RETRO FORMAT

PROMOTIONAL ISSUE

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THE WORLD CALLS ON BROFORCE!

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A ONCE-OFF PRODUCTION

FIFTY RETRO EXPERIENCES

FROM ATARI TO XBOX CLASSIC

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RETRO FORMAT

WELCOME

Welcome to the sample issue of Retro Format, a shameless plug for the magazine and our Kickstarters!

In this issue we gather various articles and game reviews from past issues of the magazine. The first article is from issue zero of Retro Format, covering the excellent Sega Dreamcast. We then quickly move into various game reviews for various retro machines. Check out Broforce if you want to blast everything to smithereens. All our reviews contains information on how to get your hands on the game, as well as other useful information. Preservation through Playability is an excellent article by eXo covering how games should be preserved. Then there's Keith Shaw's excellent series of arcade articles, in this issue, Capcom. The magazine finishes with a look at the original Mad Max movie.

If this sample issue whet your appetite for more, then check out our the Retro Format at **retro-format.com** to purchase physical copies as well as digital downloads of the magazine. Also have a look at our kickstarters at **www.kickstarter.com/profile/8bitmagazine/created**. At the time of writing, our latest Kickstarter is for Retro Annual 2022 and 2023, you can check that out directly at **www.kickstarter.com/projects/8bitmagazine/retro-annual-2022-and-2023-plus-retro-format-and-eight-bit**.

Enjoy the magazine,

John Kavanagh
Editor

FUTURE ISSUES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
To get your hands on future issues, keep an eye on our website retro-format.com as well as our Facebook page. We will be offering single issue purchases, as well as back issues and subscriptions. For subs, you will have the choice of 3, 6 or 12 issue subscriptions.

SUPPORTING RETRO GAME DEVELOPERS
To support those who are developing either new games for old hardware or retro-inspired games for modern systems, we will be offering free advertising space. As well as the advert, the game listed in our news section and possibly even reviewed with possible interviews with the development team. To find out more, Email us at editorial@retro-format.com. Keep in mind that we may not mention a new game if we don't know about it, so be sure to email us if you are a retro game developer or just somebody who want to support an upcoming game.

Dreamcast

John Kavanagh takes a look back at the SEGA Dreamcast and the unique games that made it fondly remembered.

Catch fish with *Sega Bass Fishing*

Seek adventure in *Skies of Arcadia*

It's hard to believe that over twenty years have passed since the launch of the Dreamcast, SEGA's last effort to produce another successful console.

After the failure of the SEGA Saturn and two failed attempts at trying to keep the Mega Drive / Genesis alive with add-ons, the Dreamcast had to be perfect. Too many people were burnt by past failures and the brand itself had been seriously damaged. So much so, that the Dreamcast logo takes the dominant spot in advertisements, instead of the once much loved SEGA logo.

Launched in North America on the 9th of September 1999, (9/9/99) for $199 and a week later in Europe for £199 Sterling, almost a year after its Japanese launch which was November 27th 1998. Still, the delay meant there were some great games available on the EU/NA launch days, like Sonic Adventure, Soul Calibur, PowerStone, House of the Dead 2 and Aerowings. The console sold over 1 million units in North America and over half a million units in Europe, before the end of year. SEGA would go on to sell only 10 million units worldwide.

Things looked bright for SEGA, but there was still a nagging doubt that it might fail, especially after hearing that Electronic Arts weren't going to support it. That meant that there would be no Madden, NBA Live or FIFA, which was a major blow to SEGA. The reasons that Electronic Arts refused were many, firstly SEGA didn't go with the 3DFX graphics engine which EA (Electronic Arts) wanted them to use over the PowerVR. Secondly, SEGA was going back and forth on if they should include a modem with the Dreamcast. Thirdly, and probably the most damaging, both companies couldn't come to an agreement over licensing. It was reported that EA wanted exclusive rights to sport games on the Dreamcast which SEGA wouldn't agree with. This was the Dreamcast's first major blow, but one that was put into the back

of many people minds at the time. Besides, there was the SEGA 2K sport series to keep sport fans happy.

My memories of the Dreamcast came Christmas 1999, a fresh-faced 21-year-old who was excited to get my hands on this powerhouse of a console. I had never been excited by the first PlayStation or Nintendo 64, the graphics were too blocky for me. Instead, I remained exclusively a PC man during the mid to late 90s. The Dreamcast was different, this had graphics roughly on par to my 3DFX powered PC and I was itching to get back into console gaming after seeing screenshots and reading the hype on various gaming magazines at the time. My excitement wasn't to be denied. The gameplay, the graphics, the sound, all of it just blew me away. Many of the launch titles were fantastic and the good games just kept on coming.

The Console

The Dreamcast is small and cute, looking very compact and minimalist. It measures just 19cm x 19.6cm x 7.5 cm (7.48 x 7.71 x 2.97 inches) but has good weight to it, around 1.5 KG (3.3 lb). At the top is a power button and an open button for the GD-ROM drive (more on that later). There are connections for up to four controllers for the ultimate party action.

The Controller

While the controller isn't terrible, it isn't the best either, even for the time. There's only one thumb pad (big mistake) and the shape of it made it easy for that thumb to slip, despite the raised dots. By the time the Dreamcast was released, the Sony PlayStation already had the infinitely better DualShock controllers. That's two thumb-sticks with vibration feedback, which was so good that it remained the base design for the PS2, PS3 and PS4 controllers.

The controller also feels hollow and there's a gaping big hole where the VMU goes (more on that later). Thankfully, when the VMU and rumble pack are added, the unit ends up feeling much more substantial.

The D-pad is not bad but sadly, not as good as the Saturn's pad for some strange reason. There are four coloured buttons and a snazzy triangle start button. You also get two pressure-sensitive trigger shoulder buttons. They feel good but they do cause the index fingers to cramp over time.

The VMU

While the PlayStation had memory cards, the Dreamcast had the

Virtual Memory Unit (VMU). The VMU, as well as being a storage device, allowing over 100 KB of storage, also served as a status screen in some games e.g. displaying your health condition in the Resident Evil games. The VMU even had mini-games. For example, in Sonic Adventure you got to download a small game to the VMU called Chao Adventure, where you can take care of a pet Chao, a bit like Tamagotchi (remember those?). Once plugged back into the controller, the Chao could be transferred back into the main game. Another neat use was with Marvel vs Capcom 2 where you could trade unlocked game characters with other VMUs. Did two people ever trade game characters back in the day, no one knows. Nevertheless, a nice feature.

Some uses of the VMU were completely bonkers, like being able to play Virtual Tennis, while looking at the VMU instead of the TV and using the fishing rod controller instead of the game controller! This is especially more bonkers when you find out that the screen size is just a little over an inch (2.54 cm) and could only display 48 pixels by 32 with only 1 channel of sound.
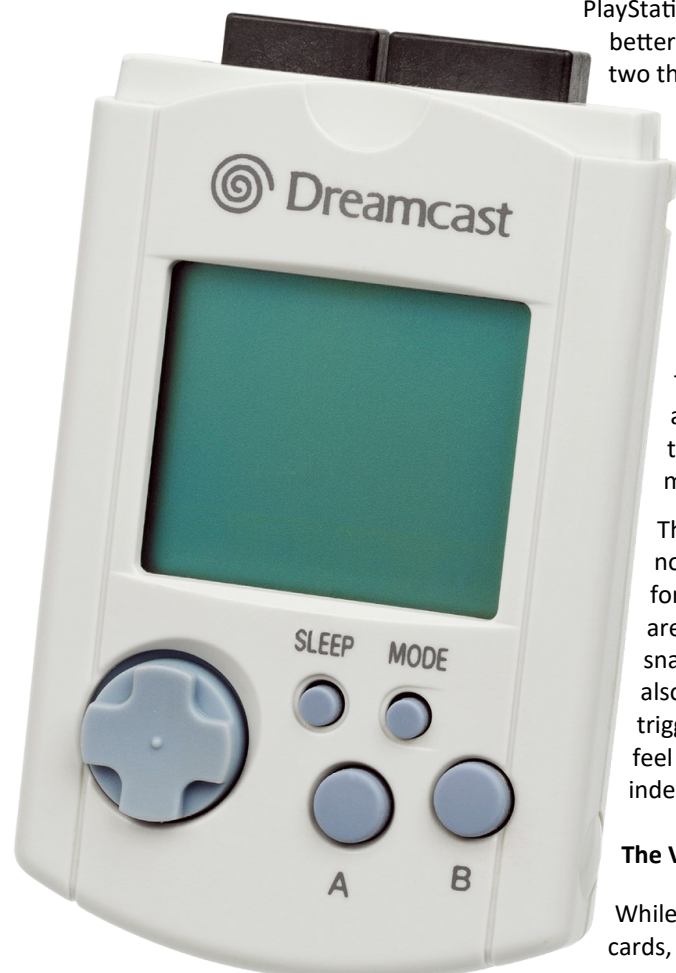
Some still consider Soul Calibur to be the best Dreamcast game of all time

The CPU

The CPU is powered by a 32-bit RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) Hitachi SH-4 CPU running at 200 MHz. You may have read elsewhere that the CPU is 128-bit, it isn't. The Dreamcast was advertised as a 128-bit in the media harks back to the late 80s and early 90s when bits mattered. A 16-bit Mega Drive / Genesis had technically more impressive games than 8-bit, as 32-bit consoles tend to be more technically impressive than their 16-bit counterparts. So they called the Dreamcast, 128-bit because it sounded more powerful. SEGA got away with this because the graphics-oriented floating-point unit was 128-bits. That's not to say that it was a weak system, far from it. The CPU was capable of delivering 360 MIPS (Million Instructions Per Second) and 1.4 GFLOPS floating-point calculations (thanks to that 128-bit floating-point unit) which made the Dreamcast the most powerful console at the time of launch.

The GPU

The Dreamcast also offered significant improvements in graphical ability over other consoles on the market at the time. This was due to the NEC

The Dreamcast had the best graphics available

PowerVR 2, running at 100 MHz with 8MB of video RAM. It was capable of outputting more than 3 million polygons per seconds, more when pushed. It could output progressive or interlaced video at 640 x 480 pixels with 16.7 million colours.

60 Hz

In many European countries, televisions had PAL video which had a higher resolution than NTSC (as used in the United States and Japan) but only operated at 50Hz instead of 60Hz. One undesirable result of this for gamers is the squashed picture and black bars at the top and bottom of the screen. For example, playing Street Fighter 2 on the Sega Mega Drive resulted in short stubby characters while standing and very long looking characters when they are flat on the floor. Worse still, 50Hz games played 17% slower which was a very noticeable difference. Luckily the Dreamcast had a much-welcomed PAL60, 60Hz mode on the majority of games released in that region.

The GD-ROM

SEGA used a proprietary optical disc format that could hold 1 GB of data, 300 MB more than a standard CD-

ROM. It also served as a method of copy protection with CD-R/CD-RW burners becoming popular. SEGA decided against using the DVD format for cost-cutting reasons. This would later contribute to the Dreamcast downfall.

The Internet and Online Gaming

SEGA was the first to include a modem with every Dreamcast sold. You got either a 33.6k or 56k modem depending on the territory you were in, and it plugged neatly into the side of the console. Although much more difficult these days, getting online with the Dreamcast was easy. Just put the supplied GD-ROM in the Dreamcast, enter the settings for your dial-up internet and away you go. Updated web browsers came supplied on disk from the official Dreamcast magazine. Interestingly in Europe, the supplied web browser was DreamKey while North America got the PlanetWeb browser.

Using the browser wasn't as awkward as one would expect with using a controller, sure it wasn't perfect, but you could tell that some thought was put into it. However, browsing with a Dreamcast keyboard improved things significantly.

SERIAL PORT

VIDEO OUTPUT

RGB VIDEO ENCODER

EXPANSION PORT USUALLY FOR CONNECTING 33.6K / 56K MODEM OR AN ETHERNET ADAPTER

SOUND PROCESSOR

4 X RAM CHIPS (2 ABOVE, 2 BELOW) 16 MB SDRAM

16 MB SDRAM

POWER VR2 GRAPHICS ENGINE

FLASH ROM

BOOT ROM

GD-ROM CONNECTOR

HITACHI SH-4 CPU

64 MB SDRAM

CONNECTOR TO POWER SUPPLY

64 MB SDRAM

CONNECTOR TO CONTROLLER PORTS
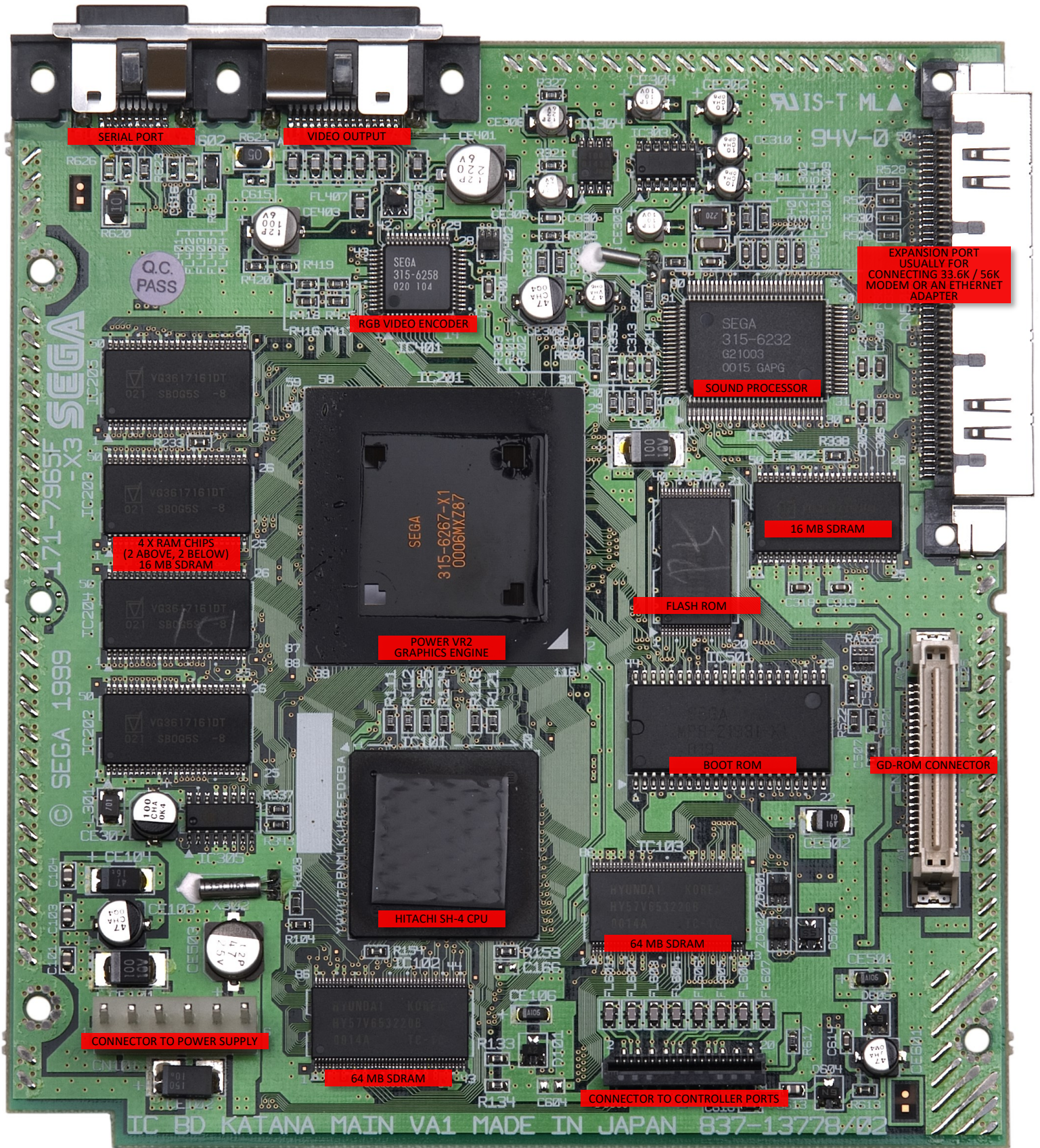
However, the real reason for including online functionality into the Dreamcast was for online gaming. Games such as Phantasy Star Online, Quake 3 Arena and ChuChu Rocket were vastly more enjoyable being played against human opponents in a far, far away living room. Sadly SegaNet, the service that allowed all of this, closed in September 2000, making online gaming a little problematic to say the least. However, there are ways around it and it's not only possible but people actually still play Dreamcast games online.

