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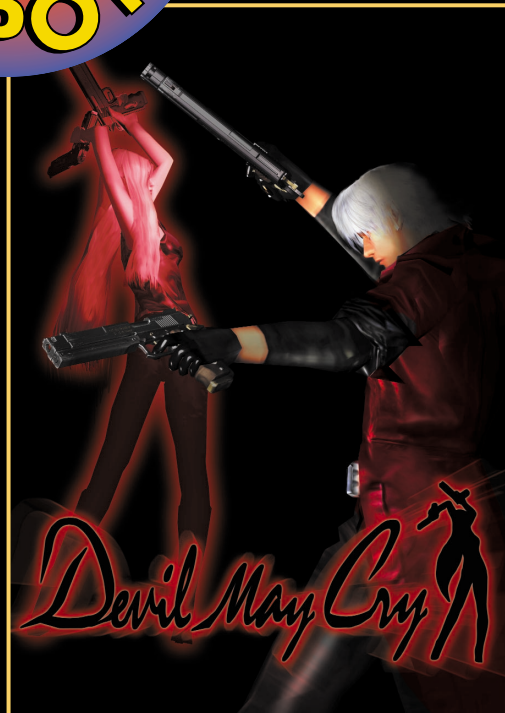


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Read This First



This section will appear in every issue, with changes made accordingly as time goes by, so always check here real quickly at the beginning of an issue for any updates!

Who We Are

We're a bunch of lucky saps that get to play games for a living, share our experiences and hopefully entertain you a bit along the way. We are not journalists, private detectives, or rock stars.

Furthermore, we are not owed our jobs, and we very acutely appreciate this fact.

We're here to serve you, the reader, first and foremost and aim to do right by you at the expense of ad revenue, our sanity and our relationships in the industry—our integrity is the only thing we have, and we will not sully that.

Readers are our lifeblood; we live and die by you, and if something is what it appears to be, we'll tell you—a spade is a spade, et al. We understand that, in our position, we have an obligation to be as forthright and honest as possible, and we don't take that duty lightly.

Our Rating System

You're either going to love us or hate us, but after sampling a large swath of mail from readers, we've decided to not include a numerical, letter, or any other form of grading scale with our reviews—we will allow the strength of our (hopefully) witty prose to do the talking for us. Besides, how do you really assign a numerical value to an experience?

And sure, some of you will think we're copping out and some of you will be utterly confused. However, it all comes down to our belief that the words we write should be of the utmost importance and not the grade we give. This should have the net effect of forcing people to 'listen' to what was said, instead of merely rattling off a letter or number that they believe tells the whole story.

Personally, we can't wait to see some of the early mail we will invariably see asking "where the hell are the scores?!" And as we casually mention "did you happen to read the section entitled 'Read This First'..." we'll all sit back and have a nice chuckle...at their expense.



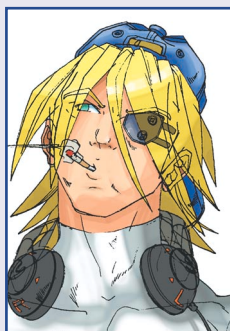
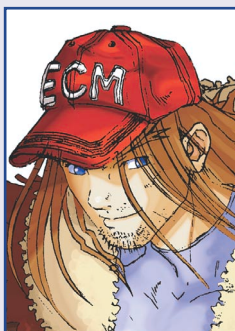
Our Review Philosophy

As each member of our staff is an individual with a wide variety of tastes, experiences and personal biases (yes, you read that correctly, biases), we want to make it painfully clear that our reviews are subjective in nature. Now while most of you are aware of this, we'd like to take a moment and clear this up, here and now, for everybody just joining us.

I usually like to make the point that if the Supreme Court can't remain objective on things, what hope for the rest of us mere mortals? The fact is, people bring pre-conceived notions, biases and opinions to everyday events—we're no different, and we're not going to hide behind the veil of 'objectivity' that so many malcontents use: "After all, beyond identifying colors and reading eye charts, human beings are pretty much incapable of being objective at all"—as one of ECM's favorite columnists is very astute to point out.

For example, if you hate a certain genre, how likely is it you're able to remain objective? Same goes for if you love a genre. Do you enter some sort of Zen-like state and push aside all previous experiences and judge solely on objective criteria—a measure that changes with every person on the planet. The fact is, nothing can truly be reviewed objectively: you need a frame of reference to work from, and it's our hope that you will find an editor to which you relate to and can trust nine times out of ten.

However, even if you can't, that doesn't mean the reviews are worthless: after all, if you find yourself always thinking the exact opposite of what a particular reviewer says, that would be just as strong an indicator of how you would feel about the topic in question.



Where's 'X' Game?!

GameGO! is not about following the pack. Nor are we about constantly regurgitating the same set of games over and over, every month, which just about everyone else happens to be covering. So you won't see rampant coverage and analysis of one screen shot from Metal Gear Solid 2, nor will you see us rewarding games based on how they look from videotape (i.e. no game of show awards for a game we can't play).

Furthermore, we're here to cover the unnoticed, the left out, and the passed over—after all, we all know that whatever

Yu Suzuki's latest game happens to be, it's going to be covered...to death. We'd rather take the space and shine the spotlight on something a bit more low-key, but just as good (as in one of this month's feature stories, Ooga Booga).

Or in the case of whether we devote ample pages to the latest blasé cart racing game: we'd rather take that space and show you something (good or bad) that you won't see anywhere else. Games like Photograph Boy 2 or Culdcept 2, for example—after all, if you want to read about other games, you've got lots of options, <snicker>, to choose from.

Which is not to say we won't cover MGS 2 or the latest Yu Suzuki mega-title: just don't expect to see them get the lion's share of the attention, month-in, month-out for 6 months straight.

