SEGA MANIA

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MEGA-CD • MEGA DRIVE • MASTER SYSTEM • GAME GEAR • ISSUE No.1 2021

WELCOME TO THE NEXT LEVEL

...It's been a bloody long time since a new Sega console showed its face in the Argos catalogue (RIP, how will my parents know what I want for Christmas now?) and yet love for the Japanese wonder company hasn't faded. Old fans are buying up the classics on eBay faster that Sonic can clear act 1 of Green Hill if you hold right and hammer jump; pushing the prices to obscene levels, and new fans are looking to expand their horizons a little more after being dragged into the fray by whatever atrocity the blue blur has been forced into appearing in lately. With the release of the Mega Drive Mini, the barrier to entry in the emulation world being smashed to smithereens by the likes of RetroPie and the excellent remastering skills of M2 and Christian Whitehead redefining some of Sega's best titles. It's never been easier to get your hands on Sega's entire library of games in some shape or form.

A Sega addiction isn't complete however, without a copy of your favourite mag to tell you what's hot and what's not. Unfortunately, though, if you pop down to your newsagents this afternoon with your paper-round money in hand to grab the latest copy of Sega Power, Mega Tech, Mean Machines or Sega Force you're going to find yourself leaving empty handed. If you cry a little while sitting on the bus home, listening to Ace of Base on your shiny new Walkman in an attempt to console yourself there'll be no judgement from us but we might just have a cure for what ails ya...

...welcome to Sega Mania, a brand-new magazine dedicated to everything Sega. Our premier issue kicks off in the year 1990. Not because we're ignorant of Sega's humble beginnings in the 50's and rise to stardom in the late '80s, but because the turn of the decade was when things truly started getting interesting. The future was here, shoulder pads were out and smiley face t-shirts were in, the internet was on the horizon and brit pop was blaring out its first few notes on the radio. 16-bit was the all the rage and your ZX Spectrum was off to the local car boot sale.

The '90s were a special time for gaming and an exceptional time for Sega (well until later but we'll get to that) and so by purchasing our magazine you've given us a license to drag you kicking and screaming backwards in time into the heady days of black cartridges, crazy controllers and blast processing.

There'll be a smattering of modern Sega developments across our pages too, but our number one aim is to bathe you in the light of their glory days. So put your feet up, grab a glass of slightly luminous Sunny Delight and a Freddo bar that doesn't require a bank loan to buy and get ready to dive deep into the mother of all nostalgia-based magazines.

We're super grateful you're here and we really hope you enjoy it!

-Tim Hugall, Editor

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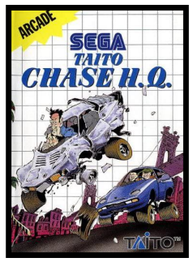

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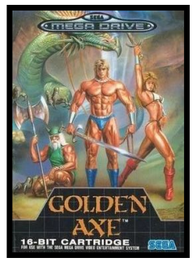

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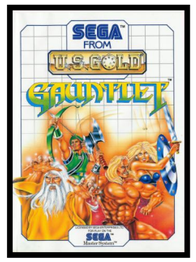

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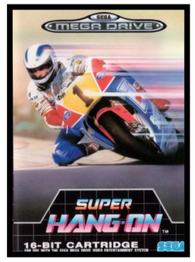

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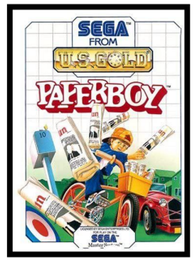

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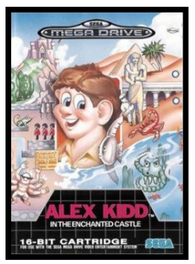

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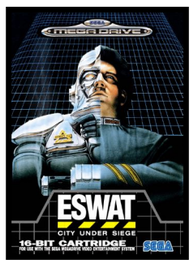

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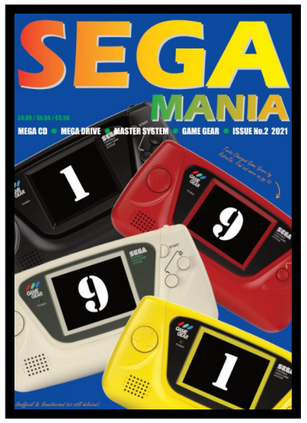

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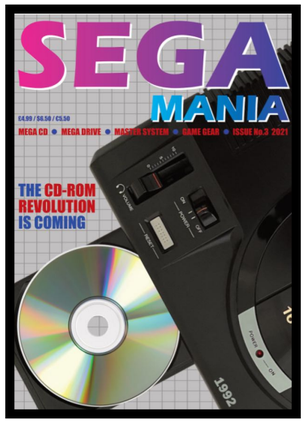

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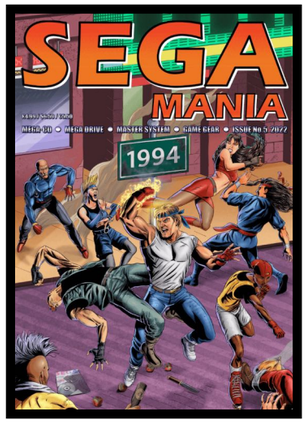

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THE HISTORY OF SEGA MANIA...

...our editor Tim reveals the origins of the UK's newest Sega Magazine!

About a year ago I had an urge to do something creative outside of my 9-5 job, targeting the retro gaming scene. As a major hobby of mine it's something I've always been keen to share with other people. There are so many excellent resources out there for existing and new retro gaming enthusiasts and I really wanted to add to those resources in my own way, but I didn't quite know what shape to make my contribution. I'd dabbled in the past with a blog and tried my hand at becoming a YouTuber but neither of these things ever scratched the creative itch in quite the right way. The blog was fun to begin with, but the sheer speed in which competing articles appear often results in your efforts getting lost in the ether in a matter of days and although clicks, likes and views aren't life or death, poorly performing articles can make it hard to carry on trying. As for YouTube, well with a face for radio and a voice that's really good at boring people to death it was a bust from day one.

Writing a book however was something that really appealed to me. I've always liked writing and I was excited by the prospect of seeing a paperback with my name on it sitting on a bookshelf someday. There's a permanence in a novel that in my opinion gives a greater feeling of accomplishment and value than something published online. So, I set to work, and began writing a history of British gaming from the year of my birth right up to the modern day. I quickly learned however, that creating a novel is a very long and lonely process and although my blog and YouTube channel were unsuccessful, the feedback from the small amount of community that built up around them was a more important motivational tool than I had

> "I CAME UP WITH A PLAN, DISCUSSED THE CONCEPT WITH SOME FRIENDS, FELT HAPPY WITH MY DECISION AND THEN, DID ABSOLUTELY F*CK ALL ABOUT IT FOR 12 MONTHS"

realised. My novel wouldn't see that kind of engagement until it was finished. So, despite my best efforts it rapidly became clear that without the drive of a team or a community behind me, I just wasn't cut out at being a novelist either and it wasn't long before the book ended up in the recycle bin with the other projects that had gone before it.

I was still, however, enamoured with the concept of putting a physical product in people's hands, in an online world; collecting items such as books, magazines, toys and records are once again becoming increasingly popular as people seek a more visceral experience after years of digital burn out. With this in mind and writing still being my primary focus I began to explore the idea of a magazine. A shorter development cycle combined with the prospect of working with others, along with the physicality of it and the opportunity to gather community feedback after each edition, would allow me to address all the issues that had led to my failures in the past. A magazine was actually something I could see myself pursuing to completion and regular releases would perhaps appeal to audiences looking to add something new to their collections.

Finding inspiration was easy. Having discussed the importance of magazines in the world of gaming pre-internet in my abandoned novel. I'd purchased copies of magazines I'd owned as a child, and I'd tried to identify what had made them a must have for every British gamer in the 1990s. I was mainly a Sega gamer throughout my younger years and it was the likes of Sega Power, Mean Machines Sega, Mega-Tech, Sega Pro and Sega XS that had caught my attention the most. Going through the magazines again as an adult resulted in every turn of a page giving me incredible feelings of nostalgia and I was saddened by the thought that such magazines would likely never make a comeback. At least not in the way we'd known them.

From this point all was clear. I would aim to create a new Sega magazine in a style similar to the legendary publications of old. With a goal to not only to cover the games of the past from a new perspective but to also celebrate the culture of the time. It would be a nostalgia trip for Sega's old fans, and a learning experience and a view into a different era for new fans. With my idea finalised, I came up with a plan, discussed the concept with some friends, felt happy with my decision and then, did absolutely f*ck all about it for 12 months.

That was until early 2021, when the latest issue of Retro Gamer got shoved through my letterbox. One of their articles was about Amiga Addict (www.amiga-addict.com), a brand-new magazine focused on the Amiga scene with an aim to emulate the classic magazines of the '90s such as Amiga Format and Amiga Power. If I'd had any contact with the Amiga Addict team in the past, I would have been tempted to say that those bastards had nicked my idea but of course that wasn't true. What they had definitely done however, was prove that the idea of a new old magazine was completely feasible. Amiga Addict's successful launch made me massively regret not doing anything with the idea I'd come up with a year ago. It was the kick up the arse I so badly needed to finally start doing something and so I set to work.

As it happens however, making a magazine is not an easy thing to do (you're forgiven if the phrase "no shit Sherlock" just jumped into your mind). It's not just the writing that takes work, there's page design and production, marketing, finance management and so much more to consider. It was clear I was going to need some help.

Thankfully, after putting some feelers out, I came across some incredibly like-minded individuals who like me had also been harbouring a burning desire to push their passion for retro gaming out into the real world for all to see. With their help and dedication, the magazine which was once a figment of my imagination has become a reality, and the fact that right now you are holding it in your very hands is nothing short of amazing to me.

You will find their incredible work strewn all throughout this magazine and I cannot thank them enough for helping me bring this magazine together. What started as a one-man vanity exercise has transformed into a team passion project. All our strengths have combined to produce what we think is a really special product and we couldn't be prouder.

Whether we've succeeded however, is not for us to say, that responsibility lies with you, the reader and we'd love to hear your feedback. Although we've produced a magazine that we wanted to make, what we really want to do is to create a magazine that you want to see and so we're fully open to your thoughts and suggestions (insults are fine too). Hopefully as a community driven publication, Sega Mania can take pride of place on the mantelpiece alongside your GamesMaster Golden joystick, FIFA '94 sticker annual and that pencil rewound copy of Definitely Maybe.

You can get in touch with us via our Discord, Email, website, or any of the social media platforms we've sold our souls to. Details are on the contents page and we can't wait to hear from you.

All that's left to say is a huge thank you to each and every one of you. Without your support this magazine could never have happened. The entire Sega Mania team and I are eternally grateful, and we hope to see you all again soon in issue two.

-TIM

Those who have come before us...

...we owe it all to these legendary publications and many more and we hope to cover them in more detail in future issues...stay tuned!

THE YEAR OF 1990

Back we go in time to the beginning of the best decade in history...

You wake up on January 1st 1990. The 80's are finally behind you, those colourful years of big hair, nuclear threat and rampant capitalism are just a memory now. Movies and music have arguably already peaked, and a recession is looming in the UK. So what's left for you to look forward to? Well, video games are about to explode, but as a Sega kid, you still have a year or so to wait before a certain blue hedgehog and some other heavy hitters appear. 1990's Master System and Mega Drive offerings are covered elsewhere in this magazine, but what else did the year have to offer? Read on for a reminder of a time of progress, politics and high emotion.

What's on the news?

The news channels are dominated by grainy images of night-time bombings in distant Kuwait as tensions rise in the Middle East. Iraqi forces move into Kuwait City, a move that would eventually lead to Operation Desert Shield and the Gulf War the following year. However, slightly closer to home there is a sense of solidarity as the Berlin Wall continues to be brought down, and the process of unifying Germany is completed.

Huge advances are being made in science and technology. Somatic gene therapy is employed successfully on a patient for the first time, the first web server is created, forming a foundation for the World Wide Web, and the Hubble Space Telescope is launched. It still orbits the Earth to this day, providing vital scientific information about the universe.

Here in the UK, Margaret Thatcher walks out of 10 Downing Street in tears as she resigns as prime minster due to dwindling support from the conservative party. The Iron Lady was replaced in the role by John Major, who would lead the nation for another seven years.

Alright, but what else is on?

How about the Simpsons? Admittedly looking very different to the loveable family we're used to seeing today, the hit show debuted on Sky TV, giving UK viewers their first taste of the soon-to-be phenomenon. If you're not one of those households with a satellite dish on the side of your home, you'll have to wait until 1996 to see it on BBC 1. Not to worry though, the first episodes of Mr Bean, Keeping Up Appearances, One Foot in the Grave, Have I Got News For You and Stars in Their Eyes all debut on terrestrial television in 1990.

Isn't there some kind of sporting event this year?

The 1990 FIFA World Cup is at the forefront of the sports world, taking place over in Italy in June and July. The tournament was short on goals, still holding the record of the lowest average goals per game, and setting a record at the time for the most red cards in a world cup tournament. England went in full of hope, with a squad containing the likes of Gary Lineker, Paul Gascoigne, John Barnes and Stuart Pearce, but went out to eventual winners West Germany on penalties. Get used to that.

In other sports, the San Francisco 49ers claim the Super Bowl trophy over in America, and Ayrton Senna wins his second Formula 1 World Championship, finishing first in the Australian Grand Prix to end a successful season. Nick Faldo wins the golfing Masters Tournament in Augusta, and in Tokyo, Buster Douglas defeats Mike Tyson by knockout in what is considered by many to be boxing's biggest ever upset.

Here in the UK, Liverpool win the 1st Division (the Premier League hasn't been invented yet) and Manchester United beat Crystal Palace in the FA Cup Final. Phil 'the Power' Taylor wins the first of his 16 World Darts Championships, and Stephen Hendry is the snooker world champ at the Crucible.

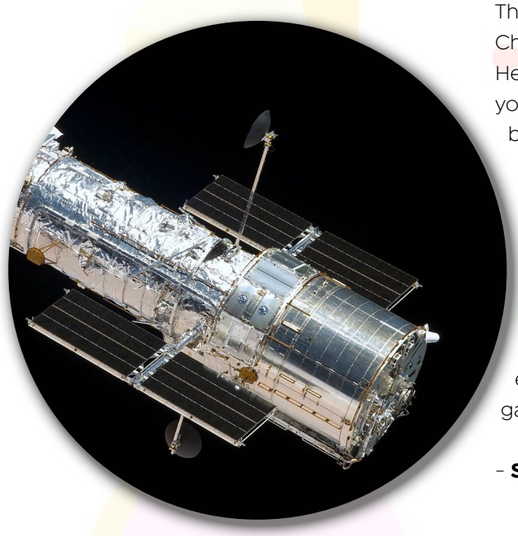
Oh, and in the Toronto SkyDome in Canada, the Ultimate Warrior defeats Hulk Hogan for the WWF Championship at WrestleMania VI. Incredible scenes.

Great, what about popular culture?

We're still having a bit of an 80's hangover, with bright colours, shell suits and baggy pants the norm. The rave and dance scenes are sweeping the underground, and somewhere in Essex, electronic punk band The Prodigy are being formed. That said, if you turn on the radio you can expect to hear a plethora of popular classics that are still played to this day. "The Power" by Snap, "Nothing Compares 2 U" by Sinead O'Connor, Madonna's "Vogue" and "U Can't Touch This" by MC Hammer are all unleashed upon the nation this year. Vanilla Ice releases "Ice, Ice Baby" to an unprepared public, and a little known pop band called Bombalurina are singing about an "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" as well. Those last two efforts are probably best left in the past, though.

There's plenty to see in your local cinema, Predator 2, Total Recall and Tremors are all there for fans of science fiction, action and monsters. Arachnophobia achieves a nice mix of light-hearted comedy and terrifying scares, depending on your stance on spiders, and Edward Scissorhands kicks off a long-standing working relationship between Tim Burton and Johnny Depp. Younger movie-goers can enjoy Home Alone, The Rescuers Down Under, or the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movie. Also, an author called Michael Crichton released a book called Jurassic Park.

The aforementioned adolescent turtles are at the top of every kid's Christmas list this holiday season. Still known as the Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles in the UK, they're a worldwide phenomenon, and every youngster wants to get an action figure of his or her favourite bodacious amphibian for Christmas. Speaking of which, the UK Christmas number 1 this year is "Saviour's Day" by Cliff Richard. Something for the traditionalists.



So an interesting year then?

Yep, especially if you're from Germany. However, even in rainy old Blighty there is plenty to keep you captivated, interested and entertained. Or you could just spend the entire year playing video games like I did.

- **Simon P**

THE ASYLUM

Sega Mania's resident lunatics Simon Pike and Sam Forrester take us on a journey down memory lane, and remind us why some things were so much better in the good old days!

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe

ORN Empire attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Nepura. I watched laser cannons glitter in the dark in the city of Liberty. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain... Except they won't.

