

NintendoWorldReport

ISSUE 10

POWERED  OFF



Disney **DUCKTALES** -REMASTERED- REVIEW INSIDE

STAFF SEZ

The best Nintendo present ever!

EXCLUSIVE FEATURE

The Emotionless Digital Future

THREE MONTHS IN THE FOREST

J.P. reveals his inner Animal Crossing demons



BEING EXCLUSIVE

By Nicholas Bray

Digital game collections vs physical game collections, a query that continues to appear more and more as we walk into the era of full digital distribution. While some people cherish the advances in not having to own disks and cases, many, including myself, love to have a library of titles that we can physically connect with. James Jones's exclusive article for this month talks about his love and admiration for the collection of games he has amassed over the years, even after he has had to pack it all up to move house, he is still seemingly pro physical.

Danny Bivens has recently attended the Tokyo Game Show and has managed to find some interesting games that will soon be appearing on the Nintendo 3DS in Japan. The games include, Gaist Crusher, Hatsune Miku: Project Mirai 2 and Theatrhythm Final Fantasy: Curtain Call.

Other content that appears in this issue includes some more Animal Crossing fun, more thoughts on the recent DuckTales remake, Of Nerds and Men, some history on Rune Factory, plus much more!

Lastly, the first entry in our Game Idea of the Month section has been included. Fans of Radio Free Nintendo will surely not want to miss these ideas.

Any questions comments or game ideas can be sent to:
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The Emotionless Digital Future

By James Jones

Some point between buying my house and leaving my apartment I had a revelation: I own a ton of little plastic boxes with tiny disks in them. Of about ten cardboard boxes I took from the liquor store, I found that about six of them were entirely devoted to “the shelf.”

I actually tweeted out a picture of the pile, commenting on the tedium of boxing what is essentially a collection of boxes. It was, however, more than tedious; it was a long-running process of cutting ties with what had been my home. It was the first place I really felt like an adult, with a household. It was moving on. And these stupid plastic boxes were constant reminders of both the work that lay ahead and the past I was moving on from.

I remember when I first started boxing up the shelf I was deeply concerned about putting things away in the “right”



order. When I first got a dedicated shelf for my games I developed a sort of library sorting system. The beauty of the system was that I always knew where everything was, which at first seemed obsessive but as the collection grew became a godsend. As work progressed, as moving day got closer, I became increasingly unconcerned with sorting. I had a deadline. I had a task. And despite what it might seem, I had other things to pack!

On the day of the move the shelf was one of the last items delivered to the living room. The boxes had been piling up in the foyer since the truck arrived, and had managed to find themselves in my way with more frequency than seems possible, unless the house is haunted. Which it isn't. Because ghosts.

My family departed a few hours after the movers, and I spent much of the next hour taking the cases out of their boxes and putting them into neat little piles. Wii games over here, GameCube games there, 360 cases on the end table, DS box over yonder, 3DS games...I'm out of places to stack, leave them in the box. As much as putting games into boxes was cutting ties, sorting the games into piles and later into their respective shelves was catharsis.

This collection of games was me. Anyone who knows gaming could peruse these shelves and understand who I am, what my interests are, what makes me laugh, what gets me excited, what gets me angry, what I like, and via their absence what I don't. It was the first thing here that was mine. Furniture is fine, but this collection says something, not just to others but to me.

Putting these games back into their homes stirred up memories not just of the games, but of where I was in my life when I first played them. This was a timeline of me. From 2001 to 2013, these games covered high school, college, and my professional career. It covered my entire term with Nintendo World Report, with Radio Free Nintendo, even my entire association with the gaming community online. There were games I played with long lost friends, with former loves, in fits of depression and moments of joy. These little boxes were touch points on the life I lived thus far.

Since moving I've pulled out games I had long since relegated to memory, and I've had a good time reliving them. They've also gifted me a chance at introspection, thinking about where and when I was.

One of the replies my tweet got, from our own Guillaume, was praise for the all-digital future. Questions of ownership aside, and they are as numerous as they are thorny, I'm not ready for this digital distribution of games. I like having my physical copies. Sure, it's less convenient.

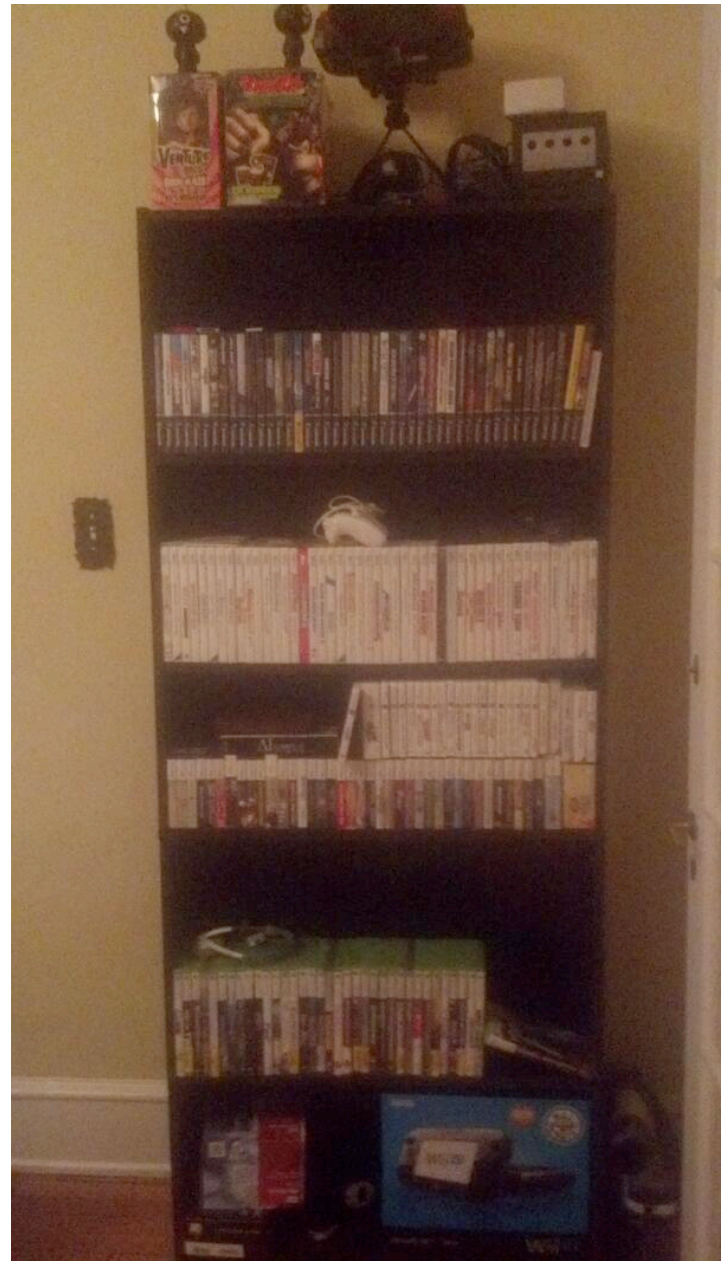
And yes, they take up space. But they're also a firm reminder, an anchor, to where I was. They are an archive, where I can bring people to see a collection of games they may know little of. They are where I can research history of our industry, and where I constantly make additions and enhancements. I don't collect games to satisfy some collector's impulse. I curate a living, growing, ever-changing, representation of me. And while I obviously define myself in terms beyond what Tales game I was playing that year, these bolts of nostalgia are part of me.

When I think about the fact the age of retail video games may not be far from closing I can't help but be wistful of the excitement of holding a long-lusted after game on release day, the excitement of finding a missed classic in a discount bin or a swap meet, or the recent joy of finding a piece of my own history on a shelf that has been in plain sight all along.

And it is on that note that I report the old bookshelf and I are parting ways, at least in its current function. I always regarded the shelf as merely a home for the collection. A place for the important part, the games, to live. It was never something to be proud of – particleboard laminate furniture surrounded by proper sofas, chairs, tables, and the such.

Its shelves were always far too deep for the shallow task of holding game cases and its construction a bit too cheap for the room. Its replacement is far more stately, better equipped to handle the job efficiently, and considerably less of an ever-present toppling risk. Made of real wood, with glass doors, it will look right at home. And it will greatly diminish the odds of me dying at the hands of my own games.

Yet, part of me feels almost bad for the bookshelf, which will probably find itself relegated to the office. It did its work and only once imperiled my life. And I wonder if I moved on to a shelf with doors as a way to hide my collection, as if in shame. It did, in more than one instance, attract comment from housewarming guests in something less than reverence. However, this new home is better for the task, and was a non-negligible investment. It will protect the games from sun bleaching, and will give them a proper home. So perhaps this is less about hiding my collection and more about preserving it and giving it a place to continue to grow, digital future be damned.



The Best Games from TGS 2013 That You May Never Play

By Danny Bivens

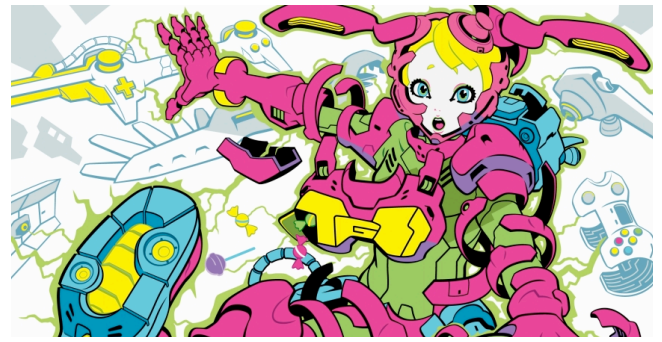
Pray for Western releases for these, or for you rich, passionate fans, just bust out your Japanese 3DS.

