

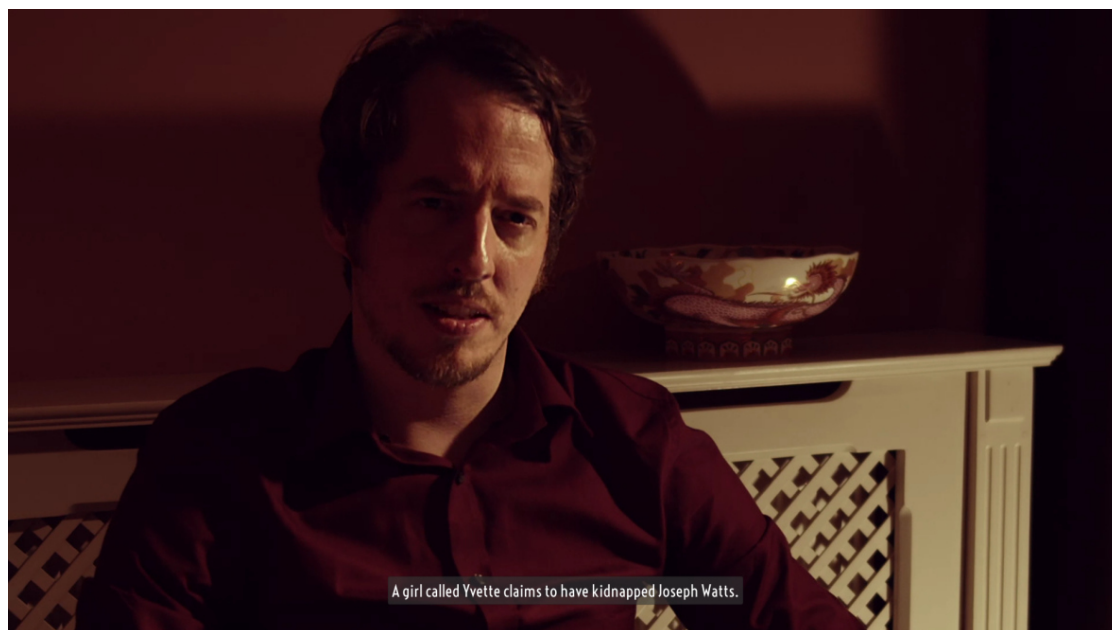
## New Game+

# Dark Nights with Poe and Munro review

*May 19, 2020* *May 19, 2020* • *Olly Smith*

It's weird reviewing FMV games because you need to be critical with certain aspects you wouldn't normally approach in a typical video game review, while also ignoring the ones you would. It's a genre that blends movies and interactive fiction, a way for filmmakers to experiment with how far they can go beyond the limits of their structure. With plenty of experience after the award-winning *The Infectious Madness of Doctor Dekker* and *The Shapeshifting Detective*, D'Avekki Studios is no stranger to FMV. And now its back with a new episodic mystery in *Dark Nights with Poe and Munro*.

Meet John 'Poe' Pope and Ellis Munro (played by Klemens Koehring and Leah Cunard respectively), two hapless radio hosts in the small town of August who are often drawn into supernatural occurrences on their own curiosity. Each of the six episodes present the dynamic duo as they encounter nightmare stalkers and vengeful ghosts, while also keeping their spirits high and their banter higher.



In developing an FMV game, it's important to get the best performances out of your actors. Koehring plays Poe as an enthusiastic, charismatic artist, while Cunard's Munro is a sweeter optimist, always able to keep up the duo's morale. I met the two at a press event last year, and their enthusiasm for the project really strengthens their performances. The chemistry between them is a delight to see on-screen, with playful teasing and innuendo-loaded wit complementing the camp horror ambiance the direction achieves.

And while D'Avekki is partial to hilariously unsubtle sex jokes, there's also more depth to the script than meets the eye. The story is paced well thanks to the writing team of Lynda and Tim Cowles, who often create moments that jump between hilarity and sincerity. One such highlight accompanies the appearance of D'Avekki regular Aislinn De'Ath, whose short presence is both memorable and powerful as she shares the screen with Cunard.



It'd be unfair to praise these performances without also recognising the excellent locations to bring them to life. While the budget to create fully fledged sets may not have been there—as many scenes looking like they were filmed in someone's dining room—this aura actually works well in Poe and Munro's favour with each scene giving off an old-fashioned, cosy vibe. With every episode being set in the late hours of the night, coupled with the intimate lighting and compact cinematography, the 'midnight radio' aesthetic is achieved. It's moody, it has character. It's something you could play in the evening, by the fireplace with a cup of tea.

This game also marks a change in direction from D'Avekki's previous titles. Doctor Dekker and Shapeshifting Detective explored their non-linearity through simple questioning and keyword interfaces, while Poe and Munro opts for a more streamlined approach to its decision-making. This is part of a feature called hotspotting. These are markers that periodically pop up in the story, and act as ways for Poe, Munro, and anyone else they meet to make choices that result in drastically different outcomes. Every episode has situations where this means the difference between life and death, and there are moments where the variances can be catastrophic. It's enough to get you to replay it just to see the whole story, or perhaps correct a past mistake. However, the hotspot markers also come without any text, and so it can be sometimes unclear as to what you're selecting. There are a few sequences where I thought I'd be making a certain choice, only to realise the game was prompting me to do something else entirely, and it broke my immersion in an instant.



But really, there is almost no fault with the game. Its weirdness reminds us of FMV's campy roots, while the innovations it cooks with storytelling decrees it a key pioneer in the genre's renaissance. With around five hours of recorded video, what it lacks in length it makes up for in personality.



**Tested on** PC

**Developer** D'Avekki Studios

**Publisher** D'Avekki Studios

**Price** £9.99

**Disclosure** a copy of Dark Nights with Poe and Munro was supplied by D'Avekki Studios

Accessibility Checklist	
<b>Audio Description / Closed Captions</b>	X
Subtitles	✓
<b>Adjustable Subtitle Size</b>	X
Adjustable UI Size	N/A
<b>Colour Blind Options</b>	N/A
Remappable Keys	N/A
<b>Toggling Visual Effects</b>	N/A
Highlighted Words	X
<b>Difficulty Modes</b>	N/A
Alternative Assist Mode	N/A
<b>Toggling HUD Options</b>	N/A
Left-handed / Inverted Axis Options	N/A
<b>Alternatives to Quick-Time Events</b>	✓

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