

Dark Nights With Poe & Munro Review

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Binge-Worthy FMV

I think it's fair to say that 2018's *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* wasn't the revolution in video content that many thought it might be. Playing an FMV video game via a streaming service is still a novel concept, but the show itself was mostly a retread of where FMV games have already been. Still, there's some unexplored potential in the unique interactive TV show format, and I'm happy to see companies like D'Avekki Studios try their hand at it with *Dark Nights With Poe & Munro*.





What is *Dark Nights With Poe & Munro*?

Released as a video game but structured like a season of TV, *Dark Nights* consists of six interactive adventures exploring characters and settings from 2018's *The Shapeshifting Detective*. Poe and Munro are two local radio DJs that host a macabre talk show featuring dream analysis, radio plays, and other old-timey fun. Over the course of the season, they commune with ghosts, escape from dream realms, and take up the detective hat themselves. Or maybe not, as the stories refuse to take themselves seriously as they deal heavily in unexplained supernatural elements.

Each episode runs about 20 minutes, and mostly stays self-contained, which is a departure from what you expect from an FMV adventure game. Even *Bandersnatch* told one continuous storyline over its movie-sized length, implementing restarts and rewinds into its overarching plot. *Dark Nights* runs more like a typical program, a new story each time out with a few recurring elements to hold things together. That structure solves the problem of having to explain replaying sections over and over, but it's not without its own issues.



Don't let the timers run out on your choices!

How is *Dark Nights With Poe & Munro* as interactive TV?

Each episode of *Dark Nights* seems to have less story than you'd expect from a typical series. This may be because it has to factor in player choice, including scenarios that need to be separate from the main plot by design. Each episode begins the same way and comes to (mostly) the same conclusions, forcing a restart in time for the next adventure. Replaying an episode multiple times reveals more variance than you probably expect, but that doesn't overcome the feeling that you're still making very small choices that don't affect the narrative too much.

One problem that comes over from *Bandersnatch* is how vague some of your choices can be. It's a hard problem because the TV-like structure seemingly demands a pace that doesn't leave much time for players to make a choice. Still, there were many points in my initial playthrough where I chose something and then immediately regretted it due to character actions that no one could have seen coming. I guess you could say that's part of the surprise and a way to encourage replayability, but it makes me feel like I'd rather just watch the show the way the author intended it rather than guessing my way through and producing a good episode my fourth time out.

In my eyes, the ultimate end goal of this fusion between adventure games and TV programming is a season-length story that really changes depending on how things play out. In *Dark Nights*, there are great bits of character work shown in optional sections, but you know they might never come into play in future installments because they're optional. The self-contained nature of the stories works, but it doesn't do it any favors when framed as a video game.

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How is *Dark Nights With Poe & Munro* as an FMV adventure?

All that being said, is *Dark Nights* worth your time? Yes, especially if you're a fan of FMV-style acting and horror stories. Much like their previous work, D'Avekki Studios gets a lot out of a modestly budgeted production, creating a set of fun mini-adventures to play through. There are bad endings that encourage a second go-round and percentages attached to every choice to judge you Telltale-style. The interaction is unfortunately limited, and there are less absurd moments than you'd like from an adventure game, but these are still satisfying stories with likable characters.

Beyond the main characters (played deliciously by Klemens Koehring and Leah Cunard), I feel the need to point out one standout guest star. Justin McElroy, host of MBMBaM, The Adventure Zone and Munch Squad, turns in a wonderfully dark turn as Frankie. He only appears as a voice actor, a caller into Poe and Munro's radio program, but he immediately leaves an impact. He's recognizable, but so far into his character that I didn't mind. Consider just how much I've listened to Mr. McElroy's goof about Taco Bell over the years, the fact that I could buy into his performance without a second thought shows a lot of talent.

Aislinn De'ath reprises her role from *The Shapeshifting Detective*, confirming her spot as the John Ratzemberger of horror-themed FMV. Jesse Cox and *Phantasmagoria's* David Homb also pop up when you least expect them, rounding out a host of great performances. You wouldn't mistake any of them for breakout roles in a high budget film, but that's just part of the fun. The occasionally questionable line reads and forced jokes lead the tone, pulling the audience out of their comfort zone and making the surreal happenings work all the better.



Dark Nights would probably work just as well on mobile gaming platforms as it would on short-form video services like Quibi.