The Tokyo Game Show is not really known as an event that placates Nintendo fans. As many of you know, Nintendo doesn't even attend the show and even when third party titles for Nintendo platforms are there, they usually don't show up in large numbers. This year was no different and with a large focus on things like the Playstation 4, Xbox One and Vita TV, Nintendo games were once again pushed almost out of sight. However, out of the handful of games that were at the show that I did manage to try out, a few stood out as top notch titles that were enjoyable and show great potential. The three games below were easily the best of the show, and while their quality is very apparent to people who play them, those of you outside of Japan (or that don't have Japanese Nintendo 3DS units) might never get a chance to get your hands on these titles.

Gaist Crusher (3DS)

When I first read the title of this game in Japanese, I immediately thought of the infamous GameCube first person shooter, Geist. Sorry to disappoint fans that were hoping for a sequel, but Gaist Crusher (the alternative spelling sets this apart, right?!) is a third person action game coming from a collaborative effort between Capcom and Treasure to the Nintendo 3DS. The game isn't the only part of the franchise taking flight in Japan with an anime hitting the airwaves in early October and toys to accompany the game when it releases. Gaist Crusher is set in the year 2064 in a world where everything is going down the crapper when drilling for a previous metal called Gaimetal somehow unleashed creatures, called Gaist upon the world. To fight these creatures, a special force known as the Gaist Crusher Garrison is created to fend off the looming threat.

After first laying hands on Gaist Crusher at TGS this year, I was immediately reminded of last year's E.X. Trooper from Capcom (another game that never made it out of Japan). While both games are third person action titles, E.X. Troopers had more of a focus on shooting, whereas Gaist Crusher focuses more on close range, melee combat. The demo for Gaist Crusher clearly shows off the anime aesthetic



wonderfully, and the tight control configuration make the game accessible to novice gamers. Even though the game is aimed at a younger crowd, it just wouldn't be a Treasure game without it being a bit challenging. While most of the demo was pretty simple, the large boss characters could be a bit harder.

It is totally unclear whether or not this game will see the light of day outside of Japan. The strong marketing push for the game is great to see and could help to ensure success of the franchise, at the very least, in Japan. Even if you don't care one iota about the any of the toys that can help you in-game or the anime, Gaist Crusher is a game that should be on your radar.



Hatsune Miku: Project Mirai 2

If you were to hear that the main star of a game was a sixteen year old anime girl with turquoise hair, would that cause you to steer clear of the game or draw you in? For myself, I'm typically in the camp that stays away from games like this, however, being one of the few Nintendo-related titles at the Tokyo Game Show this year, I felt like I had to play Hatsune Miku: Project Mirai 2. After playing through the demo a few times, I can confirm that you do not need to be a pervert to enjoy playing this game.

Gameplay in Hatsune Miku: Project Mirai 2 is super simple and enjoyable. While the demo at TGS this year only featured one song, it allowed you to play with either touch or button based controls. Using the “chance circle system,” it’s your job to either press the correct buttons or tap the screen when the circle is over the the on screen cues to score as many points as possible on the song. It is a lot like the Event Music Stages in Theatrhythm Final Fantasy in the sense that the circles move along a predetermined track, but instead of grooving to music from the Final Fantasy series, you are jamming with vocaloid. Even from the limited amount of time I had with the demo on the show floor, it is easy to see how rhythm game fans can get sucked into the experience. It seems like a long shot for this game to make it outside of Japan, but with the recent release of Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F on the Playstation Network this summer in Europe, there may be hope for vocaloid fans yet.



Theatrhythm Final Fantasy: Curtain Call

Theatrhythm garnered plenty of attention upon release both in Japan and in the West. Positive reviews and word of mouth helped propel this nostalgic love fest for Final Fantasy music into gamers’ mindshare. With the sequel, Curtain Call, the aim is pretty much the same, except this time there is no holding back. The original Theatrhythm Final Fantasy shipped with 70 songs and then offered DLC later on down the road and more or less limited itself to the mainline Final Fantasy titles (with a few exceptions in the DLC). Curtain Call is not worrying so much about limiting itself and

is offering tracks from the entire realm of Final Fantasy music. In the demo I played, there were tracks for Advent Children, Final Fantasy XIII-2: Lighting Returns and even the PSP Japan exclusive, Final Fantasy Type 0. Not only that, but the game is enhanced even more with the inclusion of button based controls on top of the touch screen controls that were introduced in the first title. With Final Fantasy fandom still pretty large in the West, I would wager that you guys outside of Japan won’t have to wait long for this new, 200 track sequel to Theatrhythm Final Fantasy.

BLOG Three Months in the Forest

By J.P. Corbran

Original Publication: September 12, 2013

A harrowing tale of addiction and furniture.

Hi, my name is J.P. and I'm an Animal Crossing addict. For three months now I've tended my virtual village, building things, planting things, and abusing the local economy via a neighboring island. Through a combination of game-provided objectives and those of my own personal creation I've made this town my own, and I see no end in sight.

As I mentioned, I've had this game for three months now, since the day it was released here in North America. Over that course of time, I have played the game at least a little bit every day. Even if I was just checking the store (still looking for the last few bits of the Modern Wood set) and digging up a few fossils, I was taking part in this world. Some days I had other things going on and it would have been easy to let it slip, but I always made it there, even if I had to force myself.



The meat of the game involves making a lot of money in order to expand your house and build improvements for the town. I've spent a lot of time on those things, but as time has gone by I've drifted farther and farther away from that. Lately I've been obsessed with flowers. Ever since acquiring a golden watering can I've devoted a large portion of my time to intricate arrangement of flowers, and my daily routine has been increasingly dominated by extensive watering. I've set up formations of them to facilitate the creation of hybrid flowers that you can't get any other way.

That kind of thing is why I can see myself playing this game for a long time. I would eventually run out of things to buy and build, but I haven't even been paying much attention to those recently anyway because I've been so busy making up my own goals. That's the beauty of this game: there's so much going on and so many things available to you that you could play it

continuously for months, if not years, and still have stuff to do as long as you're creative.

Three months in, I can definitely see myself still active with it three months from now. I need to find Gracie a couple more times to unlock the final store upgrade. I need to keep buying a tree from the garden store every day so they guy will eventually give me a golden axe. There are still a few parts of my town that I haven't already covered with flowers. And that's all in addition to the house I haven't finished expanding and all the other public works projects I have left to build.



Some might argue that Animal Crossing isn't really a game, but I'd say that there's as much of a game there as you want there to be. This version has more built-in goals than any game in the series before it, and the building blocks for even more. I've already sunk more than triple the time into it as the next game on my 3DS Activity Log, and I can't see myself stopping anytime soon. I may be addicted, but I'm loving it.

Of Nerds and Men: Isolation

By Zachary Miller

Original Publication: September 4, 2013

Fear and loathing in nerd culture.

I went to the comic book shop yesterday. Well, I should back up a little. I went to the Dimond Center mall yesterday, after work, with two goals: download that Shiny Dialga to both my Pokémon White and White 2 cartridges by standing outside of GameStop, and buying the new issue of IDW's excellent Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles reboot. As it turns out, these goals were about one hundred feet apart. Not long ago, the comic shop and the GameStop were separated by the entire mall, which gave me a nice, relaxing "mallwalk" and it let me (potentially) rack up some more StreetPasses, since the Best Buy is between the two stores. Well, no longer. Now, the comic shop and the GameStop are separated by an escalator, and nerds are free to stroll between the two establishments unfettered by any significant distance.

Despite its gradual cultural acceptance thanks in large part to Joss Whedon, Steve Jobs, Wil Wheaton, that dude from "Castle," and "The Big Bang Theory," the term "nerd" is no longer so much derogative or pejorative as merely descriptive in a vanilla sense. Nerds read comic books and play Halo. People who once beat nerds up in high school now actively self-describe as such. But there's still that implicit visual of the fat guy with acne and glasses held together by duct tape, sitting in his parent's basement playing World of Warcraft with one hand and stuffing Cheesy Poofs in his orange-coated gullet with the other. This is not a positive correlation.

It is, however, one that nerds actively partake in. I have a love/hate relationship with the comic book shop. I go in there for very specific purposes: buy one or two comics, look through the Pokémon cards, and see if they have any Kotobukiya figures that catch my eye. It's also, generally, where I buy my board/card games, although Amazon is kind of taking over that role. Some nerds, however, like to go in there and debate. They like to debate loudly. And these are my least favorite nerds.

Yesterday there were two of them (arguing in volumes one normally reserves for screaming at the umpire from your stadium seat) about dwarves, Minecraft, and Dungeons & Dragons. The amazing thing is that they were arguing about these three things simultaneously, and they weren't really arguing so much as agreeing



with each other, vociferously, in terrible Scottish accents (because all dwarves are Scottish). I suppose one might wonder, "what if I was a dwarf character in a D&D game that took place in the world of Minecraft?" Well, apparently you'd just dig downwards forever, because that's just what dwarves do, and sometimes you'd randomly hit a dungeon where the other party members would be and you'd act all casual about it and be like "hey guys, just digging away, you know how it is," as if it were a happy accident.

