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Preview: Code Name: S.T.E.A.M.
Shawn offers his thoughts on Intelligent Systems' newest strategy title.
By Shawn Wilkins. Posted 03/10/2015 09:00 [Comment on this](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [ShareThis](#)

Code Name: S.T.E.A.M. is going to be released at the end of the week, and with the recent draw toward Wii Wheaton being the Abraham Lincoln, there is much to be desired. With the demo having been released recently, a play-through of it was more than suited.

The game presents itself as something that can be picked up and played at virtually any hour. Its story revolves around something that is seemingly very harsh and crass, but its gameplay could be nothing but the opposite. It's a turn-based game, focusing heavily on small innovations such as actual ranged shooting, land pick-ups, and various types of characters. Most games of the same genre focus on how a character may move, or how one may be strong and another may be a healer, but this game places heavy emphasis on how each and every person is here to fight and that they may be able to heal people.

Beyond the game itself is its genre. Turn-based gaming has seen many evolutions, many faces, and has been experimented with before, but it's never seen something so carefully crafted. Nintendo SPD Group 2 has a history of taking the utmost care with its titles, and pairing that with Intelligent Systems will give you nothing short of an immaculate experience. SPD 2 alongside Intelligent Systems is known for its development of every *Fire Emblem* game, *Brain Age*, and co-producing *Xenoblade*, *Wonderful 101*, and six main Pokémon titles. And now the teams forged together an experience that can be labeled as familiar, but they've almost managed to do what Nintendo is known for doing with its 25+ year franchises-- innovating upon themselves.

With *Code Name: S.T.E.A.M.*, you're given an assortment of characters to control, but aside from what the majority of turn-based games may offer, the interactions between you and the enemies are seen in a comical real-life-esque format. All of the characters have various weapons, ranging from an injecting needle to launching themselves directly on top of aliens. The turn-based element of gameplay almost feels like an afterthought when the presentation is filled with something as lively and vibrant as this.



Each character is moved from area to area and given a simple goal: defeat the aliens. The characters cannot free roam, but they must move between an assortment of available spaces as if it were a board game. Some characters have smaller areas, some have larger ones, but the understanding is simple: you need more steam to move to more places. The name S.T.E.A.M. may be an acronym for Strike Team Eliminating the Alien Menace, but all-to-obvious usage of steam is pivotal to the game and how you decide to play it.

This additional tactic in how you play isn't only relied on for movement, but also your attacks and how many times you may use them. Your steam is divided into portions to show how much of it will be utilized by your weapon, dictating how many times you may use it. With that, your range is either wide, short, or lingering in the middle, depending on your steam availability. It's all about strategy and how you manage to use every character at any given moment. However, the more you use your weapon, the less you can move and the more you move, the less you can use your weapon. It brings that level of innovation that Nintendo is not only known for, but known for excelling at.

With a new creative approach to turn-based gaming is the comic book-inspired artwork. We've seen similar art styles games like *XIII*, *Wrack*, and *Borderlands*, but the venture into something stringing together American authors, creatures of folklore, and comic book art showcases a string of creativity that is usually lost on video games of today. Seeing the quick flash of BANG!, all of the assets with thick outlines and solid, bright colors, and snappy one-liners simply heightens the adoration that is on display when playing *Code Name: S.T.E.A.M.*

The likes of John Henry, Henry Fleming, Tom Sawyer, and the Lion from Oz all come together in this game with huge guns, shooting from block to block, all to defeat aliens under the order of Abraham Lincoln. The game sounds idiotic, and it is, in a good way.



Although, this is not the main takeaway from the game. The overall ridiculousness of the game's story, what's happening, and how it all plays out rushes in with such speed, that you have nothing else to do but accept it. This is not a bad thing. You play the game as John Henry, you work for Abraham Lincoln, you are shooting literal aliens, you have guns literally larger than your entire body and it seems glorious. There is nothing that compares to a game that idealizes a ideology of blatant ridiculousness at every turn and angle-- and this is simply the demo.

The game launches on March 13, 2015 in the US, May 14 in Japan, and May 15 throughout Europe. Even though only some levels of comical absurdity can be experienced right now, one can only hope the full game multiples upon it tenfold.

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