

AGI Studio 1_ wk10_related work research
Gin Lin

Hatoful Boyfriend

https://store.steampowered.com/app/310080/Hatoful_Boyfriend/

The full name of the game is *Hatoful Boyfriend: A School of Hope and White Wings*. It's an otome visual novel developed by PigeoNation Inc.. It was first released as a flash game in 2011. The international remake version was released in 2014 by Mediatonic and Devolver Digital. Hatoful Boyfriend is a text-based visual novel. The player reaches different endings based upon the choices have been made throughout the game.

The game has a bizarre plot which the player plays as the protagonist, a human young girl, attends an elite pigeon school and finds romance among her fellow pigeons from a first-person angle. Like most of the love simulation visual novels, the players get to choose the love interest when prompted in the game. Since the majority of the scenes happen in school, the player chooses to take one of the classes (out of three) daily to build up one of the three stats. In order to reach a different ending, there are requirements to be fulfilled, including certain stat values. Player does not only have to build up the required stat, but also have to "tick the right boxes" of the chosen love interest through conversations to successfully get a good romance ending. Once the player achieves certain endings, the game then unlocks another hidden route of Hatoful Boyfriend (Bad Boys Love a.k.a. Hurtful Boyfriend). The hidden plot then reveals the truth about the bizarre bird and human world. The human race is wiped out in 2068 by a type of bird virus. However, the virus makes the birds stronger and smarter than humans, therefore the birds take over the world. The birds then divided into two parties. One is to keep the remaining humans and the other supports exterminating humanity altogether. When the player starts a new game in the unlocked hidden route, the game jumpstarts at the midpoint of the normal route. The protagonist then is murdered in the following part of the story. The game switches to third-person angle at this point. The player goes on following Ryouta, protagonist's pigeon best friend, and other love interests to gradually discover the full dark conspiracy behind the school and the game turns into a horror game.

I personally am not a horror game fan. I was not able to finish the game myself. I made it up by watching the gameplay videos on youtube. However the dramatic plot change of Hatoful Boyfriend is refreshing and interesting. It makes Hatoful Boyfriend stand out from other otome love simulators. Other than that, Hatoful Boyfriend got a pretty standard UI, which includes a main menu, save and load screen, preference screen and fast forward button. The UI design is standard and functionalable. The length of the normal romance route is one school year. The player plays through school days and holidays. The current in-game date is shown on the left corner of the scene so the player can estimate how far it is in the story. This is also a classic game element for lots of simulation games. I think this type of "time tracking" is a helpful and subtle in game reminder to notify the player tracking the stat values and requirements for the aiming ending. Without it, it is possible for the player losing interest in repeatedly pointing and clicking and especially skipping text. I had a dreadful experience with Night in the Wood, which

doesn't show this time / date element. I was quite lost and not sure what to do (where to make different choices) after "a few daily routines." Yes, I could tell the game was moving forward with the diary collectibles and different occurring events. However, I was not able to know how far I'm in the game with the branching plot (even after completing one route). I also think the saving and loading gameplay function in Hatoful Boyfriend is helpful. Even though reading and experiencing make up the main entertainment in most visual novels or point'n'click games, going through the same text over and over again just to achieve another ending can be draining. With the game save function, the player gets easy access to jump right to the point where the branching plot begins. I think it may at certain levels also encourage the player to try different routes or go back to make different choices. The game save function and in-game calendar are two elements I consider adding to my project.