

Screen Currency 2026

Understanding the value of
Australian screen and games

A study in 5 reports with
supporting case studies

 Case study

Untitled Goose Game

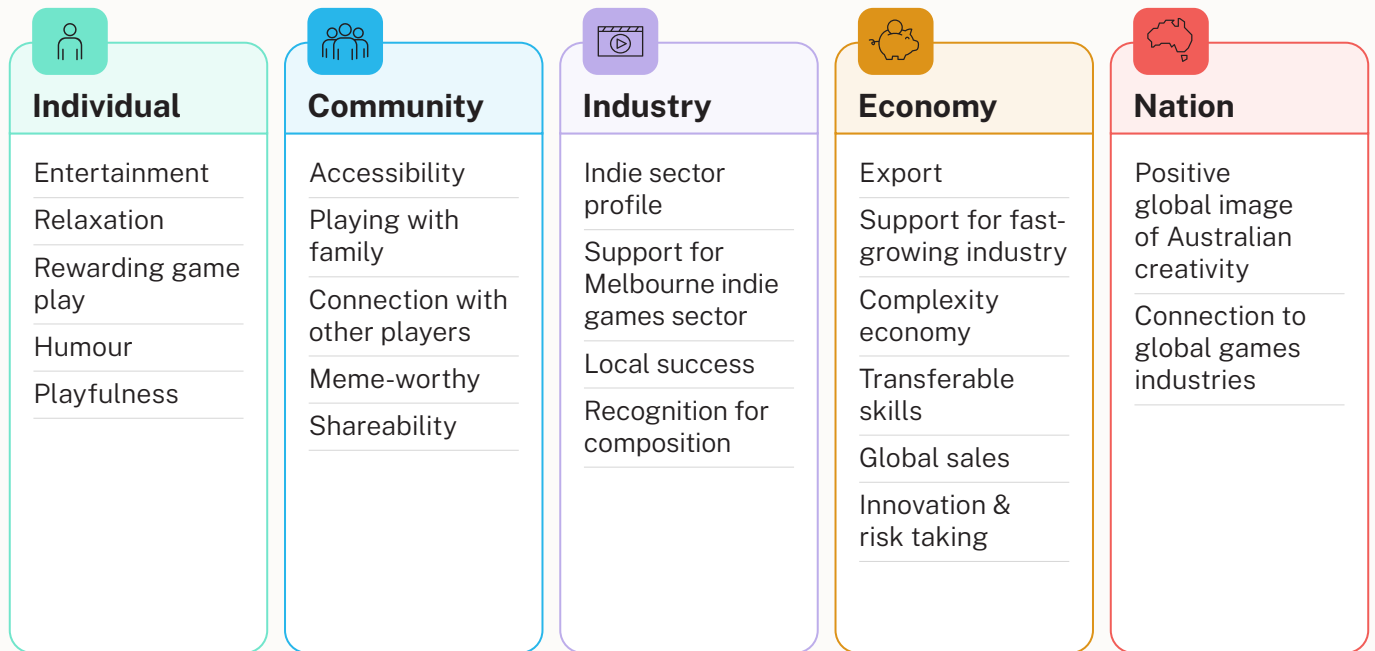
Video Game • Released 2019
House House



Australian Government



Introduction



Untitled Goose Game is one of Australia's most successful independent games.

Developed by Melbourne-based studio House House and published by the American games publisher Panic, the comedic stealth puzzle game casts players as a mischievous goose causing havoc in an idyllic English village. By reimagining familiar stealth mechanics through playful, non-violent interactions, the game established a distinctive creative identity.

The game's breakout commercial and critical success brought global recognition to House House and demonstrated the international appeal of Australian independent game development. While its setting is an imagined English village rather than an explicitly Australian one, *Untitled Goose Game* became a landmark export for the Australian games industry and one of the country's most internationally recognised original game titles.