This Is Your Magazine

This Is Your Magazine

It's been said millions of times in countless publications, but we mean it: if you want more of something, tell us! If you want less of something, tell us! We have no problem steering the ship into uncharted waters, by the seat of our pants, but some help from the readership on navigation never hurt—as long as Pokey isn't at the helm. So if you want to see some changes, additions, subtractions, let us know!

Errant Bits of Info

Items deleted by reader request from last issue: centerfold, white space (much to Kasumi's chagrin),

Items added by reader request: more art, less white space (much to Kasumi's chagrin), more screen shots, more ads (go figure), and more pages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS **GAMEGO!**

COVER STORY



Read This First	2
GO!.....	4
Editors Assemble	6
Final Analysis	8

FEATURES:

Feature: Hoshigami	12
Feature: Final Fantasy X.....	18
Feature: Harvest Moon 3.....	21
Feature: Tales of Destiny 2.....	22
Feature: Gwlaner 2	24
Feature: Tiny Toons.....	26
Feature: Ooga Booga	28

REVIEWS:

Review: Alien Front Online	32
Review: Heavy Metal Geomatrix ..33	
Review: Bomberman	34
Review: Puzzle Fighter	35
Review: Culdcept 2	36
Review: Cleopatra Fortune	38
Review: Endonesia	40
Review: Yanya Caballista	42
Review: Photograph Boy 2	43
Castlevania Chronicles	44
Review: Sengoku 3	46

SHMUPS:

Shmups: Raiden DX	48
The J-Files.....	50
Games 101	52
Tech Support	54

RETRO:

RetroVIEW: ECM	56
RetroVIEW: ECM	58
RetroFIT: ECM	60
RetroFIT: Shidoshi.....	62
RetroFIT: Pokey	64
RetroFIT: NeoGman	66
RetroFIT: Haohmaru	68

AnimEtc.	70
Left Overs	74
Tales of the Hardcore/Overhead/ Freshed Brewed.....	75
Renderz	76
Letter Head	78
Parting Shot.....	80

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Thomas Keller

EDITOR IN CHIEF AND
CO-PUBLISHER
Eric Mylonas

SENIOR WRITER
Matt Van Stone

WRITER
Rich Depping

WRITER
Lawrence Wright

ANIME WRITER
Eric Patterson

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
Kevin Deselms

WEBMASTER
Jacob Rens

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Debra Keller

MANAGING EDITOR AND
DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
Peter Lutz

ORIGINAL ART BY:
CHARACTERS & COVER:
Patrick 'Spaz' Spaziente

CONTRIBUTING ARTIST:
Long Vo

CONTRIBUTING ARTIST:
Saka

*For subscription
inquiries write to:*
GameGo! Magazine
54 Clinton Street
Center Moriches, NY 11934

e-mail:
subscriptions@gamegomagazine.com

For advertising inquiries:
petelutz@gamegomagazine.com
631-878-7693

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The last thing you want to hear from an industry luminary such as Tomonobu Itagaki (creator of Rygar, Ninja Gaiden and Dead or Alive) on the first day of E3 is "it's going to be a lousy year for games." But sure enough, that's exactly what we did hear. Why exactly would he say such a thing? Well, if you were at the 2001 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), you'd be hard-pressed to disagree judging by what was on offer.

Now don't get me wrong: it's not as if the show was a complete and utter loss. After all Xbox and GameCube made their first official public appearances and that alone is cause to be at least fairly upbeat about the entire affair. Thing is, the Xbox showing was fairly meager and the GameCube display, while more impressive, was hardly equal to that of, say, Sega during E3 2000.

Even more frightening was the fact that while Sega has bowed out of the console race, they still managed to, overall, have the best showing of any publisher at the entire show—and on Dreamcast, no less. Kinda makes that decision to pull the plug a little harder to take for the lucky ones that were allowed into Sega's gaming compound (their attitude of selective admittance being the most foolish mistake any publisher at the show has ever made).

Getting back to Itagaki's comment: why exactly will it be a bad year for gaming? To paraphrase him, essentially, he said that it's going to be a year of virtually no risk, lots of rehashed ideas and very little in the way of advancing the craft of game making (must have a keen sense of irony, then, when his own game is perhaps the epitome of that mentality). And far be it for us to disagree as the show had very few games that our staff can say we were genuinely salivating over.

It's this problem that led us to forego any heavy duty E3 coverage, instead confining it to this little editorial at the front of the magazine. Was it terrible? No. Was it earth-shattering? No. Should it have been? I should hope so..

How often do two new consoles debut at the same exact time—how about never? And given this fact, we were certainly expecting a lot more than what was actually delivered. Yes, we loved Rogue Squadron II and Smash Bros. as well as the amazing Pikmin, but beyond that, there wasn't much in the way of excitement from either Nintendo or Microsoft that was actually playable. Sad? You bet. Still, if you knew where to dig, there were gems to be found.

For example, this E3 marked a turn in the fortunes of the PS2: there is now sufficient good-to-great software coming in the next 6 months to finally make that console a worthy purchase (above and beyond Klonoa and Stretch Panic from last month). We're certainly jazzed about Capcom's Maximo,

Sony's Ico, and Sega's Rez among a clutch of other titles.

The lowly PlayStation One even had its fair share of great news: the stunning Hoshigami (which is on our cover for a reason); the long, long awaited Dragon Quest VII; and Koei's Saiyuki all hold great promise—the machine for RPGs? Maybe...<grin>.

While the Dreamcast is now officially a footnote in gaming history (<sob>), the final 6 months or so of its active existence (if retailers and 3rd parties don't kill it sooner than that, the fools) will feature great games such as Ooga Booga (very much overlooked at E3), Alien Front Online, Floigan Bros., and a clutch of others will let Dreamcast go out with its head held high.