The Games

The Dreamcast hardware was based on the NAOMI arcade machine which made porting arcade games to the Dreamcast easy. SEGA and other arcade game developers took advantage of this and games like Crazy Taxi, the Power Stone series, Outrigger, and F355 Challenge to name a few, were ported.

There were many more games made specifically for the system, many of which remain exclusive to the system. Examples include the Sonic Adventure games and the 2K sports series.

Weird Games

We can't mention the Dreamcast without mentioning at least a few of

its weird games. First up, there's Samba de Amigo. A game where you use a pair of maracas, one for each hand that you need to shake to the rhythm of the song that's playing. Your game character is a monkey and the better you shake those maracas the happier he is. Keep to the rhythm and various other characters start appearing on screen, dancing to the music. Play badly and the monkey loses his friends and becomes sad. I'm sure it's great fun at parties.

The same can't be said for Seaman which is possibly the weirdest game to ever exist. You control a virtual pet which is a fish with a human face, and it can talk. Not only that, but you can talk back to it with the supplied microphone. At first, it replies with gibberish but later as the creature develops it starts speaking back to you properly. Eventually, it will kill it siblings, until just two remain, then they have sex and the species evolve. I told you it was weird. The goal of the game is to evolve your creature to a Frogman which is then released into the wild, and the whole cycle starts over again.

The End of SEGA

Despite the many great games, the Dreamcast had a short lifespan being discontinued on March 31st 2001, lasting not even two years since its

Seaman is possibly the most disturbing game, ever!

western launch. The reason was due to consumers holding out for the release of the PlayStation 2 after hearing news on how powerful it was going to be, with a lot of it being hyped up considerably by Sony. When the PlayStation 2 was finally released in Japan, Dreamcast sales dropped to practically zero. Another reason for this was that in Japan, many consumers purchased the PlayStation 2 as a game console as well as a DVD player which was a major selling point at the time. SEGA left the console business and instead focused on producing games for other consoles.

However, that wasn't the end of the Dreamcast for many of its followers. Its amazing game library kept it alive and people are still playing it today. Not only that that, but homebrew games are still being developed, many of which we will be reviewing in future issues. The Dreamcast is not being made anymore but it isn't forgotten.

Playing Samba De Amigo is an unforgettable experience

As the Dreamcast was based on the Naomi arcade cabinet, many fun games were easily ported over to the system.

MUST HAVE GAMES

METROPOLIS STREET RACER (2000)

There were a lot of racing games released in the 1990s where you could win races by just bouncing off walls. Try this with MSR and you won't get far. In this game, you need to drive right to win. Kudos points are rewarded for good driving and you need to get enough of them to progress through the 25 chapters. The fact that you can't just luck your way through is what makes the game extremely enjoyable, it requires skill.

With 262 tracks across Tokyo, San Francisco and London, 15 square miles of 3D scenery and 40 licensed cars over 14 manufactures, this game has a lot to offer. The graphics were a great improvement over all the console games that came before it, with much more detail and a fantastic dynamic day/night cycle based on the current time. Another excellent feature was the music, with the option to choose between three radio stations in each of the cities. It was this game that led Bizarre Creations to create the excellent Project Gotham series on the original XBOX.

SOUL CALIBUR (1999)

Arguably one of the best launch title games and some might say, the best Dreamcast game ever, Soul Calibur sure packs an impressive punch. Praised by the press and receiving very high scores, the question is, what makes it so good?

Well, first of all, it isn't a button

basher. Button bashing is where you would just hit multiple buttons at random to win the game, with no skill involved and soon becomes boring! Soul Calibur was different because it allowed for more tactical play with its 3D eight-way movement system, which was something new back then. Depending on the character you choose to play, defines the best tactics to use. For example, a smaller faster character could easily dodge attacks but would be unable to block efficiently when hit. Importantly, for the game, there's no character with an outright advantage.

Stunning graphics plus fluid animation along with Namco's polish makes this a classic that still holds up today.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2 (2001 / 2002)

Sonic gets to go to Earth as well as into space, plus he has a new enemy,

Shadow the Hedgehog! You can choose to play on the side of good or evil. Playing as the good guys, Sonic, Tails and Knuckles, your mission is to save the world, while the bad guys, Shadow, Eggman and Rouge the Bat are out to conquer it. Being able to play on either side really elevates the game and that's before I mention the different gameplay styles which are decided upon when you pick your character.

Sonic Adventure 2 is an improvement over the first, much loved Sonic Adventure game in every way. Released on the 20th Anniversary of Sonic the Hedgehog, this was the best 3D Sonic game before everything went drastically wrong.

POWER STONE 2 (2000)

Somehow I missed this game when it was first released but managed to play it a few years ago. I was blown away with the amount of fun that can be had playing this and that was only on single player. Like the first game, you can have up to four players all playing at once for the ultimate party game.

It plays like the first Power Stone too. It's a frantic fighting game with beautifully drawn backgrounds, but they're are not there for show, they can be interacted with. Some objects need to be avoided but you can also sneakily force your opponents into making contact. Other objects you will want to use, to gain an advantage over your opponents. You can also take cover behind objects, which is especially useful as there's no blocking in this game. It's fun alone but playing with friends is a blast.

IKARUGA (2002)

This arcade vertical scrolling shoot 'em up was ported to the Dreamcast in Japan only but received a cult following for game importers worldwide. It's not hard to see why either, with its fantastic gameplay mechanics and fast-paced action.
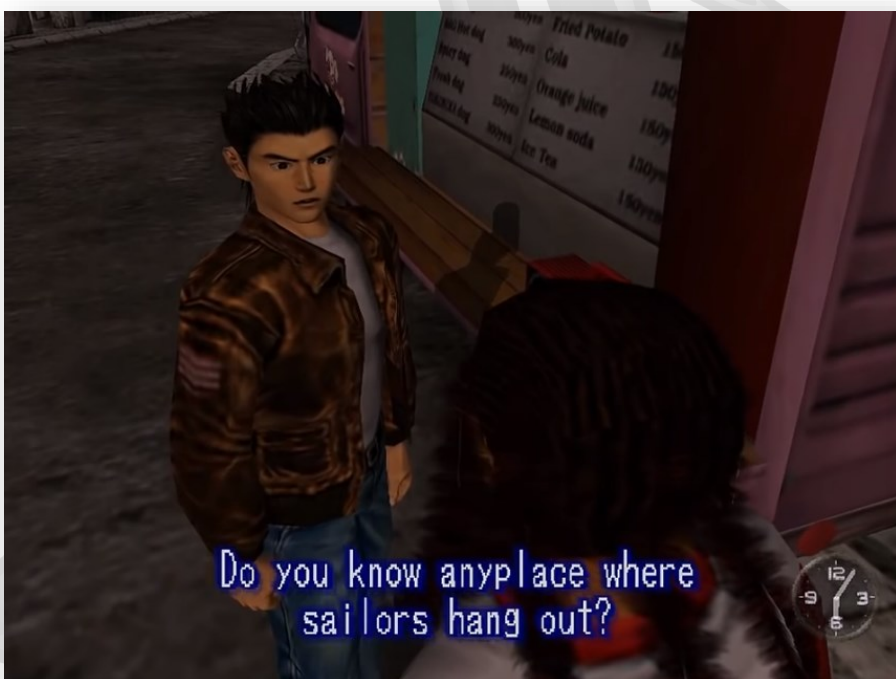
The game plays differently than traditional vertical shooters. Your fighter, the Ikaruga can flip between two polarities of black and white. Enemy bullets are either black and white as well. When bullets of the same colour hit your craft, they are absorbed, but bullets of a different colour will damage your fighter. This is where it gets complex, enemy fighters have different polarities as well. If your craft is black while the enemy is white then your bullets will do double the damage. Enemy crafts of the same polarity will expel energy which can be absorbed. However, there are no

power-ups like in other, more traditional vertical shooters. Don't be mistaken and think this gets in the way of having an adrenaline rush. It actually adds to it and getting to grips with the gameplay is important to progress further.

SHENMUE (1999)
SHENMUE II (2001)

Here are the most expensive Dreamcast games ever, with an estimated cost as high as $70 million US dollars. Despite creating an ambitious game, the likes that were never before seen, the series was a commercial failure for SEGA.

Set in 1986 Japan, you play Ryo Hazuki, a martial art teenager in pursuit of his father's killer. You wander around in an open world where you can ask people questions which may open up other lines of dialogue or examine objects for clues. This game is not for everyone as it can be quite slow. You do get to fight other characters and there are quick twitch events where you must press the right combination of keys for the desired action. This doesn't sound too impressive but it's the way everything is combined and how the story plays out and the sense of freedom is where the true magic lies. You can

even walk into an arcade and play SEGA games such as After Burner, Space Harrier and Out Run!

RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA (2000)

Ah yes, survival horror at its best. More ambitious than any Resident Evil game before it, as it features true 3D environments.

The game is set three months after Resident Evil 2. You start out playing as Claire Redfield who is in search of her brother Chris. I'm not giving too much away but the story is fantastic and will keep you glued to the screen. While the puzzles are mostly easy, you do come across the odd puzzle that can be frustrating, but completing them and the game is very satisfying.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2 (2000)

There's not much bad to say about this game because everything is fantastic. A 2D fighting game in a 3D environment and it works amazingly well. Be ready to receive some impressive visuals on your retinas.

Screenshot from Shenmue. I have no idea why he's asking about sailors!!!
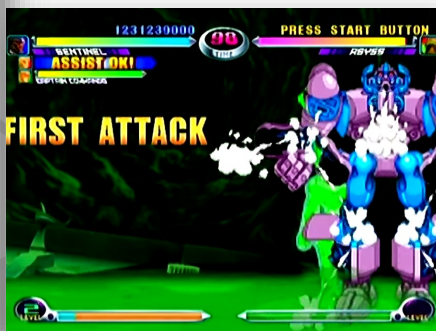
WORTHY

Princess Ruby is devastated, her sacred mega-diamond, part of her personal collection is gone. It was stolen by battle-mage Malek. You play Aldo, a young boy who's madly in love with Ruby, but she doesn't see you as worthy. Well, here's your chance to prove yourself. All you need to do is battle through forty levels of increasing danger, collecting diamonds as you go in hopes that the princess will find you worthy!

This is a top-down puzzle game where you have to collect a set number of diamonds in each area and then end the level by running up to Ruby. If you run up to her with not enough diamonds, you'll have to go back and get more. Level 1 and 2 are easy, it's when you complete level 3 that you start to understand the game. How can I get past the red sleeping blob? It's blocking the lever and if I get close, it chases and kills me. That's where the answer is, get it to chase you, then the other blob on guard duty will follow you too, run around the trees, making sure they don't see you, run to the lever and pull it. Once pulled, both blobs will head towards Ruby to investigate the noise they heard. You then run for the swords to take them on. This is how clever the game is and this what makes it totally addicting, not to mention heart pounding. One false turn when they are chasing you and it could be a life lost. Even with the sword, it can be scary, swing it too soon or too late and you're dead. Luckily, picking up a beer or two dotted around the map will get you an extra life.

There are three types of enemies (not counting the final boss). The red blob is the most common in early levels and also the slowest. Then there is the blue blob which is much faster. Later levels will have you come up against the green blob, they don't follow you but instead, they spit at you. If you are hit, their spit will result in a loss of life. Interestingly, if their spit hits a red or blue blob, that blob will fall asleep. Pay attention, as you will need this knowledge to pass higher levels!

Each of the enemies has five different modes. First up, there's the sleeping mode. Here the blobs won't chase you but get too close and they wake up. In guard mode, the blobs stand ground unless they see you, then they will give chase. In patrol mode, they follow a set path until disturbed. Red and green ones will chase and as mentioned above, the green one with fire those deathly spits, disgusting! The fourth mode is chasing mode they follow you relentlessly, but you can give them the slip if they lose sight of

There's no way out, you're going to be splattered!

DETAILS

	FORMAT	Amiga OCS and CD32
	YEAR	2018
	CREDITS	Pixelglass
	PRICE	€9 Digital, €17 CD, Disk, €23 Box, CD, Disk
	WEBSITE	https://amiga.net.pl/index.php?kwt=4191&lng=eng

JOHN KAVANAGH

you. If this happens, they go into the final mode, searching. Interestingly, the manual claims the blobs can smell you so they tend to head towards your direction, eventually.

Now, with all of this going on, you can imagine how complex the game could get and this is where the appeal of the game lays. A level may look easy at first but then you discover why it's hard. It takes wits and clever thinking to progress.

There are also spikes and arrow traps to contend with. However, the arrow traps can be useful in tricking blobs to run into them. Spike traps are no use against blobs, they can just slide through them!

It's not all stress either, the game does have pleasant relaxing music

which does help, but what helps more is the lack of a time limit. Sure, there's a timer but that's there only to get extra points for completing the game in a certain amount of time. You can also start the game from the last level you were on, so no need to replay earlier levels, unless you want to.

Worthy comes across very polished and while it's a bit on the expensive side, it is definitely 'worthy' of your hard earned cash.

We got the DVD case version because of (whispers –Ed) budget constraints. The big box version is much more impressive.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
No amazing effects or animation here, just buckets of cuteness and refinement. Well drawn.

8.0

AUDIO
Nice, relaxing music (needed) and good sound effects.

8.5

PLAYABILITY
Like another game I mentioned in this issue, easy to play, hard to master. A recipe for a good game.

8.5

LASTABILITY
You'll want to complete it, to the point of thinking about solutions in bed!

9.0

OVERALL
A very enjoyable and a well polished game.

9.0

As you can see, the levels do get much more harder!

JOHNWICK

Whatever you say about the John Wick movies, they certainly are packed with action from start to finish. The movies (especially the second and third one) feels more like a video game where you kill hundreds of enemies while being able to take an unrealistic level of damage. Well, now there's a game, unofficial but bearing the John Wick name and it runs on modern hardware, but we'll review it as it's based on classic NES gameplay, sound and

Your first end of level boss, and it's a hard one!
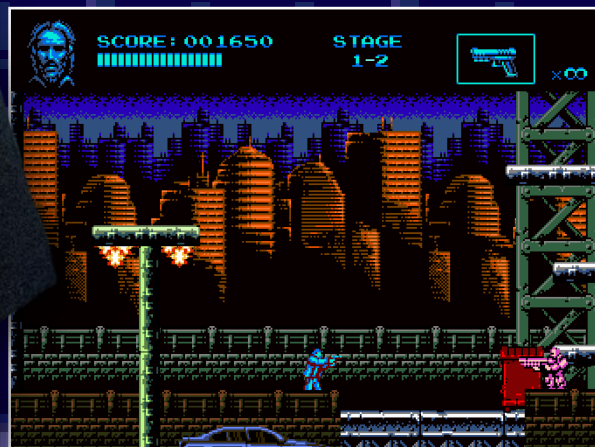
On to stage 1-2. The cars passing by are a neat effect. Oh wait a second, they are not just for effect! You'll find out soon enough!

WINDOWS (NES INSPIRED)

John can duck down behind objects and shoot!

DETAILS

	FORMAT	Windows (NES Inspired)
	YEAR	2019
	CREDITS	@MuriloDev
	PRICE	Free
	WEBSITE	https://murilodev.itch.io/john-wick

JOHN KAVANAGH

graphics. The graphics are especially nice, edging toward the top of what a real NES could do.

On starting the game, you are faced with the typical looking platform shooter. John has only one life. Once his health bar is depleted, he's dead, and there are no power-ups to increase it. This makes the game seem like one of those old-school shooters that are near impossible to complete, but nothing could be further from the truth. Firstly, enemies always follow a similar pattern and once they die, they're dead. They won't respawn if you wait around. Secondly, there's no countdown timer so you can plan your movement carefully. It's actually possible to complete a stage (excluding the end of stage boss) without getting a single hit from enemy fire. Thirdly, when John Wick does die, and he will during your first few games, he won't be taken back to the beginning of the game, but instead to either the beginning of a stage or the beginning of a difficult part of a stage. Even if you leave the game, you can restart from any stage you've completed. You'll have a fighting chance in completing all five stages while avoiding much

frustration that those type of games can sometimes give. That's not to say the game is too easy, it's perfect for the typical player.

Some enemies are difficult to get to and you need to work out how to get to them without decreasing your health bar to unacceptable levels. Luckily, the controls are fantastic. John can shoot left and right as well as diagonally, Contra style! You got two buttons, one to shoot and the other to jump. In order to get many of the difficult enemies, you can press down and up at the same time (you will need to use a keyboard), John will duck down, but when you press fire, he will stand for a split second to shoot. This move has gotten me out of many sticky situations.

