

STARDEW VALLEY

is as good as farming simulators get



RAIAN ABEDIN

Farming simulators, as a subgenre of video games, seldom see anything new that attracts the eye. Of course, games like *Harvest Moon* have dominated the landscape for decades at this point (despite access to it being limited only to Nintendo devices or via emulation). But other than that, very few games have actually managed to remain relevant while also presenting a game built mostly around the idea of waking up every day to maintain a farm. This is understandable, as the core gameplay can quickly become tedious if it is not designed in a way that offers comfort and relaxation, alongside a dense world filled with secrets to discover and people to meet. Fortunately, *Stardew Valley* offers just that—and a little bit of fishing to top it all off.

The game starts with a narrative setup that is bare-bones, and yet, is just enough to explain the context to the player: a corporate worker tired of your life, you decide to move to *Stardew Valley* after inheriting your grandfather's

land upon his passing to start your own farm and a brand new life.

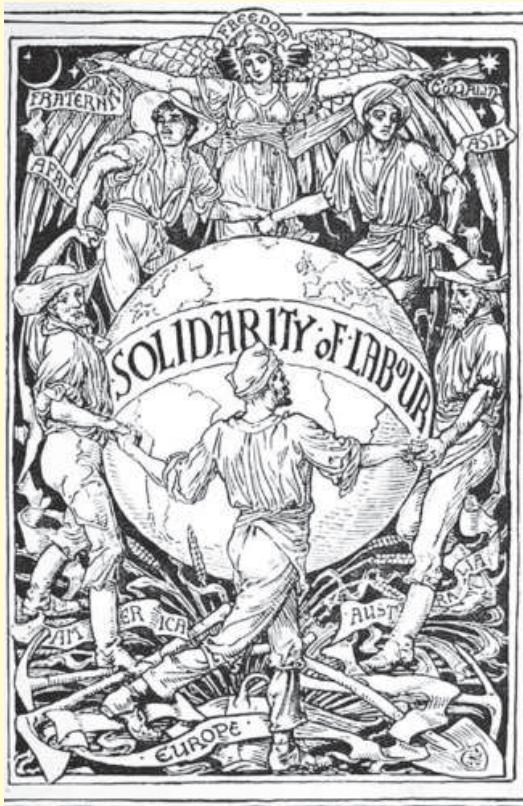
Now, while farming itself plays a crucial role in the day-to-day activities that make up the game, what really breathes life into *Stardew Valley* are all the townspeople and their varied, eccentric, and rather mysterious personalities. Getting to know these people is a long process, as it requires you to progress the game on various fronts to find unique gifts for them. Depending on your friendship level with these people, you get nuggets of information that allow you to get closer to them, which leads to numerous unlockables (and even romance options!). This method of gameplay may be very reminiscent of *Harvest Moon*, but what makes it so special here is how the game constantly pushes you to attempt new things in order to find new gifts for the townsfolk.

Farming is merely one aspect of what the game has to offer. There are tons of things to explore and unlock in order to discover more about the town which you now call

home. The different mechanics offer a lot of excitement, keeping the game from feeling stale. Mining, for instance, is a constant hunt for rare ores, with combat mixed in to ensure that the player never gets trapped in a monotonous cycle. Then there is fishing, which brings with it a whole new world's worth of things to do. Things like cutting trees, removing grass, organising your farm, and managing produce slowly interweave and become a core part of the gameplay.

At the centre of it all, though, there is you and all the actions you choose to do. What initially attracted me about the game—and what still attracts me today—is how the game allows you to tackle it at whatever pace you desire. Yes, over time you will discover more stories and more secrets that the town has to offer. But there is never a need to rush. The game focuses on the idea of moving away from the rat race we are all used to and finding comfort in doing what we love—and, as a result, the game itself brings with it a well of comfort.

DID YOU KNOW?



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

International Workers' Day, more commonly known as Labour Day or May Day, is observed on May 1 every year in honour of the working class, and to celebrate the contribution of the labour movement.

The date of May 1 was chosen by an international federation of trade unions and socialist groups in 1889 to commemorate the Haymarket affair of 1886 when a workers' strike in Chicago ended in a bomb attack and police gunfire, resulting in many being injured or killed. The federation called for international demonstrations to support the labourers' demands of an eight-hour workday. May Day demonstrations took place in much of Europe and the United States in 1890. The efforts of the labour movement resulted in workers all over the world securing the eight-hour workday in subsequent years.

With over 160 countries observing Labour Day as a national holiday, celebrations vary from country to country and have seen particular importance in communist and former Soviet bloc nations. Although it started as a simple demonstration for lowered work hours, International Workers' Day has become a symbol for working class demands and struggles, including equal pay for women, better working conditions, and fair remuneration.

Editor & Publisher
Mahfuz Anam

Features Editor and Head of Content Marketing
Ehsanur Raza Ronny

Rising Stars In-Charge
Faisal Bin Iqbal

Rising Stars Team
Syeda Afrin Tarannum
Abir Hossain
Adrita Zaima Islam

Photographer
Orchid Chakma

Graphics & Layout
TDS Creative Graphics

Production
Shamim Chowdhury

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