In any event, we'll be here to cover it all in a way that only we can, devoting the space to the games that will be overlooked by nearly everybody else in the run up to the holiday season (hey look—another MGS2 preview...kill me)—who else would be insane enough to put a PlayStation One game on their cover, I ask you? Not even the PlayStation-specific magazines—whether this is good or bad, though, we're not quite sure.

Oh, and drum roll please, Shidoshi marks his return to the family he never really left, with his own unique contributions to the guide to what you should be playing. Be sure to check out his freshly minted anime section (because you demanded it) and tell him what a great job he's doing—we'd like him to stick around for a while.

And with that last joyless stab (OK, so there was a little joy—I'm only human), kick back, and enjoy the magazine. Oh, and another thank you to all of you for supporting us in our quest to bring a little excitement back to our chosen hobby—couldn't do it without you guys!

Happy camper,
ECM



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NEW TURBO EXPRESS



RESIN STATUES



Editors Assemble

ecm@gamegomagazine.com

ECM (a.k.a. Eric Mylonas):

ECM passed two milestones, of a sort, this issue. For starters he discovered that he was an Irish, as well as U.S., citizen due to some parent born in Eire chicanery. He can now roam the Emerald Isle (and a large chunk of Europe) as a full citizen, entitled to all the rights such an honor bestows: free medical care; commiseration with whole groups of new peoples; and a sense of belonging that he, heretofore, hadn't experienced. He also managed to pass one thousand posts on the GameGO! message board. We'll give you one guess as to which he took more glee in (hint: it has nothing to do with four leaf clovers, Irish eyes, or pots of gold)—"2000 posts, here I come!"



This issue we thought we'd let you in on the various and sundry goals and milestones the staff at GO! have achieved (or attempted) since the last issue. What exactly do the boys at the most laid back magazine on the planet been up to—check it:

ECM

TOP 10

1. Culdcept II—DC
2. Growlanser 2—PS2
3. Sengoku 3—NG
4. Hoshigami—PS
5. Tiny Toons B.B.D.—GBA
6. Cleopatra Fortune—DC
7. Ooga Booga—DC
8. Target Earth—Genesis
9. Super Star Soldier—PC Engine
10. DonDokoDon—PC Engine

kodomo@gamegomagazine.com

Kodomo (a.k.a. Matt Van Stone):

Kodomo recently had the 'pleasure' (our word, not his) of attending his ten-year high school reunion. Surrounded by all sorts of successful, happy people, he wondered exactly where were all the horror story people you always hear about at your reunion—no painfully skinny people turned into morbidly obese 'fatties'; only one dead person in the entire class (darn the luck); even the class clown that nobody expected to amount to anything turned out to be a cop (dodging warrants at your reunion? Only Kodomo). Yep, it was a disappointing evening all around...at least until he took a trip to the little boy's room. After washing his hands Kodomo finally found the type of people he was looking/hoping for...in the mirror.



KODOMO

TOP 10

1. Sakura Taisen 3 – DC
2. TTT – PS2
3. Red Alert 2 – PC
4. PSO – DC
5. Worms World Party – DC
6. Comix Zone – Genesis
7. X-Com – PS
8. Final Fantasy Tactics – PS
9. Ridge Racer V – PS2
10. Hello Kitty Lovely Fruit Park – DC

shidoshi@gamegomagazine.com

Shidoshi (a.k.a. Eric Patterson):

Shidoshi finally traveled to Japan over the course of completing issue #2, and felt like he'd journeyed to the land to which he should have been born. Unfortunately, unlike ECM's parentage, Shidoshi (much to his chagrin) can't fall back on some technicality to make him a full-blooded Japanese citizen. So, in the interim, he's taken to perusing several mail order bride catalogues in the hopes of starting up a US edition to be shipped east (that AnimEtc. stuff you see is merely practice). The name of the publication? Eligible Bachelor from America Monthly. We're not sure, but we think a more accurate title might be, Desperate Gaijin Seeks Gullible Japanese Wife.



SHIDOSHI

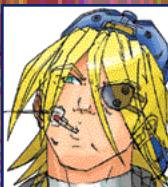
TOP 10

1. DDR 4th Mix—Arcade
2. Top Shop—PS
3. Klonoa 2—PS2
4. Para Para Paradise—Arcade
5. Outtrigger—DC
6. Last Blade 2—DC
7. Project Justice—DC
8. Incredible Crisis—PS
9. Planet Harriers—Arcade
10. Red Alert 2—PC

haohmaru@gamegomagazine.com

Haohmaru (a.k.a. Tom Keller):

This issue Haohmaru managed to get over his initial shock at the size of the print bill for GameGO!, which, if you'd actually laid eyes on it, is no mean feat. Now that he can breathe without a sharp pain in his chest and has adjusted to a diet of water and, uh, water, he's free to pursue much loftier goals. These include: How to pay your mortgage with 300 loose copies of 3DO Immernecary and Virtual Boy Tetris; can you really make money selling your blood and other, viscous, bodily fluids; and exactly how much does a healthy baby fetch, per pound, on the black market. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Kasumi...