The truly great things, the meaningful, memorable contributions which leave lasting impacts on us and the emotions we experience collectively in response to something amazing. Those things can never be lost. My bastardisation of one of the greatest movie quotes of all time should serve to illustrate that point. It's been nearly forty years since Blade Runner came out and I strongly doubt I would've even needed to name the film in this column at all, you'd all already pictured Rutger Hauer's face as he delivered those words. "Tears in rain" is an excellent metaphor for the ephemeral, the easily forgotten or the barely noticed, yet ironically the metaphor itself has left a long lasting impression on the zeitgeist of popular culture.

As I sit down to write about the consoles and games I haven't played or even really thought about for decades, I am struck by how much I remember. Not just excitedly tearing open a Christmas present at some point in the early nineties at the age of six or seven and finding a Master System 2 inside or watching a little blue hedgehog speed his way across Green Hill Zone for the first time, but the emotions that come with them. These were my first gaming experiences and they truly shaped my life. If mum and dad had got me an Action Man instead it's no exaggeration to say that I might be a different person altogether.

These days, like any other gamer, you can find me playing the more modern titles like World of Warcraft (although I prefer Classic funnily enough), CSGO, Dota2, the Final Fantasy VII remake, Gears of War, Fifa, all sorts. I've travelled to different countries to meet the online friends I've made and had experiences I never thought I would have. When I truly look back on my life so far, so much of who I am can be traced back to that Christmas morning.

Of course, like many reading this, I have friends who aren't the least bit interested in gaming, don't own a console or worse still have never really played a video game at all! Sure they may have been to parties and had a go at Wii Bowling or another party game, but they've never been truly captivated by the things we have. I sometimes feel sad about that, like they're missing out on something huge and that they haven't had that emotional resonance.

Going back to play some of those older titles after so many years is a surreal yet refreshing experience. Those of us who have been around the block a few times will know the pain of online toxicity, min-maxing, sweaty try-harding, the win-at-all-costs mentality and the odd anxiety of letting teammates you've never met down. Gaming has become somewhat of a science. If you don't watch Twitch to see what the best gamers in the world do in your game of choice, you're at a disadvantage. You play the game optimally or you risk the screaming rage of a 12-year-old on the other side of a headset. It's different. Even mobile games are programmed to keep you coming back for rewards, often at the expense of actual gameplay.

So coming back to play titles where I didn't need to worry about all of that was nothing short of joyous. If you've picked up this mag I expect you've probably kept up with retro titles for quite a while and play them fairly often. None of what I'm saying will be new to you. But from someone who is very late to the party, I'm glad to be here. 'Tears in rain' my ass.

Sam F

I have a confession to make

I don't think I had a Sega console in 1990. I want to say I was still playing on my Commodore 64, or my friend's Amstrad CPC 464, or my other friend's Spectrum ZX. Some favourites of mine on those ancient and venerated devices include a game called Renegade, and it's sequel, Target: Renegade.
I also recall being fascinated by Gauntlet on the Spectrum ZX, and having my imagination captured by a little-known Codemasters title called Armourdillo on my Commodore 64. All of these games were on tapes, and had very long initial loading times during which flashing, coloured lines were displayed on your screen and a sound not unlike the grating squeal of those old dial-up modems was played through your speakers.

As you might imagine, the advent of consoles was a huge step-up for gamers. Once I got my hands on a Master System, and eventually the Mega Drive, I was in love with the blue brand. The games provided a huge leap forward in quality and complexity, the cartridges made loading screens a thing of the past (until discs came along), and the simple plug-in and play premise of consoles made gaming a far less technical affair for kids who, unlike the kids of today, were more used to digging for bugs in the garden than operating complex technology.

These were very different times. The concept of 'downloading' a game from some kind of digital, 'online' store was completely alien. Going to your local, independent gaming outlet and picking up one of those chunky black boxes was an event. Hand the friendly shop assistant your birthday money and read the manual in the car on the way home. Those gaming magazines as well, they were a big deal to a 90's kid. The writers held a lot of sway on our young, impressionable minds. Nowadays people know to take reviews with a pinch of salt. It's just one person's opinion after all, and we've all loved games that the critics hated, and been disappointed by games that the critics loved. In those days it was different. If there are two games I'm interested in and Mean Machines Sega gave one 88% and the other 89%, you better believe I'm buying the latter!

Tribalism, that was another thing that those old magazines were fond of influencing my hyperactive little mind with. I mean, if you were a Sega kid back in those days, Nintendo were the enemy, and vice versa. You were either team blue or team red. It was fun, actually, those friendly (or maybe not so friendly) playground arguments about whether Sonic was better than Mario, spouting half-understood 'facts' about processors and rendering capabilities to convince an associate that they made a terrible life choice in going with the NES over the Master System. I wouldn't take it back. I enjoyed it. Having said that, it did cause me to miss out on some really good stuff. When I eventually played Mario, I did have to begrudgingly admit that it was great. I admitted it only to myself, I would never let my so-called friends have that victory.

Believe it or not, this kind of mentality is still very prominent today. I am in a position where I interact with a lot of modern gamers, from casual FIFA players to hardcore JRPG nuts, and that tribal split is still right there, right out in the open, only nowadays it's mainly between PlayStation and Xbox. There are people out there, grown-ass adults, who will never touch one of those lousy PlayStation consoles, because Xbox is best in every way and nothing Sony put out is worth a second glance. It's crazy really, to deny yourself such potentially great content because you've already decided it sucks. Why? Because of some misguided loyalty to a multinational company that has no idea you exist and to whom gaming is only a small part of their vast commercial empire.

It is fun though. It may be counterproductive, it may defy common sense, but it's human nature. Just put an Arsenal fan in a room with a Tottenham fan. They might be civil, they'll probably even get along, but that divide is just right there, like an elephant in the room. It's alright though, it's good to feel so strongly about your hobbies and interests, it shows character. A lively mind is a passionate one. Keep it friendly, remember where the line is, and it can be healthy and spark long, interesting debates in which everyone learns something.

So as I sit here, enjoying Breath of the Wild on my Nintendo Switch, installing God of War on my PlayStation 4 and keeping an eye out for new Halo: Infinite footage, I'm very much aware that I'm still that Sega kid underneath it all. Cut me and I bleed blue. Not Sony blue, Sega blue.

Simon P

NEWS ZONE

Is any of this news? I mean all of this stuff has happened now. We don't know, but it sure is fun taking a look at what was big in the world of Sega back in 1990.

Have we written some stuff in the present tense instead of past tense and vice versa? Absolutely. Oh and there's also some new actual news stuff in here as well (check out the Master System table it's so freakin' cool!) so consistency has gone completely out of the window but hopefully you get the idea. It's a bunch of stuff that was happening at the time and some stuff which is happening right now.

Lots of stuff, news stuff. Stuff that is news...and so on...

The second coming!

All the talk this year is about the release of the Sega Mega Drive over here in the UK, but don't forget about the Master System II! First announced at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago (where they also kept talking about something called the Sega Genesis), the Master System II is a more compact, cheaper version of our favourite 8-Bit console.

The Master System II has a nifty slide-opening cartridge slot, but loses the composite output and the card slot. This means that you can't use your flat cards or your 3D glasses in it, but who still has those anyway, right?

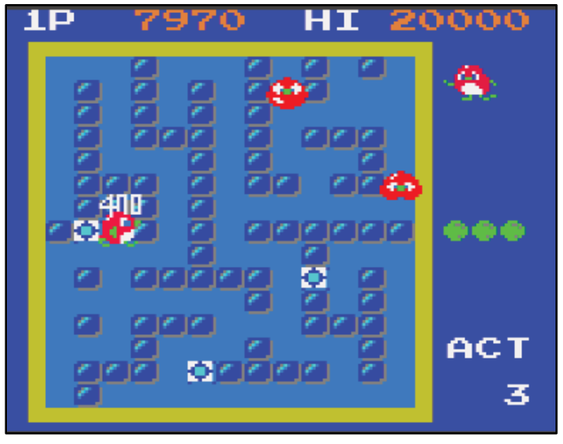
Alex Kidd in Miracle World will be built in to the console, so you'll be able to jump into a game without even going to the trouble of slotting in a cartridge!

This new, less expensive system is sure to attract new gamers into our ever-growing fold.

Grab your batteries!

The Game Gear is currently taking Japan by storm, but what can we expect when it hits the UK next year? Let's take you to the Far East to find out what's going on with Sega's handheld powerhouse.

The first thing you'll notice in the screenshots dotted around this page, is that it's full colour! The Game Gear has all the power of the 8-Bit Master System, but can actually process more colours, meaning those games are going to look extra sparkly on that high-quality 3.2 inch screen. The console is designed to be held horizontally, and this, along with the hardware similarities, means that awesome, updated ports of Master System classics could be at your fingertips very easily.



The Game Gear launched in Japan with Columns, Pengo and Super Monaco GP. The Game Gear version of Columns is almost identical to the Master System version, apart from the appearance of a mysterious city in the background while you play. Super Monaco GP is another faithful adaptation of a Master System hit, while Pengo is a cute, penguin-centric puzzler in which players need to push blocks of ice around the screen to trap enemies and squish them, with gameplay that looks oddly similar to the currently Nintendo exclusive Bomberman.

Some other games to keep an eye out for that our Japanese friends are enjoying this year include high-speed air-combat simulator G-LOC: Air Battle, hard-core role-playing adventure game Dragon Crystal and a Game Gear port of the highly-rated platform adventure Wonder Boy.

So with loads of great games, a full colour screen that's backlit for sneaky bed-time gaming sessions, a headphone port for stereo sound, and all the processing power of your Master System, the Game Gear is perfectly set up to drag us forward from the murky, green-tinted handheld gaming offered by Nintendo's Game Boy. In fact, let's have some fun and make a prediction. By the end of the decade, Sega's Game Gear will have blown the Game Boy out of the handheld console market and taken its rightful place at the top of the pile.

You heard it here first!

STREETS OF RAGE 4 GETS FIRST DLC

If you're a fan of Sega you should be well aware of the fantastic Streets of Rage 4, which revived Sega's legendary street-based brawler series with outstanding style, care and finesse. The game was extremely well received, and those who saw the new story of Wood Oak City through to the end were surely left wanting more. Good thing developers DotEmu, Lizardcube and Guard Crush Games are bringing that DLC then!

The big draws are the new characters. Max, the scarred-up wrestler built like a brick shit-house joins the playable cast, and fan favourite Shiva, the super-cool, silky-haired recurring boss character makes a welcome playable appearance too. Lastly, Estel, the SWAT-style cop boss, who fights players by calling in artillery attacks, joins the playable roster too. These three kick-ass vigilantes come with full move-sets to learn, and add all sorts of extra strategies and gameplay opportunities to an already outstanding game.

The DLC also includes a survival mode, new weapons, and new music, to add to the absolute bangers that already fill the game's soundtrack. 15th of July is the release date, giving you the perfect excuse to tear up the

KNOW YOUR ENEMY!

We're not completely Sega-centric here at Sega Mania Towers. We understand that other games and platforms exist too. Let's have a quick peek outside the living room curtains and look at what else was happening in 1990, over on the other side...

Computer Piracy

First off, if you were in possession of one of those desktop computers with a mouse and keyboard thingy, you might have been enjoying The Secret of Monkey Island, originally released in October of 1990 by Lucasfilm Games. It was heavily praised for it's witty humour and point click gameplay, and is still recognised to this as one of the finest examples of the genre. would be an eventual link to Sega, as it be re-released on the Mega CD in 1993!

Nintendo Go Wild ... in Japan

Nintendo are having a really important year their home turf, with games like F-Zero and Mario World lighting up the store shelves. These games would go on to define the SNES, would make huge waves when they eventually western shores. However, over here in SNES-free Britain, there's not much happening that's particularly earth-shattering as far as home consoles are concerned. The EU release of Punch-Out!! on the NES is probably the pick of the bunch as far as games that still hold a place in pop culture today, with Little Mac and his various national stereotype pals boxing their way to our shops in August of 1990.

Handheld Heaven

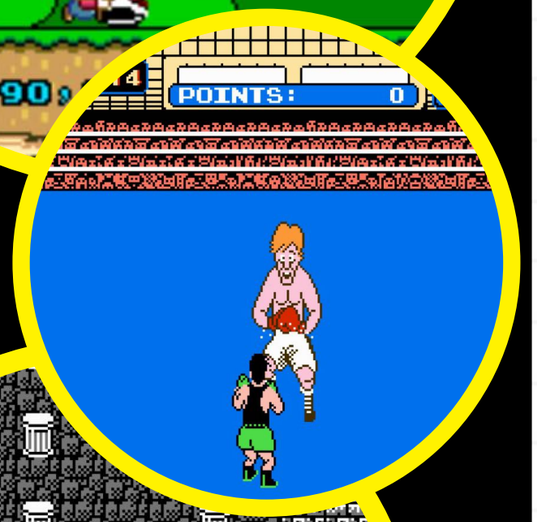
Nintendo do manage to take the UK by storm with the release of their handheld Game Boy console. It came to our shores in September of 1990 and was wildly successful. It launched with Super Mario Land and Tetris, among others, and Nintendo were never really challenged at the top of the handheld world from this point onwards. The Game Boy, and its successor the Game Boy Color, went on to sell an estimated 118 million units worldwide. Nowadays, kids play games on their phones and tablets, but we know that's not real gaming. Casuals.

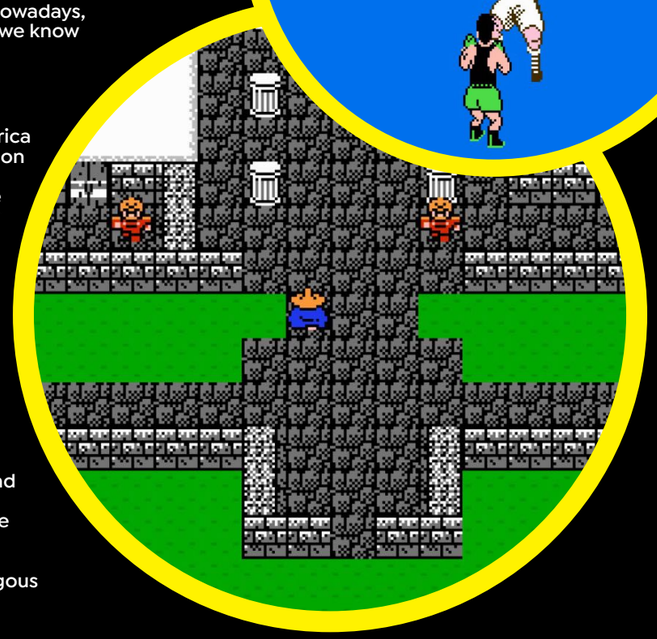
Square's Final Chance

It didn't reach Europe until 2003, but over in America gamers were getting their hands on the NES version of a certain Final Fantasy. The legend is quite famous, if not entirely proven. Developers Square were facing bankruptcy at the time, and put their trust into one last role-playing game to save them from becoming just another game industry footnote. The Final Fantasy. As we all know, the game failed to save Square, and no more games in the series were ever made. Wait, I remembering that right?

The 2600's Swansong

While the Mega Drive and SNES were just getting started in 1990, Atari's famous 2600 system was bowing out. The final games released on the console were Klax, a falling block puzzle game, and Fatal Run, a post-apocalyptic combat racer, both hitting the shelves in 1990. In Fatal Run, players are tasked with getting an anti-radiation vaccine to survivors before time runs out, which sounds like something straight out of Mad Max. Lord Humongous would be proud.





Master System Table

Yeah that's right...a freakin' Master system table!

Creator Tommy Brown tells us how it's done...

SM: How is it made and what is it made from?

TB: The main body is MDF board as well as the buttons. It's easier to form and work with and doesn't have grain that sometimes come through in paint. It has an internal frame built of pine since the MDF board is not as rigid as regular wood.

SM: How long does it take you?

TB: About 40 man hours.

SM: How did you get into this line of work?

TB: I do this as a hobby. I like to travel the world and this funds some of the expenses.

SM: How much would a table like this cost to purchase from you.

TB: I sell these type of tables for US$700.

SM: You mentioned something about it being commissioned by someone in California, seeing as the Master System was a borderline failure in the states did this request surprise you?

TB: Yes it was an odd one. To be honest I'd never heard of it. I had Atari and up in systems, but never ran across this. Had Sega Saturn, Sega CD, GENESIS and even the Sega channel, but never came across this.

SM: Have you done any other systems?

TB: Yes, I've built two NES controller tables. That's how the guy found me in a Facebook group and asked me to do it.

SM: Are you a gamer yourself? If so what are some of your favourite titles?

TB: Absolutely, I still have every regularly used cheat codes and fatalities etc. burned into my brain. Doesn't matter what controller is in my hand!. Mortal Kombat on GENESIS (Genesis, WTF is a Genesis - ed.) was a game changer for me. Played a lot of flying and RPG games throughout the years.

