

**Mudita-** Hi guys! Welcome to the episode! I am Mudita Jain the producer of this episode, and today I'm in conversation with Rishika and Pratyush. We have all played a version of Where's Waldo as kids, but as we grow older, we stop enjoying such seemingly simple games. Today, we are about to analyse the game, Hidden Folks, which will make you reminisce of the times you spent finding waldo as kids. Hidden Folks is a hidden objects game with a series of animated and interactive scenes. In this episode of the Longest Rainy Sunday podcast series, we will talk about what makes Hidden Folks so enjoyable, what we can learn from it, and why it is also for adults and not just kids.

So guys, What are your first impressions of the game?

**Pratyush-** What I found particularly eye-catching was its design. The game has very distinctive visuals, almost unlike anything I've seen before. It was like doodles, and it was in monochrome but it was so intricate that it made it interesting enough so that I could stare at the screen for a long time without getting bored.

**Rishika-** I also think the sound effects were really interesting. Every time you click on a component of the drawing trying to find something, it sounds like it would in real life— the bushes rustle, the water splashes and monkey-like-characters squeal. Something interesting about these sound effects is that each of them has been recorded by people. It adds life to the game and makes it more interesting, but it can be a total nuisance for the other people in the room.

**Mudita-** Yah, my sister was about to pull her hair out 15 minutes into the game when I was playing it. Eventually, though, so was I. In most games, time is a constraint of the model world, but in Hidden Folks I realized that it's the absence of a ticking clock that forms a limitation, and that could actually become frustrating if you're stuck on the same level for a long time. It's as if there's nothing pushing you forward.

**Pratyush-** I think that the game requires you to be your own driving force. It wants you to take charge. You have to depend on your intrinsic motivation to play, and to make progress. Even in real life, whenever you are doing something for yourself, like reading a book or recording a song, then you have no extrinsic force or deadline driving you, it's your passion that steers you to do it.

**Rishika-** The absence of time can be looked at from another perspective as well. Maybe the game developer wants the player to develop a sense of appreciation for the little things in life. While playing the game, we spend a long time looking at the same scene, and every time you look at it you notice something new, something you didn't see before. This allowed me to appreciate the intricacies of the world and to find beauty in it.

**Mudita-** Growing up gaining a sense of the world, we have stopped paying heed to the less important details around us. When we were kids, and we saw an airplane flying, we got so excited and pointed to it, as if we wanted to catch it. Now leave aside being excited, we don't even pay attention to it. It's almost like we have created a filter for ourselves to restrict irrelevant information, so that we can be more productive. We literally train ourselves to only focus on what's required, to prevent being 'distracted'. This, basically, just roots from the fact that adults try to find meaning in everything they do.

**Pratyush-** Now that I think of it, it's so sad that we aren't easily fascinated anymore. I think this game helps us to rekindle that lost sense of appreciation. It urges us to turn off all those filters and

take a closer look at the world. I think it's important for adults to play Hidden Folks as it can bring out the childlike wonder in themselves.

**Rishika-** Removing these filters can make one feel uncomfortable too. It makes us question why we created these filters in the first place, and whether life would be better without them. Would we be happier and less frustrated if we stopped trying to find meaning in everything we did? It's scary to think that the answer to this is probably yes.

**Pratyush-** Ohhhhh!! guys, that just got dark.

**Mudita-** The game is pretty fun too. Although, it seems boring. Like, I mean there's just a bunch of drawings and you need to find stuff. But the interactive nature of the game keeps you engaged constantly. As Andrew Webster said in his article for The Verge "The interactive nature of Hidden Folks also means that you're doing more than just staring at a screen. The game encourages experimentation, coaxing you into exploring its scenes with your as well as your eyes."

**Pratyush-** This is further enhanced by the feedback system of the game. It isn't conventional— there aren't points to collect or anything like other games. But the sound itself is the feedback, and it's instant. As soon as you find something, an affirming sound is created, which is subtle but very satisfying. It's like a mini celebration.

**Rishika-** This aspect of Hidden Folks makes it different from its predecessor- Where's Waldo. Here, you can click on things, destroy bushes to see what's behind them, and open up tents to look in there. It makes you actively search for the objects. And the game makes sure to let you know when you're successful. This is something that is lacking in Where's Waldo.

**Mudita-** Another game fun game Hidden Folks reminds me of is Pictureka. The difference is that Pictureka induces a sense of intense competition with other players whereas in Hidden Folks, you are just trying to outdo yourself. Hidden Folks allows you to move at your own pace, take your own time. On the other hand, in Pictureka, pace is actually influenced by how fast your teammates are going, thus giving it a sport-like feel.

**Pratyush-** Another thing that sets Hidden Folks apart is its universal appeal. It's easy to comprehend, and you just have to keep one goal in mind— finding objects. Despite the simplicity of the game, there's a lot we unknowingly learn from it.

**Rishika-** One of these things is patience. It's not easy to find the objects, and each level may take hours to complete. We need to persist without giving up.

**Mudita-** Additionally, what this game teaches you is observation. The design is so detailed that you need to find an object exactly as it is described. In one of the levels, there were about a 100 human-like creatures, but you had to find one human doing tai-chi by following hints to do it.

**Pratyush-** Also, in this game we do the complete opposite of telescoping. We first take a glimpse of all the hidden objects and then begin finding them together, thus splitting our mind between different things. Strategizing is what you unexpectedly have to do in this game- whether to go at it all at once or find one object at a time.

**Rishika-** Something interesting about the game is that at every step, it gives us a sense of satisfaction every time you find an object. There's inherent joy in finally unveiling something that you have been looking for a long time, and I think, this is compounded by the feedback system we spoke about earlier.

**Mudita-** At the same time, there is some joy in the process of playing the game too. It's not a fast-paced game, and thus it lets you enjoy the actual playing of the game without getting stressed. It allows you to just take a moment and devour it.

**Pratyush-** In 2020, I think this is of utmost importance. Currently, we're amidst the Coronavirus pandemic. This has turned our entire life upside down. Playing Hidden Folks in lockdown has alleviated some of the boredom and stress that has been brought upon most people this year, and it also helped me appreciate the smaller moments in life.

**Rishika-** The single player mode helps in establishing a connection with the game. In an article about single-player video games in the Los Angeles Times, Game Critic Todd Martens described games as a dialogue between the developer and the player. In Hidden Folks, that communication actually comes through.

**Mudita-** Thank you for listening, hope you guys enjoyed this episode and tune in next week.