HAOHMARU

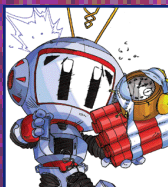
TOP 10

1. Growlanser 2—PS2
2. Final Fantasy Tactics—PS
3. Outtrigger—DC
4. Alien Front Online—DC
5. Ooga Booga—DC
6. Guilty Gear X—DC
7. Elemental Gearbolt—PS
8. Spriggan Mark 2—PC Engine
9. Hoshigami—PS
10. Ys 1 & 2—TurboGrafx 16

Pokey@gamegomagazine.com

Pokey (a.k.a. Rich Depping):

Pokey isn't what you'd call a goal or milestone-oriented individual—he's one of those guys that kinda lets life eddy and flow around him like a rock in a stream; like a bird in flight; like a guy that would rather be doing anything but working. While that sounds nice and Zen, the truth of the matter is that the only real goals Pokey has in life are to get home in time to catch the newest episode of Alien Zim and chatting on IRC. We're confident, though, that Pokey's lack of motivation will pick up next issue. After all, he has 300% more pages in this issue over issue one. Sounds pretty damn impressive till you realize he did (hold onto your seats) one page last issue.



POKEY

TOP 10

1. Phantasy Star Online V2—DC
2. Psikyo vs. Capcom: Net Mahjong—DC
3. Remote Control Colony—PS2
4. Escape from Monkey Island—PS2
5. Shining Force III—SS
6. Skullmonkeys—PS
7. Soldier of Fortune—DC
8. Gunstar Heroes—Genesis
9. Rayman—Jaguar
10. Fight for Life—Jaguar

Neogeoman@gamegomagazine.com

NeoGman (a.k.a. Lawrence Wright):

Since NeoGman is happily married to a Japanese woman and does indeed reside in Japan (listen for the quiet keening of the endangered Shidoshi, sobbing from his lofty perch) his goals are simple: sell lots of stuff on eBay and avoid massive cell phone bills on his handy I-Mode phone. For the former, he hoards all that really cool stuff you hear about and sells to the highest bidder on the 'Net, as opposed to his good friends at GO! But that's OK, the boys back home get their payback. See, Neo pays per character on email sent to his handy little gadget. Probably should have sold ECM that SG-1000, Neo—hope you like War and Peace as an appetizer and the Bible as a main course. Hope that SG-1000 goes for seven figures—you're gonna need it.



NEOGMAN

TOP 10

1. Necronomicon SAT
2. Robotron 2084 ARCADE
3. Metal Slug 3 NEO
4. Last Blade 2 NEOCD
5. Raiden DX PSX
6. Rage Racer PSX
7. Akumajo Dracula x68000
8. Raiden Fighters 2 ARCADE
9. Heavy Metal Geomatrix DC
10. Samurai Showdown IV NEO

CosPlayground

Due to popular demand (who'd a thunk it), we bring you Cosplayers in the only game magazine brave enough to help promote this 'slowly becoming respectable' activity.

And since the costumes just keep getting better and better, we're seriously thinking of getting involved ourselves: ECM as Terry Bogard (if he was

Choi's size); Shidoshi as Blue Mary (we're not laughing); Haohmaru as Haohmaru (if he was white and really, really out of shape); and Kasumi as, heh, Kasumi (now that would be interesting).

So to spare all of you pain that would make even the Marquis de Sade blanche, we implore you to send your Cosplay pics to

cosplay@gamegomagazine.com.

For our inaugural CosPlayground, we give you Serge (of Chrono Cross fame) performed by Genjitsu of the ACP. Check out their site at www.acparadise.com and get to sending those submissions. Haoh's currently trying to squeeze himself into a big white sheet and keeps yelling "ora ora ora!" God help us all.



LAST MINUTE MANIA

While rummaging around a local dump, we stumbled upon this image of Mario, Luigi and Donkey Kong. Anybody wanna guess which game it's for? Mario Bros? Super Mario Bros? Donkey Kong? Would you believe Mario Bros... for the Atari 7800. Yes, in what amounts to a twisted residual rights story, when Atari launched its ill-fated 7800 Pro System they held the rights to certain Nintendo properties for use on their menagerie of consoles (the Atari XE also), so we wound up with bastardized Mario and co. My bet is that Shigeru Miyamoto still wakes up late at screaming: "what did you do to my boys?!"



Donkey Kong®

by Nintendo®
You are Mario and that big ugly Gorilla just ran off with your girlfriend. She's at his mercy, while you struggle up a maze of beams and ladders, dodging the barrels and fireballs that no-good ape hurls down at you. Hang tough.
CX7800 / Controller / 1 or 2 P



Donkey Kong Junior®

by Nintendo®
The tables have turned—Mario's got papa Gorilla locked in a cage and is treating him... well, like an animal. It's up to you to help Donkey Kong Junior rescue the big ape. But watch out for Mario's now-scraggly allies. Good video action, plus magically-powered fruit.
CX7800 / Controller / 1 or 2 P



Mario Bros.®

by Nintendo®
The brothers are back, rid-ding the plumbing of some particularly pesky pests. It's twice the fun when two players work together to bump the beasties off the girders and into the water. An all-time classic.
CX7800 / Controller / 1 or 2 P

Kasumi's Korner



Many have asked if I ever enjoyed playing video games. Right after my second daughter Gabrielle was born (who was colicky) I became addicted to House of the Dead 2—not sure if the two were interrelated but I find it makes the story more interesting. Besides, ECM says I need to work on my exposition. He's pretty smart... for a smurf.

Anyway, I went through at least 2 guns and hours of game play each day. Every time my little

bundle of joy fell asleep, my older daughter, Samantha and I would head to the game room for an hour of House of the Dead 2. Sadly, I had to give up the game—my little one traded napping for near-constant, head-rupturing screaming, which, naturally, really interferes with your aim, ya know. That was probably as close to being a real gaming addict as I will ever get.

I would like to dedicate the rest of my column to the white space that I really liked in the first magazine (ECM's Note: what white space <points to the non-white background>)

—Kasumi

Debra Keller

kasumi@gamegomagazine.com

The brains behind the layout of the mag. She brings over 15 years of print experience to the staff - something that the above group of crazed drooling lunatics don't know much about.

