scoped in on the goal of creating story worthy clips.

Second, the soundtrack paired well with the gameplay and maintained focus through the whole experience.

First off on the negative side, the narrative and character development is practically non-existent, which makes the lack of funny jokes even worse.

Second, the level design loses its focus later in the game. It begins to lean too heavily on puzzle and traversal mechanics instead of keeping its eyes on action.

Third, it didn't take long for the visuals to outstay their welcome. The best way to describe it is that they were functional instead of artistic.

[transition music]

Verdict:

We've made it now to the final boss! This is the part of the podcast where I let you know whether you should slay the game and buy it, flee the game and avoid it, or farm up and wait for a sale.

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My verdict for My Friend Pedro is to slay or flee this game depending on who you are. If a game focused entirely on creating cinematic action will satisfy your cravings, by all means, My Friend Pedro is the game for you to slay! On the other hand, if you're someone who needs layers of art and quality storytelling, I would wholeheartedly tell you to flee this game instead.

[transition music]

Conclusion:

As always, thank you all so much for taking the time to listen in! If you enjoy the content I produce, I'd love it if you told a friend and considered giving the show a 5-star review on Apple Podcasts.

You can reach me with your thoughts, questions, recommendations and flame at klutchkittengaming@gmail.com, on Instagram and Facebook @klutchkittengaming, and on Twitter @kkgpodcast.

I hope you have an amazing rest of the day, and I'll see you in game!

[upbeat outro music]