Then one day I went to my friend's house and he was playing Gears of War on Xbox Live and I was like what the hell is this? You mean to tell me you're playing against someone else at their house? I immediately went and bought everything I needed and from there on out I've been cracked out. I have actually travelled to Germany to stay with the family that I met playing Xbox and we have since travelled back and forth several times to each others homes, they even named their kid after me so I've got to do a lot of pretty cool stuff all because of meeting people from video games.

SM: Is your work just limited to tables or do you do other works as well? If the latter what other cool stuff have you made.

TB: I like to make anything people request but only if I feel I have the skills to do it properly. I know my limitations, I know what I'm good at and what I struggle with. I built a lot of whisky barrel furniture, coffee tables, barrel bars with LED lights. I also make robot lamps with Wi-Fi speaker headlights and phone holder and chargers, they're pretty cool little setups.

SM: Is there a place people can go to see some more of your work?

TB: I don't really have a storefront or anything since it's a hobby but feel free to view my Instagram:

@igoballzdeep

ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD DX

Remember that game that used to be built into your Master System II? Well, it's back. Developers Merge Games and Jankenteam have brought Alex Kidd in Miracle World kicking and screaming into 2021 with a bright new coat of paint, new content, and some subtle but significant control tweaks. Should this bygone series have been revived for the modern age? Or would the characters and creatures of Miracle World have been better off left in the past? Read on for the Sega-Mania scoop.

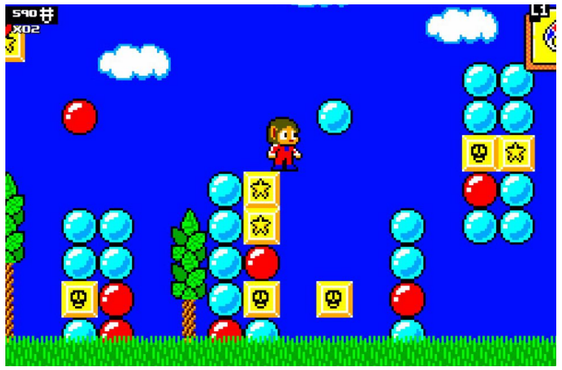
First, let's talk about the visuals. Upon jumping in to Miracle World you'll recognise that iconic first level with its vertical orientation and eventual drop into the water below, and you'll see straight away that the developers have done a great job in updating the graphics. The grass is lush and bright, the item blocks sparkle in the sunbeams, and the background is livened up with a picturesque waterfall.

Alex Kidd himself has taken a major upgrade in visual fidelity and also general appeal. Whereas before he kind of just looked like a boy with pointy ears and a big fist, he now has loads of character, and resembles a cute, toddler version of the Monkey King of Chinese mythology.

The game's artists really have proven themselves to be masters of the pixel, and have let their imaginations run free, adding background art, weather effects and other touches that greatly enhance the atmosphere of the original levels. In another nice touch, players are able to switch between modern graphics and Master System style visuals at the touch of a button. It's really interesting to see where we're at compared to where we came from, and while it is by no means a first, it's a nice idea and its inclusion is appreciated.

The controls have been upgraded as well. Alex moves with a natural flow that feels very tight and fair, and he really does feel like he has the poise of a martial artist. If you miss a jump, it's difficult to blame the gameplay, because the controls are responsive, the physics are sound, and everything makes sense. This helps to give the game an addictive edge. If you run out of lives you'll have to start at the beginning of the level, but if you do things a bit differently this time you just know you'll clear that tricky area that claimed your last life just moments ago, and you'll want to go again.

Despite these control tweaks, the overall gameplay comes at you straight out of 1987, with sharp reflexes, instantaneous reactions and level memorisation needed to survive. Things can get frustrating, and enemies will kill Alex off with a single touch, meaning there are no second chances. There are moments of empowerment, with vehicles and equippable items giving you the gifts of flight or projectile attacks, but the game is just waiting to snatch these powers away from you. What's that? You made a mistake and accidentality crashed your little helicopter? Well, I sure hope you like trudging through the rest of the level on foot because you're never seeing that baby again.

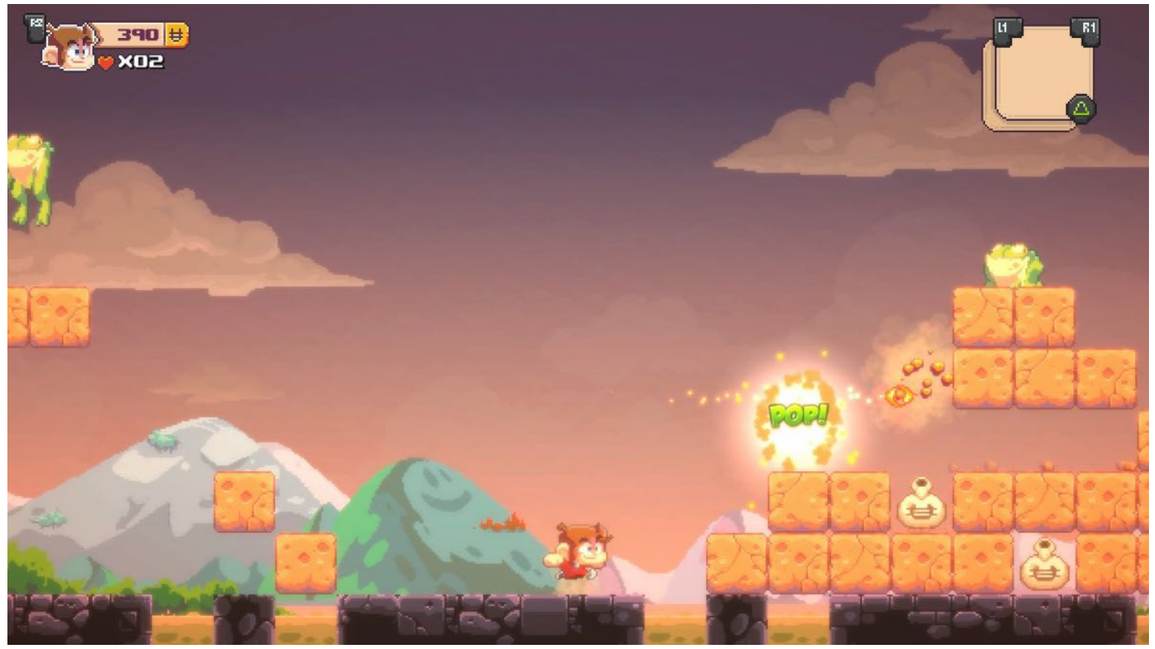


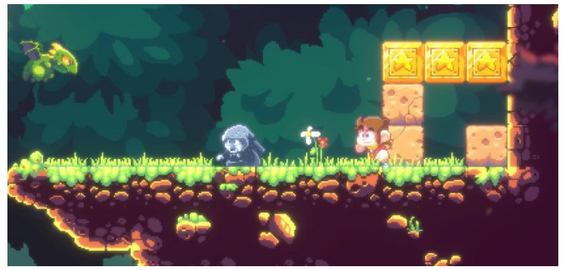
Complete the story mode and you can unlock classic mode, which is an upscaled version of the Master System original, and a boss rush mode as well. Speaking of bosses, those creepy fellows with hands for heads that challenge you to infuriating games of rock-paper-scissors are back too. I never got these guys, and I still do not. I suppose someone, somewhere thought they were a good idea and we appear to be stuck with them. I could've done with options to skip these goons. There is an option for infinite lives though, so that helps, although it will lock you out of certain trophies and achievements, so use it wisely!

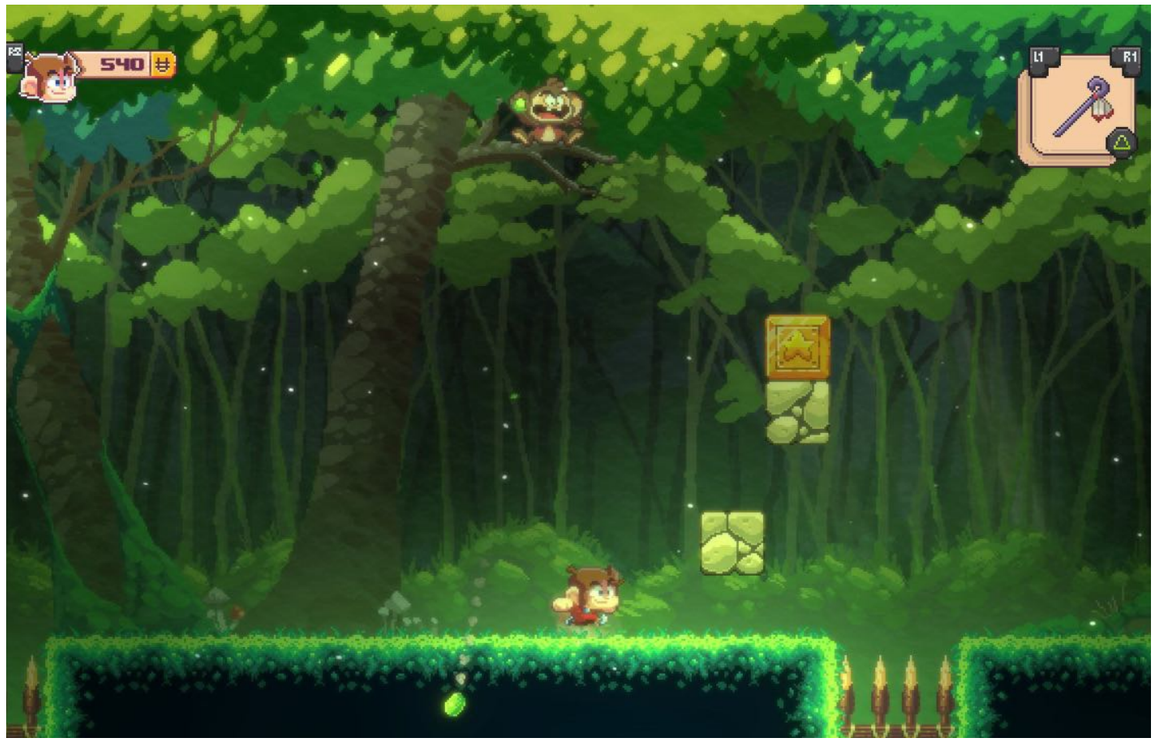
Alex Kidd in Miracle World DX is a very nice remake full of visual charm and retro appeal, though the archaic and tough gameplay may be a little too much for modern audiences. An example of this is the fact that Alex cannot venture backwards through a level once he has progressed into it, meaning you can't go back to the shop if you lose your bike or your helicopter, even if you have the money to buy a replacement. This sort of thing will infuriate modern gamers, but not us veterans, we're used to that sort of punishment, right?

What's on the Menu?

Alex Kidd is known for his martial arts abilities, but he's also known for his appetite. Depending on which version you played back in the day, Alex's trademark favourite nourishment would have been rice balls or hamburgers. In Alex Kidd in Miracle World DX, you can choose what our hungry hero likes to chow down on in the menu screen. There are quite a few mouth-watering options, but I had to go with fish and chips. Look how much he's enjoying it!







SEGA MEGA DRIVE MKI

The Master System was a fantastic console but a poor performer outside of Europe. It wasn't until the arrival of the legendary Mega Drive in the late '80s that we saw Sega truly break out of the arcade and into people's living rooms. Although the Mega Drive II offers a more compact design, it's the MKI that is truly special with its timeless futuristic look and additional features. Early revisions sporting the "High Definition Graphics" insignia are the models to buy if you want the best sound and picture quality, but any MKI will still put a smile on your face if you haven't been face to face with one for a while. It's also the easiest to mod. Something we'll be covering in the next issue.

TECH SPECS:

CPU: 16-bit Motorolla 68000 (7.68MHz) / Co-processor: Z80 Zilog (4MHz) RAM: 64KB / Graphics: Dedicated graphics processor / Colors: 512 (64 on screen) / Sprites: 80 / Resolution: 320x224 pixels / Sound: 6 channel stereo TI 76489 PSG, Yamaha YM 2612 FM chips.

STRIDER

A lone warrior glides through a night sky as alarms cry out and spotlights illuminate him from below. He lands on top of a building, and then leaps from rooftop to rooftop, slicing through bayonet-toting soldiers, spider-like robots, laser turrets, drill spikes, a cyborg wrestler, and finally a huge, pink, mantis-centipede-robot of doom.

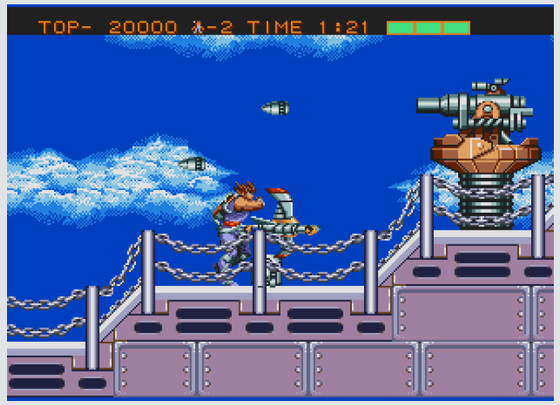
That's level one. The metal gorilla the size of a house isn't until level two.
It's safe to say that Strider throws a lot at you, and new surprises are waiting around every corner.

The first thing you'll notice about the game is that it's an absolute spectacle, with large, detailed sprites, epic music, and memorable and surprising enemy designs.

Capcom have definitely done a great job porting their action-packed coin-op classic to your Mega Drive, but be warned, things can get pretty frantic if you go in unprepared.

Strider puts you in the fashionable shoes of Hiryu, a warrior sent to defeat Grandmaster Meio. The Grandmaster is a sorcerer sporting an epic manicure, and he wants to steal all of the world's technology and build a new moon. Why? To hang out there while he watches the planet burn. To save the day you'll need skill and patience. Strider is tough and occasionally frustrating. Enemies are powerful and can come out of nowhere. Traps are devious and the level design will often sucker you right into them, and certain dangers and pitfalls are completely unavoidable without prior memorisation of the level.

Not everything is trying to kill you though. Throughout the game you can pick up capsules that contain allied robots that will surround you



and fire at your enemies, and if you collect enough of them an awesome chrome jaguar will fight by your side. Players can also find a power-up that will extend Hiryu's badass sword attack, enabling him to take down enemies from further away. Lastly, there are power-ups that increase Hiryu's health bar, which are absolutely essential if you want to beat the game.

Once you've mastered the fast-paced combat and you're able to make it through to the later levels, you're in for a cinematic treat. A battle against a massive airship's anti-gravity core is a particular highlight, and a trip through a prehistoric jungle is another, with epic music accompanying you all the way. The pace is fast and frenetic, with levels split into numerous shorter sections and quick-fire changes in the music setting the tone for each awesome set-piece.

Once you've mastered Hiryu's moves and memorised all of the traps and boss fights, it must be said that the game is actually fairly short. A skilled player is likely to be able to smash through the story in under half an hour with a little practice. You're certain to encounter the occasional bout of slowdown as well, with one particular boss' projectiles giving the Mega Drive hardware a big problem managing that frame rate.

With all of that said, Strider still comes highly recommended. If you're looking for an impressive adventure with plenty of exciting high-points and challenging encounters, you've definitely found it right here. Strider is an absolute must-play for action fans.

CHASE H.Q.

Based on the classic arcade game, Chase HQ on the Master System is a neat little mission-based racer. The game starts with a wealth of customisable options and then you're right into the action having been given your mission. The premise is simple, chase down the target car and damage it by ramming it before the time runs out. The game lends a lot from Outrun in its execution where the clock is your real enemy. You have low and high gears and a turbo button to help you and that's about it. The game plays really smoothly and is simple to control but it's not an easy game. Getting to the target car in the time allotted, even with a near perfect run and tactical use of turbos is tricky. Obstacles include pedestrian cars, traffic bollards, rocks and stones. Visually the game is basic but pleasant and functional. The environment changes regularly to stop you getting bored which is nice but the music won't do the same. It's not annoying but not exactly catchy, thankfully you can switch it off.

I definitely feel that Chase HQ is one of those must have games for the Master System. It may not be the most complex of games but it sure is fun with a lot of replayability and a great sense of reward as your skills improve.

COLUMNS

At long last, you too can take part in the ancient Greek tradition of throwing gems down a hole. Columns is Sega's dryly-named answer to a certain Russian falling-block puzzle game, but lacks some particular touches and intricacies that make that other game such an addictive classic.

The gems drop onto the screen in vertical stacks of three. You can move this stack from side to side as it falls, and use the controller buttons to shuffle the order of the gems. As your score goes up the gems fall faster, steadily increasing the difficulty and the tension. You can make gems disappear by connecting specific colours in vertical, horizontal or diagonal lines of three or more. This scores you points. If the screen fills up with unconnected gems, you lose.

That's the game, more or less. You'll find it's at its best when played with a friend. The tension can ramp up to feverish peaks as you glance across to see your opponent's screen filling up slower than yours, and you realise that you're going to have to set off some of those nifty chains you've been trying to set up before the situation gets too hot to handle.