I witnessed a very strange man with a very strange-looking backpack ask if he could reserve something. The employee asked for his name and email address or phone number, and the guy became paranoid. "Why do you need that information?" "So we can let you know when (whatever it was) arrives." "I'll just come in and check on it. Can I just give you my first name?" What the fuck, people.

As I was perusing one box of pocket monster cards, a girl leafed through another. By her side was her reluctant boyfriend, whose only role was to act as a soundboard for her constant verbal stream of how cute certain of these monsters were. She was unusually distracted by little things, like a Psychic-type card being in a red sleeve, because red sleeves, of course, are reserved for Fire-types, or errors in alphabetization. I'm the same way, of course, but I don't verbalize my every thought. I just silently slide the Bulbasaur that was accidentally placed behind the Cloyster back with the other Bulbasaur. I don't gibber incessantly about how cute or powerful a particular card is. I keep that shit to myself. It's possible she had a pathology, but I found it more likely that she was a babbler—possibly because her boyfriend enabled such behavior.

Unfortunately, next to me (because I was in the cards section), three nerds were arguing with each other about who the best Green Lantern was. It was absolutely mind-numbing. These nerds were arguing about people that don't exist who have powers that are impossibilities in a context that doesn't matter. This is exactly why I haven't gone to a Comic-Con. I imagine the entirety of that con would be people like this, having heated exchanges regarding continuity errors between the different books of the New 52 DC comics, because that shit matters. We're about to bomb Syria, the debt crisis is about to rear its ugly head again, and pythons have taken over the Everglades, but goddamnit, Don Draper would've been a better Batman than Ben Affleck. I'm not saying your longform essay about why Grant Morrison ruined Catwoman isn't culturally relevant; what I'm saying is that you should probably be worried about far more important things.

Says the guy who agonized over whether they'd ruin Godzilla again for the 2014 film.

But I kept that shit to myself.

The one nerd I appreciated was the clerk, a young woman who noted how old the two Pokémon cards I ended up buying were. I explained that I was trying to collect one of every Pokémon from the first ten sets (that is—all the sets released before the eReader expansion). She thought that was cool, and wished me luck. I appreciated that, and I wondered if she represented the same tier of nerd that I feel that I occupy: largely introverted, but willing to strike up a conversation about one of our hobbies should the opportunity present itself, but in what you might consider an "inside voice." The Internet is a wonderful place, as it allows nerds of all stripes to come together and discuss their interests. What bothers me is when I walk into an establishment and am accosted by the absolute worst stereotypes our isolating culture produces. There's OCD girl by the Pokémon cards, Lord of the Rings guys screaming in Scottish accents, paranoid guy who doesn't even want anyone to know his last name, one-uppers with strong opinions on galactic police officers, and people I haven't begun to dismantle: really, really fat guy in an X-Men T-shirt, equipped with a satchel; goth kid reading manga in a corner; former jocks commenting on Halo 4; the list goes on.

These are not my people, but at the same time, they are. Nerd culture is simultaneously vast and insular. The majority of this essay has been repulsive—an effort to distance myself from the kinds of people I don't wish to associate with and who I wish, to be honest, would go to another comic shop. But I can't do that without looking inward. I'm the kind of nerd THEY don't want to associate with: the judging nerd, the one who looks down his nose at Green Lantern

arguments while simultaneously having strong opinions on how the Teenage Mutant Ninja Goddamn Turtles have been portrayed by different creative teams over the last twenty years. I'm the nerd who doesn't like Halo because it's Halo, and who dismisses EA Sports games as being little more than \$60 roster updates (which they are, but that's beside the point). I'm the guy who disparages figmas while buying figures. I'm not immune to criticism myself, nor should I be; nor should any of us be.

I guess my point is that I can whine and distance myself from other nerds all I want, but I do have to appreciate that we all want the same things, ultimately. I share an enthusiast's eye with OCD girl over Pokémon cards, though our motivations differ substantially. I wanted to deck those Lord of the Rings guys, but I probably wasn't the only one in the store with those feelings. Really fat guy was picking up a stack of New 52 books; I was picking up a stack of TMNT comics. Aside from our BMI's, there's really no difference there (except the satchel—I can't forgive that). And I really DO want to go to San Diego Comic-Con before I die, if only to meet some of my heroes—J. Scott Campbell, Frank Cho, Bruce Timm, etc. I'll just have to turn my "tolerance" meter up to "high." Because I'm pretty intolerant of my fellow nerds, but sometimes I think it's warranted.

They probably feel the same way about me.

Expansion Quack Included: More Thoughts

By Andrew Brown

Original Publication: August 20, 2013

It's not a mystery, they DID re-write history!



As I mentioned in my DuckTales Remastered review, “words cannot describe the sheer attention to detail that has been put into this meticulous re-imagining.” Well, I'm going to throw some more words around in an attempt to further explain why you need to buy this game.

See, it's already been established that I loved the DuckTales cartoon back in the day. I've collected the DVDs recently and re-watched all of them, to discover that my childhood love certainly wasn't misplaced like with several other shows (Toxic Crusaders, I'm glaring at you). The adventures of Scrooge McDuck and his plucky group of family and friends still hold up as a wonderful example of family entertainment today. Granted, I'm the target audience that DuckTales Remastered was intended for, someone who loved the original game and still fondly remembers the show. Does that make me biased? Hardly. If anything, it's the fans who would nitpick if a character acted unusually, if a voice didn't sound right, or a reference to the source material was erroneous.



It's the authenticity of the package where WayForward have pulled out all the stops. Close your eyes during the cutscenes and you'd think you were back in time, listening to an episode of the show on a Saturday morning in the late '80s. The quirky cast of adventurers and antagonists is written perfectly, down to every little catchphrase and personality nuance. Scrooge's nephews refer to their Junior Woodchuck guide books to research geographic locations. Launchpad upholds his crash-landing track record in more than one level. Webby even mentions her Quackie Patch dolls.

It's not just the “curse me kilts” and “quack-a-rooney”'s stuck in the dialogue to give the characters some hint of a tie-in to the source material, either. The upgraded storyline now lives and breathes in the DuckTales continuity. Remember Magica De Spell's primary motivation for the wicked things she does to Scrooge? She is, and always has been, only concerned with obtaining Scrooge's Number One Dime – the first coin he ever earned - to use in her spells. Without going into specific detail, this becomes an integral part of the remastered remake's story, and goes so far as to explain the final boss and Magica's unusual and sudden team up with Glomgold in the final scenes of the original NES game. Though it seems like such a simple and superfluous addition, Remastered even gives you the ability to go for a quick dip in Scrooge's Money Bin. It comes so naturally to the DuckTales world and is such a mindlessly fun thing to do that it's surprising it took 23 years for someone to think of putting it in a game.



In the process of expanding the itinerary of things to do in each level, characters that once had throwaway cameo appearances are now given fully fleshed-out roles crucial to completing the stage. For an example, in the Himalayas level in the original game, Bubba Duck could be found frozen in the ice at the end of a precarious tunnel, and would reveal one of two secret health upgrades in the game for saving him. In the remake, he's now found much more easily, and after Scrooge frees him from the ice, he'll follow you through a frozen cave, smashing giant ice blocks in your way.

My favorite improvement to the game is in the African Mines level. Back on the NES, Scrooge would come across a locked door at the start of the stage, where his nephew Louie would be waiting. "You'll need a key to get in," the young duck would say. "It's in Transylvania." How did he know this? Why is the key there? With absolutely no explanation or warning, you're whisked away to the Transylvania level, where you have to locate the hidden key, go back to the level select screen and travel to the mines all over again. This silliness is, literally, a thing of the past in the new version, but it's not entirely gone. In the remake, Scrooge has hired an excavation team to tunnel into the mine, when mysterious voices cause the workers to flee in a panic, thinking the shaft is haunted. To enter the mine he now needs to find a key to start an elevator winch that descends into the entrance tunnel. When he returns, his nephews are convinced that ghosts had taken the key and hidden it away somewhere. It's a crafty little homage to what once was a needless pain in the tailfeathers.



Everything from the style of the painted backgrounds to the official voice cast who still sound spot-on (especially Alan Young, who does an incredible job for someone in his 90s!), just feels so utterly perfect. No flaw exists in DuckTales Remastered that wasn't already present in the original version of the game* and many flaws that the original game had have been rewritten or removed entirely. The game really has been improved in every way.

I hope others in the industry are taking note, this is how to remake a classic game. Other recent revivals such as the excellent Monkey Island Special Editions are helping to prove that there is definitely enough elbow room for these remasters to coexist with new titles. Perhaps one day Nickelodeon and Konami will release Turtles In Time Re-Re-Shelled with the appropriate voice actors and a more faithful representation of the Fred Wolf art style, and maybe then it won't suck.

*Pointing out glitches at this point would be entirely unfair, since WayForward are working hard to fix them in an update patch.



By Kimberly Keller

Original Publication: September 14, 2013

Let's get geared up for Rune Factory 4's eventual release with a history lesson!

After a double delay and with anticipation mounting, Rune Factory 4's North American release can't come soon enough. The game was already released in Japan last year to rave reviews, and was also shown off with an extensive demo at E3 which we were able to play... extensively. Rune Factory 4 is not only exceeding expectations as Japan's highest selling game of the series, but is also already leading towards the announcement of a Rune Factory 5. So, in spirit of the game's eventual North American launch, let's take a look back at the history of Rune Factory.