What I love about this game is that John Wick's moves are like the movies. Jump to avoid a car and don't quite make it and John will bounce off the roof, painfully, John Wick style! Even the music is spot on, nothing special but very fitting.

The only real negative thing about the game is that it only has five stages, and since enemies behave the same each time, replaying the game might

not be as desirable because of this, but at least it's fun while it lasts.
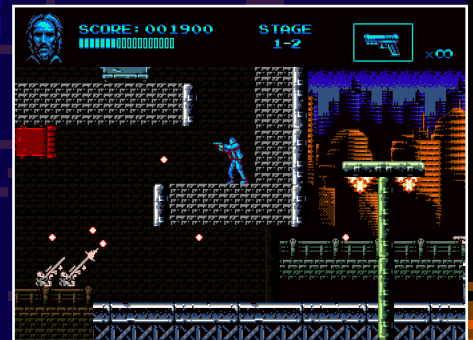
HINT: Deal with the big guns by shooting at the red power box

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Graphics are Nintendo like when an 8-Bit Nintendo game gets it right. Parallax scrolling too!

9.0

AUDIO
Sound effects are spot on, even the thump sound of John Wick hitting the roof of the car. Music, while nothing special, does add to the atmosphere.

7.5

PLAYABILITY
Easy to get into, hard to put down. It's playability done right!

9.0

LASTABILITY
You'll want to complete it to the end but the problem is that the end isn't very far away.

6.5

OVERALL
If you enjoy the John Wick movies or games like Contra, then you're going to love this.

8.0

HUNTDOWN

Huntdown is a retro-inspired 2D run and gun game by Easy Trigger Games out of Sweden, published by Coffee Studio Games, and playable on modern game consoles and PC (Epic Games Store exclusive until 2021). The game centres on three bounty hunters hired by a megacorporation to take down several colourful and crazy gangs in order to resolve a violent municipal crisis.

Huntdown's graphical style harkens back to the 16-bit era of consoles. The art style is very reminiscent of run and gun classics such as Contra or Metal Slug, updated to widescreen. The graphics display a wide range of small, detailed sprites mixed with larger background elements, all following what appears to be the Sega Mega Drive colour palette. Every sprite is discrete; the game never resorts to the sprite-composite approach seen in games such as Gunstar Heroes. The UI is chunky and easy to read, and health/weapon pickups are obvious against the backgrounds. The backgrounds themselves are lushly detailed, and enemy attacks scatter fire, smoke, and particles galore across the screen.

The three playable characters are unique in design, though have a tendency to blend into the background, making certain scenarios with lots of enemies on screen difficult. In fact, from the very first screen of the game, it's never totally clear which NPCs are enemies and which are just part of the background.

To the game's credit, every level has an obvious "start the action" barrier before you enter the first encounter set, so you will never get ambushed as the level begins.

Huntdown mixes an FM synthesis soundtrack dripping with synthwave/outrun flavour along with fully voiced characters and narration. The soundtrack isn't especially memorable to me, though the character quips and narration are full of dark humour and personality. The character quips are highly situational and don't repeat too often to the point of becoming annoying.

Huntdown's running, gunning gameplay is a joy. The movement is fluid and responsive. between sliding, dodge rolling, and hiding in and out of cover. The different weapon types, from the standard unlimited fire gun, to shotguns, to grenade launchers, are very satisfying. Each character also has a unique secondary weapon, such as a boomerang or a set of throwing kunai. There's not one weapon superior to all the others, though I found that the standard gun was plenty useful for most situations, assuming you can jam on the primary fire button fast enough. The characters lack invincibility frames outside of the dodge button, so it is easy to take lots of damage in crowded enemy encounters. I

His blood type spells AK47! Well, that what it says in the game trailer!

SPECIFICS

FORMAT WINDOWS (REVIEWED), XBOX ONE, PLAYSTATION 4, NINTENDO SWITCH
YEAR 2020
CREDITS EASY TRIGGER GAMES
PRICE 19.99 EURO
WEBSITE HUNTDOWN.COM
INFO EASY TRIGGER GAMES WAS FOUNDED IN LATE 2016 BY TOMMY GUSTAFSSON AND ANDREAS REHNBERG, IN TROLLHATTAN, SWEDEN

MICHAEL KOBZIK

recommend taking each stage section slowly to not risk losing too much health at once.

The two-player local co-op experience is even more fun than solo play, but has its drawbacks. The two characters should try to stay together when possible, otherwise you will risk getting caught on the sides of the screen, catching offscreen enemy fire. When one of the characters loses all their health, the other character has 20 seconds to run over and jam on the action button to revive them. The major problem with that mechanic is that it is interruptible by enemy fire, and also runs the risk of the reviving player dying themselves almost immediately after a successful revival. When playing with friends of mine, this back-and-forth dying scenario happened multiple times in a row during boss battles, which often happen in small arenas with little room for assistance.

The game has four difficulty modes, with each mode giving you more or less health and a greater or lesser chance of getting weapon or health pickups. I do not recommend going through the game on hard mode immediately, as learning the stages and the boss patterns are key to surviving.

Huntdown is short, with only about 20 stages that each takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The game will not take you much longer than a few hours to beat and is very breezy with a friend on Normal difficulty. Each level has its own set of achievements, such as killing every enemy, finding every secret stash, and not dying at all during the level.

If you're on the hunt for a breezy, retro-inspired run and gun game with modern sensibilities and a couple of gameplay quirks, then Huntdown is an excellent bounty to collect.

Look! Scary Dragons!

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Detailed sprites in a Mega Drive / Genesis colour palette,. What more do you need?

9.0

AUDIO
Character quips and narration are full of dark humour and personality.

8.0

PLAYABILITY
Gameplay is a joy thanks to controls being fluid and responsive.

9.0

LASTABILITY
Only take a few hours to beat but you'll be coming back for extra achievements.

8.0

OVERALL
Run and gun game with modern sensibilities.

8.5

Welcome to the future, time to blow it up!

BROFORCE

Platform games, particularly those of the 2D variety, are often attractive to developers due to the simplicity of the format. It must seem fairly straightforward to look back at classic examples of the genre, cherry pick the best features and arrange them in a way to suit modern-day audiences in order to produce the next indie platforming gem. However, one quick look through the platformers that can be found on modern platforms shows

that this isn't the case. A platformer, perhaps more than any other genre, needs a hook. This could be the central character, the game dynamics, the graphics or the theme of the game.

Broforce has hooks in all these aspects and they all land. In terms of theme, Broforce takes its inspiration from big budget Hollywood action movies. The developer's love and appreciation of these Hollywood blockbusters is clear.

It comes across first and foremost in the roster of characters that you can play as. All of your favourites are here, present and correct, in wonderfully pixelated form. Each one given a little name change to keep the lawyers happy and give the developers a chance to crowbar the 'bro' motif in. So, welcome The Brominator, Double Bro Seven and Indiana Brones. Each one of the characters is a pixel-perfect representation of their silver-screen selves, handles differently and has different special attacks.

The twist is that you don't get to choose who you play; you are randomly assigned a 'bro' at the start of each stage. Liberating the caged POWs that are found at certain points in the levels, wins you an extra life but this is, again, allocated at random. This is a great little dynamic causing you to weigh the benefits of playing with a strong character against living a little longer but getting a worse character. That the characters are unbalanced is part of the charm but it can lead to some of the big boss fights being all but impossible on occasion.

The Bros make it to da chopper

SPECIFICS

▮ **FORMAT** WINDOWS (REVIEWED), MAC, LINUX, PLAYSTATION 4 (2016), NINTENDO SWITCH (2018)
▮ **YEAR** 2015 ▮ **CREDITS** EVAN GREENWOOD, RUAN ROTHMANN, RICHARD PIETERSE, RELEASED BY DEVOLVER DIGITAL ▮ **PRICE** EURO 13.99
▮ **WEBSITE** STORE.STEAMPOWERED.COM/APP/274190/BROFORCE/
▮ **STORY** WHEN EVIL THREATENS THE WORLD, THE WORLD CALLS ON BROFORCE!

CERI ROBERTS

There are many levels to play through, varying from jungle greenery to urban environments to alien-infested underground caverns. Each is distinct enough from the others as to maintain interest. As nice as the level design is there is usually not much of it left by the end of play as everything can be destroyed. Whilst this is undoubtedly fun and offers players multiple routes through a level, it can also lead to frustration when progression becomes impossible because there is no longer anywhere to stand. All part of the challenge you might say.

Challenge has always been part of the appeal of platformers. In the past, that challenge has often been unfair. Arcades such as Ghosts 'N' Goblins and Metal Slug were infamously difficult by design so as to ensure players had to keep putting coins into the machines. This level of difficulty was kept as the genre transferred to home formats. Without the option to put more coins in to continue,
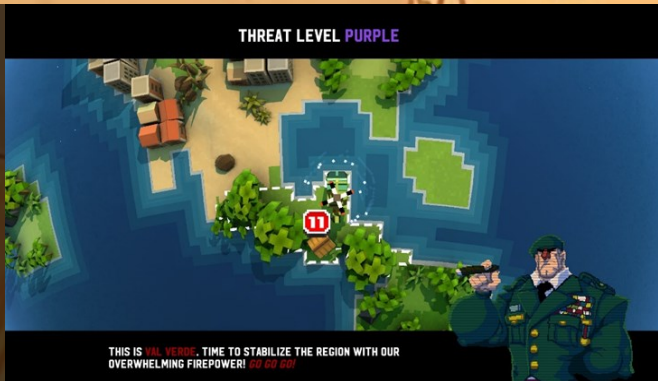
The map screen for choosing the next country to 'liberate'

frustration levels rose. Broforce gets it spot on though. It is unforgiving for sure, as it should be, but it is never unfair. This will keep players coming back. That you only have yourself to blame for not being able to get past that particular tricky bit is a very powerful motivator.

There is the possibility of online or local four-player co-op and it is certainly excellent fun, but it is all too easy to lose track of your player amidst the carnage and too easy to be standing next to the traditional exploding barrel when a 'friend' is a little careless with their spray of bullets. That the level's platforms can disappear in a matter of seconds depending on the weaponry being used can make it too much of a challenge as well. I preferred the single player campaign.

There is also an excellent level editor to produce your own levels which can then be shared online. There is, therefore, an almost endless supply of levels to test yourself with and tested you will be.

Broforce plays it with the sound all the way up to eleven. If it was a film it would be directed by Tony Bay and would star everyone. It looks awesome and everything blows up at the end. And at the start. And all the way through.

Using our nostalgia for 8-bit platform games and love of 80s Hollywood action movies, Broforce hits a winning formula. It's not perfect, but for simple pleasures, it hits all the right notes. With a bazooka. In a word, BOOM!

SCORE

GRAPHICS
It looks awesome and everything blows up at the end. What more could you ask for?
8.0

AUDIO
Play with the sound all the way up to eleven.
8.0

PLAYABILITY
A little frustrating but you'll keep coming back to it.
9.0

LASTABILITY
Online and four-player co-op and a level editor means you're going to be playing this for a long time.
9.0

OVERALL
Time to "Liberate" this game to your collection.
9.0

Brade makes a mess

赤い夕焼け
RED SUNSET

I was primarily a Spectrum owner when I was a kid, but a family member got bored of his Amstrad CPC464 and gave it to me, so I was in the pretty unusual position of owning two contemporary home micros at the same time. The Amstrad machines were not as popular as the Spectrum but had the same Zilog Z80 processor. Unfortunately, this meant that a large portion of the CPC software library consisted of lazy Spectrum ports. Because of this, many Amstrad games inherited the monochrome look typical of Spectrum games. This was intended to bypass the problem of colour clash on the Spectrum but was irrelevant on the Amstrad. Once in a while though, we are treated to a game that uses the full graphical capabilities of the CPC. These rare gems give us an insight into what might have been if the developers had given the Amstrad machines the attention they deserved.

Red Sunset is one of those games. A modern game released in 2020, it was written from the ground up specifically for the Amstrad hardware, and it shows. The first hint that we are in for a treat is the loading screen. It depicts a sort of flying sports car being driven by a sword-wielding cyberpunk dude. It is very impressive, and so is the comic book style intro which follows.

The game has a simple premise; you play a young man named Takeshi who discovers that his sister, Sakura, has been kidnapped by a criminal organization called The Red Hand. Takeshi borrows his grandfather's ship and sets off in pursuit. What follows is an exceptionally good vertical shoot 'em up along the lines of *1942*, with perhaps a little *Xenon 2* and *DonPachi* thrown in. Like *DonPachi*, the game has a Japanese theme, which is a very unusual thing to see on a British home computer from the '80s.

There are two ships to choose from that have slightly different characteristics. You start the game with four lives, and like most traditional shoot 'em ups there is no 'damage bar' - you lose a life each time you get hit.

Power-ups are reasonably well thought out but could have been a little more imaginative. Collect two power-ups and complete a level, and you are awarded an extra life.

Scrolling is glassy smooth. There is just a touch of slowdown when there are a lot of enemy ships and projectiles flying around, but such instances are relatively rare. Controls are responsive and tight, and collision detection is accurate.

The music is truly excellent and keeps the pulse racing as you weave in and out of the waves of enemy ships. It really adds to the atmosphere of the game, as do the pleasant but minimal sound effects. As an added bonus, the game comes with an audio player for playing the music from the game. The music player is stylized as an old-fashioned tape Walkman, and it only allows you to play music from levels that you have previously unlocked by playing the game.

Red Sunset is unremarkable on paper – after all, there are only so many ways to make a shoot 'em up. The experience of playing it however is something else entirely. I felt as though I was playing a 16-bit game, or perhaps even an early arcade game, and I had to keep reminding myself that I was playing on a lowly 8-bit Amstrad.

In summary then, while it might not do anything groundbreaking, all of the elements are perfectly executed. The graphics are phenomenal, the music and sound effects are superb, and the gameplay is perfectly paced. It's a textbook example of a shoot 'em up, and fans of the genre are going to be delighted.

SPECIFICS

- **FORMAT** AMSTRAD CPC
- **YEAR** 2020
- **CREDITS** ARTABURU, SAD1942, MCKLAIN, LITOS
- **PRICE** FREE
- **WEBSITE** ESPSOFT.BLOGSPOT.COM/2020/06/RED-SUNSET.HTML

JAMES BEAT

STRAIGHT

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Some of the best graphics I have seen on an 8-bit machine. The graphics really showcase the capabilities of the Amstrad CPC hardware.

9.0

AUDIO
Fantastic AY chip tunes mesh with and enhance the action perfectly, and the music player is a nice touch. Sound effects are solid and add to the action.

9.0

PLAYABILITY
Tight, responsive and user-definable controls make for a very playable game.

9.0

LASTABILITY
An easy game to pick up and play. Not the type of game you play for hours at a time, but certainly a game that you keep coming back to.

7.5

OVERALL
A technical masterpiece. *Red Sunset* pushes the Amstrad hardware to the limit and squeezes out every last drop of performance.

9.0

CHRONICLES OF NANAKO

Nanako is a game character created by the Mojon Twins. She is always getting herself into awkward, dangerous situations and always seems to be inappropriately dressed. Well it seems that way (but I'm not complaining) with the Chronicles of Nanako, two games on one cassette available from Bitmap Soft (bitmapsoft.co.uk).

The game cassette contains *Nanako in Classic Japanese Monster Castle* on side A and *Nanako Descends To Hell* on side B. These are enhanced versions of those that appeared in 2009 on various 8-bit platforms. It's time to turn on my trusty CPC 464 and check these games out!