Chains are the key to surviving and racking up a big score. If you're quick and are capable of a bit of foresight, you can set up situations where matching a row of gems results in other stacked gems falling down into further matching rows. Pull this off and you'll be rewarded with a generous helping of points, some happy little sound effects, and the satisfaction of seeing all of your gems fall down to the bottom of the screen, giving you precious room to breathe.

This respite is temporary. You will lose. Eventually, those gem stacks will fall so fast you won't be able to keep up with them, and once you get to that point it's really just a matter of time. Does that sound fun and challenging? Or does it sound like a stressful nightmare of sweat-inducing inevitability? Your answer will go a long way towards telling you whether you should buy this game.

There is definitely fun to be had with Columns, especially if you have another player to go head to head with, but unless you're a score-chasing addict or a glutton for punishment, it's going to be fairly short-lived. There's just not much game to be found here. There's no way these gem-matching games are ever going to catch on...

GOLDEN AXE

DOUBLE REVIEW!

A great shadow has fallen upon the world. The evil Death-Adder has risen an army and is terrorising the realm. Three powerful heroes step forward, each with a brooding desire for revenge on the evil overlord, but their task is great. The minions of the enemy are numerous and deadly, and they possess the ancient and sacred ability to attack you from off the side of the screen where you can't get to them. These truly are dark times.

Sega's side-scrolling, coin-op conversion captures the feel of its Conan-inspired fantasy world admirably, with cool characters, an ominous soundtrack, and interesting level design. Everything is dark and dreary, the enemy thugs are violent and brutal, and the peasants are rightfully fleeing for their lives. The stages are memorable and have character all of their own, with multi-level areas so that you can try and gain the high-ground, and bottomless pits waiting to swallow up careless enemies and players alike.

There are three playable characters: Ax Battler, Tyris Flare and Gillius Thunderhead. Ax is an all-round fighter with decent magic attacks and physical toughness. Gillius' axe strikes are quick and deadly, but he has the weakest magic. Tyris is a little more delicate than the others, but is capable of awesome destructive spells. Magic power is built up by finding potions throughout your adventure, and the more potions you're carrying the more powerful your magic attack will be. These spells affect all enemies on screen, but the real challenge is knowing whether to use a few potions here and there to get you out of scrapes throughout the level, or save all your power and unleash your most powerful spell during the end of level boss fight.

You'll spend most of the game outnumbered, and enemies will constantly be trying to surround you and hack away at you from multiple directions. Another player will help you here. You can team up with a pal and give Death-Adder's minions a taste of their own medicine as you co-operate to meticulously take them out. Be careful, though, friendly fire is a thing, and if you're not careful you could easily end up chipping away at your comrade's health bar.

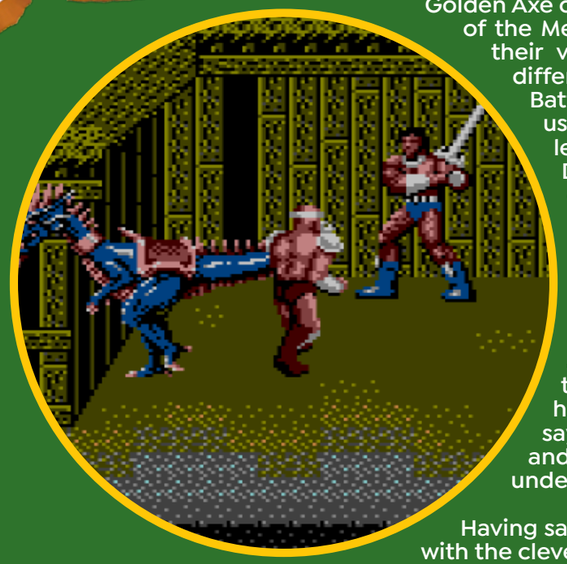
Arguably, Golden Axe's stand out features are the beasts you can ride. There is a beaked, dinosaur-like creature with a fearsome, clubbing tail, and there are two dragons, one with a close-range flame attack and one with a fiery projectile. Get in the saddle of one of these beasties and dominate the battlefield, but don't let your guard down. If an enemy manages to knock you from your mount, they're sure to take the reins and turn the tables on you. It would be great to be able to take your mount with you to the next level, but sadly that's just not possible.

There are a few other negatives to relate. Golden Axe is pretty short, with only five brief stages and six or seven enemy types, but the three playable characters are different enough that want to finish it with all of least once. Also, things can pretty unfair. Enemies will you from off the screen, or and lock you in place, helpless as you watch your bar disappear. It's not exactly friendly, but with experience able to stop this from happening too much.

So, in conclusion, Golden Axe feels like a great coin-op conversion that kind of hates you, but bring another player along and things start to even up. Multiplayer is where the game shines brightest. If the idea of striding around woods and villages in nought but a loincloth is something that appeals to you, but you maybe don't have the figure to pull it off in real life, then I can confidently say that Golden Axe is precisely what you're after.

The Golden Axe has been taken by the evil Death-Adder, and who better to bring it back than the mighty barbarian, Ax Battler! Wait a second, he's called Tarik? Where's Ax? Where are Gillius and Tyris? What's going on?

Golden Axe on the Master System is for all intents and purposes a port of the Mega Drive version, but Sega have seen the limitations of their venerable console, and tried to do something a bit different. Tarik is the sole playable character, and he has Ax Battler's look, magic and moves, but he can also choose to use Gillius' thunder magic and Tyris' fire magic as well. The levels and enemies are all lifted straight out of the Mega Drive and arcade versions, but the action is subtly different. As is the lore, should you care about that sort of thing.



It's admirable that the developers put the effort into coming up with a storyline reason for the decision to go with one playable character, rather than having Gillius and Tyris inexplicably disappear, but it's still sad to see those other characters go. Unfortunately, having three heroes to choose from isn't the only feature this version says goodbye to. It also bids farewell to two-player mode, and this really hurts. Adventuring is an activity best undertaken with friends, after all.

Having said that, Golden Axe is a visual treat on the Master System, with the clever game artists using all the power of the console to bring players a great looking world and detailed and vivid characters. All three dragon mounts are present too, and the slick animation gives the game a fast-paced feel. If the two player mode was intact, Master System owners would have an absolute treat on their hands. As it is, it's a great-looking, action-packed experience that you'll just have to enjoy all by yourself.

GAUNTLET

Stay well away from that glowing green fellow!

Grab as much treasure as you can and bail before the time rungs out!

Try to avoid being surrounded, it won't go well for you!

Collect potions to unleash screen-clearing magic attacks!

A gauntlet can be a glove worn with armour to protect the hand. The word can also refer to a severe trial or ordeal. Let me be clear for a moment; the latter interpretation is the one this game is going for. Choose your character and plunge into a literally endless maze of dungeons, facing swarms of relentless monsters, locked doors and dead ends, and health points that are constantly trickling down to zero. You will be overwhelmed, it's just a question of how deep you can get before the inevitable happens.

Despite this stressful-sounding premise, Gauntlet is hugely entertaining. The name of the game being to delve as deep as possible, collecting food to top up your health, and trying to stave off your inescapable demise as you desperately search for the exit. There are four characters to choose from, and each changes the way you play. The warrior is slow but tough, the elf is delicate but quick, the wizard is frail but has powerful attacks, and the valkyrie is a balanced, all-rounder.

The arcade version of Gauntlet is famous for allowing four players to explore at once, but the Master System version limits you to just two thanks to the lack of extra controller ports. It's a great game to play with a friend though, and will produce some heart-racing moments as you fight back to back while surrounded by approaching enemies, or one of you guards a corridor while the other desperately searches for the key that will open the door to the exit.

Expect to encounter ghosts that disappear when they damage you, axe-wielding grunts, fire-breathing demons and some other nasty surprises as you explore. Most enemies emerge from monster generators, and one of the keys to survival is to destroy these before they pump out so many enemies that you end up surrounded. You could just run for the exit, avoiding monsters as much as you can while you search for that fabled black square, but usually a better tactic is the cautious approach, gradually moving forward as you take out generators. Remember that your health is ticking down though, so try to strike a balance between speed and safety.

Gauntlet on the Master System looks great. The top-down view is interesting and gives you the ability to use strategy and positioning to avoid being swamped, and there are often huge numbers of enemy sprites on screen without a hint of slowdown. There are only two music tracks in the game, a between-levels jingle and a faintly annoying treasure room ditty, but for the majority of the game you'll be exploring in silence, save for the functional sound effects. Another thing that arcade Gauntlet is know for is it's digitised voice clips, but these are mostly missing.

Don't let that stop you. Gauntlet is an exciting and tense dungeon-crawl for you and a friend to enjoy, and the urge to survive for just a few more levels next time will keep you coming back for more. Master System owners, it's time for you to choose your fighter and brave the gauntlet.

SUPER HANG-ON

Everyone dreams of the open road. A roaring engine, some swanky biker gear, and a horizon to chase. Sega's arcade hit Super Hang-On let you experience everything but the exhaust fumes and picking the flies from your visor, but how does it play on the Mega Drive? To cut a long story short, it plays really, really well, but Super Hang-On is not without its hang-ups.

There are two distinctive game modes, original and arcade. In original mode you can earn cash for successfully finishing races, and spend that cash on upgrading your bike, enabling you to progress to more difficult races with higher rewards. If you wreck your ride, you'll have to pay for repairs before you can race again, so keep your eyes on the road unless you want to end up in the red.

In arcade mode the game takes you all around the world, across Africa, Asia, America, and Europe. As you jump from continent to continent, the difficulty level rises. Africa is a short and sweet intro to the game, with some long straights and gentle turns to get you into the swing of things, while Europe is a long, winding and wickedly tricky course that will really test your endurance and skill to the fullest. You need to keep passing checkpoints along the multi-stage tracks to add precious seconds to the timer in the centre of the screen. If that timer reaches zero, it's game over and time to start again.

The way your bike handles is responsive and tactile, and the graphics give a nice sense of speed. In arcade mode your ride is upgraded to the max, including the ability to use a turbo boost once you reach a certain speed. In original mode you have to earn upgrades to get the most out of your bike, which gives a great incentive to keep playing. This concept adds hours of game play to the original arcade offering, and is a huge bonus for those of us playing the game at home.

As you advance through the different stages on each track, the lighting and environments will change. It's a nice visual touch that reminds you that you're making progress, and keeps you from getting bored of the same old locations. The bikes and riders look really classy too, though I wish there was some more colour variation in the opposition racers, to at least give the impression that you're not racing the same two guys on a perpetual loop.

These opposing racers are little more than glorified obstacles anyway. Super Hang-On is all about endurance racing. Stay in the saddle and beat that clock, and you'll be a track legend. Lose your cool and you'll be eating dust. If you want to do well in the tougher races, you'll need zen-like concentration and thumbs of steel to make it to the end. If the idea of this kind of challenge makes you want to jump into the saddle, then this is the game for you. Power up your Mega Drive, choose from one of four classic melodies, and just try to hang on.

World Cup Italia '90

World Cup Italia '90 often gets pigeonholed as a budget and low-quality title due to its inclusion on the first of many Mega Games carts for the Mega Drive. Until the arrival of Sony's Platinum range many years later, compilation carts and cassettes could be a death sentence for a games popularity regardless of its quality. If something can be sold for practically nothing alongside two other titles, then surely it must be crap? The arrival of Mr Trip Hawkins, reverse engineering his way into the game some years later would be the final nail in the coffin for Italia '90, everyone remembers their first-time playing FIFA, the same can't be said for Sega and Virgin Interactive's 1990 classic. It's a real shame as Italia '90 is a solid title. At least on the Mega Drive anyway.

The 16-bit version offers a full roster of teams from the competition of that year, all pleasingly presented on a map with a "mouse" cursor for you to choose with, which is something of a novelty when looking back at it now. Before kicking off, there's the opportunity for you choose your starting eleven, each player has their own unique stats but sadly not their real names! It's nowhere near a full management sim but it's nice to have a choice even if its debatable whether said stats impact the gameplay in any meaningful way.

The game is only playable from a birds eye view perspective and the players are rather

poorly represented, looking more like foosball figures than real people, the pitch however, is really quite beautiful with a very vibrant and realistic grass texture. The ball features smooth and detailed animations and coupled with an effective shadow technique gives a great illusion of height and depth when hoofed overhead. The 16-bit version also features some colourful and beautifully drawn pixel art for goal kicks and celebrations which are a welcome break from the tiresome fixed viewpoint. The style in these "cut scenes" are truly representative of the fashion of time and there's no Wayne Rooney hair transplants here, just mullets and thick manes blowing in the breeze!

The A.I. is surprisingly competent which is a huge plus as the game isn't particularly complex with little in the way of hair-raising tricks or tactics at your disposal. A decent opposing team at the very least brings some element of challenge but it won't take you long to exploit weaknesses each match, bringing the longevity of the game into question. Two player games are great for a while, but it won't take either of you very long to tire of it. If you've had too many post-match drinks and need something basic and uncomplicated to have a quick kick about with it's a good game to go to.

The Master System version doesn't fare as well as its bigger brother. The full roster of teams is present, but the customisation options are nowhere to be seen. Gone too are the artwork interludes and the big and bold sprites. What you get instead is something of a confusing mess with

broken AI. Working out where you are and what you're doing is a real chore on the 8-bit system. The sound and music also take a dive in the cut down version. Although the Mega Drive's soundtrack won't win any awards, the music is solid, and the thumps of the ball being kicked around are satisfying. The same can't be said of the Master System version whereby the tune would have been best left out entirely, its never ending shrill just makes the whole experience all the more miserable.

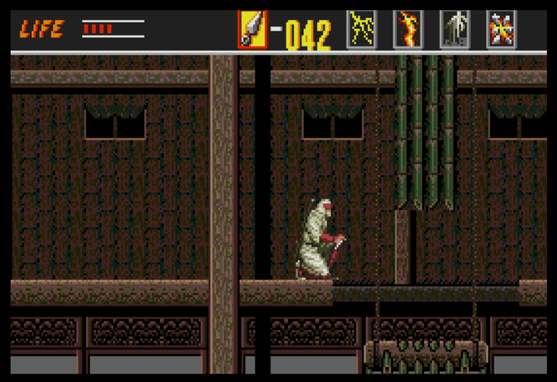
World Cup Italia '90 may not be a high grade football sim with intricate tactics and ground breaking graphics but on the Mega Drive at least, it's a relatively fun and easy to play game and nowhere near as bad as many make out. The Master System version however gets a red card from us. Avoid at all costs.

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

It seems pretty safe up here, no way he can jump in all that armour.

Flitting across rooftops in the dead of night, hurling shuriken from the shadows and slicing armoured enemies in their one weak spot to nail that kill. All just another day at the office for a ninja. Even so, you'd struggle to find one as overworked as Joe Musashi, we'd wager.

Returning to our screens three years after the original Shinobi game, The Revenge of Shinobi, sees our titular character beset by misfortune once again at the hands of the Neo Zeed criminal organisation. They have killed his master and kidnapped his bride, you see, and as you might expect, a man famous for eviscerating foes with a deadly array of weaponry and the occasional ninjutsu technique isn't taking it lying down.



Break boxes for power-ups - you can run out of throwing knives you know.

The Revenge of Shinobi is a comfortable side scroller where you fell your enemies with throwing knives, or get up close with a sword when you can. Progressing through the various stages is very satisfying and the challenges deeper than you might expect. You will find yourself having to find your way around locked doors, activate switches and solve the occasional puzzle to negotiate parts of levels.

The boss fights at the end of each section offer clever challenges as well. From battling a giant samurai to throwing down with another ninja in a disco hall, you must time your attacks, figure out the patterns of your adversaries and adapt to tricky mechanics in order to succeed. Simply throwing your knives will not work on these tougher foes.