Developed by Neverland Co., Rune Factory was published by Marvelous Entertainment, famously known for their other series, Harvest Moon. According to Rune Factory Producer Yashimoto Hirofumi, the first game in the series, Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon, was created as a special product to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Harvest Moon but took off with a life of its own after receiving high reviews.

The game contained a lot of similarities to its predecessor: players can grow crops, players can upgrade their farm equipment, certain actions require stamina (or Rune Points), and the passage of time is relative to the real world (one minute goes by for every real world second). However, Hirofumi wanted to expand the world of Harvest Moon and add in more "western ideas" into his game. Inspired by the exploration allowed by Dragon Quest, Yashimoto set out to create an open world game with a focus on exploration and giving players a choice long after the end credits.

Unlike Harvest Moon, players in Rune Factory are able to choose what they want to spend their time on. They can battle their way through dungeons, focus on friendships, develop their farm, or even start a relationship and get married! NPCs all have personalities and backstories, reacting to the world around them and thus extending the game further. The game's freedom even spreads into the linear storyline of each game: players are never forced to pursue the story's end, and even the final boss battle can be ignored.

With the seemingly infinite choices a player has, planning ahead is always important.

Time, weather, and seasons all affect NPCs and available actions. Different events occur often, and NPC birthdays are important to keep track of if you want to grow a friendship.

There are six games so far in the series, all beginning with Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon for the Nintendo DS, released in Japan in 2006. North America received it a year later, and it was brought to Europe and Australia in 2009, a year after Rune Factory 2 was already out in Japan and North America. This first game introduced players to the town of Kardia, where an amnesiac male protagonist collapses in front of a kind villager's house. Every game in the series begins with an amnesiac character that learns the ways of the town along with the player.

Though most games in the series feature a male lead, Rune Factory 2 allowed players to partly play as a female protagonist by introducing a second generation to the story. After completing the main storyline and getting married, players were able to choose their child's gender. The game speeds forward some years, and begins a second part centered around the child's nine-year-old problems.



The Japanese release of Rune Factory 2 dropped the game's original reference to Harvest Moon from the name. Due to the first game's success, Marvelous Entertainment decided to grow it as an independent series and even released multiple manga series in various magazines to help promote the game's release. Interestingly, Natsume, the NA publisher for most of the series, kept the Harvest Moon reference on their numbered releases.

Rune Factory Frontier, for the Wii, was released only months after Rune Factory 2, and became the only game until Rune Factory 4 to be published in North America by Xseed Games. One year later, the series would return to the DS for Rune Factory 3.

Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny is the only title to be released on a Sony console. As a PlayStation 3 and Wii release, the



game took advantage of both the Wii Remote and PlayStation Move controllers to greatly add to game mechanics. This was the second game to allow players to play as a female protagonist again once the main storyline was completed.

All the games take place in the fantasy continent of Adonea, which contains two large nations: the Kingdom of Norad and the Sechs Empire. Some species, like elves, have their own, smaller nations on islands or in certain regions. The games take place in villages in the Norad Kingdom where people focus on magic, while the Sechs rely on machinery. For the most part, the world is peaceful, with Kardia being the exception due to its status as a border town.

Rune Factory 4 will be the first game in the series released on the 3DS and will take relationship elements even further. With the game's theme being described as "passionate love, sweet marriage", more dating events and drama will be brought to the game. For the first time, players can choose their character's gender from the beginning of the game and must rule over their town as a prince or princess with the help of a god-like dragon who hangs out in your castle.

Long term relationships will also be introduced and defeated monsters can even transform into humanoid characters that can even become potential mates, because why not? Taking the theme even further, players not wishing to be separated from their families can even bring them into battle, including children!



For fans of the whole series, a nod to the past can be found in the form of cameos from Rune Factory 2

and 3. These characters can even be recruited into the player's party, hopefully saving the protagonist's children from the horrors of battle.

I will be reviewing the North American release when it finally arrives stateside, tending my crops, marketing my town to tourists, falling in love with perfectly drawn anime men, and laying waste to any monster foolish enough to challenge me – all while battling through amnesia and befriending dragons and townsfolk. Will I remember all their birthdays? Will I declare endless festivals? Or perhaps, will I destroy all of the furniture in my castle in a fit of rage? Weirdly enough, all of these are viable options in the insane microcosm that is Rune Factory.

Making of a Myth: The Grueling Development of the Original Kid Icarus

By Devin Monnens

Think Pit's climb out of the Underworld is tough? Try developing a game by yourself!

On December 19, 1986, Kid Icarus was first released for the Famicom Disk System in Japan, coming out in North America in July 1987. Kid Icarus is one of the forgotten classics of the NES era, and is only just now receiving its first sequel in 21 years. In the game, players take the role of the angel Pit, who must rescue the kidnapped Goddess of Light, Palutena, from the clutches of the evil Medusa. Pit escapes from his Underworld prison and scales the perilous cliffs, fighting off hordes of Medusa's minions, from lowly snakes to the dangerous God of Death. Along the way, Pit overcomes Zeus' trials, gaining more powerful weapons to defeat the hordes of the Underworld. Finally, once Pit had reached the end of the stage, he would explore a massive fortress full of traps and puzzles. There is very little else quite like it on the system, though it is often described as a cross between Metroid and Zelda.

Kid Icarus is also infamous for its incredible difficulty: monsters will attack from right and left, and the tiniest slip leads to a fatal drop off the bottom of the screen—which scrolls ever upward, never down. Pit himself is something of a joke: his wings serve only to slow your fall, and the game's heroic march seems to mock his every step. The initial climb out of the Underworld is bitterly hard, though the difficulty slackens once players reach the second and third worlds. The game also had one of the most amazing development stories of any title from that era—and one that sheds light on why the game looks the way it does today.

Enter Toru Osawa

Known in Japan as Myth of Light: Palutena's Mirror, Kid Icarus was the brainchild of Toru Osawa. Although not as widely known as Metroid's Yoshio Sakamoto or Zelda's Eiji Aonuma, Mr. Osawa's hand can be seen at work in a number of famous titles, including Super Metroid, where he designed Kraid, Mother Brain, and the map system; his directorial work on The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time; and the dark humor of For the Frog the Bell Tolls, which he co-wrote with Mr. Sakamoto.



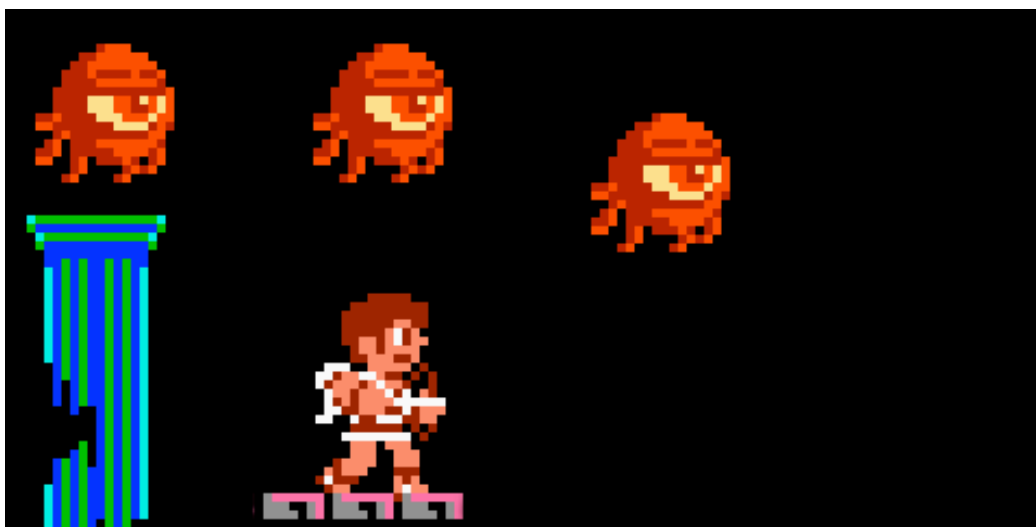
Born in 1962 in Kyoto, Osawa studied arts and animation at Kyoto Seika University before joining Nintendo in 1985. Less than two years later, he asked to create his own game and was given the chance, although he was, as he put it, “neglected.” As a result, Mr. Osawa developed the entire game single-handedly throughout most of the development process. He wrote the design document, drew all the sprites, brought it to an external company for testing (Tose Co., Ltd, according to Mobygames), and saw the game through to completion. It wasn't until Metroid was completed in August 1986 that Osawa received a helping hand from the rest of Nintendo's R&D1 staff, and then only because Yoshio Sakamoto saw the game couldn't possibly meet its December deadline, which by then had been set in stone.

This is even more surprising considering Kid Icarus was Osawa's first game. Back then, Nintendo's culture was full of a “can-do” spirit. Following the success of Shigeru Miyamoto—who had been merely an artist before his work on Donkey Kong—the idea was that a person could be a designer if he had any artistic experience. If he had the will and requested it, even a rookie could direct a game.