NANAKO IN CLASSIC JAPANESE MONSTER CASTLE

This is a puzzle game where you have to get Nanako from the bottom of the screen to the top by lifting and dropping wooden boxes when the platforms are too high to reach. This, as you may guessed, isn't as easy as it sounds. Nanako has to stand on the box to lift it. When she does lift it, there's no animation of her lifting and holding the box which would have been nice. Instead, the box disappears, only to reappear when you press the drop button. A box can be dropped mid-air and will remain there. It's important to master dropping the box just at the right time to have any chance of progressing through the game. Drop the box too low and you have to do it again, too high and you might not be able to reach it anymore. This can lead to you having to restart the game. This isn't a flaw, it's a part of the game and forces you to plan your moves carefully. There's no timer to worry about but there is an enemy called the Karakasa which appears in different locations each level, sometimes at a position that makes progress much more difficult.
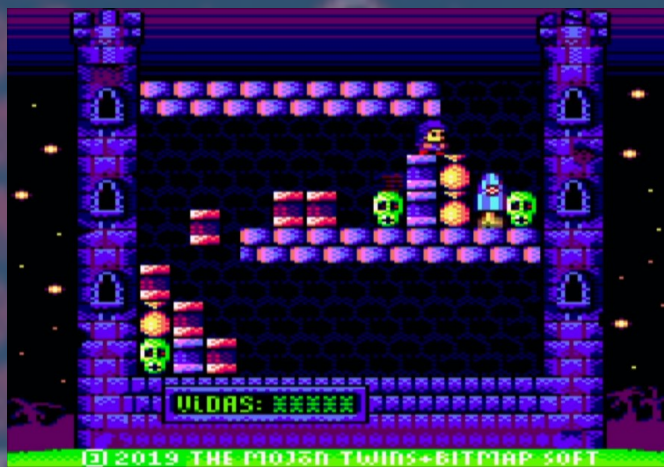
There are 25 levels in total, each with increasing difficulty. There's certainly frustration but also the desire to go back and beat the level. Thankfully there's a password system so you don't have to repeat levels. The only problem is that the password for each level, although only four characters long, is hard to read and worse still, disappears too fast. It should have been easier to read or at least, have it displayed until a key is pressed. At first, I thought it may be

Nanako lost the longest tongue competition to the delight of the Karakasa

my 36 year old monitor at fault but those passwords were still hard to read in YouTube videos, although not as hard as reading it from the screen.

The graphics are cute and functional but nothing special, and the music is a little annoying but if you love puzzle games, you'll love this.

The graphics, while nothing special, are cute and functional

DETAILS

▌	**FORMAT**	Amstrad CPC (TAPE)
▌	**YEAR**	2019
▌	**CREDITS**	Mojon Twins
▌	**PRICE**	£10 Sterling
▌	**WEBSITE**	bitmapsoft.co.uk/product/chronicles-of-nanako/

JOHN KAVANAGH

Nanako misplaced her clothes, again!

Unlike Classic Japanese Monster Castle, this game has a much needed refinements over the 2009 release.

OVERALL

Two good games at a good price. Head on over to the Bitmap Soft website to get your copy now.

While the image of Nanako takes up a lot of space, the playing area doesn't feel small

NANAKO DESCENDS TO HELL

Nanako's village is under attack by malevolent forces. On seeking guidance from the Oracle, she was told to go to hell! Literally! There are four artefacts she must find in the depths of hell. Nanako will be again semi-naked in this game, hey, hell is hot!

The game is very different than the first, the only thing at all similar is the character. You must explore hell in this flip-screen to find the four artefacts. Along your way you will bump into slow moving creepy old men, no wait, they are actually slow moving monsters, but don't underestimate them. One touch and you lose a life. You can combat them by picking up holy water and storing it in one of your four inventory slots. You can also pick up scissors to cut through fences and axes to chop through trees. As you find the artefacts, they take up space in your inventory so you'll need to work out a strategy for that.

Speaking of strategy, it might be a good idea to make out a map to help with gameplay. I found myself getting lost often.

JAPANESE MONSTER

GRAPHICS
Cute graphics.
8.0

AUDIO
Music annoying, sound effects basic but functional.
7.0

PLAYABILITY
Easy to get into, hard to master.
8.5

LASTABILITY
You'll want to beat the levels.
8.5

OVERALL
If you like puzzle games then you will like this.
8.0

DESCENDS TO HELL

GRAPHICS
The higher resolution four-colour mode works well.
8.5

AUDIO
Better music and good sound effects.
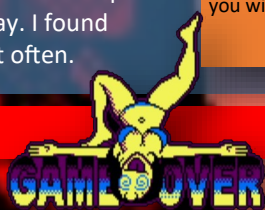**8.0**

PLAYABILITY
Fun to play and work through.
8.0

LASTABILITY
It's the type of game where you get better the more you play.
8.5

OVERALL
A good game with a good old-school feel.
8.5

Bubblegum Bros is a single-screen per level game where you use a jetpack and fire bubble gum at monsters. Kill enough enemies and it's off to the next level. It plays very similar to *Bubble Bobble* (1986) and just as cute, maybe even more so.

To get through each level, you got to just keep firing bubble gum at the enemies until a pick-up appears that takes you to the next level. The enemies keep on coming so the action is frantic and there are pick-up items for points and bonuses. The cherries and chests are for the extra points but more usefully there are pick-ups for extra lives, firebombs, double bubble distance, freeze monsters and even limited invincibility. If you don't collect the next level pick-up in time, it'll disappear and you will have to wait until it appears again.

The levels are nicely varied going from cute to cute-scary and are different enough to help increase the desire to make it to the next level. There are 64 levels in total, spread across 8 worlds.

However, it is not all good. While the two-player mode is always fun in these type of games, it's the only mode available. Sure, you can play a one-player game but the second player just stands in a corner like a bold child, that is, if you're lucky! I got something quite

different! For me, the second player moves and jumps to the left while firing bubble gum all by himself. It's very distracting and there's no way to turn it off. I tried different joysticks, two joysticks plugged in, one joystick, different ports, resetting the Next, everything I could think off and only in one game did player two remained still, only to return to behaving like a deranged little shite on the next game. We reviewed the full version of the game too as purchased from itch.io so it's isn't a pre-release bug. It does ruin the game significantly.

Shame really, as there's a good pace to the game and it's is the type of game where you want to play just one more time and ending up playing for a lot longer than planned. The

SPECIFICS

- **FORMAT** ZX SPECTRUM NEXT
- **YEAR** 2019
- **CREDITS** ADRIAN CUMMINGS
- **PRICE** $1.99
- **WEBSITE** HTTPS://SOFTAMUSE.ITCH.IO/ BUBBLEGUMBROS

JOHN KAVANAGH

graphics are nice and colourful and it's refreshing to see a Spectrum style game with so many vibrant colours. Although it would have been nice to see the enemies encased in bubble gum and float away instead of just disappearing.

Animation of the enemies is done nicely but not for all enemies. For example, the end of level boss for Candy Land doesn't have any animation, it just moves around the screen. Things like that make the game seem

unfinished. The music is nice and pleasing and the sound effects functional.

With just a few adjustments, this game could have been so

much better. As it stands, it's still a fun game for your shiny new Spectrum Next, even if it doesn't use its capabilities to the max.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Fun, colourful graphics.

8.5

AUDIO
Excellent music, and okay sound effects.

8.5

PLAYABILITY
The second player bug puts a dampener on playability….

5.0

LASTABILITY
… and the desire to return to the game. The only reason it scores a 7 is because there's a good game in there, some-where.

7.0

OVERALL
A fun game, ruined by bugs.

7.0

LEVEL = 07 PICKA

YAZZIE

Not content with "keeping da Speccy alive", Russian homebrew outfit Retro Souls, started their adventure of "Keeping da MSX alive" porting their ZX Spectrum game Yazzie across to the MSX (9 days after the Speccy version). The gameplay is identical to the Speccy. Graphics and sound differences are minor, the average player wouldn't observe them. Yazzie is a typical Lode Runner style game. Your objective is to guide your treasure hunter hero Yazzie around 20 different rooms of a mansion - to collect all the gold from within each level.

Enemies patrol each level, guarding all the gold you need to avoid them, otherwise, you die on impact. Throughout each screen, ladders help you to where gold bars are located. Ladders can also help to avoid your enemies, they are an integral part of the gameplay and are very useful.

LEVEL= 08 PICKAXE= 00 GOLD= 00
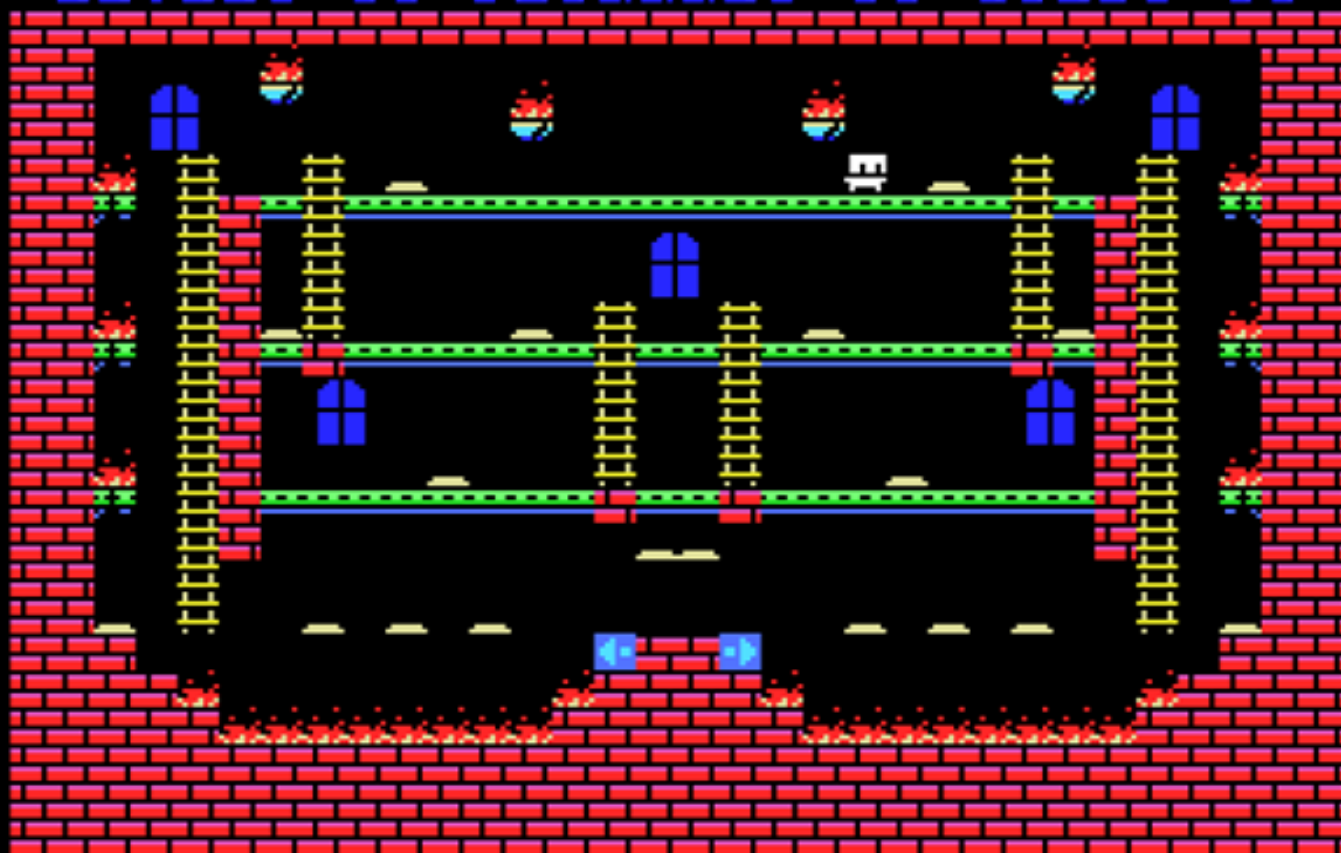
Yazzi is a typical Lode Runner game

SPECIFICS

FORMAT MSX (REVIEWED), ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR 2019
CREDITS RETROSOULS TEAM
PRICE DONATION
WEBSITE WWW.RETROSOULS.NET/?PAGE_ID=957
STORY HELP THE GOLD SEEKER COLLECT ALL THE GOLD FROM THE STRANGE MANSION, WHILST AVOIDING THE ENEMIES. COLLECT PICKAXES TO DIG THROUGH THE BRICK FLOORS.

GEORGE BACHAELOR

Pickaxes allow you to dig through the brick floors at the touch of a button when no other route to reach gold bars is possible. Where you see a gap in a platform you may be able to expand a bridge by pressing your fire button, I love this feature and it should be in more platform games. Progress through the higher levels uncovers some more inclusions such as being able to fall through screens where the floor is marked with an arrow pointing down. Beware as this can either be a help or a hindrance and poor timing can lead to instant death if you fall on top of an enemy. Exploding mines will also appear in later stages. When walked on they set off a timer, so don't be standing on the mine when it blows or you're dead. Visually lovely, explosions break away the bricks that will allow you to get to the gold pieces. Yazzie has one life, one repeated life because if you die you just start again on the same level. That's what keeps you playing until you complete all 20

levels. Old school retro is the game style. Platforming is the action. Avoiding enemies will keep you alive and collecting all the gold will get you to the next level.

The colour palette is gorgeous for this game even though it's just a few windows and a brick tilemap, but hey I like computer bricks! Character sprites look rather basic, but it does fit in well with the games aesthetic and everything is just so cute. Simple puzzles with each level's design provide lasting gameplay action and the ease of movement around each room of the mansion is sufficiently fast with controls of Yazzie not jerky or slow. Perhaps the game looks and plays too simplistic? Possibly, but it is fun! Musically it's a bit limited, nice enough spot effects but not enough 'oomph' in the soundtrack. The enemy A.I. is a bit weak. They seem to have no idea where you are, not that I am complaining. It helped me get further

into the game but there may be some that feel this is a weakness. You can't fault the other aspects of the game because it is very enjoyable to play.

Could this game have been any better than what was delivered? Sure some improvements could be made with the likes of sound, but for 32Kb it does the job quite wonderfully well. Yazzie MSX is just the fun and addictive load runner platform clone game MSX'ers need right now.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Character sprites look a little basic.
7.5

AUDIO
Not enough 'oomph' in the soundtrack
6.5

PLAYABILITY
Addictive gameplay.
9.5

LASTABILITY
If you die, you get to start again on the same level making you want to keep playing.
8.0

OVERALL
Yazzie is fun and addictive.
8.0

Yazzi is a typical Lode Runner game

WARHAWK

Warhawk was originally released in 1986 by Firebird as a "Silver 199" budget release for the Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC and Atari 8-bit. There was even an Atari ST version, but strangely, nothing for the ZX Spectrum. The latest remake of the game for the Spectrum Next will do nicely then. Coded by Jim Bagley and Michael Ware, who was a part of the development team for the 1986 version, expectations are high. Let's check it out.

It has been nearly 500 years since the last Warhawk defeated Zock's Ministers of Evil, but the evil empire is back and it's up to you and your Warhawk to stop them. The typical 'save the Galaxy' story then, but hey, there's nothing wrong with that, right? Besides, we are here to rate the game, not the backstory.

Warhawk is a vertical shooter where you fight hoards of alien ships coming down the screen. You have two weapon modes, pressing fire repletely or you can do more damage by holding the power button and then releasing for a massive burst of energy. As expected for such a game, there are also power-ups that can increase your fire-power and speed,

but you'll lose the upgrades if you take too much damage. If you destroy all the ground bases, you'll get a bonus. There are no extra lives, you only got one, but your Warhawk can take a good bit of damages before it spectacularly explodes and it's game over.

The graphics are beautifully drawn and the animation is silky smooth. There's also a lot of variation with enemy types and their patterns that you must master if you are to get far in the game. The parallax effect stars are a nice touch and the ground doesn't seem too close or cluttered.

The action is fast and a lot can happen on screen with enemies filling it from all sides. Lose your focus and you will take a lot of damage, making your battle with the end of level boss that much more difficult, that is, if you even make it that far!

Not everything can be blown up either, for example, shooting asteroids will only slow them down, which could make them more of a menace.

Enemy ships can be big...

SPECIFICS

▌ **FORMAT** ZX SPECTRUM NEXT
▌ **YEAR** 2020
▌ **CREDITS** CODING: MICHAEL 'FLASH' WARE, JIM 'BAGGERS' BAGLEY, AUDIO BY SPACE FRACTAL, GRAPHICS BY LOBO. PUBLISHED BY RUSTY PIXELS
▌ **PRICE** £14.99 ▌ **WEBSITE** WW.RUSTYPIXELS.UK/?PRODUCT=WARHAWK

JOHN KAVANAGH

The animation is silky smooth

Such beautiful graphics and frantic gameplay do make you feel like you're playing an arcade from back in the day, however the interface to the right looks more... Spectrum like. I'm not sure why this was done, but I do think having less screen-width works better for those types of games than the wider screen on the original Warhawk game.

There are twenty levels in total, ten more than the original. Each level has an end of level boss, unlike the original game which had none. The first level boss is easy to deal with, just wait for him to get back to the top of the screen but later level bosses are much more difficult.

It's a hard game as you work through but thankfully you can restart from the beginning of your furthest completed level, even if you switched off your Spectrum Next. If you're looking for a fast-paced, white knuckle, vertical shooter for your ZX Spectrum Next, this is it.