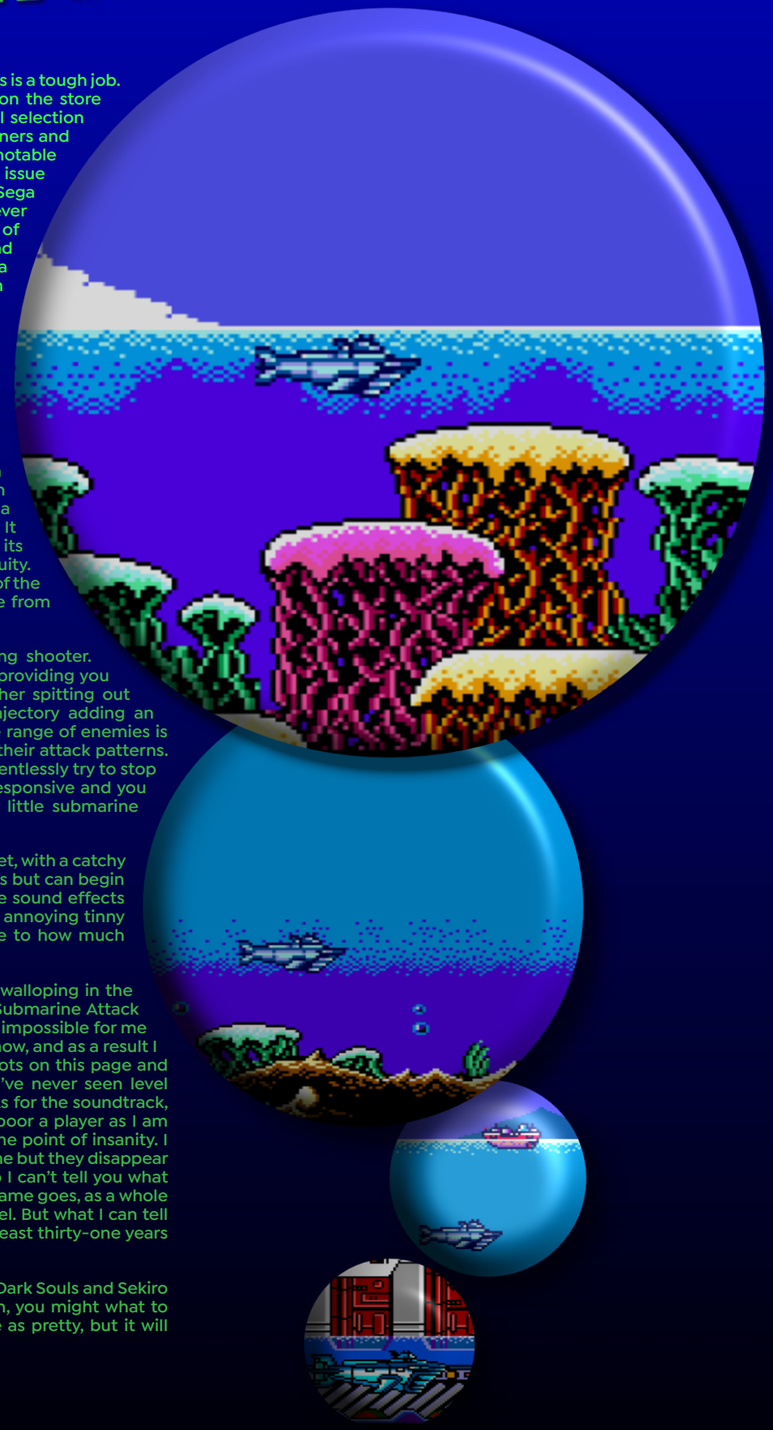
"By the moonlight! Let us dance."

For the most part this is your standard hack 'n slash, but in addition to the challenge of each level's enemies, you will find yourself contending with the environment as well. Dodging bamboo spikes, hopping up logs on a water fall and jumping between the foreground on background on a military base to take out every enemy are just a few of the demands when it comes to the platform element.

The Revenge of Shinobi offers a lot in terms of gameplay, no two enemies are the same and there are a variety of attacks and special spells you can cast to keep things fresh. Some of the challenges can border on frustrating but, if you're a true ninja, they should be nothing you can't handle. Just try not to let the evil laugh at the game over screen grate on your nerves too much if you find yourself on the wrong end of a blade.

Submarine Attack

Choosing games to review at Sega Mania towers is a tough job. We can't cover all of the games that landed on the store shelves in 1990. So, when it comes to our final selection before we go to print, there are inevitably winners and losers. Submarine Attack is not a particularly notable or memorable game, but it wins a place in this issue because not only was it the first game for a Sega console I owned but also the first cartridge I ever held in my then tiny hands. Prior to the arrival of my Master System Mark 2 in Christmas 1990 I had to make do with a Spectrum ZX 2+ with only a copy of Daley Thompson's Decathlon on cassette to pass the time. So the colours and sounds of Submarine Attack, were an assault on the senses when the game fell out of Santa's sack and into my living room that year, and for this reason and this reason only, does it get a mention on our pages. Because otherwise dear readers...it's a bit shit.



Woah! Woah! ok, sensible cap on...lets wind that back a bit. Visually, Submarine Attack is an excellent looking game for the Master System with very clean and bright sprites and a consistent design language throughout. It doesn't break the mould in any major way but its very pleasing to look at and there is no ambiguity. It's very clear what's an enemy and what's part of the environment, something of a rarity for a game from the 8-bit era.

Gameplay-wise it's a fairly basic auto-scrolling shooter. Both Master System buttons are utilised, one providing you with a straight-shooting torpedo and the other spitting out upward firing rockets which have an arc trajectory adding an element of skill into how they are utilised. The range of enemies is wide and there's a good amount of variety in their attack patterns. Mines, enemy subs, ships and even bubbles relentlessly try to stop you in your path. The controls are tight and responsive and you should have no problems commanding your little submarine with a high degree of confidence.

The music is probably the games' strongest asset, with a catchy tune which is excellent for the first few minutes but can begin to grate a little for reasons explained later. The sound effects aren't as strong with your torpedoes and their annoying tinny woosh sound becoming quickly annoying due to how much there is to constantly shoot in this game.

So, what justifies me giving the game such a walloping in the first paragraph? Well, the biggest issue with Submarine Attack for me is the difficulty. It is brutally hard. It was impossible for me as a 5-year-old and it's still impossible for me now, and as a result I really don't like it. Take a look at the screenshots on this page and you'll note they're all taken from level one. I've never seen level two...I don't even know if there is a level two! As for the soundtrack, yes the first track is excellent but if you're as poor a player as I am you will be hearing it over and over again to the point of insanity. I can tell you that there are powerups in this game but they disappear so quickly I've never been able to grab one so I can't tell you what they do. Ultimately as far the longevity of the game goes, as a whole package I can't say, there may only be one level. But what I can tell with absolute certainty, is that you can get at least thirty-one years of gameplay out of that first stage.

So, if you're a masochist who loves the likes of Dark Souls and Sekiro and the pleasure of dying over and over again, you might what to give Submarine Attack a spin. It might not be as pretty, but it will certainly keep you busy!

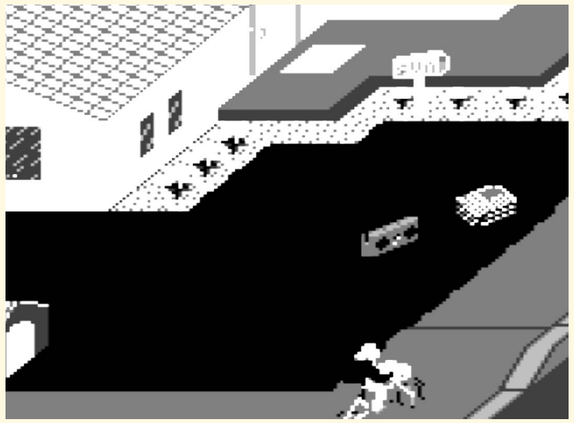
ALTERED BEAST

It's hard to believe that this screenshot is one of the first scenes many Mega Drive owners would have seen. Altered Beast was the pack-in game for the system for many years until it was usurped by a blue rodent. It's also believed that it was infamously responsible for low system sales in the US bible-belt as the game looked like "devil worship". The real reason was probably because it just wasn't a very good game but it still holds a special place in our hearts and is an iconic early release for the platform.

PAPER BOY

Master System • US Gold — December 1990

EXTRA EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

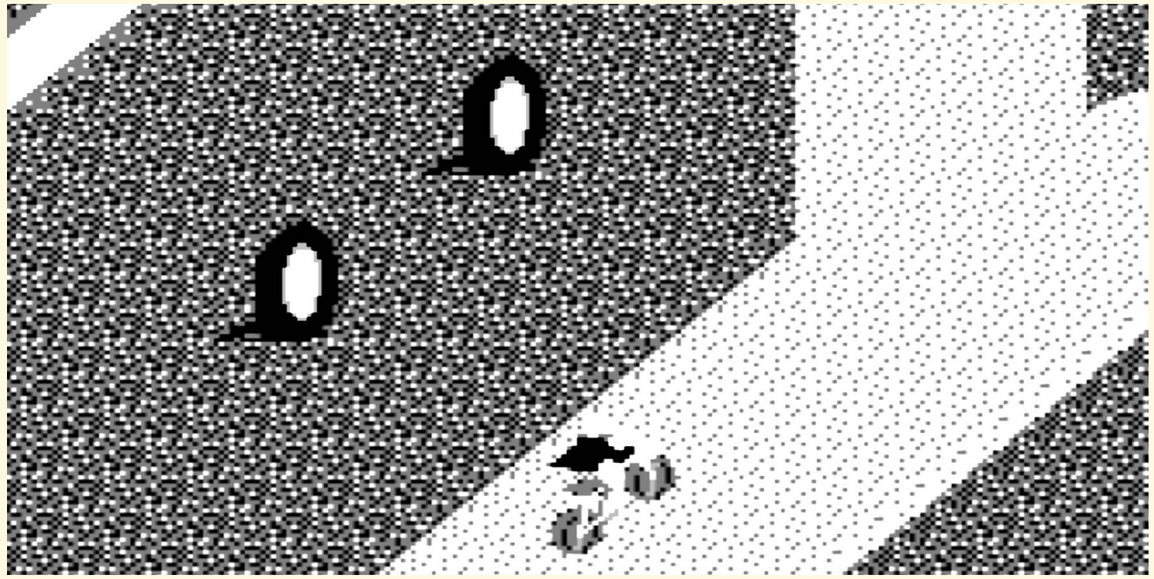


Midway's arcade hit that celebrates one of society's true unsung heroes, the humble paperboy, has arrived on the Master System. Paperboy eschews such outlandish concepts as alien attacks, deadly dungeons and police chases, and takes us on a journey through the comparative normalcy of suburbia. But is it worth your hard-earned paper-round money? Read on for the big scoop.

The concept of the game is basic but cool. Ride your bike from one end of the street to the other, throw rolled up newspapers at people's doors or mailboxes, and avoid obstacles and intersections. Run into too many poodles, RC cars, unicyclists or flowerbeds and our hapless hero will quit his job, resulting in a game over. You'll need to stay on target with your newspaper throws, if you smash a window or miss a house all together, you'll lose that household off your subscription list and it'll be that much harder to get a good score next time. Make it to the end of the street in one piece and you'll be able to take on a short obstacle course as a fun little bonus.

Paperboy is an example of a simple concept executed very well, resulting in a high quality experience that looks good and has an addictive gameplay loop, lending itself to those quick gaming sessions after school, or after you've returned from your real life paper round. Get on your bike and get down to the shops to pick up a copy.

P.S. The game isn't actually in black and white, we just thought this looked cool- ed.



GHOULS'N GHOSTS

Whether it's being vomited on by a troll from above, or pushed into a pit of fire by a plant that spits eyeballs at you, there sure are plenty of ways to die in Ghouls 'n Ghosts. I particularly enjoyed opening a chest only to be turned into an old man by the evil wizard within which made me just slow enough for a buzzard to swoop down and impale me. It sure was windy on the next part, oh look! Little tornado monsters with scythes for hands. Joyous. Then came the tentacles and the plants which eject skulls in every direction when they blossom and the giant statue with a monster head on it. Talk about a trial by fire.

That was just the first level!

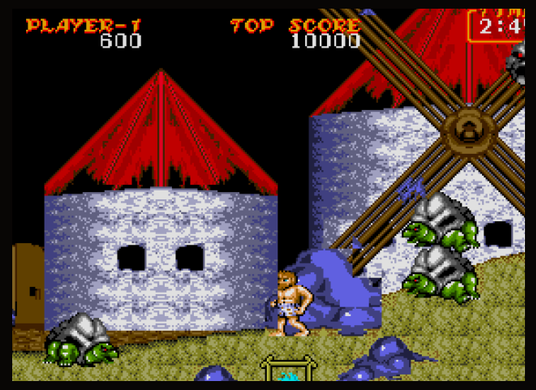
Ghouls 'n Ghosts certainly does not hold your hand or take you gently through a cushy tutorial where your character is in a nice safe environment while you learn the ropes. It's more like the ropes are trying to string you up – along with everything else every three steps. Oh how modern day developers have spoiled us. I'd almost forgotten what it was like to be thrown in the deep end and have the lifeguard take the ladders away while filling the pool with flammable, acidic cement.

You control a brave knight sent to rid the land of the evil that has befallen it – and there is a lot of evil. Starting in a cemetery, you'll smash your way through skeletons rising from the grave, narrowly avoid nasty looking birds, fight your way past evil fauna and the aforementioned poorly trolls, only to be welcomed to the end of the first stage by a giant monster that takes up half the screen and breathes fireballs at you.

Ghouls 'n ghosts is frustratingly addictive, the more you play it, the more you recognise what you should be doing and which parts you should be avoiding, which then makes it more frustrating when you inevitably cock it all up and fall through the floor and into the quicksand for the sixteenth time and into the jaws of the giant antlion who lives there. You know where the trapdoors are but that won't stop you stepping on them.

The game feels very crisp and simple, the mechanics are not complicated, but there is an immense challenge to be had, which makes your success – should you eventually achieve it – incredibly rewarding. You can pick up new weapons from treasure chests, although I'd recommend sticking with projectiles, and there are little bits and pieces to collect for some bonus points. So while it is a single player game by most definitions, there's nothing to stop you and your chums taking it in turns and seeing who can score highest on any particular level – and then maybe have a break from speaking to each other for a couple of days.

Did I mention it was difficult?



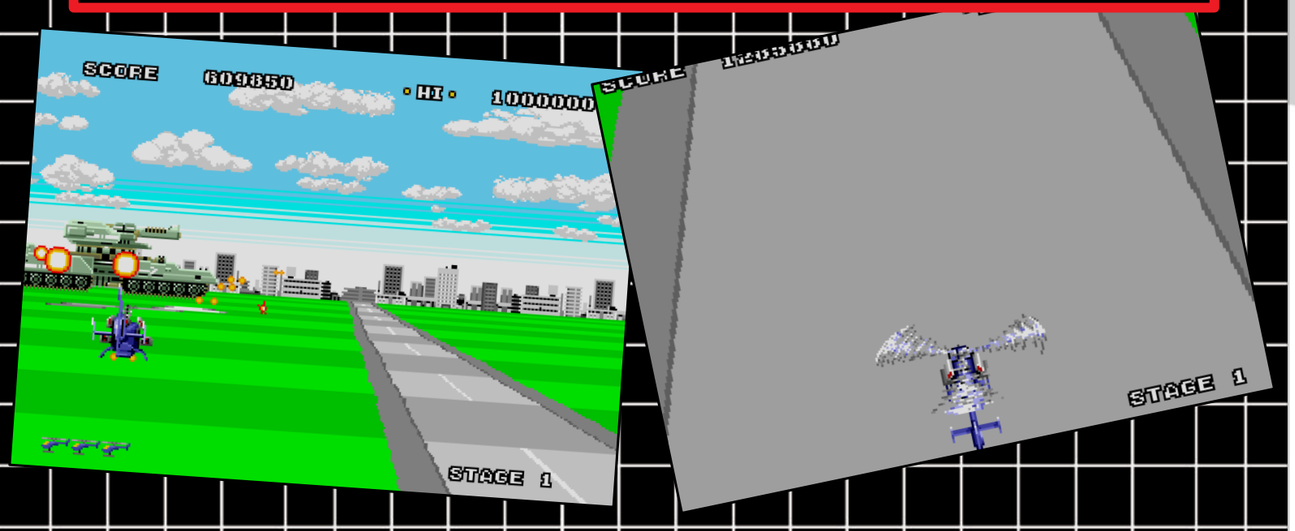
Super Thunder Blade

Here's something I bet you've never thought about before when playing shooters...you usually move faster than the projectiles coming at you. Not very realistic I know, but in the likes of Space Harrier and Afterburner it keeps things fair and only in a lapse in skill and concentration will get you killed. In Super Thunder Blade however, the physics are completely reversed and despite your nimble and easy to control helicopter, you will get f*cked over very quickly by projectiles moving at you far too rapidly to avoid and in too large a quantity to preemptively dodge. With some practice you can get a rhythm going and your progress will improve but it'll take many many hours of gameplay to really get it down. Thankfully the game allows you to up your lives and drop the difficulty from the menu, which is highly recommended for new players as you'll lose lives in the first level no matter how hard you try, this game is cheap.

That being said it is an impressive early title for an early Mega Drive game. The 'into the screen' graphics and occasional birds eye view sections are pleasing to look at with large scale sprites and an excellent sense of depth. Spread over four stages there is a lot of variety with each level featuring a different theme. Longevity is questionable however as once you've gotten over the difficulty hurdle there's not really a lot to come back to aside from chasing a high score.

Sound effects are muted and nothing to write home about but the music is exceptional which really helps the feel of the game. If you're the owner of a Mega Drive MK1 I'd highly recommend using the headphone out to get this game pumping through a decent sound system.

I can't say that I love Super Thunder Blade but I can't say that I hate it either. For an early release it certainly shows what the Mega Drive can do but it's just too unfair to warrant multiple replays.



ALEX KIDD IN THE ENCHANTED CASTLE AND SHINOBI WORLD

It's no surprise that management at Sega were desperate for someone to come up with a faster and more accomplished mascot for the company, something fast...maybe in the colour blue. The Alex Kidd games are tragic and yet somebody kept making them.

