

Pixelus

Overview

Are you ready for Odysseus' 3 hour tour? Welcome to the world of Pixelus, full of frisky gods and broken mosaics. Can you help the deities put their floors back together so they'll feel obliged to send you away from their island?

Gameplay (10/10)

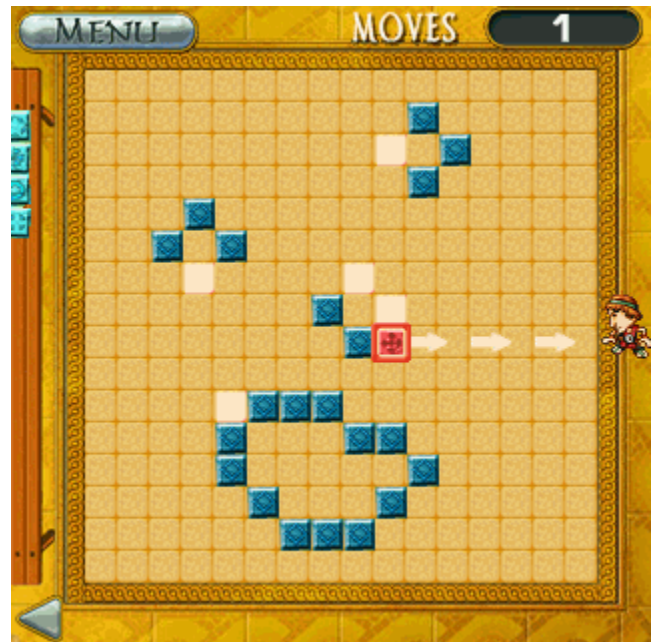
Like most good puzzle games, the gameplay in Pixelus is deceptively simple. You have been stranded on the island of the gods, and it seems that all their pretty mosaic tiled floors have gotten destroyed. It's up to you to put them all back together in exchange for safe passage off the island.

You will be presented with a series of designs, each of which have several pieces missing. Coincidentally enough, you have just the right number of tiles to fill in the missing spaces. You do this by clicking on an empty space to slide a tile onto that space. Sounds simple enough, I'm sure. The trick, however, is that there must be a tile next to the empty space in order to stop the momentum of the tile you've slid. Here's where the challenge comes in.

In the beginning most puzzles will be pretty straight forward. The parts of the pattern that haven't been destroyed will be enough to stop your tiles from sliding past their destination. Before long, though, you'll start getting empty spaces that have no tiles surrounding them. In order to place a tile into these spots, you must first build a "bridge" between a stationary tile and the space in question. A bridge is a series of tiles that will eventually probably be removed from the board, because they don't actually belong where you put them. However, you need to place them in certain locations temporarily in order to stop the momentum of tiles that will actually fill empty spaces. Starting to sound a little more complicated?

To remove a tile from the board, simply click on it (it must be one that you have previously placed - you cannot remove tiles that were there when you started the level). In order to remove a tile, there must be a free path between the tile and your character in at least one direction. This becomes especially important as the puzzles get more complex, because you might think you're doing yourself a favor by placing certain tiles as a bridge to get a piece in place, only to find out you have no way to remove those pieces! As the puzzles get bigger, more planning is required to ensure you don't slide yourself into a dead end.

There are several fallbacks within Pixelus in case you make a mistake. If you place a tile then decide you put it in the wrong spot, simply click the tile to get it back. This move acts as a quick undo feature, and reduces your move count by one as if you had never done anything. For more complex undos, there is an arrow down in the bottom left corner of the screen. This will undo moves



one by one as long as you keep pressing it. When all else fails, you can reset the puzzle and start over.

Graphics (9/10)

The graphics in Pixelus are top notch. The characters throughout the game have a crisp, cartoon like quality about them. The backgrounds are well rendered, and even the in game levels, while containing small tiles to compensate for some rather large puzzles, are still very well drawn. Your character is even amusing to sit and watch from time to time, as he does various tasks such as flip a coin or juggle as he's waiting for you to slide your next tile. If anything, I would say I was disappointed with the images of the completed mosaics. For supposedly being beautiful treasures of the gods, it seemed kind of silly that they were still all fuzzy looking when completed.



Controls (10/10)

The controls in Pixelus are as simple as can be. Click an empty square to send a tile to that square. Click a tile on the playing field to return it to the bench. You can actually use hardware keys as well, but I've never really been compelled to do so, with as well as stylus control works. If you do decide to use the hardware keys, the setup is fully customizable. The menus are all easily accessible from just about any point in the game. You will have no problems moving around in the world of Pixelus.

Sound (7/10)

This is a slow paced game with very little going on action-wise, so the sound effects are minimal. Everything that does make noise sounds good, though, which mainly constitutes the

sliding of puzzle pieces. There is also music in this game. One song is played at the main menu, and another one as you are playing each of the puzzles. Sadly, the song is the same for every puzzle, so it does get repetitive. However, it's nice that they at least saw fit to include some music.

Options (10/10)

There aren't many options, but then in a game like this you don't really need any. You can customize the function of all the hardware keys, and adjust the sound and music levels. You also have the ability to set up multiple save games (known as players), and each one can be played as normal or expert. Expert mode provides you with no hints and takes away your ability to undo moves.

Replay Value (8/10)

Normally I don't consider puzzle games to have much replay value, and they usually don't need it. However, Pixelus actually has an interesting replay system built in. Because each puzzle has three possible awards, you could potentially win the game without scoring a gold medal on each puzzle. If you're ambitious, you could go back through the game and try to achieve that gold medal for every puzzle. The best part about this is if you get a gold where you once had a silver or bronze, you know you've actually solved the puzzle a different way. There aren't too many puzzle games that have that kind of flexibility. Of

course, having the patience to play through each puzzle until you score a gold medal could kill the replay factor for many.

Summary

If you're looking for a quick fix where you can solve multiple puzzles quickly, you might be better off with a game like Super Slyder. However, if you're a hard core puzzle player who enjoys actually taking time to think before you solve, Pixelus is definitely for you. Sharp graphics, good music and sound effects, and an amusing "plot" combine to form a dynamic puzzling experience for the PalmOS platform.

The Good

- Simple yet addictive gameplay
- excellent graphics
- good sound and music

The Bad

- Mosaic pictures kind of disappointing
- achieving the gold medal on some puzzles can get very frustrating

Overall Rating (9/10)