Creation

Companies involved

Game studio:

House House

House House began as an informal creative collaboration among friends with arts and film backgrounds, initially experimenting with small local multiplayer projects before gradually formalising into a studio. The Melbourne indie ecosystem played a formative role in the studio's early development, with community infrastructure, festivals and spaces such as Freeplay, Parallels and Bar SK acting as key sites for peer exchange, feedback and connection. These environments helped shape creative confidence and industry literacy. The scene has since "grown up" and fragmented, raising questions about whether the same degree of "cultural continuity" and shared reference points still exist for newer entrants.¹

House House characterises its approach to growth as cautious and incremental. Development is undertaken by a small core team supplemented by trusted contractors and collaborators, with hiring decisions driven by long-standing creative relationships. The team decided not to resign from their day jobs until project funding for *Untitled Goose Game* was secured.²

Origin story: the idea and initial development

The concept for *Untitled Goose Game* spawned from a joke in a group chat between House House's Jake Strasser, Stuart Gillespie-Cook, Nico Disseldorp and Michael McMaster. The starting point was a goofy-looking stock image of a goose shared in their group chat with the caption "let's make a game about this".³ That went from riffing on what was good about a goose ("the whole animal is only 2 colours"), to different hypothetical game designs ("there's a church fête and you just absolutely destroy it"), to a half stealth simulator, half silent comedy film. Shaped by their creative backgrounds in film and fine art, they drew on a range of comedic influences from Postman Pat to Buster Keaton.⁴

“There's something about being the goose that seems to be very appealing to people. I think lots of people like to play pretty much every game by trying to break everything and make a big mess, and they see our goose and recognise part of themselves.”⁵

– Nico Disseldorp, co-creator

House House's four-person core team had worked together for years, having met as teenagers through a shared interest in games. Bringing together backgrounds in fine art, film and television, and self-taught programming, the team developed the game collaboratively, with fluid roles that allowed each member to contribute across multiple aspects of design while drawing on their individual areas of expertise.⁶



The creative process

The development of *Untitled Goose Game* was highly collaborative and iterative. While the team knew from the outset that players would take on the role of a mischievous goose, they spent much of the early development exploring what form the game should take and what players would actually do. Rather than beginning with a fixed gameplay structure, they experimented by placing the goose in different scenarios and continually adding opportunities for humorous interactions, allowing the game's distinctive style and mechanics to emerge organically. Even after unveiling the first trailer in October 2017, the team remained uncertain whether audiences would embrace the concept or understand its humour.

The prototype was developed iteratively before a trailer was created for a festival appearance. In late 2017, the trailer went viral 2 years ahead of the game's release. Drawing on film-school skills, trailer-making became the studio's primary marketing strategy. The team deliberately avoided constant dev-blogs or high-frequency social media engagement, focusing instead on high-impact moments.⁸

Central to the game's appeal are the expressive animations of the goose and the village's residents, complemented by composer Dan Golding's dynamic reinterpretation of Claude Debussy's *Préludes*, with the piano score responding seamlessly to the player's actions. This distinctive combination generated strong anticipation well before players could get the game in their hands.⁹

“The game started out as an in-joke, but it turned into a testing ground for things that the development team wanted to experiment with.”⁷

– Nico Disseldorp, co-creator



“We’re trying to capture a non-gamer audience. That’s what is exciting to us, when these people from outside the gaming sphere seem to be talking about it.”¹⁰

– Stuart Gillespie-Cook, co-creator



“This game is made of pure love ... Every object, character, and environment is made for creativity, imagination, and fun.”¹¹

– Online user review, Steam



Production

Game studio employment metrics

The counts below are sourced from *Untitled Goose Game*'s full game credits and adapted by consolidating individual roles and teams into broader categories to illustrate the broad spectrum of roles essential to developing a game such as *Untitled Goose Game*.¹²

Developers:	4
Additional programming:	1
Additional art & animation:	1
Sound design & music:	2
External support:	75
People in multiple roles:	2

Production financing: investment and presales

Early support from the Victorian Government played a major role in House House's development, helping the studio establish its business, build production capability, attend international festivals, and fund console porting before the release of *Untitled Goose Game*.¹³

VicScreen (then operating as Film Victoria) provided early development funding in 2017, followed by funding through Film Victoria's Assigned Production Investment Games program in 2019.¹⁴ This investment funded approximately the first third of the game's development, including refinement of gameplay and hiring of local developer Cherie Davidson to work on the accessibility features of the game. Importantly, it also helped the studio secure publisher Panic, whose funding enabled the project to be completed.¹⁵



Dissemination

Distribution

Video game publisher Panic approached House House after the trailer went viral. The partnership with Panic was key to legitimising the studio and unlocking platform relationships, including an exclusivity deal with Epic and console deals.¹⁶

The game launched with 12 months of exclusivity on the Epic Games Store before releasing on Steam. This staged platform approach helped to shape revenue timing and discoverability. The game was later ported to console enabled by a grant from Film Victoria.¹⁷