Miracle World is perhaps the best known due to it being the built-in game for the Master System 2 for quite some time, but Alex Kidd didn't just spend his life trapped inside Sega's 8-bit grey box, several games in the franchise were made across multiple platforms and we're looking at two of them today.

Shinobi world on the Master System is an excellent premise and the theme stays strong throughout with lots of enemy variety and solid gameplay. It's a challenging game but the tight platforming and simple controls (1 to attack and 2 to jump) mean that if you screw up it was definitely your fault. This contrasts strongly with Enchanted Castle. The first thing you'll notice is how slippery it is. Think of any ice level in any game and that's what Alex feels like in this one when he's walking across any surface. The controls are a bit of a mess, with a jump button a punch button and a jump plus kick button. All of these actions give promise of exciting action but the reality (and poor collision boxes) force you to just wait for an enemy to come to you before despatching it if you want to survive.

Enchanted Castle does offer a nice amount of verticality that wouldn't look out of place in Minecraft, with plenty of secret areas and breakable ceiling blocks giving you access to new areas, but it fails to make up for the poor controls and randomness of it all. I'm not quite sure what the theme is meant to be in Enchanted Castle, there's a lot of shit going on with cars planes and robots. It's all rather odd. Something that is thankfully missing from Shinobi world is the Rock Paper Scissors game that Alex Kidd games are famous for, but in Enchanted Castle they're abundant and absolutely infuriating. Losing one of these games is instant death and the only way to win is to either get incredibly lucky or play the game repeatedly to learn the patterns, a strategy which I strongly suggest you don't adopt for your mental health.

The reason why the evil moustachioed plumber's games play so well is consistency. You know what you're getting with that little sod when you pick up one of his games. The platforming feels tight and predictable, and the mechanics are always the same no matter which system you're playing on. Somebody at Sega should have picked up on this before they started shitting out Alex Kidd games because the experience across all of his games varies wildly completely undermining the franchise. It's therefore no wonder that as soon as the blue blur arrived that Alex Kidd was promptly sacked as the Sega mascot. It's just not a series you can rely on to deliver a guaranteed experience and looking at these two games demonstrates that clearly.

To sum up, Shinobi World is the winner here, it may not be as colourful and as visually interesting as Enchanted Castle but is the more fun game to play if you absolutely must pick one of them. I'm sure in future we'll cover more of Alex's games, but I've got to be honest I'm really not looking forward to it.

ESWAT

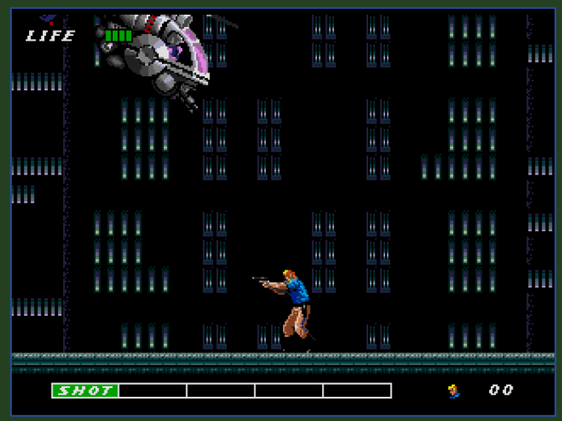
Why you would want to be a bad guy in the world of ESWAT: City Under Siege I don't know. Sure you've got the numbers, sure if the one good guy in the entire game moves off your part of the screen you and your friends re-spawn and sure you've got helicopters and special robots. But you're facing down a one-man killing machine armed to the teeth with blasters, a rocket suit and the most dangerous thing of all... a purpose.

See, you've stepped into his city and the super powered local police force does not like to be trifled with! Gunning down ne'er-do-wells is all just part of the job for our blonde-haired protagonist to whom mass murder in the name of a righteous cause is barely worth a blink. Even before the game progresses and literally unleashes the big guns, his pistol will shoot you so hard your body will fly backwards and explode in a blaze of fiery destruction. And that's just for starters.

As the player, your first mission sees you tasked with "guarding" the city. I put air quotes around the word "guarding" because what you're really doing is proactively gunning down all the evil forces in town with extreme prejudice. Not exactly watching the CCTV cameras waiting for the local youths to vandalise a war memorial is it?

ESWAT: City Under Siege does ease you in slightly; the first few enemies are slow off the draw and will give you plenty of time to blow them away. There's the odd projectile flinging robot here and there but for the most part you'll be alright as long as you figure out that you can jump slightly higher by holding up. Once you're past the army that has somehow amassed in your city under the very noses of the local authorities, it's on to a one on one battle with a helicopter. Hey, I didn't say it eased you in for very long!

The next mission is to infiltrate a prison, presumably to kill the people you've just put away and the stakes and danger jump up in those sort of large increments for the rest of the game. Before you know it you will be flying across the levels in a robot suit, launching rockets and disintegrating your enemies with a ball of plasma that'll have them wishing for the corpse-exploding bullets of the early levels. But don't worry, the enemies get faster, stronger and more plentiful so if you think this makes it easy, you've got another thing coming, officer. Now get out there and murder more people. In the name of the law!



SPACE HARRIER II

"Oh, look at me! I'm making people happy! I'm the magical man from Happyland in a gumdrop house on Lollipop Lane! Oh, by the way I was being sarcastic." This classic quote from The Simpsons is predated by Space Harrier II by about a year but it just about sums up my feelings towards this so called "Fantasy Land" I've been drafted in to defend.

You would think a place with that sort of name would be a magical place, full of wonder and whimsy but oh no, it wouldn't be a retro game were the land not under siege by the forces of evil now would it?

Instead of money trees, beautiful women and rivers of beer, our hero Harrier sees himself squaring off against giant snakes, fire-breathing turtles (seriously why were turtles so evil in the nineties?) and killer robots. In fact there are all manner of evil creatures you must fight and destroy over 12 stages before you can confront their leader, the Dark Harrier in the final world, so we have our work cut out for us.

Following on from the hugely successful Space Harrier, this sequel was one of the original launch titles for the Mega Drive in Japan. The titular Harrier receives a distress call and finds the world from the first game once again in a bit of a pickle, so in true heroic fashion, grabs his underarm laser cannon and proceeds to blast the ever loving crap out of anything that stands in his way, even the trees!

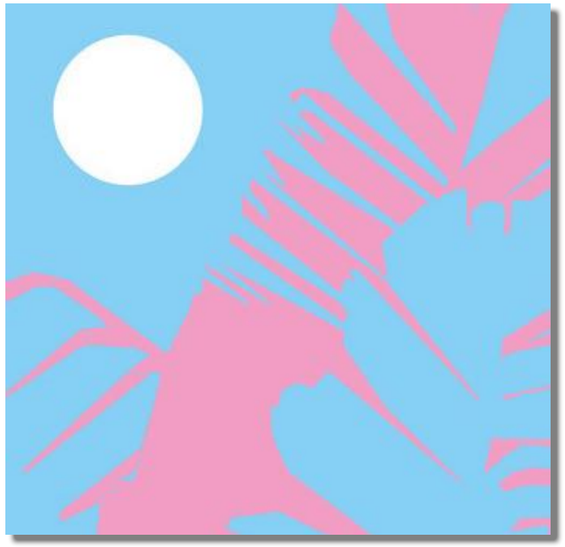
Space Harrier II is bloody good fun from the off, the camera follows you from behind with the controls allowing you to fly off in every direction to avoid environmental hazards, dodge lasers and blasters and negotiate your way into the perfect position for a satisfying kill. You're on rails so you can't move forward or back and have to deal with what's right there in front of you, but this style of game is a cool variation from the popular side-scrollers of the time and it is immensely fun to be able to barrel off into the skies.

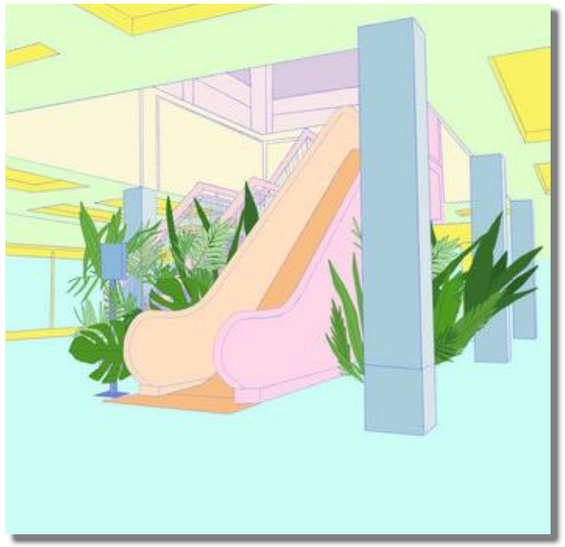
I'd recommend playing the levels in the order they're presented to you as the difficulty does scale up significantly, but you can play them in any order you like. There isn't much more to the game than blowing up your enemies and it can feel a bit repetitive but the ever increasing challenge will keep you occupied as you try to beat your high score.

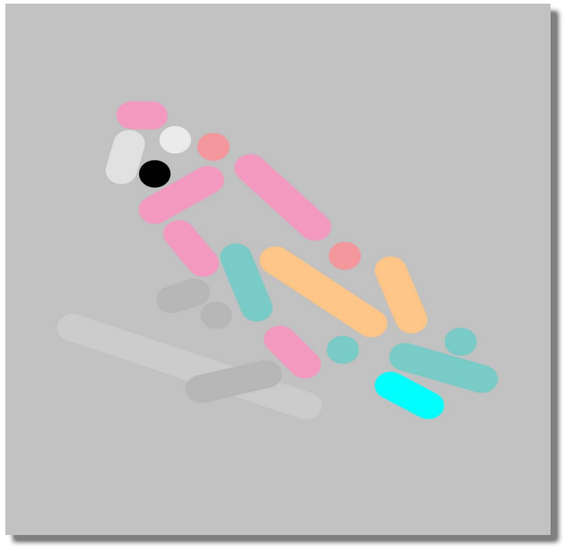
THE MUSIC ZONE

Gaming and music have always gone hand in hand. Be it chiptune compositions originating from gaming hardware itself, the rocking beats of Crush 40 accompanying the blue blur on his adventures or just your favourite CD on in the background to help you concentrate on getting that high score, there's no denying that the two industries are intrinsically and culturally linked.

The '90s were a great time for music. Punk made way for grunge and dreamy sythns were binned in favour of rap, trance and hip hop. It would therefore be irresponsible of us to not cover music in this mag, however it would be all too easy for us to cover old ground and review popular albums from 1990 (what you mean like we have done with the game reviews? -ed) so we're going to be doing something a little different and bringing to you some new sounds that would very much feel at home in the late '80s and early '90s. This month we feature two very special interviews with two very incredible bands...







DUETT

bandcamp
duett.bandcamp.com

Someone once said: *"Synthwave gives you feelings of nostalgia for a place you've never been to and a time that you didn't live through."* **Nobody encapsulates that feeling better than Duett.**

We go backstage to find out more about the magician behind the music.

SM: When did you first take an interest in music and when did you decide being a musician is what you wanted to do?

I first took an interest in making music when I was a child in the early 90s. I was really into rave culture - but was obviously too young to attend any raves, or know what it was really about. I liked the homemade sound, and it felt accessible. I was massively into Prodigy. I felt like I could relate to Liam because he had a quiet, shy persona, enjoyed creating electronic beats in his home studio, but was making big music. He could also sit in the background whilst the other members took the spotlight, and I liked that. From then I spent a lot of time working out how I could get into making music, and how it was done.

SM: Who are your main influences?

I'm more influenced now by producers and musicians of the 80s and 90s. Producers like Trevor Horn, Jam and Lewis, Narada Michael Walden and musicians like Tony Banks, David Frank, Mike Lindup and David Gamson.

SM: What inspires you when it comes to creating music?

When I'm working on music I'm always looking for chord progressions or sounds that give me a specific nostalgia or feeling. That's not big uplifting power chords, but atmospheric sounds and textures.

SM: How would you describe your musical style?

Some 80s pop, some 80s library music.

SM: What would you be doing if you weren't a musician?

Id love to have my own cafe/arcade.

SM: Your social media channels often depict old games systems, do these influence your music at all?

Massively. I would play levels in games again and again just to hear the music on certain levels. I can't always pinpoint an exact influence, but there are definitely elements and melodies in my music that are clearly influenced by games.

SM: What are your fondest memories of gaming? Parents bringing home your first console? Multiplayer with siblings?

My first computer was a commodore 64, which I got for Christmas one year and loved, but it was the NES I got for Christmas the following year that was the one. Oddly it came with Super Mario Bros 2 which I spent months playing - and trying to complete. I remember completing it late one night, and seeing the picture of Mario in bed - which comes up at the end - and feeling like id really accomplished something! I still play the Mario games on my NES now.

SM: What is your favourite old school game?

I think my favourite game is Sonic The Hedgehog 3. I love Sonic 2 but I always found the end levels quite frustrating. With Sonic 3 the gameplay, the music, the vibrant colours, the vs levels, the bonus levels - everything about it is so good. I still play it now. Hydrocity Zone 1&2 were the levels I would play again just for the music.

SM: What more modern games are you into?

I don't play a lot of modern games, but I do like Forza and Fifa. I can dip into those without getting too involved, and that suits me now!

SM: I can see from your Twitter you're cool with people using your music for their streams. Do you watch Twitch yourself? What's your take on modern gaming?

The way I approach Duett is that I want everyone to have access to it. I don't want to price anyone out of being able to listen, or that only people with a budget can license tracks for streams. If a corporation wants to use a track for promo that's different but I like that people on twitch can share things they're into and it benefits them socially.

SM: There are a lot of late eighties/early nineties references on your Twitter feed. Why would you say you are so fond of this era?

It's probably mainly because of nostalgia - for a time when it felt like you didn't have your adult worries. Its also because it was a really interesting time for art and design. New technology was influencing design and music more than ever, and so you end up with a mix of over-produced music, and sleek design. I use my twitter feed as a kind of mood board, which I always reference to inspire me when I'm working on something new.

Kobra FORCE

An interview with the legends behind the Wasteland EP. They tell us what inpired them...and what's next!

SM: Could you tell us a little bit about who is behind Kobra Force and how it came about?

Liam: We met at college studying music production in 2006, started our first project "hands up for cassettes" in the first year, then changed to "Who's Alan Now!?", after Steven told a hilarious story, which very few people would even understand. The punchline of the story was someone saying "Who's Alan Now!?", and it became our band name from 2007, all the way up until we started Kobra Force in early 2018.

We used to make a lot of different styles of music, from industrial metal and comedy tunes (such as a punk song based on the Ronnie Pickering event), to weird hip hop and electronica. We never really settled on one style or genre until we found our niche in making synth/retro style music. It was like a massive musical epiphany where we realised "Yeah, this is what we've been wanting to make all along!". It all clicked into place when Steven brought the Juno 106 to my little home studio and we made "The Future is Love".

Steven: Yeah, I remember hearing Timecop1983's "Reflections" album - which was my gateway to the whole synth / retro scene. I fell in love instantly and as Liam said, we just clicked that this is what we should be making. We stopped working on our old project and starting writing some new tracks, using some old 80s synths and drum machines and the first EP came together.

SM: What does your band name mean?

Liam: The original concept was to make it about some sort of futuristic team of super soldier mercenaries escaping from a planet ravaged by war and conflict. We had that narrative for the first EP, but it feels like we've deviated from trying to continue a narrative since then, so now, for me, it's just a cool name that fits with the vibe. We haven't abandoned the narrative concept all together, we're just a bit more loose with it on the upcoming album, where the first half continues the story from the Wasteland EP. It deviates and branches off, due to where the narrative leads us on the track "Kingdom", which I think in future, will allow us to serve the music, as opposed to using the music to serve the band name and a vague narrative, if that makes any sense?

Steven: It sounded like it could be the title of an 80s action movie, the kind we grew up watching on VHS. It wasn't until after we'd stuck with the name that we realised that there was actually an 80s B movie called "Cobra Force" seemed to be a good fit so we stayed with it.

SM: Who are your biggest influences?

Liam: In the synthwave scene, Miami Nights 1984, Lost Years, Timecop1983, The Midnight, Power Nerd, Neon Nox, Wice, Gunship, Tom Crux. My most distinct memory is hearing "The Getaway" by Miami Nights 1984, sometime in 2014 and thinking "this is the music I need to make!". Still blown away by that track to this day.

In general, I tend to listen to a lot of heavy stuff, like Nine Inch Nails, HEALTH, Muse, Deftones, Tool, Placebo, Rammstein, Bring Me the Horizon and Architects. There's also artists like Clive Barker, Jean Michel Jarre, Chic, Jan Hammer, Prince, Bowie, Flock of Seagulls, Duran Duran. Not to mention all the 80's movie soundtracks, like The Terminator, Robocop, Blade Runner (you know, the obvious ones). We've got some quite eclectic tastes and influences between us, I reckon. I mention a lot of people there, but there's more, but this answer is already long enough, so I'll leave it at that.