.. and so are their weapons

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Arcade like graphics and animation.
9.0

AUDIO
So good, you enjoying it without realising it's there. Suits the game perfectly.
9.0

GAMEPLAY
White-knuckle gameplay!
9.0

STAYING POWER
You'll give up in frustration, but then have just 'one' more go.
9.0

OVERALL
Another great game from Rusty Pixels.
9.0

Nobita flies through space.

DETAILS

▌	FORMAT	MSX
▌	YEAR	2018
▌	CREDITS	Coninee
▌	PRICE	Free
▌	WEBSITE	http://blog.livedoor.jp/cobinee/

PAUL MONOPOLI

ド

It's called what? The name on the title screen of the game is ド, which is the katakana character for 'Do'. Dragon Ball starts with ド（ドラゴンボール）as does Doraemon (ドラえもん). The Dragon Ball association was covered in last year's annual (2018), in the Amstrad CPC game, Baba's Palace.

So in this case ド refers to the 'Do' in Doraemon, the time-travelling gadget cat who was sent back to the past by Nobita's descendant. You see, the family is not doing too well and they trace it back to the fact that Nobita never did well at school and generally failed at life. Doraemon is tasked with making sure that Nobita becomes a success. As for the plot of the game, well it comes with no documentation (MSX games have no documentation so it seems? Weird stuff - Ed) but Doraemon is a formulaic show. Most episodes involve something going wrong with one of the gadgets Doraemon digs out of his 4th-dimensional pocket. You can make your own story from there.

ド is an overhead shooter, which has you flying downwards rather than up. Enemies dart around the screen, shooting at you, as you would expect. They shoot small, multicoloured blasts which can be difficult to dodge. When you reach a boss you quickly find that their blasts are many times larger,

requiring you to keep moving to avoid them. I never died while playing the game, instead a hit will paralyse you, preventing you from firing. There is a timer along the top left, and once it hit zero the boss just blew up. I thought I'd either beaten them or all I had to do was survive until the time ran out. Then I found myself back on the title screen... So I didn't beat them? I tried again, and again, but I just could not get past the first level. I keep getting hit continuously, preventing me from firing (strange things seem to happen in MSX games - Ed). The graphics are your basic MSX1 affair, though they suit the style of the game quite well. The audio is a different story. When I played the game on an emulator I heard little music and only simple shooting effects. However, if you watch the gameplay video on Cobinee's website you can hear music based on the Doraemon theme tune, I wonder are there two versions of the game? I couldn't find another one. Maybe it depends on the specs of your MSX?

The directional controls will move Doraemon around the screen while the space bar or button 1 will shoot. Button 2 or shift will change your character to Nobita, Gian or Suneo. There is no female representation as Shizuka is not playable in this game. Each of the 4 guys have different shooting methods. It's nice to have a

bit of variety, though I found myself mainly using Nobita with his front rapid fire.

ド is a basic shooter. It's nothing special really, and not being able to pass the first level is just painful. Still, maybe you prefer your shooters to be hardcore. If so then this may be for you.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Basic MSX1 graphics, nothing more.
7.0

AUDIO
Can't rate due to possible different versions.
0.0

PLAYABILITY
If you like hardcore shooters hardcore then this is the game.
8.0

LASTABILITY
Not enough fun to keep going.
3.0

OVERALL
There are other shooters out there that are much better.
4.0

P4G Persona 4 GOLDEN

When his parents are sent to work overseas for a year Yu Narukami is shipped to the small Japanese town of Inaba to live with his uncle. During the train ride there Yu dreams of 'The Velvet Room', a mysterious place which appears to be the interior of a limousine. Igor and Margaret, residents of the room, explain that this place exists between mind and matter. They suggest that perhaps you may be returning to this room as your destiny unfolds. Spoiler alert: You will be!

After this mysterious introduction and running into a random girl at the train station, Yu is met by his Uncle, Ryotaro Dojima, and his daughter Nanako. With his rustled hair and unkempt facial stubble Dojima is every bit the typical small-town detective. Nanako is the quintessential younger sister-type,

with a shy expression and ribbons in her hair.

The game initially revolves around Yu starting his new life in the sleepy little town where not much happens. He meets Yosuke, another out-of-towner with an eye for the ladies, and his friends Chie and Yukiko. Everything seems pretty uneventful until Dojima

is called to investigate the gruesome death of a news reporter, a lady who was rumoured to be having an affair. There are whispers around town, talking about the Midnight Channel, a TV show that appears at midnight on a rainy night. There is no explanation for why it exists or what it represents, but the kids at school have their own theories. Yu decides to explore the

Rise

When I came to, though, I was already in the other world.

The story can seem a bit weird for western players

There's a lot of a dialogue in this game

different arcana. Each arcana has specific personas that can be spawned from it, and the higher the arcana ranking the more personas that can be created.

Additionally, developing relationships with party members will provide them with extra abilities during battle, including the ability to intervene if they are not in the party, or assist other characters if they are knocked down or dizzy. It is wise to work on these relationships as often as possible, focusing on others if your team members are not available that day. Relationships cap at level 10, at which time you are not required to hang out with them anymore.

rumour, staying up to watch the midnight channel one evening. Saki Konishi, a student Yu just met appears on the screen and Yu accidentally discovers the strange ability to enter the TV. Shortly after her appearance on the Midnight Channel Saki winds up dead.

Is there a connection between these murders and the midnight channel? What is the Velvet Room, and who are its mysterious occupants? With these mysteries and a curious fog that appears after the rain, the year is guaranteed to be far from boring.

Persona 4 Gold is an enhanced and expanded port of the original PlayStation 2 game. New content has been added for the Vita release, along with new characters and scenarios. Initially, the game appears to run along a linear narrative, though you quickly discover there is a lot of freedom to change the way the story flows. Like a typical RPG there are stats to raise for battle, but you are also required to increase personality stats.

These five personality stats, knowledge, courage, diligence, understanding and expression all work towards how you interact with the various characters in the game. This is important, as Yu will need to develop relationships with his team and other key residents of the town to increase his ability to create strong personas. Personas are projections of one's inner self, and they are used to aid you in battle. Each has different abilities and while each character in the team will have one, Yu is able to create extra personas. Each relationship he develops will represent a

For all Yosuke likes to consider himself the ladies man of the game, that role is truly reserved for Yu. He can develop romantic bonds with most of the girls in the game, including party members. Unlike in real life, there are no consequences for having multiple romantic relationships, and doing this will actually open up new cut scenes with the girls at different parts of the game.

Persona 4 Golden is broken down into days. Most of these days have Yu at school in the morning, free time in the afternoon, and after you have built enough trust with Uncle Dojima, free time in the evening. Free time can be spent working on side quests or developing your relationships and personality traits. During afternoons you can also explore the world inside the TV. This is needed to save those who appear on the Midnight Channel, and if you fail to save them in time then the game ends.

There are many different locations to see
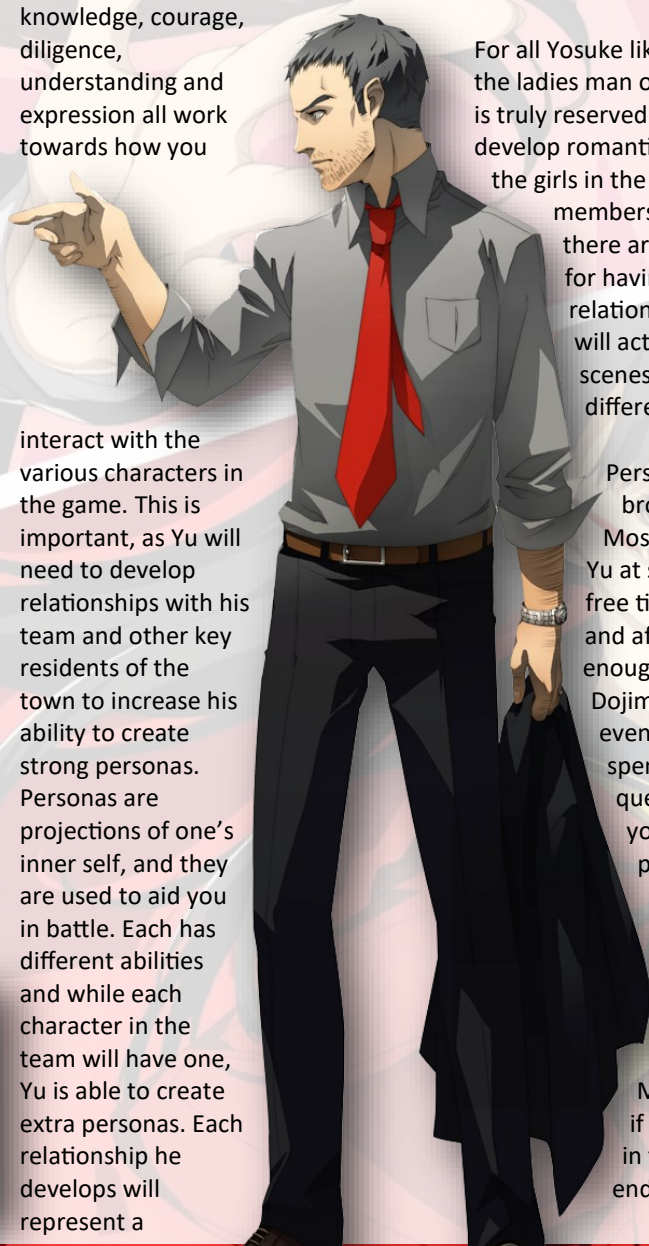
DETAILS

FORMAT	Sony PS VITA
YEAR	2013
CREDITS	Atlus, published by NIS America
PRICE	€ 9.99
WEBSITE	store.playstation.com

PAUL MONOPOLI

Yes, time to retreat!

Just one of the many embarrassing situations that appear in the game

such as Neon Genesis Evangelion and Ranma 1/2.

The expanded Persona 4 Golden is only available on the PlayStation Vita, though I recommend playing the game on a PlayStation Vita TV. A game with as much depth and atmosphere as Persona 4 Golden deserves the very best, and that includes a large screen and thumping sound system! Though 2019 saw the PlayStation Vita cease production, if you are looking for something to keep it alive for a bit longer you should definitely check it out.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Not a huge upgrade from the original PS2 version.

7.0

AUDIO
An amazing soundtrack that is both atmospheric and massively enjoyable.

10

PLAYABILITY
The game starts off feeling rather linear...

7.0

LASTABILITY
...though when you start to get into it, the storyline and characters will keep you coming back for more.

10

OVERALL
There is a reason this game is listed as one of the 'Greatest games of all time'. If you haven't played it yet then do yourself a favour!

10

Yu's schedule will change during school holidays or special events. These may offer you additional free time, or they may be taken up with the story narrative. Many of these events will also trigger fully animated cut scenes. There is an accompanying anime of the series which is available to those who want to get through the story in 26 episodes rather than the 90+ hours I have been playing the game so far.

The graphics are well done, though they are not that much of a step up from the PS2 version of the game. Where Persona 4 really shines is in its soundtrack and voice acting. Atlus has done an amazing job with the audio, with each track representing a specific part of the game. I have found myself sitting there, just enjoying the music. Many parts of the game feature full voice acting, which features actors from popular series

STRIKE COMMANDER

When one thinks of a Chris Roberts game from the 1990's, they will more than likely would think of the Wing Commander series. While I love those games, especially the later ones with Mark Hamill, there was another game which seems to be lost in the mists of time. That game is Strike Commander, released in 1993 for MS-DOS floppy (and PC-98 and FM Towns) and later on CD-ROM with enhancements such as voice acting and the Tactical Operations levels.

Set in the near future, ahem, 2011,

the world is in turmoil and mercenary groups are common. You play a member of a mercenary group called the "Wildcats", which specialise in aerial operations using multiple F-16 jets. You complete various missions in different locations around the globe, all for the highest bidder.

On starting the game, my rose-tinted glasses were shattered. This game just wasn't as visually appealing as expected. I wasn't expecting high definition but what I got was a lot worse than I remembered, even to the point of being unplayable, maybe?

Click on the woman in the bed to load saved games!

Time to pick your weapons of destruction

Like the Wing Commander series, the game is plot driven. You can walk around the base and have conversations, stock weapons etc. Not focusing on the management side could mean game over. You are always trading between buying expensive weapons to help making a mission easier and cutting costs to keep the account books in the black. This does involve you reading the manual and having some knowledge of the weapons and their capabilities.

There are many that claim that this isn't a full-on flight simulator, but it's certainly not an arcade game. The flight model behaves the way a fighter plane should (so I've heard), and Chris Roberts claims that it's more accurate than Falcon 3.0. One thing for sure, you won't be able to just pick this game up and play without having a look at the supplied manual. It sets up

DETAILS

	FORMAT	MS-DOS
	YEAR	1993
	COMPANY	Origin Systems / Electronic Arts
	PRICE	$5.99 on GOG.com
	WEBSITE	www.gog.com/game/strike_commander

JOHN KAVANAGH

Apparently this looked great back in 1993, and I thought so back then too. Now, I just keep rubbing my eyes thinking I have blurred vision.

the background of the game, with a bit of comedy thrown in. While mildly entertaining, the second part of the manual is more helpful in helping you to get to grip with the game. It explains the cockpit layout, flight dynamics, air combat and gives an explanation of the various weapons available. You'll discover that there are a lot of keys to remember so printing out the reference sheet is a must.

Well, I didn't do any of that. I went straight into the game relying on my memory of the early to mid 1990s and the knowledge that I got pretty far in the game back then. I got to the first mission and it was a disaster, the blocky graphics were disorientating, I was unsure of the controls and didn't know how to follow waypoints. Taking my own advice, I went back to the manual. While GOG.com supplies a manual and a strategy guide in digital format, I instead went for my original paperback manual. It was surprisingly, in fantastic condition for something

that's now over 25 years old. Reading through the best parts. Prepared, I went back to the game and I was suddenly having fun again. Although I had to slightly cheat to do so, selecting easy hits and unlimited ammo, because running out of ammo is no fun. While the 320x200 resolution is an eyesore, this was one of the first games to have a 3D cockpit and made use of gouraud shading which was ground-breaking at the time. I would say that this game is only worth playing for nostalgic reasons, so be prepared to be a little disappointed.

SCORE

GRAPHICS
Blockier than you'd remember, but there's still a nice style to the animation of 3D models.
5.5

AUDIO
As you would expect from the time. Voice acting is a little ropey.
7.0

PLAYABILITY
Hard to get into, but if you like classic flight sims and make the effort, you'll make it happen.
1.5

LASTABILITY
I can't see anyone playing all the way to the end, a few missions, yes, but no more.
4.0
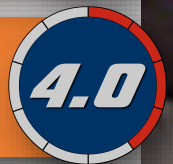
OVERALL
Eventually I felt a bit of the original magic of the game but with shattered memories.
6.5

Ah look, this is the character you're playing. Apparently they wanted the likeness of Mel Gibson

Preservation through Playability

eXo

Game preservation has become a popular topic in the past decade. The Strong National Museum of Play, The Video Game History Foundation, and even the Smithsonian have begun storing and uncovering the games of our past. This shows that video games (both console and computer) have finally reached a similar status to other mediums such as art and movies. A primary difference has been availability and usefulness of this preserved media.

Imagine for a moment that the only way to appreciate a movie from your past was to own a VCR (and a television capable of hooking up to it). Or maybe you are somewhat technically savvy and you have a "VCR Emulator" on your computer. One that allows you to load up images of VHS tapes being dumped by groups of faceless individuals using a variety of cryptic codes to denote original dumps, over dumps, bad dumps, hacked dumps, etc. Now imagine that the movie isn't guaranteed to run the proper speed or with the right number of frames per second. Users can browse unwelcoming forums that describe how to tweak configuration files to set specific tracking, tape speed, PAL vs NTSC, and a myriad of other options that only the designer of the VCR should have ever had to learn. How many movies from your

past are you willing to go through all of that effort to watch? Likely only a handful, and yet, this is exactly what that modern the computer emulation scene looks like currently.

It didn't start this way. The rise of emulators introduced fairly simple programs that attempted to mimic the capabilities of a Nintendo or a Genesis through software. Simply feed it a ROM file (dumped by one of those faceless folks who use the cryptic naming conventions) and you had a more or less playable version of a game you might have grown up with. Usually, the largest hurdle was locating a mythical BIOS file or finding a specific ROM. Fast forward to 2020 and now the number of devices capable of running console emulators is practically endless. Custom Pi

devices, FPGA builds, hacked mini consoles, cell phones… basically anything with a screen (and even some without – I hear you can attempt to navigate through Zork on your echo device).