Llamas

eBay Pain

It takes a special kind of imbecile to post an auction on eBay for a game that hasn't even been announced for console release, and yet that's just what silver^falcon of the UK did. Check out the complete item text:



"U R BIDDING ON RADIANT SILVERGUN 2, YES 2! ON THE PLAYSTATION 2. THIS IS A JAPANESE IMPORT AND IS VERY RARE. THIS GAME IS MADE BY THE BEST GAMES COMPANY IN THE WORLD TREASURE AND IS TOTALLY MINT. U GET THE GAME BOXED WITH INSTRUCTIONS, CD IS SCRATCH FREE! THIS GAME IS VERY LIMITED IN JAPAN TO 1000 UNTILL IT GOES ON SALE TO THE PUBLIC IN DECEMBER! IT WONT EVEN REACH THE US OR UK UNTILL 2002. IF YOU THOUGHT RS ON THE SATURN WAS GOOD, THIS WILL BLOW U AWAY. PLACE A BID NOW. EMAIL ME WITH ANY QUESTIONS, GOOD LUCK."

Thank God we now have the inside scoop on RS2. I think ECM will even be able to sleep soundly after hearing that RS2 wouldn't come to arcades—now we know it's already available on PS2! Thank you silver^falcon! We'll rest easier tonight.

Note: we did not edit this message in anyway—the caps and "U R"s were all his. This bright lad even insisted via email that he was going to get eBay after us after we told him we had already reported him to eBay. We won't reprint our mail to him, as the expletive ridden missive isn't fit for these pages. Needless to say we fully believe that fornicating with your mother is an activity this fellow partakes of quite frequently.

FINAL ANALYSIS

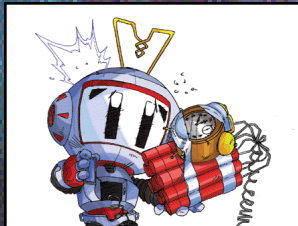
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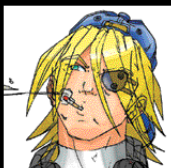
THE 6th MAN



Castlevania Chronicles
Playstation
Konami
Platformer
Reviewed page 44

After a few bad 3D Castlevanias, the 15 year old 68000 version will just have to do. No, it's not PC Engine Dracula X, it's not PSX Symphony of the Night, but it IS good ol' 2D Dracula the way it's meant to be. 2D platforming goodness that isn't quite up to the standards of the titles that it spawned, but still far better than the N64 aberrations that followed. The graphics on this Castlevania seem very dated despite the typically rock solid 2D platforming engine that we've all come to expect. Not a spectacular installment in the series--think of it as an hors d'oeuvre or dessert for you to feast on before or after Game Boy Advance Castlevania Chronicle, the true heir to the series that pays respect to its ancestors.

HAOHMARU



If I stuck a PB&J sandwich in a Ziploc bag, and crammed it under the stairs for 8 years, it wouldn't be hailed as a 'classic', or that it 'aged well'- they would say it's rancid. I know it seems like a bizarre metaphor, but that's exactly what's happened with Castlevania Chronicles. Konami hastily whipped up a Castlevania game based around the old NES engine for the Sharp X68000 computer in the early '90s, and after being buried for nearly a decade they decide to exhume the coffin (ow) and 'remake' it. Then they slapped the original slop and the redone slop on a PSX disc for ¥5800. What really puzzles me is why it was delayed so many times. Would it have killed them to put the NES incarnations on the tons of empty disc space?

POKEY



Tales of Destiny 2
Playstation
Namco
RPG
Reviewed page 22

I did indeed enjoy the initial PS Tales of Destiny, but there just isn't enough here for me to get worked up over. Sure, it still has the wonderful real-time combat that's a hallmark of this series, but the snapped character designs (nice sports bra, Reed), contrived story and been there, done that gameplay diminish my enthusiasm. Still, it is a very pretty game, with some very lush 2D visuals, but the animation can't hang with BoF IV (though the actual game smashes that pile of boredom) and the best music is confined to the opening them song (which is very well done). If you simply must have every PSRPG you should run out and snap this one up, I guess. Me? I'm going back to lusting over Hoshigami and playing Growlanser 2 till my eyes fall out--you should do the same.

ECM



Tales of Destiny was a rare offering from Namco, namely an RPG from the founders of Pac Man, Ridge Racer, and Tekken. The real time battle system is evidence that the crafters of the aforementioned titles have extended their influence to this game. Your fighter (Reed) fights with hack and slash skill reminiscent of other real time RPG's, albeit in a simpler fashion. You can improve certain elements of your character in lieu of others, a control feature that's always welcome in titles bearing the name 'Destiny'--controlling your own is always a plus. Tales of Destiny 2 isn't for the faint of heart--it's a very difficult RPG that makes you learn the value of stretching your resources. Still, if you were a fan of the first or fond of a challenge, TOD2 will be right up your alley.

HAOHMARU



Endnesia
Playstation 2
Enix
RPG
Reviewed page 40

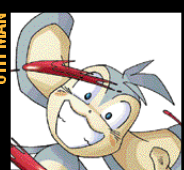
Despite Kodomo's loathing of this quirky little title elsewhere in the book (he's just cranky cause the pills have run out), I think it's pretty great. It's definitely weird, and a lot of people won't get it, but it's a neat little adventure/puzzle game that more than three people should play (me, Kodomo and HAOHMARU being the three). The graphics are sharp as a tack and the loopy world, replete with bizarre 'gods,' off-the-wall (but logical) puzzles, and the very nice atmosphere (punctuated by very subtle 'music') all deliver a nice little game that I hope some intrepid 3rd party deems worthy of release. It's playable in Japanese (good luck finding it), but it'd be that much better with a wee bit of the Queen's English.