Release

Well before the game was released on 20 September 2019, it had exposure at games festivals and online. In 2017, an early gameplay trailer uploaded to YouTube and clipped onto Twitter went viral, amassing millions of views in under a week.¹⁸

Disseldorp describes going to PAX West (an annual gaming festival celebrating video games, tabletop games, and gaming culture) in 2018 as; “a surreal experience, there were lots of very friendly and enthusiastic people who wanted to see our game. I was completely overwhelmed by the reception. There were crowds gathered around the TV laughing together at the game and people lining up for an hour for a chance to play.”¹⁹

By the time the full game was released, it was highly anticipated and received global attention, quickly going viral across social media platforms. American model Chrissy Teigen tweeted about playing the game, and the band Blink-182 gave the game a shoutout on stage at one of their concerts. The game was critically and popularly acclaimed, selling over 100,000 copies in its first 2 weeks of release on the Nintendo Switch alone.²⁰ Days after its release, The Age reported it had topped best-seller charts, besting the newly released *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* to reach number one on the Australian and US Nintendo shop bestseller charts, and number 2 in the UK.²¹

Awards

Untitled Goose Game has won 6 awards and was nominated for 19, including:²²

- Golden Joystick Awards – Breakthrough Award
- 23rd D.I.C.E Awards – Game of the Year, Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game, Outstanding Achievement in Character (The Goose)
- 20th Game Developers Choice Awards – Game of the Year
- 16th British Academy Games Awards – Family Game



Over 100,000 copies sold within the first 2 weeks.²³



“A simple idea, being a trouble-making goose, turned it into something hilarious and unforgettable. Indie studios like House House pour their creativity and passion into their games, bringing us fresh, original experiences we wouldn't get anywhere else.”²⁴

– Screen Currency focus group participant

Engagement

Online metrics

Selected audience and critic scores are shown below.²⁵

Metacritic (general score):	81/100
Metacritic (user):	7.7/10
IGN (general):	8
IGN (user):	7.8
Steam (followers):	125,068
Steam (reviews):	24,557

Reception

Online and international engagement

Online engagement with *Untitled Goose Game* is extensive. The game was first released on PC in September 2019 with a one-year exclusivity period on the Epic Games Store and subsequently launched on Steam in September 2020. Over the next 5 years, the game amassed 23,000 user reviews on Steam, with over 95% recommending it to other players. Reviews are distributed across 29 languages, underscoring the game's global reach and appeal. Fewer than half of user reviews were in English, and the game received positive reviews across all regions.²⁶

“Part of the reason the game is popular online is that it's easy enough to understand just by watching it for a while.”²⁷

– Nico Disseldorp, co-creator.

Pricing

Despite the game's overwhelmingly positive reception, many reviewers felt negatively about the game's price. “It's a charming game, but it just doesn't have enough content for \$20. You could finish almost the entire game in a single evening, and there's very little replay value after that.”

Another reviewer completed the game twice and then claimed it was “\$2 worth of fun with a \$20 price tag. I could probably recommend it at \$5 or less, but there's no way I can recommend it at \$15 to \$20.” Conversations like this around price for an independent game speak to the challenges independent developers face in pricing a game

appropriate to the expense of making it while also having to compete with much larger and more competitively priced games on the same platform. Many players think of games first and foremost, in terms of how many hours of entertainment they will get out of it – but this trend was very much secondary to the overwhelmingly positive reviews that highlighted the game's charm, comedy and value of playing with family.²⁸

Social and cultural impacts

Participants in Screen Currency audience research described *Untitled Goose Game* as humorous, charming and visually distinctive. They recognised its entertainment and aesthetic values, reflecting its simple but effective design and broad appeal.²⁹

Entertainment value

Reviewers consistently highlighted the game's entertainment value, particularly its humour, suitability for family play, and distinctive music and visual design.

The game's humour was one of its most frequently praised qualities. Players enjoyed the exaggerated reactions of the villagers to the goose's antics, with one reviewer commenting, “There's a dedicated honk button. Just honking at people [and] watching them get hella surprised is ... hilarious,” while another described the experience as having a “wonderful playfulness.”³⁰

Rather than relying solely on scripted jokes, reviewers emphasised that the humour emerged through playful interactions, experimentation, and the player's ability to create comic situations.

