

Indivisible  
James Moller  
Klutch Kitten Gaming Podcast  
03/06/20

### **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 70 of the show!

If you're new here, the basic rundown of the podcast is that I give my first impression review on one indie game each week in the hopes that I can save you time and money with my thoughts.

With that being said, let's get into this week's game!

[transition music]

### **Game Facts:**

Today we're going to be discussing Indivisible, which is an action RPG, platformer developed by Lab Zero Games. Lab Zero Games is a studio based out of L.A., founded in 2012, and best known for its work on Skullgirls.

When it comes to Indivisible, despite having some struggles with crowdfunding in the beginning, it was released on October 8th of 2019 on PC, Mac, PS4, XBOX 1 and Switch for \$39.99, and according to howlongtobeat.com, it takes anywhere from 18 to 27 hours to beat.

Let's transition now to the narrative!

[transition music]

### **Narrative:**

[begin outdoor sounds...]

Ajna's Father: Ajna! Ajna, come to your training right now!  
(sigh) There you are. What took so long?

Ajna: (inaudible)

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Ajna's Father: I'm an obnoxious father? Ajna, I want to help you become a self-sufficient and strong young lady like your mother was, but you need to listen and train like I keep telling you.

Ajna: (inaudible)

Ajna's Father: Dear, it's not that I don't want to tell you about how your mother died, but it's not yet time. I know that must be hard to hear, but it will come soon enough. I love you Ajna, and your mother would be so proud of the woman you're becoming.

[...end outdoor sounds]

Indivisible, much like many other RPGs, begins with tragedy. Within the first 15 minutes of the game you experience the death of Ajna's mother and then flash forward to experience the death of her Father.

It's a devastating start to the game, but as you probably guessed, these events open up the narrative to a compelling story about revenge and redemption. You play as a teenage girl named Ajna in a world full of monsters, mages, and maniacal warriors, and although it's based in a fantasy world, it's clear from the start that Lab Zero garnered inspiration from Southeast Asian mythology and culture.

Apart from the core plot of Ajna's journey of self-discovery and vengeance, the bulk of the narrative is developed through interactions with your party of friends. Without getting into detail about how it's done, Ajna is able to suck people's beings into her inner realm. (awkward laugh) Yea, I know, it's weird. What this means is that despite only being able to use four party members in combat at a time, Ajna is able to have a whole squad of people tag along for the adventure.

You end up meeting people like Razmi, the sarcastic, pyromaniac witch, and Dhar, the man who murdered your dad thinking he was fulfilling a worthy quest! Each new character you meet is unique and has their own backstory, motivation, and personality, which ends up creating hilarious and heartwarming interactions that show off superb writing.

From the very beginning of this game, I was attached to Ajna's character. She's spunky, independent, and kind, and those qualities continue to create interesting scenarios throughout

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the entire game. Scenes of dialogue are enjoyable to read, and even when you're platforming through an area, you can always enter Ajna's inner realm to have conversations with your party.

If it's not already clear, the writers over at Lab Zero Games showed an outstanding level of talent when it comes to crafting an engrossing story.

Let's move on now to discuss gameplay.

[transition music]

### **Gameplay:**

Indivisible is one of those games which crams a ton of different genres into one experience. It's like making a stew. You start throwing in all of these different ingredients in the hopes that it creates depth of flavor as opposed to disgust. In the case of Indivisible, there are elements taken from platformers, fighting games, turn-based RPGs, action RPGs, and metroidvanias, and the question we need to ask ourselves is whether those elements create a rich experience or not.

Since there is so much complexity and depth to the game, I'm going to focus our time on two primary elements: platforming and combat.

Due to the side-scrolling perspective that was chosen, platforming is your primary means of traversal in the environment. Some areas have pretty large, flat sections, but as you move from area to area, the game throws increasingly difficult platforming puzzles your way. In addition, in a very metroidvania style, new abilities are unlocked as the game moves forward, which then allows you to access previously inaccessible locations.

The setup for platforming is all pretty standard, and the game gives you a fair amount of impactful platforming tools, but the big question is whether or not the platforming and puzzles are fun.

On the puzzle side, I found most of them to be pretty clever. They often require you to meet tight timing windows, and some of the puzzles are straight up wacky, in the best of senses. All of that is fine and dandy, except that I found the actual platforming to be imprecise. When I'm platforming, I'm

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looking for something like The Messenger and Celeste where every jump and dash feels tight and responsive. Unfortunately in Indivisible, movement was not nearly as precise as I would have liked, which lent to a platforming experience where I couldn't appreciate the puzzle design due to my focus on making the mechanics work for me.

To give you an example, one of your primary platforming tools is the Axe. It allows you to reach ledges as well as grab walls in order to jump higher. What I ended up finding was that my axe only seemed to work on certain parts of walls, even if the entire wall looked the same. It felt like the game was telling me, "James, you have to grapple at least this high up otherwise you won't make the jump!" I ended up having issues so many times because of this, and it wasn't the only inconsistent or imprecise aspect of the platforming I encountered.