Dark Nights With Poe and Munro Review | Final Thoughts

As with most modern FMV games, *Dark Nights* is over far quicker than I'd like. However, due to the TV

presentation, the short length works. Each episode is quick enough for a break in between other things, and the entire season provides good value if you just want to plow through. The replayability isn't deep, but you'll likely want to see how some bad endings turn out if you nudge the titular duo in the right direction.

If you go in with the right expectations, *Dark Nights With Poe & Munro* will provide a few evenings of adventure you won't soon forget. It arguably pulls off the whole "interactive TV" angle better than anything on Netflix, inching things far closer to a full merger between gaming and TV. However, it's likely that *Dark Nights* isn't concerned with making those kinds of big moves, and it succeeds as a fun side story for D'Avekki Studios' growing catalog. If you or your loved ones adore over the top horror, then you should definitely tune in to Radio August.

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TechRaptor reviewed Dark Nights With Poe & Munro on PC via [Steam](#) with a copy provided by the developer.

Review Summary

8.5

You won't be spending many Dark Nights with Poe and Munro, but you'll find a few memorable episodes of interactive TV in this FMV success story.

Pros

- Excellent Performances
- Fun FMV Storytelling
- Occasionally Surreal Visuals

Cons

- Cancelled Too Soon
- Limited Interactivity
- Genre Teething Issues

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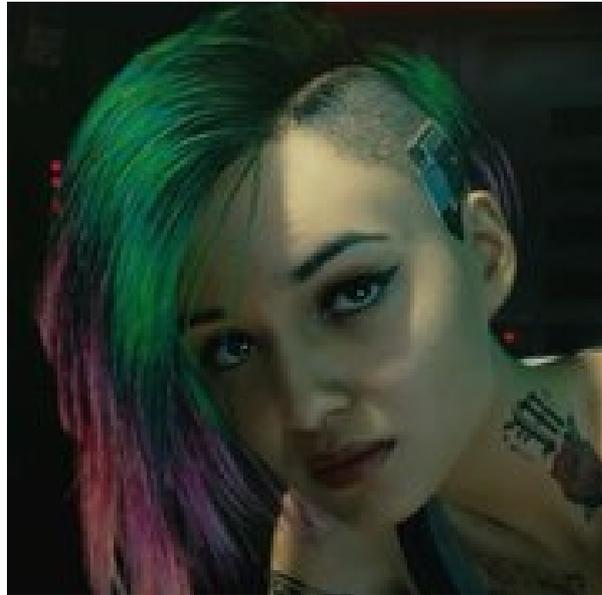


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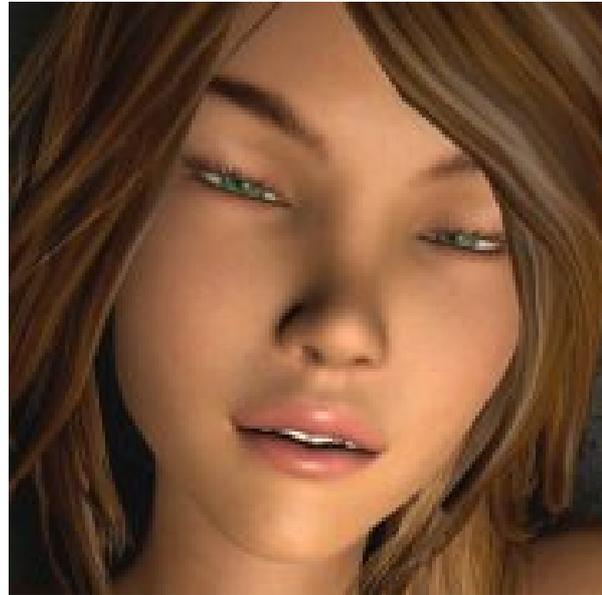
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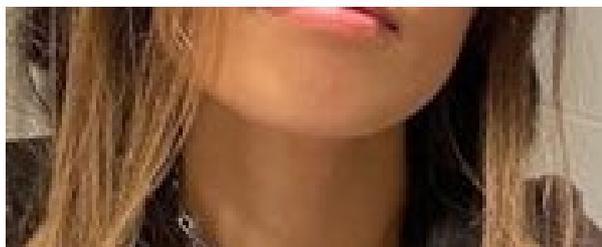


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