ASU interdisciplinary team releases whimsical video game

After meeting at Xbox Game Camp, alums created Stella Astrum in 31 days; available to play on Steam platform

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News
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Story highlights

A team of ASU alums and one current student released a whimsical new video game on the Steam platform.

The interdisciplinary team worked together remotely for 31 days to create Stella Astrum.

Want a little whimsy in your life?

An interdisciplinary team from Arizona State University has created a new video game called Stella Astrum in which players manage stars and planets in a colorful galaxy.

The all-ages game, released in September on the Steam platform, was created by four ASU alumni and one current student over 31 days this summer. The members met at the Xbox Game Camp held in May by the Endless Game and Learning Lab at the Media and Immersive eXperience (MIX) Center in Mesa, Arizona.

“The Xbox Game Camp proved to the team that we were good and capable, which is why a lot of us were like, ‘Oh, we could probably make an actual game,’” said Orlando McBride, a Mesa resident who graduated from ASU in 2017 with a degree in computer science.

His team and another team won prizes at the event, so he decided they should join forces. His game company, Death Knight Studios, produced the game.

“If we were able to win something in a weekend, what would we be able to do with 31 days?” he said. The project ran from Aug. 1 to Aug. 31, with some pre- and post-production tweaking.

The team combined technical expertise with artistic and musical skills.

Besides McBride, the team included William Gittings, who earned a degree from the School of Arts, Media, and Engineering (now The GAME School) in 2024; Brett Page, who graduated from the School of Music, Dance, and Theatre in 2025; Shannon Langefels, who earned a degree from The GAME School in May; and Alfaroqomar Alaa Aldeen, who’s currently pursuing a master’s degree in computer science at ASU. Mesa resident Baylee Balsimo Ketelhut, a video artist and engineer, also was on the team.

They decided on 31 days because everyone was already working on their own projects. McBride started Death Knight Studios last year after years of working in the corporate world.

Langefels, a video game artist who lives in Chandler, Arizona, was working at an internship during part of the Stella Astrum marathon.

“It was intense. Thirty-one days is quite a short window, so I was balancing my internship and Stella Astrum,” she said. “There were definitely some very late nights.”

Growing up, Langefels’ two big passions were art and engineering.

“And I realized that video games are a combination of art and technology, and I would love to work at that fusion,” she said. She earned a Bachelor of Science in media arts and sciences, concentrating in media processing with an animation minor and a certificate of computer gaming.

With both the internship and the game complete, she’s now looking for jobs in the gaming industry.

“Video games are very interdisciplinary. You have art, sound, programming, production, marketing, all these sorts of things. My team was amazing, hardworking, collaborative, professional,” Langefels said.

“I had tons of group projects while at ASU, which definitely helps you develop a sense of how to work with other people, especially people who might not have the exact same skill set or background that you do.”

During the 31 days, the team worked remotely, communicating on Discord.

About midway through the 31 days, they attended a “demo night” held by the International Game Developers Association and showed their work.

“And that night we saw it coming together really well and we had people willing to come and play. And so, knowing we had roughly a week and a half left, I felt very confident that we could get to the end,” McBride said.

Stella Astrum is a factory game in which players build their own galaxy in space by feeding elements into a black hole at the center.

“We really wanted to focus on the pretty and the cozy and the fun part of it all while also maintaining a challenge to the player,” McBride said.

The game, which is played on a PC, has a free demo version with the complete game available for $10.

This story originally appeared on ASU News.

Main image



Stella Astrum, an all-ages video game created by four ASU alumni and one current student over 31 days this summer, was released in September on the Steam platform. Courtesy image

Text image(s)



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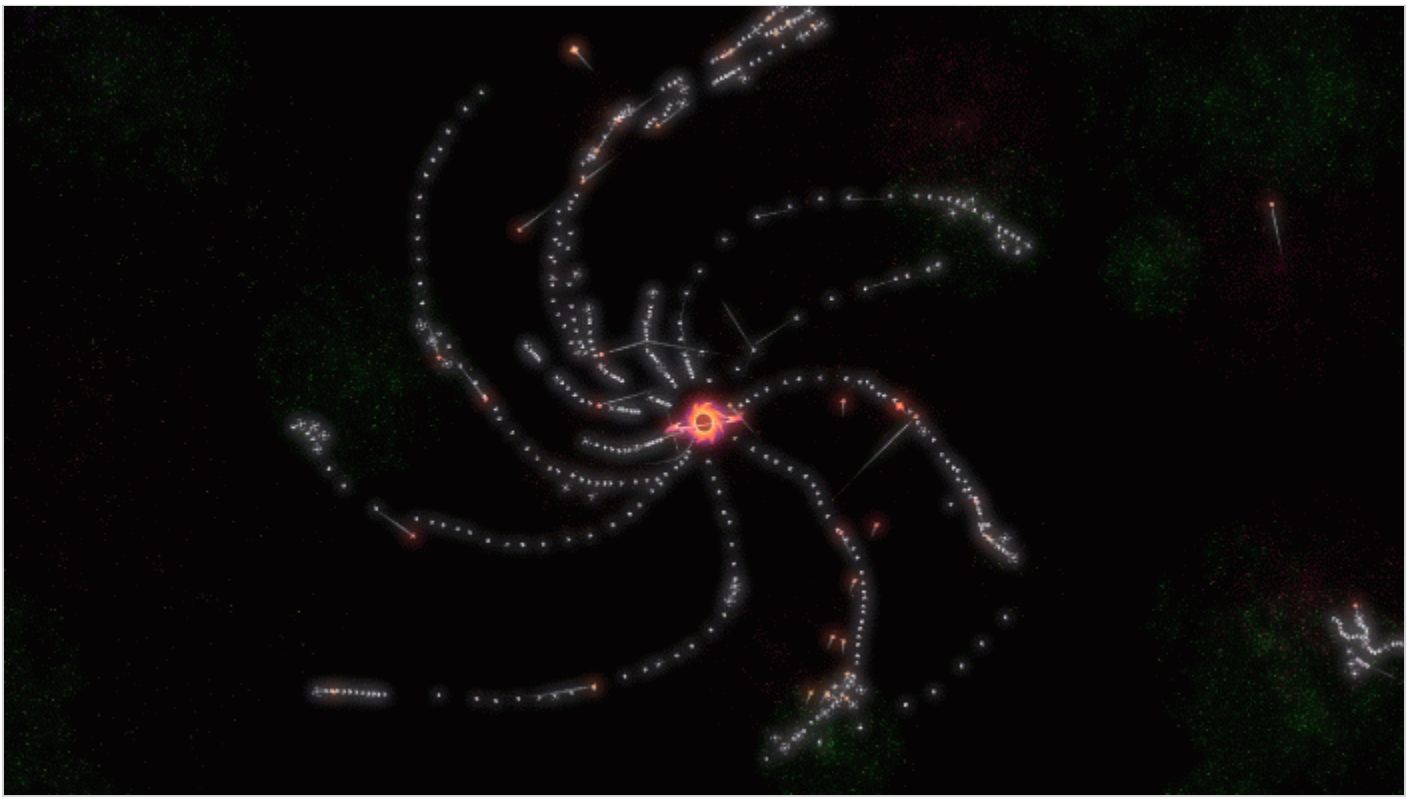

An interdisciplinary team of ASU alums and one current student worked together remotely for 31 days to create Stella Astrum. Courtesy image