Inspired by Homer

Kid Icarus's design was inspired by the athletic spirit of Hiroji Kiyotake, the artist who created Samus and the dog from Duck Hunt. Osawa combined the “running and shooting” style of Metroid with his interest in Greek myths, infusing it with the level-up system of an RPG. The resulting world was filled with mythical monsters, intense arrow-shooting action, and perilous drops into the abyss. It was intense, and there was nothing else quite like it at Nintendo.





Osawa also infused the project with his sense of dark humor, which can be seen through both the bizarre characters found in *Kid Icarus* and even Pit's infamous death cry, "I'm finished!" For instance, the Eggplant Wizard was inspired partly by Osawa's "passion for eggplants," and the eggplant masks found in *Wrecking Crew*, but Osawa also says he drew it in celebration of having received his summer bonus. Needless to say, the rest of the team didn't consider an eggplant-wielding wizard strange at all. In addition, Specknose, the Groucho Marx-glasses monster, was inspired by the large-nosed visage of Hirokazu Tanaka, the game's composer. As a final treat, Japanese players who completed the game poorly would also find Pit transformed in the game's end screen not into a strong Olympian hero, but an ugly Specknose! In another example, Pit can also get a credit card that can be used to buy an item from the Black Marketeer without having to pay full price. However, Pit must work to pay off the debt, with each heart he collects going immediately to the card! Despite its heroic flavor and dark themes, *Kid Icarus* self-consciously doesn't take itself seriously.

Endless Nights of Crunch, and a Marriage

Osawa continued to stoically develop *Kid Icarus* by himself. When *Metroid* was completed, the rest of Nintendo's R&D1 department took a well-deserved vacation, and Osawa was left behind in Nintendo's offices amidst the August heat, struggling to get his game completed on schedule. When Yoshio Sakamoto came back from vacation and saw *Kid Icarus* had only running and shooting mechanics, he immediately saw his friend needed help and recruited the rest of the *Metroid* team to assist.

What resulted can only be described as the worst kind of development hell: three straight months of crunch, constant all-nighters and developers desperately trying to sleep in the office on broken-down cardboard boxes. Not even signs saying "Please do not wake me until 10 AM" would prevent a rude awakening. It got so bad that after pulling the shades, the

team would be surprised to discover the sun rising in dazzling brilliance.

And things only got worse as autumn turned to winter, and Nintendo turned off the building's heating system after hours to conserve energy. Struggling through those long, bitter nights, the team dreamed of sleeping under the covers in their nice, warm beds with the heat turned on.

During this time, Osawa got married. He and his wife had been planning the wedding for some time and had intended to tie the knot after *Kid Icarus* was completed, but as development dragged on into the winter months, he was forced to set a wedding date. Asking for three days off instead of a honeymoon, Osawa spent some time at home with his new wife tidying the house. However, on the second day, he received a phone call from his supervisor, Yoshio Sakamoto, just as he was sitting down to dinner. The new husband had no choice but to return to the office and continue the final slog towards completion.

An End in Sight!

In the second week of December, *Kid Icarus*'s December 19 deadline loomed large, but the game was not yet completed, and Osawa remained at his desk working on the project until a mere three days before release, when he was forced to send the master out for production. This was possible because Famicom Disk System (FDS) games could be pumped out in mere seconds at Nintendo's factory by assembly line workers. At this speed, Nintendo could manufacture an entire game—disk, packaging, and manual—and ship it to retailers in just three days. Osawa recalls he was told on December 16, "If this doesn't have any bugs, it's finished." Otherwise, heads would roll. Osawa didn't even have time to add in a staff roll. His pleas of, "It took great pains to produce..." were left ignored. (A staff roll was later added in the North American release, although, sadly, Osawa's name is not listed in the credits.)

Myths into Legend

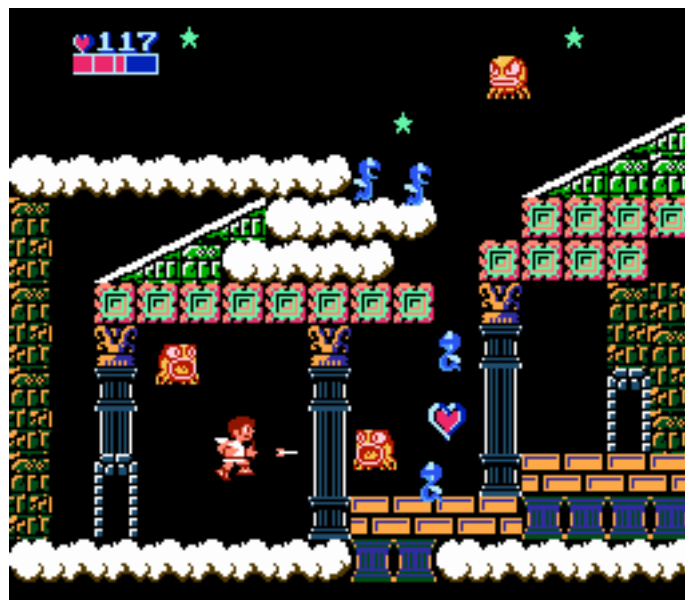
Both Osawa's inexperience and the game's crunch time can be seen in the final product, which is one of Nintendo's quirkier titles. The game's difficulty is quite harsh, from the ease at which Pit can fall off the screen, to the terrible Reaper and the vicious Pluton Flies in Level 2 that can lower your weapons level permanently in a single hit. Of course, players in the 1980s were also more than willing to accept the challenge and conquer whatever the designers could throw at them. “Customers were perfectly willing to play it, and we were perfectly willing to make it that way,” Yoshio Sakamoto recalls.

In addition, the game's final stage, in which Pit grabs Palutena's magical treasures—sword, mirror shield, and wings—and takes to the skies to destroy Medusa in an epic scroll-shooting action sequence, was added at the very last minute as a way to surprise players.

It is quite easy to criticize the game for its failings and notes from an era of game development long past, but by understanding how a title was made, we can have a better idea of why the final product looks the way it does. Given enough time for play testing and more development experience, these rough spots might have been polished out, but with a development team at the end of its rope, Kid Icarus turned out the way it is, for better or worse.

Still, considering the game's rocky development cycle, the final product is nothing short of astounding, and I am looking forward to trying out the 3D Classics remake.

For more information on Kid Icarus, see the Kid Icarus Shrine and a translation of Toru Osawa's interview with Nintendo Dream at the Metroid Database. Much of the content of this article was sourced from the Nintendo Dream interview. (Disclaimer: The author works for the Metroid Database and translated this article.)



The staff reminisce about their Christmas presents in a way that would make Ralphie green with envy!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS EVERYONE!



Christmas is just a few days away, and our Jewish friends are celebrating their nights of Hanukkah. Malls are overflowing with last minute shoppers, children are dreaming of Santa's arrival and everyone has been swept by the warm feelings of the holidays, including our staff members at Nintendo World Report. We gathered around the Christmas tree and decided to reminisce about Christmas past.

Or, to be more specific, we asked each other the following...

What was the best Nintendo-themed Christmas/Holiday present you have ever received?

And the answers we gave were as follows...

Neal "Jacob Marley" Ronaghan said...

"Game Boy with SML2 - my first Nintendo system"

Carmine "Bob Cratchit" Red said...

"A Game Gear. I was never naughty again."

Zach "Ebenezer Scrooge" Miller said...

"On my 8th birthday, which is close to Christmas, I got a Game Boy, Super Mario Land, Tetris, and Castlevania. I basically wet myself."

Josh "Ghost of Christmas Past" Max said...

"When my future wife give me a real life Pokemon."

J.P. "Nephew Fred" Corbran said...

"There were a couple ways I could have gone with this, but I'll say "a GameCube with Pikmin, Rogue Leader and Luigi's Mansion."

James "Tiny Tim" Dawson said...

"When I got my original glacier blue Game Boy Advance."

Pedro "Ghost of Christmas Present" Hernandez said...

"Definitely a tie between the Nintendo 64 and The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time."

Andrew "Fezziwig" Brown said...

"A SNES with Mario All-Stars. It was the beginning of everything."

Nicholas "Fan" Bray said...

"When I got Mario Kart: Super Circuit & Golden Sun."

Nate "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come" Andrews said...

"Pokemon Red Version, which I played well into the morning."

Patrick "Belle" Barnett said...

"Gameboy Color with Pokemon Pinball, I still play that game."

Matt "Little Boy that gets Scrooge a Goose" Walker said...

"My NES. It was the beginning of my obsession."

Andy "Man that asks Scrooge for money for the poor #1" Goergen said...

"The NES Deluxe Set, which came with R.O.B. & Gyromite, and the Zapper with Duck Hunt. On top of that, I got Baseball and Super Mario Bros. on the side."

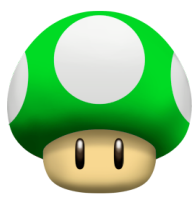
Danny "Man that asks Scrooge for money for the poor #2" Bivens said...

"Ocarina of Time, Pokémon Red, Rogue Squadron, WCW/NWO Revenge Christmas 1998!"

Minoru "Man that steals Scrooge's pajamas after he dies" Yamaizumi said...

"As many as 10 GBA games (for ambassadors)."

And yes, we are aware many of us broke the 10 word rule... but lighten up, it's Christmas!



The Quest to Keep My Sanity

By Danny Bivens

This...can't...be...happening! Danny finally plays through *Eternal Darkness*.