Many reviewers also linked this humour directly to the game's audio-visual design. As one player observed, “The graphics are simple, but that all adds to its charm. The most amazing thing about this game is its attention to detail. From the sounds your evil avian makes as he flip-flops his way across different surfaces, to the echoes that honk back at you from a well. The attention to the small things makes this game feel polished and solid.”³¹



“People aren't writing about this as a piece of media. They're writing about it as if it's a cultural fad.”³²

– Nico Disseldorp, co-creator

Accessibility

Another major theme from the analysis of online comments and reviews is the game's accessibility and lack of violence, making it possible to enjoy with children or other family members who don't typically play games.

Many video games require players to be very good with complex controls, can often penalise players who don't follow expected play styles, and are widely known for featuring violent content. *Untitled Goose Game* has relatively simple controls and is largely forgiving of mistakes. There is no 'game over' fail state, as the player's goose instead just gets shoo'ed away to try again. Failing and succeeding all fuse together into a single amusing experience. The mischievous missions may be perceived as 'cruel' by some (such as scaring a young boy and stealing his glasses) but are generally framed in a cartoony and non-violent way.

Some reviews suggest that the gameplay is accessible enough for young children to play. One reviewer who played the game with their 4-year-old noted, "I wish I could find more games that were actually fun for my son's age that we could play co-op together on PC."³³ Another reviewer said *Untitled Goose Game* is their 5-year-old son's favourite and a "great game to play with your kid(s). It's a mischievous game full of ornery behaviour, but it's all relatively harmless and simple fun. It's a nice change of pace for a game to have minor dubious objectives instead of being a destroyer of worlds."³⁴ Others spoke to being grateful for being able to play the game with parents and partners.

Social value

Meme culture

A key theme in user reviews was simply participating in the viral meme culture that surrounded the game. In addition to recommending the game to other players, many reviewers would simply write 'honk' or include art of the goose and popular memes about the game in their reviews, even years after its release. These amusing reviews speak to the broader popularity and virality of the game, transcending the game itself to become a popular source of memes and audience creativity across the internet. Meme templates and fan art placed the titular goose alongside slogans such as "No gods. No masters." and "Peace was never an option" were distributed globally, drawing on the game's mischievous nature. On Steam, 'Honk' was the most frequent word used across all user reviews.³⁵

Australianness

Despite the developers' expertise being explicitly recognised in some reviews, and the fact that the game includes both the VicScreen logo and an Acknowledgement of Country statement, very few user reviewers mentioned that the game was made in Australia. Only 5 out of the 10,495 English language reviews included any of the words 'Australia', 'Victoria', or 'Melbourne'. The game itself is set in a British village, and more reviews (approximately 70) commented on the game's Britishness than Australianness. Overall, the place where the game was made seemed of little interest or value to most reviewers.³⁶



"There's a dedicated honk button. Just honking at people [and] watching them get hella surprised is f***ing hilarious."³⁷

– Online user review, Steam



"It's a bit mischievous but that's the worst of it. I'd say it's fun for all ages. I wish I could find more games that were actually fun for my son's age that we could play co-op together on PC."³⁸

– Online user review, Steam



"The graphics are simple, but that all adds to its charm. The most amazing thing about this game is in the detail. From the sounds your evil avian makes as he flip-flops his way across different surfaces, to the echoes that honk back at you from a well. The attention to the small things makes this game feel polished and solid."³⁹

– Screen Currency focus group participant

Endnotes

- 1 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Industry Insights*, based on screen business interviews by McAtamney & Advisors.
- 2 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Industry Insights*, based on screen business interviews by McAtamney & Advisors.
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- 6 VicScreen 2018, *Developing a horrible goose and a huge following*.
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- 8 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Industry Insights*, based on screen business interviews by McAtamney & Advisors.
- 9 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: How Audiences Value Australian Screen Content*, based on N=200 online comments and reviews for *Untitled Goose Game*, analysed by Brendan Keogh at Queensland University of Technology.
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- 24 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: Audience Insights*, developed by 89 Degrees East.
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- 27 VicScreen 2018, *Developing a horrible goose and a huge following*.
- 28 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: How Audiences Value Australian Screen Content*, based on N=200 online comments and reviews for *Untitled Goose Game*, analysed by Brendan Keogh at Queensland University of Technology.
- 29 Screen Australia 2026, *Screen Currency 2026: How Audiences Value Australian Screen Content*, based on N=200 online comments and reviews for *Untitled Goose Game*, analysed by Brendan Keogh at Queensland University of Technology.
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Acknowledgments

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