There is a clear line between how well-preserved games are and how playable they are on modern systems. Take MS-DOS for example, a platform I have spent well over a decade attempting to preserve. Getting a classic MS-DOS game running requires first emulating the proper hardware. PC compatible machines were consistently released and upgraded for nearly twenty years. The variety of hardware across that time span is impressive and daunting. Assuming you are able to get the hardware emulated properly, you then find
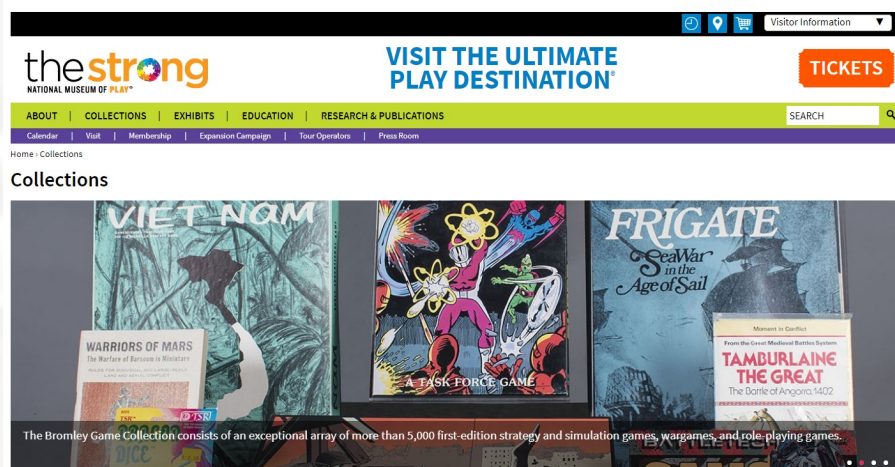
The Strong National Museum of Play

yourself at a command prompt. A blinking cursor taunts you to speak an archaic language. Now you must provide the software. The internet is littered with ripped copies of old games that are leftover from the day of dial-up modems and their bandwidth limitations. Rips missing speech, music, and cinematics are much more common than complete copies. Original games are often locked to the floppies they reside on. Only a handful of people have working 5.25" floppy drives these days.

All of these challenges illustrate why the preservation of computer software is so much more complicated than consoles. Without a concentrated effort to find, preserve, and make these games playable they are inevitably forgotten or lost to disk rot. This has led most consumers to turn towards companies like Good Old Games (GOG) and Steam to play the games from their past. In these cases, playability has generally come *at the cost* of preservation. Good Old Games has kept titles such as Dungeon Keeper and X-Com available to play while simultaneously stripping them of their original media. Unlike the world of cartridge-based games, computer games were designed for a myriad of hardware. The GOG versions of games often default to the most common hardware setup while stripping out the ability to make any changes. In many cases, they delete the actual install\setup file and all unused drivers. The Secret of Monkey Island supports no less than 6 different video cards and 7 different sound types, yet these options are not available in any current commercial releases. The seminal Sierra Adventures were originally scored on Roland MT-32 MIDI modules and then down ported to adlib. Hearing these games with their original soundtracks is transformative, yet no current commercial release of these games makes it easy to experience. How well preserved is a game if it is missing a majority of the options it was originally released with? Unfortunately, this becomes a real

concern as it becomes more difficult to locate original copies of games while these stripped-down versions continually multiply online.

For computer software, all the scenarios discussed so far are missing a key ingredient to long term preservation. The museums have accurate original copies that are unplayable. The complexity of emulators makes it difficult for users to play original copies. Digital game repacks often present austere versions of games. The solution is to remove the barrier of emulation while retaining the integrity of the software. This can be done by first preserving the game's original media. The second step is to then make that media playable on modern systems. This includes tapping into as many of the original hardware options as possible. Soundcards, video cards, and re-enabled networking features are all just as important to the game's overall experience as the main gameplay itself. Finally, all of this must be wrapped up into an easy to use platform that contains clean metadata for these games. Box scans, manuals, screenshots, release information, and a general description of the game are all incredibly important to prevent such a collection from becoming just another file dump. Most importantly, the playability encourages users to dive in. This can turn an unplayable game of which there was only a handful of copies into a game that is sitting on thousands of hard drives. Every new user who plays one of these older games is an example of how playability has driven preservation.

It is important that these games be preserved and made functional before they disappear. The value of a game is impossible to estimate. Games have

Accessing games on 5.25" disks can be difficult these days

the potential to remind us of late nights wandering through Daventry looking for missed items with a parent or sibling. They transport us to an elementary library with a group of friends all trying to make it to Oregon. They take us back to hauling heavy CRT monitors to a friend's house for a LAN party and the blur of hours that followed into the early hours of the morning. Those who didn't grow up with these games have the ability to jump into a time machine and experience something from the past. A properly preserved library of software shows us where we came from, what the concerns\politics of the time were, and how we chose to express ourselves.

A great game on the shelf is still just a game on the shelf. A great game on your screen can rival any work of art. Getting that game from the shelf to the screen is crucial to long term preservation. It is incredibly important to not compromise the integrity of the game in the process. It is my hope that publishers who are digging through their back catalog begin to look more at the preservation side of things and not just a quick buck. In the meantime, it is important that the community does it for them. Unfortunately, that is when the third "P", piracy, often rears its ugly head. Which is another topic for next time.

eXo

THE ARCADE: CAPCOM®

KEITH SHAW

Welcome back to The Arcade, this month I take a look at Capcom, its rise to arcade stardom and the stellar cast of games that were produced under the CAPCOM CO. LTD. brand, one of the most popular being the Street Fighter series, the majority of Capcoms arcade games were ported to home console systems to be enjoyed by everyone in the comfort of their living rooms as well as many original games developed for each individual system.

As before here is a short history of CAPCOM CO., LTD. and a selection of my personal favourites. Due to many of the games being made in the late 90s when unfortunately I had less time to visit an actual arcade, the reviews of each game are mainly based on playing the arcade releases in emulated form as well as the arcade ports to home systems.

CAPCOM THE BRAND

CAPCOM CO., LTD. as it will become known was established in 1979 as I.R.M Corporation with the objective of developing and selling electric applied game machines in Matsubara, Osaka.

In the same year, I.R.M Corporation changed its name to SANBI CO. LTD and also established a subsidiary JAPAN CAPSULE COMPUTER CO., LTD.

In 1981 the brand Old CAPCOM CO., LTD was established in Osaka and Tokyo for the purpose of selling software. In 1983 Capcom Released their first originally developed coin-op Little League and also opened Acty 24, a video arcade under the direct management of Capcom. In 1984 Capcom released its first arcade video games, Vulgus and 1942 which went on to be a big hit, with many releases under the series to follow. In the same year CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. was founded in California.

In 1987 Old CAPCOM CO., LTD. was merged with SANBI. and the Corporate name was changed to CAPCOM CO., LTD. and the head office was moved to Higashi-Ku, Osaka, whilst also opening an office in the United Kingdom.

Capcom has become a household name in the arcade producing many excellent hits including Ghosts'n Goblins, Pang, Final Fight, AvP and of course not forgetting its fighting games, including the immensely

popular Street Fighter series. Although not an Arcade game, a special mention has to go to the hugely popular Resident Evil series to the extent that even non-gamers would know about it when asked due to the film franchise that followed.

The majority of the games reviewed below ran on Capcom's own propriety boards developed over several years, the CP System and CP System II also known as CPS, which were developed in-house by Capcom to reduce costs by producing a system that ran on multiple games by switching out removable boards, two custom microchips that they called the CPS Super Chips, equivalent to ten normal arcade printed circuit boards were produced. The development costs were extremely high (reportedly £5,500,000) but in the long run, it proved its worth.

The CP System hardware was also used in Capcom's attempt to crack the home console market called the CPS Changer, a domestic version of the CP System similar to the Neo-Geo AES, unfortunately, it never became popular and failed.
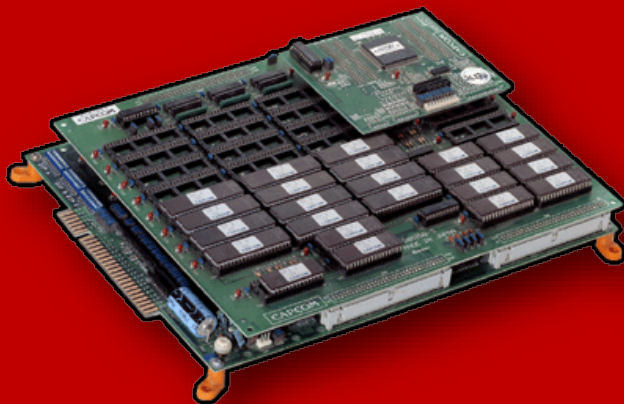
Specifications – CP System

CPU: Primary: Motorola 68000 @ 10 MHz (some later boards 12 MHz), Secondary: Zilog Z80 @ 3.579 MHz. Co-processors: 2x CPS Super Chip.

Sound: Yamaha YM2151 @ 3.579 MHz, Oki OKI6295 @ 1 MHz (7.576 kHz samples).

Display: Resolution: Raster, 384x224 @ 59.6294 Hz, Colour depth: 16-bit (12-bit RGB with 4-bit brightness value), Colours available: 65,536. On-screen colours: 3072(192 global palettes with 16 colours each).

RAM: 68K RAM: 64 KB WORK RAM + 192 KB VRAM(Shadow), PPU: 192 KB VRAM + 16 KB CACHE RAM, Z80 RAM: 2 KB WORK RAM.
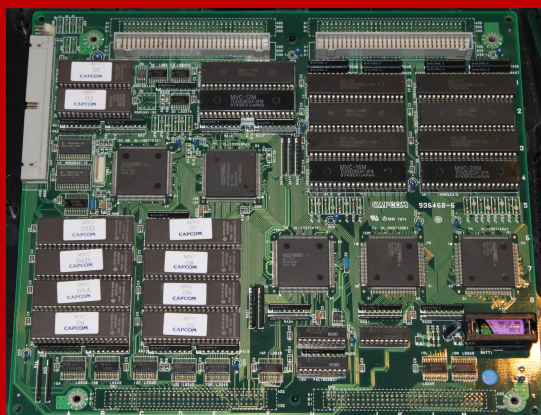

Capcom CP System board

Specifications – CP System II

CPU: Primary: Capcom DL-1525 (encrypted 68000) @ 16 MHz.

Sound: Kabuki DL-030P (encrypted Z80, but encryption not used) or standard Z80 @ 8 MHz.

Display: Active resolution: 384×224 pixels, Overscan resolution: 512×262 (262 scanlines) , Sprites: 900 on screen, Colors Available: 32-bit (RGBA) Palette: 16,777,216 colors (24-bit), Onscreen colours: 4096 (12-bit).

RAM: 1328 KB (1 MB FPM DRAM, 304 KB SRAM), A-Board: 1 MB FPM DRAM, 280 KB SRAM (256 KB video, 16 KB I/O, 8 KB sound), B-Board: 16 KB SRAM (2× 8 KB) Communication Board: 8 KB SRAM.

Capcom CP System II board

1942

First on the list is 1942, one of Capcoms first proper arcade releases that became a huge series for the company.

Year: 1984
Genre: Scrolling shooter
Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 2 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
CPU : Zilog Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound CPU: Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound Chip : 2 x AY-3-8910A PSG @ 1.5 MHz

The aim of the game

Set in the Pacific Theatre of World War II the player controls a Lockheed P-38 Lightning Airplane flying over 32 vertically scrolling sea and land scenarios whilst Shooting various types of Japanese planes to reach your ultimate goal of reaching Tokyo and destroying its fleet of aeroplanes, the player can collect a variety of weapon power-ups to enhance your plane with a double shot, a wider shot, smart bomb and having 2 further planes flank you helping you shoot the enemies ahead.

1942 was most known for its loop mechanic (and iconic sound which I can hear in my head as I type this) where the plane will fly out of the field of play avoiding oncoming trouble in tricky situations i.e lots of enemies on screen at one time, you have three rolls per level, but you are awarded a bonus for any that are unused. Upon dying or completing the game players could input their initials onto a leaderboard that showed on idle.

Unusually for a Japanese manufacturer, the content and gameplay were strange considering it was made by a Japanese manufacturer, this decision was made due to the game being primarily

1942

aimed at the American arcade market. 1942 was a huge commercial success in the arcades becoming Japan's fifth highest-grossing arcade game in 1986 and one of America's top five highest-grossing arcade conversions that year.

1942 was ported to many home consoles including the MSX, NEC PC-8801 and the Famicom home system in 1985 in Japan and North America, the game was also published by Elite Systems for the Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum, and Commodore 64.

Capcom also released many sequels; 1943, 1943 - Kai, 1941 - Counter Attack, 19XX: The War Against Destiny (1996) - 1944: The Loop Master

Overall

1942 is a relatively simple shoot-em-up but deserves any gamer's respect for being in my opinion the one that started the verticle scrolling genre. It's a great concept made better for its innovative loop mechanism allowing you to dodge the rain of bullets and planes moving at a rapid rate towards you. The enemies fire at you and move around the screen in patterns but unlike some other shooters, the planes can crash into you as well. Just sitting in one place and firing isn't going to work here, you need to move and fire and move smartly too if you want to make it to Okinawa.

1942 is well worth playing and is a full burst of nostalgia and fun, yes it's simple and not a bullet hell type game that's as hard as nails like most modern vertical scrolling shooters nowadays but I like it because of this.

Ghosts 'n Goblins

Year: 1985
Genre: Scrolling shooter

Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 2 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
CPU : Motorola MC6809 @ 6 MHz
Sound CPU: Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound Chip : 2 x YM2203 @ 1.5 MHz

The Ghosts 'n Goblins franchise was created by Tokuro Fujiwara, in 1985 and is a side-scrolling platform game, with the series as a whole selling over 4.2 million units and currently stands as the 13th best-selling Capcom game franchise. The game has been ported to many home computers and consoles including the Commodore 64, Commodore Amiga, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance, NES, Xbox, Sega Saturn, PlayStation PlayStation Portable and Nintendo Switch Online as well as having many sequels made Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Super Ghouls 'n

Ghosts, Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins, Ghosts 'n Goblins Resurrection.

The aim of the game

You play as the brave knight Arthur, who fights demonic enemies, and villains whilst navigating obstacles over several deadly levels set in the Ghoul Realm of Makai to find and save princess Guinevere who has been kidnapped by Astaroth, king of the Demon World. The levels have platforms to use to Arthur's advantage as well as various chests with armour upgrades and different weapons within. Arthur's health and magic level are shown by the armour he wears, this also being one of the most notable and frustrating features of the game, regardless of how powerful the armour Arthur wears, he will lose it with a single hit leaving him with only his boxer shorts to protect him, once hit again Arthur will die and spawn at a preset point in the level, the game has become synonymous for being one of the hardest arcade games ever made, once completing the game the player is forced to re-play the game's stages at an even

harder difficulty level to receive the game's "true" ending.

Overall

Ghosts 'n Goblins is brutally hard, but also in its own way a great game, graphically it looks really good, the design of each level was better than most arcade games in 1985, and the enemies and main character stood out well not getting lost in the foreground. The environments matched the horror theme well with a good variety of styles between the graveyard and the forest to the caves leading to the castle. The sprites are well animated, the sound effects are top-notch and matched any game of its genre at the time. The only downside or upside depending on your opinion is the hardness or unfairness of the two hits and die system that someone at Capcom that was obviously a masochist decided on. Yes, it has its fanbase and obviously did not put people off playing it, as it sold very well, as have the other games in the franchise. It did not bother me and still does not in more modern games (I'm looking at

you Dark Souls). It was a challenge and one that was fun to play, it was also funny to a point in a cartoonish way in the way that it looked and played which also stood out at the time.