Extra Life is a weekly column focused on giving games a first, second, or third chance. Each article, someone will look at a game they missed, remember fondly from their childhood, or just thought was passed over. It could be a game that received universal appraisal, or one that seemingly nobody played.

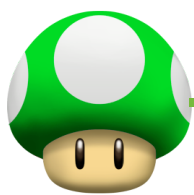
An eternal darkness and ancient magick threaten to destroy the world as we know it, and all you have is a dirty old book, bound in flesh, and the stories of the people inside. Learning spells, how to wield weapons, and trying to keep my sanity, I delved into this Silicon Knights GameCube classic from 10 years ago hoping to smite the oncoming darkness and save all of humanity. Keeping your mind from going completely insane, both inside and outside the game, is a constant theme in *Eternal Darkness*. While many of the gimmicks used to achieve this state are a bit antiquated in the era of HDTVs, and though I had a slight knowledge of what was in store, I would still find myself creeped out by the game's aesthetic and the thought that this could actually be happening (probably not, though) in the real world without my knowledge of it.



I'll be honest, I usually don't get into games like *Eternal Darkness* simply because they creep me out and sometimes give me nightmares. After hearing so many good things about the game over the past decade (coupled with finding it at a used game shop for \$3 with the case and manual), I thought it was about time I put aside my fears and delve into the experience headfirst. As I expected, the game is still as creepy as it was the first time I played it nigh 10 years ago.

Even for a game released seven months after the GameCube launch, the controls are well implemented and hold up very well. Combat is responsive and feels great. There is something satisfying about targeting specific body parts of enemies and seeing them fall to the floor after a bit of hacking at them with a sword. This accompanied by the great camera work create a compelling experience that hasn't been duplicated since. For example, I would be exploring an area and then upon going to the next room, the camera would be focused on me but I could hear zombies behind the camera moaning and limping towards me, and usually toward their death. It's a really great touch that is very reminiscent of older *Resident Evil* games minus the cumbersome tank controls. Whether I am playing an engaging game or watching a thought provoking movie, I tend to really, and I mean, really get into the story. *Eternal Darkness* was no different. The ease of the controls helped transport me to these ancient (and sometimes not so ancient) locations to almost make me feel as if I were really there. Each satisfying swipe of my sword coupled with the great camera work enhanced this. The sanity effects were just the icing on the cake and even when I stopped playing, I would sometimes hear or see things that shouldn't have been there only to find it was just my imagination. Thankfully, my own "sanity meter" was never low enough to make me scream, "This...can't...be...happening!"

Visually, *Eternal Darkness* is not going to overwhelm you and wouldn't have even done so upon its release. Originally developed for the Nintendo 64 before being moved to the GameCube, you can tell with some of the game's geometry in the game is very N64-ish with higher resolution textures on them. The human character models as well aren't really anything to write home about. Where the game really stands out visually is with the enemy designs. Seeing a creepy, zombie who is basically a skeleton with flesh, or the Gatekeepers, who's bat-like wings and creepy way of walking are enough to send shivers down your spine. These creatures, horrifying in their own rights, stayed with me outside of the game. Even though they aren't picture perfect, they were realistic enough to be believable and I would sometimes have daydreams wondering what I would do if one of these creatures were to come crashing through my sliding glass door right into my apartment.



Where the game truly shines is in its sound design. For a game from 2002, the voice work is pretty well done and beats the pants off of voice acting in other games from the time period. Enemy moans are creepy and foot steps are squishy and convincing. Once the green sanity bar is really low, the sound and tone changes quite a bit. Babies crying, doors being pounded on, the occasional cry of your character pathetically saying, “This can’t be happening!” and the slight off-balance camera shift really add to the mood and set this game apart from other horror games on the market. Unlike Resident Evil games, which are usually more surprising more than they are creepy, the sounds used in Eternal Darkness are truly those out of your worst nightmares. They really made me think, “If this stuff were real, it would have to sound something like this.” As a gaming experience, if the sound design didn’t work, the product would not have delivered.

Eternal Darkness isn’t perfect, but it is definitely one of the most unique and undoubtedly the most creepy experience you will find on the GameCube. I don’t know why, but I always played the game at night and would constantly feel uneasy while and after playing. Upon going outside at night to throw out my garbage, I would swear that the bush a few feet away from me was a Xel’lotath zombie, but found out that perhaps I needed to refill my own sanity meter. In a way, playing through Eternal Darkness was kind of like a quest to keep my sanity. Of course, I don’t think I’ll need to check into a psyche ward anytime soon (thought, don’t all crazy people say that?!), but this game can be incredibly disturbing and made me think some crazy thoughts and creeped me out even when the controller wasn’t in my hands.



Manifest
2013
Nintendo
Cosplay
Gallery



By Andrew Brown



Game Idea(s) of the Month

By Sara Miller

Send your ideas to:
poweredoff@nintendoworldreport.com

Editors' Note: Sara is a longtime listener and emailer to Radio Free Nintendo. She is a devoted fan of Jon Lindemann and all things hairless.

The Jons

I've always imagined what Jon does when he's not missing recording segments. Now I know. In *The Jons* you control a bald family as they go about their day to day tasks. You furnish their homes with accessories ranging from cat helmets to piles of unopened video games. Activities include rapping, swimming, missing podcast recordings, and online purchases. Unlike *The Sims*, *The Jons* never die, as they live forever.



Unnamed Cats Project

I love cats, and so does Jon. In this cat virtual pet game you do more than care for cats. You create Facebook pages and stage cat weddings in order to be a successful cat owner.

Jon Coaster Tycoon

I love going to theme parks, and if Nintendo can make a video game about a theme park that doesn't exist, featuring their characters, why can't we do the same for RFN's most lovable cast member? Build the Tilt 'N Jon to keep your visitors (who are also Jon) paying. You can charge next to nothing for the salty Jonzel (a pretzel in the shape of Jon's face) then charge a fortune for Jon-Cola. After you've extracted their money for that drink, charge them to use the Jon. Save up enough money and you'll be able to build Mr. Jon's Wild Ride.

Jon-Based Character Action Game

Imagine the Dante of *Devil May Cry* (not *DMC*), but bald.

Jonster Rancher

Back during the PSX era there was a game I loved called *Monster Rancher*. It was like *Pokemon*, but instead of just catching monsters in game you gained monsters by putting

your CD collection into the PSX. A monster was generated based on the data in the disk. Same concept, except Jon-themed monsters. Finally, an excuse to open all those boxes.

Cho Aniki Sequel

Let's be honest, Jon already looks like Adon. Let's just dial back the homoeroticism a little bit in this one and call it a day. Not too much though, I've listened to the episode he recorded with Jonny. Many times.





Original Publication: March 24, 2003

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker By Rick Powers **REVIEW**

Rick has finished the newest Legend on the GameCube, and can't stop grinning. See what all the fuss is about in his epic review of this epic game!

Minor spoilers are included below, but nothing that will ruin your enjoyment of the game.

The latest installment in the Zelda franchise has been a subject of much speculation and controversy since it was initially unveiled at SpaceWorld 2000. The first time anyone would see real-time graphics for Nintendo's new GameCube system, Nintendo showed a near-photo-realistic version of a classic hero and villain that many of us grew up with. It was with a certain degree of shock that we witnessed a drastic change in graphic style for The Legend of Zelda. Gone was the gritty realism, and in its place was a wide-eyed "toon-shaded" version of Link. Fans cried out in utter disbelief, wanting the more realistic version of this beloved character. They said that the game would be ruined, and that it would no longer be a game they wanted to play.

Thankfully, none of these people get to make Legend of Zelda games.

Producer Shigeru Miyamoto and Director Eiji Aonuma have been very clear that in creating a more realistic version of Zelda; they were getting away from what made the previous games in the series so wonderful. They were worrying more about making the characters move believably, something that must be done when you create a game with realistic graphics. We know how the real world works and moves and even the slightest mistakes will hinder our suspension of disbelief. It was with that in mind that Miyamoto and Aonuma took the bold step in changing the graphics and style of the game, and thankfully, the result is a world that feels more real

because we come to it with no pre-conceived notions. It's almost ironic that a game lacking realistic graphics would feel so real, but that's exactly what Nintendo has accomplished.

Nevertheless, there will be "purists" who will reject the game due to the graphic look alone, and they will simply refuse to play the "cartoon" version of The Legend of Zelda. The joke is on them, because The Wind Waker is most true to the series we all love, and while it may not have the realistic graphic style that fans clamored for, you'll quickly find that the story started in The Ocarina of Time isn't complete until you've finished The Wind Waker. Upon finishing this new game, it becomes clear why Nintendo chose to re-release Ocarina of Time to promote The Wind Waker. The two stories are inexorably linked, and neither is complete without the other. It also serves to showcase that the beloved Ocarina of Time wasn't nearly as realistic in look as we remember through our rose-colored glasses. It was the storyline that made Ocarina feel so grown-up, and in that department, The Wind Waker delivers in spades.