ECM



As the designated lackey, I only really get to play the games no one else wants to touch with a ten foot pole --which happens to be 3x ECM's size...conservatively speaking. Once in a while, though, I get to play something fun: something that actually make my dreary day to day existence worth living. Endonesia is one of those games. While it's probably not for everybody, I certainly got a kick out of the wacky machinations of the lost little boy and his mutant dog-thing. The odd language that the people speak, and the cute puzzles all conspire to deliver a game that more than the staff of this magazine should experience. Of course the odds of that are rather slim, but if you have the chance, take a trip to Endonesia.

6TH MAN



Where did this come from?! It's rare enough that the staff 'round these parts can agree on where to go for lunch, but to agree across the board on a game<checks the thermometer in hell>?! But that's just what happened with Grow2--everybody on the staff loves it...heck, I think I even saw game-hating (outside of HotD 2) Kasumi sneaking some time with it. Why on earth the first one was passed over for US release is now a mystery I must get to the bottom of...well, me or my monkey-based alter ego. Amazing graphics, a stunning and amazing combat system and the theme song! Oh how I love some extra-cheesy pop metal ballads to go with my RPGs.

6TH MAN



This game is utterly amazing. I didn't know what exactly to expect, as I didn't invest in its PlayStation forebear, but if it's anything like part 2, it's probably among the best games on that console. G2 features amazing real-time, turn-based gameplay (you'll have to play it--trust me, it all makes sense) by the fellows that brought us the Langrisser titles (minus the DC disc of pain) so it's got to be good, right? The graphics are stunningly sharp and the Germanic thrust really helps set it apart. This is the best RPG I've played on PS2 and may be the best I've played since Dreamcast was introduced (this includes all PS RPGs). If there's a God, this game will see a US release--please Atlus, I'm begging you.

ECM



Growlanser 2
Playstation 2
Career Soft/Atlus
RPG/Strategy
Reviewed page 24

I can't believe I am actually going to admit I enjoyed a sports game. TENNIS, no less. Hard Hitter is thus far the only tennis title I can think of for the PS2, and it's a damn nice one. Realistic models, detailed players, and decent physics make for great visuals. The player movements seem a bit stiff, but they do not detract from the gameplay. What's even more entertaining tho is the odd play-by-play doled out during the TV close-up type shots in-between plays. Clearly the writers have had very little experience with US broadcasters as it's peppered with gems like "He seems to REALLY like tennis!" Since tennis isn't a high profile or a Mountain Dew-guzzling XTREME sport, don't look for EA or ESPN/Konami to knock out a tennis title anytime soon, so take what you can get, eh?

POKEY



Hey look: a wannabe Virtua Tennis... only not nearly as good. Who else isn't shocked? Listen, if you want to make a good tennis game, at least make sure it has responsive control and there isn't a lag every time you move. Sure, in real life a tennis player might have a hard time pivoting from left to right in mid-stride, but this is a video game--you're supposed to be able to do things you wouldn't normally be able to do to keep it fun and fast-paced. Remember those never-fraying volleys in VT? You'll find nothing so much as half as intense here. The graphics are decent and the audio is tolerable but I'd rather play Net de Tennis than this budget (it is a budget title, btw) VT clone--double fault.

ECM



Hard Hitter
Playstation 2
Magical Company
Sports

If you had to work with ECM every day, you'd quickly come to appreciate his mind-numbing rants on "the dearth of originality in today's games." While I do get sick of hearing it, the guy actually sometimes gets it right: case in point, Mosquito. This game sounded so cool when we first heard about it--you get to play an actual mosquito! We figured this might be Sony's start on a whole series of games based on weird critters. If this game is anything go go by, though, let's pray we never see that rhinoceros sim I had my heart set on. This game sucks, period. Forget all the bug-based jokes you could make--I won't even bother wasting the energy. Needless to say, another black eye for PS2.

6TH MAN



For the love of God: how can something that sounds so right turn out so completely wrong? I mean an idea as original as this deserves to be nurtured with some TLC--not dumped in a stagnant pond, and left to rot. How is it that a first party PS2 title can be this bad? It looks OK, and the premise rocks but where's the gameplay?! And what's with the 'hot spots'--hit 'em on people and they forget all about you? Wha?! I also love the fact that you can only suck blood from specific points on a person's body, including the blood-rich scalp (anatomy 101 would have been nice). Needless to say this sort of thing would be inexcusable from Joe's Game Studio, never mind one of the biggest publishers in the world.

ECM



Mosquito
Playstation 2
Zoom/SCEA
Action
Reviewed page 41

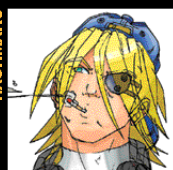
Sometimes I forget Irem is still alive. Thank god they check me every now and again with stuff like this. PhotoBoy II is a sequel to the classic but very scarce Photoboy (duh) on PC-E. Press pass and camera in hand, you slowly plod from left to right to grab the best shots you possible from varying locales. You're sent out on a specific mission to nab a specified photo, but you need to grab other shots to pay the bills. With a fast eye and even faster hands you can rack up a high score and earn tons of respect from your editor, or you can go to town getting shots of Godzilla destroying downtown Tokyo and schoolgirl skirts fluttering--it's up to you, photoboy! Grab it before it dissipates, A+!

POKEY



It's not too often that video games go against what one would think are the results of countless meetings between suits to determine the marketability of a particular title. Photograph Boy 2 succeeds in bucking the trend of 3D FPS rehashes and VF clones. Meander through various environments with your trusty Nikon taking various shots for which you score points. Obviously the "bigger" the event, the more points you accumulate. Of course, certain events aren't as important but timing is. The comical events are guaranteed to make you smile and you'll find yourself trying to beat previous scores to get to the next level, all to unlock the sub-stages that split off the main stages. Shoot, shoot, shoot!