Steven: I think my influences change quite often, there's the obvious synthy greats such as Jean Michel Jarre, John Carpenter, Vangelis, Giorgio Moroder Depeche Mode, Human League - the list could go on forever! But my influences change depending on what I'm currently listening to. Recently, I've been listening to a lot of imagined soundtrack scores recently as well as Bleachers, Angels & Airwaves, Cvrches, Fela Kuti, Chromatics & Public Service Broadcasting to name a few. So yeah, as Liam said, we've both got very eclectic tastes.

SM: Wasteland is part of the retrowave/synthwave genre, could you tell us a little bit about the scene?

Liam: I'm a bit of recluse, so I don't know much about the scene, except that it's a bunch of people from many varied musical backgrounds, who have found common ground through their love of the sound of the 80's. It's still a relatively small, but thriving community, with very few egos, which is refreshing to see, because you find that in a lot of scenes, there are people who think their opinion is the be all and end all, when it isn't. I Haven't really seen any of that sort of attitude in the synth/retro scene so far.

Steven: Yeah I really enjoy the vibe the scene has. There's just so much love for the music out there. I remember seeing the Midnight play and just looking around seeing the whole crowd absolutely blasting out the chorus on "Days Of Thunder" was amazing.It's still very small but growing fast. It's also quite close knit – Artists are all very active on social media and the "big names" we'll say, are all willing to chat and talk production tips etc.

SM: What is your songwriting process?

Liam: I'm very much a stickler for harmony/music theory, whereas Steven tends to approach it from a more experimental playing with soundscapes/ textures/timbre point of view, so together, we have a pretty solid foundation for song writing. We have an in joke, where we say I do guitars and Steven does snares, but it's definitely more complicated and collaborative than that. Experimentation and honest constructive criticism are important. The thing I love about how we work is that we've never ever really fought over anything. If we disagree over something, we make our points and compromise. You hear about bands and musicians falling out all the time over disagreements of certain musical directions, but that's never seemed to happen with us, even after 15 years. It's pretty chill, always a good laugh. Especially when we try to sing melodies to each other for ideas, and end up sounding like Vic Reeves singing in the style of a club singer.

Steven: We also generally make the music together in the same room. We might start a track on our own but usually we get together to really work on stuff. Last year when the pandemic hit, we barely made any music as we couldn't actually be in the same room.

SM: Are there any essential artists you'd recommend to newcomers in the retrowave scene?

Liam: Miami Nights 1984, The Midnight, Timecop1983, Tom Crux, Wice, Neon Nox, FM-84 and Lost Years. They were basically my introduction, and I still listen to them quite a lot, so they're the ones I'd personally recommend.

Steven: I'd add Futurecop!, Robert Parker, Waveshaper & Midnight Danger.

SM: Are you gamers and if so do games influence your music in any way?

Liam: Yeah, I'm a massive gamer. If I'm not making music or working, I'm playing games. I play with a group of people from work (SFST gaming), we've been doing monthly 24 hour gaming streams for charity throughout the pandemic, to keep ourselves occupied and sane. In terms of gaming influence, Cyberpunk 2077 definitely influenced one of the new tunes on the album, "Gloves Off".

Steven: Not so much these days, I'll play one or two games a year really. I'd like to play more but I just don't really have the time. I've got a family, which takes up a huge amount of my time. My son is getting to an age now where he's interested in games so I'm introducing him to the games I played as a kid.

SM:What can we expect to see from Kobra Force in the future?

Liam: We have an album that's just about done. I've got 2 bars of a guitar solo to re-do on one song a bit of mixing, then we need to get some artwork sorted and master the final product. I'd love to play some gigs, but we need more musicians (A drummer at least). Maybe live streaming gigs on twitch could be a way forward for now. Who knows? It's all about managing time, and we tend to be creating, having a laugh and making silly noises with vintage synths, rather than stressing out over organising and learning a live set. Though I really do want to play live eventually.

bandcamp
kobraforce.bandcamp.com

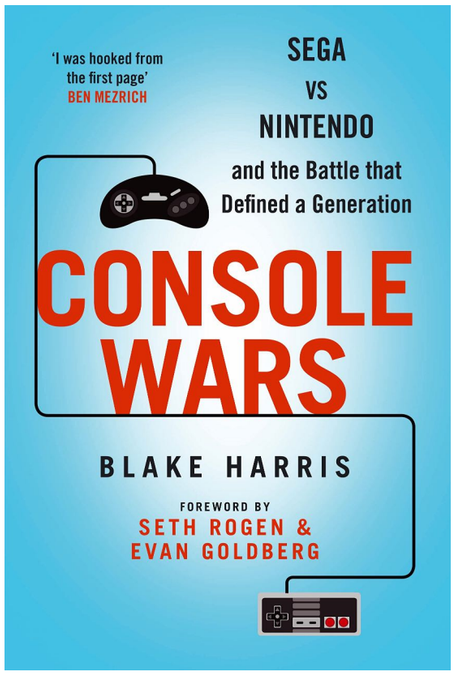
THE CAPITALISM ZONE

The suggested £70 recommended retail price for games today just isn't enough for our corporate overlords. Something's got to pay for the dolphin mosaic on the bottom of the pool in their third home. So why not help them out by buying some sweet swag?

We jest of course, there's some really cool gaming merchanside out there as well as books and music inspired by the industry. We've included some of our favourites here.

Console Wars: Blake Harris

The fact that this book has now been turned into a documentary speaks volumes, it really is that good (despite the foreword by Seth Rogan).



It does have a few issues however. Rather than being written as a dry factual account of the war between Sega and Nintendo, Harris has dramatised the events with the outcome being more of a novel. With that comes a healthy dose of cringe, especially in the early parts of the book where the dialogue is more reminiscent of a £2.99 airport romance page turner. It really took me out of if for a few chapters.

That said it isn't long before it turns around and you're drawn into one of the most fascinating periods in gaming history.

At 576 pages it's all here and a big read. What makes this truly worth a look is knowing how it all turned out in the end as you turn the pages. You can cheer along with the victories and celebrate the ballsy plays that were made by Sega of America inc. in order to corner the US market, but also sit in the corner and die quietly as you "watch" a catastrophe unfold at each turn of a page.

The Games that Weren't: Bitmap Books/Frank Gasking

Bitmap books are usually best known for their incredible visual compendiums which showcase artwork, box-art and behind the scenes details of games and consoles. They can often be however, nothing more than coffee table books and scant on readable content. The Games that Weren't however caught my attention more than the rest of their library as it looked like it would

scratch the itch I get from a curiosity of mine...games that never made it to market.

For me there's something fascinating about seeing games that either didn't get finished or seeing versions of them very different to what was released and TGTW delivers that in spades.

Packed with interviews with developers and never seen before images and concept art, it's an excellent read, broken down into managable chunks especially good for night time, before bed, consumption. The caveat is however, is that it's very '70s and '80s centric. I would have liked to have seen more titles from the '90s and the modern era but the author explicitly states that as games became bigger, so did the non-disclosure agreements resulting in developers having to be more tight lipped, which is a shame. So with this in mind proceed with caution if you're not a fan of anything that only would have made its way into your home on a cassette or a floppy disk.

The best thing about TGTW however is the fact that it lives well beyond its 644 pages on its accompanying website that you can check out here:

www.gamesthatwerent.com

Retro-Bit Official Sega Mega Drive 6-Button Arcade Pad

You could be forgiven for thinking that this was yet another USB clone of a classic controller for use with your PC, Xbox One or PS4 but you'd be dead wrong.

This dear readers is an officially licensed, genuine, 100% Mega Drive compatible replacement joypad and it's glorious. It works with all versions of the Mega Drive and its many clones and features a good three metres of cord so there's no pulling your precious console off the cabinet during a frantic Space Harrier II session.

The buttons feel almost exactly like the real thing including the D-Pad, which, isn't as accurate as the original but is close enough that it can be forgiven. You may fail to pull off a few moves in Street Fighter 2 (In this magazines canon that game doesn't exist yet but is a useful driver for this point - ed.) but for everything else it provides a pleasant gaming experience.

Costing only £14.99 it's an absolute steal for a controller that's free of scratches, wear and 30 year old skin flakes.

Our only complaint is that they only offer the six button variant. Although the most useful overall, we think the six button controller lacks the

distinctive aesthetic of the original 3 button model. Hopefully someday Retro-Bit will surprise us with that edition. Bonus points if they do red button white button variants too. We wait with baited breath.

Panini Super Play Cards

When we stumbled across these bad boys on eBay recently the nostalgia pangs were so intense, Simon had to have a little lie down. Although their descriptions and tips are woefully inaccurate, they're a great addition to any retro Sega gaming collection. Prices vary massively but it shouldn't be too hard or expensive to get a hold of a full set if you're so inclined.

Get the '90s look!

You can't be a true '90s gamer without a rad outfit, we've sourced some of the best and worst fashion choices you can buy today. Ideal if you want to cringe a flossing Fortnite player to death.

FORCES CREATIVE FC-180 T-SHIRT
WWW.DESIGNMUSEUMSHOP.COM £21

HYPERCOLOR T-SHIRT
WWW.REDBUBBLE.COM(zemrani1) £15

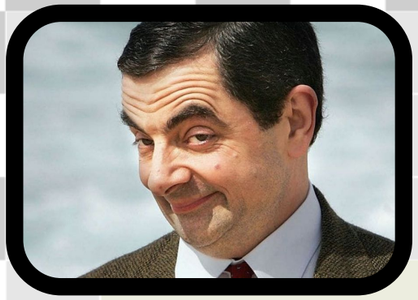
SLAP BANDS
WWW.AMAZON.CO.UK £VARIOUS

LEE TIE DYED T-SHIRT
WWW.BEYONDRETRO.COM £23

CILO JR2 SUNGLASSES
WWW.SPECSCART.CO.UK £50

What's on the box?

The '90s was an awesome decade for Television and saw the launch of some belters that would go on to become true cult classics with catchphrases surviving decades later. **Tim Hugall** lists some of his favourites here from 1990 for you to enjoy. Some of them are still available on modern streaming services. Some of them you'll need to sail a little further a field to find, but if you're up for a blast of nostalgia it's well worth taking to the seas to track them down.



An alien or just a really strange bloke? Nobody knows but either way **Mr Bean** landed on our screens this year and he became an overnight sensation.

Based on a character created by Rowan Atkinson while he was at University, Mr Bean follows the antics of a "child in a grown man's body". The character gets himself into some downright ludicrous scenarios but mostly comes out on top via the use of some creative ideas or props.

Amazingly the show only ever had 15 episodes but the lasting impact makes it feel like there were so much more.

Two cinematic films were later created. The first was a smash hit and critically acclaimed, the second failed to live up to its predecessor's expectations.

Mr Bean lives on today in the form of a childrens cartoon.

Our overseas readers might be surprised to learn that we never got the Ninja Turtles here in the UK. Oh no. The BBFC thought the word 'Ninja' was too hostile for children and instead we were given **Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles.**

Nevertheless the show didn't fail to capture the nation's attention when it landed on British television in 1990.

Every school playground was buzzing with the sound of kids arguing as to who was going to be who. Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael or Michelangelo, everyone had their favourite and by the time it was decided the school bell usually rang, pushing the argument well into the next day.

The toys also played a big part in the success of the show and an enormous amount of merchandise was made available to purchase. It wasn't until the relaunch of Thunderbirds in 1991 that the Turtles toy fever died down.

Heroes in a Half Shell....Turtle Power!

If I had to choose a primary influencer in my life, Victor Meldrew would be in the running for first place.

One Foot in the Grave was a show that probably would have died a death had the cast not been so brilliantly chosen.

Richard Wilson plays Victor, an early retiree who is at odds with the world. He years for a simple life but the universe often has other plans.

Most of the six series that were produced follow the basic sitcom formula but at times the show dips into moments of black comedy and sometimes tradegy and at the time caused a degree of controversy.

The show ended in with Victor's death in 2000 but his catchphrase "I don't believe it" will live on forever.

If there was ever a show that everybody in Britain wanted to take part in it was **The Crystal Maze**.

Hosted by Richard O'Brien of The Rocky Horror Picture Show fame, The Crystal Maze saw a group of contestants compete in a series of challenges throughout four different themed zones.

The challenges would often involve physical or mental tasks with a strict time limit. Success would reward a crystal which could be used to buy time in the Crystal Dome at the end of the show. Failure combined with the players inability to leave the challenge in time would result in the player being locked in. A crystal could be exchanged to free them but at the expense of that all important time in the dome.

The Crystal Dome required the players collecting gold tickets blown around with fans. Enough gold tickets would result in a prize, usually a holiday. The show ended in in 1995 but was rebooted in 2017 with less success.

The BBC had Tony Hart, ITV had **Art Attack**.

Fronted by Neil Buchanan, Art Attack was a kids TV show designed to make messing about with paint and crafts a little more interesting.

Neil would demonstrate different approaches to working with materials with the intention that the viewer would follow along. Neil was accompanied by "The Head" a puppet stone bust who would make wise cracks or attempt to following along as well, usually making a dogs dinner of it.

Art Attack was perhaps most famous for Neil's large compositions at the end of the show. The camera would give a bird's eye view of a large area and using a mix of objects such as hay bales and dustbins, Neil would create an enormous picture. It was the highlight of the show and always made sitting through it a worthwhile effort.

The show was eventually bought by Disney and ran until 2015 under various hosts.

Quite why it took three years for **Star Trek: The Next Generation** to land on British television sets is a mystery considering how bloody good it is.

The original series will always remain a classic but TNG is where things really started to kick off for Trekkies. Led by Captain Jean Luc Picard played by Patrick Stewart, the crew of the Starship Enterprise introduced us to a whole new world of Star Trek lore.

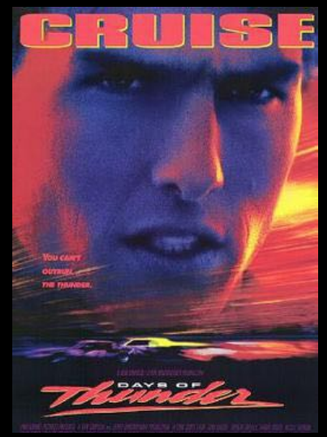
TNG also brought to light the galaxy's most terrifying foe, the Borg, who, have cemented themselves in Sci-Fi culture with their catchprase "resistance is futile" still used frequently today.

Running for seven series and a whopping 178 episodes, the show also spawned four films: Generations (which starred the original crew in a cool crossover), First Contact, Insurrection and Nemesis.

Although TNG ran alongside the less popular Deep Space Nine, it was eventually fully superseded by Star Trek Voyager in 1995.

At the movies!

@Dvdmike is back again with more great movie reviews. Some have questioned the inclusion of movie reviews in our magazine, stating that more games reviews would be better. Although giving you a sliver of '90s culture is an important part of our goal to drive home that nostalgic kick in the groin, we thought four reviews was, perhaps, a bit much so we've cut it down to two reviews...and used the extra page for TV shows instead! IN YOUR FACE! In the immortal words of Rage against the Machine: "f*ck you I won't do what you tell me!" (although there are a lot more game reviews than last time so you do kinda win...bugger...)



Days of Thunder

Rubbing is racing

I will start out by saying Tony Scott is my favorite director of all time, so with that massive bias out of the way...

Days of Thunder was a reuniting of the Top Gun dream team: Star Tom Cruise Director Tony Scott and super Producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson.

Days finds Cruise as Cole Trickle an Indy Car racer looking to move to NASCAR, Tim Daland a local car dealer wants to set up his own team with help of retired legend crew chief Harry Hodge. He hires Cole for a tryout in the car of rival Rowdy Burns (an always great Michael Rooker) to see if Harry will sign off on this new inexperienced driver. This leads to Cole being schooled by Harry on how things work, Cole admits to not knowing anything about cars and needs to learn a lot from Harry to get better. His pride takes a few hits, no more than a really bad accident between Burns and Trickle that leaves them both in the hospital.

This introduces Dr. Claire Lewicki (a pre-mrs Tom Cruise Nicole Kidman) who treats them both and Cole ends up in a relationship with. While Cole is out and recovering Russ Wheeler takes over for him (a great evil turn by Cary Elwes) and starts winning like Cole was before his accident. Cole gets back to racing and is very gun shy and worried about a repeat of the accident that hospitalised him, this leads him to take less chances and he ends up performing poorly due to the injuries.

This was a film fulled behind the scenes by cocaine and ego, and a war in the press with Dick Tracy on who would have the biggest opening weekend. The script written by Chinatown's Robert Towne and score from the then little used Hans Zimmer (when I really liked his style).

Producer Don Simpson had millions of dollars of cosmetic surgery to be in the movie as a driver, he made sure he was in the script and had scenes filmed as a rival racer. All bar maybe 1 minute of his performance remained in the final film, I think Scott may have had to make a hard call there and cut the producer out of the movie. The behind the scenes were legendary but for me even knowing all that, what is up on the screen is what speaks loudest.

The practical racing scenes are stunning, just pure vicerial action metal on metal.