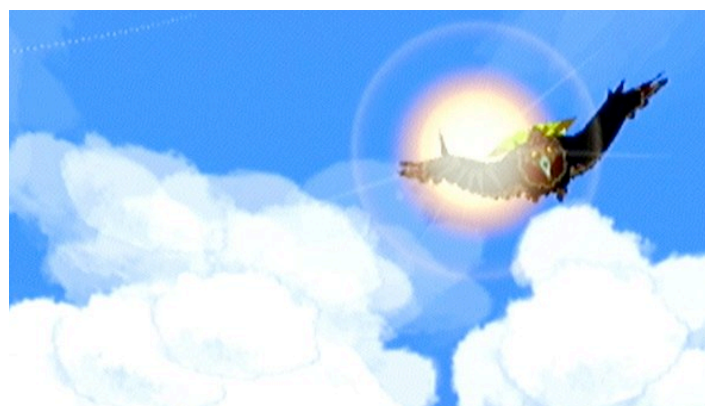


The game starts off with Link (asleep on a tall lookout) being woken up by his sister, Aryll. Immediately the foreshadowing starts, as things being “woken” is a recurring theme in the game. Aryll tells Link that their grandmother has a gift for him ... it seems that it's Link's birthday! As Link stands, you get your first view of this new world, as he looks far out onto the horizon. The draw distance in *Wind Waker* is not just impressive, it's astounding. There is a depth of field blur that is used to accent the distance, and it's tempting to just sit there and look around. However, Grandma is waiting. You're now free to wander around Outset Island, where you can talk to the residents and even take a dip in the water. Much like last year's Game of the Year in *Metroid Prime*, *Wind Waker* is full of minute detail that might escape the notice of casual gamers. You can watch the wind blowing through the air, enabling you to tell at a glance which way the wind is going. Not only that, but the wind will change your environment as well, with grass and trees swaying in the breeze. Link can swim through the water, and when he reaches land, you can see the droplets of water falling from him. Stop to talk to someone to start a cinematic, and you see the power of the real-time engine, as the water continues to drip off of him. Pre-rendered graphics just can't offer that kind of customization.

Grandma's gift turns out to be a costume which he gets to wear for the day. When young boys reach a certain age, they are all given a green tunic and hat that symbolizes reaching the age of the legendary “Hero of Time” that saved the land of Hyrule a hundred years ago. Sure enough, the costume fits Link perfectly, and he's ready to go show it off to his sister. Aryll gives him her present, a telescope that she lets Link use for the day along with his costume. This new tool serves to prove that the draw distance is no trick, as you can now use the telescope to zoom in on any of those islands in the distance that looked so interesting.

As Link checks out his borrowed telescope, there's a bit of a commotion, as Link spies a girl dropped by a large bird into the forest on the hill. At this point, Link is called upon to go rescue the girl, but he can't go unarmed. Link goes to learn sword-fighting techniques from Orca, a grizzled old retired swordsman. It is here that we see some of the new refinements made to the battle system. “Z-Targeting” is back, albeit using the L Trigger, and you still have the option of holding the button down or setting it to a “toggle”. Now, Link has a series of sword attacks and combos that he can use in battle, making very quick attacks, leaps, rolls, and dodges seem absolutely effortless. One of the best refinements is the use of “parry” attacks, when you can sense the incoming attack, dodge out of the way, and return the attack. With all these different ways to handle combat situations, you can actually tailor the fighting style to how you want to play. Elements like these serve to illustrate how innovative Nintendo is in this industry.

Once you set out to rescue this mysterious girl, you get your first real taste of battle, and it's quite fulfilling. This is just a warm-up for more intense battles and different techniques ahead. Miyamoto is a master of using small victories in a game to help teach you what you need to know for the future, and it's clear that he's passed much of this information on to his teams. That, and the way his games tease you with areas that you can't yet reach, but will suddenly leap to the forefront of your memory when the proper tool comes along. You are constantly being tempted with further exploration opportunities, and you are given the perfect vehicle to satiate those wandering tendencies with Link's sailboat. The “King of the Red Lions” is exhilarating in a way that Epona could never be in Hyrule Field's close quarters, and Link's command of the wind gives him the ability to explore anywhere. The game almost seems to be able to read your mind, because just when sailing to reach far off islands starts to become a bit tedious, you are given the ability to jump from place to place, speeding up your frequent searches.



One thing that is never dull when sailing is the absolutely splendid soundtrack, arranged by the brilliant Koji Kondo. The instruments are varied and all rather enchanting. The full soundtrack is over 130 pieces (albeit some are rather short), with each and every one adding to the mood and atmosphere in the game like never before. Some pieces borrow from previous recognizable themes, others are new works, and some are simply background ambience. The ambient sounds are best experienced in full Dolby Pro Logic II if you have it, but even regular Dolby Pro Logic is wonderful enough to leave you bobbing your head or tapping your feet absent-mindedly to the music while you play. Another wonderful addition is the way many of the pieces are dynamic based on your location in the world, or even the time of day. The way the music fades from an upbeat and chipper theme to something with an air of foreboding as you approach the unknown can send chills down your spine. The absolute best part is the way the music reacts to Link's sword during battles, an effect that has never been done with this level of sophistication, if ever. Every time Link makes contact with his blade, the music strikes a chord, almost as if it's not just the wind that Link can now conduct, but the soundtrack of his adventures as well.

As wonderful as the music is, it's the graphics that have had everyone talking, as well they should. There has not been a game this graphically impressive in recent memory. Games like Star Fox Adventures used bump-mapping quite nicely, and Metroid Prime managed to push a great deal of polygons and other effects. Zelda is on a whole different level, with a graphic style that looks hand drawn at all times; little in the game belies its computer generated nature. The animation is incredibly fluid, almost unconceivable given the 30 frames per second frame-rate. Nevertheless, Link and everything around him move in a totally believable manner. Zelda has its share of graphic tricks as well, such as the aforementioned depth-of-field blurring, heat blur, particle effects (used brilliantly on Dragon's Roost Island), and very stylized puffs of smoke that swirl and undulate, yet still manage to look "real". The only caveat comes right at the end of the game, when the camera is used to call attention to certain details, and there is some texture clipping that distracts from what would otherwise be very emotional and engaging moments.

Wind Waker makes excellent use of what until now has been little more than a gimmick addition to the GameCube console, that being the link to a GBA system. Early in the game you can rescue the mapmaker Tingle, who will gift you with a GBA-shaped "Tingle Tuner", which you can use to contact Tingle for hints, or even direct help. For a price, Tingle can drop bombs to open passages, find secrets, or destroy your enemies. While you can use it alone, it adds a whole new aspect to the game by giving the GBA to a friend and having him or her play along.

When you aren't playing with Tingle, there are a ton of hidden items and mini-games you can play, many with no tangible reward other than personal satisfaction. There are races and distance events, trading games, picture taking quests, letter delivery jobs, and more. Probably the best

"hidden" feature of the game is one many people may never find without help, that being the "Nintendo Gallery". Once you acquire the color camera, you can gain access to this gallery, where pictures you take of people are turned into figurines ... gotta catch them all!



Inevitably, this game will be compared to the outstanding Ocarina of Time, which is a high-water mark for the Zelda series. Ocarina had the gameplay and story that Zelda fans simply gushed over, and there has been a great deal of concern over how Wind Waker would stack up. Fans, you have not been let down. Wind Waker is the new heir to the throne of Hyrule. Those familiar with the series are going to be grinning ear to ear as missing pieces of the Zelda puzzle are assembled and explained for them. This, coupled with simply the most fantastic final battles ever conceived, will all serve to catapult Wind Waker to the top of any self-respecting gamer's list. Let the pundits and naysayers miss out; it serves them right for judging a book by its cover. It's only March, and The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker is destined to be the best game of the year on any platform.

Score

10

Pros

- + A revamped battle engine that will turn you into a master swordsman
- + Every bit the sequel that Ocarina of Time deserves
- + Excellent sound direction, with innovative dynamic battle sounds
- + "Toon-shaded" design gives new

Cons

- One particular quest is needlessly expensive and tedious
- Some unfortunate texture clipping during pivotal story sequences



Original Publication: September 12, 2013

Ryū ga Gotoku 1&2 HD for Wii U By Danny Bivens

REVIEW

Wander the streets of Tokyo and Osaka getting shot in the face and somehow living to tell the tale.

Sega has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with Sony platforms over the years with the Yakuza franchise. While the series is not super popular amongst gamers in the West, Japanese console and handheld owners have been enjoying the titles for years. Earlier this year, Sega decided to bring the series away from Sony platforms for the first time ever with the release of Ryū ga Gotoku 1&2 HD (Yakuza 1&2 HD) for Wii U in Japan. Despite being a complete commercial flop, Yakuza 1&2 HD still does many things right, but not without a handful of technical oddities.



After playing through both games, it is worth noting that the difference in the gameplay between the first and second game is noticeable, particularly in combat. As mentioned in my previous set of impressions (which you can read [here](#)), the combat in the first game is very particular about where you are placing your punches and kicks. If you are just slightly off from facing the enemy in a flurry of attacks, Kazuma, the main character, will continue the animation in midair, leaving you susceptible to incoming attacks. This has been balanced out a little bit more in the second title thanks to a rubber banding-like effect. Even if you're a little bit off with your attack, the game will guide the kicks and punches toward the enemy. This evolution makes the second game superior in

terms of controls, but at the same time still feels a bit antiquated.

Apart from gameplay, the thing that both of the Yakuza games do extremely well is tell an engaging, dark and interesting story. The excellent voice acting and interesting characters make the entire experience entertaining and cinematic. Both games will take players to seedy areas in both Shinjuku and Osaka and offer tons of things to do on top of the main story. Getting to the end credits of both games took me a little over 30 hours total, but with a decent amount of side missions, mini-games, hostess clubs and tons of things to collect along the way, players can easily clock in 40 hours or more.