HAOHMARU



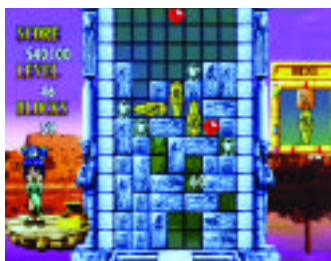
Photograph Boy 2
Playstation 2
Irem
SIM/Parody
Reviewed page 43



Yanya Caballista
Playstation 2
Koei/Cave
Sports
Reviewed page 42



Alien Front Online
Dreamcast
Wow Entertainment/Sega
FPS
Reviewed page 32



Cleopatra Fortune
Dreamcast
Taito/Altron
Puzzle
Reviewed page 38



Culdcept 2
Dreamcast
Omiya Soft/Media Factory
Board
Reviewed page 36

Wow. This is exactly what happens when you try to extend beyond your limitations or expertise in one area--after all, nobody wants a gynocologist helping them with a proctological problem (yow, that's cold!). But don't tell that to Koei and Cave who have embarked on a quest to overtake Jet Set Radio and managed to really, really embarrass themselves. Just to scare you silly right off the bat: this game requires one of those boards that you snap onto the dual analog sticks--one of those that makes it impossible to play. It controls badly, plays badly and looks decent. If you thought JSR was limited in the tricks dept. you ain't seen nothing. And those poor gawoos...what did they ever do?

ECM



Folks are going to think I've gone soft with all of the happy faces that adorn these pages, but damn if this isn't another homage to what could've been for Sega. Alien Front Online is an blaster with a twist--you're in a tank...fighting aliens. They're big, they're tough, and you're armed with the latest in tank technology to save the planet. AFO isn't a tank sim by any stretch--the action is fast and furious. There's arcade, online, and mission based modes (both alien & army) to keep you occupied. It's a visual sensation and a testament to what the Dreamcast is capable of. Solid FPS, multiple vehicles and enemies, team play, online and microphone voice support. Another Johnny come lately that shouldn't be missed.

HAOHMARU



If you read Haothmaru's review elsewhere in this issue you may have got the impression that he's not too thrilled with it (he keeps muttering something about "Columns clone")--well I am! The twist here is you have to bury the items you want to get rid of which opens up all new areas of your brain that probably haven't been used--ever. A brilliant game that Haothmaru and I played for 6 hours straight one night (though for vastly different reasons)--it's good enough that I'm actually actively seeking out the JAMMAboard to add to my PCBcollection. Remember kids:if it says Taito on it, it has to be good...unless it's Densha DeGo, <ick>...right JAPJAC?

ECM



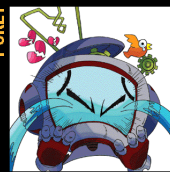
While ECMand several of the other moreJapanese-centric staff go bonkers over this, I just don't care. They keep going on about how"it's Monopoly meets Magic"--eh, so what? Monopoly was cool when I was 12 and Magic, well Magic was never cool. Sure, the game looks pretty and has some very nice production values but I really don't care. Maybe I just don't get it; maybe there's some hidden gameplay magic going on that I just don't see; or maybe it's just that it really isn't much of game. Think I'm going to go with the latter, much to ECM's profusely flustering face across the office"but you have to like it--it friggin' rocks, man."This from a guy that could fit on the game board...no thanks.

HAOHMARU



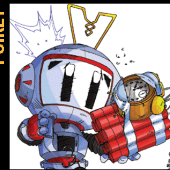
What a disappointment: Cel-shaded characters along the lines of Jet Grind Radio; skateboard to defeat non-threatening but invading alien forces. Sure it sounds hokey, but who wouldn't enjoy doing away with a pink ghost-looking thing by busting out a hardflip upside its head? Unfortunately, Koei decided cel-shaded kids skating around beating up on weird aliens wasn't enough so they opted to make a 'skateboard attachment' for the controller. You snap this little board over your Dual Shock sticks, and hold the pad sideways to steer. The control just does not work that route. If Koei just caved in and ripped off Tony Hawk this would be an immensely playable and FUN! game, but it's, well, not.

POKEY



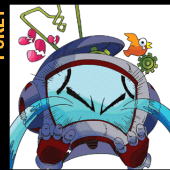
Big tanks, big aliens, big explosions--that about sums up AFO. Choose to pilot either massive 'Tokyo Wars'-esque tanks and defend the earth, or invading alien crafts and wipe out the hairless apes. The game has a strange feel and style seemingly ripped half from the movies "Independence Day" and the other half from "StarShip Troopers," but still retains a style all its own. And if you get sick of arcade mode, there's a massive campaign mode to plow thru, as well as online play where you can utilize the packed-in microphone to communicate with teammates and taunt the other guys. Only detractors: too few levels & no broadband support...and no import release--buy accordingly.

POKEY



A Taito puzzle game - there's a fresh twist if I ever saw one. 5 years ago Taito released Cleopatra Fortune into the arcades, a year or 2 later onto Saturn & PlayStation (in Japan of course). Now for some reason in 2001 Taito decides - wait, not even Taito - Altron decided the need to license the game from Taito and release it on the desiccated corpse of DC. The thing is, this wasn't even a very good puzzler when it was first released. Half somewhat original and half stolen from Tetris, the main objective is to surround the gems and/or coffins with the granite slabs to eliminate them. It's not very fun, it's pretty expensive--I'd call it a tax write-off, but they didn't press ENOUGH for it to be one.

