Whichever it’s gathering shells to pay off your crippling mortgage in Animal Crossing or painting the town red in OlliOlli: A Colorful Tale, wholesome, relaxing games have been on the rise of late – and that’s exactly what we’re celebrating in this edition.

If nothing else, this issue provides ample evidence that cozy games can take on all kinds of forms. Smalland is a survival sandbox that smooths off the genre’s harsher edges to create a more whimsical take on life as a tiny person in a gigantic world. FixFox is a non-violent adventure about repairing gadgets and savouring bowls of sticky rice. Arcade Paradise, meanwhile, offers its own kind of coziness, with its business-building mechanics wrapped up in a nostalgic layer of hulking coin-ops and nineties shell suits.

As pointed out in our roundtable chat about the subject on page 28, the popularity of cozy games really began to take hold during the global pandemic; and while Covid appears to (thankfully) be abating, this sunniest of genres looks as though it’s here to stay, with an increasing number of studios making their own cheerful, soothing experiences.

Speaking of cozy, there’s just room to give a warm welcome to our new features editor, Aaron Potter. He has a soothing Bristolian accent, plays guitar, and has a pet gecko named Dotty. Welcome aboard, Aaron! Toot!

Ryan Lambie
Editor

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