The visuals throughout both games are a mismatch of crisp, uprezed character models and locales mixed with low resolution assets making up a majority of the environment. Typically, the camera can hide most of this by repositioning itself as you stroll around the cities, but there is just no getting away from the muddy, washed out backgrounds. Being story driven games, Yakuza 1&2 incorporate quite a few cutscenes throughout the experience. About half of these are low-resolution videos ripped out of the Playstation 2 version. Some of which were recorded in engine when the games originally released. The other half of the cutscenes are included using the updated, uprezed assets. It is extremely inconsistent and you never quite know what you're going to get when the cutscenes initiate.



Yakuza 1&2 HD for Wii U is a solid game at its core but suffers from noticeable technical issues that tend to annoy rather than take away from the heart of the experience - the narrative. Both games have fun and interesting stories to tell and if you can get past the flaws, you can enjoy this game. Sadly, most gamers outside of Japan will more than likely not have that chance on the Wii U. The barrier of entry and requirements to play the game (i.e., owning a Japanese Wii U and knowing Japanese) are extremely high. If you meet these requirements and can look past the antiquated aspects of a game that is nearly ten years old, there is some fun to be had here. If you can't do that, there are certainly more current-generation titles on the platform that fill the void for this genre.



Score

7

Pros

- + Accurate, albeit fictionalized, look at the streets of Tokyo and Osaka
- + Fun, engaging story

Cons

- Antiquated combat system
- Dated Visuals
- Inconsistently placed low resolution cut scenes



Original Publication: September 25, 2002

Mega Man Zero

By Jonathan Metts

REVIEW

The GBA's first side-scrolling Mega Man game also happens to be one of the best and freshest in the series.

Considering the many dozens of Mega Man games on the market after about fifteen years since the franchise debuted, I'm going to assume you've played one or at least know what the general gameplay is like. Mega Man Zero brings that classic formula to GBA (finally), but it also turns that formula inside-out. The result is a considerably different kind of game that will still appeal to your nostalgia, and the whole package is wrapped in a thick, shiny layer of quality.

Although Mega Man Zero is essentially a 2D side-scrolling action game like its predecessors, the action itself is quite different thanks to Zero's sword. There are also two totally new primary weapons, but neither of them is as useful or has as much impact on the gameplay as the Z-Saber. Combat now takes place right up next to your character, and this fundamental shift affects everything from the control to the pacing to the challenge of the game. The challenge is particularly ramped up, since Zero has to throw his body right into any attack. You can still use a traditional blaster if you want to play safely, but Zero's blaster is so weak compared to his other weapons that the sword is just a better choice for most situations.

Is this game too hard? Some people seem to think so, but I have to disagree. MMZ is probably slightly harder than most of the Mega Man X series, but in context with most 2D platformers, it's not a particularly difficult game. Most of the levels aren't hard at all if you're even slightly familiar with the Mega Man level design philosophy. The only level that caused me trouble (a lot of trouble, actually), is only hard

because the GBA's screen proportions create a series of nearly blind platforming jumps. Capcom's development team should have fixed that issue, but fortunately, it's an isolated problem. On the other hand, the bosses are almost all quite difficult if you're not properly equipped...and again, this is nothing new for the Mega Man series. The most excruciatingly hard boss will go down in five hits if you are using the proper elemental alignment and have even a basic grasp of his attack patterns. If you're not comfortable with dying several times before figuring out how to kill a boss, you really have no business playing this or any other Mega Man title.

The new Cyber Elf system is thankfully not as Pokemon-like as you would think, considering that only a few major Elves will require feeding, and those select few are usually worth the trouble. Only a true master of the game will be able to last through the final levels without a Sub-Tank or at least an extended life bar. I would still prefer Mega Man X's upgrade system, with everything just cleverly hidden within the levels.



Perhaps the most surprising thing about MMZ is that it takes on an almost RPG flair with its story and level select features. Instead of simply choosing your next level from a list, you're given a whole world to explore and play in. There are always enemies to fight and power-ups to find if you want to go out and find them, and when you're ready to start a new mission, you just go talk to a certain person. The mission structure is also unorthodox, with several missions taking place in revised versions of previously played levels. It reminds me a bit of Mega Man 3, when you had to go through four of the levels again, but they were each heavily remodeled. Another neat but ultimately useless attempt to add RPG elements is the weapon upgrading system. Each of Zero's four weapons will gain new powers as he uses it more. It sounds like a really cool idea until you realize that only the first couple of upgrades per weapon really matter, and those will be activated after just a couple of missions. The "leveling up" ends up not having much effect on the overall game design, but the idea has potential for sequels.

In the end, Mega Man Zero is worthy of both your money and a place in the Mega Man series. It brings an intense, hardcore 2D gameplay experience that isn't easily found on Game Boy Advance, and it also serves to innovate the famously stubborn Mega Man game design. I'm looking forward to its many sequels.



Score

8.5

Pros

- + Challenging, fun gameplay
- + Great graphics and tight control
- + New twists to the old Mega Man game design

Cons

- Blind jumps on "Protect the Factory" mission
- Cyber Elves take too long to feed
- RPG elements could be much deeper



Original Publication: August 14, 2013

DuckTales Remastered

By Andrew Brown

REVIEW

Bless me bagpipes! This game is pure gold!

Whenever a game gets remade, there's always a degree of improvement over the original to be expected, but equally important is the retention of the feel of what made the original game so memorable to begin with. DuckTales: Remastered does both in such a masterful way that you'd believe this was the game Capcom intended to make way back on the NES.



Words cannot describe the sheer attention to detail that has been put into this meticulous reimagining. Every 8-bit sprite has been lavishly redrawn to resemble the style from the show, and brought to life with that charmingly smooth and subtle animation that you'd expect from WayForward. The painted background art, courtesy of Disney veterans Mike Peraza and Rick Evans, is crafted into 3D platforms with layered background scrolling. It complements the 2D characters wonderfully and is never so distracting that you'd lose focus on enemies or items.

The music has been remixed with modern styles and instruments that match the various locales Scrooge visits

throughout the game. Extra nostalgia points are awarded for the wonderful mash-up of the original 8-bit theme music that's blended perfectly with the instrumentals from Mark Mueller's version from the cartoon.

Likely the most important addition to the mix is that the game now features a fleshed-out story that



ties everything together, complete with fully voiced dialogue by the official Disney cast from the show. In the original NES version, Scrooge simply ventures to five seemingly arbitrary locations in search of treasure and relics, with no explanation as to why he wants these particular items. It was also possible to blunder your way into a boss room and clear the stage within minutes of starting a level. In the remake, however, each level now has an individual storyline with progressing goals that require you to explore every nook and cranny to fill a checklist of items before the boss area opens. Some parts of levels have been redesigned, expanded, or removed entirely in order to make things flow more naturally.



To better incorporate the new story, two entirely new levels have been added to the game; it's a vast improvement over the original, which made you visit the Transylvania level three separate times in order to finish the game. The story even goes so far as to explain some strange details that were fairly obscure in the original game. Why did Flintheart Glomgold suddenly team up with Magica De Spell in the final scenes of the game? Just what were the Beagle Boys doing in that cave beneath the moon's surface? And how could everyone breathe comfortably up there in the first place? It's all written into the experience now, and never feels forced or out of place.

What is perhaps the only downfall is that the levels frequently pause to give more story explanation as Scrooge comes across a roadblock or finds a key item required to progress. While the dialogue is true to character and very witty (you'd have to be heartless not to crack a smile at the delightful banter between Scrooge and Launchpad), it can also get quite lengthy. Fortunately you have the option to skip it, which comes in handy for repeated playthroughs. Sadly, I also came across some severe audio glitches during the final battle and even a Wii U crash during my time with the game. Rest assured WayForward is well aware of these issues and is working on fixing them in an update patch even as I write this. In the meantime, a quick reboot of the game will solve any problems that come up.

Bugs aside, this is a game that raises the bar for HD remakes of classics. There is a huge gallery of bonus art and music to buy with your collected treasure. The controls and physics are as tight as ever—purists can even select “Hard Pogo” mode for retro “Down-Y” NES controls. There's an unlockable option to play the game with the original 8-bit music—even the new tunes have 8-bit renditions to match the classic themes. It's truer to the source material than even

the original game was, and everything feels just right. Should you buy this game? If you liked the original NES version, yes. If you also liked the DuckTales cartoon, double yes. Young'uns who never experienced either of those certainly won't be able to appreciate this remake as much, but it's still a prime example of a solid, fun platformer with some decent challenge to be had.

I sincerely hope WayForward gets the opportunity to remaster DuckTales 2 in the near future.
Summary





Score

8

Pros

- + Expanded story with bigger supporting cast roles
- + Level changes were made for the better
- + Masterful animation
- + More options and extra content than you could ask for
- + The official voice cast returns!

Cons

- Frequent cinematics halt the action (but can be skipped)
- Not much appeal for newcomers
- Unfortunate glitches



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The original RFN shirt design features "character art" of Jonny, Greg, James, and Lindy, all provided by listener David Ochart. The overall graphic design is by Amanda Albert. The front features all four beloved RFN personalities arranged in the style of the classic "black box" NES packaging; the back says "NintendoWorldReport.com" and "Est. 1999".



NEXT ISSUE



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