Aliens Vs. Predator

Year: 1994
Genre: Scrolling shooter
Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 3 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
CPU : Motorola MC68000 @ 16 MHz
Sound CPU: Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound Chip : 2 x AY-3-8910 @ 1.5 MHz

Alien vs. Predator made in 1994 uses a control setup with an eight-directional joystick and three buttons: one to attack, one to jump, and one to shoot. The default cabinet for the game allows as many as three players to play simultaneously, although some smaller cabinets only accommodated two players. The game was based on an early draft of a script for a film

Ghosts 'n Goblins
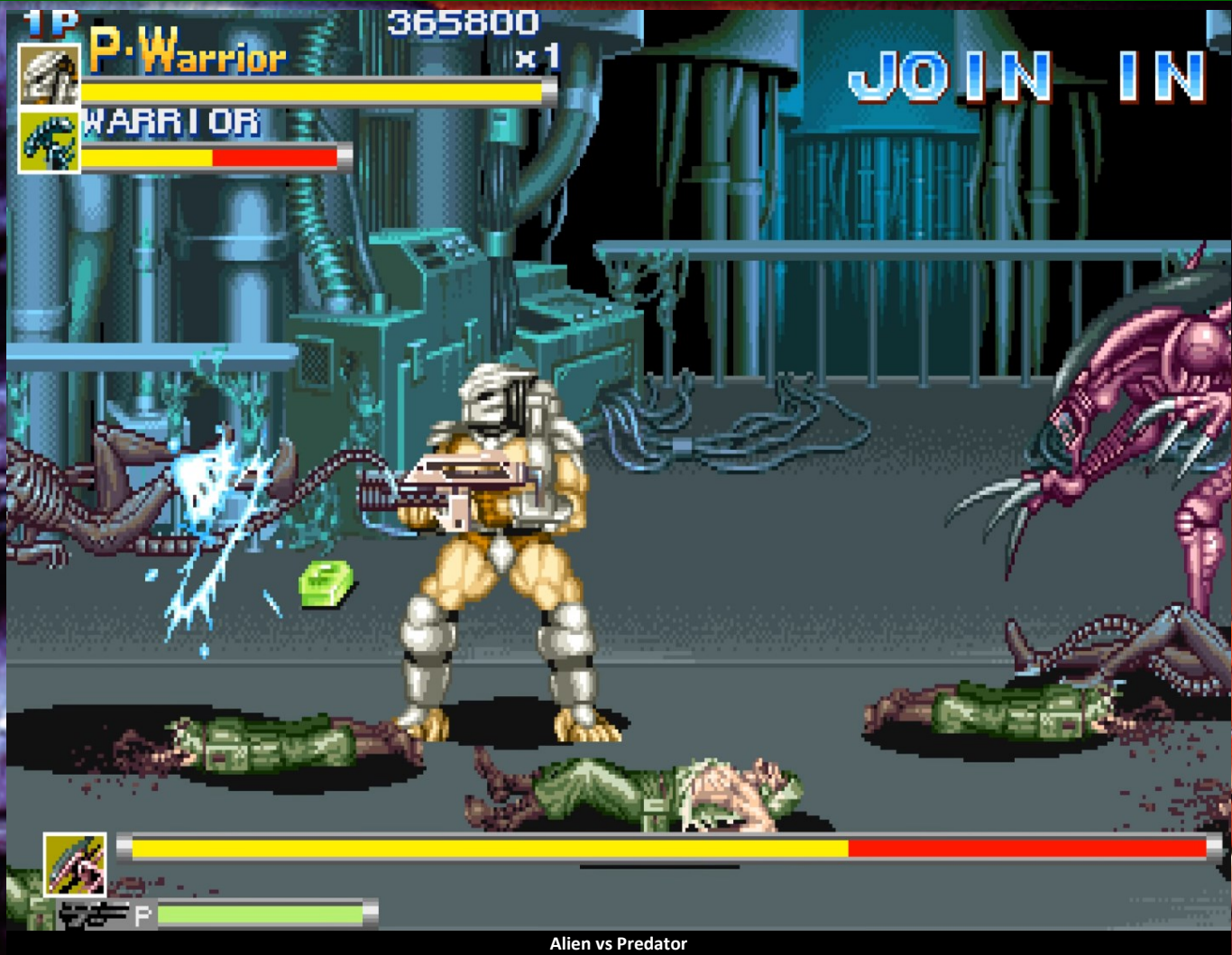
Alien vs Predator

adaptation of the *Alien vs. Predator* comic book series but was not released until after the game and was an entirely different story. Alien vs. Predator was well received by critics. In Japan, Game Machine listed the game on their July 15th, 1994, issue as being the third most-successful arcade unit of the month.

AVP as it is commonly known was not ported to any home or console system although an unrelated Alien vs. Predator beat 'em up game for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System was made.

The aim of the game

San Drad has been overrun by Aliens, and the cybernetically-enhanced Major Dutch Schaefer and Lieutenant Linn Kurosawa of the United States Colonial Marine Corps have been abandoned by their superiors after being overrun and cornered by the Aliens. Before they can be killed, a pair of Predators appear and destroy the Aliens. The Predators offer an alliance with the two cyborgs to team up to stop the Alien infestation.

The player or players take control of up to three of four characters: Dutch, Linn, a Predator hunter, and a Predator warrior to defeat the aliens across seven stages scrolling left to right. The ultimate aim of the game is to destroy the Aliens Hive and kill the Alien Queen.

Three of the four characters are equipped with a melee weapon, a katana for Linn, a bladed naginata staff for the Hunter, and an extendable-

retractable spear for the Warrior. Dutch has a cybernetic arm to hit the Aliens with as well as being able to hold and swing any melee weapon dropped by another character, each character is also equipped with a projectile weapon for ranged attacks. Ammunition is represented by a meter near the bottom of the screen, when the meter is depleted, the character is unable to fire until it refills, A variety of weapons such as grenade launchers and flamethrowers can be found or taken from fallen enemies, but these have a limited ammunition supply, also found throughout the levels are jewels for bonus points and food and medicine to restore lost health.

The characters' details are as below.

Predator Warrior -The older of the two Predators, the Warrior is a well-balanced and powerful character with no weaknesses; he boasts good reach and damage.

Predator Hunter - The Hunter is the younger of the two Predators. He plays similarly to the Warrior but lacks quick recovery but compensates by having a more damaging jumping dive attack.

Major Dutch Schaefer - Dutch is named after Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in the original Predator film. He is a human cyborg and has a cybernetic arm with a smart gun mounted on it. His attacks are powerful but slow. Dutch can powerbomb enemies for massive damage

Lieutenant Linn Kurosawa - Linn is a human cyborg who uses a handgun and katana and can execute several martial arts attacks. She is faster and more agile than Dutch.

Overall

Back in the 90's side-scrolling games were popular, Konami had X-Men, The Simpsons, TMNT and Sega the Spider-Man franchise. Capcom had The

Punisher, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs and Aliens Vs. Predator which appeared in the arcades in 1994.

Aliens Vs. Predator did everything right that was required for a great scrolling beat-em-up, you had a large variety of enemies to fight, xenomorph grunts, xenomorph bruisers, boss level xenomorphs, face huggers, rogue Predators, private army soldiers in exo-suits and not forgetting the Alien Queen.

The controls are spot on and once mastered made the game massively fun to play with each character having special moves and weapons, on top of all of this you could play with up to three people at once making the experience even better. The graphics of the characters and enemies are large, colourful and very well animated, killing xenomorphs and slicing and dicing enemies is pure arcade bliss and feels great and very visceral. The locations of abandoned factories, space stations, and jungles look great and detailed and the sound effects and soundtrack playing in the background fit in perfectly. Replay value is very high as each character plays very differently and had its own strengths, attacks and weapons to use.

If you want a high-quality beat-em-up with high replayability Aliens Vs. Predator is the one for you.

Pang

Year: 1989
Type: Videogame
Genre: Platform
Cabinet Styles: Upright/Standard
Controls: Joystick: 8-way Buttons:1
Sound: Amplified Mono (one channel)

Tech Specs
CPU : Z80 (Encrypted Kabuki Model) @ 8 MHz
Sound Chips : MSM6295 @ 8 kHz, YM2413 @ 3.579545 MHz

Pang, or Buster Bros as it was known in America, is a puzzle-

action Arcade game, players destroy balloons that are terrorizing famous landmarks. Pang was originally released as an Arcade game by Capcom, It was later ported to a vast number of computers and consoles. sequels were made too Super Pang and Buster Buddies (or Pang 3!). Pang was ported to a number of home computers and consoles including the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC, Amiga and Atari ST by Ocean Software, all titled Pang and only released in Europe.

The aim of the game

The player has a single harpoon gun that fires a chain straight up and will damage a balloon that touches any part of the chain. however, there is a catch, the player cannot fire again until the harpoon has hit the ceiling or one of the balloons, they have a preset path as they move across the stage, but each will burst into smaller and harder to hit balloons each time they are hit, quickly overwhelming the player if not dispatched quickly enough, If a player touches a balloon of any size, the player dies and if two players are playing both players must start the stage again, when both players touch a balloon at the same time, only Player 1 will lose a life, but joining the other again shortly afterwards, there is a jeopardy to this though if a bonus or weapon is dropped, the player who did not die will be the only one to pick it up.

Players start with 3-5 lives depending on the setting of the machine, extra lives are also given when certain point totals have been accumulated, and the stage ends when all of the balloons are successfully cleared. The game ends after all stages have been completed.

There are 50 stages at 17 locations:

Mount Fuji, Mount Keirin, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Angkor Wat, Ayers Rock, the Taj Mahal, Leningrad, Paris, London, Barcelona, Athens, Egypt, Mount

TIME:091

PLAYER-1   300   MT.FUJI   PLAYER-2

1-1 STAGE
HI: 100000

Pang

Kilimanjaro, New York, Mayan ruins, Antarctica, and finally Easter Island.

Each location has a background that shows the area's most famous landmarks, the stages contain a different layout of blocks, some that disappear after being shot, others that do not, and some that are hidden that reveal bonuses and some that make you slide about or move slowly. The stages start with a different number and size of balloons, the largest balloon divides for the first three times it is popped after the fourth and smallest balloon is popped it vanishes, each player starts with a single harpoon, some balloons when popped may drop a special weapon, these include:

Double Wire - a twin harpoon that allows two shots at once.

Power Wire - a grappling hook that stays attached to the ceiling or block for a short time. This time can be decreased by rapidly pressing fire.

Vulcan Missile - this works much like a machine gun allowing rapid shots.

Some bonuses can be dropped, these include, a force field that protects the player from one hit by a balloon, an hourglass that slows the balls down, a clock that stops the balloons for a short time and dynamite that pops all of the balloons down to their smallest size simultaneously.

Overall

Pang is a simple game in its concept, but by god, it's addictive and fun, it reminds me somewhat of Arkanoid, it can also be very stressful but in a good way as most of the time if it is you're doing that has made it that way, as an example, the power-ups and weapons that drop are very effective but herein lies a problem, take the dynamite as an example it will split the balls into their smallest size, so if you have two large balloons left or even 4 medium size balloons, using the dynamite gives you a big problem, they will split, split again and

again until they reach their smallest size, so instead of a few balloons on the screen you now have lots more on the screen bouncing around causing chaos, this is essentially the same as the weapon power-ups, pick a double wire weapon or Vulcan up and you are now splitting the balls twice as fast.

By popping this many balloons at once your score will rocket up which is to your advantage, so the question is when to utilize them or even do you utilize them?, there is also a time limit to each stage which is fine on the starting levels as it's pretty fair but gets considerably less on the higher levels giving you something else to worry about, adding a second player to this mix also adds another level of complexity, with you both having to work in tandem thinking likewise otherwise hell breaks loose, one mistake or wrong pickup can induce panic on the screen that is both immensely fun and terrifying at the same time.

Pang is a triumph in style, design and

Commando

playability whilst also being simple and despite being old looks and plays like a dream, it beats anything like it still to date and on top of that is amazing played with a friend.

Commando

Year: 1985
Genre: Scrolling Fighter
Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 2 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
CPU : Z80 @ 4 MHz
Sound CPU: Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound Chip : 2 x AY-3-8910 @ 1.5 MHz

Commando was released by Capcom for arcades in 1985. The game was designed by Tokuro Fujiwara. who was concurrently leading the development of both Commando and Ghosts 'n Goblins at the same time, It was distributed in North America by Data East, and in Europe by several companies including Capcom, It is unrelated to the 1985 film of the same name, which was released six months after the game.

Commando was a critical and commercial success, becoming one of the highest-grossing arcade video games of 1985 and one of the best-selling home video games of 1986. It was also highly influential, spawning numerous clones following its release while popularizing the run-and-gun shooter genre. Commando was ported to many home computers and consoles including the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Amiga and Atari ST.

The aim of the game

The player plays as Super Joe, who is dropped off in a jungle by a helicopter and has to fight his way out fending off a massive assault of enemy soldiers over eight levels, once these levels are cleared a helicopter picks Joe up again and he returns to the beginning so the game really has no end, Joe is armed with an assault rifle with unlimited ammunition as well as a limited supply of hand grenades, Joe can fire his gun in any of the eight directions that he faces, his grenades can be thrown to clear obstacles, and explosions from well-placed grenades can kill several enemies at once they can only be thrown vertically toward the top of the screen, at the end of each level, Joe must fight several

soldiers streaming from a gate or fortress. prisoners of war can also be freed as they are transported across the screen by the enemy for bonus points, extra lives are given at 10,000 points, and 50,000 scores up to 960,000; thereafter, no more lives. Play continues until Super Joe dies which ends the game.

Overall

My fondest remembrance of commando was the Commodore 64 port, with its brown and green detailed backgrounds, chunky sprites and fantastic sounds and music by Rob Hubbard the sound master himself, I did play commando in the arcade and for its time it was a good game but not fantastic, the difference to most other vertical scrollers at the time was that you controlled the pace of the game and when the screen

scrolled, unlike others at the time which moved at its own pace, also you played a human, not an aeroplane or spaceship.

You fought against other humans and tanks and jeeps, the 8-way movement of Joe is great being able to spray bullets around the screen, the use of grenades was somewhat tactical and being in short supply you had to be careful when to use them, they also hit objects behind bunkers and on bridges making them deadly and were essential to get through some sections of the game, it certainly wasn't a difficult game to play but not having to worry about ammo made the game easy but very playable, it was not ground-breaking but was definitely fun, the graphics are a muddy green and brown colour and detailed, the sprites of the soldiers, jeeps, tanks fortresses and backgrounds looked

great, the tune playing in the background was ok but nothing special.

Commando for me was the start of a different kind of vertical scroller a bit like 1942, it did something new that kicked off another sub-genre and this is why I like it as a game, it did something different.

Final Fight

Year: 1989
Genre: Scrolling Fighter
Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 2 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
CPU : Z80 @ 4 MHz
Sound CPU: Z80 @ 3 MHz
Sound Chip : 2 x AY-3-8910 @ 1.5 MHz

Final Fight

Final Fight was designed by Akira Nishitani and was produced by Yoshiki Okamoto, When coming up with the game's concept, Okamoto looked at the arcade game Double Dragon II: The Revenge and its success as his basis for Final Fight. According to Okamoto, the sales division of Capcom originally requested a Street Fighter sequel, so his team decided to promote Final Fight as a Street Fighter sequel at trade shows, the title was changed to Final Fight before its official release after feedback from operators stated that the game was nothing like Street Fighter

Many of the characters are named after 1980s rock musicians such as Axl Rose (Axl), Slash (Slash), Gene Simmons (Simons), Sid Vicious (Sid), and Billy Idol (Billy) amongst others.

Final Fight was ported to many home computers and consoles including the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, U.S. Gold released ports of Final Fight for the Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC.

The aim of the game

Final Fight is set during the 1990s in Metro City, a well-known crime capital that has been ruled by violence and death for many years, a fact which the newly-elected Mayor Mike Haggar's plans to change. The majority of the violence was down to a large gang known as Mad Gear. When they learned of the mayor's plan they kidnapped his daughter Jessica to change his mind. However, when Haggar learns this, he takes immediate action by recruiting Jessica's boyfriend, Cody and his friend Guy to go on a rescue mission to track down the big boss of the gang, Belger, and rescue Jessica.

The game takes place over six stages as well as two bonus rounds, each round taking place in a different section of Metro City moving through the six major stages of Final Fight

you'll find yourself in some expected and unexpected locations on city streets, bars, subways, warehouses, and my favourite, fighting on a moving subway train, you will find yourself in wrestling rings and on skyscrapers fighting a large variety of enemies looking to kick your ass, with most rounds featuring more than one level. At the end of each round, you will need to defeat a boss to reach the next round.

You have the option of choosing any of the three players each with their own special abilities of fighting, by pressing the attack button repeatedly when attacking an enemy or multiple enemies will cause the character to perform a combo, by moving the joystick in different directions the final blow of the combo can be changed to a throw if facing the opposite direction just before landing it, by pressing the attack and jump buttons simultaneously allows the player to perform a special attack (a death blow) that strikes all surrounding enemies but will drain a small portion of your health.

By walking into one of them, once grabbed, you can perform a grab attack by pressing the attack button or perform a throw by tilting the joystick left or right, enemies can be thrown into other enemies for additional damage. Weapons, health recovery items, and items awarding extra points can be picked up by standing over one and pressing the attack button, the weapons have limited uses and if the player is disarmed by an enemy the weapon will disappear.

