



## SUPER MEAT BOY

SYSTEM: Wii, 360, PC  
PUBLISHER: TEAM MEAT

ESRB RATING: T  
SCORE: 95

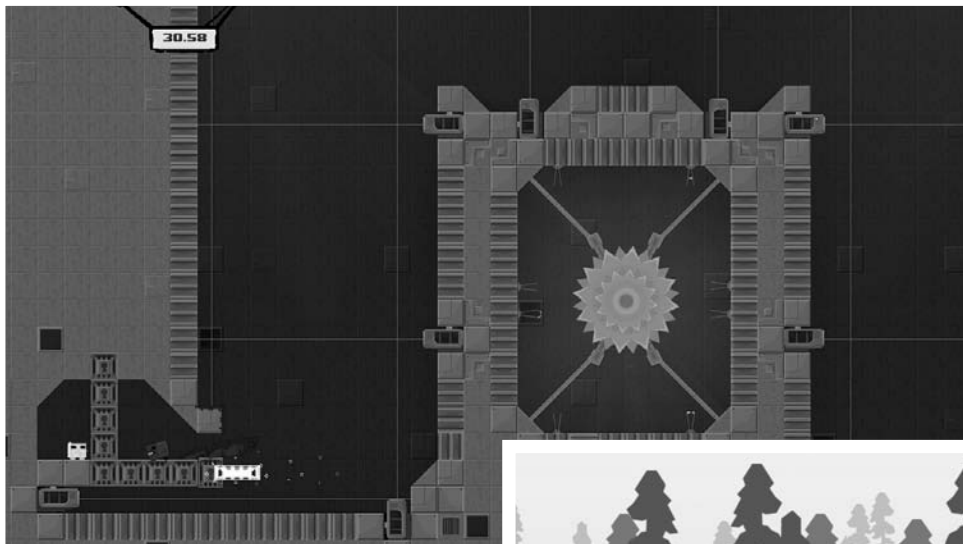
It is impossible to avoid swearing while playing *Super Meat Boy*. It doesn't matter if you're Ned Flanders, the game just doesn't allow you to keep a clean mouth. The game is that maniacal sort of difficult that lets you know it's not impossible to win, but at the same time making it unbelievably difficult to do so. If there is one thing you can call the game, it's sadistic.

*Super Meat Boy* is a punishingly hard, independently developed platformer for the Xbox Live Arcade and PC. This description fits a lot of games these days; the indie scene has really adopted the genre. Make no mistake though; *Super Meat Boy* is the best of the breed.

Players take control of Meat Boy, a squishy protagonist who wants nothing more than to hold his beloved Bandage Girl. Unfortunately for him the evil Dr. Fetus has kidnapped her and hid her behind six worlds full of deadly traps and obstacle courses. Armed with nothing more than a springy jump and an indomitable will its *Meat Boy's* job to rescue her.

Part of what makes *Super Meat Boy* stand out is it's almost parody-like level of self-awareness. Team Meat, creators of the game, revel in their role as indie developers and flaunt it at every turn. All of the cutscenes are done in the traditional Newgrounds/Adobe Flash style and soundtrack features more than a handful of low-budget chiptunes songs. None of this should be surprising though, considering its origins as a free flash game.

What takes this independent motif over the top is the inclusion of over a dozen unlockable characters from other punishingly hard indie platformers. As players progress they'll unlock the likes of Tim from Jonothan Blow's *Braid*, Commander Video from Gaijin Games' *Bit.Trip* series, and Alien Hominid from the Newgrounds classic. The game also includes more obscure characters like The



Kid from Michael "Kayin" O'Reilly's *I Wanna Be The Guy* and Gish from *Gish*.

Each of the characters brings their trademark control style to the game, refreshing each of the levels in a new way without requiring a complete redesign of the game. It's an ingenious way to add new playstyles and encourage experimentation for speedruns while adding a lot of flavor at the same time. These unlockables will surely introduce a lot of unaware players to some rather cool indie games. It's like a crash course in indie-scene legends, all wrapped in a single game.

Beyond the allure of cameo appearances, the game does offer a lot of value in terms of content. With each of the six worlds featuring 20 levels, plus hidden warp zones and another 20 'Dark World' levels for those who master the originals there is a lot to play in this game. Throw in the fact that, like the rebellious independents they are, Team Meat has a built-in patching system that will provide new free DLC without needing Microsoft's approval and you have a seemingly never ending supply of content.

Where *Super Meat Boy* shines brightest though, is that despite all its quirkiness and indie appeal it delivers a sense of satisfaction to the player. While the game



may slap you around like a bitch when playing, the difficulty is only there to facilitate that great exhale when you finally succeed. Above all else, *Super Meat Boy* understands challenge and reward; it's difficult in all the right ways, and unlike a lot of modern video games feels like it's worth beating.

This may be a drawback for those who like to be coddled by their games; there is no baby-mode here. *Super Meat Boy* is not for the faint of heart, casual gamers need not apply. You will not be able to enjoy this one if you lack some serious skills.

*Super Meat Boy* is without a doubt one of the best Xbox Live Arcade games made to date. It takes the player on an emotional journey without a narrative and does so with a wink and a smile. The game is a challenge to play, but never a chore and the satisfaction it provides is unlike any other. *Super Meat Boy* is a gamers' game and that's nice to see in a world that's getting increasingly more casual. -JS