All in all, it wasn't the worst platforming in the world, but it was definitely the most disappointing part of the gameplay.

Despite that being the case, I found that combat picked up the slack in terms of my enjoyment. Indivisible is described as an action RPG, but it's much more nuanced than that. Whenever you attack an enemy with your axe or clumsily bump into them, you enter combat in a very similar way to a turn-based JRPG. From there, combat takes an unusual turn.

When your party of four enters the battlefield, they position themselves in a diamond, which ends up corresponding to the buttons on your controller. Even if you're a PlayStation fanatic, pretend with me for a moment that you're using an Xbox gamepad. On it, your bottom character corresponds to the A button, your right character to the B button, your left character to X, and your top character to Y.

From there combat is mostly real-time; although, your ability to attack with any given character is tied to cooldowns on their abilities that don't recharge unless you've stopped attacking altogether.

Without getting too into the muck with details, combat plays out in a fashion that feels like a lot like a fighting game combined with a turn-based battle system. It feels like a fighting game because directional attacks matter, and if you time your attacks correctly, you can end up juggling an enemy or

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breaking their defense for higher combos. You also have a meter that builds up as you attack and does a variety of special attacks depending on which character and level it's used at.

So there are a lot of fighting game elements, but unlike a traditional fighting game where you're traversing an arena, the structure of battles in Indivisible are more similar to a turn-based system. Apart from when attacks are made, your characters are stationary. There are defensive combos and blocks, but combat is primarily offense focused apart from healing.

Again, I could talk on and on about the intricacies of combat, and even though I won't, I believe it's a testament to the depth of the systems. That depth is also without even mentioning the wide variety of party members you can choose from with their own special attacks and abilities!

To wrap up our discussion of combat, I'm very impressed with what Lab Zero created. Battles can be difficult if your characters don't synergize or if you struggle with combo-ing attacks, but man, when you find a solid team and the mechanics start to click, combat shines. Especially as someone who is atrociously bad at fighting games, Indivisible felt surprisingly accessible.

Before we end our gameplay discussion, I want to mention one quick critique related to combat.

When you're engaged in battle, you're unable to access the character menu to see specific character combos. Since there are so many characters which all have different combination priorities, it's counterintuitive that the character menu isn't accessible during engagements. It makes you as the player feel handicapped if you forget optimal moves.

Clearly, at a certain point, you'll get good enough at the game that you don't need to use a cheat sheet, but I found that the lack of information during battles made me less likely to use new characters.

Apart from that complaint, I was very pleased with combat as a whole.

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### **Art & Sound Design:**

Now that we've made it through the narrative and gameplay, let's touch on the art and sound design.

On the art side, I was originally skeptical about the visuals when I watched trailers, but when I actually started playing the game for myself, I was blown away. Lab Zero uses 2D characters in a 3D side-scrolling environment, which creates a unique effect. The hand drawn art is beautiful, colorful, and crisp, and character animations are smooth and representative of the individuals they're attached to!

When it comes to the sound design, I was astounded by how great it was.

The soundtrack is composed by Hiroki Kikuta and is a two-hour score full of dynamic and engaging orchestral pieces. The songs are bold while still capturing the emotion of whatever moment you're in. In case you're not familiar with that composer, he's best known for his work on Secret of Mana, which should be a clear indicator of his level of skill.

Regarding voice over, I was thoroughly impressed. Not every conversation or character is voiced, but there is still a significant amount of VO. All of the voices I heard throughout my experience were solid. Especially when it comes to Ajna, I was captivated by her character early on, and I know a large part of that reason was the VO. I think Razmi is also worth mentioning as well. Her character is meant to be sarcastic and dark, and the actor who played her captured that dynamic so well.

[transition music]

### **Summary:**

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

First off on the positive side, Lab Zero Games did an outstanding job of creating memorable and compelling characters.

Second, the combat system is unique and allows for a great deal of skill expression.

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Third, all of the artistic elements are top notch, but the VO and score specifically stood out as a beautiful companions to the writing and character development.

First off on the negative side, the lack of platforming precision hurts the overall gameplay flow. Although many of the puzzles are clever, the execution leaves much to be desired.

Second, the inability to see ability information during combat was an unfortunate oversight. Whether it was a design or technical choice, there needed to be a way to see character combinations while you're engaged in conflict.

[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. My verdict for Indivisible is to slay this game. Despite its mediocre platforming, I found the overall experience to be fresh and fun in a way I wasn't originally anticipating. If you're a fan of RPGs and want to join a group of touching characters on their bold adventure, this is wonderful game to consider

[transition music]

### **Conclusion:**

As always, thank you so much for taking the time to listen in! If you enjoy the content I produce, consider telling a friend, and if you haven't already, I'd love it if you gave the show a five star review on apple podcasts. Whether you agree with my opinion or not, feel free to reach out and say "Hi"! You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @klutchkittengaming, on Twitter @kkgpodcast, and via email at [klutchkittengaming@gmail.com](mailto:klutchkittengaming@gmail.com).

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

[upbeat outro music]