Scott knew what he was doing making Top Gun mostly all practical and it works here the same way.

Cruise is earnest and at times vulnerable and that is more than this silly blockbuster deserves, he was fresh from Born on the Fourth of July and he seems like he cares here.

It looks and sounds amazing, one of the first films with a digital soundtrack with Kodak's CDS system a full two years before Dolby did the same with Batman Returns.

This never gets remembered like Top Gun, but I feel it feel it tells a better story and with a more serious tone then Gun did.

DARKMAN

Fresh off Evil Dead 2 writer/director Sam Raimi and (the then relatively unknown) Liam Neeson unleashed an original superhero into the world: Darkman.

Raimi tried to buy the film rights for The Shadow and Batman and when he was unable to he decided to make his own dark hero taking themes from both.

Darkman tells the tale of Peyton Westlake (Neeson), a scientist who is working on synthetic replacement skin for burn victims. His girlfriend Julie Hastings (Fargo's Francis McDormond) is an attorney for a property developer who has been bribing city officials to get his new city made. The evidence of all these shady deals (the fantastically named) Belisarius Memorandum is in her possession and also sought by the city crime boss Robert Durant (Larry Drake).

Durant shows up at Westlake's home/lab in search of the Belisarius Memorandum, just as he breaks the key to make the skin last 100 minutes before melting. Durant with his band of goons in tow (including Raimi's brother Ted) and torture Westlake, murder his assistant and just as Julie turns up to see the lab explode. Westlake now considered dead was taken in to hospital and to save his life his nerve endings are severed to save from the pain he would be feeling constantly due to his burnt hands and face. This loss of sensation gives him boosted strength due to adrenal surges, but this ramps up his anger to the point that he mentally breaks. He breaks out of hospital and returns to his lab to recover the equipment he was using to make the synthetic skin. He then plans with the masks made from the skin,and his gift of imitation to get his his revenge on Durant and his hope to return to his life with Julie.

This was Raimi's first step into the relative mainstream of 90s cinema, what is interesting that he and cinematographer Bill Pope (who would work together again with an actual superhero movie Spider-man 2) still have the low budget gonzo fun and inventiveness that Raimi used in his Evil Dead movies.

Neeson also seems to be having a lot of fun behind 18 hours of make up and false teeth, crazy to think that he would after Phantom Menace talk about visual effects killing Hollywood and wanted to retire.

Raimi would here first work with composer Danny Elfman, a relationship that would still be solid (With a little fall out over Spider-man 3) to today and the upcoming Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness coming soon.

This is a silly little movie, but the fact is knows it is makes it work, its all the fun and then some. It is very stupid and wears its influence on its trench coat sleeves, its pure pulp Universal horror movie in the vein of The Invisible Man or Frankenstein.

I may be biased as a massive Evil Dead fanboy, but the fun is infectious and takes you along for the ride, this is where I knew Neeson from as a kid and the point of reference along with Batman 89 why Danny Elfman should do all the superhero scores ever.

I had the NES game, I own the original cinema poster and it has pride of place on my wall.

YOU CHEATING B*STARD!

Lets face it, the only reason anyone ever bought gaming magazines in the '90s was for the cheats. So here you go you lazy, untalented, poor excuse for a gamer! As a dirty cheater, I hope that you always get given the 3rd party controller at a friends house, your cartridges always need blowing and you get a joypad blister that never heals!!!!*

Chase HQ (MS)

At the parts screen, press Right x 7, Left x 2 then Right x 9. Choose the stage using the numbers at the top, then you will be given 8 continues and 3 million points to buy all the car parts.

Strider (MD)

Invincibility: At the start screen press up, down, right, left, a, b, b, a, c, start, and you'll be invincible.

Infinite Lives: *(Note: A copy of Altered Beast is required to access this cheat)* Insert Altered Beast into the Mega Drive. As soon as the title screen appears, remove Altered Beast without turning off the system. Insert Strider and press Reset, then start a game as usual.

Extra Continues: For three continues, press A, C, B, C, A, Start at the intro screen.

Golden Axe (MD)

Level Select: Select arcade mode. Hold Down/Left + B and press Start at the character selection screen. A number that corresponds to the starting level will appear in the upper left corner of the screen. Use the D-pad to change it to the level you want.

27 Lives: Start Arcade Mode. When you get to the character select screen, hold down + left and hit A + C + Start. The next time you get Game Over, it should say you have 9 credits instead of 3.

9 Credits: On the Arcade Mode character select screen. Hold the left and down buttons on the D-pad, press A, C, and start at the same time to get 9 credits.

Golden Axe (MS)

Extra Continue: Press Up + 2 while holding during the game over screen.

Extra Credit: On the game over screen, press Up + Left + 1 at the same time.

Gauntlet (MS)

Continue after death as player 1: Press any button on controller 2 after losing all lives when playing as player one. Game play will continue with player two.

Unlimited treasure room time: Begin game play in two player mode. Allow one player to exit the treasure room. The second player will have an unlimited amount of time to collect the treasure.

Super Hang-On (MD)

Extra $10,000: Go to options and choose Arcade Mode. Then hit Up-Left-A-B and press start.

Passwords (Original Mode Only)

Level 1 Password: 0FF3F546F30504

Rival: Mia Ferraru: FFOSLPIMFJPGNU

Level 2 Password: 0FF3F546F30514

Rival: Jose Alverez: FFOSLPIMFJHSSU

Level 3 Password: 0FF3F546F30524

Rival: Nobuhiko Hasegawa: FFOSLPIMFJPOFT

Level 4 Password: 0FF3F546F30534

Rival: Felica Perez: FFOSLPIMFJHKKT

Level 5 Password: 0FF3F546F30544

Rival: Hans Braun: FFOSLPIMFJQFNW

Level 6 Password: 0FF3F546F30554

Rival: Marie Lefoure: FFOSLPIMFJIRSW

Level 7 Password: 0FF3F546F30564

Rival: King Arthur: FFOSLPIMFJQNFV

Ending Password: 5FF3F546F35564

Record: 5-0: FFOSLPIMFJQNKS

Turbo: When you reach the top speed of 280 km/h, press B + C to increase your speed to 320 km/h.

Cheat Menu: When the title screen comes up, press A + B + C all at once. Press Start to exit and play the game.

Revenge of Shinobi (MD)

Unlimited Shurikens: For unlimited shurikens, set the number of shurikens on the Options screen to 0 and wait about 20 seconds. The zero will turn into an infinity symbol.

Submarine Attack (MS)

(Action Replay code)

Infinite Lives: 00C02809

Altered Beast (MS)

Beast Select: Down-left + A + B + C when you switch the system on. When the title screen appears press start.

Carry on playing: When you die, hold A and press Start repeatedly.

Sound Test: At the title screen, press and hold A + C + Up Right + Start.

Options / Level Select: At the title screen, hold B and press Start. To select a level, choose a round on the Options screen, then hold A + Start at the title screen.

Paper Boy (MS)

Score at least 1050 points to enter your name on the high scoreboard, then enter one of the names below:

All cheats enabled: .HERO.

Allows complete stop: ..STOP

Infinite lives: ..DJC.

Infinite papers: GARY.V

Someone always subscribes: .SEGA. *(if only this worked on our website - ed)*

Ghouls n Ghosts (MD)

Invincibility: Wait for the "Start" message, then push A, A, A, A, UP, DOWN, LEFT, RIGHT. You should hear a chime. Then press and hold B, then START. You should hear another chime. Finally, press and hold C, then push START.

Japanese Play: From the Options screen, select 26 for music and 56 for sound. Then hold DOWN-LEFT + A + B + C + START.

Level Select: Press Up, Down, Left, Right at the title screen. Repeat until you hear a tone. Then use the following inputs to choose a level:

The Execution Place: START

The Floating Island: A, START

The Village of Decay: UP, START

Town of Fire: UP, A, START

Baron Rankle's Tower: DOWN, START

Horrible Faced Mountain: DOWN, A, START

The Crystal Forest: LEFT, START

The Ice Slopes: LEFT, A, START

Beginning of Castle: RIGHT, START

Middle of Castle: RIGHT, A, START

Loki: DOWN, RIGHT, START

Super Thunder Blade (MD)

On the title screen:

Level 2: A, Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Up, Start

Level 3: A, A, Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Up, Start

Level 4: A, A, A, Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Up, Start

Level 5: A, A, A, A, Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Up, Start

Alex Kidd in Shinobi World (MS)

(Action Replay codes)

Infinite energy: 00C22E06

Infinite lives: 00C22F09

Invincibility: 00C22781

Alex Kidd in The Enchanted Castle

To start with 4 Lives, 500 coins, & 2 of all items, during the intro sequence, when you see the chests hold Down + Right + A until the music stops at the title screen.

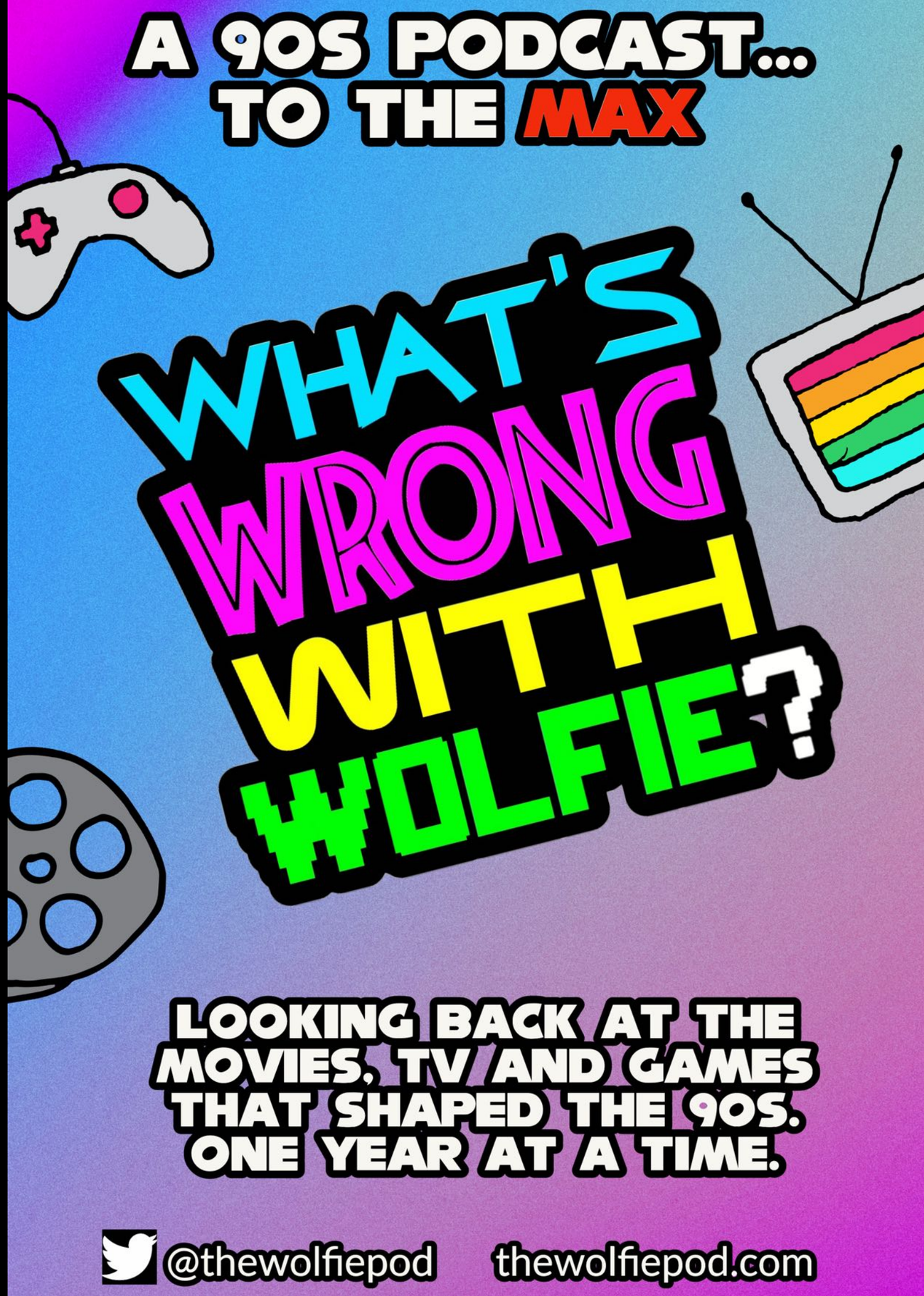
ESWAT (MD)

Level Select: On the Hero and Mission hold down A,B,C and press Left, Right, Up, Down on D-Pad.

Space Harrier II (MD)

Level Select: Press Start and wait for the screen that says "Stuna Area." Press Left or Right to choose your starting point. You still have to finish 12 levels to finish the game, though.

Options: When the title screen appears, hold down A.



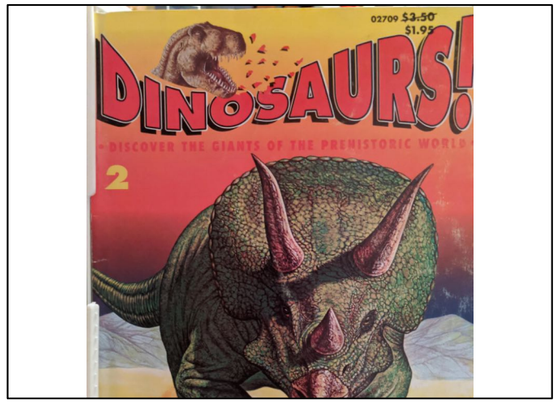
LETTERS

Cereal toys

Does anyone else's dad not let them have the toy from the cereal box until you finish the cereal? A popular chocolatey puffs type of cereal have come out with this great spoon that starts out clear but when you eat the cereal it goes brown and then you can suck up the chocolatey milk with it through a hole at the top. But by the time my dad lets me have the bloody thing the cereal is all gone and I fancy Frosties for the next week instead. No wants to suck up Frostie milk. Then, when I desperately need that free toothpick in their cereal to get the orange gunk out of my teeth, I can't have it until I finish the box, or need a filling, whichever comes first. I'll be really screwed when I switch to Ricicles and he won't let me have the free insulin syringe. Who else's dad is a bastard?

- Stan, Portishead

To quote Eminem: "You got some issues Stan, I think you need some counselling, to help your ass from bouncing off the walls when you get down some" - listen to Marshall Mathers, get help.



Dinosaurs

Hey there! I know I should probably ask them about this instead of you guys, but I started collecting a dinosaur magazine where you get a free model piece with every issue and after 50 weeks you end up with a T-Rex. It's really cool, but I missed issue four and my dinosaur has no upper spine. What would you recommend replacing it with? We've got two cats. Also will you guys be doing any giveaways, I'd love to build a Game Gear from scratch.

- Ralph, Seaton

Got Something to say to us?

We probably don't want to hear it but you're welcome to send us an email anyway: *letters@sega-mania.com* and if we print your letter you'll win absolutely nothing at all. We're also on Twitter and Discord too, details of which are at www.sega-mania.com so please..come and troll us!

I'm starting to think that these letters aren't real.

My Gran

Hello, guess what? My Gran says Mario is better than Sonic and that Luigi could beat Sonic's brother Tails in a fight, and said that Princess Peach could beat Amy Rose at Fortnite. My Gran rides a superbike while smoking cigars. She said that the only good Mega Drive game is Shaq Fu. My other Gran said that Metroid could beat Halo in a fight. She said that Halo is alright, but Metroid is a way cooler guy. She also said that Kirby is the best Pokemon. Nintendo is the best and Sega sucks and you guys should GIVE UP! Halo is the worst Sega franchise. The Atari Lynx is way better than the Game Gear and has more games. Sonic showed his true colours when he betrayed Sega and showed up in Smash Bros. with Solid Snake and Gandalf. It's over!!! Quit living in the past.

- Nigel, Eastleigh

Nice try at emulating the kind of letters that used to appear in old gaming mags. Close but no cigar.

Help!

Hi Sega-Mania crew. My best friend at school let me look after his shiny green Dragonzord card at lunch and some bigger boys took it. Now my friend is asking where it is and I don't know what to do. I've tried asking the older boys for it back and they won't give it. The dinner ladies are useless and all. Should I move schools or take matters into my own hands? They say you shouldn't copy the Power Rangers but I don't know...

- Eric, Chester

Yeah this needs to stop, this whole idea of "write some fake letters for the first issue" has massively backfired.

Total War

Hi Sega-Mania Magazine! I just thought it would be nice to talk about a game series that it's really easy to forget is published by Sega. Total War! Yep, since Medieval: Total War in 2005 Sega have been publishing this great series, and no hedgehogs or ball-imprisoned monkeys in sight. It's so strange to me to think that Sega have a hand in arguably the greatest strategy franchise of all time. What do you guys think of the Total War series? My favourite is Shogun II for it's balance and the awesome second expansion. Cheers!

- Jeff, Wigan

Finally a real letter! Well what we think about Total War is...damn, out of space...

Next issue...

N O M A D S

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