POKEY



Once again I find myself in agreement with der uber-editor, ECM. What's next? flying monkeys? This game is rippingly cool! The Monopoly meets Magic gameplay is so sweet, it's super-sweet. Log on for some online action--it's not that hard--and you'll be able to play somebody virtually 24 hours a day in no holds barred card combat. A beautiful engine, seamless gameplay (with a touch of randomness to keep things interesting) equal one of the best DCgames yet.I hope and pray this gets ported to GameCube and then localized for US-consumption, cause games like this should not, nay, cannot be missed by the masses--even though they wouldn't know a good game if it smacked 'em.

POKEY



Think Spawn with smaller environments and fewer camera problems and you have Geomatrix in a nutshell. Kickin' tunes and bad ass weapons make for a game that's as much a state of mind as it is a video game, boasting bigger than life opponents encompassing both male and female, freaks, mutants and misanthropes. While it leaves a bit to be desired in the one player mode (the A.I. has the I.Q. of a doorknob--), the two player mode is good therapy for folks who need to beat up their best friends once in a while. Games like this make the Dreamcast's premature demise even that much more difficult to acknowledge, especially when this game hangs, graphically, with the best of the best.

HAOHIMARU



It's not bad enough that the DC is dead, but Capcom has to rub it in our faces with this unbelievably good game that will never get the audience it deserves. HMG fixes all the problems Spawn suffered from (mainly in the camera dept.), cranks up the graphics, adds some amazingly killer tunes, Simon Bisley art, and enough gameplay for even the most jaded gamer to dance in the streets over. Great combos, piles of weapons and utterly beautiful graphics--graphics, I might add, that would look at home on Xbox. As this is going to degenerate into another "why God, why?" rant, let me just say that this is a rocking game that all DC fans (those that haven't abandoned ship) need to check out.

ECM



Heavy Metal Geomatrix
Dreamcast
Capcom
Fighting
Reviewed page 33

Sega seems doomed to only release the A++ titles after the demise of their consoles: after the Saturn died we received Panzer Saga, Burning Rangers and Shining Force III. Sega announced the death of DC, and we get Sonic Adventure II, Shen Mue II, and Ooga Booga. Ooga Booga is a deranged collection of "party" minigames played out on little "tribal" islands. Pick your favorite character from the rogues gallery (leprechauns, dudes with massive afros, pirates, midgety savages, etc) and start hucking rocks at anything that moves! Up to 4 players can get in on the action in your living room, or gird your loins and hop online for some Net-based chicanery--good stuff all around, Visual Concepts!

POKEY



Say what you want about Sega and their business decisions, but when it comes to making unique and captivating games, they have no equal in the industry--enter Ooga Booga. Primarily designed for online and multiplayer play, it's an absolute riotfest of "Smakahuna" action. Ride the boar, throw shrunken heads, or use your old fashioned stick to womp on your opponents. Numerous islands and characters like Dottie, Fatty, Pirate, Abe (Lincoln) and many more to choose from are coupled with tribal beats to get the blood pressure up. The only peeve is the small amount of power ups and the like. Absolutely worth the hunt that late release DC games are becoming infamous for.

HAOHIMARU



Ooga Booga
Dreamcast
Visual Concepts/Sega
Action
Reviewed page 28

Super Puzzle Fighter II for Matching Service serves up 3 variations on the old Tetris/Tetris Attack theme with a twist. Some of you might've been here before with either the PSX or Saturn versions. However, for those not in the know, Puzzle Fighter is one of Capcom's lesser known series that always seems to get passed over. Super deformed characters represent you and your opponent, but the real battle is on the puzzle side. Arcade, training, versus, network and edit modes round out the various elements of Super Puzzle Fighter IIX and while it certainly isn't new, it's still worth playing...just don't believe ECM when he tries to tell you it isn't a Columns clone.

HAOHIMARU



It's not a Columns clone, <ahem>. Anyway, this was a fantastic arcade game and just as good on PS and SS, only now it has Net play that we'll never be able to access...damn the fates and their infernal, fickle ways! Yes, well, moving along... It's still a great game and one that everybody needs to take a spin on. It kills me that I have to deal with playing two really great puzzle games in the same month on the same dead platform, but that's life...I suppose. Capcom USA could do a lot worse in porting this puppy to the states so that it gets to hit a wider audience, though I'd imagine the odds of that are somewhere around zero even though this nice shiny version smashes the previously released editions.

ECM



Super Puzzle Fighter
Dreamcast
Capcom
Puzzle
Reviewed page 35

It's good. It's real good. I wouldn't go as far as 'brehtaking,' but it's really damn good. It's the best Final Fight clone I've played in the last 5 years. Sadly, there hasn't been that many, due to the rise of the '3D or DIE' marketing mentality pushed by certain, well, 'market leaders.' My only real gripes with the title are the mind-boggling repetition of the enemies--every level is infested with the same hoard of evil samurai ghosts, with the occasional sub-boss and boss thrown in for variation. Due to SNK's current (but temporary) state of affairs, the current holder of the NeoGeo mantle is slowly but surely getting this game out to arcade operators, so it might be awhile before you see it in your favorite haunt.

POKEY



The NeoGeo finally gets a new game, and all I hear from people is that it's 'OK' at best. So when I managed to sit down for some quality time I was expecting to be bored off my arse--imagine my surprise when it turns out that it's one of the Top Five Neo games of all time. Sure, the variety in enemies is, well, ass but the game itself is utterly engrossing and features a very slick combo system that obliterates the 'combos' (such as they are) in Final Fight and Streets of Rage 2. This is one beat 'em up where actual skill will separate the stronger players from the weaker players. My only regret: I didn't get to heap praise on it in the full, 2 page review, <sob>. Better than Final Fight? Oh yes...

ECM



Sengoku 3
Neo Geo
Noise Factory/SNK
Beat'em Up
Reviewed page 46