Overall

Final Fight is one of the best scrolling beat-em-ups made, personally Double Dragon and its sequel were better but that's just my opinion, there is something about Final Fight that makes it a little special, the graphics are large, detailed and colourful with little details and touches of a crime-

ridden city with large colourful sprites of the enemies waiting to hit you really stand out and are extremely detailed all wearing different clothing and all with different animations, they vary from small to large and will gang up on you with the smallest taking your attention away from the most powerful. The fighting is fair, the bosses can be hard but once you learn the patterns and movements they can be beaten. The gameplay holds up very well considering its age, the fighting mechanics are still very good and satisfying when you get the hits in, the replay value with the three different characters to choose from and a two-player option also add to the value, it feels like a side-scrolling version of street fighter II which is a big compliment.

A great beat-em-up with good replayability value, if you've not played Final Fight yet do so as it's an experience not to be missed.

Street Fighter II

Year: 1991
Genre: Fighter

Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 6 buttons
Sound: Stereo

Tech Specs
Capcom CP System II
Motorola 68000 (@ 16 MHz)
Raster (horizontal),
384×224 resolution,
4096 colours on screen,
16,777,216-color palette

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior was released in 1991 following an unsuccessful attempt to brand the 1989 beat 'em up game Final Fight (see above) as the Street Fighter sequel. It is one of the earliest arcade games using Capcom's CP System hardware and was designed by Akira Nishitani and Akira Yasuda, who also made Final Fight and Forgotten Worlds.

Street Fighter II was the first one-on-one fighting game to give players a choice from a variety of player characters with different moves, allowing for more varied matches.

Each character has a unique fighting style with approximately 30 moves, including new grappling moves and throws, and two or three special attacks. In the single-player mode, the player character is pitted against the seven other main characters before confronting the final CPU controlled four bosses, exclusively CPU-controlled. As in the original, a second player can join anytime for competitive matches.

Street Fighter II was immensely popular, eventually turning Street Fighter into a multimedia franchise. It had a huge impact on gaming. More than $10 billion revenue as of 2017 was grossed from all versions, mostly from arcades More than 14 million cartridges were sold for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Sega Genesis/Mega Drive, it has been upgraded many times with the first official update to the series being Street Fighter II: Champion Edition, the four computer-controlled boss characters are now human-playable and two players can choose the same character, leaving one

character with an alternate colour pattern. It had slightly improved graphics, including differently coloured backgrounds and refined gameplay.

A second upgrade, Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting was next. Hyper Fighting offered faster gameplay than its predecessors, different character costume colours and new special techniques. Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers, the third revision, gave the game a complete graphical and musical overhaul and introduced four new playable characters. It is also the first game to use Capcom's CP System II arcade hardware. The fifth arcade instalment, Super Street Fighter II Turbo, brings back the faster gameplay of Hyper Fighting, a new type of special technique known as Super Combos and a hidden character, Akuma.

Numerous home versions of the Street Fighter II games have been produced following the release of the original game. The original

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Street Fighter 2

version, Street Fighter II: The World Warrior, was ported to the Super Nintendo System in 1992, Also that year two home versions of Hyper Fighting were released: Street Fighter II Turbo for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition for Genesis/Megadrive. The next game in the series, Super Street Fighter II, was also ported to the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Genesis/Megadrive in 1994 plus many more iterations and upgrades for various systems in the future.

The aim of the game

Two opponents, player vs player or player vs CPU fight one-on-one in close quarter combat in a series of best-two-out-of-three matches. The objective being to deplete the opponent's vitality before the timer runs out. If both opponents knock each other out at the same time or the timer runs out with both fighters having an equal amount of vitality left, a double KO or draw game is declared and additional rounds will be played until sudden death, If there is no clear winner by the end of the final round, then either the computer-controlled opponent will win by default in a single-player match or both fighters will lose in a 2-player match.

The game uses an eight-directional joystick and six attack buttons. You can jump, crouch and move towards or away from the opponent, as well as guard the character from an opponent's attacks. There are three punch buttons and three kick buttons of different strength and speed (Light, Medium and Heavy). The player can perform grabbing and throwing attacks from any position, unlike in the original *Street Fighter*. Special moves can be performed by inputting a combination of directional and button-based commands, memorizing and timing these moves is key to success in any Street Fighter game.

After every third match in the single-

player mode, the player will participate in a bonus round for additional points, including a car-breaking event, a barrel breaking game where the barrels are dropped off from a conveyor belt above the player and a drum-breaking bonus game where drums are flammable and piled over each other. Unlike the original, Street Fighter II has a roster of multiple playable characters, each with its own different fighting style and special moves.

The roster of eight characters available are;

Ryu and Ken - the main characters from the original *Street Fighter*

E. Honda - a sumo wrestler from Japan, who wants to prove his fighting style

Blanka - a beast-like mutant from Brazil who was raised in the jungle

Guile - a former special forces operative from the USA, who seeks to avenge his best friend.

Chun-Li - a female martial artist and ICPO agent from China, who seeks to avenge her father.

Zangief - a pro wrestler and national hero from the USSR

Dhalsim - a wise Yogi from India, who seeks to help his village home.

The single-player mode featured four CPU-controlled opponents whom the player faces after defeating the other main characters. The bosses in the game are:

Balrog - an African-American boxer who was banned from formal tournaments.

Vega - a vain and conceited claw-welding, ninja-like Spanish matador, bullfighter and top assassin.

Sagat - a one-eyed Muay Thai master from Thailand, and the former champion of the original *Street Fighter*.

M. Bison - a mysterious military commander and leader of a secret drug cartel and crime organization known as Shadaloo.

Overall

A one-on-one fighter with huge characters trying to beat each other over 3 rounds using special moves by inputting button combinations that the player needed to remember and use efficiently, what is there not to like? The legacy of Street Fighter shows that even now it's still popular, the fact that Capcom revised it and upgraded it to add so many tweaks, balances and improvements speaks for itself.

Street Fighter II was a big improvement on Street Fighter I

which is why it is on this list and Street Fighter I is not, it spawned so many similar games and practically invented the genre, special joysticks were made to play the game on home consoles due to the six-button system, the character sprites were massive, colourful and well animated much more than most other games of its time, the backgrounds were hand-drawn and immensely detailed, people where queuing up to play this game because you could fight against another human player one-on-one. Add to that that there were 8 characters to master, and players needed to work out and remember the combos for each fighter, it was not the characters themselves you had to beat it was how the other player used that character.

Street Fighter II started this genre and then Capcom went on to improve and define it as the best fighting franchise ever.

Giga Wing

Year: 1999
Genre: Shooter
Cabinet styles: Upright cab
Controls: Joystick – 8 Way, 2 buttons
Sound: Mono

Tech Specs
Capcom CP System II
Motorola 68000 (@ 16 MHz)
Raster (horizontal),
384×224 resolution,
4096 colours on screen,
16,777,216-color palette

Giga Wing, released in 1999 by Capcom and used the new revision of Capcom's new CP System II Board to great effect with its graphic prowess, it was ported to the Sega Dreamcast and also included on an arcade compilation package for the Nintendo Switch.

The aim of the game

Numerous wars have been fought since ancient times - many

civilizations have emerged and disappeared. The cause of the wars is Medallion, a divine stone that brings both prosperity and destruction to humankind. Uncounted civilizations have sought it, fought for it and vanished. What they gained in their struggle for power was nothing short of annihilation!

Giga Wing takes place during a fictional war within a steampunk setting. The player controls one of four different futuristic aircraft and is tasked to destroy enemy aircraft, tanks, ships, and buildings using both guns and missiles mounted on the aircraft as well as a limited supply of bombs that damage or destroy all enemies on-screen when used. The game is based on the player trying to destroy a medallion that possesses great power, many of the bosses use the medallion as a weapon. In the end, it seems an evil villain called the Stranger is the real person who is in control of the Medallion and was responsible for the war, as well as other conflicts in the past including World War II, the players fight him three times as a mini-boss and as the last boss.

The player chooses one of four different craft each with its own pilot flying through seven stages.

Isha- an ace pilot who became a nun and is now out of retirement and takes to the skies again in the Porchka, a decent plane with heat-seeker missiles.

Ruby- an ex-sky pirate who now runs an orphanage for war orphans, she flies the Carmine, the fastest of the four planes and the best one for getting medals.

Sinnosuke- has issues regarding his family's own Medallion. He flies the Raijin, with a wide arc of fire and the coolest bomb.

Stuck- Also called Shutock in the game, he is a doctor who also happens to be a cyborg. he also has some scores to settle with the

Medallion. His plane is the venerable Widerstand.

You begin the game with three lives. You have the option to continue once all lives are lost, the only catch being the seventh stage is only accessible if the player does not use any continues. Each ship in *Giga Wing* has three attacks: a normal shot (spray of bullets), reflect (reflects enemy bullets and damages enemy ships in the field), and force bomb (nullifies all on-screen bullets) and power-ups are also dropped by enemies. You start with two bombs and up to seven can be collected, each bomb left in reserve after any boss fight gives the player a bonus. Players can increase their score multiplier by collecting medals dropped by defeated ships. Player rank is determined by your score at the end of each level, the game also adjusts the difficulty accordingly by rank.

The stand out feature of Gigawing from most other shoot-em-ups is the reflect feature, used by holding and pressing the fire button which then produces a circle around three times the size of your craft, once used it reflects all bullets back to the enemies on-screen giving you a great opportunity to rack up your score to insane amounts due to these hits scoring more than a normal hit.

The 'Giga' in the title refers to the insane scores this game lets you make. You can make billions very easily, once hit some enemies will drop a medal and by collecting these you rack up massive scores.

There are six kinds of medals that enemies release:

The first medal is worth 1 point, and x + 1 after that. Generated only by reflected shots hitting home.

The second medal is worth 1 point, and x + 1 after that.

The third medal is worth 5 points, and x + 5 after that. The fourth medal is worth 10 points, and x + 10 after

Giga Wing

that. The fifth medal is worth 20 points, and x + 20 after that.

Lastly, there is one medal that is very rare and can only be found in one stage. Worth 100 points.

The medal tally is cumulative, i.e. if x is your medal count before collecting, say, a medal worth 10, the collected medal will be worth x + 10, you now shoot down an enemy, its score will be (Base value) (x + 10).

Overall

Graphically, Giga Wing is a good looking game for its age The enemy designs are varied if a little odd in design, there are lots of explosions (and I mean lots), smart-bomb effects and aesthetic bullet patterns to keep you busy. The character designs are ok but nothing special, although there

is an underlying story with character animation talks split within the combat.

The biggest thing for me that makes Gigawing stand out is the massive scores that you can rack up, the graphics look great and the screen can get pretty hectic with very little slowdown and the reflect shield mechanic is where the game really shines. It works very well and is essential for getting high scores when used to good effect, level design can get a bit samey after a while but it all ties into a really great shmup that is very easy to keep playing just to see how high your score can get

Replayability is good with 20 levels, 12 endings and 4 characters to play. If you fancy a good shmup that is not a really tough bullet hell game then give this a try.

Notable Mentions

Below are some of the games that missed out on the list above but still deserve a mention.

Bionic Commando - run-and-gun platform game.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs - side-scrolling beat 'em up.

Capcom vs. SNK 2 – Beat-em-up.

Dungeons & Dragons*: Tower of Doom* - side-scrolling beat 'em up.

Dynasty Wars - side-scrolling beat-'em-up.

MAD MAX

KEITH SHAW

first saw Mad Max as a young 12-year-old on VHS rented from Blockbuster Video, underage, thanks to my parents being very understanding about age limits, it had a big impact on me as a child as did many other films now deservedly labelled as cult classics. I have been a huge fan of films ever since. Be warned, spoiler's ahead.

Mad Max is seen as a cult classic deservedly so, it spawned two sequels, Mad Max 2 -The Road Warrior (1981) and Mad Max - Beyond Thunderdome (1985) as well as a very successful reboot in 2015, I believe it's the best in the series especially so due to its low budget. To me it is a story of revenge, others not so and have divided opinion among fans and reviewers alike. It became a kickstart to Gibson's career and also lauded for its action sequences and filmography.

Directed by George Miller who went on to direct the sequel, produce the remake as well as two successful films as far from the dystopian world of Mad Max as you could possibly get, Babe: Pig in the City and Happy Feet. Miller's direction is superb, keeping the action flowing with chaotic car and bike chases and set pieces which are brilliantly filmed, the camera work is smooth with cuts and close-ups placed well to add suspense and thrills, he brings the intensity of a post-apocalyptic world to life never before seen for its time.

The moral issues that Miller introduces into the film are subtle, Is Max just as bad as the Bikers by enacting revenge as they had originally done or is he just overtaken with emotion from the death of his family forgetting his actions and consequences? Gibson shows why he went on to become an accomplished actor, showing emotion, anguish and

pain of loss, playing the part of a cop in a post-apocalyptic world to great effect, the Bikers and especially Toecutter are well-acted and come across suitably mad befitting the parts given them.

Set in a dystopian post-apocalyptic world, staring a young unknown Mel Gibson as Max Rockatansky and a cast of heavily modded muscle cars and bikes. Mad Max is a high-octane thrill ride. The film starts with a chaotic and hectic car chase involving three cop interceptor pursuit cars, Max's friend Goose on a motorbike and another car occupied by The Nightrider, part of a crazy gang of bikers led by Toecutter, their Bonkers leader. It's a great start to a movie, it's brilliantly filmed with lots of fast action bumper camera shots, close up's of bike wheels, leathers, dark visor helmets and tense action, along the way innocent pedestrians, a trailer that just so happens to be stuck in the

middle of the road and many other obstacles dodged, smashed and generally wrecked. At one point a toddler wanders across the road and is narrowly missed by two cars going either side of him, its an iconic set piece which ups the intensity of the chase and it works really well, remembering that CGI did not exist in 1979, it's an impressive feat of cinematography.

Whilst collecting the coffin of the nightrider, the gang get up to high spirit's chasing after an innocent young couple driving a Hot Road, eventually catching up with them, raping the woman and wrecking the car, one of the gang is left behind and taken to the Halls of Justice for trial, no witnesses turn up and the gangs' lawyer's get him off, Goose is unhappy about the decision and roughs him up. Whilst being led away Goose is threatened and informed to watch his back. Later Goose is caught and burned, left for dead.

In my opinion, the start of the film sets a high precedent that unfortunately, the middle of the film does not quite live up to, devastated by the condition of Goose, Max hands in his notice but is advised to think about it by his boss for a few weeks before deciding. Whilst on vacation with his wife and son, it just so happens Toecutter and his gang are at a nearby beach to set upon Max's wife. A hand is severed whilst fleeing, a chase insures.

It's a bit convoluted, to tell the truth. Don't get me wrong, it's well shot and needs to be there to push the story along but I found myself impatiently waiting for the action to kickstart again, luckily the end does not disappoint.

Max and family are caught at his Grandmas farm and set upon by the

gang, said wife and son are killed in a rather macabre way, understandably upset, seeing red and ignoring the consequences he sets out for revenge. After Max witnesses the devasting death of his wife and son, he turns into a different man, racked with pain and anger, revenge is the only thing on his mind, the action kicks off again, a montage of Max driving into the sunset and through the night mowing down bikers with his Black V8 Muscle Car whilst chasing down Toecutter, cue more low camera shots, fast action, high-speed crashes and bodies and bike parts flying left right and centre. Finally, Max hunts down the last member of the gang in a fitting end to the story.

Mad Max (1979)

Running Time: 1 hour 28 minutes
(1 hour 33 minutes for the Special Edition)
Directed by: George Miller
Country of Production: Australia
Budget: US$300,000
Gross Worldwide: US$ 8.77 Million
Starring: Mel Gibson, Joanne Samuel, Hugh Keays-Byrne

The Ford Falcon XB Coupe is another star of the film

For those interested: a short note about Max's car, for me a star in its own right. It's a Ford Falcon Coupe 1973 XB V8 351 in black, exclusive to Australia and it's a beast. The main modification is the front end to make it look meaner as well as a few other small body modifications.

Overall - Considering the year it was made and the low budget given, it does not show in its production values, stunts, crashes, explosions and the many vehicles that must have been written off perfecting the crashes. It's a very accomplished piece of filmmaking and in my opinion, stands out as the best in the series. The film does drag on somewhat in the middle but does not deter from the enjoyment of the whole film. Given its well-deserved cult status, If you have not seen Mad Max it's well worth a watch and in some respects better than a few of its modern-day counterparts.

The Toecutter is the leader of the gang

A gruesome scene as Jessie runs for her and her son's life

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