

Digital watercolours and anime spellbind for Haven, the latest game to mix rhythm and romance

Japanese animation shows Nintendo hot on the heels of swooning games like *Sayonara Wild Hearts*.

It's Valentine's Day, love is in the air – but it seems romance has been hovering over game makers for a good while now.

The decade ended with the release of a sparkling indie game called *Sayonara Wild Hearts*, in which a heartbroken young woman rides a motorbike through a cyberpink (not punk) landscape to the beat of pulsing pop music.

2020 meanwhile starts with the offering of *Haven*, a Nintendo game from the makers of *Furi* that follows the 'journey of two lovers escaped to a lost planet in a desperate attempt to stay together.'

, the release follows in the footsteps of *Furi* and Japanese aesthetics, with a soundtrack redolent of the latter's electronic rhythms.

To be honest though, we're more interested in the game's opening movie, which made its premiere this week on YouTube. Created and directed by Yukio Takatsu, the animation makes for a spellbinding collision of digital watercolours and Ghibli-style anime.

[embedded content]

Yukio is a game design and art veteran with experience in anime movies and TV. His short sees Yu and Kay glide over the

grasslands of a shattered planet, 'unravelling its mysteries, looking for a way to settle down' (to quote the press release.)

The watercolour aesthetic is one not seen much in the gaming medium, but the decision makes senses considering the online popularity of traditional watercolour artists like . Every still from the movie is Instagrammable, and seeing it in your feed you'd be forgiven for not realising it's promotion for a Nintendo game.

"Opening movies really set the mood before you start the game," says Emeric Thoa, creative director at The Game Bakers. "The first time you launch the game, you get a peek at the tone, the values, the characters."

“Watching them years later, they revive the memory of the whole adventure. Hopefully, we can create that long lasting connection for Haven, with a memorable opening that captures the game magic.”

While *Haven* doesn't seem to be a rhythm game like *Sayonara*, it definitely shares a same wide-eyed romantic sense, as filtered through to a generation in love with all things *Evangelion*, Instagram and synthwave.

Haven will be available for PC, Nintendo Switch, Playstation 4 and Xbox Game Pass later in 2020.

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